

Saving the Reset From Attack

By [Edward Lozansky](#)

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Although it is still a year to the U.S. presidential election, the fight for the White House is in full swing.

In this fight, anything goes, and the Republicans are determined to take away every chance of President Barack Obama winning. Obama has performed better in international affairs than in the economy, and the “reset” in relations with Russia is among the brightest feathers in his cap. Therefore, many Republicans believe that the reset has to be compromised at all costs, even if the United States’ own interests may suffer in consequence.

One would have thought that John Boehner, speaker of the House of Representatives, has little time to waste. Congress is fiercely debating the impending dramatic budget cuts, attempts to reduce unemployment and lessen the national debt, which is nearing \$15 trillion. The Occupy Wall Street protest movement is on the rise, and several cities have already seen serious clashes with the police.

Nonetheless, Boehner dropped his pressing agenda and went to the Heritage Foundation last

week to announce that the reset is a total failure and benefits Russia alone. I suspect that Boehner's appearance at that session was due not least to the exceedingly active Georgian lobby, whose members were spotted among the audience. The theme of "Russian aggression" against Georgia appeared not just in the Boehner's speech but in others as well.

The leitmotif of all the speeches at Heritage was that the reset is doing harm both to the economy and to U.S. security and should be discontinued.

Logic is best forgotten at this point. Every U.S. company trading with Russia — and there are hundreds of those, including some of the top companies in the Forbes 500 list — believe precisely the opposite: that the reset has been good and should be continued. They also strongly support Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization and advocate the repeal of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which they believe would both be in their corporate interests and in the interests of the country as a whole.

As for security, the fact that Russia provides transport corridors for the delivery of military and other supplies to the troops of the United States and NATO along the northern route to Afghanistan makes the reset indispensable.

It is a known fact that taking those supplies along the southern route via the territory of so-called U.S. ally Pakistan has frequently ended in transport convoys blown up and even occasionally casualties among U.S. servicemen. It is hardly a secret that, although the strikes were delivered by the Taliban, they acted with direct support from Pakistani secret services.

Or take the problem of Iran. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland, as well as other officials of the Obama administration, have said repeatedly that Russia's stand on the Iran issue was important.

Michael McFaul, nominated as the next U.S. ambassador to Russia, likewise said in no uncertain terms at a Senate hearing on Oct. 12 that the reset was based strictly on those positions that benefit the United States and that the Obama administration had never made "gifts" to Russia

So who is more concerned about U.S. interests — supporters or opponents of the reset? Opinion is divided even in the Republican Party itself. There are some who flatly refuse to sacrifice the country's interests to short-term, opportunistic political gains in the presidential race or to please foreign lobbyists trying to channel U.S. policies against Russia to suit their own interests. This applies not only to Georgian lobbyists, but oddly enough, also to Russian ones. It was no coincidence that Garry Kasparov, who was introduced as an "opposition leader," was also invited to speak at the conference. As expected, he expressed his bile against resetting relations with the autocratic Putin regime.

At the same time, however, this election-year reset bashing has been met with some resistance not only from some leading Russian experts in the United States but from Republicans as well, who agree that the reset is a constructive U.S. policy toward Russia and that it helps improve U.S. national security and benefits both economies. Let's hope these voices of support are represented in Congress so that the reset can continue to improve U.S.-Russian political and economic relations.

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