Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Perspectives are always difficult to apply to issues of the day,

and no one wants to be discouraged, but frankness requires some

assessments that are not precisely rosy at this time. Arguably, despite

some rather terrific advancements in the democratic institutions,

the situation in Russia is worse in many different ways than

it was a decade ago, and American relations are worse in many different

ways than it was a decade ago.

Statistics speak for themselves. Today, the Russian economy is

25 percent smaller than it was in 1992. Today, fewer than 40 percent

of Russian babies are born healthy. Today, more than 10 percent

of Russian first graders suffer some form of mental retardation.

Whereas 70 percent of the Russians had a favorable view of

the United States in 1993, only 30 percent do today.

Now, there are those that always like to assess that, when things

go wrong, perhaps American foreign policy is at fault. I don’t view

it that way. I think most of the accountability is within Russia

itself, but I do believe that there is some legitimacy to some of the

critiques of American foreign policy.

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I don’t want to go to the extreme of Professor Cohen who is perhaps

considered one of America’s preeminent Russian scholars

today. He suggested that our foreign policy is an unmitigated disaster.

He said it is the worst foreign policy since Vietnam, with

consequences of more long-term end perils. That is an academic.

Many have cited the concern—and, frankly, of all of the concerns

I as an individual have—that our government has not identified

with the problems of the Russian people and more closely identified

with the new Russian ruling elite in the new Russian oligarchy,

and this is a matter of deep concern.

No one in this Congress wants to turn their back on Russia. A

lot of people want to see policies put in place that benefit the Russian

people more. But we don’t see that occurring.

I just wonder if you could look back at your time as Secretary

of State and suggest where perhaps our policy, their policy, the

intermingling of both policies may have had some difficulties; and

are there any lessons to be learned as we look forward to a new

century of relations with this seminally important country?

I appreciate that. But some of the stiffest criticism

comes from your former boss, Zbigniew Brzezinski, so I don’t want

this to be understood as a rival academic. These statistics are extraordinary,

and they are deeply tragic. And I personally believe

that the changing system itself is traumatic, and that systemic

change is at the root of part of the problem. But I will say that,

from a sheer economic perspective, it would be very, very hard to

say that we have interrelated well with this great titan of a country.