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# Assessing the Obama-Medvedev Reset in US-Russia Relations

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## Assessing the Obama-Medvedev Reset in US-Russia Relations: Achievements and Reasons for its Limited Success

### Introduction

Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, US-Russia relations can be characterized as highly cyclical. The beginning of a new presidency in the United States, or conversely in the Russian Federation, brings with it highly ameliorative expectations for the future of relations between the two powers. By the end of the presidential terms in the respective countries, however, the relationship deteriorates to a point of insolvency. (Stent, 2014, p.ix) This has indeed been of all American and Russian presidencies in the post-Cold war period. The Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton era began on almost positive footing, the trajectory of relations advanced by Clinton having declared 'alliance with the Russian reforms'—only to end with the 1999 NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, which lacked authorization from the UNSC and was heavily condemned by the Russian side. (Suslov, 2015) The millennium began with a positive impetus between Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush, exemplified by the 2001 Ljubljana summit meeting and cooperation on counter-terrorism post 9/11, only to be overshadowed by the deterioration of relations due to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008. (Suslov, 2015)

Yet again, in 2009 there was a switch in presidencies in the US, as well as in Russia (in 2008), and what was termed by Angela Stent as the fourth reset began between the newly elected Russian president, Dmitri Medvedev, and his US counterpart, Barack Obama. (Stent, 2014, p.x) The reset was inaugurated at their meeting before the G-20 summit in April 2009, which appeared to create a favorable atmosphere for such a course of events. It did indeed seem that both countries acknowledged each other's different views on the unresolved Georgian situation and the development of missile defense in Europe, as was portrayed by the follow up meeting in Moscow. (Stent, 2014, p.220)

In contrast to the third reset between President Putin and George W. Bush, which was initiated by the Russian side, the Obama-Medvedev reset was a foreign policy initiative of the US, specifically the Obama Administration. The reset of relations with Russia was part of Obama's changed US global strategy, whereby he acknowledged that continuing the foreign policy of George W. Bush would be detrimental to US national security. During Bush junior's presidential term, the US acted unilaterally (refusing to constrain itself to actions approved by multilateral institutions, such as the UN) and arrogantly (in defying the rights and interests of other nations). (Feith & Cropsey, 2012) Examples of such behavior include the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Obama believed that in order for America to empower itself and regain leadership the US should be more humble and take into account the interests of other nations. (Suslov, 2015)

An improved US-Russian relationship was crucial for Obama's administration to make progress on its top foreign policy priorities, like stabilizing Afghanistan and promoting nuclear non-proliferation. Hence, Obama wanted to engage Russia cooperatively to prevent it acting as spoiler in areas of vital US interests. (Asmus, 2008) In contrast, Russia viewed the Obama reset as a necessary American course correction of Bush's failed policy and less as a joint

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project. Nevertheless, Obama's foreign policy shift was welcomed by Russia– not least because Russia saw the benefit in cooperative relations with the US, which could help resolve the consequences of the 2008 global financial crisis and introduce more Western capital to modernize and diversify the economy, arguably the main goal of Medvedev's presidential term. (Medvedev, 2010)

Indeed, there was much progress made in relations between the two powers, especially in spheres, including the dialogue on the Iranian nuclear program, nuclear non-proliferation and Afghanistan amongst others. However, the positive momentum was soon to be ended by Medvedev's departure (Putin's return) in May 2012, where already wounded relations continued to further deteriorate. (Suslov, 2015) The reasons lie in the presence of two types of problems: practical-orientated problems in the spheres of cooperation, and the constant resurfacing of the same sources of discord between the two parties, which keep resurfacing in the relationship. One of the aims of this research will be to identify both types of problems. Secondly, a conclusion will be reached whether the reset can be termed a success, reaching some limited stated goals, or a failure– resulting in yet another deterioration of US-Russia relations. Thirdly, the essay considers what possible actions have to be taken in the future to overcome a repeated scenario of deterioration in US-Russia relations.

## Spheres of Cooperation and Disagreements

### *Iranian Nuclear Program*

The development of the Iranian Nuclear program was seen as a major impediment to the development of constructive US-Iranian relations. Unlike Bush's policy of Iranian isolation, Obama wanted to engage Iran in a dialogue, which reflected his foreign policy priority of a new U.S. outreach to the Islamic world, exemplified in his June 2009 Cairo speech. (Stent, 2014, p. 231-232) (The White House, 2009) In order to attain US national security interests and limit Iran's nuclear potential the US goal of the reset was to ensure Russian support for measures to limit Iran's nuclear program and bring more predictability to US-Iranian relations. Russia was vital for the achievement of this aim, as it could either obstruct US national security interests and block progress on the issue or facilitate its resolution. (Stent, 2014, p.231-232)

The Russians were also concerned with the development of the Iranian nuclear program, especially about the construction of the secret underground uranium enrichment facility in Qom. Hence, mutual interests of the US and Russia prevailed and allowed Russia to join the other Permanent-5 members of the UNSC in support of Resolution 1929, imposing tougher financial controls and an expanded arms embargo. (RSMD, 2014) (The White House, 2014) Furthermore, of great importance to the US was the Russian cancellation of the \$800 million defense contract between Russia and Iran with regards to the sale of S-300 air defense systems to the Iranian military. (Nation, 2012, p.380) The possession of such advance systems by Iran could directly undermine the security of US allies in the Middle East, notably Israel, as well as US security interests in the region. (President of Russia, 2010) (Lenta.ru, 2010)

It seemed that the US and Russia had similar positions on the resolution of the Iranian nuclear question. However, there was a clear limit to which Russia would go on to pressure Iran further, as it was clearly in Russia's interests to maintain a cooperative relationship with one of its few remaining partners in the Middle East. Consequently, although some agreements between Obama and Medvedev were reached on the Iranian nuclear question, further cooperation in this sphere was limited, largely due to differences in each country's respective relationship with, and approach to, Iran.

### *The New Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (New START)*

According to Dmitri Suslov, the signing of the New START treaty between the US and Russia in April 2010 was the major 'material success' of the fourth US-Russian reset. (Suslov, 2015) Furthermore, the treaty possessed symbolic value, being a first-step towards a revived US-Russian relationship, especially salient because of the failure of Bush and Putin to negotiate a replacement to the START 1 agreement. (Nation, 2014, p.381)

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Indeed nuclear nonproliferation and arms control were at the heart of Obama's foreign policy initiatives with his commitment to a global policy of 'ultimate zero'. New START offered significant security benefits for the US, notably the assurance that Russia would limit its strategic nuclear forces (both sides agreed to limit themselves to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads) and the verification procedure, which added greater transparency to the relationship. (Stent, 2014, p.223) The signing of another nuclear arms treaty was also a priority for Moscow, as it not only allowed it to free up economic resources to spend in other spheres, but also reinforced Russia's claim to great power status and boosted its international prestige. The negotiations allowed Russia to position itself on equal terms with the United States (the nuclear capacities of both parties being one of the few areas in which they were largely equals). (Stent, 2014, p.221-222)

Despite some initial demands from the Russian side to link missile defense (a highly problematic issue, which will be discussed separately) to START, and the opposing stance of some Republicans in US Congress, the new treaty entered into force in 2011 after joint ratification by both parties. Clearly, the arms control agreement succeeded because of the common vision and common interests that both sides shared. (Brookings Institution, 2011)

However, Obama's vision of global denuclearization (meaning further nuclear reductions by Russia and the US) was not welcomed by the Russian side. Firstly, Obama's initiative to negotiate a further reduction of deployed strategic warheads and delivery vehicles was unacceptable in Russian security terms. (Suslov, 2015) Russia believed that its remaining nuclear arsenal could act as a counterbalance to its weakness in conventional forces, where NATO bloc members possessed superiority. Furthermore, because of Russia's concerns over China's long-term ambitions and uncertainty of further development of US missile defense plans in Europe, it was prudent from the Russian perspective to maintain a nuclear force that could deter China and keep strategic parity with the US in place. (Cimbala, 2012, p.273-274) A similar explanation can be used to explain the Russian reluctance to Obama's initiative of negotiating reductions in tactical nuclear weapons. (Pifer, 2010, p.15-16)

## *Missile Defense in Europe and Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture*

The Missile Defense sphere remains one of the most antagonistic and difficult spheres of US-Russia relations. The disagreements on the development of missile defense in Europe (as argued by the US aimed against the threat rogues states, such as North Korea and Iran) were particularly acute during the Bush-Putin years, where the leaders failed to reach a compromise on cooperation in the missile defense sphere. The US and Russia reflect contrasting strategic defense policy cultures. The US is more open to strategic innovation and less uptight about the traditional logic of mutually assured destruction. In contrast, Russia maintains a traditional view of the centrality of strategic deterrence and relies heavily on its tactical nuclear weapons as a foundation for the defense of its territory. Furthermore, Russia is concerned about the potential destabilizing impact that US missile defense capacity can have on Russia's nuclear deterrence capability. (Nation, 2012, p.382) (Pifer, 2010, p.35-36) (Suslov, 2012)

Despite it seeming that Obama addressed Russian concerns by scaling down land-based deployment in Central and Eastern Europe by introducing a European Phased Adaptive approach (EPAA) (partly supplementing land-based with sea-based interceptors), bringing Russia into a cooperative missile defense undertaking failed to work. (Stent, 2014, p.225-226) (Nation, 2012, p.381) As reiterated by Russian officials, like Russian foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, the EPAA did not prevent the possible future acceleration of missile defense deployments, as it did not address US intentions, but only their temporary capabilities. Moscow's demand for Congressionally binding legal guarantees vis-a-vis the missile defense system not being a threat to Russia were deemed impossible from the US standpoint, especially with the presence of Republican opposition present in Congress. (Deyermond, 2012, p.77-80) (Cimbala, 2012, p. 271-272) Moscow's fear was further reiterated by Former US chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Michael Mullen, when he stated his view that the missile defense system will threaten Russia's strategic forces. The relations in the missile defense field essentially reached a stalemate, and as Stephen Hadley put it, 'the outline of the deal [was] there... but you can't overcome the politics'. (Stent, 2014, p.228-229) (Brookings Institution, 2011)

There were further problems with regards to the formation of stable Euro-Atlantic security architecture in Europe, as there was an inability to bridge the gap between Russian and Western perspectives on the future development of Euro-Atlantic security. For Russia, the expansion of NATO, which had been ongoing for the past two decades, was

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perceived as a threat to its own national security. On the other hand, the 2008 Russo-Georgian war exposed the vulnerability of 'in between' states (outside of EU & NATO structures, but inside common neighborhood of EU and Russia). For many Baltic countries and other new Central and Eastern European NATO members, NATO was a guarantor of safety against, what was in their view a 'revanchist, post-Cold war imperial Russia'. (Stent, 2014, p.238)

Medvedev's proposal of a new 'draft European Security treaty' in November 2009 was rejected out of hand by the US, because they believed that legally-binding articles with rules and decision-making processes were already present in existing OSCE treaties. (President of Russia, 2009) (Stent, 2014, p.239-240) This viewpoint was conveyed by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton with the US further encouraging European security issues to be dealt with within the format of the existing OSCE, an organization with which Russia quickly became disillusioned (as it believed its security concerns were not taken seriously). (Clinton, 2010) Furthermore, there was some unease over specific clauses in the proposed Medvedev treaty, which essentially superseded the fundamental underlying principle of NATO commitment to collective defense. (RIA Novosti Analytics, 2009) Bratersky and Tonkih support the view that the US categorically wanted to avoid a weakening of NATO and a redefinition of European security in favor of Russia. (Tonkih, 2011, p.61-63)

Despite successful NATO-Russia direct cooperation in handling many practical issues, such as counter-narcotics, the divergent views of NATO and Russia on European security remained an obstacle in the US-Russia relationship. Russia still perceived NATO as being hostile, as was portrayed by the 2010 Russian Military doctrine, naming NATO the number one external danger to Russia. The US, despite attempts to engage Russia in cooperation through the NRC (NATO-Russia Council), withdrew its obligations from the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty in 2011, realizing that attempts to encourage Russia to recommit to the CFE regime were failing. (Stent, 2014, p.239-240)

## *The Former Soviet Space and Colored Revolutions*

The post-Soviet space had been a strong source of tension in the US-Russia relationship during the presidencies of Putin and Bush, resulting in fundamental disagreements between the two sides and the war in Georgia in 2008. (Nation, p.383) In contrast to Bush, who advocated integrating Georgia and Ukraine into Euro-Atlantic institutions, Obama took a much more cautious approach. He took Russian interests into account and hoped for co-operation in this field, stressing that it was no longer a zero-sum game. (Stent, 2014, p.235)

The events in Ukraine during 2010 played a favorable role in the development of relations between the US and Russia. The US-supported Orange Revolution of 2004 was de-facto dead by 2010, when the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovych won in the 2010 presidential election. Yanukovych's decision to declare Ukraine's non-bloc status with regards to joining NATO made the US policy towards Ukraine less of an irritant, as Russia's priority of not losing its sphere of influence was maintained. Hence, the Ukraine NATO question receded as a contentious issue for US-Russia relations. (Stent, 2014, p. 235-236)

An unanticipated locale of cooperation between the US and Russia was seen during the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Moscow had been pressuring the Kyrgyz president Bakiyev to eject the Americans from their Manas US air base in Kyrgyzstan, because the Russians saw it as unnecessary US leverage on politics in a region of its interest, despite it being crucial to support the US-led coalition in Afghanistan. (Cohen, 2010) The overthrow of Bakiyev in 2009 (arguably because of the reversal of his decision to oust the US Manas air base) resulted in ethnic violence breaking out in the south of the country between the Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Despite Moscow not supporting the deployment of a joint US-Russian peacekeeping force, the situation was stabilized as a result of cooperative efforts from both Moscow and Washington, where each side consulted the other on developments happening on the ground. (Nichol, 2014, p.24-25) (Cooley, 2012, p.127-129) (Whitmore, 2010)

However, fundamentally different views on how to deal with the post-Soviet space, present during all presidential administrations since the fall of the USSR, resurfaced yet again. Due to Russia never being presented with a realistic prospect of joining Western institutions it has long advocated what Medvedev referred to as Russia's 'sphere of privileged interests' in the post-Soviet space (selective countries in the region are seen as being crucial to Russia's survival; hence their pro-Russian foreign policy must be ensured). The US rejects such Russian policy on the basis

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that it represents Russia's 'hegemonic aspirations'. It has actively worked on drawing new post-Soviet countries closer to the Western sphere of orbit— examples including the NATO Partnership for Peace program. (Nation, 2012, p.382) Russia portrays this as unjustified and hostile US interference into its sphere of influence.

The climax of such disagreements can be portrayed by the aftermath of events of the 2008 armed conflict in Georgia. On the US side, Pentagon officials stated it was important to maintain the support of Georgian military training programs and to aid Georgia in restoring equipment lost during the war. Russia, on the other hand, made it clear that any US rearmament of Georgia would be seen as a hostile act. Ultimately, this issue became less of a problem after 2012, because of the change of power in Georgia, where the more pro-Moscow Ivanishvili replaced Saakashvili. Clearly, this example portrays that the geostrategic competition between the US and Russia in the post-Soviet space is very much a source of discord, which complicates their bilateral relationship.

### *US-Russia Military Cooperation on Afghanistan*

The US engaged Russia much more successfully in an area of its top security priority: Afghanistan. This sphere was particularly salient for Obama, as his 2008 campaign included a promise to gradually withdraw the US army from Afghanistan. From a logistical angle, getting Russian support was of particular importance due to the transit route of weapons through Pakistan becoming more unreliable as a result of convoy attacks and deteriorating US-Pakistani relations. Former US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mike Mullen specifically cites the Pakistani intelligence service's support of the Taliban as directly subversive to the war effort in Afghanistan. (Bumiller & Perlez, 2011) The less reliable an ally Pakistan was turning itself into, the more important Russia became in facilitating alternative routes for weapon delivery to Afghanistan and consequently, a successful Afghan campaign.

For Russia, the situation was on the one hand a window of cooperation from which it too could benefit. A hasty and preliminary withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan could destabilize the Central Asian region as a whole, leading to the spread of radical Islam in Russia—something Moscow feared. On the other hand, the longer the US was present in Central Asia, the harder it was for Russia to consolidate its concept of the 'sphere of privileged interests', which Russia ascribed to. (Stent, 2014, p.229)

Russia decided to support the NATO campaign in Afghanistan and provide logistic support. The Northern Distribution Network of NATO supplies was established in early 2009 and further expanded in July 2009 after an agreement for the transportation of both lethal and non-lethal goods was signed between Barack Obama and Dmitri Medvedev. Despite the slow implementation of the agreement due to bureaucratic red tape and Russian ambivalence towards US involvement in Afghanistan, the cooperation progressed unfringed, with over 70,000 containers of supplies crossing the Russian territory by the end of 2012. (Charap, 2010, p.10-11) Further US-Russian cooperation can be seen in the joint anti-narcotics effort to counter the heroin trade and the sale of 21 Mi-17 Russian-made helicopters for use by the Afghan Army (purchase was financed from the US defense budget by the Pentagon). (Sputnik News, 2012) As both Stent and Suslov suggest, the US-Russian cooperation in Afghanistan was the most successful and important reset achievement after New START. (Suslov, 2015) (Stent, 2014, p.230)

### *The Events of the Arab Spring*

The situation, which began to develop in the Arab world in 2011, in many ways represented a return to Bush's Freedom Agenda policy, which instead of being implemented by the US in Russia's near abroad was being followed in the Middle East. This created problems for the US-Russian relationship, as Russia became increasingly unsettled in what it saw as Washington's advocacy of regime change. (Felgenhauer, 2011)

The events, which took place in Libya and Syria, had a particularly negative end effect on the US-Russian reset. Despite close economic ties between Russia and Libya, Medvedev agreed that Russia would abstain from vetoing UNSC 1973, instead authorizing the use of air power to impose a no-fly zone. However, Russia criticized NATO for overstepping its mission in Libya by trying to kill the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, instead of prioritizing humanitarian concerns. (Lekic, 2011) The Syrian situation was even more contentious than the one in Libya, where Russian economic and military stakes were even higher (Syria being among the top-five foreign defense buyers of

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Russian military equipment) Furthermore, the strategic positioning of Syria in the Mediterranean and the presence of a Russian naval base in Tartus added to the Russian reluctance to worsen relations with Syria. (Wezeman, 2013, p.269-271) Consequently, Russia vetoed the draft UNSC resolution which called for Assad to step down from power (over his alleged authorization for the Syrian army to use chemical weapons against civilians). (Batty, Pearse, Chulov & Harris, 2012) In essence, Russia continued to support the regime of Bashar Assad, in contrast to the US and its allies who wanted the President to step down and for a new government in Syria to take power,

The disagreements between the US and Russia over these two relevant conflicts, amongst others, are indeed of a fundamental nature and, according to Angela Stent, represent an ideological and philosophical gap between the two countries. The two core principles emphasized by the US (i.e. the 'doctrine of humanitarian intervention' and the responsibility to protect) were diametrically opposed to Russia's classical 19<sup>th</sup> century principles of the primacy of absolute sovereignty and noninterference in domestic affairs. Furthermore, the instability and violence, still present in Iraq after the US intervention in 2003, led Moscow to be skeptical about the results of such uprisings and the benefits they could bring to world stability. (Stent, 2014, p246-247)

## Sources of Discord in US-Russian Relations

It is evident that both the US and Russia share common interests in many spheres, including counter terrorism (as shown by the cooperation in Afghanistan) and non-proliferation (as shown by some successes in the Iranian dialogue and by the signing of the New START in 2010), as well as others. Therefore, the problems inherent in the relationship between the two countries are most assuredly not limited to practical problems within spheres, but remain of a much deeper and fundamental nature.

Specifically, the existence of a value and interest gap has constrained the ability of the US and Russia to cooperate on key global challenges. (Stent, 2014, p.255) The events in the Arab world have shown that the core principles of the US and Russian foreign policy differ fundamentally– a notable example being the principle of humanitarian intervention, as opposed to the principle of domestic non-interference. Furthermore, substantial progress on the reset agenda was inherently difficult to achieve, beyond those limited successes acknowledged, because of the US rejection of Moscow's policy of privileged sphere of interests in Eurasia (a region seen as key to Russia's security). (Lukyanov, 2009, p.13-14)

Another fundamental problem in the relationship relates to the two dominant strategies through which the American political establishment chooses to deal with Russia. Those favoring an approach based on realism stress that the US needs to deal with Russia through pragmatic foreign policy cooperation. This has indeed brought some success in the relationship as the Obama-Medvedev reset has shown. However, this realpolitik approach has been criticized by David Kramer and a significant number of Republican Congressmen, who think that the US should link its foreign policy vector with the Russian domestic political system and penalize Moscow for what Washington sees as growing authoritarianism. (Kagan & Kramer, 2012) This approach towards Russia is reinforced in domestic governance and remains, according to Nation, credible and powerful, posing a significant barrier in the path of transformational initiatives designed to cement a cooperative relationship between the US and Russia. (Deyermond, 2012, p.67-68) (Nation, 2012, p.381)

The inability to expand the spheres of cooperation between the United States and Russia beyond the traditional, dominant focus on hard security issues (missile defense, arms control etc.), present during previous administrations, limits inter-party dialogue because of the fundamental differences in the political systems and world views. (Stent, 2014, p.256) Therefore, an impasse reached in dialogue on hard security issues automatically results in a deterioration of the relationship, because alternative issues remain much less salient and are at best discussed marginally. Despite there being an attempt to expand relations into non-security spheres of economic cooperation with the creation of the US-Russia bilateral presidential commission and working groups, the institutional basis of the relationship remained finite. (Suslov, 2013) Additionally, the disproportionate role of personal ties remained a recurrent problem during the reset, which impeded a shift of the relationship to an institutional basis. (Ivanov, 2012)

The asymmetry in the relationship between the US and Moscow remained a source of discord in the US-Russia

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relationship during the reset period. Moscow's importance for Washington had declined significantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, becoming a second-order priority for the US, despite the acknowledged importance to seek Russian cooperation on US first-order priorities, such as Iran and Afghanistan. (Kremenyuk, 2009) Russia remains important for Washington to reach certain foreign policy goals, but is marginal as an issue in US domestic politics. For Russia, on the other hand Washington—at least until recently Washington represented a top priority for Moscow and was seen as the route to the restoration of Russia's great-power status. (Stent, 2014, p.257-258) Of course with the rise of China and Russia's pivot towards Asia, this has somewhat shifted, but Moscow has still found it difficult to cope with the fact that they were no longer treated as an equal counterpart, like the USSR was. This source of discord was not resolved during the reset and as a result represented a continued irritation for both sides, affecting the relations in a negative way.

## Conclusion

The US-Russian relationship remains a selective partnership, where Moscow and Washington cooperate on some issues, because of common interests and disagree on others, because of the recurring sources of discord identified above.

The reset has not aligned the US and Russia ideationally on national interests and political values. Nation has noted the reset's failure to 'transform relations in a fundamental way'. (Nation, 2012, p.385-386) Other critics have stated that the reset abandoned the historic role of the US, as a global democracy promoter, because Obama reduced the public criticism of Russia's democratic and human rights failings in order for the reset to accelerate. (Deyermond, 2013, p.506-507) However, these were not the aims that both the US and Russia wanted to gain from the reset. For the Obama administration, the reset has been a clear success, as it halted the immediate post-Bush deterioration of the US-Russian relations, as well as agreement being reached on specific issues of importance to the USA, especially in the area of national security (New START, Afghanistan, amongst others). (Deyermond, 2013, p.501-504 & 518) (Stent, 2012, p.259) Russia has indeed viewed the Obama-Medvedev reset as an American course correction and acknowledged the limited reach and achievements that the reset could bring to the relationship. From Russia's point of view the reset was successful as it enabled Russia to pursue its national security interest, by reaching agreements with the US in key spheres (e.g. New START). (Ivanov, 2012)

Another point which has to be addressed is what could be done differently in the future to overcome a repeated deterioration of US-Russian relations. One must overcome the sources of discord present in the US-Russian relationship for it to reach a new level. (Deyermond, 2013, p.385) In my opinion, this is best done by continuing to expand the number of stakeholders present in the relationship and encouraging the development of further economic relations between the two countries. The prospects for the success of such an approach are strengthened by the existence of institutional structures (working groups within the BPC), created during the early phase of the reset. (Deyermond, 2013, p.517) (Dubnov & Lukyanov, 2012) Only then there is real hope that the US-Russian relationship might not be disproportionately dominated by issues of hard security, but might evolve into something broader, possibly even a strategic partnership with the passage of time. Of course, such a course of events is difficult to predict, because various factors would have to align at the right moment to ensure such a development. The current crisis in US-Russian relations over disagreements with regards to the situation in Ukraine will make it even more difficult for the relationship to be upgraded to a new level. (Suslov, 2015)

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