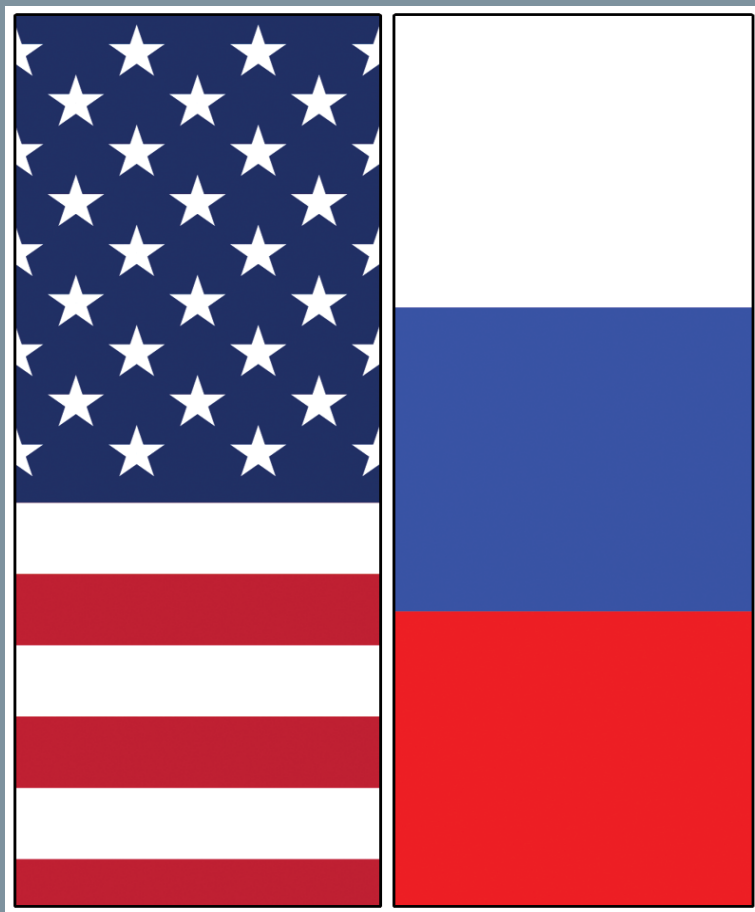


# The Policy World Meets Academia: Designing U.S. Policy toward Russia



Edited by Timothy Colton, Timothy Frye,  
and Robert Legvold

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

# The Policy World Meets Academia: Designing U.S. Policy toward Russia



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Robert Legvold

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# Introduction

Timothy Colton, Timothy Frye, and Robert Legvold

## GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

During the Cold War—and never more than in its first decades—scholars studying the Soviet Union and American policy-makers were so tightly linked that the boundaries between the two communities often blurred.<sup>1</sup> Each needed the other as they struggled to understand how the Soviet system worked, what motivated the regime’s behavior at home and abroad, and which trends were most likely to shape the country’s further evolution. For both groups, the Soviet Union stood at the center of their concerns: for some academics because the Soviet Union was, other than the United States, the key country in the international system they studied; for others because the USSR was governed by a single-party regime that was the prototype for many others; and for policy-makers because the Soviet Union dominated the U.S. foreign policy agenda. With the fall of the Soviet Union, academics and policy-makers at first were equally at sea and turned to each other for counsel. But gradually over the last decade-and-a-half, the two communities have drifted away from one another.

In part the distance between the two has grown because much of the current scholarly work on Russia and former Soviet countries addresses disciplinary rather than policy questions. At the same time, the demise of Communism has removed the puzzle that lay at the heart of Soviet studies and that gave the field unusual weight in the social sciences. But it is also because policy-makers reserve less of their attention for Russia and Eurasia, and, when they do design strategies for the region, they have a widening array of groups and institutions beyond the university to turn to for insight. In the broadest sense, academics still contribute to the marketplace of ideas relevant to public policy through their research and by educating future government officials. However, scholars devote much less time to writing about policy than in the past, while policy-makers and their staffs spend much less time reading academic work. Compounding the problem, there is a larger gap in style, methods, and topics of interest than existed before.

Some scholars have embraced the dissociation between their work and the policy process as a small price to pay for encouraging academics to look beyond short-term policy issues and to focus on fundamental questions. No one would want to return to the research priorities and politically charged debates of the Cold War years; still, academics could contribute more to de-

1. David Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

liberation over policy than they currently do, using the best tools of social science in the process. At a minimum, an opportunity to foster a more productive relationship between scholars and policy-makers is being squandered.

Unfortunately, the large and increasing distance between the academic and policy-making communities limits our collective capacity to understand complex international issues, such as U.S.-Russia relations. It diminishes the quality of debate on U.S.-Russia relations by depriving the discourse of nuanced and sophisticated analyses of both U.S. and Russian foreign policy. In addition, there is a growing dearth of scholars studying the foreign policy of Russia and the other states of Eurasia, a shortage especially pronounced in the younger generation. Academics trained after 1989 have focused primarily—almost exclusively, in fact—on the domestic and comparative politics of the former Soviet states and have paid far less attention to foreign policy and international relations. As a result, the number of academics working on security and other foreign policy issues in the region is too small to generate the knowledge base required by the policy community.

## THE AGENDA

The essays that follow are not intended simply to shed light on different aspects of U.S. policy toward Russia. They were inspired by a desire to grapple directly with the problem raised by academia's increasing distance from the policy world. Hence, we invited academics—in this case, the younger among them—to address the broad basic foreign policy tasks that policy-makers face. Their work falls into three categories: assessing the essential nature of the challenge contemporary Russia poses for U.S. policy; designing an effective U.S. response to this challenge; and dealing with the practical bureaucratic and political obstacles in the formation and implementation of U.S. policy toward Russia. The three topic areas in turn provide an organizational structure for this volume. We carefully selected eight scholars from the ranks of Russia specialists and the general field of international relations theory and asked each to take one of the three major topics. By drawing on what they saw as the insights from the discipline, they were urged to analyze an aspect of the problem in ways that would be useful to a policy-maker.

Originally, the contributors presented their work at a seminar held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on January 29, 2010, attended by leading academic figures in Russian and international relations studies. To launch the discussion, we asked three experienced policy-makers to respond to what they had read and heard. The responses from two of the three—Thomas Graham, the senior Russia advisor to President George W. Bush, and Stephen Pifer, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine and senior official in the Clinton administration—make up the other contributions to this volume. (The third policy-maker, Celeste Wallander, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in the Obama administration, spoke off the record.)

## GOALS FOR THE MEETING

The January 29 seminar had two purposes: first, we wanted to encourage a provocative and substantive discussion on issues affecting U.S.-Russia relations. From nuclear nonproliferation to energy security, from human rights to frozen conflicts near Russia's borders, the agenda facing decision-makers in Moscow and Washington is extensive and complex. The seminar took place at a pivotal moment in U.S.-Russia relations. A month before the signing of a new strategic arms-control agreement, many felt that the Obama administration's efforts to recast the U.S.-Russia relationship had slowed. Some observers were impatient because the "reset" button appeared not to have produced a meaningful change in relations with Russia; others suggested that Russian recalcitrance meant that any improvements in relations would be marginal at best. Both the academics and policy-makers weighed in on this issue, but for the most part, their essays and commentary focus on broader and longer term trends in the relationship.

The second purpose for the seminar was more novel. Beyond the substantive discussion, we also hoped to explore strategies for strengthening ties between policy-makers and academics. Identifying barriers to dialogue between the academy and policy-makers, we feel, constitutes the first step toward finding innovative ways to overcome them.

What stands in the way of a more productive relationship between the academic and policy-making communities? Several factors are often suggested, none of which would seem insuperable. They begin with the nature of academic research: many argue that the social sciences in the last two decades have become too technical, too abstract, and too insensitive to context to provide guidance on the immediate policy issues of the day. This is a sweeping accusation—almost certainly too much so—because the field is diverse. Still, it deserves thought. In the last twenty years, the social sciences have come to rely more heavily on statistical analyses of varying degrees of sophistication, which some see as one source of the increasing distance between academics and policy-makers. But economics, a more technical and abstract discipline than political science, has had far greater impact on policy-making than has political science. Policy-makers such as Ben Bernanke, current chairman of the Federal Reserve, and Lawrence Summers, current director of the National Economic Council, have strong academic credentials and have moved with relative ease between the academy and the policy-making world. Moreover, the legions of economists working at the various branches of the Federal Reserve Bank are able to use their academic knowledge to gain a voice in policy-making that has no parallel in political science. Whatever humility should be attached to the effect of academic economics on economic policy, given the failed regulatory policies that contributed to the global financial crisis, the technical nature of scholarly work has clearly not been a barrier to collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

2. For a recent effort to link economic research to policy-making, see Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).

Much contemporary academic writing in the other social sciences, including political science, however, is simply not aimed at policy-makers. Indeed, academics can be criticized for writing solely for each other's benefit. On the other hand, we dare suggest that the policy community also plays a role in walling itself off from academia by not bothering to consult research as it has grown more technical. Thus, one possible avenue of cooperation would be to find ways to distill technically framed research into more accessible formats.

Yet the problem resides not so much in the technical nature of most academic research as it does in the choice of topics—decisions largely driven by disciplinary and theoretical concerns rather than policy concerns. This problem is particularly acute for scholars early in their careers who face strong incentives to publish in general journals of political science and to devote less time to policy-related research. To advance in their fields, younger scholars not only must develop a teaching portfolio and gain regional expertise, but also must stay on top of their ever increasing disciplinary demands. Although this is less a problem for senior scholars who are more insulated from disciplinary pressures, even here the incentives within academia to devote considerable time and effort to writing about public policy are weak.

We believe, nonetheless, that it may be possible to find a middle ground between pure academic research and applied policy work. Much academic research has policy implications, but scholars rarely have the time or the incentives to spell them out in a fashion easily accessible to policy-makers. The issue then becomes how incentives might be changed to induce academics to devote more time to studying policy issues or translating their scholarship with potential policy implications into forms that speak to the policy-making community.

The natural follow-on question is how to integrate policy-relevant work produced in the universities into the policy-making process. Should scholars focus on writing about public policy issues and let others advance their ideas within the policy-making community? Is writing op-eds enough? Do scholars need to take time off from the academy and enter government in order to share their insights directly with policy-makers? Would seminars or other regular encounters between academics and policy-makers be useful? More generally, how can an infrastructure be created to enable a steady flow of information and feedback between the academic and policy-making communities?

A second reason for the widening gulf between the two worlds shifts the attention to the policy-making community. Many would argue that the nature of policy-making in Washington has curtailed the role that academics play. The proliferation of foreign-policy think tanks, the rise of interest groups with stakes in issues such as those related to U.S.-Russia relations, and the expansion of the business community as a source of information tend to elbow academics to the margins of the policy-making process. Prior to 1989, academics were the people who generated data, gathered evidence, and monopolized the research agenda. Now many nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, and business organizations not only sponsor extensive research programs, but conduct research that is policy driven and usually comes complete with policy prescriptions.

On balance, this is a healthy development. Introducing more voices into the marketplace of ideas intended to influence policy can only be welcomed. Policy-makers should by all means hear a range of views—but academic research should be an important thread in this conversation. After all, academics continue to have certain comparative advantages over other knowledge providers, such as a greater ability to conduct original research over longer periods of time and to address the overarching issues that require lengthy investigation. Academic freedom and, with it, the immunity from political pressures that other players do not always enjoy allow academics to question conventional wisdom and offer unorthodox interpretations. Moreover, the last fifteen years have given academics new opportunities to engage in fieldwork, conduct surveys, and collaborate with colleagues from the region that were largely unavailable to previous generations of scholars studying the Soviet Union. The proliferation of voices in policy-making toward Russia that has arisen since the end of the Cold War has indeed changed the relationship between academia and the policy-making community. But this shift will be unfortunate if it ends by eclipsing the academic community's contributions to sound policy.

In the end, the problem may be less the cacophony of voices seeking to influence policy than the difficulty of finding ways to gain the attention of busy policy-makers and ensuring that scholars' analytical work is easily accessible to them. How can policy-makers and their staffs engage with the most cutting-edge academic research? Should academics focus their efforts on getting the latest research into the policy debates by creating new forums for disseminating research? Or is it more productive to devise the equivalent of refresher courses to bring policy-makers and their staffs up to speed on the latest relevant research? Whatever the answer, we believe that academia and the policy-making community alike would benefit from institutional mechanisms that would increase communication and cross-pollination between the two.

All this said, in many areas the contributions of academic social science to public policy are substantial and growing: think of international finance, climate change, and poverty reduction. One hopes that the same could again be true in the realm of foreign policy, including the design of U.S. policy toward Russia and the important countries surrounding it. By focusing on this issue, raising the questions we have, and, in particular, sponsoring the essays that follow, we hope that our three institutions have modestly helped move the two worlds in this direction. In the meantime, we are heartened by Thomas Graham's post-conference reflection:

The state of the academy's influence on the policy world is not as bleak as [some pessimists] would suggest; indeed, it is not bleak at all. There is substantial positive interaction between the academic and policy worlds. At times, academics exercise the initiative in reaching out to policy-makers, during [presidential] campaigns, for example; more often, policy-makers turn to academics because they need help on

a specific issue, but they want that help on their time. Policy-makers, as we like to think, are busy people, and they want to use their time wisely. This does not mean that academics need to be brief, but it does mean that they need to be relevant to the policy-maker's concerns. The charge Secretary of State [George] Marshall gave to George Kennan as he assumed the position of first director of the Department's Policy Planning Staff some sixty years ago remains good advice today: "Avoid trivia."

# Assessing the Russian Challenge to U.S. Policy

The essays written by Alexander Cooley, Ronald Krebs, and Jeffrey Mankoff, together with commentary from Thomas Graham, assess the challenge Russia poses to U.S. policy. Rather than provide a comprehensive or broad treatment of the subject, Cooley, Krebs, and Mankoff instead focus on specific aspects of the relationship and offer a fine-grained appreciation of the task facing the policy-maker. Cooley looks at Russia's behavior within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes China and most Central Asian states. He considers in rare detail the practical implications Russian actions have for U.S. interests in this context. Krebs, an international relations theorist, moves in another direction, introducing the impact that national narratives have on foreign policy behavior. He contrasts U.S. and Russian versions of why Russia lost the Cold War, whether it remains a great power, and what the extent of its decline since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been. He argues that narrative divergences may significantly affect relations between the two countries. Mankoff turns to a particularly vexed issue in U.S.-Russia relations: Russian policy toward its new neighbors and the contentious interaction with the United States in former Soviet space. The word is then given to Thomas Graham, who brings his policy-maker's experience to the topic and shares his assessment of the potential contribution to policy-making from the three scholars' papers.

## CHAPTER 1

# Russia and the Recent Evolution of the SCO: Issues and Challenges for U.S. Policy

Alexander Cooley

The rise of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—comprised of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan—has been met with a mix of alarm and fascination in the West. Some analysts view the organization as an emerging anti-Western military bloc intent on undercutting U.S. influence in Central Asia. Others have painted a more benign portrait, arguing that the SCO's functions have expanded well beyond the security realm and that the organization is now primarily a facilitator of regional cooperation. Analysis of the SCO's purpose and scope has become a virtual cottage industry.<sup>1</sup>

The hype surrounding the SCO has not matched its still meager accomplishments. Though a number of new initiatives, projects, and functions have been announced over the past five years, few of them have been effectively implemented or come to fruition. And despite its self-styled image as a “new” type of regional organization, the SCO continues to be plagued by the perennial political concerns of its two key members, Russia and China, and their growing competition for influence in Central Asia.

This paper seeks to clarify, both analytically and empirically, the development of the SCO and to evaluate its competencies and shortcomings. Analytically, I draw from a diverse set of academic literatures on clientelism, hegemony, and regionalism to explain the various functions and challenges faced by the SCO. Empirically, I mostly draw on recent interviews that I conducted with

1. Some of the better analyses include Alyson J.K. Bailes, Pál Dunay, Pan Guang, and Mikhail Troitskiy, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” SIPRI Policy Paper 17 (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, May 2007); Geir Flikke, “Balancing Acts: Russian-Chinese Relations and Developments in the SCO and CSTO” (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2009); and Rebecca Nadin Louise, “China and the Shanghai 5/ Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 1996–2006: A Decade on a New Diplomatic Frontier,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sheffield, July 2007.



SCO-related policy-makers and analysts in China (including with the SCO Secretariat itself), Russia, and Central Asia, as well as with EU and NATO officials in Brussels.<sup>2</sup> I outline three emerging scholarly views of the SCO: as a “soft-balancer” against the West, as a promoter of authoritarian norms, and as a regional public goods provider. I then critically evaluate how well these perspectives explain the organization’s recent evolution. Next, I discuss Russia’s growing ambivalence toward the SCO and China’s growing influence in Central Asia. In the final section, I propose some principles to guide U.S. policy-makers in their formulation of a strategy toward the SCO and Russia.

## PERSPECTIVE #1: THE SCO AS AN ANTI-WESTERN SECURITY ORGANIZATION

The most alarming view of the SCO is that it is a strategic challenger to the United States and NATO military presence in Central Asia. This view gained currency in July 2005, when, at the SCO annual summit in Astana, the organization issued a communiqué declaring that U.S. military bases in Central Asia had served their initial purpose to stabilize Afghanistan and should be placed on a timetable for withdrawal. Just a few days later, the government of Uzbekistan issued an eviction notice to the U.S. Embassy, and U.S. forces were completely withdrawn from the Karshi-Khanabad facility (K2) by November 2005.<sup>3</sup> Some analysts attributed the eviction from K2 to pressure brought by Russia and China on Uzbekistan through the SCO.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the biannual joint military exercises, or “Peace Missions,” conducted by Russia and China since 2003 have also elevated concerns that the SCO is developing an advanced operational capability.<sup>5</sup>

Among academics, the SCO’s Astana statement and K2 eviction have been held up as examples of “soft-balancing” against the United States.<sup>6</sup>

2. As an Open Society Institute Fellow, I conducted field research on the SCO in Kyrgyzstan (June 2009), Moscow (September 2009), China (October 2009), and Brussels (October 2009). In addition, in July 2009 I was invited to participate as a Western academic in the 9th Annual Academic Conference on the SCO and Central Asia, organized by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

3. For analysis of the events leading up to the K2 expulsion, see Alexander Cooley, “Base Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* 84 (6) (2005): 79–92; and Alexander Cooley, “U.S. Bases and Democratization in Central Asia,” *Orbis* 52 (1) (Winter 2008): 65–90.

4. See, for example, Adam Wolfe, “The ‘Great Game’ Heats Up in Central Asia,” *Eurasianet Insight*, August 3, 2005. However, we now know that even in Astana, the declaration concerning the status of U.S. bases was proposed by Uzbekistan’s President Islam Karimov and then accepted by the other members. It did not originate from Moscow or Beijing, though Russia was keen to support the resolution.

5. See Roger N. McDermott, *The Rising Dragon: SCO Peace Mission 2007* (Washington, D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, October 2007).

6. Robert A. Pape, “Soft Balancing Against the United States,” *International Security* 30 (1) (Summer 2005): 7–45; and T. V. Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy,” *International Security* 30 (1) (Summer 2005): 46–71. For a critical response, see Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “Hard Times for Soft Balancing,” *International Security* 30 (1) (Summer 2005): 72–108.

Robert Pape, the author of the doctrine, defines soft-balancing as “actions that do not directly challenge U.S. military preponderance but that use non-military tools to delay, frustrate and undermine aggressive unilateral U.S. policies.”<sup>7</sup> The denial of base access to the United States, as happened in the K2 expulsion, is a prime example of such soft-balancing responses, as are the SCO’s periodic statements critiquing “U.S. unilateralism.”

In reality, the hostile SCO reaction to U.S. military presence in Uzbekistan was the culmination of regional concern that the West was planning more “Colored Revolutions” in Central Asia, intending to overthrow regimes under the guise of promoting democracy. The collapse of Askar Akayev’s regime in Kyrgyzstan’s “Tulip Revolution” in March 2005, following protests in the south of the country over the conduct of flawed parliamentary elections, sent shock waves across the region and marked the first regime change in Central Asia since its independence.<sup>8</sup> All SCO members strongly opposed the revolutions, albeit for slightly different reasons: Russia was convinced that these regime changes were directed against Moscow and were intended to bring pro-Western governments to power; China was concerned that such democratizing forces might spill over and destabilize its Western province of Xinjiang. Central Asian leaders, especially President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, believed they might also become targets, even though Western assistance efforts played a much less significant role in Kyrgyzstan than they had in Georgia and Ukraine. When the United States failed to back Tashkent after its heavy-handed crackdown on protestors in the eastern city of Andijon in May 2005, Karimov was convinced that realigning with Moscow and Beijing served his regime’s interest more than continuing military cooperation with the United States.<sup>9</sup>

Just a few years later, however, the regional security environment in Central Asia has changed dramatically. Whereas in 2005 Afghanistan appeared relatively stable and Central Asia seemed prone to volatile regime change, since 2008 this situation has been reversed. Instability is now mounting in Afghanistan, even in the north, while Central Asian elites have consolidated their rule, and their concern about externally sponsored regime change has eased. All SCO members now acknowledge the pressing importance of the international campaign in Afghanistan (though they are divided over how actively to support U.S. and International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] efforts), and the organization has established an SCO-Afghanistan contact group and held a number of conferences on the topic, including a March 2009 summit in Moscow that U.S. officials attended as invited observers. Since early 2009, the U.S. military has reached commercial agreements with each Central Asian state to allow the transit of military goods and supplies through their territory, establishing the so-called Northern Distribution Network for

7. Pape, “Soft Balancing Against the United States,” 10.

8. For an overview, see Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan,” *Journal of Democracy* 17 (2) (2006): 132–146.

9. Cooley, “Base Politics.”

Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Tellingly, throughout these developments, the SCO has remained silent about its renewed cooperation with the U.S. military in Central Asia.

### *Emerging Differences in Russia-China Regional Security Agendas*

Moreover, the aftermath of the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia illustrated important divergences in the Russia-China regional security agendas. Russia remains concerned about countering Western strategic efforts and influence in Central Asia. It also wants to integrate Central Asia into Russia-dominated security structures such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Beijing has no desire for the enduring presence of U.S. military bases in the region, but its primary security concern is stabilizing the region and countering separatism in the Xinjiang province.

In August 2008, the SCO's self-defined security goal—to combat the “three evils” of terrorism, separatism, and extremism—came into direct conflict with Russia's attempts to splinter Georgia and recognize the independence of the breakaway territories. Just a few days after President Dmitry Medvedev recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Russian premier headed to Dushanbe for the 2008 annual SCO summit to secure support for the Russian position. It is still unclear how much backing Moscow believed it could obtain from the SCO states, but Russian analysts and commentators suggest that Medvedev was fairly confident he could secure Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's recognition of Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence. Instead, the Central Asian states, backed by Beijing, held firm and restated their commitment to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Officials from both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also subsequently expressed concern that Moscow's “passportization” policy in Georgia—its indiscriminate distribution of passports abroad and subsequent invocation of the right to defend these citizens—could also potentially undermine the sovereign interests of the Central Asian states.

Russia's frustration with the SCO on the Georgia issue can be instructively contrasted with the organization's immediate and strong support for China in the aftermath of the July 2009 ethnic violence that erupted between Uyghurs and Han in Urumqi. Just a few days after the rioting, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs drafted a strong SCO statement that characterized the riots as “purely China's internal affair” and that supported Beijing's actions to “restore order in the region.” Within a few hours, all SCO countries signed on to the communiqué, and an official declaration was issued.<sup>11</sup> The episode's contrast

10. See Andrew Kuchins, Thomas M. Sanderson, and David A. Gordon, “The Northern Distribution Network and the Modern Silk Road” (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 2009). For a less optimistic view of the Northern Distribution Network, see Cornelius Graubner, “Implications of the Northern Distribution Network in Central Asia,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, September 1, 2009.

11. Author's interviews with Chinese analysts and SCO officials, Beijing, China, October 2009. On the declaration, see [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/11/content\\_11693625.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/11/content_11693625.htm). Also see Alexander Cooley, “Cooperation Gets Shanghai'd: China, Russia, and the SCO,” *Foreign Affairs* (online version), December 14, 2009.

with the Dushanbe summit also illustrates how China has been arguably more successful in using the SCO to promote its regional security agenda than Russia has been with its own.

## PERSPECTIVE #2: SCO AS A PROMOTER OF AUTHORITARIANISM

A second category of scholars and analysts has pointed to the ways in which the SCO promotes authoritarian practices and norms in its member states.<sup>12</sup> There is ample evidence to suggest that much of the SCO's successful cooperation does indeed undercut civil liberties and democratic practices across Central Asia. The organization's mission to combat the "three evils" has been criticized by human rights activists for being far too broad and allowing any form of political opposition to be silenced as a designated security threat.<sup>13</sup> Since 2005, the Central Asian states have adopted similar measures to restrict the activities of external NGOs and curtail domestic media freedoms. New laws restricting the Internet have been disseminated across the region, with China providing censoring software and training to the Central Asian security services under SCO cybersecurity initiatives. SCO member countries also have bundled a common list of "extremist" groups, including political dissidents, human rights champions, and NGOs, under the auspices of the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Center (RATS). Despite assurances that the RATS list of extremist organizations would be made public, the SCO has yet to do so.

Of related concern to human rights groups have been the SCO security services' numerous expulsions of political dissidents. Groups such as Human Rights Watch and the Moscow-based Civic Assistance Committee have accused the SCO of violating asylum laws, bypassing national extradition procedures, and reciprocally recognizing acts of "terrorism, separatism and extremism," regardless of national law or due process protections.<sup>14</sup> Data on the number of expulsions by security services conducted under SCO treaty jurisdiction are difficult to corroborate, but the number seems to total in the hundreds, with most suspects accused of membership in the Islamic organization Hizb ut-Tahrir or Uyghur separatist movements.

The other area in which the SCO's activities have directly challenged Western-supported democratic practices has been international election monitoring. One of the critical lessons drawn by Eurasian elites from the Colored Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine was that the activities and official procla-

12. See especially Thomas Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60 (8) (2008): 1321–1344.

13. For example, see the prepared comments by Damian Murphy, senior program manager at Freedom House, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Threatening Human Rights or Providing Regional Cooperation and Stability?" September 19, 2007, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/DMSCOtestimony.pdf>.

14. "Agreements of the SCO as the 'Legal' Basis for the Extradition of Political Refugees" (Moscow: Civic Assistance Committee, August 2008), [http://hro1.org/files/SCO\\_ENG.doc](http://hro1.org/files/SCO_ENG.doc).

mations inherent in the election-monitoring mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), a part of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, were pivotal in delegitimizing fraudulent initial election results. Starting with the March 2005 Kyrgyz Parliamentary elections, the SCO has joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in sending election observers to each national legislative and presidential election held in its member states.<sup>15</sup> Instructively, the SCO's verdict on each election has been far more positive and supportive of the incumbent government than the more critical evaluations issued by the ODIHR.

Though the SCO is not exclusively concerned with promoting authoritarianism, its many activities to strengthen ruling regimes and undercut political opposition should not be dismissed. The conceptual issue is not so much that the SCO explicitly promotes "authoritarian norms," but that it actively promotes regime stability and survival in its members in the name of security. One consequence is the conflation of external and internal security threats within SCO countries. Thus, regional militant Islamic groups are put on a par with Western human rights organizations or democracy-promoting NGOs; they are all perceived as destabilizing, and therefore threatening, transnational forces. The situation is challenging, but perhaps not irreparably so. After all, another regional organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), was once described as a regional "club for dictators" and now has gone some way toward institutionalizing more democratic values among its members. Perhaps as the promotion of Western-style democracy is recast less in terms of threatening "regime change" and more in terms of supporting selective reforms, there may be some room for the West to pressure the SCO to clarify the criteria by which individuals and organizations are classified as one of the three "evils."

### PERSPECTIVE #3: SCO AS A REGIONAL PUBLIC GOODS PROVIDER

A final analytic perspective looks beyond the security functions of the SCO to consider the organization as a facilitator of regional integration in Central Asia and provider of scarce "public goods," such as project finance, infrastructure development, telecommunications, and energy projects. Starting around 2006, a number of European-based commentators began to present the SCO as an organization primarily interested in fostering regional cooperation and integration in Central Asia.<sup>16</sup> According to these commentators, such integration

15. For an overview of the origins and dynamics of these "counter-election monitors," see Rick Fawn, "Battle over the Box: International Election Observation Missions, Political Competition and Retrenchment in the Post-Soviet Space," *International Affairs* 82 (6) (2006): 1133–1153.

16. For representative examples, see Oksana Antonenko, "The EU Should Not Ignore the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation," Centre for European Reform Policy Brief, May 2007, [http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/policybrief\\_sco\\_web\\_11may07.pdf](http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/policybrief_sco_web_11may07.pdf); Alyson J.K. Bailes, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Europe," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5 (3) (2007): 13–18; and Marcel de Haas, "Central Asia's Waking Giant," *The Guardian*, January 5, 2009.

not only deserved to be supported by the EU as part of its emerging Central Asia strategy (officially adopted under the German presidency in 2007), but also implied that the EU and West European governments should immediately engage the SCO as a multilateral partner in order to avoid “being left behind” or shut out of multilateral planning of the region’s development.

Such views are part of an emerging (incorrect) impression that the SCO has become a leading economic actor in Central Asia and that it facilitates cooperation in regional trade, development, and investment. Certainly, China has consistently tried to promote the organization as an economic vehicle. In 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao publicly proposed that the SCO should potentially expand into a free-trade zone. In 2006, the SCO established the Business Council and an Interbank Association to coordinate regional investment among the member countries’ national development banks. Some commentators point to a list of 135 alleged “SCO projects” that the Council supervises as evidence of the SCO’s ambitious regional economic agenda.

In practice, however, the organization’s economic initiatives independently have yielded few results. All the projects on the Business Council list were preexisting bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including the flagship trans-Central Asian highway projects that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched in the 1990s through its Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation program. Indeed, the original ADB program was started with seed money from Japan (supplemented by the EU) and is now being directed to suit Chinese interests and infrastructural development. Almost all the SCO’s realized projects are Chinese bilateral initiatives that are given the SCO’s multilateral stamp of approval. And Russia is increasingly alarmed at China’s assertive attempts to expand the SCO’s economic functions; neither it nor the Central Asian states, which are also concerned about China’s potential to overrun the area economically, will accept a free-trade zone in the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, the one public goods function that Moscow has pushed (so far unsuccessfully) is the SCO’s potential to become an “energy club” that could rationalize and coordinate energy distribution and pipeline projects within Central Asia. Not only has Beijing remained lukewarm to this idea, but in 2009 it aggressively pursued and concluded major new bilateral energy agreements with Central Asian countries, offering investments and cash infusions in exchange for shares in prime energy assets. In April 2009, China announced a \$10 billion package for Kazakhstan that included a \$5 billion investment in its state-owned oil company, KazMunaiGas. China now reportedly owns at least 27 percent of Kazakh oil production, a remarkable number given its exclusion from the major international consortia in Tengiz and Kashagan. Most dramatically, in December 2009 China concluded initial construction of its trans-Central Asia gas pipeline, which extends from the gas fields of eastern Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan toward Xinjiang. The pipeline’s initial 13 billion cubic meters (bcm) annual capacity is expected to triple to 40 bcm by the end of 2012. Remarkably, within a few years Turkmenistan may export more gas to China than it does to Russia.



*Central Asia's Weak State Institutions as a Barrier to Regional Integration*

A second factor that has undermined the SCO's role as a regional public goods provider has been the weak and patrimonial institutions of the Central Asian states themselves. Political scientist Kathleen Collins has argued that the patrimonial structure of Central Asian states prevents them from implementing agreements to deepen regional economic integration.<sup>17</sup> According to Collins, every major regional initiative designed to foster economic integration in Central Asia has failed because key state-run economic positions and assets serve as political rewards to political clients of the ruling families. Introducing true market competition in these spheres would undercut the entire system of graft and clientelism that underpins Central Asia's systems of patron-client rule.

Collins's argument can be expanded when one considers the cases of the most lucrative state-controlled assets: for example, electricity sectors in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and telecommunications in Kazakhstan. These sectors are actually controlled by prominent members of the ruling family themselves, not just their political clients. In turn, these assets are managed in a predatory fashion, providing sources of private revenue to ruling families under the guise of state activity. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that these controlling partners would ever agree to implement a plan for regional cooperation that would transfer control of these private rent-seeking assets to another country, such as China or Russia.

Finally, the weakness and acute governance problems in the Central Asian states also undercut the capacity of these bureaucracies to implement and regulate regional integration agreements. For example, consider all the institutional and legal arrangements that underpin the EU's internal market or NAFTA.<sup>18</sup> The former has been governed mostly *ex post* by an array of supranational bodies, regulators, and standards-setting agencies that carefully monitor the legal and technical requirements necessary for operating a common market. In the case of NAFTA, most regulations are painstakingly specified *ex ante* in the thousands of pages of the original agreement, so actual arbitration and dispute resolution have been kept to a relative minimum. But the important analytical point is that each of these two different models of regional integration—the EU's *ex post* institutional regulation and NAFTA's *ex ante* complete contractual specifications—require a high degree of state capacity, bureaucratic expertise, and clearly specified chains of delegation within states. The contrast between these models and the SCO, in which periodic declarations of friendship and cooperation frequently lack bureaucratic follow-up, could

17. Kathleen Collins, "Economic and Security Regionalism among Patrimonial Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 (2) (2009): 249–281. On the recurring inability of Central Asian states to implement regional cooperation, also see Roy Alison, "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 27 (2) (2008): 185–202.

18. See Alexander Cooley and Hendrik Spruyt, *Contracting States: Sovereign Transfers in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), chap. 5.

not be greater. As one of the SCO national coordinators pointed out, there is simply no mechanism by which SCO countries are expected to keep their commitments in various sectors.

## RUSSIA'S REGIONAL INTERESTS AND GROWING AMBIVALENCE TOWARD THE SCO

The three analytical perspectives on the SCO—as anti-West balancer, authoritarian norms promoter, and regional public goods provider—also allow us to understand better Russia's evolving attitude toward the organization. In practice, Russia has supported the first two perspectives, whereas it has been significantly less supportive of the organization's public goods and economic initiatives.

Moscow has strongly supported SCO initiatives to counter Western political influence and support for democratization. In turn, President Putin's mantra of promoting "sovereign democracy" was broadly supported by all the Central Asian members, as were Russia's efforts to weaken the election-monitoring activities of the ODIHR. Similarly, Russia's techniques to restrict the activities of Western democracy and human rights NGOs have been emulated by the Central Asian states, while the Kremlin has emphasized to the Central Asian regimes that it unequivocally backs them and considers democratization in the region a potential security challenge.

In the security realm, Russia has tried to harness the potential geopolitical weight of the SCO to counter the spread of Western influence in Central Asia. Though Russian President Putin did not initiate the Astana declaration, he enthusiastically supported Karimov's proposal and statement. And in February 2009, all accounts indicate that Moscow was intimately involved in Kyrgyz President Bakiyev's dramatic announcement that his government was closing down the Manas air base to U.S. forces.<sup>19</sup>

However, since the drama of Astana, the SCO has not advanced an aggressively anti-Western agenda. Not only have differences emerged in the regional security priorities of China and Russia, but as Bobo Lo of the Centre for European Reform has detailed, the bilateral relationship is prone to as much strategic competition and mutual distrust as it is to collaboration.<sup>20</sup> In the realm of Central Asia, this competition is now clearly intensifying.

Tellingly, since Medvedev's rebuke at the SCO summit in Dushanbe in August 2008, Russian officials have asserted that the CSTO, not the SCO, should be the preferred institutional vehicle for dealing with regional security

19. See Shairbek Juraev, "The Logic of Kyrgyzstan's Base Policy," PONARS Eurasia (Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia) Policy Memo 72, September 2009.

20. Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008). In his review of Lo's book, Princeton University's Stephen Kotkin, a professor of history and international affairs, goes even further, referring to Russia as China's "junior partner" in an increasingly imbalanced relationship. See Kotkin, "The Unbalanced Triangle: What China-Russia Relations Mean for the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 88 (5) (2009).



issues. For example, on Afghanistan, Moscow maintains that the CSTO has the experience and capacity to be more actively consulted by NATO and the United States. SCO officials themselves admit that the organization's members have yet to develop a consensus about its potential role in Afghanistan beyond the often-discussed issue of narcotics trafficking.<sup>21</sup>

In public, Chinese officials are very careful to minimize any potential rivalry with Moscow over Central Asia and tend to acknowledge Russia's "special interest" in the region. Yet it is also clear that Beijing has no intention of mediating or slowing its efforts to expand its Central Asian influence under SCO auspices because of Russian concerns. For example, China has initiated a number of training and exchange programs for Central Asian customs officials and is now deepening its security cooperation with each of the Central Asian states. Chinese policy planners have also stated that the SCO should develop a more formal technical assistance arm, modeled on USAID, to assist the Central Asian states in the implementation of SCO policy. In terms of its potential regional scope, most Chinese SCO analysts and planners view the organization's natural Western boundary as the Caucasus and Caspian Sea, with the energy fields of Azerbaijan as the ultimate target for the expansion of Chinese influence.

If Moscow has become increasingly concerned that it can no longer leverage the SCO to counter the West, it is also alarmed at the extent to which China is using the organization to promote its economic interests. In response, over the last two years Moscow has pushed the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) forum, which includes the Central Asian countries but not China, as its preferred instrument to increase regional economic cooperation. Though Russia cannot halt large Chinese initiatives to develop regional infrastructure, it does see the potential to use its voice in the SCO to limit the projects designed to connect Central Asia with South Asia.

But Russia clearly no longer has the capacity to monopolize the economic interactions of the region, with China now adopting country-specific strategies toward each of the Central Asian countries.<sup>22</sup> For example, Beijing views Kazakhstan as a supplier of energy and a significant market for cheap consumer goods, whereas it sees Kyrgyzstan as a "transit state" through which it can take advantage of a more liberal trading regime to then reexport its goods to the rest of the region.<sup>23</sup> Tajikistan is viewed as a supplier of electricity for the energy-intensive industry being developed in Xinjiang, and Chinese companies are investing billions to lay down power transmissions lines and improve Tajikistan's infrastructure.

The financial crisis that started in Fall 2008 magnified the regional economic imbalance between Beijing and Moscow. Moscow's opposition to the

21. Author's interview with SCO Secretariat, Beijing, China, October 2009.

22. Alexander Cooley, "Behind the Central Asian Curtain: The Limits of Russia's Resurgence," *Current History* 108 (720) (2009): 325–332.

23. Kyrgyz analysts estimate that more than 90 percent of Kyrgyz imports from China are subsequently reexported to other Central Asian countries.

SCO's economic functions was illustrated over the course of 2009 by its reaction to Beijing's proposal for an "anti-crisis" stabilization fund.<sup>24</sup> Beginning in October 2008, China proposed to establish an SCO fund for investing in Central Asian infrastructure during the economic downturn. Moscow refused the request and then proceeded to draft its own anti-crisis financial packages for CIS members Belarus and Kyrgyzstan under EurAsEC auspices. At the June 2009 SCO summit in Yekaterinburg, Chinese officials once again proposed to establish a \$10 billion SCO fund and suggested that Russia and China each contribute \$5 billion in order to retain joint control of its projects. Moscow once again refused, citing a legal barrier that prevents Moscow from contributing to multilateral organizations without explicit Duma approval; China went ahead and unilaterally announced that it would fund the entire \$10 billion on its own. It is still unclear what, if any, political concessions Moscow extracted from either Belarus or Kyrgyzstan in exchange for its financial packages. After all, Kyrgyzstan renegotiated a basing accord with the United States to create the "Manas Transit Center" in Spring 2009, while Belarus has steadfastly refused to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, despite considerable pressure from Moscow to do so.

In sum, Russia has grown increasingly frustrated with its inability to control the SCO's security and economic agenda. The aftermath of the war in Georgia and the financial crisis have emphasized to Moscow that China's regional interests are not as strategically aligned as they were during the Colored Revolutions, when both regional powers feared Western-backed regime change and instability in the region. And China's aggressive economic moves in Central Asia, especially in the energy sector, have underscored the growing gap in the economic potential between the countries.

## TOWARD DEVELOPING AN SCO STRATEGY FOR THE UNITED STATES

Given Moscow's current ambivalence toward the SCO, how should the United States think about crafting its potential strategy toward the organization? Three points seem especially relevant.

First, policy-makers should view the SCO primarily as a Chinese-controlled vehicle designed to advance Beijing's influence and interests in the region. Beijing would certainly like to implement more projects in consultation with Moscow, but it is prepared to move its regional agenda forward and build Central Asian partnerships through the SCO even with waning Russian enthusiasm. Therefore, support for certain SCO initiatives is consistent with the stated U.S. policy of strengthening the sovereignty and independence of the Central Asian states.

24. This episode was discussed at the 9th Annual SCO Conference in Shanghai in July 2009 and confirmed by SCO officials to the author in October 2009.

Second, policy-makers should acknowledge that even though the SCO is not an anti-Western military bloc, it still engages in a number of activities that serve neither United States interests nor values in the region. Encouraging the public goods agenda of the SCO would certainly continue to undermine Russian regional influence, but it would also erode the existing authority and influence of Western-controlled international organizations and NGOs operating in the region. For example, neither the World Bank nor the International Monetary Fund can seriously compete with the \$10 billion anti-crisis fund established by Beijing. Accordingly, China's policies in Central Asia may come to resemble its current role in Africa, where some countries now view China as an appealing alternative source of investment and patronage to the West. As with its dealings in Africa, Beijing is positioning itself as the respectful partner that, in contrast to the West and its persistent demands for political and economic reforms, does not meddle in the internal sovereign affairs of the Central Asian states.

Third, given this wide range of U.S. regional objectives and extensive set of SCO functions and activities, U.S. officials should recognize that developing an effective SCO policy will require formulating nuanced trade-offs regarding what it wants from the organization. U.S. officials should be prepared to support certain SCO activities and voice their concern about others. Moreover, policy-makers should recognize that such an initial period of engagement is potentially when U.S. leverage over the SCO will be at its maximum. SCO planners are growing increasingly desperate to secure external recognition and engagement and might be willing to compromise on certain elements of the SCO agenda in order to secure more robust external contacts.

## CHAPTER 2

# Living in Alternate Universes: Divergent Narratives and the Challenge of U.S.-Russia Relations since the Cold War

Ronald R. Krebs

International relations theory provides several lenses through which to view the post-Cold War U.S.-Russia relationship. Realists focus on Russia's absolute and relative decline, republican liberals on its flirtation with and subsequent retreat from democracy, and commercial liberals on its integration into the global trading and financial system. What these theoretical viewpoints overlook is the importance of identity and narrative to foreign policy. The difficulties in U.S.-Russia relations are compounded by conflicting American and Russian narratives of why Russia lost the Cold War, whether it is still a great power, and most important, whether its decline is irreversible.

In this essay, I introduce a narrative perspective on international politics; offer some observations about the content of the inconsistent narratives that underpin U.S. and Russian foreign policy; suggest which conditions contribute to the emergence and maintenance of divergent narratives in the context of power transitions; and trace the implications for future U.S. foreign policy.

### NARRATIVE, POWER, AND FOREIGN POLICY

The core realist insight into international politics, that the distribution of material power and changes in that distribution drive foreign policy, is a powerful one. In his classic *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, E. H. Carr famously warned that the problem of effecting "peaceful change" lay at the center of international theory.<sup>1</sup> Scholars of international relations have long argued that both declin-

1. E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1951), 208–209.

ing dominant powers and rising challengers are often destabilizing forces on the global stage. The former might launch a preventive war to forestall the challenger from assuming its rightful place in the international hierarchy; the latter might (if for reasons that are hard to fathom) initiate war prematurely, before the distribution of power was clearly in its favor.<sup>2</sup> Realist writing on such “power transitions” tends to focus on cases in which the distribution of power actually shifted: Wilhelmine Germany overtaking Britain, imperial Russia overtaking Germany (in some dimensions), and the United States overtaking all other major powers.

From a realist perspective, post–Cold War Russia is less disconcerting than the cases usually studied. It is a failed challenger, a state that declined before it surpassed its target and whose prospects for renewal and restoration to great power status seem meager.<sup>3</sup> The dangers are correspondingly less severe. If Russia’s retreat to regional power from erstwhile great power is mismanaged, some unnecessary tension might result, but realists would not generally expect an abiding threat to international stability. On the one hand, Russia’s influence on the international stage cannot exceed its shrinking material power base. On the other hand, the United States cannot exert its will without constraint, given Russia’s substantial nuclear forces and wealth in natural resources. Both Russia and the United States must respect the limits of their power or bear the consequences.<sup>4</sup>

Many realist critics of post–Cold War U.S. policy toward Russia view that policy—specifically NATO expansion and support for Kosovar autonomy—as too provocative. But, despite realists’ pessimism about the competitive nature of international politics, their accounts also have a more optimistic edge: states, realists presume, generally perceive the distribution of power accurately and are compelled, at least over time, to play the game of international politics within that distribution’s limits.

But the traditional approach to power transitions understates the problems associated with managing a failed challenger’s decline. Those problems arise from the fact that leaders and elites in different states do not necessarily narrate—that is, tell the story of—their nations’ respective rises and declines in the same way. This observation goes beyond the insight that cognitive and motivational biases shape actors’ perceptions of the distribution of power, as even some realists have argued.<sup>5</sup> If a state fails to acknowledge its own decline,

2. Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

3. One might debate the latter point, but I am not aware of many analysts, realist in orientation or otherwise, who argue that Russia’s prospects are bright.

4. See Sherman Garnett, “Russia’s Illusory Ambitions,” *Foreign Affairs* 76 (2) (1997): 61–76; Michael McFaul, “Getting Russia Right,” *Foreign Policy* (117) (1999–2000): 58–73. On the constraints imposed by Russian regionalism, see Sam Nunn and Adam N. Stulberg, “The Many Faces of Modern Russia,” *Foreign Affairs* 79 (2) (2000): 45–62.

5. William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

does not see that decline as enduring, or attributes it to treacherous forces at home or abroad, the state has no reason to accept without contest its consignment to secondary status. In fact, it may promote just the opposite, especially if the state is aware that others narrate its past, present, and future in terms of a permanent decline. It may seek opportunities to demonstrate its continued relevance beyond its borders. It may be unusually sensitive to its exclusion from various forums, interpreting such exclusion as a slight, and it may undermine international collaboration to prove its exclusion to be in error. A state whose future is dim may fatalistically accept international cooperation that disproportionately benefits others in the short run, as long as it makes some gains. But a state convinced that renewal is possible may be more sensitive to unbalanced or relative gains, and international cooperation may suffer.

Put differently, how states react to their own decline (and for that matter their own rise) and how they interact with other states depends on how they tell their story: how they narrate what has happened, what is happening, and what is likely to happen. More than just creatures with a lust for power, in the classical realist idiom of the international relations theorist Hans Morgenthau, human beings are creatures with a lust for meaning. Scientists have documented how little the human mind tolerates disorder and how readily it imposes an interpretive framework on disparate pieces of data. Narratives are crucial in this process of imposing order on disordered experience.<sup>6</sup> To the extent that a narrative is accepted, events seem meaningful, no longer random. As meaning-making creatures, then, human beings are narrative-composing creatures—*homo narrans*, as one scholar puts it.<sup>7</sup> Through narratives, human beings define reality and link thought to action. Narrative is the vehicle through which we formulate and articulate stories about self and other (identity) and about what self and other want (interest). In the absence of narrative, neither identity nor interest can be formulated, and thus political action is not possible.<sup>8</sup> This notion is not merely an abstruse scholarly insight. Commentator David Brooks

6. On the human need for order and stability, see Jennifer Mitzen, “Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12 (3) (2006): 341–370.

7. Walter R. Fisher, “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm,” *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984): 1–22. On man as a “story-telling animal,” see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 201.

8. Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden’s Intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 3. On narrative and identity, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 136; Janice Bially Mattern, *Ordering International Politics: Identity, Crisis, and Representational Force* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 12; Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the ‘Peuple Québécois,’” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (2) (1987): 133–150. The observation that the construction of the self hinges on narration goes back at least to George Herbert Mead’s “Self as Social Object,” in *Mind, Self, and Society*, ed. George Herbert Mead (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934). On the nature of narrative, see Celeste M. Condit, “The Functions of Epideictic: The Boston Massacre Orations as Exemplar,” *Communication Quarterly* 33 (4) (1985): 284–299; Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe, “Narrative in Political Science,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 1 (1998): 315–331.

wrote not long ago in *The New York Times* that “unlike other animals, people do have a drive to seek coherence and meaning. We have a need to tell ourselves stories that explain it all. We use these stories to supply the metaphysics, without which life seems pointless and empty.”<sup>9</sup> Narrative does not stand opposed to reason; rather, it makes rational deliberation possible. Policy alternatives must be embedded in, and justified with regard to, larger narrative constructs. Indeed, psychologists have found that narrative structures underpin decision-making.<sup>10</sup>

Narratives would not be interesting if they simply reflected actors’ material power positions or flowed directly out of events. What makes narratives interesting is that neither international events nor material resources speak for themselves, that these stories often become the object of political contestation, and that these stories subsequently take on a life of their own. Multiple narratives may be fitted to observed events, and much of politics revolves around disputed meaning, over how to define a shared reality. Narratives are powerful because they structure, without determining, legitimate political contest. These story lines constitute the boundaries of what can or cannot be said or challenged; they define the zones of unquestioned agreement. Dominant narratives do not shut down political competition, they channel it. Narratives limit the policy stances that can be publicly justified and sustained (or legitimated) and thus the policies that can be pursued. Power is at work in successful efforts to dominate public narrative. This power is more subtle than the accumulation of wealth and military matériel or the exercise of naked coercion, but it is no less consequential, and perhaps more so. Narratives are a form of linguistic power that “define[s] what kinds of social beings actors are” and thereby affects the distribution of capabilities, actor identities, and their visions of the possible.<sup>11</sup>

This observation is as true of the international arena as it is of the domestic. Realists expect nations’ narratives on international affairs to converge. Realist pronouncements that states must obey the imperatives of the international system, or be punished for ignoring or misreading them, imply that there can be only one *real* story line consistent with the objective features of the international situation and that reasonable observers would agree on that story line. Social constructivists, however, are open to the possibility, even the probability, that nations’ narratives might diverge, and not just momentarily or episodically. From this perspective, both cross-national narrative convergence and divergence call for explanation; whether nations’ dominant narratives converge or diverge has real consequences for their interactions. This essay thus examines the following questions: How have Americans and Russians narrated the

9. David Brooks, “The Rush to Therapy,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 2009. See also George Lakoff, *The Political Mind* (New York: Viking, 2008).

10. Michael Calvin McGee and John S. Nelson, “Narrative Reason in Public Argument,” *Journal of Communication* 35 (4) (1985): 139–155; Theodore R. Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

11. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” *International Organization* 59 (1) (2005): 52–53.



end of the Cold War and their nations' subsequent roles in the drama of international affairs? How do they narrate their respective futures? Why have their national narratives converged or diverged, and with what consequences?

## NARRATIVE DIVERGENCE AND U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Since 1992, Russians and Americans have articulated rather different narratives about the Cold War's end, the post-Cold War structure of international politics, and Russia's future. For Americans, the end of the Cold War signified a clear victory for American power and principles. Among U.S. decision-makers, there was little dissent from Francis Fukuyama's triumphalist (if wistful) commentary on how liberalism and democracy had emerged from the Cold War without ideological competitors.<sup>12</sup> Those who bristled at the tone of the Bush administration's 2002 *National Security Strategy*, whose opening sentence declared that "the great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise," would do well to remember that Clinton's national security adviser, Anthony Lake, delivered a much-publicized 1993 address proclaiming the "victory of freedom" and his confidence that "the idea of freedom has universal appeal."<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, while Americans debated how their country should relate to the world in the 1990s, and while projections varied dramatically about how soon new competitors would arise, there was little disagreement that America stood alone after the Cold War, bestriding the world as few had done before. The world was "unipolar"; America was the reigning "hegemon." As Lake put it in 1993, "[W]e are [this era's] dominant power. Those who say otherwise sell America short." Soon, few said otherwise. Fears of a challenge to U.S. primacy from Japan had abated, as the Japanese economy remained mired in the doldrums. With Japan no longer a likely "peer competitor," analysts looked to China, but while its rise was unmistakable, many forecast U.S. dominance for the foreseeable future.<sup>14</sup> Some, including U.S. foreign policy expert Strobe Talbott, feared a revanchist Russia and cautioned against prodding the bear as

12. Implicit agreement with Fukuyama held even as U.S. officials shied away from his unfortunate phrase, "the end of history," as did Anthony Lake in the 1993 speech cited below. This was also true even among those on the left and the right who, for different reasons, believed Cold War competition could have been avoided if the United States had pursued a different policy (whether more conciliatory or more hard-nosed) early on. Even intellectual critics who assailed the "errors of endism" questioned Fukuyama's presumption of the *permanence* of liberalism's triumph, not the *fact* of that triumph.

13. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nssintro.html>; <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lakedoc.html>.

14. Fareed Zakaria, "China: Appear . . . Or Contain?" *The New York Times Magazine*, February 18, 1996; Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy," *International Security* 25 (4) (2001): 5–40; William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24 (2) (1999): 5–41.



it nursed its wounds.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, through the first years of the Clinton administration, officials tended to acknowledge Russia as a fellow great power. But as the 1990s wore on, “American supremacy in global affairs only grew larger and Russia’s status as a major power dropped precipitously.”<sup>16</sup> Russia was more often seen by American elites as a source of economic opportunity or a nation of political instability and corruption than as a present and future competitor.<sup>17</sup> The Clinton administration’s dismissal of Russian concerns over NATO enlargement (and then again over NATO’s air war over Kosovo) captures the dominant attitude that emerged in the 1990s toward the United States’ former Cold War rival.<sup>18</sup> Russia’s sensitivities mattered less to U.S. policy than either domestic politics or the post–Cold War quest for a grand strategy. The limited extent to which U.S. administration officials took Russia’s concerns into account was driven by fears that NATO expansion would undermine Russia’s democratic transition and doom Boris Yeltsin’s leadership, not because Russia was a player on the global stage whose power and prestige required that its objections be heeded.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the Russian post–Cold War narrative, I offer here only preliminary impressions. My sense is that the dominant narrative has shifted over time. In the immediate wake of the Soviet Union’s dissolution, some Russians reproduced the American narrative. They embraced the discourse of free-market capitalism, democracy, and, at least implicitly, Western triumph. They also accepted Russia’s subordinate role. But there were powerful voices of dissent, both nationalist and communist, that did not acquiesce to the narrative of liberalism’s triumph. Some dissenters blamed reformers for having hastened the Soviet Union’s downfall. Others refused to accept Russia’s permanent consignment to second-rank status on the international stage.

By the end of the 1990s, and coinciding with Vladimir Putin’s ascent, nationalist dissent had become dominant. This did not entail a rejection of the discourse of democracy and the free market or promise a return to a Soviet political-economic model. Rather, the narrative offered by Putin and his successor, Dmitry Medvedev, is characterized by a discontinuity between the democratic and modernizing present and the stultified Soviet past. They have blamed the Soviet Union’s “closed society and totalitarian political regime”

15. After his 1995 conversion to support of NATO enlargement, however, Strobe Talbott cited the prospect of Russian revanchism as a reason *for*, not against, enlargement. See James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 36–37, 93–95.

16. James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 15, 359–361, quote at 3.

17. See, among others, Robert Legvold, “Russia’s Unformed Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 80 (5) (2001): 62–75; Jack F. Matlock, Jr., “Dealing with a Russia in Turmoil,” *Foreign Affairs* 75 (3) (1996): 38–51; David Remnick, “Can Russia Change?” *Foreign Affairs* 76 (1) (1997): 35–49. For an exception, see Richard Pipes, “Is Russia Still an Enemy?” *Foreign Affairs* 76 (5) (1997): 65–78.

18. While the administration worked to bring Russia along in both cases (as Goldgeier and McFaul emphasize in *Power and Purpose*), it made very few adjustments to accommodate Russian objections.

19. For many examples, see Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, 36–37, 93–95.

for making the country “an industrial and raw materials giant . . . [that] proved unable to compete against post-industrial societies.”<sup>20</sup> Nor does this narrative reject existing international norms or organizations. Putin and Medvedev have regularly affirmed Moscow’s desire to integrate into the existing system, especially regional organizations and alliances (though they have also called for the democratization of international politics). But the Putin/Medvedev narrative has differed substantially from the post–Cold War U.S. narrative in its refusal to accept (1) America’s international dominance as a fact, as the natural or rightful structure of international politics after the Cold War; (2) Russia’s consignment to the rank of regional power and its concomitant exclusion from the rank of global or great power; and (3) the inevitability or permanence of Russia’s relative weakness. Moreover, although all agreed that the Cold War belonged to the past, Russia’s leaders have consistently accused their Western counterparts of having failed to escape the Cold War’s adversarial blinders: “the prejudices inherited from the era of global confrontation.”<sup>21</sup>

It is striking, when one reads through the public addresses of Russia’s last two presidents, how little rhetorical attention they have devoted in the last decade to narrating the past in general, specifically the Soviet past, as if it were best forgotten. They have emphasized *Russia’s* rich history and how *Russian* traditions inform the present and future. But the mythical Russia they summon belongs to no specific time or place.<sup>22</sup> They invoke the Soviet Union only to mark a clear contrast to the present.<sup>23</sup> They represent Russia as having undergone an irreversible transformation. It is, as Putin has said, “a new country, and at the same time a very ancient one.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Russia’s leaders still

20. Dmitry Medvedev, Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, November 12, 2009.

21. Vladimir Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, May 10, 2006. For other examples, see Putin’s speeches and related comments at the following: a meeting of top commanders of the Russian Armed Forces, November 20, 2000; a meeting of top members of the Russian Diplomatic Service, January 26, 2001; the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany, September 25, 2001; a meeting with the ambassadors and permanent representatives of the Russian Federation, June 27, 2006; the Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 10, 2007. See also Dmitry Medvedev’s speech at a meeting with German political, parliamentary, and civic leaders, June 5, 2008.

22. Putin’s remarks on the following occasions are illustrative in this regard: inauguration ceremony, May 7, 2000; Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, May 16, 2003; inauguration ceremony, May 7, 2004; Annual Address, April 25, 2005; Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 10, 2007.

23. An important exception comes occasionally in the context of the regular annual events in honor of veterans of World War II, whom Putin has hailed for having “fought for our great Soviet motherland”; address at a parade dedicated to the 55th Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, May 9, 2000. See, similarly, Putin’s address on the 60th Anniversary of the Beginning of the Great Patriotic War, June 22, 2001.

24. Putin expressed this sentiment in an address to the Millenium Summit, September 6, 2000. Related comments were made at Putin’s Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, April 3, 2001 and May 26, 2004; Putin’s speech in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany, September 25, 2001; and Medvedev’s speech at a meeting with German political, parliamentary, and civic leaders, June 5, 2008. See also Andrew Osborn, “Russia’s President Dmitry Medvedev Condemns Stalin,” *Telegraph*, October 30, 2009; Ellen Barry, “Don’t Gloss Over Stalin’s Crimes, Medvedev Says,” *The New York Times*, October 30, 2009.

display a certain rhetorical ambivalence. Post-Soviet Russia is represented as having embraced democracy, freedom, and the rule of law, while the Soviet leadership is assailed for its “self-isolation,” “imperialism,” “totalitarian ideology,” and self-destructive militarism. Yet the collapse of the Soviet Union is also represented as a “tragedy” and “disaster.”<sup>25</sup>

Regarding the present structure of international politics, Russia’s leaders have since 2000 represented their country as a “great power” temporarily fallen on hard times—or, in Putin’s paradoxical formulation, “a rich country of poor people.”<sup>26</sup> Putin has advanced from the start a vision of Russian renewal. It was the president’s task, he declared, “to restore the country’s prestige and leading role in the world” and to return Russia to “international respect.”<sup>27</sup> Restoration was possible, Putin said, because Russia is far more than “just a reduced map of the Soviet Union; it is a confident power with a great future and a great people.”<sup>28</sup> By the mid-2000s, Russia’s leaders were speaking more assertively. In 2003, Putin declared that Russia had returned to its rightful, “recognized place among the ranks of the truly strong, economically advanced and influential nations.”<sup>29</sup> Russia had a special status and special responsibilities as one of “the world’s leading powers,” largely because of its immense stock of nuclear weapons, but also because of its swift economic and moral revival.<sup>30</sup> Russia’s interests and foreign policy remained “global” (“of course,” Putin breezily stated), with an army and power-projection capabilities to match.<sup>31</sup> Its relations with the world were “of great importance for us and for the entire international system”—hardly something that could be said of a second-rank power.<sup>32</sup> What Russia demanded and deserved, Putin declared, was a “partnership” with the United States grounded in “equal rights and mutual respect.”<sup>33</sup> Upon entering office, Medvedev credited Putin with “dramatically

25. Putin made this comment in speeches on a number of occasions, including: a meeting of top commanders of the Russian Armed Forces, November 20, 2000; in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany, September 25, 2001; Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, April 25, 2005 and May 10, 2006.

26. Vladimir Putin, Open Letter to Voters, February 25, 2000. Putin also made similar remarks in a television address to the citizens of Russia, March 24, 2000.

27. Putin, television address to the citizens of Russia, March 24, 2000; Putin, speech at the presidential inauguration ceremony, May 7, 2000.

28. Putin, Open Letter to Voters.

29. Putin made this declaration at his Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, May 16, 2003. See also Putin’s speech at the 58th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, September 25, 2003.

30. Putin referred to Russia in this capacity in his Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, May 10, 2006. See also Putin’s Annual Address, April 18, 2002, May 26, 2004, and April 25, 2005; speech to an enlarged conference at the foreign ministry attended by the heads of Russian diplomatic missions abroad, July 12, 2002; press statement on Iraq, April 3, 2003.

31. See Putin’s speech to the foreign ministry, July 12, 2002; Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, May 10, 2006.

32. Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, May 10, 2006.

33. Putin made this appeal during a speech at a meeting with the ambassadors and permanent representatives of the Russian Federation, June 27, 2006.

[changing] Russia's international standing. . . . [T]o put it simply, the world once again has started to respect our country."<sup>34</sup>

Regarding the future of international politics, Putin and Medvedev built on this narrative of Russia's post-Cold War setback, its subsequent swift renewal, and its reclamation of its historical standing to offer a vision of an assertive Russia that would lead the world toward "a polycentric international system." That system would be "a truly democratic model of international relations [that would] not [allow] any one country to dominate in any sphere."<sup>35</sup> If Russia were a great power, one could not characterize the world as unipolar, as the United States did after the Cold War. Indeed, Russian leaders denied the relevance of unipolarity, both as an alleged depiction of the international system's structure and as an aspiration. Hegemony was not a fact, but an American pretension and an unwarranted arrogation. Putin's language is revealing: "The unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place either." Unipolarity was merely a *proposed*, and for Putin an unattractive, mode of organizing international politics. It could not be an accurate description of the international system because it was materially impossible, Putin declared, and thus had never been put into practice.<sup>36</sup> "Emerging multi-polarity and [the] increasing role of multilateral diplomacy" was, he said, an "objective development," a historical inevitability.<sup>37</sup> Medvedev, too, put forward Russia as a leading architect of "a new global regime," a true collective security system in which states forswear violence.<sup>38</sup> More noteworthy than the substance of the vision was Russia's self-assigned leading role in articulating it. Whereas American leaders either wrote Russia out of the story of great-power politics (often by omission) or narrated Russia as history's latest loser, Russian leaders held out a vision of global politics in which Russia remained a leading power; in which Russia was central to the operation of the system; and in which the 1990s were a temporary setback, not the new normal.

These divergent narratives may have complicated post-Cold War U.S.-Russia relations. Might this narrative divergence help explain Russia's sensitivity to America's relationship with countries in the former Soviet Union, specifically the United States' establishment of military bases there after 2001? Russia has displayed this sensitivity even when those relationships and bases have served common ends, such as countering the spread of radical Islam in the region.<sup>39</sup> Might it also explain America's corresponding insensitivity to

34. Medvedev's comments are from a speech made in the State Duma of Vladimir Putin, May 8, 2008.

35. Medvedev, Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, November 5, 2008.

36. Putin, speech and the following discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 10, 2007.

37. Putin, speech at a reception for the heads of diplomatic missions, November 28, 2007.

38. Medvedev, speech at a meeting with Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives to international organizations, July 15, 2008.

39. Russia's posture changed strikingly in Summer 2009, when the United States and Russia reached an agreement to permit U.S. overflights to Afghanistan, and continued in December 2009 with Medvedev's support for the expansion of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Russia's fears of an American empire springing up along its borders—via NATO enlargement, support for Kosovo's autonomy and independence, the establishment of U.S. military bases, and the provision of foreign aid? Or why Russia has been willing to court international disapproval and risk punitive measures over seemingly peripheral interests, such as the fate of breakaway regions like South Ossetia and Abkhazia? Or why Russia has spent tens of millions of dollars to buy others' recognition of these breakaway regions as sovereign states—while Russia's infrastructure crumbles and its suffering pensioners' discontent grows? Or why Russia has expended blood and treasure and, more importantly, challenged international norms to teach Georgia (not coincidentally an American ally) a lesson in Summer 2008? And why the United States refused to accede when a major regional power sought to exert its will in bordering regions? Or why Russia has generally been reluctant to support European- and American-led efforts through the United Nations to counter Iran's nuclear research and alleged nuclear weapons development programs?

I tentatively suggest that the divergence between Russia's and the United States' post-Cold War narratives, and Russia's consequent desire to demonstrate to Western powers that it remains a major player in global politics, sheds light on both Russian and American foreign policy over the last decade. There are of course other plausible explanations in each of these cases. Future research might clarify what, if anything, a narrative perspective contributes to understanding these specific cases and/or whether it can account for the larger sweep of U.S.-Russia relations. If divergent Russian and American narratives are a source of instability in the global politics of the present and the recent past (and the foreseeable future), then the question for policy is whether and how they might be brought into alignment. But what makes narrative divergence sustainable in the context of power transitions?

## EXPLAINING NARRATIVE DIVERGENCE

Under what conditions does narrative divergence take shape, complicating the emergence of a stable international order? This is not merely a theoretical question. It potentially has great import for policy. Understanding why American and Russian post-Cold War narratives have diverged may also help us understand the forces that hinder (or facilitate) their alignment.

Many great powers have accepted their own decline. Some, the Ottoman Empire or Austria-Hungary, for instance, ceased to be states, let alone great powers. Others, including Sweden, The Netherlands, Italy, and Great Britain, came to accept their demotions while remaining sovereign states.<sup>40</sup> Why was post-Cold War Russia able to sustain the myth of its great power status and, even in its darkest days, faith in its renewal? One possible answer is that Russia (especially Putin's Russia) lacks a competitive marketplace of ideas. Its leaders

40. France, at least in the Gaullist narrative, never really came to accept its second-tier status.

are free to engage in myth-making while those opponents—politicians, journalists, and activists—who are brave enough to speak out are subjected to harassment or even murder.<sup>41</sup> However true, this answer projects an idealized view of the state of political discourse in liberal democracies. Certainly, political contestation is the norm in democracies, but existing configurations of material power and dominant discourses and narratives shape the terrain on which contestation takes place and limit the policy stances that can be articulated. The widely accepted claim that democracies have well-functioning marketplaces of ideas is itself a dominant myth. In fact, Britain, a liberal democracy with a healthy civil society, was extremely reluctant to accept its status downgrade after World War II, and it was insistent on its role as a global power despite clear evidence of its entrenched economic weakness and its dependence on the United States.

A simpler and more powerful explanation may be that the Soviet Union lost its empire and dissolved without the physical defeat of a “hot” war. War, as historian Geoffrey Blainey has argued, is often the great clarifier that puts myths to the test and sorts truth from pretension.<sup>42</sup> Defeat in war is a tangible marker of decline, and for material and psychological reasons, great powers that endure defeat in war cannot pretend that they retain a claim on their former status. Powers that avoid defeat in war can sustain myths of resurgence and preserve their national pride. Rather than fade away peacefully, they go to lengths to demonstrate to others that the narrative of their irrevocable fall does not hold. This may help explain why Putin’s Russia can espouse the narrative it does.<sup>43</sup>

The case of Britain has lessons for that of Russia. Although World War II left the British economy in tatters, Britain was among the victors. Indeed, it emerged from the War with its empire intact and with a renewed sense of imperial mission.<sup>44</sup> Even though the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two great axes of global politics, and even though Britain’s industrial base was weak,<sup>45</sup> Britain’s leaders and populace narrated their own experience as one of the “Big Three” both during and after the War. These pretensions, which seem so absurd in retrospect, hardly seemed absurd at the time, and the result was fateful for Britain. According to historian David Reynolds, in the decade after World War II, “Britain was exerting itself as a power more energetically than at any time outside the world wars, certainly far more than

41. For further explanation of regime type and myth-making, see Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, “Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas,” *International Security* 21 (2) (1996): 5–40.

42. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1988).

43. A similar argument is suggested briefly in Goldgeier and McFaul, *Power and Purpose*, 3–4, 15.

44. L. J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 28, 36; David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, U.K.: Longman, 2000), 154–155.

45. Correlli Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1986).



its supposed Victorian heyday.”<sup>46</sup> British leaders were acutely aware of the widespread perception that Britain was in decline, and this frenetic activity was perhaps intended precisely to persuade the world that Britain remained a great power. Maintaining that status was an “unquestioned priority” of the postwar Attlee government.<sup>47</sup>

Britain’s failure in the postwar years to abandon its aspirations to be a great power (what one scholar has called its “great power complex”<sup>48</sup>) lasted until the mid-1960s, when it finally succumbed to economic realities. As a result, it legitimated the imperial overextension that contributed to its subsequent economic free fall. The unwarranted confidence in the British spirit may, moreover, have impeded the postwar economic reforms and investment that at least some historians believe might have reversed, or at least alleviated, Britain’s decline.<sup>49</sup> It also contributed to Britain’s obsession with atomic weapons and the hydrogen bomb.<sup>50</sup> All of this activity was facilitated by World War II, which muddied the waters as to where Britain stood in the postwar hierarchy of power and prestige. French diplomat Jean Monnet spoke of “the price of victory—the illusion” of British independence and great power that led British leaders to set themselves apart from Monnet’s European project.<sup>51</sup>

The myth of Britain as a great power persisted even as the empire gradually dissolved. In a sense, this is surprising. Britain’s claim to greatness was closely tied to its imperial possessions. Indeed, as the historian Tony Judt recalls, in a personal observation, Britain’s imperial dominions were essential to its identity: “to anyone raised (like the present author) in post-war Britain, ‘England’, ‘Britain’, and ‘British Empire’ were near-synonymous terms. . . . The names of colonial and dominion cities, rivers, and political figures were as familiar as those of Great Britain itself.”<sup>52</sup> To lose India, “the jewel in the crown of the British empire,” and to refer Palestine to the United Nations, and to end aid to Greece and Turkey—all fateful decisions made by the British cabinet in an atmosphere of crisis in February 1947—would have lifted, one might have thought, the scales from British eyes.<sup>53</sup>

46. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 186; see also David Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: An Introduction to British Foreign Policy since 1945* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989).

47. Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 63.

48. John Callaghan, *Great Power Complex: British Imperialism, International Crises and National Decline* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), esp. 88–109.

49. For further discussion on postwar missed opportunities, see Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*. For a more polemical account, see Correlli Barnett, *The Lost Victory: British Dreams, British Realities, 1945–1950* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

50. See Ritchie Ovendale, “The End of Empire,” in *Rethinking British Decline*, ed. Richard English and Michael Kenny (London: Macmillan, 2000), 264; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 171.

51. Quoted in Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 309.

52. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 278–283, quote at 278–279. See also Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 98; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 23, 174.

53. February 1947 is represented as a key turning point in nearly all historians’ accounts.

Yet, as colony after colony peeled off, British leaders refused to let go of the dream; there was always another way for Britain to exert influence, another reason to have faith. In May 1947, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin declared to the Commons that “His Majesty’s Government do [*sic*] not accept the view . . . that we have ceased to be a Great Power.”<sup>54</sup> After India gained independence, Britain doubled down its bets, sinking deeper into Africa and the Middle East. Even after Britain’s humiliation in the Suez Crisis and after the next wave of decolonization, in the early 1960s, Britain insisted that it still had a global role “east of Suez.” It expected to retain near-equivalent influence in Africa through economic ties and defense treaties.<sup>55</sup> Later still, following the Cuban Missile Crisis, which “mocked the claims of successive British leaders that they were influential interlocutors in the Cold War,” Prime Minister Harold Wilson, in his first major foreign policy speech in office (and in a similar one the next month in the Commons), declared, “We are a world power, and a world influence, or we are nothing.”<sup>56</sup> Only as the value of the pound collapsed in the second half of the 1960s did British leaders finally reconcile themselves to their country’s secondary status, at which point talk of decline became widespread.<sup>57</sup> None of this was inevitable of course: British leaders might have embraced their ordinariness on the global stage. That they did not was a contingent matter, but one made possible by the circumstances surrounding Britain’s decline.<sup>58</sup>

On material grounds alone, one might argue that, well before World War II, Britain deserved to fall from the ranks.<sup>59</sup> Nations are great powers less because they have access to a sizable percentage of the globe’s material resources than because they see themselves and talk about themselves as great powers and, even more important, because others see them and talk about them as great powers. In part, great powers are in the eyes of the beholder: (with apologies to Potter Stewart) we know a great power when *others* see it. Whether states see themselves as party to the great-power game, and whether others see them as party to that game: that is as much, if not more, a part of the dynamics of great-power politics as is states’ material rise and fall.

54. Quoted in Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 309. See also Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 65–66.

55. Suez is often seen as a turning point both toward a more pessimistic British popular temper and away from the nation’s aspirations to be a global power. The former may be true (see Judt, *Postwar*, 298–302), but not the latter (see Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 208–214).

56. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 201, 213.

57. *Ibid.*, 219.

58. It would also be interesting to trace how Britain’s view of itself resonated, or not, with other key actors, notably American and Soviet decision-makers. I suspect there was narrative divergence in this case as well, and it would be useful to explore if and how this divergence complicated Britain’s relations with the superpowers.

59. This point is argued most powerfully in Barnett, *The Audit of War*.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA

The above analysis suggests a number of (often unasked) questions regarding U.S. policy toward Russia.

*Does the United States have strong interests in Russia's definitive fall from the ranks of the global powers—that is, in Russia's assent to the American narrative?*

If the two states' divergent narratives have complicated U.S.-Russia relations, perhaps shaping the Russian narrative should become a U.S. priority, and the costs and benefits of specific policies should be examined through that prism. Treating Russia as a power of the first rank, massaging the Russian ego, and offering conciliatory measures in areas beyond Russia's legitimate interests as a regional power—as Bill Clinton did at times, such as when he pressed the G7 to admit Russia to its ranks—might bring about temporary stability and cooperation, but it might also reinforce a problematic Russian narrative and create further difficulties down the road.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps U.S. policy must walk a fine line between acknowledging Russia's legitimate regional interests and putting Russia in its (second-rank) place.

Yet hawks should not take heart. Taking Russia down a notch might be destabilizing. Perhaps analogously, historian Paul Schroeder argues that the stability of Europe before World War I rested on a precarious balance and required maintaining both the reality and, more important, the façade of Austro-Hungarian great-power status. When its fellow great powers, especially Britain, were no longer willing to maintain that façade, the system crashed. Millions of Europeans perished as “Austria decided not to die quietly, and . . . [finally embraced a] long-postponed decision to recover her position by violence.” The point, Schroeder surmises from the European experience, is that “nothing is more likely to occasion a major war than a threat to the existence or *great-power status* of an essential actor.”<sup>61</sup> Although the current international order does not appear to rest on myths of Russia's great-power status, and no third world war is in the offing, Schroeder's point should still be considered. The benefits of making Russia acknowledge its weakness may not be worth the costs. First, hard-nosed policies may prompt prohibitively costly recalcitrance from Russia in the short to medium run. Second, allowing Russia to maintain its global-power pretensions, even indefinitely, may not be especially costly. If it is not costly, the United States can weigh the costs and benefits of accession to Russian demands and concession to Russian sensitivities without taking into account the effects on both Russia's self-image and others' image of Russia.

60. On the negative consequences of treating Russia as a great power, see Goldgeier and McFaul, *Power and Purpose*, 360.

61. Paul W. Schroeder, “World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak,” *The Journal of Modern History* 44 (3) (1972): 334–345, quotes at 345, 335; emphasis added. I would like to thank Tim Crawford for bringing Schroeder's observation to my attention.

However, the scholarly literature generally concludes that great-power status matters and implies therefore that permitting Russia to maintain its pretensions is by no means costless. Many see reputational considerations as a prime motivator of state behavior. The desire to be perceived as a legitimate and responsible international actor may explain in part why states comply (to the extent that they do) with international law.<sup>62</sup> States have often expended substantial blood and treasure to defend their interests beyond narrowly construed strategic considerations precisely because they fear they will acquire a reputation for being weak-willed.<sup>63</sup> To be a great power is to have a reputation for strength, resolve, and global influence. Beyond that, great-power status seems to confer benefits that exceed bilateral relationships. Great powers set “the rules of the game”: the international arena is populated with institutions and norms that reflect the desires of the great powers.<sup>64</sup> States thus aspire to that status with good reason, and some may even invest substantial resources in developing nuclear weapons, despite international opprobrium, precisely because they believe those weapons are a prerequisite for international recognition as a great power.<sup>65</sup> If states are willing to take on substantial costs to acquire that reputation, such status is presumably of value, and the United States, presumably, has an interest in denying that status to states whose interests conflict with its own and who will press for revisions to the international order.<sup>66</sup>

The key question is the extent to which the Russian vision of global politics and institutions differs from the American vision. The more these two nations’ visions and interests differ, the more costly it will be for the United

62. From a large body of literature, see especially Andrew T. Guzman, *How International Law Works: A Rational Choice Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Beth A. Simmons, “International Law and State Behavior: Commitment and Compliance in International Monetary Affairs,” *American Political Science Review* 94 (4) (2000): 819–835. On the limits of this mechanism, see Beth A. Simmons, *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 117–118. For skepticism on reputation and compliance, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 158–169; George Downs and Michael Jones, “Reputation, Compliance, and International Law,” *Journal of Legal Studies* 31 (2002): S95–S114.

63. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966).

64. For this strand of realist thought, see Brooks and Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance*, 150–151, 180–182; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Randall L. Schweller and David Priess, “A Tale of Two Realisms: Expanding the Institutions Debate,” *Mershon International Studies Review* 41 (supp. 2) (1997): 1–32.

65. Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” *International Security* 21 (3) (1996/1997): 73–80.

66. Some scholars have questioned whether states can in fact shape their reputations for resolve through actions or whether those reputations matter in crisis situations; see Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005). However, those findings are not necessarily portable to the question of great-power status. Moreover, this scholarship generates its own puzzle: if reputations matter so little or are impossible to acquire, why would states bother expending resources to that end, which no one denies that they do? Why would states believe, and act upon, such foolish ideas?

States to allow Russia's pretensions to take hold and to reinforce them through conciliatory measures beyond the zone of legitimate Russian concern. The extent to which U.S. and Russian interests and global visions are shared or are in conflict is best left for another essay and other writers (including in this volume).

The options available appear to be either trying to compel Russia to accept the American narrative or persisting in a destabilizing state of narrative divergence. But there is an alternative, if provocative, option that is worthy of a hearing. Americans themselves might consider telling a different story of global politics since the Cold War's end. This alternative might cast America's Cold War victory in less grand ideological terms (no end of history in sight), recognize the limits of American power, depict global politics as multipolar or even nonpolar (rather than unipolar), and vivisection post-Cold War American discourse that characterizes the United States as "the last remaining superpower" and "the indispensable nation"; it might depict the imperative of maintaining U.S. hegemony or primacy as yet another instance of what Senator J. William Fulbright called "the arrogance of power." This reframing might bring Russian and American narratives into alignment, and it is a more achievable end. Americans have greater control over the stories they tell themselves than over the stories Russians tell. Unfortunately, despite the United States' recent travails in Iraq and Afghanistan, this story line does not seem to be one that either the American body politic or President Barack Obama is ready to embrace.

*Even if reshaping the Russian narrative is in U.S. interests, does the United States have policy tools at its disposal to shape how Russians narrate their nation's past, present, and future? Are there less costly ways of influencing Russia's narrative than "getting tough" on Russia? Is "getting tough" even likely to work?*

There are profound limits to public diplomacy.<sup>67</sup> As the United States has discovered since September 2001, it has little control over how it is perceived by foreigners, how the events of 9/11 are understood abroad, how the "War on Terror" is interpreted, and how the invasion of Iraq and the operation in Afghanistan are narrated elsewhere. To think that any consistent U.S. public diplomacy effort would have much impact on how Russia narrates its own past, present, and likely future is beyond arrogant. It is quixotic at best, delusional at worst. In this, as in other areas of U.S. foreign policy, there is reason for humility.<sup>68</sup>

67. David M. Edelstein and Ronald R. Krebs, "The Quest for the Holy Sale: Washington's Troubling Obsession with Public Diplomacy," *Survival* 47 (1) (2005): 89–104.

68. On the demonstrated limits of U.S. power to promote domestic change in Russia, see Goldgeier and McFaul, *Power and Purpose*, 335–354.

Perhaps actions, especially if costly, do speak louder than words. Hawks might argue that if the United States acted more consistently, Russia would get the message: it would realize that others do not see the country as a leading power, and it would accept its subordinate status. But entrenched narratives are resilient. They can accommodate a large amount of discrepant evidence before they are abandoned. Because individuals crave order and stability, mental and discursive, they are resistant to jettisoning these constructs before they must. This means not only that the United States would have to be extremely consistent for a very long period of time—a costly strategy—but also that the United States, to drive the point home, might have to exaggerate its lack of respect, to the point of even denying Russia’s status as a regional power. Otherwise, Russian observers might misinterpret American respect for legitimate Russian aims (that is, those the United States saw as befitting a regional power) as deference to a fellow *global* power. Even more important, it means that other countries would have to follow suit—an exceedingly unlikely proposition—or the signal would be swamped by noise. There is no reason to think that, in assessing others’ views, Russia looks only to the United States. Finally, this perspective sees the Russians themselves as too passive. Certainly Russians might, in response to the American signal, revise their narrative. But they would seem equally likely to redouble their efforts to alter the American narrative—and this, too, should give hawks pause.

## CHAPTER 3

# Russia, the Post-Soviet Space, and Challenges to U.S. Policy

Jeffrey Mankoff

The post-Soviet space is among the most conceptually challenging problems for U.S. foreign policy. The fifteen former Soviet republics are a strikingly diverse group of states, with radically varied income levels, different ethnic and religious compositions, and divergent attitudes toward their Soviet past and toward the current Russian Federation. Moreover, despite the post-Soviet states' gradual emergence as sovereign members of the international community, many in the Russian elite continue to promote a Monroe Doctrine-like exclusivity designed to deny outside powers (especially the West) any meaningful security role in the region. The perpetuation of the post-Soviet republics' dependence on Russia is intimately linked to the Russian elite's desire to restore Russia as a major world power. On occasion, and the 2008 war in Georgia is perhaps the most significant instance in recent years, Moscow has withheld its cooperation, even on areas of mutual interest, in order to pressure the West into accepting its claim to special influence in the post-Soviet space.

The story is more complex than that of a former hegemon forcibly suppressing the interests of its smaller neighbors. For the elites of many post-Soviet countries, geographic proximity and the shared Russophone and Soviet cultural heritage make Russia a natural partner. Russian officials and businesses know how to operate in the region in a way that their Western counterparts do not. Unlike the United States, Russia is also inescapably tied to the region and cannot abandon it when new challenges arise in other parts of the world. Meanwhile, in many post-Soviet countries, the West appears to be a dangerous partner because of its record of working with (even encouraging) opposition movements that have challenged existing regimes.

As long as Russia refuses to recognize its onetime dependencies as fully sovereign states, tension with the West will persist. The challenge for the United States and its allies lies in reconciling Western strategic objectives in the post-Soviet space (including accessing new sources of energy, enhancing security

cooperation, and encouraging political and economic liberalization) with the goal of a closer partnership with Moscow. At times, these dual objectives appear to be directly in conflict; integrating them even in the best of times requires deft diplomacy on the part of U.S. and European officials.

## RUSSIA AND THE “NEAR ABROAD”

Though Russia’s desire to adopt a leading role within the post-Soviet space in many ways resembles other post-imperial complexes such as Britain’s Commonwealth or France’s Francophonie, the historical peculiarities of the formation and collapse of the Russian/Soviet empire have left Russia’s post-Soviet neighbors in a much different position than that of a Ghana or an Algeria on the morrow of independence. Because the Russian empire expanded gradually overland into contiguous spaces (not unlike the westward expansion of the United States), the cultural discontinuities between center and periphery were not as extreme as with the overseas empires of Britain, France, or Portugal. These discontinuities were further diminished after seventy years of Soviet ideological conformity. Furthermore, with the important exception of the Baltic states, the post-Soviet republics did not become independent during a period of mass movements for independence. Particularly in Central Asia, local elites wanted to preserve the USSR long after Boris Yeltsin and his allies in Moscow became determined to sweep it away. When the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991, independence was for many an unwelcome surprise, and nearly two decades later, patterns of trade and migration preserve a significant degree of informal regional integration.

Moreover, with the exception of the Baltic countries, the Soviet collapse did not create a fundamentally new political elite. Nationalist governments seeking a sharp break from their Soviet past briefly came to power in Georgia and Azerbaijan but were soon replaced by regimes dominated by former *apparatchiki*, or Communist Party functionaries. Elsewhere, the *apparatchiki* never left. Ten of the twelve non-Baltic republics are currently ruled by ex-Soviet officials or (in Azerbaijan) the son of a Soviet general groomed to be his father’s successor. In Georgia and Moldova, the departure of the *apparatchiki* was a prolonged, difficult process pushed forward by resentment against Moscow’s overt political manipulation. In Ukraine, vigorous multiparty democracy overlays competition for power and resources among a heavily Sovietized elite.

The perpetuation of a largely Soviet ruling class in these countries has facilitated the development of a peculiarly post-Soviet style of politics across the ex-USSR; it isolates the post-Soviet states from neighbors over which the hammer-and-sickle never flew. Russia remains a significant reference point for post-Soviet elites across the former USSR. Even when diplomatic relations with Moscow are strained, the shared political-cultural heritage of the USSR keeps the post-Soviet states (again, the Baltic states are an exception) from

turning on Moscow.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the most notable attempt by the post-Soviet states to counter Russian influence was the creation of the GUAM (or GUUAM) bloc in 1997. Of the five states that once comprised the group, only Georgia remains firmly committed to checking Russian influence.<sup>2</sup>

Russia shares these post-Soviet traits with its neighbors. It also hearkens back to an imperial past that is inextricably bound up with its self-proclaimed role as a great power.<sup>3</sup> With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the territory controlled by the Russian state shrank to dimensions not seen since the time of Peter the Great. Despite the retreat of the state's frontiers and the economic, social, and demographic collapse that Russia endured after 1991, the Russian elite has continued to view Russia as occupying a special role in the international balance. Fundamental to the elite's understanding of Russia's place in the world is a belief that Russia is destined by its size and its history to be one of the world's major powers, sharing with other large states a responsibility for resolving major issues of world order.<sup>4</sup> Throughout Russian history, state power was generally correlated with the extent of territory under state control. As today's Russia seeks to reassert its international influence, its leaders see a central role in the post-Soviet space as a *sine qua non* for Russia's restoration as a major power.

This self-perception provides one of Russia's principal justifications for seeking a privileged role in the affairs of the post-Soviet space and contributes both directly and indirectly to the difficult relationship between Russia and the West. The belief that Russia will always have a special responsibility in upholding world order is deep-seated and held by figures across the political spectrum. This self-conception shapes Russia's perception of its interests; according to political scientist Alexander Wendt, "deliberation about national interests takes place against the background of a shared national security discourse . . . which may substantially affect its content."<sup>5</sup> In Wendt's view, only through a reshaping of the predominant national security discourse can a state redefine the nature of its interests and the policies it pursues in seeking to attain those interests.

1. See Christopher Marsh and Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "The Persistence of Eurasia," *Policy Innovations*, The Carnegie Council, November 5, 2009, <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/commentary/data/000152>.

2. The five countries are Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. Uzbekistan withdrew from GUUAM in 2005, returning the bloc to the original appellation of GUAM. Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova all face separatist conflicts fueled in part by Moscow.

3. I elaborate on this argument in *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), esp. chap. 1.

4. Russia's view of what constitutes a major issue of world order is in important ways outside the mainstream of world opinion; Russia, for instance, has done little to address the dangers of climate change or other transnational problems characteristic of the twenty-first century. See Samuel A. Greene and Dmitri Trenin, "(Re)Engaging Russia in an Era of Uncertainty," *Carnegie Policy Brief* No. 86, December 2009, 4.

5. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 129.



In Russia's case, the shared national security discourse of the elite is clearly focused on promoting and strengthening Russia's position as a great power in a world dominated by a finite number of great powers. Though rooted in self-perception rather than more objective measures of Russia's standing relative to other countries, the emphasis on Russia's role as a great power in itself contributes to competition and confrontation with other large powers by channeling foreign policy into a quest to maximize power at the expense of others.<sup>6</sup> This desire for great-power status is a destabilizing factor in Russia's relations with other states.<sup>7</sup>

Sovereignty, in its traditional Westphalian sense, implies the ability of each state to choose its own allies and economic partners and conduct its internal affairs free from the interference of any outside state.<sup>8</sup> Given their political, cultural, and economic bonds to Russia, however, the post-Soviet states began their history as independent nations at a disadvantage. Meanwhile, Russian policy since 1991 has worked to keep its neighbors in loose alignment with Moscow, regardless of whether a pro-Russia policy is in these states' interest. Russia has used selective political support for regimes it deems friendly, control over energy distribution networks, and a web of institutions such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) to prevent its neighbors from leaving the Russian orbit.<sup>9</sup> Russia's demand for a *droit de regard* in the former Soviet Union has prevented many Russian neighbors from pursuing the full range of political and economic opportunities available to them. The majority have not, for instance, been able to sell their natural resources at world-market prices or join international institutions, such as NATO, in which Russia does not play a dominant role.

In the process, Russian policy has not only limited opportunities for its neighbors to pursue full economic integration with the outside world (a step that would in most cases improve their standard of living), it has also inhibited their political development by constraining the choices available to their leadership. Even though official Russian discourse has abjured use of the term "near abroad" for several years, the Kremlin's approach to the post-Soviet space reflects the continuing belief that the countries of the former Soviet

6. Notably, current Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has challenged important pieces of this paradigm. For instance, he declared in his 2009 annual address to parliament that the core goal of Russian foreign policy should be to improve the country's standard of living and to pursue a greater degree of integration with European structures without surrendering Moscow's claim to a predominant role in the former USSR. See Medvedev, "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," November 12, 2009, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5979/print>.

7. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 29–54.

8. See Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). For more information on the applicability of traditional concepts of sovereignty in the post-Soviet space, see Martha Brill Olcott, "Sovereignty and the 'Near Abroad,'" *Orbis* 39 (3) (Summer 1995): 353–367.

9. Mark Kramer, "Russian Policy Toward the Commonwealth of Independent States: Recent Trends and Future Prospects," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55 (6) (November/December 2008): 5.



Union are somehow less sovereign, less “real” than countries in the “far abroad.” The war between Russia and Georgia was perhaps the apotheosis of Russia’s policy of keeping the post-Soviet states within its sphere of influence by any means necessary. Whether the ascent of Dmitry Medvedev and the fallout of the 2008 to 2009 economic crisis will loosen Moscow’s grip on its neighbors is among the major questions analysts and policy-makers are asking. A related question is whether Western policy can in any way affect Moscow’s bearing on the former Soviet Union.

## WESTERN POLICY AND THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

From the standpoint of the West, Russia’s behavior in the post-Soviet space is problematic for a number of reasons. The West is not prepared to recognize the post-Soviet space as an exclusive Russian sphere of influence or as the “zone of privileged interests” Medvedev described in the aftermath of the August 2008 war.<sup>10</sup> As Western governments and companies seek to establish a presence in the region, they continually face resistance to what the Kremlin views as intrusion in its own backyard. For this reason, the status of the post-Soviet space has become in many ways the most intractable and explosive issue in relations between Moscow and the West.

The post-Soviet space also negatively impacts the West’s relationship with Russia, since Moscow’s cooperation in other areas is often made contingent on the West’s acceptance of Russia’s desiderata in the former Soviet Union. The status of U.S. forces in Central Asia is a good example. Russia shares with the United States and Europe an overwhelming interest in seeing the Taliban defeated and Afghanistan stabilized. Yet Moscow’s attitude toward the presence of U.S. forces in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are important staging points for the Afghan conflict, has vacillated. Though Russia reluctantly assented to the initial deployment of U.S. forces in the region in 2002, Moscow subsequently pressed for those forces to depart, even as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated after 2005. The aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis undermined Russia’s influence throughout the region (especially its economic influence), allowing Washington to outbid Moscow for the right to keep its base in Kyrgyzstan, even as Russia offered the use of its own territory and agreed to join the so-called Northern Distribution Network for supplying the NATO mission in Afghanistan.

To be fair, the West has at times made the situation worse by pursuing a strategy designed to bring as much of the post-Soviet space as possible directly into the Western orbit, regardless of the potential impact on relations with Moscow. The United States and its European allies have also fallen into bipolar, confrontational logic over relations with the post-Soviet states. NATO expansion has been the most visible and salient element of this strategy, particularly

10. To read Medvedev’s comment, see “Interv’yu Dmitriya Medvedeva rossiiskim telekanalam,” August 31, 2008, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/1276>.

when discussions have turned to the possible membership of Georgia, Ukraine, and other post-Soviet countries. This approach treats Russia as the main security threat to countries around its borders, reinforcing Russian suspicions of Western intent and often (as in the case of Georgia) undermining the security of the countries that NATO expansion was designed to protect. An effective U.S.-European policy toward the post-Soviet space must overcome this legacy of merely expanding the existing institutions of “the West” closer and closer to Russia’s borders without either reforming the way those institutions function or developing an approach that treats Russia as potentially part of the solution to regional insecurity rather than as a threat.

The West has no reason to oppose close relations between Russia and its post-Soviet neighbors; indeed, good relations among the post-Soviet states would greatly enhance security across the entire region and could improve relations between Moscow and the West. The problem is that Russia’s strategy for promoting closer relations with its neighbors often appears to perpetuate a zero-sum bloc mentality. This approach limits the policy options available to the post-Soviet states and polarizes the relationship between Russia and outside powers seeking to establish a presence in the post-Soviet space. This polarization plays out even in the domestic politics of the post-Soviet states, where the Kremlin has devoted significant effort to preventing uncontrolled political transitions (“colored revolutions”) and where the question of balancing relations with Russia and the West has become a focal point for political competition. Russian intervention has consequently sought to prop up authoritarian regimes in neighboring states, since the perception remains that democratization leads to a pro-Western (and hence anti-Russian) foreign policy.<sup>11</sup> Whether the experience of Ukraine in 2010, when a largely free presidential election resulted in the victory of the Kremlin-friendly Viktor Yanukovich, changes Russian perceptions of democracy’s benefits remains to be seen.

## IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS

Russia’s approach to the post-Soviet space is laid out in the basic documents governing Russian foreign policy, including the Foreign Policy Concept and the National Security Concept. These documents provide a conceptual foundation for Moscow’s conviction that the former Soviet Union plays a fundamentally different role in Russian foreign policy than any other region of the world. According to the version of Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept adopted early in Medvedev’s presidency, Russian foreign policy aims to “devote particular attention to activities and structures capable of strengthening the process of integration on the territory of the CIS.”<sup>12</sup> The focus on integration has been

11. Thomas Carothers, “The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion,” *Foreign Affairs* 85 (2) (March/April 2006).

12. “Kontseptsiya Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” July 12, 2008, <http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/0e9272bafa34209743256c630042d1aa/d48737161a0bc944c32574870048d8f7?OpenDocument>.

central to Russia's policy in the post-Soviet space since at least the mid-1990s, when Yeltsin and his team reversed course under pressure from various conservative forces who opposed what they saw as Yeltsin's headlong and futile rush into the embrace of the West. Even during the first years after the Soviet collapse, Moscow intervened directly in the affairs of some of its neighbors, including Georgia, where Russian troops were dispatched in late 1993 to defend the government of President Eduard Shevardnadze against rebels loyal to his predecessor, Zviad Gamsakhurdia. In the process, Moscow pressured Shevardnadze's teetering government into formally joining the CIS.

The CIS, along with the alphabet soup of multinational organizations across the former Soviet Union territory, has been a central component of Moscow's strategy for preserving the links between the post-Soviet states. Given the disparity in size and wealth between Russia and any of the other post-Soviet republics, it is hardly surprising that these groups tend to be Russia-dominated and typically prioritize Russian interests, although organizations such as the CSTO, EurAsEC, and the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union provide some benefits to their non-Russian members as well. The CSTO, for instance, allows members to purchase Russian weapons for their militaries at the discounted price offered to the Russian military and provides a security guarantee that allows them to summon Russian military assistance against internal or external threats.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these benefits, many non-Russian states have decidedly mixed feelings about these organizations, to which membership can seem compulsory and which often seem to subordinate the interests of smaller members to those of Russia. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is more popular among its Central Asian members because it provides a forum for playing Russia and China off one another and facilitates China's economic penetration of a region long dominated by Moscow.<sup>14</sup> Other regional organizations lacking a Chinese presence give their smaller members fewer options. Since Russia exports far more to its neighbors than they export to Russia, some officials argue that the Customs Union has harmed the Kazakh and Belarusian economies by leaving their industrial sectors vulnerable to Russian competition.<sup>15</sup> The benefits of membership are largely political, helping Kazakhstan and Belarus to maintain a solid relationship with Moscow. Likewise, the CSTO's charter forbids members from participating in any other military bloc (read: NATO), which limits the options available to member states and perpetuates the idea of a bipolar standoff between the West and Russia.

Military integration under the auspices of the CSTO has also raised concerns among some of Russia's neighbors because the alliance serves as a pretext for Russia to station troops outside its borders. The messy breakup of the

13. "Ustav Organizatsiya dogovora o kolektivnoi bezopasnosti," <http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index.htm>.

14. See Alexander Cooley, "Cooperation Gets Shanghaied: China, Russia, and the SCO," *Foreign Affairs* (online version), December 14, 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65724/alexander-cooley/cooperation-gets-shanghaied>.

15. Author's interviews with Kazakh officials, Astana, Kazakhstan, July 2009.

USSR left Russian troops in numerous locations across the old empire. In some places, such as Tajikistan, Russian forces have been an important stabilizing factor under conditions of state breakdown and civil war, but they have also served as a bargaining chip with the local government and an impediment to pursuing security cooperation with the United States.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Russian troops have been a source of corruption through their participation in the regional drug trade.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, they have played a more overtly political role. The presence of Russia's Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol, on the coast of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, has been a major rallying point for Ukrainian nationalists seeking to extricate their country from Russian influence, in part by expelling the naval base. Russian hardliners, for their part, demanded Russian intervention to ensure the Fleet's continued presence when former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko called for its expulsion. Russian diplomats warned at the time that an attempt by Kyiv to expel the Fleet could ignite a military conflict between the two countries.

The role of the Russian military in the so-called frozen conflicts around the former Soviet Union is equally explosive. Though ostensibly deployed as peacekeepers, Russian forces in Transdnistria (Moldova) and South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia) have prevented the Moldovan and Georgian governments from asserting complete sovereignty over their territory. In South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russian troops were active participants in the August 2008 war against the Georgian government, and their presence has continued to underwrite the de facto independence of the two breakaway republics. Their presence also helps perpetuate Russia's estrangement from the West, since the United States and the EU maintain that Russian deployments in Transdnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia violate the terms of an agreement, reached in 1999, by which Moscow agreed to remove its troops from neighboring countries in exchange for a revision of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty to address Russia's concerns about the effects of NATO expansion.<sup>18</sup> Russia's failure to withdraw its forces from Georgia and Moldova in line with the terms of the Istanbul Commitments has led the West to refuse ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty that the two sides signed in 1999, blocking progress toward a more comprehensive security accord between Russia and the West.

16. Zafar Abdullayev, "Tajikistan, Russia Probe Military Partnership," *Eurasia Insight*, EurasiaNet, March 4, 2004.

17. Kathleen Knox, "Tajikistan: Heroin Bust Ties Russian Military to Drug Trade," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), May 7, 2004.

18. Vladimir Socor, "Russia Repudiates Istanbul Commitments in JCG Meetings," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, November 16, 2004.

## ENERGY AND RUSSIAN-LED CIS INTEGRATION

Another component of Russia's drive for economic and political integration across the post-Soviet space has been control of energy pipelines. Given the importance of energy to the economies of Russia and its neighbors, power over the pipelines gives Moscow significant political leverage. Pipeline construction in the Soviet era did not take into account the interrepublic borders of the USSR and left the successor states with pipeline networks poorly matched to the political and economic needs of independent states. Since the Soviet-era infrastructure was oriented toward meeting demand in the more industrialized RSFSR (which became the Russian Federation in 1991) and delivering hard-currency exports to Europe, the oil- and gas-producing states of Central Asia (and initially Azerbaijan) have had no choice but to send their resources to Russia for export to world markets. Its monopsonistic position for many years allowed Moscow to pay the Central Asian producers a fraction of the price Gazprom charges to the end consumers of the same gas in Europe. It also creates vast opportunities for corruption, as dubious trading companies (of which the Russo-Ukrainian outfit RosUkrEnerg is the most notorious) profit from the large markups imposed each time the gas crosses a national border.<sup>19</sup> This revenue stream, which benefits officials across the former Soviet Union, further reinforces Moscow's drive for integration across the post-Soviet space by creating a community of interest among corrupt officials in multiple countries. The ability to tap these revenue streams has given officials in Ukraine and elsewhere a vested personal interest in preserving the status quo, including financial-institutional ties to Russia.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1990s, Russia used its control of the pipeline network from Central Asia to pressure Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan to exclude foreign companies from signing major energy deals. This strategy was particularly pronounced in Russia's relations with Turkmenistan, which, due to its geographic isolation from external markets, had few options for breaking the Russian grip on its energy sales.<sup>21</sup> Kazakhstan, which moved early to strike deals with foreign oil companies, and which is able to ship oil across the Caspian Sea by barge, has been more effective than Turkmenistan in forging links with Western companies. In the process, it has enhanced its geopolitical leverage as well as its economic development. Azerbaijan and Georgia, in contrast, were able to pursue more independent foreign policies once Western-built pipelines bypassing Russia connected them to world markets in the late 1990s.<sup>22</sup>

19. Vladimir Milov and Martha Brill Olcott, "The Great Uncertainty: Russian-Central Asian Energy Relations," presentation to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 13, 2007. Before 2008, for example, Gazprom purchased gas from Turkmenistan for about \$130 per thousand cubic meters (tcm) and sold it at the Ukrainian border for more than double that amount.

20. See Misha Glenny, "Gas and Gangsters," *New Statesman*, March 3, 2008.

21. Adam N. Stulberg, *Well-Oiled Diplomacy: Strategic Manipulation and Russia's Energy Statecraft in Eurasia* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2007), 93–132.

22. The Baku-Supsa oil pipeline was completed in 1998, though the much larger Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline did not become operational until 2006.

This experience is central to the ongoing debate about the proposed Nabucco gas pipeline, which would extend from Erzurum in Turkey through the Balkans to Central Europe, and which was conceived to operate with gas pumped from the Caspian Basin. Azerbaijan, which has been selling significant quantities of oil and gas to Europe since the mid-1990s, is largely on-board with the project, despite ongoing Russian attempts to encourage Baku to re-orient its exports to Moscow.<sup>23</sup> Most analysts doubt that Azerbaijan by itself has enough gas to meet Nabucco's projected volume of 30 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year on its own. The country will almost certainly have to secure energy supplies from the east side of the Caspian—that is, from Kazakhstan and/or Turkmenistan, or from the Middle East.

Russia has relied on a combination of promised rewards and threatened penalties to dissuade Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan from participating in Nabucco. It has also proposed its own alternative, the so-called South Stream pipeline, which would run beneath the Black Sea to Bulgaria and hence along a route similar to that planned for Nabucco. South Stream was initially projected to carry an amount of gas comparable to Nabucco (31.5 bcm), though in early 2009, Russian gas monopoly Gazprom announced that it would double South Stream's capacity, undermining the economic argument for the rival Nabucco project.<sup>24</sup>

From the perspective of the energy-producing post-Soviet states, plans for South Stream (as well as the similar Nord Stream pipeline, which would extend beneath the Baltic Sea to Germany) appear to be designed to weaken support for Nabucco by offering a politically safer alternative for accessing European markets. For current transit states Belarus and Ukraine, the impact of the new pipelines could be especially profound. Without the new pipelines, virtually all the gas Russia sells to Europe (whether that gas originates in Russia or Central Asia) has to cross Ukrainian or Belarusian territory, making it difficult for Gazprom to stop deliveries to Ukraine and Belarus without risking disruptions to its European customers as well. Several times since the Soviet collapse, payment disputes between Gazprom and these transit states have led to partial cutoffs. In January 2009, a major dispute with Ukraine over back payments eventually led Gazprom to shut off deliveries entirely, leaving many customers in Europe without gas in the depths of winter. The economic and political fallout for Gazprom, and for Russia, was steep. (A similar, albeit less far-reaching, dispute in 2007 was even more damaging for Russia politically.)

South Stream and Nord Stream are problematic for the EU (and hence for the United States) for at least three reasons. First, the planned Russian pipelines have been a major source of discord within Europe. Several Western European states, principally Italy and Germany, both of which would become key transit hubs for gas from the new pipelines, have thrown their weight be-

23. Bruce Pannier, "Russia, Azerbaijan Achieve Gas Breakthrough," RFE/RL, June 30, 2009.

24. "Putin and Berlusconi seal 'South Stream' pipeline deal," EurActiv, May 18, 2009, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/putin-berlusconi-seal-south-stream-pipeline-deal/article-182435/>.

hind the Russian projects, even as some Eastern European states have reacted with alarm to what they see as Russia's transparent attempt at divide-and-rule tactics within Europe.<sup>25</sup> Second, by increasing the overall amount of Russian gas sold in Europe, the two pipelines would deepen Europe's dependence on Russia and therefore enhance Russia's political leverage over the EU, at least in the medium term. Finally, the pipelines would change Europe's political calculus vis-à-vis the transit states. No longer facing the prospect of suffering directly from Russian chastisement of Ukraine or Belarus, the barriers to EU intervention in disputes between Moscow on the one hand and Minsk or Kyiv on the other would rise, further strengthening Russian leverage over its neighbors and reducing the salience of events in Ukraine and Belarus to European interests.

## ECONOMIC CRISIS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

In some ways, the economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 weakened Russia's role in the post-Soviet space. Even though most of the smaller post-Soviet republics have suffered severely in the recent downturn, Russia's own difficulties have made it more difficult for Moscow to keep its neighbors on a tight leash. Russia's withering trade and credit have spurred post-Soviet states from Moldova to Kyrgyzstan to look for new sources of funds and in the process to begin to reshape the international environment of the former Soviet Union. The post-Soviet states have additional foreign policy opportunities that have led them in a variety of directions. Authoritarian Belarus has tacked closer to the European Union, even signing up for the EU's Eastern Partnership program in the face of Russian opposition. Together with Uzbekistan, Belarus has sought to downgrade its commitment to the CSTO, boycotting a summit and (in Tashkent's case) withdrawing from an agreement to set up a CSTO rapid reaction force that many states fear could be used to bully them into allowing Russian forces on their territory. Kyrgyzstan, meanwhile, reversed course on its decision to expel U.S. forces from its base at Manas Airport after Moscow fell through on its promise of a \$2.1 billion loan to Bishkek—a decision that appears to have contributed to Moscow's support for the protests that overthrew former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April 2010. China has been a major beneficiary of Russia's financial weakness over the past eighteen months. China remains cash-rich and has poured loans and investments in natural resources into the former Soviet Union, including Russia, where Beijing is underwriting the construction of an oil pipeline to the Pacific in exchange for concessionary prices for the oil.

25. In 2006, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski (then minister of defense) famously compared Nord Stream to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; see "Nord Stream 'a waste of money,' says Poland," EurActiv, January 11, 2010, [http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/nord-stream-waste-money-poland/article-188727?\\_print](http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/nord-stream-waste-money-poland/article-188727?_print).



Russia's economy will eventually recover (by the start of 2010, it already appeared to be gradually turning around), and when it does, Moscow will undoubtedly seek to restore its influence across the post-Soviet space. In the interim, the West needs to strategize on how to steer engagement within the CIS away from a zero-sum competition with Russia. As long as a major part of Russia's elite continues to think of their country as a nineteenth-century-style great power, they will seek a dominant role in the post-Soviet space. Therefore, Western policy needs to be twofold: on the one hand, it should bolster the resilience of Russia's neighbors and thus provide them with the self-confidence to make foreign policy decisions on the basis of national interests; on the other, the West should forge connections that simultaneously encompass Russia and its neighbors, so that every contact between the West and a post-Soviet country is no longer automatically perceived in Moscow as a loss for Russian security.

Strengthening institutions across the post-Soviet space is in some ways the lesser challenge, daunting though it may be. The United States and Europe should avoid military involvement and instead work with the post-Soviet states (as well as NGOs and the private sector to the degree possible) to strengthen institutions of governance, including the judiciary, anticorruption watchdogs, and financial authorities. Policy should also involve greater opportunities for officials to study and travel to the West on professional exchanges. The objective of such exchanges would be to develop the capacity of these weak states to act autonomously, giving substance to the rhetoric of sovereignty that has long underpinned U.S. policy in the region.

On the second policy objective, the United States and its allies need to get relations with Russia right, above all on the question of the CIS. Continually expanding the writ of organizations like NATO without simultaneously engaging Moscow in discussions about collaborative projects in the region only exacerbates the problem of polarization. Russian suspicions and an inclination to play a spoiler role have inhibited progress on this kind of engagement in the past; however, in the wake of the economic crisis and consequent diminishment of Moscow's loftier ambitions, the moment seems ripe for a new approach that treats Russia as a potential part of the solution to regional instability as well as part of the problem. Given the level of mistrust that exists on all sides, it would make sense to start small, with an emphasis on trade agreements encompassing the EU, Russia, and Russia's post-Soviet neighbors. More difficult issues, such as security cooperation and the fate of the CFE Treaty, will have to be addressed at some point, but perhaps not at the beginning.



## CONCLUSION

The post-Soviet space represents a unique challenge for U.S. foreign policy insofar as it is intimately linked to, but not fully congruent with, policy toward Russia. The United States has been largely unsuccessful when it has attempted to impose a hard divide between its policy approaches to Russia and policy toward Russia's neighbors. The ongoing economic crisis reinforces the temptation to ignore Russia's self-proclaimed interests in the post-Soviet space. Yet while Russia's recovery may be uneven and halting, it will occur. If past experience is a guide, unilateral gains Washington makes at Russia's expense in the post-Soviet space will be resented by Moscow and will increase the obstacles facing future U.S.-Russia rapprochement.

Whether Russian interests in the region are "legitimate" is in some ways misframing the problem. They exist, and are intimately linked to the elite's broadly held conception of Russia's identity as a state and an international actor. If the United States hopes to work with Russia on issues of surpassing importance like Iran, it must finesse disputes over the post-Soviet space. The United States does not need to abandon support of countries like Georgia or engage in unsavory trade-offs with the Kremlin, but it does need to acknowledge the continued linkage between the two problems and design policies that treat them in tandem—in part because leaders of many CIS states continue to view Russia as their most natural partner and the United States as, at best, an external balancer.

Real change will come only once Russia no longer views the CIS as a "zone of privileged interests" from which other powers are to be excluded. While Western policy cannot force Russia or Russian elites to change their views of the post-Soviet space, it can create incentives to allow Russia to play a more positive role in the region. Time, especially the emergence of a truly post-Soviet generation in both Russia and its neighbors (in many of which knowledge of the Russian language is already declining rapidly) will have to do the rest.

## CHAPTER 4

# Assessing the Russian Challenge to U.S. Policy

Thomas Graham

In the first two decades after the breakup of the Soviet Union, U.S.-Russia relations suffered two cycles in which great expectations for cooperation were followed by profound disappointment in the results. Both the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations left relations with Russia in worse shape than they found them and in arguably the worst condition relations had been since the late 1980s. The Obama administration hopes to avoid this fate as it seeks to “reset” relations with Russia. But progress has come slowly and with great difficulty—best illustrated by the prolonged negotiations for a START follow-on treaty that the administration initially regarded as low-hanging fruit—which underscores the challenge confronting President Obama.

The obstacles impeding constructive U.S.-Russia relations have changed over time, and President Obama almost certainly faces the most daunting challenge thus far. During the Clinton and Bush administrations, Russia policy failed primarily because of disparities between American assumptions and the reality in Russia. The Clinton administration assumed that Russia would make rapid progress in building a free-market democracy, even if it understood that success would require a generation or more. Instead, in the 1990s, Russia endured a socioeconomic and political crisis of a scale unknown to any great power that had not been defeated in a great war. The Bush administration assumed that an increasingly weak Russia would welcome the opportunity to follow the United States’ lead in building a new world order based on American values. Instead, in the 2000s, Russia engineered a remarkable recovery. It reasserted itself as a major power pursuing an independent foreign policy that was often at odds with American objectives.

Whether the Obama administration has made similarly unreliable assumptions about Russia is less consequential than the challenges posed by the current global geopolitical context. The two previous administrations envisioned a post-Cold War world marked by the advance of democracy and free markets

under the leadership of the United States, deemed the “sole remaining superpower” or “indispensable nation” in contemporary rhetoric. This triumphalism reached its apogee under President Bush, who believed that the United States could use its military might unilaterally to reshape the world in its image. President Obama, however, does not find himself in this post–Cold War world. Rather, as a consequence of the failed policies of the Clinton and Bush administrations and, more important, of deeper-lying trends, the post–Cold War world as envisaged by American leaders has ended. The world has entered a period of great flux and uncertainty that will endure until a new global equilibrium is established.

This new world is unlike any the United States has encountered since it emerged as a great power a century ago. It is multipolar; it is global; it is globalized. The new global equilibrium will be built on a number of regional equilibriums in Europe, East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas. Isolationism is not an option for the United States as it was in the decades that preceded World War II. America’s security and well-being are too enmeshed in places and events beyond its borders to withdraw from the global stage.

Moreover, this new world is unlike any the United States has faced since it became permanently engaged in global affairs on the eve of its entry into World War II. There is no strategic foe (a Nazi Germany, an Imperial Japan, or a Soviet Union) to provide a central focus for U.S. foreign policy; there is no overarching goal (“unconditional surrender” or “containment”) to guide thinking on specific issues. Rather, the United States is facing a number of great powers and lesser regional ones with which it has—and will continue to have—varying relations of cooperation and competition. This situation is a familiar one to most other powers; it is a novelty for the United States.

Finally, the new world presents challenges to all states that are qualitatively different from those of the past. These challenges are produced by the very character of the international system, or more precisely, the dark side of globalization: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, pandemic diseases, climate change, and massive, unregulated transnational financial flows. No one state can master these challenges on its own; most international organizations, including the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, are inadequate. The need to cooperate on global issues only sharpens the contradictions in an international system in which states still operate—and compete with one another—on the basis of parochial assessments of national interest.

Thus the Obama administration will have to pursue a much more subtle and complex diplomacy than previous administrations have followed. The United States is—and will likely remain—the preeminent world power by any measure. But its margin of superiority is narrowing, and its mounting national debt will only further constrict its room for maneuver. The United States must establish its priorities and pursue them in a disciplined fashion.

This new world will necessitate a change in the institutional mindset of the American national security apparatus, which was profoundly shaped by the Cold War. The National Security Act of 1947 created the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Department (as part of a reorganization of the military) just as the State Department was rapidly growing to deal with permanent global responsibilities. The core of these agencies' worldview grew out of the global geopolitical, zero-sum, ideological contest with their Soviet counterparts. This worldview not only survived the Cold War, but thrived in the years thereafter. The sole consequential change was the loss of the other superpower as a restraining influence, which eventually led to the excesses of the second Bush administration.

As a result of altered circumstances, today and well into the future, the United States must do well what it has done poorly in the past: engage in multipolar, not simply multilateral, diplomacy. To advance its own interests, the United States will have to cooperate with other major powers. Cooperation will require that it pay greater heed to the interests of other powers and accommodate those interests to some degree to advance its own, for no effective cooperation will endure unless each major power believes its own interests have been sufficiently satisfied. As much as American leaders would like to set and lead the international agenda, that agenda will emerge from the welter of competing national interests, and leadership will be shared or else contested.

## RUSSIA AND AMERICAN INTERESTS

One of the most difficult relationships in this new world will be between the United States and Russia. The residual distrust and suspicion left by the bitter Cold War struggle have been exacerbated by the disappointments and reversals of the past twenty years. Yet Russia remains critical to the achievement of many American priorities. With its large nuclear arsenal and experience in nuclear matters, Russia is indispensable to any effort to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and, more specifically, to President Obama's signature goal of moving toward a world without nuclear weapons. As the largest exporter of hydrocarbons in the world, and as a major consumer of them, Russia is critical to global energy security and to managing climate change. By reason of its geographical location, vast resources, and political and economic ties, it has a central role to play in the construction of durable security structures in East Asia, the broader Middle East, and Europe. With one of the world's largest economies, Russia has an impact—though not as large as that of China or India—on global economic developments. In short, across this broad range of issues, the United States will always be better off if it can work with Russia rather than at cross-purposes.

Fostering cooperation with Russia will require the United States to make tough trade-offs and demonstrate a willingness to accommodate Russia's interests, at least to the extent that it does not jeopardize its own. Such an approach meets considerable resistance within the American foreign policy establishment and specifically within the government. "Trade-offs" are construed as "compromises of principles"; "accommodation" is taken to mean "appeasement." American officials would much prefer to deal with each discrete issue on its own merits, even if they understand that the overall atmosphere can help or hinder reaching agreement on specific matters. They have a fundamental belief that the United States can cooperate with Russia on shared interests while vigorously resisting Russia in other areas, a belief encapsulated in the Bush administration's short description of its approach to Russia: cooperate where we can; push back where we must.

For Russia, however, everything is linked; it believes in trade-offs. In Russia's view, if the United States wants cooperation on its high priorities, it must be willing to cooperate on Russia's. At a minimum, it must not actively seek to thwart Russia's efforts to advance key interests. In other words, there will be no progress on the American agenda without progress on Russia's. As a result, in developing an effective policy toward Russia, one that persuades Russia to help advance key American interests, the United States faces myriad challenges. Of particular import are the challenges of clashing interests, different priorities, and policy coherence.

## THE CHALLENGE OF CLASHING INTERESTS

Two related issues stand out because they lie at the core of Russia's self-identification as a great power: the former Soviet space and Russia's role in Europe.

The former Soviet space is also the former Imperial Russia space. Primacy in this region, if not outright domination, has historically given Russia geopolitical heft and formed an essential bulwark against external threats. In President Medvedev's formulation, Russia has a zone of "privileged interests" in this region. (He might have been tempted to declare a "sphere of influence" but likely realized that defending such a claim is beyond Russia's current capabilities.) At the same time, the United States is not prepared to recognize a Russian zone of any kind in the former Soviet space because it, too, has interests there—geopolitical and commercial, among others. Moreover, at least in the current era, the United States believes as a matter of world order that sovereign states have a right to determine a foreign-policy orientation consistent with their own national interests and priorities.

Stiff, at times behind-the-scenes, competition in this region poisoned the U.S.-Russia relationship during the Bush administration. Thus far, regional competition has not been a problem for the Obama administration. Its decision to mute any talk of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, together with

developments in these two countries, has tempered U.S.-Russia geopolitical competition in the former Soviet space. But tensions remain, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia, because of the continuing struggle over energy resources. These tensions persist despite growing cooperation on Afghanistan, including the increased shipment of war matériel across Russia and Central Asia by land and air to U.S. and NATO forces. Moreover, the easing of tensions that has occurred has come not from bilateral discussions on how to manage conflicting interests, but from unilateral decisions to hold back on controversial moves. As a result, the current calm is fragile. It takes little imagination to write scenarios that could quickly pit U.S. interests against Russia's (instability in Georgia or in the Fergana Valley in Central Asia, for example) and that could reverse the current positive trend in relations.

A similar situation arises with respect to Europe. Europe is the arena in which Russia has historically exercised its clout and revealed itself as a great power in contests with other European states. President Medvedev's call for revising European security architecture—to make security on the continent indivisible, or create equal security for all—is an effort to reinsert Russia into European affairs as NATO and EU actions push it to the margins. But the logic of European integration and NATO enlargement, particularly once the Balkans are brought fully into these processes, means that much of what happens in Europe (beyond the former Soviet space) is rightfully “internal” EU (or European) and NATO affairs, in which Russia's involvement should be minimal. In other words, the United States and the EU are working, by design or not, to keep Russia out of Europe proper while encouraging it to engage constructively with Europe on common challenges. Russia, for its part, intends to operate inside Europe while pursuing an independent policy as a great power.

Efforts to bring Russia constructively into European security arrangements have begun. NATO, for example, made an explicit attempt to engage Russia in its new strategic concept by sending a high-level group of experts to Moscow to listen to Russian concerns in early 2010. Successful management of conflicting interests entails redirecting Russia's great-power aspirations and demonstrations of influence away from Europe to Asia. It requires building U.S.-EU-Russia cooperation on security challenges that emanate from outside Europe, such as the rise of China and India as major economic and geopolitical players; nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction; counternarcotics, particularly with regard to Afghanistan; and instability in the broader Middle East. Addressing these issues will take considerable time, given Russia's views of its role in the world and the EU's aversion to developing the hard-power capabilities to operate effectively beyond Europe. Success is far from certain.

## THE CHALLENGE OF DIFFERENT PRIORITIES

The Obama administration has identified a number of shared interests to provide the basis for cooperation with Russia, including Iran and Afghanistan. But shared interests are not sufficient grounds for cooperation, particularly when those shared interests are embedded in different contexts and are assigned dramatically varied levels of priority.

As the Obama administration—and the Bush administration before it—has stated, Russia shares our interests in preventing Iran from developing or acquiring a nuclear weapon. The problem is that Iran’s nuclear program ranks at the top of the United States’ priorities, not Russia’s. (Russia’s new military doctrine, adopted in February 2010, puts nonproliferation sixth in a list of concerns, after NATO, strategic missile defense, and related matters.) Moreover, the two countries fix Iran’s nuclear program in radically different assessments of Iran. The United States sees a hostile Iran that supports international terrorism ( Hamas and Hezbollah), destabilizes the Persian Gulf, and oppresses its own people. Russia, by contrast, sees a constructive Iran that, as an important regional power, has played a positive role in Central Asia and the Caucasus (by not supporting the Chechen rebels as the West did) and that provides a market for Russian arms and civil nuclear projects (the Bushehr reactor). In addition, Iran holds large gas reserves, which, if developed, could compete for European gas markets now dominated by Russia. Since gas revenue provides a considerable share of Russia’s federal budget, tension between Iran and the United States that effectively blocks Iran from European markets also serves Russia’s interests.

These differences complicate any effort to cooperate on the shared interest of nuclear weapons, as current discussions of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran have underscored. The United States wants to cripple a hostile regime; Russia does not want to antagonize gratuitously an important—and largely friendly—neighbor.

Similarly, U.S. and Russian policies on Afghanistan are in broad agreement on preventing Afghanistan from becoming, once again, a haven for terrorists with global reach. But the United States and Russia understand the terrorist threat in different ways. For the United States, the key terrorist threat is al-Qaeda, the militant Islamic fundamentalist group that attacked on 9/11; it is prepared to make compromises with some Taliban factions on the condition that they refuse to provide sanctuary for al-Qaeda. For Russia, by contrast, it is precisely the Taliban that poses a threat to the region extending from Central Asia to Russia proper. Significantly, the Taliban fostered the insurgent Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and officially recognized and supported the Chechen separatists.

From this divergence in security concerns, other differences emerge. Russia, for example, wants to see a major poppy eradication program in Afghanistan because drug flows from Afghanistan feed an immense narcotics problem

in Russia. The United States, however, has been reluctant to launch such a campaign, fearing negative consequences for its counterterrorist operations against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Finally, whereas the United States hopes to sufficiently stabilize the situation in Afghanistan so that it can withdraw in a year or two, Russia is not opposed to the United States' becoming mired there. U.S. commitments in Afghanistan diminish the United States' ability to challenge Russia elsewhere while it helps contain the instability to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Given the sharp contrasts in these perspectives, it is hardly surprising that shared interests at one level have engendered uneven and halfhearted cooperation by Russia on Iran and Afghanistan. However displeasing it may be to the United States, Russia's position is not irrational given its own national interests. If the United States hopes to persuade Russia to be more helpful in addressing U.S. concerns, it has to satisfy Russia's needs to some extent. To create incentives for Russia to cooperate on Iran and Afghanistan, the United States can seek to alter Russia's priorities by providing offsetting benefits in the case of Iran; it can help Russia deal with its top challenges in Afghanistan, even if that detracts some resources from the United States' top priorities; or it can work to accommodate Russia's interests in the former Soviet space and Europe. The issue is quite simply whether the benefits of partnership with Russia outweigh the costs of obtaining it.

## THE CHALLENGE OF POLICY COHERENCE

Given the multitude of bureaucratic players and interested parties in Washington, policy coherence is a challenge on any issue. Bureaucratic stovepipes are the bane of good policy on complex issues. During the Cold War, the challenge of creating a unified policy toward the Soviet Union was attenuated because the Soviet Union lay at the center of all U.S. foreign policy. The United States looked at the world through the prism of its relations with its Soviet rival. Policies toward other countries or on most international questions were subordinate to the strategic goal of containment. In other words, there was an organizing principle for U.S. foreign policy as a whole, and specifically with regard to the Soviet Union.

Twenty-first-century Russia, while still important, is not at the center of U.S. foreign policy. The United States does not look at the rest of the world through the prism of its relations with Russia. Rather, the United States views Russia through the prisms of its relations with other countries or of other issues. For instance, Russia might have a predominant role in U.S. nonproliferation policy, but it is not the only major factor. Moreover, it is a relatively minor actor in U.S. policy on global economic governance, compared to Europe, Japan, China, and India. The same is true of counterterrorism, energy security, regional conflicts, climate change, and space exploration: Russia is a factor,



but not the sole nor generally the most important one. The situation is exacerbated at the working level inside the U.S. government: While there may be an official responsible for policy toward Russia, that official does not have the lead responsibility for the vast majority of issues that affect Russia. The National Security Council staff, for example, has different directorates with lead responsibility for nonproliferation, energy, counterterrorism, Europe, and Asia, among other issues. Similar divisions of responsibility exist at the Departments of State and Defense. In this environment, the integration of policy toward Russia is nearly impossible.

Integration must begin at a higher level. The lowest-level possibility is most likely the under secretary level, where an official might have responsibility for the full range of political, economic, or arms control issues. Further integration can be achieved at the higher levels of deputy secretary and secretary. But full integration is only possible at the level of the president, as only the president can resolve differences between the secretaries of state and defense, for example.

In short, for the United States to produce a coherent Russia policy, the president must be engaged. But the president, particularly President Obama, has other pressing matters to address, both domestic and foreign. That he has devoted considerable attention to Russia thus far is indeed surprising. But it defies logic to believe that he will continue to do so unless relations with Russia provide some tangible, significant benefits in the near term and offer prospects for major benefits in the future. The negotiation of a new START agreement in Spring 2010 was an important achievement that perhaps justified President Obama's intensive engagement during his first year in office. Nonetheless, the administration has yet to articulate a strategy going forward that would continue to justify a considerable commitment of the president's time and energy. Indeed, it may be looking for a justification to reduce its commitment: Progress on a current administration priority—building up U.S.-Russian commercial relations—would shift a considerable share of the burden of maintaining the relationship to the private sector.

For the United States, the Russia question boils down to a simple one, even if the answer lies in a web of contradictions, complexities, and unknowns. The price the United States should be willing to pay to gain Russia's cooperation depends on Russia's future. Is the United States facing a Russia in secular decline, a country enjoying a brief moment of resurgence in a downward trajectory? Or is it facing a Russia on the long-term rise after a decade or two of profound crisis and national humiliation? In other words, should the United States seek cooperation with Russia now for tactical advantage, while Russia's resurgence lasts, or should it seek strategic cooperation for the long term as Russia rebuilds? That, in a nutshell, is the Russian challenge to U.S. policy and the analytical community.

## PART II

# Formulating U.S. Policy toward Russia

Contributors in this section attempt to devise appropriate U.S. policy responses to the challenge Russia presents. Samuel Charap tackles the assignment by focusing on the alternative strategies urged on U.S. policy-makers for dealing with the way Russia plays its role in international economics, including the use of its vast oil and gas resources. He comes down on the side of what he calls a policy of “principled integration.” Keith Darden returns to the issue opened by Jeffrey Mankoff in Part I: the challenge posed by Russian policy in its immediate neighborhood. After identifying two subtle factors shaping the political terrain on which Moscow and Washington compete in this key area—the effects from the political vagaries surrounding property rights in these states and the risk of cultural cleavages being politicized—Darden then suggests ways for the United States to cope more effectively with both factors. H. E. Goemans, another of the international relations theorists in this volume, draws on his work dealing with personalistic leaders and the likelihood that their countries will be involved in international conflict. He concludes that Central Asia, a region with more than its share of this leadership type, will be conflict-prone, creating a serious policy challenge for Russia. Insofar as the United States should aid in minimizing this danger to advance its own interests, Goemans offers lessons from the success of U.S. policy responses after 1907 in Central America. These responses, he argues, helped end comparable violence in that region that had persisted for most of the prior century. Stephen Pifer concludes Part II with candid reflections on what in these essays is and is not likely to be useful or used by policy-makers.

## CHAPTER 5

# Principled Integration: A U.S. Policy Response to the Economic Challenge Posed by Russia

Samuel Charap

Economic ties are typically a low priority in formulating U.S. policy toward Russia. There are several good reasons for this tendency. First and foremost, trade and other economic considerations are of minimal importance in the U.S.-Russia relationship. Our trade turnover with Russia is miniscule relative to the size of both countries' total trade; we import a very small amount of Russia's hydrocarbons, its most important export; and foreign direct investment in both directions is not a major component of either economy's overall foreign direct-investment stock.

Second, Russia was not a significant or even coherent actor in the international economy for the first decade of its post-Soviet existence. As a result, "normal" economic ties with Russia are a relatively new phenomenon. In the 1990s, U.S. economic policy toward Russia focused on economic assistance, facilitation of economic reform, and work with international financial institutions on their lending projects—not the sort of relationship we have with other emerging markets.

Because the economic aspect of the bilateral relationship was largely insignificant, there was little controversy about how to shape policy in this sphere for the first decade after the Cold War. Issues such as facilitating trade, working with Russia on its World Trade Organization (WTO) accession, or trying to improve the investment environment for U.S. companies operating there did not spark the same acrimony in Washington as did security matters or human rights.

Moreover, the notion that integrating Russia into the international economy would supplement Western efforts to bolster Russia's economic reforms was also relatively uncontroversial. That such integration might have a liberalizing impact on Russia's politics was a less widely accepted notion, but even

those who doubted it shared similar policy prescriptions, if for different reasons. (Generally, their focus was on benefits for the U.S. economy.)

This situation has changed radically in the past five years. The policy response to Russia's role in the international economic system has become central to the debate about U.S. strategy. There are two schools of thought on what the response should be.

On the one hand, there are those who continue to emphasize the importance of integration and utilizing policy tools to boost the commercial ties between the two countries, for both economic and political reasons. On the other, there is a growing group of analysts and observers that rejects this posture and instead advocates a far more confrontational approach—what might be called a neocontainment policy. They caution against integration, or in some cases call for isolation, and focus on ways to counter Russia's economic activities abroad. With every new headline about Russia's alleged use of its natural-resource wealth as a “political tool” this point of view has become more common.

These two conceptions of the U.S. policy response to the economic challenge Russia poses might seem irreconcilable. But a well-thought-out strategy can address the concerns of neocontainment advocates while retaining core “integrationist” principles, which from a long-term perspective are fundamentally sound. This paper proposes such a strategy, termed “principled integration,” and suggests tactics, such as building relationships with institutions instead of individuals, demonstrating “strategic persistence” with the integration process, and seeking common ground with Moscow on economic ties, that policy-makers can employ to implement it.

## THE CASE FOR INTEGRATION

A number of justifications can be made for putting integration at the center of the U.S. economic policy response to Russia. First, the more Russia is tied into the international economic system—which is essentially an element of the West—the more of a stake it has in preserving and bolstering that system. If excluded, Russia could become a fully revanchist power, a state intent on thwarting Western interests and challenging the existing global economic order. Indeed, some of its recent behavior suggests it might be heading in that direction.

Integration is therefore an important means of “managing Russia's rise,” to borrow a phrase associated with U.S. policy toward China. In other words, engagement and integration present an opportunity for the United States to shape Russia's external posture. A Russia integrated into the international economic system will be a more responsible stakeholder in that system.

Today, Russia is far from a responsible stakeholder. Often both in word and (less frequently) in deed Moscow has challenged the existing international economic system. For several years, the Kremlin has been decrying the exist-

ing international financial architecture. At the St. Petersburg Economic Summit in 2007, then-President Vladimir Putin declared that the “existing organizations aren’t capable of regulating international relations. The structures that were created in the interest of a small number of active players now appear archaic, undemocratic, and inept.”<sup>1</sup> However, similar words spoken in Fall 2008 by current President Dmitry Medvedev in the midst of the global economic crisis were seen as constructive and almost mirrored Western leaders’ statements.

While there are many examples of Russia’s rejection of international economic norms, such as the European Energy Charter, Moscow has acted constructively on several occasions. Russia is now a net donor to the World Bank’s lending activities, and in recent years it has contributed to the Bank’s programs and sought its advice on policy issues, such as housing and communal-services reform and energy efficiency. Such behavior suggests that the path toward becoming a responsible stakeholder remains open.

Second, closer economic ties could improve the overall climate of U.S.-Russia relations, thereby making discussion of other, more divisive issues possible. A less antagonistic atmosphere will by no means necessarily lead to agreement, but a climate of goodwill created by closer economic ties should increase the chances for productive dialogue.

Further, robust economic relations could add, as the Brookings Institution’s Steven Pifer puts it, “ballast that could cushion the overall relationship against differences on other issues.”<sup>2</sup> Presently there are remarkably few stakeholders in the U.S.-Russia relationship in either country. In the case of U.S.-China ties, the vast number of American firms with economic interests at stake helps prevent radical swings in the bilateral dialogue. By contrast, Washington’s relations with Moscow all too often have rested on flimsy foundations such as the personal bonds between presidents. Increased commercial ties would create a group of private actors in both countries that could provide an anchor to the bilateral relationship. The example of China shows that such a group can play an important role in stabilizing relations and keeping open lines of communication.

Third, the United States could reap substantial economic benefits from new investment opportunities, increased trade, and greater inward investment achieved through engagement and integration. The low starting point for commercial ties (between 2000 and 2008, U.S. trade with Russia was thirteen times lower than the total trading volume with China) suggests that major gains could be made in relatively short order.

The converse—that stronger economic relations with the United States could increase prosperity in Russia—is another reason to pursue integration. Greater prosperity in Russia will add to the ranks of the country’s middle

1. [http://www.newsru.com/russia/13jun2007/peter\\_forum.html](http://www.newsru.com/russia/13jun2007/peter_forum.html).

2. Steven Pifer, “Reversing the Decline: An Agenda for U.S.-Russian Relations in 2009,” Brookings Institution Policy Paper No. 10, January 2009, 2.

class. While studies have shown that Russia's middle class is by no means a great believer in democracy and is especially skeptical about the appropriateness of a democratic system for the country, they are overwhelmingly in favor of free-market norms and are more positive about the impact of economic reforms than their less well-off counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the growth of this cohort could put pressure on the political leadership to liberalize the economy, or at least to attach costs to the reversal of market reforms.

The causal linkage among prosperity, a free market, and a more democratic political system is disputed. But the chances for democratic consolidation have been shown to increase in countries with the rise in the middle-class share of overall gross domestic product. Moreover, new evidence suggests that nations with "contract-intensive" economies are less likely to engage each other in fatal conflicts than democracies that lack such economies. (There were no such conflicts among the former in the period 1965 to 2001, while there were several among the latter.) In other words, "democratic peace" might in fact be "capitalist peace," and therefore it is certainly in the U.S. interest that the only other nuclear superpower be a market economy.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, economic integration is a means by which the U.S. government can promote Western values in Russia. Russia's increased cooperation with international economic institutions could embed norms in its economic policy sphere that are associated with open societies, such as the rule of law and property rights, and also could reinforce and deepen the free market. Even engagement that stops short of membership with organizations such as the WTO or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) carries with it obligations to adhere to internationally accepted norms of behavior. Much of the change in Russian laws and regulations in commercial and corporate law over the past decade can be attributed to the need to act in accordance with international practice. One example is the 2001 Customs Code, which was written to comply with the Kyoto Convention, the international standard for customs procedures.

The integration of Russia's private sector firms into the international economic system has also had a palpable impact. When Russian enterprises have significant ties to Western and especially U.S. firms (given our stricter laws), they face increased demands to comply with relevant legal statutes. For example, if a U.S. firm has an investment in or trade dealings with a Russian company, the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act necessitates investigations of potential sales representatives, sales agents, and even employees. If a U.S. firm acquires a controlling stake in a Russian enterprise or opens a subsidiary, all ethics codes required by U.S. law must be implemented. More generally, greater access to global markets achieved through integration incentivizes

3. See Sergei Guriev, Maxim Trudolyubov, and Aleh Tsyvinski, "Russian Attitudes Toward the West," CEFIR/NES Working Paper Series, <http://www.econ.yale.edu/faculty1/tsyvinski/WP135.pdf> and <http://www.ispr.ru/SOCOPROS/socopros206.html>.

4. Michael Mousseau, "The Social Market Roots of Democratic Peace," *International Security* 33 (4) (2009): 52–86.

better corporate governance, since those firms that meet international standards are far more likely to succeed. According to a report by the International Business Leaders Forum, these incentives have already changed enterprises' behavior.<sup>5</sup>

## THE NEOCONTAINMENT CRITIQUE

A vocal group of analysts and scholars in Washington and beyond is deeply skeptical that integration could precipitate these outcomes. Further, they consider the integrationist agenda naive and imply that pursuing it could undermine the U.S. national interest. Their critique rests on several assertions about Russia's motives, namely that Moscow seeks to use its newfound economic might almost exclusively as a means to thwart the United States and our allies; to employ energy as a tool of its foreign policy, subjugating its neighbors and bringing Europe to heel; to undermine the existing global economic system; to embed and extend its corrupt elite patron-client relationships in other countries in order to extract ever greater rents and increase political control; and to manipulate the price of hydrocarbons by colluding with other exporters. As two observers put it:

The geo-economic and geopolitical implications of Russia's economic power projection abroad cannot be overstated. As the Russian state's main source of revenues and as a foreign policy arm, it enables the Kremlin to extend Russia's influence on a global scale. . . . The Kremlin has made it clear it intends to diminish America's standing as a world leader by promoting a "multipolar" world, and by using its military, economic, and "soft" power to re-establish Russia as America's closest competitor.<sup>6</sup>

Their prescription for policy-makers is clear: contain the threat posed by Russia's international economic behavior and find ways to mitigate it. Further, they argue, Russia should be kept out of the Western institutions of which it is not already a member, and serious consideration should be given to removing Russia from those in which it does participate.

The neocontainment strategy has the appeal of seeming tough on Russia. However, it is likely to worsen the very trends that its proponents find objectionable. Isolating Russia could make the Kremlin less likely to cooperate with

5. International Business Leaders Forum, "Improving Business Standards in Russia: Actions and Results" (2007), [www.iblf.org/docs/RussiaBizStandards.pdf](http://www.iblf.org/docs/RussiaBizStandards.pdf).

6. Ariel Cohen and Lajos F. Szaszdi, "Russia's Drive for Global Economic Power: A Challenge for the Obama Administration," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder #2235, January 30, 2009, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/bg2235.cfm>. While refuting them is not the focus of this paper, it should be noted that several of the assertions about Russia's intentions that undergird neocontainment are dubious or at least overstated.

the international economic system, could undermine those in Russia who wish to deepen connections with the West, and could empower the reactionary hawks in the Russian political establishment who prefer a “fortress Russia” model, complete with tight political controls, a closed economy, domination in the former Soviet region, and greater confrontation and competition with the United States and its allies. Isolation would also eliminate external leverage or incentives for reform.

## PRINCIPLED INTEGRATION

Neocontainment advocates bring to the fore the direct challenges—they would say threats—that Russia’s external economic policy poses to U.S. interests. Their prescriptions might be counterproductive, but their arguments highlight Russian actions that render the integrationist agenda an inadequate policy strategy. Some have argued for adopting a middle ground, calling for limited engagement, or what one observer has called “hedged cooperation and integration.”<sup>7</sup> Pursuing the integration agenda willy-nilly with an “illiberal, patrimonial, authoritarian” Russia, these critics argue, “would give the Kremlin the resources of globalization without the rules, constraints, and competition-inducing aspects of political and economic liberalization. It would feed Moscow’s power and leverage.”<sup>8</sup>

If integration provides Russia all the benefits of the international economic system but exempts it from all the rules (and thus liberalizing pressures), then it is certainly not an optimal approach. Integration, however, need not be abandoned if it is part of a broader policy response that is guided by core Western principles and values and that ensures strategic preparedness. Rather than consciously hedging on the integration agenda, the United States should make it the foundation of a more comprehensive strategy.

A component of this strategy must be to use the norms that govern our political and economic institutions to shape our approach to Russia as an economic actor. We must move beyond declarations and take these principles and values seriously when formulating policy. In cooperating with Russia in international institutions, this stance would entail making no exceptions to the rules to allow for Russia’s entrance or to ensure its participation for political reasons. We cannot make special-case exceptions for Russia on economic matters in order to facilitate cooperation in other spheres.

As we plan new multilateral economic institutions that involve Russia, we should ensure that whatever structures result maintain an emphasis on transparency and accountability. In terms of bilateral trade, this aspect of our pol-

7. Peter Rudolf, “Towards a Common Transatlantic Strategy in Dealing with Russia?” *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP Comments* 22, October 2008.

8. Celeste A. Wallander, “Russian Transimperialism and Its Implications,” *The Washington Quarterly* 30 (2) (2007): 120.



icy response implies vigorous enforcement of our laws, in particular the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, anti-money laundering regulations, and related legislation. It also demands that we cajole our European allies into adopting similar codes of conduct for their businesses.

We also should not let our dialogue with Moscow on economic issues devolve into mere business promotion. Policy discussions should be a consistent component of this interaction, in particular on issues like property rights and the rule of law. Finally, a principled approach to Russia also calls for the development of clear rules on the activities of state-controlled or state-owned firms. While these entities do not represent an inherent threat to U.S. national security, they do deserve special scrutiny given their unique structure.

A strategy that reflects values also requires their consistent application. In our energy diplomacy, this requirement means adhering to our own principle that pipelines should be commercially viable. In terms of inward foreign direct investment, it means maintaining a nondiscriminatory environment for Russian investment in the U.S. economy. The United States has sufficient legal tools to protect its national interest in this sphere, especially following the passage of the Foreign Investment and National Security Act, which altered the procedures governing the activities of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

Technically there are no greater structural impediments to Russian investment than there are to investment from other countries, but Russian investors on several occasions have shied away from new projects because of fear of discrimination. If Russian enterprises are prepared to abide by American laws and regulatory requirements, they should not be subjected to additional impediments to investing here. If we ask Russia to treat U.S. companies fairly, we must be prepared to do the same in return.

The policy strategy of maintaining an emphasis on integration while adhering to values can be referred to as principled integration. This strategy should be complemented by strategic preparedness—that is, the United States should ensure that it has adequate capacity to respond to any challenges to its interests posed by Russia’s external economic posture. This goal requires a multifaceted effort, much of which falls under the rubric of “getting our house in order,” especially when it comes to our European allies’ energy policy. Preparedness measures in this area include creating a single market for gas, diversifying supply and transit options, and increasing the role of renewables and alternatives.<sup>9</sup>

Being adequately prepared also means developing the analytical capacity and maintaining the composure necessary to assess Russia’s intentions accurately and avoid false assumptions about its behavior. For instance, assertions about the Kremlin’s motives put forth by neocontainment advocates have become conventional wisdom in Washington and reflect common tropes in Western

9. See Jeffrey Mankoff, *Eurasian Energy Security*, Council on Foreign Relations Special Report No. 43, February 2009, 25–39.

media coverage. But many of these assertions are overblown, and some are simply false.

The allegation that Moscow uses energy as a tool of foreign policy is an apt example. While it is true that there are several strategically consequential cases in which Gazprom, the state-controlled gas giant that has a monopoly over gas export, or Transneft, the fully state-owned oil pipeline operator, engaged in behavior that served a declared foreign policy goal, often these goals were consistent with commercial objectives. Further, the demands of the balance sheet sometimes operate at cross-purposes with the interests of the state, and in some cases commercial concerns prevail, as the deterioration in the relationship between Russia and Turkmenistan in 2009 demonstrated. Though a mysterious pipeline explosion provided Gazprom some justification, its interest in buying less Turkmen gas (essentially because it had no one to sell it to) led to an unprecedented row between the two countries and an acceleration of Ashgabat's efforts to boost its energy links with China.

In short, it would be erroneous to assume that the actions of Russia's energy firms are exclusively intended to further the foreign policy objectives of the state. Effective strategic preparedness must entail maintaining the ability to assess Russia's actions as objectively as possible.

## TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementing principled integration will take a level of creativity and inter-agency coordination that the U.S. government is rarely able to muster. A complete implementation blueprint is beyond the scope of this paper, but below are three tactics that can be adopted to realize this strategy. These tactics are not meant to be systematic, nor are they intended to accomplish the strategy in themselves. They should, however, be part and parcel of the policy approach.

### *Institutions, Not Individuals*

First, we should focus on finding institutional, not individual, counterparts in Russia. All too often the character of U.S.-Russia economic interaction has been determined by relationships between individual decision-makers. The relationships between Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin and George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin are the most prominent examples, but there are others as well. In the 1990s, there were close relationships between various U.S. policy-makers and the so-called young reformers in Russia, especially Anatoly Chubais. Reliance on these personal ties was bound to lead to wild vacillations in the bilateral relationship, especially when Yeltsin was in office and high-ranking officials changed or lost their jobs at a rapid pace.

It also meant that U.S. and other Western officials were not always talking to the people in Moscow who were actually making decisions. Instead, they chose familiar faces. For example, on August 15, 1998, just days before

the financial crisis, high-ranking International Monetary Fund and U.S. officials headed to Moscow for high-level talks on avoiding the impending catastrophe. Rather than meeting with the prime minister or a delegation of negotiators, they met with Chubais (who was only a special envoy at that point) and Yegor Gaidar, another favorite counterpart. Gaidar had no post in the government; indeed, he had been out of office for several years. Not surprisingly, the two did not deliver on any of the vague commitments that were made at the meeting.

Cultivating personal relationships with those in power is crucial when interacting with a personalistic political system such as Russia's. But it is nonetheless crucial to build strong ties between institutions. Here the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission, established by Presidents Obama and Medvedev to broaden the discussions between the two governments, represents a step in the right direction. The United States, however, should also support partnerships among nongovernmental organizations and business associations and their Russian counterparts to broaden ties beyond the state-to-state level.

### *Strategic Persistence*

A second important tactic is what can be called strategic persistence when it comes to Russia's international integration. Attempts at integration in the post-Cold War era inevitably began with high hopes that were subsequently dashed, producing a period of hand-wringing and disappointment. Therefore policy-makers and observers would be well served to temper their expectations about the possibility of success for the integrationist approach. Even when Russia's integration into the international economic system moves forward, officials should not expect an instantaneous change in its behavior. The integration project itself is a long-term enterprise, and the impact of integration on Russian actions will be palpable only years later. Further, this impact may not necessarily produce behavior that is always to our liking.

In other words, the integrationist approach requires a high—perhaps impossibly high given the political stakes attached to the U.S.-Russia relationship—level of patience. Frustration at both real and imagined failures to integrate Russia is a common theme in U.S.-Russia relations in the post-Cold War era. Continued disappointments often lead to “integration fatigue”: “We tried, it didn't work, so why bother?” Russia's apparent rejection of WTO membership in favor of the Customs Union with Kazakhstan and Belarus might well produce this reaction.

When steps toward integration are taken but Russia continues to behave in ways we find troubling, the first instinct of many in Washington is to reject the integrationist approach altogether. The prime example is the call to remove Russia from the G8; after all, membership in the club was conferred on Moscow as a sign of the West's endorsement of Yeltsin-era reforms and as an attempt to ensure they would not be reversed. This attitude also is evident in the growing reluctance in the West to allow Russian firms, especially state-controlled

ones, to list on Western exchanges. Rosneft, the state-controlled oil major, is listed on the London Stock Exchange, but little change can be observed in its corporate governance or behavior internationally. So why give other state-controlled or even state-influenced enterprises the opportunity to enrich their beneficiaries and the bankers who orchestrate the initial public offerings?

Integration fatigue has caused some observers to call into question the utility of integration per se. Since Russia's current level of integration and its overwhelming need for the expertise and technology that greater integration would bring have not already liberalized its economy, they see no reason why we should continue engaging Moscow on these issues. But U.S. policy-makers should not be deterred by the lack of visible progress. The impact of integration is unlikely to be palpable for years, and the effects of increased prosperity are tectonic shifts, not short-term developments.

To stay the course of integration, a posture of strategic persistence should be adopted. Such a posture begins by accepting that integration is a long-term enterprise. It calls for policy-makers to persevere even if Russia takes steps back from the integrationist path. Abetting Russia's drift away from Western institutions and norms is not in the national interest of the United States. Still, there are limits to what Washington should do if the Kremlin simply is not prepared to reciprocate.

### *Find Common Ground*

Searching for areas of common ground represents a third tactic that can help realize the strategy outlined above. Often economic relations between the United States and Russia boil down to mutual recriminations and an exclusive focus on divisive issues. "Trade wars" are part and parcel of our relationships with even our closest allies, but U.S.-Russia interaction in this sphere often seems to be dominated exclusively by disputes. Examples include imports of U.S. meat products, Russia's failure to implement its obligations under the bilateral WTO accession protocol, Russian customs procedures and corruption, U.S. export controls, U.S. sanctions against Russian enterprises, and the Jackson-Vanik amendment, among others.

Rarely, if ever, do the two sides focus on mutually beneficial issues. The only exception in recent memory is the 123 agreement on civil nuclear cooperation. But this initiative stalled following Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008, and it no longer appears to be on the agenda.

Other possibilities for engagement have been largely overlooked. Elsewhere I have suggested two such avenues: facilitation of Russia's OECD bid and cooperation on energy efficiency.<sup>10</sup> The former does not involve the same con-

10. See *After the "Reset": A Strategy and New Agenda for U.S. Russia Policy* (Center for American Progress, July 2009), [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/after\\_reset.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/after_reset.html); and *The Neglected Challenge: U.S.-Russia Climate and Energy Efficiency Cooperation* (Center for American Progress, June 2009), [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/06/neglected\\_challenge.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/06/neglected_challenge.html).

tentious bilateral trade issues as WTO accession does, and it offers similar benefits in terms of improvements in the rule of law and property rights. The latter is potentially even more attractive: it is a priority of both presidents, entails public-private partnerships, could benefit industry in both countries, has environmental benefits, and could bolster cooperation between scientific communities.

## CONCLUSION

Principled integration will no doubt face many challenges. Most prominent among them is the Kremlin's rejection of Russia's full-fledged integration into the world economy. Instead, it has chosen an approach that can be characterized as managed integration, the international economic policy analogy to managed democracy. The fear that both globalization and democracy, if unchecked, can undermine the regime, and thus Russia's national security, drives the Kremlin to manage them both.

The Russian leadership is unwilling to accept the reality that true integration erodes national sovereignty and freedom in decision-making. Indeed, as the Carnegie Endowment's Dmitri Trenin notes, for the Kremlin integration "implies promoting contacts with the international community in general, not joining any one of its parts."<sup>11</sup> Moscow also sees integration as a means of achieving growth, not an end in itself. As a result, the Russian leadership has chosen to increase Russia's international ties, but to tightly control the process. Just as managed democracy has preserved the formal aspects of democracy without the substance of democratic norms and practices, managed integration allows for the partial internationalization of the Russian economy without true openness and interdependence. Both concepts demonstrate contradictory instincts: a desire simultaneously to encourage and constrain socioeconomic processes along with an understanding of the necessity and desirability of these processes but a deep anxiety about their possible consequences.

The approach of Russia's current leadership, however, should not force a reconsideration of the principled integration strategy. Russia's integration into the international economic system offers the possibility to shape its external behavior, encourage reform of its domestic political and economic systems, increase prosperity, improve the overall climate of bilateral ties, and promote fundamental Western values. Of course, there is no guaranteed causal linkage between integration and these outcomes, which, if they do materialize, could occur years from now. Nonetheless, principled integration represents the most effective policy strategy for furthering U.S. national interests.

11. Dmitri Trenin, "Realpolitik Moskvy," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 9, 2004.

## CHAPTER 6

# Conditional Property and Regional Political Cultures: Challenges for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Space

Keith A. Darden

For the past decade, the international political environment of the post-Soviet territories has been somewhat akin to the early Cold War. The United States and Russia are often depicted as competing for influence in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan in a way similar to the competition once seen for control of Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, and Germany. In the contemporary contest, the United States promotes freer markets, private control over key economic assets, the victory of pro-Western (and anti-Russian) parties and candidates in competitive elections, and cooperation with the NATO military alliance. Russia, in this view, is often cast in the role of a spoiler: giving counsel and countenance to authoritarian regimes, undermining efforts to incorporate post-Soviet states into the alliances and institutions that are central to U.S. policy, and seeking to preserve opaque and personalistic control over key economic resources (oil, gas, and metals, for example) in order to limit Western access and enhance Russian influence.

Russia, however, does not always play the spoiler to U.S. policy goals; there are many areas in which U.S. and Russian interests align in the region. There has been and will continue to be regional cooperation between the United States and Russia on a number of technical fronts, on counterterrorism, and on nuclear proliferation. It is also evident that while Russia has often played the *rhetorical* spoiler by decrying U.S. involvement and intervention in the region, in *practice* Russia has been relatively restrained. An aggressive Russian policy toward its neighbors could have been successful in fomenting the secession of northern Kazakhstan, Crimea, and much of southern and eastern Ukraine, and certainly would have presented a greater obstacle to

U.S. efforts in Central Asia and Iran. In addition, the stakes are not as high now for either Russia or the United States as they were in the Cold War; the struggle for influence in the post-Soviet region is not a top priority for either country. Nonetheless, the view that the United States and Russia are competing for influence over the states in the region—however one characterizes the intentions of either side—is reasonably accurate. Moreover, this assessment underpins much of the contemporary thinking about U.S.-Russia policy toward former Soviet territories, in both Moscow and Washington.

In this essay, I draw attention to two structural challenges within the post-Soviet states that significantly influence how this struggle plays out and that have been underappreciated in U.S. policy development to date. The two challenges are: 1) the fusion of political and economic power and the persistence of an economy based on “conditional property” instead of private property; and 2) the deep cultural cleavages in key countries in the region, most notably Ukraine, that consistently lead to political divides and have the potential to lead to secession and war. Neither of these conditions can be altered through U.S. policy in the short term. But regardless of whether the underlying conditions can be altered, policy crafted with an awareness of these challenges may be more effective than policies crafted without. We must think of ways to manage the U.S.-Russia relationship that will not lead to direct conflict or significant harm to major U.S. policy objectives in the region, paying attention to the short term as well as the long term.

This essay briefly discusses how the two challenges might be managed more effectively in U.S. policy toward Russia and the Soviet successor states. I put forth policy suggestions that simultaneously avoid conflict and advance U.S. goals in the region. My broader argument emphasizes that effective U.S. foreign policy depends on attentiveness to the peculiarities of the *local* post-Communist environment. I suggest that by accommodating rather than aggravating the Russophile cultural attachments across the region and by applying international pressure to limit the economic expropriation that accompanies political change, we can forge closer ties to the countries in the region while promoting democracy and bolstering territorial integrity.

## THE PERSISTENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF “CONDITIONAL PROPERTY”

The peculiar political economy of the region is based on “conditional” rather than “private” property. What is conditional property, and how does it impact U.S.-Russia relations in the region? How might U.S. policy be altered or improved by taking it into account? The term “conditional property” implies that one’s right to control and determine the use of an asset is conditional on one’s political influence. In this system, rights, particularly property rights, are not guaranteed generally. One has the right to use an asset only insofar as one

has the personal political clout to preserve it. Anyone who wishes to engage in economic activity of his own design must have or establish a network of political and administrative patrons to protect his property.

How does this fusion of political power and economic control influence the politics of the region and U.S. policy goals? First, the persistence of conditional property arrangements makes elections dangerous, high-stakes events that many of the most powerful actors in the region would prefer to avoid. The fate of one's economic assets is determined by the fate of one's political patrons (or political-administrative agents: it is not always clear who is working for whom in these relationships). As a result, competitive elections are avoided entirely in some cases, and the losers in elections (legitimately or not) invest heavily in street mobilization to question, invalidate, and overturn the results. Even in nondemocratic countries in the region, the uncertainty associated with political succession carries enormous risks. If property were private and secure and the state simply made policy, the costs of losing an election would be tolerable. When property is contingent on political control, winners really can take all.

The support for authoritarianism ("managed democracy") among post-Soviet elites stems from a natural desire for continuity, security, and predictability when the losses associated with change could be significant. The demand for authoritarianism is really a demand for secure property. A long-term U.S. policy goal should be to ensure that the continuity and security these elites seek can be provided by a stable and genuine private property regime rather than a nondemocratic political regime in which the same people remain in power. Until we substitute private property for conditional property, there will be only a false stability and repeated crises of succession in nondemocratic regimes. Russia initiated a novel and perhaps workable solution to the problem of succession: a partial succession, whereby the incumbent yielded the presidency but did not yield all the reins of power. It remains to be seen whether this form of gradual, partial succession is stable over the long term.

The persistence of conditional property regimes in virtually all post-Soviet states significantly influences international affairs in the region because of the involvement of Russian companies in neighboring countries and the importance of regional trade. Russia and Russian companies have natural interests in their former Soviet neighbors. Trade between neighboring countries is mutually beneficial. Markets for the region's consumer goods are regional. Even twenty years after the collapse of Communism, quality goods produced in the region are typically known only within the region. It is often Russian investors who have the language, cultural skills, and know-how to turn a profit in the peculiar environment. Their combination of political influence and economic resources is a more compatible form of corporate governance for companies in the region. In short, Russian economic involvement in the post-Soviet states is both inevitable and welcome.



Because of the peculiar fusion of economic and political power associated with the conditional property regime, Russian economic activity necessitates a certain degree of Russian involvement in the domestic politics of its neighbors. So long as the control and ownership of assets require local political influence, and Russian companies have an economic stake in their neighbors, Russia has no choice but to be involved deeply in its neighbors' political affairs. To the extent that U.S. policy goals seek to elect new leaders and new parties and to preserve electoral competition in the absence of guarantees for existing stakeholders, the United States will face a coalition of local elites and external Russian patrons who have an interest in preserving stability and continuity. These "spoiler coalitions" are often effective in undermining U.S. policy goals.

U.S. support for regime change, economic reform, and electoral competition would be more effective when taking the real political economy of these countries into account. Confronting the spoiler coalitions directly with our own international-local coalition (along the lines of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine) is not necessary, would likely be ineffective, and, if successful, would be unlikely to endure. If democracy is equated with disenfranchisement and appropriation of assets, it is not likely to persist. If Russian companies and Russian assets are expropriated as a result of electoral competition, the demand by both Russian and local elites for authoritarianism is likely to undermine U.S. efforts to promote democracy. In games where winners take all, those with an investment try to head off any competition. To succeed and avoid the development of a powerful internal-external (local-Russian) spoiler coalition in U.S. democratization and other policy efforts, U.S. policy might be geared toward:

- 1) Providing economic guarantees to potential electoral losers, including, but not limited to, broad amnesty for ill-gotten gains and corruption during the previous terms of office;
- 2) Limiting the expropriation that traditionally follows changes in power (often under the guise of "reform"), even and perhaps especially in cases where U.S.-favored candidates are the victors; and
- 3) Engineering a shift from conditional property to private property over the long term through:
  - a. Greater publicity around instances of property expropriation. The vast majority of cases of expropriation is unnoticed by the international community. Only a few high-profile cases (Khodorkovsky, for example) gain international attention. Establishing a network of NGOs that tracks these phenomena at the oblast level, engages in advocacy, and compiles data nationally would be an essential first step.
  - b. Diplomatic pressure to prevent the expropriation of assets that is similar to international pressure to protect dissidents and human rights.

- c. A recognition that efforts to “fight corruption” in these societies tend to be thinly veiled efforts to expropriate and re-allocate the assets of those who have lost their political influence. Corruption will be uprooted as noncorrupt practices come to be profitable and standardized and as the elite cooperates to make a collective shift to different business practices. It will not be defeated by individual prosecutions of the corrupt.

## CULTURAL CLEAVAGES

One of the key problems we confront in post-Soviet states is the prospect that cultural cleavages within these countries will be politicized and lead to conflicts that will bring Russian involvement and/or the involvement of the United States or its allies. Many U.S. policies activate and exacerbate these cleavages in ways that can threaten the integrity of our intended partners.

The potential for U.S.-Russian conflict associated with these cultural cleavages was highlighted most recently in South Ossetia and has been a persistent issue in politics in Ukraine. Nearly all states in the region have sharp cleavages in political culture stemming from the complex imperial history of Eurasia. In the past twenty years, these cleavages have presented the most significant threats within the region. The activation of regional divisions led to bloody civil wars in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Moldova, and Russia. Kyrgyzstan experiences persistent tensions between its north and south, involving both Russia and Uzbekistan. Ukraine is a deeply divided society; its divisions have only increased and become more politicized, raising the specter of secession and violence.

The nature of these cultural cleavages has often been misunderstood. They are not, for the most part, based on language or ethnicity. Rather, they are differences in popular attitudes and loyalties; understanding them requires a good bit of local knowledge. The divide in Ukraine, for example, is not between Russians and Ukrainians. Nor is it between Russian-speakers and Ukrainian-speakers, agricultural regions and industrial regions, Eastern and Western Christianity, or East and West. Instead, it arises from distinctive cultural “regions” in the country stemming from different imperial legacies. How regions within these countries configure on different salient issues, or how they break out in support of different political parties and presidential candidates, is essential for understanding the politics of these countries.

Ukrainian politics in particular cannot be understood without an appreciation of these cultural cleavages. Taking cleavages into account, the politics becomes highly predictable. The prospect of NATO membership, for example, cleaves the country along a predictable divide. Broad support exists only in the three former territories of Habsburg Galicia, and this reality is unlikely

to change so long as NATO is perceived as an anti-Russia and U.S.-dominated alliance. In contrast, support within the country cleaves along entirely different lines on matters of Russian language and cultural policy. The electoral salience of these issues has led to the Orange-Blue partisan divide in contemporary Ukrainian electoral politics and to deep, durable support for a Russophile party, such as the Party of Regions. Ukraine is not unique in this respect. Most countries in the region face significant regional divisions of one form or another, and the political salience of certain issues can cleave these countries in fairly short order as well.

These kinds of cultural divides are typical of post-Communist states more generally. Romania is sharply divided politically between the former Ottoman and Habsburg territories. Poland is still split along its old imperial partition boundaries: Poles living in the Prussian partition consistently elect more liberal politicians even though ninety years have passed since the unification of Poland. The correlation between imperial boundaries and contemporary voting is so close that the best predictor of which party would win an electoral district in the 2007 legislative elections in Poland was whether that district fell within the Prussian partition prior to 1918. The same was true for the most recent Romanian elections, which were dominated by a distinction between formerly Habsburg and formerly Ottoman (Moldavia, Walachia, Dobrogea) sections of the country. Although Ukraine's imperial legacies are more varied and complex than any other country in Eurasia, Ukrainian elections are increasingly divided between the former eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian imperial province of Novorossija, or "New Russia" (in the south and east of the country, where the pro-Russian Party of Regions is dominant), and the "Orange" center and west. For the policy-maker, these cultural divisions are received as fixed conditions. Nothing can be done to alter them in the short term, and potentially little can be done over the long term. Moreover, as the electoral systems mature, the regional voting patterns appear to be solidifying and getting closer to the boundaries of the empires out of which these countries were constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Why are these cleavages relevant to U.S. policy? Because in most of these countries, there exist one or more substantial regions with a strong cultural bond to Russia, or "Russophile regions." Support for close relations with Russia, for the persistence of Russian culture, and, in some cases, for political integration with Russia runs very high in these regions. To the extent that U.S. policy is perceived as a threat to Russian interests or to Russian dignity or an honored and revered Soviet past, or to the extent that the U.S. government is seen to ally itself with domestic political forces that promote the eradication of Russian cultural influences, these regional blocs can become powerful centrifugal movements leading to threats to territorial integrity. U.S. policy that raises the salience of issues located along lines of cultural cleavage will cause internal divisions that bring Russian involvement, the potential collapse

of the state, and (in the case of South Ossetia) international conflict. NATO expansion is one such issue for these countries.

Although these political-cultural cleavages are relatively fixed, they can be managed or manipulated in ways that substantially impact U.S. interests in the region and our relationship with Russia. As in the case with political-economic and property issues, there are often international-local spoiler coalitions that form along cultural lines and that present a challenge to U.S. policy. Very often the two groups are combined. In Ukraine, for example, industrialists seeking to preserve their holdings in the south and east of Ukraine in the face of threats posed by Tymoshenko and the Orange coalition also find deep popular support for an agenda to counter NATO membership and sustain deep cultural ties with and affinities for Russia. Similarly, bonds between Russia and South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transdnier are genuine. In these cases, Russophilia and a strong attachment to a Soviet past are driving secession and preventing integration as significantly as are Russian security interests and the presence of Russian forces and aid. Inattention to these cultural attachments and the genuine bonds that exist between local Russophiles, Russian military forces, and the Russian government have exacerbated these conflicts, led to an underestimation of both Russian and local resolve, and made the sides significantly more difficult to reconcile. The deep and durable ties to Russia and the Soviet Union among populations in neighboring states, and among non-Russians, have not been sufficiently incorporated in U.S. strategies over the past decade.

There are, however, clear cases in which U.S. policy has been effective and spoiler coalitions have not undermined U.S. policy. Relations have been effectively managed in Kazakhstan, where there is openness to both U.S. investment and cooperative relations with Russia. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) continues to expand and has been a model of successful Russian-Western-Kazakh joint investment. Close Russian involvement with the country has not been to the exclusion of U.S. interests, and U.S. policy has never presented itself as a challenge to Russia.

Contrast this example with the policies of the Georgian government, or of the Moldovan government in the early 1990s, or the policies of the Orange coalition in Ukraine. In all three cases, there have been efforts to impose a particular notion of national unity on a diverse population, ultimately leading to different degrees of countermobilization with external Russian involvement. In Georgia, the decision to use violence to incorporate South Ossetia led to Russian invasion and undermined the potential for NATO expansion for the foreseeable future. In Moldova, a nationalist central government led to the rapid emergence of an alliance between the 14th Army, the Russian government, and the local administration in Transdnier that has persisted in undermining Moldovan territorial integrity. Yushchenko's advocacy of NATO membership was polarizing and unpopular outside of Galicia. His pressure to recognize the Ukrainian Resistance Army (UPA) and to offer their soldiers

veterans' benefits was somewhat popular in Galicia and Volhynia, but was incomprehensible and offensive to large swaths of the country. Efforts in the past year to impose Ukrainian language in public life and culture in the Russian-speaking areas of the south and east have succeeded only in mobilizing deep feelings of resentment. In general, the so-called nation-building policies, often implemented with endorsement and encouragement from Western governments, have had the opposite effect of what was desired. They deeply alienate their target populations and lead them to mobilize politically around a divisive cultural agenda. Far from bringing cohesion, the policies drive these regions to seek Russian patronage.

The risks of disintegration in Ukraine and other countries in the region are quite real, but they are also avoidable with an effective and insistent U.S. policy. With hindsight, one can see how U.S. policy could have avoided the fragmentation of Georgia and Moldova. The goal of U.S. policy should be:

- 1) To reduce the salience of issues that activate cultural cleavages, not to support nation-building policies in a vain attempt to overcome or eradicate cultural divides. This goal can be pursued by adhering to these guidelines:
  - a. Discussion of NATO expansion in countries where Russophile sentiments are regionally concentrated should be discouraged. Official discussions regarding NATO expansion should take place only after survey data reveal that support for NATO membership is widespread.
  - b. Given the strong negative association with NATO in some regions, alternative security arrangements should be developed for the incorporation of these countries into an alliance with the United States.
  - c. Language and cultural policies that limit the use of Russian or non-titular languages should be abandoned. Rather than eradicating Russian influence, these policies lead to increased disaffection and a turn toward Russia in Russophile regions. When combined with economic coalitions, these are remarkably potent bulwarks against U.S. policy interests in the region.
- 2) To appropriate the Soviet legacy and Soviet nostalgia in advancing U.S. goals. Given the centrality of World War II in Soviet mythology and in the cultural attachments of many regions, the United States should promote the history of U.S.-Soviet partnership during the War rather than highlight Soviet atrocities. This promotion includes participation in Victory Day celebrations and funding for the protection and preservation of Soviet war monuments (such that U.S. funding is made clear). These gestures are simple and low-cost but have remarkable cultural significance. We can perhaps more effectively undermine the legacy of Soviet-era institutions under the mantle of Soviet nostalgia. At a minimum, such efforts will deny anti-U.S. coalitions the exclusive use of

these powerful symbols. Without such symbolic acceptance of the Soviet past, we greatly weaken our potential for influence in territories where that past is revered, even among younger generations.

In summary, the goal of U.S. policy should be to appropriate powerful symbols that resonate with the population rather than to undermine and replace pro-Soviet and largely pro-Russian culture and symbolism. The latter has failed to produce positive results except in those few countries (the Baltics) where anti-Soviet and anti-Russian sentiment was already pervasive.

## CONCLUSION

The intent of U.S. policy should be to advance the spread of competitive elections, military alliance, and economic reform without generating the powerful anti-U.S. coalitions or state fragmentation that have marked the response to many of our policy initiatives to date. In an environment where political and economic power are fused, and where the ability to own and maintain control of an asset is dependent on preserving one's political influence, efforts to foster competitive elections and the genuine rotation of power must initially involve guarantees to current stakeholders. Otherwise, they will form coalitions to block U.S. policy goals and will undermine efforts at political liberalization that they deem threatening.

In an environment marked by states with deep cultural cleavages, policies need to be designed and presented in such a way that they do not activate these cleavages or attempt to elide them. In particular, in countries where attachments to Russia and the Soviet past are strong and concentrated regionally, policy needs to be framed in a way that prevents Russia and potential rivals from drawing on symbols to heighten cleavages, foment secession, and fuse coalitions that would provide a bulwark against U.S. policy aims. Ultimately, it is the success of U.S. foreign policy in forging effective linkages in this distinctive political environment that will prevent or diminish the successful development of Russian-allied spoiler coalitions and that will lead to the effective implementation and durability of our policy goals. If pursued to their logical ends, efforts to reduce the salience of divisive cultural cleavages, to secure property, and to limit the stakes of democratic change could also generate more effective linkages with Russia itself. A warming of ties between the two countries could be effective in promoting U.S. security and economic interests well beyond the post-Soviet region.

## CHAPTER 7

# Putin's Peers

H. E. Goemans

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, few institutions remained to allocate and reallocate political authority in the successor states. Many were led by local representatives or functionaries held over from the Communist Soviet Union. Over time, the majority of successor republics in the West adopted institutions to regulate the transfer of political authority and to guarantee leaders a safe retirement should they lose power. In the East, however, most successor states failed to develop such institutions, and thus evolved into personalist dictatorships.

As a result, Russia—which, arguably, is also to some degree a personalist dictatorship—is geographically close to seven such regimes, sharing a border with four. The fact that personalist dictatorships are significantly more likely to engage in international conflict than any other type of dictatorship makes Russia (surrounded by more personalist dictatorships than any country in recent history) especially vulnerable to future disputes with some of its non-democratic neighbors. Moreover, most personalist dictatorships on or near Russia's borders contain a significant minority of ethnic Russians. The combination of personalist dictatorships and significant ethnic minorities considerably increases the prospects for international conflict.

It would be a mistake to reflexively attribute a conflict between Russia and a neighboring state to Russia's renewed determination to control the former Soviet Empire. Rather, such a regional conflict would more likely result directly from domestic constraints and interregional politics.

The United States can play a powerful and positive role to promote peace and stability in the region. First, the United States should continue its policy of refusing to recognize leaders who come to power through the threat or use of force. Second, preferably in consultation with Russia, the United States should vigorously oppose any leader in the Soviet successor states who resorts to ethnic repression in order to maintain power. Third, the United States might consider promoting, in cooperation with Russia, the establishment of a regional institution through which the former Soviet republics could settle territorial

or other issues. However, the United States should not openly pressure the personalist dictators in Central Asia to change their domestic political institutions. Coercion would likely be met with ferocious opposition from the current leadership and perhaps from Russia as well. Abandoning a policy that promotes democratization, though not an attractive option, is decidedly better than the alternative. Any policy for democratization will have to take a long-term view.

In this paper, I examine the incentives and constraints of personalist dictators; offer a brief analysis of a comparable region and era of personalist dictators—Central America in the nineteenth century—and trace how the prevalence of conflict there was finally resolved; and draw conclusions that might inform U.S. policy toward Russia.

## DIFFERENTIATING DICTATORSHIPS

The groundbreaking work of political scientist Barbara Geddes opened new avenues of research into the behavioral patterns of different types of dictatorships. Geddes distinguished three major categories of dictatorships: military, single party, and personalist dictatorships, as well as several hybrids or combinations of these types. She defines military regimes as those in which “professional military . . . rules as an institution, for example, Argentina 1976–83.” Single-party regimes (including Leninist) are defined as those in which “the party . . . penetrates society to the village level and . . . officials and leaders must come up through the party, for example, the CCM in Tanzania and the KMT in Taiwan.” Finally, personalist regimes are those “in which despite possibly wearing a uniform and creating a support party, policies and personnel are chosen and disposed of at the whim of the ruler.”<sup>1</sup>

Of the fourteen countries that share a border with Russia, four are led by personalist dictators.<sup>2</sup> In Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been the effective leader for almost two decades. In Belarus, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has ruled since July 1994. After independence, Heydar Aliyev first ruled Azerbaijan; since his death in October 2003, his son Ilham Aliyev has ruled. Finally, North Korea’s Kim Jong Il similarly inherited the mantle of his

1. Geddes collected data on 170 authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 1996; Barbara Geddes, “Minimum Winning Coalitions and Personalization in Authoritarian Regimes,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 2–5, 2004. It is important to note that Geddes collected the data largely by country. For the empirical analyses below I merged Geddes’s data with Archigos, taking care to attribute the right regime type to the appropriate leader; Henk E. Goemans, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza, “Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders,” *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (2) (2009): 269–283. This merged data and the DO-files are available on request. Please note that CCM refers to Taiwan’s Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution); KMT refers to Kuomintang (the Chinese Nationalist Party).

2. These fourteen countries (with the mileage shared along the borders) are Kazakhstan (4,254 miles), China (2,265 miles), Mongolia (2,170 miles), Ukraine (9 miles), Finland (816 miles), Belarus (596 miles), Georgia (449 miles), Poland (268 miles), Latvia (181 miles), Estonia (180 miles), Azerbaijan (177 miles), Lithuania (141 miles), Norway (122 miles), and North Korea (11 miles).



father in 1997. The noncontiguous successor states of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan also suffered (and in the case of Uzbekistan, continue to suffer) under personalist dictators. In Uzbekistan, President Islam Karimov has ruled for two decades. Askar Akayev led Kyrgyzstan until he was deposed in March 2005. Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who led the revolution that overthrew Akayev, has since ruled the country and overwhelmingly won the elections of July 2009. (The elections were subsequently deemed “a disappointment” by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.)<sup>3</sup> Although perhaps not a full-fledged personalist dictator yet, Bakiyev appears to be determined to hold on to power, if necessary by repression. Perhaps the most extravagant and flamboyant of the personalist dictators of Central Asia was Saparmurat Niyazov, who promoted an elaborate cult of personality and ruled Turkmenistan until his death in 2006. As in the case of Bakiyev, Niyazov’s successor rose to power in an irregular manner, which, we shall see below, also significantly affects the international behavior of leaders. “Owezgeldi Atayev, who, according to the . . . constitution [of Turkmenistan], should have succeeded Niyazov, was instead relieved of his post as speaker of the 50-member Majlis (the unicameral legislature) after an unspecified criminal case was brought against him by the prosecutor-general’s office.” In his place, Deputy Prime Minister Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov became Turkmenistan’s new ruler.<sup>4</sup> A year after he came to power, Berdimuhammedov began a purge of officials from the Niyazov regime. Although perhaps not as extreme as his predecessor, Berdimuhammedov is well on his way to establishing another personalist dictatorship in Turkmenistan.<sup>5</sup>

Barbara Geddes and, subsequently, political scientist Erica Franz<sup>6</sup> postulated that a fundamental factor in these regimes’ behavior, in domestic as well as international affairs, is their significantly different numbers of veto players—that is, actors who can single-handedly block policy—and thus the significantly different constraints on their policy choices. (This argument is echoed by political scientists Dan Reiter and Allan Stam,<sup>7</sup> but offers only a shallow explanation of why personalist dictatorships are prone to war.) However valid the argument, because the concept of “veto players” is empirically difficult to operationalize, I work from a different set of principles, one that is well established in the literature on comparative politics. I argue that regimes can be usefully distinguished by the degree to which they allow their leaders a safe and prosperous retirement. In this vein, scholars of comparative politics have offered two ideal types to distinguish regimes. As political philosopher Karl Popper explains,

3. *Keesing’s Record of World Events* 55 (July 2009): Kyrgyzstan, 49323.

4. *Keesing’s Record of World Events* 52 (December 2006): Turkmenistan, 47641.

5. <http://www.cacianalys.org/?q=node/5039>.

6. Erica Emily Franz, “Breaking Down the Residual Category: Policy Stability among Dictatorships from a Veto Players Perspective” (n.p., 2006), [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=904263](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=904263).

7. Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, “Identifying the Culprit: Democracy, Dictatorship, and Dispute Initiation,” *American Political Science Review* 97 (2) (2003): 333–337.

[W]e may distinguish two main types of government. The first type consists of governments of which we can get rid without bloodshed—for example, by way of general elections; that is to say, the social institutions provide means by which the rulers may be dismissed by the ruled, and the social traditions ensure that these institutions will not easily be destroyed by those who are in power. The second type consists of governments which the ruled cannot get rid of except by way of a successful revolution—that is to say, in most cases, not at all.<sup>8</sup>

The fundamental difference between these two ideal types, according to political scientist William H. Riker, stems from the degree to which institutions protect politicians and leaders after they lose office:

Almost everything . . . that we think of as civil liberties (the rights of a speedy trial, habeas corpus, and security against unreasonable search and seizure, for example) originated to *protect politicians who feared prosecution if and when they lost office*. Thus the historic purpose of these fundamental democratic liberties has been not to provide freedom as an end in itself, but to render effective both political participation and the process of choice in voting.<sup>9</sup>

Leaders of countries that do not rely on such well-established norms, rules, and procedures lack institutional protections to shield them against ensuing, sometimes severe, punishment after they lose office. Riker's argument thus suggests a close institutional link between the manner and consequences of losing office. Leaders lose office in a regular manner (that is, following the existing rules, norms, and procedures, including elections, term limits, and voluntary retirement) because they can afford to. Leaders lose office in an irregular manner (by the threat or use of force) because holding on to power provides their only protection against potential punishment. Since the voluntary retirement of such leaders exposes them to potential punishment, they cling to power. The only way to remove them from office is by the use or threat of force.

As noted by Popper, the distinction is often drawn to clearly separate “democracies” from “dictatorships.”<sup>10</sup> The logic of Popper and Riker can be extended further to distinguish different types of dictatorships and explain their distinctive behavior in international politics. Specifically, personalist dictators face a significantly higher probability of personal punishment after they lose office. This, in turn, makes such personalist dictators extremely reluctant to

8. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (New York: Routledge, 1963), 124.

9. William H. Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1982), 6–7; emphasis added.

10. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 124.

give up power and even likely to resort to international conflicts in gambles for survival.<sup>11</sup> Thus, removing personalist dictators often requires the use of force, either by domestic military forces or by domestic rebels with foreign military support. This argument is corroborated by two sets of simple cross-tabs, which examine the manner as well as the consequences of losing office for the different types of dictatorships. Table 1 compares whether leaders were removed in a regular manner according to institutional norms, rules, and procedures, as a result of ill health or a natural death, or as the result of an irregular removal from office. Irregular removals from office occur when leaders are removed 1) contrary to well-established norms, rules, and procedures or 2) when no such norms, rules, or procedures have been established. Table 1 shows a striking result: personalist dictators are significantly more likely to be removed in an irregular manner than other dictators.

**Table 1: How Dictators Lose Office**

Regime Type	Regular Means %	Natural Death %	Irregular Means %	Total
Military	47 (35)	4 (5)	47 (35)	75
Military/Personalist	36 (5)	14 (2)	50 (7)	14
Personalist	16 (8)	14 (7)	70 (35)	50
Single/Hybrid	31 (12)	15 (6)	54 (21)	39
Single Party	55 (62)	27 (30)	19 (21)	113
Amalgam	42 (5)	17 (2)	42 (5)	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>42 (127)</b>	<b>17 (51)</b>	<b>41 (124)</b>	<b>302</b>

Regime type as provided by Barbara Geddes in “Minimum-Winning Coalitions and Personalization in Authoritarian Regimes,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 2–5, 2004. Source: Author’s calculations based on data from Geddes, “Minimum-Winning Coalitions and Personalization in Authoritarian Regimes” and from H. E. Goemans, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza, “Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders,” *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (2) (2009): 269–283.

A more in-depth examination of how leaders are removed—omitted here for brevity’s sake—delivers two striking patterns that explain why personalist dictators tend to go to war more frequently than other dictators. First, 12 percent of personalist dictators were ousted by domestic rebel forces with foreign support. Except for one military/personalist-hybrid leader (6 percent) and two single-party hybrids (5 percent), none of the other types of dictators left office

11. Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans, “Leaders and International Conflict” (unpublished book manuscript, University of Rochester and Vanderbilt University, 2010).

under such conditions. Second, personalist leaders were twice as likely as military leaders and four times as likely as single-party leaders to be removed through a coup. A striking 40 percent of the personalist dictators who lost office were removed by a coup. (If military-against-military coups are included, about 32 percent of the military dictators lost office as a result of a coup.) Therefore, it is not surprising that the post-tenure fate of personalist dictators, as demonstrated in Table 2, is particularly bleak.

**Table 2: The Post-Tenure Fate of Dictators**

Regime Type	OK %	Exile %	Jail %	Death %	Total
Military	59 (42)	16 (12)	14 (10)	10 (7)	71
Military/Personalist	33 (4)	58 (7)	0 (0)	8 (1)	12
Personalist	20 (9)	37 (16)	12 (5)	30 (13)	43
Single/Hybrid	42 (14)	30 (10)	9 (3)	18 (6)	33
Single Party	75 (64)	12 (10)	12 (10)	1 (1)	85
Amalgam	50 (5)	10 (1)	30 (3)	10 (1)	10
Total	54 (138)	22 (56)	12 (31)	11 (29)	254

Regime type as provided by Barbara Geddes in “Minimum-Winning Coalitions and Personalization in Authoritarian Regimes,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 2–5, 2004. Source: Author’s calculations based on data from Geddes, “Minimum-Winning Coalitions and Personalization in Authoritarian Regimes” and from H. E. Goemans, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza, “Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders,” *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (2) (2009): 269–283.

## PERSONALIST DICTATORS AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

Personalist dictators are particularly likely to become involved in international conflict because it can significantly reduce the leaders’ risk of losing office. First, when personalist dictators face a domestic rebellion supported from abroad, they have strong incentives to interdict such military support by attacking rebel bases beyond their countries’ borders. Second, escalating threats to deter foreign support of domestic rebels can easily trigger an international crisis. The foreign supporter may decide to increase its military support or even become directly involved in the fight with its own forces, especially when ethnic brethren form a substantial part of the rebel forces or suffer repression.

Third, international conflict allows the leader to send potentially troublesome and ambitious officers out of the capital and to the front. Following the ancient example of King David and Uriah the Hittite, Idi Amin, the military dictator and president of Uganda during the 1970s, used this strategy to eliminate opposition from within the armed forces. In 1977, Great Britain broke off diplomatic relations and, together with the United States, imposed harsh economic sanctions on Idi Amin's Uganda. The sanctions exacerbated the deterioration of an already faltering economy and, by diminishing Amin's ability to buy off his core supporters in the military, created unrest among those supporters.<sup>12</sup> Determined to maintain control, Amin began to purge his inner circle, including his longtime second in command, Vice President and Commander of the Armed Forces General Idris Mustafa Adrisi.<sup>13</sup> After Adrisi suffered a highly suspicious car accident, his supporters in the army, particularly the crack Simba (Lion) Regiment and the Chui (Leopard) Regiment, openly revolted. While the revolt was brutally suppressed, survivors fled across the border into Tanzania.<sup>14</sup> The 1978 war between Uganda and Tanzania began when Amin sent his soldiers in pursuit of the rebels. Contemporaries agree that the primary goal of Amin's invasion was to deal with a threat from his own military forces. Milton Obote, the former president of Uganda who was in exile in Tanzania at that time, put it bluntly: the invasion "was a desperate measure to extricate Amin from the consequences of the failure of his *own* plots against his *own* army."<sup>15</sup> By turning on some of his remaining core supporters, Amin risked antagonizing the very forces that underpinned his brutal regime. Thus, he tried to blame the Tanzanian forces for the executions of rebels from the Simba Regiment. After the Tanzanian forces recaptured the Kagera salient, they found "[s]cattered in the bush . . . the bodies of 120 Ugandan soldiers. There had been no Tanzanian troops in the area before, and there was no sign that Tanzanian artillery had landed there."<sup>16</sup> The truth was inescapable: "The Tanzanian commanders deduced the corpses had been dumped to look as if they were battle fatalities, although they were actually executed mutineers."<sup>17</sup>

While I cannot offer a direct statistical test of the different mechanisms whereby personalist dictators are likely to become involved in conflict, I can establish that personalist dictators are indeed more likely to become involved

12. Amji Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890–1985* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 139–141.

13. Tonay Avirgan and Martha Honey, *War in Uganda, The Legacy of Idi Amin* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1982), 48–51; George Ivan Smith, *Ghosts of Kampala* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 176–178.

14. *Ibid.*, 178.

15. Quoted in Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda*, 52; emphasis original.

16. *Ibid.*, 69.

17. Joseph Kamau and Andrew Cameron, *Lust to Kill: The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* (London: Corgi Books, 1979), 306.

in international conflict. Improving on the work of Mark Peceny, Caroline Beer, and Shannon Sanchez-Terry,<sup>18</sup> Dan Reiter and Allan Stam<sup>19</sup> were the first to show that personalist dictators are particularly likely to challenge democracies but are unlikely to have democracies challenge them. Nonetheless, particular dyads may be conflict prone because of country-specific factors rather than regime type; therefore I run a fixed-effect logit model, grouping observations by country, to control for any country-specific effects on the overall probability of conflict involvement.

Table 3 shows that personalist dictators are significantly more likely to become involved in international conflict than hybrid regimes.<sup>20</sup> This likelihood is more pronounced early in the tenures of those who entered office in an irregular manner and dissipates over time, though these effects do not appear to be very robust. Notably, leaders are less likely to become involved in conflict as they grow older, a trend that is quite robust.<sup>21</sup>

To probe more deeply into the factors that drive personalist dictators toward war, in the next section I analyze a region that experienced a concentration of personalist dictators similar to that which currently prevails in Central Asia: that is, Central America from 1840 to the 1920s. This brief history strongly suggests some disturbing parallels to the current situation in Central Asia. At the same time, the history of Central America also highlights steps the United States can take to mitigate the dangers of international conflict.

## A HISTORICAL ANALOGY: CENTRAL AMERICA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In Central America between 1840 and 1919, the caudillo, a personalist dictator par excellence, decided when to go to war. During this period, the leaders of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala went to war much more often than is generally known. No fewer than seventeen wars were fought between 1840 and 1919,<sup>22</sup> and a striking pattern emerged in eleven

18. Mark Peceny, Caroline C. Beer, and Shannon Sanchez-Terry, "Dictatorial Peace?" *American Political Science Review* 96 (1) (2002): 15–26.

19. Reiter and Stam, "Identifying the Culprit," 333.

20. Using a one-tailed test, the difference between personalist dictators and military dictators is just barely significant at 10 percent. The differences between personalist and single-party dictators, however, fail to reach conventional measures of significance. Nevertheless, the predicted probability of war involvement is about 0.040 for personalist dictators and only 0.025 for leaders of single-party dictatorships.

21. Michael Horowitz, Rose McDermott, and Allan C. Stam, "Leader Age, Regime Type, and Violent International Relations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (5) (2005): 661–685.

22. See Chiozza and Goemans, "Leaders and International Conflict"; Lorenzo Montúfar, *Reseña Histórica. Centro-América*, vol. Tomo Sexto (Guatemala: Tipografía "La Unión," 1887); Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: History of Central America*, vol. III, 1801–1887 (San Francisco: The History Company Publishers, 1887); Gregorio Bustamante Mace, *Historia Militar de El Salvador*, 2nd ed. (San Salvador, El Salvador: Publicaciones del Ministerio del Interior, 1951); Robert L. Scheina, *Latin America's Wars: Volume I* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2003); Mario Rodríguez, *Central America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1965).

of them. Leaders in Central America became increasingly likely to lose office through the use of force when the ideological balance of power between so-called liberals and conservatives<sup>23</sup> in the region changed, either because a leader in a neighboring country was replaced or because a neighboring leader changed his allegiance.

**Table 3: Dictatorial Regime Types and Conflict Involvement**

Variables	International Conflict	
	b	p-value
Personalist	0.925	0.013
Military	0.255	0.580
Single Party	0.584	0.242
Civil War	1.175	0.000
GDP Per Capita	-0.397	0.068
GDP Growth	-0.711	0.471
Population	0.173	0.580
Commander in Chief	13.56	0.412
Number of Borders	0.014	0.900
Entry	1.148	0.262
Entry × Days in Office	-0.090	0.492
Age	-0.028	0.006
Time since Previous Onset	-1.287	0.000
Time since Previous Onset - squared	3.439	0.000
Time since Previous Onset - cubed	-2.227	0.000
No. Obs.	2134	
Pseudo R-square	0.071	

Fixed-effect logit; observations grouped by country. Coefficients of each regime type must be interpreted relative to the excluded category, hybrid regimes. Source: Author's calculations based on data from Geddes, "Minimum-Winning Coalitions and Personalization in Authoritarian Regimes," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 2-5, 2004 and from H. E. Goemans, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza, "Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders," *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (2) (2009): 269-283.

When, for example, a Conservative leader was overthrown by a Liberal in Guatemala, Conservative leaders elsewhere had reason to worry that their own Liberal exiles would obtain support from Guatemala's new Liberal regime and that as a result, the domestic balance of power between Conservatives and Liberals could shift against the leader. However, a Conservative leader could not bargain for a power-sharing deal with his political opponent because there

23. These labels do not correspond to our current usage of the terms. Liberals were largely anticlerical and pro-trade.



was no guarantee the agreement would hold if circumstances changed in his favor. Instead, violent conflict between the leader and the opposition became more likely. The opposition would gather abroad, where Guatemala's Liberal opponent would give them shelter, arms, and a safe place to organize and prepare an invasion.

Exiles across the border, organizing to overthrow the leader, were often the cause of interstate war. As war correspondent Frederick Palmer<sup>24</sup> put it, "A favorite means of warfare of one President on another was to support the organization of a revolutionary army within his borders to invade his neighbor's territory when it was ready." Leaders, who often led their army, would try to preempt such invasions by invading their hostile neighbor first, provoking international warfare.

We can detect a disturbing analogy to this pattern in Central Asia when we consider the treatment of or foreign support for Russian ethnic minorities living in successor republics. Azerbaijan has the lowest percentage of ethnic Russians living within its borders, with 1.8 percent. Turkmenistan (4 percent) and Uzbekistan (5.5 percent) have slightly higher fractions of ethnic Russians. In Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, the percentage rises to 11.4 percent and 12.5 percent, respectively, and is highest in Kazakhstan, where 30 percent of the population is ethnic Russian. As different leaders in these countries rise to power and repress or support Russian minorities (which occurs for domestic political reasons, as well as foreign) the danger of international conflict rises dramatically. Recall that the statistical analysis (not shown) confirmed that personalist dictators were particularly likely to lose power as a result of domestic rebellion supported from abroad—with the obvious foreign supporter, in this case, being Russia.

The United States played an effective role in significantly decreasing the risk of war in Central America, a role it should assume in Central Asia today. As I noted above, the support of exiles time and again led to war in Central America. When, for example, Honduras and Nicaragua were ruled by a Conservative and a Liberal, respectively, the Conservative leader of Honduras would support the Conservative exiles from Nicaragua, while the Liberal leader of Nicaragua would support the Liberal exiles from Honduras. Why would leaders make the same mistake over and over again, especially when it often led to war and their forcible removal from office? The answer is simple: to maintain support among Liberals (or Conservatives) at home, the Liberal (or Conservative) leader had to support Liberal (or Conservative) exiles. As a result, the dominant strategy for maintaining power—supporting exiles with a similar ideological bent—created a classic Prisoner's Dilemma. Even though both sides would have been better off if neither supported exiles, the logic of their strategic interaction ensured that both sides supported exiles, which increased the probability of war. To escape this dilemma, the sparring Liberals and Con-

24. Frederick Palmer, *Central America and Its Problems* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1910), 293.



servatives needed a credible enforcer, a party that would hold leaders accountable for supporting exiles.

The Washington Treaty of December 1907 would finally provide such an enforcer. U.S. Secretary of War Elihu Root determined that wars in Central America were against the interests of the United States. He organized a conference of all five states in December 1907 in Washington, under the auspices of Mexico and the United States.<sup>25</sup> On December 20, the parties attempted to deal with the fundamental causes of recurrent warfare on the isthmus. Articles XVI and XVII declared:

*Article XVI*—Desiring to prevent one of the most frequent causes of disturbances in the Republics, the contracting Governments shall not permit the leaders or principal chiefs of political refugees, nor their agents, to reside in the departments bordering on the countries whose peace they might disturb. Those who may have established their permanent residence in a frontier department may remain in the place of their residence under the immediate surveillance of the Government affording them an asylum, but from the moment when they become a menace to public order they shall be included in the rule of the preceding paragraph.

*Article XVII*—Every person, no matter what nationality, who, within the territory of one of the contracting Parties, shall initiate or foster revolutionary movements against any of the others, shall be immediately brought to the capital of the Republic, where he shall be submitted to trial according to law.<sup>26</sup>

An Additional Convention to the General Treaty contained three further clauses intended to do away with the threat of a forcible removal from office. It stated:

*Article I*—The Governments of the High Contracting Parties shall not recognize any other Government which may come into power in any of the five Republics as a consequence of a coup d'état, or of a revolution against the recognized Government, so long as the freely elected representatives of the people thereof, have not constitutionally reorganized the country.

*Article II*—No Government of Central America shall in case of civil war intervene in favor of or against the Government of the country where the struggle may take place.

25. Palmer, *Central America and Its Problems*, 292–294.

26. Reproduced in *ibid.*, 307–317, Appendix A.

*Article III*—The Governments of Central America, in the first place, are recommended to endeavor to bring about, by the means at their command, a constitutional reform in the sense of prohibiting the re-election of the President of a Republic, where such prohibition does not exist, secondly to adopt all measures necessary to effect a complete guarantee of the principle of alternation in power.<sup>27</sup>

To enforce these terms, the Treaty established a Central American Court of Justice, in Cartago, Costa Rica. In subsequent years, with some relatively minor exceptions, the United States showed that it intended to hold the Central American states to their promises. Thus, “[t]he United States became the enforcer of the 1907 treaty.”<sup>28</sup> The old pattern was broken. Even though a Conservative leader replaced a Liberal leader in Nicaragua in 1911, and the Conservative Manuel Bonilla regained power in Honduras in 1913, these exogenous shocks did not trigger international crises or wars as they had so many times before. Thus, the 1907 Washington Treaty solved the commitment problem by cushioning the effects of any temporary shock to a leader’s capabilities and legitimacy. By stipulating that any leader who came to power through a coup would not be recognized, the Treaty fundamentally altered the costs and benefits of any coup or revolt.

To minimize the risks of international conflict in Central Asia, the United States should seek to emulate the position it took more than a century ago. The United States should vigorously support its current policy of refusing to recognize any leader who comes to power through the use or threat of force. It should, as is current practice, withhold foreign aid (including military aid) until credible elections have been held. It should oppose any attempts at ethnic repression, both for moral as well as for practical reasons. Finally, the United States should perhaps consider proposing to Russia a joint establishment of a tribunal to settle any disputes among the Soviet successor states.

## CONCLUSION

Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev, and the Russian leaders who will succeed them face a precarious situation in Central Asia, where Russia is neighbor to between four and seven personalist dictators and confronts an elevated risk of international conflict. Adversaries of the personalist dictators know that there exists only one way to obtain power: through the threat or use of force. Domestic political opponents of personalist dictators, particularly if they are eth-

27. Reproduced in *ibid*, 316–317.

28. Scheina, *Latin America’s Wars*, 261.

nically organized and have ethnic brethren in neighboring countries, are likely to seek support from neighboring leaders. If they succeed, the probability of international conflict, unsurprisingly, drastically increases.

Basic statistical patterns in regime type and the consequences of losing office show that personalist dictators have strong reasons to cling to power (Table 2). As a result of these pressures, personalist dictators are significantly more likely to become involved in international conflict than other regime leaders (with the potential exception of single-party dictators; see Table 3).

The history of Central America between 1840 and 1919 shows that the presence of exiles abroad (or ethnic brethren, as is the case today in Central Asia), and an exogenous regional shock in favor of those exiles, can explain the prevalence of conflict in that period. In 1907, by declaring its unwillingness to recognize leaders who came to power through the use of force, and by instituting a Court of Arbitration to address disputes among the Central American states, the United States successfully defanged the most important factors that had led to recurrent war. The United States should pursue a similar policy in Central Asia, preferably in close cooperation and consultation with Russia.

## CHAPTER 8

# Formulating U.S. Policy toward Russia

Steven Pifer

While efforts to “reset” relations with Russia may not have gone as far as many people would like, U.S.-Russia relations have improved significantly since the aftermath of the Russia-Georgia conflict in August 2008.<sup>1</sup> That progress has been made in part because the Obama administration came into office prepared to consider trade-offs and to address some Russian concerns in order to improve the broader U.S.-Russia relationship and secure a more cooperative approach toward Russia on issues such as Afghanistan and Iran.

I worked with Celeste Wallander, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia Policy in the U.S. Department of Defense, as part of the foreign policy team for Obama’s election campaign. In August 2008, the team had a conversation that led to a strategy paper for engaging Russia, which included the kinds of trade-offs the United States might offer in order to improve the relationship and secure Russian cooperation on other questions. By February 2009, it was clear that the Obama administration was ready to act on some of the key issues.

One of the issues the administration chose to prioritize was strategic arms reductions. It shifted from a Bush-administration approach to an arms-control approach that was more familiar to Russia. The new strategic arms reduction agreement was to be legally binding, limiting not just warheads but also missile launchers and bombers. That was a comfortable framework for the Russian government, and a move that the Obama administration viewed as good for arms control and as an acknowledgment of Russian concerns.

Another step the Obama administration took was the September 2009 decision to reconfigure missile defense in Europe. Although the move was advertised as being driven by a reassessment of the Iranian ballistic missile threat, and I believe that was largely true, it would not have passed unnoticed to Rus-

1. This essay is modified from remarks given at “The Policy World Meets Academia: Designing U.S. Policy toward Russia,” a conference held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, January 29, 2010.

sia experts in the U.S. government that Moscow would see the reconfiguration as a positive gesture. The Russian government is undoubtedly displeased that the plan still entails the deployment of American military infrastructure in countries such as Poland. But such infrastructure will not include a missile interceptor with a range of 10,000 kilometers; the interceptor will have a range of 900 kilometers—a very different question for Russia in real military terms.

Officials in the Obama administration said from the beginning that they hoped moves such as resumed arms control negotiations would encourage a positive response from Russia. Arms control measures, though important to the United States, were also meant to garner Russian cooperation on issues that matter to the Obama administration, namely Afghanistan and Iran. Administration officials, in private conversations in Spring 2009, were very explicit about their reasoning.

In fact, several of us who took part in those conversations came away with the strong impression that Russia's response to U.S. gestures, such as the resumption of strategic arms negotiations, might well influence a White House decision on the amount of time and attention the president would devote to Russia, given everything else on what is a very full foreign-policy plate. Russia did respond, for example, with the move announced in July 2009 to allow U.S. overflight of Russia with lethal military equipment going to Afghanistan. There was a sense that Russia was prepared to reciprocate in some other ways, too.

With Iran, my impression is that the U.S. administration hopes for more cooperation from Russia; I wouldn't say the administration expects it. But there, too, is a story that so far appears to be successful. President Medvedev has envisioned a more robust attitude toward Iran, in terms of possible sanctions, than Russia has proposed at any previous time. The crucial moment will be when the UN Security Council takes up the issue of new sanctions; we will then see how far Moscow is prepared to go. I believe that in the end Russia will be helpful, though Moscow is probably unprepared to commit to the full extent of U.S. proposals for new sanctions. The result may be a two-tiered structure: a set of sanctions adopted by UN Security Council resolution and then, perhaps, additional sanctions applied by the United States and Europe.

Whether a victory is declared for U.S. policy will depend on the degree to which Russia is prepared to cooperate on new sanctions, which is yet unknown. But the United States is seeing more positive movement from Russia on issues of U.S. concern than in the past.

In the case of European security, my sense is that the Obama administration is ready to engage in discussions on the topic, taking into account Medvedev's proposal. The United States should approach that dialogue with the confidence that it has the support of NATO, the European Union, and countries such as Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Russia will not be able to muster a great deal of support for the problematic ideas in Medvedev's draft treaty, such as proposals in Article II of the Russian draft treaty that suggest Russia would all but have the right to veto enlargement of NATO and the European

Union. We have to be creative in thinking about ways we could use that dialogue to advance U.S. and Western interests—and then engage in a conversation on Russia’s treaty proposal.

The post-Soviet space is potentially the largest source of friction between Washington and Moscow because each country’s position fundamentally contradicts the other’s. In July 2009 in Moscow, head of the Russian Council for Foreign and Defense Policy Sergei Karaganov had an interesting perspective on the issue. He said Russia was prepared to help America deal with its problems with Iran, North Korea, and Afghanistan—provided that the United States concede primacy to Russia in the post-Soviet space. That’s not going to happen. Washington will continue to execute an approach that engages Russia’s neighbors by building robust relations and keeping doors open for those countries to develop their links with the West. That said, the problem of managing U.S.-Russian differences over the post-Soviet space should become easier as issues such as extending NATO membership to Ukraine and Georgia move to the back burner, in the former case because Ukraine has largely taken itself out of the NATO game. But at some point, there will likely be tension with Russia over the post-Soviet area.

The role of Central Asia is a special case. With everything that’s on America’s foreign-policy plate, it may be difficult for Washington to devote much energy, time, and resources to Central Asia. China’s involvement in Central Asia may be a positive development: to the extent that countries in Central Asia have greater room to maneuver—which China is giving them, as China can offer an alternative to Russia—those countries have options.

For example, there are clear differences between China and Russia, particularly regarding energy in Central Asia. The United States has wanted to see multiple pipelines coming out of Central Asia, and there is now a gas pipeline extending from Turkmenistan to China. That’s a good development for the region.

Perhaps we should look at how to involve India in the region as well, in a manner that would not raise Pakistani concerns that India is encroaching on Afghanistan. The fact that there are multiple players in Central Asia may compensate for the limited time and energy the United States can devote to the area.

Finally, at Robert Legvold’s suggestion, I would like to offer a couple of general thoughts on academia and the policy world from the perspective of a former policy professional. The essays prepared for this collection are very interesting. But they also make clear that the academic and policy worlds speak two completely different languages. If the objective of these essays is to influence policy, they are unlikely to succeed, as essays such as these may never reach the right audience in the U.S. government.

This reality is unfortunate because there is a lot of good thinking in the academic world, thinking that could be useful to policy-makers. But that work often is not conveyed to the policy world. Packaging this work in a way that

is accessible to and easily digested by policy-makers would be valuable—and would increase influence on policy. But it would require significant repackaging.

First, be brief. A nine- or ten-page paper is considered short in the academic world. For the policy world, one to two pages is the target. To get the information to the right people, you have to be able to boil it down to the essential points.

Second, analysis is good, but in the urgency of the moment, the policy-maker is looking for the solution. What's the proposal? What's the policy suggestion? Offer very basic analysis; the policy—the prescription—is the important part.

Third, choose topics to have influence. Some topics are not appropriate to tackle. For example, when several of us at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., wanted to look at U.S.-Russian nuclear arms reductions last year, I spoke with people in the administration and asked, what happens after the New START negotiation? The answer seemed to be that it was impossible to know, because the focus of everyone working on START was on completing the treaty by December. This reality told us two things. One, we probably ought not to be thinking about what is being done for the New START treaty, because it is a moving target and the U.S. government is thoroughly engaged on the subject. But there was, perhaps, some useful contribution to be made in terms of thinking about the next round, after the New START Treaty was done. By talking to people in government, one gets a sense of what they may not be focusing on because their plate is full, and that may give some ideas about areas to tackle where writing and proposals will have greater impact on the policy world.

Fourth is timing. The beginning of an administration is a good time to present policy proposals. In the first six to eight months that the current administration was in office, it was open to ideas on U.S.-Russia policy. After October or November, the foreign policy course for engaging Moscow was more or less set in place. There are certain periods when there will be greater receptivity to ideas and when one in the academic world may have a chance of maximizing impact.

The difficulty of communication between academia and the policy world, however, remains a big problem for both sides. The policy world needs to think about how it can take advantage of the ideas that are out there. Academia needs to think about how to make its writing accessible to policy-makers. Greater communication would benefit both.

## Addressing the Obstacles to U.S. Russia Policy

Contributors in this section wrestle with the practical realities—bureaucratic and political—that have to be accounted for when planning and implementing U.S. policy toward Russia. Daniel Drezner provides a broad overview of the subject. Starting from the proposition that the thrust of U.S. foreign policy once set changes in motion only slowly, he explains why the Obama administration was able to alter rather sharply the course of the Russia policy it inherited. He then goes on to identify the reason bureaucratic politics, special interests, public attitudes, and alliance politics in all likelihood will revert to form and set narrow limits on further policy shifts. The channel, he says, will run somewhere inside a “new Cold War” posture at one extreme and an ambitious “grand bargain” at the other. Monica Duffy Toft approaches the problem by selecting the constraints that operate when the United States factors Russia in its counterterrorism strategy. Her concern is less with the bureaucratic and political complexities of U.S. policy-making and more with the complications introduced into U.S. policy by the way Russia defines terrorism within its own borders. She explores how Russia’s definition of terrorism impacts how it combats insurgency in the North Caucasus.



## CHAPTER 9

# American Foreign Policy toward Russia: Is a U-Turn, or Any Turn, Possible?

Daniel W. Drezner

The American foreign policy machine is a Rube Goldberg contraption that processes a jumble of ideas, institutions, and interests into something that vaguely resembles the national interest. There is frequent disagreement and discord among intelligent and well-informed members of the foreign policy community over the optimal course of action for any given situation. Both policy-makers and political scientists are well aware of the myriad ways in which alliance entanglements, legislative meddling, bureaucratic politics, special interests, and groupthink can ensure the tyranny of the status quo.

When one evaluates U.S. policy toward Russia, an additional layer of complexity has to be added: the weight of history. The United States and the Soviet Union were at loggerheads for the four decades of the Cold War. Although bipolarity was stable,<sup>1</sup> the residual enmity from such an enduring rivalry can last for generations. Differing interpretations of the post-Cold War era also complicate matters. Americans think of the post-Cold War interregnum as a time of stability and prosperity. Russians view the same period as a time of suffering humiliation and condescension by the West in general and the United States in particular. With the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a raft of new books and articles revived old controversies.<sup>2</sup>

This essay surveys the state of play in American foreign policy toward Russia and asks whether there are any impediments to changing the current approach. I characterize current U.S. policy toward the Russian Federation as a form of “realist internationalism.” By realist internationalism, I am refer-

1. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979).

2. Mark Kramer, “The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia,” *The Washington Quarterly* 32 (April 2009): 39–61; Mary E. Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).

ring to the kind of foreign policy doctrine espoused during the George H.W. Bush administration. This approach recognizes Russia's great-power status and the utility of a great-power concert in dealing with global trouble spots. Rather than prioritizing human rights, democratization, or even economic interests in the bilateral relationship, this policy position prioritizes great-power cooperation on matters of high politics, such as nuclear nonproliferation and the containment of rogue states that transgress global norms.

Realist internationalism is a dramatic turnaround from what U.S. foreign policy toward Russia looked like a few years ago. At first glance, this new position implies that American policy is more plastic than suggested above. However, the switch to realist internationalism took place because the hard-line neoconservatism of the George W. Bush years was unsustainable. Russia's current status as a stagnant great power provides both strategic logic and political support for realist internationalism. A survey of the constraints imposed by alliance politics, interest groups, bureaucratic politics, and public opinion reveals a strong bias toward the status quo, albeit with slight asymmetry. The constraints against a more dovish policy are a bit stronger than the constraints against a more hawkish approach.

#### AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA, 2008–2009

It is worth considering the distance that American foreign policy toward Russia has traveled since the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. One of the obvious triggers for that conflict was the Bush administration's concerted efforts to persuade NATO allies to agree to a Membership Action Plan for Georgia. The war was the climax of a series of policy maneuvers beginning in 2002 that dramatically heightened Russian-American tensions:

- The 2002 U.S. decision to withdraw unilaterally from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty;
- The 2003 U.S. decision to invade Iraq without explicit UN Security Council support;
- Over the first part of the last decade, overt and covert American support for “color revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan;
- The expansion of NATO to Russia's borders in 2004;
- The 2006 Russian decision to renegotiate terms of the Sakhalin II energy deals with U.S. multinational corporations;
- Russia's 2006 registration requirements for Western nongovernmental organizations;
- Russia's 2007 “moratorium” on its compliance with the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty;
- Stalemated negotiations over Russian membership in the World Trade Organization;

- Russia’s weakening of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) election-monitoring process;
- Vladimir Putin’s 2007 Munich speech declaring a second “Cold War” with the United States;
- A deteriorating personal relationship between U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov<sup>3</sup>;
- U.S. support for Kosovo’s 2008 unilateral declaration of independence;
- Staleminated negotiations over the successor to the START II treaty, which was scheduled to expire in December 2009; and
- The 2008 U.S. decision to place interceptor missiles in the Czech Republic and Poland.

These tensions should not be overstated: Russia and the United States cooperated extensively on the war in Afghanistan, intelligence sharing with regard to terrorism, and numerous UN Security Council sanctions resolutions against Iran and North Korea. Nevertheless, by the time Russia clashed with Georgia, U.S. commentators and policy-makers were anticipating a return to the historical antipathy between Washington and Moscow.<sup>4</sup> The Putin administration’s increasing intolerance for domestic discontent made it much easier to put a “black hat” on Russia. Commentators viewed Moscow as being in the vanguard of an “authoritarian capitalist” model that challenged U.S. hegemony on a number of policy fronts.<sup>5</sup>

One economic crisis and one U.S. presidential election later, the tenor of the Russian-American relationship has changed. The Great Recession had a modest humbling effect on Russian ambitions. The commodity bubble, which had fueled Russia’s economic growth and self-confidence for the past decade, popped in Summer 2008. The invasion of Georgia abetted a capital outflow that had begun in reaction to the Russian government’s heavy-handedness in picking winners and losers in the domestic economy. These trends, if nothing else, likely highlighted the opportunity costs of continued bellicosity to Russian elites and Russian policy-makers.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the Obama administration came into office determined to restore America’s standing in the world. Even as a candidate, Obama articulated a realist internationalist position toward the Russian Federation in his *Foreign Affairs* essay: “Although we must not shy away from pushing for more democracy and accountability in Russia, we must work with the country in

3. Glenn Kessler, *The Confidante: Condoleezza Rice and the Creation of the Bush Legacy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007).

4. See, for example, Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Knopf, 2008); Stephen Sestanovich, “What Has Moscow Done?” *Foreign Affairs* 87 (November/December 2008): 12–29.

5. Azar Gat, “The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers,” *Foreign Affairs* 86 (July/August 2007): 59–69.

6. Catherine Belton and Charles Clover, “Liquidity Crunch Hits Russian Tycoons,” *Financial Times*, September 10, 2008.

areas of common interest—above all, in making sure that nuclear weapons and material are secure.”<sup>7</sup>

The Obama administration has quickly implemented this realist internationalist position toward Russia over the past year.<sup>8</sup> Policy shifts include:

- A series of rhetorical outreach efforts stressing the need to “reset” the Russian-American bilateral relationship. This movement began with Vice President Joseph Biden’s speech at the February 2009 Munich Security Conference and continued through President Obama’s speech on the bilateral relationship during his Moscow visit in July 2009;
- A greater receptivity to Russian proposals to engage Tehran on the nuclear issue;
- A reversal on the missile defense shield to be deployed in Poland and the Czech Republic<sup>9</sup>;
- A modest tamping down of human rights criticism of the Russian Federation<sup>10</sup>;
- The creation of a Russian air corridor for U.S. armed forces to ferry supplies to forces in Afghanistan; and
- The negotiation of a successor treaty to START II, which expired on December 5, 2009.

The reset of bilateral relations has yielded mixed results to date. Russian leaders have still taken license to deliver rhetorical jabs at the United States. On his September 2009 visit to the United States, for example, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev suggested to ITAR-TASS that he wanted to meet with American “dissidents.” The air corridor agreement has not truly been implemented. The successor to START II has been completed, but the negotiations took much longer than Obama administration officials anticipated. Indeed, to date Putin and Medvedev appear to be playing a “two-level game” with the United States, with Putin acting as the hard-liner to improve Medvedev’s bargaining position vis-à-vis the United States.<sup>11</sup> The twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall again revealed the freight that history brings to this bilateral relationship.

7. Barack Obama, “Renewing American Leadership,” *Foreign Affairs* 86 (July/August 2007): 5.

8. Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement,” *Survival* 51 (December 2009/January 2010): 39–62.

9. At the time, this shift was widely interpreted as a sign of accommodation toward Russia and possible tactical issue linkage on the Iran question. On the merits, however, there were sound tactical reasons for the switch. See George N. Lewis and Theodore Postol, “The European Missile Defense Policy,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 64 (May/June 2008): 32–39.

10. This shift in human rights rhetoric has already triggered a backlash among human rights NGOs. See Lilia Shevtsova, “The Kremlin Kowtow,” *Foreignpolicy.com*, January 5, 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/05/the\\_kremlin\\_kowtow](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/05/the_kremlin_kowtow).

11. On two-level games, see Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level Games,” *International Organization* 42 (Summer 1988): 427–460.

Nevertheless, the shift in U.S. foreign policy has been fruitful in some ways. Russia's position on Iran has aligned more closely with U.S. preferences, despite Moscow's significant interests in continuing its partnership with Tehran. The rhetorical jabs are few and far between. At a minimum, the relationship has reverted to a more businesslike arrangement. It is possible that the shift has been more significant. A strategy document from the Russian Foreign Ministry leaked in May 2010 suggests a more serious reorientation of Russian foreign policy. In the document preamble, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov calls for "modernizing alliances" with countries that can assist Russia in surmounting its technological backwardness—a clear reference to NATO countries. The document also praises President Obama as a "potentially transformative" leader.<sup>12</sup>

What explains the Obama administration's ability to shift U.S. foreign policy toward Russia so quickly? To be sure, Obama's foreign policy team exploited the policy window that exists with any change in presidential administration.<sup>13</sup> However, structural factors offer the best explanation for the shift in tone and action.

It is no coincidence that 2002 was the year that Russian-American relations started to deteriorate. In that year, the United States was at its post-1960 peak in terms of relative power.<sup>14</sup> The U.S. economy was responsible for more than 30 percent of global economic output—a significantly higher percentage than at the end of the Cold War. The U.S. military advantage over every other great power seemed painfully obvious. The ejection of the Taliban and al-Qaeda from Afghanistan in Fall 2001 augmented the reputation of U.S. power, which had yet to be tarnished by Iraq. As historian Paul Kennedy famously wrote at the time, "Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power; nothing. I have returned to all of the comparative defense spending and military personnel statistics over the past 500 years that I compiled in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, and no other nation comes close."<sup>15</sup> Even advocates of multilateralism allowed that the relative increase in American power partially explained the Bush administration's first-term foreign policy preferences.<sup>16</sup>

By the 2008 financial crisis, the power landscape had shifted. In the aggregate, U.S. economic power had ebbed significantly.<sup>17</sup> The military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan were bogged down, sapping U.S. military strength

12. Fred Weir, "Leaked Russian Document: Could Medvedev Era Tilt More Pro-West?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2010/0513/Leaked-Russian-document-Could-Medvedev-era-tilt-more-pro-West>.

13. John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Choices* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1984).

14. Stephen Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

15. Paul Kennedy, "The Eagle Has Landed," *Financial Times*, February 2, 2002.

16. G. John Ikenberry, "Is American Multilateralism in Decline?" *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (September 2003): 533–550; David Skidmore, "Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2 (July 2005): 207–228.

17. Robert Pape, "Empire Falls," *The National Interest* 99 (January/February 2009): 21–34.

and diminishing America's reputation for the competent exercise of power. The loss in American standing and reputation increased the transaction costs of bargaining with allies and rivals on policy issues.<sup>18</sup> Shifts in the distribution of power made it impossible for the United States to continue to pursue a "maximalist" foreign policy of aggressive democracy promotion and unilateralism.<sup>19</sup>

The shift in Russia policy should be seen as part of an ideational reversion toward the more stable pre-2001 foreign policy equilibrium. The Bush administration's grand strategy, as epitomized by its 2002 National Security Strategy and Bush's second inaugural, was not completely alien to American foreign policy, but the combination of its elements was unique.<sup>20</sup> After this brief experimentation with the Bush doctrine, it is not surprising that U.S. foreign policy returned to the combination of realism and liberal internationalism that guided the United States between 1946 and 2001.<sup>21</sup>

Russia's relative stagnation as a great power makes this policy easier. Vice President Joseph Biden's July 2009 statement to *The Wall Street Journal* is revealing:

The reality is the Russians are where they are. They have a shrinking population base, they have a withering economy, they have a banking sector and structure that is not likely to be able to withstand the next 15 years, they're in a situation where the world is changing before them and they're clinging to something in the past that is not sustainable. [ . . . ]

I always assume that sooner or later people, countries are going to figure out their self-interest. There's a whole lot between Moscow and Washington that the Russians need.<sup>22</sup>

While blunt and impolitic, Biden's assessment is largely accurate. Russia's demographic situation is a nightmare: the country's population has been shrink-

18. *U.S. Standing in the World: Causes, Consequences, and the Future* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 2009); Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Geoffrey Wiseman, "Pax Americana: Bumping into Diplomatic Culture," *International Studies Perspectives* 4 (November 2005): 409–430.

19. Philip Gordon, "The End of the Bush Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* 85 (July/August 2006): 75–86; Daniel W. Drezner, "The New New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 86 (March/April 2007): 34–46. It should be noted that the Russia portfolio was one of the last to experience this shift. On most other foreign policy dimensions, the second term of the Bush administration looked far more realist than neoconservative in orientation. Again, it is possible that historical resentments allowed the bilateral relationship to fester in an unproductive fashion for longer than with other countries.

20. John Lewis Gaddis, "A Grand Strategy of Transformation," *Foreign Policy* 133 (November/December 2002): 50–57; Melvyn Leffler, "9/11 and American Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 29 (June 2005): 395–413.

21. Jeffrey Legro, "A 'Return to Normalcy'? The Future of America's Internationalism," in *Avoiding Trivia: The Role of Strategic Planning in American Foreign Policy*, ed. Daniel W. Drezner (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), 58.

22. "Excerpts: Biden on Eastern Europe," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 2009.

ing since 1992.<sup>23</sup> The country has experienced positive economic growth over the past decade, but it has been due almost entirely to the run-up in energy prices. The price spike also had a “Dutch Disease” effect on the Russian economy, with an ever greater share devoted to natural resource extraction in general and oil and natural gas in particular. Over the past year, President Medvedev has lamented multiple times that “trading gas and oil is our drug.”<sup>24</sup> Russia’s other great-power capability is its nuclear arsenal. Because it has failed to modernize, however, that arsenal is also a deteriorating asset. Political scientists Kier Lieber and Daryl Press calculate that Russia will soon lose its credible second-strike capability.<sup>25</sup>

At present, Russia’s geography, natural resources, nuclear stockpile, and global-governance prerogatives mean that Moscow is still a great power. Compared to the other BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) economies, however, Russia’s future trajectory is far from promising. This assessment appears to reflect the consensus view of the U.S. intelligence community as well.<sup>26</sup>

Given this state of play, it is not surprising that U.S. foreign policy has reverted to the “equilibrium position” of realist internationalism; over time, the distribution of power between Russia and the United States will trend in America’s direction. A pragmatic approach that alleviates Russian concerns about its relative decline echoes the George H.W. Bush administration’s approach to a fading Soviet Union. It would therefore be a mistake to infer from the Obama administration’s reorientation of its Russia policy that there are no impediments to change from the status quo. The surprise is not how much Obama was able to alter American foreign policy; the surprise is how far and how long the Bush administration was able to deviate from the prior policy equilibrium.

## LATITUDE FOR CHANGE

The reversal of course suggests the constraints that will keep American foreign policy anchored in the status quo ante. If the Obama administration were so inclined, however, could they alter the substance of their approach toward Russia? What are the possible “change agents”?

The most obvious shock to the system would come from Russia itself. Domestic discontent over the economy or creeping authoritarianism could trigger a repressive crackdown. A genuine rivalry between Prime Minister Putin and President Medvedev could lead to elite instability. Problems along Rus-

23. Nicholas Eberstadt, “Drunken Nation: Russia’s Depopulation Bomb,” *World Affairs* (Spring 2009).

24. Spiegel interview with Medvedev, November 9, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,660114-2,00.html>.

25. Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, “The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of U.S. Primacy,” *International Security* 30 (Spring 2006): 7–44.

26. For the new National Intelligence Officer’s ex ante views on Russia, see Eugene Rumer and Celeste Wallander, “Russia: Power in Weakness?” *The Washington Quarterly* 27 (Winter 2003): 57–73.



sia's borders, such as Georgia or Belarus, could precipitate further interventions. Any of these events would drastically increase domestic pressure on the Obama administration to adopt a more hard-line position toward Russia.<sup>27</sup>

Assuming there was a strategic reason to shift foreign policy, however, what constraints would politics and institutions impose on America's freedom to maneuver? Alliance commitments would likely impose the first constraint, though they would also work at cross-purposes. It is safe to say that NATO allies have differing opinions on Russia. Former Warsaw Pact members are understandably wary of Russia's ambitions in its near abroad. Even during Russia's period of turmoil in the 1990s, Moscow actively used economic coercion in its perceived sphere of influence to advance its interests.<sup>28</sup> The Eastern European members of NATO—particularly Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic countries—will likely lean on the alliance to adopt a hedging strategy toward the Russian Federation.

These allies matter because of both their symbolic and strategic importance. The demise of Communism has endowed these countries with an unprecedented symbolic power in the domestic American political scene. They have strong and deep connections with influential writers and columnists in America's foreign policy community.<sup>29</sup> Through such connections, these countries will be given a platform to respond to shifts in American foreign policy.

At the same time, Western European allies will likely exert countervailing pressure on the United States to take a more dovish position. Fueled in no small part by energy needs, countries like France and Germany have been intent on fostering stronger ties with the Russian Federation. German and Russian economic interests are bound together in Nord Stream, an ambitious effort to build a gas pipeline directly linking the two countries via the Baltic Sea. France wants to sell Russia several *Mistral*-class amphibious warships, the first sale of advanced weaponry to Russia from a NATO country. French officials are starting to speak about a Franco-Russian "modernization partnership," echoing language used by Germany and Russia.<sup>30</sup>

France and Germany do not have the same emotive link with American influence-makers, but their historical and behind-the-scenes ties with members of the foreign policy community and Foggy Bottom are likely stronger. The aggregate effect of alliance influences, then, is a stalemate. Assuming Russian policy does not change, Eastern European allies will push back against any U.S. policy shifts that are perceived to be too dovish. Western European allies

27. If, against all odds, a color revolution were to lead to a more liberal regime in Russia, there would be corresponding pressure to pursue a more accommodationist position toward the new Russian government.

28. Daniel W. Drezner, *The Sanctions Paradox: Economic Statecraft and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chap. 5–6.

29. To give just one obvious example: *Washington Post* foreign affairs columnist Anne Applebaum is married to Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski.

30. Vladimir Socor, "Mistral Warship Offer Symbolizes New Franco-Russian Strategic Partnership," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, December 2, 2009; Nicholas Kravov, "France Likely to Sell Warship to Moscow," *The Washington Times*, January 20, 2010.



will push back against any U.S. policy shifts that are perceived to be too hawkish. Alliance pressures will likely cancel each other out.

Domestic and bureaucratic resistance to policy changes depends in large part on the dimension of existing policy that requires change. In contrast to strong foreign policy states, like France, the United States possesses a “weak” state structure that is highly permeable to outside interests. Interest groups can exercise an outsized influence on American foreign policy. Interest groups tend to concentrate their efforts on policies that can distribute or generate significant resources, and most foreign policies do not fall into this category. Paradoxically, this *increases* the influence of interest groups that do care about foreign policy. A thin organizational environment means that the remaining interest groups can wield disproportionate amounts of power over their particular issue.<sup>31</sup> Because members of Congress have little incentive to take an active interest in foreign affairs votes, interest groups can supply information and advice about how to vote.<sup>32</sup>

The status quo in foreign economic relations with Russia favors interest groups that would push harder against a warming than a cooling of relations between the two countries. Russian-American trade relations are relatively modest given the size of the two countries, amounting to less than \$25 billion per year. This is due in no small part to the uncertainty surrounding the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. This depressed economic relationship creates a negative feedback mechanism. Actors with a vested economic interest in the status quo also have a greater incentive to lobby for its continuance; actors with a potential interest in an expanded economic relationship will not lobby as hard for change. If an exogenous shock were to trigger greater openness, this negative feedback mechanism would be replaced with a positive one.<sup>33</sup> Without that shock, however, the status quo will persist.

On some policy dimensions there are multiple “veto players”: actors who can thwart any desired policy change.<sup>34</sup> As a general rule, any measure that requires congressional approval dramatically expands the number of veto players. This increase augments the power of interest groups and interested members of Congress at the expense of the executive branch. For example, any effort to secure Russia’s admission into the World Trade Organization is likely to run into several political obstacles. Human rights advocates would likely oppose such a move because it would be seen as an implicit endorsement of

31. Daniel W. Drezner, “The Future of U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 15 (January 2008): 11–35.

32. Matthew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms,” *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (February 1984): 165–179; Helen V. Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

33. Oona Hathaway, “Positive Feedback: The Impact of Trade Liberalization on Industry Demands for Protection,” *International Organization* 52 (Summer 1998): 575–612.

34. George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Russia's authoritarian tendencies. Because of institutional prerogatives, some members of Congress would also be likely to oppose repeal. Maintaining Jackson-Vanik gives Congress a foreign-policy weapon, crude as it may be. As a recent Council on Foreign Relations backgrounder points out, "refusing to abolish the amendment or graduate Russia has become a way for Congress to express disapproval with Russian trade, foreign policy, and human rights offenses."<sup>35</sup> On other issues that require congressional approval—such as the successor to START II—there is a sufficient bloc of hawks to prevent dramatic deviations from the status quo. Progress on a nuclear test-ban treaty, or radical cuts in nuclear warheads, might lack a bargaining core.

Deciphering the real-time bureaucratic politics within the executive branch is a difficult exercise. There has been minimal press reportage of intra-administration conflict over how to calibrate policy toward Russia, especially when compared to other issues, such as Iran or China policy.<sup>36</sup> This shortage might be due in part to message discipline, but not entirely. It is worth remembering that in February 2007, while serving in the Bush administration, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates downplayed Putin's hyperbolic "Cold War" speech at the Munich Security Conference.<sup>37</sup> If the traditional hawks in the National Security Council favor the realist internationalist position, then simmering organizational conflict about the nature of the bilateral relationship is highly unlikely.

The most likely bureaucratic dispute to affect the Russian-American security relationship is the divergence of institutional views on the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Ever since his *Foreign Affairs* essay, Obama has made nuclear disarmament one of his signature issues. At the same time, Gates advocated for the Reliable Replacement Warhead in his own *Foreign Affairs* essay.<sup>38</sup> His position directly contradicted Obama's pledge not to develop a new generation of nuclear weapons. At last report, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had sided with Gates, while Vice President Biden sided with Obama.<sup>39</sup> This divergence in views suggests that a lower bound of nuclear deterrence exists. If Obama were to propose any cuts deeper than that, powerful bureaucratic interests would make their displeasure known.

The final potential constraint on Russia policy comes from American public opinion. If the mass public felt strongly about relations with Russia one way or another, it would impose serious constraints on the Obama adminis-

35. Julie Ginsberg, "Reassessing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, July 2, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/19734/>.

36. For recent takes on the bureaucratic politics of Obama's foreign policy apparatus, see Edward Luce and Daniel Dombey, "U.S. Foreign Policy: Waiting on a Sun King," *Financial Times*, March 30, 2010; and Michael Hirsh, "Obama's Bad Cop," *Newsweek*, April 23, 2010.

37. Demetri Sevastopulo and Stephen Fidler, "Gates Brushes Aside Putin's Anti-US Tirade," *Financial Times*, February 11, 2007. Gates's remarks are available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3888>.

38. Robert Gates, "A Balanced Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 88 (January/February 2009): 28–40.

39. Elaine M. Grossman, "Inside Obama Administration, a Tug of War Over Nuclear Warheads," *Global Security Newswire*, August 18, 2009.

tration's freedom of action. The latest comprehensive survey, released by the Pew Research Center in December 2009, suggests some minimal constraints on policy extremes in either direction.<sup>40</sup> On the one hand, the number of Americans who judged Russia to be the most significant threat to U.S. interests fell sharply over the past year, from 14 percent to 2 percent. This decrease suggests that there is little public appetite for intensifying tensions. At the same time, the mass public puts a much lower priority on nonproliferation and arms control issues than do foreign policy elites. More generally, the poll revealed a general turn inward for Americans, with a focus on the economy. There is a strong preference for the United States to "go its own way" and "mind its own business," which is consistent with a realpolitik worldview.<sup>41</sup> It does suggest little public support for President Obama to focus on grandiose multilateralism with Russia, however.

The Russian-American relationship has experienced a dramatic shift in the past year-and-a-half. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude from this shift that policy can change even more. If Russian attitudes do not change, there are strong structural and institutional checks to keep the Obama administration on a path to maintain the status quo. The constellation of alliance, interest group, and bureaucratic politics will act as a further check to prevent a shift from the current course of action. If there were a change, it would likely be in a more mildly hawkish direction. Most important, the American public is clamoring for its leaders to focus inward, and recent special elections will only cement that perception in the eyes of the Obama administration. A new Cold War with Russia is therefore unlikely—but so is a new Grand Bargain.

40. *America's Place in the World 2009* (Pew Research Center, December 2009), <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/569.pdf>.

41. Daniel W. Drezner, "The Realist Tradition in American Public Opinion," *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (March 2008): 51–70.

## CHAPTER 10

# Russia's War on Terrorism

Monica Duffy Toft

In November 2009 and March 2010, terrorists struck again in Russia. In November, bombers attacked the Nevsky Express, a luxury train on the St. Petersburg-Moscow line. Twenty-six people died, and more than one hundred were wounded when a bomb derailed the last three carriages of the train near the town of Bolgoye (about 250 miles northwest of Moscow). In March, two female suicide bombers struck Moscow's subway system at the height of the morning commute. These separate bombings resulted in thirty-nine dead and sixty injured. Then came the claims of responsibility from "a North Caucasus Islamist group" calling itself the "Caucasian Mujahadeen," and then from Doku Umarov, the leader of the Chechen resistance who is dedicated to achieving independence for Chechnya.<sup>1</sup> These stories, along with countless others over the past decade, has led many to consider "terrorism in Russia" and "Islamic fundamentalist terror" worldwide to be two parts of the same phenomenon.

The Russian Federation is especially keen to emphasize that Russia's war against Islamist terror is only one theater of the "global war on terror" promulgated by the George W. Bush administration throughout its 2000 to 2008 tenure. This connection to the global Islamist struggle, however, is only minimally correct. Russia does suffer from terrorist violence, as well as from organized criminal violence, but "Islamist" violence is actually quite rare. In fact, from 2000 to 2008, only 4 percent of the violent attacks that took place on Russian soil in the Caucasus were carried out by actors connected with Islam. Instead, most of the violence is driven by grievances over Russia's heavy hand in regions of concern, such as the North Caucasus. This disconnect between the public imagination and facts on the ground suggests important policy implications. In particular, as the United States looks forward to pressing the "reset" button on its relations with Russia, it must carefully evaluate the degree

1. Doku Umarov is one of Russia's most wanted terrorists. He is a veteran field commander who calls himself president of the "Chechen Republic of Ichkeria," the name separatists use to connote a Chechnya independent of Russia; BBC News, "Islamists Claim Russia Train Bomb," December 2, 2009; *Kommersant*, 226 (4281), December 3, 2009; Ellen Barry, "Chechen Rebel Says He Planned Attacks," *The New York Times*, March 31, 2010.

to which Russia's counterterrorist policies may affect the United States' own security interests, in both the short and long term.

In this essay, I present the facts regarding the distribution and sources of Islamist violence in contemporary Russia and the relationship between terrorism in Russia and Russian counterterrorist strategy. I emphasize that although continuing to approach Russia as an ally in a "global war on terror" is dangerous, close cooperation with Russia is nonetheless essential for reframing a joint approach to effective counterterrorism.

## CORE ISSUES

Contemporary accounts of terrorist attacks emanating from Russia almost invariably include a religious extremist frame. In a minority of cases, this depiction is accurate. Understanding Islamic extremism is therefore a vital concern for the Russian Federation. However, the violence that plagues Russia's southern flank is predominantly driven by grievance over the hopeless economic conditions, the devastated physical infrastructure, and the conduct of Russia's military and special operations forces in the region.

In addition to adopting strict counterterrorism legislation, which allows for the swift and brutal suppression of any activity deemed "terrorist" and for the creation of new bodies to oversee and coordinate counterterrorism activities, Russia has dramatically constrained public access to information on operations and casualties.<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the characterization of violence (or selective reporting) tends to emphasize Islamic extremism.<sup>3</sup> There are two main reasons for this emphasis. First, if Russia's enemies in the Caucasus are religious extremists, then rebuilding devastated physical infrastructure, implementing plans to rebuild the region's economy, and punishing Russian war criminals will have little impact on the likelihood or intensity of a future attack. Islamic extremists are imagined—not without some validity—as a force of nature rather than a rational adversary with which the Russian leadership can bargain. Conversely, grievance-based terror attacks have the capacity, in the rare cases in which they capture unmediated access to a public audience, to expose the Russian government's shortcomings. In the Nord-Ost hostage crisis of 2002, for instance, the Chechen terrorists who took over the theater were able to state their demands publicly. They did not call for the independence of Chechnya or for an Islamic Caliphate. Instead, the taking of hostages was intended to publicize the plight of Chechen noncombatants in Russia's

2. Simon Saradzhyan, "Russia's System to Combat Terrorism and its Application in Chechnya," *National Counter-Terrorism Strategies* 14 (2006).

3. According to one account, for example, the Kremlin insisted at one point on a particular glossary of terms to describe rebel fighters in Chechnya, adamant that "Chechen terrorism" be termed "international terrorism" and that the local Muslim community "jamaat" be replaced with "terrorist organization"; Igor Torbakov, "War on Terrorism in the Caucasus: Russia Breeds Jihadists," *North Caucasus Analysis* 6 (42) (2005).

brutal counterinsurgency campaign. For domestic political reasons, then, “Islamic” terror is vital to the Russian government’s cost-saving and incompetence-hiding strategies.<sup>4</sup>

The second reason the term “Islamic” is attached to terror attacks in Russia is that the Medvedev government (and the Putin government before it) understands very clearly that the U.S. government will be constrained in its criticism of Russia by a large and vocal U.S. public that strongly associates “terror” with “Islam.” The Bush administration, to its credit, was at pains to point out that this connection is unfair and in many cases spurious. Yet at the same time it depended on a constituency of fundamentalist Christians who increasingly came to understand U.S. foreign policy as a kind of crusade against *jihadis* who, by definition, were Muslims. The Bush administration may have envied the Russian Federation’s success in constraining civil liberties—journalistic freedom, in particular—and in responding ruthlessly to terror. Even the Obama administration is constrained by this unfair but increasingly ubiquitous association of terror and suicide attacks with Islam.

These widespread perceptions have important policy implications. The issues at stake thus far can be summarized as:

- 1) Both the United States and the Russian Federation face an ongoing and active threat from radical Islamist organizations and their militant operatives.
- 2) That threat is dramatically inflated in the Russian Federation for two reasons: (1) the Russian government can avoid the expense of physical reconstruction and economic recovery initiatives by characterizing its adversaries as irrational; and (2) it can deflect international criticism of how it engages in counterterrorism (generally a lack of accountability abetting a deliberate policy of extrajudicial killing, torture, murder, and private organized criminal activity) by insisting that its actions in the Caucasus make it a bulwark against the spread or intensification of Islamic fundamentalism abroad.

4. In a related argument, Russia turns the blame for the Caucasians’ complaints back on them: when Dagestanis or Chechens argue that Russia owes them for the destruction and damage caused by Russia’s counterterrorism operations, Russia reacts by arguing that the extreme poverty and physical destruction these regions suffer are punishment for their previous toleration (or support) of terrorists. In addition, some Russians hope that the scale of the damage may act to deter future or related actions by others, as in, “Look what happened to Grozny. If you don’t want that to happen to you, do not allow these ‘bandits’ to go off marauding against us.” By that measure, independent of expense or ongoing efforts to keep the government from looking imperfect, a serious reconstruction effort and a successful effort to boost employment may negate the deterrent effect of the current misery. These arguments are usually not captured by opinion polls, but in casual conversation.

## TERRORISM IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS: AN EMPIRICAL SURVEY

What does terrorism in the North Caucasus region really look like? What proportion of the violence is directed by religious groups (specifically, Islamic extremists), and what amount is directed by other groups? Is there a connection, as repeatedly asserted by the Putin and now the Medvedev administration, between international *jihadis* and local violence? What are the aims of those perpetrating the violence? How has the level of violence been affected, if at all, by recent Russian counterterrorism efforts?

A recent paper I cowrote with Yuri Zhukov has examined some of these questions to discern whether the violence in the Caucasus is driven by jihadists with a global Islamist agenda or is the result of local politics and grievances.<sup>5</sup> We find that, as stated above, “Islamic” extremist violence accounts for less than 4 percent of the terrorist attacks that took place on Russian soil in the last decade. Thus, *more than 95 percent* of terror attacks against Russia are carried out by groups other than Islamic extremists.

Of the 4 percent of attacks that are evidently driven by an Islamist agenda, we find that this violence is not related in any credible way to international Islamic groups (such as al-Qaeda and its offshoots). The data reveal that the violence in the Caucasus is independent of transnational Islamic extremist violence.

What are the objectives of the various parties? The aims of the non-Islamic groups tend to be negative (the cessation of some unbearable burden or practice) rather than positive (the creation of an independent state or transnational Caliphate). Furthermore, and not surprisingly, the bulk of these grievances are associated with Russian counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. In other words, *Russian repression is driving Russian terror*. Most of what has been written about the Islamic extremists who undertake terrorist attacks in Russia is true: they seek the formation of a vast, transnational Islamic Caliphate in what is now Central Asia. However, they are a minority actor and minimally responsible for most of the violent activity in the Caucasus.

In sum, while the causes of recent upheaval in the North Caucasus remain opaque to audiences beyond the Russian government, independent observers have confirmed much of this information. These observers are fearful of an impending escalation in the quality and frequency of terror attacks likely to emanate from the region.

5. The paper examines data compiled from all violent episodes in the Caucasus region from 2000 to 2008. Of nearly 28,000 violent incidents, only 1,200 had a religious basis, either involving religious actors or displaying religious motivation. See Monica Duffy Toft and Yuri Zhukov, “Violence in the Caucasus: Global Jihad or Local Politics?” paper presented at the annual International Studies Association Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 17–20, 2010.

## POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE IN RUSSIAN COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY IN THE CAUCASUS

If Russia's record in counterinsurgency (including counterterrorism) is so problematic, why does it continue?<sup>6</sup> It is easy, and right, to criticize the Russian government's many failings in the Caucasus since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But it is also important to note that the Russian Federation is a young government, and when faced with crisis, is apt to default to old ways. Its ministers and leaders were all raised in a different era, and old habits will not easily be replaced, even if many of them are counterproductive.

Outside observers of Russia have accurately remarked that Russia has become progressively less democratic since it became independent in 1991. Less widely recognized is Russia's cultural tendency to respond to security threats by according more power to the state. Russia is hardly alone in this practice, but unlike the United States and its Western European allies, whose governments were largely de-secularized following the Thirty Years' War (1618 to 1648), the Russian Empires (Tsarist and Communist) never fully separated "church" and state. The Tsarist rule rested on two fundamental pillars: (1) the authority of God (the Tsar embodied both the highest secular *and* religious authority in a single person) and (2) the ability to lead Russians to victory in war. (Russia's unexpected and humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, along with early disasters in East Prussia in 1914, severely undermined the legitimacy of the Tsar's rule and, more than any other factor, made possible the 1917 Revolution that destroyed the Russian monarchy.) Although the new government was called an atheist regime, the October Revolution of 1917 merely replaced one religion with another: Marxism.

This point cannot be too strongly emphasized. Marxist-Leninist ideology performed precisely the same function that religion performed in pre-Westphalian principalities. It entitled elites to virtually unlimited power (checked only by challenges from other similarly endowed elites), and most important, it made any challenge to state or government policy from within tantamount to the cardinal sin of heresy.

This background adds perspective to the continuity in the Russian government's responses to threats—especially internal threats—to its authority. It also explains why Russian heads of state often blunder in their political, social, and economic domestic policies and why corruption and ineptitude are so difficult to eradicate. In most democratic states, when war is not imminent, a system of checks and balances pits proponents of policy against critics. Overall, this arrangement results in policies that work better, not only because exposure to criticism acts as a check on potentially harmful ideas and interests, but also because the very process of checking and balancing brings more affected actors into the decision and implementation nexus.

6. Although Russia formally ceased its counterterrorism operations in Chechnya in April 2009, violence continues. The Moscow-installed Kadyrov regime continues to act lawlessly in its arrest and prosecution of perceived enemies.



Russia, despite critics' claims to the contrary, is attempting to straddle the line between popular sovereignty and ancient habits (when in doubt, empower the state). But it does not have an effective system of checks and balances. Corruption and ineptitude are difficult to rein in because any check on central authority tends to be inflated to a threat to that authority and, by extension, to the security of the state. For this reason, challenges to central authority often invoke an excessively harsh response and are generally followed by public calls for the transfer of additional powers to the state (along with a new round of restrictions on civil liberties).<sup>7</sup>

One natural limit on state power in Western countries is that as states become centralized, their economies suffer. Economic problems create social unrest and affect the state's ability to defend itself from other states. Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in the USSR was ultimately an artifact of this process. Gorbachev was chosen because it was hoped that he could maintain one-party rule *and* invigorate Russia's flagging economy. This strategy failed largely because Gorbachev, though gifted as an analyst and organizer, proved to be a true believer in Soviet ideology. Contemporary China has followed a path Gorbachev was unwilling to consider, abandoning Marxism-Leninism in favor of establishing a sound economy, and, by extension, creating a base for renewed and expanding state power. (Although China may at present seem to be a success, its own path may prove to be just as risky for one-party rule as were Gorbachev's attempts at reform in the 1980s.)

Russia's economy has indeed suffered as its government has become more and more authoritarian, but the true damage has been difficult to appreciate due to soaring energy prices and Russia's large endowment in natural gas and petroleum. All other sectors of Russia's economy are impaired. A faltering health care and education infrastructure is a true threat to Russia's national security and has been permissible only with the spread of anti-NATO rhetoric claiming the contrary. Russia's leaders understand that there is no credible military threat to the Russian Federation from outside its borders. With no imminent war on the horizon, Russia's ruling elite has been able to siphon off profits from Russia's energy wealth for personal consumption. By increasing state control of media outlets and allowing secondary education standards to sag, the government is able to shape public perception of security threats and hide its corruption and incompetence.

7. Russia is not alone here. The British implemented restrictions on civil liberties in response to the threat of terrorism from Northern Ireland, and the United States is still trying to strike a balance between security and liberty as it deals with countering terrorism.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

In 2006, then-President Vladimir Putin signed into law the National Counterterrorism Committee (NCC), a new, more powerful, and more centralized agency for countering terrorism in Russia.<sup>8</sup> Prior efforts (stemming primarily from acknowledged government failures that contributed to the Beslan hostage disaster of 2004) had distributed key counterterrorism responsibilities among several ministries, with mixed results. The NCC, by contrast, would be run by Russia's most effective government organ, the Federal Security Bureau (FSB).

The NCC was to have three core responsibilities (and the resources needed to carry them out): (1) counterterrorism doctrine, policy, and legislation; (2) coordination of the federal government's counterterrorism efforts; and (3) "measures to counter terrorism and remove the causes and conditions which facilitate it."<sup>9</sup> The difficulty with this reasonable organizational shift is that Russia continued to define "underlying causes" as, primarily, "bandits with beards and turbans." In this interpretation, "measures" means killing terrorists rather than tackling unemployment, building shelters, hospitals, and libraries, and staffing schools. Simon Saradzhyan carefully notes that some in the security services understand that economic issues and grievances from abuse suffered at the hands of counterinsurgency operations matter; nonetheless, the amount of resources actually devoted to these underlying causes remains severely stunted.

Russia is hardly unique in this regard; U.S. and Israeli counterinsurgency policies look very similar. In all three cases—Russia, the United States, and Israel—counterinsurgency operations tend to focus on finding and killing terrorists and pay only lip service to the question of why each state might be the repeated target of violence. One constraint on the United States and Israel is the fear that attempting to understand terrorist groups' motivations would be viewed as justification for terrorist acts. It should be clear, however, that whatever the legitimacy of the grievance, under no circumstances is murder justified. Still, it is possible, if at times uncomfortable, to ascertain which grievances are legitimate and, among these, which the state can reasonably engage.

## ONE PAST SUCCESS

There is one exception to the general rule that Russia responds to insurgency with extreme and indiscriminate (near-genocidal) violence. Ironically, this example comes from the same region troubling Russia today. After its victory in the Napoleonic Wars, Russia turned its attention to the conquest of the Cau-

8. Saradzhyan, "Russia's System to Combat Terrorism and its Application in Chechnya."

9. Russian-language Regulations of National Counter-Terrorism Committee, approved by Edict of the President of the Russian Federation, no. 116, February 15, 2006; amended August 2, 2006.

casus. In 1816, Russia sent one of its most talented and beloved generals, Alexei Yermolov, to conquer and “pacify” the region. Reasoning that his adversaries were godless savages, Yermolov instituted a brutal policy against the tribes of the Caucasus (descendants of today’s Dagestanis and Chechens). The brutality had two effects. First, it tilted the balance of power away from the older, more conservative religious leaders (Islam came late to the Caucasian tribes, but after seven years of Yermolov, its influence became widespread), who counseled peace and inner purification, to the younger clerics who counseled war and purification by the sword. Second, it expanded a pool of grievances into a sea of them. By the time Yermolov reported to the Tsar in 1822 that he had “succeeded” in pacifying the Caucasus, he had done little more than set the stage for perhaps the greatest asymmetric conflict in history, the Murid War of 1830 to 1859.

That war, which pitted Imam Shamil—Third Imam of Dagestan—against not one, but three successive Tsars, has been well recounted elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> For our purposes, however, it should suffice to note three important features. First, the conflict was made possible by Russia’s excessive cruelty in the preceding years. Second, it set Orthodox Christian Russia in opposition to a newly unified and manifestly *Islamic* resistance. Third, it was brought to an end as much from kindness and reconciliation as from attrition.

Though Yermolov started the war, Prince Bariatinsky finished it. The young Bariatinsky, authorized by his reformist Tsar to attempt negotiation with Shamil and his vassals, instituted a program of amnesty. He permitted adult males—nominally peasant subjects of His Majesty—to continue to bear the *kindjal*, a dagger marking a young boy’s accession to manhood. He paid large sums of his own fortune as bribes and reparations for damage caused by his soldiers, and he respected the security of any who surrendered to him or to his lieutenants. He punished looters and rapists among his troops, and above all, he insisted his men treat the Tsar’s adversaries as human beings.

It was an entirely novel approach. We will never know whether the subsequent rapid collapse of Shamil’s resistance (he was eventually captured and given a lifelong pension by the Tsar) was due to Bariatinsky’s novel “hearts and minds” strategy or to simple exhaustion: the war had gone on for twenty-nine years. But it is worth noting that the Murids were unprepared for their adversaries’ kindness and humanity. It profoundly dislocated them.

The point here is not to advocate a policy of “kindness” per se, only to remind readers that a sound counterinsurgency strategy skillfully combines discriminate violence with an attention to the grievances that motivate public support for (or apathy toward) insurgents.

10. The classic in English is John F. Baddeley, *Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans, Green, 1908). More recent accounts can be found in Moshe Gammmer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (London: Frank Cass, 1994); and Ivan Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

## CONCLUSION

Understanding how insurgency and counterinsurgency interact is only one part of the problem, however. It is yet unclear how the United States and Russia can move forward given their tendency to regard each other as international rivals hurtling toward a new confrontation and the challenge of countering a menace that, while not directly threatening to either state, is still painful. The chief difficulty is that each state has convinced large swaths of its public that (1) the source of most terror (and the most extreme terror) is Islamic groups; (2) those who seek to harm the state are not rational actors; and (3) it therefore makes little sense to devote resources to (a) identifying and (b) addressing their grievances. Changing this public perception will be a challenge, and in this effort, two avenues must be explored. First, social and political elites in the United States and Russia should begin a concerted effort to downplay the intensity of the threat posed by contemporary terror attacks. Though upsetting, terrorist activity does not threaten national survival to the degree, for example, that a major conventional or nuclear war would. Annual traffic fatalities drastically exceed the number of deaths caused by terror attacks in the majority of advanced-industrial states. Yet most people have become reconciled to the risks of automobile transport. If the perceived danger of terrorism were likewise successfully mitigated, an excessively militarized response to terror could be prevented. Second, local grievances must be addressed and, where appropriate, engaged. Much of the terrorism that takes place in the world is based simply on retribution for perceived wrongs. Sometimes, as in the case of the *Zapatistas* in Chiapas in the 1990s, these grievances are real and legitimate. In other instances, such as Oum Shinrikyo's desire to end all life on earth, terrorist violence is neither motivated by legitimate grievances nor actionable.

It has been widely recognized for more than a decade that the single greatest grievance-producing machine in the Islamic world is the plight of Palestinian Arabs and the widespread perception that the United States has been and will remain a reliable supporter of harsh and unjust (even illegal) Israeli repression of Palestinian Arab national and religious freedom.<sup>11</sup> Israeli governments have differed in their approach to Arab and Palestinian Arab terror, but it is frequently observed that the closer an Israeli government moves toward a fair and comprehensive settlement with the Palestinian Arabs, the less popular it becomes and the more at risk individual members of that government and their families become. The same might also be said of the Palestinian Arab side.

11. We should note here that Osama bin Laden's most recent statements released to the world on January 24, 2010 and March 25, 2010 (assuming it was bin Laden, which as of this writing was not yet fully confirmed) talked of the Palestinian issue as a key reason for al-Qaeda's continued attacks on the United States and the West more generally.

Interestingly, however, in the Russian case, the bulk of the violence directed against the government from within the country is driven not by religious issues, but by a strong desire for retribution for Russian abuses, or by a sense of hopelessness and boredom (better to die in battle against Russians than to suffer). Thus, Russia has within its power the capacity to undermine the grievances that produce terrorist violence. Russia has an advantage not enjoyed by the United States: if the government can hide its abuses and mistakes in Chechnya and the rest of the North Caucasus, it can also lie about a new strategy of reconciliation and reconstruction. The government can threaten to “wipe them out in their outhouses,”<sup>12</sup> and make promises to rebuild the physical infrastructure and create jobs in areas it destroyed during previous counterinsurgency operations.

Like the United States, the Russian Federation rewards political elites who militarize their response to terrorist violence. At the same time, it rebukes those who advocate more comprehensive counterinsurgency policies aimed at engaging both a group’s militants and the public support (or grievances) on which the militants depend. Each state therefore faces similar challenges but with different constraints and opportunities. For the United States, the threat of Islamic terror has been exaggerated, and the public seems largely convinced that most terror, and the most serious terror, is “Islamic.” President Obama and other senior members of his administration and Congress must begin the hard task of attempting to reverse this image. Research aimed at identifying the sources of terror can help a great deal (or help protect against the accusation that such efforts are politically motivated). Furthermore, the United States must make a greater effort to bring about a permanent solution to the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. The current policy of the Israeli government (expanding settlements in the Occupied Territories) directly damages U.S. security interests (and Israeli interests as well), because it underscores the unjust treatment of Palestinian Arabs and claims that the United States and its “Christian” allies support such policies. Neither task will be easy; both may prove impossible. But acting otherwise is apt to be more costly over time.

The United States must approach Russia as an equal partner and must publicly and frequently refer to Russia as a world power and leader (even if it is neither). The United States should also freeze NATO expansion, but only when this move can be seen as a unilateral initiative of the United States, rather than a response to a Russian demand. Russia above all craves status and recognition as a great power, hence public acknowledgment of Russia’s eminence can only help U.S.-Russia relations. This charm offensive should include offers to increase joint U.S.-Russian counterterrorist cooperation, so long as it

12. Putin, referring to Chechen forces at the start of the war in 1999; see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2010/03/sec-100330-rianovosti01.htm>, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2010-03-30-Moscow\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2010-03-30-Moscow_N.htm), and <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article6168959.ece>.

is understood in the United States that this alliance will make no practical difference on the ground, either for the United States or for Russia. Again, the purpose of the charm offensive is to prepare for a longer-term relationship with a more practical, mature Russia. A well-run charm offensive may also have the side benefit of undermining conservatives inside Russia and opening its political system to slightly more moderate politicians.

Yet there is not much the United States can do materially to affect Russia's war on terror.<sup>13</sup> Criticizing Russia's human-rights record is fair but accomplishes nothing save the further de-democratization of Russia. One can only hope that the combination of a U.S. charm offensive and a decade of costly failure (perhaps aided by a dip in energy prices) may convince Russia to begin the hard and unfamiliar work of rebuilding its education and health care infrastructure, reforming government, stemming corruption, and relaxing the restrictions on civil liberties that stifle healthy criticism and impede a check on government excess.

13. In fact, a recent poll indicates that roughly one-third of Russians believe that the United States is fomenting terrorism in Russia as a way to weaken Russia; *Moskovsky Komsomolets* 195, September 3, 2009. This sentiment is becoming more common. In a December 2009 interview, for instance, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov accused the West of agitating violence in Georgia as a way to gain control over the entire Caucasus; see Michael Stott, "Interview—West Using Rebels to Destroy Russia—Chechen Chief," Reuters, December 21, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE5BK064>. Also see BBC News, "Russian Commentary Criticizes FSB for Blaming 'Alien Foes' for Domestic Problems," October 19, 2009.

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