

THE U.S.–RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP ALWAYS MATTERS

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The U.S.–Russia relationship matters at this time because in the contemporary international constellation it always matters. For Russia it matters because the United States is the world’s leading power. For the United States it matters less but it matters nonetheless, because Russia is too big to dominate, too proud to ignore, and too dangerous to fight.

Now that “the reset” has yielded to “the pause,” both governments should take advantage of the time-out to inquire into and share the lessons of this latest pendulum swing in the relationship. A key problem that must be addressed this time around is the domestic political environment in each country. Not only do entrenched mindsets and powerful players work against enduring cooperation. More fundamentally, they keep policymakers in Moscow and Washington from making realistic allowances for political realities in the other place.

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