



# The Future of U.S.-Russia Relations: Beyond 2012

## Keynote Address

Wednesday, November 28, 2012  
Washington, D.C.

### Welcome/Moderator:

**Jessica Mathews,**  
President,  
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

### Speakers:

**Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)**

**Oleg Nikolayevich Burmistrov,**  
**Minister-Counselor and Deputy Chief of Mission,**  
**Embassy of the Russian Federation**

Transcript by Federal News Service  
Washington, D.C.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

[00:00:12]

JESSICA MATHEWS: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I'm Jessica Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Great pleasure to have you here this morning.

This is a big Russia week at Carnegie. For those who were with us yesterday, we had a fascinating discussion based on a piece that was done by our senior people at the Carnegie Moscow Center on where Moscow – where Russia is and is going in its domestic evolution. Today, we're focusing on the bilateral relationship, and on Friday, we're going to be looking at the Russia-China relationship, which is also in a state of important change. So I think we won't have covered everything, but we will have covered in this week a great deal.

As you all know that for nearly a year, the bilateral relationship has been stuck in neutral as both countries wrestled with their domestic politics, and now the question faces us, along with many other big questions that the Congress is wrestling with, where do we go from here? I think it's worth taking a minute to remember that while the reset may not have met everybody's expectations, it did achieve a great deal. The relationship when President Obama took office four years ago was really terrible. I would say it had almost no positive content in it and an awful lot of negative content. And since then, some of the important accomplishments that the reset yielded include strategic arms reductions and enhanced transparency for both sides under the new START treaty, Russia's succession to the WTO, new supply route for NATO forces in Afghanistan, joint efforts on terror – against terror and drug trafficking in the region, a large new wave of educational and cultural exchanges, which we expect will be further enhanced by a new visa liberalization agreement. And these are – these are very substantial accomplishments for any relationship, especially one that was rooted in enormous tensions over the conflict in Georgia just four years ago.

[00:02:42]

At the same time, it obviously takes two to reset, and President Putin has made it pretty clear recently that he maybe has other things in mind for the – for the immediate future. In the past few months, the Kremlin has cracked down on Russian civil society, has expelled USAID, has withdrawn from Nunn-Lugar, and so the questions that we – that face American policymakers and Russian and that are subject for today are, what can one hope for in the relationship looking forward, for the near term? How do we develop an agenda, constructive agenda, that might yield results, and where are the possible areas of opportunity for moving forward?

We have a distinguished – two distinguished panelists to help us think through these questions, but first we're very honored and lucky to have with us Senator Jeanne Shaheen to share her thoughts on these questions with us. She has won a well-deserved reputation as one of the most thoughtful and pragmatic members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She chairs the European Affairs Subcommittee, and she was instrumental among other things in the ratification of New START. She's been an outspoken champion of human rights in Russia.

On the eve of Senate consideration of PNTR for Russia next week and the Magnitsky Act, we're particularly fortunate to get her to come share her thoughts with us, and we really look forward to hearing them.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

So please join me in welcoming Senator Shaheen to open our day. (Applause.)

SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN (D-NH): Good morning. Thank you very much, Jessica, for that very kind introduction, and for doing a great job of really setting the stage for exactly what I'm going to say in my remarks. I want to thank the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace for your continued leadership, particularly with respect to programs on Russia and nuclear policy. I'm delighted to be able to join you this morning. This is my first visit here, so it's very nice to have this opportunity.

This year, we marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It's hard to believe that it's been a half-century since those 13 days shook our nation and brought the world to the brink of disaster, and like many in this room, I'm sure, I can – we could all tell you where we were when we heard the news and saw President Kennedy make his address on television. Remembering that close call provides some important context on how far we've come to move beyond the crisis-driven, nuclear-armed brinkmanship marked by Korea, Cuba and Berlin. Today, however, as we try to chart a path for U.S.-Russian relations beyond 2012, we're reminded of the celebrated Russian author, Anton Chekhov, who once remarked that anyone can face a crisis; it is this day-to-day living that wears you out.

[00:06:12]

On a day-to-day basis, there are few more complex or complicated relationships in the world than the United States and Russia. The United States and Russia have a long history of dramatic ups and downs and seeming contradictions. In World War II, we fought shoulder to shoulder as allies against Hitler, only to move quickly into the Cold War where we threatened each other's annihilation. We eagerly developed a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, then subsequently worked together to reduce them and limit their spread. We pulled out all the stops to race each other into space, yet now our astronauts travel together to a joint space station on Russian rockets. More recently, we famously looked into each other's eyes, only to see Russia soon thereafter invade and occupy a NATO partner.

It's enough to wonder if our bilateral, and at times bipolar, relationship might benefit from a therapy session. It is this complex and challenging history that complicates any discussion on the future of our relationship. Unfortunately, in the hypersensitive, media-frenzied arena of Washington, this difficult and multi-faceted topic will no doubt be boiled down to one overly-simplistic and politically-charged question, namely, is the reset a success?

[00:07:42]

How one chooses to answer is clouded by political prejudices and long-held biases, yet it's important to focus on the facts: I would argue that the reset is not the dramatic, tectonic shift in strategy that some would have you believe, but as Jessica said so well, it has proven a limited success for what it set out to do. The subtle change in tone brought on by the reset was both appropriate and necessary to move beyond the stalemate in relations that we faced. The shift brought some concrete progress in areas of mutual interest, but it has not dramatically altered Russian calculations on any number of disagreements, nor was it likely to.

## *Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

The Obama administration came into office with U.S.-Russian relations at perhaps their lowest point since the fall of the Soviet Union. The Russians had just invaded sovereign Georgian territory; every facet of our relationship was in decline, this at a time when our two countries shared a wide range of mutual and urgent security interests. The reset tested the notion that the United States and Russia should work on areas of mutual interest, even while continuing to disagree on a number of important issues.

[00:09:05]

In that respect, we've seen areas of significant progress over the last three years. As a result of the new START Treaty, the U.S. and Russia will have the fewest operationally-deployed nuclear weapons since the days of Eisenhower. In Afghanistan, the agreement to create the Northern Distribution Network has allowed us to ship tens of thousands of containers of equipment to our troops. This has proved especially critical when Pakistan shut down our ground lines of transportation for nearly a year. We've seen limited cooperation on Iran, including another round of U.N. Security Council sanctions as well as the cancellation of the sale of the S-300 surface-to-air missile system. As of August, Russia is a WTO member, where it must abide by international rules on trade and investment. In addition, there continues to be relevant, if not headline-grabbing, progress on a whole host of cooperative efforts, from clean energy to global health.

The reset has brought limited but truly significant and concrete benefits that are firmly in the security interests of the United States, but we do need to recognize that the reset is not the huge strategic shift that some might have anticipated, nor was it ever likely to result in some dramatic altering of Russian political calculations. The fact is that the concrete successes occurred precisely because they were in Russian interests as well as American ones. The new Arms Control Agreement was helpful to Russia, as it sought to limit the costs associated with its expensive nuclear arsenal. The Northern Distribution Network provides additional revenues for Russia and helps ensure relative stability in Afghanistan. WTO accession, Iran, counterterrorism cooperation, all can be seen in the same vein.

[00:11:10]

Just as we must be careful not to oversell the depth of the reset moving forward, we should be equally skeptical of those who would cite the reset as the root of all complications in our bilateral relationship. Despite what some would have you believe, the reset is not the cause of Russia's recent deterioration of human and civil rights, nor is it the reason Vladimir Putin decided to reclaim the presidency, and it surely is not the impetus behind Russia's actions in Syria or its continued violation of Georgian sovereignty. The reset neither created these problems nor made them worse.

So where do we go from here? I believe the dynamics underlying the reset are still very much in play. There remain numerous areas of mutual interest that we should and can continue to pursue. But we have to be honest and admit the areas of agreement are narrowing, while the areas of disagreement may move to center stage.

Perhaps one of the more pressing issues for today's bilateral relationship is the human rights situation in Russia. Over the last six months, we've seen perhaps the worst deterioration in Russia's human rights record since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Upon Mr. Putin's revelation that he would return to the presidency and the subsequent manipulation of the parliamentary and

## *Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

presidential elections, Russians across the country took to the streets. In response, Mr. Putin has chosen to clamp down and severely restrict civil society.

I'm concerned the Kremlin's actions are creating an environment of fear inside the country. We've seen the United Russia Party enact a series of new laws that restrict protest and public expression, and severely constrain civil society in the country. We've also seen what happens to critics of the Kremlin, with one of the most egregious examples being the alleged abduction of an anti-Kremlin activist who was seeking asylum in the Ukraine. He was forcibly returned to Moscow by Russian agents. Blaming outside forces for the ongoing disaffection voiced by the Russian people, the government has expelled our USAID program from the country.

[00:13:24]

Now, I'm from the state of New Hampshire, and our motto in New Hampshire is live free or die. You may have heard that one; it's fairly famous. So we're not ambiguous about the principles our country was founded on. We believe that the drive for freedom is universal, that it's shared by Americans and Russians alike. The United States is not, should not and will not be shy about our staunch support for democratic values around the world, and Russia will be no different.

Now, I'm under no illusion that our speaking out on human rights will suddenly result in some dramatic change in policy. Ultimately, change will come from the Russian people. But a strong, successful and transparent Russia that protects the rights of its citizens is squarely in the interests of the United States. So we should not stand quietly waiting on the sidelines. We should not only voice our concerns, but also look for new ways to raise the profile of this important issue. The Magnitsky Act, supported almost unanimously by Russian opposition and civil society groups, is one such tool we should employ. As our USAID programs end, we'll also need to find creative ways to transition these programs, and continue our cooperation with Russian NGOs. Finally, we should do more to coordinate with our allies in Europe on this effort.

[00:15:19]

Another major source of disagreement which is likely to remain center stage is Syria. Russia's stance on Syria at the U.N. Security Council is deplorable, and Russia is paying a price for its intransigence. Russian flags burning on the Arab streets, as we know here in the United States, have a long-term cost, and Russian influence in the Arab world will wane over time. We in the United States should continue to highlight our differences and demonstrate to the Arab world who is standing on the side of the people, and who is standing with Mr. Assad.

Even as these areas of disagreement are pushed to the forefront, I would hope that we can continue to find agreement on areas of mutual interest. As the two largest nuclear powers in the world, the United States and Russia have a special responsibility to work together on arms control issues. I believe we can further reduce strategic deployed weapons, and there is still a deal to be struck on reducing tactical and stockpiled weapons. Obviously, missile defense remains a difficult sticking point, but this can be an area of cooperation. There is a whole menu of mutually beneficial options on the table, including information exchanges, early warning support, and a joint data fusion center. But we need to be clear: The limited U.S. program poses no threat to Russia's strategic deterrent, and at the end of the day, a legal guarantee will not be necessary or possible, since that kind of a guarantee could never get through the Senate.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

Nonproliferation is always an area where we can do more. Together, we have historically led the world on this agenda; it would be a shame to end this important cooperation. Much has been made about the possibility of ending one of the most successful foreign policy initiatives of this generation, the Nunn-Lugar program. However, I believe there's room for a follow-on agreement, particularly with respect to third-party countries. It's incumbent upon both of us to finish the job we started.

Other possible areas of cooperation include rule of law and the fight against corruption, trade and commerce, the development of the Arctic, and counterterrorism in North Africa and the Middle East. We still have a large bilateral agenda to pursue, while at the same time, making crystal-clear where we stand on our disagreements.

[00:18:06]

From containment to détente to today's reset, we have perhaps too often tried to encompass our Russia policy in a catchy little phrase. Unfortunately, foreign policy by bumper sticker just doesn't cut it in today's world. We forget that Kennan's explanation of containment took over 6,000 words, the complexity of our modern-day relationships, especially with Russia, just can't be captured in a tweet.

As we look forward, we'll have to be both pragmatic and principled. It was Reagan who called the Soviet Union the Evil Empire, and urged them to tear down that wall even while negotiating directly with the Russians on an arms control agreement. Kennedy, while going eyeball to eyeball with Krushchev over Cuba 50 years ago, approved a security guarantee for Cuba and the withdrawal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey. A successful policy with Russia will find a way to both protect our interests and defend our values. It will not be easy, but it never has been. The reset has provided us an opening. We should continue to build on that.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

[00:19:30]

Now, I understood that you would like me to about five to 10 minutes of questions. Whether the audience wants that or not, that was my charge this morning, so I'm happy to take questions. And I would just ask that you introduce yourself and tell me what organization you represent, or where you're from. Thank you.

Yes, sir.

Q: Yes Senator. Bill Jones from the –

MS. MATHEWS (?): Just wait for – could you just wait for a mic? Thank you.

Q: – thank you. Bill Jones from Executive Intelligence Review. Just an issue over the Syrian question, your description of the Russian position, I think, needs a little bit of review or a little bit of correction, to the extent that their concern has been since Libya that there is, in fact, a new doctrine of being able to go in for regime change, which they're not accepting. And I know this is something

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

at the U.N. where now the humanitarian interventionism is becoming more and more of an issue to put aside the usual Westphalian idea of sovereignty.

[00:20:32]

But the Russians have adamantly taken the position that this should not be the case – that they have taken a position in Syria, after their experience in Libya. And they're defending a principle and not simply defending an interest. And I think there's also controversy here in the United States as to whether or not we should back, militarily, regime change in Syria and what the consequences would be. And I think here's more to their argument than you described it. And I think if you could elaborate a little bit on the position, I would appreciate it.

SEN. SHAHEEN: Well, I appreciate that's Russia's position. I think – and, again, I speak for myself this morning, I don't speak for the Senate or the Foreign Relations Committee, but I think the fact is that we have a regime where the dictator in power is killing thousands of his own people. And I think it's an appropriate topic for the international community to weigh in on. And I would hope that Russia looks at this particular situation and decides that the issues there are more than about regime change, they're also humanitarian. And the international community should take a strong stand on what's going on there.

Yes.

Q: Thank you very much, Senator. I'm Susan Allen Nan from George Mason University. I wonder if we might add to the list of potential areas of shared interests, preventing renewed fighting over Karabakh – Nagorno-Karabakh.

SEN. SHAHEEN: Certainly. I think that it would be very helpful to have Russia continue to weigh in on the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. Certainly it's, I think, in the interest of Armenia and Azerbaijan, but it's also in Russia's interest, it's in the international interest to see that dispute resolved after so many years.

Yes.

[00:22:38]

Q: Good morning, Senator. I'm Mr. Lloyd (sp) from University of Maryland. This question is about the APEC. With the recent event in Vladivostok and with the rise of China as an economic power, is there any plan, or do you see in the future any plan, for the Russian side to develop militarily Vladivostok as a Far East military post for Russia, considering that China is growing as an economic power and the shift of power in the Northeast Asia is getting hotter, especially with the issue of the East and South China Sea claims of the many countries in the area. Thank you.

SEN. SHAHEEN: I have not looked at that issue. I'd be interested in your perspective on it. It sounds like you think it's a place that's ripe for Russia to look at countering some of the Chinese influence that we're seeing now in the Far East. Is that – thank you.

Yes.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

Q: Hi, this is – (inaudible) – from EIR (sp). I just want – I just have one question to the Senator, if you’ve look at – looked at some of the proposals that’s coming from the Russian side. For example, last year, Mr. – (inaudible) – made a proposal to have U.S.-Russia scientific collaboration, especially in space. You know, for example, the whole asteroid and all these threat that that’s posed, and kind of start working together on that basis. I wonder if you’ve looked at it – looked at that, and if you know if any – you know, any response from the U.S. side, given your representing the Foreign Relations – Senator Foreign Relations?

SEN. SHAHEEN: I’m not familiar with that proposal, but that’s the kind of area that I was suggesting provides continued opportunity to work together. I think particularly environmental concerns, issues around global health – those are areas where we have a lot of mutual interests at stake, where we really have an opportunity to work together. And I think space, obviously, is one of those as well.

MS. MATHEWS: We have time for one more.

SEN. SHAHEEN: Yes. Oh, in the back. Go ahead. (Laughter.)

[00:25:19]

Q: Hi. I’m Mary Berger with Washington Trade Daily. I was wondering what your take is on what’s likely to happen with Magnitsky in the Senate. Will you stick to the Senate version or is there pressure to go with the House version just to get PNTR done?

SEN. SHAHEEN: There’s an amendment that would make the House version global. I personally think it would be better to go ahead and adopt the House bill and send it back to the House with the Russia-specific language, just because we are so late into this session that I think any changes make it much more difficult to get – to get the legislation done. I’m actually a co-sponsor of the Cardin legislation, which is global in nature. But at this point, I think the most important thing to do would be to get the bill passed. And the best way to do that is for the Senate to adopt the House version.

[00:26:18]

MS. MATHEWS: We’re going to – I’m afraid that I see lots of hands, but I’m afraid we need to move on. We have a very crowded agenda. Please join me in thanking Senator Shaheen.

SEN. SHAHEEN: Thank you all, again, very much. (Applause.)

JAMES COLLINS: Well, good morning. My name is Jim Collins. I am the director of the Russia and Eurasia Program here at the Carnegie Endowment. And it’s my honor and privilege to take us to our next speaker. Ambassador Kislyak, unfortunately, was not able to make the event this morning. He, however, has asked his minister counselor, Mr. Burmistrov, to speak on his behalf.

And I think, because this morning we are dealing really with the future of the relationship between the United States and Russia, it’s important to get both perspectives. And so we’re very

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

honored to have Minister Counselor Burmistrov with us. And I want to give him the floor to make some remarks. And we will then proceed to our panels once he has finished his time.

So, Mr. Burmistrov.

OLEG NIKOLAYEVICH BURMISTROV: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Ambassador Kislyak wasn't – has been invited and had to be here, but he is still in the process of – process of recovering from his illness, as maybe you know, that it is very difficult for us, warm-loving Russians, to get used to very – to extremely tough and cold Washington climate. (Laughter.) Anyway, he has asked me to share with you how we, the representatives of the Russian government, envision the future of Russia-American relationship.

[00:28:40]

And I think there is no need to explain why our countries are destined for partnership, at least for the sake of preserving peace in the world. As you know, the joint nuclear potential of the United States and Russia exceeds 90 percent of the total volume of our planet's nuclear arms. And it should be admitted that, as regards our joint efforts to avert international nuclear alert or threat, we have achieved very tangible results in this area.

One of the recent examples is the New START treaty signed by President Obama and President Medvedev. However, the time is not standing still, and it is – the time is dictating to us new challenges and threats, to both of our countries. Besides maintaining bilateral nuclear security, we have managed to establish a very constructive and trustful dialogue on many international or regional issues, including the nuclear problems of Iran and North Korea.

To make progress together through such – (inaudible) – as fight against international terrorism and drug trafficking, illegal money laundering and cybercrime, as an example, the Russian EMERCOM and the U.S. FEMA are reliable partners in eliminating consequences of natural disasters and catastrophes, both on the territory of our two countries – of our own countries and in other regions of the world.

Maybe you know that just recently the Russian side has provided humanitarian assistance to the Hurricane Sandy's victims in New York by delivering blankets there with the use of EMERCOM's aircraft. It's just a very small example, but very fresh. It is clear that the above-mentioned problems will not disappear tomorrow. And this means that our cooperation on solving them will go on.

[00:31:18]

The old new team in the Kremlin understands that and counts on it. And we hope that the new old administration in White House has the same vision. One important point to my mind, I think that one of the toughest tasks in our relationship is the protection of the bilateral relations from the internal politics considerations. It's very urgent and important task. And for this, first what we should do is to create a solid trade and economic basis.

The elections in our countries has passed, has ended as they had to be ended. We have new administrations in our countries and their main task for them is to focus on – first of all, on

## *Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

economic issues. And from the very first day of the – of his presidency, President Putin signed an executive order on measures to implement the Russian foreign policy. And the United States is the only country in the world that deserved the whole paragraph on this paper.

[00:33:01]

And the first lines of this paragraph deals with the necessity to attach priority attention to substantially increasing trade and economic cooperation, expanding the activities of the Russia-American presidential commission and securing a – (inaudible) – and nondiscriminatory regime in bilateral trade and permanent – on permanent and unconditional basis. And the meeting of the President Obama and President Putin in Los Cabos this June, the emphasis was made on the need to strengthen economic – (inaudible) – of relations.

Russian president proposed, for example, to think together on the creation of the mechanism that would allow tracking problems with the investment climate faced by the Russian companies in the U.S. and the American companies in Russia. As soon as the U.S. administration is regrouped and ready to work, we will come back to this idea. Russia has become a full-fledged member of the WTO. And in order for the U.S. business to work on the Russian market on an equal basis with foreign competitors, the U.S. Congress is expected to pass in the nearest future a law on granting permanent normal trade relations to our country. Hope that this decision will significantly improve our bilateral commerce.

I think you will agree that it is a shame to have such a low volume of mutual trade and investment between our countries. And so, at the same time, of course, our – it's not a secret – we deeply regret that the lawmakers in the Congress have voiced a firm support for the so-called Magnitsky Act as a condition of repealing the Jackson-Vanik restrictions from trade with Russia. From our point of view, it shows that some aspects of Russian-U.S. relations have never become part of the reset policy.

A backbone factor in bilateral relations is the bilateral presidential commission. This commission is comprised of 21 working groups on a broad range of issues on bilateral cooperation. This is a very available tool, but a certain upgrade in its work is also required. Our main goal is to aim – is to aim the commission working groups at concrete, practical results and tangible economic cooperation and not the dialogue for the sake of dialogue, as sometimes used to be. The Cold War ended 20 years ago. And I hope that the stage of the first contacts with each other in the new historic circumstances is already over. It's time to proceed to practical work.

[00:36:40]

I will remind you – remind you the words of our Foreign Minister Lavrov, who said that we are ready to work with the United States on the basis of three – on the triad of very simple principles: the equality and the mutual respect and the mutual benefits. Our countries have many shared interests. And at the same time, there are differences on some issues. And it never managed without this. And we will be ready to go as far in deepening our cooperation, how the United States' administration will be ready for this.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

And I'm confident that today's discussion will be constructive and useful, both for those who study the Russian-American relations and for those who put them in practice. And thank you very much for your attention. (Applause.)

I'm not sure that I can replace my ambassador in answering your questions, but I can try. (Laughter.)

MR. COLLINS: OK. So let me have questions. Some in the back who didn't get a chance – (inaudible). Yes, please.

[00:38:14]

Q: Yeah, hi. I'm Susan Cornwell with Reuters. Just wondered if you could elaborate a little bit more on the Magnitsky bill and what you think will be the reaction in Russia if it does go ahead and pass in the version – well, I guess either version would affect Russia. The House version limits it to Russia and the Senate one says – currently says anywhere in the world. But that would nonetheless affect Russia if that version were passed. Maybe you'd like to say which version you prefer, give any other comment on that.

MR. BURMISTROV: OK. All right. Well, I think that I cannot say which is worse – (laughter) – the global dimension or the Russian-focused – (inaudible). But it's a matter of American lawmakers. We do not intervene in internal affairs of the United States. They have a right to do what they want, but unfortunately, unfortunately it's a game – the rule of the game we should react. It's not our choice. How, I don't know. It's a very sensitive issue, of course. But again, it's not our choice to do that. But anyway, we have to. But again, I don't know what is better or worse in the choice of the American lawmakers. Thank you.

MR. COLLINS: Yes, in the back.

Q: Len Bracken, Bloomberg BNA. Could you repeat for me the – President Putin's proposal on investment? I didn't quite – didn't quite get that. And if you could also talk about some of the concerns that Russian companies have investing in the United States and –

[00:40:17]

MR. BURMISTROV: And just – yes – and just an idea was – which was raised for the first time by President Putin in June in Los Cabos but the conversation of assigning a special bilateral agreement on improving investment countries – or climate in both countries – the conversation on this is on the way for a number of years. And at the end of this week the first deputy prime minister, Shuvalov, will be here in Washington to discuss this. It's very fruitful idea. You know that they're joining – the – Russia's joining to WTO opens new opportunities for both countries in the – in trade sphere, and it's high time now to launch a very serious not dialogue but negotiation process on concluding very concrete and creating very concrete conditions on how the American investors can work in Russia, and opposite, how the Russians can work here in American market. And the idea is to conclude investment agreement between us. So I think it's very, very important that trade is trade, but investments – mutual investments is a very, very important thing for both of our countries.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

Q: Yes. Thank you so much, Mr. Burmistrov. I am Victoria Kupchinetsky. I'm with the Russian Service of the Voice of America. As Senator Shaheen in her speech mentioned that for the United States the area of human rights in Russia is a big concern for the United States, and this criticism has been persistent over the past several, many months, and what is the Russian reaction to this criticism?

MR. BURMISTROV: We accept any criticism from abroad. It's very good. But we do not want that this should spoil the atmosphere of our bilateral relations. Of course it's three senators, three lawmakers has absolutely tried to express their opinion. And it's not a secret. Yes, we have problems with the human rights in Russia. We have problems with corruption. We have many problems, as well as many other countries in the world. But we are trying to improve the situation.

[00:43:32]

You're a journalist. I think that you're watching Russian TV sometimes, and as I do – and when – every morning the Russian news starts with the, what, with the new criminal deals on corruption, scandals in Russia. Is it bad? Yes, but we have – we have corruption, yes. But is it good? Yes, good – the government is trying to do something. Will it succeed or not? Who knows. But it is doing its best to improve the situation at least in this sphere. You can agree with it or not, but the government is trying to do something in this sphere.

Of course, we accept advices, but of course, as any country, as any government, we do not like when we are taught – when anybody in the world want to teach us how to do it. But anyway, we understand. We live in the real world. Yes.

[00:44:44]

MR. BURMISTROV: OK. One last question, yes.

Q: (Name inaudible) – George Washington University. Mr. Burmistrov, you mentioned Russian television, and over the last month, we have seen a very strong anti-American campaign on the Russian government-controlled television. And in addition to that, we've seen a number of laws passed, including the law on foreign agents and the recent amendments to the criminal code that broaden and increase definitions for treason; and a number of other laws that actually indicate that Russia is – or the Russian government is going to impose some kind of self-isolation. Do you think this kind of policy is good for the alleged modernization of Russia, or is it bad?

MR. BURMISTROV: I don't know. You know, we are – I (can ?) comment on the Russian-American relationship today. Of course, I have my personal opinion on every issue. But you have asked that the situation on Russian TV has worsened in its comments that the United States or the United States policy. I don't agree with you on that. It's not my job to monitor the Russian – programs of Russian television. But as I can see the situation, the situation – the situation on the Russian TV is quite stabled toward the United States, maybe even improved after the re-election of President Obama. We have expected other options, but –

MR. COLLINS: So did some of the others. (Laughter.)

MR. BURMISTROV: But now it's – (chuckles) – we do hope that with this administration we can – we can work, we can continue to work successfully, successfully, despite all difference,

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

including the – including the humanitarian human rights sphere. We can work together. That's the main thing I wanted to stress today.

MR. COLLINS: Well, Mr. Minister, thank you very much for your remarks, for your (generosity?). (Applause.)

MR. BURMISTROV: Thank you.

(END)