

ENGAGEMENT IS MUCH MORE PROMISING THAN ISOLATION

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With thousands of nuclear warheads, some of the world's largest oil and natural gas reserves, territory spanning one-seventh of the globe's land mass, nearly 150 million people, and a UN Security Council veto, Russia is surely one of the countries in which developments could most directly affect the lives and liberties of Americans, citizens of other countries, and U.S. interests abroad. Research and history show Russia is not incorrigibly anti-American, nor is its population antidemocratic. Much of its international behavior is driven by domestic politics and efforts by its leadership to retain power. In this context, engagement is much more promising than isolation, even under Putin. We share joint interests in many key spheres, including trade and security, and should not let our differences (which we should express frankly) interfere. For the longer run, trade and exchanges of officials, scholars, and students are vital to shaping a positive U.S.-Russia relationship.

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