



U.S.-Russian Relations under Bush and Putin

Interviewee: A. Elizabeth Jones

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[Begin Transcription]

BEHRINGER: My name is Paul Behringer. I'm a post-doctoral fellow at the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University.

MILES: My name is Simon Miles. I'm an assistant professor at the Sanford School of Public P



German school—



But the view that we had then was a little bit of a blank slate with Putin, but out of that we developed quite an understanding at the time of the kinds of things that were—the kinds of things that he did. So, for example, he put on a big show of being very religious, which was very attractive to President Bush. He had learned to speak some English, and so a lot of the walking around outside was done in English with Putin, so the interpreters weren't there.

There was a brief meeting that included the national security advisor, so Condi Rice was in on some of it, but not a lot of it. And one of the times that I saw Condi Rice completely flummoxed—Dan Fried may have told you this story—we're all sitting there at the press conference in Slovenia, and President Bush says that he's invited Putin to visit him in Crawford. And Condi Rice happened to be sitting right in front of me in the press conference, and she audibly gasped because she had no idea—because I would've thought [00:08:00] maybe she knew and just, I was the only one that didn't know, but no.

But the interesting sort of backstory or "P.S." for that story is that, when the Russians came, it was agreed that it would be in November, et cetera. Now mind you, 9/11 had happened in the meantime, but in any case, when the Russian delegation—there were two parts of it. The Russians said, "It's great that the president has invited our president to his home in Crawford, but we can't have an official visit without it being in Washington. There has to be part of it in Washington, and he has to be received at the White House, or it will come across that he's being downgraded in some way." And as much as we tried to explain that very, very few people had been invited to Crawford, that it was a great honor to be invited to the president's personal home, the Russians didn't buy it at all. And so we said, "Okay, fine. We'll do part of the meeting in the White



House," which we did. But the other part too was when the Russian delegation, the protocol people and security people, went to Crawford with our protocol team, and they were shown the president's house and where the Putins would, what room they would have, and how big the ranch was, et cetera, et cetera, they spent an hour or two going through everything, through the place. And then the chief of protocol turned to the American chief of protocol and said, "But where's the real house?" It was way, way, way too rustic. There was no gold plate anywhere, and they couldn't believe that this was the cool place that Putin was going to be entertained at.

BEHRINGER: And did you actually get to go to Crawford as well? Were you there for that meeting?

JONES: Yes, indeed. It was quite the show. There were several things that happened. First, Mrs. Putin arrived in a sequined top. She was wearing jeans—I mean, the whole deal [00:10:00] was to wear jeans, right? She was wearing jeans and she wore a sequined top that was sequins of the American flag, which I thought was extremely kind and interesting and a little bit funny. But the other thing—a couple of things happened. One, I could see that she was over by herself. We were in the living room, and drinks were being served, and it was the Russian delegation, the American delegation. And she looked alone over there, and I could see that Mrs. Bush was looking a little nervous about the whole thing, 'cause she saw the same thing too. So I walked over to her and trying to think along the way, "Okay, what do I say to her?" and came up with something in Russian and got something



But the other fun thing that happened was I was talking with the Russian political director who was not really my counterpart, but often was my counterpart, but really was the counterpart of the undersecretary for political affairs. But in any case—and that was Marc Grossman. Marc wasn't at the meeting. I was. And so I was talking to [Georgii] Mamedov, and the two presidents were over by themselves talking. And I said to him, I was pointing to the two presidents, "What do you think about all this?"





So I, at the time of Crawford, didn't—I didn't worry about it that much, partly because I was so intensely involved in everything that happened with the Russians after 9/11 [00:16:00], so I was kind of focused on those more immediate issues. But, like I say, I didn't understand the intensity of the attitude about the ABM Treaty and sort of any treaty that particularly Cheney thought hamstrung the United States in doing anything that it wanted to do with our own arms control kinds of issues.

So the trip that I particularly remember being the ABM Treaty trip was in December. It was December of that year—I've forgotten when it was, but it was sort of mid-December. And I went with Powell on that trip to Moscow. It was the end of a different trip. But we ended up going to Moscow, Berlin, Paris, and London to formally advise the ABM Treaty partners that we were going to step out of the treaty and were giving them the six-month notice. I was in the meeting with Secretary Powell, with Putin



especially in the early years of the administration of kind of the intellectual lay of the land, so to speak? Are there people with really strong views on what to do vis-à-vis Russia, or is Russia a lesser policy issue? And of course I'm sure the advent of the wars in Afghanistan and then Iraq has some dispositive impact here, but just the intellectual landscape on Russia.

JONES: As I remember it, it was—benign might be too positive, but it wasn't negative. And it was partly because Putin was so new, and we had been able to forge good relationships with Russians in various sectors of the economy and the political life during the Yeltsin years. And so we knew Russians. We had relationships with them, and Mamedov, the political director, had been around forever, and they were well-known and Colin Powell as secretary of state was very, very well known to the Russians from his various [00:20:00] roles in the U.S. government and in the military. I went to a meeting with him once with some very senior military, retired Russian, former Soviet military generals. And they talked about the Fulda Gap and all the years that they spent looking across the borders at each other with terrible things in mind, and they laughed and drank vodka, and they had a grand old time. So it was almost collegial, let's put it that way. And the stroppiness, the severe stroppiness that we get from Putin now was not in evidence at all then.

Now, there was still kind of an anti-Soviet vibe around among the Cheney crowd, that group, but in t



lot of happy talk and a lot of meetings and a lot of, "Oh yes, yes, we're going to share this. Oh yes, yes, we're going to share that." And then they didn't. And it wasn't until we got more into the Iraq War period [00:22:00] that things started getting much more



about



not prepared to discuss any of this now, but let's form different working groups"—within this, U.S.-Russia Counterterrorism Working Group is what we renamed it—"and we will come back to you."

So one of the main arrangements, of course, was between the CIA and various of the Russian intelligence agencies. It was basically run through the Embassy, through the station. But also Frank Taylor was the director of counterterrorism at the State Department, and his counterpart was a guy named [Zamir] Kabulov, and they met very regularly. And Frank was—and often I'd participate in the meetings as well—and Frank would offer all kinds of information about what we knew about this, and what we knew about that, and what we knew about the guys in Hamburg and what we—et cetera, et cetera. And he never got anything really from Kabulov at all. But it meant that we had a [00:30:00] reason to meet. We had a lot of conversations. We had—Bush was very good about phone calls with Putin, which is a big thing for the Russians, as we now know—when, ever since Obama didn't do phone calls with Putin, [laughter] we know that was a big deal.

BEHRINGER: And I think there's been this narrative that has emerged on the Russian side that the United States didn't give enough in return for the help that the Russians gave in Afghanistan, and the picture you're presenting is very interesting: that they were not so forthcoming at first. But is there any reason that they should be disappointed about cooperation on terrorism efforts? Does that narrative have any basis in reality? Why do you think that they were supposedly disappointed in—

JONES: It's a made-up story, frankly. The one thing that they can say that they did for us, which we needed to have done, is they gave us overflight approvals to get flights into



Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan because we needed to overfly Russia. So they did do that, but otherwise they didn't do anything else. They didn't participate in any way. All of the work—I ended up doing a tremendous amount of the work of getting those approvals for use of Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan and the airport in Bishkek, and then the little one in Dushanbe as well. It was my office and my guys who negotiated all of those agreements with each of those countries, et cetera. But it was up to us to get the overflight approvals, and we did. But they gave zero—I mean zero—intel help.

And it was a little unclear why [00:32:00], because we knew that Putin was terrified of Muslims. We could see that from the way he handled Chechnya. And so we knew that there was no love lost really for the guys who had perpetrated 9/11. But that's a much newer story. They didn't say that kind of thing at the time when I was working on it, that was not one of the issues.

What they were upset about when I was working on them was NATO enlargement. That was a totally different thing. They could easily say, "we gave them overflight clearances so they could get stuff into Afghanistan, and then they turned around and enlarged NATO." I mean, okay. They could say that. But there wasn't anything that they needed that we didn't give them other than—well, let me take that back. So we did continue to put the—my lack of arms control experience is showing here—whatever it was that we wanted to put in Warsaw or in Poland, we went ahead and put in, we were talking about doing some in Azerbaijan as well. And we continued with that, and they kept saying, "No, no, no, you're surrounding Russia with that." And we kept saying, "It's to protect Russia and everybody else. It's not against you. It's to protect



everybody." But that talking point never went over very well. I used it a lot, but it never worked.

BEHRINGER: You brought up getting those agreements for overflights through Central Asia. Can you talk a little bit more about, given your experience as ambassador in Kazakhstan, the role that Central Asia plays in U.S.-Russian relations?

JONES: Ah. T



So when I say Nazarbayev picked his battles carefully, he fought back on paying reparations for the ecological damage at the space station in Karaganda. He was careful not to let the Russians have the coal mines, for instance. Things like that. Plus, Tokayev especially, as the foreign minister, worked very, very hard—this is more the Chinese, but it applies to the Russians [00:36:00] as well—to close down, or to make formal agreements on every little part of the border between Kazakhstan and China—and to a degree with Russia, but that was more settled—so that the Chinese in particular couldn't say, oh, well there seems to be some discrepancy here, so we'll just come across this border and take over part of Kazakhstan. They were very nervous about that.

But that was typical of how they all behaved. The Azeris, for example, very much wanted to do things their own way, wanted to be sure that the Russians weren't trying to tell them what to do in terms of exporting of gas. So when we proposed the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and the Russians kept saying, "No, no, no," 'cause basically they wanted to control the export of oil out of Central Asia, which they were able to control through CPC² until Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan was built. And the Azeris said, "No, we're going to go ahead. We like this. We want to be independent." And same thing with the Georgians. Georgians were a different story, though, especially when Saakashvili came in. But that was later.

BEHRINGER: Yeah. And next there's three things unfolding at once. There's the Iraq War and NATO enlargement and the color revolutions are all unfolding in the same time frame. So I guess let's take Iraq first. Were you involved in the effort to convince the Russians to support the invasion of Iraq?

² Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC).



JONES: Yes, in the following respect. The British in particular, but also the French, wanted to have a Security Council resolution that would authorize their participation in something in Iraq, because none of them was particularly convinced that Iraq was [00:38:00] a culprit. And, frankly, neither was the State Department. We all had been—I happen to have been working on Iraq and Iran almost exclusively before I took over the Europe-Eurasia portfolio when Powell came in, so I knew that the intel that we had on Iraq, on Saddam Hussein and what he had and where the weapons were and where the palaces were—that all the intel that the Bush administration was touting was all stuff that we had had two years previously. There was nothing new. And we also knew that there had been some progress by the UN inspectors. Although when poor Secretary Powell had to go to the UN to explain what we knew and had George Tenet swear on a stack of Bibles that everything that he was being given to say was accurate, it turned out it wasn't accurate, and the skepticism the State Department had about all of that was valid.

Anyway, but before all of this, Powell had been—and Bush—had been persuaded by Tony Blair that he needed a Security Council resolution, or actually a second Security Council resolution in order to attack Iraq. And so Colin Powell spent hundreds of hours on the phone with his Russian counterpart negotiating the Security Council resolution language that would permit this to happen, and they did negotiate it. And it was one of the more interesting negotiations for me to watch. I wasn't involved in the negotiation—I'd hear about every word change—but it was all Colin Powell with Igor Ivanov on the phone for that one. And, of course, as you know, that second Security Council resolution wasn't passed in the end [00:40:00] because the French didn't like it and were able to persuade the African members of the Security Council to vote against it.



France [00:42:00], ignore Germany, and forgive Russia" afterward. Can you talk a little bit about how the invasion of Iraq affected the U.S.-Russian relationship, and was it something that that your counterparts in Russia constantly brought up when you met with them? Was it a big irritation in the relationship?

JONES: It was an irritation in the relationship, but, for a period of time, the entire discussion was getting the Russian ambassador out of Baghdad and how to get his convoy safely through what was going on there at the time—I forget the timing of it exactly, because the war obviously had already started, and we had been working with the Poles there, who were our protecting power, on getting them out safely, getting others out safely. And we explained to the Russians which route they had to [00:40:00] take and what they would find along the way and gave them safe passage. And we advised all the units along the way that this convoy was going to be coming through.

Well, for whatever reason, the Russians decided to go a different way. And then, oh my God, surprise, they get caught, with some Iraqi something or other and get stuck. Luckily, they weren't killed. But it was—that's one of my main god-



negotiating to get the troops into Iraq to start with, through Turkey. That was a whole big story, but thatvbutstart with



people, Fourth of July weekend. And he had a long, detailed conversation with Shevardnadze. On the plane, on the way over, he said, "Let's come up with a better plan other than just these talking points." And we came up with a sort of—I've forgotten, it was like thirteen agreements, or—eleven items that we wanted the president and the opposition leaders to agree to in terms of how the election commission would be formed and how the election would be conducted. And Baker talked Shevie into it and then asked me to stay to talk the opposition into it—Baker had talked to the opposition, had presented it to them, and they were still fiddling around with it. So I stayed a couple of extra days and got the thing agreed. So the election happens, there are all kinds of things that go wrong. Again, I've forgotten the timings exactly, but at one point it was clear that [00:48:00] Shevie needed to go and was inclined to go, but it was a little unclear how to make it all happen.

And so Powell calls up his Russian counterpart and explains—and he'd been talking to him all along about what we're trying to get done there, actually





me or Condi Rice, if she went—I can't remember if she did, probably she did. We had lots of meetings on exactly how to have an election and how to make sure it's free and fair and all that kind of thing. So in a way it was the same kind of set of ideas as in Georgia, but the situation in Ukraine was so different, because Kuchma was so much involved with the Russians, and the Russians were—they cared a lot more about Ukraine and what happened in Ukraine than they [00:52:00] cared about what happened in Georgia, as you can imagine.

So, as the Orange Revolution developed in Kyiv, we had many more of the Europeans involved—in particular, the Poles, the EU, and one of the Baltics, I think the Lithuanians, it was—who had particularly good relationships with various of the senior Ukrainians and would go there on a fairly regular basis to talk them into behaving properly and not having the election be a complete mess, et cetera. And we, the U.S., were very involved in talking to that group—the Poles, the EU, the Lithuanians—and then it was the U.S. and Canada were not involved in the regular discussions with the Ukrainians—you know, when they had those little meetings, when they'd go to Kyiv



the U.S. would take it a little bit further than that. So that—and that went on for weeks until, finally, Kuchma left.

Kyrgyzstan was different. That happened as I was leaving, so I can't really speak to [00:54:00] what we did other than it was gonna have another color and we thought, oh God.

BEHRINGER: I mean, in—

JONES: Actually, it was the Tulip Revolution, they called it the Tulip Revolution, didn't they?

BEHRINGER: That's right. Yeah.

JONES: So not really a color, but anyway—like a flower, like rose.

BEHRINGER: That's true. So, it's interesting that in the Georgian case you had a really close involvement with the Russians in dealing with that. But in the Ukraine case, it seems like there wasn't much. What types of communications was the administration having with the Russians as this is all was going on the European—

JONES: Regular. Every time we had an event where somebody was going to make a statement, I would tell Secretary Powell about it and Dan Fried so that everybody knew, everybody was involved in how we were orchestrating it. And at various points, we would say, "Okay, Mr. Secretary, here are a couple of things that would be a very good idea for you to call your counterpart and go through: here's what we're trying to accomplish, here's what the stumbling blocks are, that this isn't meant to be anti-Russia, it's not anti-Russia, it's not anti-anything. It's pro-people making a choice." And sometimes we'd have our Pentagon colleagues call their counterparts.

There was one night when we were very worried that that the Ukrainians had ordered troops out. And the reason we thought that was that our defense attaché had







meeting." "Okay." And then we came up with the NATO-Russia Council so that there would be a more sort of robust discussion at NATO meetings that involved the Russians. And this had a reflection in the OSCE,⁴ and the minister was there as well, in terms of the way the Russians wanted to be treated, et cetera. And we kept trying to accommodate that and do it in a way that made sense.

But the small—the first enlargement of NATO had already taken place by the time I took over the Europe-Eurasia Bureau. And so the discussion was, was there going to be another expansion? And it was pretty well agreed that there would be another enlargement. But the question was, how many? And we decided, my sort of senior team said, rather than just have a theoretical discussion, let's have a set of



what they had to do to meet them, and what the timeline would be, and all of that. And that was very carefully monitored. It was carefully explained. It was carefully detailed. We briefed Congress on it because we wanted to make sure that, whatever we did decide, Congress would agree to, because they had to approve the revised treaty. So, as it came time to make the decision about was it going to be large or small, basically the decision was, it can be as large as we as we think the countries can qualify. And so it wasn't a decision to be large. It was, we will see who qualifies. And it turned out seven qualified.

MILES: So as we've talked to people, they've indicated that there were varying degrees of approbation for that, and the varying perspectives on the wisdom of that choice. What was—

JONES: The choice [01:06:00] that we'd have criteria or the choice of those seven?

MILES: Actually both. There are some people who have said, we should have just let it basically anyone, just open the door, and, within reason, we should have kind of—and then, there's some who've said, it should have been fewer and so on and so forth. So I'm wondering what your perspective on that is.

JONES: So one of the things that was very important to me was that I be able to explain to anybody who asks why it was that XYZ country was asked to join. And I wanted e470.



newspapers in Russian, Russian-language newspapers, be permitted to continue in the Baltic states, which they knew perfectly well the Baltics didn't want to do. But we said that there should not be discrimin— that minorities should not be discriminated against. In the Baltic states it was the Russians. In others it was the Roma, et cetera. So it was a criterion that wasn't just because of the Baltic states and Russia. It was a criterion that had to apply to everybody no matter who their minorities were. And plus, we thought too—and I think we were right about this—that if we had this whole set of criteria, that it was much easier to explain to the Congress why we had done what we had done. And it would be much more difficult to say, [01:08:00] “But, but, but, but, but, but—my favorite—my constituency is from Croatia, and we want Croatia in.” And I would say, you know, “Croatia didn't qualify, for the following nine reasons.”

Now, one of the criteria was that I think it was over 50 percent of the population had to want to join NATO. Well, that didn't work with a couple of countries, like Ukraine, for instance. Anyway, it's true that we got into— there were very detailed fights within this group, within the administration, a 0 1 90.024 594.17 Tm0 G[()] TJETQ] TJ595.2 841.92 reW*nl



MILES: I'm asking your opinion. Bottom line, do you think it was the right choice?

JONES: Yes.

MILES: Do you think it was a good policy to



MILES: I like your term of the Russians get over themselves. I don't know, Latvia has got 6,500 men in uniform. That's pretty [inaudible] scary.

JONES: They could not explain to me how they were going to be threatened by [01:12:00] Lithuania joining NATO. Please. Nor could they explain to me how they were going to make sure the Lithuanians kept Russian newspapers—unless it was NATO making them do it, by the way.

BEHRINGER: And you mentioned Russia promising to do all this stuff on civil service, on civil society that they didn't do. In the first administration, how much did the Bush administration push Putin on democracy and human rights issues?

JONES: We pushed them quite a bit. My idea always was that we have to decide if we actually want to get a change. Do we want to change behavior, or do we just want to make ourselves feel good? And the difference is, if you want to change behavior, you need to be quiet about it. If you want to make yourselves feel good, then you go broadcast all the mean stuff you were saying to the Russians. There's a time to do that, mind you, probably, as we've seen. But—and Colin Powell agreed with that philosophy of—not that I persuaded him to.



JONES: So Colin Powell said to him— and fortunately, our interpreter understood what he said—he said, “There’s a very big difference. I don’t think you call Khodorkovsky your friend, a close friend of yours, but the heads of Enron were all very good friends of the president of the United States, and he had to see them do the perp walk.” I thought, oh God, he’s never going to get that. But the interpreter had grown up in the Bronx, so he knew what a perp walk was, and he translated very nicely. [laughter] But yeah, that was his—you know how, in this recent interview that that they did with Putin, and the journalist said, “You’re very good at what-about-ism.” And I thought of that, exactly that comment from him: “What about the Enron people?”

BEHRINGER: And that segues nicely into Russia’s—at the same time he’s cracking down on the oligarchs, Russia is also resurging economically, price of oil spiking and everything. And first of all, it seems like that was an unforeseen occurrence, Russia’s quick resurgence there. Did anyone foresee that in the administration?

JONES: I’m not sure that—I’m not sure I can answer the question, because it would mean going back to say, did anybody ever write that that could happen? And I imagine it probably did. But the thing that was important to us as we’re working on all this stuff is that as Russia is [01:16:00] financially, economically more stable and more prosperous, we’re thinking that they’ll be more comfortable with themselves and more comfortable in the world and feel freer, feel more free to loosen up internally and let people travel and that kind of thing, which of course they then did. So my recollection is, I thought it was a good thing that that sort of anxiety, that element of anxiety was gone, that they didn’t have to worry so much about that. Now, the whole issue of the **Sale of the Century** already having happened—you know, the Chrystia Freeland book—and then what I used to say is that



the oligarchs—Putin started getting rid of the oligarchs in order to replace them with Kremlin oligarchs, i.e., his pals, and they all did the same thing. They all were still oligarchs. They were just his oligarchs instead of ones that weren't necessarily in his support group.

And the part of it that gets complicated has all happened much more recently, with the heavy-duty sanctions over Ukraine and all that kind of thing, where the Russians had to become self-sufficient, and that self-sufficiency has added a level of arrogance that we didn't have to deal with.

BEHRINGER: One of the—

JONES: On Putin's part, that we absolutely didn't—it just wasn't—that isn't what was happening at the time. We had much more conversations. I wasn't in this conversation, but Steve Pifer was, it was a very early one where there was a meeting [01:18:00] in Latin America somewhere, and I can't remember why, but Putin and Bush met there. This was after Slovakia. And there were already some things, anti-democratic things happening in Russia, and one of them was that that Putin was going to appoint the governors from now on. They could no longer be elected. And so that was—we did some talking points about, for the president to say, "That's one of the things that makes us nervous about permitting the people to make political choices. You're letting them make economic choices, but what about the political choices?" And Putin, as you know, is extremely good at taking the conversation and talking forever and then leaving no time for a response, but in this case, President Bush did respond and he said, "You know, I wish I could appoint the governors too." Geez. [laughing] Does not help get the point across very well. Oh dear. Anyway, the things that happen.



BEHRINGER: And one of the ways that Russia was becoming more assertive abroad was using its weight in the energy sector. I think I read that you were involved in talks in 2004 in Georgia to restart the construction of the BP pipeline there?

JONES: Yes.

BEHRINGER: I was wondering—

JONES: That was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan. BP was building it. Yeah.

BEHRINGER: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about those negotiations and how Russia figured into the Georgians' hesitancy, what were the issues on restarting that pipeline?

JONES: The Russians didn't figure in that at all. It wasn't the Russians that they were concerned about. They had—part of the pipeline was going through some communities that were in an uproar [01:20:00], and so Saakashvili was very nervous about that. But even more importantly, what happened was Saakashvili, when he came in, stopped the construction of the pipeline, because he assumed that it had—that it was a Shevardnadze corrupt deal, and he thought that he should stop it because it had to be done wrong. And that was a very big lesson for me, because it was clear to me that BP had not been talking to the opposition leaders or anybody in the parliament about BTC and what it was about and all of the work that had been done with it. I was involved in, as the American Caspian energy diplomacy person, that I'd been involved in getting the environmental approvals and getting the bank approvals and getting the legal approvals, but the host reW approvals and



Russia. The White House had—" Oh, God, what's the name of the American journalist who—

BEHRINGER: Dan Rather?

JONES: "The White House had Dan Rather fired," he said. And, to me, that was—I forget, President Bush handled it very well—but to me that was indicative of how badly Putin was briefed, or in what a strange way he was briefed, that that he thought these kinds of—that this is what happened, that George Bush had Dan Rather fired because he had done a bad story about his draft situation. But it was one of those—my recollection also—I wasn't in the meeting with the president and Putin, but I was in the side meetings with Secretary Powell—and the Russians were really scratchy then. We were on a downhill slide by then in terms of the relationship and the kinds of things that one could talk about.

And I mean they had a list [01:26:00] of grievances. There were some Russian sailors that were in jail in Los Angeles, and they became as important to get out as Khodorkovsky, and stuff like that. And so there was this sort of—and the Russian ambassador leaving Iraq. That's still—they wanted to bring that up every time, to the point I did one more trip after Colin Powell left, before I retired, with Condi Rice, and was in a meeting with the Russians, with her, and she just, again, just shook her head. She said, "My God, can't we get past any of this stuff?" I said, "I guess not, it's just going to be part of the routine. We've got to go through all the grievances, and then maybe we can get to the substance."

MILES: It's interesting you mentioned that



hopefully there was time left to talk about something that mattered, whether that was, as you said earlier, Putin



think that's what he's doing, even now. And he's right. There isn't a consequence, really, that affects him.

MILES: Right, yeah, that doesn't affect him in his position.

JONES: Yeah.

MILES: So Bratislava goes terribly. Steve Hadley has called it "a real low point" in the relationship. To what extent was this [01:30:00] surprising to you, that things were, at this juncture, really going quite poorly in the relationship and, if at all, to what extent maybe should it have been surprising?

JONES: I wasn't surprised, partly 'cause it was so gradual and we could see it—there was a little step all the way down. We could point each thing that went wrong. And those who, that are very sort of, didn't like the administration or were pro-Russian in some way or another, they always pointed to NATO enlargement and the ABM Treaty as the problems. And they're right. That those were the two things that really got Putin upset. And I thought the ABM Treaty was an own goal on our part. It was absolutely unnecessary. And as much as Colin Powell tried, he couldn't prevent it from happening. In the end, it didn't matter that much, but still, it was what started Putin thinking, "They're not really my friends."

And then, with NATO enlargement, he was completely convinced. Now NATO enlargement, I think—in both cases, he's looking at his—at the **nomenklatura**, he's looking at the elites who are upset with him that he isn't getting Russia back, that he's lost Russia's position in the international community with losing the ABM Treaty, that he's not a big boy at the table anymore. And that was really exacerbated under Obama for, in some ways [01:32:00], understandable reasons. On NATO enlargement, like I said



MILES: So do you think that's what emboldened Putin? I think it's the next day or it's maybe a day or two after that same summit—I just don't remember the exact timeline of this—where he basically starts floating Russian territorial claims to Crimea—

JONES: Yeah.

MILES: —where he says, “The transfer was legally iffy,” or I forgot what the pretext was.

JONES: I do too. It doesn't mean that that's connected, that he wouldn't have done it if that hadn't happened. But yeah.

MILES: Yeah. Of a piece.

JONES: So I couldn't understand it. I could not understand why the NATO-niks allowed that to happen because the NATO-niks that I worked with would have slit their wrists before they would have permitted that to happen, to go to a summit without full agreement.

MILES: So you mentioned Colin Powell would have never allowed this to happen. Of course, Condoleezza Rice is secretary of state now—not now, at this time—and one thing that's always interesting to me is that there's actually, at the very top levels of the Bush administration, there's so much—I was going to say Russia expertise—but maybe really it's Soviet Union expertise in some senses, such as Rice with her deep background in Soviet military general staff stuff, Gates too, other figures as well. I guess [01:36:00] my question is simply, do you have any thoughts on what the impact of, for example, having, while you were there, a national security advisor and then a secretary of state who had a lot of deep background in the region, command of the language, and so on and so forth?

JONES: Here's what—I know I used to, I wondered about that a lot, because when she was, when Condi Rice was national security advisor, we didn't agree with her a lot on how to deal with the Russians. And, in funny ways, it was just sort of off in my view. Sometimes it was



too harsh, sometimes it was too giving, and I finally thought, "Well, maybe if you have only academic experience with Russia, you don't actually know how to deal with these guys." And one of the things that I firmly believe is that they are bullies, and that the best way to deal with a bully is to be very direct right back and take no crap from them.

Now, I saw—I was with her in one meeting with Russians, and she handled it completely well. There was no question about it. She did a great job, without question. But, at other points, her instinct was not what I would have expected. And I think the difference was that Colin Powell had decades of dealing with these guys in— what's the right word?—on practical matters, how do we get something done? And Dr. Rice hadn't had to do that very often until she was in a very senior position in government. [01:38:00] And maybe that's the difference.

BEHRINGER: From an administration standpoint, do you feel like too much of the relationship was delegated to her rather than State—

JONES: No.

BEHRINGER: —or do you feel like that was properly arranged in the first administration? In other words, was she kind of the point person on Russia because of her experience and proximity to the president, or was that more—

JONES: She wasn't. No, Colin Powell really was, because he was the one with the relationships. Now, he was second-guessed all the time by all those guys, but he was the one who was always on the phone with Ivanov and with various of the others. Condi probably was on the phone with whoever the national security advisor was at the time, but I didn't have—it didn't come across to us that she thought she was in charge of the relationship, not at



all. And I never got that from Dan⁸ either. I was the one upfront talking to the ambassador. I was the one going to the meetings with Colin Powell. Sometimes Dan came too, but I never had the sense that she thought she was in charge of it.

Well, it was mostly because she tried very hard not to be in charge of anything. She was very careful to—I heard her say it in a National Security Council meeting, that she was the executive secretary of the National Security Council and that it was up to everybody else to agree among themselves, rather than that she was in charge of making them agree. And it was kind of a problem, actually. It was very difficult. We had some very, very, very difficult times when we had trouble getting the Pentagon and the Joint Staff to agree to something that had been agreed at a National Security Council meeting. [01:40:00] It was hard.

BEHRINGER: Unless you wanted to give more—I don't know if there was a story there that you wanted to share or not about the specific policy, but if not, I have a—

JONES: There was nothing on specific policy. There was one point—. That involved the Iraq War, when I know Colin Powell thought that we had a particular plan agreed with the White House on how to deal with a Security Council resolution to go into Iraq, and Cheney made a speech in August before then that messed up the plan, and nobody knew he was going to make the speech. And the speech involved trashing Russia too.

BEHRINGER: Oh, okay.

JONES: What's the point? Anyway. Yeah. But those things happened. Let's see.

BEHRINGER: So I have one more question and then I think Simon, I'll give Simon the last question. So I found, in 2007 interview with Charlie Rose, you mentioned that the Bush

⁸ Daniel Fried, then senior director for European and Eurasian affairs at the National Security Council.



administration, the White House in particular, could've done more to get Jackson-Vanik repealed and move forward on that issue, which was also a sticking point that seems like kind of an easy win that could have happened. But I was wondering if you could just elaborate on that a little bit. What could the White House have done to push that forward a little bit better?

JONES: Their leg affairs⁹ people could have called the Congress for us. That's all it would have taken. But then they didn't do it. It was weird.

MILES: Why?

JONES: It was for them an esoteric issue. It wasn't top of their list. They were much more involved in domestic issues. But we could not get them to [01:42:00] do this one at all. And I'm pretty sure Dan tried hard, too, Dan Fried. But that's not the first White House that's refused to call the Hill about a foreign policy matter that was important. [laughter]

MILES: So maybe just by way of wrapping up—Looking back on, not just your years in the administration, but maybe on the whole administration—and I know we've really focused in our conversation today on the events with which you have a personal connection, but feel free in answering this to expound. Don't be bounded by those years. What's the story of U.S.-Russian relations during the George W. Bush administration? Is it a story of a missed opportunities? Is it a story of squandered opportunities?—and that could be squandered by either side, just to be clear. Is this a story of self-delusion about this young, promising, new Russian leader and the ability to make common cause? Is this like a Sisyphus story of, it was just never going to work, and we broke our backs trying to make something that couldn't happen, happen? What's your big takeaway on these years?

⁹ The legislative affairs staff at the White House.



JONES: My big takeaway is that we were talking past each other much more than we understood that we were. And that just because we thought we had very good, very logical arguments ~~didn't mean~~ the Russians were going to believe 'em. And I certainly didn't appreciate that. I thought if, the more I could argue, the more I could bring them around. And part of the delusion, to a degree, was [01:44:00] these long discussions took place over nice dinners, things like that. It wasn't angry, mean conversations. But we just could not get through to them, and they couldn't get through to us that they felt threatened, even when we knew there was nothing actually threatening them.

And so, for instance, I, for one, I didn't care about the Star Wars stuff and basing some of the things in Azerbaijan and Poland, but, if we hadn't done that, w 8411 12 Tf1 0 0 1 443.45



There was nothing we could do about it. We could not change his behavior.



[END OF AUDIO/VIDEO FILE]