

**CENTER FOR
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

PRESS BRIEFING ON KENNEBUNKPORT SUMMIT

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ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Good morning, all, and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and thank you for coming to our briefing on President Bush and President Putin's Kennebunkport's summit. For those of you who are traveling to Kennebunkport, enjoy yourself; it's a beautiful place, as many of you have already seen. And I know everybody is busy this morning, and we're going to try to end right at 9:20. So we'll get started and I'll do a brief introduction.

Dr. Andrew Kuchins is to my left. He is chair of the Russia-Eurasia program. Dr. Sarah Mendelson, a Senior Fellow at CSIS, is right here, and she is also the director of our human rights initiative. And Ambassador Steve Pifer, next to Sarah who is a Senior Advisor at CSIS and part of our Russia-Eurasia program. And with that, I will turn it over to Dr. Kuchins.

ANDREW C. KUCHINS: Thank you very much, Andrew. So someone has endowed a chair for my program and they didn't tell me about it? That is great news. Welcome this morning. Sarah and I were laughing last night kind of thinking about what we were going to say today because this seems like it's going to be sort of a weird summit, the weird summit. Frankly, I have a lot more questions than answers about what is going to happen, but let me run through why I have more questions than answers. That is not exactly what journalists want to hear in a briefing I suppose in the morning.

First of all, there is the issue of the location: Kennebunkport. Is this the first time that a U.S. leader has hosted a foreign leader at Dad's house? I mean, maybe JFK had someone over at Hyannis Port, and it was his father's house; I don't know, but this is pretty unusual. And the symbolism is quite striking. And I ask myself the question: Do Vlad and George need some kind of adult supervision? But it's really unusual.

Secondly, there is the question about whose initiative this meeting was. And I have had different variations on this story, and I don't know what the real story is. When I was in Moscow and St. Petersburg about a month ago, the story I got was that an invitation was extended when George H. W. Bush went to Yeltsin's funeral at the end of April for a meeting in Kennebunkport. Subsequently, I learned from U.S. government officials that, in fact, it was Putin's initiative. And now I read in several reports that, no, it was Mr. Bush's initiative. Okay, so I don't know whose initiative this is. It may not be that important whose initiative it is, but it is kind of unusual that there is so much non-transparency around this question.

And that brings me to the third question, which brings us all here: Why? What is the purpose? Why are they meeting in Kennebunkport? And, frankly, that is a very tough question that I have been scratching my head over for the last couple of months.

Well, this is what I think: I think now they are both playing for history and legacy, and I really don't think that either of them wants as part of their legacy a trashed U.S.-Russian relationship. I think that is quite genuine.

I think there is a sense of missed opportunity in this relationship. And maybe Steve will say more about this in his remarks and this relationship after the promise of the kind of second honeymoon in U.S.-Russian relations right after 9/11. And the Kremlin is quite bitter about that. And I think that is partially a contributing factor to the escalating rhetoric that we have heard over the last few months coming from Mr. Putin.

And, you know, the Kremlin story is we made a big decision to cooperate with you in defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, and what happened? Well, you defected. You withdrew from the ABM treaty; you expanded NATO. You went to war in Iraq. In summary, Moscow saw little reciprocity on the part of Washington, rightly or wrongly. And I think that there has been a judgment that there is little to gain from making further political investment in the relationship, or investing political capital.

Then of course in the fall 2003, Mr. Putin turns his attention to domestic issues in managing the elections and taking care of Mr. Khodorkovsky, et cetera, et cetera. Then the color revolutions come along, and whatever opportunity there was for really building more of a lasting strategic partnership disappeared.

So Mr. Bush faces a genuine policy dilemma with Russia today. And I did have the opportunity almost a year ago to this day to spend about 45 minutes with him. That is my anti-war haul 50 minutes, five minutes in the sun in the Oval Office talking to the president about Russia. And I came away kind of sympathetic toward him about the dilemma.

And while he is concerned about the current situation, he expressed much greater concern actually about future trends and what Russia was going to be like for his successor three terms from now. So that was 2018 at that time. He was hopeful about a growing middle class and a generation of stakeholders, but concerned that many of them were becoming more anti-American. And of course I didn't have the heart to mention that it might have something to do with U.S. foreign policy. And he was aware that our leverage and our credibility were very limited.

And, you know, the dilemma is: Russia is getting more prosperous. There is a growing middle class. Is it becoming more democratic? No. Is it becoming more aggressive and assertive? Yes. What do you do about that? No easy answers to that question.

So I think there is an interest on our part in talking about the future, in President Bush's mind, and how we can advance a more constructive bilateral relationship, and perhaps even how the two of them can take some initiative to enhance the images of each country in the other country. That may be wishful thinking, but I think they are going to be talking about things at this summit that are not really the typical agenda items.

And, finally, let me go quickly through those: Kosovo. I don't expect any agreement on Kosovo. I think there may be discussion about how to massage

disagreement in the U.N. Security Council on that. I am skeptical that the Russians are going to move on that. Missile defense: I think the best-case scenario there is that the two presidents would designate in effect a bilateral working group to come up with some recommendations for cooperation in the future after Mr. Putin's surprising Gabala proposal.

Finally, there may be a civilian nuclear reactor cooperation agreement—123. That may be initial – that may be one deliverable. Iran, there may certainly be discussion about the next round of U.N. sanctions, maybe there is – and I see some linkage in these items on missile defense and civil and nuclear reactor cooperation and Iran, all of them pointing to the Russian position of moving away from Iran to some extent.

Finally, the last comment: You know, Vladimir could surprise us. He has a penchant for doing so. Last year I named him Vladimir the lucky in a piece I wrote, and this year I renamed Vladimir the surprier after that trick he pulled at the G-8 meeting earlier this month.

And it's certainly not a small step for him to decide to pay a visit to Kennebunkport, it seems to me, at this time. And if he did have a special message about his plans for the future, George W. Bush may be the only foreigner he would think it useful to consult, and whom he thought he might be able to trust consulting. So, let me turn it over to my colleagues.

SARAH E. MENDELSON: So I want to talk about some themes that go beyond the lobster summit or the main meeting, the lobster role, whatever you want to call it, but which are critical to understanding the context of many of the recent Putin speeches. And these big themes have to do with essentially the way in which the Russian government is taking advantage of the decline of U.S. influence, the rise of nationalism inside Russia, and the anti-U.S. sentiment – how real is it; what does it mean, and the politics of history. There is a certain rewriting that is going on.

If the question is, what is eating Putin, then the answer is succession. Putin is using the theme of the collapse of the Soviet Union as the, quote, “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century,” as an organizing principle to shore up his legacy.

And closely related to this theme is the idea that the United States and the West constitute a threat to Russia. Now, you might have noticed that the U.S. has experienced a rather steep decline in our influence abroad, particularly our soft power, the ability to persuade and inspire. But this decline has had a hugely negative effect on the ability to promote democracy and human rights. So President Bush's speech in Prague is sort of the right message but the wrong messenger.

The Putin administration has taken advantage of this leadership gap. And they are pushing a completely different conception, one of hyper-sovereignty, and one that is essentially threatened by international human rights norms. And if U.S. soft power continues to decline over the next decade, for example, Russia together with China can

essentially set the table on human rights issues in ways that favor hyper-sovereign interpretations of international legal frameworks. And I think there are all sorts of implications for stability in the international system.

Now, I mentioned the theme of the U.S. as a threat. I have been somebody who has been pretty skeptical of people talking about the rise of xenophobia and intolerance in Russia, and I'm here to say I was wrong. There is a steady drip, drip, drip coming from the Kremlin and Russian television that is intensely anti-American, and the message is being received by Russian youth. Russia is viewed as encircled by enemies. There are specific policies, as of spring 2007, that make it illegal for non-Russians, even those that are legally registered, to sell food in markets. Anti-American sentiment is part of this larger trend.

So the *New York Times* headline today is that American youth lean left. Well, Russian youth are leaning right and far right, and they are being encouraged to do so by none other than Putin. A 2007 spring brochure from the Kremlin-friendly youth group, NASHI – I don't know how many of you have heard of this group, but it's really quite something. It's very frightening. And it addresses this younger generation. The *pokolenie Putina*, that is generation Putin. And it's filled with words such as betrayal, traitors, discussion of Georgia as an "American colony," American invaders into Russia, fascist and traitors getting ready to invade and break Russia up.

And while Kremlin authorities went back and forth about whether Putin's May 9th speech of this year actually contained comparisons of the United States to the Third Reich, this brochure and many other speeches suggest that at a minimum, the authorities are highly permissive of language that increases nationalism.

But we have our own survey data here at CSIS that suggests in fact that Russian youth have really moved quite far to the right, and it comes from a survey I co-authored of 1800 16 to 29 year olds in Russia that we just received, and we'll be looking at over the next couple of weeks. In the eyes of young Russians, the United States is enemy number one. Nearly two-thirds see the U.S. as an enemy or a rival, substantially more than see Germany, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, or even China and Iran in these terms.

So the last theme I want to touch on, which I think is relevant for the context of this meeting, is the politics of history and how President Putin is using the politics of history, or what we might call absent memory. How a country, any country, reconciles with its past, especially with episodes of gross human rights violations, shapes political and social development, yet oftentimes we don't speak about it, and certainly the way the U.S. government has gone about looking at democracy promotion and human rights, they don't speak about it either. But it's extremely important in understanding what is going on in Russia today.

Misperceptions are not surprising given the lack of critical texts that are taught in Russian schools, but the fact that there is simply no taboo surrounding the issue of Stalin, as we discovered when we surveyed in 2005 and then again this year, reveals a

tremendous gap between young people in Russia and elsewhere. A majority of young Russians in the survey believe that Stalin has done more good than bad. So there is a – I remember Ambassador Vershbow used to speak about a values gap. There is a huge wall that is separating the next generation of Russians from their counterparts in Europe. And Putin again is trying to play to this.

As long as Russians remain uneducated or mildly supportive, or even just ambivalent about a dictator who institutionalized terror, disappearances, slavery, had millions killed, they are simply unlikely to protest disappearances in parts of Russia today. So how you're reading the past has an effect on what you see today.

Absent memory, again, is not in any way unique to Russia. In the United States, we clearly can see that our democracy has become more robust when we deal with our abuses and crimes. But what we see in Russia today is a really toxic mix of nationalism and absent memory, and a disbelief that there is a shared history or serious empirical inquiry into the past. There is a weird way of having the president essentially say what history is and disregard large amounts of research. And strikingly, we see very little response from our government or other governments. And I think we're essentially letting the Putin administration rewrite history in a way that bodes very badly. I'll stop there.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Ambassador Pifer.

STEVEN PIFER: Well, thank you. Let me I guess add three observations to what Andy and Sarah have just said. The first observation is Kennebunkport represents the last real opportunity for the two presidents to try to reverse this downward slide that has characterized U.S.-Russia relations over the past several years. But having said that, expectation should be modest. It's the last opportunity in the sense that looking out between now and the March elections in Russia, there is probably only one more chance in the calendar where the two presidents will get together, and that will be on the margins of the APEC summit in the fall, which tends to be fairly time-limited.

But expectations for Kennebunkport should be modest because if you go down the list of issues that Andy outlined, you see lots of difficult issues on which there are competing interests: Kosovo, missile defense, and there really are no obvious candidates for a breakthrough issue that would impart a positive momentum to the broader relationship. My understanding is that they are getting close on a civil nuclear cooperation agreement, but I'm not sure that issue is of the magnitude to reverse this downward slide.

The second observation is that both President Bush and President Putin really are preoccupied. They go to Kennebunkport but they are preoccupied with other questions. For President Bush, it's Iraq and the whole broader Middle East situation. For President Putin, it's increasingly the question of the succession issue leading up to the elections in March of next year. And if you look back at U.S.-Russia relations, whether you look at Reagan-Gorbachev, Bush "41"-Gorbachev, Clinton-Yeltsin, it's a very, very labor-

intensive relationship. But at the level of the presidents, you have limited time, limited bandwidth, and right now that is being devoted to other questions.

This is not a new problem. Andy mentioned missed opportunities. If you go back five years ago to the May 2002 summit in Moscow, which produced the treaty on strategic offensive reductions, but also produced a very broad, positive, forward-looking agenda. Cooperation on energy, trade, graduating Russia from Jackson-Vanik, the president has established a strategic-stability working group consisting of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and their two Russian counterparts. They talked about cooperation on missile defense, exchanges – this very broad program. But what happened is on both sides, they got distracted by other questions. So there was not the devotion of sufficient time, energy, and focus to implement that agenda, and what you soon had was drift and then it was followed by a downward slide in the broader relationship.

I would second what Sarah said about sort of the perceptions in Russia. When you look at the rhetoric coming out of Moscow and coming specifically from President Putin, this sort of standing up to the United States and the West plays very well with the Russian public. So we should expect this continue, especially against the backdrop of Russian Duma elections and presidential elections over the next 10 months, and that does not create a good atmosphere for trying to change the overall direction of the relationship.

And the third observation would just be that there was one big issue on the agenda that Andy didn't mention, but it won't be discussed at Kennebunkport, unfortunately, because there won't be time, and that is the question of Russia, the West, and the former Soviet space. I don't think Russia is trying to recreate the Soviet Union, but certainly when you look at how Russia has dealt with Georgia, Moldova, Estonia, and Ukraine in the last couple of years, it's clear that Russia is insisting on a certain deference to its interests. It wants to build a sphere of influence.

And the Russians appear to regard almost really any Western engagement with that former Soviet space as somehow inimical to Russian interests. It's very much a zero-sum calculation.

Now, again, given everything else on the agenda and the fact that even though they have almost a full day; time is going to be limited for official meetings and it's unlikely that that question is going to get onto the agenda between the two presidents. And that's unfortunate because when you look at these competing interests between the United States and the West on one hand and Russia on the other hand in the former Soviet space, that seems likely to lead to additional tensions in the relationship between the U.S. and Russia and the West and Russia that is already pretty difficult. So I'll stop there.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Great. Thank you, Steve. We're going to open it up to questions. If you could please identify yourself and speak into the microphone for your questions, and we'll open it up.

Q: Jonathan Beale, BBC. Can you just tell us a bit more about missile defense, what you think will come out of the meeting, whether – I mean, I think President Bush has described it as interesting the idea of using this space in [Azerbaijan]. I think it's intriguing. Whether it's realistic...

MR. KUCHINS: It means there was a surprise.

Q: And whether this administration is prepared to put on hold the bases in Poland and the Czech Republic while they try and hash out details in this sort of working group.

MR. KUCHINS: I don't think that the administration is prepared to back down from the plans for the X-band radar in the Czech Republic as a tradeoff for using the Gabala station. Technically the radar station of Gabala is not up to the task of targeting missiles.

But – and if Mr. Putin holds to the position that is an either/or, which is kind of the way he put it initially at the G-8, that Gabala can replace the X-band radar, then the discussions won't go anywhere. If he backs off from that and is more open to kind of looking into the question a little more seriously and thinking about Gabala or whatever might happen in Azerbaijan, or be used in Azerbaijan in a complimentary way to the plans for the existing system, then they might get somewhere.

But I think there is a larger question as to what – about Mr. Putin's proposal. I mean, was this simply a political ploy to not only try to appeal to Czech and Polish publics—although Russian's appealing to the Polish public is pretty much of a stretch—but also to the older European powers, and the U.S. Congress. I mean, the timing of Putin's proposal on Gabala was not coincidentally timed very effectively for the U.S. congressional discussions about budgetary allocations for missile defense.

MS. MENDELSON: Just one thought: This is an excellent example of how Putin is taking advantage of how the Bush administration is so tied up with other issues. I think this really surprised the administration. This was something that the bureaucracy essentially burped up and then Putin took it and threw it out there, and had this other suggestion, which doesn't answer the problem that the administration wanted to address. But the Kremlin has been very nimble in its dealing with this issue, and the Bush administration is sort of like Goliath tied down. They have got so many other things going on.

MR. PIFER: I would just add, I don't think you're going to see a definitive response at Kennebunkport. I mean, what they have said is that the experts will look at this. My understanding is that the experts still really haven't had a chance to get through and do the vetting. And that is probably good because I don't think the Bush administration wants to say no. The answer is likely to be a yes, but, and the "but" may be fairly unpalatable to the Russians.

I would add a second point to what Andy said about, not only is the Garbala radar unable to do what the radar proposed for the Czech Republic will do in terms of tracking, but the missile intercept that is proposed for Poland is basically the same as those that are being deployed – are already deployed now in Alaska and California. They are designed to defend against an offensive attack in the mid-course phase. So if you take the Russian's suggestion of putting those things into Iraq, or Azerbaijan, they are actually too close to Iran and they couldn't work.

So I think that it's a proposal that is interesting, particularly after several months where the Russians have made this a big public issue. Then President Putin comes forward with his seeming concession, but I would view it also in public relation terms because in the end, when the administration has to say, yes, but, the explanation is going to be a lot more difficult than that Putin made a concession to try to find a way to resolve this issue. You'll have to get into definitions of X-band radars versus early warning radars, and quickly the public battle is going to be hard to fight.

MR. KUCHINS: Just one last thing on this. I think for Putin, it was kind of a win-win in that if he wants to simply postpone the deployment of a system or postpone decisions about deployment of a system, which would likely – he understands it is likely that a democratic administration is going to follow in 2009, which is probably not going to be as enthusiastic about missile defense as the Bush administration. So anything he can do to postpone deployment or decisions about deployment works for him.

If he is genuinely serious about talking about cooperation, then that does open up an interesting door, but I would bet on the former probably, calculation.

Q: Can I just follow up on a comment made earlier before the G-8 before pulling out of the – what is it, the CFE – sorry, terribly early in the morning for me – I mean, do you think that has gone away now or do you think that is still there?

MR. PIFER: Well, I think it's still there, and it reflects Russian frustration that the treaty hasn't been ratified. But as Washington and NATO countries will correctly argue, the understanding in 1999 was that the treaty would only be ratified and brought into force once the Russians withdrew forces from both Georgia and Moldova. And in the Moldova case, that clearly has not been fulfilled. Again, I think this is part of an effort to stir some anxieties in the West. You know, whether the Russians would actually take the step of withdrawing from either the CFE treaty or the treaty banning medium-range missiles I think is a big question because at that point, going from beyond raising this as a concern, a possible threatened action, to an actual withdrawal from either treaty, I think at that point, they have to weigh that they would begin to do real damage with their relationships with Europe.

If you look at—shifting to the medium-range missile treaty—if the Russians were to start building medium-range missiles, those missiles can't reach the United States, but they can reach all of Europe, China, and Japan, and that very much complicates their relationships with a bunch of other countries.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Deb?

Q: Why do you think the American public should be interested in this summit or following it?

MR. SCHWARTZ: Be careful, otherwise you're going to chase them all away.

MS. MENDELSON: I don't actually think the American public will be or necessarily should be. There are so many other issues before the United States right now. I think the Russian public is going to be much more interested. The Russian public is going to see President Putin who today is meeting with President Chavez in Moscow after he has just met with Lukashenko in Belarus and been to Iran. You know, this is a set up that is really sort of caustic and will show President Putin as standing up to the West. But I think, you know, for us, there are so many other issues going on. It's kind of a reminder that Russia is out there, but –

Q: So then why is Bush doing this?

MS. MENDELSON: Well, the U.S.-Russian relationship is an extremely important one and the political trajectory of Russia has been a major interest of U.S. national security, and it's not going well. So it's vital that this relationship be doctored a bit – I mean, that there be some kind of attention paid to it. There has been very little Russia policy. I don't know how many of you have noticed, but, you know, there has just not – Russia has not taken up a huge amount of time. And the relationship suffers. Plus, Putin has been really good at taking advantage of our decline.

MR. KUCHINS: Just quickly on that question: I fully agree with Sarah. First of all, Russia is one of the most important bilateral relationships that the United States has in the world. I put it at least in the top four along with China, Great Britain, Japan, and Russia is changing very, very rapidly, and it's not clear where that change is going, and that is a great concern for the president. The other thing I would add is that the Bush administration doesn't exactly have a whole lot of foreign policy successes that it can point to, and I think it seriously can—it did consider its Russia policy in the first few years quite successful, and I think that the president would like to try to retain something of that.

MR. SCHWARTZ: We'll go to Michele in the back and then Dmitri.

Q: Yeah, Michele Kelemen, NPR. I just wanted to go back to this question again because I wonder if you fear that this meeting could just sort of perpetuate this illusion of a partnership and play into Putin's anti-Western criticism. But also—and I want a broader question—the U.S. policy, basically they keep saying we agree where we can agree and we push back where we can push back. What is in the agreed category?

MS. MENDELSON: Well, it is an illusion. It's not you know, looking into his eyes and – I mean, the most regretted statement I'm sure the president ever made, other than a few other ones. He bet wrong. And quite honestly, if you had followed closely, for example, human rights issues, Chechnya, I mean, there were a lot of signs that President Putin was not the reformer that President Bush was betting on. All that said, there is – you know, for those of us who get particularly anxious about where U.S.-Russians relations are, people will be looking to the body language and the degree to which – there is some personal connection. The problem has always been whatever personal connection that is there, no one is taking advantage of it to deal with the really tough issues. They didn't do it when there seemed to have been something there, and, haven't been able to do anything now.

Your issue – your question about what is agreed on – I have been focusing a lot on terrorism and counterterrorism, and Russia has experienced very serious terrorist attacks, catastrophic terrorist attacks. The way in which they have dealt with these, it's not always clear that it has contained it. It may have bred extremism, but I think Salafi jihadists are very focused on Iraq right now. Should Iraq be settled some time in the future, their attention may turn back towards Russia. So I think it's still an issue for the Russians; it's absolutely an issue for the Americans in trying to deal with that. I mean, I think that that is one area where you would hope there would be some kind of shared understanding. It's not clear that there is, but –

MR. KUCHINS: I suppose I would be a little bit less critical of President Bush's statement about looking into his eyes. As I see it, when he met with Putin back in June of 2001, he was trying to cultivate Mr. Putin as a partner. And you can look at the response that Mr. Putin made after 9/11, and while you can't draw a direct line, Mr. Putin made the decision that Mr. Bush wanted him to make, and that was important for us in Afghanistan in being able to take out the Taliban. And that was an important period of partnership and an opportunity there.

The problem was that we got distracted by some other things. Our agenda was different. If Mr. Bush really thought that Vladimir Putin was a liberal democrat, then of course he was mistaken, but as far as Mr. Putin's desire for a constructive relationship with the United States, I don't think he's mistaken about that despite all of the rhetoric.

Now, what else have we agreed upon? Well, you know, our positions on Iran have come considerably closer over the last few years, and even though we're in very different geopolitical decisions, we're not that far apart I think. And I think the administration has actually been fairly satisfied with the cooperation they have had from the Russians on Iran for the most part, overall.

I mean, on the areas of where I think the pauses on the agenda, I mean, there does continue to be some cooperation in the area of counterterrorism and then nuclear nonproliferation. Again, there is this chance that they are getting close to conclusion of a 123 civil nuclear cooperation agreement. The Russians were helpful on North Korea in

terms of finding a way to get the money back to the North Koreans, although I think the Russian influence in North Korea is less than that of China, South Korea, or Japan.

And I agree in part on what Andy said on Iran, although I think in terms of the U.S. and Russia working together in Iran, there are certain limitations, and where we run into those limitations is that the Russians will not be prepared to go as far and as fast as the U.S. will want to go in terms of sanctions on Iran if Iran does not respond in a positive way, and that is just because the Russians have a very different set of geopolitical and economic interests in Iran. And while they don't want to see Iran become a nuclear power, they also don't want to trash those other interests which are important to them.

So I think those are the positives, but when you set them up against questions like Kosovo, missile defense, some of the differences on energy security, it seems to me that the agenda probably has more difficult issues than issues that offer ways forward for cooperation, and that is what going to make Kennebunkport a difficult meeting.

MR. SCHWARTZ: We're going to work our way around the back and then come to Dmitri. Thom.

Q: Thom Shanker with the *New York Times*. Thanks for an interesting discussion.

I want to drill a little more deeply into what you were just talking about, the link between missile defense and Iran. Putin understand that there may be a Democratic White House after this, but the Bush administration understands too that deployment is 10 years away. So if Bush is really playing for a legacy, do you see any opportunity for him to sort of push aside the argument on missile defense in order to give Putin something and move forward on Iran, which really would be a legacy issue? Have you picked up any clues that that sort of clue is in the works?

MR. PIFER: I don't think so because I do think that this administration wants to leave part of its legacy that it took real steps on missile defense. They have put concrete, they have deployed missiles in Alaska. They have done the same thing in California, and they see getting at least some concrete laid, some construction started in Poland and the Czech Republic as important to fixing a course on missile defense that they hope will then be continued after they depart. So I have seen no indication this administration is prepared to sacrifice that piece, which I think is part of the legacy that they want to leave behind.

MR. KUCHINS: I agree with Steve. I don't think that there is – I don't think that the administration is prepared to make that kind of tradeoff, and my expectation is the Russians are aware of that.

Let me make a little bit more explicit some of the linkage between these issues that I see. You know, the most intriguing thing for me about the Gabala proposal is the

fact that this is an early warning system that can pick up missiles coming from Iran and all throughout the Middle East. You know, did Mr. Putin phone up Mr. Ahmadinejad the day before and consult him about this proposal like he supposedly did with Mr. Aliyev, his ally? I don't think so, but I wouldn't expect that if we knew the answer to that question, that would help to tell us something about the proposal, but if he didn't, that does say something about his views on Iran.

Similarly, with the civilian nuclear reactor agreement, the Russians have very ambitious plans for selling more nuclear reactors around the world. They like to have 25 percent of that market, the export market. They know that they need the stamp of approval from the United States on civilian nuclear reactor cooperation to help them get those markets. And again, that runs against some of their other interests with Iran. I'll leave it at that.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Dmitri.

Q: Dmitri Sidorov of *Kommersant* and *Russian Business and Political Daily*. Two questions – first one in regard to this 123 agreement, the filling reentry agreement. Don't you think that yesterday's Lantos's resolution, the Non-Proliferation Act, actually buried any hopes for this agreement to be announced in Kennebunkport. And the second question is if you can please describe Putin's legacy?

MR. PIFER: No, I think the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement, which is – I think Andy described it as very important to the Russians. It's also important is that it would enable, for example, cooperation from Westinghouse or General Electric – wanted to work with the Russians, and that allows then incorporation of Western safety systems, which may make the Russian reactors more marketable.

The problem I think for this agreement is, is that once it's signed by the presidents – and I don't know if this will happen at Kennebunkport or at some later point – it still has to be either approved or not rejected by Congress. And I think that is going to be fairly problematic because when people are looking at this agreement, that is when concerns in Congress will emerge: are the Russians being sufficiently helpful on questions like Iran, on other global non-proliferation issues. And I think when you're looking at agreements that are seen as doing benefits for Russia in Congress in the current climate, it's going to be a tricky thing. It will require a lot of work by the White House to ensure that any agreement that they do conclude with the Russians in fact is then approved on Congress.

MS. MENDELSON: His legacy is a bit in the eye of the beholder. I think for a lot of people, Putin will be the person who shored up – let me put it this way: the last 30 years are a battle of two different kinds of networks. One is illiberal nationalists who want to see Russia, then the Soviet Union, as separate and apart from the Euro-Atlantic community, and liberal internationalists who have worked very hard to bring Russia into that community. And towards – from Gorbachev to Yeltsin, there was kind of an arch of the liberal internationalists. And then Putin has swung up the illiberal nationalists. But

the illusion is of order, following the years of chaos of Yeltsin, when in reality, there are major public institutions in Russia that function very poorly – health, police, army – we could go on. And so the degree to which the laws of gravity essentially push on the system all at once will betray how fragile the situation is.

MR. KUCHINS: Comment on those two questions quickly. I think a homerun for the summit will be the initial – the one, two, three agreement. They come to an understanding about the next round of sanctions the U.N. Security Council on Iran and they basically agree to disagree on Kosovo. That would be a pretty positive outcome of deliverables for the summit – best-case scenario.

On the legacy question, I think – you know, a lot of it – it's sort of a tale of two cities or probably the blind man and the elephant. Depending on what part of elephant you're touching or you're looking at, you have a different perspective on what is happening in Russia.

And this is where for Mr. Putin, for a lot of people, people that are in the investment community, the financial community, they see that Mr. Putin has happened to be the president while the Russian nominal dollar GDP increased by a factor of six in less than 10 years. You just look at the macroeconomic numbers that are in Russia for the last 10 years. Whether or not Mr. Putin was just lucky or if he played a more active role in generating some of this, the fact is – and this is not an illusion – that he has been the president of the Russian Federation during an extraordinary economic recovery that nobody anywhere predicted.

Now, what is – I think what is going to be more telling about his legacy is what happens to Russia in the next 10 years and whether these problems that he is leaving Russia with – and Sarah alluded to some of them – to what extent those are going to be manageable. But then for those that are looking at democracy and human rights and concern about a wide variety of –

MS. MENDELSON: Governance.

MR. KUCHINS: – governance, governance issues in the Russian Federation, you know, they are going to have a different perspective. This is one reason why our narratives – the Western narrative about Russia and the Russian narrative about Russia become so divergent. And that, you know – whether Kremlin plays upon this and points out that, look, the 1990s, you didn't really think that was a democracy in Russia; you just liked the fact that Russia was weak and we basically did everything that you wanted. You liked that. Oh, but now that we are recovering economically and we're becoming stronger again, that is what you don't like, and that is a very strong psychological dynamic that is inside the heads of those in the Kremlin and for many Russians, and it's a real problem I think for the legacy of the U.S.-Russian relationship, frankly.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Great, well, we will end it at that. Thanks so much for coming to the Center for Strategic and International Studies today.

(END)