

PREPARED TESTIMONY BY
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Mr. Chairman: Thank you for the opportunity to address this commission.

The topic is most compelling: How to promote human rights and democratic governance in Russia while also seeking a relationship with that country that advances economic, foreign policy and, especially, security concerns of both sides. It is worth noting that striking this balance is a challenge we face on several vital fronts, for example, in dealings with China, and certainly in our approach to the complex worlds of Islam.

Most commentary of late about Russia and our relationship has been gloomy. Kremlin authoritarianism is creeping forward. Russian foreign policy displays a defensiveness bordering on paranoia, combined with an assertiveness bordering on pugnacity. A new cold war is said to be in the offing. "Russia is back," say many pundits with foreboding and many Russian authorities with pride. One might say "the old Russia is back," for the attitudes and reflexes on display have deep roots in Russian and Soviet history.

Recent history is very important here. Putin, Putinism, and the behavior of the Putin regime are very much a product of, as a backlash to, Russian developments in the late 80s and the 90s: the political disorder, the loss of empire and international standing, and especially the economic collapse accompanied by rampant criminality and corruption and the impoverishment of most Russians. To be fair to the Russians and to the history, we have to recognize our role in this. Some of our actions, which inevitably caused Russian resentment, were necessary and good, such as: 1) Expanding NATO to export security into a zone that produced two world wars and to support the Westernizing and democratizing efforts of the people of Central and East Europe. 2) Getting out of the ABM Treaty so as to better face the inevitable spread of ballistic missile technology. 3) Extending our influence to the newly independent former Soviet republics for political and geo-strategic reasons.

But we also have to recognize the complicity in the 90s of US and Western governments and businesses in the plundering privatization and bandit capitalism that robbed the state, pauperized the people, and produced a hated new class of so-called oligarchs. Although exaggerated in Russian minds, this role was real. It was neither good nor, in my view, necessary. Different behavior on our part might not have produced different results in Russia, but they would not have produced such deep resentments as we now see among Russian elites and the public. This whole sordid history has yet to be adequately exposed, although then Congressman Chris Cox made a valiant attempt in 2000.

On the foreign policy and security front, given the landscape of Russian attitudes and interests that ancient and contemporary history have produced, I believe the Bush

administration is not doing too badly. And the Putin regime is showing some constructive realism and, occasionally, initiative. On the basis of public information, I believe this judgment holds for the very important areas of cooperation on counter-proliferation and counter-terrorism. Had I now access to intelligence and private diplomatic information, I suspect I'd see more negatives; but the public picture is encouraging. On the energy and economic fronts, I withhold judgment for lack of expertise.

But I'd like to table a question about Russia and energy. Putin proclaims the aim of turning Russia into a great energy power. The means for doing so are evidently dominance of extraction, monopoly of transport, and intrusion downstream into consumer markets. Many fear that a tight supply situation will allow Russia to use oil and gas as it once used military power, to intimidate, coerce, and dominate. Russian rhetoric and behavior, e.g., toward Ukraine, suggest this is what the Kremlin aims for. But economic leverage, of which energy is a kind, requires cooperation and mutual respect for interests and well-being among suppliers and consumers...at least so far as real markets apply over the long term. If this is the case, Moscow's energy strategy may prove to have a moderating, even civilizing, influence on Russia foreign policy.

On many security fronts Russian attitudes and behavior, resentment of the US and desire to counter our superpower, official secrecy, pose big problems for us. But so do rationally perceived national interests, which we must understand if we are to deal realistically. Take Iran, for example: Russia has manifold geopolitical and economic interests there. Moreover, Russian leaders suspect that, were they to follow the US in lock step, it would not materially change Iranian behavior but only increase the likelihood of conflict and regional instability that would make Russia a more proximate victim than the US. Some Russian pundits note that a US war on Iran would send the price of oil through the roof and greatly profit Russia. But the Kremlin does not appear to buy that line. I recently convened a workshop of Russia hands far more expert than I am who emphasized the need to understand, albeit not necessarily defer to, Russian interests and perceptions of this kind.

There has been a recent development of great importance on US-Russian security cooperation, strangely ignored by the US press and largely so by the Russian. Late last month, our Under Secretary of State for Arms Control Robert Joseph and his Russian counterpart Sergei Kislyak reached an agreement to revive an official diplomatic dialogue on strategic nuclear issues, one task of which, reportedly already begun, is to craft a successor to the Start 1 agreement which will expire in 2009. Unless superseded by a similar agreement, its provisions for declaration, verification, and inspection of strategic nuclear forces will also lapse. This is good news which should not be hidden under a bushel. Successful management of the world's nuclear problem will require a sustained, frank, and constructive dialogue between the world's original nuclear powers about controlling and reducing their own weapons. And, after all, survival is a human right, too.

Now to the all-important topic of promoting human rights and democratic self-government in Russia: Let me make basic points that I believe most vital as briefly as possible.

Point One: We, by that I mean our government and all concerned people and institutions, must make the best effort to understand what is really going on inside Russia. This is difficult. Counting my years as a student along with a professional lifetime thereafter, I've been trying to understand that country for nearly half a century. Despite, in some ways, because of the abundance of open information, it is more difficult than ever to determine what is true and what is false, what is important and what is trivial, what dubious assertions by authorities are sincerely meant or made cynically for political show. These puzzles litter the landscape, from economic statistics to who set off the bombs that helped get Putin elected or what killed Chechen warlord Basayev.

Still, there are important but nuanced truths that can be appreciated.

Russia has an authoritarian regime. But it is a weak authoritarian regime. It is strongest at monopolizing political power and suppressing or marginalizing any serious competition. It is not strong enough effectively to tackle Russia's real problems, the demographic crisis, the decaying infrastructure, the backwardness of the economy outside the energy sector, and pervasive corruption. And there are important divisions and factions within the regime itself.

Russia needs, but does not have a strong state. It has a huge, bloated, flabby state that is as much an assembly of avaricious clans and bureaucracies as a state. A truly strong state can be built by Russians. It could be built on the basis of strong authoritarianism. That would require charismatic leadership, a charismatic militant ideology beyond just Russian nationalism, and probably large scale repressions. This cannot be ruled out in the future, but, happily, does not look likely. Or the Russians can build a strong state on the basis of true democracy, which is what we and a lot of Russians, alas too few for now, are trying to promote.

Russia needs, but does not have, a free media environment for information and ideas. The media of broadest reach and influence, especially TV, are dominated and largely controlled by the Kremlin. Still there are significant degrees of freedom in the print media and the internet. People can think and say what they please and propagate what they think more freely than throughout most of Russian and, especially, Soviet history.

As of today, Putin's weak authoritarianism has broad public support because it has brought a sense of order, a sense of pride, and thanks to energy revenues increased economic well being for many. The question is how long this will last.

Part of the reason for Putin's public support is that, for much of the population, democracy and market capitalism mean the experience of the 1990s which offered too little of either. Beyond the regime and elites, we have to find ways to address that population.

Point Two: We need to clarify and codify -- for the Russian audience and for many others -- our doctrine of democracy in its fullest. Democracy can come in many different flavors, informed by culture, tradition, rational choice among alternative institutional arrangements and procedures. But the ingredients or requirements are the same: The rule of fair and reasonable law, established by the legitimate representatives of the people chosen through authentic public participation in an authentically competitive electoral process and enacted in a transparent parliamentary environment surrounded by the free exchange of ideas and information, and enforced by independent courts and an impartial police. Democracy requires a strong state, effective in performing its proper tasks as defined by law, but limited to them, such as defense, public order, regulating commerce, and supporting the deserving disadvantaged. This doctrine is more complicated than just voting, or freedom for NGOs, or freedom of the press. But it is not all that complicated.

The doctrine of democracy can be articulated in different ways. But we need to articulate it in ways that refute the charge we are trying to hawk an American model or so-called Western-style democracy in violation of the cultures, traditions, needs of others. In so doing, we can better expose Kremlin slogans like "managed democracy" and "sovereign democracy" as covers for evading the pursuit of real democracy.

Point Three: How to promote democracy in Russia.

We need to impress upon Russia's leaders, including President Putin and his successor, that this is a genuine and legitimate concern of ours, sometimes or somewhat in tension with our security agenda but basically in harmony with it. For the great conflicts of modern times arose in whole or in large part out of bad governance. Given the way they think and what their power interests are, current Russian leaders will not be much moved by expressions of concern about democracy from our leaders, including our President. But they can be convinced that we mean it. And that is extremely important. Achieving just this requires persistence and good style. Ronald Reagan had both, which I saw in action up close and personally. During his critical second term, he had with the Soviets his four part agenda: arms control, regional conflicts, human rights, and bilateral issues. His private meetings with Gorbachev usually began with human rights. Gorbachev could be irritated to the point of anger at the hammering he got. But he could not doubt Reagan's seriousness. I don't know how President Bush expresses himself on this to President Putin, I hope with the same earnestness and lack of apology that Reagan did. However, I think his instinct for doing this personally more or less in private is sound. The public critiques and admonitions generally should come from others.

Congress has a vital role to play in expressing the seriousness of American concern about democracy and human rights in Russia, for all audiences, the leadership, elites, broad publics, and those who share our values. This can be done in various ways on various issues. Achieving persistence and the right style is important.

The biggest and, barring a far more authoritarian regime, most enduring obstacle to the democratization of Russia is a population made somewhat hostile by bad experiences in

the recent past and largely indifferent by a mildly authoritarian regime that has brought a measure of stability, security, and prosperity. The question is: How do we reach and educate this audience, especially its younger members, on the real content of democracy and how vital it is to solving Russia's most serious internal problems?

We should begin by recognizing this, without fanfare and noise, as a national priority over the long term. Russia is a very important country because of its size, location, nuclear status, and potential future wealth and power -- although less important now than its leaders currently pretend. How Russia develops internally will be vital to the future global security environment and especially for the long-term prospects of the democracy agenda world wide.

At the level of technique and technology, my practical experience at this was in a by-gone era of Cold War, short-wave radio, and bookshops for Russian tourists and sailors. The end of the Cold War, globalization, satellite broadcasting, the internet, and the information age have made all that pretty obsolete and opened whole new vistas for communication about which others are far more expert. I shall add in closing, however, that from personal contact I know among those others are Russians who share our agenda, know how to act on it, are expert, enthusiastic, determined, and daring. They don't need education on democracy or the ills of their country. They need support.