By Ariel Cohen, PhD

As President Medvedev of Russia is coming to visit Barack Obama, the Administration's spokesmen are desperately trying to convince us that the "reset" policy with the Russia has paid off. They argue that Russia and the United States have developed a real partnership, as demonstrated by the signature of the New START treaty, Russian support for the U.N.'s sanctions on Iran, and transit agreements to move troops and supplies into Afghanistan through Russian territory and air space.

Senator John Kerry (D-MA), the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, thinks that a new era of U.S.-Russian cooperation has dawned. A closer look at the bilateral relationship, however, reveals that the cost for this cooperation and its often symbolic success has been very high.

Kerry's article states that the reset initiative has produced Russian cooperation in three critical areas:

The negotiation of the New START treatyAgreement to support a new round of U.N. sanctions against IranPermission for the United States to move American supplies and troops through Russian territory to Afghanistan

However, the compromises made in the past year by the Obama Administration demonstrate that what Senator Kerry and the Administration hail as a "partnership" is in fact a one-way street full of unilateral concessions. The U.S. cannot build a lasting relationship with Russia by giving out the farm.

The concessions include severely diluting and limiting the U.S. ballistic missile defense; recognition of Russia's 'exclusive zone of interests in the post-Soviet "near abroad"; and consideration of a new security architecture in Europe. In short, Russia will be milking the reset for all its worth.

The U.S. concessions also include the so-called 123 civilian nuclear reactor agreement, which will provide Russia with $10 billion-$15 billion in new nuclear fuel reprocessing business and support for Russia's entry into the WTO.

Consider arms control. According to Senator Kerry, the New START Treaty signed on April 6, 2010, limits the number of deployed nuclear warheads. Actually, what the treaty limits are only numbers of accountable nuclear warheads, and the U.S. has to eliminate 80 warheads more than Russia. Worse yet, America will have to eliminate 150 delivery platforms (subs, bombers or silos), while Russia can add more than 130 vehicles!

What the Treaty clearly limits, both in the Preamble and Article V in the main body, is the U.S.

ability to deploy effective missile defenses to protect the homeland and its allies. When viewed together, it is clear that the treaty's Preamble, the Russian unilateral statement on missile defense, and remarks by senior Russian officials suggest an attempt by Russia to future U.S. missile defense capabilities by threatening to withdraw from the treaty should the U.S. expand its missile defense. It is hard to imagine an administration committed to getting to zero nuclear weapons risking the viability of this treaty by upsetting the Russians.

In addition to this, credible published reports indicate that there may be a secret deal to further limit U.S. ballistic missile defense. It is no wonder that Sergei Karaganov, Chairman of the Russian Council on Defense and Foreign Policy, said that "In the course of the negotiations, Russia reached almost all of the objectives it could possibly set."

Russia's support for UN sanctions has also come at a high cost. As in previous rounds, due to Russian and Chinese pressure, the sanctions are so weak that they are unlikely to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. While the Obama administration promised that this round of sanctions would be crippling, they are better described as nibbling.

The sanctions fail to impose limitations on Iran's oil trade or on financial transactions with the Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Worse yet, the sanctions have a loophole which will not prevent from Russia from fulfilling its contracts and transferring the highly sophisticated S-300 antiaircraft missiles when Moscow deems appropriate.

Before agreement to the sanctions, Moscow also prevailed in having the U.S. rescind long-standing sanctions against five of its firms who have contributed to Iran's military nuclear and missiles programs.

Finally, while Russia may have indeed allowed more U.S. and NATO traffic of late over Russian territory to reach Afghanistan, this has come at the cost of America's presence and commitments in Eurasia. It is clear that the United States, distracted by Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, and anxious to improve relations with Moscow, has downgraded its relations in Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

This has been most clear by the Obama administration's refusal to sell Georgia defense weapons, let alone offensive ones. In a letter by President Obama on the 123 civilian nuclear agreement, Obama wrote that the "situation in Georgia need no longer be considered an obstacle" to the finalization of this agreement. The Bush Administration withdrew the Agreement after the August 2008 war. Since then, Russia only retrenched in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The friend of the US, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, was given a cold shoulder by not even being allowed to hold a meeting with President Obama during the Non-proliferation Summit. Another friend of America, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, was not even invited to Washington. Russians in Kyrgyzstan have been on full display. When seen together, Russia is clearly using the "reset" to make major gains in the post-Soviet space.

At the same time, the Russian government continues to increase engagement with

terrorism-supporting rogue regimes such as Syria and Venezuela, promising them nuclear reactors, as if the Iranian experience is not enough.

The Russian elites love the "Reset" and the New START, but for the US, this is no diplomatic success. Nor this is the dawn of a new era.

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