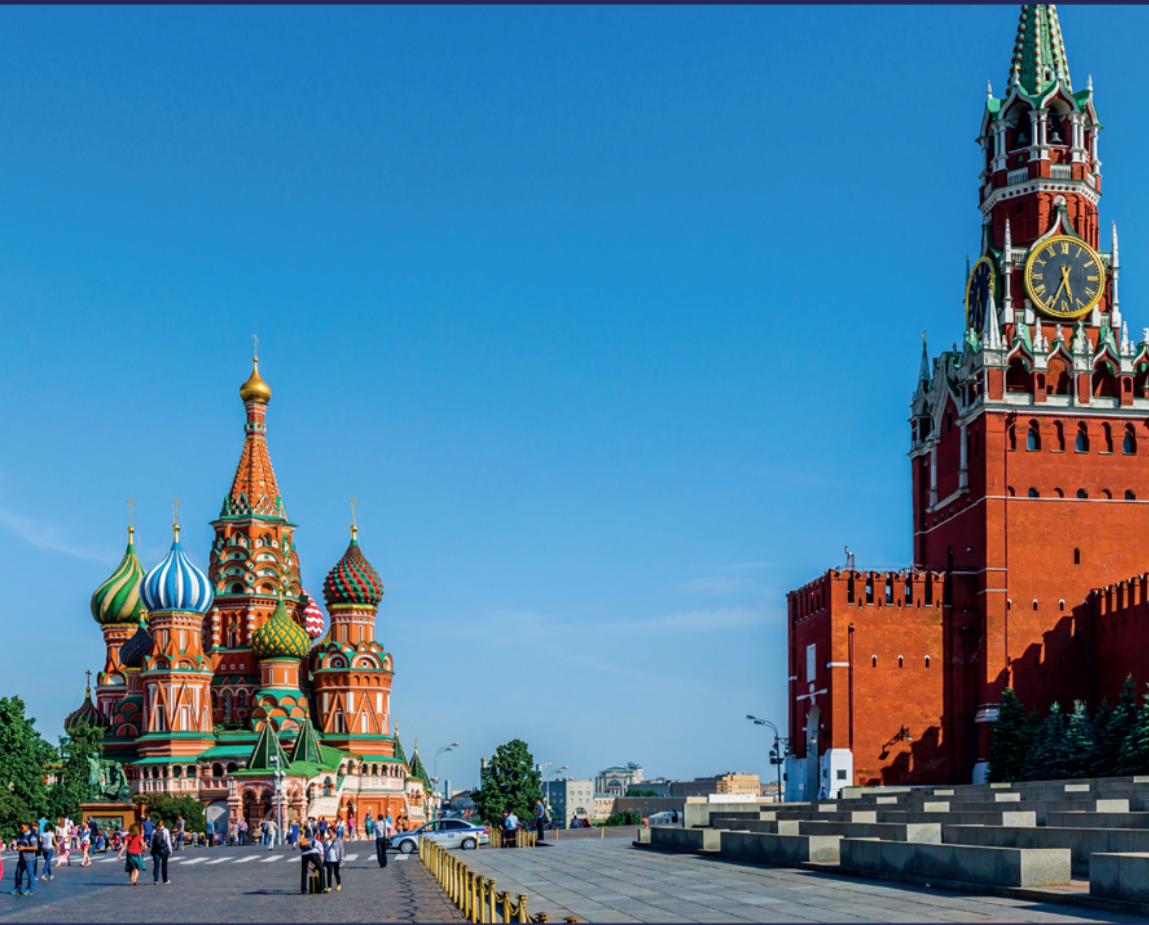


SIXTH EDITION

# THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA

CHANGING SYSTEMS, ENDURING INTERESTS



ROBERT H. DONALDSON AND  
VIDYA NADKARNI

ROUTLEDGE



## **Praise for the Sixth Edition**

The updated edition of this indispensable text offers students of politics and international relations, policy-makers, and the public a systematic, accessible, and even-handed discussion of Russian policy-making concerning relations with other states. Rooted by necessity in historical context from Tsarism up to early 2018, the book provides incisive, nuanced, and compelling analysis of changes and continuities in how Russian leaders perceive what is in their national interest and how they interpret and react to the actions of leaders elsewhere. Donaldson and Nadkarni offer a wise, timely contribution to debates about statecraft, soft power, pragmatism, East-West relations, and the role of cyber-crime.

**Mary Buckley**, *Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge*

Donaldson and Nadkarni's text is the best around, encapsulating the best of American scholarship on Russia: It demonstrates a deep knowledge of Imperial, Soviet, and contemporary history, paired with a complex yet clear understanding of domestic realities' role in foreign policy decision-making and implementation. The up-to-date sixth edition covers, for example, the Kremlin's growing use of soft power and devotion to Eurasian (rather than European) economic integration. This book will be of great use to students, international relations professionals, and businesspeople interested in or implicated by Russian foreign policy.

**Stanislav L. Tkachenko**, *Saint Petersburg State University*

The Foreign Policy of Russia is a sober and accessible analysis for both students and researchers. This a rare opportunity to get a full review of the origins, incentives, and challenges of Putin's controversial foreign policy.

**Andrei Kolesnikov**, *Carnegie Moscow Center*

Donaldson and Nadkarnyi have written an elegant textbook on Russian foreign policy, covering the period from the nineteenth century through the present. The book is comprehensive in its coverage, very well sourced in Russian and Western literatures, and defensible in its judgments throughout. They are especially insightful in dealing with issues in contemporary American-Russian relations, including Russia's involvement in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. They also relate the evolution of Russia's foreign relations to international relations theory. This textbook will provide undergraduate students with an excellent foundation in understanding general tendencies in Russia's external relationships over time as well as a coherent framework of analysis for exploring specific issues in greater

depth through more specialized articles, book chapters, and monographs. In short, it is an ideal text for a survey course on Russian foreign policy or even for a more general course on international relations or comparative foreign policy that includes intensive attention to one or more of the great powers.

**Allen C. Lynch**, *University of Virginia*

# THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA

This text traces the lineage and development of Russian foreign policy with the insight that comes from a historical perspective. Now fully updated, the sixth edition incorporates new coverage of issues including relations with the major powers and with other post-communist states, with an emphasis on tensions with the U.S. and engagement with Ukraine, Crimea, and Syria. International security issues including arms control, sanctions, and intervention continue to grow in importance. Domestic and regional issues related to natural resource politics, human rights, Islamism, and terrorism also persist. Chronologically organized chapters highlight the continuities of Russia's behavior in the world since tsarist times as well as the major sources of change and variability over the revolutionary period, wartime alliances and Cold War, détente, the Soviet collapse, and the first post-communist decades. The basic framework used in the book is a modified realism that stresses the balance of power and the importance of national interest, and identifies several factors (both internal and external) that condition Russian policy. The interpretations are original and based on a mix of primary and secondary sources.

## **New to the Sixth Edition**

- Thoroughly updated coverage of Russia's bilateral relations with the United States and countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- Discussion of how Moscow employs Russia's "soft power" assets.
- Russian-American relations, especially with respect to interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections and to U.S. foreign policy concerns in North Korea, Iran, and Syria.
- Russia's interference in recent and upcoming elections in European states, which (along with the Brexit vote) threaten to jeopardize the future of the European Union.
- The full unfolding of the Ukraine crisis.

- Vladimir Putin's continuing campaign to command greater Western respect for Russia's interests and capabilities.
- Significant new developments in the Middle East including the nuclear deal with Iran, the involvement in the Syrian civil war, and the first-ever production-control deal with OPEC.
- A new concluding chapter: "Russia and the United States: A New Cold War?"
- An Epilogue on the July 2018 Trump-Putin Summit and surrounding events.

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# THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA

## CHANGING SYSTEMS, ENDURING INTERESTS

S I X T H   E D I T I O N

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Routledge  
Taylor & Francis Group

NEW YORK AND LONDON

Published 2019  
by Routledge  
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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First edition published by M.E. Sharpe 1998  
Fifth edition published by M.E. Sharpe 2014 and Routledge 2015

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Names: Donaldson, Robert H., author. | Nadkarni, Vidya, author.

Title: The foreign policy of Russia: changing systems, enduring interests / Robert H. Donaldson, University of Tulsa; Vidya Nadkarni, University of San Diego.

Description: Sixth edition. | New York : Routledge, 2019. | "Fifth edition published by M.E. Sharpe 2014 and Routledge 2015"--T.p. verso. | Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018023204 | ISBN 9781138326781 (hardback) | ISBN 9781138326798 (paperback) | ISBN 9780429449666 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Soviet Union--Foreign relations. | Russia (Federation)--Foreign relations.

Classification: LCC DK266.45 .D66 2019 | DDC 327.47--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018023204>

ISBN: 978-1-138-32678-1 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-32679-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-44966-6 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman by  
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire

## —————To Joseph L. Noguee—————

When we launched the preparation for this sixth edition, Joe Noguee asked us to undertake it without his involvement as co-author. We would be remiss, however, if we failed to acknowledge his outstanding contributions to the analysis and exposition that has carried over from the previous editions.

For Bob Donaldson in particular, co-authoring with Joe Noguee has been a professional highlight. Through four editions of *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II* and through the first five editions of *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, Joe and Bob would each serve as principal author of a given chapter and then exchange drafts for comments and editing. Readers who have themselves experienced co-authorship will appreciate how rare it has been for us *never* to have a substantive difference in interpretation of Soviet and Russian policies. Since we first met at Vanderbilt University in 1969, on our frequent visits in Houston, and on a trip to Russia that we took together in 2002, Joe and Bob have been professional soulmates as well as great personal friends.

Vidya Nadkarni heartily joins Bob Donaldson in expressing admiration for and gratitude to Joe Noguee for his many contributions to the field in general and to this book in particular.

Robert H. Donaldson  
Vidya Nadkarni





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## — Acronyms and Abbreviations —

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ANC	African National Congress
APEC	Asian and Pacific Economic Council
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline
CACO	Central Asian Cooperation Organization
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CFE	Conventional Forces in Europe
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRRF	Collective Rapid Reaction Force
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSKA	Central Sports Club of the Army
CSS	Commonwealth of Slavic States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
CTR	Cooperative Threat Reduction
CVID	Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Dismantlement
DACA	Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
DOSAAF	Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

xii ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
EURASEC	Eurasian Economic Community
FAPSI	Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information
FPS	Federal Border Service
FSB	Federal Security Service
G-6	Group of Six (states conducting nuclear negotiations with Iran: United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, China)
G-7/G-8	Group of Seven (the G-8 meeting without Russia) / Group of Eight Industrial Nations (Canada, France, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, United States, Japan, Russia)
G-20	Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
GNP	Gross National Product
GPALS	Global Protection Against Limited Strikes
GRU	Soviet Military Intelligence Agency
GUUAM (now GUAM)	Regional cooperation organization: Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (until 2005), Azerbaijan, Moldova
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IFOR	Implementation Force
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INF	Intermediate Nuclear Forces
IRBM	Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KGB	Committee for State Security
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
KPD	Communist Party of Germany
MFN	Most Favored Nation
MIRVs	Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles
MPLA	Movement for the People's Liberation of Angola

NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIS	Newly Independent States
NKR	Nagorno-Karabakh Republic
NMD	National Missile Defense
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSA	U.S. National Security Agency
NTV	Independent Television
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
ORT	Public Radio and Television Broadcasting
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
P5	Permanent five members of the UN Security Council (U.S.A, U.K., France, Russia, China)
PFP	Partnership for Peace
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
Rossotrudnichestvo	Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation
RSDLP	Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SES	Single Economic Space
SMF	Strategic Missile Forces
SORT	Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty
SOVA	Center for Information and Analysis (Moscow)
SPD	Social Democratic Party (Germany)
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
SVR	Foreign Intelligence Service
TCP	Trans-Caspian Pipeline
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNMOVIC	United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

xiv ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOA	Voice of America
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organization

## ———— Acknowledgements ————

We thank Daniel S. Papp, who read our original manuscript and made helpful suggestions. We alone are responsible for errors of fact or interpretation. We are grateful to Jonathan L. Leitch and Andrew Brooks for helpful research assistance. We would also like to thank the following scholars for their helpful comments in our work to write this new edition: Mary Buckley, University of Cambridge; Mark N. Katz, George Mason University; and Stanislav L. Tkachenko, Saint-Petersburg State University.

We also thank our respective institutions, the University of Tulsa and the University of San Diego, for their support of our work.

Finally, we are grateful to our families for their encouragement and support, and for their tolerance of the many distractions from family life that writing a book entails.

Robert H. Donaldson  
Vidya Nadkarni





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# Power, Polarity, and Personality

## Dynamics of Russian Foreign Policy

In May 2018, Vladimir Putin was inaugurated as Russia's president for a fourth term. Since Putin's third term began in 2012, he has steered Russian foreign policy in an assertive—some would say aggressive—direction as he seeks to reclaim the country's status as a global power. From direct military interventions in neighboring Ukraine and far away Syria to covert and indirect cyber-interference in Western democracies designed to sow division and discord ahead of elections, Russian foreign policy has taken global center stage combining traditional and unconventional tools of statecraft to promote Moscow's interests around the world. How and why this has happened is a puzzle with which this book engages.

We attempt in this book to provide both a description and an explanation of the foreign policy of Russia. Our time frame is largely the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century, although we do reach back into the latter part of the nineteenth century. Especially over such a broad expanse of time, it is easier to describe policy than to explain it, because causality in politics involves multiple factors that are constantly changing in value.

For the period of Russian politics dominated by the Soviet system, the basic character of foreign policy seemed simple. Marxist-Leninist doctrine appeared to dictate confrontation with the non-communist world. However, foreign policy during the Soviet period was never as clear as it appeared to most contemporaries. Non-ideological factors produced complex relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and other great powers: at times, cooperation with the West (*détente*), and at times, hostility to other communist regimes (e.g., Yugoslavia and China).

Multiple factors shape foreign policy. Some are internal, such as the government and its political elites, the culture, economy, geography, and demography of a country. Others are external, such as foreign threats, political vacuums, and changes in the balance of power. These factors are always changing in substance

and weight, thus making it impossible to come up with a formula or model to explain or predict foreign policy. In short, foreign policy, like all politics, is dynamic.

One broad generalization about Russian foreign policy that we believe to be valid is that elements of both continuity and change are always at work. Over the course of time, Russian foreign policy has exhibited many profound shifts in direction. Perhaps less obvious has been the continuity in behavior of governments headed by tsars, commissars, and presidents. In many respects, Russian foreign policy has been similar to that of other great powers, and in other respects it has been unique. We begin this survey of Russian foreign policy with a preliminary analysis of the continuity and change we will be describing in Russia's relations with the world, and of the degree to which that policy can be deemed distinctive.

### **Continuity and the International System**

To begin with the continuities and similarities, we note that as a general rule of statecraft, Russia has pursued balance-of-power policies. (Admittedly, it has not always fared well in these, as evidenced by the disaster of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact,<sup>1</sup> but in that respect also, Russia has shared a characteristic with the other great powers in the world.) In principle, *balance-of-power policies* are the measures taken by governments whose interests or security are threatened, to enhance their power by whatever means are available.<sup>2</sup> The most common technique associated with the balance of power is forming or joining military alliances, but the balance of power might also entail military buildups, intervention in weaker countries, or resorting to war. Essentially it involves the mobilization of power to countervail the power of an enemy or a potential adversary. Thus, tsarist Russia was a member of the Triple Entente (with Great Britain and France) in the period leading up to World War I, as a counter to the Triple Alliance headed by imperial Germany. In the Soviet period the Warsaw Pact served as a military counterpart to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The Russian Federation differs from preceding regimes in not being a member of any military alliance. This is because post-Soviet Russia, unlike preceding regimes, has no major enemies. Nevertheless, it does have rivals and competitors—for example, the European Union to the west and Japan to the east. Some aspects of Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia are strikingly reminiscent of the Great Game of power politics played by European powers in that region in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In Europe, an example of Moscow's continuing pursuit of balance-of-power policies is Russia's opposition to NATO expansion.

The enduring goals pursued by Russia through its foreign policy have placed primary emphasis on ensuring national security, promoting the economic well-being of the country, and enhancing national prestige. In this respect, Russia's behavior is not markedly different from that of most great powers, but how these goals have been interpreted and achieved has changed with time and circumstances.

We can explain the similarities and continuities of Russian behavior in large part as a consequence of the *international system*, which conditions the foreign policies of all states. As the primary units or actors in international politics, states—though in some respects interdependent—operate from the premise that they are sovereign and independent entities. Their independence stems from the lack of a global political authority to govern all states. Thus, the international system is decentralized; each nation is free in principle to determine the range of policies it will pursue for itself, including at times the use of force. Sometimes the term “anarchic” is used to describe this feature of the international system.<sup>4</sup>

In reality, foreign policy rarely expresses the principle of national sovereignty (or anarchy) in absolute terms. Just as states are not fully constrained by international norms, economic interdependence, or the power of other states, so they are never totally free of such constraints. But the larger and more powerful a state is, the greater is its freedom of action; small and weak states are more limited. Precisely because there is no world government or protective mechanism for nation-states, each must constantly be on guard to protect its security and interests from those states that periodically emerge on the world scene as a threat to others. In the words of Kenneth N. Waltz:

Each state pursues its own interests, however defined, in ways that it judges best. Force is a means of achieving the external ends of states because there exists no consistent, reliable process of reconciling the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise among similar units in a condition of anarchy.<sup>5</sup>

Of the many interests pursued by states, none is more important than survival: maintaining territorial integrity and political independence. Unlike the individual in domestic society, the sovereign state is unprotected by legal institutions (police, courts, militias, and so on) and must look instead to the tools of statecraft—diplomacy, armaments, and political and military alignments—for self-protection.

### **Explaining Variability in Foreign Policy Behavior**

The international system defines the broad parameters of foreign policy behavior, but obviously it cannot explain the specific decisions that determine the behavior of states in the realm of international politics. While theory might have predicted that Moscow in 1939 would seek an alliance with some European power, it could not account for Stalin’s choice of Germany over Britain and France. Exactly a half-century later, theory also could not have predicted that the leaders of the Soviet Union would simply stand aside as the Warsaw Pact disintegrated before their eyes. Foreign policy cannot be predicted because it is the outcome of a large number of constantly changing variables.

Thus, for example, Soviet policy during the Cold War exhibited considerable variability, notwithstanding the fundamental antagonism between the communist world and the West. East-West relations were at times close to military

confrontation, and at times cooperative. The arms race was interspersed with arms control agreements. Former friends became enemies, and intervention gave way to “new thinking.” In a word, throughout the Soviet period there were multiple forces at play that constantly pushed Moscow in new directions.

In an earlier study, we identified seven general variables that we believe influenced the changing direction of Soviet foreign policy after World War II.<sup>6</sup> These were not the only factors influencing Moscow, but they were among the most important:

1. the change in the structure of the international system from multipolarity to bipolarity;
2. the growth of polycentrism in the international communist movement, followed by the collapse of the movement altogether;
3. the development of a military technology that makes possible the total destruction of an adversary;
4. the achievement of military parity between the Soviet Union and the United States, followed by the collapse of the USSR as a superpower;
5. the transition of the Soviet regime from a totalitarian system to an authoritarian oligarchy and then to a fragmented polity;
6. the failure of the command economy; and
7. the differences reflected in the leadership of different personalities, from Stalin to Khrushchev to Brezhnev to Gorbachev.

Some of these variables were of an external nature, reflecting changes in the international environment, and others were domestic or internal in nature. Together they reflect the fact that foreign policy has its roots in both domestic and foreign forces.

As we survey Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet period, we can identify five broad underlying factors that collectively explain much of the change and variability in Russian foreign policy. These observations are necessarily preliminary; independent Russia has existed for slightly more than a quarter-century, and it can be expected that over a longer period of time new determining forces will become evident. We consider the following particularly critical in explaining Russian foreign policy:

1. the change in the structure of the international system away from bipolarity;
2. the decline in Russian military capability;
3. Russia’s transformation from a command economy to a market economy;
4. Russia’s integration into the global economy and its increasing reliance on the global market; and
5. Russia’s political leadership and domestic politics, especially as initially manifested in the struggle between Yeltsin and Russian nationalists,

followed by Putin's efforts to restore the power of the state and its central control, while ensuring his personal domination of the system.

We have noted above the general impact of the international system on foreign policy. But clearly, the international system does not possess a fixed or unchanging structure; the number and hierarchy of great powers changes over time. The term *polarity* commonly is used to describe the structure of the international system. A universe dominated by one great power would be designated "unipolar"; one dominated by two powers (or blocs) is "bipolar"; and one characterized by several powers (usually five or more) is "multipolar." What impact does the structure of the international system have upon foreign policy and international politics? While political scientists disagree about the precise impact of polarity on international politics, most would agree that there is a connection.<sup>7</sup>

A bipolar system is characterized as one in which the two dominating powers are juxtaposed against each other in an unceasing struggle for power. Each side sees the other as a deadly adversary, and both view international politics as a "zero-sum game"; that is, each adversary views any gain for the other as a loss for itself. International politics in a bipolar system is characterized by continuous tension and frequent crises. There are occasional military clashes, but more commonly (because of the power of the adversary) the struggle is fought by means of economic competition, propaganda, and subversion.

By contrast a multipolar system is more benign. There is a competitive feature to international politics, but the competition is moderated by the fact that each state views the others as potential allies as well as adversaries. Relations among states in a multipolar system are thus more fluid and less antagonistic.<sup>8</sup> Most political scientists consider multipolarity to be more stable than bipolarity.<sup>9</sup>

"Bipolar world" comes closer to describing the Cold War between the Soviet bloc and the Western bloc (1945–1990). There was no Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West before 1945 for the basic reason that international politics was multipolar and not bipolar. Indeed, bipolarity on a global scale did not exist until the end of World War II. The only examples of bipolarity prior to the twentieth century were within geographic regions.<sup>10</sup>

With the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the international system was no longer bipolar. Though the United States became the most powerful state in the world, with unrivaled military strength and a defense budget larger than that of all of its potential competitors combined, it did not—despite complaints to the contrary from Moscow, Paris, Beijing, and other capitals—dominate world politics in a way that would create a "unipolar" world. Especially in the realms of diplomacy, economics, and transnational relations, the patterns of interactions, involving both states and non-state actors, quickly began to resemble those of a multipolar world.

In 1992 there was marked improvement in Moscow's most important relationship in the West—that with the United States—with a new round of Strategic

Arms Reduction Talks (START II) and American support for Russia's domestic reform. But Russia no longer treated the West as a monolith. Yeltsin moved to develop a differentiated relationship with the countries of Europe. Annual summits were planned among the presidents of Russia, Germany, and France, independently of those between Yeltsin and U.S. President Bill Clinton. Annual summits also were agreed upon between Yeltsin and China's Jiang Zemin. At one of these summits in the spring of 1997, Yeltsin and Jiang signed the Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Formation of a New International Order, in which the two presidents explicitly declared:

The cold war has ended. The bipolar system has disappeared. Positive trends toward the formation of a multipolar world are developing at an accelerated pace, and relations are changing among the major states, including former cold war adversaries. Regional organizations for economic cooperation are showing significant vitality. Diversity in the political, economic, and cultural development of all countries is becoming firmly established, and the role of forces that favor peace and broad international cooperation is growing.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever the international structure, the ability of a state to play an active role in world politics is linked to its *military capability*. Military power is traditionally assumed to be a prime shaper of foreign policy because it is the most immediately employable power asset for protecting populations, controlling territory, and coercing others. To a degree, economic power can compensate for military weakness—Japan is a case in point—but traditionally a state's capacity to project force abroad has been a vital element in defining its status as a great power. There would have been no Cold War without the power of the Red Army backed by a nuclear capability. That explains why the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1945 was not a superpower and why there was no Cold War until the USSR emerged, following the defeat of Nazi Germany, as the strongest military power in Europe.

Eventually the Soviet Union achieved an overall relative military parity with the West. With combat forces numbering in excess of 4 million, the Red Army was twice the size of the U.S. Army. By most quantitative measures, the Warsaw Pact had more weapons than NATO, though qualitatively the West was superior. Since exact comparisons of capability are difficult to measure, it was assumed on both sides that a rough parity existed. Soviet military strength—both conventional and nuclear—continued to grow well into the Gorbachev era.

Militarily, post-Soviet Russia is another story. Following the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, Soviet and then Russian military capability steadily declined. The Russian Army became a hollow shell of its Soviet counterpart. At the heart of the problem was Russia's inability to finance a powerful fighting machine. Soldiers returning home from Eastern Europe were inadequately housed. The government's severe cash shortage led to the non-payment of soldiers' wages. Equipment was not properly maintained. Russia's pilots and naval personnel were not able to train adequately. Research and development of weapons was

sacrificed. As a consequence, morale plummeted. Among Russian conscripts life was so bleak that many resorted to desertion or even suicide. If there were any doubt about the military collapse, the performance of Russian forces in secessionist Chechnya in 1994–1996 removed it. A ragtag army of Chechen guerrillas and combat forces defeated the armed forces of a country enormously larger and richer. Even when Chechen guerrillas twice invaded Russia in 1995, Russian forces were unable to prevent the escape of their leaders. Further demonstration of the decline of Russia's military power came in the summer of 2000, with the sinking of the Russian submarine *Kursk*.

Yeltsin was bitterly condemned for the decline of the armed forces—of which he was constantly reminded. In the spring of 1997, when he fired Igor Rodionov as minister of defense, he exclaimed: “I am not merely dissatisfied. I am outraged . . . over the condition of the armed forces.”<sup>12</sup> Yeltsin's proposed military reform contemplated substantial reductions in troop strength and ultimately the creation of a professional army without conscription. But at its root, the problem of military reform was economic. Though Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin, increased military spending, Russia's armed forces remained essentially unreformed until 2008. Although its superior numbers helped Russia's military prevail in the short war with Georgia—a much weaker country—in August 2008, its performance exposed glaring weaknesses. From 2009 until 2014, Russia's defense budgets rose steadily, with investments going not toward greater troop strength but to increased training and professionalism, improved combat readiness, and updating of equipment, in part through modernization partnerships with European defense firms and high-tech arms purchases, especially from France and Israel.<sup>13</sup> Collapsing oil prices and punitive sanctions following Russia's intervention in Ukraine in 2014 halted economic growth and the attendant defense budget increases, but the performance of Russian armed forces in Ukraine amply demonstrated how much progress had been made.

Russia's size, skilled population, resources, and nuclear weapons guarantee its ongoing status as a great power, but its military shortcomings, so long as they persist, will limit Russia's influence in world affairs. In relations with states of the former Soviet Union, Russian influence will be paramount, because these states are even weaker; but in Europe, Russia will still have to concede when the West is united on political or security issues.

Another variable is Russia's transition from a command economy to a market economy. Although that transformation has been mired in controversy in both Russia and the West, there is a general consensus that the old system has now been replaced by the new, though Russians disagree regarding the pace and scope of change. Most economic production is now in private hands, the ruble is fully convertible, and prices are free to fluctuate with supply and demand.<sup>14</sup>

U.S. economic aid for Russian reform began in 1992 with the passage of the Freedom Support Act. It continued throughout the 1990s and (in declining amounts) into the first decade of the twenty-first century, amounting to more



than \$2.5 billion. This aid was defended in the U.S. Congress on the following grounds:

The primary U.S. interest in Russia and the NIS [newly independent states] is to prevent their reemergence as a security threat to the West. This can be best achieved if these states make a transition to market economies and democratic systems of government.<sup>15</sup>

Both aid and investment from the West declined sharply following Russia's 1998 economic crisis, and the country endured several years of net capital outflow. As Russia's economy began to grow again in the early years of the new century, it became a more attractive target for foreign investment. In the first six months of 2004, total foreign investment was reported to have grown 50 percent over the same period in 2003, to a level of \$19 billion.<sup>16</sup> Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Russia peaked in 2013 at \$53.4 billion, but it declined rapidly thereafter as a result of the Ukraine crisis and Russia's economic reversals. In 2015, FDI fell 92 percent, and although it recovered somewhat in 2016, it still reached only \$19 billion (less than 2 percent of Russia's GDP). Despite efforts by Putin's regime to attract more foreign investors, the combined effect of sanctions, regional instability, bureaucratic excesses, and corruption were persisting limiting factors in Russia's stimulus efforts.

Related to Russia's transformation from a command to a market economy is the growing linkage of Russia's economy to the global economy. The extent of that linkage should not be exaggerated, because until it finally joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), Russia continued to impose significant barriers to the free flow of goods and capital between itself and the world. However, compared to the autarchic policies of the Soviet period, post-Soviet Russia has gone a long way toward joining the global economy. The ruble is now a convertible currency and is thus subject to the influence of capital flows throughout the world. In 2015 Russia ranked thirteenth among the world's nations in the volume of its exports. Russia now sells stocks on the international market as well as domestically. And Russia has joined international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank as a means for promoting macroeconomic stabilization. While the surge in oil and gas prices brought windfall profits to Russia as a result of its large volume of petroleum exports, this increased global economic role also posed a downside risk. With more than three-fourths of its total exports—a proportion which did not change between 2004 and 2014—and more than half of its federal government revenues accounted for by raw materials exports, Russia's economic stability became extremely vulnerable to a decline of commodity prices.

Economists differ on the full significance for national economies of the growing integration of the world economy; but at the least, that integration limits governments in their freedom of action in the pursuit of domestic economic policies. Boris Yeltsin conveyed his desire for Russia to coordinate its macroeconomic

policies with those of the major industrial states by joining the G-7 group of developed states. In 1995 Russia began seeking admission to the WTO, a goal not achieved until 2012.

The earliest evidence of international influence over the economic transformation of Russia was the reliance of the Yeltsin administration on the IMF for assistance in macroeconomic stabilization. The IMF had approved loans of about \$37 billion for Russia, of which \$22 billion had been disbursed by August 2000. By 2006 all of Russia's Soviet-era sovereign debt to the Paris Club and to the IMF had been repaid, most of it ahead of schedule. Strong earnings from petroleum exports also allowed Russia to amass the world's fifth-largest foreign reserves—rising from \$12 billion in 1999 to \$524 billion in 2013.<sup>17</sup> However, a large share of its reserves was depleted as its economy declined and the government sought to preserve the value of the ruble after 2014.

The foreign policy implications of economic globalization are clear. International conflict becomes more costly, particularly if it involves states on whose assistance Russia relies. So long as membership in international institutions is important to Russia, Moscow can be expected to make greater effort to resolve its differences with the members of those institutions by peaceful means.

### **Political Leadership and the Impact of Domestic Politics**

Finally, there is the role of political leadership in guiding Russian relations with the world. The study of leadership, personality, and politics has been a preoccupation of social scientists for many decades, and there is a rich literature drawn from observations of a variety of political environments, from democratic to totalitarian.<sup>18</sup> The theory that best frames our analysis is that of Fred Greenstein in his classic *Personality and Politics*. Of particular relevance is Greenstein's summary discussion of the circumstances in which individual actions affect events:

The likelihood of personal impact varies with

1. the degree to which the actions take place in an environment which admits of restructuring;
2. the location of the actor in the environment;
3. the actor's peculiar strengths or weaknesses.

The latter two conditions are self-explanatory, but the first requires some further elaboration. Political environments that "admit of restructuring," Greenstein explains, are "unstable" or in a state of "precarious equilibrium," whereas a situation that does not admit of restructuring would be one in which the outcome "can be expected to occur even if some of the contributing factors are eliminated."<sup>19</sup>

In the context of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation (or of the USSR before it), it is not difficult to determine which leaders were strategically placed so that their peculiar strengths or weaknesses could be brought to bear on the content of policy. In the Soviet period, since the time of Stalin the general secretary of

the Communist Party occupied the strategic leadership position, whereas in the post-Soviet period—and especially after the passage of the 1993 constitution—the president of the Russian Federation is positioned to dominate the policy process. Under what circumstances, then—that is, at which times or in which issue areas—might we expect the occupants of these positions to have impact on policy? Guided by Greenstein’s first proposition, we might hypothesize that a leader’s impact would be greater in times of political transition or internal instability. It also would be greater in times when an unrestrained individual dictatorship (a “cult of personality,” in Soviet parlance) overrode the norms of collective leadership in the top councils of the party or state. Conversely, it would be unlikely that a leader would have much impact at relatively settled times, when the distribution of influence among interest groups and institutions is fairly static and shared governance (or “collective leadership”) prevails. Similarly, opportunities for an individual leader to restructure the political environment are limited at times (or in particular issue areas) when doctrine or ideology are rigidly adhered to and leave little room for maneuvering.

Looking at Moscow’s foreign policy since World War II, we can easily discern occasions when Stalin’s power was unrestrained and his personality traits had significant impact on policy. The opposite case—relatively little impact of the leader’s personality on foreign policy—is well illustrated in the study of the Brezhnev era. Termed by his successor Gorbachev the “era of stagnation,” the Brezhnev period in Soviet history was characterized by the collective rule of relatively colorless politicians who represented strong interests and institutions; it was also a time of doctrinal rigidity and established routine. Policy outcomes during this period could usually be expected without regard to the particular personalities at the helm of the Communist Party. Not until Gorbachev began to consolidate his power as general secretary in the late 1980s did the Soviet political environment again admit of *perestroika* (restructuring)—indeed, *perestroika* was Gorbachev’s preferred slogan. The foreign policy record of his administration fairly clearly demonstrated the impact of his personal leadership, as he guided the choice of key personnel, reduced the role of the party bureaucracy, discarded outdated Marxist-Leninist tenets, and conducted an innovative personal diplomacy.<sup>20</sup>

Gorbachev’s experiment in *perestroika* was an immense failure, resulting in the collapse of the political institutions of the USSR and the breakup of the country itself. Stepping into this precarious environment, which decidedly “admitted of restructuring,” Boris Yeltsin clearly occupied the strategic location from which he could exert far-reaching impact on the foreign policy of his newly established realm. In Greenstein’s framework, it was the third variable that would prove decisive. Yeltsin’s political skills—the strengths and weaknesses of his personality—would ultimately determine his personal impact as a leader. He was destined by his situation for greatness; but in Sidney Hook’s terms, his personal skills would determine whether he would go down in history as a Great Man or a Great Failure.<sup>21</sup>

Although Gorbachev had set a new direction and forged new relationships, the foreign policy challenges facing Yeltsin demanded considerable leadership skill. His political career had been a shifting one marked by many contradictions. From a communist *apparatchik* (party bureaucrat) he transformed himself into a democratic leader. To him fell the unique opportunity of defining a new national identity for Russia and establishing the basic concept for its national security. Moreover, with the collapse of the long-dominant Communist Party, he would need to build the new institutions that would shape foreign policy. His foreign policy, like Gorbachev's, could help set the direction for economic and social changes in the country and could gain the foreign assistance that might spark its recovery from a long downward slide. A totally new challenge lay in establishing relationships of trust and mutual assistance with the fourteen other newly independent states that emerged from the Soviet collapse.

Russia's new constructive relationships with the West were not yet solidified, and immediate attention to the "non-West" would be required to reduce threats to the security of the borders of Russia and her new neighbors. Finally, Yeltsin would have to pursue policies that ensured that Russia found a prominent "place at the table," to ensure safeguarding not only its traditional interests, but also its concerns relating to the new dangers of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ethno-religious conflict, and terrorism.

Boris Yeltsin's primary aim in foreign policy, like Mikhail Gorbachev's before him, was to create a non-threatening external environment that would be most conducive to his country's internal economic and political development. As in the early decades of Soviet rule, this concentration on domestic development, together with relative shortcomings in military strength, produced a foreign policy of accommodation, retrenchment, and risk avoidance.

After Yeltsin resigned from the presidency of Russia, historians began to debate which appellation he deserved—Great Man or Great Failure. There is no doubt about Yeltsin's skills as a destroyer, for he clearly played a major role in bringing down the Soviet Communist system and in breaking up the USSR, as well as in clearing away the remnants of Soviet-style political institutions in post-Soviet Russia. It is about his qualities as a builder that the debate rages. His defenders cite his record in advancing the cause of democracy in Russia through his respect for the electoral process, the freedom of speech and press, his efforts to achieve compromise at critical junctures, and his tendency to support the efforts of market reformers. His efforts made possible the first law-governed electoral transfer of power in the thousand-year history of his country. His detractors, however, cite his ego-driven and authoritarian style of rule, the absence of a vision or program for his country, his apparent insecurity and lack of personal discipline, his inconsistency, his willingness to resort to violence against internal enemies, and his penchant for destabilizing Russia's politics.<sup>22</sup>

Our survey of Yeltsin's foreign policy in the chapters that follow will support a judgment that his record in responding to the challenges facing Russia is

decidedly a mixture of successes and failures. All of the challenges he faced in 1991–1992 were passed on to his successor unresolved. With respect to the task of defining a new national identity for Russia and a basic concept for its national security, the detractors are undoubtedly right in bemoaning Yeltsin's inability to articulate a vision or a larger sense of purpose behind which his people could unite. The inability to accept Russia's new geopolitical confines and the question of the reconstitution of the Russian Empire in some form is still alive in some political circles in Moscow.

At the root of Yeltsin's failures in foreign policy was the lack of an overarching vision of where he was taking his country. Despite the production of documents solemnly listing "concepts" and "doctrines," policy objectives were not clearly defined, and Yeltsin kept shuffling personnel at such a rate that implementation became impossible. This absence of a guiding philosophy—in Dimitri Simes's words, "this preoccupation with political tactics at the expense of substantive policy"—produced a foreign policy that seemed to lurch from point to point.<sup>23</sup>

Returning to Greenstein's framework, we can conclude by speculating whether the outcomes of Russian foreign policy in the 1990s would have been expected to occur even if the critical variable—the personality of Yeltsin—had been absent. Would it have made a difference to Russia's place in the world if the August 1991 coup plotters had succeeded in removing Yeltsin from the political scene, or if his parliamentary opponents had succeeded in ousting Yeltsin in October 1993, or if the Communist candidate Gennady Zyuganov had won the June 1996 presidential elections, or if Yeltsin had died on the operating table the following autumn? The clear answer, for better or for worse, is that Russia's course would not have been the same. Or to frame our speculation in another way: Where would Russia be today had its first president been a committed democrat with a clear vision of where he wanted the country to go and the self-discipline to pursue that vision? The Yeltsin legacy is indeed a mix of success and failure, but there is little doubt that the foreign policy of Russia felt enormous impact from the powerful personality of the man who ruled in the Kremlin in the 1990s.

Yeltsin was succeeded in January 2000 by a president with a very different personality. When he took power, Vladimir Putin was a relative unknown to the outside world (and to many in Russia). His background in the Soviet secret police, the Committee for State Security (KGB), led some to suspect that he had an orientation toward authoritarianism, while his association with Anatoly Sobchak, the reformist mayor of St. Petersburg, suggested a more liberal bent. Putin insists he is a democrat.<sup>24</sup> Our analysis in the chapters that follow suggests that he is a pragmatist with a pronounced authoritarian bent.

During his first two terms as president (2000–2008) Putin pursued an authoritarian course in domestic politics. This was reflected in his centralization of power in Moscow at the expense of the regions, the ruthless suppression of Chechnya's insurgency, his control of parliament through his party, United Russia, and the suppression of human rights activists. However, these policies cannot be

attributed solely to his personality. Throughout his years in power Putin confronted the assaults of terrorism, particularly those originating in the Caucasus. In foreign policy his actions could be summed up by the term *nationalism*—a determination to restore Russia’s standing as a great power. Putin’s leadership, in the words of Dmitri Trenin, one of Russia’s most astute foreign policy specialists, “is essentially about two things: first, to keep Russia in one piece and, second, to return it to the ranks of the world’s great powers.”<sup>25</sup> Here he was acting not only on his own impulses, but also on the wishes of an overwhelming majority of the Russian people, whose responses to public opinion surveys have consistently given him strongly positive marks.

Both Yeltsin and Putin were influenced by a new force in post-Soviet politics: public opinion. Putin’s shift to the right reflected a nationalist sentiment that was less accommodating to the West than in Yeltsin’s time. Though the Cold War was over, there remained differences with the West such as NATO expansion, competition for influence in the newly independent states of the former USSR, the exploitation of oil and the location of pipelines, support for Iranian nuclear power, missile defense, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq, among others. Notwithstanding these differences there were numerous areas where Russian and Western interests converged. Combating Islamist extremist terrorism and nuclear proliferation, for example, produced significant cooperation.

The personality factor as a determinant of foreign policy became more complicated after May 2008, when Dmitry A. Medvedev assumed the office of president—thus creating (not for the first time) a duopoly of power in the Kremlin. Constitutionally prohibited from seeking a third consecutive term, Putin chose Medvedev as his successor, just as Yeltsin had picked Putin to succeed him. Trained as a lawyer, Medvedev had executive experience as chairman of Gazprom’s board of directors and chief of Putin’s presidential staff. In the Russian political spectrum, he was widely viewed as tilting on the more liberal side, though he was not only a protégé of Putin but subject to the influence of the most popular leader of the nation.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, for the entirety of Medvedev’s one term as president, Putin continued to be recognized as the country’s “paramount leader,” even though he held the constitutionally lesser office of prime minister. In Chapter 9 we will examine the impact of this “tandem” on policy. Although he continued to play a key role in Russia’s politics as prime minister in Putin’s third term, there is little doubt that the impact of his personality on Russian foreign policy was far less than either Yeltsin’s or Putin’s.

Putin’s return to the presidency in 2012 came at a time of growing turbulence not only in Russia’s internal political order but also on Russia’s periphery, leading to a significant strain in its relationship with the United States. In these circumstances, drawing on Greenstein’s framework, we would expect Putin’s personal impact on Russia’s foreign policy to grow even larger. There is little doubt that Putin himself viewed the international environment after 2012 as offering rare opportunities for restructuring in a fashion that would affirm a multipolarity that

defied unilateralism and that cemented Russia's return to the rank of great powers, without whose vital participation major international issues could not be resolved. His location at the commanding heights of Russian political life, with no potent challengers in view, and his swaggering confidence in his abilities to command attention at the highest international forums, seemed to match the requirements of Greenstein's other variables. In a sense, Putin equated the maintenance of his own power and popularity with the achievement of the international respect and deference that he and most of his public craved for Russia. As Trenin put it:

Forcing his way to the high table, and making others deal with him out of necessity if not of choice, has become Vladimir Putin's diplomatic trademark in his relations with US leaders. This combative foreign policy is being waged against the background of an unmistakably authoritarian Russian domestic regime, which prides itself in following the conservative tradition and publicly rejects some of the latter-day European values, particularly on the issues of gay rights, family, religion, migration, and the role of the state.<sup>27</sup>

In Chapters 9 and 10 we will recount in detail how Putin's words and deeds appeared to be designed to accomplish these objectives for himself and for Russia.

## **Russian Diplomacy**

Interstate diplomacy, broadly understood, represents the ongoing "conversations" that occur between and among states in an effort to calibrate intent with action in foreign policy. As we have noted earlier in this chapter, polarity, power, ideology, domestic institutional arrangements, and the nature of political leadership shape a country's foreign policy and diplomacy. Beginning in the eighteenth and continuing into the nineteenth century, the Tsarist Empire expanded to the west, east, and south. In the process, Russia's relative position in the multipolar European game of power politics constituted an important external variable, while monarchic autocracy, Orthodoxy, and pan-Slavism emerged as important domestic drivers of diplomacy and foreign policy. As we explain in Chapter 2, Russian diplomats sought to preserve and protect the monarchic form of rule as well as to promote Russia's standing as a major power in the European theater.

During the Soviet period, Marxist-Leninist ideology initially positioned Soviet diplomats as revolutionaries who were forced to work within the interstate system of which the Soviet Union was a member, even as they sought to undermine this very system by fostering revolutionary movements in Europe and elsewhere in the world. After World War II when the Soviet Union and the United States emerged as the major powers in a bipolar world, interests alone would have cast them in the role of rivals. Ideological antipathies exacerbated their conflict, even as the nuclear age forced a Cold War upon the protagonists. As we show in Chapter 4, Soviet diplomacy during this period was aimed primarily at "winning over" the allegiance of newly decolonized countries in Asia and Africa in order

to reduce the geographical ambit of Western influence. In the United Nations, the USSR frequently used its veto power to stymie what its representatives saw as Western capitalist attempts at world hegemony. Over time, however, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, ideology served both to frame a communist-oriented worldview and as a post-facto justification for policies undertaken in the secular national interest. Even when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev jettisoned the straitjacket of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and called for an end to the Cold War, his views and those of his foreign policy establishment continued to be shaped and influenced by an abiding faith in a socialist model that would compete with the capitalist system without wars and arms races.

In 1992, the foreign policy purveyors of the newly formed independent Russian Federation, which was shorn of its historical Marxist-Leninist identity, first gravitated toward an “Atlanticist” Western liberal and post-imperial identity. As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 7, this view was immediately challenged by the “Eurasianists” and extreme nationalists, who each offered an alternate vision for Russian foreign policy. Ultimately, Russian foreign policy coalesced around a Eurasianist perspective that cast Russia in a unique role as a bridge between East and West. Under President Putin, Eurasianist foreign policy has been imbued with a twenty-first century defense of conservative social values, promotion of Orthodoxy, and protection of the interests of ethnic Russian compatriots in the post-Soviet space, and co-religionists elsewhere. As Chapters 5 and 10 will demonstrate, Putin has drawn a stark contrast between Russia as a bastion of traditionalism and a West that is mired in materialism, individualism, multiculturalism, and degenerate liberalism. Russian diplomats have promoted this message in traditional state-to-state bilateral and multilateral channels and also employed instruments of public diplomacy and social media to spread this Russian perspective abroad.

Russia, like most other countries, has utilized economic tools in the service of foreign policy. During Soviet times, economic aid to client states was the primary material instrument for influence. As we shall see in Chapter 8, the debt issue became a matter for contentious negotiations after the fall of the Soviet Union, requiring the readjustment of many Soviet-era loans to countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Since independence, the Russian Federation has relied on two major categories of exports to exercise influence—the sale of arms and of oil and gas. Chapters 6–10 consider the ways in which Moscow has often used economic coercion to bend countries, particularly in its immediate neighborhood, to support Russian preferences in foreign policy and to enlist them in multilateral organizations such as the CSTO and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

To a certain extent, the external face of Russian diplomacy over the past two decades has echoed important themes of the imperial era, and especially through its emphasis on asserting its prerogatives as a great power. This has been exemplified by the attention given by the foreign ministry, under both Yevgeny Primakov and Sergei Lavrov, to Prince Aleksandr Gorchakov, who served as foreign minister



under Tsar Alexander II. Primakov resurrected the image of Gorchakov as a model for Russian diplomacy, and Lavrov has praised Gorchakov's skill in managing the restoration of Russia's influence in Europe after its defeat in the Crimean War—best summarized in his missive to Russian embassies in 1856: “Russia is accused of getting isolated and keeping silence in the face of facts that are in harmony neither with the law nor with justice. They say that Russia is sulking. Russia is not sulking; she is composing herself.”<sup>28</sup> In 2010 President Medvedev issued a decree establishing the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund “supporting establishment of a favorable for Russia public, political and business climate.”<sup>29</sup> Hailing Gorchakov's skill in returning Russia to a starring role in European diplomacy, Foreign Minister Lavrov noted that “he did it . . . without moving a gun. He did it exclusively through diplomacy.”<sup>30</sup>

## Notes

1. While communist apologists praised the Nazi-Soviet Pact as a brilliant defensive maneuver, the case that it was a disaster is much stronger. See George Kennan, *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin* (New York: New American Library, 1961), pp. 295–327.

2. For a description of the balance of power, see Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985).

3. For a description of the nineteenth-century Great Game, see Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Power in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1990).

4. See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

5. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 238.

6. Joseph L. Noyes and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), p. 3.

7. The classic analysis of the behavior of states under different conditions of polarity is Morton Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: John Wiley, 1957). A summary of Kaplan's argument is presented in his “Balance of Power, Polarity and Other Models of International Systems,” *American Political Science Review* (September 1957), pp. 684–95.

8. Analyses of bipolar and multipolar systems can be found in Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Stability of a Bipolar World,” *Daedalus* (Summer 1964), pp. 881–909; Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability,” *World Politics* (April 1964), pp. 390–406; and Joseph L. Noyes, “Polarity: An Ambiguous Concept,” *Orbis* (Winter 1975), pp. 1193–1224.

9. A notable exception is Kenneth N. Waltz.

10. An original analysis of bipolarity at the regional level is Peter J. Fliess, *Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1966).

11. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press (CDPSP)* 49, no. 17 (1997), p. 2.

12. *CDPSP* 49, no. 21 (1997), p. 1.

13. Gustav Gressel, *Russia's Quiet Military Revolution, and What It Means for Europe*, Policy Brief ECFR/143 (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015), pp. 4–5.

14. Anders Aslund, *How Russia Became a Market Economy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1995).

15. Lee H. Hamilton, "The Debate on Aid to Russia," *Problems of Post-Communism* (May–June 1995), p. 37.

16. "Foreign direct investment in Russia to rise to \$51 bln in 2010," *RIA Novosti*, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20071225/94110977.html>.

17. International Monetary Fund, "International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity: Russian Federation," November 2013, [www.imf.org/external/np/sta/ir/IRProcessWeb/data/rus/eng/currus.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/np/sta/ir/IRProcessWeb/data/rus/eng/currus.htm).

18. For a more extensive theoretical discussion of the impact of a leader's personality on political situations, see the following: Harold D. Lasswell, *Power and Personality* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1948); Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (New York: John Day, 1943); James David Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992); Fred I. Greenstein, *Personality and Politics* (Chicago, IL: Markham, 1969); *Personality and Politics*, ed. Gordon J. DiRenzo (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1974); *A Psychological Examination of Political Leaders*, ed. Margaret G. Hermann with Thomas W. Milburn (New York: Free Press, 1977); Barbara Kellerman, *Political Leadership: A Source Book* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986); and Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (1969), pp. 190–222.

19. Greenstein, *Personality and Politics*, chap. 2, reprinted in Kellerman, *Political Leadership*, p. 43.

20. A persuasive account of Gorbachev's personal impact on Soviet foreign policy can be found in Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), chap. 7.

21. "Hook's interest, of course, is in lending precision to the notion of the Great Man. Therefore, he is concerned with the individual who, because of especially great talents, is able to alter the course of events. For our purposes, the Great Failure is equally significant: an actor's capabilities may be relevant to an outcome in a negative as well as positive sense." Greenstein, *Personality and Politics*, in Kellerman, *Political Leadership*, pp. 45–46.

22. See the summary assessment in Daniel Treisman, *The Return: Russia's Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev* (New York: Free Press, 2011), pp. 64–79.

23. Dimitri Simes, *After the Collapse: Russia Seeks Its Place as a Great Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), pp. 128–30.

24. Nataliia Gevorkian, Natalia Timakova, and Andrei Kolesnikov, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President Vladimir Putin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 169.

25. Dmitri Trenin, *Should We Fear Russia?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016), p. 56.

26. See Treisman, *The Return*, pp. 123–62.

27. Trenin, *Should We Fear Russia?*, pp. 17–18. For insightful accounts of Putin's rise to power and leadership, see Allen C. Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, Shapers of International History Series (Washington, DC: Potomac Press, 2011); Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015); Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012); Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's Choice*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008).

28. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/en/about/bio/>.

29. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/en/about/>.

30. Susan B. Glasser, "Minister No: Sergei Lavrov and the Blunt Logic of Russian Power," *Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/minister-no>.

## **The Tsarist Roots of Russia's Foreign Policy**

### **Territory and Climate**

The foreign policy of Russia—whether in its tsarist, its Soviet, or its post-communist form—is an expression in some measure of certain relatively fixed geopolitical realities. As it began early in the fourteenth century to escape the confines of Muscovy—the principality with Moscow at its center—the expanding state soon encompassed vast and often forbidding territories. At its peak size, after more than four centuries of expansion, the Russian Empire (including Poland and Finland) covered just under 9 million square miles—over one-sixth of the earth's land surface. After World War II, the Soviet Union, including portions of pre-war Poland, Finland, and other East European states, as well as fragments of pre-war Germany and Japan, had an area of about 8.6 million square miles. Today's Russia, the successor to the largest of the USSR's fifteen republics, has an area of 6,592,850 square miles—still the largest of any country in the world and almost twice the size of second-ranked Canada. From east to west, it spans more than 6,000 miles and 11 time zones; from north to south, it extends about 2,800 miles.

However, much of this vast land is inhospitable. Located in the high northern latitudes, with no mountain ranges in the north to shield it from frigid Arctic blasts, Russia experiences climatic extremes of bitter cold during the long winters and intense heat during the brief summers. Compared to North America, Russia extends considerably farther northward, with most of its land area north of 50° latitude. St. Petersburg, at 59.5° north, lies more northerly than Juneau, Alaska. Moscow, at 55.5° north, is situated somewhat more northerly than Edmonton, Alberta. Even the southernmost part of Russia, in the Caucasus, is just at 41° north—the same latitude as Cheyenne, Wyoming; Cleveland, Ohio; or New Haven, Connecticut. About one-half of the country is in the permafrost zone, where the subsoil is permanently frozen; most of Russia's major ports and rivers are frozen for part of the year.

Although Russia is a country rich in natural resources, its harsh climate limits the ability to exploit them. Vast reserves of petroleum, natural gas, coal, gold, bauxite, and iron ore lie far from the most populated areas, and some are virtually inaccessible. Apart from its brutal effects on workers, the extreme cold hinders the operation of equipment, and the summer marshiness and omnipresent mud make transportation extremely difficult.

The largely unfavorable combinations of soil conditions, temperature ranges, and precipitation produce a situation in which less than 15 percent of the land is sown in crops. The northernmost soil and vegetation zone, known as the tundra, is a treeless plain, with poorly developed soils and little precipitation. The zone to the south of the tundra is the taiga, comprising well over half the country's land. Its winters are cold and summers are hot; the soils are leached and not very fertile. Much of this rolling land is covered with coniferous forests. South of the taiga in European Russia is an area of mixed forests, with milder winters and more fertile soils. In the southern part of European Russia and Western Siberia are the steppes—grassy plains, with hot summers and cold winters. The soil is black and fertile (*chernozem*), and crops include wheat and sugar beets. The rest of the land is either semidesert or mountainous.

From west to east, the five geological regions of Russia are the European Plain, the Ural Mountains, the West Siberian Plain, the Central Siberian Plateau, and the Eastern Siberian Uplands. On the European side of Russia are the Caucasus Mountains, located between the Black and Caspian Seas and reaching heights up to 18,510 feet (Mount Elbrus, the highest point in Europe). The Ural Mountains—the dividing line between Europe and Asia—are low and rounded, averaging 2,000 feet in height; they are rich in deposits of iron, copper, and other metals. The major Siberian mountain ranges are the Altai, in the southern part of western Siberia; the Sayan, in eastern Siberia; and the Verkhoyansk, in northeastern Siberia.

In European Russia, the major rivers flow north to south. In their northern reaches, they are frozen for six months each year; in the south, for about two months. From west to east, the largest river systems cutting across the European Plain are the Dniester, the Dnieper, the Don, the Volga, and the Ural. The first two, largely in Ukraine but with Russian tributaries, empty into the Black Sea; the third flows into the Sea of Azov (which connects to the Black Sea). The latter two empty into the Caspian Sea, which is really a vast inland saltwater lake. The three major river systems in Siberia—the Ob, the Yenisei, and the Lena—flow south to north, to the Arctic Ocean. The Amur River flows easterly along the border with China and empties into the Pacific Ocean.

For over two centuries, Russia has been the most populated among the countries of Europe. (Although the European part of Russia constitutes a relatively small part of Russian territory, the largest proportion of the population lives there.) A combination of territorial expansion and rapid population growth propelled the population of the Russian Empire from 17.5 million in 1700 (second to France

among the European states) to 37 million in 1800 (about 30 percent larger than France). By 1914, with 171 million people, Russia was two-and-one-half times larger than Germany, which ranked second in Europe. A combination of territorial loss, war, famine, and political persecution slowed the growth considerably, and in 1940 the Soviet Union had 194 million people. With more than 20 million lost in World War II, the USSR's population had grown to 209 million by 1959. High birth rates among the non-Slavic peoples of the Soviet Union helped drive the population to about 290 million at the time of the dissolution of the USSR. Russia, which had 147.4 million in 1989, the time of the last official Soviet census, declined to about 145.2 million in the 2002 census and was estimated to be 141.4 million in mid-2007, although it increased—for the first time in many years—to 144.5 million in 2017. Of this total, ethnic Russians—who were barely one-half of the population of the USSR at the time of its dissolution—make up just over 80 percent, and the rest is distributed among nearly 100 minority nationalities. Ten percent of the population in 2002 was reported as Muslim.

The natural decrease in population—attributed to an aging population, a sharp drop in the birth rate, environmental degradation, and poor public health—was partially offset by the migration of almost 8 million people into Russia from other areas of the former Soviet Union. However, this inflow had significantly slowed by the end of the 1990s—though it briefly spiked again after the outbreak of the fighting in Ukraine. The mortality rate (especially for men) increased sharply in the 1980s and early 1990s, to the point that the ratio of deaths to births stood at 1.8:1 in 2001. Without significant changes in these trends, Russia's population at the middle of the twenty-first century will decline to 100 million (compared to an anticipated U.S. population almost four times higher)! In his first report as president on the state of his country, Vladimir Putin declared this demographic crisis to be the country's most acute problem, endangering the very survival of the Russian nation. By the end of 2012, Putin could report that the birth rate had finally begun to exceed the death rate, though it was still far below the replacement rate. However, a report from the government's statistical agency in 2017 showed that the birth rate, especially among ethnic Russians, was again falling—a consequence of the “demographic collapse of 1992–2000” when the numbers of future mothers-to-be dropped so significantly.<sup>1</sup> Overall life expectancy actually grew 2.5 years in the period 2008–2012, but in 2016 it was still much higher for women (77.1 years) than for men (66.5 years). Clearly, the sharp decline in Russia's population, with its serious implications for the country's security and economic health, continues to be a major challenge for the nation.

### **The Legacy of the Tsars**

The origins of Russian foreign policy can be traced to the period (1462–1505) when Ivan III (Ivan the Great) reigned over the Muscovite state. The year 1480 saw the formal collapse of the two-and-one-half-century-long “Tatar yoke,” as

the dominion of the Mongol warrior Genghis Khan and his successors over Russia is popularly known. Ivan already had begun to undermine Tatar power through his policy of "collecting of the Russian lands." The thriving trade center of Novgorod was subjected to Moscow's rule in the 1470s, and the regions around Perm and Tver were incorporated in the following decade. Ivan's westward conquests embroiled him in wars with Poland, which continued under his son Vasiliy III (ruled 1505–1533), who brought Smolensk into Moscow's orbit in 1514.

Ivan the Great was the first ruler of Moscow to use the title "tsar." His wife Sophia, niece of the last Byzantine emperor, encouraged him to claim the title, which was derived from "Caesar" and was meant—in the wake of the fall of Constantinople to the infidel Turks—to convey supremacy over both the spiritual and the earthly realms. Tsar Ivan was determined to build a strong central state based on his hegemony over other princely families—a policy that drove him to acquire additional lands with which to reward his followers. This linkage of strong rule at the center and expansionism continued under Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) who ruled from 1533 to 1584. His reign saw the further strengthening of autocracy, symbolized in the institution of the Oprichnina (special realm), which had features of a secret police force as well as a parallel administrative structure subordinate personally to the tsar.

Externally, Ivan IV began the expansion of Muscovite power into non-Russian territories through the conquest in the 1550s of the southern Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, thereby gaining access to the Caspian Sea. Ivan also sought, unsuccessfully, to defeat the last remnant of the Tatar Empire, on the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea. Even more bitter failure was experienced on Muscovy's western frontier when the Peace of Yam Zapolie with Poland in 1582, and a treaty with Sweden a year later confirmed the loss of prior territorial gains in Livonia (much of present-day Latvia and Estonia) on the Baltic seacoast. Perhaps the most significant of Ivan IV's expansions, however, was the first stage of the conquest of Siberia, which began in 1581. Experiencing only spotty resistance from nomadic tribes, Moscow's forces reached the Ob and Irtysh rivers by the end of the decade. Moving in a northeasterly direction, the entire Siberian conquest, from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean, was accomplished before the midpoint of the 1600s.

The three decades following Ivan the Terrible's death were turbulent times for the young Muscovite state. Ivan's weak son, Fyodor I, left no heir, and was succeeded by the ruthless boyar Boris Godunov. Boris's demise, in the midst of terrible famine, ushered in the so-called Time of Troubles, which climaxed with the occupation of Moscow by Polish forces. With the expulsion of the Poles, a new tsar, Michael I, was elected in 1613, and the dynasty of the Romanovs began its lengthy occupancy of the Russian throne. Michael and his son Alexis (ruled 1645–1676) fought eight more wars with Poland, the fruit of which was the incorporation into the Muscovite state of the eastern part of Ukraine, including its capital, the seat of "old Rus," Kiev.

The full flowering of Russian foreign policy took place under the strong leadership of Alexis's son, Peter I (Peter the Great), who reigned from 1689 to 1725. Not only did Peter transform his country into one of the great powers of Europe, but also in 1721 he renamed it the Russian Empire and dubbed himself emperor of Russia. Fascinated by the sea from an early age, Peter dreamed of acquiring ports and building a great navy. Frustrated in his efforts to wrest the fortress of Azov on the Black Sea from the Turks, Peter enjoyed his greatest military successes in the Great Northern War against Sweden (1700–1721), and fought in the interests of acquiring a coast and ports on the Baltic Sea, for both military and commercial purposes. As early as 1703, Peter began building a new city on the marshlands near the Baltic Sea, which he named St. Petersburg; in 1713, he made it his capital.

Although the ultimately decisive battle against Charles XII of Sweden was fought in 1709 at Poltava, the war was ended only in 1721 by the Treaty of Nystad, which effectively confirmed Sweden's decline and its replacement by Russia as a great European power. The treaty formalized Russia's incorporation of Livonia, Ingria (the area southwest of St. Petersburg), and parts of Finland.

Moving Russia's capital westward was only one way in which Peter the Great brought Russia into a European orbit. He himself made two lengthy journeys to Europe, and he brought back many ideas on how to "Westernize" his country. These changes had a far-reaching impact on the administrative structure, educational system, and economy of Russia.

Peter's forays southward were less enduring. He first acquired and then lost access to the Black Sea in wars with Turkey. A war against Persia in 1722–1723 resulted in the acquisition of the western shores of the Caspian Sea, including the town of Baku, but these gains were relinquished by his successors. Nor was there territorial expansion in the Far East during Peter's time. The Treaty of Nerchinsk, concluded with China in the same year that Peter assumed power, kept Mongolia in the Chinese sphere of influence and confined Russia's colonization to the area north of the Amur River. Supplemented just after Peter's death by the Treaty of Kyakhta, which established certain trade and diplomatic regulations, the agreement at Nerchinsk effectively delimited Russian and Chinese spheres for the next century and a half.

Six monarchs (three women and three men) ruled the Russian Empire in the thirty-seven years between the death of Peter the Great and the beginning of the next significant period in Russian foreign policy: the reign of Catherine the Great. During this interim, Russia participated in three wars: it fought another war with Turkey (1738–1739), at last gaining a Black Sea coast through the Treaty of Belgrade; it fought again with Sweden, gaining the Finnish city of Vyborg in the Peace of Abo (1743); and it participated, from 1757 to 1762, in the Seven Years War in Europe, first on the side of Austria and then as an ally of Prussia.

With the accession of Catherine II in 1762, Russia withdrew into neutrality as the war reached its conclusion. But the empress was soon pursuing an active foreign policy, which resulted in adding significant territories to the Russian

Empire. Catherine was a full partner in European continental politics, demonstrating Russia's dominance in its immediate neighborhood through its victory in yet another war with Sweden (1787–1790) and through three partitions of Poland (in 1772, 1793, and 1795). The partitions gave Catherine White Russia (Belorussia, or Belarus), Lithuania, and western Ukraine; in all, about two-thirds of former Poland was transferred to the Russian Empire.

Equally impressive expansion in the south was produced by two wars with Turkey (1768–1774 and 1787–1792). The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774) and the Treaty of Jassy (1792) gave Russia much of the northern Black Sea coastline, including Azov and Crimea, and extending as far eastward as the mouth of the Dniester River. As one of the fruits of these victories, the great Black Sea port of Odessa was founded in 1796, the year of Catherine's death. By that time she had added another 200,000 square miles to her realm.

Thanks in part to the relative stability of European military organization and technique, Russia had been able to catch up with its Western neighbors by borrowing expertise from them. Indeed, it now had advantages by virtue of the sheer size of its population and by its willingness to spend about three-fourths of the state's finances on the military. This was clearly demonstrated during the course of the Napoleonic Wars, at the end of which Russia's army—with a force of 800,000—was superior to any other on the continent. Not until the Industrial Revolution changed the scale of European warfare during the nineteenth century would Russia fall behind again.<sup>2</sup>

Russia's power gave Alexander I (1801–1825) a major role to play at the Congress of Vienna (1815), which constructed post-Napoleonic Europe. By this time, yet another European land (Finland) had been added to the empire, and wars with Turkey and Persia had led to the incorporation of Bessarabia, Baku, and Georgia. Although his tutors had filled his head with Enlightenment ideas, Alexander's multinational empire gave him a vested interest in suppressing nationalism and preserving the status quo. The Holy Alliance, largely his creation, emerged from Vienna as the embodiment of the principle of legitimism, and Russia began to play its role as the "gendarme of Europe." This policy was even more evident under Alexander's successor, his brother Nicholas I, who ruled with an iron hand from 1825 to 1855. "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationalism" were the guiding ideas of his regime. In 1849, Nicholas sent 200,000 Russian troops to suppress a revolution in Hungary, thus ensuring that one of the last vestiges of the great revolutionary wave of 1848 in Europe would not spread to the Russian Empire.

The conservatism of Nicholas I did not translate into a purely defensive foreign policy. He and his ministers were devoted to the objective of expanding Russia's realms southward—to capture Constantinople and seize control of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits, thereby controlling passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Russia's growing naval base at Sevastopol would have greater strategic significance if the tsar, rather than the Turkish sultan, controlled



the passage of warships in and out of Russia's back door. The Ottoman Empire, in Russia's eyes, was the "sick man of Europe," and Russia was eager to make arrangements to inherit his territory before he died.

In the cause of protecting the sultan's Orthodox Christian subjects in Greece, who had been struggling for independence since 1821, the Russians went to war against Turkey in 1828, concluding hostilities the following year in the Peace of Adrianople. Its terms not only declared Greek independence but transferred Turkish possessions in the Caucasus to the tsar, brought Russia's frontier to the southern mouth of the Danube, and gave her a protectorate over the Orthodox Christians inhabiting the Danubian provinces of Moldavia and Walachia.

Apparently, for Nicholas, not only were the principles of legitimacy and defense of the status quo to be subordinated when Russian strategic interests dictated, but struggles for national liberation of Christians under Muslim rule were to be treated differently from nationalist revolts within the Muslim family. In 1833 he responded affirmatively to the Ottoman sultan's call for assistance in putting down a revolt by Mohammed Ali, his vassal in Egypt. The tsar's reward was the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, which gave Russia the right to use the straits for passage of its warships but denied the right to other nations. Britain and France were disturbed by the strategic importance of the concessions thus handed to the tsar. Together with the Austrians and Prussians, they insisted upon a multilateral arrangement (the London Convention of 1841), which reversed the terms of Unkiar Skelessi and closed the straits to all foreign warships in time of peace.

Conflicting ambitions of the Russians, British, and French in the Near East reopened the struggle for strategic advantage in the Ottoman lands. When French President (soon to be emperor) Louis Napoleon won a concession from the sultan for protection of Catholics and Christian holy places in Palestine, Tsar Nicholas demanded similar privileges in defense of Orthodox Christians. Having failed to persuade the British to join in an outright partition of the Ottoman Empire, Nicholas proceeded to demand a Russian protectorate in Turkey. Encouraged by Britain, the Turks declared war on Russia in October 1853, and the British and French joined them six months later.

Neither side distinguished itself militarily in the Crimean War, but the Russian performance was especially dismal. Despite its growth in population (from 51 million in 1816 to 76 million in 1860) and in textile and iron production, Russia was falling far behind in economic strength. While Russian iron production doubled in the first part of the nineteenth century, that of Britain increased thirtyfold. A lack of capital or consumer demand and the absence of a sufficiently large middle class seriously impeded Russia's industrial takeoff. While Russia had little more than 500 miles of railroads in 1850, the United States had 8,500 miles. And none of Russia's railroads extended south of Moscow. The tsar had to rely on horse transport to move his army to the Crimea, taking as long as three months to move troops to the front, whereas the British and French could reach it by sea in three weeks. The army—thought to be the strongest in Europe at the time of the

Hungarian Revolution of 1849—was soon exposed as shockingly backward, with inadequate weaponry and poor leadership, and with many of its large contingents tied down in internal policing duties.<sup>3</sup>

Following the death of Nicholas I, his son Alexander II (ruled 1855–1881) agreed to the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1856), which ended the Crimean War and stripped Russia of many of its recent territorial gains. The tsar ceded the mouths of the Danube and part of Bessarabia, and he forfeited some of his conquests in the Caucasus. The Danubian principalities were placed under the joint guarantee of the powers, and the Black Sea was neutralized. Turkey was admitted to the Concert of Europe, and the powers promised to respect its integrity and independence. Russia, thus frustrated in its ambitions toward the south, turned its attention inward, toward reform, and confined its external expansion to Asia, where resistance was weaker.

The need for internal political, economic, and social reform in Russia had long been debated by the intelligentsia, who were roughly divided into two camps: Westernizers and Slavophiles. The former group, ashamed of Russia's past and present and attracted by the ideas of the French Revolution, believed that Russia's great mission could be fulfilled only by advancing further on the road that Peter the Great had pioneered: imitation of the West. At the time of the accession of Nicholas I in December 1825, a group of young officers, students, professionals, and nobles (the Decembrists) who had sought to force Westernization on Russia through revolution had suffered a tragic fate. In their wake, writers as diverse as the liberal Granovskii, the romantic Herzen, and the radical realist Belinskii continued to insist that Russia must follow the West.

The Slavophiles did not dispute that Russia was backward and needed change, but they saw its salvation not in servile imitation of the West, with its materialism and its ideas of rationalism and individualism. Rather, they sought a return to what they regarded as Russia's true traditions—the faith of its people and the people's sense of belonging to a community. Russia's faults, the Slavophiles believed, were traceable to Peter's introduction of foreign models and his subordination of the Orthodox Church to the state. According to thinkers such as Karamzin, Kirevskii, and Aksakov, a reformed Russia could fulfill its mission by helping to civilize the West. The most influential book to insist on the uniqueness of Russia and its mission was Nicholas Danilevskii's *Russia and Europe* (1871).

Both sides idealized their models. As the Slavophiles readily pointed out, the real West was a grimmer place than Westernizers claimed, but it was just as true that Russia's traditions were not as happy as the Slavophiles imagined.<sup>4</sup> The debate over the extent of Russia's "special mission," and whether the Western experience was something to imitate or avoid, lasted for much of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, it resurfaced in arguments among Russian Marxists as the century opened, and in debates among post-Soviet Russian writers and politicians as it closed.

With Russia's weaknesses so sharply exposed in the Crimean War, Alexander II introduced a series of significant reforms, many of which seem designed to avoid the more radical changes urged by both Westernizers and Slavophiles. The most important of these was the emancipation of the serfs, proclaimed in February 1861. This was followed in the next few years by financial, educational, judicial, and administrative reforms, and by an edict to reduce censorship. The change in the legal status of the peasantry was slow to produce benefits in increased agricultural production, but the reforms did have a more noticeable impact in spurring railway construction and industrialization of the economy under state sponsorship. Although the reforms allowed Russia to close some of the distance between itself and the rest of Europe, in its class structure and in the total absence of constitutional or popular rule, Russia remained a rigid and centralized autocracy.

In the wake of its humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, Russia pursued an especially active policy in Asia and the Far East. Russian incursions into Chinese territory in the Amur River region, in violation of the provisions of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, actually began just prior to the war and were intensified during the conflict, in anticipation of an Anglo-French naval attack. After the war, the annexation of the Amur region was legalized in 1858, but the Russians pressed further into Chinese territory, founding Vladivostok in 1860. That same year, the Treaty of Peking established a new border along the Ussuri River. China thus formally ceded to Russia the territory south to Vladivostok. The Russo-Chinese border in the Central Asian region of Turkestan was also revised, allowing the Russians to shift their attention there.

Over the course of two decades, from the time of the capture of Tashkent in 1865 until the conquest of Merv in 1884, Russia penetrated further into Central Asia and subdued and incorporated Transcaspia and Turkestan. Russia justified its initial conquests to the other powers by citing the need to defend its subjects and settlements against raids and robbery by subjects of the ruling khans, with each new expansion of the boundary bringing Russia into contact with new raiders. While securing the frontier may indeed have been the initial aim, these territories possessed mineral wealth and were a source of raw cotton. In light of the simultaneous Anglo-Russian conflicts of interest in the Balkans, Russia's policy of expansion in Central Asia also served to bring useful pressure to bear on the British, who feared that Russia would press all the way into India. These concerns were at least temporarily alleviated in 1885, when the two countries signed an agreement delineating the northern boundary of Afghanistan, effectively making it the terminus of the Russian advance.

In contrast to the steadiness of Russia's expansion on the Eurasian landmass, this period also witnessed an important withdrawal from an area to which Tsar Alexander II apparently felt Russia had overextended itself. Russian fur traders had begun to work in the Aleutian Islands and the southern coast of Alaska as early as the 1760s. The Russian American Company in 1799 was given a monopoly over hunting and commerce southward to the fifty-fifth parallel (the southern

tip of present-day Alaska). In 1812 the company established a new base for hunting and food supply at Fort Ross, just seventy miles north of San Francisco. Although pressured by both Spain and Mexico, the Russians did not abandon Fort Ross until 1841. The vulnerability of these North American possessions became evident to Russia during the Crimean War, just as the economic benefits began to disappear. Hostility toward Britain influenced the decision to sell Alaska to the United States instead; this was accomplished in 1867, for a price of \$7.2 million.

The hiatus in Russian activity in Turkey and the Balkans came to an end in the 1870s. At the beginning of the decade, Russia seized an opportunity (in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War) unilaterally to abrogate the Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris. This action was supported the following year by a convention recognizing the right of both Russia and Turkey to maintain naval forces in the Black Sea. Russian territorial ambitions stirred again at mid-decade, with the occurrence of uprisings against Turkey in Bulgaria and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and with the outbreak of war between Turkey and Serbia.

These events further fanned the flames of the burgeoning Pan-Slavist movement, which transformed the Slavophile ideology into a foreign policy. Since the fifteenth century, Russian churchmen had regarded Moscow as the "Third Rome," but the nineteenth century brought the notion that the tsar, as head of the Russian Orthodox Church, had a special mission to protect Orthodox Christians against the excesses of Ottoman rule. Pan-Slavists disagreed on whether "Slavdom" included only those who were Orthodox, or all who spoke a Slavic tongue. They also were divided between the Greater Slav idea (with all Slav nations treated as equals) and the Lesser Slav idea (emphasizing the dominant role of the Russian state and the Orthodox religion). The 1863 revolt of the Poles against Russian rule, suppressed with great fury by the tsar, diminished the appeal of the Greater Slav idea. The foreign policy consequences of the Lesser Slav idea—although it was imperialistic—were distinctly less risky in that the object of Russia's liberating zeal would be the Slavic subjects of the sultan, rather than those who lived under Austro-Hungarian or German rule.<sup>5</sup>

With the eruption of the Balkan conflict, amid great popular excitement, the Russian government allowed the public collection of funds for the anti-Turkish cause and permitted Russian army officers to enlist as volunteers against the Turks. The defeat of the Serbs provoked a rare public speech by the tsar, in which he referred to the sufferings of Christians in the Balkans and the "cause of Slavdom," ending with the prayer: "May God help us to fulfill our sacred mission."<sup>6</sup> A few months later, Russia declared war on Turkey, and in March 1878 it was able to dictate peace terms in the Treaty of San Stefano. By its terms, the independence of Serbia and Montenegro was recognized and both received territory; Romania was declared independent; Bulgaria was granted autonomy under an elected prince and Russian military occupation; and Bulgaria was to be substantially enlarged to include most of Macedonia and an Aegean seacoast. Russia received Ardahan, Kars, Batum, and Bayazid from Turkey.

Like the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi forty-five years before, the Treaty of San Stefano was distinctly not to the liking of most of the other great powers, and they proceeded to call an international meeting to force Russia to modify its terms. With German Chancellor Bismarck as the “honest broker,” the Congress of Berlin (June 1878) left Russian Pan-Slavists furious (especially at Germany and Austria) and left the nationalist aspirations of Serbia and Bulgaria unfulfilled. The size of Bulgaria was significantly reduced, and Serbia and Montenegro also lost territory. Austria was given a mandate to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia kept Batum, Kars, and Ardahan and gained southern Bessarabia from Romania (thereby ensuring Romanian hostility).

Aware that a frustrated and isolated Russia could go shopping for allies among Germany’s enemies, in the wake of the Congress of Berlin, Bismarck devised a plan whereby Russia could achieve some of its security objectives in the Black Sea in return for alignment with the German powers. Germany and Austria had formed an alliance in 1879, and Bismarck proceeded to revive the idea of the Three Emperors’ League (*Dreikaiserbund*). Temporarily delayed by the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, the three-way alliance was finally implemented by his son and heir, Alexander III (ruled 1881–1894). The highly secret treaty, signed in June 1881, effectively protected Russia against attack in the Black Sea by stating that if Turkey violated the principle of closure of the straits, the three powers would warn the sultan that he had put himself in a state of war with the aggrieved power (Russia). The three powers also agreed that modifications in the territorial status quo in Turkey should take place only after agreement among them, though Austria reserved the right to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina whenever it saw fit. The treaty was renewed once, in 1884, but was allowed to lapse in 1887 because of the tsar’s growing dissatisfaction with Austrian policy.

Determined to keep Russia away from France, Bismarck devised a secret treaty (the “Reinsurance Treaty”) in which the two empires promised each other neutrality if either became involved in a war with a third power, with the exception of an aggressive war of Germany against France or of Russia against Austria. In Russia’s interests, the treaty once more reaffirmed the principle of closure of the straits, but also it went further, promising German moral and diplomatic support “to the measures which His Majesty may deem it necessary to take to control the key of his empire” (i.e., the entrance to the Black Sea). The Germans also recognized Russia’s predominant influence in Bulgaria and promised to aid in reestablishing a pro-Russian government there.

The Reinsurance Treaty came up for renewal in 1890, in the wake of Bismarck’s dismissal as chancellor, and the young Kaiser Wilhelm II was persuaded by his new advisers to allow it to lapse. This proved a fatal mistake, as it virtually drove the Russians into the arms of the French, setting the stage for the transformation of the European system into a rigid bipolarity of opposing coalitions. The initial Franco-Russian convention of August 1891 was only a vague agreement that the two states would discuss measures to be taken if the peace were endangered or

if either were menaced. The following year the Russians agreed in principle to a draft military convention. The actual formalization occurred only at the end of 1893—and not as a treaty, which would have required legislative ratification in France, but as a highly secret military convention. It provided that if France were attacked by Germany, or by Italy supported by Germany, Russia would employ all available forces against Germany; if Russia were attacked by Germany, or by Austria supported by Germany, France would employ all available forces against Germany. Precise levels of troop commitments were specified in the agreement. Additionally, if the forces of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy) or any one member of it mobilized, France and Russia were committed to mobilize without delay.

With the maintenance of the status quo in the Balkans seemingly ensured for the time being, Russia again turned its attention eastward, with the powerful finance minister, Count Sergei Witte, as lead strategist. In 1891, Russia decided to build a 5,000-mile railroad from Moscow to Vladivostok, for both strategic and commercial reasons, but since Vladivostok is not ice-free, Russia also renewed its interest in obtaining such a port, either in Korea (Pusan) or on the Liaotung Peninsula. These ambitions directly conflicted with those of Japan, which feared being cut off from the vast Chinese market. Taking matters into its own hands, Japan launched a war against China in 1894, as a result of which it took from China the offshore islands of Formosa and the Pescadores as well as the Liaotung Peninsula. Determined to drive Japan back off the mainland and prevent the premature partition of China, Count Witte enlisted German and French assistance in pressuring Japan to yield the peninsula.

At the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II in 1896, the Chinese ambassador was induced by a bribe to accept a fifteen-year defensive alliance whereby Russia undertook to defend China from attack and China agreed that a Russian railway could be built across Manchuria to Vladivostok (the Chinese Eastern Railway). Two years later, to the great consternation of the Japanese, China granted Russia a twenty-five-year lease of the Liaotung Peninsula, including Dairen and Port Arthur. Japan sought a conciliatory solution, proposing a division of spoils, in true imperialist fashion, with Japan to be granted predominant influence in Korea in return for recognizing Russia's primacy in Manchuria. Confident of its superior position (though unprepared for war), Russia refused the offer.

Seeking a European partner in its quest to block Russian expansion in the Far East, Japan concluded an alliance with Britain in 1902. The following year, as the first trains passed over his Trans-Siberian Railway, Count Witte was dismissed. In the face of growing internal political unrest, Witte's rival in the tsar's court, V.K. Plehve, counseled an even more aggressive policy, arguing that Russia needed "a little victorious war to stop the revolutionary tide."<sup>7</sup> In February 1904, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. Besieged for most of the year, the city fell to the Japanese in December. Further military reversals followed, as the Russians lost a major land battle at Mukden and

suffered the loss of a naval fleet of thirty-two vessels in the Tsushima Straits in May 1905. By this time, fueled by humiliation in the Far East, a revolution had erupted in Russia, and the government was impelled to seek an end to the war with Japan. With U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt serving as mediator, a settlement was reached at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in September 1905. By its terms, the Russians retained their influence in northern Manchuria and escaped the payment of indemnity, but were forced to recognize Japanese preponderance in Korea and to cede to Japan the southern half of Sakhalin Island as well as their rights in the Liaotung Peninsula and Port Arthur. Two years later Russia signed a convention with Japan explicitly renouncing interest in Korea and southern Manchuria, in return for Japanese recognition of Russia's special interests in northern Manchuria and Outer Mongolia.

Ironically, the forcible limitation placed on St. Petersburg's expansionist ambitions in the Far East removed a point of contention between Russia and Britain and helped open the way to the Anglo-Russian Entente, concluded in August 1907. The two powers settled their remaining imperial differences, with Britain recognizing a Russian sphere of interest in northern Persia, Russia recognizing preponderant British influence in Afghanistan, and both sides recognizing Chinese suzerainty in Tibet. Britain also assured the tsar that it would not obstruct Russia's long-standing desire to open up the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to Russian warships in the Black Sea, thus facilitating a revival of Russian interests in the Balkans.

More sensitive than ever to public opinion in the wake of the 1905 Revolution, the Russian government again took up the banner of Pan-Slavism. The fervor for liberation of the southern Slavs ultimately halted a possible agreement between Russia and Austria, negotiated secretly between their foreign ministers, Alexander Izvolskii and Count von Aehrenthal, in which Austria would have supported a change in the rules governing passage through the straits in return for Russian approval of Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. When Austria rushed to proclaim the annexation in October 1908, the Pan-Slavist outcry in Russia led Prime Minister Peter Stolypin to direct Izvolskii to condemn the Austrian action and instead champion Serbia's claims on these Slavic lands. The ensuing diplomatic crisis hardened the lines between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente in Europe, ruined the prospects for a peaceful accommodation of Russian ambitions in the straits, and strengthened Russia's determination to create a barrier against further Austrian influence in the Balkans.

When war finally broke out in the Balkans in August 1914, sparked by the assassination in Sarajevo of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, by a Bosnian Serb nationalist, it quickly escalated into a European war and then to a world war that none of the great powers truly wanted. Research in Russian archives after the collapse of the Soviet Union reveals that Russian diplomacy and military strategy more actively contributed to the outbreak of World War I than had theretofore been recognized by scholars. Under the guiding

hand of Sergei Sazonov, Russia's foreign minister (supported by Tsar Nicholas II), Russia anticipated the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and deliberately risked war with Germany in order to incorporate Constantinople and the straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus into the Russian Empire.<sup>8</sup> By many indicators, Russia was in a much stronger position for a war than it had been earlier. Its population was three times that of Germany and four times that of Britain, and Russia's standing army was the largest in Europe, with 1.3 million front-line troops and up to 5 million reserves. Russia's industrial output was growing at an average annual rate of 5 percent between 1860 and 1913, and ranked fourth in the world. Railway construction was proceeding at great speed, and Russia was the world's second largest producer of oil.

However, as Paul Kennedy has noted, Russia was "simultaneously powerful and weak."<sup>9</sup> Much of its industry was devoted to food and textiles, and output per capita amounted to only one-quarter of Germany's and one-sixth of Britain's. Given the population growth, annual real national product was expanding by only 1 percent per capita. Eighty percent of the population worked in the inefficient agricultural sector. The average Russian's income was about one-quarter of the average Englishman's, but the average Russian was forced to part with over half of his income for defense. Industrialization had been carried out with forced savings from the population as well as substantial foreign borrowing; Russia's foreign debt was the largest in the world. Most decisively, Russian strength was further undermined by the weakness and ineptitude of its government, starting with Tsar Nicholas II, "a Potemkin village in person."<sup>10</sup>

His great-grandfather's (and namesake's) war in Crimea had exposed Russia's weaknesses, as had his own war against the upstart Japanese, and yet the tsar and his advisers missed every opportunity to turn away from the path that ultimately not only devastated the country but destroyed the regime itself, in the process opening the way to communist revolution and to the imposition of the Soviet state on the Russian Empire.

### **Expansionism in Tsarist Foreign Policy**

Having sketched the broad outlines of Russian foreign policy under the tsars, we can now turn to a search for patterns in tsarist diplomacy, and for explanations of how these were shaped by peculiarities of Russia's geography, of the organization of the tsarist state, of ideology, and of the prevailing norms and characteristics of the international system.

Not surprisingly, the dominant theme most analysts find in the foreign policy of Russia under the tsars is that of expansionism. This is sometimes expressed in a tendency to fill internal vacuums, and sometimes in a push toward the open sea. There are variations in the explanations given for this four-centuries-long pattern of expanding the boundaries of the Russian state. Some analysts stress factors that portray Russia as an unprovoked aggressor fulfilling some messianic or autocratic



urge, and others depict a regime haunted by its vulnerability to invasion and obsessed with the search for security.

Russia's geopolitical situation partially explains several facets of Russian expansionism. The vastness and openness of the Russian landmass, and the absence of natural barriers within or around it, help to account for the obsessive concern by Russia's rulers for its security, as these factors permitted easy invasion by neighboring powers and, alternatively, relatively easy outward expansion of Russian power. On those occasions when invasion has occurred—most notably, by Napoleon in 1812 and by Hitler in 1941–1943—Russian military commanders have had the luxury of being able to trade space for time, while enlisting the harsh climate as their ally in defeating the invader. Conversely, long distances have sometimes turned into logistical nightmares for Russian generals seeking to move forces or supplies to the front. This was especially so prior to the development of a network of railways in the country (as in the Crimean War), but it remains true in the absence of an all-weather network of highways, on terrain where mud can be a greater impediment than snow or ice.

Finally, from the time of Peter the Great, when Russia's aspirations for naval power were born, the absence of ice-free ports often has been cited as a motive for Russian expansion toward the Baltic and Black Seas and toward the warmer waters of the Pacific Ocean. Of equal importance for enhanced naval maneuverability is Russia's need for ports that provide access to open waters leading to the major oceans. Ships leaving the Baltic Sea ports must pass through narrow straits between Denmark and Sweden to reach the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Naval forces leaving the Black Sea for the Mediterranean must pass through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, where the rights of passage were subject to treaty restrictions for long periods. In the Far East, Vladivostok is icebound for part of the year, and ships departing southward toward the Pacific Ocean must pass through Tsushima Strait. Had Russia fulfilled its ambition of acquiring Pusan in Korea, it would have controlled this strait. Only during the period when Port Arthur and Dairen were under Russian control was ice-free passage to the Yellow Sea and the Pacific possible.

Another familiar theory is that Russian expansionism was a product of the particular type of regime—that internal despotism found its outward expression in relentless expansion, and that incorporation of numerous subject nationalities required unusually heavy militarization to maintain central control. No checks and balances existed to question or block the tsars' decisions to devote enormous sums of state revenues to the armed forces. In Henry Kissinger's words:

The absolute nature of the Tsar's powers enabled Russia's rulers to conduct foreign policy both arbitrarily and idiosyncratically. . . . To sustain their rule and to surmount tensions among the empire's various populations, all of Russia's rulers invoked the myth of some vast, foreign threat, which, in time, turned into another of the self-fulfilling prophecies that doomed the stability of Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly, both Ivan III and Ivan IV found that the necessities of state building were well served by expansion, as they sought to acquire new lands with which to reward their nobles. The process by which the Muscovite state was transformed into the Russian Empire by Peter I also reveals linkages between perceived internal requirements and external policies. But during the reigns of Catherine II and Alexander I, the Russian regime was not noticeably different in type from others in Europe, and it is difficult to argue that Russian foreign policies departed from the balance-of-power policies that were being pursued elsewhere.

By the time Nicholas I ascended the throne, Russia already was lagging behind the other major European powers in permitting constitutional change and expanding democracy, and this gap grew considerably over the ensuing decades. Kissinger argues that "even when Russia was pursuing legitimacy, its attitudes were more messianic—and therefore imperialistic—than those of the other conservative courts."<sup>12</sup> An alternative view, however, would argue that policies of conservatism and preservation of dynastic legitimacy were better served by a stance of preserving the status quo than by upsetting it through expansion.<sup>13</sup>

Analysts who perceive a connection between regime type and expansionist policy also argue that the strong state bureaucracy and central control in Russia produced a diplomatic style that was at considerable variance with European great power norms. They describe Russian diplomacy as more secretive and suspicious, untrustworthy, and displaying unusual hostility toward the Western powers—characteristics that are said to have carried over to the Soviet period. Lord Palmerston, Britain's Russophobic foreign secretary and prime minister in the mid-nineteenth century, stated the case for Russian untrustworthiness in 1860:

The Russian government perpetually declares that Russia wants no increases of territory, that the Russian dominions are already too large. But while making these declarations in the most solemn manner, every year [it] adds large tracts of territory to the Russian dominions not for the purpose of adding territory but carefully directed to occupation of certain strategical points, as starting points for further encroachments or as posts from whence some neighboring states may be kept under control or may be threatened with invasion.<sup>14</sup>

Denigrating tsarist diplomacy, Kissinger describes Russia's foreign ministers as "little more than servants of a volatile and easily distracted autocrat, for whose favor they had to compete amidst many overriding domestic concerns."<sup>15</sup> Even when the tsar was a dominant personality, Kissinger observes, the autocratic system of policymaking weighed against coherence in policy, while the tsar's "princely lifestyle" made it difficult for him to concentrate attention on foreign issues over a sustained period.

Russia's greatest fault, in Kissinger's view, lay in the unwillingness of the tsars to abide by the maxims of the prevailing international system—balance-of-power politics—which resulted in a Russian expansionism that proceeded without self-imposed limits.

But Russia seemed impelled to expand by a rhythm all its own, containable only by the deployment of a superior force, and usually by war. Throughout numerous crises, a reasonable settlement often seemed well within Russia's reach, much better in fact than what ultimately emerged. Yet Russia always preferred the risk of defeat to compromise. . . . Russia on the march rarely exhibited a sense of limits.<sup>16</sup>

In similar fashion, Kissinger and other analysts have commented on Russia's tendency when confronted with superior force or war in Europe to turn toward expansion in Asia, and to return to European objectives when more favorable circumstances prevailed.

Instances in Russian history suggest the existence of a greater sense of prudence—and a greater devotion to pragmatic, balance-of-power politics—than this analysis allows. It is true that Russia's wars were not solely defensive—undertaken out of a search for security alone—and that Russia would attack or take territory from neighboring states that were not currently threatening it. However, Russia's targets were invariably states or tribal entities that its rulers perceived to be weaker than itself, and possibly exposed to the ambitions of other states if pre-emptive moves were not taken. Examples are the partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century, Peter I's war against Persia, various wars against Turkey, and acquisition of territory from a weakened Chinese Empire by means of what Beijing has long seen as "unequal treaties."

Prior to the disastrous slide into World War I, when confronted with the possibility of going to war with a stronger state, Russia would pull back. Nicholas I found himself at war with Britain and France in the Crimea only because they came to the defense of the "sick man" on the Ottoman throne. Both Alexander II and Nicholas II had occasion to back away from possible wars with Austria in the Balkans, and Nicholas II, having suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of a Japanese state that had been widely perceived as inferior in strength, sought entente with Britain soon after that war, rather than undertake another costly conflict.

Unlike the successor Soviet regime, imperial Russia's expansionist ambitions were not global; even the expansion into North America soon was regarded as too costly to sustain. As Martin Malia argues, a "pragmatic geopolitical motivation accounts for most of Russia's constant westward expansion from the mid-17th century to Alexander I . . . the Russian imperial regime saw no further than the Vistula, the Straits, Iran, or the Yalu."<sup>17</sup>

If tsarist Russia was not following the maxims of the balance-of-power system, how did it formulate and justify its expansionist policies? The answer, Kissinger and others believe, is that Russian expansion was largely motivated by ideology—alternatively viewed either as the triad of autocracy, orthodoxy, and nationalism or as a messianic Pan-Slavism. Russia's distinctive approach to foreign policy, it is argued, arises not from a sense of insecurity, but from ideology. In Kissinger's words, Russia for most of its history "has been a cause looking for opportunity."<sup>18</sup>

Again stressing the continuity between the tsarist and Soviet periods, Kissinger describes Russian exceptionalism as a paradox:

Unlike the states of Western Europe, which Russia simultaneously admired, despised, and envied, Russia perceived itself not as a nation but as a cause, beyond geopolitics, impelled by faith, and held together by arms. After the Revolution, the passionate sense of mission was transferred to the Communist International.

The paradox of Russian history lies in the continuing ambivalence between messianic drive and a pervasive sense of insecurity. In its ultimate aberration, this ambivalence generated a fear that, unless the empire expanded, it would implode.<sup>19</sup>

As Kissinger notes, tsarist Russia's attitudes toward the West were ambivalent—a complex mix of hostility and admiration. At least in part, this ambivalence reflects a duality in what “the West” represents. As Bruce Porter has written, there was not only the liberal West of the Enlightenment, so beloved by many Russian “Westernizers,” but also the other West—“the militarized, regimented, technological juggernaut” embodied by the armies of Charles XII, Frederick the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Kaiser Wilhelm. Whereas Russia's internal cohesion and the power of the state were threatened whenever it emulated the reforming, democratizing West, the frequent interaction with the military might of the West helped ensure that “this was the West that Russia actually emulated.”<sup>20</sup>

However accurate are Kissinger's insights on this point, he nevertheless overstates the extent to which the “passionate sense of mission” was a characteristic of official attitudes, as opposed to an undercurrent in society. As Hugh Seton-Watson demonstrates in his study of the foreign policy of Imperial Russia, occasionally the tsar would permit manifestations of Pan-Slavism to be expressed, when it suited his policy; but also he could turn it off again, if it threatened to get out of hand.<sup>21</sup> Much of Russia's expansion had nothing at all to do with Slavic brotherhood, but resulted from a quite pragmatic quest for gold and other valuable minerals, furs, or trading pathways to the storied markets of the Orient.

Martin Malia, a scholar who argues that Russian exceptionalism was largely confined to the Soviet period, makes the case against ascribing Russian expansionism largely to ideological motives:

In fact, however, Russian foreign policy under the old regime was no more ideological than that of any other European powers. Like all other powers, Russia was expansionist, but essentially for geopolitical reasons.

Indeed, there was probably more ideology in the Western overseas expression of this expansionism than in its Russian, continental, and Eurasian forms. . . .

Russian foreign policy under the old regime did have an ideological component, but only toward the end. Until the early 20th century, pan-Slav ideology was much more the property of society than of the government, which succumbed to it only in the immediate buildup to 1914. . . . It was with the

October Revolution that Russia's international role changed fundamentally to a messianic ideology.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, no single motive force can be found to explain tsarist Russian expansionism; rather, the influences of geography, regime type, the international system, and ideology all weigh in, though in different proportions at different times. As we will see in Chapter 3, there are features of tsarist diplomacy that did carry over to the Soviet period, but also there are characteristics that did not. In evaluating the legacy of the tsars, one can, however, surmise that certain lessons could be drawn from the history of the Russian Empire to help guide the foreign policy of both communist and democratic successors. From the Time of Troubles in the seventeenth century through the Crimean and Russo-Japanese Wars until World War I, Russian history teaches the dangers that overextension and war pose for internal stability. Sometimes undertaken to divert popular attention from internal problems, war more often than not exacerbates these problems—ultimately, for the tsars, causing the collapse of an empire once regarded as the mightiest in Europe.

## Notes

1. Paul Goble, "Declining Birthrates Among Russians Leading to Further Demographic Decline, Rosstat Figures Show," in Johnson's Russia List, #106, June 5, 2017.

2. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 94–95.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 170–74.

4. Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855–1914* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1952), pp. 22–24.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–93.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

7. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 213.

8. See the revisionist book *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, by Sean McMeekin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). This traditional Russian war aim was repudiated by the Bolsheviks, who took power in 1917. One of their popular anti-war slogans was, "We don't want the Dardanelles," p. 231.

9. Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 233. Much of the following paragraph is drawn from pp. 232–41 of this book.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

11. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 140.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

13. Martin Malia, "Tradition, Ideology, and Pragmatism in the Formation of Russian Foreign Policy," in *The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Leon Aron and Kenneth M. Jensen (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1994), p. 41.

14. Quoted in John P. LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700–1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 368.

15. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 175.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 172–3.

17. Malia, "Tradition, Ideology, and Pragmatism," pp. 41, 45.

18. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 175.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
20. Bruce D. Porter, "Russia and Europe After the Cold War: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies," in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), p. 126.
21. Seton-Watson, *Decline of Imperial Russia*, pp. 317–18.
22. Malia, "Tradition, Ideology, and Pragmatism," pp. 40–41, 43.

## Soviet Foreign Policy

### From Revolution to Cold War

#### **The Russian Revolutionary Tradition**

Emerging in the nineteenth century, movements for revolution in Russia produced political values, beliefs, and symbols that formed part of the political landscape in which the foreign policy of the late tsarist period was devised. The distinctive features of this revolutionary tradition not only helped to shape the foreign policy of the Soviet period of Russian history, but also they live on today by virtue of their importance in the political socialization of the current leadership of democratic Russia. This inheritance includes not only the ideas of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and others who shaped the Marxist-Leninist ideology, but also the political experiences and traditions of the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, which formed the distinctive environment from which Lenin's Bolsheviks emerged.

The main feature of this environment was autocracy: unrestrained political power in the hands of the tsar, wielded through a strong centralized bureaucracy and augmented by a secret police, and an economy and social order controlled by the state. The Russian Orthodox Church and strong manifestations of Russian chauvinism were the other pillars of tsarist authority over the vast multinational empire. The nineteenth century witnessed a widening gulf between the regime and Russia's intelligentsia—the educated professionals who sometimes were termed “superfluous people” because they were divorced from practical social activity as well as from any opportunity for political participation. In short, it was an environment that sponsored utopianism rather than pragmatism, impulses toward revolution rather than gradual reform, and the eventual replacement of one autocracy and orthodoxy by another.

The mid-century debates between Westernizers and Slavophiles pointed up a tradition, visible on both sides, of *narodnichestvo*—faith in the simple laboring people, especially the peasantry, as uncorrupted by political power and bourgeois values and capable of delivering Russia onto the path of social justice. In the wake

of the disillusion in the circles of the intelligentsia over the incomplete reforms of the 1860s, a populist movement emerged, known as *khozhdenie v narod* ("going to the people"). It envisioned an exodus of intelligentsia from the cities to the villages, where they would provide the peasantry with the education and insights that would lift the scales from their eyes and allow them to see the shortcomings of the regime. The movement was an utter failure. Peasants, not yet devoid of their faith in the tsar, distrusted the citified intellectuals—in some cases, going so far as to turn them over to the police.

Arising from the ashes of the utopian hopes of agrarian socialists like Alexander Herzen and Peter Lavrov was the phoenix of violent revolution. As in the earlier division between Westernizers and Slavophiles, the intelligentsia was again divided—this time, between those who were essentially anarchists ("nihilists") and those who adhered to the more deterministic, rationalistic, and Western-oriented Marxian socialism. Lenin's genius was in synthesizing these two streams.

In the former tradition were Mikhail Bakunin, the anarchist, whose hatred for political authority was so great that he engaged in a long battle with Karl Marx, whom he considered too rational and conservative; and P.N. Tkachev, who stated that a revolutionary minority, utilizing terrorism, must seize power to forestall a middle-class revolution and the development of Russia along capitalist lines. Unlike the utopians, these men demonstrated a will to power and contempt for the spontaneous development of the masses, in whose name they sought to achieve a "preventive revolution."

The tightly organized, highly disciplined revolutionary party advocated by Tkachev, after a campaign of terrorism in the 1870s, succeeded in 1881 in realizing its fondest wish—the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, liberator of the serfs. The consequence of this terrorism was that the new ruler, Alexander III, guided by his reactionary tutor Konstantin Pobedonostsev, opened up a period of political and social reaction, intensified chauvinism, and suppression of the revolutionaries.

Opposed to the anarchists in Russia were the first of that country's Marxists. The first Russian Marxist organization, the Emancipation of Labor, was formed by G.V. Plekhanov and others in 1883, and by 1887 Marx's *Das Kapital* was the most widely read book among Russian students. Unlike its attitude toward the populist parties, the government did not at first seek to suppress Marxist ideas or study groups, viewing Marxism as an abstruse and harmless doctrine, which in fact performed a useful service by downgrading terrorism and preaching the inevitability of capitalist development. One reason for the growth of Marxism in Russia was that industrialization was indeed proceeding rapidly at the end of the nineteenth century—even if it was proceeding under state auspices rather than through the efforts of native capitalists, and the urban proletariat was still a tiny drop in a sea of peasantry. In Marx's terms, this development was only the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and the revolutionary agenda at this stage



was not the proletarian revolution and establishment of socialism but the bourgeois-democratic revolution and further development of capitalism. The dilemma for Russian Marxists was that the “progressive” course for their country seemed to require the very development of bourgeois greed and exploitation that so many of the Russian intelligentsia had long decried in the West. As Engels confirmed in a letter to Russian Marxists in 1892, historical materialism dictated that only after the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution could Russian revolutionaries pass on to the promotion of socialist revolution.

There was little formal disagreement with this principle, but much argument about what the tactics of Russian Marxists should be. The viewpoint known as “economism” focused on improving the material condition of the Russian proletariat through trade union organization and peaceful strike movements—a position that gained force when the regime made it clear at the end of the century that it would not tolerate political agitation among the workers. Indeed, the First Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), held in Minsk in 1898, was disrupted by the arrest of some of the delegates by the tsarist police.

For those who were determined that the proletariat should have a political party, and not merely bide its time, the question of tactics arose most sharply at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, held in Brussels and London in 1903. The classical Marxist view of a two-stage revolution, obligating the proletariat at present to support the bourgeoisie in Russia in achieving the bourgeois-democratic revolution, was argued by Plekhanov and Julius Martov. (Although the majority of delegates supported this viewpoint, the loss of a vote on a relatively minor issue led to their being labeled *Mensheviks* [minority men] by Lenin and his *Bolsheviks* [majority men].) A second viewpoint, articulated by Leon Trotsky, insisted that the Russian proletariat could itself seize leadership of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, making it into a “permanent revolution” that would grow into a socialist revolution with the critical assistance of a victorious European proletariat.

Lenin agreed with Trotsky that the Russian bourgeoisie was not worthy or capable of leadership, and that the proletariat must substitute. The first-stage objective, however, was overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and establishment of a “revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry,” which would build the material base for a socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. By 1917, Lenin had taken over Trotsky’s view that this process could be more or less continuous, given outside assistance. Lenin and Trotsky and their followers, impatient with Marxist determinism, were unwilling to see the bourgeoisie seize political power. Strictly speaking, they adhered to Marx’s doctrine that the bourgeois revolution must come first, but they now spoke of a revolution that was bourgeois by virtue of the tasks it would perform rather than by virtue of its leadership. Temperamentally, Lenin, more than the *Mensheviks*, was in keeping with the mood of the intelligentsia and with Tkachev’s idea of a preventive revolution. Like Tkachev, he doubted the ability of the masses to

make their own revolution. The element of political will would be supplied by the party—a centrally directed core of professional revolutionaries that would act as vanguard of the proletariat.

In effect, this Leninist conception of party as elite vanguard, showing the way to the masses, negates the Marxist notion of the proletariat itself as the revolutionary instrument. But this did not mean that the masses were not important to the revolution. Indeed, the “revolutionary situation”—the moment at which the party could seize power—would be characterized by a wave of spontaneous mass uprisings, on the back of which the party could rise to power. At such moments, it was acceptable to utilize slogans inconsistent with the party platform, if they would help to ensure a mass following. Indeed, in 1917 the Bolsheviks came to power not on the basis of their Marxist promises and programs—of which few of the workers and peasants had ever heard—but on the basis of three slogans:

1. immediate peace;
2. all land to the peasants;
3. all power to the soviets (the councils of workers’ and peasants’ deputies that had become half of the dual government that succeeded the tsarist regime).

None of these were Marxist demands—the latter two were in fact contrary to Marx’s program—but they were slogans that enabled the party to utilize the mass unrest and come to power.

The official principle of organization of the Bolshevik wing of the RSDLP—later the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)—was what Lenin called “democratic centralism.” All issues were to be fully discussed by all before a decision was reached; but once the majority had decided on a course of action, debate would cease and the party would function as a factionless monolith. The democratic element also extended in theory to the choosing of leaders—each party body was to be elected by the body below; but party practice very quickly metamorphosed into the cooptation of new members of the elite by those already in the leadership. Furthermore, in practice, no policy matter could even be opened for debate unless the leadership declared it a debatable question. The failure of a policy line was not allowed to cast doubt on the prerogative of the leadership to continue to operate in this fashion. Rather, mistakes were blamed on scapegoats; the party itself never erred.

What Lenin did was to synthesize the Marxist dialectic method, theory of economics, and doctrine of proletarian revolution with the temperament and organizational principles of the Russian intelligentsia. However suitable it was to the Russian culture, this Bolshevik principle of democratic centralism became (in 1920, at the Second Congress of the Communist International) a precondition for any party that wished to affiliate with the Leninist movement. In this context, it caused great difficulty for parties operating in cultures where democratic theory

and the practice of centralized direction by a self-chosen elite were regarded as incompatible.

### **Marx and Lenin on Foreign Policy**

The writings of Marx and Engels contain very little that pertains to foreign policy—indeed, as little as they contain on the operation of a socialist economy. For Marx, the motivating force in the development of industrial society was internal, and the main conflict was among classes rather than nations. Nevertheless, two themes can be extricated from his writings that have relevance to foreign affairs.

The first of these, internationalism, is expressed in the closing words of the *Communist Manifesto*: “Working men of all countries, unite.”<sup>1</sup> The cosmopolitan character of production and the imposition on the whole world of bourgeois values meant that the distinctiveness of nations was fading. The bourgeoisie of the world was already united; likewise, the working man had no country. National sentiments, in Marx’s scheme, belong to the superstructure and will entirely pass away with the demise of capitalism. The second theme relates to the nature and function of the state and the uses of state power. Since the state is the instrument of the ruling class for exploiting other classes, it will wither away with the end of the class struggle. During the transition period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the role of the state is the repression of the bourgeoisie and the creation of conditions for its own withering away. In Marx’s view, nation-states and foreign policies would have no place in the communist era of history, when all peoples would live in harmony.

In Western Europe, Marxism evolved in a different direction than it did in Russia. After the outbreak of World War I, Lenin was prompted to formulate a doctrine on international affairs by developments in international socialist circles—and especially in the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the largest and best-organized Marxist party in the world. Legalized since 1890 and consistently gaining votes in national elections, the SPD had developed a considerable vested interest in the German state. When Lenin heard that SPD delegates in the German parliament had voted in favor of war credits to the imperial government, he was incredulous. The SPD’s leadership had reasoned that since the imperial German state was on the verge of being inherited by the SPD and was under attack by reactionary tsardom, defense of the German state was an act in favor of socialism.

Disappointment with the SPD’s stand, and with the attitudes of other parties of the Socialist International that also had supported the war effort, impelled Lenin to publish *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.<sup>2</sup> A new attempt to justify Marxist internationalism, while at the same time recognizing the revolutionary potential of nationalism in less developed areas, the pamphlet depicted a positive role for international conflict in achieving the new world order. The theory performed the dual function of explaining why Marx’s predictions of the

imminent fall of European capitalism had not come to pass, and of justifying the attempt to create the first socialist revolution in Russia, the most backward of major European countries.

Marx had been concerned with the capitalist as an individual entrepreneur, but Lenin sought to show how the system had developed to the point where industrial capital and finance capital had merged—the banks had stepped in as sources of finance for industry. Moreover, capital had been increasingly concentrated through the formation of huge international monopolies, which used their financial power to direct the policies of the bourgeois states. And the policy that they had imposed was imperialism, which Lenin described not merely as a policy but as a stage of capitalist development. In order to stave off the ruin of capitalism, which Marx foresaw as the result of the shrinking of the domestic market, the imperialists had turned to investment in less developed countries, using them not only as a source of raw materials, but more importantly as a market for the investment of surplus finance capital.

Thus whole nations had come to be exploited by the capitalists. Moreover, the system had been further propped up by the device of bribing the proletariat in the imperialist countries—creating a labor aristocracy that acted as partner in the plunder of the colonies, and promoting opportunism and jingoism in the socialist movement. This explained the rise of wages and reduction in class conflict within the major capitalist countries; the class struggle had been transferred to the international arena.

This stabilization of the capitalist system was inevitably impermanent, for the major imperialist powers had by the beginning of the twentieth century appropriated to themselves the major non-European areas of the world, and they were struggling among themselves for a redivision of these markets. This struggle would inevitably result in a great imperialist war; in fact, World War I was such a war, Lenin wrote. The result of this struggle would be the overthrow of capitalism not only in a few advanced countries, but in the whole imperialist system, which was now interconnected. The revolutionary proletariat in Europe—that part that had not sold out to the capitalists—would form an alliance with the peoples of the oppressed countries. Indeed, given the interconnectedness of the system, Lenin argued that it was now likely that the first spark of the revolution would be touched off at the weakest link of the imperialist chain—in Russia—and would quickly spread to the advanced countries.

This formulation by Lenin assigned importance to elements Marx did not stress; the principle of national liberation became as valid a revolutionary slogan as class struggle. The idea that socialists should strive for independence of the colonies would have horrified Marx, who saw the force, for example, of British capital in India as progressive, because it brought industrialization. Likewise, the idea that revolution in backward countries could precede that in more advanced countries was inconceivable to Marx, because it elevated those countries to a higher plane than that to which their stage of historical development entitled them.

Lenin argued that the national problem was the Achilles' heel of Britain and France, as well as of the Russian Empire, but he maintained that the problem of national exploitation was essentially economic. Once socialism resolved the problem of economic exploitation, the national problem could be resolved by arrangements such as federalism. Thus nationalism was not a completely independent force in world politics, but it was conditioned by the stage of economic development.

After Lenin, Soviet theorists continued to stress the uneven development of capitalism in the international arena and the ongoing struggle for redivision of the world. The seeds of capitalist destruction were said to be sown primarily in the international field. The class struggle continued to be fought in the international arena, and peaceful coexistence between the world proletariat and the capitalist world could only be temporary. As a lasting legacy of Lenin's theory of imperialism, Soviet policymakers continued to demonstrate sensitivity to the common ground between socialist states and underdeveloped countries said to be suffering from imperialist exploitation.

### The "Operational Code" and Foreign Policy

In addition to the explicit beliefs and values of Marxism-Leninism, which formed part of the belief system of Soviet (and some post-Soviet) decision makers, certain characteristic patterns of thought and action exhibited by Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders continued as an *operational code* for their successors. This term is defined by Alexander George as a set of general beliefs about issues of history and questions of politics as these bear on the problem of action—a prism influencing an actor's perceptions and diagnoses of political events, shaping estimates and definitions, and providing norms and guidelines. While not determining the decisions of its adherents, the operational code bounds the alternative ways they perceive and assess the external world.<sup>3</sup>

As originally set forth by Nathan Leites, the operational code sensitizes its followers to certain approaches to establishing control over people and institutions, orienting them toward the objective of mastering any situation. These precepts are based on the assumption that the party is working in a hostile environment, surrounded by internal class enemies or encircled by capitalist states, and that difficulty, danger, and conflict are the norms of political life—as opposed to the Western view that harmony is the natural political state.<sup>4</sup>

Official histories of Soviet foreign policy aver that throughout its history the party has steered the correct middle course. But they also reveal another feature of the Bolshevik belief system: there can be at any one moment only one correct policy. The "scientific" element of Marxism-Leninism demands certitude and intolerance of the suggestion that more than one way might be correct.

Given the assumption of a hostile environment, in which all groups are potential enemies and all means are potentially justifiable, the principle emerges that

the only good neighbor is the absolutely controlled neighbor. In establishing such control and in destroying its enemies, the party traditionally seeks to manipulate individuals into conflict with one another, exploiting the contradictions in the enemy camp; or the party might form temporary alliances with those who share a common enemy. These alliances are impermanent by design and based on wariness and distrust. Ultimately, these alliances must be broken. Working on the assumption that the other party is operating by the same principles of expediency, Leninists must be sure to destroy their ally before their ally turns on them.

The party must be ready to make temporary retreats in the name of survival, in order to preserve its forces from total destruction, but it must never let up its pressure, even when the enemy appears to be growing weaker. Above all, the Leninist must realize that there can be no permanent balance of power, no lasting compromises. All situations tend toward total victory or total annihilation; one must overtake the adversary or be wiped out. Appeals to conscience or interests cannot reduce hostility; constant pressure rather than reasoned negotiation is the only way to modify the enemy's conduct. In short, as Leites summarizes the operational code, it demands a constant awareness of the question *Kto-kogo?* (Who is prevailing over whom?)<sup>5</sup>

### **The Role of Ideology in Soviet Foreign Policy**

Just as the tsarist foreign policy tradition is one source of the perceptions and behavior of foreign policy decision makers during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, so also the set of influences just discussed—the Russian revolutionary traditions, the writings of Marx and Lenin, and the operational code—had a significant effect on Soviet policy. Taken together, these influences constitute the ideology known as Marxism-Leninism.

An ideology is a comprehensive and consistent set of beliefs and values that usually begins with a critique of existing reality and a statement of goals, and contains a program for the radical transformation of society and attainment of these goals. As such, ideology consists not merely of an assessment of the situation, but an impulse toward action, toward bringing about the desired change in the situation. An adherent of the Marxist-Leninist ideology is provided both with a set of goals and with a distinctive way of looking at events that, in this case, emphasizes the clash of economic classes as the motive force of historical development.

Analysts of Soviet foreign policy have long debated just how large a role ideology played in decision making.<sup>6</sup> At one extreme are those who argue that on issues of foreign policy the doctrine played no active role in shaping Soviet decisions; it was retained as a rationalization and justification for the rule of the party, but doctrinal pronouncements merely masked calculations based on power considerations or national interest. At the other extreme are those (more often found in the world of statecraft than in scholarship) who see Marxism-Leninism as a blueprint providing explicit guidance to Soviet policy and who argue that

Soviet policy thereby was rendered quite distinctive. Some stress that as ideology became less operative and relevant on the domestic level, its salience increased on the foreign policy level.<sup>7</sup> In fact, this debate is highly artificial, since there was no contradiction in the Soviet mind between the demands of ideology and those of national interest. Rather, doctrinal tenets were so long term and flexible that they could usually be made to conform to the policies that also promoted the national strength of the USSR.

Vernon Aspaturian has identified six functions of ideology, which provides:

1. transcendent objectives,
2. an image of the world,
3. an action program,
4. a system of communication,
5. a means of rationalization,
6. a symbol of continuity and legitimacy for its adherents.<sup>8</sup>

The latter three are passive or “after-the-fact” functions, and there would be little disagreement that Marxism-Leninism played these roles in the Soviet period, providing language and symbols pervasively used in the analysis of events, a way of rationalizing actions taken in the international arena, and a symbol for the regime of the legitimacy of the continued rule of the CPSU. With respect to the former three, the more active functions, the extent to which Marxism-Leninism performed them varied with time, with the actor, and with the circumstances. That is, the degree to which the doctrine functioned as an operative element in the belief system of Soviet leaders varied from individual to individual—often assuming a larger role in the belief systems of older members of the elite and of those who were not specialists in foreign policy—and from regime to regime, as well as with the external situation that was being faced at any given time.

With respect to the objectives of world revolution and establishment of a new type of international relations, the fact that Marxism-Leninism prescribed no strict timetable for their achievement and the conviction that history was on their side made it easier for its adherents to lengthen the time frame without feeling that they had thereby abandoned the objectives themselves. With respect to the second function, Marxism-Leninism provided an image of the world that heightened the observer’s sensitivity to change and conflict, and increased attention to economic and class factors in the analysis of events. By affecting the way certain events were perceived or understood, it did not necessarily alter behavior in any particular way. As a guide to action—the third of Aspaturian’s “active” functions—it followed from the very imprecision of Marx’s and Lenin’s pronouncements on the subject of international relations that nothing very concrete could be expected here. Indeed, it is better to think of this function as less of an “action program” and more of a push toward activism.

Content analysis of Soviet policy pronouncements has shown a stronger ideological component in the longer-range and more general statements, and far less influence on the day-to-day decisions.<sup>9</sup> Still, there was enough continuity in the programmatic statements of the Soviet elite to suggest that the ideology consisted of an unchanging doctrinal core together with an action program that was subject to revision and sensitive to change. Thus ideology can be seen as being at the same time both “principled” and “expedient,” and the “creative interpretation” of Marxism-Leninism by Soviet leaders in the light of changed circumstances need not be viewed as either cynical manipulation or abandonment, but rather as a mark of the importance of the doctrine, impelling the leaders to take great care in revising it.

It is entirely in the Leninist tradition to modify the action program or to discard tactics or instruments that are felt to have outlived their usefulness; flexibility is an inherent component of Leninism. Even so, the Soviet party’s leadership reserved to itself the right to restate and reinterpret doctrine, not only for itself, but also for the entire world communist movement. The party leader who sought to establish his authority attempted to be seen as a learned ideologist, since a challenge to a leader cloaked in priestly robes was seen as a challenge to the sacred mission of the party itself.

### **The Establishment of Soviet Power**

Chapter 2 has noted the debilitating effects that World War I and its attendant economic and social dislocations had upon the tsarist regime. The revolution that forced the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II occurred unexpectedly and spontaneously in March 1917 (February by the Julian calendar then used in Russia). Bread riots and strikes broke out in Petrograd (a more Russianized version of the capital’s name, used during the war), and these escalated into a full-scale general strike and mutiny of soldiers in the capital garrison. After the fall of the tsar, institutions reflecting the bifurcation between the middle classes and the masses—the so-called dual power of the Duma (parliament) and the Provisional Government on the one hand and the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies on the other—coexisted uneasily for the next seven months.

Lenin was in exile in Switzerland at the time of the March Revolution, and did not manage to get back to Petrograd until April 16, arriving—as documents long suppressed now establish—in a sealed railway car traveling with German assistance. Before his arrival, Bolshevik leaders were cooperating with the new dual power and not seeking to seize power on their own. Thus they were shocked when he informed them that the first stage of the revolution had already been completed and that the time was ripe for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This entailed repudiation of the Provisional Government (“all power to the soviets”); seizure of power by the proletariat and poor peasants; and abolition of the institutions of police, army, and bureaucracy. Lenin’s plan, initially rejected by the party’s Petrograd Committee, was adopted in May.



A July demonstration against the government, now headed by Alexander Kerensky, started spontaneously but was subsequently directed by the Bolsheviks. However, it soon passed out of their control, and Lenin fled the capital to escape arrest. The threat of a Bolshevik takeover contributed to the attempt of the conservative aristocracy and military forces, under the leadership of General Lavr Kornilov, to stage a coup—the failure of which only strengthened Bolshevik popularity and helped the Bolsheviks to win majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow soviets.

This gain in strength, together with rising peasant unrest precipitated by Kerensky's refusal to allow the peasantry to seize land from its owners, produced what Lenin perceived as a "revolutionary situation." By late September, he began to urge the Bolsheviks to seize power without waiting for scheduled elections to the Constituent Assembly. Again, there was resistance in the party, and only on October 23 did Lenin's plan command a majority. The Bolsheviks' military muscle was centered in the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, under Trotsky's command, together with several strategically placed units of sailors and soldiers loyal to the Bolsheviks. On November 6–7 these forces managed to capture Petrograd, meeting with surprisingly little resistance.

Having gained a majority in the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets (after their conduct provoked a walkout of more moderate delegates), the Bolsheviks proceeded to establish as the new governing body of Russia a Council of People's Commissars (abbreviated as Sovnarkom), which was nominally responsible to the Congress of Soviets. Lenin was appointed chairman of the council (equivalent to prime minister); Trotsky, commissar of foreign affairs; and Joseph Stalin, commissar of nationalities.

The true extent of Bolshevik popularity outside the largest cities was revealed in December, when elections to the Constituent Assembly were held. The Bolsheviks obtained only 25 percent of the votes, and when the assembly convened in January, it was dissolved after only one session. The soviets were turned into organs controlled by the Bolshevik Party and withered into insignificance, and by 1922 all competing political parties had been formally proscribed.

As one of their "campaign promises," which had proved especially effective in hastening the demoralization of the armed forces, the Bolsheviks had promised to end Russia's involvement in World War I. Accordingly, the first act of the Soviet state—taken on November 8, just one day after the Bolsheviks' seizure of power—was the issuance of the Decree on Peace, approved by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Addressed to "all warring peoples and governments," it proposed the conclusion of a just and democratic peace, without annexations or indemnities. The intended targets of the document were the mass publics of the "imperialist powers"; one section appealed particularly to the "class-conscious workers" of England, France, and Germany to liberate humanity from the horrors of war and to liberate the masses from all exploitation.

The decree failed to produce either peace or revolution. Having received no reply from other governments, Trotsky appealed to Germany for a cease-fire. Negotiations began on November 27 in the eastern front headquarters of the German Army in Brest-Litovsk.<sup>10</sup> The Germans offered a cease-fire of twenty-eight days, to be automatically renewed unless either side gave a week's notice, with an agreement that both armies would stand in position. (In fact, many German troops already had been transferred to the western front.) They acceded to a Bolshevik request for fraternization of troops and mutual dissemination of newspapers.

The armistice was signed on December 15, and five days later a conference was assembled to draft a treaty of peace. The initial German position agreed to the principles of no annexations and no indemnities as the basis for a general peace, if Russia's allies would agree. The Russians were elated, thinking that this meant that Poland and Lithuania would be returned to them, and they were crushed when a German draft revealed Berlin's position that the people of these territories had already expressed their will to withdraw voluntarily from the Russian Empire and accept a protected status within the German Empire. While brandishing the threat of a separate peace with the Central Powers, Lenin and Trotsky were trying to persuade the entente to accept a general peace, urging the workers to take the initiative if their governments failed to do so. At the same time, in secret discussions, unofficial emissaries of Britain, France, and the United States considered the possibility that Russia would get allied support to break off its talks and renew war with the Germans—who had now made it clear that the price of peace, cloaked as “self-determination” rather than annexation, included Poland and much of the Baltic states.

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and Lenin's proclamation of the “public liquidation of formal democracy in the name of revolutionary dictatorship” had done further damage to the Bolsheviks' image in Western Europe, where they were already suspected of being German agents. Trotsky devised a plan to demonstrate to the proletariat of Europe the fundamental enmity between Germany and the Bolsheviks. His proposed formula—“we shall stop the war, but we shall not sign the peace treaty”—would put to the test Germany's willingness to resume the war. If they failed to do so, it would be a victory for Russia; if they did, the Bolsheviks would demonstrably capitulate at the point of a bayonet rather than willingly. Lenin argued for accepting the German terms in order to buy time for the Bolsheviks to consolidate their position in Russia, while allowing the two imperialist blocs to destroy each other in continued war. The majority of his colleagues, led by Bukharin, were persuaded by their own propaganda into believing that Europe's workers were ripe for revolution, and they pressed for the Russians to take up arms in the name of revolutionary war. Believing that the dangers in such a war exceeded the risk of harsher peace terms that Trotsky's plan entailed, Lenin agreed to give Trotsky's formula a try, in return for his promise not to later argue for revolutionary war.

On February 10, Trotsky, conducting the peace talks for the Russian side as a public prosecution of German imperialism, unveiled to his unbelieving audience his “no war, no peace” position, and withdrew the Bolshevik delegation from the talks. Eight days later, portraying themselves as the saviors of civilization from Bolshevism, the Germans resumed their offensive. Meeting no resistance, their armies crossed 150 miles in five days. Lenin’s acceptance of Germany’s original peace terms was ignored; new and harsher terms were demanded on February 23. By these terms, the line of Russian non-control was shifted eastward, to include Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Ukraine. Russia was to renounce interference in these territories, whose future would be determined by Germany and Austria in agreement with their populations. Additional territories in the Caucasus were to be ceded to Turkey. Together, the lost territories included 34 percent of the population of the Russian Empire, 32 percent of its agricultural land, and 54 percent of its industry. In addition to these losses, Russia was to pay a large indemnity to Germany for the costs of caring for its prisoners of war.

Outraged, most of the Bolshevik leaders again called for revolutionary war against Germany. Threatening resignation, Lenin argued that either the regime must sign the German terms or it would be signing its own death warrant. The only way to save the world revolution was to hold onto its only foothold, Soviet Russia, even under such shameful conditions. The Russian proletariat had triumphed with relative ease, because it had confronted a rotten regime. The victory of the European proletariat would be harder to achieve, because its internal enemies were stronger, but that victory would come—and must come—if the Russian Revolution was to be saved. In the meantime, Lenin told the Congress of Soviets, survival of the revolution required signing the peace:

No matter how brief, harsh and humiliating the peace may be, it is better than war, because it gives the masses a breathing space. . . . Everybody who looks reality in the face and does not deceive himself with a revolutionary phrase will agree with this.<sup>11</sup>

To the consternation of the diplomats of the Central Powers, who preferred not to appear to be dictating terms, a Russian delegate returned to Brest-Litovsk on March 3 and signed the treaty without discussion. Although the Congress of Soviets gave its approval, Lenin and his colleagues were denounced as traitors. The German ambassador was assassinated by members of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, who later tried to shoot Lenin himself—an incident that led to the unleashing of the Red Terror.

Although Lenin had agreed that the Soviet government would desist from propaganda among the German troops, he later declared that he could not be held responsible for what the Bolshevik Party chose to do. Indeed, propaganda was so widespread that the German eastern front commander complained that his army had become “rotten with Bolshevism.” This factor, together with the need

to utilize large numbers of troops to keep control of areas taken from Russia, prevented the Germans from transferring troops that might have turned the tide on the western front. On the home front, the new Soviet Embassy in Berlin became the headquarters for German revolutionary forces—not the last time that Soviet diplomats were plotting to overthrow the government to which they were accredited. On November 5 the “accidental” opening in the Berlin railway station of a Soviet trunk containing insurrectionary documents led to the expulsion of the Russian ambassador and his staff. Four days later, the Bolsheviks annulled the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which the Germans also were required to renounce in their surrender at Compiègne on November 11.

This episode in early Soviet foreign policy tells a great deal about what was to come. It marked an end to the age of innocence for the Bolsheviks in the international arena, and it constituted the first step in the establishment of the “socialism in one country” doctrine—the belief that Soviet socialism could be constructed even without the assistance of the European proletariat. For Lenin, signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was not a betrayal of world revolution in favor of the Russian state, nor was it a choice between ideology and national interest. In his mind, these two were so interlinked that they could not be viewed as mutually exclusive. The flexibility of Leninism was revealed in Lenin’s belief that power relations would change and losses could be undone; a temporary capitulation, buying time to exploit contradictions in the enemy’s camp, could have the result that the Soviets later would be in a stronger position to promote their objectives. The case also illustrates the Bolshevik diplomatic style, which has been termed “demonstrative diplomacy”—using negotiations as a propaganda forum, to appeal over the heads of diplomats and directly to their peoples.

The collapse of the Brest-Litovsk arrangement and of the German threat did not, however, ensure the survival of the Bolshevik regime. A new threat of civil war, complicated by the intervention of Allied forces, continued to call it into question. The initial Allied intervention, designed to keep eastern front pressure on the Germans and safeguard Allied military supplies, received the tacit assent of the Bolsheviks. But in the summer of 1918 the intervention assumed an anti-Bolshevik tinge, as the larger Allied forces began to support rival parties which pledged to bring Russia back into the war. By the spring of 1919, British, French, U.S., and Japanese troops openly were cooperating with the White armies in the civil war, in hopes of putting an end to Bolshevism altogether. To make matters worse, an attempted proletarian revolution in Germany was crushed and its communist leaders were murdered, while short-lived Soviet-style regimes in Bavaria and Hungary were put down.

In the midst of these events, Lenin reported to the Eighth Party Congress on the prospects facing the new Soviet state. Consistent with the operational code’s certainty that one side or the other must triumph, Lenin made a statement on the inevitability of war between Soviet Russia and the imperialists that was to be often quoted by his successors:

We are living not merely in a state but *in a system of states* and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable. That means that if the ruling class, the proletariat, wants to hold sway it must prove its capacity to do so by its military organization.<sup>12</sup>

In 1920, Polish efforts to intervene in Ukraine in quest of territory led to war between Poland and Russia. Early successes of the Red Army brought it to the gates of Warsaw, again raising hopes that European revolution would result. But military disaster befell the Russians, and they were forced, in the Treaty of Riga in March 1921, to cede parts of Ukraine and Belorussia to Poland. The same month witnessed the March Action in Germany—another failed attempt at revolution. Nevertheless, by the end of 1921—despite the absence of outside assistance and due in part to the disunity of their opponents—the civil war had ended, the Allied intervention had been liquidated, and the Bolsheviks had managed to establish their control over most of the tsarist patrimony. While their survival in isolation was a result they never could have imagined in 1917, the continuous experience of threats, both from internal “counterrevolutionaries” and from outside “imperialist” powers, amply confirmed preexisting expectations on the part of the Bolsheviks regarding the need for vigilance and caution in dealing with the omnipresent enemy.

### **Russia and the West in the 1920s**

Although the Russian communist regime had survived, the situation in which it found itself in 1921 was by no means comforting. In March, sailors at the Kronstadt naval base had demonstrated in favor of democratization. The rebellion was crushed, and the dictatorship was further tightened, as all organized factions within the Communist Party were banned. Political and social unrest were exacerbated by severe economic dislocation. Large parts of the country were experiencing famine, resulting from civil war policies of forced requisition of grain from the peasantry. Industry was disorganized and badly in need of capital equipment.

Lenin’s answer to this crisis was the New Economic Policy, which represented a retreat from socialist economics. The peasants were given greater freedom, and private trade and private ownership of small business again were legalized. But economic recovery could not be accomplished without obtaining capital and trade from the outside world: that is, the capitalists. This, in turn, required that the Soviet regime overcome its virtually complete diplomatic isolation. In response to the logical question, “Why should the capitalists help the recovery of the Russian economy?” Lenin argued that, while the capitalists had not changed their stripes and could resume hostile intervention at any time, they were so economically bound up with Russia that they could not properly calculate their own

interests. As Bolshevik leader Lev Kamenev so graphically expressed it, "We are convinced that the foreign capitalists, who will be obliged to work on the terms we offer them, will dig their own grave."<sup>13</sup>

The search for peaceful businesslike relations with the outside world—the assigned priority of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel)—was made more difficult by the parallel existence of the Communist International (Comintern), which was appealing to the revolutionary masses to overthrow the very governments with which Soviet diplomats were attempting to deal. Although the Soviets tried to maintain the fiction that the Comintern was simply housed in Moscow and operated independently of the Soviet government, in fact from its beginning in 1919 it was tightly controlled by the Soviet Communist Party. Trotsky (who had resigned as foreign minister just prior to the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk) had been succeeded by Georgy Chicherin. Chicherin was handicapped by the fact that his rank in the party was much lower than that of Grigory Zinoviev, the head of the Comintern and one of Lenin's closest associates. Indicators of the lowly stature of the Narkomindel in the 1920s could be found not only in its constant conflict with the Comintern over control of Soviet embassies, but also in the fact that on occasion the party Politburo would deal directly with foreign affairs, bypassing Chicherin's foreign office altogether.

Foreign policy during this period further was complicated by the internal political struggle over the succession to Lenin, who suffered a stroke in 1922 and died in 1924. Of special significance was the dispute between Stalin and Trotsky on the possibility of building "socialism in one country"—a debate often misunderstood as posing an extreme choice between concentration of all resources on promoting the world revolution or abandonment of world revolution in favor of the narrow pursuit of national interests. In fact, both agreed that the building of socialism could begin in Russia alone. But Stalin insisted that the process could be completed in one country, whereas Trotsky argued that it could not be completed without the aid of world revolution. In effect, there were two differing meanings of "socialism," with Stalin using Lenin's definition ("Soviet state power plus electrification"), and Trotsky adding qualities of refinement and civilization. Trotsky's followers tended to be more cosmopolitan and to have greater international experience, whereas Stalin was making a calculated appeal to the party and state bureaucracy, which had a vested interest in consolidating domestic power.

Stalin's formula did not amount to casting out world revolution altogether; he averred that the construction of socialism could not be "final" as long as the Soviet Union remained encircled by capitalism. The building of Soviet state power, he argued, was in the ultimate interest of world revolution. By 1929 Stalin was able to carry this perspective to its inevitable conclusion: that the world revolutionary movement in fact now existed primarily as an aid to the achievement of Soviet foreign policy requirements:

An internationalist is one who unreservedly, unhesitatingly, and unconditionally is prepared to defend the USSR, because the USSR is the base of the world revolutionary movement, and it is impossible to defend or advance the world revolutionary movement without defending the USSR.<sup>14</sup>

The strains in Soviet policy were fully evidenced in the regime's relations with the West in the 1920s. The first country to accept Lenin's offer of trade was Britain, and the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement of 1921 included Britain's de facto recognition of the Soviet regime. The major impediment in expansion of Soviet economic relations with Western Europe was the issue of tsarist debts, which the Soviets were willing to honor only in part and only in return for credits. The Genoa Economic Conference in 1922 constituted an effort on the part of the major powers to present a united front to the Soviets on the issue of debts and to the Germans on the issue of reparations. At the conference, Chicherin brilliantly played the Germans against the British and French. The resulting Treaty of Rapallo, between Soviet Russia and Germany, as a combination of the two outcasts on the European stage, included a mutual renunciation of claims and de jure recognition of the Soviet regime. In fact, the treaty only strengthened a relationship that had begun in 1920, with a secret pact which allowed the Germans to circumvent Versailles Treaty restrictions by testing weapons on Soviet soil in return for assisting in Soviet military development.

The Narkomindel's efforts to develop relationships with Germany and Britain were seriously threatened by Comintern activities, including its support of an armed uprising instigated by German communists in 1923 and its conduct of anti-imperialist propaganda in the British colonies. The atmosphere was such that the discovery of an alleged (and probably forged) letter from Zinoviev to the British communists calling for revolutionary actions led to the defeat of a new Anglo-Russian trade treaty and to the fall of the Labor government. A raid by British authorities in 1927 on the Soviet trade delegation led to a total break in diplomatic relations between the two states. In the meantime, Soviet efforts to forestall a united capitalist front against them were frustrated by the Dawes Plan for easing Germany's reparations burden and the Locarno Treaty, which guaranteed Germany's western borders and allowed her entry into the League of Nations. Consequently, by 1927 the Soviet Union was again experiencing general isolation in Europe.

### **The Soviets Turn to the East**

Unlike its policies in Europe, the Soviet regime's diplomatic and revolutionary activities in Asia in the 1920s were coordinated, as it allied itself with nationalist forces in the struggle against imperialism. In part, this was a continuation of the old Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia, though it had been restated by Lenin in ideological terms. But the Soviets faced a practical problem in attempting to

formulate an operational strategy based on Lenin's sensitivity to the community of interests between the peoples of the oppressed countries and the international proletariat. The difficulty arose in part because of the intractability of Asian social forces to the Marxist categories of analysis, and in part because of the intrusion of the succession struggle into Soviet policymaking.

The Soviets briefly flirted in 1919–1920 with the notion of an assault on British-held India, through Afghanistan, reminiscent of three abortive plans during the tsarist period. In the fall of 1920, Lenin approved the plan of Indian communist M.N. Roy to train an army of Indian revolutionaries at Tashkent, where they would form a joint force with Soviet troops, passing through Afghanistan to the Indian frontier and declaring a revolutionary government. Two trainloads of arms and bullion were supplied, and a number of Indians were trained, but the plan was torpedoed by British pressure, both on the Afghan king and on the Soviets, who were threatened with rupture of trade relations unless the Tashkent school was disbanded.

This same M.N. Roy had been a major participant in a discussion, at the Second Comintern Congress in July 1920, about communist strategy in the East. He had argued against Lenin that the first priority of the Comintern should be liberation of the colonies and semicolonies, since these were the mainstay of the imperialist system. And he had challenged Lenin's thesis that a class-based revolutionary struggle would fail, and that Asian communists needed to subordinate the struggle for socialism and instead cooperate in a united front with "bourgeois nationalists," such as Mohandas Gandhi and Sun Yat-Sen, who were leading the independence movements in their countries. Lenin and Roy had agreed that once Asian, African, and Latin American countries had achieved their independence, and were given the support of the proletariat of more advanced countries, they could bypass the capitalist stage of development and move rapidly toward socialism.<sup>15</sup>

The Soviets were active in the early 1920s in supporting nationalist and anti-British tendencies among three Muslim states on their southern border: Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Under a treaty of friendship signed with Ataturk's Turkey in 1921, they extended military aid to the nationalist regime, even though it was persecuting Turkish communists. Treaties of friendship also were concluded in 1921 with Iran and Afghanistan, as those countries were able to subordinate their long-standing border rivalries and their irritation with activities of the Comintern to the need for Soviet support against the British. In 1925 a neutrality pact with Turkey was the first instance in which the Soviet Union extended technical and economic assistance to a less developed country. Relations with Turkey continued to be reasonably good until 1939, when the Soviets rekindled the traditional Russian ambitions toward the straits.

The most extensive Soviet anti-imperialist investment in Asia in the 1920s was in China, whose internal political weakness made it a tempting target for European and Japanese designs, thereby posing a threat to the Soviet Far East. This traditional Russian interest in excluding hostile powers from a weak China



converged with the Marxist-Leninist impulse to strike a blow at imperialism by liberating China from its control. The dilemma for Moscow again lay in the potential contradiction between the dual objectives of national liberation and internal socialist revolution, for it was precisely the feudal and bourgeois “oppressing classes” who headed the anti-imperialist movement in China. The strategy by which the Soviets proposed to overcome the dilemma called for supporting the nationalist movement (Kuomintang) against the imperialists and their puppet government in Beijing, while assisting the Chinese communists in penetrating and assuming control over the Kuomintang. The strategy was further complicated by the fact that the Soviets also were dealing with the Beijing government, signing a treaty in 1924 that established diplomatic relations, joint management of the Chinese Eastern Railway, and Soviet withdrawal from Outer Mongolia (where they were quickly replaced by pro-Soviet Mongolian forces).

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), founded in 1921, was regarded by the Comintern leadership as too weak to lead the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution in China. Its members were instructed to join the Kuomintang but to preserve their freedom of action, exposing the compromises of its leadership, even while the Soviet government and the Comintern supported the Kuomintang in its struggle against imperialism. Once it had served its purpose, Stalin reasoned, the Kuomintang “would be squeezed out like a lemon and then thrown away.”<sup>16</sup>

In accord with an agreement in 1923 between the Soviet diplomat Adolf Joffe and Sun Yat-Sen, the Kuomintang leadership was trained by the Soviets in political organization and military tactics. After Sun’s death in 1925, one of the products of Soviet training, General Chiang Kai-shek, took over the Kuomintang leadership, and by the following year was ousting communists from key positions they had won in the organization. Despite the Chinese communists’ pleas that they be allowed to withdraw, Stalin ordered them to stay in the Kuomintang, while seeking to achieve control over it. Chiang Kai-shek’s northern expedition in 1926–1927 brought his forces to the gates of Shanghai, a communist stronghold. The communists rose up and defeated the anti-Kuomintang forces controlling the city. Chiang waited until this was completed and then marched into the city and slaughtered the communists.

Stalin’s strategy in China came under heavy fire from Trotsky, who had advocated that the CCP abandon the Kuomintang and form revolutionary soviets. Loath to admit that his policy was mistaken, Stalin still did not allow a total break, ordering the CCP to seek hegemony over the left wing of the Kuomintang, centered in Wuhan. When these forces also turned on the communists, Stalin refused to allow the CCP to concentrate on building up its support among the peasantry, arguing that they must instead prepare for an uprising of the industrial proletariat. In December 1927, needing a victory to display to the crucial Fifteenth Party Congress, Stalin ordered an uprising in Canton. It lasted long enough for Stalin to be able to claim success for his strategy, but then it collapsed, and with it, the urban base of the Chinese communists.

This experience not only destroyed the prospect of friendly relations between the USSR and the government of Chiang Kai-shek, but also it left a residue of bitterness between Stalin and Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong. No less important was the effect of Stalin's failure in China on his future perception of Asian revolutions. Having so focused his energies on the Chinese Revolution, to the exclusion of other national-liberation movements, Stalin reacted to his defeat by refusing to reinvest Soviet energies and resources in another Asian revolution. For him, the "lessons of China" precluded cooperation with unreliable Asian nationalists, leaving the Soviets relatively inactive just at the time when anti-imperialist movements were heating up in India and Southeast Asia.

### **Changing Soviet Policy, 1928–1938**

The relative isolation of the Soviet regime in the late 1920s and early 1930s was a result not only of diplomatic rebuffs in Europe and revolutionary failures in China, but of internal developments as well—the decision to embark upon the "third revolution," featuring rapid industrialization and collectivization of the peasantry. Concentration on development of the economy, perceived in part as necessary for building military power, required a period of relative peace in Soviet foreign relations. For one thing, the Soviets needed to expand foreign trade and short-term credits. They sought to increase exports sharply, selling anything for which there was a foreign market, without regard to internal demand, in order to get the currency necessary to import heavy machinery. For another, they needed to avoid external adventures at a time of severe internal strain and weakness, when the regime was conducting a virtual war on the peasant majority of its population.

The militant tone of Soviet policy during this period, and the assessment of the international situation that lay behind it, bore the distinctive imprint of Joseph Stalin. In 1928 he announced that the "temporary stabilization of capitalism," which Lenin had declared in 1921, had come to an end, to be replaced by a period of revolutionary upheaval in the capitalist countries and their colonies. Moreover, the capitalists were said to be preparing a new offensive against the USSR. To help ward off this attack, the proletariat of the world must strike a blow against imperialism by concentrating its fire on the social democrats and on the national bourgeoisie in the colonies, and by taking the place of these elements in the leadership of mass movements. This militant isolationism was understandable only in terms of Stalin's perceptions of his domestic political needs. Having defeated Trotsky and his allies, he now was seeking to discredit Nikolai Bukharin, who had become identified with the policy of cooperating with European socialist parties. The Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 issued the directive to foreign communists to switch from a "united front from above" strategy, in which the Communist Party was organizationally allied with socialist and nationalist parties, to a "united front from below," in which cooperation ended and efforts

were made to win over the followers of these parties. In this strategy, the “main enemy” was said to be the erstwhile allies on the left.

The most dramatic illustration of the effect of this policy was in the equanimity with which the Comintern and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) viewed the paralysis of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler. They saw no immediate dangers, but rather thought the Nazis would be useful in helping to destroy the parliamentary illusions of the German masses. Initiated with the collapse of the empire and cursed with the stigma of national shame in defeat, Weimar never acquired legitimacy with the German public. With 6 million unemployed by 1931, Germany’s lower middle class was dispossessed by the Great Depression, creating an anti-regime majority of rightists and leftists. As a member of the governing coalition, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was appealing to the communists for common action against the Nazis. But the KPD tactics, set by the Sixth Comintern Congress, portrayed the SPD as the real fascist beast. The communists celebrated every Nazi gain, believing that Hitler’s victory would close the chapter on capitalism and social democracy and would open the way to communist rule.

The Nazi victory in March 1933 led to Hitler’s appointment as German chancellor. Even after the Reichstag fire resulted in the banning of the KPD and arrest of its leaders, the Comintern continued to declare that the proletarian revolution was drawing nearer. Soviet foreign policy called for a continuation of military and political cooperation, in the spirit of Rapallo. In December 1933 the new Soviet foreign minister, Maksim Litvinov, said that Hitler’s anti-Soviet speeches and his attacks on German communists would not deter the USSR: “We are, of course, sensitive to the sufferings of our German comrades, but we Marxists are the last who can be reproached for permitting our feelings to dictate our policy.”<sup>17</sup> In his remarks to the Seventeenth Party Congress the following month, Stalin criticized the attitude of the German regime, but he was no friendlier to the Western capitalists, declaring, “Our orientation in the past and our orientation at the present time is toward the USSR, and toward the USSR alone.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite the militant isolationism of 1928–1933, the USSR had not been totally inactive on the diplomatic front. In 1928 it had signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact outlawing war as an instrument of policy, and the following year it had formulated with its neighbors the Litvinov Protocol—a reaffirmation of the treaty’s terms within the specific region of Eastern Europe. In 1932 the Soviets signed non-aggression pacts with Poland, Finland, Latvia, Estonia, and France, and subsequently advertised their search (ultimately unsuccessful) for an “Eastern Locarno”—a guarantee of Germany’s eastern borders.

At this point the seemingly greater threat to Soviet security was in the Far East, where Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1931. Trying to keep the Japanese pointed away from Soviet territory, the Soviets offered Tokyo a non-aggression treaty and hinted at their willingness to sell the Chinese Eastern Railway (for the control of which they had fought a war with China in 1929) to the Japanese puppet regime

of Manchukuo. The Japanese declaration of war on China in 1932 came as a huge relief to the Soviet Union.

Far from being pleased that their predictions of imminent imperialist collapse and proletarian victory were being borne out as international instability increased and war clouds approached, the Soviets instead perceived danger to their own security. Their greatest fear was that the capitalist powers would encourage rising German and Japanese militarism to turn toward the Soviet Union. To ensure that this would not happen, Litvinov became the most vocal advocate of disarmament and collective security. In May 1935 the Soviet Union signed treaties with both France and Czechoslovakia. The former lacked specific military provisions, such as had been contained in the Franco-Russian entente of 1891, and was intended by Moscow primarily to deny to Hitler French support or neutrality for a move against the Soviets. Likewise, the latter treaty obligated the Soviets to assist Prague only if the French also gave assistance.

This collective security policy was supplemented by a reversal in Comintern policy. The Seventh Comintern Congress in August 1935 prescribed the Popular Front policy, calling for containment of fascism through electoral alliances between communists and bourgeois and socialist parties. It also sanctioned renewed collaboration between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang in the struggle against Japan.

The failure of the League of Nations to punish aggression in Manchuria or Ethiopia or to prevent Hitler's reoccupation and remilitarization of the Rhineland reawakened Soviet fears of the softness of the Western powers and their suspicions that they would try to turn Nazi aggression in Moscow's direction. When Austria was invaded in March 1938 and incorporated into the Third Reich, the West failed to act. Litvinov warned that Czechoslovakia was next, and he called for an international conference, but the USSR was not even invited to the Munich Conference in September. Although the Soviets claimed that they were willing to help the Czechs, the Poles and Romanians refused passage to Soviet troops, and the French declined to take military action. With appeasement a popular slogan, collective security effectively was dead, and the Soviets became obsessed with the need to stay out of impending conflict; for, in fact, the Soviet Union could not have been more unprepared for war. Bloody purges in 1934–1938 had decimated both the party leadership and the top ranks of the military, as Stalin sought to remove all possible internal opposition to his rule. Their unintended effect was to convince both Hitler and the Western powers of the USSR's internal weakness.

### **Nazi-Soviet Cooperation, 1939–1941**

This period provides one of the best studies of Stalin's diplomatic style and of his ability to reconcile doctrinal perceptions with the interests of safeguarding the Soviet state. In 1939 he turned a desperate situation into an apparent diplomatic coup, only to have the situation reverse itself two years later.

The negotiations that produced the Nazi-Soviet Pact proceeded in two phases: a protracted period between the Munich Conference and late July 1939, during which the USSR, Britain, France, and Germany were continuously feeling one another out, followed by a dramatic month in which agreement between Hitler and Stalin was rapidly hammered out. At the opening of the first phase, the Soviets sent signals that they were determined not to have to face Hitler alone, and that they were seeking incentives to make a deal with whichever side would offer the greater assurance to their security. In the fall of 1938, the Soviet press dropped its earlier distinctions between the fascists and the Western democracies. The Soviets began referring to the coming conflict as the “second imperialist war”—a clear sign that they had no intention of being a party to it.

Stalin’s report to the Eighteenth Party Congress in March 1939 opened the door to the possibility of improved relations with Germany. He characterized the British and French as “egging on and encouraging the aggressor” and warned that he would “not allow our country to be drawn into conflict by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.”<sup>19</sup> At the end of that month, the situation changed fundamentally when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain followed Hitler’s violation of the Munich Accords with a unilateral British guarantee of Polish security. This seemed to remove the risk that Poland would be attacked by Hitler with impunity—a possibility that posed the greatest danger to Moscow, since it could bring an aggressive and unopposed Nazi army to the very borders of the USSR.

Now, after the British action, Stalin was the arbiter of the situation. The British needed his support so that Hitler would be dissuaded from attacking Poland, or to gain an ally if he attacked anyway. But Hitler could now use an agreement with Russia in order to dissuade Britain from honoring its guarantee to Poland, or at least—if the British honored their guarantee—to avoid a two-front war. Stalin’s greatest objective was to stay out of war, preferably while Hitler and the West were locked in a protracted battle, but at the least he needed to not have to fight Hitler alone. The British guarantee to Poland indirectly provided a guarantee to the USSR as well, since any German attack on the Soviets would have to pass through Poland. Stalin suspected that if he were to cast his lot in a formal agreement with the British, they would leave Poland in the lurch with another Munich, leaving only the Soviets in danger. Nevertheless, talks proceeded between the Soviets and the British and French, in part to allow Stalin an opportunity to assess the likelihood that the West would indeed fight for Poland.

Stalin’s other alternative—a deal with Hitler—would allow the Germans to buy Russia’s neutrality at the price of giving Stalin a free hand in Eastern Europe. Stalin’s hints of availability included the dismissal of Litvinov, who was not only identified as an advocate of collective security against fascism, but also was a Jew. His replacement was V.M. Molotov, a member of the Politburo, who was known for his absolute subservience to Stalin. This signal, Hitler later told his generals, was decisive—“it came to me like a cannon shot as a sign of change in Moscow.”<sup>20</sup>

On July 26, three lower-level officials met in a Berlin restaurant to discuss the specifics of a Nazi-Soviet agreement. The German assured the Russians that "there was no problem between these two countries from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea or in the Far East that could not be solved."<sup>21</sup> Over the next month, as Hitler's deadline for the attack on Poland neared, Molotov teased the German diplomats, insisting on caution. Finally, on August 20, Hitler telegraphed Stalin urging that Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop be allowed to proceed to Moscow to complete negotiations. When the German arrived, he found himself negotiating directly with Stalin.

The resulting treaty provided that if either Germany or the Soviet Union were to become involved in a war with a third country, the other would remain neutral. Although it was termed a "pact of non-aggression," the treaty omitted the usual stipulation that if one of the parties should commit an act of aggression against a third party, the other would be entitled to renounce the pact. It also omitted the standard procedures for ratification. These were clear signs that it was in fact intended to be a pact facilitating aggression. A secret protocol delimited the boundary of the two parties' spheres of influence in Eastern Europe "in the event of a territorial and political rearrangement." The northern border of Lithuania was to be the boundary in the Baltic area; Poland was to be partitioned; in southeastern Europe "attention is called by the Soviet side to its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares its complete political disinterestedness in these areas."<sup>22</sup>

Stalin was evidently pleased with what seemed to be a perfect situation for the USSR: the capitalists would exhaust themselves in a long and bloody war while the Soviets remained aloof, with a free hand in territories long separated from the Russian Empire. Moreover, the pact with Hitler allowed an easing of tensions in the Soviet Far East, where Soviet and Japanese troops had been fighting an undeclared war all summer. Hitler was eager for Japan to concentrate its energies on British and U.S. possessions in Asia and the Pacific, and evidently encouraged an armistice between the USSR and Japan, which was signed in mid-September.

Hitler's armies crushed Poland in a matter of days. Stalin, not wanting to share the blame for the aggression, delayed occupying the assigned Soviet sphere. When Russian troops finally moved into Poland, the Soviet communiqué, devoid of Marxist pretexts, could have been issued by Catherine the Great. It spoke of the disintegration of the Polish state, "now a suitable field for all manner of hazards," creating a "need to aid kindred Ukrainian and Belorussian peoples who are left defenseless."<sup>23</sup> Von Ribbentrop returned to Moscow at the end of September to sign the Treaty of Friendship and to revise the secret protocol, transferring Lithuania to the Soviet sphere and moving the German line of control eastward in Poland. In a significant demonstration of Stalin's willingness to be a useful partner to Hitler, trade agreements also were concluded. They helped Germany to break the British blockade by providing for critical raw materials to be sent from the USSR in return for German manufactured goods and weapons plans. By

June 1940, a high proportion of German imports—22 percent and many of them critical to the war effort—were coming from or through the Soviet Union.

Although the British and French had declared war on Germany, they had launched no offensive, and the German and Soviet diplomats (the latter with reluctance) issued an appeal for peace. Western communist parties, so recently engaged in vitriolic propaganda against fascism, were directed—at enormous cost to their reputations—to join in praise for the new German “dove of peace.” Additional damage was done to the international image of communism and of the Soviet Union by Moscow’s bullying behavior toward Finland. In October 1939 Stalin had demanded that Finland trade strategic territories in the area of Leningrad and the Gulf of Finland in return for other Soviet territory. Finnish refusal led to an invasion by the Red Army on November 29 without a declaration of war, disguised as a response to an appeal from the revolutionary “Finnish People’s Government.” The Soviets were expelled from the League of Nations, and the British made preparations to assist the Finns. Hitler, seeing a potential Allied intervention in Scandinavia as a menace to Germany, rendered diplomatic assistance that resulted in a peace settlement on March 12, with Finland acceding to the original Soviet demands. The cost of this territory to Soviet prestige was enormous, given the startling demonstration during the Winter War of Soviet military weakness and inability to crush a much smaller army.

The Russians found some consolation later in the spring of 1940, when the “phony war” in the West finally ended in a German blitzkrieg, which also ended persisting Soviet fears that the Germans eventually would team up with the British and French against the USSR. Soviet relief was short-lived, however, as French armies behind the vaunted Maginot Line surrendered in a matter of weeks. Almost immediately, the Soviets moved to consolidate the fruits of the secret protocol, annexing the three Baltic states “at the request of” new governments there, and demanding the cession by Romania of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (the latter not mentioned in the secret protocol).

In the following month, July 1940, Hitler began planning for an attack on the USSR. Convinced that Britain was refusing to surrender because of encouragement from the Russians, and giddy with success, he took the risk of a two-front war out of a conviction that he could defeat the Soviets in five months. No more concessions were made to Stalin in the Balkans. The Germans guaranteed Romania’s frontiers, moved troops into Finland, and forced the adherence of Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria to the Axis. In an effort to cover up his intentions and possibly intimidate the British, Hitler invited Molotov to Berlin in November 1940 to discuss a possible “quadripartite pact” among Germany, Italy, Japan, and the USSR. The Russians drastically overplayed their hand, demanding, as a price of their adhering to the pact, recognition of the area south of Batum and Baku in the general area of the Persian Gulf as the center of Soviet aspirations; German troop withdrawal from Finland; a mutual assistance pact with Bulgaria; and a base within range of the straits.<sup>24</sup> Hitler never replied, describing Stalin as a

“cold-blooded blackmailer” and telling his generals that “Russia must be brought to her knees as soon as possible.”<sup>25</sup>

On December 18, Hitler issued the directive for Operation Barbarossa, setting the invasion date for mid-May. Two major blunders doomed his possibility of success. First, he allowed the Japanese to sign a neutrality pact with the Soviets in April, thereby allowing Stalin to avoid a two-front war. Second, he postponed the beginning of the invasion so that he could “destroy Yugoslavia militarily and as a nation” in punishment for its new government’s refusal to join the Axis. Meanwhile Stalin was receiving numerous warnings of Hitler’s intentions, which he treated as provocations. Convinced that Hitler wanted to strike a deal, Stalin signaled his readiness for talks by various acts of appeasement, as well as by assuming the premiership himself. The Soviets were caught in a complete tactical surprise. As he listened to the German ambassador read the declaration of war on June 22, 1941, a pale Molotov only could say, “Surely we have not deserved that.”<sup>26</sup>

Although Stalin later claimed to have used the twenty-two months of Nazi-Soviet partnership to prepare for the German attack, his successor declared, “this is completely untrue.” In his secret speech to the Twentieth Party Congress, Nikita Khrushchev said that “the necessary steps were not taken to prepare the country properly for defense and to prevent it from being caught unawares.”<sup>27</sup> Not only had the military been seriously wounded by the purges, but also the Soviet war-fighting doctrine was based on the assumption that the initial attack would be repelled immediately and the bulk of the war fought on enemy territory; Soviet territory contained few tank traps or other fortifications.

Indeed, in the time Stalin had “gained,” Germany had acquired all the resources of Western Europe plus vital economic assistance from the Soviet Union itself to strengthen its war machine, while Stalin had not even prepared border defenses. The “buffer zone” acquired by the Nazi-Soviet Pact was crossed by German armies in a matter of days. The result of Stalin’s gamble that a long war would destroy the capitalist West was that the second front that might have been available to him against Germany in 1939 was gone in 1941 and would not be reopened for three years. The European communist parties, which had never been so popular as in the days of the Popular Front against fascism, had become demoralized and weakened by the pro-German defeatist line dictated from Moscow, in the most obvious demonstration in Comintern history of the extent to which the goals for international communism were manipulated to fit the Kremlin’s interpretation of Soviet security needs. In sum, while Stalin’s decision to sign the Nazi-Soviet Pact might have seemed reasonable at the time, the Soviet gains appeared much less impressive two years later.

## **Soviet Diplomacy During World War II**

From the time of the Nazi invasion until the January 1943 victory at Stalingrad, the very survival of the USSR was in grave doubt. Hitler’s initial thrust captured



lands that were home to more than 40 percent of the population. Soviet losses—by their own estimate totaling at least 20 million dead—were most severe during this period. The country's industrial production dropped by half. That the Soviet Union not only survived but emerged from the war as Europe's strongest power was a tribute to Soviet military valor and diplomatic skill.

When Stalin finally emerged from an initial gloomy silence to address the nation on July 3, he made several references to Nazi "treachery." In tacit recognition of how little reason the people had to fight for his regime, the speech was full of patriotic and nationalistic imagery; Marxist-Leninist appeals for the defense of socialism were absent.<sup>28</sup> The German drive stalled at the gates of Moscow in November, through a combination of circumstances: the onset of severe winter, Hitler's decision to bog his army down in attacks on Leningrad and Moscow, his failure to force Japan into the war, and the Germans' unwillingness to use humane treatment in order to tap the anti-Soviet sentiment of non-Russian nationalities.

The following month Stalin demonstrated that he already was calculating Russia's post-war political gains. Unsuccessfully pressing British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden for a secret protocol to be included in a British-Soviet treaty of alliance, he sought British recognition of the Russian annexations of 1939–1940, Soviet bases in Finland and Romania, and agreement on the dismemberment of Germany. In the spring, Molotov made trips to London and Washington to talk about Allied cooperation and press for opening a second front. In the United States, he found Roosevelt focusing on preservation of friendship among the Allies, preferring to postpone decisions on specific political issues.

Although the Soviets were always keenly attuned to post-war power configurations, they did not appear to have a rigid blueprint but preferred to keep their options open. Issues relating to the future of Poland were particularly sensitive, and neither the Polish government-in-exile in London nor its British patrons were willing to agree to the recognition of the boundaries established in the Nazi-Soviet Pact. To create an alternative, Stalin set up a communist-dominated Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow, but he held off recognizing it as the legitimate government. However, the Soviets severed relations with the Polish government in London following their demands for an international investigation into the massacre in the Katyn Forest of thousands of Polish military officers. The Soviets had denied German charges (later proved accurate) that the atrocity had occurred during the Soviet occupation of that section of Poland. The Russians' feigned indignation was a convenient pretext to free their hand and keep open future political options.<sup>29</sup>

Embarrassed at the behavior of the London Poles, the British and Americans had even greater feelings of guilt when they announced to Stalin in mid-1943 that the opening of the second front would have to be postponed for yet another year. Roosevelt eagerly sought a face-to-face meeting to "win over" Stalin and calm his anger, and it was in this context that the Big Three met in Tehran in November

1943. There Stalin was able to take advantage of divisions between Churchill and Roosevelt to achieve important Soviet objectives.

Roosevelt failed to support Churchill's argument that the invasion of France should be postponed in favor of an invasion of southeastern Europe—an operation that would have altered the political fate of Eastern Europe. Roosevelt also declined, for domestic political reasons, to enter into discussions on Poland. Its fate was essentially decided in bilateral conversations in which the British suggested moving Poland westward, compensating for Soviet gains to the Nazi-Soviet line by ceding German lands to Poland. The plan was illustrated by Churchill with the aid of three matches; he and Eden observed that it "pleased Stalin."<sup>30</sup> Well it might, for it guaranteed that no independent Polish government could accept this plan, and thus that a puppet government would have to be installed. Churchill also suggested that Russia deserved warm-water ports, and Stalin replied that "it might be well" to relax the restrictions on the movement of Soviet warships through the Turkish straits. Stalin followed with an inquiry about what might be done for the Soviets in the Far East, and Roosevelt—grateful for Stalin's expressed willingness to enter the war against Japan after the defeat of Germany—suggested the possible availability of the port of Dairen.

Stalin's apparent willingness to cooperate at Tehran so impressed his U.S. and British allies that they were offering up the very prizes he coveted. No display of this attitude was more striking than a discourse by Churchill that appeared to invite Russian imperialism:

It was important that the nations who would govern the world after the war should be satisfied and have no territorial or other ambitions. If that question could be settled in a manner agreeable to the great powers, he felt then that the world might indeed remain at peace. He said that hungry and ambitious nations are dangerous, and he would like to see the leading nations of the world in the position of rich, happy men. The president and Marshal Stalin agreed.<sup>31</sup>

Churchill's and Roosevelt's focus on preserving friendship with Stalin suggests that they were staking Europe's future on their belief that the Soviet regime had changed fundamentally. Their willingness at Tehran to satisfy Stalin's "security needs" by altering the boundaries of Poland and Germany not only ensured Poland's future dependence on the USSR, but also made it impossible for Germany to conclude a separate peace with the West.

In the last summer of the war in Europe, following the Allied invasion of Normandy, Stalin showed how his armies could be deployed to advance his political objectives. In Romania, for example, the Red Army was sent to occupy the entire country even after it had renounced its alliance with the Axis powers. Bulgaria, too, had abandoned Germany and was in the midst of suing for peace when the Soviet Union declared war and invaded. In Poland, in late summer 1944, Stalin cynically employed a tactic he learned from Chiang Kai-shek. He halted the advance of the Red Army outside Warsaw while the Polish underground,

rising up on command of the London Poles, was slaughtered in battle with the Nazis. Afterward, the Soviets captured the city and turned it over to their communist-dominated puppet regime.

The following month Churchill was in Moscow for a last attempt at forging a compromise between the London Poles and the Soviets. Despite pressure from both the British and the Russians, Polish premier Stanislaw Mikolajczyk refused to comply with Soviet demands for territorial adjustments. An exasperated Churchill, showing again how he valued Soviet friendship, declared, "Because of quarrels between Poles we are not going to wreck the peace of Europe."<sup>32</sup> At this same meeting, Churchill cynically proposed a division of the other countries of Eastern Europe into Western and Soviet spheres of influence, stated in percentage terms, and Stalin quickly acquiesced to the proposal.

The fate of Poland was settled by Soviet and Allied military strategy in 1944, although it was discussed again at the last conference among Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, held at the Crimean resort of Yalta in February 1945. After much discussion, Stalin gave his Western partners a small victory by agreeing to take a few London Poles into the communist-dominated "Lublin provisional government," and by promising to hold free elections in Poland "as soon as possible." However, he reserved the right to limit participation to "democratic" parties—a designation that would be made by Soviet authorities alone. A similar unacknowledged difference in interpretation lay behind Stalin's willingness to agree to sign the Declaration on Liberated Europe, which called for democratic elections to be held in all the liberated and former Axis satellite states. Roosevelt put great stock in this document, which was the focus of later Western charges of Soviet bad faith. Similarly, securing agreement on the basic structure of the United Nations was high on the agenda of the Americans, who were haunted by the memory of President Wilson's mistake of failing to build the international organization before making the final political settlement of the war.

Roosevelt also was eager to secure a reaffirmation of Stalin's willingness to bring the Soviet Union into the war against Japan three months after the German surrender. This Stalin was happy to do, in return for a share of the dismantled Japanese Empire—in particular, the territories and privileges lost by the Russians in 1905. The Soviets wanted southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles from Japan, and from China they sought recognition of the independence of Outer Mongolia, access to Dairen, a naval base in Port Arthur, and joint ownership of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Roosevelt persuaded Chiang Kai-shek to accede to this territorial rearrangement in a Treaty of Alliance and Friendship, signed between China and the USSR on August 14, 1945.

In the remaining weeks of the war in Europe, the movement of Soviet troops was followed by the imposition of "friendly governments" in Eastern Europe. The role of non-communist elements in Poland was seriously constricted; a communist government was forced on Romania, and communists assumed leading positions in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. In Yugoslavia, where

Tito's communist army was the main force fighting the Germans, the coalition with non-communist elements was abandoned. The Soviets turned a deaf ear to Western complaints about these actions. But following Roosevelt's death in April, the successor administration of Harry Truman appeared to adopt a harder attitude toward Moscow's behavior, and in May it suspended Lend-Lease assistance to the Soviet Union.

President Harry Truman was able to assess the Soviet leader directly at the final wartime conference, which was held in Potsdam, in occupied Germany. (The other participant, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, suffered electoral defeat during the meetings and was replaced by his successor, Clement Atlee.) The opening day of the conference, July 16, was also the birthday of the nuclear age in international politics. Shortly before his first meeting with Stalin, Truman was informed of the first successful test of the atomic bomb. When Stalin was "casually" informed by Truman "that we had a new weapon of unusual destructive force," he apparently "showed no special interest."<sup>33</sup> In fact, the Soviet Union had been actively conducting its own atomic research program, assisted by intelligence agents who were well informed about U.S. progress.

The main focus of discussion at Potsdam was the reorganization and governance of defeated Germany. There was no disagreement about the need to disarm and de-Nazify the country, but the Soviets and their Western allies adopted sharply differing positions on how to demarcate Germany's borders and dispose of its industrial capabilities. Amid heated disagreements about political developments in their respective spheres of influence, Britain and the United States showed no receptivity when Stalin restated his claim to a Soviet base in the Turkish straits.

The United States used the atomic bomb on Japan on August 6 and 9, and on the latter day—exactly three months after Germany's surrender—the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. In the week that passed between that date and the Japanese surrender, Soviet armed forces managed to occupy the northern part of Korea and moved rapidly through northern Manchuria to join up with the army of the Chinese communists. Again using his own armies to acquire his post-war political objectives, Stalin quickly occupied the territories that had been conceded to him at the Yalta Conference. However, he was rebuffed when he sought to extend Soviet influence even further by sending troops to share in the occupation of Japan.

As a result of World War II, communism had expanded from its base in the Soviet Union to extend its domain over an additional 100 million people in eleven more states of Europe: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania (all soon reannexed into the USSR), Poland, the eastern zone of Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. These states were extremely diverse nationally, religiously, and culturally, while they shared a low level of economic development as well as relative inexperience in self-rule. They also varied in the strength of their communist parties, though all were to some extent under Soviet

control. The Western leaders were slow to understand that, for Stalin, the control of these governments by communist politicians loyal to him was not simply ideologically desirable, but was essential to the security needs of the Soviet Union. The gradual tightening of political and economic control over the states of the region was a logical consequence of Stalin's conviction, expressed to Yugoslav communist leader Milovan Djilas, that "everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."<sup>34</sup>

### **The Beginning of the Cold War**

The cause of the breakup of the cooperative alliance between the Soviet Union and its wartime partners has been the subject of considerable debate among American historians of the period. The "revisionists" write of the betrayal of the idealism of Roosevelt by the Truman administration, while the "orthodox" portray an abandonment of naive illusions by politicians more realistic about Soviet intentions. In fact, as the preceding pages have spelled out, the alliance was never more than a marriage of convenience, marked by misperceptions, misunderstandings, and frequent outbursts of suspicion. Despite their efforts to maintain a spirit of friendship and cooperation, Britain and the United States found themselves able to do so only by papering over their divisions with the Soviet Union, and they never succeeded in drawing Stalin into a genuine shared vision of the post-war political order.

Stalin's certainty about the inevitability of conflict after the war was expressed in a speech on February 9, 1946. In it he set forth his interpretation of the nature and meaning of the war, justified his pre-war and wartime policies, and voiced his prescriptions for the future. The persistence of his Marxist-Leninist worldview was evident in his analysis of the causes of the war, which he described as an inevitable consequence of capitalism. The Soviet Union found itself in alliance with Britain and the United States for the very limited purpose of defeating fascism—a cause that would not have been achieved without Soviet participation. Far from being unprepared, he asserted, the Communist Party long ago had begun to provide the resources needed for victory through its policies of industrialization and collectivization and through purging its ranks of traitors and saboteurs.

As for the future, Stalin made it clear that there was to be no easing of the forced-pace drive to "organize a new mighty upsurge in the national economy." The reason for continued sacrifice, he implied, was the external threat: "Only under such conditions can we consider that our homeland will be guaranteed against all possible accidents. That will take three more Five-Year Plans, I should think, if not more. But it can be done and we will do it."<sup>35</sup> There would be no near-term Western effort to pry away the fruits of Soviet victory by force of arms, and this allowed a substantial reduction in Soviet armed forces. But it was clear from a remark Stalin made to Djilas in 1945 that he did indeed expect that a few years of respite would be followed by another war: "The war shall soon be over.

We shall recover in fifteen or twenty years [three more Five-Year Plans] and then we'll have another go at it."<sup>36</sup>

Stalin's speech was indicative of a revival of ideological militancy that had taken place in the Soviet Union following the victory at Stalingrad. After Hitler's invasion, the regime's communications with the Soviet people had been laden with patriotic symbols and evoked pre-revolutionary Russian traditions. The reappearance of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy appeared to be a ritual of purification coinciding with the liberation of Soviet territories from Nazi occupation and with the Red Army's penetration into the capitalist world beyond Soviet borders. Stalin's suspicions about ideological contamination and even betrayal fell most heavily on some of the minority nationalities; during and immediately after the war, whole nations—most notably, the Volga Germans, the Crimean Tatars, and the Chechens—were subjected to mass deportation.

This sense of threat clearly went beyond ideology; it was an expression of Stalin's deep-seated insecurity. This was amply confirmed in his later years not only by the wide-ranging purge of the Leningrad party apparatus, but also in the demented "doctors' plot," through which Stalin in his last days was apparently planning to eliminate many of his closest associates. That this paranoia had a profound impact on Soviet foreign policy was documented in Khrushchev's "secret speech" to the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956:

Stalin was a very distrustful man, sickly suspicious. Everywhere and in everything he saw "enemies," "two-facers," and "spies." . . . He had completely lost consciousness of reality; he demonstrated his suspiciousness and haughtiness not only in relation to individuals in the USSR, but in relation to whole parties and nations.<sup>37</sup>

No account of Soviet foreign policy in the post-war years, and no explanation of the origins of the Cold War, can be complete without an awareness of the extent to which Stalin's policies and personality required isolationism, an atmosphere of hostility, and an omnipresent enemy.

### **Continuity and Change in Soviet Foreign Policy Before the Cold War**

During the three decades from the Bolshevik Revolution to the beginning of the Cold War, the Soviet regime functioned in an international system that, in certain fundamental respects, more closely resembled the one faced by the tsars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than the one that emerged after World War II. World War I had not changed the multipolar and Eurocentric nature of international politics, nor had it altered the basic "rules" of balance-of-power diplomacy. Although the Soviet regime differed from its tsarist predecessor in some very fundamental respects, these systemic constants—together with the enduring geopolitical realities—helped produce more continuity in Moscow's policy than might have been expected.

In the wake of the diplomatic thunderbolt that was the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Winston Churchill, one of the closest and most astute observers of the diplomacy of Lenin and Stalin, characterized Moscow's policy with an enduring phrase: "It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Unfortunately, the balance of Churchill's observation has been less well remembered: "But perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest."<sup>38</sup>

As we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Soviet leaders did not act as though the demands of ideology and those of the Russian national interest were in conflict. Lenin, in negotiating the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and Stalin, in negotiating the Nazi-Soviet Pact and in the wartime summit conferences, were constantly aware that their first priority was to ensure the survival of the Russian state and to seek ways to enhance its security, whether through acquiring "buffer" territories or through seeking respites in which to build up its economy and defense capabilities. When they had opportunities to expand, the territories that interested them were identical to those that the tsars had sought, for identical strategic reasons. As we have seen, neither Lenin nor Stalin hesitated to equate policies that pursued Russian national interests with the long-term interests of world socialist revolution. Both were adept at employing communist rhetoric to explain and justify strategic moves that served the interests of Russia.

Indeed, especially for Stalin, the primary purpose of the international communist movement was to serve the interests of Soviet foreign policy, as defined in the Kremlin, no matter how it twisted and turned to meet internal economic or political needs. Revolutionary parties or leaders who were not under Stalin's control were not to be trusted, and—as German, Iranian, Turkish, and Chinese communists could testify—even those who were loyal were expendable if Soviet national interests demanded that they be sacrificed.

The Russia inherited by the Bolsheviks in 1917 was considerably weakened and faced powerful adversaries. In such circumstances, it was not surprising that Soviet leaders sought to enhance their security by aligning with other states to promote their interests: that is, to seek to establish a balance of power, so that they were not faced by an overwhelming hostile coalition. This required that they be capable of assessing changes in distributions of power and willing to align with other states—regardless of ideological orientation—that could help preserve the balance, often playing these states off against each other. Lenin's and Stalin's policies toward Germany, from Brest-Litovsk to Rapallo to the Nazi-Soviet Pact, amply illustrate that communist leaders were no less adept than the tsars at playing the balance-of-power "game."

At the same time, we have noted characteristics in Soviet foreign policy during this period that represented significant changes from the tsarist period. One change was in the practice of diplomacy itself—the use of techniques that have been termed "demonstrative diplomacy." These treat the negotiation as an opportunity to gain an international platform from which to proclaim revolutionary principles that will turn the peoples of other states against the very leaders with whom talks

are being held. Sometimes agreements are sought and gained, but sometimes the negotiations are conducted primarily for the propaganda opportunities they present. Trotsky's behavior during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, Chicherin's at the Genoa Conference, and Litvinov's in the League of Nations all provide evidence of the skill with which Soviet foreign ministers have conducted "demonstrative diplomacy." We also have observed numerous instances in which this dual policy—promoting revolution while conducting diplomacy—created difficulties for Soviet foreign policy, or even led, as in Soviet-British relations in 1927, to a total break in diplomatic relations.

Another element in Soviet foreign policy during this period that differentiates it from the balance of power diplomacy practiced during tsarist times was the assumption, voiced by Lenin in his famous statement of 1919 and often repeated by Stalin, of the inevitability of war between the Soviet Union and its capitalist adversaries. While the tsars fought many wars, they also showed themselves adept at avoiding conflicts with powerful rivals. Tsarist diplomacy, unlike that of the Soviets, was not conducted against a backdrop of implacable hostility toward the outside world. Whereas both Lenin and Stalin argued at particular times that peaceful coexistence with the capitalist world was possible, it was not thought to be a permanent prospect. For Stalin, the very existence of the two hostile "camps," though they could coexist with one another under certain conditions, meant that one or the other must triumph. The Soviet Union could proceed with the construction of "socialism in one country," but as long as "capitalist encirclement" prevailed, the people would have to make sacrifices in order to ensure the country's preparedness for the inevitable day of reckoning. As we have seen, this theme—far from disappearing during the years of the Allied coalition of World War II—was voiced again by Stalin in February 1946 as the prevailing prospect for the coming years of what would be termed "Cold War."

## Notes

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in *Essential Works of Marxism*, ed. Arthur P. Mendel (New York: Bantam, 1961), p. 44.

2. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), pp. 204–74.

3. See Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," in *The Conduct of Soviet Foreign Policy*, ed. Erik P. Hoffmann and Frederic J. Flernon, Jr. (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton, 1971), pp. 165–90.

4. Nathan Leites, *A Study of Bolshevism* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1953).

5. *Ibid.* p. 28.

6. An early and classic version of this debate, with contributions by R.N. Carew Hunt, Samuel Sharp, and Richard Lowenthal, appeared as "Ideology and Power Politics: A Symposium," *Problems of Communism* 7, no. 2 (March–April 1958), pp. 10–35.

7. See, for example, Adam B. Ulam, "Soviet Ideology and Soviet Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 11, no. 2 (January 1959), pp. 153–72.



8. Vernon Aspaturian, "Soviet Foreign Policy," in *Foreign Policy in World Politics*, 4th ed., ed. Roy C. Macridis (New York: Prentice Hall, 1972), pp. 182–83.

9. Results of a content analysis of speeches of Soviet leaders may be found in Jan Triska and David Finley, *Soviet Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), chap. 4.

10. The best account of the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, on which the following paragraphs draw, is John Wheeler-Bennett, *The Forgotten Peace, Brest-Litovsk* (New York: Morrow, 1939).

11. Quoted in *The International Situation and Soviet Foreign Policy*, ed. Myron Rush (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1970), pp. 6–7.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

13. Quoted in *Soviet Russia and the West, 1920–1927*, ed. X.J. Eudin and H.H. Fisher (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 94.

14. Quoted in *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1928–1934: Documents and Materials*, vol. 1, ed. X.J. Eudin and R.M. Slusser (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), p. 21.

15. For a more detailed account of the Lenin-Roy debate, see Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Policy Toward India: Ideology and Strategy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 8–13.

16. Quoted in Robert C. North, *Moscow and the Chinese Communists* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1953), p. 96.

17. Quoted in *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, III: 1933–41*, ed. Jane Degras (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 56.

18. Quoted in Rush, *International Situation*, p. 82.

19. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 93, 96.

20. Quoted in William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), p. 531.

21. Quoted in Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 614.

22. The text of the treaty is found in *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939–1941*, ed. R.J. Sontag and J.S. Beddie (New York: Didier, 1948), pp. 76–78.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 235–58.

25. Quoted in Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 810.

26. Quoted in Gustav Hilger and Alfred Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 336.

27. The text of Khrushchev's secret speech to the Twentieth Party Congress may be found in *Khrushchev Remembers*, trans. and ed. Strobe Talbott (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1970), app. 4. The quotations are on pp. 587 and 589.

28. For the text of Stalin's radio address, see Joseph Stalin, *The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union* (New York: Greenwood, 1969), pp. 9–17.

29. For a full discussion of the circumstances and the evidence relating to the massacre, see Louis Fischer, *The Road to Yalta: Soviet Foreign Relations, 1941–1945* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 75–90. When Poland's president Jaruzelski visited Moscow in April 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev presented him with "recently discovered documents" pertaining to the Katyn Forest incident that laid responsibility for the massacre on Lavrentii Beria and his henchmen in the Soviet secret police. A TASS (Soviet press agency) statement was issued expressing "deep regret" over the tragedy and labeling it "one of the grave crimes of Stalinism" (*Pravda*, April 14, 1990). During the Putin era, however, the official Russian position on this Stalinist "crime" softened, as it did on the historical treatment of other misdeeds of the Stalin period. An official Russian military prosecutorial inquiry, concluded in 2005, declined to label the Katyn affair as an act of genocide. The Poles were outraged by this conclusion, as well as by the Russian refusal to declassify most of

the relevant documents and make them available for outside scrutiny. (Valeri Masterov, "Katyn Forest and Chechen Mountains," *Vremia Novostei*, March 16, 2005, in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press (CDPSP)* 57, no. 11 [2005], pp. 19–20.)

30. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Closing the Ring* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), pp. 359–62.

31. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers: The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 567–68.

32. Quoted in Fischer, *Road to Yalta*, p. 186.

33. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), p. 416.

34. Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1962), p. 114.

35. Excerpts from Stalin's speech may be found in Rush, *International Situation*, pp. 117–23.

36. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, p. 115.

37. Quoted in Talbott, *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 585, 600.

38. *The Eloquence of Winston Churchill*, ed. F.B. Czarnomski (New York: New American Library, 1957), p. 80.

## Soviet Foreign Policy

### The Cold War

#### **The Stalinist Approach to Cold War**

The Cold War began as a struggle between two major powers, each at the head of an ideologically defined coalition. Yet this initial bipolarity was not a struggle of equals. The United States emerged from World War II with far greater economic and military strength than the Soviet Union. Even after U.S. troops (other than occupation forces) were withdrawn from Europe and the Pacific and demobilized, the United States retained unchallenged air and naval superiority, and its monopoly of the new atomic weapon gave it a formidable lead in military capability.

While Stalin expected a respite from armed conflict that would enable him to rebuild the Soviet Union's shattered economy, he nevertheless sought to deter the United States from utilizing its military strength. He did this by capitalizing on the Soviet lead in conventional arms and exploiting the perception that Western Europe was vulnerable to an attack by the Red Army. Although both sides had demobilized, U.S. reductions had left ground forces at about one-half the size of the Soviet Union's. About thirty Soviet divisions were deployed in Germany and Eastern Europe in the late 1940s, compared to about ten maintained by the West. While an active program of atomic research was under way in the USSR, Soviet military doctrine played down the significance of nuclear weapons and stressed the importance of conventional forces and superior morale.

Stalin's political strategy combined opportunistic probing with caution about provoking a military reaction. This was demonstrated in the first post-war crisis, which occurred in Iran—a border area that had tempted Russia's rulers for centuries. When the Soviet Union broke its wartime promise to withdraw occupation troops from northern Iran and instead demanded autonomy for two communist-dominated provincial regimes it had set up there, Iran brought the dispute to the newly established UN Security Council. Under strong U.S.-British pressure, including an implicit threat of force, Soviet troops were withdrawn.<sup>1</sup>

Some voices in the West were already warning early in 1946 that a long struggle was in the offing—most notably, Winston Churchill's declaration that an "Iron Curtain" had descended across Europe, and U.S. diplomat George Kennan's pessimistic "long telegram" from Moscow. Not until the first half of 1947 did the words "Cold War" and "containment" enter the American vocabulary, as the bipolar nature of the post-war conflict became clearer. In February, Britain notified U.S. officials that it was no longer able to act as protector of the existing order in the eastern Mediterranean, where the Greek government was under serious pressure from a communist guerrilla movement and the Turkish government was facing an ominous Soviet demand for frontier adjustments and a naval base in the Turkish straits. After an intensive strategic review, President Harry Truman proposed to Congress that the United States assume the burden of leadership, not only through specific (and ultimately successful) assistance to Greece and Turkey, but through a broader commitment "to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure."<sup>2</sup> The Truman Doctrine was followed by a proposal from Secretary of State George Marshall—responding to a severe economic and political crisis throughout Western Europe—for massive U.S. assistance in rebuilding the continent.

Although the Marshall Plan was deliberately posed in non-ideological terms, allowing for Soviet and East European participation, it was denounced by the Soviets as an imperialist plot to undermine the independence of the states of Europe while staving off economic collapse in the United States. In retrospect, the decision by Stalin that the USSR and its East European allies would not participate in the European Recovery Program appears seriously mistaken. As it happened, the Marshall Plan produced an economic miracle that helped to restore stability and reduce the appeal of communism in Western Europe. Had the Soviets participated, they might have shared in the economic benefits; but it is more likely that the U.S. Congress would never have appropriated large sums for a program with communist participation, in which case communist prospects in France and Italy might have mounted. At any rate, Stalin's decision served to confirm the political and economic division of Europe.

In the summer of 1947, an anonymously published article by George Kennan publicly articulated the U.S. strategy of responding to Soviet behavior with a policy aimed at "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies" and featuring "adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy."<sup>3</sup> Almost simultaneously, at the founding conference of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), Stalin's lieutenant Andrei Zhdanov described a titanic conflict between two camps—the "imperialist" camp, led by a predatory and expansionist United States, and the "democratic" camp under Soviet leadership, which sought to "resist the threat of new wars and imperialist expansion, to strengthen democracy and to extirpate the vestiges of fascism."<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, both the USSR and the United States perceived themselves as heading coalitions struggling for peace and justice against an evil and determined rival. Thus, they saw the world in terms of “tight bipolarity,” such that all states would be forced to choose one side or the other, and in which the struggle of ideologies left no room for compromise; but while both seemed prepared for protracted conflict, neither appeared willing to risk provoking the other into actual warfare.

The chief purpose of the Cominform was to aid in tightening the Soviet coalition by solidifying Moscow’s hold over the states of Eastern Europe and shielding them from the temptations that might be posed by U.S. aid and propaganda. The increasing similarity of these regimes was reinforced in February 1948, when the communist coup in Czechoslovakia removed from the East European political scene the last trace of an accountable government. At the same time, Stalin sought to assert his authority over Yugoslavia, where Tito and his followers had created a fiercely pro-Soviet but independent communist regime. When they refused Stalin’s demands, the Yugoslavs were expelled from the Cominform. Moscow and its allies mounted a campaign of unrelenting pressure, which Tito was able to resist thanks to solid internal support and timely assistance from the West. Though unwilling to risk war to remove Tito, Stalin proceeded to purge potential imitators in the states of the region and to end any deviations of policy from the orthodox Soviet pattern.

One opening remained in the Iron Curtain, because British, French, and U.S. forces continued to occupy the western sectors of Berlin—100 miles within the Soviet zone of Germany. In February 1948, the Western Allies decided to proceed, without Soviet participation, toward economic reform in their zones of occupation in Germany, including West Berlin. They announced a currency reform as a first step toward the creation of a federal republic in Germany. The new state would be included in the European Recovery Program and possibly even in a future anti-Soviet military coalition. Seeking to force a Western retreat from this plan, the Soviets mounted a pressure campaign, which climaxed in June with the blockade of all land routes into Berlin.

The United States responded with an airlift of supplies—a continuous shuttle over the next twelve months of more than one-quarter million flights. The dramatic Berlin airlift inspired the American, Canadian, and West European people and their governments to support the creation, in the spring of 1949, of the Federal Republic of Germany and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Acknowledging defeat, the Soviet Union ended the blockade of Berlin and sponsored the creation in its own zone of occupation of the communist-ruled German Democratic Republic (GDR). Although the continuing presence of the West in Berlin was a constant irritant that Moscow would again seek to remove, the political and economic division of Europe appeared complete.

As in tsarist times, diplomatic stalemate in Europe was followed by renewed Russian attention to opportunities for expansion in Asia. There indigenous communist forces were on the verge of establishing control over the world’s most

populous country, and the European colonial empires in South and Southeast Asia were in the process of being toppled by nationalist revolutions. These revolutions had proceeded without Soviet leadership, in part because of preoccupations in Europe, but also because of Stalin's earlier unhappy experience in China in the 1920s. The Soviet media virtually ignored the military successes of the Chinese communists and—unlike the resurgent communist parties of France and Italy—the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) received no invitation to the founding congress of the Cominform. Mao Zedong's military victory was essentially complete before he obtained Soviet diplomatic recognition in October 1949. Only shortly before that did the Soviets give public endorsement to the armed struggles being conducted by the communist parties in Indochina, Indonesia, India, Burma, Malaya, and the Philippines. In so doing, they claimed that the true inspiration for the "Chinese path to revolution" was to be found in the teachings of Lenin and Stalin.

Even the conclusion in February 1950 of a Sino-Soviet treaty of alliance—after nine weeks of hard bargaining—gave signs of the ambivalence with which the Soviets regarded the Chinese communist victory. Their experiences with Tito had revealed the potential difficulties with a communist neighbor who had won victory without Soviet military assistance or political counsel. Moreover, Moscow already had established a treaty relationship with Chiang Kai-shek's regime that had produced territorial and economic benefits—control of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the base at Port Arthur—that disappeared in the new treaty. Under its terms, the Soviets were to return control of these assets no later than the end of 1952; they also undertook to render economic assistance to China in its (sure to be costly) efforts to build socialism.

That same year, however, a miscalculation on Stalin's part caused China to be diverted from its major objectives and plunged into an undeclared war with the United States in Korea. That country had been divided into U.S. and Soviet zones of occupation following the surrender of Japan. In ending the Occupation in 1949, each side had turned over its zone to like-minded political forces. The North Korean regime, run by Soviet-trained communists, was militarily and politically stronger than South Korea, which seemed vulnerable to attack. The United States, which had taken no military action to prevent a communist triumph in China, had failed to include its Korean client within its announced "defense perimeter" in Asia. For Moscow, the situation presented an opportunity to unify the peninsula under a single communist regime, while demonstrating to Japan that it would be unwise to form closer security ties with the United States, which was of uncertain will.

When North Korea invaded the South on June 25, 1950, the Truman administration responded swiftly and boldly. With the United States leading, the UN Security Council—boycotted since January by the Soviet delegate, in protest of the continuing representation of China by Chiang's government—condemned the aggression and appealed to member states to come to the aid of South Korea.

U.S. forces stationed in Japan were ordered to Korea by President Truman. He reassured Stalin that the United States sought no direct conflict with the USSR—which in 1949 had broken the U.S. monopoly and become an atomic power. Disavowing responsibility for the conflict and denying that they intended to intervene, the Russians were content to watch the spectacular initial military success of their client.

When the tide of battle in Korea turned in October, however, and UN forces were driving the North Koreans all the way back toward the Yalu River border with Manchuria, both the Soviets and the Chinese faced unacceptable prospects. For the Soviets, the defeat of a communist government by U.S. arms was a dangerous precedent; for China, the establishment of a hostile state on its border—or even a possible invasion of Manchuria—had to be prevented. After several fruitless warnings to the United States, and after having received assurances of Soviet aid, China sent “volunteer” forces into the fighting at the side of the North Koreans. Several months of fierce combat were followed by a bloody stalemate at the original boundary of the two occupation zones. Armistice talks commenced in July 1951, but Stalin found it advantageous to prolong a situation in which U.S. forces were tied down in endless conflict with Moscow’s proxy. Moreover, China, fighting with arms purchased from the USSR, found itself diplomatically isolated and increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union.

Although Stalin was willing to experiment with new tactics in his later years, a major reorientation of Soviet policy would have to await new leadership, which came with Stalin’s death in March 1953.<sup>5</sup> While the Soviet Union had achieved major successes in the post-war years and had become one of the world’s two nuclear superpowers, it confronted equally large challenges. The Iron Curtain dividing East from West seemed higher and more impenetrable than ever, and behind it, in Moscow’s sphere, nationalist tensions and popular dissatisfaction simmered beneath the facade of socialist unity. Stalin’s record in foreign policy was decidedly mixed; gains achieved through shrewd bargaining existed alongside opportunities missed because of stubborn inflexibility. Attacked by his successors as a ruthless paranoid whose policies often were divorced from reality, he was again praised by his lieutenants’ heirs for his strong and single-minded leadership in building an industrial power capable of awesome military successes. More than a half-century after his death, the “genius leader of all mankind” continued to be a dominant, controversial, and unsettling figure both for his own people and for the entire communist world.

### **The Khrushchev Strategy**

Although Stalin’s policy had built the Soviet Union into an industrial and military superpower, it had exacted an enormous price in loss of life, human suffering, unmet needs, and personal insecurity for the elite and masses alike. It was evident to the country’s new leaders that a continuation of this approach would

be counterproductive. The legitimacy of its own rule depended on restoring the authority of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, without surrendering its monopoly of political power. Further strengthening the country's economic and military capabilities required motivating the population through material incentives rather than terror. But if they were to achieve domestic stability and improve living standards, the new leaders would need to avoid confrontation with external enemies. They also would need to lessen tensions within the socialist camp—a point that was brought home only three months after Stalin's death, when demonstrations erupted in East Germany and had to be quelled with Soviet tanks.

While persuading the other members of the socialist camp to adopt a “new course” that relaxed the harsher features of the Stalinist system, the new Soviet leaders sought to improve relations in other areas of conflict as well. They resumed diplomatic relations with Greece and Israel, withdrew their territorial claims against Turkey, and—most significantly—took steps to break the stalemate and allow the conclusion of an armistice in Korea. Prime Minister Georgy Malenkov, in a speech to the Supreme Soviet on August 8, 1953, declared that “there are no disputed or outstanding issues which cannot be settled peacefully by mutual agreement.” At the same time, he warned those who perceived the new Soviet policy as a sign of weakness that the United States now had “no monopoly on the hydrogen weapon.”<sup>6</sup>

The following year Malenkov voiced the previously heretical view that the existence of nuclear weapons meant that war between imperialism and communism would destroy world civilization. He evidently meant to use this doctrine as the basis for cutting the Soviet defense budget, but within a month he was forced by a majority of his colleagues in the collective leadership to modify his thesis to state that only capitalism would be annihilated by nuclear war.

Basking in its new status as a thermonuclear power, the Soviet Union called for a conference of foreign ministers to be held in Geneva in the spring of 1954 to consider Korean reunification and a solution to the conflict in Indochina. The Korean phase of the conference ended in deadlock, but the Indochina phase produced an agreement for a truce between France and the Vietminh National Liberation Committee, led by Ho Chi Minh and a nucleus of communists, which had been fighting French colonial forces since 1946. The Geneva agreement called for France to withdraw its troops, recognize the independence of Laos and Cambodia, and partition Vietnam pending national elections in 1956. Although both sides regarded it not as a final solution but as a springboard to further struggle, the agreement represented a victory for Asian communism.

The adroit diplomacy of Zhou Enlai at the Geneva conference signaled the reemergence of China on the world stage, and its elevated status was confirmed later in 1954 by a renegotiation of its partnership with the USSR. A delegation of Soviet leaders traveled to Beijing to conclude a new treaty that freed China from some of the more humiliating terms imposed by Stalin. The Soviets agreed to



withdraw from Port Arthur, to eliminate the joint stock companies set up in 1950, and to increase the level of credits and technical assistance to Chinese industry.

An area of conflict on which no progress was made was Germany. Soviet hopes that disunity in the West would prevent German rearmament were dashed in 1954, when the NATO allies agreed to admit the Federal Republic of Germany, bringing an army of a half million under integrated NATO command. In response, the Soviet Union assembled its East European allies in Warsaw and adopted the Pact of Mutual Assistance and Unified Command (the Warsaw Pact), which gave a symbolic symmetry to European defense arrangements.

Despite this setback, the Soviets continued to focus attention on security arrangements in Central Europe. In May 1955 the Austrian State Treaty provided for withdrawal of Soviet and Western troops from their respective zones of occupation and for the permanent neutralization of the Austrian state. The cost for the Soviets was relatively low, since no communist state had been set up in the Soviet zone, and they may have hoped to provide neighboring West Germany with another lesson on the advantages of neutrality.

The Austrian treaty helped clear the way for the first big-power summit meeting since Potsdam: the Geneva summit of 1955. The major Soviet proposal was for the mutual disbandment of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the withdrawal of non-European (i.e., American) forces from the continent, and conclusion of a European security treaty. Neither this nor the major Western initiative—President Eisenhower's proposal to open the defense installations of each side to aerial surveillance by the other ("open skies")—produced any agreement. But the conference did bring a marked reduction in international tension (the "spirit of Geneva"), fostering the impression that the Soviet leaders (First Secretary of the CPSU Nikita Khrushchev and new Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin) were reasonable men, with whom it was possible to negotiate.

Later in 1955, the Soviets made another attempt to "exploit the contradictions" in the Western camp by enticing its West European allies away from the United States. Their target was the West German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who visited Moscow in September for talks on establishing diplomatic relations and commercial ties. Using the time-honored technique of appealing to capitalist greed, the Soviets hoped to use the bait of renewed commercial relations to gain Adenauer's formal renunciation of the goal of German reunification. But Adenauer had his own initiative to pursue—offering German financial assistance in return for reunification or, as the Soviets saw it, buying the German Democratic Republic from Moscow in return for West German credits and reparations. Although the temptation must have been great, the Soviets were unwilling to deal away "their" part of Germany. Khrushchev later wrote about it in terms similar to the Western "domino theory"—the abandonment of socialism in the GDR would only have encouraged more Western pressure and set off a chain reaction: "Once you start retreating, it's difficult to stop."<sup>77</sup> (As we shall see, Chancellor Helmut Kohl had much better luck making the same proposal

to President Gorbachev thirty-five years later, when other dominoes around the GDR already had fallen.)

When the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU convened in February 1956, the new direction in Soviet foreign policy already was evident, but the congress played a significant role by articulating and approving the changes in interpretation of Marxist-Leninist doctrine that supported a relaxation of tensions. This necessitated a turn away from Stalin's rigid two-camp worldview, which left no room for Soviet cooperation with movements and states that were non-communist but anti-imperialist. The task was not to invent an entirely new approach, but to return to Lenin's concept of a temporary strategic alliance between the USSR and various "neutralist" or "nationalist" forces against the imperialist powers.

Khrushchev justified his approach by declaring that the balance of forces in the international arena had shifted as a result of the transition from "socialism in one country" to a powerful socialist world system. This made it possible for Marxism-Leninism to triumph both in individual states and worldwide without war or violence, but through peaceful competition. In his major public address to the Twentieth Congress, Khrushchev proclaimed the major tasks of Soviet foreign policy:

1. pursuing a policy of peaceful coexistence;
2. building stronger relations among the socialist states, including Yugoslavia;
3. strengthening friendship and cooperation with neutralist and peace-loving states in Europe and the Third World;
4. pursuing closer relations with the United States and its allies;
5. strengthening the USSR's defense potential and exposing the activities of the enemies of peace.<sup>8</sup>

Although these pronouncements at the Twentieth Party Congress represented a significant departure for Soviet foreign policy, Khrushchev's lengthy and controversial secret speech attacking Stalin had an even greater effect, particularly within the socialist camp. Khrushchev's explicit comments in the realm of foreign policy included criticism of Stalin's failure to prepare Soviet defenses for the German attack in 1941; Stalin's "lack of faith in the Chinese comrades," which delayed the establishment of the communist regime in Beijing; his "shameful role" in relating to Tito; his misunderstanding of the nature of the national liberation movement in India; and his "unrealistic" assessment of the situation in Korea, leading to the creation of a "risky situation" there.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from its enormous impact on political, social, and cultural life in the USSR, Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign had dramatic consequences for Eastern Europe as well. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, together with his public acknowledgment that "many roads to socialism" were permissible, was intended to help the USSR mend fences with Tito and bring him back into the

Soviet camp. The Yugoslav leader traveled to Moscow in June for a “fraternal visit,” during which relations between his party and the CPSU were reestablished. Pleasing as they were to Tito, Khrushchev’s revelations about Stalin had a shattering effect elsewhere in the socialist bloc, where Soviet authority was linked closely to Stalin’s personality and policies. On Soviet initiative, the “little Stalins” ruling in Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria had been replaced in the first half of 1956 by more reform-minded leaders, and—in another concession to Tito—the Cominform had been abolished. Khrushchev evidently thought that the bonds of Marxism-Leninism and the institutional ties to the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) were strong enough to substitute for the late dictator’s fearsome iron grip. Clearly, he overestimated how solid these ties were, particularly in the face of revelations that the “genius leader of all mankind” who had presided over the establishment of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe had in fact been a criminal and a madman for most of his career. The “posthumous rehabilitation” of the victims of blood purges in the USSR and Eastern Europe had the effect of stimulating even more searching questions about the nature of a political system that could allow such suffering and injustice.

The most profound reverberations were felt in Poland and Hungary. Strikes and demonstrations began in Poznan, Poland, in June, setting off a chain of events that culminated in October with the election of a new party leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka. Gomulka, who previously had been suspected of “Titoist” sympathies, immediately declared Poland’s intention of following its own national path toward communism. A Soviet delegation headed by Khrushchev rushed to Warsaw, and there were strong hints of possible action by the Red Army. The Poles were able to reassure the Soviets that the Communist Party remained in firm control and that it was committed to maintain Poland’s alliance with the USSR.

This challenge was followed the same month with an even more serious rebellion on the part of the Hungarian population. This led to an attempt by the new premier, Imre Nagy, to restore multiparty politics and free elections and to withdraw Hungary from the Warsaw Pact. In the first few days of November, Soviet tanks were sent to crush the Hungarian Revolution. In a coincidence that was fortunate for the Soviets, the potential negative reaction in some parts of the world to their bloody invasion of Hungary was reduced by the simultaneous invasion by Western forces of a prominent Third World neutralist state. In the eyes of many African, Asian, and Latin American nationalists, Moscow’s action to prevent a defection from its East European security zone was less offensive than the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in response to President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal and to attacks on Israel by *fedayeen* guerrilla (Arab) terrorists in the Sinai Peninsula.

While taking care not to become militarily involved, the Soviet Union championed Nasser’s cause and claimed that its noisy threats had forced the retreat of imperialism. The outcome of the Suez crisis seemed to further the USSR’s two chief objectives in the Middle East: hastening the decline of British and French

influence in the area and combating the Western-sponsored anti-communist alliance—the Baghdad Pact of Britain, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan. The fact that the United States was not party to the Suez intervention, and in fact harshly condemned it, gained little credit in the region for Washington. In fact, it produced an additional benefit of the crisis for Moscow—the weakening of Western unity.

While the Suez crisis helped to mitigate the international impact of Soviet intervention in Hungary, it did not forestall the weakening of Khrushchev's domestic political position. His rivals claimed that he had undermined Soviet authority in Eastern Europe with his unwise revelations about Stalin and his concessions to Tito. In June 1957 Khrushchev was faced with what he termed "a so-called arithmetical majority" in the Party Presidium that demanded that he step down as first secretary. The resourceful Khrushchev, with the help of Defense Minister Georgy Zhukov, turned the tables on his adversaries by summoning the Central Committee to Moscow to override the Presidium's action and remove his chief opponents (the "anti-Party group") from their positions.

As he set about repairing the damage to his own position, Khrushchev also was engaged in an effort to reconstruct the socialist bloc. This culminated in November 1957 in a meeting in Moscow of the leaders of twelve ruling communist parties. Tito was not present, since the Hungarian events had produced another rupture in Soviet-Yugoslav relations. The Moscow meeting widened the reopened breach by condemning "revisionism" in the communist movement. Mao Zedong, on the other hand, played a prominent role at the meeting, freely giving advice to the Soviets even as he acknowledged (in return for Khrushchev's promise to aid China in developing nuclear weapons) that the CPSU was at the "head" of the socialist camp. But China was clearly beginning to question the validity of Khrushchev's doctrinal interpretations and his ability to lead the socialist bloc to further successes. Under growing pressure, he needed a dramatic breakthrough.

The successful launch by the USSR of an artificial space satellite (*Sputnik*) in October 1957 provided the key ingredient in Khrushchev's plan—parlaying the Soviet lead in the "space race" with the United States into an assertion of Soviet strategic superiority. In fact, the strategic military balance was quite unfavorable to the USSR, given the U.S. lead in bombers and the fact that the Soviets were not investing in missile production. Khrushchev sought to create the opposite impression by making a series of exaggerated claims regarding Soviet rocket development. Using a combination of threats and proposals for disengagement, he sought to pressure European members of NATO into refusing an expansion of American nuclear capability on the continent and in Germany in particular.

The purpose of this elaborate missile deception was to extract political concessions from the West, particularly regarding Berlin, which had been divided into zones of occupation since 1945.<sup>10</sup> The three Western zones had de facto linkages to the Federal Republic and shared in its economic prosperity. East Berlin, occupied by Soviet forces, was a depressing study in contrast. Located 100 miles inside the GDR, Berlin was an easily accessible escape route for East

Germans, about 3 million of whom by 1961 had traveled from East Berlin to West Berlin and then on to West Germany. This outpouring of refugees was a dramatic and embarrassing manifestation of the side-by-side comparison of the achievements of the two economic systems. Together with the GDR's virtual diplomatic isolation, the refugee flow clearly threatened the long-term viability of the German communist regime. Khrushchev hoped to use the missile deception and a carefully deployed combination of enticements and threats to force a change in the status of Berlin. He calculated that this would shake the confidence of West Germans in their NATO partners, while producing formal recognition of Germany's division, neutralization of the two states, and a permanent ban on West German access to nuclear weapons.

Khrushchev sought to achieve a diplomatic triumph in Europe "on the cheap." His ambitious seven-year plan for the Soviet economy, unveiled at the Twenty-First Congress of the CPSU in January 1959, was designed to propel the Soviet economy to a level past that of the United States. Its fulfillment required a further diversion of resources "from guns to butter," and in January 1960 Khrushchev announced a reduction of about one-third in the size of the Soviet armed forces. Adopting ideas expounded by Malenkov in 1954, he acknowledged that nuclear war would destroy both capitalism and communism, and concluded that it was thus no longer necessary for Soviet forces to be of a size and diversity that would allow them to survive an initial nuclear attack and then to win a conventional war with the West.

Khrushchev's strategy was posited on the achievement of favorable results in negotiations on Berlin and a concomitant relaxation of international tensions. He was encouraged by a meeting of the Big Four foreign ministers (of the United States, the USSR, Britain, and France) in the spring of 1959, a summit meeting with President Dwight Eisenhower in the United States that autumn, and Western agreement to a Big Four summit on European security issues to be held in Paris in May 1960. As it turned out, however, the Paris summit ended in disaster. A few days before it was to open, the Soviets shot down a piloted U-2 high-altitude plane belonging to the United States, part of an ongoing series of photographic espionage flights over Soviet territory in search of the allegedly numerous (but actually fictitious) Soviet missile emplacements. When President Eisenhower, whom Khrushchev had recently hailed as a peace-loving statesman, took personal responsibility for the spy mission, the Soviets decided that the summit conference could not begin without a personal apology. To be sure, the Soviets were aware that their missile deception probably had been exposed and realized that the Paris negotiations indeed were not likely to produce Western concessions on Germany. An opposition faction in the Soviet leadership, composed of heavy industry and defense lobbyists and hard-line ideologists, dissatisfied with Khrushchev's defense cuts, apparently took advantage of the situation to force a harder line in Soviet policy. After the breakup of the Paris summit, the remainder of 1960 saw a lingering chill in East-West relations, climaxed by Khrushchev's belligerent

performance at the United Nations, in which he banged his shoe on a desk in protest of a speech he found offensive.

The Kennedy administration, which came to power in 1961, pledged an activist response to the Soviet challenge in Europe and the Third World. However, its first foreign policy crisis—an ill-fated U.S.-supported invasion of Cuba by anti-Castro forces at the Bay of Pigs—aroused doubts about Kennedy's resoluteness. A meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev in Vienna in June, held in a somber atmosphere, was followed by Khrushchev's reinstatement of a deadline for a settlement on Berlin, an announced increase in the Soviet defense budget, and suspension of the planned reduction in the size of the Soviet armed forces. Kennedy parried with increases in the U.S. defense budget and troop strength.

Khrushchev's next move caught the West by surprise. The Soviets succeeded in August 1961 in solving their immediate problem in Berlin, closing off the escape route by building a wall between the western and eastern sectors of the city. This was followed two months later by an ominous confrontation between Soviet and U.S. tanks at the border of their respective sectors, but Khrushchev again defused the crisis by withdrawing his deadline.

Khrushchev grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of movement toward his longer-range goal of changing the status of Berlin and stabilizing the situation in Germany. The long-standing Soviet fear that West Germany would gain access to nuclear weapons was now multiplied by visions of an aggressive and nuclear China. Not only was the Soviet Union's prestige at stake, but also its relative strategic position was worsening. The United States had discovered that the presumed missile gap in favor of the Soviets had never existed—but only after their own strategic buildup had resulted in an actual gap favoring the United States. Khrushchev lacked the economic resources to satisfy both civilian and military needs, and he was under increasing pressure from a hard-line faction to produce a foreign policy victory. At the beginning of 1962, he was desperately seeking a way to demonstrate Soviet military might, thereby impressing the United States and China and impelling them to the negotiating table to resolve pressing political issues. His thoughts led him to a solution that was both unorthodox and bold, as he later recounted in his memoirs:

I had the idea of installing missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba without letting the United States find out they were there until it was too late to do anything about them. In addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call the "balance of power." Now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you; we'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine.<sup>11</sup>

This idea led in the fall of 1962 to the most dangerous confrontation of the Cold War, a crisis that had the potential for a nuclear war. In the summer of 1962 Khrushchev authorized sending to Cuba a missile force of thirty-six medium-range rockets and twenty-four intermediate-range rockets, all armed

with nuclear warheads, as well as nuclear-equipped tactical forces to defend the strategic weapons. As never before, these missiles would have put the Soviet Union in a position to devastate a large portion of the American heartland.

Foremost among the Soviet leader's objectives was to prevent an American invasion of Cuba and the overthrow of Castro's revolution. But additionally he wanted to redress (at least partially) the nuclear superiority the United States had over the Soviet Union and thereby enhance Moscow's political bargaining power on a range of Cold War issues. Although not a primary goal of his gambit, the Soviet leader wanted to pressure President Kennedy to move on a German peace treaty to legalize the permanence of Germany's division.

From the beginning, Moscow was faced with problems that reflected the fact that the Soviet maneuver was poorly thought through and poorly executed. Originally Khrushchev planned to deploy the missiles in secret and then confront Kennedy with a *fait accompli*. However, on October 14, 1962, before the missiles were in place and made operational, they were observed by a U.S. reconnaissance plane. The ships carrying the IRBMs were still at sea when the crisis began. Kennedy and his advisors agreed that the missiles had to be removed. On October 22 Kennedy addressed the American people on television, informing the world of the American position and announcing a naval "quarantine" of Cuba as a signal of U.S. intentions. From that time until October 28, when it became public that the missiles would be withdrawn, a state of high tension existed in both governments as each contemplated the possibility that some miscalculation on either side might lead to a nuclear war that neither Washington nor Moscow wanted. Khrushchev's idea from the beginning was to threaten the United States with the use of nuclear weapons—not to use them. But he could not be certain that Kennedy understood this.

For about two weeks the world was gripped with fear. The problems of both sides were complicated by the lack of a direct means of communication between the two leaders. Thus a number of intermediaries were used at different times. An added complication was Khrushchev's occasional uncertainty about what to do, perhaps reflecting differences among his advisors. An illustration of his vacillation was two letters sent to Kennedy: one on October 26 proposing a deal (withdrawal of Soviet missiles in return for an American pledge not to invade Cuba), followed by a letter the next day that added a condition for withdrawal—United States removal of missiles from Turkey. Ultimately the crisis was resolved when Kennedy replied affirmatively to the October 26 letter and ignored the October 27 letter, and Khrushchev agreed. It was a profound defeat for the Soviet Union.

The Cuban missile crisis had short-term and long-term consequences. It moved the Soviet premier toward a renewal of his policy of peaceful coexistence, producing such agreements in 1963 as the Hot Line Agreement and the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. But it also undermined his authority domestically. Within the communist camp, Khrushchev had to endure blistering criticism from Fidel Castro and Mao Zedong. And on the second anniversary of the beginning of the crisis in October

1964, the opposition to Khrushchev managed to force his resignation. One can even speculate that the outcome of the crisis was a factor in the ultimate collapse of communism and the Soviet system a generation later.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Cold War and the Third World**

One of Khrushchev's most important foreign policy legacies was the Soviet rediscovery of the Third World as the "vital strategic reserve of imperialism." He saw it as an arena in which the Soviets could compete with the West with a high likelihood of success, but with less risk than would result from a direct challenge in the "main arena" of the bipolar struggle. Several significant events in 1955 signaled Soviet priorities and the techniques they were willing to employ in this new arena: the sale of arms (ostensibly from Czechoslovakia) to Egypt, gaining a foothold for Soviet influence in the Middle East; high-level diplomacy in South Asia, starting with a June visit to Moscow by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India and a return trip at the end of the year by Khrushchev and Bulganin to India, Afghanistan, and Burma; and economic assistance to the state sector of developing countries, inaugurated during the Soviet leaders' trip to India with the announcement that the Soviets would finance and construct the giant Bhilai steel mill. Although some were nominally "socialist," most of these countries were not leaning toward communism; rather, they interested Moscow for strategic and geopolitical reasons.

Adopting Lenin's perspective, Khrushchev perceived that Soviet interests were advanced by joining with nationalist and neutralist Third World states in the struggle against imperialism—a temporary alliance he called the "zone of peace." He confidently asserted that Soviet aid to state-owned industries in these countries would help liberate them from their economic dependence on the West, while simultaneously stimulating the growth of a communist-oriented industrial proletariat.

However, it did not take long for the Soviets to lose their optimistic outlook on the prospects for socialist development in Asia and Africa. In only a few countries were communist parties even allowed to function; rarer still was one with healthy political prospects. The call for the application of "creative Marxism" in further research by Soviet scholars led to a great deal of doctrinal experimentation—a search for alternative paths by which the new states could make the transition to non-capitalist development, and thus be deemed worthy of Soviet support. This produced concepts so pliable that even the most backward economies were said to be capable of socialist development. Indeed, Soviet analysts argued, given a mutually supportive relationship with the Soviet Union, the transition to socialism could occur even without the leadership of the proletariat or of a communist party.

Certain Third World leaders found satisfaction in having their countries proclaimed as candidates for rapid development toward socialism. Khrushchev surely was eager to seize on the new concepts to justify his claims that Soviet



policies could produce victories for socialism. The Chinese, on the other hand, objected sharply to the ideological sleight of hand, as did Third World communists whose historical role was thereby eliminated. The most fundamental problem with Khrushchev's approach, however, was that it largely ignored the realities—that Third World countries confronted tremendous obstacles to economic development.

Wide varieties of techniques were employed by Moscow in its opportunistic search for influence in the Third World. In addition to diplomatic contacts, the Soviets developed ties with a variety of political parties; promoted exchanges with labor, student, and cultural groups; disseminated massive quantities of print and radio propaganda; and employed tens of thousands of civilian and military technicians and advisors. The Soviet program of foreign aid (totaling just over \$47 billion through 1988), though dwarfed in absolute terms by that of the United States, was highly selective, with four countries (India, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey) receiving just under half of the total amount. Disbursed in the form of long-term credits strictly tied to the purchase of Soviet goods, economic aid was closely linked with Soviet foreign trade.

Far greater in volume was the military aid program of the Soviet Union; indeed, weapons were the chief export of the USSR to the Third World. Its military aid relationships presented Moscow with opportunities not only to extend its own political influence in strategic areas while strengthening its clients against local and regional challengers, but, more concretely, to extend its military reach in ways that could alter the international balance of power. However, the program was not without its costs; Moscow did not always find itself on the prevailing side in regional conflicts, and even when it did, it did not always experience gratitude from its allies.

Soviet achievements in the Third World under Khrushchev's leadership may have been far less impressive than he had promised, but he did lay the ideological and operational foundations for long-range Soviet involvement. Although his ambition greatly exceeded Moscow's reach, Khrushchev plunged the USSR into global involvement; he extended the bipolar struggle into the "imperialist reserve" and left the United States unchallenged in no area of the world. He forged active ties with the more radical states of the Third World, for which Moscow represented an alternative source of economic and military capabilities. But lavish Soviet aid and the encouragement of radical socioeconomic change often left economic and political chaos in its wake. Khrushchev's most promising clients—Indonesia's Sukarno, Algeria's Ben Bella, and Ghana's Nkrumah—were toppled shortly after Khrushchev himself.

Despite the failures, Khrushchev's lasting accomplishment was to expand the horizons of Soviet foreign policy beyond the narrow parameters to which Stalin had confined it and to renew the appeal of Soviet doctrine beyond the rigid formulations of his predecessor. In so doing, Khrushchev won for the Soviets some valuable footholds in strategically prized and previously uncharted territories.

As in other spheres, the successor leadership continued the basic objectives of this strategy, while shifting tactics and adopting a more cautious and pragmatic style. In the face of an explicit recognition of the complex and extended nature of social change in the Third World, the emphasis in Soviet pronouncements was soon on the lengthy timetable that would be required for the new states to build socialism. As a leading Soviet analyst phrased his criticism of leaders who pushed social change too quickly: "Proclaiming socialism is not the same thing as building it."<sup>13</sup> The new Soviet approach to economic assistance placed greater stress on the economic feasibility of aid projects, and motivations for Soviet aid and trade were increasingly expressed in terms of mutual economic benefit. More than ever, Moscow's targets in the Third World were chosen according to the degree of Chinese or Western interest in the country, its importance to Soviet security, or its ability to provide support facilities—including airports, harbors, or sites for communications stations—for Soviet military activities.

These factors grew in significance during the years of Leonid Brezhnev's rule, as the Soviet Union deployed its sizable and growing navy in the waters surrounding the Third World. The Soviets sought to use this new capability not merely for military defense, but for the political purpose of "protecting state interests in time of peace" or "showing the flag." In the Indian Ocean, for example, by the mid-1980s the Soviets were maintaining a permanent squadron of at least twenty vessels, with occasional "surges" in times of crisis to more than thirty. By expanding its navy in this fashion, Moscow showed its determination to achieve the status of a global superpower—not confined to the Eurasian landmass but capable of projecting its power far beyond its own borders.<sup>14</sup>

As the Soviet Union's investment in strategic Third World resources and facilities grew, its involvement in "national-liberation struggles" and regional conflicts became an issue of greater contentiousness in its relationship with the United States. At times when the Soviets were seeking "détente" or relaxation of tensions with the West in order to widen access to trade and technology or pursue negotiated settlements, their Third World involvements worked at cross purposes, despite Soviet efforts to keep the two arenas separate. Moreover, the strong forces of nationalism and the volatility of regional conflicts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America made it difficult for the USSR to establish reliable patron-client relationships. Among the high-profile reversals were some that resulted when "clients" switched sides in search of a better deal (most notably, Somalia and Egypt), and some that resulted when pro-Soviet regimes were overthrown (such as Chile's Allende and Ethiopia's Mengistu).<sup>15</sup> In fact, Soviet influence seemed to peak in the mid-1970s, with the coming to power of pro-Soviet regimes in Angola, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan, and the spread of communism to Laos and Cambodia. Afterward, there were no new Third World successes. In the Gorbachev era, the costs of the USSR's investments in the Third World were reassessed, and class struggle and the two-camps thesis were explicitly abandoned in favor of more cooperative relationships with the West, which facilitated a

scaling back of Soviet commitments and negotiated solutions to some of the more dangerous regional conflicts in the Third World.

### **The Sino-Soviet Conflict**

In the Third World, as in all other arenas of the Cold War, no development so profoundly affected the foreign policy of the Soviet Union in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s as its conflict with China. The challenge to the notion that Moscow was the single center of the international communist movement, initiated by Tito, was raised to shattering heights by Mao Zedong. Yugoslavia in 1948 demonstrated that a communist regime could remain independent of the USSR, and Poland in 1956 showed the possibilities of pursuing home-grown domestic policies within the context of Soviet military control. China in the 1960s became the USSR's chief enemy and thereby forever destroyed the Marxist myth that proletarian forces engage in "international relations of a new type."

At least in part, the schism between the Soviet Union and China was a consequence of a larger change in the international system—the decline of rigid bipolarity and rise of multipolarity, as new power centers emerged in global politics. But China's challenge was not simply that of an emergent great power. Its significance and intensity were magnified by other factors, including a conflict in ideology, a personality clash between Khrushchev and Mao Zedong, long-standing national rivalries, differing levels of economic development, and a rivalry for leadership of the socialist camp. Differences that were expressed confidentially in the late 1950s were more openly communicated in the early 1960s, and by 1964 the split in the socialist system was an acknowledged reality.

Although they had no reason for devotion to Stalin, the Chinese voiced dissatisfaction with Soviet policy only with the accession of Khrushchev to the leadership of the USSR. They were disturbed by the events of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956—not only the doctrinal revisions unilaterally announced by Khrushchev, but also his secret speech attacking Stalin. Having been persuaded (in part by the promise of assistance in their nuclear development) to refrain from an open challenge to Soviet leadership at the conference of Eastern bloc states in 1957, the Chinese found Soviet behavior in the next two years intolerable. Specifically, they objected during the Middle East crisis of 1958 when Khrushchev proposed a summit conference of the traditional Big Four plus India; later that year, when the Soviet Union was thought to be insufficiently forthcoming on behalf of Chinese claims to the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu; and in the following year, when Moscow adopted a stance of neutrality in the border clashes between communist China and "bourgeois" India. Why, in the wake of the launch of *Sputnik*, the Soviets appeared more interested in peaceful coexistence with the United States and in friendship with India than in aggressively pressing the demands of their socialist ally was a point of bitter frustration for the leaders in Beijing.

For their part, the Soviets were alarmed by the bold policies adopted by China both domestically and externally. In 1958 the Chinese adopted a radical industrialization policy (the “Great Leap Forward”) and a system of agrarian communes as methods of moving quickly toward the stage of full communism. Implied in their claims was a challenge to Soviet ideological pre-eminence. Khrushchev’s response was the hastily summoned Twenty-First Party Congress in January 1959—the “Congress of the Builders of Communism”—that adopted an ambitious seven-year plan. In the foreign policy realm, China’s quest for control of Taiwan and the offshore islands, its brutal repression in Tibet, and its campaign to force adjustments on the Sino-Indian border escalated global tensions at a time when Khrushchev was emphasizing peaceful coexistence and the potential fruitfulness of negotiations. In an unmistakable sign of their distrust, the Soviets in June 1959 abrogated the 1957 military aid agreement in which they had promised to give China technical data for the manufacture of the atomic bomb. At about the same time, Khrushchev was evidently supporting an unsuccessful challenge to Mao’s leadership by the Chinese defense minister.<sup>16</sup> When these moves failed to change China’s course, the Soviets curtailed their economic assistance, withdrawing between 2,000 and 3,000 specialists and removing or destroying the blueprints of their projects.

In 1960 Sino-Soviet differences resurfaced, with the publication by the Chinese of a lengthy critique of the Russians under the title “Long Live Leninism.”<sup>17</sup> In November of the same year, a conference of eighty-one communist parties in Moscow saw a dozen parties—with Albania foremost among them—support the Chinese positions. Although the overwhelming majority supported the Soviets, and a statement maintaining a facade of unity was published, the Soviets were undoubtedly humiliated by the need to lobby for support in the international communist movement. The Moscow conference proved to be the last meeting of its kind.

The Sino-Soviet conflict escalated further in the early 1960s as a result of incidents along their long border. The Chinese cited nine “unequal treaties” that had been forced on China by the tsars, and they laid claim to some 580,000 square miles of Soviet territory in the Far East. Tension also arose periodically along the Central Asian frontier, which divided the Chinese province of Xinjiang from the Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Border incidents worsened in the latter half of the decade, during China’s Cultural Revolution, and the two countries seemed close to open warfare in the spring of 1969, when armed clashes, involving large troop concentrations and artillery, occurred at their Far Eastern frontier along the Ussuri River. With both sides maintaining massive forces at the border, rumors circulated during the summer of 1969 that the Soviet Union might be considering a pre-emptive nuclear strike against China.<sup>18</sup> By then, each party clearly regarded the other—and no longer the United States—as its primary security threat. From the perspective of balance-of-power politics, the logic of the situation called for both sides to turn to the United States for assistance

against the other. Triangular politics was to become a distinctive feature of the Cold War in the 1970s.

### **Brezhnev and the Policies of *Détente***

As a result of the massive buildup of Soviet strategic forces following the Cuban missile crisis, by 1970 the military strength of the two superpowers was approximately equal. While the United States continued to lead in many categories, the USSR pulled ahead in numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). However, the military expansion had put tremendous strain on the economy of the Soviet Union, whose rate of growth was rapidly dropping. Hesitant efforts at structural reform, led by Aleksey Kosygin, Khrushchev's successor as premier, challenged too many vested interests and were abandoned. Curtailment of military budgets was apparently not even seriously considered, given the considerable political power of military commanders and the defense industry lobbyists. Facing increasing pressures to improve the quantity and quality of consumer goods available to the Soviet population, Kosygin and Leonid Brezhnev, who had succeeded Khrushchev as head of the CPSU Secretariat, agreed that importing Western technology was their best available means of increasing economic productivity.

The new political landscape of the 1970s—emerging global tripolarity, Soviet-American military parity, and stagnation of the Soviet economy—necessitated a rethinking of Soviet foreign policy. The policy adopted by Brezhnev and his colleagues went beyond earlier practices of “peaceful coexistence”—avoidance of war and relaxation of tensions with the West—to include active collaboration in areas such as arms control, trade, crisis management, and science and technology. In the West, the resulting relationship was labeled “*détente*” (French for “relaxation”), but in the USSR there was never a connotation that all forms of struggle between opposing social systems had come to an end or that genuine partnership had been established. As Georgy Arbatov, a leading foreign policy advisor to Brezhnev, put it: “These relations will never become relations of an alliance between two superpowers who have divided up the world.” Rather, “no matter how successful the process of normalization and *détente* is, in the historical sense [they] will remain relations of struggle.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, on both sides of the ideological divide, influential politicians voiced skepticism about the adversary's intentions and about the wisdom of cooperative agreements.

During its first quarter-century, the main battlefield of the Cold War had been Europe, and especially divided Germany, and so it was predictable that the first tests of the new policy would take place there. The Soviet Union's chief objective was to gain the West's acceptance of the division of Germany and its recognition of the legitimacy of the post-war territorial and political changes in Eastern Europe. The election of Social Democratic leader Willy Brandt as West German chancellor late in 1969 set change in motion. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* abandoned the long-held Christian Democratic goal of German reunification, substituting for it

the more conciliatory formula of two German states within one German nation. A Soviet-West German treaty, signed in August 1970, provided for mutual renunciation of force and recognized the frontiers "of all states in Europe" as inviolable, including the East German border with Poland. Thus, West Germany confirmed the division of that nation into two states and the loss of pre-war German lands in the east to Poland. These commitments were confirmed in a separate treaty between the Federal Republic and Poland later in the year.

Chancellor Brandt's price for ratification of these treaties was a satisfactory four-power agreement on West Berlin. The West deemed it to be part of the Federal Republic, while the Soviets still wanted West Berlin to be an independent political entity, access to which would be controlled by East Germany. Long and difficult negotiations produced a compromise agreement only after the replacement of hard-liner Walter Ulbricht as East German leader. The Final Quadripartite Protocol, signed by the Big Four in June 1972, effectively removed Berlin as a source of East-West tension. It stated that West Berlin was not a constituent part of the Federal Republic, but it acknowledged Soviet responsibility to ensure unimpeded access to the city. This was followed at the end of the year by a treaty between the two German states that allowed them to establish mutual diplomatic representation and to gain admission to the United Nations, without definitively settling their permanent status.<sup>20</sup>

The USSR had long proposed an all-European conference on collective security as a means of gaining recognition of the post-war territorial and political status quo while reducing U.S. influence on the continent. During the late 1960s, the campaign for a European security conference took maximum advantage of the growing strains between the United States and its European allies, many of whom felt anxious about the escalating dimensions of Washington's involvement in Vietnam—an area thought by the NATO allies to be of distinctly secondary importance. The strong anti-war movement in the United States was paralleled by violent student unrest in Western Europe, the sharply anti-American tone of which was exploited by the Soviet Union and its various front organizations.

With the conclusion of the agreements on Germany and the Soviet consent to U.S. and Canadian participation, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe opened in Helsinki in July 1973. The Final Act, known as the Helsinki Declaration, was signed on August 1, 1975, in a summit meeting of thirty-five states that approximated a peace conference for the war that had ended thirty years before. Brezhnev achieved his objective of gaining acknowledgement of the inviolability of the frontiers of all the states of Europe; but during the long negotiations the Soviets had to accede to the Western demand to include provisions ("Basket Three") recognizing and pledging the signatories to respect such human rights as freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; freer movement, contact among individuals, and travel; and free and wider dissemination of information. Brezhnev, who had put an end to the limited experimentation with freer expression that had been allowed in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev period, and

who had presided over a partial rehabilitation of Stalin's record, stated clearly that no such "interference in internal affairs" of the USSR would be accepted.

For U.S. President Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor (later, Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger, the chief benefit of détente with the USSR was to be found in securing Soviet assistance in extricating the United States from the war in Vietnam under conditions that would not constitute a defeat. Concessions on Soviet priorities would be linked to this. As the major source of aid to North Vietnam, ensuring against Hanoi's defeat, the Soviet Union had been content since the mid-1960s to see Washington tied down in an unpopular war it could not win, so long as the conflict did not escalate to the point that it threatened to draw in Moscow. To put additional pressure on Moscow, Nixon and Kissinger forged a new relationship with China, hoping to enlist Beijing's assistance toward the same objective.

Vietnam was a major topic of discussion in the summit meeting between Nixon and Brezhnev in May 1972. The United States apparently succeeded in gaining the help that it sought; a Vietnam truce agreement was signed in Paris the following January. Equally important at the summit were discussions on the limitation of strategic arms, aimed at countering developments in the arms race that threatened the strategic balance. The talks resulted in the signing of a treaty that would prohibit both sides from building a nationwide defense against ballistic missiles, by limiting the number of anti-ballistic missile (ABM) sites each side could have. The summit also produced an interim strategic arms limitation agreement (SALT I) establishing a five-year freeze on the number of offensive ballistic missiles possessed by each side, though allowing some replacements for older missiles.

A new, cooperative sphere in the Soviet-U.S. relationship was addressed in agreements on medicine, public health, the environment, space, and the prevention of naval incidents. In the commercial sphere, the two sides established a commission to discuss extension by the United States of most favored nation (MFN) trading status to the Soviet Union. This action was necessary to make it possible for the Soviets to pay for the technology and grain they sought to import from the United States, by giving their exports competitive access to the American market. A trade agreement in October 1972 opened the way for granting MFN status and credits in return for partial Soviet payment of the Lend-Lease debt from World War II. A separate agreement arranged for the Soviets to purchase \$750 million worth of American grain over a three-year period on extremely favorable terms.

A second Nixon-Brezhnev summit was held in the United States in June 1973. With Vietnam no longer an irritant in the relationship, the two powers seemed closer than at any time since their wartime alliance. In a joint communiqué, they pledged "to turn the development of friendship and cooperation between their peoples into a permanent factor for worldwide peace."<sup>21</sup> Eleven agreements were signed during the summit, including a framework for the next stage in strategic arms limitations (SALT II) and an agreement on cooperation on the peaceful

uses of atomic energy. The most important of the measures signed at the summit was the "Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War," which contained the following:

If at any time relations between the Parties or between either Party and other countries appear to involve the risk of a nuclear conflict, or if relations between countries not parties to this Agreement appear to involve the risk of nuclear war between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or between either Party and other countries, the United States and the Soviet Union, acting in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement, shall immediately enter into urgent consultations with each other and make every effort to avert this risk.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the Cold War, the superpowers had faced the risk that they could be dragged into conflict by allies they could not control. Such crises had occurred numerous times in the conflict in Indochina, as well as in the 1971 Bangladesh War, in which the United States had supported Pakistan and the USSR had backed India. In this accord the superpowers agreed that the need to cooperate with each other would override the interests of their allies, if necessary. Within a few months, the agreement was put to its first test—in the 1973 Yom Kippur War in the Middle East—and it proved wanting.

The war between Egypt and Syria on one side and Israel on the other began with an attack by Egypt's forces across the Suez Canal on October 6. Although the attack was a surprise to Israel and the United States, the Soviets had advance warning, but they did not act to prevent it or to consult the United States. The United States sought an immediate cease-fire, but the Soviets—having launched a massive resupply of arms to the Arabs—urged restraint only after the tide of battle had turned against their clients. Before a UN peacekeeping force could be organized, the Soviets had threatened unilateral intervention on behalf of the Arabs, and both superpowers had put their own military forces on high alert. Not only did the crisis raise even stronger doubts about the depth of détente, but also it led to the virtual bankruptcy of Moscow's policy in the region, thanks to Henry Kissinger's brilliant "shuttle diplomacy." Realizing that, whereas Moscow could supply the arms for war, apparently only the United States could achieve the peaceful return of Arab territories, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat broke with Moscow and agreed to a separate peace treaty with Israel, brokered by the United States.

From the high point of the Washington summit, Soviet-U.S. relations rapidly worsened. The Soviet Union's suppression of dissenters and its harassment of Jews who sought to emigrate weighed heavily with American public opinion, and led to congressional action making MFN or trade credits dependent on changes in Soviet policy. Angry about such interference, the Soviets eventually canceled the 1972 trade agreement. Likewise, negotiations for SALT II were stalled by U.S. concerns over the growing numbers of heavy Soviet missiles and by disagreements over how to deal with the new technology allowing for multiple



independently targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs). Weakened by the Watergate scandal, President Richard M. Nixon nonetheless journeyed to Moscow in June 1974 for his final summit with Brezhnev, which produced no breakthroughs on the growing list of issues between the two superpowers. Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, did manage to work out an agreement on further guidelines for a more far-reaching strategic arms limitation treaty during a meeting with Brezhnev in Vladivostok in November 1974. But mounting political discord in the ensuing months again put SALT II on the back burner.

While détente produced a marked change in the security environment of Europe, it was in the Third World that Brezhnev's policy ran aground. The Soviets had never understood détente as obligating them to pass up opportunities to reduce Western influence in the Third World; indeed, in their view, one of the benefits of the relaxation of tensions was that it created more favorable conditions for the pursuit of national liberation and revolutionary struggles. In addition to continuing tensions over Cuba and the crises in the Middle East, developments in Indochina presented an even greater challenge to détente. Not long after the signing of the Paris peace treaty, the United States began to complain to the Soviets about infiltration of North Vietnamese troops into the South. The Soviets chose not to restrain their ally, and the United States was unable to strengthen the resistance of the non-communist government in Saigon. In the spring of 1975 Vietnam was forcibly reunified under communist rule.

The fall of the right-wing dictatorship in Portugal in 1974 and the dissolution of Lisbon's empire in Africa further illustrated the differing understandings of détente. Whereas U.S. warnings to Moscow to refrain from direct support of pro-communist forces in the new government in Portugal—a NATO ally—were apparently heeded, no such caution was demonstrated by the Soviet Union in Portugal's former colonies in Africa. Soviet military aid to the Marxist faction, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, in Angola's civil war was sharply increased in 1975, and Moscow introduced a new—and to Washington, even more disturbing—element when it tipped the military balance decisively by airlifting some 17,000 Cuban troops to fight on the side of the MPLA. Prevented from intervening by the action of a U.S. Congress still reeling from the Vietnam defeat, the Ford administration could only denounce the Soviet action, with the president even declaring that détente was no longer in his political vocabulary. The Soviets continued to insist that they had never promised to abandon the ideological and revolutionary struggles. As one Russian remarked to his U.S. counterpart, "You Americans tried to sell détente like detergent and claimed it would do everything a detergent could do."<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet-Cuban victory in Angola coincided with the conclusion of the Twenty-Fifth Party Congress in March 1976. General Secretary Brezhnev used this congress to tighten his grip on party leadership and to proclaim the success of Soviet foreign policy. Citing the victory in Vietnam, treaties of friendship with Iraq and India, and normalization of relations with Germany, among other

successes, Brezhnev declared that “the international position of the Soviet Union has never been more stable.”<sup>24</sup> As we have already noted, however, this proved to be the high-water mark for Soviet influence in the Third World. The CPSU Congress barely had adjourned when Anwar Sadat unilaterally terminated the Soviet-Egyptian treaty. A year later Sudan, a long-time recipient of Soviet aid, also reversed its position and expelled all Soviet technicians and military advisors. Also in 1977, Somalia, angered at Moscow’s aid to its antagonist, Ethiopia, followed suit by abrogating its treaty with Moscow, expelling Soviet advisors, and denying its naval facilities at Berbera to the Soviet navy. Even a seemingly contrary example of triumphant Soviet diplomacy and influence in 1978—a twenty-five-year security treaty with Vietnam—soon proved embarrassing. When Vietnam invaded neighboring Cambodia in support of a rebellion against its pro-Chinese government, China responded by invading Vietnam to punish it for its aggression. Moscow was unwilling to risk war with China by coming to the aid of its ally.

This mixed record of Soviet activism had not prevented the administration of President Jimmy Carter from proceeding with strategic arms negotiations. With great difficulty, a SALT II agreement was hammered out and signed at a summit between Carter and Brezhnev in Vienna in June 1979. The limits set in the treaty froze a status quo that gave the USSR more powerful missiles with a greater throw weight than any possessed by the United States, while leaving the latter with a superiority in the total number of warheads. The main benefit of the treaty was in reducing the risk of war by adding to the stability of the deterrent relationship, making each side’s second strike forces more secure. The limits also would permit both sides to reduce their defense budgets.

The SALT II treaty was never ratified, as it and the remaining fragments of détente fell victim to the Brezhnev regime’s most dramatic demonstration of lack of restraint—its invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The crisis began with a Soviet-instigated coup d’état in which Afghanistan’s Marxist president, Hafizullah Amin, was murdered. At the “invitation” of Amin’s Soviet-installed successor, Babrak Karmal, Soviet troops entered the country to put down a widespread Islamic insurrection that had been incited by Amin’s radical social and economic policies. As the Kremlin saw it, failure to preserve a pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan would have created the specter of a third (with Khomeini’s Iran and Zia’s Pakistan) anti-communist Islamic republic on the periphery of Soviet Central Asia. Even though Afghanistan was headed by a Marxist government with which a treaty of friendship had been signed, the invasion was the first time Moscow had sent combat forces into a country that was not actually a part of the Soviet bloc. This was the critical distinction that shocked world opinion more than the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 or the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The UN General Assembly in January 1980 voted 104 to 18 to deplore the invasion, and a conference of thirty-six Islamic states later in the month did likewise.

The reaction of the United States was strong. President Carter lamented, “This action of the Soviets has made a more dramatic change in my own opinion of what the Soviets’ ultimate goals are than anything they’ve done in the previous time I’ve been in office.”<sup>25</sup> As punitive measures, he announced the curtailment of U.S. grain sales, suspension of high-technology exports, deferral of cultural and economic exchanges, and a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. In his State of the Union address, he warned Moscow against pushing further, stating that the United States was prepared to go to war to defend vital oil supply routes in the Persian Gulf. In summary, he said, “The Soviet Union must realize that its decision to use military force in Afghanistan will be costly to every political and economic relationship it values.”<sup>26</sup>

The price paid by the Soviet Union for its occupation of Afghanistan was much greater than it anticipated. Like the United States in Vietnam, Moscow learned that conventional military superiority was no guarantee of success against guerrilla forces. By the time of Brezhnev’s death in 1982, more than 110,000 Soviet troops were in Afghanistan, but the resistance—using bases in Pakistan, and covertly supplied by the United States—was fiercer than ever. The Afghan government’s army had virtually disappeared through defections, and Soviet officials were overseeing almost every function of administration in the country.

Its heavy casualties were not the only costs to the USSR. The collapse of détente had led to a new tension in relations with the West—and especially with the new and stridently anti-Soviet administration of U.S. President Ronald Reagan, which initiated a major buildup in military power. Virtually cut off from Western trade and technology, the Soviet economy continued to decline, deepening the country’s social unrest, and the technological development of its weaponry began to slip well behind that of the United States.

Beset with an even deeper economic crisis, communist Poland was faced with a workers’ movement led by Lech Walesa, which managed in the fall of 1980 to topple party leader Edward Gierek and achieve recognition of a free trade union, Solidarity. When the crisis threatened to dislodge the communist regime itself, the Soviet Union hinted at invasion. But the immediate danger passed in December 1981 with the declaration of martial law by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the commander of the Polish armed forces, who also had assumed the posts of party leader and premier. Nevertheless, the experience of neighboring Poland had to serve as a chilling reminder to the aging Soviet leaders of the limits of popular patience with economic and social deprivations.

### **The Twilight of the “Old Thinking”**

In the sixty-five years between the Bolshevik Revolution and Leonid Brezhnev’s death in November 1982, the Soviet regime had experienced only three real leadership successions: the protracted conflict among Stalin and his various rivals following the illness and death of Vladimir Lenin; the succession to Stalin; and

the succession to Khrushchev, which differed from the others in that the incumbent leader was removed not by death but by a coup d'état. In stark contrast, the USSR had three successions during the twenty-eight months (November 1982 to March 1985) that followed Brezhnev's death. The significance of this brief period goes beyond the fact that three general secretaries of the CPSU died in less than three years, being rooted in a much more profound changing of the aging Kremlin guard. The generation of Brezhnev, Kosygin, Gromyko, and their Politburo colleagues had enjoyed an unusually long tenure in high offices, with most of them rising to positions of command in their thirties as the result of the liquidation of their elders. Thus, the multistage succession to Brezhnev was part of the first thoroughgoing generational change in the Soviet leadership since the Great Purge of the 1930s. The other point that was underscored by the unusual string of successions was that the Soviet Union still had no regular constitutional means by which to replace its top leader. Indeed, even in cases where the top leader had left an heir-apparent, power was inherited by another.

Quite likely, some of the drift and immobility of the latter period of Brezhnev's administration was related to the age and physical condition of the ruling elite. His successor, Yuri Andropov, the long-time head of the security police (KGB), who had only recently moved into the party Secretariat, was thought to be intellectually superior to his colleagues. But an initial period of vigorous activity in domestic and foreign affairs came to an early end with the failure of Andropov's health.

Andropov had sought to wake up the stagnant Soviet economy by campaigning against the widespread inefficiency and corruption, but only short-term improvements were possible in the absence of a fundamental restructuring of the system of centralized economic decision making. Although he presided over the removal of some of the oldest and most inept members of the regional party elite, Andropov was either unable or unwilling to introduce radical change into the Soviet system.

During the first part of 1983, the new leader was able to produce modest improvements in Soviet relations with both China and the United States. But Soviet-U.S. relations reentered the deep freeze in September, when the Soviets shot down an unarmed civilian airliner (Korean Airline flight 007) that had strayed over their territory. In the aftermath, the Soviets compounded international outrage by denying responsibility, lying about the facts, refusing to compensate the families of victims, and accusing the United States of using the plane for espionage.

It was also during the final months of Andropov's brief term that Soviet-U.S. arms control negotiations suffered a severe setback. The arms race had intensified, with both sides concerned about weapons developments by the other and worried that they might suffer politically from perceptions that they were falling behind in strength. In order to replace older missiles that had become vulnerable to more accurate U.S. weapons, the Soviets in 1977 had deployed a new intermediate-range missile (the SS-20), which was mobile, solid-fueled, accurate, and MIRVed. Perceived by NATO as not only survivable but also a potential first-strike weapon,

the missile appeared capable of upsetting the European balance of power unless matched by NATO. Accordingly, in 1979 the alliance had decided to persuade the Soviets to remove the SS-20s or face deployment by 1983 of a modernized intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) of 572 Pershing II and cruise missiles in response. As negotiations bogged down, NATO increasingly saw itself facing a political test of its credibility and cohesion against an adroitly managed Soviet “peace campaign” designed to appeal to a nervous European public.

Paralleling the INF talks and equally stalemated were the negotiations to reduce strategic weapons, now referred to as START. Each side sought to reduce the other’s inventory of missiles viewed as capable of destroying their own retaliatory forces in a first strike. After it was announced in March 1983, the Soviets also were intent on forestalling Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)—a space-based ballistic missile defense ambitiously intended to destroy Soviet missiles before they could reach their targets. Reagan’s plans were especially threatening to Moscow, not only because they could destabilize the military balance and force a new round of offensive missile production, but also because the Soviets doubted that they could muster the economic and technological resources to match the U.S. defenses.

When the United States began installing cruise missiles in Britain and Germany in December 1983, as scheduled by NATO, the Soviet reaction was sharp and immediate: it angrily broke off both the INF and the START negotiations. Andropov had calculated that the Soviet walkout would force NATO to halt its deployment, especially in the face of an expected popular outcry in Europe. The tactic backfired, leaving the Soviets with the onus of having cut off all possibilities of curbing the arms race.

Andropov’s death in February 1984 did not provoke his colleagues to grasp the opportunity to choose a younger and more vigorous leader. Rather, he was replaced by a seventy-two-year-old, visibly ailing Brezhnev crony, the veteran party bureaucrat Konstantin Chernenko. Domestically, there was not even the pretense of reform of Soviet society or the economy along the lines of Andropov. In foreign policy, there were also no bold initiatives or breakthroughs. However, at the very end of his brief term, Chernenko did retreat from his predecessor’s demand that the United States cease deploying INF missiles in Europe as a precondition for the resumption of arms talks. Two days before the negotiations were to recommence, Chernenko died.

This time, the majority of Politburo members could not escape recognizing the necessity of an energetic push toward reform. They elected as general secretary their youngest colleague, Mikhail Gorbachev—at age fifty-four younger than any man to assume the office since Stalin. Gorbachev’s colleagues thought that they were electing a tough and earnest reformer, but not a radical. The Soviet system that produced him did not promote to high positions people of unorthodox thought or bold action. Only loyalists advanced in the party apparatus, and nothing in Gorbachev’s career suggested that he was anything but a loyal communist.

The Soviet economy that Gorbachev inherited in March 1985 had experienced virtually no real growth in over a decade. It was not even one-half the size of the U.S. economy, and yet it was burdened with the need to support a fully competitive military establishment. Agricultural productivity was less than one-fourth that of the United States, and about one-third of Soviet food production spoiled before reaching the consumer—forcing the USSR to become the world's largest importer of grain. Over 10 percent of the country's gross national product (GNP) was devoted to subsidizing this inefficient agricultural sector, in order to keep food prices artificially low. The housing stock throughout the country was inadequate, especially in the rural areas, where indoor plumbing was still relatively rare. Because of poor diet and low public health standards, the country was experiencing a decline in the average life span of its citizens and an increase in infant mortality. The supply of consumer goods, always irregular, suffered periodic disruptions, resulting in panic buying and in long lines for all shoppers (except the elite, who had access to special stores) whenever goods were available.

During the Brezhnev years, people constantly had been bombarded with the claim that "life is improving," even while they were surrounded with abundant evidence that the country was falling apart. The result of the sharp disjuncture between claim and reality was almost universal cynicism and the search for "private solutions"—which for many citizens meant the black market, and for others meant "dropping out" through alcoholism, drug abuse, or other deviant behavior.

Gorbachev's initial impulse was to continue the approach of his mentor, Andropov, instilling greater discipline into the workforce through a combination of exhortation and a law-and-order campaign that included rooting out corruption and drastically cutting down on the availability of alcohol.

The paucity of results brought recognition that the roots of the problem were deeper, and that what was required was *perestroika* (restructuring)—moderate reform from within the socialist economic system. More resources were to be invested in the domestic infrastructure and in consumer goods, and the military budget was reduced accordingly. In the services sector, some mixing of forms of ownership was allowed. The gigantic state planning mechanism was to be overhauled, the size and power of the central economic ministries reduced, and enterprises throughout the country were gradually to be put on a system of *khoz-raschet* (an obligation to produce enough value to cover their costs of production). The trouble with this program was that it had all been tried before, in the 1960s, under the sponsorship first of Khrushchev and then of Kosygin, but it had failed to produce the desired results—in part because it had been openly sabotaged by the party and state bureaucracy long enmeshed in Stalinist work habits and the attendant system of perquisites and job security.

Just as the shortcomings of gradual economic reform were not immediately evident to Gorbachev, so also he began his quest for arms control without a fresh (or workable) strategy. His early proposals called for total abolition of nuclear weapons, on which the USSR was less dependent than the West for its

security—essentially resurrecting the “ban the bomb” propaganda campaigns of the late 1940s; but his primary emphasis was on derailing Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative. At his initial summit encounter with Reagan, in Geneva in November 1985, he emerged with nothing to show toward either goal.

After a year of hard campaigning before Western public opinion on behalf of both proposals, Gorbachev met with Reagan again—this time in Reykjavik, Iceland. Agreement seemed near on a number of important issues: a 50 percent reduction in strategic forces; elimination of all INF in Europe and deployment elsewhere of only 100 by each side; and observance of the ABM treaty for another ten years. But Gorbachev made everything contingent on limiting SDI to laboratory research during the ten-year period. Reagan refused to comply, and the conference collapsed. Even more damaging to Reagan’s prestige was the revelation that as the talks progressed he had departed significantly from the prepared U.S. position. First he had proposed, as a condition of the ten-year extension of the ABM treaty, that both sides eliminate all their ballistic missiles by the end of that period, and then he had accepted Gorbachev’s counterproposal that not just missiles but all strategic nuclear weapons be eliminated. As a result, the Soviets were able to launch a post-summit propaganda campaign claiming that total strategic nuclear disarmament could have been achieved, had it not been for Reagan’s stubborn refusal to abandon SDI.

In Gorbachev’s hands, Soviet policy positions were handled more smoothly and energetically in 1985 and 1986, but they were fundamentally the same positions as before. Soviet-U.S. relations continued to be characterized by sharp rhetoric and public posturing on both sides. Tension in Soviet relations with China was slightly reduced under Gorbachev, but could not be eliminated as long as Soviet troops remained in Afghanistan and Vietnamese forces stayed in Cambodia, and as long as the Sino-Soviet border remained heavily militarized. Gorbachev appeared still to be trying to win a military victory in Afghanistan. Finally, with regard to domestic policies, the Soviet regime’s relationship with its own population did not appear to have changed fundamentally under Gorbachev. This was dramatically illustrated by the leaders’ failure to give a prompt, full, and honest account of the terrible accident at the Chernobyl nuclear facility in April 1986.

### **“New Thinking” and the End of the Cold War**

Gradually, Gorbachev realized that he must break the power of the bureaucracy in order to accomplish reform of the economy. At a crucial CPSU Central Committee plenum in January 1987, the definition of perestroika was broadened to include democratization of the country, and Gorbachev began to unleash popular forces that he thought would be his allies in the struggle for economic reform. Profound changes such as greater official tolerance for religion, the opening up of new avenues of cultural expression, and the revision of interpretations of prior

Soviet history were introduced not as ends in themselves, but as devices intended to mobilize public pressure against the Soviet bureaucracy, so as to break its resistance to the freeing up of economic forces in the country. The intent of the *glasnost* (openness) campaign was not to open up an attack on the legitimacy of the party or its Marxist-Leninist ideology, but to attack the pillars of the Stalinist system. Similarly, the democratization of political institutions was not originally intended to end the Communist Party's monopoly on power. Rather, it was to be guided from above to bring about swifter changes in mid-level party leadership, by forcing unpopular party bureaucrats to face the wrath of the voters, and by utilizing local and national legislatures to put pressure on a conservative party bureaucracy.

The necessary companion to these evolving ideas about domestic reform was a new approach toward changing the confrontational relationship between East and West. What came to be known as the "new thinking" in foreign policy proceeded from the premise of the "interdependence of states and peoples," an idea much discussed in the West, but less familiar in the communist world. In an interdependent world, Gorbachev reasoned, national security could not be based on the use or threat of nuclear weapons. Rather, security for the superpowers must be mutual, and must be ensured by political means. Enormous sums of money and attention had been squandered by prior regimes on the military competition, he acknowledged, to the neglect of possibilities for cooperation.

In the new spirit of *glasnost*, pointed references to the errors and shortcomings of the Brezhnev-era "old thinking" began to appear in the Soviet press. One writer described the decisions to deploy SS-20 missiles and to introduce Soviet troops into Afghanistan as examples of "solutions of a subjectivist nature oriented toward the use of military-force tactics in foreign policy" which did great "moral and material damage" to the USSR.<sup>27</sup> Another condemned the "incompetent approach of the Brezhnev leadership," which had neglected the country's vital national interests by trying to keep up with the United States in an unproductive arms race. "Our true interest," he wrote, was in ensuring an international atmosphere that would allow "profound transformations" in the country's economy and its social and political systems.<sup>28</sup> As the advocates of "new thinking" saw it, economic strength was proving more decisive than military strength in resolving many global issues, and thus only by reversing its precipitous economic slide and establishing linkages to the international economy could the USSR qualify as a true "superpower."

Gorbachev was at pains to stress that the "new thinking" did not amount to an abandonment of the classic principles of Marxist-Leninist doctrine—the "greatest revolutionary worldview." But the ideology had to be adapted to new circumstances: "Loyalty to Marxist-Leninist teaching," he said, "lies in its creative development on the basis of accumulated experience."<sup>29</sup> It was left to Gorbachev's new foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, to announce the most far-reaching change in interpretation of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine—a



renunciation of the concept of class struggle as the fundamental guide to foreign policy. At a conference of senior Soviet diplomats and scholars convened in July 1988, he said that in the nuclear age it was no longer justifiable to see peaceful coexistence as a special form of the class struggle. Rather, “the struggle of two opposing systems is no longer the decisive tendency of the contemporary age.”<sup>30</sup> A few days later, the Politburo’s chief conservative, Yegor Ligachev, attempted to rebut this notion. But the last word was given to Gorbachev’s close associate, Aleksandr Yakovlev, who wrote in *Pravda*—Lenin’s own paper and still the party’s authoritative voice—this extraordinary interpretation of Marx’s doctrine:

Marxism as such is the interpretation of the common interests of mankind from the point of view of history and the perspective of the development of all mankind, not only that of individual countries or classes, peoples or social groups. In placing in the forefront the interests of the downtrodden and exploited can it be said that the founding fathers of socialism placed the interests of that class against the interests of all the others? Of course not. The thesis of the priority of the common interests of mankind helps us look realistically and soundly at the idea of the coexistence of countries with different political structures as a requirement of history and a manifestation of the internationalist tendencies of global development.<sup>31</sup>

In stark opposition to the positions articulated by Brezhnev and Arbatov during the détente of the 1970s, Gorbachev and his spokesmen were attacking the very foundations of communist ideology.

Simultaneously with this change in doctrine and the movement toward democratization, Gorbachev executed a momentous shift in Soviet foreign policy positions. In February 1987, he made the first of several significant concessions on the INF issue. This quickly led to a treaty, signed at a summit in Washington in December, in which the two sides agreed to eliminate the entire class of Soviet and U.S. medium-range and short-range missiles. The agreement removed a dangerous threat to European security, while resolving a dispute that had poisoned Moscow’s relations with Washington for a decade.

The last years of the 1980s witnessed Soviet initiatives to resolve some of the regional conflicts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that had been so divisive in Soviet-U.S. relations. The American public had been especially concerned about the extent of Soviet assistance to revolutionary movements in Central America. The Sandinista regime in Nicaragua had received massive military and economic aid from the Soviet Union and its allies. In 1989 Gorbachev communicated to President George Bush that the military aid would be terminated. While the Soviets were undoubtedly shocked by the Ortega government’s overwhelming electoral defeat early in 1990, Gorbachev probably was pleased to be rid of this burdensome Third World conflict. The long-standing Soviet-Cuban involvement in Angola was terminated through negotiations that were concluded in 1988. In the Middle East, the Soviets joined with the United States in sponsoring a 1987 UN resolution seeking a cease-fire in the lengthy war between Iran and Iraq; when

the war finally ended the following year, Moscow moved quickly to improve relations with Iran. At the same time, the Soviet Union adopted a higher profile in urging that international peace talks be initiated, toward resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Most significant, however, was Gorbachev's decision early in 1988 to liquidate the Soviet Union's costly war in Afghanistan. Gorbachev committed the USSR to a phased withdrawal of its troops without assurances that a communist-dominated government would remain in Afghanistan. By January 1989, after suffering casualties in excess of 13,000 killed and 35,000 wounded, all forces of the USSR had been withdrawn, but the disunity of the anti-communist guerrilla forces helped to extend the life of the pro-Soviet government.

Having thereby removed an irritant in relations not just with Washington but also with Beijing, Gorbachev proceeded to encourage Vietnam to withdraw its remaining troops from Cambodia in 1989. With two of China's three conditions for a normalization in relations thus realized, Gorbachev traveled to Beijing in May 1989 for the first Sino-Soviet summit in twenty years. There he addressed the third condition for normalization, announcing a substantial unilateral cutback of about 200,000 troops in the Soviet Far East and proposing demilitarization of the entire Sino-Soviet border. The rapprochement with China was sealed the following year when Premier Li Peng went to Moscow to conclude a ten-year pact for increased economic and scientific cooperation.

Also improving relations on Moscow's other major front, Gorbachev participated in three summit meetings with American presidents—with Reagan in May 1988, with Reagan and President-elect Bush in December 1988, and with Bush again in December 1989. The fruit of relaxed tensions—benefiting not only world peace but also the Soviet defense budget—was evident in December 1988, when Gorbachev announced in a dramatic speech at the UN General Assembly that the Soviet Union would make a unilateral reduction of 500,000 troops and would remove 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery pieces, and 800 combat aircraft from the European theater.

As Gorbachev and his reform-minded colleagues began to introduce *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and democratization into Soviet domestic politics and “new thinking” into Soviet foreign policy, they were encouraging their communist colleagues in Eastern Europe to join them in the reform program. When they informed the “little Brezhnev” of Eastern Europe—as early as 1987—that Soviet troops would no longer protect them from their peoples, the Soviet leaders were not anticipating the total repudiation of communism there. Rather, they were hoping that the socialist system in Eastern Europe would be salvaged through the reformist activities of “little Gorbachevs” who would come to power. Justifying Soviet actions in the wake of the dramatic changes of 1989 and 1990, Shevardnadze told the Twenty-Eighth CPSU Congress: “We sensed that unless serious changes and reforms were made, matters would reach the point of tragic events. But, proceeding from the principles of the new political thinking, we

couldn't interfere in others' affairs. I think that we acted correctly."<sup>32</sup> However, the attempt to save the socialist system in Eastern Europe by reforming it never got off the ground. Throughout the region, spontaneous mass movements, arising out of depressed living standards and widespread alienation and disillusionment, challenged governments that lacked legitimacy.

The movement began in the spring of 1989 in Poland, where negotiations between President Jaruzelski and Lech Walesa produced in June the first partially free elections since the communist takeover. Solidarity won virtually every contested seat. In August, with Poland pledging to stay in the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union consented to a non-communist prime minister there, and in December, Jaruzelski was replaced as president by Walesa. Also in the spring of 1989, a reformist communist regime in Hungary, having accepted with Gorbachev's approval the creation of independent political parties, negotiated with the opposition to schedule free elections for the following spring—elections that it then lost overwhelmingly. In the meantime, the Hungarian communists startled the world by tearing down the country's barbed-wire border with Austria. Thousands of East Germans, disillusioned with the lack of opportunities in the "workers' paradise," streamed into Hungary and were allowed in September to cross to freedom in West Germany. Hoping to stem the flow, a desperate East German communist regime received Gorbachev's implicit agreement to replace its aging dictator. Responding to massive demonstrations across the country, the new leaders announced that travel restrictions to the West would be lifted. As hundreds of thousands of East Berliners poured into the streets, a frightened local communist leader felt he had no choice but to open the hated wall. The delirious citizens of Berlin had a weekend party the likes of which the world never expected to see.

A few days later, more than 200,000 people demonstrated in Prague, where the hard-line communist regime—in a striking reversal of the situation in 1968—had been criticized by the Soviet press as insufficiently reformist. A general strike, organized by students, forced an end to the communist monopoly of power in Czechoslovakia and an agreement on free elections. Emerging as the new leader was dissident playwright Vaclav Havel, just released from a Prague prison, who reluctantly accepted the presidency when old-line communist Gustav Husak was forced to resign. In Sofia, Bulgaria, in early December, 50,000 people marched for democracy. In January, the parliament revoked the Communist Party's monopoly of power, and talks began to prepare the way for free elections in June. Changing its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the former Communist Party managed to prevail in the elections, though under new leadership.

Romania's revolt under communism was the last in the Soviet bloc, and the only one that became violent. Iron-fisted dictator Nicolae Ceausescu ordered his security police (the Securitate) to fire on demonstrators in Timisoara on December 15. Staging a rally in Bucharest a few days later to condemn "foreign conspirators" for subverting his regime, Ceausescu was loudly booed by students in the crowd. Some demonstrators were killed and others arrested by

police. When violence broke out in the capital, Ceausescu and his wife fled. On December 25 they were apprehended, tried, and executed. A provisional government, the National Salvation Front, was formed, headed by Ion Iliescu, a former high-ranking communist who had been ousted by Ceausescu. This government's assumption of power was forcibly resisted by the Securitate, which was defeated only after much bloodshed. Iliescu's forces were able to win a landslide victory over anti-communist parties in free elections in May.

Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the possibility of German reunification had reappeared as a focal point of East-West negotiations. After Gorbachev publicly accepted the principle of unification at the end of January, NATO and the Warsaw Pact discussed for the next several months what political structure would best guarantee Europe's security: a neutral Germany, a unified Germany in NATO, or a unified Germany in both security systems. These discussions were formalized in the "two plus four" talks among the two Germans and the USSR, Britain, France, and the United States. Apparently, Gorbachev's initial opposition to the membership of a unified Germany in NATO was a bargaining device, and it succeeded in winning him a good price from West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl: a credit of 5 billion German marks, together with an agreement that Soviet troops could remain in eastern Germany through 1994, and that NATO forces would not be moved into the former GDR.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Germany's army would be limited to 370,000 troops, and Germany would be prohibited from possessing nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. The Final Settlement with Respect to Germany was signed on September 12, 1990, by the two-plus-four powers, followed the next day by the Treaty of Friendship between Germany and the USSR. The official reunification of Germany took place on October 3.

East Germany's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, together with Hungarian and Czech demands for the removal of Soviet troops from their territories, raised the question of the future utility of the alliance. In June 1990, its members declared that the West was no longer an "ideological enemy"—a statement answered the following month by a declaration from NATO that the Warsaw Pact countries were no longer adversaries. The following February, the members of the Warsaw Pact formally voted to disband the military components of the alliance by March 31, 1991.

The reunification of Germany and the end of the system of hostile military alliances in Europe essentially brought the Cold War to an end. A symbolic "peace conference" took place in November 1990, at the summit meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Paris, where the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed. In the CFE treaty, the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact agreed to maintain equal levels of conventional forces in Europe, thus formalizing the removal of the decades-long fear that the Soviet Union could overwhelm the continent with its conventional superiority. A few weeks prior to the conference, it was announced that Mikhail

Gorbachev had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his contributions toward ending the Cold War.

As the Cold War was ending in Europe, a new crisis broke out in the Middle East. This crisis tested the notion, articulated by both the Soviet and American presidents, of a “new world order” in which the powers would cooperate to defend the principle of the non-use of force to achieve national objectives. Soviet-American cooperation was especially tested by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 because of Moscow’s long-standing alliance with Baghdad. Gorbachev was subjected to cross-pressures from his advisors, some of whom stressed the need for the Soviets to join the emerging global coalition against Iraq, and others of whom counseled against the loss of a position of influence in the Middle East. While condemning Iraq’s invasion and suspending arms shipments, as well as supporting the UN resolution for an economic and military embargo of Iraq, Moscow refused to withdraw its advisors there and sought to restrain the coalition from using force against Saddam Hussein. Gorbachev sent his special envoy Yevgeny Primakov, who had personal ties to Saddam, on missions to Baghdad twice in October and again in February, seeking to persuade Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait. As the deadline neared for President George Bush’s ultimatum demanding that Saddam withdraw or face ground war, Gorbachev was desperately telephoning world leaders, seeking support for a compromise solution. Although Soviet prestige suffered when these mediation efforts failed, Moscow and Washington both agreed that their cooperative relationship had survived the Gulf War intact.

During the months of the Persian Gulf crisis, Gorbachev was involved in mounting political difficulties at home. Having achieved constitutional changes in March 1990 that ended the CPSU’s monopoly of power and established a new executive presidency, he employed the Twenty-Eighth Congress of the CPSU in July 1990 to change the party statutes to allow for direct election of the general secretary by the congress, to expand the Politburo to include representatives of each of the USSR republics, and in general to shift responsibility for direct management of the economy from the party to new government bodies. Perestroika had become a hollow slogan as the Soviet economy entered a period of negative growth, and democratization and glasnost—intended to weaken the conservative forces of resistance—had spurred revelations and discussions of unsolved problems, heightening frustrations and stimulating further dissension. The dissent, increasingly targeted toward Gorbachev, came primarily from three as yet unorganized sources:

1. the working masses—stolidly conservative proletarian and peasant forces, longing for the relative security and patriotic achievement of the Stalin and Brezhnev eras, angered by growing shortages, and opposing measures that threatened the national “safety net” by introducing unemployment, increased prices, and reduced welfare subsidies;

2. the liberal opposition, grouped around Boris Yeltsin, that sought a radical shortening of the time frame of reforms, more concessions to private enterprise and foreign ventures, more radical decentralization of economic decision making, virtual elimination of the residual powers of the party, and drastic reduction in the executive powers now concentrated in Gorbachev's hands;
3. secessionist nationality groups, especially in the Baltic states, the Transcaucasus, and Ukraine, emboldened by glasnost, tempted by the spectacle of even greater freedoms newly enjoyed in the neighboring lands of Eastern Europe, and threatening to break up the multinational Soviet state.

In September 1990, Gorbachev backed away from a political compromise with Yeltsin that would have adopted a "500-day plan" for radical decentralization and market socialism. One by one, his more progressive advisors walked away, in sadness or disgust. The last to leave was Shevardnadze, who resigned as foreign minister in December with a dramatic warning that the country was headed toward dictatorship. In picking a new team, Gorbachev found ministers who appeared to be only younger versions of the gray bureaucrats who had run the Soviet system into the ground for the previous three decades. In January, his new team dispatched military forces to the Baltics, ostensibly to enforce Soviet laws on military conscription, but in fact to bludgeon the defiant secessionists into submitting to Moscow's authority. When demonstrators were killed in both Lithuania and Latvia, there was a storm of international protest.

Yet again, the acrobat tilted his political orientation. Gorbachev concluded a surprise agreement in April with Yeltsin and the leaders of nine union republics, establishing a framework for the new Union Treaty, which would provide considerable autonomy for the republics. Seeking to regain lost international support, Gorbachev signaled his support for an economic reform plan that would utilize large-scale Western aid to assist a move to a market economy in the USSR, but the West was understandably reluctant to make commitments until details of the plan were in place. Gorbachev pleaded his case for aid at the annual summit of the leading industrial nations (the Group of Seven, or G-7) in London in mid-July, and again with President George Bush at a summit in Moscow at the end of that month. The other major feature of the Soviet-American summit was the signing of the long-awaited Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) treaty—the first arms control agreement to undertake substantial reductions in the size of the strategic nuclear arsenals of the two countries. Under its terms, the United States agreed to reduce its inventory of warheads from 11,602 to 8,592, and the Soviet Union agreed to reduce its inventory from 10,877 to 6,940.

Although Gorbachev had assumed the presidency of his country, he had rejected advice that he seek a popular mandate through national elections. The enormity of this error became clearer in June 1991, when his reformist rival, Boris Yeltsin,

won election as president of the Russian Republic, drawing 57.3 percent of the vote against several conservative candidates. Yeltsin thus eclipsed Gorbachev by becoming the first popularly elected Russian leader in Russian and Soviet history. A few days after the election, key members of Gorbachev's government—led by KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov, Interior Minister Boris Pugo, Defense Minister Dimitrii Yazov, and Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov—attempted a constitutional coup by harshly criticizing Gorbachev's policies before the national legislature and asking it to cede many of his powers to them. Oddly, a victorious Gorbachev took no action against them.

Two months later, the same individuals, joined by four others (including Gorbachev's hand-picked vice president), constituted themselves as the State Committee for the State of Emergency, placing the president under house arrest at his Black Sea dacha and usurping his powers. Ineptly led, the coup collapsed after three days, when important units of the military failed to obey orders to dispel large crowds of resisters who were under Yeltsin's leadership. In the wake of the failure of this effort to resurrect the essential features of the old Soviet political order, the entire system unraveled. The weeks after the coup saw Gorbachev's resignation as CPSU general secretary and the suspension of the party's activities, declarations of independence by the republics, and abandonment of many of the institutions of the central government. As in 1917, the country was ruled for the next several months by a "dual power" consisting of Gorbachev on the one hand and Yeltsin and other key republic leaders on the other. They were ostensibly cooperating to adopt a much-revised Union Treaty that would have preserved most of the former Soviet Union (minus the three Baltic republics, whose independence was recognized in September) as the confederated Union of Sovereign States. However, Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belorussia, meeting at the Belovezhskaya Pushcha (a forest preserve near Minsk) on December 8, decided instead to create the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), with Minsk as its capital—leaving no role for a reconstituted USSR or its president. The three leaders telephoned their decision to President Bush before they told the Soviet president. Gorbachev's frantic efforts to save his country and his job went virtually without support. On December 25, 1991, he resigned as president, and on the last day of the year the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics officially went out of existence. In his final television broadcast as president, Gorbachev told his people:

Our society has attained freedom, has liberated itself politically and spiritually. And that is the major victory, of which we are not yet fully cognizant, undoubtedly because we have not yet learned how to use it. . . .

We live in a new world: the Cold War is over, the threat of a world war has been averted; the arms race and the insane militarization that distorted our economy, our social consciousness, and our morality have been halted. . . .

I am certain that, sooner or later, our joint efforts will bear fruit, and that our peoples will live in a democratic and prosperous society.<sup>34</sup>

## **“The Cold War Is Over”**

For decades, as hostile armies stared at each other across the chasm of divided Europe, most observers' estimates of the Soviet Union's strength and its resolve to hold onto its hard-won security zone in Eastern Europe left them firmly persuaded that Moscow would not voluntarily abandon its empire. This assessment seemed credible in light of images from East Germany in 1953, when Soviet armies fired on striking East German workers; or from Budapest in 1956, when Soviet tanks crushed freedom fighters armed only with Molotov cocktails; or from Prague in 1968, when the combined forces of the USSR, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria squeezed the life out of Alexander Dubcek's effort to build "socialism with a human face." Thus it seemed inconceivable to observers not only in the West but in Eastern Europe itself that communism would crumble in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary without a shot being fired.

For over forty years the United States had led a coalition of Western nations in pursuit of a policy of containment of the spread of Soviet power through the application not only of firm diplomacy, but also of enormous and expensive military deterrent forces. In George Kennan's original formulation of the policy in 1947 he had forecast that the steady application of Western resolve and pressure would someday result in the liberalizing transformation of the countries of the Soviet Empire. Though Kennan himself felt that the military expression of containment was at times overused, there is no doubt that the events of 1989–1990 would not have occurred but for the Western military deterrent that produced an uneasy stability in Europe throughout the long night of the Cold War.

Another key ingredient in producing the transformation of Eastern Europe was the insistence by Western diplomats—led by the United States, during the long years of bargaining that became known as the "Helsinki process"—on the inclusion of a "basket" of human rights principles in any collective treaty that reaffirmed the post-war borders in Europe. When the Soviet Union and its East European allies signed an agreement at Helsinki called the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which contained a statement of the fundamental human rights of all the peoples of Europe, their communist dictators probably reckoned that the agreement's ringing phrases were as flimsy as the paper they were written on. To their everlasting consternation, however, human rights groups sprang up throughout the Soviet bloc, seizing on the Helsinki declaration for their moral authority.

In a real sense, however, the seeds of the dissolution of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe were sown in the very process of its establishment. For the political and economic system that was created there was a virtual replication of the Stalinist totalitarian system that had been imposed on the USSR itself decades before. As an alien system, backed up by the force of the Red Army and managed by puppet regimes, communism throughout most of Eastern Europe lacked the



deep roots of legitimacy. Only the determination of Stalin and his successors to hold on to their empire by force kept the system in place despite its manifest unpopularity and its embarrassing economic failures.

Clearly, the indispensable and decisive element in bringing about the swift collapse of these regimes was a changed attitude in the USSR—an unwillingness to continue to support unreformed and unresponsive communist dictatorships. Not even twenty years after it had been brutally articulated, the Brezhnev Doctrine, which justified the use of force to protect the “socialist commonwealth” from the wrath of its own people, had been unmistakably repudiated by Mikhail Gorbachev. Indeed, when asked in 1987, during the Soviet president’s trip to Prague, what was the principal difference between the policies of Gorbachev and those of Dubcek, spokesman Gennady Gerasimov answered with just two words: “Nineteen years.”

But explaining the fall of communism in Eastern Europe does not answer the questions about why it collapsed in the Soviet Union as well, or why the USSR itself was then unable to survive the demise of the Marxist-Leninist system. Much has already been written on this subject, both in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere, and much more research and analysis will undoubtedly follow. An able summary of the explanations that have been put forward was compiled by Jack F. Matlock, Jr., who served as U.S. ambassador to the USSR during much of the Gorbachev period. In his aptly named study, *Autopsy on an Empire*, Matlock suggests several individuals and key events that might be held responsible for the collapse of Soviet communism and the USSR.<sup>35</sup>

The possibly decisive events, as Matlock enumerates them, include the fall of the Berlin Wall (Boris Yeltsin’s own suggestion); several events that helped to create a more powerful Russian entity within the USSR (the Russian parliament’s declaration of sovereignty in June 1990, the creation of the separate Russian Communist Party later that summer, and Yeltsin’s election as Russia’s president in June 1991); actions by Gorbachev that caused him to lose the support of the democratic opposition and much of world opinion (his turn to the right in the fall of 1990, and the use of force against Lithuanian and Latvian protesters in January 1991); the August 1991 coup d’état; the Ukrainian declaration of independence in December 1991; and the Belovezhskaya agreement among Ukraine, Belorussia, and Russia, which itself seemed to have been in part a product of the personal feud between Yeltsin and Gorbachev.

The individuals whom Matlock cites as possibly most responsible include Leonid Brezhnev, whose long inertial reign over the “period of stagnation” saw the USSR lose both internal morale and economic capabilities; Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, whose strong opposition to Gorbachev’s proposed treaty may have doomed the effort to create a federal or confederal union; and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who led both the democratic opposition to the rightist coup in August 1991 and the effort by the republican presidents to create the Commonwealth of Independent States as the successor to the USSR.

Matlock's own conclusion, however, is that Mikhail Gorbachev bore the greatest responsibility for the fall of the communist system in the USSR, both because of his various initiatives that allowed independent opposition forces to bring an end to the CPSU monopoly of power and because of his unwillingness—unique among Russian or Soviet rulers—to employ force to save his own regime. It is probable that most of Gorbachev's countrymen would agree with this verdict. More surprising is Matlock's contention that KGB director Vladimir Kryuchkov, as the organizer of the August 1991 coup attempt, was most responsible for the demise of the USSR, since the coup was timed to block the signing of the Union Treaty (scheduled for August 20), and since, in the wake of the failure of this treaty, it became virtually impossible for Gorbachev again to persuade the republics to unite in a voluntary federation. Of the two, history will devote much more attention to Mikhail Gorbachev, who—though reviled by many in his own country for having surrendered the East European empire and for having failed to preserve the unity of the USSR—was hailed throughout much of the world for having played the decisive part in the third, and even more important, dramatic event of this era: bringing about an end to the Cold War.

The Cold War was a state of relations between opposing states or social systems with a constant policy of reciprocated hostility that, nonetheless, was not allowed to escalate to the level of military force. It was a revolutionary era, with conflict between the hostile powers extended to the realms of ideas and economics, with threats a daily fact of life, and with propaganda and subversion omnipresent. Yet there was also moderation, in that there was no use of nuclear weapons after 1945, and there was no direct military clash between the two main opponents—although crises in Berlin and Cuba threatened to boil over into "hot war." There was even on occasion some joint interest by Moscow and Washington in restraining their junior partners and in using the United Nations to extinguish certain dangerous conflicts. Each exercised a degree of prudence in the other's backyard.

The two faces of the Cold War existed alongside each other because of the increased costs of the use of force. Both superpowers came to recognize that nuclear war would be mutual suicide. The very weapons that marked their strength were the least usable. Each could deny gains to the other, but could not achieve its own offensive objectives through the use of force. Ironically, smaller powers seemed freer to act than did superpowers.

Although the East-West conflict that dominated the world scene for forty-five years stopped short of war, these years were nevertheless rife with war and violence. Most notable for the United States were the two protracted wars in which it participated, Korea and Vietnam, in which the USSR was involved only through surrogate communist regimes; but also there were numerous regional conflicts in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa that threatened to drag in the superpowers. There were also innumerable Third World civil conflicts, as well as over a dozen "wars of national liberation" in colonial areas, in which the United States and the USSR were supporting rival contenders. On several occasions, the United States

and the Soviet Union resorted to the use of force to quell disturbances in their own neighborhoods: the United States in Central America and the Caribbean, the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. Finally, there were several major wars between regional powers in which both superpowers were relatively uninvolved but that they were unable to stop, including the bloodiest of all wars in this era—the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s.

Although the normalization of the relationship between Washington and Moscow and the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact were of enormous significance, most areas of regional tension, and many root causes of civil conflict and revolution, remained. Ironically, while the prospects of a general war in Europe seemed more remote than at any time in the twentieth century, the ending of the Cold War actually increased the chance of certain forms of ethnic or civil conflict on that continent, as witnessed in both the former Yugoslavia and the former USSR. The Middle East and South Asia also remained volatile.

The end of the Cold War actually seemed to have an adverse impact on the Third World. Moscow's foreign aid programs were cut to the bone, and the U.S. Congress seemed in no mood, absent the Soviet threat, to sustain large programs of economic assistance. On the other hand, Washington and Moscow did not cease sales of military hardware to Third World regimes. Prospects of continuing and escalating economic hardship combined with increasing levels of military force did not bode well for orderly peace and development in these regions.

Despite the ending of the Cold War, there remained dozens of unresolved conflicts, with a variety of causes and with great potential for violence, throughout the world. There also remained enormous arsenals of nuclear and conventional weaponry. Despite rhetoric about a "new world order," the world was in fact no closer to constructing an alternative security system to replace the Cold War alliances—security pacts that did after all bring a certain stability to the post-war world.

## Notes

1. See Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 91–92. Much of the material in this chapter is explicated more fully in this earlier book.

2. Quoted in Joseph M. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York: Viking, 1955), p. 22.

3. George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," in *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (New York: Mentor, 1952), p. 99.

4. Excerpts in Rush, *International Situation*, pp. 125–39. (Complete citation in Chap. 3, note 11.)

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27. Aleksandr Bovin in *Izvestia*, June 16, 1988.
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30. *Pravda*, July 26, 1988.
31. Quoted in Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 147. Matlock's analysis of the significance of this issue is particularly enlightening.
32. *Pravda*, July 11, 1990.
33. Soviet leaders never received a binding written commitment that NATO would not move eastward, but according to Michael Mandelbaum such an assurance was conveyed to Mikhail Gorbachev in February 1990 by Secretary of State James Baker. See Michael

Mandelbaum, “Overpowered?” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (May–June 2010), p. 116. Scholars who emphasize that no *binding* commitment or pledge was offered by Western officials include Mark Kramer, “The Myth of a No-NATO Enlargement Pledge to Russia,” *Washington Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (April 2009), pp. 29–62, and Kristina Spohr, “The ‘NATO Enlargement Question’ in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990–1991,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2012), pp. 4–54.

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## **Domestic Factors in the Making of Russia's Foreign Policy**

### **External and Internal Influences on Foreign Policy**

When it inherited many of the international rights and responsibilities of the USSR on January 1, 1992, the government of the Russian Federation faced an international system that differed markedly from the one confronted by prior tsarist and Soviet rulers of Russia. The previous chapters have shown how changes in the structure of the international system have influenced the foreign policy of Russia. Such factors as revolutionary developments in military technology, boundary alterations resulting from war or treaty, and shifts in the global distribution of power resulting from changes in states' relative economic and military capabilities have at times produced distinct modifications in Russian policy.

To recapitulate, there were several such changes during the period of the Cold War that had significant impact on the policies pursued by Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, and their colleagues. The tight bipolarity of the late 1940s gave way to a multipolar system, as the relative strength of Japan, China, and the states of Western Europe grew during the 1950s and 1960s, and as the United States and the USSR found themselves competing for favors from relatively powerless Third World regimes. Political conflicts between the Soviet Union and other communist states, beginning in Eastern Europe in 1948 and climaxing in China in the late 1960s, doomed the monolithic communist subsystem to fractious polycentrism and finally to disintegration. Thermonuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles raised the costs of "hot war" between the chief adversaries to unacceptable levels; but once it had achieved a state of military parity with the United States in the 1970s, the Soviet Union, increasingly hobbled by economic shortcomings, was able to keep up the pace of the arms race only at a cost that proved suicidal. Because the Soviet Union largely was isolated from the global economic system, its superpower status was called into question as military prowess became less and less relevant to international issues in the 1980s and 1990s.

By the time the Soviet Union ceased to exist, at the end of 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev had significantly altered the foreign policy of the USSR, in part as a response to these changes in the international environment. He had played a significant role in bringing about an end to the Cold War and the virtual disappearance of the communist international subsystem. Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin inherited these features of a changed international system, as well as territorial boundaries radically different not only from those of the USSR but also from those of any prior independent Russian state. Coastal territories near the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, acquired by Peter I and Catherine II through costly warfare, now belonged to units of the former USSR that were no longer under Moscow's control. Except for the province of Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg), separated from the rest of Russia by independent Lithuania, the Russian Federation had no border with the East European states that had been part of Stalin's post-war empire. Thus pushed back from Europe, a Russia shorn of the Transcaucasian and Central Asian republics was also more distant from the Middle East and South Asia, where nineteenth-century tsars had played the "great game" with Britain and other powers. Although the United States had emerged from the Cold War as the globe's only surviving superpower, the leaders of the new Russia, unlike many people outside the new government, nevertheless perceived no threat from it. Indeed, Russia's rulers faced a more benign environment beyond the borders of the former empire than had been the case for centuries. Far more troublesome for Yeltsin and his colleagues were Russia's newly independent neighbors, the former Soviet republics, relations with which were now matters for foreign—rather than domestic—policy.

It is this last change in the external environment that was largely responsible for producing the tightest mixture of foreign policy and domestic politics that Russia had seen since the earliest months of Soviet power. The bureaucratic structures and personnel that were involved with the foreign policy of the new Russian state, many of which were simply inherited from the Soviet Union, had not been asked to treat the former Soviet republics as objects of foreign policy. Moreover, these new neighbors encompassed many areas of instability and ethnic conflict, and the resulting military and political concerns for the Russian government were magnified by the fact that 25 million ethnic Russians resided in these new states.

In spite of the increased difficulty of untangling external and internal influences on Russia's foreign policy decision making, we will attempt in this chapter to examine the domestic factors and to describe the conceptual and institutional environment in which the foreign policy of the Russian Federation is being formulated. In so doing, we shall demonstrate that, far from being simply a calculated response to external stimuli on the part of a monolithic state, Russian foreign policy emerges from the interaction of decision makers representing a variety of personal and institutional perspectives and involved in the simultaneous resolution of a large number of domestic and foreign issues.

In today's Russia, as in the preceding Soviet state, domestic factors constrain and help to determine foreign behavior in two ways. First, internal economic, social, and political plans and policies can rival foreign and defense policies as claimants on limited resources, creating the constant necessity of choosing whether to spend resources on guns or butter, as well as whether to allocate energies and attention to foreign or domestic pursuits. Second, foreign policy decisions can be shaped by the contests for influence among groups and individuals, thus raising to the fore in Yeltsin's or Putin's Kremlin, not wholly unlike Khrushchev's or Gorbachev's before, the question of *Kto-kogo* (Who is prevailing over whom?). Although regular competitive elections became part of the institutional landscape in post-Soviet Russia, within the Kremlin struggles over competing policies and struggles for power remain closely linked.

The continuity in the operation of these two domestic constraints is heightened by the similarity in Gorbachev's, Yeltsin's, Putin's, and Medvedev's views of the role of foreign policy. For all four presidents, the domestic challenges of economic and political development were clearly paramount. The primary purpose of foreign policy in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods of Russian history has been to create a non-threatening external environment that would be most conducive to this internal development. As was the case in the early decades of Soviet rule, this concentration on domestic development, together with relative shortcomings in military strength, initially produced a foreign policy of accommodation, retrenchment, and risk avoidance—at least, in Russia's relations with states beyond the borders of the former USSR.

We can learn from the history recounted in the preceding chapters that simply categorizing the type of regime in Russia—whether tsarist or communist empire, or a managed (illiberal) democracy—is not a sufficient basis on which to judge how high a priority policymakers will give to foreign policy or what direction it will take. Rather, to gain a full understanding of the impact of internal factors, we must consider specific features of the ideas and institutions that are dominant at a given time.

### **Continuity and Change in Russian Ideas on Foreign Policy**

In the opening chapters, we encountered the impact of ideas on the formulation of tsarist and Soviet foreign policy. Only during the Soviet period have the prevailing ideas been encompassed in an official ideology—Marxism-Leninism, which we defined and discussed in Chapter 3. In pre-revolutionary times, as well as in the post-Soviet period, we encounter not an ideology but ideas, understood as broad concepts or paradigms that help both to shape the way that policymakers view the world around them and to choose policies appropriate to their objectives.

In the late tsarist period, messianic pan-Slavism was such an idea, originating among the intelligentsia but adopted at times by the regime not only as an organizing principle but also as a way of mobilizing popular support for



expansionist policies. For the Bolsheviks, Marxism-Leninism provided a different understanding of Russia's international mission, although we have seen that its adherents interpreted it with sufficient flexibility to avoid violating what both they and the tsars perceived to be Russia's national interests. The key precepts of this ideology, as it applied to foreign policy, were rejected before the fall of the Soviet Union, when Mikhail Gorbachev introduced "new thinking." Essentially a variant of liberal internationalism, Gorbachev's foreign policy ideas centered on interdependence, mutual security, cooperative solutions to global problems, the primacy of non-class values, and an understanding of capitalism that rejected the notion of its inherent militarism and the inevitability of war.

Although it was abandoned as a guide to action by Soviet foreign policymakers before it was officially jettisoned, Marxism-Leninism continues to have limited influence on the foreign policy of Russia, not as official ideology but as one of several contending conceptual approaches. This influence is felt not only through the activities of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation—in the 1990s, the largest of Russia's political parties and still, more than a quarter century later, the largest opposition party—but also through the role that the doctrine played in the political socialization of many members of the current political elite. Accordingly, some elements of Russia's political culture—especially in such conservative strongholds as the armed forces and certain large economic enterprises related to the former "military-industrial complex"—demonstrate significant continuity with Soviet era thinking.

Nevertheless, the loss of the ideology's official standing, combined with the fall of the CPSU and the disintegration of the USSR itself, left a conceptual void in the foreign policy of the newly independent Russian Federation that brought to the forefront the question of Russia's national identity. Russia had never existed as a nation-state; rather, during both the tsarist and the Soviet periods it had been a multinational empire with messianic ambitions. Unlike other European imperial states, the modern Russian nation was not formed prior to the period of colonial expansion. Moreover, the tsars, unlike the rulers of Britain or France, colonized and then integrated into Greater Russia lands that bordered on their home territories, thus producing an unusual intermixing of Russian and non-Russian peoples.<sup>1</sup> The Russian Federation remains multinational, but now the proportion of ethnic Russians in the total population is about 81 percent, whereas they composed just over half the population of the USSR, as recorded in its last census in 1989. Further complicating the definition of Russia's national identity is the fact that, at the time the USSR disappeared, 25 million ethnic Russians lived outside the Russian Federation, in the other newly independent states (NIS) of the former Soviet Union.

Not only are the people of the Russian Federation experiencing new geopolitical confines, but also they are acutely aware of the relative weakness of their state in comparison to the superpower status enjoyed by the USSR at the height of its power. The dizzying economic decline of the early 1990s produced a profound

sense of national humiliation, as Russia's leaders were perceived as meeting with Western leaders in the role of supplicant for foreign aid. The combination of a loss of national mission, a wounded national pride, and a confused national identity rendered more acute the need for a definition of national purpose in the foreign policy of the new Russia. As Presidential Advisor Sergei Stankevich wrote in March 1992: "Foreign policy with us does not proceed from the directions and priorities of a developed statehood. On the contrary, the practice of our foreign policy will help Russia become Russia."<sup>2</sup>

The task of articulating the basic principles of Russian foreign policy in the early months of 1992 fell to Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, a young professional diplomat who had spent sixteen years in the Department of International Organizations of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the foundations of the liberal internationalism of "new thinking," Kozyrev—not surprisingly, given his background—constructed a heavy reliance on Russian participation in international institutions.<sup>3</sup> Determined to liberate Russia from the burdens of empire, messianism, and overreliance on military instruments that had characterized both the tsarist and the Soviet periods, Kozyrev developed foreign policy ideas centered on the promotion of human rights and the universal values of global economic, environmental, and nuclear security, realized through a community of democratic states. Accepting as an article of faith the liberal thesis that democracies do not attack other democracies, a democratic Russia, he believed, would have nothing to fear from the West. If the purpose of Russian foreign policy was the creation of the conditions in which the new nation could prosper, Kozyrev reasoned, it would be necessary for Russia to gain membership in the club of developed democratic states and their economic institutions, thus assuming the "fitting place that has been predetermined for us by history and geography."<sup>4</sup> During the early months of 1992, not only Kozyrev but also President Yeltsin and Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, who was responsible for economic reform, consistently voiced these "liberal Westernizing" views of Russia's national interests.<sup>5</sup>

The tradition of expressing the basic principles of policy in a programmatic and officially endorsed statement still runs strong in post-Soviet Russia. Accordingly, Kozyrev was urged to develop a "foreign policy concept" that would be discussed in the government and adopted by the Supreme Soviet and the president, to serve as the expression of a national consensus as well as guidance for diplomats, parliamentarians, and others. The foreign minister was under attack from a growing number of critics, who perceived that the quest for Western economic assistance had produced a servile Russian imitation of U.S. positions on such issues as arms control and the war in Bosnia. The drafting of a concept became the occasion for a highly political debate over alternatives to Kozyrev's ideas. Further impetus for the expression of competing ideas was given in the spring of 1992 by the organization of two new foreign policy institutions: the Russian Ministry of Defense and the Security Council, a consultative body of key government officials to advise the president on security policy. At the initial meeting of the latter body on May

20, a draft of a document called “Program for the National Security of Russia” was reportedly circulated (but not adopted), stating that the Russian military must be capable of deploying forces “in any region of the world” in order to counteract “possible attempts by the United States to achieve unilaterally advantageous conditions in any region of the world.”<sup>6</sup>

As competing ideas such as these began to be heard within the Russian government in the spring and summer of 1992, they quickly focused the question of Russia’s identity. For Kozyrev, Gaidar, and other liberals, the Western democracies were the ideal model and partner for Russia. Russia must shed its tradition of distinctiveness and its illusions of serving a “special role” as a “bridge” between Europe and Asia. It must also avoid the temptations of assuming a leading role in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), not only because reintegration of Russia’s economy with those of the other former Soviet republics would slow market-oriented reforms and integration with Atlantic and European economic institutions, but also because Russia’s assumption of a peacekeeping role in the troubled bordering states would restore the privileged status of the military and thereby threaten the tender shoots of democracy in Russia.

Juxtaposed to this Westernizing or “Atlanticist” orientation of the foreign ministry was a “pragmatic nationalist” or “Eurasianist” viewpoint that was expressed by officials in a variety of government and academic institutions. From this perspective, articulated forcefully by Presidential Advisor Sergei Stankevich, Russia was indeed separate and distinct from the West—even more so with its new boundaries—and did have a special mission to serve as a bridge between Western and Eastern civilizations. Foreign policy must be more than pragmatic opportunism; without displaying messianism, Russia needed a mission—in Stankevich’s words,

to initiate and maintain a multilateral dialogue of cultures, civilizations and states. Russia the conciliator, Russia the unifier, Russia the harmonizer. A country that takes in West and East, North and South, and thus is uniquely capable of harmoniously unifying many different elements, of achieving a historic symphony.

For Stankevich, Eurasianism was not a rejection of the West but a balanced policy, although the immediate requirements of balance were to heighten emphasis on the East. With the West, Russia at best could aspire to a role as junior partner “not worth accepting,” but opportunities for displaying great-power leadership were greater among “second-echelon” states such as Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Greece, Turkey, India, and China. The very first priority for Moscow’s diplomacy, however, was “to talk in tougher tones”—to defend the Russian population and Russian heritage in the other states of the former Soviet Union from any form of discrimination or attack.<sup>7</sup>

In the first few months after the dissolution of the USSR, it became clear that the CIS was not going to maintain unified security forces, and that regional

instability—including threats to the rights and status of ethnic Russians in the “near abroad”—was growing. In response, the “pragmatic nationalists” were increasingly vocal in their insistence that Russia exercise hegemony in the region. In August, another advisor to Yeltsin, Presidential Council member Andranik Migranyan, wrote, “Russia should declare to the world that the entire geopolitical space of the former USSR is a space of its vital interests.” This declaration should not come in the form of a threat to solve problems by the use of force, Professor Migranyan added, but rather an announced intention to act as the guarantor of stability in the region.<sup>8</sup> Migranyan likened this proposed declaration to the Monroe Doctrine, and he urged Russia to seek international recognition of its special role in the region, including “special provision for Russia’s right to defend the lives and dignity of Russians in the nearby foreign countries.”<sup>9</sup> Although the “pragmatic nationalists” did not go so far as to advocate forcible revision of the boundaries of the Russian Federation, they clearly disagreed with Kozyrev and Gaidar in arguing that Russia should be prepared to make economic, political, and diplomatic sacrifices in order to promote tighter integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

By the end of 1992, this internal criticism was combining with external events—including the disappointing Western response to Russia’s requests for economic assistance—to bring an end to the “romantic” phase of Russian foreign policy, and the movement of Russian liberals closer to the centrist foreign policy views of the “pragmatic nationalists.” Another factor contributing to this coalescence was the growing political strength of the “red-brown coalition” of communists and extreme nationalists, whose members voiced an even more sharply critical “fundamentalist nationalist” point of view. Most of the attention given to this orientation was generated by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the misleadingly named Liberal Democratic Party, a neofascist party that showed surprising strength in the parliamentary elections of December 1993. Other proponents included Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Simply stated, the foreign policy idea expressed by this group sought to recreate the Russian Empire—up to and even surpassing the borders of the former USSR—by the use of force, if necessary. Unlike the “pragmatic nationalists,” the “fundamentalists” were openly anti-Western, professing to see Western aid as a conspiracy to weaken the Russian economy and opposing any further moves to integrate Russia into the world economy. They defined the Russian nation in ethnic rather than civic terms, with some chauvinists openly voicing anti-Jewish and anti-Islamic sentiments. Appealing to many disaffected elements in the military and security establishments, politicians of this orientation advocated the restoration of a strong, authoritarian, imperial state in Russia. More than their “pragmatic” counterparts, these extreme nationalists were the late twentieth-century heirs of the Slavophiles (discussed in Chapter 2), contemptuously denouncing “Westernizers” for thinking that Western culture or political institutions were worthy of imitation, and depicting Russian civilization as distinctive and superior.

By the end of his first year in office, Yeltsin was forced by public opinion and parliamentary criticism to move toward the center. This led him to replace the liberal Yegor Gaidar as prime minister with the conservative Viktor Chernomyrdin. Kozyrev remained as foreign minister, though he acknowledged that “as a democrat he felt constrained to take into account public opinion in foreign policy matters.”<sup>10</sup>

As might be expected from these harbingers, the official foreign policy concept approved by President Yeltsin in April 1993 reflected the complete abandonment of the “liberal Westernizing” idea and the convergence of “establishment” thinking around the “pragmatic nationalist” viewpoint. The final document emphasized Russia’s rights and responsibilities in the states of the former USSR (in this period, generally referred to as *blizhnee zarubezhe*, or the “near abroad”).<sup>11</sup>

Andrei Kozyrev remained the target of hostile criticism from parliament and the press—and, on occasion, from President Yeltsin himself—until after the December 1995 elections, when he resigned as foreign minister to take a seat in the new Duma. His replacement was Yevgeny Primakov, an academician. Trained as an Arabist, Primakov spent five years as a *Pravda* correspondent (with presumed connections to the KGB) in the Middle East. He became a close aide to Gorbachev, serving on his Presidential Council and Security Council. After the 1991 August coup, he had been appointed as chief of the reorganized Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), and he retained this post in Yeltsin’s government.

Expressing his foreign policy ideas in his first press conference as foreign minister in January 1996, Primakov unmistakably allied himself with the “pragmatic nationalist” and “Eurasianist” viewpoints. He declared that “Russia has been and remains a great power, and its policy toward the outside world should correspond to that status,” while echoing his predecessor in saying that Russia’s policy should create “an environment that would, to the greatest extent possible, be favorable to the development of the economy and the continuation of democratic processes in Russian society.”

Hailing the stabilization of the global conflict, he sought to salve Russia’s wounded pride by asserting that the United States and Russia “jointly won—I want to put special emphasis on the point that there were no victors or vanquished here—jointly won the Cold War.” Finally, Primakov enumerated four foreign policy tasks that would be given top priority:

1. creating external conditions conducive to strengthening the country’s territorial integrity;
2. strengthening the processes of reintegration, especially in the economy, in the former USSR, though “this does not and cannot mean the rebirth of the Soviet Union in the form in which it used to exist”;
3. settling regional and interethnic conflicts, first of all in the CIS and former Yugoslavia;

4. preventing the creation of new “hotbeds of tension, and especially the proliferation of means or weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>12</sup>

In a later interview, Primakov, repeating the formula that “Russia doesn’t have permanent enemies, but it does have permanent interests,” described these four tenets as Russia’s permanent interests.<sup>13</sup>

A generation older than Kozyrev, Primakov proved a more experienced manager of the foreign ministry and a more adept politician. The liberal press characterized him as a “moderate reformer” with a steady style and immense organizational talent, who “appears to personify a relative foreign policy consensus.” One article quoted Aleksandr Yakovlev’s declaration that Primakov, though “not a conservative,” would pursue a policy that “will constantly remind the Americans of Russia’s existence.”<sup>14</sup> Primakov’s relative immunity from the sharp criticism that had plagued Kozyrev was due in no small part to the fact that the foreign policy ideas he expressed found support among broad segments of the Russian political elite, while his assertiveness in promoting Russia’s national interests seemed to restore a measure of pride in Russian foreign policy.

The nationalist trend that began during Yeltsin’s administration accelerated with his successor. A combination of factors influenced Putin: his background in the KGB, the unilateralist policies of President George W. Bush, Russian domestic politics, and the deadly challenge posed by Chechen terrorism. Whereas the ideas of “integration” into the West and “strategic partnership” between Moscow and Washington had seemed viable in the 1990s, events in the new millennium rendered them obsolete.

Putin’s goals focused on promoting a “multipolar” world and creating within it a Moscow-centered system as a counter-pole to a Pax Americana. As we will show in the chapters that follow, neither Putin nor his temporary successor, Dmitry Medvedev, consistently pursued a hard line in their decision making, and even if not pro-Western, they were not ideologically anti-Western. Indeed, during his first two terms, if a single label were to be applied to Vladimir Putin it might be “pragmatic nationalist.” However, Putin’s third non-consecutive term as president, which began in March 2012, saw the crystallization of external strategies that (1) focused greater attention on the promotion of what Moscow saw as Russia’s unique soft power resources; (2) offered stronger expressions of Russian nationalism; and (3) steered Russian society toward a steady militarization. Public opinion polls reveal that a majority of Russians, primed to see their country as a great power, have generally been supportive of these trends.

Soft power, as a concept, is associated with American political scientist Joseph Nye, who defined it as a country’s power of attraction based on the magnetism of its society, culture, and ideas.<sup>15</sup> For Nye, other peoples and countries sought to emulate the values embedded in the American democratic model because of their innate attractiveness. He also recognized that rather than being a consequence solely of a persuasive natural appeal, a country’s social worth is often aided by

a state's active promotion of its brand. During the Cold War, for instance, the United States invested considerable resources in public diplomacy through *Voice of America* radio broadcasts around the world. Soviet propaganda in turn sought to advertise the attractiveness of the communist model. However, the economic success of the United States arguably was a significant factor in making the American model of democracy more attractive to others.

Around the turn of the century, as Russian officials began to evaluate the merit of soft power resources, they adopted elements of Nye's original idea, as when Konstantin Kosachev agreed that "Russia's image should be 'naturally attractive.'"<sup>16</sup> Kosachev, a former diplomat who has chaired the foreign affairs committees of both chambers of the Russian parliament, served as head of *Rossotrudnichestvo* (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation) from 2012 until March 2015, when he was replaced by Lyubov Glebova.<sup>17</sup> This agency, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is billed as Russia's soft power agency.<sup>18</sup> But Russian leaders also adapted the concept to make it more relevant to the Russian context and focused on cultural rather than political/democratic values. According to this argument, the "universality of Russian high culture" represents Russia's most valuable soft power asset that can be deployed in countries where there is a Russian "cultural presence."<sup>19</sup> Moscow has also promoted the Russian statist model to non-democratic governments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as an alternative to an intrusive U.S. model based on human rights and democracy promotion.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the many debates over the country's foreign policy direction at heart entailed a question of the meaning of Russian identity. Putin's turn toward what Mark Galeotti and Andrew Bowen termed a "new Russian exceptionalism" came in response to a sense of being buffeted by unrelenting winds of criticism from the West and nagging worries over perceived Western attempts at regime change in the post-Soviet space.<sup>20</sup> According to Galeotti and Bowen, Putin's view of Russian civilization as *sui generis* rests on his belief that the forging of a new civic Russian (*Rossiskii*) nationalism has to be founded on the mortared bricks of an illustrious ethnic Russian (*Ruskii*) civilization that draws inspiration from the history and culture of Orthodoxy and belief in a strong leader who is charged with upholding and safeguarding traditional values.

In his 2013 address to the Federal Assembly, Putin heralded 2014 as the "Year of Culture," emphasizing the country's "cultural roots, patriotism, values, and ethics," and calling on schools to help citizens "form their identity, absorbing the nation's values, history and traditions," as well as to inculcate in them a "strong internalized knowledge of culture."<sup>21</sup> Moscow's view of its role as protector of its co-citizens was reflected in Putin's response to the March 2014 Crimean referendum vote in favor of joining Russia, when he noted with satisfaction that

Crimea and Sevastopol were returning to their “home harbor, to the native shores, to the home port, to Russia.”<sup>22</sup>

Russia’s soft power strategy sought to parlay this unique vision of Russian identity into policies designed to promote economic and cultural integration of the post-Soviet space, particularly as the “color revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in the early 2000s (described in Chapter 6) threatened Moscow’s influence in its immediate neighborhood. In a 2008 interview with *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov located the source of Russia’s soft power as emanating from “civilizational, humanitarian, cultural and other foreign policy forms of attractiveness.” He stressed that “the whole grammar of our diverse links with compatriots should be constructed precisely with account of these factors.”<sup>23</sup> These ideas had provided the vision for the creation in September 2008 of *Rossotrudnichestvo*.<sup>24</sup>

Following the promulgation of the initial “foreign policy concept” in 1993, new versions—intended to lay out the fundamental basis of Moscow’s worldview—had been issued by the Kremlin in 2000, 2008, and 2013. However, the most recent “Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation” was approved by President Vladimir Putin at the end of November 2016—only three years after the previous edition, but in a much-changed international environment, accentuated by Russian intervention in the crises in Ukraine and Syria. NATO, the European Union, and especially the United States were blamed in the document for policies—including attempts to promote “unconstitutional changes of regime”—that had resulted in a “serious crisis in the relations between Russia and the Western states.”

In the face of these and other dangers, including “the growing threat of international terrorism,” Russia was said to conduct an independent and “assertive” foreign policy—the first time this latter characteristic had been specified. Nevertheless, Russia was “committed to working with all interested States to address common challenges.” Furthermore, the 2016 document placed new emphasis on “information support”—“delivery to the international community of unbiased information about Russia’s perspective on key international issues”—in other words, actively promoting Russia’s soft power in furtherance of Moscow’s foreign policy objectives.<sup>25</sup>

The concept of “soft power” officially had first entered the Russian lexicon in the 2013 Russian Foreign Policy Concept. In an oblique critique of Western policies, the Concept decried the “destructive and unlawful use of ‘soft power’ and human rights concepts” to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries but at the same time touted the general idea of soft power as an essential part of a “comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives” using “information, cultural and other methods and technologies.” A prime objective of Russian foreign policy, according to the Concept, was “promoting the Russian language . . . disseminating information on the achievements of the peoples of Russia and consolidating the Russian diaspora abroad.”<sup>26</sup>



The 2016 Foreign Policy Concept reiterated the importance of soft power.<sup>27</sup> Moscow would enlist soft power resources to enhance the magnetism and image of Russia and its culture around the world and to unify and bind Russia's civilizational space, including both Russian "compatriots" and Russophone regions.<sup>28</sup> As an authoritarian state, Moscow viewed the deployment of soft power as a state-driven rather than a civil society-driven process or one emanating autonomously from the attractiveness and magnetism of country-specific social, political, and cultural societal norms and values.

Such a view of soft power dovetailed with a rising nationalism in Russia that evoked pride in the country's greatness and its unique expression of democracy that stood apart from and as an alternative to Western liberal democracy. For Russian thinkers and ideologues, Europe has always represented the "Other" against which Russia's virtues or vices are measured. Putin promoted the idea of patriotism as the essence of Russia's new national idea. In his speech at the 2013 meeting of the Valdai International Club, Putin stated that all participants in the debates about identity and national future had to be "patriotic." He called on his compatriots to be "proud" of Russia's history and cautioned them about "challenges to Russian identity" from a Euro-Atlantic world that was rejecting its roots, "including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization."<sup>29</sup> Criticizing the European embrace of "multiculturalism" and "political correctness" as an artificial model adopted to expiate a "colonial past," Putin argued that Russia's multitude of cultures "evolved in 'blossoming complexity' as a state-civilization reinforced by the Russian people, Russian language, Russian culture, Russian Orthodox Church, and the country's other traditional religions."<sup>30</sup>

As Henry Hale has argued, two types of nationalism compete and coexist in the Russian landscape. One version sees Russia as a capacious union of multitudes while the other is more exclusive in its Slavic-oriented nationalism. The former is compatible with an in-flow of non-Slav migrants from the post-Soviet space. The latter is anti-migrant in orientation, xenophobic at the fringes, and supports the defense of the rights of ethnic Russians who live outside Russia. The Crimean annexation received strong support from nationalists of both varieties.<sup>31</sup>

Nationalist rhetoric from the Kremlin registered an uptick after the Crimean annexation. In its assessment of xenophobia and radical nationalism in 2014, the Moscow-based Center for Information and Analysis (SOVA) suggested that the "shift in the official Russian policy and propaganda toward greater traditionalism, authoritarianism, and militarism" created "a breeding ground for nationalist ideology."<sup>32</sup> The challenge for Putin is whether he can harness instrumentally the energies of the ultra-right groups in support of his policies in the post-Soviet space while simultaneously limiting their potential to hijack the national idea of Russia as a multinational, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society in which all citizens—ethnic Russian, Slavs, and non-Slavs—are welcome.

According to James Sherr, Moscow's view of the capabilities necessary to safeguard Russia's security is colored by an understanding of geopolitics that

“encompasses not only the spatial, but ethno-national, confessional, (and latterly, values-based) dimensions.”<sup>33</sup> Sherr notes that Russia’s pursuit of “‘non-linear,’ ‘network,’ and ‘new generation’ (i.e. ‘hybrid’) war . . . is designed to blur the thresholds between internal and interstate conflict and between peace and war.”<sup>34</sup> Nationalist and patriotic themes are enlisted to mobilize societal support for a foreign and military policy aimed at projecting influence in the *Russkiy Mir*—lands over which Russia historically exercised leverage—and in the world to reclaim Russia’s status as a great power. Moscow has deployed military and non-military measures to counter the West’s attitude of confrontation toward Russia. In the view of Russia’s military leaders such as Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, the available level of technological sophistication and the existing “psychological-informational environment” makes possible “the destruction of military forces and key state assets in several hours” without armies or nuclear weapons.<sup>35</sup>

Under Putin, the upgrading of military capabilities has gone hand in hand with official efforts to shore up societal support for Russia’s armed forces. Social organizations, often with state sponsorship, have aided in this process. DOSAAF (Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet) focuses on promoting patriotism and pro-military attitudes in society. In September 2016, the Russian government, with the blessing of President Putin and Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu, launched *Yunarmia* (dubbed the “Army of Shoigu”) as a “military-patriotic movement” of school-age children.<sup>36</sup> With local branches headed generally by veterans of the Afghan and Chechen Wars, the primary task of *Yunarmia* is to inculcate in young minds an appreciation for “Russian national traditions that reject such ‘foreign’ elements as LGBT rights, religious fanaticism, radical nationalism, various sects, and ‘aggressive minorities’” that, in the view of the Kremlin, “seek to overthrow ‘legitimate governments.’”<sup>37</sup> *Yunarmia* branches operate under the joint auspices of the CSKA (Central Sports Club of the Army) and DOSAAF.<sup>38</sup> In February 2017, Shoigu announced the building of the military-themed Patriot Park with a replica of the Reichstag in Berlin that would give *Yunarmia* members “a specific location to storm.” (The Soviet Army had attacked the building during World War II.)<sup>39</sup>

Sam Robertshaw, writing about the role of public organizations that aim to foster favorable views of the military establishment, concluded that “everyday the militarization” is a “defining characteristic of contemporary society-military relations in Russia” and that the work of these organizations “can be mobilized to promote political goals such as strengthening the military and maintaining support for the elites.”<sup>40</sup>

We will discuss the links between public opinion and foreign policy at the end of this chapter. We turn now to a consideration of the institutional impact on post-Soviet foreign policy.

**Foreign Policy Decision Making: The Institutional Context**

During both the tsarist and the Soviet periods of Russian history, foreign policy was conducted by a highly centralized and authoritarian state. The absolute power of the tsar was exercised through a powerful central bureaucracy, which tightly controlled the Russian economy and society at large. The secret police and the state censors combined to restrict political participation and political expression. Until the introduction of limited parliamentarism following the 1905 Revolution, there were no regularized channels through which countervailing pressures could be brought to bear on policymakers. The politics of foreign policymaking was largely confined to the imperial court.

After the October Revolution, the Communist Party played the primary role in making foreign policy decisions and exercising control over their implementation. For almost three-quarters of a century, until constitutional changes were made in 1990, the party was “the leading core of all public and state organizations” and the guardian of the purity of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Throughout most of its history, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was a tightly organized hierarchy under strong central direction. In theory—and, as late as 1930, in practice as well—policy on foreign relations, international revolutionary strategy, and domestic issues was debated and decided by the party congress, to which delegates were elected by party organizations throughout the country. Under Stalin, as the party congress grew larger and met less frequently (only three times between 1930 and 1952), it became more and more a creature of its executive organs, which technically were responsible to it. The Central Committee of the CPSU, charged with directing policy between sessions of the congress, also was diluted in authority during Stalin’s rule. It became a sounding board and a legitimizer of the policies and personnel decisions offered for its unanimous approval by its executive committee, the Politburo.

The Politburo was the one political organization in the country in which a vote really decided something. This body functioned as the primary decision-making body of the CPSU—and thus, of the USSR itself. The chief exception was during the period in which Stalin exercised true one-man rule, personally making all major decisions. Composed of between twelve and sixteen voting members and six to eight non-voting members, from 1973 until 1990 the Politburo included the prime minister and the ministers of foreign affairs and defense and the director of the secret police (KGB), as well as the most important functionaries of the party apparatus. Not all members were equally involved in foreign policy matters; often, these were referred to subcommittees, of which the most important was the Defense Council. In 1990, as part of the creation of the executive presidency in the USSR, Gorbachev introduced changes in the party rules that changed the composition and reduced the importance of the Politburo. The functions of its Defense Council were largely pre-empted by the new USSR Security Council.

The other top organ of the CPSU was the Secretariat, which was responsible for formulating the issues and alternatives that constituted the agenda of the Politburo, overseeing the implementation of its decisions, and (with the Politburo) controlling appointments in the party bureaucracy, the government, and the key institutions in society. Since Stalin's time, the general secretary had been able to translate his dominance of the Secretariat into a role as *primus inter pares* in the Politburo itself and, ultimately, as the top Soviet spokesman on both foreign and domestic policy. Among the staff agencies of the Secretariat (the "central apparatus") were several with foreign policy responsibilities. Chief among them were the Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers Parties of the Socialist Countries, which conducted Soviet relations with other communist states, and the International Department, which was responsible for CPSU relations with non-ruling communist parties.

In the last three years of his regime, Gorbachev sponsored changes that reduced the authority of these agencies—and of the Communist Party itself—and invigorated the foreign policy role of the institutions of the government of the USSR. In the eyes of the would-be coup makers of August 1991 (as well as many outside observers), these changes in long-standing party institutions prepared the way not only for the fall of communism in the USSR, but for the disintegration of the USSR itself.

When the Communist Party, even in its diminished state, was banned in Russia by Yeltsin's decree the week after the attempted coup, there was no longer an effective mechanism at the center for coordinating foreign policy. Indeed, the two institutions of government that had been created in 1990 to assume the responsibility for implementing Soviet foreign and defense policies—the Security Council and the Cabinet of Ministers—also were abolished in the wake of the failed coup, because their leading members had participated in the plot or tacitly supported it. In their place, Gorbachev formed the State Council, composed of himself and the presidents of all the republics, that had the responsibility for overseeing foreign policy and national defense during the remaining months of the Soviet Union's existence. Finding an effective substitute for the party as a coordinating mechanism continued to be a major challenge also for the Yeltsin administration.

The other major change in the conduct of foreign policy that began in the latter period of Gorbachev's rule and continued in the Yeltsin years was the opening of the policy process to wider participation and greater public visibility. Prior to the initiation of glasnost by Gorbachev, extreme secrecy was the norm in the decision-making processes of the USSR, and sensitive foreign policy issues were discussed and decided by a relatively few high-ranking officials within the top leadership. Public discussion, even in parliamentary forums, took the form of after-the-fact justification and ratification of decisions, the basis for which was rarely, if ever, discussed with completeness and candor. To a limited extent during Gorbachev's last year or two in office, and to a much greater degree in

Yeltsin's democratizing Russia, the foreign policy debate became more public and more open to the participation of a variety of groups representing more diverse viewpoints.

However, during Putin's presidency, it appeared to many observers that participation was again narrowing and secrecy increasing. Although he himself denied it, Putin seemed to be attempting to rein in the independent mass media. An ominous signal of what might be in store appeared in June 2000, when Putin approved the National Security Information Doctrine, the major theme of which was the need to increase government control over the flow of information. Soon thereafter, Putin's government was engaged in conflicts with two wealthy businessmen ("oligarchs" Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky) whose extensive media holdings included television networks that had taken a critical stance toward the Kremlin. When the dust settled, the two oligarchs were living in exile and their television outlets had been placed under state control of one form or another. Although some Russian newspapers and other media outlets continued to voice independent messages, most Russians (like Americans) get their news from television. By 2003, reporting or opinion not favorable to the Kremlin was seldom heard by the public through that medium.

### **The Presidency, Its Advisory Councils, and the Coordination of Foreign Policy**

Since the creation of the executive presidency in the USSR in 1990, and continuing in independent Russia, the office of the president has been the institutional centerpiece of Moscow's foreign policy decision making. Prior to 1990, the Soviet "presidency" was a ceremonial position—head of state but not of the government. With the changes in 1990, Gorbachev's presidency resembled that of France, with constitutional powers to head "the country's entire system of bodies of state administration." Although the office was intended to be popularly elected, Gorbachev chose not to subject himself to an electoral test and was instead selected by the Congress of People's Deputies. The Soviet president also headed two new institutions with foreign policy responsibilities: the Council of the Federation, which included the presidents of the union republics and gave them a voice in issues of all-union significance, and the Security Council.

This presidential dominance of foreign policy has been even more pronounced in the Russian Federation, especially since the adoption of the new constitution in 1993: Articles 80 and 86 of this document give the president the power to exercise "leadership of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation," within the framework of the constitution and laws of the country.<sup>41</sup> The earlier, Soviet-era constitution of the Russian Republic (written in 1978 and—though much amended in its last years—continuing in force until 1993) gave the Russian parliament the formal right to determine the main lines of foreign policy and approve ministerial

appointments, but efforts by the legislative body in 1992 and 1993 to turn this formal power into reality were stubbornly resisted by Yeltsin.

The formal or official powers of the Russian president under the 1993 constitution are greater than those of any previous Russian leader since the tsar. Of course, unlike the tsar's powers, those of the president have been granted by a vote of the Russian people. However, while the constitution was approved by a 58 to 42 percent margin, only 54 percent of the eligible voters participated in the December 1993 vote.

Unlike its predecessor, the 1993 constitution clearly gives the president control of the government. The president nominates the prime minister, and if the lower house of the parliament, the State Duma, rejects the nomination three times, the president may dissolve the Duma and call for new elections. The State Duma may vote no confidence in the government, but the president is entitled to reject this vote rather than call for the government's resignation. A second vote of no confidence within a three-month period will lead either to resignation of the government or to new elections of the Duma. On the other hand, the president may demand the government's resignation without the Duma's approval, as Yeltsin did in March 1998—and then on three more occasions in the next eighteen months. In accordance with the constitution and federal laws, the president determines the basic guidelines of domestic and foreign policy; serves as commander-in-chief, appointing and dismissing top commanders of the armed forces; approves military doctrine; may declare martial law and states of emergency (with the approval of the parliament's upper house, the Federation Council); and may issue binding decrees and directives (providing they do not contradict the constitution or federal law).

Given these considerable powers, it is not surprising that the president has a large staff, directed by the head of administration. Vladimir Putin inherited Yeltsin's chief of staff, Aleksandr Voloshin, who was a member of the departing president's inner circle (the "Family"). Putin reportedly had promised Yeltsin that he would not make changes in the leadership of the presidential administration or the government until his first term ended, and it was not until October 2003 that Voloshin departed (apparently in protest over the arrest of "oligarch" Mikhail Khodorkovsky). He was succeeded by one of his former senior deputies, Putin loyalist Dmitry Medvedev. At the beginning of Putin's second term in 2004, the size of the presidential administration was reduced from 1,500 to 1,200, but by the beginning of his third term in 2012, its size was estimated at 2,000.<sup>42</sup>

In November 2005, Medvedev was reassigned to the government, as first deputy prime minister, and placed in charge of the "priority national projects." In this position he gained higher visibility, and eventually was designated by Putin as his desired successor. Only forty-two years old at the time of his nomination, Medvedev shared Putin's educational background (a law degree from St. Petersburg University). Virtually his entire career had been spent as a member

of Putin's administrative support team. Accordingly, Medvedev did not share Putin's background as a veteran of the KGB, and thus was not—unlike his presumed chief rival for the succession nod, First Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov—considered to be a member of the Kremlin *siloviki* faction (personnel from the security services). Medvedev had run Putin's 2000 campaign for the presidency, and had succeeded Voloshin as head of the presidential administration. In November 2005 he moved to his post as first deputy prime minister, where he directed government spending on priority social projects. Since 2002 Medvedev also had served as chairman of the board of Gazprom, the powerful natural gas monopoly.

Putin's United Russia Party, whose election list he had himself headed in the elections to the Duma that had been held in December 2007, dutifully endorsed Putin's choice as its nominee, as did three other pro-Putin parties. In accepting the endorsements, Medvedev announced his intention, if elected, of naming as his prime minister (who would succeed in case of his death or resignation) none other than Vladimir Putin.

Nevertheless, between the time of his nomination and his election as president in March 2008, Medvedev's presumed foreign policy leanings were the subject of considerable press speculation. Most reports in the West depicted him as likely to be more "pro-Western" in his foreign policy and more pro-reform (or "liberal") in his economic policy.<sup>43</sup> The new president's first foreign trips were not to the West, however. His maiden foreign venture was to neighboring Kazakhstan, closely followed by a visit to China.

Speculation about Putin's possible return to the presidency was stirred again in November 2008, when President Medvedev proposed to the parliament that the constitution be amended to increase the length of the presidential term from four years to six and the length of the term of the Duma from four years to five. Firmly under the control of the pro-Kremlin United Russia Party, the parliament dutifully approved the amendments, which were to come into force at the end of Medvedev's term of office. Some observers saw the change in presidential terms as an indicator that Putin would return to the presidency in 2012, where he could possibly serve for two consecutive terms of six years each.

The intense speculation about Putin's plans came to an end in September 2011 when Medvedev announced, at the congress of the United Russia Party, that he would nominate Putin to be the party's candidate in the 2012 presidential election. Modestly accepting his protégé's nod, Putin indicated that—should Medvedev succeed in leading the party to victory in the forthcoming December elections for the Duma—he would likely be Putin's choice to succeed him as prime minister.<sup>44</sup> Chess-loving Russians immediately dubbed this proposed switch of jobs the "castling."

However, Putin's return to the presidency was not as smoothly accomplished as the masters of the Kremlin anticipated. In light of the long period of teasing about a possible second term for Medvedev, the statement by both men that

they had agreed in 2008 on the timetable for Putin's return stirred feelings of skepticism, cynicism, and even anger in some sectors of the press and public. This was made even more manifest in December, when United Russia—dubbed the “party of crooks and thieves” by oppositionist blogger Aleksy Navalny—claimed a victory margin in the Duma elections that was widely regarded as falsified. The mass protests that followed, notably mobilizing tens of thousands of younger urban professionals and business people in Moscow and St. Petersburg, cast a perceptible cloud the following March over Putin's re-election victory—a victory achieved without a runoff, but against a distinctly weak field.<sup>45</sup>

To assist the president in exercising his considerable powers in making and directing foreign and defense policy, he appoints personnel in the Presidential Executive Office, headed by a chief of staff, as well as several advisory bodies composed of experts from inside and outside the government. During most of Putin's third term as president the chief of staff was Sergei Ivanov, the ex-KGB general and former head of both the Security Council and the Ministry of Defense, who had been passed over for the interim presidency in 2008. Ivanov, once described by Putin as one of his closest comrades,<sup>46</sup> was suddenly removed from his influential position in August 2016 and replaced by a much younger deputy chief, Anton Vaino—in one of several generational shifts involving some of Putin's long-serving colleagues.

The presidential staff also includes an assistant to the president for international affairs. This position was filled during Yeltsin's first years in office by a career diplomat, Dmitry Ryurikov. An expert on international law and former head of the Soviet foreign ministry's Middle East department, Ryurikov was dismissed in April 1997, reportedly for poor staff work on the Russia-Belarus Treaty. He was replaced by another career diplomat, Sergei Prikhodko. With the reorganization of the presidential administration at the beginning of 2004, Prikhodko's title became “presidential aide,” but he remained responsible for supervising the work of the foreign policy directorate of the staff. Prikhodko retained this position on the president's staff during the transition from Putin to Medvedev, but he left the Kremlin in 2012 with Medvedev to join the staff of the government. Putin's new foreign policy adviser at the start of his third term was the man who had been his advisor during his term as prime minister, former Ambassador to the United States Yuri Ushakov. Thus, the foreign policy advisors were “castled” in 2012 in the same manner as their respective bosses.

The president's direct role in foreign policymaking is further enhanced by the fact that the constitution declares that the functions performed by the foreign minister and the “power ministers” of Russia—the ministers of defense and interior, and the heads of the intelligence and security services—are the responsibilities of the president directly rather than the prime minister. With so many responsible officials having direct access to the president—and given that Yeltsin's style was to keep his hands directly in so many matters—it is not surprising that there was an endemic messiness in Russian foreign policy during the Yeltsin years.



Vladimir Putin, with the more disciplined style of a former KGB officer, brought a significant dose of much needed orderliness to the Kremlin.

The creation of the Security Council in April 1992 was intended to bring the top foreign policy and national security officials together to deliberate and prepare decisions for the president to implement by decree. Its permanent (voting) members (since May 2012) included the president, the prime minister, the foreign minister, and the “power ministers,” the speakers of the two houses of parliament, the chief of the presidential administration, the Security Council secretary and his deputy, and the head of the United Russia Party.<sup>47</sup> Much of the work of the Security Council is conducted by interagency commissions, on which each relevant ministry is represented by a deputy minister. Specialized expertise is provided by a Scholarly Council.

The influence of the Security Council has varied over the years, depending upon the importance (and skill) of its members, particularly the secretary of the Security Council. For example, the appointment of Aleksandr Lebed by Yeltsin, after the former general’s third-place showing in the 1996 presidential election, temporarily enhanced the influence of the Security Council when Lebed succeeded in negotiating an end to the first Chechen War. And Vladimir Putin, before his appointment as prime minister in 1999, used his position as secretary of the Security Council to enhance his and the council’s authority. Beginning with Medvedev’s term as president and continuing in Putin’s third term, the Security Council secretary has been Nikolai Patrushev. Another close “comrade” of Putin’s, like Ivanov and Medvedev, he hails from St. Petersburg and was a career KGB officer as well as a former director of its successor agency, the Federal Security Service (FSB).

The many twists and turns in the short history of the Security Council make clear that some of its more politically ambitious secretaries have sought to inflate its authority, turning it into a powerful decision-making body with broadly defined operational responsibilities. Boris Yeltsin clearly resisted these efforts, evidently sensing that such a body—reminiscent of the post-Stalinist Politburo—would dilute his own power. Vladimir Putin, a former occupant of the position, followed the pattern of enlarging the council’s role only at times when he fully trusted its leadership. Nevertheless, it remains significant if only because of the important positions that are represented on the council.

### **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

From the time of the Bolshevik Revolution until the dissolution of the USSR, only ten men held the position of Soviet foreign minister, and they were widely varied in their influence and personalities. The original occupant, Leon Trotsky, held the position from the time of the revolution until April 1918; he surrendered it gladly, regarding it as beneath his talents. Like Trotsky, four others—Vyacheslav Molotov, Andrei Vyshinsky, Dmitry Shepilov, and Eduard Shevardnadze—were

high-ranking members of the CPSU leadership at the time they took over the foreign affairs portfolio. Two (Georgy Chicherin and Maksim Litvinov) acquired membership in the Central Committee only after serving for a while as foreign minister, and they never rose above that level.

The longest-serving Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko—a product of the career foreign affairs bureaucracy—was initially regarded as a technician. He became a member of the Central Committee in 1956 and of the Politburo in 1973, after which he assumed a more prominent role in policymaking—eventually playing a critical role in the selection of Gorbachev as general secretary in 1985. A few months later, Gromyko was “kicked upstairs” to the then ceremonial position of president (formally, chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet), clearing the way for Gorbachev to place his close ally, Shevardnadze, in charge of the foreign ministry. Under Shevardnadze’s direction, the entrenched “old guard” of the Gromyko generation was eliminated from the foreign policy bureaucracy. A massive overhaul of the foreign ministry structure and personnel accompanied the introduction of “new thinking” into Soviet foreign policy.

From the time of Chicherin, it was clear that the Soviet foreign minister was not the chief foreign policymaker; he advised and implemented, but unless he held a job in the top councils of the party, his decision making was relegated to secondary matters. Also from the time of Chicherin, it was clear that the Soviet foreign ministry was by no means the sole instrument employed in the foreign affairs realm by the Soviet Union. As we have seen, there was a long rivalry and tension between the foreign ministry, as the instrument of more traditional diplomacy, and the Communist International (Comintern) and its successor agency, the International Department of the Central Committee Secretariat, as instruments of world revolution. Indeed, from the establishment of communist regimes in Eastern Europe after World War II until their collapse in 1989, the primary responsibility for conduct of Soviet relations with other communist states was not even lodged in the foreign ministry, but rather in the CPSU Secretariat’s Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers Parties of the Socialist Countries.

Although Gorbachev and Shevardnadze already had initiated many changes in foreign ministry structure and personnel, Yeltsin and Kozyrev oversaw an even more thorough housecleaning at the Smolensk Square headquarters of the ministry, which was taken over in its entirety by the Russian Federation. Under the Soviet constitution, a foreign ministry had existed in each of the republics. Kozyrev was appointed as Russian foreign minister by Yeltsin in 1990, and by August 1991 had dismantled the party organization in the Russian ministry and staffed the top echelon with recent graduates of the Moscow Institute of International Relations, together with a few transfers from the Soviet ministry, like himself. When the Soviet ministry was taken over, its “de-ideologization” (and consequent rejuvenation) followed a similar course; all of Shevardnadze’s deputies were replaced, and many other experienced diplomats either resigned

or were removed. Some of the non-Russian personnel left to join the foreign ministries of the other post-Soviet states.

But the new Russian foreign ministry was not a streamlined operation; whereas at the end of 1991 the Soviet ministry had employed 3,700 persons and the Russian ministry 240, by October 1992 the size of the reorganized Russian ministry was 3,200 employees.<sup>48</sup> Initially, there were thirteen departments, including seven dealing with geographic regions, and nine functional administrations. One of the new departments handled relations with other members of the CIS—a task for which trained or experienced personnel mostly were unavailable. In November 1993, bilateral relations with the post-Soviet states were shifted to the established regional bureaus, where the level of staff talent was deeper. However, as we shall see in Chapter 6, the role of the post-Soviet states in Russian foreign relations grew considerably during Putin's presidency, and in May 2008, following his appointment as prime minister, Putin announced that a Federal Agency for CIS Affairs again was to be established as part of the foreign ministry. A government-wide reorganization in 2004, intended to reduce the size of the central bureaucracy and make it less top-heavy, exempted the foreign ministry from the general limitation on the number of deputy ministers. In addition to Senior Deputy Minister Valery Loshchinin and the general-director of the diplomatic corps, newly appointed Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who succeeded Igor Ivanov in 2004, was allowed to have another five deputy ministers. The number of departments, which had grown to 40, was reduced to 35, and a ceiling of 3,028 was placed on the number of ministry employees.<sup>49</sup>

Because the foreign minister reports directly to the president and not to the prime minister, he usually remains in place when the leadership of the government changes. An exception had occurred when President Putin included the foreign ministry in the 2004 changes. Although he had evidently performed his duties as minister faithfully, Igor Ivanov never had been considered a particularly strong occupant of the post. He had tried in 2002 to deal with suspicions that he was excluded from the inner circle of foreign policy decision making, asserting, "Not a single fundamental decision on matters of Russian foreign policy has been made in the past several years without my involvement or without regard for the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."<sup>50</sup>

While Ivanov was handed the potentially significant post of Security Council secretary upon leaving the ministry, his successor—Sergei Lavrov, who had rendered impressive service for ten years as Russia's ambassador to the United Nations—was generally regarded as a stronger and more assertive figure. Following the 2008 election of Medvedev and the appointment of Putin as prime minister, the former practice was reinstated, and Lavrov was retained in the post of foreign minister. And when Putin announced his ministerial appointments upon his return for a third presidential term in 2012, Lavrov was again reappointed. He is widely regarded as an extremely competent negotiator, and although neither he nor his predecessor has had the degree of policymaking influence that Primakov

had in Yeltsin's time, he appears to have Putin's confidence as an effective administrator of the president's policies.

### **The Prime Minister and Cabinet**

With the establishment of a direct reporting link from the foreign minister to the president, the constitutional foreign policy role of the prime minister and the government has been reduced. From the time of Lenin until 1990, when the executive presidency was introduced in the USSR, the prime minister, or head of government, typically played a prominent role in the conduct of Soviet diplomacy. Occupants of this position were members of the CPSU Politburo, usually with significant power bases of their own. Stalin, from 1941 until his death, and Khrushchev, from 1958 until his ouster in 1964, held the post of chairman of the Council of Ministers simultaneously with the leading position in the party Secretariat. Formally responsible to the legislature (the Supreme Soviet) for the administration of affairs of state, the Council of Ministers had among its formal powers the prerogatives to grant and withdraw recognition of foreign states; to establish or break diplomatic relations; to order acts of reprisal; to appoint negotiators and supervise the conduct of negotiations; and to appoint, supervise, and direct Soviet diplomatic representatives abroad. Even after Gorbachev assumed greater executive powers in 1990, the new Cabinet of Ministers retained constitutional powers to "safeguard the country's defense and state security" and to implement its foreign policy. The new constitution of the Russian Federation grants these responsibilities directly to the president.

The close relationship of the foreign and defense ministries to the president and their relative insulation from the prime minister and the rest of the government were demonstrated in March 1998. Almost immediately after his dramatic announcement that he was dismissing Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and his government, President Yeltsin let it be known that his foreign and defense ministers would not be affected by the action. The performance of these ministries thus proceeded relatively smoothly during the lengthy interval in which Yeltsin sought and finally obtained Duma approval of Sergei Kirienko—the young and inexperienced minister of fuels and energy—as Chernomyrdin's successor.

This pattern was disrupted the next time Yeltsin fired a prime minister, but only because the new head of government was Yevgeny Primakov, the foreign minister. Primakov's deputy, Igor Ivanov, a career diplomat who had been the USSR's last ambassador to Spain, was named to succeed him, but it was evident that the foreign ministry's role during the time of Primakov's premiership (September 1998–May 1999) was merely to implement the policies that Primakov would continue to direct. Nor did the essence of Russian foreign policy change after Primakov's dismissal, which seemed to result not so much from dissatisfaction with his policies as from Yeltsin's jealousy of his growing popularity and irritation at his inability to stave off moves in the Duma for the president's impeachment. Indeed, throughout much

of the rest of 1999, Primakov's popularity stayed high, and he was thought for a time to be the most likely successor to Yeltsin. Primakov's successor as prime minister, Sergei Stepashin—a career security official who had served Yeltsin as head of the federal counterintelligence service and as minister of both justice and interior—was himself dismissed in August 1999. In the wake of terrorist attacks in Moscow and the renewal of the war in Chechnya, the sudden rise in popularity of the new prime minister (Yeltsin's fourth in eighteen months), Vladimir Putin, combined with a flurry of negative press evidently orchestrated by the Kremlin and its supporters, eclipsed Primakov and led him to withdraw from presidential politics. But Primakov maintained a cordial relationship with the new president, and the foreign policy line that he had set, still implemented by Ivanov from the foreign ministry, continued to prevail into the first year or so of Putin's presidency.

Putin's first prime minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, was—like his chief of the presidential administration—closely associated with Yeltsin's "Family." Experienced as a negotiator on Russia's external debt, he played little role in foreign policy, and his occasional foreign travel usually was associated with promotion of trade relations and foreign investment. Despite regular complaints issuing from the president and his staff about the performance of Kasyanov's government, he was left in place until just before Putin's re-election to a second term. Putin's choice as new prime minister was the relatively unknown Mikhail Fradkov, most of whose career had been spent in the realm of foreign trade and whose most recent post had been as Russia's envoy to the European Union. Although he had ties to both factions of the president's administration (the *siloviki* and the economic reformers), he was clearly not considered strong enough to be mistaken as Putin's possible successor—thus allowing the president to defer that choice.

Putin deferred the choice once again in September 2007, as speculation about the succession was becoming especially intense. Putin removed Fradkov from the premiership (shifting him to the position of director of the Foreign Intelligence Service) and named in his place Viktor Zubkov, who most recently had been a deputy minister of finance in charge of the Financial Monitoring Committee (set up to combat money laundering). Zubkov's age (sixty-six) and his earlier close association with Putin in St. Petersburg suggested that his was only an interim position.

As described above, Putin finally ended the guessing game in December, when he announced that First Deputy Prime Minister (and longtime loyalist) Dmitry Medvedev was his choice to be Russia's next president. Medvedev, in turn, declared that, if elected as president, he intended to name Putin as prime minister. The prospect that Putin again would become head of the government provoked speculation that the power balance between that position and the presidency might be reversed. Given the prominent role that Putin had played in leading and reshaping Russia's foreign policy, it seemed especially unlikely that the prime minister would be relegated to the usual role of implementing economic and social policies during a Medvedev presidency.

Significantly, three of the ministerial members of Putin's new inner cabinet (the foreign, defense, and interior ministers) were "power ministers," who were formally answerable directly to the president. Needless to say, this did not escape the notice of those observers who were anticipating that Putin would find a way to carve out an extra-constitutional foreign and defense policy role for himself as prime minister. The doubts about whether Putin's then office relegated him to a lesser role in foreign policy were dispelled during the first hours of the August 2008 crisis in South Ossetia, when Putin abruptly left the Beijing Olympics to rush to the Caucasus as the evident orchestrator of the Russian troop movements.

### **The Military, the Intelligence Services, and the Making of Foreign Policy**

As we already have noted, the creation of the Russian Ministry of Defense in the spring of 1992 reintroduced a powerful rival to the foreign ministry. Especially during the Brezhnev years, the Soviet defense ministry had established itself as a major player in the making of Soviet foreign policy, reflecting the tremendous upsurge in military capabilities in the 1960s and 1970s as well as the growing technical sophistication of weaponry and strategy in the nuclear age. On matters of military strategy and force posture, the judgment of military professionals went unchallenged. Through the minister of defense, these professionals had regular access to the party Politburo. The combination of expertise and access produced a high degree of influence on such issues as budgetary allocations, arms control negotiations, and the use of military capabilities as an instrument of foreign policy.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, the role of the professional military establishment remained restrained and subordinated to the political control of the CPSU. Although the minister of defense was himself a member of the party Politburo and its Defense Council, political supervision of the military was reinforced through the Main Political Administration of the defense ministry, which reported directly to the Central Committee Secretariat. In fact, however, during the period between Khrushchev and Gorbachev, there were such close personal ties and similarities of outlook among the top party and military leaders that the differences of opinion that occasionally came into view paled in significance against the backdrop of broad programmatic consensus on Soviet national security policy. In other words, military interests were so well regarded by the civilian leadership that the defense establishment did not need to mount a challenge to party dominance.

In the post-Brezhnev succession, the military sought to maintain this symbiotic relationship. Minister of Defense Dmitry Ustinov played a major role in the selection of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko as successors to Brezhnev, and had he not died before Chernenko, it is possible that he could have blocked Gorbachev's rise to the top. There were signs in 1985 and 1986 that the new political leadership was seeking to reduce the foreign policy influence of the military elite. The opening for a dramatic change came in May 1987, when West German

teenager Matthias Rust flew his small single-engine plane past vaunted Soviet air defenses to land in Red Square in Moscow (ironically, on Border Guards Day). A furious Gorbachev immediately sacked Minister of Defense Sergei Sokolov and an air defense chief, and advanced his own candidate, Colonel General Dmitry Yazov, to the top job over more senior claimants. Politically weaker than his predecessors, Yazov nevertheless grew concerned about the deep cuts Gorbachev was making in Soviet defense budgets, partly as a result of arms control agreements that stirred unease among the armed forces, and about the collapse of the Soviet security system in Eastern Europe.

Thus it is not surprising that Yazov was among the coup plotters in August 1991, but his inability to maintain unity in the armed forces contributed significantly to the coup's collapse. Two generals who were close to Yeltsin and had rendered critical aid to coup opponents, air force commander Yevgeny Shaposhnikov and paratroops commander Pavel Grachev, became USSR minister and deputy minister of defense after the collapse of the coup. In November, Yeltsin banned activities of the CPSU and the Russian Communist Party within the territory of the Russian Republic, leading to the "de-partification" of the defense ministry and the armed forces. The collapse of Marxist-Leninist ideology, with its strong prohibitions against overt military interference in politics, and the demise of the Main Political Administration as the instrument of party control in the armed forces, removed important restraints on freewheeling political activity in the Soviet military. At the beginning of December 1991, there were widespread rumors that top-ranking military officers were plotting a coup to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Yeltsin moved quickly to try to reassure the military and gain its support. On December 5 he announced a 90 percent pay increase for all officers and—in light of the virtual bankruptcy of the USSR—he promised that Russia would pay the salaries. Two days later, he met with the Ukrainian and Belorussian presidents to form the Commonwealth of Independent States. The haste with which this action was taken might well have resulted from the presidents' desire to reassure the Soviet military that a new security structure would be created to replace the USSR.

At the first summit meeting of the CIS heads of state, on December 30, Yeltsin's plan to retain unified armed forces was set back by the demands of Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova to form their own national armies. But at the February CIS summit, a joint command was established, responsible for control over strategic nuclear arms, coordination of military doctrines, and resolution of armed conflicts within the CIS and along its borders. Shaposhnikov was named commander-in-chief of the joint forces. However, efforts to create a common security system proved unsuccessful. In March 1992, Yeltsin created a Russian defense ministry, naming himself the acting minister, and in May he created an independent Russian army, with General Grachev as minister of defense. In September, the parliament passed the Law on Defense, which imposed strict

state control over the Russian military, but reformers failed to gain approval for a provision that would require a civilian minister of defense.

Despite the principles contained in the new law, imposing control on the military proved extremely difficult, now that prior constraints had been removed and a number of the military's leaders had plunged into political activity. The opinions of military professionals were significantly out of step with the country's civilian leadership, as shown by a January 1992 survey indicating that 71 percent of officers favored restoration of the Soviet state, and a summer 1992 poll that showed that two-thirds would prefer a military-based regime. Ironically, a rallying point for much of this discontent was to be found in Russia's vice president, Major General Aleksandr Rutskoi, whom Yeltsin had handpicked as his running mate in June 1991 in an effort to secure military support for his election. Rutskoi had played an important role in defeating the August coup, personally piloting the air force plane that returned Gorbachev to Moscow. His ambitions ignited, he demanded in October that Yeltsin name him as Russian prime minister, and in December he bitterly criticized Gaidar and the other young reformers on Yeltsin's new team, calling them "young boys in pink shorts, red shirts, and yellow boots." He was also sharply critical of Kozyrev's "liberal Westernizing" policies, voicing statist and interventionist views that apparently were widely shared by his former military colleagues. As Yeltsin's conflict with the Russian parliament escalated in 1993, Rutskoi openly allied himself with the speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, in opposing Yeltsin, and in the October 1993 confrontation he appealed to the Russian military to support the anti-Yeltsin forces.

Initially, Minister of Defense Grachev was hesitant to commit Russian troops to support Yeltsin against the armed parliamentary supporters who stormed the main television station and the municipal administration building. But Grachev yielded to pressure, and Rutskoi, Khasbulatov, and their supporters were forcibly ousted from the Russian White House after bloody fighting that left 145 persons dead and 733 wounded. More than ever before, Yeltsin was in the debt of the military leadership; after the "October events," Grachev seemed to enjoy an expanded influence on Russian policy on such issues as the CFE treaty, NATO enlargement, and peacekeeping activities in the CIS. However, the military did not succeed in fulfilling all its wishes and was notably disappointed in its budget allocations. Nor was Grachev himself a popular political figure, as he became the scapegoat of critics of widespread corruption in the armed forces.

The evident results of Grachev's performance as defense minister—the miserable performance of the armed forces in Chechnya, the high-level corruption and widespread theft of weapons and equipment for resale, and the wretched living conditions of vast numbers of troops—were targeted by General Aleksandr Lebed during his presidential campaign, and thus it was not surprising that the minister's dismissal was the first fruit of Lebed's temporary alliance with Yeltsin. The new defense minister, General Igor Rodionov, had been closely associated with Lebed, having once been his commander and having become his political supporter.



It was not long before Rodionov suffered the same fate as Lebed. He proved to be too slow for Yeltsin's taste in implementing a military reform that would allow further reductions in Russia's defense spending. Yeltsin voiced his outrage on May 22, 1997, at the televised opening session of a meeting of the Defense Council. He fired both Rodionov and the chief of the General Staff, General Viktor Samsonov, replacing Rodionov with General Igor Sergeyev, commander of the Strategic Missile Forces since 1992.

The issue of the use of the military to quell internal political disturbances—increasingly sensitive during the Gorbachev years—became acutely controversial in the period surrounding the October 1993 confrontation between Yeltsin and the parliament. Although Grachev and his colleagues had reportedly resisted, the acceptability of this practice was incorporated in the new military doctrine that was adopted by the Security Council and the president in November 1993.<sup>52</sup>

In 1997, only two months after General Sergeyev's appointment as chief of the General Staff, Yeltsin issued the first decrees describing the proposed military reform—a goal that would be prominent for years to come. The total size of the armed forces was to be cut by half a million, to 1.2 million; conscription was eventually to be abolished, but not by Yeltsin's original target date of 2000. Future annual military spending was to be limited to 3.5 percent of GNP, down from a 1991 level of 7.2 percent. Yeltsin rewarded Sergeyev's reform initiatives by promoting him to the rank of marshal, but in light of the heavy political opposition—including that of the powerful heads of the interior ministry and the border guards—and the declining prospect of needed funds in the wake of the 1998 financial crisis, it did not prove possible during the remainder of Yeltsin's presidency to implement all aspects of the proposed military reform. Whereas a successful reform could at best have brought stability to a risky and unpredictable situation in Russia's military, a failure could have had drastic consequences—with possible scenarios including not only the breakup of Russia's military into semi-autonomous regional units or its cooptation by criminal gangs, but also an outright attempt to seize political power.

Nevertheless, in the absence of thoroughgoing reform, the state of Russia's military at the end of the 1990s was alarming. As one American expert described it,

Discipline has collapsed, equipment is becoming antiquated, morale has sunk to an all-time low, good officers and non-commissioned officers are leaving the service, the country's generals have been politicized, and Moscow's ability to ensure the military's obedience in a crisis is doubtful.<sup>53</sup>

Measuring annual military spending in Russia is a complex undertaking, since many categories of expenditure—amounting to up to one-half of the total—are not contained in published defense budgets, appearing in other parts of the state budget or coming from non-budgeted sources. Moreover, during Yeltsin's tenure, the military rarely received the full amount actually budgeted. One British

specialist has estimated that Russia's true defense spending fell in 1998 to \$42 billion, a level only one-third of 1992 expenditures, if constant 2000 prices are used. Afterward, he noted, spending probably increased another 20 percent as a result of Russia's improved revenue situation. This amounts to 5 percent of Russia's GDP—still below 1991 Soviet levels but far above Yeltsin's target of 3.5 percent. Two-thirds of the total went to the regular armed forces, with the rest devoted to civilian personnel and paramilitary units.<sup>54</sup>

Another measure reported in the West during the first year of Putin's presidency put the total of Russia's military and law-enforcement expenditures at 35 percent of the entire federal budget. This same report quoted Sergei Ivanov as complaining that "about 70 percent of the military budget is being spent merely to maintain troops and bureaucrats, leaving precious little to maintaining and upgrading equipment."<sup>55</sup> At the same time, the leading Russian military journalist, Pavel Felgengauer, reported manpower figures of just over 2 million servicemen and 966,000 civilians in the dozen or so military-related ministries. Omitted from this figure are regional police and paramilitary units; "if they are included in the count, the true figure is not 3 million, but . . . closer to 5 million." Felgengauer concluded:

The general figure seems to have remained static during the last decade. . . . The bottom line of the Security Council Statement is this: There has been no genuine military reform in this country, nor any real attempt to demilitarize the country since the demise of the Soviet Union. Many observers knew this all along, but today the ugly fact is official.<sup>56</sup>

In March 2001, Putin took a dramatic step toward ensuring the implementation of reform by replacing Marshal Sergeyev with a (newly minted) civilian, his trusted colleague Sergei Ivanov. To assist the new minister in gaining control of defense ministry finances, he assigned the former deputy finance minister, Lyubov Kudelina, as deputy minister of defense—the first female to hold such a high post in the military hierarchy. But the new minister's goals clearly were being resisted by the General Staff of the Armed Forces, and especially by its chief, General Kvashnin. Earlier, the Russian press had reported the General Staff's opposition to the positioning of U.S. troops in Central Asia, the abandonment of Russian facilities in Cuba and Vietnam, and the accommodation with NATO, which Kvashnin had publicly labeled "a public relations smoke screen."<sup>57</sup> Ivanov fired back by declaring that the General Staff had become bogged down in "administrative routine." Weary of the public quarrelling, Putin in June 2004 pushed through the Duma an amendment to the 1996 Law on Defense that stripped the General Staff of its responsibility for operational control of the Russian armed forces, limiting its role to strategic planning.<sup>58</sup>

Putin enunciated a "new military doctrine" when he spoke to the top military brass in October 2003. He expressed confidence that Russia had sufficient strategic missile strength—pressing into service previously stockpiled SS-19 missiles

with multiple warheads to replace older missiles—to overcome any potential American anti-missile system. But the defense ministry document warned that Russia would have to ratchet up its strategic forces and change its plans to cut the size of the total armed forces if NATO failed to change its own offensive military doctrine, with its “anti-Russian orientation” and plans to “lower the threshold of using nuclear weapons.” At the same time, Putin and Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov stressed that Russia’s military command would be paying far more attention in its troop training to peace operations, special operations, anti-terrorist actions, and local wars.<sup>59</sup> On the whole, in its emphasis on mobile units and peacekeeping responsibilities, especially in the CIS, the new Russian military doctrine clearly envisaged the armed forces as an instrument of the country’s foreign policy.

The problems of military reform continued to dog Vladimir Putin throughout his second term. Issues that were debated within the professional military (but not fully resolved) included: how to achieve meaningful cuts in manpower, how to increase efficiency and morale, what should be the proper balance between strategic and conventional forces, and whether to replace conscription with a volunteer army. Complicating Putin’s efforts to find common ground with his defense team were sharp differences among the military elites, differences between parliament and the government, and Moscow’s inability to obtain its desired agreements with the Bush administration on arms control and missile defense.

In February 2007 Sergei Ivanov gained relief from the operational headaches of the defense ministry. As preparations for the succession to Putin went into higher gear, Ivanov was given the position of first deputy prime minister—the same rank Medvedev already held—thus setting up a presumed competition between the two close Putin associates for the top job. As Ivanov’s successor as defense minister, Putin appointed Anatoly Serdyukov, another former St. Petersburg official, who had succeeded Fradkov as head of the federal tax police in 2004. When his father-in-law, Viktor Zubkov, was appointed prime minister in September 2007, Serdyukov offered to resign, but the offer was rejected. Like Foreign Minister Lavrov, Serdyukov was reappointed to his position when Putin became head of the government, and he joined his fellow “power minister” in the new government presidium. As for Sergei Ivanov, the loser in the presidential sweepstakes, he continued to be responsible for overseeing the defense industry in the new Putin government, but his rank was lowered from first deputy (one of two) to deputy prime minister (one of five).

Recovery of Russia’s military capabilities certainly was being aided by the recovery of its economy, fueled by soaring revenues from petroleum exports. The defense budget proposed for 2007 amounted to \$31 billion, an increase of about 30 percent from the 2006 allocation. Altogether, by 2007 the official defense budget had quadrupled in size in a six-year period.<sup>60</sup> Although, as noted earlier, the declared Russian defense budget is somewhat misleading, given the existence of large numbers of armed personnel in other government agencies, it remained at

less than 5 percent of the U.S. budget and far below the level of expenditure in the Soviet years. However, the increase did allow a certain amount of catch-up, especially in expenditures on research and development and acquisition of military weaponry—but there was much more catching up required if Russia's declared needs were to be satisfied. Military expert Aleksei Arbatov noted that “less than twenty percent of the weapons that troops now have are relatively new—purchased less than ten years ago.” In 2007, the government announced a long-term rearmament program calling for expenditures totaling \$240 billion by 2015. But Arbatov complained that real progress in re-equipping the armed forces and sustaining the Russian defense industry would not come until the size of the military had been reduced to a level well below Ivanov's announced target of 1 million. In Arbatov's words, “no reasonable budget can sustain an army consisting of 1.2 million men. And there is no need for such an army. After all, we are not going to start another Great Patriotic War.”<sup>61</sup>

The struggle between the civilian leadership of the military and the General Staff did not abate with the increased expenditures. In March 2008 rumors circulated in Moscow that the chief of the General Staff, Yuri Baluevskii, had submitted his resignation as a result of a dispute over the defense minister's reform plans. For Pavel Felgengauer, Baluevskii's alleged resignation plans were evidence of the resistance of military “traditionalists” to the ministry's reform efforts. But, Felgengauer said, the need for reforms was underscored by the lack of improvement that had resulted from the huge increases in spending.

The results [of the rise in funding] are meager, if not zero: no new weapons procured, salaries low, widespread discontent. . . . This corruption is real. I don't know whether the reforms that Serdyukov is trying to introduce will really make things better, but things as they are now are intolerable, and that's why Putin actually appointed Serdyukov, with the task of cleaning up.<sup>62</sup>

Eventually, Baluevskii did leave his position in June 2008; his successor was Army General Nikolai Makarov.

Anatoly Serdyukov was reappointed to his post when Putin began his third presidential term, but his tenure came to an abrupt end in October 2012, when a corruption scandal in the ministry resulted in his dismissal. An investigation was said to have linked a company spun off from the ministry to a \$100 million fraud. The long-serving and popular minister of emergency situations, Sergei Shoigu, was appointed defense minister. Though not officially implicated in the scandal, General Makarov was replaced as chief of the General Staff by Colonel General Valery Gerasimov. Serdyukov, however, escaped prosecution and was allowed to assume a new job. Nevertheless, the episode constituted an official recognition that long-rumored and massive corruption was not only present at the highest levels, but continued to pervade the national security sectors of Putin's government. The government's chief auditor, former Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, reported that one trillion rubles per year (about \$31.5 billion, one-fourteenth of

the total government budget) were being siphoned from the defense budget in the course of procurement of weapons.<sup>63</sup>

Well before Serdyukov's departure, however, he had initiated another phase of the long-standing effort at military reform—and this time economic recovery allowed the expansive goals to seem more achievable. The generally acknowledged poor performance of the Russian military in the brief 2008 war in Georgia gave impetus to Serdyukov's reform agenda.

The Russian armed forces were reorganized into four military districts, each with a joint operational staff (in a manner similar to the U.S. military's regional commands). The divisional structure was replaced with brigades, in a quest for greater mobility of forces. In addition to the Army, Navy, and Air Force, other branches included the Strategic Rocket Forces, Airborne Troops, and Special Forces. The latter three are subordinated to the president, as commander in chief, allowing for increasingly flexible deployments. A cyber-warfare branch has also been created.

In addition to reforms in organizational structure, there are continuing efforts to increase the professionalization of the Russian armed forces, with a goal of reducing the proportion of conscripts (and cutting their terms from two years to one) and moving toward a professional volunteer army. Although the stated goal remains a force of one million, this has proven difficult to achieve, as fewer of the contract personnel than expected are renewing their contracts. Not only are the armed forces competing for personnel with other state security organs (such as troops of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Emergency Situations), but recruitment is hampered by demographic problems—notably, a drop in the numbers of fit military-aged males and the reluctance to recruit personnel from some of the fast-growing Muslim regions where extremism is a threat.

The third feature of the latest military reform is an effort to upgrade equipment. Serdyukov had declared that only 10 percent of the military's equipment was "modern," and larger defense budgets in the period after the Georgian War were intended to allow acquisition of more advanced weaponry, with a goal of replacing 70 percent of all equipment by 2020. This was made more difficult by the relatively low capability of Russia's military industry to innovate, partly as a result of years of reduced spending on research and development. Indeed, some of the new equipment was obtained through purchases from foreign suppliers, including NATO member states.<sup>64</sup>

Achievement of these ambitious goals has been hindered in part by the resource constraints that followed the drop in oil revenue and the imposition of punitive sanctions in the wake of the Ukraine crisis. But some of the difficulty stemmed from conflicts between the civilian leadership and military professionals. In December 2012 the top military officer, the chief of the General Staff, was subordinated to the president rather than to the minister of defense. At the same time, Serdyukov was replaced as minister by Sergei Shoigu (the long-serving minister of emergency situations), and General Nikolai Makarov—who had openly

resisted some aspects of the reform—was replaced as chief of the General Staff by General Valery Gerasimov.

Together with the military, the intelligence service was another “power-wielding” institutional actor that regularly found a place at the table when foreign policy decisions were made in the Soviet Union. It continues to do so, without having undergone significant reform, in democratizing Russia. In the USSR, the Committee for State Security (KGB) played an important role not only in conducting intelligence activity in support of foreign policy but also in the policy-making process. Almost continuously since 1973, the director of the KGB had been a member of the key decision-making body, the CPSU Politburo. Indeed, Yuri Andropov, who held this position from 1967 to 1982, managed to succeed Brezhnev as general secretary of the CPSU—a mark of the prestige and importance attained by the KGB in the post-Khrushchev period. Vladimir Kryuchkov, whom Gorbachev appointed director in 1988, again underscored the key role of his agency by leading the attempted coup of August 1991.

In the implementation of foreign policy, the first chief directorate of the KGB had primary responsibility for espionage, including the collection and dissemination of intelligence, the surveillance of Soviet citizens abroad, penetration of “anti-Soviet agencies” abroad, and the coordination of the intelligence efforts of other agencies. As we have seen, it frequently used diplomatic and journalistic “covers” for its agents, and some Soviet embassies were reported to have had two-thirds of the members of their staffs on the KGB payroll. The other components of the KGB were responsible for counterintelligence, military counterintelligence, transportation security, anti-terrorism, economic crime and corruption, surveillance, communications, security guards, and border guards.

The best available evidence on the role of the intelligence and security services in post-Soviet Russia demonstrates that Yeltsin did not truly curb the powers of these agencies, but rather chose to co-opt their support, not only to perform foreign intelligence functions, but also to assist him in his struggle against his political opponents.<sup>65</sup> The price he paid for these services is that the successors to the KGB continued to play a significant policymaking role. No longer do intelligence personnel perform their functions as a single agency, however. In January 1992, after the Soviet Union collapsed, the intelligence functions of the Russian Federation were reconstituted into five separate agencies. In April 1995 the Ministry of Security (which absorbed the six KGB directorates responsible for internal security and counterintelligence) became the Federal Security Service (FSB). This dispersal of KGB functions into multiple agencies did not really diminish the power of the security apparatus or disguise the fact that most of its personnel were inherited from the old KGB.

The directors of all five of the security agencies were made members of the Security Council, and three were also members of the short-lived Defense Council and Foreign Policy Council. On these councils, they clearly played a role in advising the president on issues of foreign and defense policy. Indeed, from the

time the Security Council decided upon military action in Chechnya in December 1994 until their dismissal in June 1996, two of these officials—General Aleksandr Korzhakov, the chief of Yeltsin’s bodyguards, and General Mikhail Barsukov, head of the Main Guard Directorate and then of the Federal Security Service—seemed to exert especially strong and wide-ranging influence upon Yeltsin.

Subsequently, however, Yeltsin’s preference for personnel appointments from the ranks of the security services became even more pronounced. His last three Security Council secretaries (Nikolai Bordyuzha, Vladimir Putin, and Sergei Ivanov) and his last three prime ministers (Yevgeny Primakov, Sergei Stepashin, and Putin) had spent most of their careers in the security or intelligence services. His ultimate successor as president, Vladimir Putin, whose name appears in both lists, was hardly the most politically prominent of these individuals, having risen only to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the KGB and having had no ministerial experience prior to 1998. Rising quickly in the presidential administration following his move from St. Petersburg to Moscow in 1996, Putin soon caught Yeltsin’s eye.

In the third volume of his memoirs, Yeltsin commented on the qualities that commended Putin to him: “a person who was intellectual, democratic, and who could think anew, but who was firm in the military manner.” Yeltsin reported that he debated the comparative assets of Stepashin and Putin, concluding that the former was “soft and he liked to pose a bit,” while Putin “had the will and the resolve” but did not try to impose himself on the president: “Unlike other deputies, who were always trying to lay out their visions of Russia and the world, Putin did not try to strike up conversations with me.”<sup>66</sup> Given his background, it is not surprising that Putin appointed former colleagues from the KGB to key positions, or that he continued Yeltsin’s practice of consulting the security agencies on foreign policy questions.

The security agency that has had the most direct operational impact on foreign policy is the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), which was headed first by Yevgeny Primakov and then—after he became foreign minister—by his former deputy, General Vyacheslav Trubnikov. In May 2000, Trubnikov became a deputy foreign minister and was replaced by Putin’s former colleague Sergei Lebedev. All three had previously been employed overseas as Soviet intelligence operatives under cover—Primakov in the Middle East, Trubnikov in South Asia, and Lebedev (like Putin himself) in East Germany. When Mikhail Fradkov was removed as prime minister in September 2007, Lebedev was moved to the position of executive secretary of the CIS and Fradkov was made director of the SVR. Like Trubnikov, Fradkov had been posted to India in the 1970s, ostensibly in a foreign trade position; his SVR appointment renewed speculation that he had KGB ties in his earlier years.<sup>67</sup> In 2016 Fradkov was replaced by Sergei Naryshkin, a former St. Petersburg KGB colleague of Putin’s, who had previously been speaker of the Russian Duma. Under the Law on Foreign Intelligence, passed in August 1992, the agency reports directly to the president, with little parliamentary oversight.

The Federal Border Service also played an important foreign policy role, since it assumed responsibility for guarding the outside borders of the entire Commonwealth of Independent States. Russia alone shares borders with eighteen countries, five of which are in the CIS, and has over 60,000 kilometers of borders to protect; but Russian security doctrine is based on the premise that it is the outer borders of the CIS that are most vital to Russia's security, and since most CIS countries lack the manpower or resources to secure their own borders, the Russian Federal Border Service—which was taken over from the KGB Border Guards—assumed the function. With respect to the borders it shared with CIS countries, Moscow sought to establish a minimal border regime—"transparent borders"—with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. This proved to be more manageable with the former two states than with the others. Ukraine created its own border troops and has disagreed with the Russians on the extent of patrolling on their common border—a situation much worsened as a result of Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014 and the ensuing violence. Conflict in the Caucasus, especially after the outbreak of war in Chechnya, has required tighter border controls on the movement of personnel and goods on the borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan.

### **Parliament, Political Parties, and Public Opinion**

For most of the Soviet period, the form of government prescribed in the constitution was parliamentary, with the administrative organs of the Soviet state responsible to the USSR Supreme Soviet. Until changes were made in 1989, this bicameral national legislature, comprising a total of 1,500 deputies elected to four-year terms, met for only a few days each year. Between sessions, the Supreme Soviet's powers were exercised by its Presidium, a body of some three dozen members that served as a collective head of state for the USSR and that was empowered to receive foreign ambassadors, ratify or abrogate treaties, and declare war.

The changes made under Gorbachev created the 2,250-member Congress of People's Deputies, which met in a brief annual session to approve the state plan and budget and to consider constitutional amendments. More routine legislative functions were performed by a permanently sitting bicameral inner parliament—the Supreme Soviet—with 542 deputies, chosen from the congress membership. Sitting in two sessions per year, of three to four months each, the Supreme Soviet became a forum of genuine debate and legislative power. Standing joint committees had responsibilities for the oversight of government ministries, including those that dealt with foreign and defense policy. Gorbachev chaired the new legislature in its initial year, but with the creation of the executive presidency, the government assumed a presidential rather than a parliamentary form. Following the August 1991 coup, the Congress of People's Deputies was summoned to Moscow and virtually ordered by Gorbachev and Yeltsin to dissolve itself, in favor of the interim State Council.



The legislatures of the republics, including Russia, were modeled on the USSR legislature. Thus, when the Russian Federation became independent, its legislative branch consisted of the Congress of People's Deputies, which had the power to determine the general lines of foreign and domestic policy, to impeach the president, or to amend the constitution; and a two-chamber Supreme Soviet—often meeting as a single unit—which considered legislation and controlled the government. The congress met only a few times a year and had more than 1,000 members, but the Supreme Soviet sat from six to eight months and had 250 members. The legislature was elected in 1990—when the CPSU still dominated Soviet politics—for a five-year term, and thus seemed destined to clash with Yeltsin's policies. Nevertheless, Yeltsin was granted emergency powers in August and October 1991, and on November 2 the congress gave him the power for one year to bypass the legislature in appointing ministers and passing economic decrees. Yeltsin appointed himself prime minister and formed a "reform cabinet" whose "shock therapy" on the economy soon aroused parliamentary opposition.

There ensued a titanic struggle between legislature and executive that dominated Russian politics in 1992 and 1993. Ruslan Khasbulatov, an ethnic Chechen handpicked by Yeltsin to succeed him as chairman ("speaker") of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet at the time of his election to the Russian presidency, utilized the Presidium's right to issue decrees to establish a strong power base in opposition to Yeltsin, and he urged the establishment of a parliamentary republic with a weak presidency. The parliament's obstructionist tactics occasionally extended beyond questions of domestic politics and economic reform and into the realm of foreign policy—both on issues relating to the near abroad, such as disputes with Ukraine over the Crimea and the Black Sea fleet, and those connected with the "far abroad," such as the START II treaty and the conflict in Yugoslavia; but for the most part, the International Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet—chaired by centrist politicians Vladimir Lukin and Yevgeny Ambartsumov—while critical of Kozyrev's Westward-looking foreign ministry, was more moderate and less confrontational in its behavior.

Yeltsin convened a Constitutional Assembly in the summer of 1993, hoping that adoption of a new constitution would force new parliamentary elections; but he did not succeed in pushing the draft through to adoption. On September 21, he issued a decree dissolving the Supreme Soviet and the congress. The resistance mounted by Khasbulatov and his ally, Vice President Rutskoi, was defeated in a bloody confrontation, badly damaging Yeltsin's reputation in the process.

The constitution adopted in the December 1993 referendum created the bicameral Federal Assembly: an upper house, the Federation Council, with two representatives chosen from each of the 89 units of the federation (now 85); and a lower chamber, the State Duma, with 450 deputies. The Federation Council, which at first included many regional and republican political officials, has special powers on matters affecting the regions and republics, but also it is given sole power to approve the use of the armed forces outside the Russian Federation. The upper

house has three committees that deal with foreign policy matters: International Affairs, Security and Defense, and CIS Affairs.

Both houses must pass a bill by majority vote for it to become law, but a two-thirds vote of each house is required to override a presidential veto or to cancel a presidential decree. The Duma, half of whose membership was originally elected by a proportional party-list method and half from single-member districts, does much of its work in committees. Five of these relate to international issues: the committees for International Affairs, Security, CIS Affairs and Links with Compatriots, Defense, and Geopolitical Questions.<sup>68</sup>

The 1993 constitution, as we have seen, grants most of the foreign policy-making power to the president. Among the limited formal powers of the Duma and Federation Council in this realm is the power to ratify and renounce treaties. Nevertheless, to the consternation of the president and the occasional confusion of foreign states, the State Duma has been inclined to pass non-binding resolutions stating positions contrary to those of the government on sensitive foreign policy issues—particularly territorial issues with other post-Soviet states.

On the whole, parliamentary influence on Russian foreign policy has been quite limited. If anything, its impact is more indirect than direct, for by serving as a forum for the articulation of dissenting opinions that are widely shared among politicians and elements of the public, parliament helps shape the political climate in which executive decisions must be made, and it may thereby influence the tone and tactics, as opposed to the basic directions, of foreign policy.<sup>69</sup>

As we noted earlier, the greater openness of the political process in Russia, and the requirement that political elites engage in genuine electoral competition, has made policymakers pay more attention than ever before to public opinion on international issues; but Russia is still far from being a mature, functioning democracy, and the channels through which public attitudes are transmitted into the political process are in their infancy. Political parties, in particular, remain too undeveloped as organizations to have any major impact on foreign policy. While the opposition parties that dominated the Dumas elected in 1993 and 1995—Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation—attempted to capitalize on the public's confusion about Russia's national identity and its sense of national humiliation, surveys showed the public to be less nationalistic and less favorable to the use of force than were the party elites. Moreover, election polls have shown that there is a wide variety of foreign policy viewpoints among each party's voters, making it extremely difficult to predict a voter's party choice on the basis of his attitudes about Russia's external relations.<sup>70</sup>

The results of the December 1999 parliamentary elections, which propelled the new pro-Kremlin Unity Party into the controlling role in the State Duma, were clearly a consequence of Prime Minister Putin's own popularity—won largely through his vigorous prosecution of war in Chechnya. But credit must also be given to Putin's tactical skill. The composition of the new Duma and

Putin's maneuver in temporarily dividing its leadership posts between the Unity Party and the Communist Party effectively defanged the non-communist political opposition. Finally, the timing of the presidential election—resulting from Yeltsin's prematurely vacating office—threw the opposition off balance, both by shortening the campaign and by avoiding a possible change in public mood over the war in Chechnya.

The opposition was even more decimated in the 2003 parliamentary elections. By then the centrist parties created by Primakov and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov had merged with the Unity Party, forming a pro-Putin centrist bloc called United Russia. In order to split the leftist and ultranationalist vote, the Kremlin stage-managed the creation of a new bloc called Motherland. State-controlled television severely limited the access of opposition parties, and their electoral strength was sapped further by some cases of outright fraud. When the results were announced, United Russia commanded a two-thirds majority in the new Duma, allowing it to assume all of the leadership posts and even to initiate amendments to the constitution—sparking rumors that it might even try to engineer a third term for Putin. Putin, however, continued to insist that he opposed the effort to amend the constitution to allow him to run for a third consecutive term.

The December 2007 Duma elections were an even greater stage-managed triumph for Putin and his supporters. The electoral rules had been altered in 2004 to abolish the single-member electoral districts from which half the Duma deputies had previously been elected; in 2007, all of the 450 seats were to be allocated according to the proportional results obtained by political parties. However, stricter registration requirements were put in place for parties that wished to submit lists of candidates, and the minimum percentage of votes required in order for a party to win any seats was raised from 5 percent to 7 percent.

Putin agreed to place his own name at the head of the party list of the United Russia Party, and after the election he consented to become the party's leader (even though he continued to refuse to accept formal membership in the party). Putin's Kremlin staff, seeking to blunt the appeal of the main leftist opposition party, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, engineered the creation of a new "center-left" party, A Just Russia, which promptly joined United Russia in pledging its support for Putin. United Russia won just under two-thirds of the Duma seats (315 of 450), with A Just Russia capturing 38, Zhirinovskiy's LDPR winning 40, and the Communists (the only consistently anti-Putin party) obtaining only 57 seats. The "liberal" parties, Yabloko and SPS (Union of Right Forces), which had constituted a "democratic" voice in earlier Dumas, were shut out altogether. To no one's surprise, this new "Putinist" parliament overwhelmingly approved President Medvedev's appointment of Vladimir Putin as prime minister in May 2008. Although United Russia again gained a majority of seats in the Duma elected in December 2011, its declared share of the vote declined (and would have declined even more, had the results not been falsified). Losing its two-thirds constitutional majority, United Russia had 238 seats in the new Duma,

the Communists had 92, A Just Russia had 64, and the LDPR had 56. The liberal parties were again shut out, failing to win the necessary 7 percent. As noted earlier, the widespread protests surrounding the results of this election overshadowed Putin's own re-election in March, and relations between Putin's new government and the political opposition entered into a new phase of turbulence.

Despite the occasional noisy protests, however, the opposition has been unable to achieve success in parliamentary elections. The number of Duma seats won by United Russia in the September 2016 elections increased to 343, as compared to 42 for the Communist Party, 39 for the Liberal Democratic Party, and 23 for A Just Russia. Again the liberal parties were shut out. This election differed from the previous ones in that it featured the restoration of constituency representatives, which again accounted for half of the total seats (and probably helped United Russia build its lead). The downside for Putin and his party in this election was the lowered voter turnout, down to 48 percent, which presaged possible trouble for Putin's re-election run in 2018.

The parliament's upper house and the regional politicians whose interests it was supposed to represent also were transformed during Putin's presidency into passive tools of the Kremlin. When Yeltsin's team engineered Putin's initial rise to the presidency in the fall of 1999, regional governors, many of whom had joined forces with the Primakov-Luzhkov opposition bloc early in the parliamentary election campaign, scrambled to get on board the Putin bandwagon. Putin, determined to gather more power in the central state institutions, skillfully outmaneuvered the regional bosses. The parliament acceded to Putin's proposal to remove regional executives and legislative chairs from the Federation Council. Although regions retained the right to select their representatives to the Federation Council, the reform had the effect of replacing regional leaders with full-time senators, thereby reducing their prominence as national political figures and also depriving them of the parliamentary immunity from prosecution. The president also gained the power to remove regional governors for illegal activities. The power of the governors and other regional executives was further diminished in 2004, in the wake of the Beslan school massacre, when Putin pushed an "anti-terrorism" package of laws through the parliament that fundamentally changed the method for selecting governors and other executives of the "subjects of the federation"—the regions and republics and the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Henceforth they were no longer elected, but were appointed by the president, subject to the ratification of the regional legislature.

Measures already had been taken to reduce the quasi-autonomous role that the "subjects of the federation" had gradually assumed in the realms of foreign economic relations and foreign policy. The January 1999 Law on Coordination of the Foreign Relations and International Trade of the Subjects of the Russian Federation required that they submit drafts of proposed international agreements to the foreign ministry for its approval. The law also required advance notice when negotiations were to be conducted with foreign entities, as well as approval

for opening offices abroad. If approved by central authorities, agreements made by the “subjects” were not to have the status of treaties, and their offices were not to be accorded diplomatic status.<sup>71</sup>

Interest groups in Russia initially appeared to be poorly organized and fragmented. While it was possible to identify certain economic interests with particular policy preferences—for example, defense industrialists with protectionism and higher defense spending—early research studies of the lobbying activities of interest groups concluded that they had been of limited effectiveness.<sup>72</sup> However, by 1996 several large financial-industrial groups were exerting increasing influence on the policymaking process. Most of these groups had been built on the foundations of large banks, which had prospered through government favoritism, having been authorized to handle (and profit from) deposits of government funds. As participants in the “loans for shares” stage of privatization in 1995, the owners of these banks had parlayed relatively small investments into controlling shares of large enterprises, especially in the fields of energy and metals. Acquisition of major shares of newspapers, magazines, and television networks further enhanced the political power of this small group of Russian businessmen.<sup>73</sup>

Six of the most powerful of these emerging oligarchs had coordinated with Anatoly Chubais to organize and finance Boris Yeltsin’s re-election campaign in 1996. By mid-1997, their interests had begun to diverge; not only were the leading “clans” quarreling among themselves, but some also were using their media outlets to attack decisions made by Yeltsin’s government.

Although it appeared, as the 2000 elections approached, that the major clans had not been able to maintain their unity, it nevertheless was clear that these business oligarchs, who collectively controlled over one-fourth of Russia’s economy, would exercise considerable influence on the choice of Yeltsin’s successor; but their political power was not limited to the electoral arena. Of equal interest for our purposes is the fact that several of them in effect developed “foreign policies” in support of their financial interests. Thus, for example, Gazprom—Russia’s largest company and largest earner of foreign currency, formerly managed by ex-premier Viktor Chernomyrdin—has clearly sought to influence Russia’s dealings with countries with which it has natural gas supply, exploration, or distribution contracts.

The successor to the Soviet Ministry of the Gas Industry, Gazprom has a near monopoly of natural gas production and transport in Russia. With almost 400,000 employees, it accounts for 20 percent of Russia’s tax revenues and 8 percent of its GDP. It has about 17 percent of the world gas production, 18 percent of estimated reserves, and 15 percent of the global gas transport network. Just over 50 percent of its ownership has been retained by the Russian state and state-owned companies, but under Yeltsin a large part of these shares was managed by the chief executive officer, Rem Vyakhirev—one of the most powerful of Russia’s “oligarchs.”<sup>74</sup> Unable to collect cash payments for gas supplies from other Russian companies in the 1990s, Gazprom acquired shares in their ownership instead.

Among its substantial investments was a large share of Vladimir Gusinsky's media company, Media-Most, which included Russia's Independent Television Network (NTV).

Gazprom exports more than half of its gas production, with about two-thirds going to Europe and the remainder to the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The states of the European Union import about 80 percent of their gas, and one-third of this comes from Gazprom. A major new pipeline network, connecting the Yamal peninsula to Germany, was built in the 1990s, and a second leg was opened in 2012. The world's deepest undersea pipeline, *Goluboi potok* (Blue Stream)—extending under the Black Sea from Russia to Turkey—was completed in 2003.

As might be expected, Gazprom employs its considerable influence to support Russian policies that bolster its interests in expanding its markets and building new pipelines. Consummation of the Russia-Belarus Union would give Gazprom more direct control over its pipeline routes to Europe; if Ukraine would have also entered the union, that control would have been complete. (The May 2001 appointment of Viktor Chernomyrdin, former Gazprom chairman and former premier, as Russia's ambassador to Ukraine prompted further speculation along those lines.) Strong Russian influence in the Central Asian states—and corresponding reduction in American influence—promotes Gazprom's interests in participating in proposed gas pipelines to China and India. Friendly relations with Iran serve the company's interests, given its participation in the joint exploration of the South Persia fields. Sometimes the company's tactics are heavy-handed, generating hostility toward Russia itself. For example, as described in the Russian press by a source close to the government, Gazprom was “demonized” by Bulgarian interests and portrayed as a tool of Russian imperialism in the Balkans after it demanded that Bulgaria pay for its gas in convertible currency.<sup>75</sup> And Russia's relations with Turkey were strained in 2003 when Turkey halted its gas purchases from Gazprom because of its claims that the company was charging unreasonably high prices. In September 2012 Gazprom's alleged abuse of its dominant market position in upstream gas supply markets in the states of the European Union led the EU Commission to initiate an anti-trust case against the Russian giant, which by then was supplying one-third of all EU gas imports. In Chapter 6 we describe in detail the numerous controversies that arose during Putin's second term between Russia/Gazprom and several of the former Soviet states over pricing and supply issues.

As we discuss in Chapter 8, Russia's foreign policy also is influenced by its strong interest in promoting the sales of its military hardware to foreign countries. The Russian defense industry could not survive on the orders that it receives from the Russian armed forces alone, and defense manufacturers form a potent lobby in favor of cultivating and maintaining relationships with foreign countries that are reliable or potential customers. An example of a foreign policy decision that was made with such considerations in mind was the April 2004 veto by Russia of a U.S.-British resolution in the UN Security Council that would have guaranteed

the security of Greek and Turkish Cypriots if they had accepted a UN plan for reunification. It was reported that Russia's veto came at the request of Greece, a purchaser of Russian arms. It also furthered the interests of Russian businesses that have deposited considerable funds in banks and have created numerous "shell corporations" in Cyprus.<sup>76</sup> On the whole, there is substantial evidence that the short-run profit considerations of Russian businesses do on occasion override what would appear to be longer-term considerations of Russian national interest in the development of relationships with other countries. As summarized in a 2004 conference of Western specialists on this subject,

Although Putin would no doubt like to see business operating as the seamless extension of Russian national interest, this has not yet been realized. The dog is not fully in control of its tail, and sometimes the tail may even wag the dog.<sup>77</sup>

At the close of Yeltsin's second term, there were some attempts to try to curb the power of the oligarchs. Prime Minister Kirienko made some progress in the effort to reduce the autonomy of Gazprom, in particular by requiring it to channel some of its huge profits toward payment of back taxes. During his brief term as prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov attempted to tackle the corruption issue by encouraging the investigation and prosecution of Boris Berezovsky for illegally diverting the profits of Aeroflot to foreign accounts. Only after Putin's election as president, however, was there a sustained effort to curb the political power of the oligarchs. In May 2001, Rem Vyakhirev, who had served since 1992 as Gazprom's CEO, was removed. He was replaced by the young deputy energy minister, Aleksei Miller, who had been a protégé of Putin's in the St. Petersburg city government. Shortly thereafter, Putin's chief of staff (and eventual successor) Dmitry Medvedev became chairman of the Gazprom board of directors. Long criticized for nepotism, asset stripping, and other forms of illegalities and corruption, Gazprom's former management, led by Vyakhirev, symbolized the kind of powerful, independent political force that Putin's Kremlin was seeking to rein in.

Nevertheless, "it was no accident" (to use the old Soviet expression) that the only two powerful businessmen who were hounded by state prosecutors to the point of voluntary exile, Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky, happened to have had the largest holdings in media organs that were notably unfriendly to the new president. This campaign against the owners of independent media, combined with other events, produced an atmosphere in Russia that was "hostile to civil liberties, to activists, and, in fact, to anyone with opinions that differ considerably from the Kremlin's."<sup>78</sup>

An even greater impact on Russia's external relations resulted from the arrest in October 2003 of Russia's richest "oligarch"—Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who controlled the powerful oil company Yukos. Khodorkovsky was charged with major violations of Russian tax and accounting legislation, and Yukos was presented with several hefty bills for back taxes that forced it to the verge of bankruptcy, seriously jeopardizing its capacity to export oil at a time when global

oil supplies were very tight and prices were reaching record highs. It was widely believed that Khodorkovsky's real sin was not that he engaged in shady economic dealings, since all of the oligarchs were thought to have done so. Rather, he had clearly violated Putin's instruction to the oligarchs that they steer clear of politics. Khodorkovsky had financed opposition political parties and extended "favors" to members of parliament, as well as openly speculating about a possible run for the presidency in 2008. Equally serious in the Kremlin's eyes was his brazen attempt to usurp from the state authorities the right to shape the country's energy policies. His company—which had managed to transform itself from a "shadowy" enterprise to a firm modeling Western standards of good management and transparency—had attempted to determine the routing of export pipelines from its Siberian fields to the northern port of Murmansk and to the industrial city of Daqing in northern China; it had negotiated a merger with another Russian oil company, Sibneft; and it had invited investment from major Western companies. All of these initiatives apparently threatened the Kremlin's ability to keep control of its valuable petroleum resources, including its determination not to allow the private development of petroleum pipelines.

Although he had obtained his considerable wealth in highly questionable fashion, Khodorkovsky managed to gain a great deal of sympathy from Western businesses and the Western press. It was even said that President Bush had expressed to Putin his concern that the oligarch's arrest might signal a hostile turn toward foreign investment on the part of the Russian government. Nevertheless, Khodorkovsky was convicted in 2005 and sentenced to an eight-year prison term. Yukos was forced to sell its major production assets, the best of which wound up in the hands of a state-controlled oil company, Rosneft. A second trial in 2010 added three more years to Khodorkovsky's term. This sorry chapter in the annals of Russian injustice was allegedly engineered by Putin's deputy, Igor Sechin, and opposed by Dmitry Medvedev. As Medvedev's term as president began in 2008, speculation arose in Moscow that the new president might seek to demonstrate his strength and his independence from Sechin and other *siloviki* by pardoning Khodorkovsky.<sup>79</sup> (Although this did not happen, a Russian court, hearing an appeal in 2012, did reduce the sentence. Khodorkovsky was given early release by Putin in 2014.)

Public opinion generally tracks official views and therefore has marginal influence on the direction and substance of Russian foreign policy. In line with Putin's initiation of an assertive foreign policy beginning in the mid-2000s, opinion polls show an increase in nationalism and pride in the country's status as a great power. Sporadic terrorist attacks in the country and economic hardship have fueled some xenophobia against Muslim and other minorities, although such attitudes are not widely prevalent in Russian society.

Data from the Levada Center's 2016 public opinion polls are instructive. Since the Crimean annexation, the percentage of Russians who responded favorably ("definitely yes" and "rather yes") when asked whether they were "currently



proud of Russia” increased measurably. Whereas 48 percent fell in this category in 2006, the figures went up in 2014 (69 percent) and either rose or held steady in the following years: 2015 (71 percent) and 2016 (68 percent).<sup>80</sup> In 2016, 76 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that Russia should maintain its superpower status and 57 percent claimed Russia as a “great nation” with a “special mission in world history.”<sup>81</sup> 72 percent of respondents agreed with one of two statements—that Russia needed a strong leader at all times or that there were situations, such as at present, when it “was necessary to give full power to one person.”<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, while 39 percent supported a preference that Russia be seen as a “great power, which other countries respect and are a little afraid of,” fully 58 percent preferred Russia to be “a country with a high living standard even though it may not be one of the most powerful countries in the world.”<sup>83</sup>

On the question of whether respondents considered Russia to be a superpower, the percentage of those who felt strongly or positively (“definitely yes” and “rather yes”) rose from 53 percent in 2000 to 64 percent in 2016.<sup>84</sup> High living standards (26 percent) beat military power and nuclear weapons (22 percent) as an attribute for a country to possess in order to garner international respect. However, the latter was seen by a plurality (38 percent) as the factor most important for other countries to respect Russia, with only 5 percent indicating that high living standards were a primary consideration.<sup>85</sup> 77 percent of respondents self-identified as patriots, with 83 percent agreeing that patriotism was a personal rather than a state-determined value.<sup>86</sup> However, when asked if they supported the Russian government’s patriotism promotion program, 46 percent agreed with the statement that such a program was necessary because of internal and external threats and the need to have a citizenry willing to defend national interests, with an additional 17 percent in qualified agreement over concern with the “pork-barrel” potential for the bureaucracy and skepticism about results.<sup>87</sup> Top actions deemed unpatriotic were dodging the draft (47 percent), tax evasion (36 percent), emigration (33 percent) and disapproval of the Crimean annexation (26 percent).<sup>88</sup>

56 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that President Putin should primarily be credited with Russia’s economic success and the population’s growing well-being, and 66 percent said they would like to see Putin as president after the 2018 elections.<sup>89</sup> These responses make sense when one considers that respondents measured their economic status in comparison with those in their immediate environs. When asked about family goals, 58 percent aligned with the aspiration “to live no worse than families in my town, neighborhood,” compared with 23 percent who aspired to a better life than their neighbors and only 6 percent who desired to live like the average family in Western Europe or the United States.<sup>90</sup> The majority of Russians expressed very conventional views of marriage and family life. Most (80 percent) agreed that it was preferable “to marry and live as a family” and 52 percent stated that people married “to have kids and procreate.”<sup>91</sup>

In line with majority support for a strong leader in general and for Putin in particular, a plurality (40 percent) said that the Russian government's fight against "foreign agents" and a Western "fifth column" was "completely justified," with 25 percent disagreeing and 35 percent indicating that the question was difficult to answer.<sup>92</sup> The Russian government's control over visual media (particularly television) allows Putin to shape public perceptions both of himself and his policies. The Russian public's primary source of information is television, with a whopping 86 percent of respondents indicating that they get their news about the country and the world from television, in contrast to 19 percent who say they rely on newspapers.<sup>93</sup> To compound the importance of television, 59 percent say they trust the medium of television for news about their country and the world. The corresponding number for printed newspapers is 9 percent.

On the role of the Orthodox Church, a large majority disagreed with the view that Orthodoxy merited legally defined privileges over atheists and other confessions with 45 percent saying "no" and 24 percent saying "rather no."<sup>94</sup> But 47 percent felt the Church should play a role in supporting public morals and virtues and 41 percent believed that the Church has an important role to play in facilitating "public, national, and political consensus."<sup>95</sup>

On interethnic relations, Russians generally saw no reason for concern in their places of domicile, with majorities disagreeing with questions on the existence of ethnic tensions, a feeling of hostility toward or from those of another ethnicity, and discounting the probability of ethnic clashes.<sup>96</sup> The percentage of those who felt "deeply negative" (6 percent) or "rather negative" (16 percent) toward Muslims was lower overall than those who felt "quite positive" (14 percent) or "rather positive" (13 percent), with a plurality expressing neutrality or indifference (48 percent).<sup>97</sup> The attitude toward immigrants, however, was less charitable, with 66 percent in favor of restricting the influx of migrants, 64 percent agreeing that migrants increased the crime rate, and 62 percent agreeing that migrants take jobs away from Russians.<sup>98</sup>

With respect to the post-Soviet space, few Russians support the re-establishment of the Soviet Union (12 percent in 2016 compared to 25 percent in 2003) and a majority (65 percent in 2016) characterize relations between Russia and the CIS countries in positive terms (5 percent "friendly"; 16 percent "good"; and 44 percent "normal").<sup>99</sup> Strongly supporting the results of the 2008 war with Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia are seen as independent states by 48 percent and 52 percent of respondents respectively.<sup>100</sup> Putin's policies in Ukraine and the Kremlin narrative also garnered support. 80 percent characterized the Euromaidan events as an attempt at a violent coup. 46 percent attributed the troubles to the interest of the West in pulling Ukraine into its orbit, while 27 percent cited nationalistic attitudes and 21 percent noted the corruption of the Yanukovich regime as the reasons. But attitudes toward Ukrainian citizens remained consistently positive. Interestingly, there was an even split between respondents who viewed Ukrainians and Russians as a single nation (46 percent

in 2016, down from 56 percent in 2014—the year of the Crimean annexation) and those who saw them as two separate nations (47 percent in 2016, up from 38 percent in 2014).<sup>101</sup>

72 percent said that the accession of Crimea suggested that Russia was returning to its role as a great power and promoting its interests in the post-Soviet space, and 87 percent agreed that Crimea should be part of Russia.<sup>102</sup> Russians expressed indignation (35 percent) or bewilderment (25 percent) at sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and European countries. 70 percent agreed with the statement that Russia should stick to its policy despite sanctions.<sup>103</sup>

Xenophobic attitudes are not prevalent among most of the population. Fewer than a quarter percentage of respondents in 2016 (22 percent) supported the statement that peoples from the Caucasus should be restricted from living in Russia, down from numbers from peak years—50 percent in 2005 and 54 percent in 2013.<sup>104</sup> These numbers are consistent with data showing that most Russians (9 percent in the “definitely yes” and 51 percent in the “rather yes” categories) feel that the relevant government agencies will be successful in protecting the population from renewed acts of terrorism, and 54 percent agree that the government has enough security measures in place to deal with the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) threat.<sup>105</sup>

In general, Russians saw their country as playing a decisive (13 percent) or fairly important role in solving the world’s problems and rated their country’s influence in international affairs as very big (21 percent) or quite big (53 percent).<sup>106</sup> Russians saw an unfriendly world, with 52 percent agreeing not only that Russia faced multiple internal and external enemies but also that these enemies were not conjured by the authorities in order to make the population “an obedient puppet.” 68 percent agreed that Russia had enemies, with the United States leading the list (72 percent), followed by Ukraine (48 percent). But a majority of Russians had favorable views of Americans, with 7 percent saying they felt “totally positive” and 45 percent saying “rather positive.” The friendliest countries were Belarus (50 percent), Kazakhstan (39 percent), and China (36 percent), with India a distant fourth (18 percent).<sup>107</sup> While a majority (15 percent “definitely yes” and 47 percent “mostly yes”) agreed that Russia needed to repair relations with the West and the United States, they also agreed that most developed countries saw Russia either as a competitor (26 percent in 2016, down from 40 percent in 2014) or an enemy (27 percent in 2016, up from 16 percent in 2014), and 74 percent agreed with the statement that the primary objective behind the toughening of Western sanctions was to weaken and humiliate Russia.

Like its leaders, Russian citizens appear to support what Emil Pain has termed an “imperial nationalism”—a belief that “Russia represents a Europe different from the one supposedly dominated by American-led liberalism.”<sup>108</sup> And, they continue to support Putin’s stewardship of their country’s foreign policy.<sup>109</sup>

Our survey in this chapter of the domestic sources of Russia's foreign policy has clearly shown that the current political system resembles the earlier ones in its placement of decision-making authority in the hands of a chief executive. This state of affairs, together with the clearly secondary role that the 1993 constitution gives to the parliament and the rudimentary state of development of parties and interest groups, makes the personal attitudes and political skills of the top leader and his closest associates of particular importance. This factor should have produced a strong and coherent vision for Russian foreign policy, smoothly and effectively implemented. That it has not done so is, at least in part, the result of several important internal features of Russian politics during Boris Yeltsin's presidency. In a sense, foreign policy became hostage to the two types of bitter political struggles that Russia endured in its first years of independence.

The most visible realm of political struggle was that between Yeltsin and his parliamentary and political opponents. Clearly, the greatest impact of these influences from outside the executive branch was on issues of foreign policy relating to the former republics of the USSR, since these so suddenly became objects of foreign rather than domestic policy. But even in this realm, one major study has concluded that "the fitful incursions of other political forces into foreign policy have accentuated its meanderings more than they have altered its overall direction."<sup>110</sup>

Ironically, it was in the realm of internecine political conflict—the unceasing struggles for power and allegiance within Yeltsin's top entourage—that the greatest impact on foreign policy was felt. Clearly, President Yeltsin's personality and political style encouraged this political infighting. The constant cabinet realignments and bureaucratic reorganizations; the creation of coordinating councils, one after another; and the endless procession of ministers and advisors contributed greatly to the lack of clarity and coherence in Russian foreign policy. While Yeltsin's fragile health and his personal habits accentuated these tendencies, at root was his failure to articulate his own clear and consistent vision of Russia's national interests and to enforce sufficient discipline on his own government team to translate this vision into effective policy.

The foreign policy challenges that Yeltsin had inherited in 1991–1992—like those of the economy and the political system—were passed on to his designated heir essentially unresolved. To be sure, there was no foreseeable external threat to Russia's borders, and the ravenous appetites of the defense sector for the lion's share of Russian resources had been curbed. But Yeltsin was unable to overcome the immense sense of frustration that Russia's policymakers and people felt at having been cast down from the heights of superpower and relegated to a role of seeming insignificance. Although this could be attributed in part to occasional Western arrogance and insensitivity, in part it also testified to Yeltsin's failures as a policymaker and diplomat.

In Chapters 9 and 10, we shall evaluate the extent to which the change from Yeltsin to Putin brought a clearer sense of purpose and a smoother process for

implementing the foreign policy of Russia. We shall also consider the failure of Putin's successor as president, Dmitry Medvedev—overshadowed as he was by his predecessor/prime minister—to forge a genuine post-Putin foreign policy. Finally, we shall examine the directions in policy and in the domestic political environment that were put in place by Putin in of his third term and at the beginning of his fourth term as Russia's president.

## Notes

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2. Sergei Stankevich, "A Power in Search of Itself," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, March 28, 1992, quoted in James Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity," in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), p. 69.

3. See the description of Kozyrev's views in Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 107–15.

4. Vladimir Abarinov and Vitalii Tretiakov, "The Union Left Russia with a Poor Foreign-Policy Legacy," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, April 1, 1992, in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press (CDPSP)* 44, no. 13 (1992), pp. 4–6.

5. The terms "liberal Westernizers," "pragmatic nationalists," and "fundamentalist nationalists" are from Malcolm et al., *Internal Factors*. See especially the chapter by Margot Light, pp. 33–100.

6. Sergei Parkhomenko, *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, July 31, 1992, in *CDPSP* 44, no. 31 (1992), pp. 22–23.

7. Sergei Stankevich, "A Power in Search of Itself," *CDPSP* 44, no. 13 (1992), pp. 1–4. Stankevich's essay bore some resemblance to Stalin's famous article, "Don't Forget the East," published almost three-quarters of a century earlier. Although it notably lacked the Marxist-Leninist terminology, it was similar to the earlier article in seeking to restore balance to Russia's policy. See Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Policy Toward India: Ideology and Strategy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 19.

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9. The passage quoted here is taken from Konstantin Eggert, "Russia in the Role of 'Eurasian Gendarme'?" *Izvestia*, August 7, 1992, in *CDPSP* 44, no. 32 (1992), pp. 4–5. Eggert's article attributes the quotations to Yevgeny Ambartsumov, who subsequently wrote to the newspaper, naming Andranik Migranyan as their author (*Izvestia*, August 25, 1992, in *CDPSP* 44, no. 34 [1992], p. 14). Margot Light, in Malcolm et al., *Internal Factors*, pp. 53–55, repeated this misattribution, apparently having failed to notice the letter and the newspaper's retraction.

10. Quoted in Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change*, p. 117.

11. Vladislav Chernov, "Russia's National Interests and Threats to Its Security," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, April 29, 1993, in *CDPSP* 45, no. 17 (1993), pp. 13–15. The final version of the "foreign policy concept" was classified and never published, but this summary, written by a member of the Security Council staff, is widely believed to be authoritative. See Malcolm et al., *Internal Factors*, pp. 69–70, and Leon Aron, "The Emergent

Priorities of Russian Foreign Policy,” in *The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Leon Aron and Kenneth M. Jensen (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), pp. 17–34.

12. “Primakov Starts with the CIS,” *Moskovskie Novosti* 2 (January 14–21, 1996), in *CDPSP* 48, no. 2 (1996), pp. 11–12.

13. “A Minister the Opposition Doesn’t Curse,” *Obshchaia Gazeta* 37 (September 19–25, 1996), in *CDPSP* 48, no. 39 (1996), pp. 22–23.

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15. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

16. Yulia Kiseleva, “Russia’s Soft Power Discourse: Identity, Status and the Attraction of Power,” *Politics* 35, no. 3–4 (2015), p. 321.

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18. Yulia Kiseleva, “Russia’s Soft Power Discourse,” p. 320.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 322–23.

20. Mark Galeotti and Andrew S. Bowen, “Putin’s Empire of the Mind,” *Foreign Policy*, April 21, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/21/putins-empire-of-the-mind/>.

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82. Ibid. Table 3.2.13.

83. Ibid. Table 3.2.14.

84. Ibid. Table 3.2.15.

85. Ibid. Tables 3.2.17 and 3.2.18.

86. Ibid. Tables 3.2.21 and 3.2.22.

87. Ibid. Table 3.2.23.

88. Ibid. Table 3.2.25.

89. Ibid. Tables 9.1.2. and 9.2.22.

90. Ibid. Table 20.1.

91. Ibid. Tables 20.17 and 20.18.

92. Ibid. Table 12.16

93. Ibid. Table 16.4.

94. Ibid. Table 19.9.

95. Ibid. Table 19.5.

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97. Ibid. Table 19.8.

98. Ibid. Tables 21.8–21.10. Percentages are combined from the “completely agree” and “rather agree” categories.

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101. Ibid. Tables 25.3–25.6.

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## Russia and the States of the Former Soviet Union

### The Post-Soviet Space

Until the term became “politically incorrect” in the late 1990s, Russia used *blizhnee zarubezhe* (near abroad) to refer to the fourteen non-Russian former Soviet republics that became independent states when the Soviet Union collapsed. After 1991, relations with these states became an increasingly important focus of Russian foreign policy. As we saw in Chapter 5, initially there was confusion among Russians regarding their relationship to the “near abroad.” For some it was psychologically difficult to think of these countries as independent states. Even many of those who accepted the separation of Russia from its “internal empire” thought of it as temporary. The idea that boundaries that earlier had been interior—and in many cases, quite arbitrarily drawn—would become international borders seemed to Russian nationalists to be unnatural. Fundamentally the issue involved the nature of the Russian state itself. Thus, to many Russians (and non-Russians alike) the relationships among the former fifteen union republics were issues more of domestic policy than of foreign policy.

Gradually, however, the realization took hold that these former vassals of the Kremlin were in fact independent countries and that they had become the concerns of foreign, not domestic, policy. What is still at issue is the nature of the relationship between Russia and the post-Soviet space. More specifically, what has yet to be determined is the degree of hegemony Russia is to exercise over these newly independent states.

A central fact about the states of the former Soviet Union is their diversity. Each state is unique, though they can usefully be considered in several groups. The Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), for example, are in a class of their own because of the intensity of their nationalism and their determination to break as sharply as possible from Russian control. Alone among the Soviet republics, the Baltic states were independent as late as 1940, and they were never reconciled to their status as component parts of the USSR. All the former Soviet

republics (with the possible exception of Belarus) have a determination to remain independent, but that determination is clearly strongest among the Baltic states. They were the first to break away from the Soviet Union—having their secession formally approved by Gorbachev's State Council in September 1991—and they alone among the fourteen non-Russian states have consistently refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). More than that, they are now members of NATO and the European Union (EU).

Thus we can identify as a second group the eleven states that at one time or another have affiliated with Russia as members of the CIS. Within that group, there are also subgroups. The first would be Ukraine and Belarus, the two Slavic states that agreed with Russia on December 8, 1991, to form what they initially termed the Commonwealth of Slavic States. Then there are the three Transcaucasian states—Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan—and the five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. (One could also group Azerbaijan with the five Central Asian states, because they share a common Muslim heritage.) In a category of its own is Moldova, a territory largely carved out of pre-war Romania. No matter how the states are grouped, it must be stressed that, in terms of culture, level of economic development, resources, and history, each of the former Soviet states is unique.

### **The Commonwealth of Independent States**

Ten former Soviet republics are currently joined in the Commonwealth of Independent States. (Eight are full members; Ukraine and Turkmenistan are associate members. Georgia and the Baltic states are not in the CIS.) The CIS is an organization whose birth was accidental and whose future remains as uncertain now as it did at its birth. Those who founded the CIS really wanted a different type of union.

In the aftermath of the failed August 1991 coup, both Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev recognized that the Soviet Union would have to be replaced by a new type of union. Gorbachev wanted a union that would give its republics more autonomy, particularly in the economic sphere, but one that would retain considerable powers for the center, particularly in the realm of foreign policy and national security. Essentially Gorbachev wanted a redesigned federal system, which he proposed to call the Union of Sovereign States.<sup>1</sup> Boris Yeltsin also wanted a new union, but he wanted a decentralized system that would give the central government only those powers that the component members were willing to cede. In a word, Yeltsin favored some type of confederation.<sup>2</sup>

In late 1991 there was some uncertainty regarding which republics would join a new union, but Gorbachev and Yeltsin were in agreement that Ukraine would have to be included. Ukraine was the birthplace of the Russian state in the ninth century, when several Slavic tribes were united into an independent polity identified as "Kievan Rus."<sup>3</sup> Few in Russia contemplated the idea of an independent,

sovereign Ukrainian state. But equally few grasped the strength of Ukrainian nationalism. On December 1, 1991, a referendum in Ukraine sealed the fate of a new union when 90.3 percent of the voters opted for independence.

Boris Yeltsin was forced to improvise quickly. A week after the Ukrainian referendum, the Russian president met with Leonid Kravchuk and Stanislaw Shushkevich, his counterparts in Ukraine and Belarus, and on December 8 at Belovezhskaya Pushcha (a forest preserve near Minsk) agreed to create the Commonwealth of Slavic States (CSS). The Commonwealth was less of a union than Yeltsin had wanted, but Leonid Kravchuk insisted that Ukraine would not participate in any kind of a federation. A loose commonwealth was the only arrangement Kravchuk would accept.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of the other republics wanted some form of affiliation with Russia, and accordingly the CSS was expanded and renamed the Commonwealth of Independent States on December 25, 1991, with the signing in Alma-Ata (now Almaty) of a protocol admitting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Of the fifteen union republics, only the Baltic states and Georgia chose not to join. Within Azerbaijan and Moldova strong domestic opposition to the Commonwealth prevented their national parliaments from ratifying their membership. Azerbaijan withdrew from the CIS in October 1992. As we shall see, pressure from Russia subsequently forced Georgia to join, Azerbaijan to rejoin, and Moldova to ratify its membership. Georgia withdrew in August 2008, in the wake of its war with Russia. Of the fifteen union republics, only the Baltic states have never been members, and the Russian government never intended to pressure them to join.

The CIS was an instrument of Russian foreign policy in two ways. It served as a means for coordinating policies among its members. It was also a mechanism for asserting Russian hegemony over the other eleven states. Both goals have been pursued simultaneously. Initially prominence was given to the former, but with the passage of time the latter has become an important feature of Russian policy. In particular, beginning in the mid-2000s, Russia has used “soft power” tools (discussed earlier in Chapter 5) as a means of exercising influence. According to the text of the original CIS agreement, the members agreed to coordinate foreign policy activities. They specifically committed themselves to creating a “common military-strategic space” under a joint commander, including a unified control over nuclear weapons. That commitment, along with an agreement to create a “common economic space,” was abandoned within two years.<sup>5</sup> The idea of a “single economic space” was revived in December 2010 when Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus signed the documents for its creation following the initiation of a Customs Union joining the three countries in July 2010. In November 2011, President Medvedev announced ambitious plans for the creation of a Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) by 2015.<sup>6</sup> The EAEU was formally inaugurated on January 1, 2015, with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan as members.

Among the many international organizations in existence, the CIS is unique. The CIS is neither a political alliance nor an economic community, though its activities have elements of both. It is a loose federation with no independent powers of governance. There is provision for central institutions—principally the Council of Heads of State and the Council of Heads of Government—but these councils lack authority to impose CIS decisions on any member. Decisions require the unanimous consent of all those voting. As a matter of practice, most of the decisions reached have not been put into effect. Not infrequently several members fail to appear at scheduled summit meetings. By failing to participate in a CIS decision, a member is free to opt out of compliance, but even those members participating in decisions and agreeing with them are not obliged to comply and often do not.

Behind the failure of the CIS to become the integrated system Yeltsin and other Russians wanted it to be lay the determination of each state to preserve its newly acquired independence and sovereignty. This was true of each member without exception, though there were considerable differences in the degree to which some states were determined to maintain their distance from Russia.

Initially, perhaps Ukraine and Belarus represented the poles of sentiment within the CIS regarding a willingness to integrate with Russia. If the Commonwealth was weak, it was because of Ukraine's determination to keep it that way. Leonid Kravchuk wanted no common law, no common citizenship, and no status for the CIS in international law. It is generally believed that he viewed the Commonwealth basically as a step toward complete separation from Russia. Other members who opposed the creation of strong coordinating structures and close cooperation with Russia were Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Turkmenistan. Those favoring more integration and cooperation were Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and of course Russia itself.

No issue better illustrated the bitter struggle between those forces pressing for and against integration than the effort to create a unified CIS military command. As noted earlier, one of the expressed objectives of the Commonwealth was the creation of a "military-strategic space under a joint command," and the promise to pursue this goal was probably the necessary price the republic presidents had to pay in order to obtain the acquiescence of the Soviet armed forces in the dissolution of the USSR. But from the very beginning, differences among the new states emerged over the issue of establishing unified armed forces. At the first CIS summit, on December 30, 1991, Ukraine claimed the right to create a national army under Ukrainian command. President Leonid Kravchuk also demanded Ukraine's control over military units on its territory, including the Black Sea Fleet, which was headquartered in the Crimean city of Sevastopol. One of Kravchuk's first acts as president was to require all military personnel in Ukraine to take an oath of allegiance to the Ukrainian state. At the time, the army was only 40 percent ethnically Ukrainian and was commanded by an

Map 6.1 Commonwealth of Independent States



*Source:* Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, University of Texas at Austin.

officer corps that was 75 percent Russian. Clearly, Kravchuk perceived that the lack of control over the armed forces on Ukraine's territory was a serious threat to its sovereignty.

Russia's military leaders opposed the idea of national armies—also being sought by Moldova and Azerbaijan—among CIS members, hoping instead to place the bulk of the former Soviet armed forces under a unified CIS command. The opponents of integration prevailed, however, and the CIS leaders agreed to permit those states that so desired to create their own armies; but they also agreed to establish the Council of Defense Ministers, headquartered in Moscow, and to make Russian General Yevgeny Shaposhnikov commander-in-chief of the CIS Joint Armed Forces. While there was no agreement on the size and composition of the so-called Joint Armed Forces, there was no doubt initially that the nuclear forces of the former Soviet Union would be under the CIS Joint Command. It soon became evident, though, that the concept of a joint command—even over nuclear forces—was illusory. Not only Ukraine but also several other members were suspicious that the CIS Joint Command was in effect a surrogate for the Russian High Command. These suspicions were heightened by the close personal relationship between President Yeltsin and General Shaposhnikov.

If Moscow could not unify the armed forces of CIS member states, it could take measures to establish control over former Soviet armed forces stationed inside the territory of the Russian Federation. That occurred on May 7, 1992, when the Russian government announced its decision to create an independent Russian army. Unable to prevent military decentralization, Russia had no choice but to create its own national command. For about a year the CIS Joint Command continued to coexist with the Russian High Command, though the exact responsibilities of the former were unclear. In theory, the CIS Joint Command might have been utilized to control nuclear weapons, but in fact, Yeltsin concurred with the Russian military that all nuclear weapons would be controlled by Russia. By mid-1993, all support for a unified CIS command had dissipated, and on June 15, its abolition was announced in Moscow.<sup>7</sup>

Moscow's decision to take control over nuclear weapons was reached with difficulty and required a period of several years to accomplish. It was made possible in part with the strong support—financial and political—of the United States. When the CIS was created, nuclear weapons (including both tactical and strategic bombs) were deployed in four states: Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. Tactical bombs are designed for use on the battlefield and held little value for Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Thus agreement was easily reached among the three to remove all tactical stockpiles from their territory. Strategic weapons proved to be a more difficult issue to resolve. All three states committed themselves in principle to ridding their territory of all nuclear weapons, but as Ukraine soon found itself enmeshed in a series of contentious issues with Russia, Leonid Kravchuk balked at the idea of turning strategic nuclear weapons over to Russia. Additionally, the question of compensation for the nuclear fuel in these weapons was raised.

With the collapse of the CIS Joint Command, Russia demanded that all nuclear inventories be transferred to Russia. In this Moscow had the strong support of the United States, which viewed the problem as a serious nuclear proliferation threat. The United States and other Western governments pressured the three new “nuclear states” to adhere to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to ratify the START I treaty. In pursuit of that goal U.S. Secretary of State James Baker met with the foreign ministers of the four states in Lisbon, Portugal. On May 23, 1992, they signed a protocol to the START I treaty providing that Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine would ratify the NPT “in the shortest possible time.”<sup>8</sup>

Russo-Ukrainian relations during 1992–1993, however, were frequently antagonistic, and Kravchuk, pressured by domestic forces demanding retention of nuclear weapons, balked at carrying out the terms of the Lisbon Protocol. Ukrainian nationalists clearly saw these weapons as a useful bargaining tool. Kravchuk wanted as a quid pro quo for total nuclear renunciation security guarantees from the United States and financial compensation. During 1992 and 1993, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan ratified the START I treaty, leaving Ukraine as the only holdout. As of late 1993, Ukraine still possessed 1,656 nuclear warheads.



In early September Yeltsin met with Kravchuk at Massandra in Crimea and negotiated an agreement to cancel a portion of Ukraine's huge debt to Russia in exchange for the transfer to Russia of Ukraine's nuclear weapons. That deal collapsed in a firestorm of criticism that Kravchuk encountered on his return to Kiev, so again he reneged. To appease the United States, from which he was seeking financial assistance, Kravchuk promised not to aim Ukraine's nuclear weapons at the United States.<sup>9</sup> This was little consolation to Russia.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Massandra Accords the new administration in the United States renewed efforts to stop Ukrainian nuclear proliferation. President Bill Clinton, Kravchuk, and Yeltsin met in Moscow on January 14, 1994, to resolve the issue. Concessions were made on all sides. Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan were promised financial compensation for the highly enriched uranium in the warheads, and Ukraine was given security assurances by both Russia and the United States. The Trilateral Agreement was signed, committing Ukraine to bring START I into force and to "accede to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as a nonnuclear-weapon state in the shortest possible time."<sup>10</sup> Even this agreement encountered resistance in Kiev. In June 1994 Kravchuk was replaced as president by Leonid Kuchma, who succeeded in November in obtaining overwhelming parliamentary approval of the NPT. This removed only one of the several problems in Russo-Ukrainian relations.

### **CIS Integration**

The failure of Ukraine, historically the closest of all the CIS member states to Russia, to move toward integration with Russia was paralleled by every other CIS member state. Politically the CIS is not a federation, and economically it is not a common market. Even though until 1991 the former Soviet republics were governed as a unitary state with a command economy, as independent states they have achieved far less genuine economic integration than the EU.

Expectations of economic cooperation were initially high, because as parts of the Soviet Union the former republics were in fact economically interdependent. The non-Russian republics were dependent upon Russia for their supplies of energy, particularly oil and gas. Ukraine provided grain and other foodstuffs and rolled ferrous metal. Central Asia supplied cotton for the clothing industries in the western republics. It made economic sense for the CIS member states to agree upon rules to govern the exchange of goods and services among themselves. In addition, at independence the ruble was the common unit of currency for each republic. Russia was in the dominant position, because all the presses for printing rubles were within its domain. If the ruble were to remain a common unit of currency, a central bank and policymaking institution to maintain a uniform fiscal policy would have to be created. But these incentives for economic integration were not strong enough to create workable economic institutions. In the end, each republic chose to create its own currency.

During the early years of the Commonwealth, there were unsuccessful attempts to establish a viable economic framework for CIS members. Ironically, it was Russia, the strongest proponent of economic integration, that in practice severely undermined the possibilities. President Yeltsin's top domestic priority was radical economic reform (the so-called shock therapy), which he introduced in January 1992. According to CIS principles, Russia was obligated to consult with its CIS partners regarding economic policy. Yeltsin did not do so, despite the fact that his policy of price decontrol had a ruinous impact on all those states using the ruble for their currency. Ukraine, for one, was outraged. But Russia was not alone in its disregard of its neighbors. Several CIS members placed restrictions on the export of goods to the Russian Federation, which in turn led to retaliation by Moscow. These moves and countermoves stemmed from rising nationalist pressures in each of the newly independent countries that were once former Soviet republics.

Russia's unilateral monetary policies created a crisis for the former Soviet states relying on the ruble. In July 1993 the Russian government introduced a currency restriction prohibiting the use of pre-1993 ruble notes in Russia and permitting only Russian citizens and enterprises and foreign visitors to exchange old rubles for new ones. When this reform was introduced, nine of the CIS countries still relied on the ruble. Eventually each state came to the conclusion that national sovereignty required it to abandon the ruble for its own national currency.

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia also took a harder line on border crossing by citizens of the Commonwealth. In August 2000 Russia withdrew from the Bishkek Agreement on visa-free travel by CIS citizens. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov gave as a reason the challenges to the country's security from terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking. In addition to its desire to reduce illegal immigration, Russia expressed concern about Chechen guerrillas who were crossing into Russia from former Soviet republics.

Because the membership of the CIS is so diverse with so many conflicting interests, occasionally smaller groups of CIS member states have attempted to organize to achieve specific limited objectives. Thus, in March 1996 Russia signed an agreement with Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to create a Customs Union. This quartet became a quintet in February 1999, when Tajikistan voted to affiliate with the Customs Union. The Customs Union itself remained an idea on paper until it was formally instituted in January 2010. After contentious negotiations over the adoption of a uniform customs code, the union started functioning on July 6, 2010, when Belarus, which had been a holdout, ratified the agreement despite reservations. The three countries expressed a strong interest in removing all internal customs barriers by July 2011 and in moving ahead toward the very ambitious goal of creating a Eurasian economic union. On February 1, 2012, the Eurasian Economic Commission, a permanent bureaucratic organization set up to coordinate the operation of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space, was established. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were expected to join the Eurasian

integration project. In June 2012, Uzbekistan's leadership announced its intent to join the free trade zone.<sup>11</sup>

But, as one Russian analyst pointed out, "The chief problem with all integration projects in the former Soviet space, and not just with the Eurasian Economic Community, is Russia's deficit of resources that could really be of interest to its partners." The Customs Union, however, has been working better than expected. By November 2012, in the opinion of economists from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, unlike the CIS free trade agreement, which had created little actual integration, the Customs Union doubled trade among the parties through the adoption of common tariffs and reduction of non-tariff barriers.<sup>12</sup>

At a summit meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Commission in Minsk in October 2013, the leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan confirmed their earlier projection of erecting a Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on the foundation of the Customs Union by 2015. But Kazakh President Nazarbayev cautioned against haste, arguing that the Customs Union "needed to solve existing problems" before proceeding to deepen integration and to admit new members. He complained about the rising trade imbalance in favor of Russia and called for "simplification and liberalization" of the customs code to allow Kazakhstan freer access to Russia's energy market. Even as he continued to pressure Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to join the Customs Union, President Putin, for his part, noted that if Ukraine pursued an agreement with the EU for a free trade area, its accession to the Customs Union would be "impossible."<sup>13</sup> American scholar Stephen Blank suggested that Putin's pressures on Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Ukraine to join the Customs Union on his terms, which would largely foreclose free trade agreements with the EU, "indicate the fundamentally geopolitical motivation behind this project."<sup>14</sup>

Despite the wariness of its non-Russian members, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) was founded as planned on January 1, 2015. Moscow's hopes of Ukrainian membership in this body were dashed on the political shoals of Russian-Ukrainian conflict, with the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and active support for the insurgency in eastern Ukraine ensuring an enduring estrangement between the two countries. Through a combination of blandishments and inducements, Russia was successful in persuading Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to join the EAEU. As with all Russian regional initiatives in the post-Soviet space, the Eurasian Union project embodies geopolitical and economic objectives. But the EAEU's common market will not be in place until 2025.<sup>15</sup> So far, then, with meager tangible benefits in trade, the force of Moscow's political weight rather than the promise of economic gain has held the EAEU together.

### **Regional Stability and Russian Security**

The failure of the CIS to integrate all its members economically or militarily did not prevent Russia from using the organization to establish its dominance

over the former Soviet territorial space. During the early period of his administration, Yeltsin was anxious to demonstrate to his new partners in the West that Russia's imperial period was a thing of the past, and Moscow moved slowly and cautiously in its relations with the near abroad. As the number and intensity of conflicts among CIS members grew, and as domestic political pressure for asserting Russia's authority increased, the Yeltsin administration increasingly adopted a tougher strategy.

That policy changed yet again in the latter half of the 1990s as Moscow increasingly came to view the use of coercive measures as costly and unproductive. Several factors led to a less coercive strategy. One was the disastrous experience of the war in Chechnya; another, the economic strain of using military force; and finally, the decline in the influence of the Ministry of Defense.<sup>16</sup>

The problem confronting Russia was how to use the CIS to build an effective mechanism for security. Integration was not working, so other means had to be devised to achieve the desired ends through multilateral cooperation. An attempt toward that end was the Collective Security Treaty. Originally, the idea of a collective security force had been worked out bilaterally between Russia and Kazakhstan. However, the idea appealed to other CIS members, so at a CIS summit in Tashkent on May 15, 1992, a treaty was signed that ultimately brought together Armenia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>17</sup> In principle the treaty created a defensive alliance whose ultimate decision-making authority was to be a collective security council.

There were serious limitations with the mechanism for collective security. To begin with, it was never comprehensive. Notably absent were Ukraine and Moldova. In 1999 several members defected. Uzbekistan withdrew in March, giving as its reason Moscow's military activity "in certain CIS member states." Azerbaijan and Georgia withdrew later that year.<sup>18</sup> The Collective Security Treaty also had structural limitations. Essentially a defensive alliance, the treaty could come into force only when one sovereign entity attacked another. It did not cover subnational conflicts, and, with the exception of the war over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the conflicts that plagued the CIS were essentially internal struggles or civil wars. Notwithstanding these limitations, the treaty remained a potentially useful instrument of Russian influence. For one thing it provided a legal foundation for the CIS Unified Air Defense System, which was officially established by an agreement signed on February 10, 1995.<sup>19</sup>

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, and the introduction of U.S. forces into Central Asia, Russia sought to use the treaty as an instrument to balance U.S. influence in the region. At a summit meeting of Collective Security Treaty members in April 2003, formal steps were begun to transform the alliance into a political-military organization to be known as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The CSTO was slow to develop any military capability.

At the CSTO summit in Moscow in June 2009, all members, except Belarus and Uzbekistan, signed a document creating a Collective Rapid Reaction Force (CRRF). Belarus President Lukashenko had refused to attend the summit in retaliation for a Russian ban on Belarussian dairy imports. President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan objected to the possibility left open in the document of the CRRF being used to deal with internal crises in the CIS countries. When the CSTO conducted joint military exercises at the end of June designed to test interoperability of the units, Uzbekistan refused to participate.<sup>20</sup>

The CSTO met in an informal summit in Yerevan, Armenia, following the violent June 2010 ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan between the Kyrgyz and minority Uzbek. An earlier uprising in the spring had resulted in the ouster of sitting President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and his replacement by interim President Roza Otunbayeva. The CSTO's ineffectiveness in dealing with the Kyrgyz crisis led participants to discuss the formation of an anti-crisis response mechanism and to consider amendments to the CSTO charter that would allow the use of the CRRF to deal with crises in CSTO countries. Accordingly, at the Moscow summit in December, the CSTO was endowed with new powers "to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member countries from internal as well as external enemies." But Karimov's refusal to sign on to these changes meant that, given the principle of consensus upon which the CSTO is based, the adopted decisions cannot be enforced.<sup>21</sup>

When the CSTO met again in an informal summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, in August 2011, Presidents Lukashenko and Karimov did not participate in the proceedings, which were attended by the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Even so, the attendees continued to discuss ways to make the CRRF effective. Perhaps because of Uzbek opposition, CSTO General Secretary Nikolai Bordyuzha suggested a revision to the proposal for rendering aid to CIS governments facing internal uprisings, stating that peacekeepers rather than the CRRF would be deployed in such instances.<sup>22</sup> This did not prevent Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the CSTO in 2012. Turkmenistan has used its avowed neutrality to stay out of the CSTO.

However, since the death of Islam Karimov in September 2016, his successor Shavkat Mirziyoyev's more positive moves toward Russia have raised expectations in Moscow of greater cooperation. Uzbekistan participated in a staff exercise in Tajikistan in April 2017, an event that presaged more such involvement in the future. Interestingly, joint military exercises (Dushanbe Anti-Terror 2017) were held in Tajikistan under the aegis of the Commonwealth of Independent States Anti-Terrorism Center with Armenia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Normally held under the CSTO umbrella, this change appeared to have been undertaken with a view to facilitating future Uzbek participation in such exercises.<sup>23</sup> Planned bilateral military exercises with Uzbekistan at the country's Forish training facility, the first since 2005, also indicate a welcome move from Moscow's perspective. With these small steps and exploration of other forms of cooperation on regional

security matters, Moscow, doubtless, hopes eventually to lure Uzbekistan back into the CSTO. However, the success of these efforts is doubtful as Mirziyoyev has shown no signs of relenting on this issue.<sup>24</sup>

Another area where the CSTO continues to fight an unpredictable battle is in the effort to prevent the stationing of foreign bases in member countries. Pressured by Moscow and the CSTO to revoke the contract for the U.S. military base at Manas, former Kyrgyz President Bakiyev complied but then immediately signed a new lease with the Americans for a U.S. Air Force “transit center.” However, in June 2014, the United States vacated the facility and moved its logistical operations center for Afghanistan from Kyrgyzstan to Romania.<sup>25</sup>

### **Russian Peacekeeping**

An alternative mechanism that was to prove more effective than the collective security approach was peacekeeping. Developed by the United Nations, the institution of peacekeeping involves the use of collective armed force to intervene when invited by the warring parties to monitor a truce or cease-fire. Within the United Nations, peacekeeping developed as an alternative to peacemaking (i.e., the use of armed forces to curb aggression). Originally, peacekeeping by the United Nations was designed to limit interstate conflict, but, with the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping operations increasingly dealt with intrastate fighting or civil wars.<sup>26</sup> It was in this kind of conflict—internal wars within states bordering on Russia—that peacekeeping offered the greatest prospects.

Moscow was concerned about the outbreak of ethnic and national conflicts in the newly independent states bordering Russia for several reasons:

1. in several of the regions there were Russians who might need protection;
2. conflict might spread to the Russian Federation;
3. the success of separatist groups outside Russia might encourage separatism within Russia;
4. Islamist fundamentalism might spread to Russia’s southern neighbors and then to Russia itself;
5. there was a belief that its status as a “great power” obligated Russia to assume responsibility for keeping the peace in the region.

Some analysts argue that to these considerations might be added a sixth: hegemonic aspirations—the desire of Russia to re-establish control over the territory once dominated by the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

Basically, the principles of CIS peacekeeping were modeled on UN principles. An attempt was made in July 1992 to organize a peacekeeping force in advance that could be called upon in case of a crisis, but no such force ever materialized (as was the case with similar UN efforts in the 1940s). Peacekeeping operations were organized or planned for five conflicts that developed in the former USSR.

Not one of these operations was carried out as specified in the CIS agreement or in accordance with UN principles. The five conflicts were the civil war in Tajikistan, two secessionist movements in Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), the war over Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, and the independence struggle of the Trans-Dniester region in Moldova.

In Central Asia the major conflict was the civil war in Tajikistan. It was a complex war, in which the antagonists differed over political, ideological, ethnic, and regional issues. The war began in late 1991 when a coalition of forces that included groups seeking democracy, Islamic forces, and ethnic Pamirs and Garmis challenged the authority of the government which appealed to Russia and other CIS member states for assistance against the opposing forces. That appeal was received sympathetically in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, because of widespread fear that the civil war in Tajikistan would spread instability throughout the region and possibly enhance the prospects of spreading Islamist militancy. Russian involvement was virtually inevitable because of the presence in Tajikistan of Russian (former Soviet) forces, which found themselves caught between warring factions. In 1993 Russian troops were sent to guard the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. That same year the leaders of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan formally authorized the formation of a CIS peacekeeping force.<sup>28</sup> This operation, controlled by Russia and not invited by the Tajik insurgents, reached a size of approximately 25,000 troops. Russia was accused of using peacekeeping as a pretext for establishing its control over Tajikistan, and indeed, for all practical purposes, while the war lasted, the country was a Russian protectorate. But Moscow made a genuine effort to bring both sides to the negotiating table, and ultimately it succeeded. In June 1997 the presidents of Russia and Tajikistan and the leader of the Tajik insurgency signed a Moscow-brokered pact ending the war.<sup>29</sup>

Russia's use of peacekeeping forces to influence the outcome of the civil war in Tajikistan and of the secessionist movements in Georgia and Moldova led to a backlash against Moscow's concept of peacekeeping. At the same time the internal revolutions that replaced pro-Russian regimes with pro-Western governments (Georgia and Ukraine) have strengthened the Kremlin's determination to use peacekeeping as a method to stop the erosion of influence among the states of the former Soviet Union.

Reflecting this predilection, training exercises designed to ensure security in the Russian Federation and CSTO member states (code-named Clear Sky-2012 and Unbreakable Brotherhood-2012) were conducted in Russia and Kazakhstan. While the Clear Sky exercises were aimed at neutralizing threats from NATO, the Unbreakable Brotherhood drills simulated situations involving the possible use of peacekeeping forces in areas such as Nagorno-Karabakh and in Central Asian countries where interethnic conflicts were likely to occur.

The history of the CIS has been one of steady decline. Its meetings are only partially attended. Its decisions are largely ignored. The CIS has failed to achieve

international recognition as a viable regional organization. During the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, the dominant trend was the drive among the non-Russian members for full national sovereignty and independence. Under Putin this trend has been enhanced, as some members have been inclined toward a pro-Russian orientation and others have been more inclined toward Europe.

Still, no one is proposing the dissolution of the CIS, certainly not the Russians. On occasion the CIS has been useful for coordinating national policies. One issue on which all states agree is that Islamist extremist terrorism is a threat. Putin has persuaded the CIS to establish an anti-terrorism center, headquartered in Moscow. Though Moscow has used peacekeeping to dominate and prevent the extension of outside influence in the CIS region, Russia's peacekeeping has at the same time benefited the states involved by significantly reducing fighting among the parties and in some measure resolving the differences between them.<sup>30</sup>

On issues that are central to Russia, Moscow has relied on bilateral rather than multilateral negotiations. Ultimately, Putin's preference for bilateral over multilateral relations was evidenced when he abolished the Russian Ministry for CIS Affairs and gave its responsibilities to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Russian Security Council.

The trend toward Russia's reassertion of power in the post-Soviet space is worth noting. In the first year of Yeltsin's administration, when the Atlanticist orientation in foreign policy was preeminent, Moscow sought to adjust to a post-imperial mindset in its relations with countries of the former Soviet Union where many ethnic Russians constituted significant minorities and with which Russia had only recently shared a communist past and a single economy. This position was staunchly opposed by Russian nationalists who resisted what they saw as craven capitulation to the West. As we noted in Chapter 5, over time, the middle ground or Eurasianist view gained consensus in response to disaffection with Western policies on NATO and in the Balkans, the failure of liberal economic reform urged by the IMF, and an increasing sense that the West, especially the United States, sought the weakening and humiliation of Russia. Already evident by 1995, this feeling of alienation from the West took stronger root under President Putin, whose objective to restore Russia's status as a great power found popular support.

Putin's concerns over Western interference in the post-Soviet space intensified when the "color revolutions" in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005) replaced Russia-friendly governments in these countries. Fearing a domino effect that could engulf even Russia, Putin instituted assertive efforts to reverse what he saw as the insinuation of Western influence in Russia's traditional influence domain:

1. using "soft power" resources focused on drawing a contrast between traditional values of Orthodoxy and conservatism and Western hedonism;



2. asserting Russia's role as protector of compatriots (ethnic Russians) in the post-Soviet space;
3. enlisting state resources for information dissemination through television, digital, and social media sources to present "news" from the Russian perspective both at home and abroad;
4. flexing the economic muscle of trade and oil and gas exports to compel changes in the external behavior of states in Russia's immediate neighborhood, and offering economic incentives when such inducements induce a pro-Russia result.

As we shall see below in our examination of Russia's bilateral relationships with countries of the former Soviet Union, these "soft" coercive strategies and/or positive inducements—singly or collectively—have been used, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, to bring about a change in their behavior in line with Moscow's preferences.

### **Russo-Ukrainian Relations**

The long negotiations on becoming a non-nuclear-weapons state reflected Ukraine's deep sense of insecurity. Fundamentally Kiev had no need for nuclear weapons and indeed could not even afford the cost of their upkeep, but in Ukrainian public opinion the suspicion was rampant that Russia did not accept the permanence of Ukrainian independence. Two issues that contributed to that fear involved the Black Sea Fleet and the status of Crimea.

The Black Sea Fleet, a naval force of approximately 300 ships, was one of the four fleets of the Soviet Union. It has its headquarters in the Crimean port of Sevastopol, a city under Ukrainian sovereignty but populated largely by ethnic Russians. In a provocative move, in January 1992, the Ukrainian minister of defense laid claim to the bulk of the Black Sea Fleet. Ignoring the existence of the CIS Naval Command, Kravchuk appointed a Ukrainian naval commander for the fleet. Not surprisingly, the Russian response was outrage, particularly from the military, but including the voice of Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi. President Yeltsin's response was moderate. He rejected the Ukrainian claim out of hand, but nevertheless indicated a willingness to negotiate the issue. Within Russia there was consideration of putting the fleet under CIS control, putting it under Russian control, or sharing control with Ukraine. As the prospects for the CIS command declined in 1992, sentiment in Moscow shifted to the latter two alternatives.

Nationalist elements in both Kiev and Moscow took an extreme position on the Black Sea Fleet issue, but Yeltsin was anxious to avoid a rupture with Ukraine, and even Kravchuk understood that in the end he would have to compromise. Over a period of several years the two leaders met often in an attempt to settle the controversy. Four separate agreements were signed between 1992 and 1994, but the issue was not resolved, although the differences were narrowed considerably.<sup>31</sup>

Agreements at Dagomys and Yalta in the summer of 1992 provided for division of the fleet and for joint financing until the proportions due for both countries could be established. A year later in Moscow, the two presidents agreed on an equal division of the fleet on the condition that agreement could be worked out for the basing of the Russian part of the navy on Ukrainian territory.

This issue of basing rights was the source of bitter exchanges between hard-liners in both countries. On July 9, 1993, the Russian Supreme Soviet resolved that the port of Sevastopol was a Russian city and therefore part of the Russian Federation. This decision, even though repudiated by Yeltsin, inflamed Ukrainian public opinion and made more difficult Yeltsin's efforts at compromise. He professed to be "ashamed of the decision."<sup>32</sup>

Another attempt was made at Massandra in September. This meeting sought simultaneously to resolve the issues of Ukraine's nuclear weapons and of the Black Sea Fleet by turning both the nuclear weapons and the fleet over to Russia in exchange for the cancellation of Kiev's debt to Russia (largely incurred by energy imports). It appeared that Moscow had achieved a coup of sorts, but the Massandra deal went the way of earlier agreements when nationalist elements in Kiev forced the government to back down. Kravchuk's last deal before leaving office in 1994 was an agreement in April that the Black Sea Fleet would be divided on an equal basis, after which Ukraine would sell part of its share to Russia.

The Black Sea Fleet issue was never really a security problem, but an expression of the larger political differences between the two states. One of these differences was territorial.

Russian authorities, particularly in the legislature, claimed the Crimean peninsula and especially the city of Sevastopol as part of Russian territory. Boris Yeltsin himself never endorsed those territorial claims, but in December 1996 the upper house of the parliament, the Federation Council, called on Yeltsin to impose a moratorium on any agreement on the Black Sea Fleet until a special commission examined the status of Sevastopol. Supporting this position was Moscow's popular mayor, Yuri Luzhkov. President Leonid Kuchma, Leonid Kravchuk's successor, insisted that the loss of Sevastopol would mean the end of Ukrainian independence.

A related and potentially more serious issue was the status of the Crimean peninsula. Crimea was until 1954 a Russian *oblast* (region). According to the last Soviet census in 1989, 67.04 percent of its population was Russian, while Ukrainians composed only 24.75 percent. Almost half of Ukrainians speak Russian as their native language.<sup>33</sup> In 1954 Nikita Khrushchev arbitrarily transferred Crimea from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR to mark the 300th anniversary of the unification of Ukraine with Russia. In the Soviet period the shifting of an oblast from one republic to another meant little, because all political power was concentrated in Moscow. When Ukraine became an independent state, the magnitude of the loss to Russia quickly became apparent. Russia's nationalistic Supreme Soviet voted overwhelmingly to examine the constitutionality of

Khrushchev's transfer. On May 21, 1992, the Supreme Soviet went further and resolved that the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 "had no legal force from the moment it was adopted."<sup>34</sup> The Russian parliament called for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine and representatives of Crimea. Ukrainians were furious and rejected out of hand the idea of negotiations. Extremist rhetoric was heard from both sides. One Russian member of parliament threatened war between the two countries, to which a Ukrainian legislator replied, "The Crimea will be Ukrainian or it will become totally depopulated."<sup>35</sup>

The presidents of both countries were anxious to prevent this issue from forcing a rupture in relations and took steps to cool passions. Fundamentally, as on the issue of the port of Sevastopol, Yeltsin was not prepared to press Russian territorial claims against Ukraine. At a Russo-Ukrainian summit in Dagomys, Yeltsin and Kravchuk reached agreement on a number of contentious issues including the division of property, the opening of state borders with visa-free access, and the principle of dividing the Black Sea Fleet. Both sides made political concessions. Kravchuk affirmed his country's intention not to withdraw from the CIS, and both presidents agreed that neither country had a territorial claim on the other. Tacitly, Russia acknowledged that Crimea was an integral part of Ukraine.

Boris Yeltsin's administration smothered but did not completely suppress Russian claims to Crimea. In Russian nationalistic circles, the claim to Crimea has been reasserted periodically not only by extremists in the parliament but even by some liberals, such as the late Anatoly Sobchak, the former mayor of St. Petersburg. Former Russian Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi was a strident defender of Russia's claim to Crimea. Furthermore, within Crimea itself there was a domestic constituency for reuniting Crimea with Russia. In January 1994 the first presidential elections ever held in Crimea resulted in the victory of Yuri Meshkov, a Russian nationalist, who had made reunification with Russia one of the planks in his campaign platform. In a concession by Kiev, Crimea succeeded in acquiring a significant degree of autonomy under the Ukrainian constitution, including the right to establish Crimean citizenship.

Political turmoil within Russia and Ukraine in 1995 and 1996 made impossible a resolution of these differences. Following his re-election in 1996 and the improvement of his health in 1997, Yeltsin was able to reassert his executive authority. Yeltsin's increased political clout in 1997, together with the strong powers over foreign policy under his tailor-made constitution, permitted the Russian president to override domestic opposition and come to terms with Ukraine. A compelling motive for him to do so was the movement within NATO to expand into Eastern Europe. Russia's leverage against the powerful forces of NATO was meager, but one instrument to bolster its defense was to strengthen the weak bond between the two Slavic states.

This Yeltsin did in the spring of 1997. In late May an accord was finally reached on the Black Sea Fleet. For appropriate compensation Russia was permitted to station its portion of the Black Sea Fleet at the port of Sevastopol for twenty

years. This accord set the stage for President Yeltsin to make his first visit to Kiev, where he and Leonid Kuchma signed a treaty of friendship. Moscow agreed to write off most of Ukraine's huge oil debt to Russia. At the ceremony Yeltsin publicly observed, "We respect and honor the territorial integrity of Ukraine."<sup>36</sup>

Notwithstanding the goodwill shown by the two leaders, suspicions remained strong in both countries. The Ukrainian parliament refused for a year and a half to ratify the Black Sea agreements that gave Russia its much-needed naval base in Sevastopol. In retaliation the Russian upper house waited until 1999 to ratify the May 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership abandoning territorial claims on Ukraine, and then they did so only on the condition that the Black Sea Fleet agreements be ratified by Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin, like his predecessor, wanted not just good relations but as much integration with Ukraine as possible. Fundamentally, that meant keeping his Slavic neighbor out of the Western orbit. No single concern was more basic than preventing Ukrainian membership in NATO. Leonid Kuchma's terrible human rights record made Kiev an unlikely NATO candidate, though support for Ukraine did exist in the West.<sup>37</sup> On May 23, 2002, Kuchma chaired a meeting of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council that voted to initiate the process of Ukrainian membership in NATO. Moscow was displeased with this act of geopolitical disloyalty, but it had its own arsenal of economic and political instruments with which to constrain Kiev. Chief among these was the need for both countries to cooperate in the distribution of Russian natural gas through Ukrainian gas pipelines to markets in Western Europe. In October the prime ministers of the two countries set up an international consortium to manage and develop Ukraine's natural gas system for thirty years. Ukraine was not completely satisfied with the terms of the deal, but Moscow hinted that it was prepared to build a pipeline (through Finland) that would bypass Ukraine altogether.<sup>38</sup>

Kuchma could not avoid the geopolitical reality of Ukraine's dependence on Russia. He needed only to observe the pressure Moscow put on Belarus (see below) to realize his own vulnerability with respect to energy and food. When Putin visited Kiev in January 2004 he was assured by his host that Ukraine "looks east, not west."<sup>39</sup> As the end of the Kuchma era approached, Ukraine appeared to be no closer to union with Russia than it was at the beginning.

Putin's determination to secure Ukraine's continuing orientation toward the east propelled him into a rare diplomatic blunder. The Russian president openly campaigned for Kuchma's chosen successor, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, even appearing at his side prior to both the preliminary and runoff elections in the fall of 2004. Even before the runoff results were certified in Kiev, and amidst reports from international observers of massive electoral fraud, Putin had declared that the outcome was an "absolute clear" Yanukovich victory. While half a million demonstrators massed in Kiev in support of the opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, and U.S. and European diplomats sought ways of defusing

the crisis, Putin summoned Kuchma to Moscow to flatly dismiss the idea that the election should be repeated under stricter supervision.

When the Ukrainian Supreme Court ordered a new runoff, Putin—drawing parallels to recent changes of government in Serbia and Georgia—declared that the demonstrations and election nullification set a dangerous precedent, threatening to destabilize the “post-Soviet space.” Nevertheless, he said that he would accept the choice of the Ukrainian people and work with whichever candidate prevailed. Putin was not only forced to accept a repeat of Ukraine’s presidential election (held on December 26), but the fact that Viktor Yushchenko—the pro-Western candidate—won decisively. Many in Europe and Russia viewed this outcome as a giant step toward Ukraine’s integration into the West and correspondingly a crushing blow to Russia’s foreign policy. Those supporting Yushchenko adopted the color orange to identify their movement, thus giving rise to the description of his presidency as the “orange” revolution.

Ukrainian politics during the Yushchenko years, however, turned out to be messier than either Moscow or Kiev had anticipated. On his first visit to Moscow as president, Yushchenko assured Putin that “Russia is our strategic partner.” At the same time, he confirmed the pro-Western Yulia Tymoshenko as Ukraine’s new prime minister.<sup>40</sup> Tymoshenko insisted that her government was prepared to participate in Russia’s program for a “single economic space,” but only if that did not interfere with Kiev’s movement toward Europe, by which she meant giving priority to joining the World Trade Organization, the EU, and ultimately NATO. By contrast, the opposition forces of Viktor Yanukovich wanted to create a free economic zone uniting Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

Kiev made several modest steps to mollify Moscow over its underlying pro-Western orientation. Yushchenko, for example, decreed that all civil servants be required to be fluent in the Russian language and that all citizens be protected in their right to speak Russian. He appointed Russian politician Boris Nemtsov to advise him on measures to promote a rapprochement between Moscow and Kiev. Still, in his contacts with foreign leaders Yushchenko openly declared his determination to affiliate with the West. In the spring of 2005 he met with George W. Bush to proclaim a “strategic partnership” with Washington, and with the president of Poland to affirm his government’s determination that Ukraine be a part of Europe, even going so far as to challenge Russia’s leadership in the post-Soviet space.

The tensions in Russo-Ukrainian relations led in December 2005 to a serious confrontation over Russia’s supply of natural gas to Ukraine, described in the Russian press as a devastating “gas attack.” Vladimir Putin, in a speech on December 8, informed Kiev that as of January 2006 Gazprom would raise the price of natural gas from \$50 per 1,000 cubic meters to approximately \$180 per 1,000 cubic meters (later raised to \$220–230). Putin charged that Russia was subsidizing Ukrainian consumers by some \$4.6 billion. Although Moscow claimed that its actions were based purely on market considerations, the fact that Gazprom

did not raise the price of gas for friendly Belarus or the Trans-Dniestr region revealed the underlying political rationale for the action.<sup>41</sup> Yushchenko pleaded in vain for a gradual transition to the higher price. He even threatened to raise the leasing fees for basing the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Crimea, in response to which the Russians threatened to re-examine the issue of Ukrainian sovereignty over the Crimean peninsula. The fact remained that Russia had the big guns, and in the end Kiev had to come to terms with it.

One of Moscow's big guns was cocked on January 1, 2006, when Ukraine balked at Moscow's demands. As of January 1, 2006, all deliveries of natural gas to Ukraine from Russia were stopped. Russia was motivated in part to influence the upcoming Ukrainian parliamentary election. Presumably the damage to Ukraine's economy would work to Viktor Yanukovich's benefit at Yushchenko's expense. One complication of Russia's tactic was that Ukraine's pipelines not only transported gas from Russia to Ukraine but also from Russia to Europe. Thus, a cut-off of supplies threatened Europe's economy and Russia's reliability as an energy source for Europe.

As quickly as the crisis began, it was resolved. A complicated compromise was worked out. In three days gas transmission was resumed. The brief stoppage had hurt Russia's reputation as a reliable supplier of energy resources, triggering several European countries to give serious consideration to measures to reduce their dependence on Russian energy. But there was a payoff for Russia. Yushchenko's government was brought down by the Supreme Rada (Ukraine's parliament) because of strong dissatisfaction with the deal that ended the stalemate over gas. Worse was to befall Yushchenko. The parliamentary elections in March 2006 resulted in a substantial victory for the party of Viktor Yanukovich, Moscow's favorite. Yushchenko's party received a meager 14 percent to Yanukovich's 32 percent and Tymoshenko's 22 percent. Throughout the spring and summer a bitter struggle among the parties ensued, from which Yanukovich emerged as prime minister. When he visited Moscow in August Yanukovich was warmly embraced by Putin. The issue of the price for gas remained unsettled until the late fall, when the prime ministers of both countries agreed on a price of \$130 per 1,000 cubic meters, a price Ukraine could live with—but with difficulty.

Yanukovich had hoped his pro-Russian orientation would bring more benefits from Moscow. In the summer of 2007 he visited Moscow with the expectation of obtaining special assistance on the pricing of Russian gas, but he was largely unsuccessful. Russia was cognizant that with minor exceptions Ukraine's pro-Western orientation remained intact even with Yushchenko's wings clipped. Moscow had come to view Ukraine as both a friend and a competitor. The "orange" revolution and the gas crisis it produced had led to a fundamentally new Russian political tactic toward the member states of the CIS. Previously, Moscow had been prepared to supply the CIS member states with certain strategic commodities at lower-than-market prices, provided they eschewed membership in the military blocs of other countries, prohibited foreign bases on their territory, and

rejected what Russia regarded as threats to its vital interests in defense matters. But as the “orange” revolution (and the “rose” revolution in Georgia) changed that calculus, Moscow resorted to using Gazprom as an instrument to extract a substantial financial price.

This is clearly evident in the ongoing energy-related disputes that have continued to ruffle Russo-Ukrainian relations. Early in February 2008, Ukrainian officials disputed Gazprom’s claims that Ukraine had an accumulated debt of \$1.5 billion on its 2007 supplies that had been priced at \$130 per 1,000 cubic meters. Gazprom responded by briefly halving supplies in early March, which were restored when Ukrainian Naftogaz agreed to pay back the debt. In 2008, Ukraine’s price for gas was set at \$179.50 per 1,000 cubic meters, which amounted to less than half the price paid by Europe. This period of discounted gas prices ended in 2009. Failing to reach an agreement on outstanding debts and the price formula for 2009, Gazprom, in a reprise of 2006, temporarily shut off all gas supplies for Ukraine’s use on January 1, 2009, and raised the price to \$250 per 1,000 cubic meters. Ukraine countered with the offer of \$201 and an increase in gas transit fees, at which point Gazprom hiked the price to \$458. On January 7, Prime Minister Putin accused Ukraine of siphoning off gas meant for Europe and ordered a halt in gas transit via Ukraine. As in 2006, the spat between Russia and Ukraine threatened winter gas supplies to Europe, which then received 80 percent of its Russian gas through pipelines via Ukraine. The supplies transiting to Europe were resumed a few days later when Ukraine agreed to allow EU, Ukrainian, and Russian observers to monitor gas flows. On January 18, Putin and Tymoshenko signed a deal whereby Ukraine would pay the market price for gas in 2010. In November 2009, Gazprom and Naftogaz formalized an agreement on gas prices and transit fees for 2010, allaying fears of renewed disruptions in gas supplies to Europe during the crucial winter months.<sup>42</sup>

Russian-Ukrainian relations improved after the inauguration of Viktor Yanukovich as president in February 2010. In April 2010, the Supreme Rada ratified the Kharkov agreements extending Russia’s lease on the Black Sea Fleet base in Sevastopol for 25 years in return for cheaper gas prices. This internally divisive “base for gas” deal allowed Ukraine a 30 percent discount on the market price for gas. Russia was also pleased with Yanukovich’s May 2010 announcement that Ukraine would abandon formal pursuit of NATO membership, after which the Ukrainian parliament passed a law in June declaring Ukraine a “non-aligned” state.

Yanukovich’s pro-Russian leanings, however, did not ensure that Ukraine would toe the Russian line. For instance, Prime Minister Putin’s April 2010 proposal for a merger of Gazprom and Naftogaz and the offer of even lower gas prices in return for Ukraine’s membership in the Customs Union did not get any traction in Kiev. Later that same month, in an unavailing effort to placate Russia, Ukrainian foreign minister Konstantin Grishchenko suggested that Ukraine would cooperate with the Customs Union but not join that body. The first anniversary of the Kharkov agreements extending the Russian lease on Sevastopol was met

with calls from opposition leaders for its revocation. Moscow also objected vehemently when a U.S. missile cruiser (USS *Monterey*) visited the Black Sea and participated in the Sea Breeze 2011 military training exercise.<sup>43</sup>

Under these circumstances, Gazprom was unwilling to renegotiate the gas pricing formula agreed upon by Putin and Tymoshenko in 2009. For their part, Ukrainian authorities seeking to renege on the 2009 formula arrested Tymoshenko in August 2011, arguing that she violated the law in signing those contracts and calling into question their legitimacy. This action elicited a strongly worded rebuttal from Russian foreign ministry officials who insisted that the contracts were drawn up in accordance with the laws of both countries. Human rights advocates in Europe and elsewhere strongly criticized the harsh punishment meted out to Yulia Tymoshenko, the former prime minister.

Russia continued to exert political pressure on Ukraine to join the Customs Union in return for discounted gas prices, and Ukraine continued to resist such overtures. In August 2011, Ukraine rejected Gazprom's offer of negotiating a discounted price for gas on the "Belarussian model" with a takeover of Naftogaz, the Ukrainian gas transit system, but indicated that it would join in "soft forms" of integration without formally joining the Customs Union. The unwillingness of both sides to compromise led to yet another escalation of the conflict over gas pricing, with Prime Minister Mykola Azarov threatening to tear up the contract and reduce the purchase of gas supplies from Russia by two-thirds over the next five years.<sup>44</sup> Medvedev's rejoinder was unequivocal: "If you want a discount on gas, you must become a member of the integrated space. Otherwise, if that's not something you want, offer to sell us the gas transit system."<sup>45</sup>

After Putin's inauguration as president in May 2012, President Yanukovich sought anew to review the gas contract, which had Ukraine paying approximately \$450 per 1,000 cubic meters. But the stalemate on gas prices continued. In December 2012, Yanukovich's planned Moscow visit was canceled on Russia's initiative in part due to a disagreement over whether a discussion of Ukraine's Customs Union membership should precede gas price reduction talks. Ukraine's response to this impasse was to reduce its contractual volume of gas imports from Russia, even though such a move would trigger the take-or-pay clause of the 2009 contract, and to seek "reverse supplies" from Europe to bring down the price per 1,000 cubic meters to about \$350.

The constant tussles with Ukraine over pricing and transit fees led Moscow, for its part, to push ahead with the planned construction of two gas pipeline systems—Nord Stream and South Stream. The first links Russia to Europe through the Baltic Sea and the second would pass under the Black Sea, with neither pipeline traversing the territories of the post-Soviet space. Nord Stream's twin pipelines began pumping gas in November 2011 and October 2012 respectively. South Stream, which was expected to come online in October 2015, was abruptly shelved by President Putin in December 2014 as Russian annexation of Crimea and the consequent stiffening of EU opposition to the project made its continuation unsustainable politically and



economically. The failure of South Stream put a serious dent in Russian plans to bypass pipelines running through Ukraine to export gas to Europe.<sup>46</sup> Energy analysts had believed that South Stream would, when operational, take over the gas supply that was formerly pumped by way of Ukraine.<sup>47</sup>

As 2013 neared an end, Ukraine appeared to be facing a fundamental choice about its economic orientation: whether it should participate in the EU's zero-sum deal, which would effectively eliminate the option of joining the Russia-led EAEU. Under pressure from its newer members in the east, the EU had offered to conclude an Association Agreement with Ukraine at its summit in Vilnius in November, but the offer was also conditional upon an improvement in Ukraine's internal human rights environment—to be signified, most notably, by the release of Tymoshenko from prison. Mired in recession, Ukraine would likely gain economic benefits from a more open EU market. Acceptance of the association with the EU, however, was clearly incompatible with membership in Russia's planned Eurasian economic zone. In July 2013 Putin traveled to Ukraine for the 1025th anniversary of the advent of official Christianity in Kievan Rus. The tensions between Putin and the Ukrainian leader were quite evident. Upon Putin's return to Moscow, Russian customs officials initiated what was effectively a six-day stoppage of Ukrainian goods moving across the border into Russia, dramatically reminding Ukraine that one-fifth of its exports went to Russia.<sup>48</sup>

Apparently succumbing to persistent Russian pressure, Ukraine, which appeared to be on the verge of signing the trade and cooperation pact with the EU at the Vilnius summit, abruptly suspended that effort for reasons of "national security" and on November 21 announced its intention to pursue "active dialogue" with Moscow on an economic deal. This turnabout came amid fears of new "gas wars" with Russia. The Ukrainian "pivot to the East" came after the Ukrainian parliament rejected a series of bills that would, if passed, have met EU concerns over the human rights environment in Ukraine. This move was met with howls from the political opposition and with angry public protests. Yanukovich's party had sufficient strength in the Ukrainian parliament to defeat efforts to remove the government, but hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, concentrated in Kiev's main square, sought to force the issue in the streets.<sup>49</sup> The conflict escalated when the regime's forceful response led to bloodshed. The rival suitors—both the Western powers and Russia—observing the mounting crisis, urged restraint, but the internal stresses in Ukraine's politics and society proved difficult to reconcile.

The ensuing dramatic events in the troubled relationship between Ukraine and Russia would have severe consequences for Russia's relations with the West, and are described in Chapter 10.

## **Belarus**

Belarus is the only former Soviet republic that has moved toward genuine integration with Russia. Ethnically and culturally, the people of Belarus are similar

to Russians. Belarus before 1991 had never been an independent state. Its history was one of incorporation into various empires—the Lithuanian domain, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Prussian Empire, the Russian Empire, and finally the Soviet Union. The people of Belarus had a weak sense of national identity. For that reason its leaders were more supportive than those of other republics of Gorbachev's efforts to unite in a new union. Economically Belarus was dependent upon Russia. It relied on Russia for its security. It was home to a large concentration of military facilities that had been part of the former Soviet Union's defense infrastructure (including nuclear forces). Thus it was natural that Belarus was anxious to participate in the CIS as an original founding member.

Although it was closer to Russia politically and culturally than any other CIS member, Belarus under its first president, Stanislau Shushkevich, quickly ruled out any thought of subordinating its sovereignty to Russia. What Shushkevich wanted was close cooperation without merging with Belarus's giant neighbor. Officially the country defined its foreign and security policies as neutralist. Accordingly, President Shushkevich initially chose not to sign the CIS Collective Security Treaty, discussed earlier. This decision, however, proved unpopular with the Belarus parliament, which voted in April 1993 to seek entry into the treaty. In June 1994 Shushkevich reversed his position and agreed to affiliation.

Russian pressure had contributed to the change in Belarus's position, as Moscow threatened to charge non-signatories of the Collective Security Treaty for officer training. Shortly after Belarus's adherence the two countries signed a comprehensive military agreement providing for joint training, the maintenance of a joint air defense system, and cooperation in arms development and export.

Belarus's first presidential election, held in 1994, was won in a landslide by pro-Russian Aleksandr Lukashenko. To bolster his program for closer ties to Russia, Lukashenko submitted a referendum asking the public to endorse integration with Russia and recognition of Russian as equal in status to the Belarusian language. Voting on May 14, 1995, the public approved both propositions by a solid 83.3 percent. Immediately thereafter the two countries abolished customs checkpoints along their common border.

Russia's interest in Belarus was not without important qualifications. Security interests were primary. In particular, Moscow wanted legal authorization to station Russian troops on Belarusian territory. This it received in a treaty on cooperation and friendship, signed on April 12, 1994, which the Belarusian parliament ratified in April of the following year. But Lukashenko initially wanted much closer economic relations, to bolster his own weak economy, and on this issue Moscow was hesitant. The Belarusian economy was in such bad shape that integration could only end up as a burden on Russia (as the German Democratic Republic proved to be when it merged with the Federal Republic of Germany). Additionally, under both Shushkevich and Lukashenko, Belarus remained a command economy resistant to economic reform. Lukashenko's ideas on economic reform differed sharply from those of Yeltsin. Consequently, Yeltsin resisted

the lifting of trade barriers and rejected plans for a monetary or customs union between the two countries.<sup>50</sup> Lukashenko's suppression of the media at home and the increasingly authoritarian nature of his administration, not to mention a mercurial pattern of behavior, put off many in Russia who were trying to nurture a fledgling democracy.

Strong sentiment remains in Russia, particularly among communists and nationalists, for the creation of a union with more teeth than the CIS. During the presidential campaign of 1996, Yeltsin found himself in a bitter struggle with his communist opponent Gennady Zyuganov. Starting the campaign as an underdog, the incumbent attempted to win over as large a segment of the pro-union electorate as possible. As a part of the strategy, Yeltsin signed two agreements pledging integration between Russia and three other CIS members. On April 2, 1996, Russia and Belarus signed a treaty creating the Community of Sovereign Republics, and on May 29, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan agreed to the "Treaty on the Deepening of Integration in the Economic and Humanitarian Fields." Echoing the goals of the CIS, this new community envisaged the formation of a "single economic space," including a common market. Suggesting that this nucleus of states could expand to include others, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev—always a proponent of integration—termed the treaty the "4 + *n*" document.

Both treaties were little more than vague commitments to integrate. There was clearly no intention to merge into a new state. The treaties explicitly affirmed that all the parties would retain their national sovereignty. Reference was made to the coordination of foreign policies, synchronization of economic reforms, and a common currency and budget, but no bodies were created to implement these goals, nor were any precise timetables established for integration. The treaty between Russia and Belarus permitted either party to opt out with six months' notice.<sup>51</sup> If electoral considerations were paramount to Yeltsin, then the treaties paid off in his success in the June voting and the July runoff.

Moscow has run hot and cold on the idea of integrating Russia with a Lukashenko-governed Belarus. Union of the two countries is part of a larger vision, shared by nationalists, of uniting all the Slavic peoples into a single state. When Yevgeny Primakov became prime minister in 1998, in the aftermath of the Russian financial collapse, the prospects for union appeared to improve. Primakov was known to be sympathetic to integration. On December 25, 1998, Boris Yeltsin and Aleksandr Lukashenko signed a declaration asserting:

Russia and Belarus have taken a historic step on the path of unifying the two fraternal countries and peoples: on December 25, 1998, in Moscow, we signed a declaration on the creation of a union state in the coming year and a treaty and an agreement on guarantees of equal rights for our states' citizens on the territory of Russia and Belarus.<sup>52</sup>

Though there was discussion that the new "union state" would have a common budget, common foreign policy, single customs space, and even a single currency,

the fact remained that the two states continued to be sovereign and full members of the international community.

In 1999 a joint Belarusian-Russian group worked out the text for a treaty of unification. Resistance to a close embrace was strong within the Kremlin, in part because of the ruthless dictatorship Lukashenko exercised in Minsk, and in part due to the disarray of Belarus's economy. Lukashenko railed at what he considered to be the emerging treaty's lack of radical character, but he nevertheless pushed for its adoption. On December 8, 1999—eight years to the day after the signing of the treaty that created the Commonwealth of Slavic States—Yeltsin and Lukashenko finally signed a document referred to as a Treaty on the Creation of a Union State. Widely understood to be little more than a declaration of intent, the treaty elicited little enthusiasm from the Russian president, who was described in the press as “exhaling heavily with an air of doom, like a bridegroom who had been dragged to the altar by force.”<sup>53</sup> Vladimir Putin (who would shortly replace Yeltsin) noted that the integration process would take years. Meanwhile, he said, “the Union of Belarus and Russia will exist only on paper.”<sup>54</sup>

Presidents Putin and Lukashenko sparred continuously over the form a union between their countries would take. The central constitutional issue was whether the union would be unitary or confederal. Putin proposed that Belarus be incorporated into the Russian Federation as its ninetieth subject, that it operate with the Russian ruble, and that it be subject to Russian law. It was an offer Lukashenko could not accept.

Both men took care to preserve the outward forms of comity, though Lukashenko's public statements frequently betrayed bitterness. Moscow still wanted to maintain friendly relations with its western neighbor. It continued to provide Minsk with financial assistance, including selling natural gas to Belarus at prices well below world market prices. Russia's willingness to subsidize Belarus's gas consumption would soon evaporate, however, as relations between Moscow and Minsk deteriorated.

Wrangling between the two governments over the form of the proposed union and control over the currency worsened during Putin's second term. In Belarus the media became increasingly anti-Russian, resulting in a decline in that country for public support of a single state.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, surveys showed that support for some type of union remained high in both countries.

A bilateral commission worked for six months to draft a constitution acceptable to both sides. In the spring of 2003 a compromise of sorts was worked out, providing for a “union of two sovereign states” to be headed by a Supreme State Council (not a president, as Lukashenko wanted). Under no circumstances would Putin agree to be outranked by his mercurial neighbor. While ostensibly narrowing the constitutional differences, the two sides made no headway on the issue of a common currency. Russia insisted that it maintain complete control over ruble emission.<sup>56</sup> Giving Belarus even partial control over the ruble was impossible because Belarus's GDP was no more than 3 percent of Russia's, and Belarus's

unreformed economy still relied on subsidizing industry by printing new money. Inevitably, Russia would be faced with unchecked spiraling inflation.

Another stumbling block arose in Russo-Belarus relations when Russia insisted on changes to natural gas prices. Lukashenko insisted on the domestic price, not the higher world price, and he made threats to impose charges on Russia for various services provided by Minsk if Moscow failed to agree. Putin was not about to be blackmailed or coerced, yet he was also not inclined to push differences with his fraternal neighbors to the point of crisis. He was, nevertheless, not above applying economic pressure. In February 2004 Gazprom for the first time completely stopped the flow of natural gas into the Belarusian transport system. That forced Lukashenko to accept Russian terms (i.e., world prices) for natural gas. Bitterly, Lukashenko observed, "our relations with Russia will now be poisoned with gas for a long time to come."<sup>57</sup>

He was not totally wrong. The price of gas and who controlled its transmission has remained a dominant issue between Russia and Belarus throughout Putin's terms as president. On more than one occasion Gazprom, Russia's gas monopoly, threatened a cutoff of gas if Belarus did not pay more or concede greater control to Russia of its gas transmission system, Beltransgaz. Equally contentious were the conditions demanded by Lukashenko for introducing the Russian ruble into his country. Lukashenko demanded larger economic concessions than Moscow was prepared to pay. These and other issues put the question of political union on the back burner entirely. Moscow's hope for integration with Belarus rested more on the idea of a common market linking Russia and Belarus with Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Ever since the Agreement on a Single Economic Space was signed in 2003, the leaders of the four countries met sporadically to try to work out the details. Relations, however, turned sour in the aftermath of Lukashenko's re-election as president on March 19, 2006. He was informed of Moscow's intention to quadruple the price of natural gas sold to Belarus. Lukashenko was outraged: "Boosting gas prices to that level is an unequivocal rupture of relations," he threatened.<sup>58</sup> In addition to raising the price of natural gas, the Russian government announced that as of January 2007 it was terminating the tax breaks for oil exports to its ostensible "ally." In effect Moscow was confronting Minsk with a choice: either accept Russia's terms for a real union (e.g., adopting the ruble as a common currency) or pay real market prices for its energy.

Lukashenko did not capitulate easily. In January 2007 he imposed a new transit tax on Russian oil sent through the Druzhba pipeline, which supplies Europe as well as Belarus with oil. Putin responded by cutting off oil to Belarus, thus reviving the fears in Europe that the gas crisis with Ukraine had caused a year earlier. It was a crisis with serious economic consequences for Russia, Belarus, and Europe. Putin took a hard line with Lukashenko, who within days backed down and revoked the transit tax. However short the crisis, Lukashenko had again revealed himself to be a dangerous gambler whom Moscow had to take seriously. In the long run, union between Russia and Belarus made geopolitical

and economic sense, but it was unlikely to occur while the idiosyncratic dictator held sway in Minsk.

Trade wars between Belarus and Russia continued as each country attempted to score political points. According to one observer, the tenth anniversary of the formation of the Union State in December 2009 went unremarked, with a relationship between Moscow and Minsk that was characterized by “growing mutual irritation, distrust and alienation.”<sup>59</sup> Despite this, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed a treaty in 2007 to establish a Customs Union, which came into force in 2010, allowing for the free movement of goods within the territorial space of member countries. In December 2010, these same countries signed a declaration on the establishment of a Single Economic Space, and in 2012, the Single Economic Space came into effect, allowing the free movement of services, labor, and capital. This was followed in 2015 by the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union binding these countries and Armenia and Kyrgyzstan as later entrants.<sup>60</sup>

Common membership in the Customs Union (2010), the Single Economic Space (2012), and the Eurasian Economic Union (2015) has not eliminated trade spats and political differences between Belarus and Russia. Re-elected in October 2015 to a fifth consecutive term as president in elections widely considered flawed, Lukashenko has walked a tightrope between Russia and the West, seeking to extract favorable deals from both. This strategy has resulted in a deteriorating relationship with Moscow. Responding to token gestures from Lukashenko, such as the release of six political prisoners in August 2015 and the restraint he displayed by not repeating his previous crackdowns against political opponents, the European Union lifted most sanctions against Belarus in early 2016.<sup>61</sup> No doubt, the Russian annexation of Crimea in April 2014, Lukashenko’s refusal to recognize the annexation, and his hosting of the four-party peace talks on Ukraine also played a role in softening the EU position on Belarus. Joerf Forbrig, a Fellow at the German Marshall Fund think-tank, characterized this geopolitically driven policy as myopic because it excused ongoing and serious human rights abuses by the Lukashenko government.<sup>62</sup> The United States also has been more willing to accommodate Minsk, paving the way for talks on an IMF loan package for the financially strapped Lukashenko government.<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, in addition to his Westward-oriented policies, Lukashenko has angered Moscow through a series of decisions designed to increase rent extraction and to protect his own power. In 2016, he denied Moscow’s request for a Russian air base in eastern Belarus and refused to sign the new Customs Code of the EAEU drawn up at the summit of the organization’s Supreme Council in December 2016, a meeting from which Lukashenko conspicuously absented himself.<sup>64</sup>

The two countries have also continued a contentious battle over gas prices. In 2015, in the middle of a global slump in gas prices, Russia refused to renegotiate a lower price. In 2016, Minsk unilaterally reduced the price demanded by Gazprom for gas imports, resulting, by Moscow’s calculations, in a debt accrual of \$780

million.<sup>65</sup> In response, Moscow has tightened the economic screws by imposing bans on Belarusian meat, dairy, and agricultural products and curtailing crude oil shipments, which has hurt the oil refinery industry in Belarus and limited the country's availability of refined oil for re-export to Europe.<sup>66</sup>

After trying in vain for months in early 2017 to see Putin in order to arrest the precipitous decline in the relationship, Lukashenko was finally able to meet him in April 2017. The meeting yielded a compromise on the price of gas and a much-needed \$1 billion loan package for the chronically Russia-dependent Belarusian economy.<sup>67</sup> Minsk is so closely tied to the Russian economy that its dependence on Moscow for the foreseeable future will be difficult to overcome.

## **Moldova**

Moldova is another case of Russian intervention in a former Soviet republic to establish control over territory it believes to be within its sphere of influence. The circumstances of this Russian intervention, however, differ from the others in the degree to which Russian forces have been guided by policy from Moscow. Russian military forces in Moldova were not always completely under Moscow's control, with the result that policy toward the area often had a schizophrenic character.

Moldova is confronted by a secessionist movement in a region referred to by the movement's leaders as the Trans-Dniester Republic. The territory involved is a small strip of land on the eastern bank of the Dniester River between Ukraine and the rest of present-day Moldova. At the time of the 1989 census, the region contained 546,000 people, or 12.6 percent of Moldova's population. Of that number, 40 percent are Moldovan, 28.3 percent Ukrainian, and 25.4 percent Russian. Thus the Russians are a minority, but they dominate the politics of the region. The 2004 census results revealed the long-term effects of secession from Moldova on the ethnic composition of the breakaway region. Of a total population of 555,347 including the city of Bender, which is controlled by Transnistrian authorities but falls within the internationally recognized borders of Moldova, 31.9 percent are Moldovan, 30.3 percent are Russian, and 28.8 percent are Ukrainian, with Bulgarians, Poles, Gagauz, German, and other ethnicities making up the remainder.<sup>68</sup> In the capital city of Tiraspol, ethnic Russians constitute 41 percent of the population.<sup>69</sup> The Trans-Dniester territory had always been ruled from Moscow; its history was different from that of the west bank, or Bessarabia, which had been a part of the Russian Empire but became a part of Romania after 1917. Bessarabia was returned to Moscow's control as part of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939.

In the period leading up to the collapse of the USSR, the nationalist-minded government in Chisinau (Moldova's capital) adopted laws making Romanian the state language and replacing the Cyrillic with the Latin script. The east bank Russians strongly opposed these measures, believing they would lead to a subordinate status for Russians and that they heightened the possibility that Moldova

would merge with Romania. In addition to the ethnic issues between Chisinau and the east bank capital of Tiraspol, there were sharp political differences. The Trans-Dniester Russians were strong supporters of the Soviet system and welcomed the August 1991 coup in Moscow. Moldova's leaders, by contrast, opposed the coup and backed Gorbachev. In August 1991 Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union, and a week later Trans-Dniester seceded from Moldova, declaring itself a constituent republic of the USSR, with Tiraspol as its capital.

Moldova's efforts to stop the secession and enforce its authority in the Trans-Dniester region led to widespread fighting in 1992. The rebellious Russians were aided by the Fourteenth Army, which as a component of the Soviet armed forces had been based in Tiraspol. With its active support, the rebel troops were able to hold off Moldovan forces and establish effective control over the entire east bank of the Dniester River. In the spring of 1992 Boris Yeltsin put the Fourteenth Army under Russian control, and in June he appointed General Aleksandr Lebed to be its commander.

Defeated on the battlefield, Moldova had no choice but to involve Russia in negotiations for a cease-fire.<sup>70</sup> Moldova sought a peacekeeping force under international supervision and requested the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to send such a force. When the OSCE declined, Chisinau was forced to accept Russia's proposal for a joint force of Russian, Moldovan, and Trans-Dniester troops to monitor a truce.

On July 21, 1992, Yeltsin and Moldovan President Mircea Snegur signed an agreement creating the trilateral force and a security zone on both sides of the Dniester. As a step toward a political settlement, the two presidents agreed on the territorial integrity of Moldova and the gradual withdrawal of the Fourteenth Army. As a concession to the Trans-Dniester inhabitants, the region was to be given autonomy, and in the event that Moldova and Romania were to unify, the Trans-Dniester region would have the right to secede.<sup>71</sup>

The joint force successfully kept the peace, but—as so often happens with peacekeeping—little was achieved toward a lasting settlement. Trans-Dniester remains a semi-sovereign state in all but name. It has a government, passports, and a postal system. Yeltsin's administration was constrained by the fact that the Trans-Dniester cause had attracted strong support among Russian nationalists.

In part, the reversals of Russian policy have reflected the tug and pull of diverse domestic political forces. Particularly contentious issues were the timetable and conditions for withdrawal of the Russian Fourteenth Army. On October 2, 1994, Russia and Moldova signed an agreement for these forces to withdraw over a three-year period. The withdrawal, however, was made conditional on a political settlement providing a "special status" for the Trans-Dniester regime.<sup>72</sup> Yeltsin was pulled in one direction by strong international pressure against Russia's intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, and in another direction by his own military.



President Yeltsin was unable to secure parliamentary ratification of the 1994 agreement to withdraw Russian forces from Moldova. At the Istanbul summit of the OSCE in 1999 the issue was elevated to the European regional level when Russia agreed in the revised CFE to withdraw its forces from Moldovan territory by 2002. President Putin committed himself to doing so, but he made withdrawal conditional on a mutually acceptable resolution of the conflict. Putin assigned the task of negotiating a settlement to Yevgeny Primakov.

Primakov's task was undertaken in the midst of significant political change in Moldova. In February 2001 the Moldovan communists won a solid majority in parliamentary elections. Since Moldova is a parliamentary republic, the communists took control of the executive branch as well. Moldova thus became the first of the former Soviet states in which the people chose to return the Communist Party to power. Their leader, Vladimir Voronin, declared that he would work to give Russian the status of a state language on a par with Moldovan.

Early in 2003 Voronin tackled the Trans-Dniester problem by proposing a federal structure for the country—the first time a Moldovan leader had abandoned the principle of a unitary state. Nothing came of Voronin's initiative at the time because the presence of Russian military forces encouraged intransigence on the part of the separatists. Many Moldovans were suspicious of Moscow's intentions, and during 2003–2004 Voronin himself shifted his orientation away from the CIS toward the West. A growing number of Moldovans came to favor unification with Romania, now that it has become a member of NATO and a candidate for membership in the European Union.

The secessionist claims of the Trans-Dniester region have yet to be resolved. Together with Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in the Caucasus, the dispute in this region is one of the “frozen conflicts” that continue to divide members of the CIS. It has poisoned relations between Russia and Moldova, pushing the latter into that coalition of states (GUUAM) that seek closer relations with Europe as a protection against the Bear in the East. Moldova's principal complaint is that Russia continues to maintain military forces in the Trans-Dniester region, preventing Chisinau from extending its authority over the region.

In the summer of 2006 the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs escalated the Trans-Dniester crisis by announcing that it considered that the “unrecognized republics” in the post-Soviet space possessed the right to self-determination. As the foreign ministry noted, “The expression of the people's will is the highest authority in determining the fate of those who live in a specific territory.”<sup>73</sup> Thus was established the principle by which Russia might officially recognize Trans-Dniester, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia as independent states, or conceivably incorporate them into Russia. The West responded (through the OSCE) with a stern demand for the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Moldova and Georgia.

The objectives of Russia's active support for the unrecognized republics in Moldova and Georgia have never been clarified to the outside world. The Kremlin

has never indicated a commitment to Trans-Dniester's independence or its incorporation into the Russian Federation. But it has been generally understood that the threat of either possibility could be a means for bringing Moldova back into Russia's sphere of influence. It could have been seen as leverage to discourage the West from detaching Kosovo from Serbia. Or the threat of Trans-Dniester independence could be a means to force Moldova to recognize Tiraspol as an autonomous republic guaranteed by Russian peacekeepers. Whatever the outcome, Putin was determined that Russia would be the major arbiter of the geopolitics of that part of the post-Soviet space. The struggle with Moldova was one small arena in the larger competition with the West in general and the United States in particular.

On September 17, 2006, the residents of Trans-Dniester voted in favor of joining Russia by a margin of 97 percent. While not unexpected, the vote encouraged Voronin to seek some resolution of Moldova's differences with Moscow, which was not unreceptive to the idea. As an earnest display of his intentions, Voronin was conspicuously absent from a summit meeting in June of the pro-Western GUUAM organization. Moscow took notice. In the summer of 2007, as Russian-Georgian relations reached an impasse, Putin decided to open negotiations with Voronin for a diplomatic settlement. Some issues were resolved—ending a boycott of Moldovan wines and reaching agreement on the price of Russian natural gas. But the problem of Trans-Dniester remained.

Presidential elections in the region in November 2011 brought an independent candidate, Yevgeny Shevchuk, to power in Tiraspol. Shevchuk sought to work toward better relations with Ukraine and Moldova while taking steps to ensure continued Russian support for his territory. In July 2012, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Krasin reiterated Russia's position on Trans-Dniester, saying, "We see Transnistria's future as a special district, with special, internationally recognized guarantees, within a neutral Moldovan state."<sup>74</sup> The last session of 2012 talks on the Trans-Dniester dispute—which included the parties to the conflict joined by Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE as mediators, and the United States and the EU as observers—ended in November amid acrimony, with Tiraspol blaming Chisinau for the lack of progress and the Moldovans charging the Russians with seeking to entrench themselves in the region by secretly bolstering their military presence. The Trans-Dniester issue thus continued to fester during the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev (2008–2012) and has remained unresolved since Putin returned as president in May 2012.

Apart from the Trans-Dniester dispute, Moldova has not escaped threats from Russia of curtailed energy supplies if Chisinau were to sign economic accords with the EU. In a visit to Chisinau in September 2013, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin warned against such a move, calling it a "grave mistake." The following month, Russian officials banned the import of Moldovan wine for unspecified health concerns. A similar ban in 2006 led to an eventual drop in wine exports to Russia from 70 percent to 30 percent in 2013. Moldovan President Nicolae Timofti responded to Russian attempts to thwart his country's

Westward moves by saying that while he recognized that Russia had “geopolitical interests” in the region, it was “impossible to recreate the union that used to exist.”<sup>75</sup> Unlike Ukraine, Moldova’s government resisted Russian pressures and signed the cooperation agreement with the EU at the November summit in Vilnius. This action was rapidly followed by a supportive visit to Chisinau by John Kerry, the first American secretary of state to travel to Moldova since 1992.

Following up on its pro-European proclivities, the Moldovan government in 2014 signed an Association Agreement and an agreement to participate in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU.<sup>76</sup> But Moldova’s Westward tilt has been threatened by developments in 2015–16.<sup>77</sup> In December 2016, Moldovans elected pro-Moscow candidate Igor Dodon as president. Dodon presides over a pro-West and pro-EU Moldovan government. His victory came about as a result of popular frustration against pro-European government officials in the wake of a 2014 corruption scandal involving the embezzlement of over \$1 billion from leading banks in Moldova. The October 2015 arrest and subsequent conviction of former Prime Minister Vlad Filat, founder of the pro-EU Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova, in connection with this theft, helped propel the political fortunes of Dodon.<sup>78</sup> President Dodon has argued for closer ties with Russia, questioned the value of Moldova’s economic agreements with the EU, and suggested that a majority of Moldovans would support membership in the Russia-led EAEU. A September 2016 poll conducted by the International Republican Institute showed a fairly even distribution between voters who supported EU membership (40 percent) and voters who supported joining the EAEU (43 percent). Interestingly, the percentage of Moldovans who did not see Russian troops in the Trans-Dniester region as a threat rose from 21 percent in September 2014 to 39 percent in September 2016.<sup>79</sup> Whether this change is attributable to successful efforts by Russia to project a positive image is unclear.

The Moldovan presidency does not enjoy strong executive powers and the Moldovan government continues to be led by a coalition of pro-Europe parties, but whether the country will in time weaken or abandon its Westward tilt is a question for the coming years and contingent on the political leanings of future governments and the level of Russian influence. The EU represents Moldova’s largest export market, with Russia a close second, but the country is dependent on Moscow for its energy needs and Russia is the destination for most of its migrant workers.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the most pragmatic position for Moldova is to serve as a bridge between Russia and Europe.

### **Georgia’s Frozen Conflicts**

No region of Russia is more prone to ethnic violence than the Caucasus. All of the conflicts that engulfed the region had their origins during the years of Soviet rule, but they were contained largely by the instruments of state power centered in Moscow. That power was bitterly resented by the diverse nationalities of

the region, perhaps nowhere more so than in Georgia. The military suppression of a Georgian nationalist demonstration in Tbilisi (Georgia's capital) in April 1989, which resulted in nineteen deaths and many more casualties, shocked many in Moscow, including the USSR's Georgian-born foreign minister and Gorbachev's ally, Eduard Shevardnadze. The Tbilisi massacre not only spurred Georgian demands for independence, but sparked nationalist emotions throughout the Caucasus.<sup>81</sup>

In October 1990, a nationalist bloc headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia won parliamentary elections in Georgia, and in May 1991 he was elected as Georgia's president. An extreme nationalist who had been repressed as a dissident by Soviet authorities, Gamsakhurdia proved an erratic and repressive leader. He was passionately anti-Soviet and anti-Russian. Georgia joined the Baltics as the only former Soviet republics to reject outright membership in the CIS. Relations with Russia deteriorated under his leadership. Gamsakhurdia even gratuitously offended Moscow by supporting the demands of the Chechens to separate from the Russian Federation. As president, Gamsakhurdia was inept, corrupt, and oppressive. After a brief reign, he was overthrown by domestic opponents who reportedly received weapons from Russian military forces in the region.<sup>82</sup> He was succeeded as Georgia's leader by Eduard Shevardnadze, who was invited by the Georgian parliament in March 1992 to return to his native country. Shevardnadze proved to be a tough leader—not a compliant partner of Moscow—who was willing to work with the Yeltsin administration.

Since Georgia attained independence from the USSR, its domestic and foreign politics have been dominated by its struggle with secessionist movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Gamsakhurdia's extreme nationalist policies exacerbated longings for independence among the peoples of these two autonomous republics. Within a month of Gamsakhurdia's parliamentary victory, South Ossetia and Abkhazia both declared themselves sovereign republics.

South Ossetia is a province of Georgia that borders on North Ossetia, an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation. Georgians are Orthodox Christians, while the Ossets are predominantly Muslim. According to the 1989 census, only 14 percent of South Ossetians were fluent in the Georgian language. Because they share ethnicity with the North Ossets, many South Ossets sought political union with their brethren in the north. Fearful that the secessionist movement would spread to its own territory, Moscow refused their demands. President Shevardnadze, though noted as a champion of democracy while serving in the Gorbachev administration, also was sufficiently nationalistic to oppose any measure that would lead to the disintegration of the Georgian state.<sup>83</sup>

Fighting between South Ossetian and Georgian forces broke out late in 1990, intensifying over the next two years. Russia became involved because large numbers of refugees fled north, and because of its concern that the fighting might spread to North Ossetia. Under pressure from Moscow, Shevardnadze agreed to meet with Russian President Boris Yeltsin as well as representatives from North

and South Ossetia. In June 1992, at Dagomys, near the city of Sochi, the negotiators agreed to a cease-fire and the deployment of a joint peacekeeping force.

This mission in no way involved the Commonwealth of Independent States. It was a first of its kind, organized on a trilateral basis between Georgia, Russia, and South Ossetia. The initial objective was to enforce a cease-fire by separating the warring sides. Nominally under a joint command, the force was effectively subject to Russian authority. This operation was successful in keeping the peace, though it did little to resolve the underlying conflict. The practical effect of the cease-fire was to freeze in place territorial conquests won in battle. Shevardnadze conceded a degree of autonomy to South Ossetia, but the Ossets wanted more. In view of the unsettled status of Chechnya in the North Caucasus, Russia continued to view outright secession as a bad precedent for the region.

A more serious threat to Georgian territorial integrity was the secessionist struggle of Abkhazia. Located between the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains, Abkhazia is a province in northwest Georgia. Abkhazians, predominantly Muslims, constituted only 17 percent of the population of the province, although they dominated its government. In August 1990 the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet declared its independence (at the same time as South Ossetia). The brief but repressive administration of Zviad Gamsakhurdia had the same impact on Abkhazia that it did on South Ossetia: it heightened tensions, which ultimately led to bitter fighting. Eduard Shevardnadze was confronted in 1992 and 1993 with a military insurrection by forces loyal to Gamsakhurdia, as well as a war of secession in Abkhazia. The pressure of both forces on his government led to disaster in the fall of 1993. Fierce Abkhaz assaults on Sukhumi, the provincial capital, led to the city's fall and heightened fears that Georgia might disintegrate. In desperation, Shevardnadze appealed to Russia for assistance.

Although accounts vary regarding how much responsibility the Russians bore for Shevardnadze's predicament, it is widely believed that Russian forces gave significant aid to Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba. What is less clear is how much of that assistance was authorized by the Russian president. Ardzinba had important supporters in Moscow, including Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov, speaker of the Russian parliament. Furthermore, the Russian military despised Shevardnadze because it held him responsible (along with Mikhail Gorbachev) for the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. Whatever Yeltsin's views, and they were at times apparently ambivalent, he failed to prevent members of the Russian armed forces from helping the separatists. Fearing that the fighting might spread, Yeltsin in late 1992 intervened to mediate a cease-fire. When Abkhazian forces, reinforced with Russian equipment, violated the cease-fire, Russia did nothing to stop the secessionists.

The Georgian military fiasco in 1993 occurred at about the same time that Moscow was in political crisis. Yeltsin's defeat of his political enemies in the parliament—under the leadership of Khasbulatov and Rutskoi—worked to Shevardnadze's advantage, in that it strengthened the Russian president's resolve

to stop the fighting in Georgia. But Shevardnadze had to pay a price. In return for Russian assistance against both Abkhazia and the forces of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze had to agree to join the CIS and accept Russian military bases on Georgian soil. On February 3, 1994, Boris Yeltsin arrived in Tbilisi to conclude the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and a status-of-forces agreement with Shevardnadze. Russia received the right to maintain three military bases in Georgia with a troop strength of 23,000. Russia also acquired access to ports on the Black Sea, including Poti, a major terminus of rail lines and roads from Tbilisi.

The initial impact of Russian intervention was to prevent either side from achieving outright victory. Abkhazia could not become independent, but Tbilisi had to concede autonomy for the province. The Abkhaz rebellion was the first conflict in the region to involve the United Nations. While recognizing Georgia's territorial integrity, the United Nations was not prepared to send forces to guarantee it. At the same time the Security Council authorized 136 UN military observers to monitor the Russian peacekeepers.

Russian peacekeeping in Georgia clearly served the foreign policy interests of Moscow, but it failed to achieve all of Russia's objectives. Shevardnadze was forced to accede to a Russian role in the affairs of Georgia. In the face of a persistent deadlock over Abkhazia, the Georgian president sought support from both the United States and the United Nations for a multinational force to replace the Russians. Neither the United States nor the United Nations were willing to take a stand in opposition to the Russian government.

As efforts to resolve the conflict stalemated, Russian-Georgian relations deteriorated. Shevardnadze assumed that his concessions were a *quid pro quo* for Russia's commitment to guarantee Georgia's territorial integrity (i.e., forcing Abkhazia to surrender). Yeltsin tried to pressure Georgia and the Abkhazian separatists to negotiate, but with no success, and his administration refused to go beyond that. Moscow, already deeply involved in a seemingly endless struggle in Chechnya, was not about to get into another war in the Caucasus. Georgia's unhappiness with Moscow was reflected in several actions: cooperating with Azerbaijan in building the Baku-Supsa pipeline as an alternative to the Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline through Russia, and with the United States, Azerbaijan, and Turkey in the more ambitious Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline; participating in the pro-Western GUUAM group and expressing a wish to join NATO; permitting a Chechen mission to operate in Tbilisi; and agreeing to enlist the Turkish military in equipping and training Georgian military forces. Russian frustration with Georgia's actions was reflected in a warning made by Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev in March 1998 that Russia might altogether withdraw its peacekeeping forces in Georgia.<sup>84</sup>

Although he did not go as far as Sergeyev hinted, Vladimir Putin certainly stepped up the pressure on Georgia. In December 2000, allegedly in reaction to the infiltration of Chechen fighters across the border and Georgia's refusal to allow Russian troops to pursue them onto Georgian soil, Russia imposed a visa

requirement on persons crossing the borders (except from Abkhazia and South Ossetia). This worked a particular hardship on the 500,000–700,000 Georgians living in Russia, whose remittances composed one-fourth of Georgia's income. On January 1, 2001, Russia stopped the flow of natural gas through their pipeline to Georgia. Although the gas began to flow again after three days, the point of Georgia's total dependence on Russia was driven home in harsh fashion. The Russians were also slowing down measures to close two of their four bases in Georgia and withdraw a number of tanks, artillery pieces, and fighters, as required by the revised Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) signed at an OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999. The pressure tactics were intended, at least in part, to reduce support received by Chechen guerrillas in Georgia, but they were also probably aimed at persuading Shevardnadze to back away from his flirtation with NATO and from the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project.<sup>85</sup> Despite the pressures, Georgia managed to assume control of the Russian base at Vaziani by the July 1 deadline, but the Georgian government disputed Russian claims that they had also withdrawn from Gudauta (located in Abkhazia). Moreover, far from backing away from NATO, Georgian troops joined NATO forces in the "Cooperative Partner–2000" military exercises held on Georgian soil in June 2001.

Russia's relations with Georgia were further strained in 2002 when Moscow accused Tbilisi of harboring Chechen rebel units in the Pankisi Gorge, a mountainous region bordering the two states. At Shevardnadze's invitation, a small contingent of U.S. military forces arrived in Georgia to train the country's special forces in combating terrorism. Adding insult to injury, Shevardnadze failed to consult Russia before inviting the American military presence. Harsh anti-Georgian speeches were made in the Russian Duma, but Putin discouraged any public confrontation with Georgia by remarking, "It's no tragedy."<sup>86</sup>

The political environment in Georgia changed suddenly in November 2003 when a popular revolt (the "rose" revolution) forced Shevardnadze to resign the presidency. The objections to the Georgian president were not due to the country's foreign policy but rather to the blatant corruption and economic incompetence of his administration.<sup>87</sup> Shevardnadze's successor was thirty-six-year-old Mikheil Saakashvili, who had studied and practiced law in the United States. Though pro-Western in outlook, he immediately sought to pursue a balancing act similar to that of his predecessor. At his inauguration, he stated, "Today as my first act, I am offering a friendly hand to Russia." Significantly, special honors at the inauguration ceremonies were accorded to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.<sup>88</sup> Shortly after assuming the presidency, Saakashvili journeyed to Azerbaijan to reaffirm that Georgia would participate in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project.

Yet to be resolved, however, were the problems of the secessionist regions of Adzharia (a breakaway territory of Georgia controlled by Aslan Abashidze, a local warlord), Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, and the continuing presence of Russian troops on Georgian territory. Saakashvili's first move to restore Georgia's territorial integrity came in March, when he insisted that Adzharia participate in

Georgia's forthcoming parliamentary elections. When Abashidze resisted, the Georgian president imposed an economic embargo on the region, forcing its warlord to back down. Following the victory of Saakashvili's party in the March 28 elections, however, Abashidze refused to concede defeat, mobilizing his armed militia as Georgian troops massed on the borders of the province. Violence was averted, and the crisis ended in May when Putin sent Igor Ivanov, Security Council secretary, to inform Abashidze that his cries for Russian aid would not be heeded. The rebellious warlord resigned his position, and at Saakashvili's request, was granted political asylum in Moscow. Although Putin would no doubt have preferred to keep the pro-Russian Abashidze in place, where he had helped to serve Moscow's economic and security interests, the goal of averting armed conflict was more important. Georgia's president was quick to express his thanks: "I think that President Putin played a very constructive role, and among the things he deserves credit for is the fact that bloodshed and complications were avoided."<sup>89</sup>

Within days, however, Igor Ivanov was back in Georgia to express Russia's concern over Saakashvili's statement that "another revolution" was anticipated in Abkhazia. Georgia was pressing for a resumption of UN-brokered talks with Abkhazia on a plan that would declare the region a "sovereign entity"—but not a subject of international law and not able to conduct its own foreign or defense policy—within a federal Georgian state. The Abkhazian authorities, asserting that they had already won their independence from Georgia, refused to negotiate with Tbilisi. On Georgia's independence day, May 26, 2004, Saakashvili's speech appealed to the peoples of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in their native languages, to join in Georgia's democratic revolution, and he reiterated his intention to use peaceful means to reunite the country.

At the end of July, Saakashvili met with Putin in Moscow, hoping to agree on terms for a solution in South Ossetia and for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia. Although he professed delight at Putin's "warm attitude toward Georgia," it was clear that he had failed to resolve the issues. But Russia did little to ameliorate any of the problems throughout 2004. Russia continued its intervention in both breakaway provinces of Georgia while Saakashvili sought what support he could get from the West. Tbilisi's announcement that American instructors would begin training Georgian peacekeepers in January 2005 did not go down well in Moscow. Equally, Georgia deeply resented Russian interference in the presidential elections in Abkhazia in late 2004.

Behind the periodic crises in Moscow-Tbilisi relations lay the fundamental issue of Russia's domination of the Transcaucasus. Moscow's main strategic partner in the region is Armenia, where there is a large Russian military base. However, that base is only accessible through Georgian territory or airspace. Therein lies the importance of Georgia to Russia's geopolitical interests. Russia's military forces, plus its influence over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, are viewed as vital to keeping Georgia in its sphere of influence. But the price of Russian troops in Georgia was to prove costly because it left Russia open to the charge



of aggression against a small neighbor. At least in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Moscow could and did claim to be supporting the principle of self-determination. On March 10, 2005, Georgia's parliament unanimously voted to demand that Russia set a date by May 15 for withdrawal of its troops from the country. In late May a surprise announcement by both countries' foreign ministers reported that Russia had agreed to dismantle its two remaining bases in Georgia and remove all troops and equipment by the end of 2008. "From the standpoint of protecting our security interests," said Putin, "they [the bases] are of no particular importance to us."<sup>90</sup>

That agreement, however, did little to normalize Russo-Georgian relations. In October Georgia's parliament resolved that Russia remove its peacekeepers from Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the summer of 2006. Moscow's stance hardened as the rhetoric from Tbilisi became more strident and Saakashvili reiterated his determination to integrate Georgia with Europe. Moscow steadfastly pursued relations with Georgia's dissident provinces (as well as with the Trans-Dniester republic in Moldova)—even granting Russian passports to the residents of all three regions.

As relations with Georgia deteriorated, Moscow imposed a full transportation blockade. Neither side, however, appeared to want to press its case to the point of war. Both were willing to use the United Nations as an instrument to cool relations. In October a Security Council resolution was adopted that extended the mandate of the UN observer mission and the CIS peacekeeping forces in Georgia for an additional six months. Also, Georgia was advised to "refrain from militant rhetoric and provocative actions."<sup>91</sup> Moscow had won a diplomatic victory, but the stalemate remained.

Relations between Russia and Georgia continued to worsen during 2007–2008. In January 2008 Saakashvili won re-election as president under conditions that the opposition (and Russia) condemned as fraudulent. In March Saakashvili met with President Bush in Washington to seek his support. The warmth of his reception may have given Saakashvili an overly sanguine impression of the assistance he might receive from the United States in a crisis. For a crisis in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was brewing. That same month the parliaments of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia petitioned the Russian parliament to recognize their independence. Putin came very close to doing just that by ordering "extensive support for the population of the two republics and the Russian citizens residing there." Putin's edict amounted essentially to recognizing the laws of the unrecognized republics and constituted a form of "semirecognition."<sup>92</sup>

Tensions increased in April when Georgia denounced Russia for shooting down Georgian aerial reconnaissance drones over Abkhazia. Each side accused the other of preparing a military buildup. Amid rumors of an impending Georgian invasion of Abkhazia, Russia's foreign ministry warned Tbilisi that a Georgian attack would be countered by Russian armed forces. Early in May, Georgian authorities officially acknowledged, for the first time, that the two countries were on the brink

of war. The Bush administration, fearing Georgian overconfidence, sent Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Tbilisi to warn Saakashvili not to provoke the Russians. But the warning proved futile. On August 7 Georgian forces attacked South Ossetia's capital Tskhinvali with multiple rocket launchers, artillery, and aircraft. It was a miscalculation of enormous magnitude.

From the time of his election to the presidency in 2004, Saakashvili had identified himself as a democrat committed to aligning his country with the West. As an earnest display of his commitment to the United States he had sent some 2,000 soldiers to fight in Iraq. In return, the United States provided Saakashvili with military advisers and aid, and supported Georgia's admission into the NATO alliance. But at no point did President Bush give him *carte blanche* to use force to recover Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Indeed, administration officials insisted that they had warned the Georgian president that the United States would not back the Georgian militarily in a fight with Russia.<sup>93</sup> Saakashvili's assault on South Ossetia revealed him to be a risk-taker with enormous hubris.

Russian forces waited a day before counter attacking, but when they did, the consequences were disastrous for Georgia. Georgian control over the Kodori Gorge was lost. Russian forces penetrated deep into Georgian territory and the prospects for restoring Georgian control over Abkhazia or South Ossetia became extremely remote. Georgia's fate became dependent upon the West's capacity to pressure Russia and the Kremlin's intentions. Moscow described its actions as defensive but refused to state explicitly how far it would go, though it claimed not to seek regime change (overthrow of Saakashvili) or annexation of Abkhazia or South Ossetia. But the fact that Russian forces remained in the country through August of 2008 indicated a determination to control affairs in Georgia for a lengthy period of time. Indeed, Moscow's decision to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia virtually guaranteed that Tbilisi would not regain control of either province.

The Russo-Georgian War of 2008 had its roots more in Russia's differences with the West than in claims on Georgia itself. In Chapter 9 we will examine the international roots of the conflict.

The August 2008 Russo-Georgian War severely damaged bilateral relations between the two countries and inaugurated a long period of estrangement. Georgia severed diplomatic relations with Russia and withdrew from the CIS. Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and gained a diplomatic victory of sorts when the CSTO blamed Tbilisi for the war. Even though CSTO member states refrained from joining Russia in extending recognition to the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, this move was welcome in view of the fact that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a body that Russia does not control, had called on both parties to resolve their conflict peacefully.

Western efforts at mediation took shape in August 2008 with the Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan, which called on both parties to cease military hostilities; return to status quo ante bellum (the situation that prevailed before hostilities erupted) with

troops on both sides returning to lines they occupied before the start of the war; and allow access to humanitarian assistance. Complete Russian troop withdrawal did not occur until October. In general, the West, unwilling to challenge Russia, has not taken concrete action to reverse the *de facto* secession of these regions from Georgia but has refused to accord *de jure* recognition to the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In September, in a move designed to anger Russia, Georgia accused Russian soldiers of “ethnic cleansing” of Georgians in five South Ossetian villages and brought suit before the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ). Russia, in turn, accused the Georgians of “cleansing” South Ossetia of Ossetians.<sup>94</sup> In October, the ICJ ruled that both countries were responsible for the conflict and called on both to protect the rights of Georgians, South Ossetians, and Abkhazians. A November 2008 Amnesty International report also noted that both countries were guilty of human rights violations.<sup>95</sup>

November negotiations in Geneva, where the parties to the conflict were joined by the United States, the EU, the OSCE, and the UN, failed to yield any results. Some movement toward an accommodation was evident in November 2009 when Georgia agreed to open the Verkhny Lars border crossing with Russia, which had provided a road link for freight from Russia to Armenia via the Georgian Military Highway. Armenia had lobbied for this move, which Georgia had previously linked to removal of the ban on Georgian agricultural exports to Russia. One unfortunate consequence of the war, lamented Yevgenia Albats, a noted Russian journalist, was that a fairly robust Soviet-era economic relationship was sundered. After the war, Turkey and Azerbaijan emerged as Georgia’s leading trade partners, while Russia moved to the bottom tier of importers and virtually disappeared as a destination for Georgian exports.<sup>96</sup>

In an address to the Georgian parliament in March 2012, President Saakashvili offered Russia what he termed a “goodwill gesture”—unilaterally waiving visas for Russian nationals traveling to Georgia—saying: “We want more Russian tourists and business people to visit Georgia.”<sup>97</sup> Russia, however, refused to reciprocate. In parliamentary elections in Georgia in October 2012, Bidzina Ivanishvili’s five-party coalition “Georgian Dream” won, catapulting him into the prime minister’s office. Not unlike Yanukovich’s foreign policy goals for Ukraine, Ivanishvili’s pre-election program had called for working toward restoration of diplomatic ties with Russia, resolving the South Ossetia and Abkhazia issues while simultaneously maintaining strong ties with the West. In an environment where Russia sees the Eurasian space as its particular sphere of influence, the various planks of this foreign policy platform, in the view of some Russian analysts, indeed represented a “dream” rather than reality.<sup>98</sup>

Ivanishvili’s conciliatory gestures toward Russia, which ran counter to the pro-West-leaning vision of President Saakashvili, were neutralized with the unanimous passage in March 2013 of a resolution in the Georgian parliament signed by Saakashvili affirming Georgia’s intent to seek membership in NATO and the EU,

and expressing interest in pursuing dialogue with Russia in resolving the conflict over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The resolution, however, pointedly ruled out establishing diplomatic ties with any country (read Russia) that recognized the independence of the “breakaway republics” of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>99</sup> This move effectively set back the normalization of relations between the two countries. The determination of the new Georgian leadership to continue the country’s Westward leanings was demonstrated in November 2013 when Georgia joined Moldova in signing a cooperation agreement with the EU at the summit in Vilnius.

In June 2014, Georgia signed an Association Agreement with the EU, which became operational on July 1, 2016.<sup>100</sup> As this decision demonstrates, changes in political leadership have not entirely dampened enthusiasm for greater economic engagement with Europe, even when President Saakashvili’s anti-Russia approach was replaced by more conciliatory moves toward Russia. In November 2013, Giorgi Margvelashvili succeeded Saakashvili as president. In December 2015, Giorgi Kvirikashvili was appointed prime minister by the Georgian parliament after the abrupt resignation of Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili who had served for two years following the resignation of his predecessor Ivanishvili in November 2013.<sup>101</sup> All three prime ministers belong(ed) to the ruling Georgian Dream coalition. The new prime minister maintained that membership in the EU and NATO continued to remain his top priorities but that he also planned to pursue a “pragmatic” relationship with Russia that sought to reduce risks and minimize threats to Georgia’s adopted foreign policy course.<sup>102</sup> Parliamentary elections in 2016 returned the ruling coalition to power, giving Kvirikashvili a second term in office.<sup>103</sup>

Through all these successive changes, Russia-Georgia relations remain fraught as Tbilisi refuses to recognize the permanent loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the Russian footprint in these regions becomes heavier.

### **Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh**

Russia has used the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh to exert influence over both countries. Moscow played little role in sparking the initial dispute, but it has sought to monopolize the mediation and peacekeeping efforts to settle the conflict.

Nagorno-Karabakh is an autonomous oblast (region) in Azerbaijan, the inhabitants of which are primarily Armenian. Predominantly Christian, the non-Slavic Armenians have a long history of animosity with the Muslim Azeris. Like many interethnic antagonisms in the former Soviet Union, this one was exacerbated by Soviet nationality policy. Typical of its divide-and-rule practices, the Bolshevik government in 1921 placed Nagorno-Karabakh, whose population was 94 percent Armenian, under the administrative control of Azerbaijan. Even during the height of Soviet rule, political demonstrations between Armenians and Azeris led to

violent clashes. The conflict intensified during Gorbachev's rule, defying his efforts at settlement. When Azerbaijan declared its independence in 1991, the government of Nagorno-Karabakh proclaimed itself an independent republic. Fighting again flared up between Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians and Azeris, and when Armenian military forces joined their brethren, an undeclared war between Armenia and Azerbaijan ensued. Militarily the Armenians won on all fronts—within Nagorno-Karabakh itself, taking control of the land between Armenia proper and the oblast, and also occupying territory deep into Azerbaijan east of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the scale of military action and the number of victims, the war over Nagorno-Karabakh was larger than any other conflict in the former Soviet Union, and it was second to none in viciousness. Both sides committed atrocities.<sup>104</sup>

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was both an interstate war and a war of secession. Before the Soviet collapse, many in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh shared the belief that Nagorno-Karabakh would unify with Armenia. After Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent, the idea of unification declined and was superseded by the notion of an independent Nagorno-Karabakh republic. As the aggressor in the war against Azerbaijan, Armenia found itself under international pressure to withdraw from occupied territory. In April 1993 the UN Security Council demanded the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijan.

An earlier and more extended international effort to stop hostilities was made by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE—later to become the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE). In March 1992 it established the “Minsk Group” (Belarus, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Russia, Sweden, and Turkey) to mediate the conflict and plan for a CSCE peacekeeping operation. A CSCE observer group arrived in the region in April 1993. Russian involvement has complicated the regional organization's effort to mediate the conflict or to deploy peacekeepers. Moscow claims the right to play the leading role.

No doubt Moscow was especially irritated when the new Bush administration tried its hand at mediating the conflict, bringing the two presidents for a meeting at Key West with Secretary of State Colin Powell in April 2001. Although it pledged to keep trying, the United States—strongly pressured to intervene by domestic oil interests eager to expand their presence in Azerbaijan—was unable to achieve an immediate breakthrough.

Both Yeltsin and Putin insisted that Russia must play the dominant role in managing conflict in the Transcaucasus. In this sense, Russia continues the historic policy of the Soviet Union and Imperial Russia in viewing the Transcaucasus as a “dagger pointed toward the heart of Russia.” The issue here, unlike that in the other CIS conflicts, does not involve protecting ethnic Russians, because few live in the region. Instead, Moscow is motivated by a number of economic and geopolitical factors. Of considerable importance is the question of Azerbaijan's cooperation in the exploitation of Caspian Sea oil and the pipelines to bring the oil to Western markets.

Azerbaijan's president, the late Heydar Aliyev, a former KGB general and Soviet Politburo member, maneuvered shrewdly in dealing with Russia. Where necessary he made concessions to Moscow, as on the issue of oil production. He also agreed to rejoin the CIS after a brief withdrawal, but he resisted the stationing of Russian peacekeepers or military bases on Azerbaijan's soil—even going so far as to suggest that he might welcome NATO bases there. Aliyev also carefully exploited Russia's concerns about the influence of Turkey, a traditional rival, and Iran, a center of militant Islam, in the region. In 1994 Aliyev signed the ten-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Turkish President Suleyman Demirel. He also concluded several political, economic, and cultural agreements with Iran.

Though potentially one of the richest of the former Soviet states, Azerbaijan remains vulnerable to Russian pressure—which Moscow has not hesitated to exert.<sup>105</sup> While Aliyev and Yeltsin reportedly had an intense mutual dislike dating from their days of service together on the Soviet Politburo, Vladimir Putin initiated a rapprochement by making a brief visit to Baku in January 2001. He and Aliyev signed a statement of principles governing cooperation in the Caspian, based on the formula (opposed by Iran) of “share the water and divide the seabed.” Putin agreed to pursue mediation efforts on Nagorno-Karabakh on the basis of strict impartiality; in return, he sought Baku's agreement on Russian participation in the exploration and development of Caspian oil fields.<sup>106</sup>

Azerbaijan's politics entered a new era in December 2003 when Heydar Aliyev died (at a clinic in Cleveland, Ohio) after a long illness. In control to the end, Aliyev secured the office of president for his son, Ilham, who gave every indication of continuing his father's balancing act in regard to relations with Russia and the West. Ilham Aliyev has skillfully guided his country through the competing pressures of Russia and the West in their struggle for influence in the Caucasus region. He has managed to maintain a reputation as both pro-Russian and pro-Western, or perhaps more accurately as neither anti-Russian nor anti-Western. Russia is prepared to accept his authoritarian regime and overlook Aliyev's suppression of the opposition and human rights abuses. Europe and the United States, however, tend to be sympathetic to the opposition in Azerbaijan, much to the annoyance of Aliyev.

On the other hand, there is a nascent resentment among Azerbaijan's military because of Russian aid to Armenia, which contributed to the defeat of Azerbaijan in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Also, Azerbaijan was a founding member of GUUAM (along with Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova), an organization committed to democracy, integration with Europe, and close ties to NATO. In May 2006 GUUAM became an international organization open to other countries. And finally, in the economic sphere, Aliyev encouraged Western investment in Azerbaijan's oil development and encouraged oil pipeline transmission that is beyond Russian control.

On November 2, 2008, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia signed a declaration on Nagorno-Karabakh that reaffirmed the commitment of the parties to a political

settlement of the conflict. Even though President Medvedev held out the hope that the conflict would be resolved within a short period of time, the dispute has lingered. Both parties have criticized the position of the mediators. Armenia is unhappy with their failure to end the economic blockade and for not recognizing the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) as an independent state, arguing that the suggested compromises endanger the security of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azeris, for their part, want Armenia to be labeled an aggressor and insist that any settlement should be predicated on the return to Azerbaijan of Azeri territory and on the provision of safe passage to refugees and displaced persons to their homeland. In September 2010, after the conclusion of Azeri-Russian talks in Baku, Azerbaijan reiterated its position on reversing the Armenian occupation of Azeri territory and blamed Armenians for the ethnic cleansing of Azeris from seven Azeri districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. At another meeting in Kazan in June 2011 under Russian auspices, hopes for a settlement were raised and dashed.<sup>107</sup>

Exchanges of gunfire along the Nagorno-Karabakh border with Azerbaijan escalated during the February 2013 presidential election in Armenia in which President Serzh Sargsyan, first elected in 2008, won re-election. Fearful of renewed armed hostilities with Azerbaijan, Armenia has sought to strengthen defense cooperation with Russia. Armenian concerns were justified as a “four-day war” erupted in the region in April 2016. In a quickly arranged meeting between Azeri President Ilkham Aliyev and President Sargsyan under the auspices of the Minsk Group, which included the foreign ministers of Russia and France and the U.S. secretary of state, the two sides were able to agree on cease-fire compliance and on working toward a path to conflict settlement. Intermittent exchange of fire continues to roil the region.<sup>108</sup> The status of Nagorno-Karabakh remains frozen. The hope that domestic tranquility in both countries might facilitate a negotiated settlement has proven to be illusory.

Despite close military cooperation, Russia had been unable to get Armenia to join the Customs Union, even after repeated pressure. Armenian officials had argued that their national economic structure is incompatible with Union economies that are focused on energy.<sup>109</sup> But in 2013, Sargsyan announced his intention to join the Customs Union, noting that as “part of one system of military security [CSTO], it is impossible and ineffective to isolate yourself from a corresponding economic space.”<sup>110</sup> In addition to political and security considerations, Sargsyan’s decision was no doubt influenced by Moscow’s offer of a substantial financial incentive to forgo the Association Agreement with the EU—the cost of Russian natural gas pegged to Russian domestic prices, stepped-up cooperation on nuclear energy, and aid on a number of economic projects.<sup>111</sup> In early 2015, Armenia became a founding member of the Eurasian Economic Union and as a consequence withdrew from earlier plans to join the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area.<sup>112</sup>

During a meeting in August 2010 on the sidelines of an informal CSTO meeting in Yerevan, Presidents Medvedev and Sargsyan signed an amendment to the

Russian-Armenian agreement on Russia's 102nd military base in Gyumri, which Russia has leased rent-free until 2044. This amendment expanded the sphere of responsibility of Russian troops stationed at the base by obliging Russia to assist Armenia in case of a war with a post-Soviet republic. In January 2013, Russia moved ahead with a plan to staff the 102nd base with contract soldiers, in effect doubling the number of soldiers. In the view of military experts the accelerated move to contract service is designed to get the base "combat-ready" either to "repel aggression against Armenia" or for peacekeeping operations outside the post-Soviet region.<sup>113</sup>

Another Russian motive for strengthening military-technical cooperation with Armenia stemmed from Russian pique at Azerbaijan for refusing in December 2012 to extend Russia's lease of the Gabala radar station on acceptable terms. Azerbaijan insisted on raising the yearly price of the lease from \$7 million to \$300 million. Russian displeasure over Gabala was intensified when Azerbaijan, with American and Israeli assistance, began acquiring advanced naval warfare equipment, such as sea-based missile systems and unmanned aerial vehicles. Russia objected to the injection of Western influence in the Transcaucasus through the construction of pipelines bypassing Russia and military sales.<sup>114</sup> Failing to agree on mutually acceptable terms of lease, Russia vacated the Gabala radar station after the lease expired at the end of 2012.

Moscow has continued, not always successfully, to balance its interests between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Both countries, for instance, were incensed when Moscow decided to continue the sale of offensive arms to Armenia and Azerbaijan even when fierce fighting erupted in Nargorno-Karabakh in April 2016.<sup>115</sup> However, even as Armenia has moved closer to Russia, Azerbaijan demonstrated its desire to steer an independent course, hosting a meeting of defense ministers from Turkey and Georgia at Gabala, at which the three countries decided to strengthen their military cooperation and to hold joint military exercises in 2017.<sup>116</sup>

Armenia's place as a reliable Russian ally is important to Moscow. This explained Putin's heightened concern when President Sargsyan's April 2018 election as prime minister was met with howls of popular protest against cronyism and corruption. Sargsyan had been constitutionally ineligible to run for a third consecutive term as president. An earlier constitutional referendum had set the stage for Armenia's transition in 2018 from a presidential to a parliamentary system, with a largely ceremonial president to be elected for a single seven-year term by the legislature rather than by popular vote. In March 2018, Armen Sarkissian, upon the recommendation of Sargsyan, was elected president by the National Assembly. Faced with large and growing demonstrations against his "power grab," Sargsyan resigned as prime minister while President Armen Sarkissian appealed for an orderly transition, even as protests continued. On May 8, in a close 59–42 vote, the Armenian parliament elected opposition leader Nicol Pashinian as prime minister.<sup>117</sup> Putin congratulated Pashinian and called for the



promotion of “stronger, friendly, and allied relations between our countries and partnership within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.” Pashinian’s response was polite but firm: “Allied relations with Russia should be based on friendship, equality, and mutual willingness to solve problems.”<sup>118</sup> But Pashinian will be heading a minority government and Armenia’s economic and military dependence on Russia is likely to constrain his options.

## Central Asia

The newly independent states of Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—also lacked a history of independence. Since the eighteenth century the peoples of this vast region have been governed by the tsars and, after them, the Soviets. One scholar described the independence of these states in 1991 as an “unsolicited gift.”<sup>119</sup> These countries share a Muslim religious heritage and—with the exception of the Tajiks, who are of Iranian origin—have a common Turkic ethnic background. National identities in this region were not strongly established. In Gorbachev’s 1991 referendum on the future of the union, the strongest support in favor of preserving the USSR came from the voters of the five Central Asian republics. One reason was the region’s high degree of economic dependence on Moscow. Both the August coup and the Soviet collapse in 1991 confronted the Central Asians with unpopular choices. They were unprepared for independence, and they welcomed admission to the CIS as founding members.

Another important factor linking the new states to Russia is the large number of Russian minorities living in some of them. According to the 1989 USSR census, 21.5 percent of the people in Kyrgyzstan were Russian. Kazakhstan’s population was 37.8 percent ethnic Russian, almost equal in number to the indigenous Kazakh population. It was thus not surprising that Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan’s president, was an outspoken advocate of keeping the union together and, when that proved impossible, of integrating the CIS as much as possible. Even those regional leaders who advocated independence for their countries acknowledged that close cooperation with Moscow was a necessity for survival. Yet, as weak and dependent as they were, the leaders of Central Asia soon acquired a taste for independence and a determination not to be mere puppets of Moscow.<sup>120</sup>

Russia’s vital interests in Central Asia are both political and economic. In a general sense, Moscow has sought to maintain a degree of hegemony over the entire region, an equivalent of the U.S. Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere. A major consideration behind such thinking was security. Moscow wanted to deploy its troops in the near abroad and to maintain an air defense system that would cover not just Russia, but the outer borders of the former Soviet Union. Moscow also was concerned about the growth of Islamist fundamentalism in Central Asia and its possible spread to the Russian Federation.<sup>121</sup>

Instability in Central Asia also posed the danger of encouraging the migration of large numbers of Russians back to a country then unprepared to absorb them. According to the 1989 census, some 9.5 million Russians lived in Central Asia. Even though many of these Russians came originally as colonizers, they were not as discriminated against in Central Asia as in some other parts of the former USSR, such as the Baltics. But the fact that on average only 3 percent of the Russians knew the titular language of their country of residence indicated a less than complete level of assimilation and the ever-present possibility of a migration back to the mother country. Indeed, there has been a substantial migration of Russians from Central Asia, notwithstanding that none of the states in the region denied Russians the rights of citizenship. But, with the initial exception of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, the Central Asian states rejected the Russian demand that Russian-speaking peoples be given the right to maintain dual citizenship. In April 2003, Turkmenistan's dictator, Saparmurat Niyazov, as part of a general anti-Russian program, revoked dual citizenship for Russian-speaking residents.

Economic objectives also played a role in Russia's relations with Central Asia. For a time, an effort was made to keep these countries in a "ruble zone" so as to maintain a measure of fiscal control over them; but a deadlock in negotiations in 1993 forced the states to rely on their own resources and their own currencies. Independence did not bring economic prosperity to Central Asia—just the opposite. The post-Soviet period has been one of economic hardship for the entire region. The reasons include the economic incompetence of Central Asia's governing elites, the end of Russian subsidies, and Moscow's pursuit of policies that are almost exclusively to Russia's own advantage. Those countries possessing abundant natural resources, such as Kazakhstan, were pressed to share them with Russia. For example, Russia insisted that the Tengiz oil field in western Kazakhstan be open to Russian participation before the government of Kazakhstan was able to mobilize a consortium of foreign investors. The relations between Russia and Central Asia in the initial years could be described as "uneasy cooperation."<sup>122</sup>

Petropolitics—or who would control Central Asian oil—became an important factor in Russian-Central Asian relations, as it did in U.S.-Central Asian relations and later, with China's role in Central Asia. Initially, there were two principal issues:

1. how the oil and gas beneath the Caspian Sea was to be divided;
2. what routes would be used to transport Caspian Sea oil to markets in the West.

Five states bordering the Caspian Sea—Russia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Iran—laid claim to the oil reserves beneath it.

In the 1990s Moscow unsuccessfully sought to divide up the Caspian Sea to give Russia an effective veto over the use of undersea resources by the littoral

states.<sup>123</sup> Failing to achieve that end, Russia pressed for a resolution of the legal status of the Caspian Sea that would divide the seabed (and the fossil fuels beneath it) on lines extending from the coast of each state, while keeping the water undivided and accessible to all for fishing and navigation purposes. In May 2003 Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan divided the northern 64 percent of the Caspian Sea into three unequal parts along this median line principle, giving Kazakhstan 27 percent, Russia 19 percent, and Azerbaijan 18 percent. Turkmenistan and Iran were present at the negotiations but refused to participate in the agreement. While Vladimir Putin remained determined to forge a legal contract that would bind all five states, the fact that agreement was reached with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan meant that full-fledged exploration could begin in the north section of the Caspian Sea.<sup>124</sup>

A particularly contentious issue in petropolitics is the location of the pipelines that transport the oil from the Caspian Sea basin to markets in Europe and beyond. Under Soviet rule all pipelines from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan were controlled by Moscow. For both economic and geopolitical reasons, Russia preferred to maintain that same control. That has meant utilizing its pipelines to transport oil from the Tengiz field in Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk and from Baku to Novorossiisk. But on this issue Moscow encountered opposition from the United States and Europe, which sought to minimize the dependence of the Central Asian states upon Russia by having pipelines bypass Russia entirely.

An alternative cheaper route, which also bypasses Russia, is to ship oil to the Indian Ocean via Iran. This option is politically unacceptable to the United States because of Iranian-American hostility. Consequently, with strong backing from Washington, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) route to Turkey's Mediterranean coast was approved in 1999 as the main export route for the consortium of oil companies extracting Azerbaijani oil. The BTC pipeline became operational in May 2005.

Another pipeline bypassing Russia, also supported by Washington, is the Trans-Caspian Gas pipeline, which would take gas from Turkmenistan through Baku and Tbilisi to Erzurum in Turkey. This pipeline, which would deliver Turkmen gas to Turkey and onward through the Trans-Anatolian pipeline to Europe, has not yet come to fruition. Russia and Iran object ostensibly for environmental reasons but in reality because neither wishes a competitive outlet for Turkmen gas. Turkmenistan has also engaged with China to route gas supplies eastward. Clearly, these pipeline projects undermine Russian power in the Caucasus and Central Asia, but Moscow cannot indefinitely stop their construction. In many respects, the maneuvering of the greater and lesser powers to dominate Central Asian and Transcaucasian oil is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century "Great Game."<sup>125</sup>

There are crosscutting pressures modifying the foreign policies of all the Central Asian countries. None can afford to earn Russia's outright enmity, nor

does any relish a tight Russian embrace. One issue on which all of the states are in accord with Russia is the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. Islamist extremist rebels have challenged the regimes in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Joint anti-terrorist military exercises were conducted in the region in 1999 and 2000. Code-named Commonwealth Southern Shield 2000, the second of these maneuvers brought together the troops of Russia and four of the Central Asian states.<sup>126</sup> Since then, such exercises have been held almost every year, with the participation of a varied mix of Central Asian states.

President Vladimir Putin took active steps to improve relations with Central Asia, visiting all five states during his first year as president. He warmly congratulated Karimov on his election to a third term as president, stressing "Uzbekistan's close ties with Russia." To Turkmenistan's President Niyazov, he extolled "the dynamic development of relations between Russia and Turkmenistan," and in July 2000 he met with President Askar Akayev in the Kremlin to sign the Declaration of Perpetual Friendship and Partnership Between Russia and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>127</sup> An early fruit of Putin's approach was a rapprochement between Moscow and Tashkent. Uzbek President Karimov visited Moscow in May, declaring that Russia was now his country's "strategic partner."

However, international politics in Central Asia was drastically altered as a result of the attack on the United States by Islamist extremist terrorists on September 11, 2001. The U.S. war on terrorism led directly to a new and unprecedented American intrusion into Central Asia, which was initially accepted by Moscow but soon came to be viewed as a challenge to Russian dominance of the region. As we will see in Chapter 9, Vladimir Putin moved quickly and decisively to associate with the United States in its war on terrorism, including his acceptance of U.S. bases in some CIS member states.<sup>128</sup> However, uncertainty regarding the duration of these bases and the length of stay of NATO forces in Afghanistan soon gave way to anxiety regarding Russia's regional hegemony. Fear of losing that control led Moscow to become more assertive in its attempts to counter American influence.

Late in 2001 Kyrgyzstan's parliament approved use of its territory for foreign military bases, permitting the United States to build an air base at Manas. At the same time, Uzbekistan concluded an agreement with Washington to operate a military base on its territory. These would be the first American military bases in the Commonwealth of Independent States. The influential Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* reflected the view of many of Russia's political elite in noting, "[t]he U.S. and NATO countries took brilliant advantage of their chance to stage an outwardly 'soft' and 'temporary' but in fact indefinite occupation of Central Asia."<sup>129</sup>

Initially, Putin wanted to reassert Moscow's authority in Central Asia and counter American influence without directly challenging the United States. His strategy was complicated by the shifting policies of the region's five states. In various degrees they sought to maneuver between Moscow and Washington, as

indeed Moscow itself maneuvered between cooperating with and opposing the United States on a variety of issues. China, too, has become an important player in Central Asia. One Russian expert noted that all Central Asian states take a “pragmatic view” of all global centers of power and “strive, with mixed success to follow a ‘multivector policy’ trying to balance between the European Union, the U.S., China and Russia.”<sup>130</sup> The geopolitical game played by all involved well illustrated the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in international politics.

In March 2002 Uzbek President Islam Karimov visited the United States, where the two countries signed a declaration of strategic partnership. Washington even designated Uzbekistan the United States’s chief strategic partner in Central Asia. However, to maintain its freedom to maneuver and to avoid unnecessary provocation of Moscow, Tashkent announced in June 2002 that Uzbekistan was leaving GUUAM, declaring the organization to be ineffective as an instrument for national security.

As we discussed above, as a partial counter to GUUAM, Russia initiated the creation of another CIS subgroup, the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), consisting of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Ostensibly, EURASEC’s central mission was to coordinate the economic activities of its members. But political considerations were also important. EURASEC had been described by Moscow as a kind of analogue to the European Union, but, quite unlike the EU where each member has the same vote, Russia dominated EURASEC with 40 percent of the vote.<sup>131</sup> EURASEC was superseded in 2015 by the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Another organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), grew out of the agreements between China and the three former Soviet states with which it shares a border. Uzbekistan joined the original “Shanghai Five” (China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan) in June 2001, and the SCO was formally chartered at a summit in June 2002. The following year it became a full-fledged international organization with a budget and structure, including an anti-terrorist center located in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Some observers have described the SCO, which notably includes both Russia and China as members, as a potential counterweight to NATO, notwithstanding their common struggle against terrorism. As its relations with NATO or Europe deteriorate, it is possible that Russia could someday see the SCO as a vehicle for closer cooperation with the Asian states. But it would have to contend with China, which competes with Russia for influence in Central Asia.

The formation of these subgroups of CIS members was clear evidence that the Commonwealth was undergoing a steady decline, particularly in Central Asia. Even though some of them served the general interest of fighting terrorism, these organizations in part represented either efforts by Russia to bring Central Asia back into its orbit or efforts by some Central Asian states to escape Moscow’s embrace. A good indication of the general state of affairs came at the CIS summit that convened in Kiev in January 2003. The presidents of each Central Asian state

except Tajikistan refused to participate in the summit. As the Russian press noted, “[a]nd so the slow extinction of the CIS continues.”<sup>132</sup>

Tajikistan is one of the two Central Asian states (along with Kazakhstan) that was once most consistently loyal to Moscow. But Tajikistan’s economic weakness and political vulnerabilities have led President Imomali Rakhmon to seek assistance from Russia, China, and the United States. China is making significant inroads. Economic stringencies in Russia after the 2008 global economic crisis, followed by Western-imposed sanctions after the Crimean annexation, have widened the space for Chinese entry into Tajikistan. In 2015, for instance, Chinese foreign direct investment amounted to 58 percent of total investment, while Russia’s share dropped to a meager 7.4 percent from a 2010 total of 30 percent.<sup>133</sup> Tajikistan has also increased its anti-terror security cooperation with China with the establishment in 2016 of a China-led Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism that excluded Russia.<sup>134</sup>

However, a weak and vulnerable Tajikistan continues to be dependent on Russia for security and it is indebted to Moscow to the tune of approximately \$1 billion.<sup>135</sup> During 2003 Russia increased the size of its military force in Tajikistan, in part as a balance to the U.S. presence in the region. Then in January 2009, Tajikistan signed an agreement with the United States for transport of non-military supplies to Afghanistan through Tajik territory. China has invested more than \$100 million in Tajikistan’s mining sector and over \$200 million in the construction of highways, and in 2016 promised an additional \$500 million to develop industry in the north of the country.<sup>136</sup>

Unwilling to cede influence to China, Russia in 2008 agreed to forgive a \$240 million debt in return for Russian control over a Soviet-era space tracking station. In October 2012, in exchange for help in dealing with Islamist militancy and drug trafficking, Russia received a further thirty-year extension on a military base that had been established by Moscow in 2004.<sup>137</sup> The base extension was ratified by the Tajik parliament in October 2013 after the successful conclusion of negotiations with Russia on better terms for its 1 million migrant workers and duty-free imports of 1 million tons of Russian oil products.<sup>138</sup> But President Putin’s January 2017 visit to Dushanbe failed to elicit President Rakhmon’s interest in joining the EAEU, yielding instead only bland agreement on a continued security partnership and the promise of cooperation in the development of hydroelectric projects.<sup>139</sup>

For its part, under the National Defense Authorization Act the United States has funneled aid in the form of military training to Central Asian countries to combat drugs and organized crime. Over the course of 2015 and 2016, Tajikistan has been the largest recipient of aid under this program, with U.S. Army Special Forces detachments training 886 Tajik troops in 2015 and 340 in 2016.<sup>140</sup>

Kazakhstan is vulnerable because of the large Russian-speaking population in its regions bordering Russia. The presence of a major missile test site at Baikonur is an important economic asset for Kazakhstan. As for security, its main

rival and potential threat is neighboring Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan has responded positively to Russia's proposals for joint military exercises and a common air defense system. Together, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan form the core of Moscow's geopolitical assets in the region.

Although Kyrgyzstan was already host to an American air base, it agreed to permit Russia to open one at Kant in 2003. This was the first new military base established by Moscow in another country since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Free use of the airfield facilities was permitted by Kyrgyzstan, but the cost of operating the facility was to be borne entirely by Russia. This military presence was placed in a starker perspective when, in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, Russia's defense minister noted that Russia also reserved the right to assert the principle of "pre-emptive use of military force in the CIS countries."<sup>141</sup>

Vladimir Putin's second term as president saw a steady consolidation of his power at home. While his power waxed, that of many CIS leaders waned. Internal pressures for reform encouraged by the West undermined several of Central Asia's traditional political elites. The first Central Asian state to experience a domestic upheaval comparable to the "color revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia was Kyrgyzstan.

Early in 2005 the political opposition in Kyrgyzstan—encouraged by Europe and the United States—united, thus threatening to defeat the forces of President Askar Akayev in the parliamentary elections scheduled for February and March. In January Akayev rushed to Moscow to seek Russia's support and protection in the face of widespread tension throughout the country. Putin obliged, but cautiously. He wanted Akayev to resist American influence. The results of the elections, completed in March, were rejected by the opposition as fraudulent. Moscow was prepared to accept the elections, which the CIS declared to be fair, but which the OSCE determined to be seriously irregular. In the face of demonstrations and fighting in cities throughout Kyrgyzstan, Putin urged Akayev to seek conciliation with the opposition. Akayev was not inclined to do so. On March 24 the country experienced what became known as the "tulip" revolution.<sup>142</sup> The Supreme Court voided the elections while the previous parliament named opposition leader Kurmanbek Bakiyev as acting president of Kyrgyzstan.

Realist that he was, Putin accepted this *fait accompli* and joined the United States in offering support to the new regime. In return, Kyrgyzstan's new foreign minister, Lidia Imanaliyeva, went to Moscow to assure her counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that Bishkek remained committed to "strategic partnership" with Russia and that Russia's air base in the city of Kant would continue to operate as before.

Russia's subsequent policy toward Kyrgyzstan was a case study in the use of adaptive tactics in its efforts to establish its pre-eminence in Central Asia. Indeed, Moscow appeared to be copying some of the same techniques that it had accused the West of employing in the "color revolutions." Elected in his own right, Bakiyev soon established himself as a corrupt autocrat in the mold of his predecessor, demonstrating his willingness to play Moscow and Washington against

each other as rival bidders for influence. In February 2009 he met President Medvedev in Moscow to accept a \$2.15 billion aid package. Although both parties denied linkage, Bakiyev also announced that he would move to close the American air base at Manas, which had become a vital refueling and transit center for the NATO operations in Afghanistan. Just six months after the war in Georgia, Russia seemed to be demonstrating that the new Obama administration would not be able to achieve its objectives in Central Asia without Moscow's consent.

Only four months later, Bakiyev reversed his decision, extending the American lease at Manas in return for a tripling of the annual rent. In the spirit of its "reset" relations with Obama, Russia publicly lodged no objection, but was privately reported to be unhappy with the arrangement. Prime Minister Putin was said to have upbraided Bakiyev when they met in November, even accusing him of having misdirected the first tranche of Russian aid into his family's pockets. Reportedly, Kyrgyz politicians who opposed Bakiyev were invited to Moscow for meetings with Russian officials.<sup>143</sup>

In February 2010 Russia announced that it was postponing payment of the second tranche of its aid package, and Russian television began broadcasting reports on growing opposition to Bakiyev's corruption. At the end of March, Russia used economic pressure, eliminating subsidies on its gasoline exports to Kyrgyzstan and causing a sharp spike in gas prices. Noisy protests forced Bakiyev to flee in April, and in June the south of the country was rocked by violent ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and minority Uzbek groups that left more than 100 dead.

Interim President Roza Otunbayeva attempted to walk a tightrope in her relations with the West and Russia, asking both for aid in quelling the violence and receiving only humanitarian aid in response. Russia's unwillingness to send peacekeepers and the failure of the CSTO to take action were viewed as signs that Moscow's tactical playbook was limited to non-military moves. But Russia's influence ultimately proved to be greater than Washington's. In October 2011, following elections that were widely hailed as free and fair, the new president, Almazbek Atambayev, immediately announced his intention to close the American transit facility when its lease expired in July 2014. In September 2012, Vladimir Putin signed an agreement that extended the lease on Russia's military base at Kant, and Atambayev resurrected a plan to establish an additional base, under CSTO auspices, in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh—an offer he reiterated during his visit to Moscow in June 2017. Arguing against an expansion of Russian forces at the base in Kant, Atambayev noted that a base in the south was more meaningful because of the "problems from Afghanistan."<sup>144</sup> By February 2013 Russia had forgiven \$500 million in Kyrgyz debt and concluded agreements for deepened economic cooperation.<sup>145</sup> But, as noted above, as further indication of its increasing economic ties to Russia, Kyrgyzstan did join the EAEU at its founding in early 2015. Sooronbai Jeenbekov, who was Atambayev's anointed successor to lead the ruling Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan and had served as prime minister, handily won in the October 2017 presidential elections



and was inaugurated as president in November, and is expected to provide continuity in foreign policy.

Successive revolutions in Kyrgyzstan were viewed with alarm by entrenched political elites in neighboring countries. One such authoritarian was Nursultan Nazarbayev, whose control over Kazakhstan's parliament was contested by the opposition on the grounds of rigged elections in 2004. In May 2005 the Kazakhstan parliament took measures to restrict the activities of political parties, non-governmental organizations, and media outlets throughout the country. Later that year Nazarbayev was re-elected president of Kazakhstan in an election the OSCE's observer mission considered to be neither free nor fair. That in no way discouraged Vladimir Putin from attending the presidential inauguration and receiving the praise of Nazarbayev, who declared: "Russian-Kazakh relations are excellent . . . and are growing stronger year by year."<sup>146</sup> Indeed Nazarbayev has been a steady ally of Russia in many areas, notably those involving integration in the post-Soviet space. But that did not keep him from pursuing interests that conflicted with those of Russia. For example, in 2006 Nazarbayev agreed to join Azerbaijan in exporting oil through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. That pipeline is in direct competition with Russia's Transneft line and the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. The BTC was strongly supported by the West as an alternative to oil pipelines controlled by Russia.

By 2012, the stable Kazakh-Russian relationship was showing signs of fraying. Both sides have disputes they would like to have resolved. Astana is upset that even after joining the Customs Union, which should allow a tariff-free transfer of Russian oil to Kazakhstan, Russia has insisted that the oil and gas sector is not part of the Single Economic Space. Unless addressed to the satisfaction of both countries, these irritants have the potential to undermine the strong Russian-Kazakh relationship. A case in point is the threat by Kazakh opposition leaders in March 2013 to call for a referendum on the country's withdrawal from the Customs Union because it was not economically beneficial to the country.<sup>147</sup>

Moscow's continued reliance on the Baikonur cosmodrome has also generated tensions between the two countries. In May 2012, a Kazakh-imposed ban on Russian rocket launches from the Baikonur cosmodrome led to a delay in launching into orbit three Russian and four foreign satellites. According to an official in the Russian Space Agency Roskosmos, construction of the Vostochny cosmodrome in Russia's Far East was likely to have been the reason for the ban on launches due to concern over Russia's breaking of the rental contract for the use of Baikonur. Russia pays Kazakhstan \$115 million annually for use of that cosmodrome. This contract is set to expire in 2050.

The Vostochny cosmodrome is expected to be completed within the next decade and when ready may reduce Russia's reliance on Baikonur.<sup>148</sup> But this cosmodrome has been "plagued with problems," leading Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin to declare in July 2016 that "Russia is not leaving Baikonur as this is our joint undertaking."<sup>149</sup> Moreover, the joint effect of low

oil prices and Western sanctions have imposed severe economic stringencies on Russia, forcing Moscow and Astana to allow foreign governments to use the Baikonur facility for space launches and to consider leasing the facility in order to cover operating costs.<sup>150</sup>

While the Kazakh-Russian relationship may be characterized as stable, it is likely to face ups and downs, particularly as economic challenges in the face of low oil prices force Astana to balance its indispensable relationship with Russia by seeking expanded ties with the EU, China, Turkey, the United States, India, and Iran.<sup>151</sup>

Uzbekistan is a country that Putin has successfully wooed away from the lure of Western overtures. Relations between Russia and Uzbekistan became strained when President Islam Karimov turned Westward by making a major military base available to the United States and joining the pro-Western group GUUAM as a founding member. Since 2003 there has been a steady shift in Tashkent toward Moscow. Several bombings in Tashkent by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan made Karimov sensitive to Uzbek vulnerability to terrorism. In May 2004 agreements were signed between Uzbekistan and Russia providing for Russian military assistance in the fight against terrorism. At the same time, Karimov was becoming increasingly sensitive to Western criticisms of human rights violations in his country. As GUUAM became demonstrably more pro-Western in its orientation, Karimov showed his displeasure by leaving the organization, accusing it of engaging in anti-Russian games. As of May 2005 GUUAM lost one of its "U"s and its only bridge to Central Asia.

Islam Karimov's fears of domestic unrest were justified. On May 13, 2005, a bloody uprising in Andijon took place. Armed militants released hundreds of prisoners from a local jail and proceeded to attack administration centers throughout the city. Uzbek officials blamed Islamic militants and criminals, but opposition and human rights groups contended that the root causes of the uprising were pervasive poverty and the absence of land reform. The uprising was met with massive retaliation by government forces, which led to the deaths of hundreds of people and the displacement of thousands more. Andijon became a symbol of Uzbek repression under Karimov.

International reaction to Andijon was mixed. The violent repression by Uzbek police and military forces—some 1,500 people were killed—was widely condemned by international institutions and governments. But the involvement of Islamic elements in the revolutionary leadership of the uprising undermined criticism of Karimov's methods in suppressing it. Indeed, Washington had up to this point viewed Tashkent as a partner in the fight against terrorism. Moscow, on the other hand, had no qualms about wholeheartedly supporting the government of Uzbekistan. Karimov was seen as a bulwark against Islamic militancy. He was authoritarian but secular. If he was also an impediment to Western liberal influence, so much the better. As partial payback for Russia's unconditional support of his actions, Karimov agreed to joint Russian-Uzbek military exercises, including

the deployment of Russian troops on Uzbek territory should destabilization take place in Central Asia. Russia's defense minister pressed Karimov for permission to build a permanent military base in Uzbekistan, but Karimov was not then prepared to go that far. However, as the United States continued to press Karimov for an independent investigation of the Andijon massacre and Russia vigorously defended his actions, the Uzbek president shifted his position, agreeing in principle to permit Russia to have a military base in his country. A treaty to that effect was signed in November 2005, making Uzbekistan in effect Russia's chief ally in Central Asia.

Moscow's success in strengthening military ties with Uzbekistan was matched at about the same time with Tajikistan. In October of the previous year Russia and Tajikistan had signed a treaty giving Russia a military base on Tajik territory in exchange for transferring military equipment belonging to Russia's 201st Motorized Infantry Division, then stationed in the Tajik Republic. That agreement was finalized in June 2005.

Particularly high on the SCO agenda after the "color revolutions" in 2004 was to maintain stability among its members. And the states most vulnerable to domestic upheaval were its Central Asian members. Early in July 2005 the Council of Heads of State of the SCO convened its annual meeting. The membership at the time consisted of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. At the forefront of their concerns were the changes that had taken place within the CIS during the previous year. Among several of the leaders present—including Vladimir Putin—there was the belief that much of the upheaval was the result of outside influence, particularly that of the United States. The text of the concluding joint declaration made it clear that the SCO wanted the United States to vacate its military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

This is in fact what happened. Deeply distressed by American pressure for an international investigation of the government massacre at Andijon, Uzbek authorities in July demanded that the United States give up its air base at Karshi-Khanabad within six months. President Bakiyev initially assured Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that Kyrgyzstan would not close the American base at Manas, but early in 2009, after receiving substantial financial aid from Moscow, he ordered the United States to leave its base at Manas. Steadily Moscow was recovering influence in the CIS in the east to compensate for what had been lost in the west.

Relations between Russia and Uzbekistan, however, cooled soon after Medvedev became president. In November 2008, Uzbekistan declared that it was withdrawing from EURASEC. (Tashkent had not been a founding member of that body in 2001 but had joined in 2006, when it also re-joined CSTO.) Russian analysts linked the estrangement to decisions by the United States and European countries to seek normalization of relations with Uzbekistan. After the war in Georgia jeopardized the Russia-NATO agreement for the shipment of non-military cargo to Afghanistan through Russian territory, NATO needed to

consider alternative routes (Georgia-Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan) into Afghanistan for non-military supplies. But this consideration of alternative routes was suspended with the “reset” in U.S.-Russian relations in 2009, when Moscow agreed to keep open the “Northern Distribution Route” for supplies of “military personnel and lethal and non-lethal material” to Afghanistan.<sup>152</sup>

In November 2009, Medvedev attempted to mend fences with Tashkent by appointing an ambassador to Uzbekistan after a one-year hiatus and declaring that Russia’s Central Asia policy depended heavily on good relations with that country. Part of this interest was to ensure that Russian influence would not be supplanted by China, which just that month had inaugurated the Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-China gas export pipeline.

Uzbekistan, in June 2010, appeared to signal an interest in joining the free trade zone and in cooperating with Moscow. However, in another change of direction, Uzbekistan continued to refrain from re-joining EURASEC, and it never joined its successor organization, the EAEU. Moreover, in November 2012 it again withdrew from the CSTO. This action apparently resulted from a decision taken at the CSTO summit the previous December that third countries could not station military bases on their territories without the unanimous consent of all members. Tashkent, which had been in discussions with the United States over the creation of a rapid reaction center in Uzbekistan that would function as a U.S. military base, would not have wanted CSTO members effectively to have a veto power over this move. An April 2013 meeting in Moscow between Putin and Karimov did not yield any breakthroughs in the relationship.<sup>153</sup>

Until his death in September 2016, Islam Karimov pursued an independent foreign policy toward Russia and was often at loggerheads with his counterparts in Central Asia, particularly in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In the process, he alienated Moscow and his neighbors. But shortly before his death, Karimov sought to mend fences with Russia. Since 2012, when Karimov had moved to modernize his country’s weaponry, he had decided to diversify the sources of supply, securing transport planes and helicopters from Airbus, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) from China, and armored and support vehicles from the United States. Obtaining weapons systems from Russia was rendered difficult with Tashkent’s withdrawal from the CSTO in 2012. During a visit to Moscow in April 2016, Karimov was successful in convincing his hosts to drop the requirement to join the CSTO and the EAEU before allowing the sale of Russian arms to Uzbekistan. Additionally, the resolution of the debt that Tashkent owed Moscow opened the path to Russian loans for the purchase of weapons. In November 2016, shortly after Karimov’s death, Uzbek Defense Minister Kabul Berdiev and Russian Army General Sergei Shoigu signed a military-technical cooperation agreement in Moscow.<sup>154</sup>

Karimov’s successor, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has signaled his interest in improving Uzbekistan’s relations with Russia, with countries in his Central Asian neighborhood, and in maintaining cordial ties with the rest of the world.<sup>155</sup> But joining the CSTO and EAEU are on not on the table. Mirziyoyev’s declared foreign

policy positions include non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, non-alignment with respect to membership in multilateral military organizations, non-deployment of foreign military bases on Uzbek soil, and non-membership in the EAEU. He has instead chosen the mechanism of SCO membership as the means for improving relations with other Central Asian countries while maintaining cooperative relations with both Russia and China, which remain Uzbekistan's most important external actors.<sup>156</sup> In another significant development, Uzbekistan has opted to pursue a more engaged and constructive policy toward Afghanistan in the security and energy realms.<sup>157</sup>

However, on the matter of Moscow's continuing efforts to entice former Soviet republics into the newly formed Customs Union, there continued to be mixed signals from Uzbek leaders. On November 13, Senate Speaker Ilgizar Sobirov indicated Tashkent's interest in joining the Customs Union. But the very next day, another official insisted that Uzbekistan was only interested in a bilateral relationship with Russia.<sup>158</sup>

Moscow's drive for Central Asian hegemony is complicated by the desire of some of the region's leaders for special status as secondary leaders under overall Russian dominance. Indeed, almost all Central Asian rulers, however subordinate to Moscow, strive for some leverage to use against Russia. One factor that gives a few regimes the advantage is Caspian Sea oil and gas. On this issue the principal beneficiaries are Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

As noted earlier, Russia and the West are engaged in a hard-fought competition for control over the energy resources of Central Asia. Western oil companies want to be involved in the production of Central Asian oil and gas, and Western governments are anxious that the pipelines through which oil and gas are transmitted bypass Russian territory. Russia's ability to cozy up to the autocratic rulers of the region gives it an advantage over Europe and the United States, but by the same token it gives the leaders of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan some leverage with Moscow.

One of the most energy-rich countries of the region is Turkmenistan, a state long ruled by Saparmurat Niyazov, a ruthless, eccentric dictator. In the post-Soviet years he was able to maintain a foreign policy of neutrality. Though never close to either Yeltsin or Putin, Niyazov avoided conflict with Moscow by dependably supplying Russia with the natural gas needed by Gazprom for transmission to Europe. Indeed, shortly before his sudden death in December 2006, Niyazov assured Gazprom that he opposed a trans-Caspian gas pipeline (under the sea), which the European Union anxiously sought in order to transmit Turkmen gas to Europe, bypassing Russia. Not coincidentally, Niyazov was able to force a nice increase in the price per cubic meter from Gazprom. Niyazov's death created a temporary crisis in Ashgabat, which ultimately was resolved by a political coup leading to the presidency of Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov.<sup>159</sup> In the spring of 2007 Berdimukhammedov confirmed to Moscow the commitment to Russia made by his predecessor.

Vladimir Putin's efforts to corner the energy resources of the Caspian Sea appeared to hit the jackpot when Kazakhstan agreed in 2007 to join with Russia and Turkmenistan to build a new gas pipeline along the shore of the Caspian Sea (and not under) to transmit the vast gas reserves of the two Central Asian states to Europe going directly through Russian territory.<sup>160</sup> Putin personally lobbied hard for the deal, even agreeing to increase the price paid to Turkmenistan for the gas. Within months, however, Russia's efforts to acquire a monopoly on the transit of Central Asian energy resources hit another snag when Turkmenistan reversed its position and joined Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in welcoming an American offer to fund a feasibility study for the trans-Caspian oil and gas pipelines. At the same time, another rival to Moscow's Central Asian ambitions, China, concluded agreements with the governments of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan for constructing oil and gas pipelines that would run from the Central Asian fields directly to China.<sup>161</sup> Thus, despite Russia's efforts to exploit its close diplomatic ties in Central Asia in order to secure an advantage in the lucrative energy field, the leaders of these states seemed determined to widen their options and expand their freedom of action by continuing to welcome competing offers from the West and from China.

Gas from Turkmenistan to China began to flow in 2009. The proposed Western-backed Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP) would feed into the existing Baku-Erzurum pipeline, which runs from Azerbaijan to Turkey, and then connect to the proposed Nabucco pipeline from Turkey to Hungary. This project stalled due to two obstacles: contentious relations between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan under Niyazov and uncertainty over the volume of available gas reserves in Turkmenistan. With the presidency of Berdymukhammedov, relations with Azerbaijan have improved, and in 2008 an independent audit of Turkmenistan's gas reserves conducted by a British firm reported that there were sufficient reserves to fulfill existing contracts to Russia, China, and Iran and to undertake to supply new customers in the West.<sup>162</sup> While Europe continues to be interested in the TCP project, the earlier mentioned economic and political obstacles still remain.<sup>163</sup>

Russia's willingness to pay premium rates for Turkmen gas is largely designed to keep Turkmenistan from joining non-Russian pipeline projects. But when gas prices dropped in 2008–2009 on the heels of the financial crisis, Russia responded by curtailing gas purchases from Turkmenistan. The first of these reductions occurred as a result of an April 2009 gas explosion in the pipeline, which Turkmenistan believed was a deliberate Russian attempt to disrupt supplies, and then continued the rest of the year due to a pricing dispute. These developments created a new wrinkle in Russian relations with Turkmenistan, and demonstrated Moscow's heavy-handed approach to countries in the post-Soviet space. In 2010, Turkmenistan agreed to reduce the price of gas but Gazprom reduced its intake to 10 billion cubic meters and ceased to be the major purchaser of Turkmen gas, raising questions about Moscow's continued ability to retain primary influence in the country.<sup>164</sup>

## The Baltic Republics

Among the states formed from the former Soviet republics, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia were the most determined to remain independent of Russia's control. Not only did they reject membership in the CIS, but also they vigorously sought political and economic integration with Western Europe. There remains among many of the Baltic peoples a residual bitterness over their forced incorporation into the USSR following the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the brutal treatment inflicted upon them by Stalin. They contend that their incorporation into the Soviet Union was never legally valid, a perspective that permeates their relations with Russia.

Demographics is another factor, and it cuts two ways. Such large percentages of the population of Estonia and Latvia are not of the titular nationality that there was initial concern over national survival. At independence approximately 40 percent of the population of Estonia consisted of non-Estonians. In Latvia the proportion of non-Latvians was even higher, 48 percent. The situation is different in Lithuania, where according to the 1989 census Lithuanians accounted for almost 80 percent of the total population. In 1994 the percentage of Russians in these three republics was estimated at 29.4 percent for Estonia, 33.5 percent for Latvia, and 8.5 percent for Lithuania.<sup>165</sup> As a consequence of these demographics as well as resentment over a half-century of Soviet (viewed by many Balts as Russian) domination, there was a strong movement in Estonia and Latvia to deny citizenship rights to non-Estonians and non-Latvians and to make the acquisition of citizenship difficult.<sup>166</sup>

From the Russian perspective, the presence of some 1,725,000 ethnic Russians in the Baltic republics obligated the Russian government to protect the civil rights of these diaspora Russians. Indeed, Yeltsin's government was under considerable domestic pressure to act on behalf of all 25.3 million Russians in the "near abroad." Russian refugees from the Baltics were among the organizers of the Congress of Russian Communities, which at its second Congress in 1994 demanded, *inter alia*, "protection of the interests of Russian citizens regardless of their place of residence."<sup>167</sup> The Congress of Russian Communities, with General Aleksandr Lebed among its leaders, became a potent force in Russian politics.

Russo-Balt antagonism did not necessarily mean cooperation among the Baltic states on all foreign policy issues, nor did it preclude considerable accommodation between Russia and the Baltic states. Despite their common struggle for independence, the Baltic republics worked toward common objectives in a very modest way. Close ties were imperiled by preoccupation with domestic problems, competition for Western investments, and often just plain mutual suspicion. Lithuania's early post-independence relations with Latvia were worse than its relations with Russia, due to an unresolved dispute over the demarcation of Lithuanian and Latvian waters. Latvia and Estonia quarreled over fishing rights. Meetings among leaders of the three states through the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers were often perfunctory. Though each state sought admission to NATO, they never

agreed to a mutual assistance alliance among themselves.<sup>168</sup> Politically, Lithuania tends to look toward Poland, while Estonia and Latvia feel stronger ties to Finland and Scandinavia. In terms of economic and security interests, all three are inclined to look to Germany rather than to each other.

Whatever suspicion exists toward Russia is muted by economic dependence and the realization that tiny states must make accommodation with neighbors who happen to be great powers. For decades, non-communist and democratic Finland illustrated the limits of an independent foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. Baltic military forces are small and poorly armed. The Baltic states are dependent upon Russia for natural gas and other sources of energy. Russia was their largest trading partner, and Russian cooperation is necessary for the transit of goods to any of the other CIS member states to the east and south.

Nevertheless, relations have often been contentious. Fundamentally that tension reflected both Moscow's wish to keep the region within Russia's sphere of influence, as well as the resistance of the Baltic states to Russian hegemony. The dialectic between the benefits of cooperation and the struggle for power has produced relations that are often fluid and changing. Initially the greatest Baltic concern was the presence of some 130,000 Russian troops in the three countries. Moscow used the issue of withdrawal as a bargaining chip to obtain greater political rights for the Russian minority in the Baltics. Of the three countries, Lithuania's citizenship law was the least restrictive. A combination of pressures (some economic) from Moscow and concessions by Vilnius induced the Yeltsin government to agree to withdraw all Russian forces by August 31, 1993.

Another military problem with political implications for Lithuania involved the transit of Russian military equipment and personnel from the Kaliningrad oblast (a region separate from Russia, on the Baltic Sea south of Lithuania) to Russia. Disagreement over the terms of transit had embittered Russo-Lithuanian relations until a compromise was reached in June 1995 that made it possible for Russian troops to cross Lithuanian territory on terms acceptable to both sides. This agreement illustrated the joint efforts to normalize relations as much as possible. However, in the mid-1990s a new issue arose—NATO expansion—which put the two countries on irreconcilable paths.

Latvian and Estonian relations with Russia have been particularly strained. The slowness of Russian troop withdrawal and the restrictions on Russian citizenship rights were powerful sources of antagonism. Both Latvia and Estonia adopted citizenship and naturalization legislation that the Yeltsin government considered discriminatory. Hard-fought negotiations failed to produce an outcome satisfactory to either party. The international community, particularly Europe, exerted pressure on both sides to modify their positions. The OSCE, European Union, and Council of Europe wanted the Baltic states to liberalize their citizenship rules, and the international community wanted Russian forces out of the Baltics.

A partial breakthrough was reached in late 1993, when Russia agreed to withdraw its forces from Latvia by August 1994 if Latvia would permit Russia to



retain its radar station at Skrunda for six years and if Russian military pensioners were given social guarantees. These terms, which did not give full satisfaction to either side, were formalized in April 1994 when President Boris Yeltsin and President Guntis Ulmanis signed a treaty in Moscow.<sup>169</sup>

However, problems of citizenship and language continued through the decade to poison relations between Latvia and its giant neighbor. In early 1998 the Latvian parliament considered legislation to make the exclusive use of the Latvian language mandatory in state institutions and in the private sphere. Not only Moscow condemned the idea as discriminatory to Russian-speakers in Latvia, the OSCE's high commissioner of Human Rights agreed.<sup>170</sup> European and Russian pressure eventually forced the Latvian parliament to make some concessions. The language law, which took effect on September 1, 2000, requires the use of the Latvian language for official functions but permits public events to be conducted in Russian. In April 1998 the Latvian cabinet agreed to grant citizenship to all children born in Latvia after August 21, 1991. Of the 700,000 non-citizens then in Latvia, about 20,000 children would become beneficiaries. Parliament adopted the citizenship law, but nationalist opposition forced a national referendum on the issue. In October 1998 Latvia's voters approved the new citizenship law, thus mollifying feelings in Moscow on that issue, but repeatedly, issues have arisen that reflect the underlying tensions between the peoples of both countries.<sup>171</sup> Latvia has asserted territorial claims against Russia; it has officially endorsed rallies of *Waffen-Schutzstaffel* (SS) veterans of World II; it has denied renewal of Russia's lease of the radar station at Skrunda; and the president of Latvia has even accused Russia of planning to invade the Baltics.<sup>172</sup>

Estonia's relations with its giant neighbor have also been contentious. It has ignored Russian demands that citizenship be granted to all Estonian residents. Laws adopted in late 1991 and early 1992 granted automatic citizenship only to those who had been citizens of the pre-war republic and their descendants. Estonia also angered Moscow by demanding a revision of its border with Russia, based upon the 1920 Treaty of Tartu. This revision would have transferred more than 2,000 square kilometers to Estonia. Russia refuses to recognize the validity of the Treaty of Tartu. As in the Latvian-Russian dispute, outside pressure was exerted on both sides to make concessions. The U.S. Senate, much to Moscow's displeasure, threatened to block aid to Russia if Estonia were not freed of foreign troops. On July 26, 1994, Yeltsin and Estonian President Lennart Meri signed agreements providing for the withdrawal of Russian troops by August 31 and committing Estonia to provide some 10,700 military pensioners the same rights as Estonian citizens.<sup>173</sup> Another irritant was removed in March 1999 when Estonia abandoned its demands for the restoration of the pre-war boundary lines established by the Treaty of Tartu. Estonia was motivated in these concessions by the European Union's requirement that prospective members have no unresolved border disputes with their neighbors.

One option that is available to all diaspora Russians is to return to live in Russia as citizens. Relatively few Baltic Russians have chosen to do this, in all likelihood because economic conditions are better in the Baltic states than in Russia, and a move would probably lower their standard of living.

It is no exaggeration to describe alignment with Western Europe as the central foreign policy objective of each of the Baltic states. They view being part of Europe as central to their security and sovereignty. Russia took no active steps to prevent the expansion of the EU into this region.

NATO is another matter. As determined as the Baltic states were to join NATO, Russia was determined to keep them out. When NATO initiated its Partnership for Peace program in early 1994 as a preliminary step toward possible full membership, the Baltic states quickly joined the bandwagon. During the intense debate in 1996 and 1997 over which countries would be among the first to be invited into NATO, there was never any doubt that the Baltics would not be among them.

One of the limits demanded by Moscow was that NATO not incorporate any of the states of the former Soviet Union. Moscow's greatest concern was the Baltics, which were then the only former Soviet states actively seeking admission to NATO. Moscow's policy was formally described in a "conceptual outline" published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 13, 1997. In it the Russian government acknowledged the inevitability of NATO expansion, but insisted that such expansion could not include former USSR republics, "especially the Baltic countries." Admitting the Baltics to NATO would create a "serious barrier" between them and Russia. In compensation Moscow announced its willingness to offer its neighbors some kind of security "guarantees."<sup>174</sup>

Prior to the NATO decision, negotiations were begun in January between Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana. Primakov took a strong line against Baltic membership in NATO. He publicly warned of the consequences if that were to happen:

Russia cannot remain indifferent to the factor of distance—the Baltic countries' proximity to our vital centers. Should NATO advance to new staging grounds, the Russian Federation's major cities would be within striking range of not only strategic missiles, but also tactical aircraft. . . .

In other words, as soon as the Balts took such a path our dealings with NATO would be over. There would still be bilateral relations with the Western countries as such, of course, but in other respects Russia's foreign policy would diversify noticeably and be stepped up in the eastern and other sectors. It goes without saying that additional defensive measures would also have to be taken.<sup>175</sup>

This hard line gave way as part of the change in Russia's foreign policy line under Putin, particularly as Russia found it advisable to align with the West in the war against terrorism. As a realist, Putin accepted the incorporation of the Baltic states, not only into the European Union (which took place on May 1, 2004)

but in NATO as well (on March 29, 2004). Their NATO membership further exacerbated Moscow's relations with the Baltic states. NATO's decision to patrol the airspace over its newest members was vigorously condemned by Russia's military as "unfriendly."<sup>176</sup>

Only with Lithuania was there improvement in relations in the spring of 2004. For months Russia and Lithuania had been at loggerheads once again over the rules that would govern the transit of Russians across Lithuania as they traveled to and from Kaliningrad. After May 1, the border being crossed would be not simply Lithuania's, but that of the European Union, and Brussels was reluctant to allow Russian travelers and goods to enter the EU visa-free. By agreeing not to require visas (though issuing instead "facilitated travel documents"), Vilnius met a central criterion of Russian negotiators. In return, the Russian parliament, after years of delay, ratified a treaty signed in 1997 that formally established the border between the two countries.

Lithuanian relations with Russia, which had been warm since the mid-2000s, turned frosty in early 2007, when Lithuania, accusing Russia of "energy blackmail," vetoed Russia-EU talks on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which it finally lifted in June 2008. In 2012, Lithuania accused Gazprom of monopoly practices and spearheaded an EU initiative to investigate the company, angering Moscow. Russia responded by using the energy weapon in economically crippling ways. Lithuania was dependent on Russia for 100 percent of its gas and 60 percent of its electricity, and had a long-term supply contract with Gazprom until 2015. Gazprom also had an ownership stake in Lithuania's gas distribution network. Following the practice of making countries with policies unsympathetic to Russia pay more for energy, Gazprom successively raised its gas prices, with a 450 percent increase over seven years. Lithuania paid a higher rate than its neighbors, Latvia and Estonia, and about 20 percent more than Germany. Russia flexed its economic muscles in October 2013 ahead of an EU summit in November 2013 hosted by Lithuania aimed at promoting closer ties with post-Soviet states that are not members of the EU. Moscow's response was swift. Citing quality concerns, Russia's consumer protection agency suspended Lithuanian dairy imports.

Tensions remain in the Russian-Lithuanian relationship. With worries stemming from the 2014 Crimea annexation, Lithuania in its annual threat assessment released in early 2017 expressed alarm after Russia upgraded its military forces in Kaliningrad, with the addition of SU-30 fighter aircraft and the Iskander-M missile system. Lithuania claimed that with the modernization of its military base Russia could launch an attack on any of the Baltic states, leaving the targeted country no more than a 24-hour warning.<sup>177</sup> In response to the perceived threat from Russia, the three Baltic states increased their spending on new weapons systems from \$210 million in 2014 to \$390 million in 2016. Lithuania has taken two other steps—updating its civil defense booklet for citizens and announcing the introduction of conscription for males between 19 and 26 years of age.<sup>178</sup>

Lithuanian experts are generally pessimistic about the trajectory of Russian-Lithuanian relations.<sup>179</sup>

A contentious issue of long standing involved the borders between Russia and Estonia and Latvia. In the fall of 2012, Estonia floated a new initiative for border demarcation and bilateral discussions began anew. Following this process, in May 2013 Estonia's parliament approved a bill for a new border treaty with Russia. Latvia for a time claimed Abrene (now Pytalovo), a small area incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1944, but with no success.<sup>180</sup> Finally, on March 27, 2007, Latvia and Russia signed a border treaty in which Latvia abandoned its claim on Russia. Russian-Latvian relations began to improve after the agreement about the border. While old historical and political resentments have not been forgotten completely, Latvian President Valdis Zalters visited Moscow in December 2010 and, in the spirit of pragmatism, signed a series of agreements establishing the basis for bilateral economic cooperation. But as an EU member state, Latvia is firmly ensconced in Western institutions and its entry into the Eurozone in January 2014 was expected to cement its "shift away from Russia."<sup>181</sup>

Russian relations with both countries periodically become antagonistic over relatively minor incidents. The most notorious of these occurred in April and May of 2007, when Estonia's decision to relocate a war memorial to Soviet troops sparked riots at the Estonian Embassy in Moscow and a three-week cyber attack, allegedly emanating from Russia, that temporarily disabled dozens of Estonian websites.<sup>182</sup> But despite these irritants, the benefits of trade and economic relations mandate that neither side permit a significant rupture. Like neighboring Lithuania, though, Estonia and Latvia have been worried over Russian assertiveness in the post-Soviet space and its implications for their countries.<sup>183</sup>

In sum, Russia's relations with the states that formerly comprised the republics of the Soviet Union are varied. The Baltic states are now clearly outside of Russia's control. At the other extreme is Belarus, which remains a candidate for union with Russia. In between are groupings (whose membership occasionally shifts) that lean strongly toward the West—notably Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova—or are pro-Russian, like Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Moscow remains determined to bring as many of these states as possible into its sphere of influence. Sergei Ivanov, then minister of defense, frankly informed the Council on Foreign Relations in New York in January 2005 that "our interest in the CIS countries, particularly our defense interest, 'is a priority one for Russia.'"<sup>184</sup> But interest in the CIS member states did not necessarily equate with interest in the CIS. Within months of Ivanov's statements Vladimir Putin was openly acknowledging the failure of the CIS as an organization. At a CIS summit meeting in Armenia, Putin confessed that the CIS had "accomplished its mission" and he invited those who wished to leave to do so.<sup>185</sup> No one did so until Georgia exited in 2008.

Periodically, efforts to reform the CIS are considered but never adopted. Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's president, has been the strongest champion of reform,

attempting at one point to obtain support for transforming the CIS into something resembling the European Union with a common external border. That idea struck too many as a resurrection of the old USSR to be acceptable. Nevertheless, the CIS continues to survive. Relatively minor problems are resolved through its structure and, at a minimum, its regular summits provide CIS leaders an opportunity to meet with each other and, particularly, with the Russian president.

## Notes

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## Russia Faces West

### Aspirations and Obstacles

#### A Changed Orientation

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 changed the structure of the international system. Throughout the Cold War the international system was bipolar. A bipolar system, as contrasted to a multipolar system, is one dominated by two great powers or by two blocs, each led by a great power. Although bipolarity had characterized regions of the world before—for example, Athens and Sparta in the fifth century BCE—never before had it existed at the global level.

Political science theorists have described a bipolar world as a confrontational one in which each side views the other as a deadly adversary and in which each “pole” views any gain by the other as its own loss. In the language of game theory, the bipolar struggle was a “zero-sum game.”<sup>1</sup> It cannot be established with certainty whether bipolarity contributed to the Cold War or whether the dual structure of the international system happened to be dominated by strongly antagonistic states. Either way, by the beginning of the 1990s, the United States was clearly the dominant world power. For the moment, the international system appeared to be “unipolar,”<sup>2</sup> and with the new system came a respite in great power rivalry.

In both Washington and Moscow, a new perception of the other emerged. The two rivals became partners. As shown earlier, this change began in the Gorbachev period, as Gorbachev liquidated one by one the sources of contention between East and West: in the arms race, and in Afghanistan, Africa, Eastern Europe, Germany, Cuba, and elsewhere. But Gorbachev was a man of contradictions. He could never fully divest himself of the spirit of competition between socialism and capitalism. As he expressed it in his book *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, “Economic, political, and ideological competition between capitalist and socialist countries is inevitable.”<sup>3</sup> We can only speculate how far the rapprochement between East and West would have gone had Gorbachev remained in power.

Gorbachev's successor, Boris Yeltsin, went beyond rapprochement with the United States. He began his administration with a genuine attempt to build a partnership with the United States, even though differences emerged between Moscow and Washington as early as his first term as president. What explains the transformation in Russian foreign policy? In Chapter 5 we noted the shift in the perceptions of the political elite of Russia. Ideology was completely abandoned, ending the worldview of an inherent conflict between political systems. Yeltsin did not just modify communist doctrine, as Gorbachev did; he jettisoned it completely.

In Chapter 5 we described the debate in Russian politics between the "Atlanticists" and the "Eurasianists." Yeltsin, and especially his first foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, actively trumpeted the Atlanticist position. The Russian president stated his views at a special summit meeting of the UN Security Council on January 31, 1992:

Russia sees the U.S., the West, and the countries of the East not merely as partners but as allies. This is a highly important prerequisite for, and, I would say, a revolution in, peaceful cooperation among the states of the civilized world.

We rule out any subordination of foreign policy to ideological doctrines or a self-sufficient policy. Our principles are simple and understandable: the supremacy of democracy, human rights and liberties, legality, and morality.<sup>4</sup>

Before a joint session of the U.S. Congress on June 17, 1992, Yeltsin reaffirmed his wish to join "the world community."<sup>5</sup> However, it was clear that more than ideology or perception was involved. Russia was impelled by its domestic condition to seek outside assistance, and no country was better positioned to aid the new administration than the United States. Yeltsin made the transformation of Russia's economy his number one domestic priority. In the words of Anders Aslund, a Swedish economic advisor to Yeltsin, "When the Soviet Union broke up in December 1991, the Russian economy was in a crisis as complex as it was profound."<sup>6</sup> Foreign help was essential.

Western support for Yeltsin had an importance beyond economics. It was also important for him politically. Yeltsin understood that he could count on the support of Washington when he confronted domestic opposition. The value of this support became clearly evident during the failed coup of August 1991.<sup>7</sup> Later, during the parliamentary crisis in October 1993, Yeltsin sought and received support from the West.<sup>8</sup> In sum, the shift in Russian foreign policy toward a pro-Western orientation reflected conviction, necessity, and self-interest.

## **Arms Control**

Russian commitment toward cooperation with the United States began with the issue of arms control and weapons reduction. We have noted in Chapter 4 that in the late Soviet period Gorbachev's "new thinking" had redefined the country's



national security requirements, placing less emphasis on nuclear weapons and more on arms control. The result was a number of negotiated reductions in weapons, of which the most important were the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement of 1987, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty in 1990, and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) treaty in 1991.<sup>9</sup> The arms race during the Cold War had been one of the factors that undermined economic growth in the civilian sector. Not surprisingly, Yeltsin immediately pushed for arms cuts, particularly cuts in nuclear weapons. Reducing nuclear weapons, he announced in January 1992, “would make it possible to save substantial amounts of money. This money would be channeled toward civilian objectives and toward implementation of reform.”<sup>10</sup>

An important issue confronting Moscow and Washington was a follow-up treaty to the START agreement. Under the terms of the START I treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed to reduce their strategic nuclear forces from 11,602 to 8,592 for the United States, and from 10,877 to 6,940 for the Soviet Union. Further reductions were to be made in succeeding agreements. Negotiations for START II began in the winter of 1992 and were completed in the remarkably short time of five months. Two issues dominated the negotiations: the number of strategic nuclear warheads permitted for each side and the delivery systems that were to be destroyed. In January, Boris Yeltsin proposed reducing nuclear warheads on strategic missiles to between 2,000 and 2,500. President George Bush wanted a ceiling of between 4,500 and 5,000.<sup>11</sup> The range ultimately agreed to by both was between 3,000 and 3,500.

The major concession made by Russia in START II was agreement to eliminate all land-based ICBMs armed with multiple warheads—the backbone of its strategic force—while the United States was permitted to retain the heart of its strategic force—multiple-armed warheads in submarines. The date for completing the reduction in warheads and prohibited missiles was 2003.

For the first time since the beginning of the nuclear arms race, Russia abandoned its goal of parity with the United States. “We are departing from the ominous parity,” Yeltsin explained, “where each country was exerting every effort to stay in line, which has led to Russia having half of its population living below the poverty line.” He acknowledged that Russian concessions were made to give tangible “expression of the fundamental change in the political and economic relations between the United States of America and Russia.”<sup>12</sup> START II was agreed upon at the June 1992 summit and signed on January 3, 1993.

Not all Russians were prepared to accept the asymmetrical terms of START II. There was disquiet within the military. *Pravda*, an organ of the opposition, suggested that the treaty could be a “hasty, unwarranted concession to Washington and Russia’s final loss of the status and importance of a superpower.” It predicted, “This will evoke sharp debates in the Russian Supreme Soviet during the ratification of the agreement.”<sup>13</sup> This prediction was an understatement. Russia did not ratify START II until April 2000.

For almost three years, ratification was linked to the problem of Ukraine's refusal to ratify the START I agreement. START II could not be implemented until all the former Soviet republics possessing nuclear weapons—Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—agreed to ratify the START I treaty and the Nonproliferation Treaty. We noted in Chapter 6 the antagonism in Russian-Ukrainian relations during the early post-Soviet period (that has markedly worsened under Putin's presidency). Responding to strong domestic opinion, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk resisted giving up the "nuclear card" as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Russia over a variety of issues, including the status of Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet, and financial compensation for returning its nuclear weapons to Russia. A prolonged effort was made by Russia and the United States, acting in concert, to pressure Ukraine to ratify START I.

At a Moscow summit in January 1994, President Bill Clinton and Yeltsin induced Kravchuk to sign a trilateral agreement in which Ukraine would take measures to bring START I into force in return for financial compensation and security guarantees from both Russia and the United States.<sup>14</sup> Even that commitment was stymied because of Ukrainian domestic politics, and final Ukrainian parliamentary approval was not given until later in the year.

Although the accession of Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan (as well as Russia) to START I legally opened the way to move on Russian ratification of START II, new obstacles developed both in Russian domestic politics and in Russian-U.S. relations. As we will see below, a sharp change in Russian foreign policy resulted from a nationalist surge in Russian politics and the takeover of Russia's legislature in 1993 by nationalist and rightist forces. In 1994, a new issue emerged—NATO expansion—which further deferred ratification.

An issue related to arms control was the problem of the security of nuclear and chemical weapons in the arsenals of some of the newly independent states. Fearful that these weapons might fall into the hands of terrorists or governments supporting terrorism, the U.S. Congress in late 1991 enacted legislation creating the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, sometimes referred to as the Nunn-Lugar program after its U.S. Senate sponsors. The program was intended to give Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan financial and technical assistance for dismantling or safely storing nuclear and chemical weapons. Toward that end, projects were financed for defense conversion, housing for former military officers, jobs for scientists, storage of nuclear weapons, improvement of security for transportation of nuclear weapons, and destruction of chemical inventories. The CTR program was scheduled to end in 2001, but the U.S. Congress agreed to continue funding it. The program ended in 2012 when, amidst a general deterioration in U.S.-Russian relations, Moscow withdrew from participation in CTR.<sup>15</sup>

One constituency that Yeltsin could not afford to disregard was the military. He carefully involved the Ministry of Defense in the negotiations for START II, and, notwithstanding some criticism from the right, was able to secure a degree of political cover with the endorsement of START II by Minister of Defense

Pavel Grachev and Chief of the General Staff Mikhail Kolesnikov.<sup>16</sup> Two issues on which the military lobbied Yeltsin and received the president's support were revision of the CFE treaty and arms sales abroad. On both issues Yeltsin pressed the West for accommodation. The CFE treaty, signed in November 1990, established allocations for a variety of conventional weapons in the NATO and Warsaw Pact states. It contained restrictions on the internal distribution of forces in Russia, specifically in the military districts of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and the North Caucasus, which the Russian military considered too restrictive for post-Soviet Russia. Before the Soviet collapse, these districts were rear-echelon regions, but with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the breakup of the USSR, they unexpectedly emerged as part of Russia's first line of defense.

Opposition to the CFE within the national security elite was strong even during the Soviet period. The antipathy intensified with the change in Russia's geopolitical position. The limitation in the Leningrad district posed no immediate problems, but instability in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and the use of Russian peacekeeping forces in the Caucasus, required an upward adjustment of limitations. In September 1993 Boris Yeltsin formally proposed amending the CFE treaty. There was strong resistance to this in NATO, particularly from Turkey, the NATO member most affected. Russia remained adamant, arguing not only the threat to stability in the region and the long-term danger of Islamic fundamentalism, but also concern for the cohesion of the Russian Federation itself. Facing the possibility of Russian renunciation of the CFE treaty altogether, NATO agreed to negotiate the issue.<sup>17</sup>

### **War in the Balkans**

At about the same time that the Soviet Union collapsed, the Yugoslav state fell apart, precipitating Europe's first major post-Cold War conflict. The assertion of independence by Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, two of Yugoslavia's constituent republics, led to bitter fighting between Croats, Serbs, and Muslims. The most bitter and prolonged part of the fighting took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Each of the three communities fought for control over territory in the newly independent state. The Serbs (who composed 31.3 percent of the Bosnian population) and the Croats (17.3 percent) opposed a unified, independent Bosnian state whose dominant population was Muslim (43.7 percent). The Serbs and Croats wanted instead a loose confederation in which they would be essentially self-governing or free to unite with their brethren in Croatia and Serbia.<sup>18</sup>

Fighting in Bosnia began in the spring of 1992 and continued until a peace agreement brokered by the United States was signed in November 1995. The Bosnian War created a strain in Russian-U.S. relations because the sympathies of the two countries were with different parties to the conflict. Russia was traditionally an ally of Serbia. As we saw in Chapter 2, historically Russia had assumed

the role of protector of the Orthodox Christian Slavs in the Balkans. This feeling of kinship between Russians and Serbs resonated throughout Russian society.

The United States found itself sympathetic to the Bosnian Muslims because they were the victims of widespread Serbian atrocities associated with the policy of “ethnic cleansing” (forcible displacement from territories seized by the Serbs). Both Moscow and Washington faced constraints in supporting their respective sides. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev made no attempt to defend Serbian aggression, and the West recognized that atrocities had been committed, albeit on a lesser scale, by Croats and Muslims also.

While Yeltsin’s policies vacillated over time, reflecting the changing pressures on his administration, he carefully avoided a rupture with the United States. His general strategy was to concede to the United States those points that Washington pressed, while at the same time working to soften the blows inflicted on the Serbs. In the end, Russia—which had the power of the veto—voted with the majority of the UN Security Council to impose unprecedented, strict sanctions against Yugoslavia. However, Yeltsin’s Yugoslav policy encountered strong conservative opposition at home.

Under the leadership of Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serbs ruthlessly pursued their policy of ethnic cleansing. Though sympathetic to the Serb cause, the Russian government condemned Serb atrocities as well as Yugoslav support for Bosnian Serb aggression. That aggression led to Serb control of approximately 70 percent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In August 1992 the issue of using military force to guarantee the delivery of humanitarian aid came before the UN Security Council. Russia, notwithstanding its dislike of coercion against the Serbs, supported resolutions authorizing the use of force if necessary. As the war in Yugoslavia widened during the 1990s, however, relations with the West became seriously strained.

### **Russia’s Shift to the Right**

For about two years the Yeltsin administration maintained a pro-Western orientation in the conduct of foreign policy. Russia-U.S. summits in 1992 and 1993 demonstrated an unprecedented rapport between the leaderships of the two countries. At the Washington summit of June 1992, Yeltsin and Bush signed the Charter of Russian-American Partnership and Friendship affirming “the indivisibility of the security of North America and Europe” and a common commitment to “democracy, the supremacy of law and support for human rights.”<sup>19</sup>

As we saw in Chapter 5, the “Atlanticist” consensus within Russia’s governing elite, led by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, was by no means universally shared throughout Russian society. Yeltsin was in almost constant conflict with the parliament inherited from the Soviet period. Both in the parliament and in non-government circles, Yeltsin was attacked by nationalists for his support of U.S. policy in Yugoslavia, and for such actions as the 1993 U.S. air strike against

Iraq. *Pravda* chided Yeltsin, saying, "The role of Washington yes-man is unbecoming of any country, especially Russia, and it inevitably conflicts with national interests."<sup>20</sup> Andrei Kozyrev served as a lightning rod for much of the criticism of the Yeltsin administration. The Supreme Soviet called for his removal, and in 1996 he was replaced by the "pragmatic nationalist" Yevgeny Primakov.

Nationalists in Russia held Yeltsin as responsible as Gorbachev for the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and they hated him for it. They had a diffuse agenda ranging from the restoration of the USSR to the protection of Russians throughout former Soviet territories. For Boris Yeltsin these pressures necessitated a careful balancing strategy. His record as a whole justifies the conclusion that his commitment to partnership with the West reflected a genuine conviction. Indeed, though there were significant swings in Russian foreign policy over the course of Yeltsin's two terms, the underlying rationale never changed. But to understand the swings it is necessary to consider both the political calculations of the governing elite, especially the president, and the evolving political and economic conditions within Russia.

Certainly a factor in the evolution of Russia's policy was popular disillusionment with the fruits of economic reform. "Shock therapy," begun in January 1992, led to severe economic hardship for millions of ordinary people. By virtually every economic index, production declined during the early post-Soviet years. Economic assistance from the United States proved to be disappointingly smaller than most Russians expected. In late 1993, polls showed that by a two-to-one margin Russians were convinced that the West's economic advice represented a deliberate effort to weaken Russia. This margin increased in 1995 and 1996.<sup>21</sup>

Yeltsin's own views changed with those of the electorate. To say this is not to suggest that Yeltsin shifted with the fluctuating winds of public opinion as measured by polls, but, as president, he felt an obligation to be "comprehensible, controllable, and dependent upon public opinion. He must listen."<sup>22</sup> To many, Yeltsin had the reputation of an authoritarian leader. His repudiation of Mikhail Gorbachev in the waning days of the Soviet Union, his use of force against an intransigent parliament in 1993, and his attempt to suppress the Chechens by military measures sustained that reputation. But there was a different and equally consistent element in his political modus operandi, and that was his willingness to compromise and to find common ground with his critics and opponents. This tendency was evident in his negotiations with Gorbachev before the August coup; it was clear in repeated attempts to find common ground with his enemies in the Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies; and it revealed itself in his re-election campaign. In short, as the broad contours of public opinion shifted, so did Yeltsin. This could be viewed as political expediency or as the democratic response of a leader to his people.<sup>23</sup>

Vladimir Zhirinovsky's success in the December 1993 parliamentary elections was a bad omen for the president. Although the Liberal Democratic Party lacked a cohesive or comprehensive program, the rhetoric of its leader was that of

an extreme nationalist. Many thought of Zhirinovsky as a fascist. Zhirinovsky condemned the dissolution of the USSR and promised to restore Russia to its status as a great power. He offered his leadership as the protector of the 25 million Russians living outside the Russian Federation. Specifically, he promised to recover for Russia lost territories in Ukraine, the Baltic states, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Finland. In one of his less considered statements, he even suggested the return of Alaska to Russia.<sup>24</sup>

Russia began 1994 with a new constitution and a new parliament. The fact that Yeltsin confronted another antagonistic parliament, as he had prior to the constitutional crisis in 1993, did not mean that he was as constrained as before. As we have noted in Chapter 5, the powers of the president were significantly greater under the new constitution. Indeed, with regard to foreign policy Yeltsin had virtually a free hand. He could, should he choose, run roughshod over the parliament, but in so doing he would be going against what appeared to be the popular will.

Russia's post-1993 constitutional order shares certain features with that of France. Both nations' constitutions were drafted by strong leaders in times of crisis. In 1958 Charles de Gaulle wrote the constitution for the French Fifth Republic to give himself the power to deal with the crisis caused by war in Algeria. Both constitutions combine elements of presidential and parliamentary systems. As in all parliamentary systems, the government is subordinated to parliament; but in France and Russia, unlike other countries with parliamentary systems, an independently elected president chooses the government. Another similarity is that the potential for stalemate exists in both regimes, if the forces controlling parliament are hostile to the president. In France this potential conflict was avoided by a policy of cooperation between the president and parliament that became known as "cohabitation." To the surprise of some, Yeltsin in 1994 engaged in his own form of cohabitation by demonstrating willingness to compromise with opponents in the State Duma. In domestic politics this meant a slowdown in the economic reform. In foreign policy it meant a shift to the right.<sup>25</sup>

### **The First War in Chechnya**

No issue so dramatized the shift in Russian politics—both domestic and foreign—as the war in Chechnya, which erupted in December 1994. Chechnya is one of the ethnic republics that make up the Russian Federation. It borders on the independent state of Georgia in the Caucasus and has a Muslim population with a long history of resistance to central authority. Some Chechen units collaborated with German forces invading the Caucasus during World War II, provoking Stalin to deport large numbers of Chechens to Central Asia. In 1991 the Chechen Republic declared itself independent, but its independence was recognized neither by the Russian government nor by any other state. During the early years of his

administration, Yeltsin avoided a direct confrontation with Chechen forces led by President Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Reports of impending warfare in Chechnya were heard throughout 1994. On December 11, Russia sent armed forces into Chechnya for the purpose of overthrowing President Dudayev and establishing Russian authority in the region. Ostensibly, the reason for the invasion was to establish constitutional order—the Russian constitution denied any of its eighty-nine subjects the right to secede unilaterally—and to suppress widespread crime and corruption in Chechnya. What was not made clear at the time was why Yeltsin had chosen that particular time to act. Why had Yeltsin not attempted to negotiate a special constitutional arrangement with the Dudayev government, permitting a degree of republican autonomy, as he had with other republics?<sup>26</sup>

Russia's opaque political system rendered difficult a clear analysis of whether the decision to invade was made by military leaders not fully responsible to the Russian president, or whether perhaps Yeltsin himself was moving sharply toward a more nationalist, hard-line policy. Evidence that the war in Chechnya was part of a broader change in Russian foreign policy was provided by Yeltsin's dramatic behavior at the Budapest meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which convened just days before the outbreak of fighting. This organization, which was comprised of fifty-six states of Europe, Central Asia, and North America, had its origin in the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in the mid-1970s, and it has on occasion been promoted by Russia as an alternative security structure for post-Cold War Europe.

Speaking in Budapest against the expansion of NATO, Yeltsin warned of a new "cold peace" in Europe. His allusion to the United States was unmistakable when he observed, "History proves that it is a dangerous delusion to think that the fates of continents and of the world community as a whole can be controlled from a single capital."<sup>27</sup> Just days earlier, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev had stunned the members of the NATO Council meeting in Brussels with an unexpected announcement that Russia would not join the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program pushed by Washington.

The West did not question the right of Russia to establish, even forcefully, its authority in Chechnya, but it did object to the brutality of Russian forces fighting in the war zones, and particularly to the killing of civilians and indiscriminate bombing of the capital city of Grozny. Russian forces were both wantonly destructive and totally ineffective in winning the war.

As a result, the prestige of the Russian military declined, and with it the popularity of the Russian president. Chechnya was the first war ever viewed on television by the Russian people, and as the U.S. administration learned in Vietnam, popular viewing of a losing war generates strong domestic opposition. A national poll early in 1995 found a 72 percent disapproval rate of the Kremlin's policy in Chechnya and only a 16 percent approval rating.<sup>28</sup> In February 1995,

polls showed that Yeltsin's approval rating had fallen to 8 percent. Particularly significant was the loss of support among many of his former democratic allies. Ironically, Yeltsin's war policy was supported primarily by right-wing nationalist elements, precisely those forces least likely to support his overall foreign or domestic policies.

The war in Chechnya was the most divisive security policy issue in Russian politics during the 1995 parliamentary elections and the presidential elections the following year. Efforts were made in the State Duma to force an end to the war by legislative means, but they failed because of the refusal of the nationalist parties to attack Yeltsin on that issue.

However, in the summer of 1995 a terrorist attack on Russian soil by Chechen forces galvanized public opposition to the war. A gang of 200 guerrillas led by Shamil Basayev seized some 2,000 hostages in the Russian city of Budyonnovsk. Russians were outraged that such a large-scale operation could be undertaken in a city almost a hundred miles from the Chechen border. Compounding the humiliation of the raid was the inept performance of the military effort to rescue the hostages. So angered were critics of the war in the legislature that the State Duma voted its first motion of no confidence in the government on June 21, by a vote of 241 to seventy-two (with twenty abstentions).<sup>29</sup>

Politics in Russia during the second half of 1995 was dominated by the campaign to elect members to a new Duma. The election was scheduled for December 17. Yeltsin's policies were under attack from both the left and right. The principal vehicle for supporting the president's policies was the party Our Home Is Russia, headed by Chernomyrdin. The parliamentary elections turned into a political defeat for the administration. Overall, Yeltsin ended up with a parliament no more sympathetic to him than its predecessor. Those who constituted the opposition—a coalition of leftist and nationalist elements—were potentially in a position to mobilize a majority in the parliament. Thus foreign policy decisions that required the support of the Duma—such as ratification of START II—were problematic at best. However, the fundamental constitutional fact remained that foreign policy was made by the executive branch, not by the parliament.

Almost immediately after the parliamentary elections in December 1995, politics in Russia began to focus on the presidential election scheduled for the following June. As we have seen, one of the casualties of the nationalist upsurge embodied in the new Duma was Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. As one of the longest-serving members of the administration, Kozyrev came to symbolize better than anyone else the liberal and pro-Western features of Yeltsin's presidency. As such, he had been for years the point man of bitter criticism from statist, nationalist, and leftist elements in Russian politics. The fact that Gennady Zyuganov, the head of Russia's Communist Party, welcomed the January 1996 replacement of Kozyrev with Yevgeny Primakov meant that Yeltsin would have more clout with the Duma and at the same time not be quite as vulnerable to criticism of his foreign policy from both the left and right.



Boris Yeltsin's campaign turned out to be a spectacular come-from-behind race. From the beginning his main opponent was Zyuganov, who in January was supported by 20 percent of those who indicated to pollsters their intention to vote, compared to 8 percent who supported Yeltsin.<sup>30</sup> Yeltsin's low rating was due largely to domestic conditions; foreign policy proved not to be an important factor in the campaign, due in part to Primakov's ability to neutralize it as an issue.

Although it was not a campaign issue, the war in Chechnya contributed significantly to popular dissatisfaction with the incumbent. The Russian military simply could not subdue the Chechens. Occasional truces would be signed, only to be violated and followed by renewed fighting. In January, Russia was shocked by another Chechen terrorist assault on Russian territory. Four hundred militants under the command of Salman Raduyev, the Chechen president's son-in-law, seized a hospital in the city of Kizlar, taking some 2,000 hostages. After several days of fighting in which dozens were killed on both sides, Raduyev managed to escape into Chechnya with some of the hostages. The incident embittered both sides, further dispirited Russia's military, and intensified popular dissatisfaction with the war.

Yeltsin's conundrum was that Russia could neither fight nor negotiate its way out of the war. President Dzhokhar Dudayev never wavered from his demand that Russia unconditionally recognize Chechnya's independence. Yeltsin was not prepared to do that. The Russians sought to better their chances by removing Dudayev and they succeeded in assassinating him in April 1996. Nevertheless, Yeltsin's March peace plan met the same fate as earlier ones, and fighting continued through the summer.

The presidential campaign and the war in Chechnya were closely linked. Like U.S. Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon in Vietnam, Yeltsin wanted the political benefits of ending the war but feared the political consequences of paying the price for peace. Yeltsin won re-election despite the war. In the first round of voting on June 16, he received 35 percent to Zyuganov's 32 percent. Aleksandr Lebed, former commander of Russia's Fourteenth Army in the Trans-Dniester region, came in third with 14.7 percent. In a shrewd political move aimed at securing his voters, Yeltsin made Lebed a member of his administration, appointing him secretary of the Security Council and assistant for national security. Though there was no direct connection between this appointment and the war in Chechnya, Lebed's brief tenure was to significantly influence Russian policy. One of his first accomplishments was to secure the dismissal as defense minister of Pavel Grachev, a strong proponent of military victory in Chechnya. Yeltsin's political strategy paid off with a victory in the second round of voting in July, when he obtained 54 percent of the vote.

Militarily, the situation in Chechnya deteriorated. Within a month of the election, Chechen insurgents had retaken Grozny, the capital. Sent to the scene of battle, Lebed was appalled by the condition of Russian troops, and he concluded that Russia had no choice but to withdraw. Yeltsin, who was in poor health at the

time, appointed Lebed as his primary agent to negotiate an end to the fighting. On August 31 Lebed signed an accord with Aslan Maskhadov, Chechen chief of staff, which called for an end to the fighting and the withdrawal of Russian and Chechen forces from Grozny. On the all-important question of the legal status of Chechnya, the agreement deferred the decision for five years.<sup>31</sup>

Thus began a new phase in the Russian-Chechen struggle. Lebed's agreement did mark the end of active warfare in the country—though only temporarily, as it turned out. Neither President Yeltsin nor Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was involved in the negotiations of the agreement that ended the war, and it is uncertain whether either approved of what the impetuous Security Council secretary had done. Moscow was in the grip of a political vacuum brought on by a serious deterioration of Boris Yeltsin's health following the strenuous re-election campaign. In late summer Yeltsin announced that he would undergo heart bypass surgery.

Aleksandr Lebed himself did not survive the resolution of the debate as a government official. In October, Yeltsin fired his Security Council secretary because of Lebed's inability to work cooperatively with other members of the administration. Politically ambitious, Lebed had challenged the authority of others in the cabinet and undertaken measures that members of the government considered beyond his authority.

A satisfactory resolution of the Chechen issue eluded Russian authorities. For all practical purposes, Chechnya operated as an independent state until war resumed in 1999. For Russia, Chechnya is important for reasons other than the constitutional issue and its international prestige. There are vital economic issues at stake, the chief of which concerns oil. As we have seen in Chapter 6, a central objective of Russian foreign policy is retention of control of the pipelines transporting enormous quantities of Caspian Sea oil to the world market. Chechnya has been a vital link in the flow of oil from Baku, Azerbaijan, to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk. Instability in Chechnya has stimulated among oil producers the prospect of building alternative pipeline routes through Georgia, Turkey, and even Iran. These prospects were profoundly threatening to Russia and were a strong inducement for Moscow to assume control in Grozny.<sup>32</sup>

### **War and Peace in Bosnia**

Russia's shift toward a more nationalistic foreign policy produced in Moscow a stronger defense of the Serbs in their war against the Muslims and Croats in Bosnia. In the face of Western pressure to assist the Muslim-controlled government of Bosnia, Russia successfully blocked efforts in the United Nations to have the arms embargo in Bosnia lifted. It also strenuously opposed military intervention by the West.

As noted above, Yeltsin's inclination to support the Serbs, however, was curbed by his determination to avoid a break with the West. He thus supported Western

political initiatives to negotiate a settlement of the war. Russian diplomacy in the Balkans was constrained by the fact that its allies were guilty of the larger atrocities committed by the belligerents, and thus the preponderance of world opinion sided with the Muslim-dominated government of Bosnia.

In the spring of 1994 a crisis arose as a consequence of an assault by Serb forces on the Muslim-held city of Gorazde, a UN-protected safe area. Russians across the political spectrum, however, were angered that NATO air strikes were carried out on April 10 and 11 against Serb artillery positions without consultation with Moscow. "Trying to make such decisions without Russia is a big mistake and a big risk," warned Andrei Kozyrev.<sup>33</sup> But Moscow understood the culpability of the Serbs and resented the position in which they had put Russia. Vitaly Churkin, Kozyrev's deputy, vented his spleen to journalists: "The Bosnian Serbs must understand that in Russia they are dealing with a great power, not a banana republic."<sup>34</sup>

The crisis in Gorazde illustrated the paradox of the Balkan War for Russian foreign policy. Russia's national interest dictated that NATO forces not be used against the Serbs, so as to prevent NATO from becoming the guarantor of peace in Europe, but Serb war tactics were provoking NATO military strikes, and Moscow was unable to control its nominal allies. The optimal solution for all parties would be a negotiated settlement. The locus of diplomatic efforts became a group of five nations—Russia, the United States, France, Britain, and Germany—known as the "contact group." Their goal was to devise a political solution to the Bosnian civil war.

In July the contact group proposed a new peace plan to the Croats, Muslims, and Serbs. Under the plan, Bosnia-Herzegovina would be divided into two political entities; 51 percent of the country would be governed by a Croat-Muslim Federation, and 49 percent would be governed by Bosnian Serbs. This plan would have required the Serbs to give up part of the 70 percent of the country they controlled. Notwithstanding a personal appeal from Yeltsin to Radovan Karadzic, the Serbs rejected the idea. The Bosnian Serb intransigence led Moscow to abandon relations with the Serb hard-liners in Bosnia and to focus on Milosevic in Belgrade to exert pressure on Karadzic. Meanwhile Russia continued its policy of opposition to lifting the arms embargo against the Muslim-dominated government of Bosnia and the use of NATO forces against the Serbs.

By the spring of 1995, Russia's Bosnian policy began to fall apart under its contradictions. Serb military action reached a level of aggressiveness that the West could not ignore. The consequence was an escalation of NATO air strikes against Serb military positions. Moscow could not stop the air strikes or the Bosnian Serb military actions that provoked them. Russia found itself in the humiliating position of being ignored by both sides, each its ostensible friend. In May the Serbs unleashed a massive artillery attack against five UN "safe havens." When NATO, with UN authorization, retaliated against Bosnian Serb positions, Serb forces seized more than 300 UN military observers and

peacekeepers (including some Russians) as hostages. Even Belgrade condemned the hostage taking.

Yeltsin was deeply offended that NATO air strikes were unleashed without any consultation with Moscow. At the same time, in frustration, he publicly acknowledged that the Serbs "got what they deserved."<sup>35</sup> Karadzic's forces eventually released their UN hostages, but that did not prevent the UN from sanctioning the creation of a NATO "rapid reaction force" for use in defense of the Bosnian Muslims. Russia, while criticizing the decision as "overly hasty," abstained (along with China) on the Security Council resolution, which was adopted by a vote of thirteen to zero.

The NATO strikes steadily took their toll on the Bosnian Serb positions on the battlefield. A particularly devastating series of air strikes, the largest conducted by NATO since its formation in 1949, hit Bosnian Serb military installations in late August, in the aftermath of another brutal shelling of civilians in Sarajevo. Nationalists in Russia screamed that NATO was "unleashing a war in the Balkans."

By early fall a combination of military and diplomatic pressure induced the leaders of all the principal parties to agree to a cease-fire, which became effective on October 10. A new stage in Bosnia-Herzegovina's civil war began when Presidents Iztbegovic, Milosevic, and Tudjman agreed to meet in the United States to work out a peace settlement. As a sop to Russian prestige, Moscow was given the honor of hosting the ceremonial opening of the talks on October 30, but immediately thereafter the serious business moved to the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

Even before the terms of an agreement could be worked out, a difficult political issue had to be resolved regarding Russia's participation in the peacekeeping operation to enforce the truce in Bosnia. Russia was determined to participate in the force, and NATO agreed that Russian involvement was important to guarantee peace and stability in the Balkans. The problem was that Moscow would not permit Russian troops to be subject to NATO's command, and the United States found unacceptable any arrangement for a dual command.

While in the United States for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, Yeltsin met with President Bill Clinton to resolve the issue. This summit convened in Hyde Park, amid a generally congenial atmosphere. The outcome, finalized days later in Brussels, was a compromise that conceded to Washington the substance of the issue, but offered to Moscow a face-saving appearance. Dubbed by some "Operation Fig Leaf," the plan called for Russian troops participating in Bosnian peacekeeping operations to report to a U.S. general rather than to NATO's commander. For domestic political reasons, both presidents were anxious that their ninth summit be seen as successful (Russia was in the midst of a parliamentary political campaign, and Clinton was facing a re-election campaign). At a luncheon, Yeltsin hyperbolically affirmed, "Our partnership is designed to last not for one year, not for a decade, but for centuries, forever."<sup>36</sup>

Under the firm guidance of the United States, in the person of Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, the negotiations in Dayton produced an

agreement that transformed the military struggle in Bosnia into a political one. The structure of government created by the Dayton Accords was complex and reflected a balance—though not necessarily equal—of concerns of the three parties. The principle of a unified, sovereign Bosnian state was maintained in the creation of a central government with a Bosnian parliament and a three-headed presidency. This state would consist of two autonomous parts, a Croat-Muslim confederation occupying 51 percent of the land, and a Serb republic with 49 percent. The Dayton Accords demarcated the territorial lines of the two autonomous regions. Refugees from all parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina were to be permitted to return to their original homes. Those individuals who had been indicted as war criminals by the Special UN Tribunal at The Hague were to be turned over to the tribunal.

To ensure compliance with these terms and to enforce the peace, the Accords established a special NATO Implementation Force (IFOR). Originally the IFOR comprised some 60,000 troops. Of these, 1,600 came from the Russian Federation. Russia's participation in the IFOR was approved by the Council of the Federation in January 1996. The IFOR was intended to last only one year, but the ongoing antagonism among all three communities in the country forced NATO to extend its peacekeeping operations. After one year, IFOR became SFOR (Stabilization Force), and then was transformed into EUFOR Althea, under EU command, which maintains almost a thousand troops in Bosnia to this day.

The Dayton Accords were successful in one important sense. Forty-two months of warfare and brutal atrocities were ended. Daily life for the peoples on all sides became more peaceful, and a semblance of normality returned for many, but peace did not bring national reconciliation. In effect Bosnia remained divided, not only between the Serb and Croat-Muslim parts, but also within much of the Croat-Muslim federation. The ethnic and religious hatreds that gave rise to the war have remained unresolved for years.<sup>37</sup>

For a period of a few years Yugoslavia receded as a source of tension between Russia and the West. Later in the decade it would re-emerge with the crisis over the Serbian province of Kosovo. But in the mid-1990s, the focus shifted and a new conflict arose over NATO's plan to expand by incorporating former members of the Warsaw Pact. In time the issue of NATO expansion merged with the crises in the Balkans to pose the larger question of what role Russia would play in European security.

### **NATO Expansion**

The decision by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to include within its membership some of the countries of Eastern Europe that formerly had been members of the Warsaw Pact became the single most contentious issue in Russian-U.S. relations in the 1990s. Of the many issues related to NATO expansion, the most general and fundamental concerned what type of European

security system would replace the alliance structure of the Cold War period. From Russia's perspective, the basic question was how Russia would fit into a system of European security. Would it be accepted as a great power, or simply as another European state? Would it be viewed as a partner or as a potential adversary? And what institutional mechanism would govern decision making for security issues in Europe?

For nearly all Russians, NATO was stigmatized by the history of the Cold War and was viewed as an adversarial organization. Russian political elites much preferred the more politically neutral OSCE as a mechanism for European security. But there was more involved in the expansion of NATO than just vital national interests. National prestige was also an important consideration. Russia had not yet come to terms with its loss of status as a superpower. Indeed, many Russians questioned whether their country would even be treated as a "great power." An expansion of the military alliance that played a vital role in the defeat of the Soviet Union was viewed by many as rubbing the Russian nose in the Soviet defeat—a national humiliation.

Besides the questions of foreign policy raised by NATO, there were considerations of domestic politics. As a domestic political issue in Russia, NATO expansion had relatively low salience among the public at large; but among the nation's political elite there was overwhelming opposition, nowhere stronger than in the military. Spokesmen for Russian nationalists used the issue to criticize the Yeltsin administration for not doing enough to block the plan. "Atlanticist" leaders like Andrei Kozyrev were put on the defensive over the issue.

Both sides of the debate over NATO expansion shifted their positions over time. One reason was the abstract and remote rationale for expansion. NATO was a military alliance created to prevent a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Even if one accepted as valid the glib summary of NATO's purpose offered by its first secretary-general—"to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down"—there seemed little doubt that NATO's objectives either had been achieved or were, after the Cold War, irrelevant. Nobody considered Russia in the 1990s to be a threat. The military arguments for extending the protection of Article V of the treaty to the countries of Eastern Europe were unpersuasive. Conceivably a future Russia might be a threat to Eastern Europe, but that contingency hardly required expanding NATO in the 1990s. By the same token, NATO was no threat to Russia and should not have been perceived as such. There was, in short, a shadow boxing quality to the debate, however serious the issue was in Russian-Western relations.

Two broad considerations moved NATO toward enlargement. One was the need for a new mission and purpose in the aftermath of the Cold War. Some within the alliance came to the conclusion that NATO would survive only by expanding and becoming a security force for all of Europe. This view was strengthened by NATO's decision in June 1992 to move "out of area" and place its military forces at the disposal of the United Nations and the OSCE for peacekeeping

operations in the Balkans. Another stimulus to enlargement was the desire of several East European governments, led by the "Visegrad" states (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), for security guarantees from the West. The December 1993 Russian elections, which led to the spectacular victory of the ultranationalist forces of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, raised concern in Eastern Europe about the long-term dangers of a nationalist regime in Moscow.

Russia responded negatively to the idea of NATO expansion. Although Boris Yeltsin had spoken favorably of Poland's interest in NATO during a visit to Warsaw in the summer of 1993, he quickly reversed himself under pressure from members of his administration, particularly the military. Just before the parliamentary elections in December 1993, Yevgeny Primakov, then director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, issued a blistering critique of NATO expansion. He noted that historically NATO and the former Soviet Union had viewed each other as enemies and that "this psychological mind-set cannot be broken painlessly."<sup>38</sup> Moscow's alternative to NATO expansion was a proposal that NATO and Russia jointly guarantee East European security, an idea that appealed neither to NATO nor to the Visegrad states.

An initial attempt to satisfy the security interests of Russia and the states of Eastern Europe was a proposal developed by the Clinton administration, known as the Partnership for Peace (PFP). First proposed at a meeting of NATO defense ministers in October 1993, the PFP was designed to be a stepping-stone to eventual membership in NATO. It had several objectives:

1. to satisfy the security concerns of the Central and East European states;
2. to avoid destabilization of the delicate political environment in Russia;
3. to buy time.<sup>39</sup>

The PFP was designed to establish cooperative military relations between the members of the partnership through consultation, joint exercises, planning, and training.

The offer of partnership was extended to every member of the OSCE, including Russia. Although they much preferred full membership in NATO, the Visegrad states accepted the offer quickly. By February 1994, agreements to join the PFP also were signed by Romania, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Latvia, Moldova, and Albania. Russia's initial response was positive, because it viewed the PFP as an alternative to NATO expansion; but from the beginning there was ambivalence in Moscow. Russians understood only too well that both NATO expansion and the PFP were based on the fear of Russian aggression, and thus were essentially a continuation of the Cold War policy of containment.

Throughout 1994 the Yeltsin administration wavered in its policy toward the PFP. Concern within the military intensified as a result of NATO military activity in Bosnia in the winter and spring. Russia wanted NATO to acknowledge

a special strategic partnership, closer than that provided under the PFP. After considerable bargaining, Andrei Kozyrev signed the PFP framework document on June 23, along with a protocol affirming that "Russia and NATO have agreed to prepare a wide-ranging individual program of partnership, in keeping with Russia's size, importance, and potential."<sup>40</sup> The vagueness of the protocol and its lack of a legally binding force failed to satisfy Moscow that Russia was in fact being accorded geopolitical parity with the United States.

If Yeltsin expected the PFP to serve as a barrier to NATO expansion, that hope was dashed in the aftermath of the November 1994 congressional elections in the United States. Republican control of Congress brought renewed demands for NATO expansion, which were endorsed by the Clinton administration. In December Moscow shocked the West with a sharp reversal of the June decision on the PFP. Andrei Kozyrev, the most pro-Western member of the administration, stunned a meeting of the NATO Council in Brussels by postponing Russian participation in the PFP. Boris Yeltsin followed that up with his aforementioned harsh speech before an OSCE summit in Budapest, warning that pushing NATO up to Russia's borders risked plunging Russia into a "cold peace."<sup>41</sup>

Pressed by his military, Yeltsin sought to persuade the United States and Europe to accept an alternative to NATO for Europe's security. One concept advanced by Kozyrev was to subordinate NATO to the OSCE. Early in 1994 Kozyrev proposed that the OSCE be assigned the role of coordinator of the efforts of NATO, the EU, the Council of Europe, the Western EU, and the CIS in the areas of strengthening stability and security, peacekeeping, and protecting the rights of national minorities in Europe.<sup>42</sup>

NATO flatly rejected the scheme. As it became increasingly evident in 1995 that NATO expansion was inexorable, Moscow focused on the preconditions that it would demand for acquiescing to the inevitable. Among the preconditions advanced were a favorable revision of the CFE treaty, the non-deployment of military bases and nuclear weapons in the newly admitted countries, exclusion of the former Soviet republics (especially the Baltic states) as candidates for NATO membership, and recognition of Russia's security system with the CIS member states.<sup>43</sup>

Moscow was playing with a weak hand. What Kozyrev was attempting to do was to obtain Western agreement on a European security system that went beyond mere consultation and détente. NATO, while willing to offer some assurances on the deployment of bases and nuclear weapons in Europe, was unprepared to formalize any substantive concessions. Yeltsin relied heavily on Kozyrev's credibility with the West, but the hapless foreign minister was unable to produce the desired results. This failure was not the only reason for Kozyrev's replacement as foreign minister early in 1996, but it was a factor. NATO's leaders tried to soften Moscow's resistance through various diplomatic formulations. Eventually, Moscow signed on to the PFP on May 31, 1995, though it continued to oppose NATO expansion.



Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov was, if anything, even more vehement than Kozyrev in his critique of NATO's moving eastward as a military alliance. In April 1996 he proposed that NATO and Russia jointly guarantee the Visegrad states as an alternative to their membership in NATO. Neither Washington nor the states involved were interested. Primakov also objected to NATO membership for Austria, the Baltic states, Finland, and Sweden. Recognizing that Kozyrev's plan for the OSCE to be the structure for Europe's security was not gaining support, Primakov abandoned the idea.

The Clinton administration, mindful of Russian resentment, sought a solution to the impasse that would preserve some measure of prestige for Russia, give support to Yeltsin, and defuse the issue for nationalists. The year 1996 was particularly critical for the Yeltsin administration, beginning with the presidential campaign and concluding with a paralysis of government while the president suffered from a heart ailment. In September U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher proposed that a "NATO-Russia Charter" be worked out in conjunction with invitations in 1997 for new members in NATO. U.S. policy was to concede to Moscow a voice but not a veto on sensitive security issues.

President Clinton had determined that NATO expansion would be a centerpiece of his foreign policy. Following his election to a second term, he decided to move rapidly on this issue. He announced that invitations would be formally extended to the first batch of new members at the NATO summit in Madrid in July 1997. Intensive negotiations in the spring of 1997 were conducted to obtain Russian acceptance of the inevitable. On March 12, Moscow dropped its demand that the NATO-Russia Charter take the form of a legally binding treaty, accepting in its place an executive agreement. On May 27, Boris Yeltsin and Javier Solana signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. This act created the NATO-Russia Council, which would meet periodically to consider security problems as they arose in Europe. The Council would operate by consensus, but NATO remained free to act without Council approval. As a concession to the Russians, NATO stated that it had "no intention, no plan, and no reason" to deploy nuclear weapons on the territories of its new members or to significantly increase troop levels on their territories. Yevgeny Primakov put the best face possible on the pact, calling it a "big victory for Russia," but in a television interview on the night of the signing Yeltsin acknowledged that Russia was "playing a weak hand."<sup>44</sup> In July, NATO invited the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to apply to become members. Their applications were approved, and the three states were formally admitted as full members in April 1999, the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of NATO.

No event since the end of the Cold War was more symbolic of the new world order than the expansion of NATO. For Russia it was a major blow to its national prestige. The Russians believed that in February 1990 U.S. Secretary of State James Baker had given assurances to Gorbachev that NATO would not move eastward. Now not only was the alliance incorporating former Warsaw Pact

members, but at Madrid spokesmen made clear NATO's intention to bring in former republics of the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> Madeleine Albright specifically promised Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia that they would be future candidates for membership. In reply, a spokesman at Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "I want to emphasize once again that such a decision has been and remains unacceptable to Russia."<sup>46</sup> Despite this brave talk, NATO did indeed continue with its expansion, and the issue continued to be a major point of contention between Russia and the West, as we shall discuss in Chapter 9.

### **Russia and Europe**

In the initial period after the collapse of the USSR, President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev pursued the effort to "join the West" as the highest priority of Russian foreign policy, making no particular differentiation among the democratic market societies and associated international institutions whose partnership they sought. Like Gorbachev before them, they knocked on many doors, concluding treaties of friendship and cooperation with individual Western states, seeking membership for Russia in that most exclusive of Western "clubs," the G-7, and pursuing opportunities to cooperate with (and ultimately join) selective organizations such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the Paris Club, and the London Club, as well as broader financial associations such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)—soon to be succeeded by the World Trade Organization (WTO)—the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the security realm, the Russian parliament quickly ratified the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, initially concluded in 1990, together with the Charter for a New Europe, which emphasized an undivided "greater Europe" (or, as Gorbachev liked to put it, a "common European home"). Seeking a pan-European security framework, Russia became an enthusiastic participant in the OSCE.

Heavily criticized by the mounting nationalist opposition for "slavish" imitation of Western policies, stung by the strong showing of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and other "national-patriotic" forces in the December 1993 elections, and disappointed by the lukewarm embrace and hesitant financial support of most of their would-be Western partners, by 1994 Yeltsin and Kozyrev not only had shifted their priorities to the near abroad but also had adopted a more differentiated approach toward the West. Political extremists and "establishment" figures were asking whether Russia should be in such a hurry to join the "European-Atlantic" system, thereby binding itself with rules not of its own making and restricting its freedom of action elsewhere.<sup>47</sup>

Quarrels were erupting with the United States over policy in Bosnia, the proposed enlargement of NATO, continuing U.S. trade restrictions, and Russia's planned weapons exports to anti-U.S. regimes, which led to complaints about the United States's "hegemonic" behavior. Particularly after the outbreak of war in

Chechnya, Russia's relations with the EU soured and its progress toward membership in the Council of Europe slowed, accentuating Moscow's growing isolation and stimulating tendencies to play Western states off against one another. By the end of 1997, Yeltsin was talking openly in European capitals about the need to reduce U.S. influence in "our Europe."

### **Eastern Europe: Building Ties with Former Allies**

In its initial enthusiasm for forging links with the countries of Western Europe, Russia during its first year or so of independence clearly neglected its ties with its former Warsaw Pact allies in Eastern Europe. In its new geographical configuration, Russia no longer shared borders with Romania, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia, and only its exclave-province of Kaliningrad had a border with Poland. Some degree of tension in relations resulted from the history of past Soviet offenses against Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Yeltsin wrote of "certain psychological difficulties" in relations with Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel—understandable, he conceded, because "hanging over us is the cursed legacy of the USSR."<sup>48</sup> Further complications arose from Moscow's difficulties in complying promptly with the demand of these countries for a complete withdrawal of Red Army forces.

Another major source of difficulty was in the economic realm. Even before the formal dissolution of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in mid-1991, trade between the USSR and Eastern Europe had declined sharply, as a result of the decision in the late 1980s to settle accounts in hard currencies rather than in "transferable rubles." Furthermore, Moscow had begun to demand world prices for the oil and gas it sold to Eastern Europe, hoping thereby to build a trade surplus with the region. However, the collapse of industrial production in the USSR created imbalances in the other direction. Short of hard currency and unable to pay even the interest on the Soviet debt, Russia refused to pay in fuel, for which it could earn hard currency on the world market.<sup>49</sup> The resulting impasse, combined with the eagerness of both the East Europeans and the Russians to reorient their economies to Western Europe, produced further sharp declines in regional trade with Russia; indeed, the total volume dropped by half between 1989 and 1993.

The concerns of Poland, the largest and most strategically located of Moscow's former allies, illustrate the difficulties in Russia's relations with Eastern Europe. Warsaw's trade with the Soviet Union had almost completely collapsed prior to 1992, and a trade agreement signed with the Russian government in September 1991 failed to halt the decline; annual trade volume dropped from \$14 billion in 1989 to \$2.7 billion in 1992. The two states were deadlocked for three years on issues related to settlement of mutual debts, finally agreeing early in 1995 to a mutual write-off of indebtedness. President Lech Walesa visited Moscow in May 1992 to sign a treaty on friendship and cooperation, but his trip occurred only after repeated postponements resulting from disagreements on the document's wording, and the atmosphere of the visit was marred by reports that Poland

### Map 7.1 Europe



was siding with Ukraine in its territorial conflicts with Russia. Yeltsin's return trip to Poland also was postponed amid the furor over a remark by Kozyrev that all Moscow had lost in Eastern Europe were "false allies we never trusted anyway."<sup>50</sup> It was August 1993 before the Russian president finally journeyed to Warsaw. The visit was marked by a gesture of Russian goodwill: Yeltsin pledged to withdraw the last Russian army units from Poland by October 1, three months

early. But lingering tensions between Poland and Russia, many of them rooted in conflicts over historical events such as the Katyn Forest massacre and exacerbated by Poland's 1999 entry into NATO, erupted in the summer of 2005 in nasty incidents of physical attacks in Warsaw and Moscow, all of which were prominently featured in the Polish and Russian media.

The depth of anti-Russian national feeling in Poland was further demonstrated in October of 2005, when a right-wing nationalist politician, Lech Kaczynski, was elected as Poland's new president. As mayor of Warsaw, the new president had named a Warsaw street after the assassinated Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev and had called his predecessor's trip to Moscow for the observance of the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe an act of "national betrayal." Russia's prompt response came in the form of a boycott on the import of certain Polish meat and food products, allegedly for health reasons.

The decision by the Polish government in the spring of 2006 to accept a role in President Bush's planned missile defense system for Europe (discussed at length in Chapter 9) added another grievance on Moscow's side of the ledger. For the Polish side, an additional bone of contention was the planned "Nord Stream" gas pipeline, a Russian-German project for a new routing for Russian gas exports to Europe that would bypass Poland and the Baltic states, depriving them of transit fees. Poland's leverage in these disputes was limited, but its membership (and effective veto) in the EU gave it some bargaining power. In November 2006, newly elected Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski (the twin brother of the president) raised objections to the start of negotiations with Russia on the renewal of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation agreement, which was scheduled to expire at the end of 2007.

In the fall of 2007, Polish voters signaled a desire for a less confrontational foreign policy when they turned out Jaroslaw Kaczynski as prime minister and replaced him with the more moderate Donald Tusk, who declared that improving relations with Russia was Poland's most important foreign policy task—a sentiment that was welcomed by the Russian foreign ministry. Poland's new foreign minister, Radek Sikorski, proceeded to resume discussions with Russia about Moscow's objections to the emplacement of American interceptor missiles on Polish soil. This initiative was reciprocated by a Russian announcement of a gradual lifting of the embargo on Polish agricultural products.

The Bush administration responded with renewed pressure on Poland to accept the proffered role in the missile defense plan, and Sikorski and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced on February 1, 2008, that an agreement had been reached on positioning the interceptors in Poland. (The price demanded by the Poles was an American promise to help modernize Poland's air defenses.) Nevertheless, when Prime Minister Tusk paid a scheduled visit to Moscow shortly thereafter, the Russian press reported "definite signs of a thaw" in Polish-Russian relations, perhaps because of Poland's willingness to entertain a new Russian proposal to send military officers to the future interceptor missile site

to ensure that the missiles were not targeted against Russia.<sup>51</sup> However, Polish willingness to accommodate Russian concerns seemed to vanish as a result of Russia's military action against Georgia in August 2008. On August 14, Warsaw and Washington announced that the missile deal had been concluded, prompting an angry and threatening reaction from the chief of the Russian military staff. In September 2009 President Obama scrapped plans for deploying the anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, replacing it with a scaled-down version. A newly deployed shield consisting of a combination of radar and Aegis missile interceptors was activated in Romania in May 2016, with the second phase of the same project initiated in Poland at Redzikowo near the Baltic Sea where the missiles became operational in 2018.<sup>52</sup>

In keeping with Putin's use of geo-economics as a tool of statecraft, Russia in July 2014 again imposed a ban on imports of fruits and vegetables from Poland, which Polish leaders saw as retaliation for Western sanctions on Ukraine, which Poland supported.<sup>53</sup> Following up on the threat to extend such trade restrictions on all of Europe, Russia imposed an all-EU ban on agricultural imports in August 2014 that was to remain effective until December 31, 2017.<sup>54</sup>

Relations between Russia and Czechoslovakia also were burdened by the legacy of the past, though the presidents of the two countries were evidently able to "break the ice" more successfully (over a beer in a Czech café, Yeltsin notes) than were Yeltsin and Lech Walesa. Vaclav Havel visited Moscow in April 1992 to sign a treaty of friendship and cooperation—a document that included a reference to the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia as an unjustified use of force. The two sides also settled financial issues relating to the withdrawal of Red Army forces, with Havel agreeing to supply materials for building housing in Russia for the demobilized troops, in return for Russia's turning over real estate in Czechoslovakia that had belonged to the Soviet forces.

As was the case with Poland, however, economic relations were slow to recover. The debt issue was still unresolved in August 1993, when Yeltsin visited Prague and Bratislava to sign new bilateral treaties with the now-separated Czech Republic and Slovakia. Not until May 1994 did Russia and the Czech Republic reach agreement on repayment of Moscow's \$3.5 billion debt, partly through transfer of the property of privatized Russian enterprises. The new Russian-Czech treaty lacked an apology for the 1968 invasion (a concession to the heightened assertiveness of parliamentary sentiment in Moscow), but Yeltsin and Havel finessed a delicate situation by laying wreaths both at the grave of a Soviet tank crew member killed in the 1945 liberation and at that of a student killed in the 1968 invasion.

Following Yeltsin's departure, it was thirteen years before another Russian president visited the Czech Republic. By that time, the Czechs had become part of NATO and the EU. Russia's economy had recovered, and Russian-Czech trade had reached the \$6 billion level. On the Russian side, the primary export was energy. Russia supplied three-quarters of the Czech Republic's natural gas

requirements, and the focus of Putin's 2007 visit was, not surprisingly, on energy. Before long, however, security issues loomed larger, as a result of the Czech government's expressed willingness to accept a role in the U.S. plans for missile defense in Europe. The Russian reaction was predictable: the chief of the Russian General Staff, Marshal Baluyevsky, grumbled about the likelihood that Russian missiles would need to be targeted to respond to the alleged threat that U.S. radars on Czech soil would pose. Not only this expression from the Russians, but also the unpopularity of the missile defense plan with the Czech public and the uncertainty about whether the post-Bush U.S. administration would persist with the project, eventually caused the Czech government to postpone a final decision on participation in the American plan. As noted above, the Obama administration had departed from George W. Bush-era plans to build an anti-missile defense system in Central Europe and proposed a smaller-scale deployment.<sup>55</sup> In June 2011, the Czech Republic decided to withdraw from the program, citing displeasure with its "diminished role."<sup>56</sup>

The atmosphere during Yeltsin's 1993 visit to Slovakia was notably warmer than it was in Prague, and the trip produced an unexpected agreement on military cooperation between the two countries. In keeping with this direction, Chernomyrdin announced during a two-day visit to Bratislava in February 1995 that the \$1.7 billion debt to Slovakia was to be repaid principally with Russian weapons, including six helicopter gunships, and with Russian assistance in the construction of two nuclear power plants. Not surprisingly, given its slower progress toward democratic and market reforms (and its notably more pro-Russian policies), Slovakia was not included in the first wave of prospective new members of NATO. Expressing its relief, the Russian newspaper *Segodnia* hailed Slovakia (along with Serbia) as a "bulwark" of Russian policy in Eastern Europe, having resisted temptations to turn Westward and instead having made Russia "the main reference point" in its foreign policy. The coming to power of a more pro-Western government in Slovakia, however, paved the way for that country eventually to follow the other members of the Visegrad group into the EU and NATO.

Issues in Russian-Hungarian relations essentially followed the Polish and Czech patterns, although they were resolved somewhat earlier. Yeltsin visited Budapest in November 1992, where he was able to sign not only a new treaty of friendship and cooperation, but also a financial settlement relating to troop withdrawal and an agreement on repayment of Russia's \$1.7 billion debt. As was the case with the Czech Republic, Hungary's rapid turn toward the West and its acceptance into the EU and NATO, as well as the sorry state of the Russian economy in the 1990s, meant that there was little room on Budapest's agenda for developing relations with Moscow. But in the wake of Russia's economic recovery and its growing leverage resulting from its energy exports, Putin's March 2006 visit concentrated on energy issues. After lengthy discussions in subsequent months, Hungary agreed to participate in the "South Stream" project—a gas pipeline carrying Russian gas to Europe by way of the Black Sea floor

and Bulgaria and Romania. The viability of South Stream had been called into question when Bulgaria had declared that its participation was contingent on the project's adherence to EU regulatory guidelines. The project was shelved when Russia terminated its participation in December 2014 in the wake of EU sanctions imposed on Russia after the Crimean annexation and of what was seen in Moscow as Bulgarian obstructionism.<sup>57</sup>

Romania, another aspiring member of NATO and the EU (it ultimately joined the former in 2004 and the latter in 2007), had distanced itself from the USSR during the long reign of Nicolae Ceausescu, and relations with Russia after the fall of his regime showed no particular improvement. Not until September 1993 did the Romanian head of government travel to Moscow, where agreements were concluded on restoring economic ties, which had virtually collapsed. Romania continued to be distinguished as the only East European country with which Russia failed to conclude a bilateral political treaty. Reportedly, the primary obstacle was not debt—Romania was the only East European country not owed money by Russia—but rather Bucharest's insistence that such a treaty include a joint condemnation of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, under which the Romanian province of Bessarabia was assigned to the Soviet sphere. Already concerned about a possible future union of Romania and Moldova, Moscow evidently feared that condemning the 1939 treaty would legitimize a possible Romanian claim on former Soviet territory and no apology has since been forthcoming from Russia. Indeed, Russian-Romanian relations took a turn for the worse when the country became the site for the U.S. anti-missile shield, which became operational in May 2016. The head of the European Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry criticized Romania for becoming a NATO outpost and a "clear threat" to Russia.<sup>58</sup>

Bulgaria, by contrast, had traditionally enjoyed closer relations with Moscow, and its geographical setting made it a less likely military or economic partner for Western Europe. President Zhelyu Zhelev had sensed the shifting political winds earlier than his East European counterparts, having traveled to Moscow in October 1991, pointedly not meeting with Gorbachev, but issuing a joint declaration with Yeltsin on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Bulgaria. A formal bilateral treaty on friendship and cooperation was concluded during Yeltsin's return visit in August 1992, during which an agreement was also reached on cooperation between the two defense ministries; but economic relations between the two states were anything but cooperative. Not until May 1995, during a visit to Sofia by Chernomyrdin, did they agree on terms for repayment of Russia's \$100 million debt, half of which was to be repaid with spare parts for Bulgaria's armed forces. By that time, trade between the two had fallen 90 percent since 1990—from \$14.4 billion to \$1.8 billion—primarily because of disputes over gas prices. Relations warmed following Bulgaria's agreement to participate in a gas pipeline extending from Russia to Greece, and its expression of interest in being part of a future oil pipeline route.



Russia's economic recovery made these projects more feasible, and Bulgaria became an important partner in Putin's effort to build energy routings that would allow Russia to control distribution of oil and gas without any other single state being able to cut off the flow. Thus, Bulgaria agreed to participate in both the South Stream gas pipeline (with Romania and Hungary) and the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline project (with Greece). Negotiations on the latter project, which was envisioned by Moscow as an alternative to the Western-sponsored Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, were complicated by the desires of Greece and Bulgaria to share equally in the project with Russia. In a three-way meeting in Athens in March 2007, they finally agreed that Russia would have a 51 percent controlling interest, and the two junior partners would split the remaining share. Both the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline and the South Stream were cancelled. The former project ended when the Bulgarian government withdrew in December 2011, citing domestic opposition, and the latter was terminated when Russia pulled out in December 2014.

### **Russia and the European Union**

For the countries of Eastern Europe, as for Russia itself, the dominant foreign economic concern was not re-establishment of the trade patterns that had prevailed in the region since the end of World War II, but rather the construction of a relationship with Western Europe that would open its enormous markets to their goods, while attracting investment capital to their emerging market economies. The biggest target of these efforts was the EU, which comprised fifteen members at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse. Talks between EU representatives and the new Russian government began in the spring of 1992. That this was by no means a negotiation between economic equals was evident later that year, when the EU extended to Russia and the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States the same tariff preferences it gives to developing countries. President Yeltsin traveled to Brussels in December 1993 to sign a political declaration on partnership and cooperation, but the difficult bargaining on economic relations continued. Whereas the EU had agreed quickly to freer trade with the East European states, a draft partnership agreement with Russia was reached only in the spring of 1994 after eight official rounds of talks. The provisional agreement would free the movement of services and capital but only gradually liberalize trade. Restrictions would continue on Russian exports of steel, textiles, and uranium.

However, signing of the interim agreement by the EU was postponed after the invasion of Chechnya, which the European parliament harshly condemned. Nevertheless, in July the interim agreement was finally signed by the EU, relieving "the unpleasant feeling of isolation" that intensified with the military operation in Chechnya, and paving the way for Russia's further integration with the world economy.<sup>59</sup> When the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation with the EU

was finally ratified by the Duma in October 1996, the influential deputy Vladimir Lukin declared that the agreement was no less important than START II. The treaty would have the effect of lowering EU tariffs on Russian exports by two-thirds, while allowing Russia to maintain considerably higher tariffs on European products; it would thus facilitate Russia's gradual integration into the EU's single market. The EU finally bestowed the "market economy" designation on Russia on November 7, 2002, followed ten days later by the United States. This recognition freed Russia from some restrictions on its exports, but was also seen as a step toward Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization. However, at the end of 2008 Russia remained the largest global economy not yet part of the WTO.

Russia continued to prefer to deal with the European states on a bilateral basis; its dealings with the Brussels-based EU central bodies have been marked with difficulties. In 2002, the prospective entry of the Baltic states into the EU raised the issue of transit to the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, which would by 2004 be entirely surrounded by EU (and NATO) member states. Negotiations over requirements for transit of goods and especially over visa regulations—rendered more acute by the "prosperity gap" between Kaliningrad and its neighbors—were rancorous, and an agreement on transit was achieved only in 2004.

A further complication in relations between EU member states and EU institutions on the one hand and Russia on the other arose as a result of Europe's growing dependence on Russian energy exports, and on the perceived threat to the reliability of those supplies in the wake of the temporary Russian cutoff of natural gas to Ukraine in January 2006. Although Russia initially signed the EU's Energy Charter, it has failed to ratify it, insisting on modifications to its Transit Protocol. This dispute, like the discussions on the renewal of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, was still unresolved as of December 2017. On the whole, the tensions between Russia and the EU seem to be inherent in what some specialists have termed Russia's "semi-detached status—on the periphery of the enlarged Europe, and outside its core institutions, but searching for greater inclusion within it."<sup>60</sup>

Russia's admission to the Council of Europe, an organization of democratic nations focusing on social and political issues, was an especially lengthy process. The states of Eastern Europe and the three newly independent Baltic states were admitted with relative ease, but Russia was confronted with a varied and changing list of obstacles to membership. When the initial Russian application was filed in May 1992, the primary obstacle was said to be the continuing presence of Russian troops in the Baltic states of the former Soviet Union. A year later, the list of conditions was expanded to include free parliamentary elections and a new democratic constitution for the Russian Federation.

In September 1994, having held elections and adopted a constitution, and having virtually completed all troop withdrawals, Moscow learned from the visiting council secretary-general that it would need to bring its human rights legislation into harmony with European standards. The invasion of Chechnya

by Russian troops caused the Council of Europe to “freeze” Russia’s application—an action considered insulting by Russian politicians from various camps. Not until January 1996 did the council’s parliamentary assembly finally vote to admit Russia, despite a report from its commission on legal and human rights issues stating that Russia was not yet a law-governed state and was unlikely to become one in the near future. However, even this much-delayed action was not without conditions; the resolution stipulated that Russia must sign the European Convention on Human Rights (an act that would give Russian citizens legal standing before the European human rights court), and must complete the process of adapting its legislation to European standards, including abolishing the death penalty and curbing the powers of the Federal Security Service. The resolution even advised Russia to cease referring to its neighbors as the “near abroad.”

### **Russia and the OSCE**

In the security sphere, Russia pinned its hopes for becoming part of a pan-European system on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Although the organization sent observers to conflict zones in the former Yugoslavia and USSR, it struggled to achieve consensus for the operation of actual peacekeeping forces on the continent. In his December 1994 speech to the Budapest summit of the organization, Yeltsin had argued that creation of an all-European institution with a “reliable legal foundation,” which could assume tasks of conflict resolution and peacekeeping, had become a “vital necessity.” Plans to expand NATO, he said, were at variance with this objective. As for Russia, it sought partnership with the OSCE and the United Nations in the political and material responsibilities of peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet space, though “of course, not to the detriment of effective operations.”<sup>61</sup> But Russia failed to gain acceptance of its initiative to change the structure of the OSCE or to obtain a mandate to conduct its own peacekeeping operations in the CIS.

Only five days after Yeltsin’s return to Moscow from Budapest, he launched the invasion of Chechnya, bringing a hailstorm of European criticism down on his head. The OSCE stiffly reminded Russia of its requirement for a six-week advance notification of major troop movements. The organization sent a three-man delegation to Moscow with an offer to send observers to Chechnya to mediate the conflict. Its chairman, calling for a humanitarian truce and early elections, declared that the use of armed force on such a scale was in violation of OSCE principles and of the principles of human rights. Frostily rejecting such interference in its internal affairs, Russia charged that the violations of human rights were in fact being committed by the Chechen rebels. Clearly, however, the Russian government’s actions in Chechnya further damaged its prospects for being accepted into the Western community of nations. This failure of Russia’s plans to substitute the OSCE for an enlarged NATO as the primary structure for European security, combined with what the Russians regarded as an undue

concentration (and unwarranted interference) by this organization on political developments in the post-Soviet states, has caused Russia since the mid-1990s to denigrate the role and significance of the OSCE as it currently exists. As we shall see in Chapter 9, however, Dmitry Medvedev made a proposal in June 2008 that seemed to revive the Yeltsin-era notion of an all-European version of the OSCE acting as a security umbrella that would essentially place NATO under its jurisdiction.

### **Russia and the States of Western Europe**

Throughout the 1990s, the primary advocate in regional forums on behalf first of Soviet and then of Russian integration into Europe was Germany. As phrased by Germany's ambassador to Russia, Bonn's role is "somewhat like that of a defense lawyer for Russia in the construction of the new Europe."<sup>62</sup> Antagonists in two world wars and the Cold War, Germany and Russia have come to recognize their mutual stake in preventing conflicts in their common neighborhood that might again cast them in adversarial roles. As we have seen earlier in this volume, since the time of the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 the two states have engaged in periodic efforts to act as partners in an altered balance of power in Europe.

Bonn had acquired a considerable stake in Gorbachev's success, given the agreements it had forged with him on German reunification and withdrawal of Soviet forces. Later, with the Russian Federation, the Federal Republic of Germany was particularly interested in the fate of the Russian citizens of German origin whom Stalin had forcibly resettled from the Volga region in 1941, and for whose relocation needs Germany had already committed significant funding. Chancellor Helmut Kohl had no particular wish for large numbers of these "Volga Germans" to immigrate to Germany, and he urged Moscow to establish an autonomous republic for them in the Volgograd region. Given that Germany then accounted for 57 percent of all foreign investment in the CIS economies, its wishes carried weight in Moscow.<sup>63</sup>

Chancellor Kohl's first visit to Yeltsin's Russia came in December 1992, at a time when Yeltsin was engaged in a momentous showdown with the Congress of People's Deputies. In this context, Kohl's reassuring words and actions were viewed in the Russian press as a "life preserver" for Yeltsin, reassuring the "world community of Russian reforms and their continuation." The two leaders signed eight agreements, including a promise by Germany to give an eight-year respite on repayment of Soviet debts to the former German Democratic Republic, and a pledge of an additional 550 million marks (bringing the total to 8.3 billion marks) for construction of housing in Russia for troops withdrawn from Germany. Yeltsin promised in turn to complete the troop withdrawal four months early (by August 1994), and to provide 10 billion rubles in the Russian budget for setting up new "national districts" for the Volga Germans. At the conclusion of his visit, Kohl termed Russia Germany's "major partner in the East."<sup>64</sup>

At the end of August 1994, Yeltsin returned to Germany, accompanied by virtually his entire government team, for a ceremony marking the completion of the withdrawal of Russian troops. Yeltsin drew considerable attention to himself when he seized the conductor's baton and led an army chorus in song; a German magazine reported on his "unsteady gait" at the parade ground. All told, about a half-million troops and more than 100,000 weapons and pieces of equipment were pulled out of Germany within four years. There was considerable grumbling about the pace, since despite Germany's provision of significant funds for housing the forces in Russia, more than 25,000 military families were said still to lack accommodation. On the eve of the fifty-fifth anniversary of the start of World War II in Europe, the Russian president solemnly declared, "This Russia and this Germany will never fight each other again."<sup>65</sup>

The Social Democrats returned to power in Germany in 1998, in a coalition with the Greens. As chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder developed a close relationship with Yeltsin's successor, the German-speaking Vladimir Putin, whom he hailed in 2004 as a "flawless democrat." The two exchanged numerous visits, and Schroeder and his wife even adopted two Russian children. Germany and Russia took similar positions in opposing the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and Schroeder pursued an anti-American line in his re-election campaign later that year. Trade relations between Germany and Russia expanded considerably; by 2004, Germany accounted for 10 percent of Russia's foreign trade and 7.1 percent of direct foreign investment in Russia.

Natural gas was by far the largest component of Russian exports to Germany, and the two countries collaborated in the plans for a new pipeline to transport Russian gas from the Iuzhno-Russkoe gas field across the Baltic Sea to Germany. The North European Gas Pipeline, later renamed "Nord Stream," was intended to bring Russian gas to the German market (and possibly from there to the Netherlands and even Britain) by means of a route that would bypass the Baltic states and Poland. Germany was to participate in the development of the Russian gas fields, while Gazprom would share in the ownership of the distribution network in Europe. As the deal was being completed in the fall of 2005, the German government promised a 1 billion euro loan guarantee to Gazprom. Shortly thereafter, Schroeder's government fell, and the former chancellor was nominated by Gazprom to become head of the shareholder's committee of the joint venture.

The new German leader, Angela Merkel, who had grown up in communist East Germany, began her tenure with a much more skeptical attitude toward Russia. During her first visit as chancellor, she raised various human rights issues with Putin and ostentatiously met with opposition politicians. By the time of her second visit a few months later, however, the atmosphere seemed far friendlier. As the G-8 host in 2006, Putin was pushing an "energy security" doctrine that would emphasize both security of supply and security of demand. Whereas the Europeans were eager to diversify energy supplies and liberalize energy markets in accordance with the EU's Energy Charter, the Russians were seeking long-term

supply agreements between Gazprom and its customers that would stabilize prices. They also were promoting the notion of “asset swaps” that would allow European companies to invest in Russian gas production in return for Gazprom’s participation in the ownership of European gas distribution assets.

At a trilateral summit with Merkel and Jacques Chirac in Compiègne, France, in September 2006, Putin dangled some tempting bait. The resources of Gazprom’s giant Shtokman gas field, located in the Russian sector of the Barents Sea—originally projected to be directed toward the North American market as liquefied natural gas—would instead be directed to Europe. France and Germany would be allowed to participate in this project in return for their agreement to modify the Energy Charter to conform to Russian ideas of “security of demand” and to allow Russia to invest in the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company (EADS—developer of the Airbus).<sup>66</sup> Even after Putin “upped the ante” and offered an even larger share of the Shtokman project to German companies, however, Germany and France stuck to their free market principles and declined the offer. Evidently leery of harnessing their future energy supplies to Gazprom, which was perceived in Berlin as an ill-managed company that could be pushed around at the whim of the Kremlin, they insisted instead that Russia sign the Energy Charter and its Transportation Protocol, which required that gas pipelines be made available for the unrestricted transit of natural gas from Central Asia to markets in the EU.<sup>67</sup>

Until 2012, Russia and Germany were on generally cordial terms, even when Germany objected to Russian policies, such as during the Russia-Georgia War in 2008 or when Moscow used its energy supplies as a political weapon during intermittent interruptions in 2006 and 2009 in gas supplies to Europe through transit pipelines in Ukraine. But the bilateral relationship has weakened since Putin’s return to the presidency in 2012. Several developments have served to sap the earlier vitality of Russo-German ties. The relationship, for instance, has become strained due to the collective impact of the Ukraine crisis as it unfolded in late 2013, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the resultant EU sanctions imposed on Russia, and German fears that Moscow is behind the dissemination of distorted stories on Germany’s migrant crisis aimed at undermining popular support for Chancellor Angela Merkel, sowing fear in the minds of the German public, and persuading the German government to relax sanctions. Even so, Germany has been concerned over the continuing deterioration. Germany and the EU have viewed with some trepidation U.S. sanctions on Russia imposed by the Trump administration, fearing a negative fallout on Europe’s energy market because the sanctions target companies that aid in developing and modernizing Russia’s energy export pipelines.<sup>68</sup>

Second only to Germany in Russian priorities in Europe is France. French and Russian diplomats fondly recall the historic Franco-Russian alliance of 1893 and their common struggle against German armies in two world wars. As their Soviet predecessors did from the time of Charles de Gaulle, on occasion Russian leaders have subtly reinforced France’s continuing rivalry with Germany and its

resentments at Washington's perceived wish to dominate Western Europe. While Yeltsin's personal relations with President François Mitterrand never approached the level of warmth he exhibited with Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the personal dimension in diplomacy loomed larger after the election in 1995 of Jacques Chirac as France's president.

Yeltsin's first direct talks with Chirac again focused on NATO expansion and Bosnia; in the view of a pair of Russian journalists, they displayed a "proximity of views based on a certain anti-Americanism."<sup>69</sup> Further talks between Chirac and Yeltsin in 1997 (with Yeltsin going to Paris once and Chirac traveling three times to Moscow) produced final agreements on questions of debts, clearing the way for Russia's admission to the Paris Club of creditor nations.

Just as Russia's great German friend Gerhard Schroeder had been succeeded by a leader thought to be more inclined toward Washington, so also Jacques Chirac's successor as French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, was seen as a friend of America. In his first major foreign policy address, in August 2007, the new French leader described as "brutal" Russia's use of energy resources to exert foreign policy pressure. On his first visit to Russia in October, Sarkozy maintained a friendly demeanor, but disagreed with the Russians on issues such as independence for Kosovo and Iran's nuclear program.<sup>70</sup>

As with Germany, France's relationship with Russia has been frosty since the Crimean annexation. But the leaders of the two countries have continued to engage in frequent dialogue over ways of resolving the conflict over Ukraine and on other matters. President Putin was in France in June 2014 to commemorate the World War II D-Day landings and he met with newly elected President Emmanuel Macron in May 2017 at the Versailles Palace where Macron expressed France's interest in cooperating with Russia on resolving the Syrian crisis and in fighting against terrorism, while also telling Putin in no uncertain terms of France's willingness to retaliate militarily against the use of chemical weapons in Syria by any of Russia's proxies.<sup>71</sup> He also stood firmly by his decision to ban two Russian media outlets from covering his presidential campaign, labeling them "agents of propaganda."<sup>72</sup>

Given its greater geographical distance and the closer proximity of its foreign policy to that of the United States, Britain was a less prominent object of Russian courtship than the two major continental powers of Western Europe. Yeltsin's initial trip to London as Russian president in January 1992 was undertaken with full awareness of the importance to Gorbachev's international reputation of Margaret Thatcher's commendation in 1984: "One can do business with Mr. Gorbachev." Knowing that foreign visits had been an area of triumph for his predecessor, Yeltsin was pleased with his reception. Prime Minister John Major declared that "Yeltsin made a very good impression on me," and the British agreed to increase economic aid to Russia.<sup>73</sup> During a second visit later in the same year, Yeltsin signed a bilateral treaty and an economic agreement, and he was given the opportunity to address the British parliament.

The more important trip in 1994 was purely ceremonial—Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Russia in October was the first visit by a British monarch since the Bolshevik Revolution. The change of governments in Britain had little effect on the course of Anglo-Russian relations; a visit to Moscow by Prime Minister Tony Blair in October 1997 focused on economic relations, with attention being given to the fact that Britain now ranked second to Germany among foreign investors in Russia.

With the coming to power of Vladimir Putin, however, Blair paid greater attention to cultivating a personal relationship with the Russian president, evidently hoping to enlist Russia as a partner. He was the first Western leader to visit the new president, and Putin soon reciprocated with a visit to London. In June 2003 Putin made what was termed the first full state visit by a Russian head of state since the 1870s. But relations between Moscow and London worsened in November of that year, when Britain granted political asylum to Akhmad Zakayev, the foreign affairs envoy of deposed Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. London was also the destination for self-exiled oligarch Boris Berezovsky, who was granted asylum in 2001 when Moscow was seeking his arrest on charges of fraud and corruption.

The Berezovsky connection took on added significance the following November when his close associate and fellow adversary of the Putin regime, ex-KGB operative Aleksandr Litvinenko, died in a London hospital, apparently poisoned by exposure to the rare radioactive material Polonium-210. Before his death, Litvinenko accused Russian authorities (and Vladimir Putin personally) of the attack on him. The British investigation ultimately led to an accusation against another former KGB agent, Andrei Lugovoi. Although he had met with the victim shortly before his death, Lugovoi claimed that several Kremlin adversaries with whom Litvinenko had been associated (Berezovsky, Zakayev, and former Yukos executive Leonid Nevzlin) had killed him as part of a conspiracy with the British secret service to discredit Russia. This theory was prominently echoed in the Russian press. The British request to extradite Lugovoi for trial was denied by Russia—a position that was seemingly reinforced when the accused ex-spy gained constitutional immunity by means of his election to the Russian Duma in December 2007 (on Zhirinovskiy's party list).

The Litvinenko case occasioned the worst conflict in Russian-British relations since the Cold War. The Russians insisted that their constitution did not allow for the extradition of Russian citizens, but they were also clearly angered that Britain had refused to extradite Berezovsky and Zakayev, both of whom were wanted by Moscow on criminal charges. The British media, in turn, claimed that Russian security agencies had not only arranged for Litvinenko's murder but also had earlier attempted to assassinate Berezovsky in central London.<sup>74</sup> The Berezovsky case was closed in March 2013 with the former oligarch's death at his English estate, evidently by his own hand, following a series of business and personal reverses.



A March 2017 Foreign Affairs Committee Report of the House of Commons characterized Russia-UK relations as the “most strained” than at any time since the Cold War’s end but added that “[r]efusal to engage” with Russia was not a “viable long-term policy option for the UK.”<sup>75</sup> The report noted the issues of Ukraine and Syria as persistent irritants in the relationship.

A more severe crisis in relations between Moscow and London erupted in March 2018, and it embroiled Russia in conflict with most of Britain’s allies. In the quiet English town of Salisbury, Sergei Skripal and his daughter were attacked with a deadly nerve agent, Novichuk, which was known to have been a chemical weapon developed by the Soviets. Skripal was a former agent of Russian military intelligence, the GRU, who had spied for Britain, dealing a setback to Russian intelligence by revealing the identities of GRU agents. Tried and imprisoned in Russia, he had been part of an agent “swap” in 2010 and had been living as a British citizen. The Russian government staunchly denied responsibility when charged by the British government, but it was probably taken aback by the scale of the retaliation marshaled by Teresa May’s government: expulsion of more than 150 Russian “diplomats” (undercover agents) from Britain and more than two dozen of its allies, including sixty expelled from the U.S. Russia retaliated with a similar number of expulsions, with Foreign Minister Lavrov characterizing the entire episode as a “children’s game” more unruly than such incidents in the Cold War.<sup>76</sup>

Russia’s relations in the south of Europe were decidedly less chilly. European capitals visited by Yeltsin during his first term as president included three in the south: Rome (December 1991), Athens (June 1993), and Madrid (April 1994). In each case, Russia signed a bilateral treaty on friendship and cooperation as well as multiple trade and economic agreements, but only in the case of Italy was the economic relationship significant. Indeed, Yeltsin made a second visit to Italy in February 1998, where he signed contracts worth \$3 billion, primarily for oil and gas deliveries and for a joint venture in automobile production. By this time, Italy ranked as Russia’s second largest European trading partner. It loomed even larger in Russia’s sights during Putin’s second term, when Gazprom forged a multibillion-dollar agreement with the Italian energy firm Eni on the construction of the South Stream gas pipeline (designed to deliver Russian gas to Italy while bypassing Turkey and Ukraine).

Next to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, whose relations with Moscow were discussed in Chapter 6, Finland has been the northern European neighbor most closely tied to Russia. Formerly under tsarist rule, Finland practiced an anxious neutrality during the Cold War, tilting far enough toward Moscow in its foreign and domestic policies to escape outright incorporation into the Soviet sphere. Echoes of this uneasy past occasionally have been observed in current Russo-Finnish relations. Relations began well, with Finland being the first European state with which Yeltsin’s Russia signed a bilateral treaty. By 1997, Russia ranked fifth among Finland’s trade partners, with an annual volume of \$4.7 billion, much

of it in the sphere of energy. Opening a section of a highway in October 1997, Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen announced a plan for expanded “northern cooperation” and spoke of Finland as a bridge between Russia and Western Europe.

Yeltsin’s last foreign trip of 1997 was a highly publicized visit to Sweden, notable less for its diplomatic achievements than for several embarrassing mistakes made by the Russian president. At one point, Yeltsin evidently believed he was in Finland; on another occasion, he referred to a “Swedish” oil deal that actually had been concluded with Norway. Blurting out a confusing offer for a unilateral reduction in nuclear arms—later disavowed by his staff—Yeltsin mistakenly identified Germany and Japan as nuclear powers. In this context, observers were uncertain of the status of a declaration he made in a speech to the Swedish parliament—later confirmed by his defense minister and evidently intended to reassure the Baltic states that their membership in NATO would be unnecessary—promising a 40 percent cut in Russian ground and naval forces along the country’s northwestern border by 1999. In any event, Yeltsin’s strange behavior was later blamed by his staff on fatigue and a developing cold, and he was hospitalized upon his return to Russia.

More diplomatically significant, and symbolic of the growing differentiation that had occurred in Russian policy toward the West, was a trip Yeltsin made a little earlier in the fall of 1997 to a summit meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The Russian president seemed at pains to underscore the extent to which Russia regarded itself as part of a Europe that was increasingly resistant to U.S. domination. “We do not need an uncle from somewhere,” he declared in an interview before the summit. “We in Europe are capable of uniting ourselves to live normally.”<sup>77</sup> Within a few weeks, Russia again displayed its independence, joining with France in resisting the tough American stance on UN sanctions on Iraq. In a move clearly aimed at emphasizing that his main Western partners were in Europe, Yeltsin announced at Strasbourg that he would hold annual summits with the French and German leaders to review the state of the European continent. As we shall see in Chapter 9, the Russian effort to forge a common front with France and Germany on major global issues reached a new peak in 2003, when the three countries led the opposition in the United Nations and elsewhere to the American military action against Iraq.

### **Yugoslavia Redux**

The mix of cooperation and confrontation with the West that characterized Boris Yeltsin’s first administration continued through his second (1996–1999). As was the case earlier, Yeltsin was forced to moderate his own pro-Western proclivities due to pressures from the communist and nationalist forces in the Duma, as well as from elements in the military. On the other hand, Russian foreign policy was unable to pursue a strong position in many areas because of weakness in the economy, in the military, and in the health of the president. During Yeltsin’s

second term, two issues that earlier had brought Russia into conflict with the West resurfaced: war in Yugoslavia and in Chechnya.

The 1995 Dayton Accords ended the war in Bosnia, but it did not apply to Kosovo, a province of Serbia about the size of Connecticut. Kosovo had a population of 2 million, of whom 90 percent were ethnic Albanians. Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia's ruler, had revoked Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, imposing a repressive Serbian rule upon its people. In the early 1990s, a militant guerrilla movement known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged, determined to break away from Serbia by forceful means.<sup>78</sup> By the spring of 1998 Milosevic confronted a major uprising in Kosovo. He responded to KLA guerrilla warfare with a ruthless policy of "ethnic cleansing" and killings. Approximately 400,000 Muslims were displaced in 1998 and some 2,000 killed.

By early 1999, in response to the growing violence in Kosovo and particularly a massacre by Serbian forces of forty-five people in the village of Racak, a conference was convened in Rambouillet, France, by the Contact Group (Russia, the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy), to set the terms for ending the fighting in Kosovo. The Rambouillet negotiations produced a draft accord in February, which demanded autonomy for the people of Kosovo, a withdrawal of Yugoslav forces, demilitarization of the KLA forces, a return of refugees, and enforcement of the peace by NATO forces. A future referendum would determine a final settlement. Meanwhile, Yugoslav sovereignty over Kosovo was recognized.

Under Western pressure, the KLA accepted the terms, but Milosevic refused. As a consequence, NATO on March 23 began an air war against Yugoslavia, which lasted for seventy-seven days. Milosevic's immediate response was a massive displacement of Kosovo Albanians from their homes. Russia, as it had in the Bosnian War earlier, found itself isolated from the Western powers and ineffective with its Yugoslav ally. Even as a friend of Yugoslavia, Russia could not stop Milosevic's suppression of Kosovo's Albanians, let alone persuade Belgrade to restore autonomy to Kosovo. However, as the Western members of the Contact Group moved closer to military intervention in Kosovo, Moscow took the line that only the United Nations (where Russia has a veto) was empowered to authorize the use of military force against a sovereign state. Russia's defense minister expressed the hard-line view that launching a NATO assault against Kosovo "would signal the start of a cold war, a break in relations with NATO, and a freezing of the process of START II ratification."<sup>79</sup> Russia's civilian leaders were more subtle, warning of dire consequences if NATO were to use force, without committing to any specific response.

Yeltsin's public threat that "We won't let anyone touch Kosovo" turned out to be a bluff. Moscow expressed "outrage" and closed the NATO mission in Moscow. Prime Minister Primakov was on a flight to Washington as the first bombs fell. He was going to negotiate a program of American assistance to Russia, but the requirements of national prestige induced him to reverse course mid-flight and return to Moscow.

Russia's diplomacy during the war was as fruitless as were its efforts to prevent NATO's assault. Primakov led a high-level team to persuade Belgrade to make concessions. Yeltsin was compelled to admit that Milosevic was a "difficult negotiating partner." Russia then asked for a special session of the Security Council to demand a stop to the air war. Only two Security Council members—China and Namibia—voted with Russia.

Finding himself increasingly isolated from world opinion over the Balkan War, in April 1999 Yeltsin switched diplomatic control of the issue away from his hawkish prime minister and foreign minister and made his former prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, Russia's special representative for Yugoslavia. If the Kosovo War were to end without a land invasion by NATO, then Milosevic would have to be persuaded to capitulate. In May, NATO aircraft bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, provoking a crisis between Washington and Beijing. Washington insisted the bombing was accidental. Moscow did not publicly endorse the American explanation, but it did agree to send Chernomyrdin to Beijing to help mediate the Sino-American differences.

A more significant mediation took place in early June. Chernomyrdin and Martti Ahtisaari (representing the OSCE) persuaded Milosevic to accept a Western plan for ending the conflict. On all essential points—including a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo—the Yugoslav government capitulated to the West. In Moscow, there was a firestorm of criticism from the military, leftists, and nationalists, who charged Yeltsin's emissary with betrayal of Yugoslavia's and Russia's interests. Public opinion in Russia, however, tended to favor the Chernomyrdin mission.<sup>80</sup>

In a bizarre postscript to the war in Kosovo, 200 Russian paratroopers seized the airport at Pristina, Kosovo's capital, before NATO forces could take control. This action apparently was Yeltsin's concession to a military disgruntled about the terms of peace. It was, however brief, an assertion of national honor and a sop to the president's critics, especially in the Duma. Vladimir Lukin, chairman of the Duma's foreign affairs committee, proclaimed: "Russia had lately shown indecision in crisis situations. Now the whole world has seen that we can act brilliantly when all seems lost."<sup>81</sup> It was a daring gesture, but with little consequence. Russia gained the satisfaction of participating in the peacekeeping force (KFOR), but did not get the separate operational sector it wanted, though its military presence was assured in virtually every key area of the province. Over time, Russian forces worked effectively under overall NATO command, as they did in Bosnia.

The termination of fighting did not end Moscow's differences with NATO. It continuously protested the failure of KFOR to stop ethnic Albanian assaults on Serbs and efforts by former KLA forces to detach Kosovo from Yugoslavia. In principle, the West shared those concerns. A major source of friction between all sides was removed in September 2000 when Milosevic was soundly defeated in his bid for re-election as president of Yugoslavia. In the final analysis, the war in Kosovo revealed the fault lines between Russia and the West, exposed the inability of Russia to challenge the West in the Balkans, and revealed Yeltsin's

determination to keep Russia as a partner rather than as an adversary to the United States and Europe. In Chapter 9 we shall return to the question of the status of Kosovo—an issue with important consequences for the “frozen conflicts” in the post-Soviet states.

### The Second Chechen War

Barely had peace been restored in the Balkans when a resumption of civil war in the Caucasus brought new strains to Russian-Western relations. Early in August 1999 a second phase of Russia’s war with Chechnya began with an invasion of the Russian territory of Dagestan. Led by Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev and his ally Khattab, several thousand guerrillas occupied a number of towns in border districts. Basayev’s proclaimed goal was to establish an independent nation, to be called the Islamic State of Dagestan. Almost coinciding with the outbreak of fighting in the North Caucasus was the appointment of Vladimir Putin as Russia’s new prime minister.

Putin’s promise to finish off the “bandits” in a fortnight proved to be easier said than done. Russian forces encountered fierce resistance from the guerrillas and often had to give up territory captured from the Chechens. The fighting quickly escalated. Russia began bombing villages in Chechnya, which Moscow claimed were support bases for the guerrillas. Basayev responded, “We reserve the right to retaliate anywhere in Russia and at any time.”<sup>82</sup> Within a period of weeks in September, terrorist bombers struck several cities in Russia, including two massive bombings in Moscow. Civilian casualties numbered in the hundreds. Although Moscow could not positively identify the perpetrators, Putin’s government assumed they were Chechens and used the terrorist attacks as a *casus belli* for a full-scale war on Chechnya.<sup>83</sup> Prime Minister Putin referred to Chechnya as a “huge terrorist camp.” He believed that a failure by Russia to destroy the insurgency would ultimately lead to the disintegration of the Russian Federation.<sup>84</sup> On October 1, 1999, Putin gave the order for a full-scale invasion of northern Chechnya. The war that ensued took a large toll in Chechen lives and created hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Unlike the war in 1994–1996, the second Chechen War had the support of the majority of the Russian population; but, increasingly, the West became critical—as it had been earlier—of the brutality and destructiveness of the fighting. Europe and the United States, even while acknowledging the principle of Russia’s territorial integrity, pressed Moscow to negotiate a political solution with the government of Maskhadov, the elected Chechen president. This Moscow would not do. Putin’s government adamantly refused to conduct a dialogue with a member state of the Russian Federation in a way that recognized it as an equal partner.

Domestically, Putin’s ruthless prosecution of the war proved to be popular. Where Yeltsin lost popular support in 1995, Putin gained in 2000. His high approval ratings in March 2000 guaranteed his election as Russia’s second

president. Even as the war dragged on through 2000, the public's support for Putin's policy in Chechnya remained high. Criticism from the West was deflected in Russia by all except the champions of human rights, who were in a minority. Western criticism remained persistent but restrained. President Clinton warned, "Russia will pay a heavy price for its actions in Chechnya," but Washington never specified what that price would be. In April 2000, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly initiated procedures for suspending Russia from the Council of Europe, though it did not go so far as to actually expel Russia.<sup>85</sup> Politically, the issue put Russia's critics in a bind: they could not ignore the egregious violations of human rights in Chechnya even as they recognized Moscow's justification (and determination) to suppress the insurgency. Furthermore, there were more important issues between Russia and the West affecting vital interests, which necessitated cooperation from Moscow. In addition, for Russia the same paradox applied: Chechnya had to be subdued, though not at the expense of alienating Europe. "[W]e are," said Putin, "part of Western European culture . . . we are Europeans."<sup>86</sup>

### **Europe at the End of the Twentieth Century**

As the decade of the 1990s—and the twentieth century—ended, Russia's relations with Europe declined largely as a result of the war in Kosovo, which Russia opposed, and the war in Chechnya, whose violations of human rights offended Europeans.

Russia was operating from a position of extreme domestic weakness, which inevitably impaired its diplomatic effectiveness. In August 1998, the economy experienced a financial crisis (a stock market plunge and a collapse of government securities) that forced the government to devalue the ruble and default on its foreign and domestic debts. Europe's confidence in Moscow's capacity to carry through with economic reform noticeably declined. Even Germany, Russia's leading trading partner and source of capital, warned that financial assistance would not be forthcoming so easily as in the past.

Within a period of less than two years, Moscow had functioned under five different prime ministers. It was not surprising that under conditions of economic weakness and political instability, the prestige of Russia and its president suffered. Yeltsin was seen by many as a spent force. At the Russia-EU summit in February 1999, the Europeans assumed that Primakov was the man with whom they would be working as a strategic partner; but Primakov was no more successful than Yeltsin in modifying Western policy in the main European conflict in 1999, the war in Kosovo. As Yeltsin prepared to leave office, he had to acknowledge that, in the economic sphere, Europe was moving closer and closer to integration without Russia, and in the security area NATO—and not the OSCE—remained the dominant organization. Even before the expiration of his second term, Yeltsin realized that he could no longer effectively carry on the duties of president.

In August, Yeltsin initiated the strategy by which he would choose his own successor. He replaced Sergei Stepashin with Vladimir Putin as prime minister. Four months later, in a surprise move, Yeltsin resigned the presidency, thus making Putin acting president as well as prime minister. In doing so, Yeltsin embraced Putin as “a strong man worthy of being president.” Thus ended the era of Yeltsin and began the era of Putin, which we assess more fully in Chapters 9 and 10.

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They [the Chechens] built up their forces and then attacked a neighboring territory. Why? In order to defend the independence of Chechnya? Of course not. In order to seize

additional territories. They would have swallowed up Dagestan, and that would have been the beginning of the end. The entire Caucasus would have followed—Dagestan, Ingushetia, and then up along the Volga River to Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, reaching deep into the country.

Nataliia Gevorkian, Natalia Timakova, and Andrei Kolesnikov, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President Vladimir Putin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 142.

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## Russia and the “Non-West”

### **An Arena for Struggle**

As we saw in Chapter 4, the international system at the end of World War II was perceived in both the United States and the Soviet Union as rigidly bipolar. In 1947, both the Truman Doctrine and Andrei Zhdanov’s speech at the founding conference of the Cominform portrayed a struggle between two camps, each united around its own ideology. As the great colonial empires collapsed in the post-war period, new nations in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa joined the few already independent states in those regions, unwillingly cast in the role of an arena for the competition of the two blocs.

During the period of the Cold War the developed states of West and East were depicted as the First World and the Second World, and the less developed countries became known as the Third World. Although the breakup of the Soviet bloc rendered the familiar labels obsolete, Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet period has continued to differentiate among three “worlds”—the West; the former USSR (the near abroad) and Eastern Europe; and that large grouping of countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America that we will call (for lack of a better term) the “non-West.”

As we have seen, Khrushchev revived the Leninist perception of the developing world as the “vital reserve of imperialism,” and he initiated a relatively low-risk Soviet challenge that sought ideological victories for “socialism” as well as strategic benefits in the economic and military spheres. The initial Soviet forays became a broader-based investment under Brezhnev, as the USSR sought to counter Western (and Chinese) influence in all areas of the Third World, establishing in the process facilities that allowed Soviet military power to be projected on a truly global basis. Soviet influence reached its high-water mark in the mid-1970s, after which it lost some of its hard-won beachheads, while also failing to persuade the United States that expansionist and revolutionary activities in the Third World were compatible with superpower détente.

As the Soviet economy faltered, Gorbachev began, even before the end of the Cold War, to liquidate some of the USSR's costliest and most unproductive Third World investments. Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan, and Moscow cooperated in arranging negotiated solutions to long-standing regional conflicts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As their global competition ended, both the Soviet Union and the United States sharply cut back their economic and military assistance programs in these regions.

In Chapter 5 we examined the domestic political controversy that arose in Russia in 1992 as a result of the initial emphasis given by President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to relations with the West, seemingly at the expense of Russia's ties to the near abroad and the non-West. In his critics' eyes, Kozyrev's alleged fixation on the West and slavish imitation of Western positions on international issues came at the expense of specific economic and security interests of Russia. Just as important to the advocates of a more nationalistic foreign policy, Kozyrev's "Atlanticist" policies also permanently relegated the country to a "junior partnership" at best, thereby sacrificing Russia's role as a great power and a global leader—even if only of "second-echelon" countries. The "Eurasianists"—advocates of a more forceful Russian role in the former USSR and in the "East" generally—gained additional ammunition for the campaign to counter a Western-oriented policy when plans for expanding NATO into the former Soviet Empire threatened to further isolate Russia from democratic Europe. After Yevgeny Primakov, much of whose career had been spent in the Middle East, replaced Kozyrev in 1996, further impetus was given to the reorientation of Russian foreign policy. And when Vladimir Putin returned Russian foreign policy to a more Westward-looking orientation in 2001, it was not this time pursued at the expense of other priorities.

At least since the adoption of Russia's official foreign policy concept by President Yeltsin in April 1993—echoed in the revised concepts issued in 2000, 2008, 2013, and 2016—top priority has been given to relations with the states of the former Soviet Union. Accordingly, the main objective of Russia's policy in the non-West has been to ensure the security of the territories of the former Soviet lands, insulating them from the harmful effects of regional conflicts such as the struggle for control of Afghanistan and from threatening movements such as Islamist extremism. Given the strategic nature of energy resources in the Caucasian and Central Asian republics, Russia has tended to define its security interests in these areas to include preventing outside powers from gaining leverage over these resources. Setting its overall priorities in this way has pointed Russia toward East and South Asia and the Middle East as the zones of greatest concern. These are also the regions where there is the greatest danger of a broader, but no less potent, threat to Russia's security interests—nuclear proliferation.

With the emphasis on the role of foreign policy as a contributor to economic development, it is not surprising that another major objective of Russia's policy toward the countries of the non-West is economic. These regions constitute an

enormous and growing market, where Russian goods—be they raw or semi-processed materials, lower-quality consumer goods, or the more sophisticated products of Russian science and engineering—have a somewhat better chance of obtaining a competitive advantage than they do in Western marketplaces. Imported products from Asia, Africa, and Latin America have potential benefit for Russian manufacturers and consumers, especially if they are obtained in partial payment of the enormous debts that some countries in these regions have accumulated as a result of their transactions with the former Soviet Union.

The combined total of debt owed to Russia by developing countries was estimated in September 1997 at a staggering \$112.7 billion (all but \$1 billion of which dated from the Soviet period). Of fifty-one debtor nations, only India was repaying its debt in full. The largest debts were owed to Russia by Cuba, Mongolia, India, and Vietnam. Moscow's admission to the Paris Club of creditor nations put international pressure on the debtors to repay. While the Russians agreed to discount the debt, in amounts ranging from 35 to 80 percent, the repayments were to be made in hard currency. Resulting more from debt forgiveness than from repayment, the total debt from the developing countries in 2000 had been reduced to \$86.6 billion. Analysts estimated that Russia would eventually receive only \$15–\$20 billion, spread out over the following twenty to twenty-five years.

Russia's appetite for expanding its global oil and gas interests motivated two large debt-reduction agreements in early 2008. In February, all but \$900 million of Iraq's \$12.9 billion debt was written off, in anticipation of some \$4 billion that Russia would be investing, primarily in development of Iraqi oil fields.<sup>1</sup> In April, during Putin's visit to Libya, Russia agreed to write off \$4.5 billion in debt in exchange for Libya's agreement to sign several large contracts for civilian and military sales from Russia.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas, prior to the end of the Cold War, aid and trade transactions between the Soviets and the Third World had been heavily subsidized by Moscow for political reasons, cash-strapped Russia, forced to abandon "soft" credit terms, found its goods far less attractive than they had been. As a consequence, trade with most of the non-West in the immediate post-Soviet period fell sharply. Reflecting these realities, Russia cut back its costly overseas trade-promotion efforts, which were often a front for espionage activities during the Soviet period. Whereas Moscow operated 130 organizationally distinct trade missions abroad in 1991, the number had been cut to 47 by 1996, with trade counselors in Russian embassies taking over the responsibilities in the countries with less promising markets. In 2015, Russia had trade missions in 54 countries, still not an appreciably larger number.<sup>3</sup>

As was the case during the Soviet period, Russia's main export to the non-West has been weaponry, and a major beneficiary of renewed activity in these regions has been the underemployed military-industrial complex of Russia. The depression in Moscow's arms industry actually began in the Gorbachev period, as a result of cuts in Soviet military budgets that accompanied the arms control

agreements with the United States, combined with the negotiated settlements of regional conflicts in the Third World.

By 1991, the last year of the Soviet period, the market for arms in the developing countries had dropped to \$28.6 billion, down sharply from \$61 billion in 1988. It continued to decline in the immediate post-Soviet years, reaching \$15.4 billion in 1995, rose again in the second half of the decade, to about \$20 billion in 1999, and then declined at the beginning of the 2000s, to \$17.7 billion in 2002. The Soviet Union and its allies dominated the Third World arms market until the late 1980s, but their share of a declining market began to plummet in the latter years of Gorbachev's rule and continued to do so in the first post-Soviet years, reflecting Moscow's shrinking political profile as well as the withdrawal of subsidies for arms purchases. Weapons sales to China in the 1990s had initially included a prominent barter component, and credits extended to India were serviced with payments of Indian goods. As a consequence, Russian arms factories were left—in the words of a leading Russian defense analyst—with the burden of unloading Chinese and Indian “junk” on the domestic market.<sup>4</sup> By the mid-2000s deliveries of Russian arms were only \$5.35 billion in 2003 and \$6.46 billion in 2006, dropping to \$4.58 billion in 2007. Between 2008 and 2016, Russian arms sales averaged \$ 6.5 million, peaking in 2011 at \$8.6 million.<sup>5</sup>

As Russia has labored to regain a major share of the shrinking global arms market, it has encountered stiff competition, leading Moscow to complain at times about “unfair” competitive tactics. Not surprisingly, Washington has been regarded as the chief culprit. In recent years, Russia has made incursions into arms markets traditionally dominated by the United States—Latin America (Colombia and Brazil) and South Korea—or into areas regarded by the U.S. government as highly volatile (Cyprus and Iran). As the Russians see it, the U.S. response to being out-hustled in the marketplace has been decidedly heavy-handed.

In addition to Russia's competition with Western arms dealers, another source of vexing rivalry has been the sale of Soviet-designed weapons by the arms factories of former bloc countries such as Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Poland, as well as—most troublesome of all—Ukraine and Belarus. In March 1997 Ukraine delivered the first shipment in a \$650 million order from Pakistan for 320 T-80UD tanks. Since India, Pakistan's hostile neighbor, was one of Moscow's best customers, the Russians sought to pressure Ukraine to cancel the order.<sup>6</sup>

Russia's arms dealers also have been on the receiving end of complaints, most notably about the quality of their weapons. Recent combat demonstrations of Russian-made arms—their use by the Iraqi military in the Persian Gulf War and their use by the Russian Army in Chechnya—have not inspired confidence in the reliability or technical capacities of certain weapons, and there have been other instances in which purchasers have found numerous cases of defective products or poor servicing of contracts. A detailed account in the Indian press contends that the engines on three-fourths of the MiG-29s purchased from Moscow and put into service by the Indian Air Force in the early 1990s had failed prematurely. Indian

engineers discovered a design defect, but India had to shoulder the bill for the lengthy repairs. A 1990 Indo-Soviet agreement to allow overhaul facilities to be established in India took six years to bear fruit.

Having surveyed some of the general features of Russia's approach to the non-West, we now turn to a region-by-region examination of how Moscow's policy has been implemented.

### **Russia's Relations in the Far East**

As the country with which the Soviet Union shared its longest border, China, not surprisingly, occupied a higher foreign policy priority for Russia than any other non-Western country—all the more so given the state of high tension on that border in past decades. As described in Chapter 4, Gorbachev took steps in the late 1980s to address the most serious issues in the Sino-Soviet conflict, and his efforts culminated in his May 1989 trip to Beijing, which symbolized the end of the Cold War between the two communist giants. The Chinese were severely displeased with the domestic political changes that Gorbachev was overseeing in the USSR, especially as Soviet democratization became a beacon for Chinese students, whose dissent was crushed on Tiananmen Square just days after Gorbachev's visit. Although the Chinese rulers had reached an accord with Gorbachev's government on 98 percent of their border with the USSR in May 1991, they barely disguised their support for the coup that sought to topple the Soviet president in August.

As the USSR was breaking up in December 1991, Boris Yeltsin sent an emissary to Beijing to reassure China that Russia would abide by the border accords. The following March, Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev was in the Chinese capital for the formal exchange of ratified documents. (However, the validity of the Central Asian sector of the border settlement was now a matter for newly independent Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan to reaffirm, which they did in October 1992.) Also in March, progress was made in the realms of economic and military cooperation: Russia and China signed a new trade agreement, and the chief of staff of the CIS armed forces concluded an agreement to sell twenty-four SU-27 fighter planes to China. On the ideological front, Kozyrev stated Moscow's wish to avoid confrontation, but signs of tension were not absent during his visit; he expressed Russia's concern for China's human rights behavior, and China brought up the matter of Russia's relations with Taiwan.<sup>7</sup>

In December 1992 Boris Yeltsin made a state visit to Beijing, and the Russian delegation signed over twenty documents, among them a mutual promise not to enter into any military-political alliance directed against the other state. The Chinese characterized the atmosphere of talks during Yeltsin's visit as "friendly, open and constructive . . . and in a spirit of mutual respect, understanding and trust." The gradual escalation of such rhetorical descriptions of presidential visits over the next several years serves as a barometer of the changed atmospherics



Map 8.1 Asia



in the Sino-Russian relationship—or, at any rate, of the way in which Moscow and Beijing wanted the world to view it. Thus, Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Moscow in September 1994 was said to signify a “qualitatively new level of relations” of “constructive partnership,” although not an alliance and not aimed against any other country. Yeltsin, during his visit to China in April

1996, described a "partnership directed toward the twenty-first century" between nations of which there was "no other such pair in the world." During Jiang's April 1997 visit to Russia, the Russian president reached new rhetorical heights, describing the visit as one of "enormous, and perhaps even historic, significance, inasmuch as we are determining the fate of the twenty-first century." Of the joint declaration signed by the two presidents, Yeltsin declared, "Never before has Russia signed such a document with any other country." Guests at the formal luncheon held during Yeltsin's November 1997 visit to Beijing witnessed not only a warm embrace but also singing by the two presidents. Observers could not recall such a cordial atmosphere at prior Sino-Russian summits.<sup>8</sup>

Consistent with the Marxist-Leninist tradition, of which both presidents were well aware, such phrase mongering was not a casual exercise, but was calibrated to carry a distinct message. In this case, the message was not solely or even primarily to be understood as a description of the actual state of relations between the two states, but rather as an indicator of the extent of their mutual concern over the status and behavior of another—the United States—and of their desire to send a warning to its government. Both sides were explicit in their opposition to "hegemonism"—the effort to build a unipolar international system. As Yeltsin put it in June 1997, "Someone is always dragging us toward a unipolar world and wanting to dictate unilaterally, but we want multipolarity." Such statements on the part of Russia became especially frequent after the United States announced its plans for expansion of NATO. The implied countermeasure—a "pairing" of "great Russia" and "great China," as Yeltsin termed it in 1996—was intended to persuade NATO not to undertake expansion, or at the very least to place limits on it. Although China also denounced NATO expansion as "a policy of blocs," Beijing was less directly affected by it and was more concerned about its own differences with the United States on Taiwan, trade, and human rights.

Soon thereafter, Moscow and Beijing were focusing on a third manifestation of attempted "hegemonism"—Washington's announcement of its intention to construct a national missile defense. A joint statement issued in July 2000 during Putin's inaugural trip to Beijing expressed "deep worry" over the U.S. plan, which "boils down to striving for unilateral superiority." Strict compliance with the ABM treaty was declared to be of "vital significance," and its destruction "would trigger off a new stage of the arms race and turn back positive trends in global politics that appeared after the end of the Cold War." Addressing a particular concern of China's, Putin and Jiang voiced a "resolute protest" over any plan to involve Taiwan in any form of the contemplated missile defense system.

During Putin's July 2000 visit, Jiang sought to retain a modicum of balance in Beijing's ties with Washington by stating that Sino-Russian relations were "not an alliance, not confrontational, and not aimed at any third country." Nevertheless, the two sides reportedly agreed to prepare a new treaty relationship—the Treaty on Good Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation, signed during Jiang's trip to Moscow in 2001—to formalize what Putin liked to call their

“strategic partnership,” while adhering to China’s insistence that it not constitute an “alliance.”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the treaty would call the world’s attention to how close the relations between the former adversaries (and former allies) had grown.

Doubts about just how far China and Russia had come in their relationship arose soon after the treaty was signed—and again, because of the United States. President Putin decided, in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, to acquiesce to the movement of American troops over Russian airspace to bases in the former Soviet states of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and subsequently, not to raise major objections to the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty, while moving Russia into a closer relationship with NATO. All three of these decisions could easily be interpreted in Beijing as raising serious issues for China’s security, and yet there was no indication that any of them was preceded by consultations, as required under their new treaty.

Over the course of the 2000s, as U.S.-Russian relations deteriorated over the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the “color revolutions” occurring in the post-Soviet space, and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Russia objected to the overall thrust of U.S. global policy and increasingly resented what it saw as U.S. interference in its sphere of influence. Russia also shared with China a belief in the inviolability of state sovereignty. So, when newly elected Chinese President Xi Jinping chose Moscow as his first international destination in March 2013, the Russians were pleased. Both sides celebrated their friendship and strategic partnership. Russian commentators noted that unlike Europe and the United States, China did not give Russia “condescending lectures” about democracy and human rights. However, they acknowledged that Russia was taking on the role of a “junior partner” vis-à-vis China. One journalist noted wryly that Moscow “amazingly” did not seem to object to “this rather strange, one-sided model of Russian-Chinese relations” that the Russians seemed willing to “pretend” were “equal and based on mutual respect.”<sup>10</sup>

A long-standing irritant in Sino-Russian relations—the demarcation of their border in the Far East—was resolved when Vladimir Putin visited Beijing in October 2004. He and Chinese President Hu Jintao signed an agreement resolving the border dispute in the Khabarovsk Krai. They agreed to divide equally their disputed islands in the Amur River. When the agreement was presented to the Duma for ratification, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov insisted that Russia was not “ceding territory,” but the opposition parties and the Khabarovsk governor, highly critical of the deal, thought otherwise. Nevertheless, the United Russia Party’s strong majority in the Duma proved more than adequate for approval, and Lavrov was able to declare that, “for the first time in our history, bilateral relations with China will not be marred by a border dispute.”<sup>11</sup>

Jiang’s June 1997 visit to Moscow did provide the occasion for signing a significant agreement with Yeltsin and the presidents of the three Central Asian border states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) on reductions in the military presence along the border. This treaty sets maximum limits on numbers of ground

troops, tactical aircraft, and air-defense aircraft within a 100-kilometer-wide zone on either side of the border. Subsequent meetings of this group of five countries (which came to be known as the “Shanghai Five”) focused on the growing threat of secessionist and Islamist extremist movements in Central Asia, which China feared might spill over into its Xinjiang province. In June 2001 the five became six, with Uzbekistan’s entry into what was now called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (which we described more fully in Chapter 6).

The primary bone of contention between Russia and China in the SCO is the divergent vision that each has for the organization. Russia sees the SCO’s function primarily from the security nexus, while China wishes to use the SCO as a springboard for economic influence. Russia has resisted Chinese plans for SCO-wide economic projects largely because, as a robustly growing economy, China enjoys greater advantages in this area than does Russia. In the area of security cooperation, the SCO has been very active, conducting joint anti-terrorist military exercises since 2003. These exercises have become more elaborate over the years—with participation from more members and involving ground, navy, and air forces.<sup>12</sup>

A Sino-Russian border issue of considerable sensitivity concerns the extensive Chinese immigration—much of it illegal—into Russian territory. The demographic imbalance along the border, with 150 million Chinese crowded into northeast China and only 7 million Russians in the vast bordering territories of Siberia and the Far East, has been a source of concern for Soviet and Russian citizens, officials, and journalists for many years. As border tensions eased at the beginning of the 1990s, the scale of illegal immigration increased—rising three-fold between 1992 and 1993. This prompted Russia to conclude an agreement with Beijing in 1994 to establish formal border-crossing posts and tighten visa restrictions. The immediate impact was a sharp reduction in Sino-Russian trade, much of which was “shuttled” across the border by Chinese traders.<sup>13</sup>

The Russian press continued to provide sensational accounts of illegal immigration (termed in one account an “invasion of Huns”), prompting an advisor to Yeltsin, Emil Pain, to write an article in the government’s newspaper stating that “claims about dangerous levels of Chinese immigration and a related real threat to national sovereignty in the Russian Far East are not supported by the actual facts.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Putin himself warned an audience in the Russian Far East that unless steps were taken to develop the region, people there within a few decades would be speaking mostly Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.<sup>15</sup>

Writing in 2012, noted academic Sergei Karaganov placed the number of illegal and legal Chinese residents in Russia at 300,000, which he noted was far fewer than the number who lived in the Russian Empire before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. But he cautioned that “negative demographic trends” in the Far Eastern Baikal region, joined with “fear of overweening Chinese power,” suggest that “[i]f the current economic near-stagnation in Siberia persists, the

world will witness a second epic edition of Finlandization, this time in the East.”<sup>16</sup> What is clear, however, is that nationalist passions are too strong to allow a Russian political leader to adopt a pragmatic immigration policy.

As noted earlier, the reduction in shuttle trade caused the level of Sino-Russian trade, which had reached \$7.8 billion in 1993 (second only to the level of Russia’s trade with Germany), to fall to \$5 billion the following year. By the end of Yeltsin’s term, Sino-Russian trade had stagnated at a level just over \$6 billion. With the recovery of the Russian economy in the first decade of the new century, trade volume rebounded, reaching almost \$12 billion in 2002.<sup>17</sup> Still, whereas China ranked as Russia’s sixth-largest trade partner, Russia was only China’s eighth largest. In the years after 2002, however, trade activity picked up markedly, and it reached a two-way total of \$30 billion by 2006 and a reported \$48.7 billion at the end of the following year.<sup>18</sup> The 2016 total trade turnover climbed to \$66 billion. China was Russia’s largest export market, while Russia had fallen to China’s thirteenth largest.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the Russians were still said to be disappointed at the relatively small share of their manufactured goods (other than arms) that the Chinese were buying (just 1.2 percent of their total exports in 2006), and the Chinese were unhappy that they were not receiving higher volumes of energy imports from Russia.<sup>20</sup> Even so, Russian energy shipments to China boosted the bilateral trade volume to \$88 billion in 2012. But the lopsided trade relationship continued. According to a Russian political analyst, in 2003 industrial goods and equipment represented 30 percent of Russian exports to China. By 2012, this had fallen to 1.5 percent and Russia was purchasing machinery from China.<sup>21</sup> Western sanctions on Russia have given China a stronger advantage in their trade partnership. Beijing has been able to attain its long-sought-after objective of higher volumes of energy imports from Russia. In 2016, Russia edged out Saudi Arabia as China’s largest supplier of crude oil.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, in the same year China surpassed Germany in the volume of exports of machinery to Russia, undercutting Russia’s hopes of more diversified trade.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to discussions with Russia about projects involving natural gas and nuclear power, China’s enormous appetite for energy drove it to seek ways to obtain increased supplies of Russian oil, especially from the largely undeveloped reserves in eastern Siberia near Angarsk. Yukos, the large privatized Russian oil company led by oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, concluded a \$1.1 billion deal in 2003 to ship by rail 2 million metric tons of oil over a three-year period. At the same time, Jiang’s successor Hu Jintao announced that China and Yukos had reached a general agreement to construct in 2005 a pipeline from Angarsk to the northern industrial city of Daqing. However, the president of Transneft, the state-owned pipeline monopoly, cautioned that no such decision had yet been made by Russia. Indeed, it is likely that it was Khodorkovsky’s brazen determination to drive major decisions of energy policy without prior consent of the Kremlin, as much as his widely publicized political activities, which led to his arrest in October 2003, allegedly on tax evasion charges.

In fact, the interest of the Russian government had been piqued by a rival proposal from Japan calling for a pipeline to be built from Angarsk to the port of Nakhodka on the Sea of Japan. Tokyo was reportedly willing not only to invest \$5 billion toward the construction costs of the pipeline, but also to devote another \$2 billion to help finance exploration and exploitation of the eastern Siberian oil reserves. A clear advantage of the routing to Nakhodka was the possible access thereby gained not only to the oil-thirsty markets of Japan and South Korea, but also out into the Pacific and on to the United States.

The Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean pipeline, extending more than 3,000 miles from Taishet in eastern Siberia to Kozmino, near Nakhodka, was constructed in stages from 2006 to 2012. In 2009 Russia and China agreed to build a spur to the pipeline to the northeastern Chinese city of Daqing, the “oil capital” of China; shipments began in January 2011. Russia agreed to ship 15 million tons of oil annually. China’s enormous oil appetite was further sated by a pipeline deal with Kazakhstan, and shipments from Kazakhstan’s Caspian fields to China’s refinery at Dushanzi began in 2006.

Hu Jintao’s final visit to Moscow in his capacity as China’s president failed to yield his coveted contract for the sale of Russian gas to China, with the main disagreement centering on price. The Russians wished to use the European benchmark while the Chinese insisted on lower rates.<sup>24</sup> President Xi Jinping’s March 2013 visit to Moscow appeared to be more successful, with the two sides signing an agreement for gas deliveries to China beginning in 2018 (later extended to 2019), under which Chinese credit would fund the building of a branch line from an already existing Siberian pipeline. In its dealings with China, Moscow, as noted earlier, is dealing with a weak hand. In order to capitalize on Xi Jinping’s signature “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative that seeks to reprise the road and maritime links of Old Silk Routes that connected Asia to Europe, President Putin unveiled his vision of a “Greater Eurasia” in connection with his 2016 speech at the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg announcing an economic “pivot to Asia.”<sup>25</sup>

Beijing launched OBOR with great fanfare in 2013 with promised Chinese investments of billions of dollars in infrastructure development in 68 countries that have signed on as participants. A Belt and Road Forum convened in Beijing in May 2017 provided President Xi with another platform to promote OBOR. Putin’s twin objectives of using OBOR as an anchor for the Russia-China partnership and breathing new life into the EAEU rest on shaky ground. Beijing has successfully parlayed its stronger economic position into signing advantageous deals. A case in point is the Far East gas pipeline deal mentioned above. China was able to get Russia to agree to sell gas at bargain basement prices. At the same time, however, based on an assessment of the political and economic risks of doing business in Russia, it is charging high interest rates on loans to build the pipeline. Moreover, rather than working with the EAEU as an economic bloc, China has struck bilateral deals with its individual members.<sup>26</sup>

The Sino-Russian trade relationship is a prime example of one in which armaments constitute the single most important Russian export, accounting for about \$5 billion in the last half of the 1990s. Combat aircraft have been the chief component of Russian deliveries. Other categories of purchases include naval vessels, S-300 surface-to-air missile complexes, T-72 tanks, Smerch multiple rocket launchers, and the technology for advanced gas centrifuges used in uranium enrichment and for MIRVed missiles.

In 1995, China agreed to pay about \$1.4 billion for the technology and licenses to manufacture the SU-27 at a factory in Shenyang province, scheduled to begin production in 1999. The Russian press reported concerns that China would thereby free itself of the need to purchase aircraft from Moscow in the future, and that if China made minor modifications to the plane's design, it might even become a competitor in the export market. (Indeed, by 1999 China had already climbed to fourth place in global arms sales.)<sup>27</sup> Press reports in 2008 confirmed that these fears had been realized. China was exporting fighter planes (the J-11 B) based largely on the Russian prototypes and manufactured under the SU-27 license. Priced considerably lower than its Russian original, the Chinese airplane was destined primarily for Pakistan and other "Third World" markets. Russian objections to the apparent violations of contract clauses prohibiting re-export of its technology were brushed aside by the Chinese.<sup>28</sup> By 2013, one commentator noted that while earlier Russia had been China's "main weapons supplier," China now had "practically no need of Russian arms, having copied whatever amounts it needs." However, in March of that year, during President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow, China and Russia concluded an arms deal to buy 24 SU-35 fighter jets and four submarines for an undisclosed price.<sup>29</sup>

A significant issue is whether Russia is endangering its own long-term security by selling to its giant neighbor its most advanced weapons and the know-how to produce them. Most Russian analysts appear to believe that China's near-term foreign policy ambitions are directed toward Taiwan and the South China Sea, and that her interests in stability in Central Asia parallel those of Russia. Russian-made equipment may indeed enable Beijing to obtain a regional advantage in force-projection capability in a future Taiwan crisis. Nevertheless, the Kremlin appears to perceive no danger to Russia in such contingencies.<sup>30</sup>

The dissenting view, taking note of the demographic imbalance between Russia and China in the Far East, sees a long-range potential for conflict between the two continental powers. Another trouble spot, China's Xinjiang province, whose population is ethnically kin to that of the neighboring post-Soviet states, is troubled by sporadic anti-Beijing rebellions that could potentially spark a cross-border "liberation war." From the perspective of these observers, even with respect to the nearer term, by closely associating with China and by selling it arms, Russia risks upsetting the delicate military balance in Asia and even being drawn into China's territorial disputes with Taiwan, Vietnam, Japan, and ultimately the United States.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, Yeltsin and Primakov seemed to have calculated that they could keep the relationship with China in check, utilizing it as a way of jointly balancing U.S. influence in Asia, while enlisting Beijing’s cooperation in preserving stability in Central Asia. With the exception of his short-lived “tilt” toward the United States in the period after the September 11, 2001, attack, Vladimir Putin pursued the same strategy. However, if China’s military and economic power continue to grow and her territorial ambitions eventually turn back toward the north and west, the Kremlin may find greater safety in again tilting the triangular balance by further strengthening Russia’s ties with the United States.

Sergei Karaganov, Dean of the School of World Economics and International Affairs at Russia’s National Research University-Higher School of Economics, argued that in the short term, both Russia and China can afford to “downplay the significance of their ties with the United States” because Russia represents China’s “strategic base” in its “escalating rivalry with the United States” and the U.S.-China rivalry affords Russia some “strategic weight.” But he warned that if Russia failed to develop a growth strategy for the Pacific region, Russo-Chinese relations would deteriorate.<sup>32</sup> For now, however, Russia and China continue to see merit in their special bilateral relationship. Highlighting such cooperation, the two countries held joint naval exercises in the Sea of Japan in July 2013. A show of strong military ties between Russia and China is particularly important to the latter in light both of Sino-Japanese tensions over disputed islands in the region and the U.S. “pivot to Asia” that has led the United States “to deploy more of its naval and air assets to the Pacific Ocean.”<sup>33</sup> The Russian-Chinese partnership has assumed greater significance for both countries as a result of two factors:

1. Beijing’s assertive island-building and construction of airfields, ports, and lighthouses on islands in the South China Sea, straining its relationship with the United States;
2. Russia’s role in the Ukrainian conflict and perceived Russian threats to the Baltic states, resulting in its own deteriorating ties with Washington.

Thus, the locations of the September 2016 Russia-China joint “island-seizing” naval exercises in the South China Sea and the July 2017 joint naval drills in the Baltic Sea were clearly intended to send a diplomatic message to the United States and its allies.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the major effort Moscow has made to normalize and strengthen its ties with Beijing, Russia has by no means put all its Far Eastern eggs in the Chinese basket. Following upon Gorbachev’s initiatives, Yeltsin also sought to improve Russia’s relations with two strong allies of the United States—Japan and South Korea. In both cases, the ideological direction of the new Russian regime gave reason to expect that the two leading East Asian capitalist powers, both relatively poor in natural resources, would be eager investors in the development of Russia’s vast Far Eastern mineral reserves. Russia also hoped to play a role in



regional security arrangements that would foster stability and promote expanded trade, but neither Tokyo nor Seoul responded to Moscow's overtures with the degree of enthusiasm for which the Russians had hoped.

One reason that Japan's investment in the Russian Far East in the 1990s was less than anticipated was the continuing absence, more than a half-century after World War II, of a peace treaty between Japan and Russia. The obstacle to the conclusion of a treaty is the persisting dispute over the ownership of several small islands that are claimed by the Russians as the southern Kuriles, and by the Japanese as the Northern Territories. First claimed for the tsar by Russian explorers early in the eighteenth century, the Kurile Islands and neighboring (and much larger) Sakhalin Island were the subject of two Russo-Japanese treaties seeking to delineate a territorial boundary between the two countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first, signed at Shimoda in 1855, provided for them to share Sakhalin, and it divided the Kurile chain, with Russia getting the islands north of Iturup and Japan receiving the four southern islands. The second, signed at St. Petersburg twenty years later, gave all of Sakhalin to Russia, in return for which it renounced its claims to the Kuriles, all of which became Japanese territory.

The next alterations in the Russo-Japanese boundary came as a result of war rather than diplomatic compromise. The Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905, at the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, again partitioned Sakhalin Island, the southern half of which became Japanese. The Yalta Agreement of February 1945 provided for Moscow to enter the war against Japan three months after Germany's surrender, in return for which the southern half of Sakhalin would be returned to the USSR and the Kurile Islands would be handed over. However, the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945, on the basis of which Japan eventually agreed to surrender, did not specifically mention these territories, and the Japanese claim that they cannot be legally transferred without their consent. At the peace conference in San Francisco in 1951, in which the Soviet Union did not participate, Japan renounced "all right, title, and claim to the Kurile Islands and to that portion of Sakhalin and the islands adjacent to it over which Japan acquired sovereignty as a consequence of the Treaty of Portsmouth." Japan contends, however, that there was no reference made to the geographic definition of the Kurile Islands, to which it says the islands of the "Northern Territories" do not belong—a position which the United States also stipulated at San Francisco—and, moreover, that it did not in any event cede sovereignty over any of these territories to the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the islands remained in the possession of the Soviet Union, and not until after the death of Stalin was their future discussed directly between Tokyo and Moscow. Following the Geneva summit, Khrushchev was seeking to lure both the West Germans and the Japanese away from their security ties with the United States, and the Soviets were willing to discuss a territorial transfer as a condition of a peace treaty with Japan. But the peace treaty was never concluded, and in 1960 Khrushchev used the excuse of the revised U.S.-Japanese Security

Treaty to add another condition: the islands would be returned "only on the condition that all foreign troops be withdrawn from Japan."<sup>35</sup>

Contrary to their expectations, the Japanese did not succeed in using the bait of trade and investment to elicit territorial concessions from the proponents of the "new political thinking" in Soviet foreign policy, despite several visits to Tokyo by Shevardnadze and Yakovlev. Indeed, by the time Gorbachev made an official state visit to Tokyo in April 1991, he was politically too weak to be able to deliver such concessions, though he did acknowledge that a territorial dispute existed.

The dust from the August 1991 coup attempt had barely settled when the Japanese approached the Russian foreign ministry to propose, unsuccessfully, that Yeltsin state his readiness to be guided in a territorial settlement by the 1855 Shimodo Treaty.<sup>36</sup> After the demise of the USSR, Japan continued to show its eagerness to proceed with negotiations, urging an early visit to Tokyo by Yeltsin, but the Russians were in less of a hurry. In May, however, Yeltsin reconfirmed his commitment to a resolution of the territorial problem, with a peace treaty to be concluded as early as 1993, and he indicated that all Russian military units on the disputed islands, with the exception of border troops, would be withdrawn.

By this time Yeltsin's foreign policy had become a matter of sharp internal contention in Russia, with critics upset about its excessive softness and unseemly eagerness to please the West. With Yeltsin now scheduled to fly to Tokyo in September, the government's stance on the territorial issue with Japan became a matter of angry and visible debate. The government, sharply divided, refused to state a position prior to Yeltsin's visit. A memorandum from the General Staff of the Russian armed forces to the parliament, refuting the notion that the islands were of little importance, pointed out that the most useful straits for passage to the Pacific from Vladivostok and the Sea of Okhotsk, where much of the Russian submarine fleet is based, lie north of the disputed islands. If the southern Kuriles were in Japanese hands, it was argued, they could be turned into a forward military post facing the Russian coastline, giving a significant advantage to the "enemy" in the event of a conflict.<sup>37</sup> Another deputy, giving voice to the "domino theory" that undoubtedly lay behind the concerns of many, warned that if Russia were to make a concession, "others who lay claim to Russian lands, of whom there are quite a few, will immediately pounce on us."

In a stunning reversal, Russia announced on September 10 that Yeltsin's trip to Tokyo, scheduled to begin in four days, had been canceled by the president. The strength of the opponents of territorial concessions must have been truly overwhelming, causing a Russian government that was desperate for financial assistance to turn down what Kozyrev later claimed was a Japanese offer of \$28 billion for the southern Kuriles.<sup>38</sup>

The failure to agree on the territorial basis for a peace treaty undoubtedly retarded the development of Russo-Japanese relations in other spheres. Trade between Moscow and Tokyo, which had averaged \$5.5 billion a year prior to

1991, fell to \$4.8 billion in 1991 and \$3.1 billion in 1992. Angry quarrels erupted in 1993 over the Russian practice of dumping nuclear waste in the Sea of Japan, and in 1994 over incidents in which Russian border guards fired on Japanese fishing vessels that had wandered into waters off the southern Kuriles.

Contradictory signals on the territorial issue continued to emanate from Russia, to the evident frustration of the Japanese. President Yeltsin finally made his state visit to Tokyo in October 1993, but there were few practical results. The president did announce in Tokyo that Russia at an unspecified future time would withdraw military units from the southern Kuriles, with the exception of border troops, but the effect of this was negated the following year by denials from General Grachev that any Russian troops would be leaving the Kuriles.

Further progress was made when Yeltsin hosted Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto for an informal "weekend without neckties" in November 1997 in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk. The two leaders pledged their "maximum efforts" to conclude a peace treaty by 2000, based on the 1993 Tokyo Declaration in which Yeltsin had acknowledged the existence of a territorial dispute over the southern Kuriles. Despite the lingering ambiguities, the "sauna summit" was said by Yeltsin to have helped break the ice and overcome mutual distrust. The two sides discussed initiatives to increase Japanese investment and trade, including joint development of Siberian petroleum reserves and modernization of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Further confirmation that Japan had abandoned its earlier linkage between a territorial solution and economic cooperation came during the visit to Moscow of Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in November 1998, when Japan announced an \$800 million loan to assist Russia's battered economy. Yeltsin and Obuchi agreed to set up subcommissions to discuss territorial demarcation and joint economic activity in the southern Kuriles. A subsequent press report, quoting Japanese sources, claimed that the Russians had offered to create a tax-free zone in the territory, administered jointly but under continued Russian sovereignty. As the Russian journalist put it, "To each side it is much more important to officially own the wretched, ruined islands, while each is prepared to magnanimously let the other deal with the islands' economic development."<sup>39</sup>

Relations improved markedly at the beginning of 2003, with the visit of Prime Minister Yochiro Koizumi to Moscow and the Russian Far East, during which he and Putin agreed to an "action plan" calling for an accelerated effort to resolve the territorial dispute. Later in the same year, they agreed to appoint a "council of elders" to discuss the dispute and make recommendations. Not coincidentally, in this improved climate Japanese trade and investment in Russia also increased, with bilateral trade increasing by 25 percent to \$5.5 billion, and Japanese foreign direct investment doubling in an eighteen-month period to \$1 billion, most notably as a result of Japanese involvement in development of gas fields on Sakhalin. Although the increase in economic activity between Russia and Japan was significant, it is worth noting that even this increased level of trade was dwarfed by

the \$60 billion in annual trade between Tokyo and Seoul and the \$134 billion between Japan and China.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the Japanese continued to point out that the full potential of bilateral economic relations with Russia would be achieved only with the signing of a peace treaty between the two states.

When Putin visited Tokyo in November 2005—his first trip to Japan in five years—Russo-Japanese trade still languished at a level of \$10 billion, and Japanese investment accounted for only 1 percent of total foreign investment in Russia. In a demonstrative attempt to change this picture, Putin arrived in Japan with 100 Russian business leaders in tow, and the major news from his visit was the signing of agreements promising Japanese financing for the construction of the long-discussed oil pipeline projected to transport 1.6 billion barrels of oil a day from Siberian fields near Angarsk to the Sea of Japan.<sup>41</sup>

The steady improvement in Russo-Japanese relations took a nosedive with President Medvedev’s unprecedented November 2010 visit to the southern Kuriles—the first ever by any Soviet or Russian leader. Given Japan’s sensitivity on this issue, its leader took it as a major affront, temporarily recalling Tokyo’s ambassador to Russia.<sup>42</sup> In the wake of the diplomatic imbroglio that followed, Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan came under severe criticism for failing to prevent the visit. In Russia, a *Vedomosti* editorial opined that while it made economic sense for Russia to sell the southern Kuriles for cash or for Japanese investment, leaders on both sides had much to gain from the status quo because it allowed them to use nationalist sentiment for political purposes.<sup>43</sup>

Relations showed signs of improvement some months after Putin again assumed the presidency. At the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Economic Council (APEC) conference in Vladivostok in September 2012, Putin announced that Japan and Russia had signed a memorandum to build a \$7 billion liquefied natural gas plant in Vladivostok with the capacity to produce 10 million tons of gas annually and with output scheduled to reach full capacity before the end of 2016. Japan was slated to receive 70 percent of the output while South Korea would get 30 percent.<sup>44</sup> In April 2013, President Putin received Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Kremlin. There had been no such summit for almost ten years. Both expressed regret over the “abnormal” situation between their two countries and called for an intensification of efforts toward a peace treaty. Japan’s hopes for a favorable settlement of the Kuriles dispute are unlikely soon to be fulfilled. With his Crimea annexation, Putin has extolled his role as a “gatherer of Russian lands” and has no urgent pressures to settle this contested issue.<sup>45</sup> The December 2016 summit between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Putin concluded with economic agreements, including one calling for talks on joint economic activities on the four islands, which began in March 2017.<sup>46</sup> Significantly, however, there was no progress toward a settlement on the Kuriles. At the end of the summit, President Putin stated, “We should build up the joint economic mechanism that the prime minister has proposed. It’s important to move forward to the conclusion of a peace treaty based on this foundation.”<sup>47</sup>

In the Russia-Japan relationship, the concessions have generally come from Japan. At the G-7 summit in December 2016, Abe refrained from joining his Western counterparts in condemning Russia's attacks in Syria and in calling for an immediate cease-fire so as not to jeopardize his upcoming April meeting with Putin.<sup>48</sup> Responding to Putin's call for a resumption of bilateral talks on North Korea, the Russian foreign and defense ministers met with their Japanese counterparts in March 2017—their first ministerial-level talks on security matters since the Crimean annexation.<sup>49</sup> Ahead of Abe's April visit to Moscow, Deputy Head of Gazprom Aleksandr Medvedev threw cold water on Japanese hopes for Russian gas supplies, dimming prospects for the building of a proposed gas pipeline linking Russia and Japan, stating uncertainty over the "demand situation in Japan . . . for the next 15, 20, 25 years."<sup>50</sup> And, predictably, the April 2017 Moscow summit between Abe and Putin did not yield any substantive progress on the Kuriles.<sup>51</sup>

Whenever they discuss the regional security situation, Russia and Japan undoubtedly voice their mutual concern over the instability on the Korean peninsula. In the waning months of the Cold War, Gorbachev had initiated a balance in Moscow's relations with the two Koreas. In 1988 he allowed Soviet participation in the Seoul Olympics and opened trade relations with South Korea. Two years later Gorbachev realized his hopes for a financial benefit from his initiative; the establishment of diplomatic relations was soon followed by a lavish South Korean credit of \$3 billion to Moscow. An exchange of state visits between Gorbachev and President Roh Tae Woo fanned Soviet expectations for additional South Korean investment, but also further enraged the North Korean regime, which had been heavily dependent on Soviet military and economic aid. In pursuit of greater self-reliance, Pyongyang stepped up its program to develop nuclear capabilities.

Yeltsin and Kozyrev abandoned any pretense of even-handedness in Russia's relations on the Korean peninsula. When the foreign minister traveled to Seoul in March 1992, the South Koreans welcomed Kozyrev's declaration that relations were moving from normalization to "full-fledged cooperation," and they acceded to his request to reinstate credits frozen after the collapse of the USSR. Announcing that Russia had stopped selling offensive weapons to the North, Kozyrev said that not only would Russia not cooperate in the further development of Pyongyang's nuclear program, but also that it supported the complete denuclearization of the peninsula. In a meeting with the South Korean foreign minister in June, Yeltsin declared that the 1961 Soviet-North Korean security treaty "has lost its effectiveness and exists in name only." Later in the year, Russia announced that it had prevented sixty-four of its scientists from leaving for North Korea to assist with the latter's missile program.

Yeltsin's first Far Eastern trip as head of state, in November 1992, was made not to Beijing or Tokyo but to Seoul, where he signed a treaty on the basic principles of Russian-South Korean relations and issued a public apology for the 1983 downing of Korean Airlines flight 007. Yeltsin was disappointed when these

symbolic acts failed to elicit any additional loans from South Korea. In retrospect, it probably dawned on the Russians that by virtually abandoning their position of influence in Pyongyang, they had made themselves less valuable to Seoul and less necessary as a participant in future security arrangements in Northeast Asia. They set about trying to remedy this situation early in 1993, with a trip to North Korea by Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Kunadze. Both sides expressed interest in preserving "normal good-neighborly relations," despite the current ideological differences, but the results of the meeting conveyed little sense of neighborliness. Trade between the two had fallen 50 percent in 1992, to 1981 levels, and North Korea owed Moscow \$3 billion. However, there was little chance that economically strapped North Korea could pay this down, given Russia's insistence that future trade, including spare parts for Soviet-built weapons, must be on a purely commercial basis.

A sharp display of Russia's seeming loss of relevance on security matters on the peninsula came in October 1994, when it was announced that the United States and North Korea had agreed on a new nuclear program for Pyongyang under which North Korea would freeze its nuclear development, dismantle its graphite-moderated reactors, and replace them with light-water reactors, which were not capable of producing weapons-grade fuel. It was eventually agreed that these would be supplied by an international consortium, in which Russia was pointedly not invited to participate. Moscow's sense of exclusion from discussions of Korean security was later magnified when Washington ignored Russian suggestions for a broader conference and instead promoted quadrilateral talks among the two Koreas, China, and the United States. As one journalist put it, Moscow was being "gently pushed out" of real participation in the Korean peninsula, and—as it now did in the Middle East—would play "only the role of honored guest."<sup>52</sup>

The succession struggle that followed the death of longtime leader Kim Il Sung in July 1994 coincided with a severe economic crisis that brought widespread famine to the reclusive country. Tensions on the Korean peninsula rose as some observers predicted that the heavily armed Pyongyang regime might lash out militarily at the South in a final attempt at forcible unification of the country. In this context, it was understandable that Russia was reluctant to associate too closely with its former client state. In reaction to Moscow's tilt toward South Korea, North Korea angrily described Moscow's arms sales to Seoul as a criminal act that showed that "Russia itself is all but in the camp of forces hostile to the DPRK." If Russia continued along this road, Pyongyang warned, "we will have to settle scores with it."<sup>53</sup> However, South Korea's stunning economic collapse at the close of 1997 precluded further purchases by Seoul from the Russian arms industry.

North Korea reminded the world of its potential for threatening the security of its region in 1998, when a three-stage rocket, the Taepo-Dong I, allegedly carrying a space satellite, crash-landed in the seas near Japan. The potential range

of this rocket astonished the Americans, causing the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to revise forward its estimate of the date when North Korea would be capable of mounting a missile attack on the United States. The changed situation made rebuilding influence in Pyongyang a higher priority for Russia, and the effort to do this made notable progress in February 2000, when Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov visited North Korea to sign a friendship treaty, replacing the expired mutual assistance treaty. Its terms obligated each party not to join in actions with a third party that would compromise the sovereignty or territorial integrity of the other.

Even more dramatic was the first-ever visit to North Korea by a leader from Moscow—a surprise trip by Vladimir Putin on July 19, 2000. Proceeding to a meeting of the leaders of the G-8 on Okinawa, Putin made the startling announcement that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il had agreed to abandon his missile program—the threat most publicly mentioned by Washington as a justification for its National Missile Defense—in return for international assistance in launching North Korean space satellites. While it was not clear whether this would entail sharing missile technology with Pyongyang, the effect was to blunt the American case for missile defense. The magnitude of Putin's triumph shrank considerably when the North Koreans let it be known that Kim was only joking with the Russian leader—a revelation that Moscow greeted with frosty denials. Nevertheless, Putin persisted in seeking to demonstrate that the alleged missile threat from North Korea was a U.S.-authored concoction designed to justify its National Missile Defense program.

Russia was clearly using Kim's visits to Moscow in 2001 and 2002 to rebuild its influence with North Korea, thereby winning for itself a place at the table for the discussions of regional security in Northeast Asia. While stressing that they had yet to see evidence that North Korea had restarted a nuclear weapons program, the Russians expressed frustration with the "ambiguity" of Pyongyang's statements on the matter. When North Korea finally admitted in the fall of 2002 that it had indeed restarted its program and then withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) a few months later, Russia's level of concern increased—though not yet to the level displayed by the United States. While they urged North Korea to reverse its decision to withdraw from the NPT, Russian diplomats at the same time expressed their understanding of Kim's desire to be reassured by means of a security guarantee, and they eventually agreed, in the context of the six-power talks brokered by the Chinese in 2003, to be a party to a multilateral security guarantee. Despite initial opposition from the United States, Russia had parlayed its influence with North Korea into a role of full participant in the security talks. While Moscow worked to nudge Kim Jong Il toward concessions in his nuclear ambitions, it also was increasingly concerned that any use of force in the region—including the actual use of nuclear weapons—would be severely destabilizing to the area and an enormous threat to the security of its Far Eastern territories.<sup>54</sup>

The conduct of negotiations in the six-party framework (China, Russia, Japan, South and North Korea, and the United States) proceeded in fits and starts,

interrupted by the announcement by North Korea (February 2005) that it did indeed possess nuclear weapons, then by the North's testing of more long-range missiles (July 2006), and finally (October 2006) by the announcement that a nuclear weapon had been tested. Each of these developments was condemned by the Russians, as well as by the other parties to the talks. But not until the actual weapons test did Russia and China agree in the UN Security Council to the application of economic sanctions on Pyongyang, though they successfully resisted the effort by the Americans to frame the sanctions in the context of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which would have opened the possibility of the ultimate use of military force to enforce the Security Council's will. Moscow and Beijing argued that tougher sanctions would have been counterproductive, further isolating North Korea and inflicting grave harm upon its people rather than upon its regime.<sup>55</sup>

Ultimately, as Moscow acknowledged, it was increased Chinese pressure on North Korea that produced an apparent breakthrough in the negotiations. In February 2007 North Korea agreed to close its main reactor at Yongbyon in exchange for food and fuel aid from the other parties. A second-stage agreement in October of that year elicited a promise from the North to declare and close all of its nuclear weapons facilities. Although Russia and its partners hailed these agreements, they continued to express concern about the slow pace of implementation and the difficulties of verifying full compliance. Subsequent events were to justify their concerns as the saga of intermittent North Korean intransigence over the nuclear problem has shown no signs of abating.

After President Obama took office, North Korea conducted a series of missile tests followed by an underground nuclear test in May 2009. The United States responded by pushing for tougher UN sanctions. North Korea's actions also elicited strong criticism from Russia. Moscow uncharacteristically stated that it was considering the use of surface-to-air missiles to protect Russian territory from debris resulting from failed North Korean missile launches.<sup>56</sup> The June 2009 sanctions were supported by Russia and China, who were becoming frustrated with North Korean fecklessness. As a result, North Korea suspended participation in the six-party talks. Throughout the rest of 2009, North Korea periodically called for bilateral talks with the United States even as it continued to issue threats against South Korea.

Twice in 2011, in bilateral talks with the United States in July and October, North Korea stubbornly insisted that it would return to the six-party talks only in the absence of any preconditions, while South Korea and the United States were just as insistent that the North demonstrate a clear commitment to abandoning its nuclear program before talks could resume. In August 2011, Kim Jong Il made his first trip to Moscow since 2002, as part of a wider diplomatic effort in which he had visited China in May to discuss resumption of dialogue about ending his nuclear program. While in Moscow, after years of disinterest in a proposal to build a gas pipeline from Russia to South Korea through North Korea that might



have earned North Korea \$500 million annually in transit fees, Kim expressed interest in the proposal.<sup>57</sup> Kim Jong Un took over the reins of leadership following the death of his father Kim Jong Il in December 2011. Shortly after his accession, he agreed to freeze the nuclear program in return for food aid from the United States, raising hopes for the resumption of multilateral talks.

Following the earlier pattern, these hopes were soon dashed as North Korea ratcheted up tensions with a failed missile launch in April 2012, followed by another test launch—this time of a long-range rocket in December 2012—which brought another round of UN-imposed sanctions on North Korea. In response, Kim renewed threats against the United States and conducted a third nuclear test in February 2013. This move occasioned harsh international condemnation, including from Russia and China. In March, China, significantly, joined the United States in initiating a further tightening of UN sanctions. North Korea, in turn, stated that it was nullifying all non-aggression agreements with South Korea, warned that it was on the brink of war with South Korea (April), and launched another test series of short-range missiles. In May, North Korea seized a Chinese fishing boat and its crew, releasing them after a few days.

An angry President Xi Jinping bluntly called for a denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. At a summit meeting in Beijing in June 2013, the leaders of China and South Korea announced their joint intention to work toward restarting the six-party talks.<sup>58</sup> Soon after, North Korea was signaling its interest in dialogue while calling on the United States to dismantle its military command in South Korea.<sup>59</sup> But given the failure of past North Korean overtures, prospects for any breakthrough remain dim.<sup>60</sup>

Russia's clout with North Korea is not strong enough for Moscow to be a successful powerbroker, although Sergei Lavrov did suggest to the U.S. in December 2017 that Russia would assist in opening direct talks between Washington and Pyongyang. The escalation in tensions between North Korea and the U.S. and its allies over successive missile launches, despite warnings against such incendiary moves, has opened the space for improved ties between Russia and North Korea. Immediately following the Hwasong-14 ICBM test launches on July 4 and 28, 2017, the United States responded by flying two B-1B bombers over South Korea, alongside Japanese and South Korean fighter jets in a diplomatic show of force and allied unity. At the same time, China's patience with Pyongyang over its nuclear program has also worn thin. Kim Jong Un has tried to escape isolation by reaching out to Russia. While their bilateral relationship continues to be rather shallow, there has been an uptick in business and transport links.<sup>61</sup> Even though Chinese exports of crude oil and other products dwarf the volume of Russian oil exports to North Korea, Moscow, significantly, began to export jet fuel to Pyongyang when China stopped its exports. Russia is also an important source of foreign exchange as a result of remittances of North Korean citizens who work in Vladivostok and other cities in Russia's Far East. These factors give Russia some level of influence in North Korea.

Russia's relations with South Korea are cordial and trade has registered an upswing, rising to \$25 million in 2012, but Russia's ambassador to South Korea regretfully acknowledged that Russia's long-sought efforts to implement trilateral projects involving Russia and the two Koreas—such as the connection of the Trans-Siberian with the Trans-Korean Railway, gas pipeline construction, and installation of transmission lines from Russia to South Korea through North Korea—were languishing due to the unpredictable nature of North Korea's leadership. In response to persistent North Korean provocations, South Korea and Russia, in 2016, suspended a cooperative shipping arrangement that brought coal from Russia to South Korea through a transit point in North Korea.<sup>62</sup> For the time being such projects are unlikely to resume. North Korea's July 2017 missile test, which is widely believed to have a range long enough to strike the U.S. west coast, has reignited global concerns over Pyongyang's nuclear program.<sup>63</sup> Such concerns are amplified in neighboring South Korea.

Moscow and Seoul are attempting to find avenues for bilateral cooperation that will increase South Korea's trade and investment footprint in Russia.<sup>64</sup> As with Japan, Russia's ties with South Korea are refracted through the prism of Seoul's security alliance with the United States. Moscow has rhetorically also supported China in its concerns over the U.S. deployment in South Korea of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system, which is targeted against North Korea, but is assessed by Beijing as a threat to its interests.<sup>65</sup> The U.S.-South Korea security nexus serves as an impediment to strong Russia-South Korea ties, especially as Russia's relationship with the United States has become increasingly fraught.

### **Russia and the Middle East**

The southward expansion of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought it into frequent conflict with the Ottoman Empire and with Persia, as well as with the competing empires of Britain and France. During the Soviet period, Lenin, Stalin, and their successors engaged in active (and occasionally expansionist) diplomacy in the region, as Moscow competed for territory and influence with the countries of the Middle East and with Western “imperialism.” Although, after the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Federation now finds itself geographically separated from the Middle East by the buffer states of the Caucasus and Central Asia, Moscow's vital interests in these former Soviet republics and the vast energy reserves they contain—second only to those in the Middle East itself—have made the area a high priority for Russian foreign policy.

Accordingly, of highest concern in the region are Turkey and Iran—the two states that share a border with the states of the former Soviet Union and were thus initially seen as Russia's potential competitors there. Russia's policies toward them have varied, in part as a result of the shifting political winds in Moscow,

with Westernizers and nationalists competing over the direction of foreign policy. There was also variability in Moscow's perception of the threat that Ankara or Tehran were seeking to extend pan-Turkic or Islamic-fundamentalist influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia at Russia's expense. In both cases, Russian policy swung back and forth from nervous rivalry to a relationship so cooperative that it has included the sale of arms.

Although Turkey is a member of NATO and was the recipient of some rather brutal threats and territorial demands from Stalin, its relations with the post-Stalinist regimes in Moscow were relatively cooperative. In the wake of the breakup of the USSR, Turkey was widely viewed in the West as a secular, democratic, and market-oriented Islamic state—a potential model for the development of the newly independent Islamic states of the former Soviet Union, much of the population of which is ethnically and linguistically related to the Turks.

The broader area of concern about Turkish influence first surfaced in October 1992, when the leaders of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan met with the Turkish head of state in Ankara for discussions of a "Turkic Common Market" featuring cooperation in the economic and security realms. Fears of a burgeoning rivalry for influence were revived when the five Central Asian republics met in May 1993 to form the Central Asian Regional Union, which was encouraged by Turkey, amid talk that their energy resources would be directed away from Russia and through Azerbaijan and Turkey. The second summit of the Turkic-language states in Istanbul in October 1994 occasioned a statement by a Russian foreign ministry spokesman on the "undesirability of a segregation of the Turkic-language countries along national and ethnic lines." In contrast, by the time of the third summit, held in Bishkek in August 1995, there was no official reaction from Moscow. By this time, one journalist noted, it had become evident that the leaders of the former Soviet republics were in no hurry to replace Moscow's patronage with Ankara's, and he wryly observed that three of the six heads of state in attendance spoke not in their native languages, but in Russian.<sup>66</sup>

Moscow's reduced level of anxiety probably resulted from the parallel development of its own economic and security relations with Turkey. In March 1993 the Russians announced a \$75 million sale of helicopters and armored personnel carriers to Turkey's national police force, with most of the proceeds to be applied toward Russia's debt. This first-ever Russian arms sale to a NATO member nation was followed in May by the first visit to Turkey by a Russian defense chief in two centuries. In December 1995, a package of economic agreements was signed that included a \$350 million Turkish credit and a restructuring of the Russian debt. The two sides noted that their trade turnover in 1995 had reached \$3 billion, and that Turkish firms had concluded \$5 billion in contracts for construction of facilities in Russia—clear signs that Turkey had become one of Russia's leading trade and investment partners.

In December 1997, Chernomyrdin paid a visit to Turkey—the first ever by a Russian prime minister—to celebrate the announcement of a twenty-five-year



Russo-Turkish relations were again disturbed in 2004, when Russia unexpectedly vetoed a U.S. and British-sponsored UN Security Council resolution calling for a guarantee of the security of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots if they voted to accept a UN-sponsored plan to unify the island. The Greek Cypriot government, backed by Greece, opposed the UN plan, and Russia's veto was seen as a pro-Greek move, unfriendly to Turkey. (Only the Turkish minority voted in favor of the unification referendum, and on May 1 the Greek part of Cyprus alone joined the EU.) Russia evidently calculated that its strong economic ties to Cyprus, as well as its arms sales relationships with Greece, outweighed the harm that its veto would do to its relationship with Turkey.<sup>67</sup>

When Putin paid the first modern-era visit by a top Soviet or Russian leader to Turkey in December 2004, he characterized that relationship as one of the rare ones for Russia in which the level of political dialogue lagged behind the level of economic dealings, instead of the other way around. He noted that there were no ideological disagreements between the two countries, and he expressed delight at the exercise of independence that Turkey had demonstrated when it had refused to allow U.S. forces transit rights during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Still, the political results of the historic visit remained sparse; a few agreements, primarily on cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts, were signed.<sup>68</sup>

When Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Moscow a month later, he had 600 Turkish businessmen in tow—again highlighting the economic dimension of the relationship. Although the volume of trade in 2004 had reached \$11 billion, the Turks were displeased at its imbalance, stemming mainly from the prominence of Russian natural gas sales.<sup>69</sup> And as Gazprom worked in subsequent years to develop alternative routes for deliveries of natural gas to European markets, the Turks complained at the prospect of lower transit fees. Over time, however, the two countries attempted to work together on energy issues.

Turkey's long-standing desire to limit Mediterranean-bound oil tanker traffic from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits has stimulated several competing proposals for pipelines in this region. In December 2007, Russia, Bulgaria, and Greece signed an agreement to set up a joint company to develop the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline, allowing Russia the prospect of developing an alternative route through Greece.<sup>70</sup> But because of financial concerns, this project was called off by Bulgaria in the spring of 2013 and abandoned by Russia in 2014.

During Prime Minister Erdoğan's tenth visit to Moscow in January 2010, the two sides discussed construction of the South Stream natural gas pipeline and of a nuclear power plant in Turkey, as well as on easing travel restrictions for tourists. Erdoğan and Prime Minister Putin set the ambitious goal of increasing the bilateral volume of trade to \$100 billion over two years. The trade turnover, which was \$33.8 billion in 2008, had dropped to \$15.3 billion under the impact of the global economic crisis and hopes for its ambitious upward trajectory rested

on the possible success of large-scale energy projects. Other than the South Stream gas pipeline project, which envisages connecting Russian and Central Asian sources to Europe through the Black Sea, the two sides also discussed the Samsun-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which would link Turkey's Black Sea and Italy's Mediterranean Sea ports. Work on this pipeline began in 2007, but was delayed indefinitely in the spring of 2013 because of excessive costs and later cancelled.<sup>71</sup> Russia scrapped the South Stream project in late 2014 in response to pressure from the EU Commission on Bulgaria. The Commission held that the intergovernmental agreement on South Stream between Russia and Bulgaria violated EU law.<sup>72</sup> Forced to shelve South Stream, Russia initiated the Turk Stream project to transport Russian gas under the Black Sea directly to Turkey and thence perhaps to other points in Europe.<sup>73</sup>

However, the vagaries of Russia-Turkey relations have affected the fate of Turk Stream. In late November 2015, when Russian-Turkish relations took a nosedive after the Turkish downing of a Russian fighter jet near the Turkey-Syria border, Moscow imposed economic sanctions on Turkey and the Turk Stream project was suspended. Following the failure of the attempted coup in Turkey in July 2016 and Western condemnation of the increasingly authoritarian direction hewed by President Erdoğan, Turkey has reached out to Russia. The improvement in relations has revived discussion on Turk Stream.<sup>74</sup> Construction of the Russian end of the pipeline began in May 2017.<sup>75</sup> According to Russian News Agency TASS, Europe will be the destination of approximately half of Turk Stream's projected capacity of 1.11 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.<sup>76</sup>

In the latter half of the 2000s, Turkey's role in the Caucasus re-emerged as a matter of concern for Azerbaijan, rather than for Russia, when Turkey and Armenia began to consider the possibility of normalizing relations. A few months after Prime Minister Erdoğan reassured Azerbaijan's Aliyev in Baku in May 2009 that Turkey would not open the border with Armenia, insisting that “until the [Armenian] occupation ends, the doors will not be opened,” the foreign ministers of Armenia and Turkey signed protocols in Zurich in October on normalizing relations between the two countries.<sup>77</sup> However, prospects for ratification appeared dim. Murat Mercan, chairman of the Turkish parliament's committee on foreign relations, said in January 2010 that the “Swiss protocols” would not be considered until the “de-occupation” of Azerbaijani territories.<sup>78</sup>

In June 2012, Erdoğan had personally approved a deal to sell Turkish DenizBank to Russia's Sberbank for \$3.5 billion. A month later, during a visit to Moscow in July, Russian-Turkish relations appeared to be on an upswing. Erdoğan and Putin agreed on a contract worth \$20 billion to have Russia build Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu, with Russia holding a controlling stake in the Turkish company operating the station. These overtures, according to Russian experts, were designed to elicit Russia's support for Turkey's favored Syrian option—the exit of Bashar al-Assad and his replacement by a transitional government led by Syrian Vice President Farouk al-Sharaa, a Sunni Muslim. Putin had agreed

to give the idea some thought.<sup>79</sup> Concerned with the increasing influence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party in the Kurdish districts of Syria, Erdoğan had, over time, moved closer to the U.S. position on Syria. As the stances of Russia and Turkey on Syria diverged, their bilateral relations became increasingly strained. In a policy speech on September 30, 2012, Erdoğan, naming Russia, lashed out at countries that "history" would not "forgive" for supporting the "bloody Syrian regime."<sup>80</sup>

Turkish-Russian ties are also important to Turkey, as Russia is Turkey's largest trading partner. Turkey relies on Russia for its energy and enjoys the economic benefit flowing from 4 million Russian tourists annually. In addition, there are many Turkish businesses in the areas of construction, retail, and manufacturing in Russia. All of this makes Turkey unlikely to oppose Russia by contemplating unilateral military action in Syria.<sup>81</sup> Another reason for Erdoğan to maintain cordial ties with Russia is Moscow's unwillingness to castigate him in the face of anti-government protests that broke out in Ankara and Istanbul in June 2013. Thus, while the objectives of Russia and Turkey were not likely to coincide neatly, they had enough interests in common to avoid a serious rupture in their relationship. However, Putin's desire for an expanding Russian role in Syria brought the two countries on a collision course. Ironically, this occurred just as Erdoğan's authoritarian responses in the face of rising civil unrest in Turkey were increasing tensions with the EU and the United States, seemingly providing the grist for a limited Ankara-Moscow rapprochement, despite the underlying complication of the two states' opposing positions on the political viability of President Assad.

Rather, Turkey's downing in November 2015 of a Russian SU-24 bomber that allegedly violated Turkish airspace led to a temporary rupture in ties between the two countries. Putin retaliated by cutting off trade in limited but vital areas and permitted the PYD (Kurdish Democratic Party) and YPG (Kurdish People's Protection Units) to open an office in Moscow.<sup>82</sup> These pressures, and the isolation stemming from Western condemnation of his increasingly anti-democratic moves, prompted Erdoğan to mend fences with Russia. Turkey was also seeing its influence in Syria waning as the rebel groups it supported were hit hard by the U.S.-backed YPG and by the Syrian military supported by Russia.<sup>83</sup> By mid-2017, with ISIS in retreat, Turkey, along with Iran, joined Russia in two rounds of Syrian peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan.<sup>84</sup> In June the two countries announced an agreement "to allow international forces into areas of respective influence in Syria," with Turkey overseeing Idlib and Russia and Iran responsible for the area around Damascus.<sup>85</sup> In a further concession to Russia, Turkey moved away from calls for Assad's removal as a precondition for talks on Syria. At the end of December 2017 the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia extended further, as Ankara announced—to the consternation of its NATO allies—that it was concluding a deal for \$2.5 billion to purchase four batteries of the Russian S-400 anti-missile defense system.<sup>86</sup>

The Soviet Union's relations with Iran during the 1980s were not nearly as cordial as those with Turkey. The ideological tensions that accompanied Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic revolution have largely disappeared, given Gorbachev's decision to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the relative moderation of Iran's revolutionary policies after the ayatollah's death, and the subsequent fall of communism and breakup of the USSR, which nominally removed the yoke of communism from the practice of the Islamic religion there. Initial concerns that Iran would promote "Islamic fundamentalism" among the Muslim minority in Russia or in the buffer zone that has been created between the two countries were clearly overblown. With the exception of the Azerbaijanis, most Muslims in the former Soviet Union do not adhere to the Shiite branch of Islam that predominates in Iran. More to the point, Tehran has seemed willing to conduct its relations in ways that do not threaten the interests of Moscow.

The improvement in relations began during Gorbachev's last years in power. A state visit by President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to Moscow in June 1989 was the occasion for signing several agreements, including an important arms deal, under which the Soviets obtained badly needed hard currency for MiG-29 and SU-24 aircraft, needed by Iran to replace heavy losses during the long Iran-Iraq War. The U.S. government put heavy pressure on the new Yeltsin government to cancel military deliveries to Iran. When the Yeltsin government followed the American lead, not only was it exposing itself to further ridicule from internal opponents, but also it was ignoring the distinctive security situation Moscow faced. At least at that time, Iran seemed concerned that conflicts within the former Soviet states might spill onto its own territory; it thus appeared to share Russia's desire for good-neighborly cooperation in the interests of stabilizing the region. As long as Iran behaved responsibly in Russia's backyard, Moscow saw no reason to accede to U.S. pressure to cut off arms sales.

Although its primary emphasis was on promoting "cultural Islam" rather than overt political interference in the former Soviet republics, Iran's presence was active enough to keep Moscow on edge. In September 1993, the foreign ministry issued a statement of concern about reports that Iranian troops had crossed into Azerbaijan, and it urged Iran to show restraint in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The following month, a nine-day trip by Rafsanjani to Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan stimulated some alarm in the Russian foreign ministry.

These concerns were not sufficient, however, to deter Russia from concluding a major deal to assist in the development of Iran's nuclear program. In January 1995, the Russian Ministry of Atomic Power and the Nuclear Industry announced a \$1 billion contract—reportedly won despite heavy competition from Western firms—to complete a reactor at Bushehr, the construction of which had been halted by West Germany in 1979. The United States immediately objected, claiming that the reactor would help Iran to build a nuclear weapon, but the Russian ministry said that the project complied with the NPT and would be monitored by



the International Atomic Energy Agency. The U.S. Congress prepared legislation that would cut off aid to Russia if the deal went through. A face-saving compromise was announced in May at the Clinton-Yeltsin summit. Gas centrifuges for enriching uranium—supposedly included in the contract without the knowledge of the Kremlin or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—would be eliminated from the deal, and provisions for training Iranian nuclear physicists in Russia also would be dropped, cutting the value of the deal in half. The other terms of the contract would be analyzed by the Gore-Chernomyrdin commission to verify their conformity with the NPT.<sup>87</sup> The contract for the Bushehr reactor was left in place, but the commission did conclude a secret agreement that Russia would sell no more arms to Iran. Existing sales contracts would be honored, but all shipments would be concluded by the end of 1999.

In his first year in office, Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov continued the Russian effort to strengthen ties with Iran. Visiting Tehran in December 1996, he declared that relations between the two were “developing along an ascending curve,” in part because of Iran’s assistance in arranging a cease-fire in Tajikistan. For his part, Primakov’s Iranian counterpart told a Russian journalist that Russian-Iranian relations were the best they had been in 200 years, causing the journalist to conclude that Moscow’s way of working with Iran “i.e., trying to bring its behavior into conformity with generally recognized international norms—can be more effective than the ultimatum-based methods of the Americans.”<sup>88</sup> Signs of cooperation on regional problems continued into 1997, as the two countries collaborated on their policies toward the Taliban in Afghanistan, and as Russia sought Iran’s help in pressuring Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to cooperate with Moscow in the exploitation of the considerable petroleum reserves in the Caspian Sea. In July 1998, in an agreement with Kazakhstan, Moscow abandoned its common front with Iran and adopted a different standard for division of Caspian oil resources. Whether the Russian-Iranian relationship could remain relatively trouble-free was in question, not only because of their ensuing conflict over the Caspian, but also given Iran’s expressed interest in acquiring additional arms that would likely upset the regional balance in the Persian Gulf and greatly alarm the United States.<sup>89</sup>

Reports appeared in the Western press in September 1997—“taken very seriously” by the U.S. government—that Russia was supplying missile technology to Iran. Primakov hastily denied the reports, and Yeltsin added a blanket pledge that there would be no deliveries to Iran of missiles or missile technology. Pressed again on the subject the following month by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Russian foreign minister reportedly cited his prior intelligence background as the basis for assuring the Israelis that Iran would not have nuclear weapons or the means to deliver them any time within the next decade. As for the prospect of unauthorized “leakages,” Primakov added “that he personally had promoted the adoption of measures to prevent specialists with access to missile and nuclear secrets from having contacts with Iran.”<sup>90</sup> As the subject continued to

be pressed by the U.S. government in 1998, Primakov acknowledged that some "brain drain" had occurred, but that it was simply not in Russia's interests to assist its neighbor in acquiring long-range missiles.

Despite the Russian government's declared unwillingness to help, Iran succeeded in July 1998 in flight-testing a Shahab-3 missile with a range of 1,200–1,500 kilometers—reportedly assisted by China, Pakistan, and North Korea. This development raised new alarms in Washington about possible dual-use technology in the Bushehr project, as well as about illegal transfers of bomb or missile technology from Russia. The United States accused seven Russian enterprises of selling weapons technology to Iran, Libya, and North Korea, and in January 1999 it imposed economic sanctions on three Russian scientific laboratories for alleged assistance to Iran. Although Russian authorities at first denied that such transfers had taken place, Nuclear Industry Minister Yevgeny Adamov announced in March that Washington had agreed to lift the sanctions in return for a pledge that the labs' cooperation with Iran would cease.

American unease with Moscow's apparent lack of cooperation increased early in 2000, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright reportedly complained that, despite the expiration of the grace period, the cessation of arms transfers promised in the secret Gore-Chernomyrdin agreement had not occurred. In October, in the midst of the presidential election campaign in the United States, the existence of the agreement and Russia's violations of its terms was leaked to the American press. Whether this had any effect on Gore's candidacy is unclear, but it did prompt Moscow to denounce the breach of secrecy and to use this as an excuse to withdraw from the agreement. No sooner had this occurred than Marshal Igor Sergeyev journeyed to Tehran to inaugurate "a new phase of military-technical cooperation" between Russia and Iran. Although he maintained that only defensive arms would be sold and that no technology transfers would be allowed, the American reaction was expectedly harsh.

Putin's decision to align Russia more closely with the United States after September 11, 2001 sharpened Moscow's dilemma about how to conduct its nuclear and weapons programs with Iran, especially after Tehran was included as part of Bush's "axis of evil" early in 2002. As Washington stepped up its pressure on Moscow, the issue of Iran's possible acquisition of nuclear weapons became uppermost in U.S.-Russian relations, as we discuss at greater length in the next chapter. Tempted by the prospect of lucrative contracts for both nuclear plants and advanced weaponry, Russia, as one journalist put it, "still wants to have its cake and eat it too."<sup>91</sup> Confirming its pledge to complete the nuclear reactor at Bushehr, and even its willingness to build a second reactor there, Russia announced that it had obtained Iran's agreement that all spent fuel from the Bushehr reactor would be returned to Russia, and it urged Iran to sign a protocol to the NPT that would allow more aggressive inspections of its nuclear program by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Russia's voice was added to those of the British, French, and Germans in this effort, and Iran acceded to the pressure in December

2003. However, surprise inspections by the international agency shortly thereafter revealed suspicious activity, and the United States immediately charged that Iran was in violation of its treaty commitments and demanded that international sanctions be applied. The Russians joined the Europeans in insisting on more concrete evidence before asking for sanctions.

In June 2004, the situation became even more complicated when Iran notified the IAEA that it was resuming the production of nuclear centrifuge components—a key element of a weapons program—while continuing to insist that its program was aimed entirely at the peaceful production of nuclear energy. This turn of events caused a commentator for *Kommersant* to complain:

Over the past decade, Iran's actions have repeatedly put Russian diplomacy in a delicate, if not to say ambiguous, position. . . . A tragicomic situation in which Moscow was attempting to defend Tehran and clear it of all suspicion, while Iran was doing its utmost to thwart that effort. In the process, it failed to show the least concern for Moscow's image. . . . Under these circumstances, Moscow can, of course, continue to pursue cooperation with Iran while pretending that nothing bad is happening. . . . But that course of action will have increasing political costs.<sup>92</sup>

Reluctant to destabilize the Middle East by allowing Iran to develop nuclear weapons by default, if not by design, Moscow walked a fine line, avoiding open support of Iran's nuclear program while seeking to blunt the harshest sanctions favored by the West. However, Iran's recalcitrant leadership has not made it easy for Russia to perform this delicate balancing act. The international community has followed a dual-track approach in dealing with the Iranian nuclear challenge. The first centers on sanctions while the second pursues comprehensive negotiations for a diplomatic resolution to the problem.<sup>93</sup>

Between July 2006 and June 2010, as Iran's leadership showed no interest in negotiations, Russia and China supported all six UN Security Council resolutions that were passed with progressively punitive sanctions. Each set of sanctions had followed serial Iranian declarations of progress on the nuclear program. In November 2007, Iran acknowledged that it acquired nuclear technology, including P-2 centrifuge blueprints, from the A.Q. Khan network. That same month, Iranian officials, in their harshest criticism of Russia yet, warned of worsening relations if Russia would not supply S-300 air defense systems, according to the terms of a billion-dollar contract signed in 2005. While publicly Moscow said it would stand by the contract, officials privately suggested that the reasons for the delay were political, having to do with U.S. dissatisfaction with Iran's intransigence on the nuclear issue as well as the expectation of imminent UN sanctions to be imposed on Iran.<sup>94</sup>

In September 2009, Iran acknowledged to the IAEA the existence of a uranium enrichment facility near Qom. On February 7, 2010, President Ahmadinejad announced that Iran would begin to enrich uranium to 20 percent in its nuclear facilities, backing out of an earlier agreement to exchange nuclear fuel with

Russia and France. In August 2010, Iran officially marked the completion of the Bushehr nuclear plant, and in 2011 announced that the plant had been connected to Iran's national energy grid. In February 2013, Iran announced that it had located new uranium deposits and identified sites for sixteen more nuclear plants, and, in April, announced an expansion of its uranium production.

Alongside these provocative measures, Iran during the Ahmadinejad presidency had spurned international efforts for a diplomatic resolution to the problem. The election of Hassan Rouhani as president in June 2013 offered a ray of hope for a negotiated settlement. In 2004, Rouhani, a cleric known for his conciliatory approach, had been instrumental in Iran's decision to suspend its uranium enrichment voluntarily—an effort that had failed to bear fruit when that concession was followed by other Western demands.

Summing up Russia's relationship with Iran, a journalist perhaps reflected official Russian frustration when he stated that “rogue states” like Iran expected Russia to “pull chestnuts out of the fire for them” while offering little in return. “Russia,” he observed,

has saved Iran from sanctions a number of times, and when that was no longer possible, it softened them significantly. Nevertheless, material dividends in the form of, say, payments for the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant proved rather problematic: Tehran has repeatedly accused Moscow openly of reneging on its obligations concerning Bushehr.

Russia has even been denied the “political benefits” of influence that should flow from a “special relationship” because “Tehran has repeatedly refused to follow Moscow's recommendations and rejected the International Atomic Energy Agency's reasonable demands.”<sup>95</sup>

In a sign of cautious optimism, the deadlock on Iran's nuclear enrichment program was broken in 2013, however, when renewed attempts at reconciliation under President Rouhani led on November 24 to an interim six-month agreement. After intense negotiations in Geneva, Russia joined the other permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany (the P5+1) in offering Iran \$7 billion in sanctions relief in return for Tehran's promise to curb some elements of its nuclear activities. The parties agreed to work toward a more permanent agreement. President Putin welcomed the agreement as a “breakthrough” but noted that it was “merely the first step on a long and difficult road.”<sup>96</sup>

In July 2015, after many rounds of intense negotiations with the P5+1, Tehran agreed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), under which Iran agreed to dismantle its nuclear program and allow intrusive international inspection of its nuclear sites in exchange for the lifting of U.S., European, and UN-imposed sanctions.<sup>97</sup> The agreement was designed to slow the “breakout time” required for achieving nuclear weapons-capable status from a few weeks to a year. The JCPOA's nuclear provisions have sunset clauses whereby the restrictions on centrifuges will be lifted after ten years and those on the amount of

low-enriched uranium that Iran can possess, as well as the IAEA's access to undeclared nuclear sites, will lapse after fifteen years.<sup>98</sup> A Joint Commission under Federica Mogherini, the EU foreign policy head, was set up to settle disputes among the parties to the JCPOA. The JCPOA went into effect in January 2016 and Iran has been generally compliant with its terms. The agreement has held up so far, despite misgivings in some quarters, mainly among hardliners in Iran, some members of the U.S. Congress and newly elected U.S. President Trump.<sup>99</sup> In a move that Russia refused to support and that was widely criticized by European countries, Trump refused to certify Iran's compliance in October 2017, stating JCPOA to be against U.S. national interests, but he stopped short of withdrawing from the deal. Finally, in May 2018, Trump announced U.S. withdrawal.

Russia's decision to intervene militarily in Syria brought Moscow in temporary alignment with Iranian objectives. In a domestically controversial move that contravened Iran's long-standing "No East, No West" policy, Tehran agreed to allow Moscow to use the Shahid Nojeh Air Base in support of bombing sorties against anti-government rebels in Syria.<sup>100</sup> In a sign of solidarity, Moscow decided to resume supplies of advanced S-300 anti-air missiles to Tehran in April 2015.<sup>101</sup> Russia and Iran have also worked together on providing covert aid to the Afghan Taliban in an effort to widen their options for influence in that country.<sup>102</sup>

Tensions, however, continue to dog the relationship. Iran, for instance, has been unhappy over Russia's decision to give the Israeli Air Force permission to use Syrian airspace to bomb Lebanese Hezbollah and other targets in Syria in pursuit of Tel Aviv's objectives. And Iran has been wary of Russia's support of any Western efforts to manage the Syrian conflict.<sup>103</sup> Despite their differences, both sides have calculated that for now continuing their pragmatic but limited partnership is in their mutual interests. In a March 2017 summit meeting in Moscow, Presidents Rouhani and Putin discussed ways to work together in combating terrorism, improve trade and economic ties, and engage in cooperative ventures, such as joint oil and gas projects.<sup>104</sup>

In Chapters 9 and 10 we will return to this issue in the context of the political costs Russia incurred in its relations with the United States as a result of the escalating dispute over how to deal with the threat posed by the prospect of an Iranian nuclear weapons program.

No less a threat to stability in the Persian Gulf region, and no less undesirable in Washington's eyes as a possible partner for Moscow, was Saddam Hussein's Iraq. We saw in Chapter 4 that Gorbachev and his personal envoy Yevgeny Primakov had tried to salvage the long-standing Soviet investment in Baghdad by negotiating a peaceful resolution to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and how the failure of those mediation efforts had left the Soviet Union trailing unenthusiastically in the wake of the international effort to rein in Saddam Hussein. In the UN Security Council, the representatives of the Soviet Union and Russia repeatedly voted to support international sanctions on Iraq, to Moscow's economic detriment. Russia lost a major partner both in energy development and in weapons sales, while

holding a debt, estimated as high as \$10 billion, that financially strapped Iraq was unable to repay. Given Russia's own economic crisis, Yeltsin's persistence in supporting costly UN sanctions was prominently used by his domestic political opponents as a prime example of Russia's sacrificing its own interests to satisfy the West.

In the longer term, despite Russia's continued support of sanctions—even its dispatch of two ships to the Persian Gulf task force enforcing them—most of the Gulf states remained wary. However, Russia did manage a breakthrough with Saddam Hussein's recent victim, Kuwait, which was busy securing itself against possible future aggression by strengthening economic and military ties with all five permanent members of the Security Council.

Russia lobbied in the Security Council for a gradual lifting of sanctions as a reward for positive steps that Iraq might take, while it urged the Iraqi government to announce recognition of Kuwait's independence and borders. In October 1994, in the midst of Russia's campaign to champion Iraqi good behavior, Saddam Hussein rekindled the crisis by sending his troops to the Kuwaiti border. Yeltsin sought to salvage the situation by sending Kozyrev to Baghdad in search of a political settlement. His meetings produced a communiqué saying that Iraq was ready to recognize Kuwait's sovereignty and border, in return for which Russia would support a six-month period of monitoring Iraq's compliance with UN requirements, followed by an unconditional end to the sanctions. This initiative was speedily and angrily rejected by the Western powers, which mustered their forces for a military response to Saddam Hussein.

The deep rift that had reopened between Russia and the West over the proper response to Iraqi assertiveness appeared again in September 1996, when Saddam Hussein violated UN rules by sending troops into a special Kurdish-inhabited zone in northern Iraq. The United States responded by launching twenty-seven cruise missiles against military targets in Iraq, followed by a second strike with seventeen missiles that completed the destruction of Iraq's air defense system in an expanded "no-fly zone." An angry statement from the Russian government—said by Yeltsin's chief of staff to have been fully supported by the ailing president—bitterly denounced the U.S. actions:

Serious concern is prompted by the fact that Washington is essentially laying claim to the role of supreme arbiter, trying, in effect, to supplant the Security Council, which, in accordance with the UN Charter, possesses an exclusive right to authorize the use of force. . . . The military actions in and around Iraq must be stopped. Russia insistently urges all parties to abandon the logic of force and to embark on the path of a political settlement of the crisis situation that has arisen.<sup>105</sup>

Responding to what the Russian press termed the low point in U.S.-Russian relations in 1996, the U.S. government expressed its disappointment that Russia had not yet learned that Saddam Hussein would respond not to diplomacy but only to force. Nevertheless, with Primakov himself more directly involved in the

conversations with his “old comrades” in Iraq, Moscow continued its search for a way to reduce sanctions in return for “good behavior,” in the full expectation (avidly encouraged by Baghdad) that when Iraq resumed normal economic activity, Russia would be the major foreign beneficiary.<sup>106</sup>

Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk also saw in the role Russia was playing in Iraq a special significance for broader Russian foreign policy:

The world is increasingly coming to realize that Russia is emerging or has emerged from its period of confusion and major problems, and that it is now oriented toward conducting an energetic and constructive foreign policy. Many countries have confidence in the balanced line we are pursuing.

He stressed that Russian diplomats were not acting as “undiscriminating defense attorneys” for Iraq, since they were calling for strict fulfillment of all the UN resolutions. “But at the same time we are saying that Iraq must be shown that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Not fire but light.”<sup>107</sup>

The rhetorical heights were scaled in Moscow again the following December, when U.S. and British war planes, in an operation termed Desert Fox, conducted air strikes on Iraq in the wake of the UN arms inspectors’ report of continued Iraqi obstruction. Claiming that the chances for a diplomatic solution to the inspection impasse had not been exhausted, Yeltsin termed the Anglo-American action “senseless,” declaring that it “flagrantly violated” the UN Charter and international law and “undermines the entire international security system.” Russia’s ambassadors to Washington and London were recalled, the pending vote on ratification of START II was postponed, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy called for pre-emptive strikes against the United States, and Yeltsin was pictured poring over maps of the Middle East amid talk of dispatching Russian warships to the region. Alluding to the pending vote on Clinton’s impeachment in the U.S. Congress, a foreign ministry statement referred to the “true reasons and true motives” for the strikes.<sup>108</sup>

The Russians participated in several efforts in the United Nations to reduce, suspend, or eliminate the sanctions on Iraq, but to no avail. Reportedly, Iraq was pressuring Russia to withdraw unilaterally from the sanctions regime, hinting that prospective Russian contracts for oil exploration in Iraq might depend on Moscow’s willingness to do so. But Russia held firm to the UN sanctions policy. Moscow did not, however, agree to a U.S.-British attempt to move to “smart sanctions,” which would tighten the embargo on arms and dual-use goods while easing restriction on imports of civilian goods. Alone among the UN “Big Five,” the Russians blocked the plan with their veto threat.

In Chapter 9 we consider at some length Russia’s policy toward Iraq during the subsequent years, leading up to the American and British invasion of Iraq in March 2003. As in the case of its relations with the other two members of President Bush’s “axis of evil,” Moscow found it difficult to steer between its new-found alliance with the United States in the “war against terror” and the

long-standing relationships it had built up during the Soviet era and beyond with regimes opposed to American policies. After the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime, Russia sought to salvage some of its considerable economic investment. In December 2003, after officials of the Iraqi Governing Council indicated that Russia might be able to reinstate some of the oil contracts that had been negotiated with Saddam, Moscow suggested that it might be willing to forgive about two-thirds of Iraq's debt, depending on the outcome of more broad-ranging debt negotiations to be conducted through the Paris Club.<sup>109</sup> Having voted in favor of the lifting of UN sanctions against Iraq, Russia had resumed commercial activity in the country in 2003. And while Putin made it clear that he had no reason to wish failure upon the U.S.-led effort to restore stability to the country, he also decided that Russia would not contribute security forces to help in that effort. Only in February 2008 did the two states finally agree on a debt cancellation and repayment plan. Russia agreed to cancel 93 percent of Iraq's debt of \$12.9 billion; the remaining amount was to be repaid over a twenty-year period. At the same time (but ostensibly not “linked”), Iraq signed an agreement opening participation to Russian companies in a variety of reconstruction and investment projects in Iraq.<sup>110</sup>

But to Russia's obvious disappointment, Iraq's new government refused to honor old contracts concluded under Saddam Hussein, insisting that Moscow tender new bids in accordance with standard procedures applicable to all parties. An additional sticking point was security, with Russia ready to work in varied sectors, such as oil and gas, electrical power, and water resource management, subject to guarantees of safety for Russian workers, but Iraq admitting its inability to provide security and urging Russians to bring their own security personnel.<sup>111</sup> In April 2009, a delegation headed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki visited Russia and expressed interest in renewing military-technical cooperation. Iraq indicated that it wished to purchase 22 Mi-17 helicopters. Not until October 2012 did Russia and Iraq sign a \$4.2 billion package agreement during al-Maliki's visit to Moscow for the purchase of arms, including 42 Pantsir-S1 air defense systems and 30 Mi28-NE helicopters. Negotiations for the purchase of several MiG-29M/M2 fighter jets were also made public. But in a setback the following month, Baghdad announced that it was reviewing the terms of the deal over “corruption suspicions.”<sup>112</sup> Finally, in February 2013, Baghdad gave a green light to the arms deal, making Russia Iraq's second largest arms supplier. With this arms agreement, Russia recouped some of its earlier standing with Iraq, which under Saddam Hussein had been a huge buyer of Russian weaponry.<sup>113</sup> The Russian-Iraqi arms sales relationship continued to deepen in July 2017, with the reported sale of Russian T-90 tanks to Iraq.<sup>114</sup>

Russia has continued to nurture the relationship with military assistance and large investments in Iraq's energy sector. Two-way trade in 2015 approached \$2 billion, fueled largely by Russian exports. During a visit to Baghdad in February 2016, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin discussed offering help



to Iraq in defeating ISIS. To further this goal, Russia established a command center in Baghdad in 2015, under a joint intelligence-sharing agreement with Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Remarking on Russian assistance, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said, “[i]ntelligence plays an important role in the war on Daesh [ISIS], and we’ve been coordinating for a while now with the Russian side to place this information in the hands of Iraqis.”<sup>115</sup> The 2016–17 military effort to oust ISIS from Iraq, however, was spearheaded by the U.S.-led international coalition. In July 2017, Operation Inherent Resolve, which brought together a complex coalition consisting of the Iraqi Army, Shia militias, and Kurdish fighters, drove ISIS forces out of Mosul in a last push, following a relentless and deadly campaign that began in October 2016.<sup>116</sup> Russia’s role in this operation was limited to passive military and intelligence support.

A similar, if lower-profile, mix of activities and motives has characterized Russia’s diplomacy toward another Middle Eastern pariah state: Libya. The advent of the Yeltsin government had not been welcomed in Tripoli, which refused until 1995 to acknowledge that its \$3.8 billion debt to the USSR was now owed to the Russian Federation. When Russia joined with the West in November 1993 in voting for UN sanctions against Libya, in response to the latter’s refusal to cooperate against terrorism, Moscow succeeded in obtaining an amendment to the resolution that demanded that Libya repay its debts. Ironically, a Russian trade delegation was discovered to be in Tripoli at that very time, and the embarrassed foreign ministry quickly stated that Russia had every intention of abiding by the sanctions. With the sanctions still in force (and Primakov then in charge at the foreign ministry), a Russian delegation returned to Libya in March 1996 for a discussion of debt repayment and future large-scale economic cooperation. At this point, there were said to be only 200 Russian specialists remaining in the country—about one-thirtieth the size of the former Soviet contingent. Although Russia claimed that it had suffered at least \$7 billion in losses, and though it noted bitterly that some Western companies continued to do business in Libya, Russia nevertheless declared that it would continue to abide by the international sanctions. When the sanctions on Libya were finally lifted in 1999, Moscow was prepared to resume business with Tripoli. A delegation led by Libya’s foreign minister was received in Moscow in the summer of 2000 to discuss arms sales, but no deal could be reached in the absence of a mutually acceptable plan for liquidating Libya’s Soviet-era debt.

The debt was still an issue when Igor Ivanov went to Libya in May 2001 for talks on trade and economic relations—the first visit by a Russian foreign minister. Libya’s full-fledged return to international respectability did not come, however, until the end of 2003, when Muammar Qaddafi announced that the country would abandon its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. With its eye still on the issue of Iraq, Russia hailed Libya’s decision as confirmation that the best approach to dealing with the WMD issue is “within the framework of multilateral preventive diplomacy” as opposed to military pre-emption.<sup>117</sup>

No real breakthroughs in Russia's efforts to re-establish profitable ties with Libya were possible, however, until the debt issue was resolved, and this did not occur until the last month of Putin's second term as president, when he placed his personal stamp on the enterprise by visiting Qaddafi in April 2008. Russia agreed to erase the Libyan debt (now valued at \$4.5 billion), writing it off, as Finance Minister Aleksey Kudrin explained it, "in exchange for multibillion dollar contracts for Russian companies." Certainly not absent from the agreements was the usual Russian staple of weaponry: a deal valued between \$2 billion and \$4 billion for the sales of fighter jets, surface-to-air missiles, helicopters, and submarines.<sup>118</sup>

These topics were all still on the agenda when Qaddafi visited Russia in November 2008. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had been received in Libya in September, and Colonel Qaddafi seemed to be enjoying the unaccustomed pleasure of playing the Americans and the Russians off against each other for commercial advantages. No major announcements were made during his Russian visit, however, and the highlight of the trip appeared to be Putin's televised joint appearance to drink tea with the Libyan leader in a Bedouin tent that Qaddafi had pitched in a Kremlin garden.

Russia, which had inherited the goodwill generated by carefully crafted Soviet-era relations with Iraq, Libya, and Syria, in particular, saw much of that effort undercut—first by the 2003 U.S. war in Iraq and almost eight years later by the Arab Spring revolts that began in late December 2011 in Tunisia and spread quickly to Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. One by one, leaders supported by Russia either fell (Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Qaddafi in Libya) or came under siege (Bashar al-Assad in Syria). Russia feared that these revolutions would have negative repercussions, sparking similar uprisings in Chechnya and jeopardizing critical Russian weapons contracts and sales in Arab countries. According to Russian estimates, the total value of Russia's arms contracts with countries of the Middle East and North Africa stood at \$12 billion, making up 25 percent of all military orders. These contracts were likely to be repudiated by new governments that were being established after the fall of long-term dictators. Libya represented a case in point, with Qaddafi's \$2.2 billion contracted purchase of a large contingent of Russian fighter jets and surface-to-air missiles.<sup>119</sup>

When the uprising in Libya first began, the Russian foreign ministry expressed regret at civilian casualties resulting from the official use of force and urged Qaddafi to engage in peaceful dialogue. This stance became untenable with increasing violence and bloodshed. President Medvedev issued a stern warning that if "responsible political figures" refused to show restraint, "such actions will be considered crimes with all the ensuing consequences under international law." In making this commitment, Medvedev was taking the risk of endangering Russia's economic interests if UN sanctions were to ban arms sales to Libya. The UN Security Council resolution on Libya in March 2011, among other things, did just that.<sup>120</sup> Official Russian reaction to the troubles in Libya publicly revealed fractures in the Medvedev-Putin tandem, with Putin pointedly disagreeing with

the president. Calling the UN resolution on Libya “deficient and flawed,” Putin argued that events there did not warrant outside interference in an “internal political conflict, even an armed one.” Medvedev, for his part, stuck to his initial assessment and defended Russia’s decision to abstain on the Libyan vote in the UN Security Council, which established a no-fly zone over Libya, an asset freeze, and an arms embargo. “This resolution,” he said, “largely reflects our understanding of what is going on in Libya, but not in all respects.”<sup>121</sup>

A multinational coalition led by the United States, which did not include Russia or China, began flying sorties to enforce the no-fly zone. The United States interpreted this to include air strikes on Libyan ground forces that were threatening civilians. On March 24, 2011, NATO agreed to take command of the UN-backed military intervention. Once the intervention began, Russian opinion of the action turned negative, with some observing that “the notion of protecting civilians,” which the coalition had prioritized as its primary humanitarian objective, had “melted away like a mirage in the Libyan desert.” Others asked whether the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of states conferred by the internationally accepted principle of state sovereignty would be breached indiscriminately in the future.<sup>122</sup>

The Russian foreign ministry, for its part, issued a statement deploring the “indiscriminate use of force,” adding that Russia believed in the “inadmissibility of using the mandate under UN Security Council No. 1973, whose adoption was very controversial, in order to achieve objectives that are clearly outside the scope of its provisions, which stipulate measures only for protecting civilians.”<sup>123</sup> One critic, dubbing the military intervention “Operation Turncoat,” said that the no-fly zone authorization had been surreptitiously turned into another Western attempt at regime change.<sup>124</sup> Other observers praised the Russian decision to abstain, arguing that it left the door open for cordial Russian relations with any future Libyan government while simultaneously maintaining good terms with the West.<sup>125</sup>

By June 2011, as the crisis in Libya continued, Russia offered to mediate the dispute and even to send Russian peacekeepers to the scene. In the end, Russian attempts to mediate between the Qaddafi regime and the opposition leaders came to naught. By July, it was clear that Moscow had concluded that Qaddafi had “no political future in Libya” and when rebel forces stormed Tripoli in late August, the Qaddafi era effectively ended.<sup>126</sup>

Russia recognized the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the new Libyan government on October 1, 2011. After Qaddafi was killed in late October, the Russian press began contemplating Libya’s future without him and expressed concern over the announcement by head of the NTC Mustafa Abdul Jalil that Libya, as an “Islamic state,” would adopt Shari’a as the primary source of law.<sup>127</sup> In November, the NTC established a new interim government headed by Abdurrahim El-Keib, which was to hold elections for an interim parliament eight months later.<sup>128</sup> In May 2012, Russia lifted the previously imposed arms embargo against Libya.

A popularly elected interim legislature, the General National Congress, ran Libya pending the election of a permanent legislature following a two-step process: a referendum followed by election of a body to draft a new constitution. To Moscow's relief, Libya did not tear up old Russian energy contracts. In March 2013, Russian oil company Taftnet announced that it would reopen operations in Libya that had been shuttered during the uprising. Western analysts had predicted that when Libya began issuing a new round of energy licenses, Russia and China were likely to “win key assets.” According to Jason Pack of Cambridge University, “[c]ountries like Russia and China will be able to do decent business, even though they either supported the Gadhafi [sic] regime or were lukewarm about the uprising, because they are more able to work in the current Libyan business climate.”<sup>129</sup>

However, to Moscow's dismay, Russia lost over \$4 billion in military and commercial contracts negotiated by then Prime Minister Putin in 2010.<sup>130</sup> Since the establishment of the UN supported Government of National Accord (GNA) under Fayez al-Sarraj, continued political instability has plagued the country. Eastern Libya is largely controlled by former Qaddafi ally General Khalifa Haftar, who commands the Libyan National Army, which is “loosely aligned with the break-away Libyan parliament in Tobruk.”<sup>131</sup> Elected in 2014, this parliament's members and their armed supporters do not recognize the government in Tripoli. Haftar, who worked against Western efforts to stabilize post-Qaddafi Libya, is a self-styled anti-Islamist. According to Russian political analyst Vladimir Frolov, Russia is pursuing “two Libya policies,” with the foreign ministry backing an Algerian and EU-sponsored reconciliation option that would offer Haftar the portfolio of defense minister in the GNA—an offer that he has spurned.<sup>132</sup> Russia's defense ministry, with support from some in the Kremlin, has established direct contact with Haftar who was invited to Moscow in July and November 2016 where he met Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, and Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev.<sup>133</sup> Reports in early 2017 that Moscow had deployed special forces to an Egyptian military base in support of Haftar were met with official denials.<sup>134</sup> The open question on Russia's policy in Libya is whether playing both sides in the Libyan conflict is a gamble that will work.

As Putin's reservations over Medvedev's support of UN action in Libya showed, Moscow was deeply disturbed by the movements in the Arab world that were reminiscent of the “color revolutions” in the post-Soviet space. Russia's unease contrasted starkly with the Western reaction, both official and popular, which was supportive of the democratic aspirations of the revolutionaries, even though the liberal intent behind these aspirations was less clear. Reflecting concern over the long-term implications of the Arab Spring, one Russian commentator noted that these developments had given Saudi Arabia and Qatar “a chance to start ‘reformatting’ the Middle East to their own liking: secular regimes are to be replaced by ideological and political allies of the Arab Sunni fundamentalist monarchs in order to stem the Shi'ah influence coming from Iran.”<sup>135</sup>

Within two and a half years, the January 2011 revolution in Egypt came full circle: the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak on February 11, followed by a period of military rule, and then by the much-anticipated elections in May 2012 that brought President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood to power; the beginning of clashes after Morsi's passage of a decree in November 2012 expanding his authority; the passage by referendum of an Islamist constitution in December 2012 igniting ever-larger popular protests; and finally ending in Morsi's ouster by the Egyptian military on July 3, 2013. In presidential elections in May 2014, General Abdul Fattah el-Sisi, former head of military intelligence, who had served as defense minister under President Morsi, won with a 96 percent vote margin.<sup>136</sup> For Russian leaders, the events in Egypt appeared to vindicate their skepticism of outside support in domestic uprisings. In June 2013, just a month before Morsi's removal, President Putin, in a television interview, had argued that interventions in the internal affairs of countries in the Middle East only served to create instability and endanger peace. Noting that unrest prevailed in Egypt and instability persisted in Iraq, he said, "In my opinion, this is happening because some people on the outside believe that if the region were to be brought into compliance with a certain idea, an idea that some call democracy, then peace and stability would ensue. That is not how it works."<sup>137</sup> Putin's trip to Cairo in February 2015 followed on then Defense Minister el-Sisi's visit to Moscow in February 2014, when the two sides discussed a \$2 billion deal for the purchase of Russian arms, including an air defense system, without signing a conclusive agreement.<sup>138</sup> The two countries have stated their interest in building on their economic and technological cooperation. Two-way trade in 2014 stood at a paltry \$3 billion and both sides expect an increase in trade volumes in the future.<sup>139</sup> The bilateral relationship, in many ways, is not a significant priority for either country. Russia wants to signal to the world that Moscow has friends in the Middle East and Cairo wishes to demonstrate that Egypt is not solely dependent on the United States.

But as one analyst stated, Russia is unlikely to "retreat from its political relations with the Arab countries, irrespective of which forces will come to power (with the exception of radical Islamists). The Middle East and North Africa," he noted, "are aware of the fact that Russia, the EU and, to a lesser extent, China balance out the United States at the regional level. This means that active relations with them allow the Arab countries to maintain balanced foreign policies."<sup>140</sup>

Libya was by no means the only former Soviet arms customer where the Russian government sought new sales. In April 2001 Putin played host to Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The two presidents signed a declaration of "strategic partnership"—Russia's first with an Arab country—and they discussed Algeria's shopping list for weapons. With about three-fourths of its arsenal Russian-made, Algeria was already one of the top ten customers for the Russian arms exporters. At the time of Bouteflika's visit it had purchased \$600 million worth in the previous four years. But the future for Algeria's purchases—like Libya's—was clouded by the issue of debt. Although it acknowledged owing at

least \$4 billion, Algeria had stopped making payments on the debt in 1998, and difficult negotiations on the settlement still lay ahead.

Again, the issue was settled during a visit from President Putin (in March 2006). Russia agreed to write off the entire \$4.7 billion Algerian debt in exchange for new contracts—again, primarily arms purchases, which included fighters, anti-aircraft missile systems, and tanks. In a further parallel with the Libyan deal that was to follow, Gazprom—clearly seeking to play a dominant role in energy production in North Africa—agreed with the Algerian state energy company to cooperate in the production of oil and liquefied natural gas in Algeria.<sup>141</sup> The Algerian arms deal was subsequently clouded, however, by the issue of the quality of Russian deliveries. Discovering that its MiG-29s had been assembled from old parts, Algeria insisted upon returning fifteen of them. In February 2016, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited Algeria and the two countries agreed to deepen their economic and military cooperation. Lavrov’s visit followed the Algerian purchase of 14 SU-30 MKA fighters and 40 Mi-28 attack helicopters.<sup>142</sup>

By the end of the first decade of the 2000s, Russia’s concerns in North Africa focused increasingly on the alarming trends toward Islamization. On a February 2013 visit to Algeria, Foreign Minister Lavrov, after noting in general terms about Russia’s “special relationship” with Algeria, the growing bilateral trade volume, and hopes for greater cooperation based on the results of the upcoming session of the Russian-Algerian intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, and scientific and technological cooperation, moved on to more troubling concerns, such as the terrorist seizure of an oil refinery in southeast Algeria. Lavrov and Bouteflika discussed the growing instability in the region, with terrorist attacks in Mali and the grave consequences of the ongoing uprising in Syria. As the only secular leader in the region, other than that of embattled Syrian President Assad, Bouteflika no doubt pleased Lavrov when he assured him that his government was committed to preventing Islamist radicals from gaining strength in Algeria.<sup>143</sup> Algeria has been concerned over ISIS presence in Libya, as has Egypt, which is battling ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula. Moscow has worked with both countries to stem the spread of Islamist militancy. Following its military intervention in Syria, Russia has reached out to Algeria for support.<sup>144</sup> Moscow has hopes that Algeria, along with Iraq and Egypt, will join Russia, Iran, and Turkey in the Astana dialogue process for the settlement of the Syrian conflict.<sup>145</sup>

Yemen was another former Soviet customer that was now purchasing Russian arms. Ten MiG-29 fighter jets were delivered in June 2002—the first installment on a \$300 million order, sold by the Russians despite objections from the United States, which feared their possible resale to Iraq. Additional purchases were discussed during the April 2004 visit to Moscow of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In 2005, Russia delivered an additional twenty MiG-29 fighter jets to Yemen.<sup>146</sup> The close Russia-Yemen relationship continued under Medvedev’s presidency. But as the Arab Spring unfolded in early 2011, Yemenis, inspired by mass protests in Tunisia and Egypt, took to the streets calling for Saleh’s

resignation and were met with the brutal force of the state. This contest between protesters and security forces continued throughout 2011 as the United States and Saudi Arabia sought to broker a deal. Finally, in early February 2012, under a U.S.-backed deal that promised him immunity, Saleh stepped down. His deputy, Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, following a single-candidate presidential election, succeeded him. According to the terms of the transfer deal, Hadi was to serve for two years, with democratic presidential elections to follow in February 2014. President Hadi visited Russia in April 2013 at the invitation of President Putin, who offered Russia's help in boosting Yemen's development.

The civil war in Yemen, however, continued as armed Shi'ite Houthis based in northern Yemen, joined by units of the Yemeni Army loyal to Saleh, fought against government forces.<sup>147</sup> In late 2014, Houthi forces occupied Sana'a. Efforts at a negotiated settlement broke down when in January 2015 Houthi leaders rejected a new constitution to establish a federated Yemen.<sup>148</sup> Following the failure of negotiations, Yemeni President Hadi resigned and fled to Saudi Arabia. Intense fighting between the opposing forces resumed in spring 2015 and Houthi forces moved from Sana'a to Aden, establishing territorial control over much of the country. In March 2015, concerned that the Iran-backed Houthis would take over Yemen, Saudi Arabia assembled a coalition of Arab states to push back against Houthi gains. The Saudi military campaign and a naval blockade of Yemen resulted in a humanitarian disaster. Hadi periodically returned to Aden between September and November 2015 to supervise campaign operations.

The situation in Yemen has continued to deteriorate and the instability has allowed the strengthening in Yemen of radical Sunni groups, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).<sup>149</sup> Moscow, which has been drawn into the orbit of Iran's Shi'ite bloc through its intervention in Syria, has called for a negotiated settlement in Yemen. On March 13, 2017, the Russian foreign ministry issued a statement noting Moscow's "firm belief that the Yemeni conflict cannot be resolved by military means" and calling on all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities.<sup>150</sup> Moscow had tried to maintain cordial ties both with exiled President Hadi and with ousted President Saleh and his Houthi supporters. Saleh's November 2017 offer to broker the conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis raised the latter's suspicions about his intentions and he was killed in early December, reportedly by Houthi rebels. Saleh's death thrust the Saudi-Iranian proxy fight in Yemen into the foreground. With the resulting disarray in the country, Russia is likely to attempt to serve as an intermediary to all parties, seeking a negotiated end to the conflict in Yemen.<sup>151</sup>

A visitor from the Arabian Peninsula with a markedly different agenda had come to Moscow in the fall of 2003. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah—the first high-level Saudi emissary ever to visit Moscow—discussed the Israeli-Palestinian and Iraqi conflicts with Putin in an atmosphere clouded with distrust because of Saudi support for Chechen rebels. As if to underscore Saudi Arabia's continuing distress over Chechnya, Prince Abdullah informed Putin that Russia's

wish to enter the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) would not be granted because of the continuing conflict there. (Russia was finally granted observer status to the OIC in 2005.)

In February 2007 Putin became the first Russian head of state to set foot on Saudi Arabian soil. Now-King Abdullah welcomed Putin and his trade delegation for talks on Middle Eastern diplomatic issues as well as on expanding commercial ties. The annual volume of Russian-Saudi trade, only \$88.5 million in 1999, had expanded, but was still very modest (\$400 million) by the end of 2005. The positive trajectory of Russian-Saudi ties continued until 2010, helped by Saudi Arabia's concern over the unilateralist direction of U.S. policy under George W. Bush. As Islamist radicals began to attack targets on Saudi soil after 2003, Saudi Arabia began to show greater sympathy with Moscow's troubles in Chechnya. Riyadh's position on Chechnya softened even more after Russian-installed Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov traveled to Mecca in March 2007, met with King Abdullah in August 2007, and visited again in December 2008.<sup>152</sup> The Arab Spring uprisings, however, led to a deterioration in the relationship, as Saudi Arabia strongly backed the anti-Qaddafi rebels in Libya and the anti-Assad uprisings in Syria. Dissenting from the Saudi approach, Putin warned that support for the Syrian opposition forces would have grave consequences for Riyadh, saying that Saudi support of the rebel movement in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation “gave rise to Al-Qaeda” and that there were no guarantees that the Syrian rebels would not turn on Riyadh.<sup>153</sup> In June 2013, the relationship worsened, with harsh words exchanged over Syria. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal accused Moscow of responsibility for mass killings because of Russian military assistance to Assad. In an angry retort, a Russian Foreign Ministry statement noted that Riyadh was financing and arming international terrorists and extremists.

To halt the deterioration in the Russia-Saudi relationship, both sides have decided to set aside differences over Russian policy in Syria and pursue cooperation in areas of mutual interest. A recalibration in the relationship was particularly important in light of the January 2015 succession of King Salman to the Saudi throne. Moscow has tried, when possible, to accommodate Saudi sensibilities. In a telephone call to King Salman in April 2015, Putin invited the king to Russia, pledging greater cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. The king responded by thanking Putin for Russia's abstention on a UN Security Council resolution imposing an arms embargo on the Houthis in Yemen, against whom the Saudis had unleashed a relentless military campaign.<sup>154</sup> Then-Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense Mohammed bin Salman (MBS—son of King Salman) met with President Putin in St. Petersburg on the sidelines of the International Economic Forum in June 2015. This meeting yielded six agreements, including an important deal on nuclear energy cooperation under which Moscow would be compensated for operating up to sixteen nuclear power reactors.<sup>155</sup> Riyadh signed deals to invest \$10 billion in Russia.<sup>156</sup>



In November 2015, Putin met King Salman on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Antalya, Turkey, where they discussed the crises in Syria and Yemen.<sup>157</sup> Addressing the seeming thaw in Russia-Saudi relations, Russian Middle East expert Irina Zvyagelskaya cautioned:

In the past, relations between Russia and Saudi Arabia were very bad, so any movement is going to attract notice. But I wouldn't exaggerate this. Everyone is jockeying for a better position, seeking what advantages they can, but there are no earthshaking changes underway here.<sup>158</sup>

MBS visited Russia again on May 30, 2017. Meeting Putin in Moscow, the two leaders pledged to deepen their cooperation and continue to work on bridging their differences on Syria.<sup>159</sup> In light of King Salman's June 2017 elevation of MBS to crown prince, making him first in the line of monarchical succession, the latter is likely to have an even bigger say in matters of foreign and defense policies. Russia and Saudi Arabia have reasons to work around areas of bilateral tension. Moscow needs partners to help overcome the effects of Western sanctions that have adversely affected the Russian economy. Under its new leadership, the Saudi Kingdom has unveiled *Vision 2030*—a new plan to diversify the Saudi economy away from its dependence on oil exports and establish a regional power that is open to the world for business. It sees Russia as an important cog in the wheel of its new program.<sup>160</sup> The significance of this burgeoning relationship was underscored in October 2017 when Saudi King Salman traveled to Moscow, with a large entourage, for the first-ever state visit to Russia by a reigning Saudi monarch.

In February 2007, during his mission of friendship to the Arab world, Putin's delegation had traveled from Riyadh to Qatar, where the focus of discussion was on cooperation between the two major gas producers on better managing the worldwide supply of the commodity. Putin agreed to study the idea of a gas cartel, on the model of OPEC, and to send a delegation to a conference later in the spring that Qatar was organizing to explore the subject.<sup>161</sup> As with Saudi Arabia, differing approaches over the 2011 Syrian uprisings led to strained relations between the two countries. In December 2011, when Vladimir Titorenko, Russian ambassador to Qatar, was injured in a scuffle with airport security and customs officials at Doha airport, Russia downgraded its relations with Qatar.<sup>162</sup>

The third stop on Putin's Middle Eastern sojourn in February 2007 had been Jordan, whose King Abdullah II had twice visited Russia, and where Putin not only discussed economic and diplomatic coordination but had a meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Trade between the two countries has steadily increased, even though the total volume, at under \$200 million, is small. At the 2012 meeting of the Jordanian-Russian Business Forum in Amman, Industry and Trade Minister Shabib Ammari called for a strengthening of economic, investment, and commercial relations with Russia.<sup>163</sup> In March 2015, Jordan signed a \$10 billion deal with Russia to build two 1,000 megawatt nuclear

reactors to support heavy domestic demand for energy.<sup>164</sup> As a Sunni-majority country in close alignment with the United States, Jordan, which shares a border with Syria, was caught flat-footed by Russia’s active Syrian military intervention. To ensure that Jordanian interests would not be sidelined, King Abdullah agreed to set up a “special working mechanism” in Amman to coordinate their respective military actions on Syria.<sup>165</sup> As a result of this Russian outreach, Moscow has been careful to include Amman in consultations on Syria.<sup>166</sup>

Moscow’s most recent relations with the Arab world have been defined by two evolving circumstances in the Middle East: Russia’s role in Syria and the crisis that has pitted Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies against Qatar. Both developments were playing out against the backdrop of the Saudi-Iranian play for regional hegemony. Moscow has had to square its attempts to forge cordial ties with all the major players in the Middle East against policy choices that have increasingly brought Russia in closer alignment with Iranian objectives in Syria, Yemen, and Qatar. In Syria, Moscow’s pro-Assad predilections are shared by Iran but not by the Sunni-majority Arab states in the region, foremost among them Saudi Arabia, and by non-Arab Turkey.

The Qatari crisis began soon after U.S. President Trump’s first foreign visit to Riyadh on May 20–21, 2017, when in a speech to a gathering of over fifty Arab and Muslim leaders, he placed the responsibility for Islamist terrorism squarely on the shoulders of the Iranian leadership.<sup>167</sup> This was music to Saudi ears. Despite enduring American interests in Qatar, home of an important U.S. military base that is important to Washington’s military support of Syrian rebels, Riyadh interpreted Trump’s words as a signal that Washington would offer unqualified support to assertive Saudi actions against that country. On June 5, 2017, the Saudi leadership, joined by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, severed diplomatic ties with Qatar, blockaded the country’s only land border with Saudi Arabia, and cut off sea and air travel. These moves were designed to inflict economic pain on the oil- and gas-rich country and castigate both Doha’s support for Islamist groups (such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) and the Qatari leadership’s refusal to join in anti-Iranian efforts led by the Saudis. Libya, Yemen, and the Maldives soon joined in the Qatari diplomatic boycott.

Russia’s interests lie in temperate, if not warm, relations with both Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Concerned that the Qatari crisis could derail the ongoing Russia-led Astana reconciliation process on Syria, Russian officials, from President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov to Mikhail Bogdanov, Putin’s special envoy to the Middle East, have been collectively urging the parties to seek a diplomatic *modus vivendi*. On the very day the crisis erupted, Putin phoned Turkey’s President Erdoğan and both issued a call to leaders of the Gulf countries to begin talks. Lavrov conveyed the same message to the Qatari foreign minister.<sup>168</sup> The next day, Putin spoke separately with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and the Emir of Qatar. Bogdanov, meanwhile, met in Moscow with the ambassadors of Qatar and Egypt and with Libyan General Khalifa’s representative in an effort

to defuse tensions.<sup>169</sup> On June 13, Putin discussed the Qatar situation with King Salman,<sup>170</sup> but Russia's frenetic telephone diplomacy yielded few results.

As for the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Russia was again seeking to play a major role, but with limited success. Yevgeny Primakov, a specialist on the Middle East, had seemed determined that during his term as foreign minister Russia would move back onto the center stage of diplomacy in the region. During earlier phases, Moscow had been handicapped by its lack of influence with Israel. This had changed—as did so many other features of Moscow's foreign policy—during the late Gorbachev period. By 1988, Soviet restrictions on Jewish emigration to Israel had eased and consular missions were opened. In October 1991 full diplomatic relations, broken after the Six-Day War in 1967, were restored. At the end of that month Gorbachev attended the Madrid conference on Middle East peace, which was co-chaired by the USSR.

Yeltsin's government moved quickly to further strengthen Russian-Israeli relations. Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi visited Israel in April 1992, and the following August, Shimon Peres made the first visit to Moscow by an Israeli foreign minister. The following month Peres and Kozyrev signed an agreement calling for closer relations in several spheres. Trade relations between the two countries began to increase at a dizzying speed, moving from only \$70 million in 1991 and \$280 million in 1993 to about \$650 million in 1995. Finally, much to the chagrin of Yeltsin's domestic critics, Moscow demonstrated an unaccustomed even-handedness in the ongoing Arab-Israeli peace process, and Kozyrev was invited to the White House in September 1993 to celebrate the Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestinians.

The strong showing by Zhirinovsky and the nationalist forces in the Duma elections of December 1993 may have motivated Yeltsin initially to play a more independent role in Middle East negotiations, following the disarray caused by the February 1994 massacre of twenty-nine Palestinian worshippers by a Jewish settler in the West Bank town of Hebron. Without consulting Washington, Yeltsin dispatched Kozyrev to Tunis to meet with Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat, urged a reconvening of the Madrid conference, and supported the demand of the Arabs for international observers to protect West Bank Palestinians. In April, Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made separate visits to Moscow for consultations with Yeltsin. Although Moscow was not coordinating its initiative with Washington, it nevertheless remained even-handed. Rabin, a former general, was even invited to lecture at the General Staff Academy in Moscow, and he extracted two promises from the Russians—to use their influence with Syria to help in locating captured Israeli soldiers, and to forgo the sale of any new offensive weapons to Syria.

By this point, Moscow had only limited influence in Syria, which had been refusing to negotiate with the Yeltsin government about its substantial debt (more than \$10 billion) to the USSR. However, it was not until the debt issue was cleared up that Russian-Syrian relations were able to resume at a significant level. And the

solution to the debt question with Syria undoubtedly had to wait until Russia was far enough along in its economic recovery that collecting debts was less important for it than reasserting a position of influence in a neighboring region of strategic importance. As it happened, Putin’s ability to reach a settlement with Syria was to set a pattern that would be replicated (as we have seen above) with two other former Soviet client states—Libya and Algeria.

The breakthrough came in January 2005, when Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, during a visit to Moscow, agreed to an arrangement that would reduce the Syrian debt to Russia, by then valued at \$13.4 billion, by 73 percent, to \$3.6 billion. This agreement, which was given final approval at the end of the year, cleared the way for Syria to purchase large amounts of Russian weaponry, including advanced fighter jets and surface-to-air missile systems. Of possibly greater significance was the agreement by Syria to allow Russia to refurbish naval facilities in the ports of Tartus and Latakia that had once been the headquarters of the Soviet Mediterranean fleet.<sup>171</sup> The resumption of the military relationship between Damascus and Moscow, so critical to the Soviet posture in the Middle East during the Cold War, was decidedly unpopular with the Israeli and American governments, but it was a clear signal of the intention by a much stronger Russia to rebuild its position of influence in the region.

Syria was not spared from the uprisings of the Arab Spring, but Assad was determined not to cede power to the anti-government rebels. This led to a protracted civil war in Syria, which soon became internationalized. The situation in the country was volatile as rival Sunni groups, variously supported by foreign powers, often fought each other even as they battled for control against President Bashar al-Assad. Assad fought back with the support of loyalist members of the Syrian Army and security forces, as well as backing from Russia and Iran.<sup>172</sup> Of the insurgent groups in Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was the most revisionist as it sought to erase territorial borders and establish an Islamic Caliphate. The Free Syrian Army (FSA), made up of former Syrian military officers and conscripts, ostensibly supported a democratic and pluralist country. They were active mostly in the south of the country and were supported by the United States and Jordan. Arrayed against the FSA were many militants who supported a jihadi objective of creating a state founded on religious principles derived from Islam. Other than ISIS, there were two major groups: the Kurdish Democratic Party (PYD) and the Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (JFS). Until July 2016, the JFS went by the name of Jabhat al-Nusra. A former affiliate of Al-Qaeda, the name change was occasioned by its leader’s disavowal of the Al-Qaeda link.<sup>173</sup> The PYD, which fielded the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), had control over Kurdish-majority areas in northern Syria. The PYD formed the backbone of the U.S. supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

In pursuit of counterterrorism objectives, the United States provided the YPG with air cover and military advisors. This riled Turkey, a NATO ally, which suspects the PYD of ties with the insurgent Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in

Turkey. Thus, although Turkey supported U.S. goals both of a post-Assad Syria and of fighting ISIS, Ankara was not a willing U.S. partner. In providing Assad with economic support and military advisors who have worked with Lebanese-based Hezbollah and other Shi'a militants from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan in battling Sunni groups, Tehran's objectives in Syria coincided with those of Russia.

Russia has consistently supported Syria's Assad from the start of the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. Moscow's conservative approach and opposition to regime change date back to the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the "color revolutions" in the post-Soviet space (see Chapter 6). Early Russian support of Assad consisted in using its veto power in the UN Security Council to shield the Syrian government from Western censure and in providing passive economic and military support. Direct Russian military intervention in Syria on behalf of President Assad began with air strikes at the end of September 2015 and the deployment of ground troops in November–December.<sup>174</sup> Even though Moscow claimed that ISIS was its primary target, Western observers noted that Russian air power was often used against other anti-government forces. In particular, this was the case in the heavy bombardment that preceded the defeat of opposition forces in Aleppo in December 2015.

With Russian help, Assad was able to reassert control over several rebel-held territories. In mid-March 2016, approximately six months after the first air strikes, Putin declared the Syrian intervention a success and declared that he was pulling out the majority of Russian ground troops.<sup>175</sup> By the end of 2017, with Russian support, ISIS was largely defeated in Syria. One significant outcome of the Russian intervention was that Assad's ouster was no longer a baseline for U.S. diplomatic negotiations on Syria. Washington moved from an "Assad must go" position under President Obama to a more flexible view on Syria's future. Russia has, through its support of Assad, gained important military assets in Syria. Russia's Syrian intervention has also given Moscow three military bases in the country. The newest base in Khirbet Raes al-Waer, located near Damascus, is under construction. The other two bases are Hmeimim Air Base, southeast of Latakia, and a naval base in the port city of Tartus, under lease for 49 years and renewable subject to mutual consent for another 25 years.<sup>176</sup> In Chapter 10 we will discuss the significance of Russia's intervention in Syria for its relationship with the United States and its effort to reassert both its regional and its global prominence.

As early as 1996, the stage had been set for a major effort by Primakov, newly appointed foreign minister, to bring Moscow's diplomacy back to the forefront of the Arab-Israeli relationship. The opportunity came in April, when Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath in response to shelling of northern Israeli settlements by Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon. Primakov traveled to Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, offering himself as mediator in the conflict and hinting that Russia would be able to exert influence over forces in both Syria and Iran

that could assist in normalizing the situation in Lebanon. His meeting with Prime Minister Peres was described as "difficult," and Peres reportedly told him that Israel was interested only in U.S. mediation. A similar message came to Primakov from Washington, in a telephone call from Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who said, "We can handle this without you."<sup>177</sup> Repeated visits by the Russian foreign minister during the latter years of Yeltsin's administration brought some improvement in relations between both sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but Primakov's efforts to stimulate the peace process brought little success.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, visiting Moscow in March 1997, declared that Israel now considered Russia to be a "friendly state," and announced a \$50 million loan for Russian agricultural development. However, there were evidently serious disagreements between him and his Russian hosts, especially about Moscow's arms sales to Syria and Iran. Primakov assured Netanyahu that Russia was not supplying missiles to Iran, and Yeltsin apparently promised him that Moscow would not sell state-of-the-art weapons to Syria.<sup>178</sup> But once again, Russia's active pursuit of opportunities in the weapons market was being regarded as a major obstacle to its acceptance as a responsible partner by all sides in the regional conflict.

Netanyahu reportedly had told the Russians that "there shouldn't be two chefs in the same kitchen"—in other words, that their help was not needed in efforts to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict—but Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, visiting Moscow a few months later, clearly was encouraging a greater Russian role in the region.

The Russian approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Putin's presidency was decidedly more even-handed than it had been in prior times, as illustrated by Russia's counseling Arafat against a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood. Perhaps Moscow's attitude toward the revived *intifada* (uprising) was affected by the realization that almost one out of four of Israel's citizens was now an ethnic Russian, and that some of the same radical elements spurring conflict in that region were also supporting the rebel forces in Chechnya. Nevertheless, Russia again stood on the sidelines as U.S. President Bill Clinton took the lead in attempting to mediate a solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were regular visitors to Russia over the next few years, and the statements made by both sides underscored the growing warmth of the relationship, despite disagreements over Russia's aid to Iran. Putin told Sharon in October 2002 that "Russia will never help Israel's enemies."<sup>179</sup> On his visit the following year, Sharon called Putin "a true friend of Israel" and declared that Russia was "one of the key players in the world arena."<sup>180</sup>

Russia's vigorous re-entry into the Arab world, which began with the settlement of Syria's debt in 2005 and Putin's February 2006 trip to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan, also featured an assertive re-entry into the diplomacy surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a member (together with the United States, the

EU, and the UN) of the “Madrid Quartet,” formed in 2002, Russia had generally coordinated its stance concerning the conflict with the West. Moreover, Putin had initially appeared to be friendlier to Israel than any of his predecessors; he became the first Russian head of state to visit Israel in April 2005.

However, the parliamentary elections held in the Palestinian territories in January 2006, which unexpectedly resulted in the victory of Hamas, led to a break in the Quartet’s facade of unity. Hamas, long considered a terrorist organization by the United States and Israel, has rejected the Israeli-Palestinian “peace process,” refusing even to acknowledge Israel’s right to exist. The immediate reaction in these countries was that Hamas should be isolated and that no aid destined for the Palestinian people should be given through Hamas unless it first disarms and recognizes Israel. Thus the United States and Israel were particularly disturbed to hear Putin’s post-election comment:

Our position with regard to Hamas differs from both the American and the West European positions. The Russian Foreign Ministry has never considered Hamas to be a terrorist organization. That doesn’t mean that we approve and support everything that Hamas does and all the statements that have been made lately. . . . We consider it a mistake to deny aid to the Palestinian people.<sup>181</sup>

The Israelis were said to interpret Putin’s statement as an effort to display Moscow’s independence from the United States. The Palestinians, however, were said to be “simply confused” by Putin’s decision to break ranks with the Quartet’s position.<sup>182</sup> American and Israeli anger intensified a few days later, when Putin departed even further from the Western strategy of isolating Hamas and announced that he had invited a delegation of its leaders to visit Moscow. One Israeli official termed Putin’s move “a real knife in the back.”

Foreign Minister Lavrov seemed partially to have assuaged the reaction, however, by assuring his Quartet partners that Russia did not intend to depart from the mediators’ position, and that Russia would inform Hamas that it would need to transform itself into a legitimate political movement, on the model of the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland. And when the Hamas delegation arrived in Moscow for a three-day visit in early March, Lavrov did indeed repeat this message. For his part, Putin deliberately absented himself from the talks.<sup>183</sup>

Although the end result of Putin’s intervention was not a change in the behavior of Hamas, and although the Israeli-Palestinian “peace process” remained more stubbornly stalled than ever because of the split between the Palestinian factions, the Russian initiative was a clear signal to the United States and the other Western powers as well as to the Arab world that Moscow had reasserted itself as a “player” in the Middle East. However, Russia’s efforts to be a potential mediator have not been very successful, even when Hamas is one of the interlocutors. In November 2012, when after days of violent clashes in Gaza, Israeli and Hamas representatives sat down for talks, it was Egyptian and American mediators who had been responsible for getting the parties together. Aleksey Malashenko of the

Moscow Carnegie Center has argued that Russia should focus on building better ties with Israel, rather than with Hamas, which has little to offer Russia. Russia's partnership with Israel spans cooperation in energy, military technology, and counterterrorism.

In June 2012, President Putin visited Israel and the West Bank, with 300 businessmen and officials in tow, seeking to strengthen economic and commercial links. And in early November 2012, Shimon Peres visited Moscow. With the large emigration of Russian Jews to Israel, that country was also a prime destination for Russian tourists, 314,000 of whom visited in the first half of 2012. In 2008, in recognition of this tourist traffic, both countries abolished visas for tourist travel. But politically, Moscow continues to take positions that Israel opposes, reiterating in November 2012, for instance, Russia's support for the Palestinian bid to be recognized as an independent state. Fyodor Lukyanov, editor-in-chief of *Russia in Global Affairs*, remarked, “Russia can't accomplish anything in Palestine and would be better off distancing itself from the process. Russia has enough on its hands with Syria.” Moscow is unlikely, however, to heed his counsel. A foreign ministry spokesman suggested that Russia was engaged in unspecified “active efforts” involving all sides in the conflict. In late 2012, Foreign Minister Lavrov opined that the Quartet was an “insufficient” format for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and suggested that the group work with the Arab League to fashion a resolution to the conflict.<sup>184</sup>

Moscow has continued to make vapid pronouncements on playing a constructive role in this intractable conflict. For instance, noting the unsuccessful efforts under the Obama administration to move the peace process forward, Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, in September 2016, noted that Israel and Palestine had “in principle” accepted the idea of Moscow-brokered talks in Russia—a statement that even Russian observers believed was more about posturing than about substance.<sup>185</sup> According to international affairs expert Vladimir Frolov, Moscow does not have

a new [peace] settlement plan or is counting on much progress during the talks. This is all about prestige and status, and to make the point that Russia is back in the Middle East as a player on equal footing with the US.<sup>186</sup>

### **Russian Policy in South Asia**

In the hands of Leonid Brezhnev and his immediate successors, the policy of the Soviet Union in South Asia was a function of three conflicts: Moscow's bitter rivalries with both Beijing and Washington, and (after 1979) the Soviet war in Afghanistan. When Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded in 1989 in withdrawing Soviet forces from Afghanistan and achieving a rapprochement with China, and when the Cold War ended the following year, the Soviet approach to the region changed markedly. The breakup of the USSR increased the geopolitical distance between



Moscow and South Asia, just as Yeltsin's and Kozyrev's initial orientation toward the United States and Europe effectively expanded the psychological distance; but, as we have seen, a combination of domestic political pressures and instability in the near abroad—especially in the Muslim-majority states of the Caucasus and Central Asia—heightened Russia's attention to the neighboring Asian states.

In Afghanistan, the communist regime of Mohammad Najibullah had survived the withdrawal of Soviet troops, largely because of the disunity of the opposition mujahideen forces. Upon assuming control in the Kremlin, Yeltsin cut off military aid and raw material supplies to Najibullah, contributing to the collapse of the Afghan communist government in April 1992. Kozyrev visited Kabul the following month and joined in a statement condemning the imperialistic policy that the USSR had conducted in Afghanistan. The new government in Kabul acknowledged that Moscow's political orientation had changed, but nevertheless asked for reparations from Russia to help in the rebuilding of the devastated country. In no position to comply, Kozyrev did offer to supply spare parts for the Soviet-made weapons found in great abundance in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan again became a crisis issue when the Taliban—then supported by Pakistan—captured Kabul in the fall of 1996. One of the Taliban's first actions was to execute the former communist president, Najibullah. Frightened by the prospect that its crusading pan-Islamic zeal would propel the Taliban northward, and ultimately across the Tajikistan and Uzbekistan borders, the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States held an emergency meeting at the beginning of October to discuss possible measures for collective defense.

The Taliban overreached in the north, alienating local leaders with its harsh policies and suffering military defeats that pushed it back almost to the gates of Kabul by late July 1997. Although the Taliban was still in control of the twenty or so Pashtun-majority provinces, a coalition of other factions dominated the nine provinces inhabited mainly by Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. These groups—later dubbed the “Northern Alliance”—were supported by Russia, the Central Asian states, Iran, and India—all united in fear of the Islamist extremism of which Primakov had warned. With no signs of an imminent compromise, however, the fighting continued in this unfortunate country, which had already lost 1.5 million people in more than two decades of war.<sup>187</sup>

By mid-2000, the Taliban had again gained control of virtually the entire country and was increasing its raids into Tajikistan. To the threat of an expansion of Islamist extremism into the former Soviet states of Central Asia, the Russians now added their alarm over evidence that the Taliban was assisting some of the “terrorist gangs” active in the renewed war in Chechnya. In April, Security Council Secretary Sergei Ivanov refused to rule out the option of pre-emptive strikes against “terrorist bases” in Afghanistan, and in July, at the G-8 meetings, President Putin informed his colleagues that “the main hot spot is more and more moving to Afghanistan.” Russia assembled the adherents of the Collective Security Treaty of the CIS in Bishkek (capital of Kyrgyzstan) in October to

condemn the growing threat from the Taliban. However, a contrary view was voiced by Uzbekistan's representatives, who were said to be suspicious that the threat was being exaggerated by Moscow as a justification for increasing its military presence in the region.<sup>188</sup>

A determination to curb the Taliban's support for terrorism and to force it to expel the operations of Osama bin Laden was one goal that found Russia and the United States in accord during this period of troubled relations. In December the two states persuaded the UN Security Council to impose stronger sanctions against Afghanistan. The assassination on September 9, 2001, of Ahmed Shah Massoud, the charismatic leader of the Northern Alliance, appeared to be a serious setback to the anti-Taliban cause. But the terrorist attacks launched two days later against the United States by bin Laden's operatives, and the subsequent refusal of the Taliban to cease its protection of Al-Qaeda, unleashed the military might of the world's only remaining superpower in the region for the first time. Russia gave important support to the American military strike against the terrorists and their Taliban supporters. We discuss the nature of this support and its consequences in detail in Chapter 9.

Suffice it to say that this support waned after the United States launched the war in Iraq in 2003, which Russia opposed. American unilateralism became a subject of considerable debate in Russia in succeeding years, fueled by Moscow's suspicions of active American support for the “color revolutions” in the post-Soviet space that began in 2003. An active U.S. and later NATO military presence in Afghanistan left Russia on the sidelines until 2006. Thereafter, when President Karzai's relationship with Western powers turned increasingly fractious, he sought to rebuild links with other countries, including Russia. With the Taliban showing renewed strength since 2007, Moscow, ever concerned with the contagion of radical Islam seeping into the Central Asian space and Chechnya, once again sought to be more engaged in Afghanistan. Russia staunchly stood by the Afghan president when, after the 2009 presidential elections that many considered to have been rigged, Karzai came under Western pressure to share power with opposition forces. In an effort to increase its diplomatic footprint, Moscow also attempted to reach out to the “moderate” elements of the Taliban.

In 2010, Russia forgave Afghanistan's roughly \$12 billion debt and followed that gesture with involvement in several infrastructure projects in the country.<sup>189</sup> In the late 2000s, Russia's cooperation with the American effort in Afghanistan assumed greater importance after Islamabad's already contentious relationship with the United States worsened with the American covert operation in Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011. Concerned over the integrity of NATO's logistical routes into Afghanistan through Pakistan, to which Islamabad, for political reasons, periodically closed access, the United States had decided to end the Pakistani monopoly on supply lines. In July 2009, after arduous negotiations between Russia and NATO, Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed a military transit agreement that would give NATO a northern supply route to Afghanistan

through Russia and the Central Asian states.<sup>190</sup> Though more costly, NATO used this northern route when Pakistan closed the Khyber Pass to NATO transport vehicles in response to the alleged killing of twenty-four Pakistani soldiers by a U.S. drone attack in November 2011. Further evidence of increased Russian engagement was a May 2011 Russian agreement with the United States for the supply of twenty-one Mi-17B5 military transport helicopters to Afghanistan, with nine to be delivered by the end of 2011 and the remainder in 2012.<sup>191</sup>

The United States had made a strategic decision to purchase hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Russian-made arms, with which the Afghans were familiar, rather than retrain them in using sophisticated Western military hardware. By April 2013, Russian defense ministry officials were openly talking of setting up "maintenance bases" in Afghanistan for servicing Russian-made military equipment after NATO withdrawal. After having failed to convince NATO to stay in Afghanistan until the security situation stabilized, Moscow stepped up its role in a region that borders on its backyard. As it turned out, however, NATO and U.S. presence in Afghanistan never completely ended. In June 2013, the Afghan Army took over command of all military and security operations from NATO. In September 2014, after two rounds of the presidential election that produced inconclusive results, the two top vote-getters, Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, agreed on a power-sharing agreement, and Ghani was sworn in as president. Soon after, in October, the U.S. and U.K. terminated combat operations in Afghanistan, and in December, NATO formally ended its Afghan operation.

NATO's role, however, continued in January 2015 with Operation "Resolute Support" to provide training for Afghan security personnel, and this mission was later extended to the end of 2016. When in March 2015 an ISIS group captured a large swath of territory in eastern Afghanistan previously controlled by the Taliban, President Ghani requested a delay in the withdrawal of American forces in his country. President Obama acquiesced by authorizing 9,600 U.S. troops to remain through 2016. In mid-July, as the security situation in Afghanistan showed no signs of abating, Obama pledged to keep 8,400 U.S. troops there into 2017, with NATO agreeing to sustain troop levels and provide funding for Afghan security forces until 2020. Afghanistan continues to be buffeted by fighting between its army and security forces on the one hand and Taliban and ISIS fighters on the other, with each side intermittently winning and losing territory. In June 2017, for instance, ISIS forces captured the mountainous region of Tora Bora.<sup>192</sup> Taliban forces control vast areas of the country. Under these precarious conditions, U.S. Army Commander in Afghanistan John W. Nicholson requested a reluctant President Trump to send an additional 5,000 troops.<sup>193</sup> Nicholson also alleged that Russia was offering "covert and overt" assistance to the Taliban "to undermine U.S. and NATO" efforts.<sup>194</sup>

Moscow's objectives in Afghanistan are twofold: ensuring the serviceability of weapons used by the Afghan military and security forces, and establishing a forward presence to prevent Islamic radicalism from spilling over into Central

Asia and Chechnya.<sup>195</sup> Afghanistan's political future is closely interlinked both with strategic decisions made by leaders in Islamabad regarding the Taliban and with developments in the largely lawless and politically volatile northwestern tribal zone. Additionally, the growing religious radicalization of Pakistan's majority Muslim population has the potential to destabilize not only Pakistan, but also Afghanistan. In an effort to insert Russian influence in its former client state, Moscow organized a peace conference in Moscow in February 2017, inviting representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, and China, but pointedly excluding the United States and NATO. According to Aleksey Malashenko, while Moscow has legitimate worries about the spread of Islamic radicalism from Afghanistan to the Central Asian states, Putin is "also using ISIS and Taliban presence to assert the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. . . ."<sup>196</sup>

The long-standing and cordial relationship with India, which shares with Russia a deep concern over terrorism and radical Islam, has always been one that Moscow and New Delhi have been loathe to undermine. However, New Delhi's strengthening ties with the United States in the twenty-first century, among other pressures, have prompted Moscow to respond by seeking links with India's South Asian rival Pakistan. In a clear signal to India, this outreach has included sales to Islamabad of military assault helicopters that New Delhi considers will be used against India. Moscow had heretofore studiously avoided military sales to Pakistan in deference to its special relationship with India. Moscow's willingness to cross New Delhi on what is for India a critical interest has created visible strains, but it is unlikely to create an open rupture, as both countries continue to have convergent interests in many areas.

During the 1980s, the Soviet Union's military involvement in Afghanistan had influenced Moscow's relationships in the decades-long conflict between India and Pakistan. The latter country served as the main base for the Afghan opposition forces, as well as the conduit for American and Chinese aid to the mujahideen, and Pakistan's relations with the USSR during the long war were extremely tense. In the period after the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan's aid to the Taliban was not particularly motivated by ideological affinity; rather, it was part of its effort to turn Afghanistan into a strategic reserve in its conflict with India, as well as to gain leverage over militant Islamic forces that were conducting struggles in Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>197</sup>

As for India, although it had been uncomfortable with the intrusion of super-power military force into the internal struggles of a Third World neighbor, it was sufficiently nervous about the threat of Islamist extremism to keep its concerns muted, especially in light of its unwillingness to jeopardize Soviet support in its conflicts with Pakistan and China. However, the rise of militant Islamist forces in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal placed at risk India's long-term interest in countering Pakistan's strategic ambitions by keeping a more moderate government in power in Kabul.

Nevertheless, it was the Sino-Soviet rapprochement and the end of the Cold War, more than Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, which appeared to have the greatest direct impact on Moscow's relations on the subcontinent in the 1990s. Absent the ideological and geopolitical struggles with Beijing and Washington, Moscow's security interests in India were considerably diminished. From the standpoint of trade relations as well, it seemed likely that decline was in prospect. The long-standing problem of a lack of complementarity in their respective economies was exacerbated by a mutual shortage of hard currency and a newly competitive relationship in world capital markets. Even the product that had long been Moscow's chief export to India—weaponry—seemed less appealing to military purchasers in New Delhi after the shortcomings of Soviet-made arms and Soviet war-fighting doctrine had been revealed in the Persian Gulf War.

India had become accustomed to receiving more attention from the Kremlin than any other non-aligned country; it was the only Third World country Brezhnev had ever visited as general secretary (and he went twice), and it also received Gorbachev twice, in 1986 and 1988. Thus the falloff in attentiveness during Gorbachev's last years in office, which continued in Yeltsin's first year and which resulted from Moscow's changing perceptions of its security and economic needs, was acutely felt and perceived as neglect by New Delhi. The major topic of difficult discussions between the two governments in 1992 concerned the financial exchange rates to be used in settling their current trade transactions, and the prospects for repayment of India's \$6 billion debt to Russia. The two sides worked out a trade protocol that called for trade volume to be maintained at the 1991 level of \$2.2 billion, with India providing tea, coffee, spices, medicines, and raw materials for consumer goods production, and Russia providing oil, metals, copper, newsprint, and arms. India did not have hard currency reserves sufficient to pay in convertible currency, but the credits Russia granted for arms sales were on tougher terms than in the prior period.

During Yeltsin's second term, Russia's orientation toward India was in a different context. Rather than seeing India as a possible counterweight to China—the long-held Soviet approach—Primakov began to speak of an alignment joining Moscow, Beijing, and New Delhi as a new “pole” to balance the would-be unipolar power, the United States. In New Delhi in December 1998 as Russian prime minister—and clearly disturbed by the latest U.S.-U.K. bombing campaign against Iraq—he answered affirmatively to a reporter's question as to whether a “new pole in world politics” would be desirable. The Indians were silent on the subject, no doubt aware not only that the project would increase tensions with Washington but also that it was rather unrealistic in the face of the long-standing rivalry between themselves and China. This latter consideration faded somewhat in the opening days of 2001, as a result of a lengthy and apparently cordial visit to India by China's third-ranking leader, Li Peng. Indeed, beginning in June 2005, the three powers have staged regular meetings of their foreign ministers, which

routinely issue declarations insisting on “multipolarization” of global politics. The joint communique issued at the 2016 annual joint meeting of the Russia-India-China (RIC) consultative grouping, which met in Moscow in April, included the *de rigueur* mention of the world’s transition to a “multi-polar international system.”<sup>198</sup> The scheduled 2017 trilateral RIC meeting of foreign ministers, which was to have been held in New Delhi in April 2017, was cancelled when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi refused to attend the meeting in an atmosphere of rising tensions between India and China over their contested border.<sup>199</sup>

The continuing edginess of the Sino-Indian relationship is not the only factor that has clouded the realization of Primakov’s vision of a “strategic triangle.” Just as important is the growing warmth in relations between India and the state against which the “triangle” was to have been aimed: the United States. In 2001 the Bush administration lifted sanctions against India, and India—delighted that Washington included two Pakistan-sponsored Kashmiri organizations on its terrorist list—became an enthusiastic member of the U.S.-sponsored coalition against Islamist extremist terrorism.

India disappointed both Moscow and Beijing by its relatively positive response to Bush’s decision to build a national missile defense (which New Delhi correctly gauged to be aimed as much at China’s growing arsenal as at any putative missile threat from a “rogue” regime). It was notable, in fact, that in the statement issued following the meeting of Russian, Chinese, and Indian foreign ministers held in October 2007, the Indian side failed to echo the Russian and Chinese criticism of U.S. plans for national missile defense. Whereas India was finding the “triangle” to be a convenient channel for strengthening its relations with China and Russia, it was evidently unwilling to join in the anti-American rhetoric indulged in by the other two states.

Ironically, in light of its strenuous objections in the early 1990s to Russia’s plans to supply India, a non-NPT state, with nuclear technology, the United States sought to intrude on Russia’s special relationship with India a dozen years later with its own offer of nuclear cooperation. In return for India’s agreeing to allow IAEA inspectors access to nuclear facilities it designates as “civilian,” the United States would lift its moratorium on nuclear trade with India, provide U.S. assistance to India’s civilian nuclear energy program, and expand U.S.-Indian cooperation in energy and satellite technology. In the meantime, Russia under Vladimir Putin continued to develop its own closer ties with India in parallel with its growing harmonization with China. During Putin’s first visit to India, in October 2000, the two sides signed a declaration of “strategic partnership” that had been prepared for the 1998 visit that Boris Yeltsin had canceled. The essence of the partnership continued to be weaponry. About 70 percent of India’s arms were of Soviet origin, and the Russians were eager to conclude several major sales. India sought and won major price concessions—a sign of how desperately Moscow needed the orders to keep its defense industry alive. Indeed, one Russian journalist, impressed with the number of concessions that Russia was making,

concluded that “India is becoming not just an equal partner, but in many ways the senior partner in the bilateral relationship.”<sup>200</sup>

Putin’s second visit to New Delhi, in December 2002, focused on consolidating the “strategic partnership” and established a joint working group on counter-terrorism. Putin’s visit followed a year of heightened Indian concern about Pakistani sponsorship of terrorist groups, which had struck both in Kashmir and at the very heart of New Delhi itself. Accordingly, the Indians placed special significance on the joint declaration, which said, “states that abet terrorists or give them haven are guilty of committing terrorist acts to the same degree as the terrorists themselves.”

On his fourth visit to India as Russia’s president, in January 2007, Vladimir Putin was the honored guest at the Republic Day parade. Seemingly aimed at revitalizing a relationship that appeared to be weakening in the wake of India’s growing ties with the United States, Putin’s visit was the setting for the signing of fifteen “new and concrete steps” in such fields as energy cooperation. Prime Minister Singh affirmed that the Russian-Indian strategic partnership was based on a “profound coincidence” of national interests. The two sides acknowledged, however, that bilateral trade was still languishing; at somewhat less than \$5 billion in 2008, it was one-tenth the volume of trade that either party had with China. In 2009, the trade volume rose 8 percent to \$9 billion, but that figure is still dwarfed by the volume of India’s trade with China and with the United States. Russia and India set their target figure for bilateral trade at \$20 million by 2015. During Prime Minister Putin’s March 2010 visit to New Delhi, commercial contracts worth \$10 billion were signed.<sup>201</sup> Underscoring the significance of their mutual ties, the joint statement issued following the 2010 Delhi summit characterized the relationship as a “special and privileged partnership.”<sup>202</sup>

As one of Russia’s largest arms purchasers, India’s decision to turn down the Russian bid for the supply of medium-range 126-fighters for the Indian Air Force in 2011, settling instead on a choice between the French Rafale and the Eurofighter Typhoon, disappointed Moscow. Russia “lost the biggest military tender of the century,” stated one commentary, adding that officials of Rosoboronexport had considered that they would have the winning bid because of their lower overall price and because the Rafale and Typhoon had not been tested in combat until the 2011 military operation in Libya.<sup>203</sup> Some Russian military experts noted that Indian efforts at diversification worked against Russia, which monopolizes the Indian market for the SU-30MKI heavy, all-weather, long-range fighters.

In 2012, India and Russia celebrated the sixty-fifth anniversary of their diplomatic relationship. The year saw a string of noteworthy events: a late March visit to India by President Medvedev who was in Delhi to attend the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping) summit; an autumn summit-level meeting between President Putin and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh; the induction of INS *Chakra*, a Russian nuclear-powered submarine leased to the Indian Navy; and the launch of the Kudankulam nuclear power plant built with Russian technical assistance, with power generation expected by August 2013.<sup>204</sup>

In July 2013, the INS *Vikramaditya*—a Russian aircraft carrier, formerly the *Admiral Gorshkov*, that had been refitted for the Indian Navy—began its final sea trials. This handover, which was five years late and more than two times over budget, caused much acrimony in the relationship over a contract that had been signed in 2005. Finally, in late November 2013, the INS *Vikramaditya* was inducted into the Indian Navy and set sail for its homeport of Karwar on India’s western coast.

New Delhi’s decision to diversify its sources of arms has been a recurring point of contention with Moscow. India has purchased arms from Europe, Israel, and the United States. However, even as India’s second largest arms supplier, the United States ranks a distant second to Russia based on trend value indicators. Between 2012 and 2016, Russia’s share of arms sales to India was 68 percent, in contrast to a U.S. share of 14 percent, with 7.2 percent for Israel.

Russian worries about the extent of future arms sales to India are easier to understand when one examines other statistics, such as the share in total percent of arms exports. New Delhi accounts for approximately 38 percent of Russian arms sales, while India does not even rank among the top three purchasers of U.S. arms, with 47 percent of U.S. arms exported to countries in the Middle East.<sup>205</sup> Speaking with PTI (Press Trust of India) reporters in St. Petersburg during his 2017 annual summit with Prime Minister Modi, Putin suggested that Russia’s close relationship with India would not be “diluted” by Moscow’s growing ties with Pakistan, adding, “We do not have tight [military] relations with Pakistan.”<sup>206</sup> The 2017 summit concluded with several bilateral agreements on civil nuclear energy, joint development of advanced weapons systems, cooperation on combating terrorism, and on efforts to boost bilateral trade and investment. Of these, the signing of the General Framework Agreement and Credit Protocol for the construction of two more nuclear power plants at Kudankulam, and the announcement of first ever tri-services exercise INDRA-2017, was significant.<sup>207</sup>

In recent years, Russia’s “soft power” in India has also declined. In an effort to reverse this trend, the two governments declared that 2008 would be the “Year of Russia” in India and 2009 would be the “Year of India” in Russia. Efforts to cultivate cultural awareness have been ongoing, with a Festival of Russian Culture held in India in October–November 2012. But while the Russians proudly noted that there was a record number of Indian students in Russia (4,500) and 30,000 Russian-speakers in India, these numbers compare very unfavorably with the reach of the United States, with 75,000 Indian students, and with English continuing to be the *lingua franca* for India’s elite. While the number of Indian students in Russia has not changed, the United States in 2015–16 registered an Indian student population of 165,918.<sup>208</sup>

Despite the snags that periodically ruffle Indo-Russian ties and weak trade links between the two countries, the relationship is likely to remain fairly robust as long as the strategic elements underpinning their shared interests converge. These include their desire to check the spread of Islamist terrorism, their common



objectives in Afghanistan, and the desire of India to check rising Chinese influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean complementing that of Russia in curtailing Chinese penetration into Central Asia. But Russia's ability to keep India out of the U.S. orbit is likely to be limited.

There are signs, though, of a weakening in the strategic foundation on which the Indo-Soviet and then the India-Russia relationship was built. In the twenty-first century, New Delhi has, more or less successfully, unshackled its foreign policy from a primary focus on Pakistan and has assiduously sought international engagement. Prime Minister Modi's "Act East" policy toward Southeast Asia, vigorous outreach to Japan, South Korea, EU member countries, and the United States, and his downplaying of India's Cold-War-era non-alignment suggest an aspiration to promote India's interests assertively on the global stage.<sup>209</sup> Ties with Russia represent only one, even if long-standing and significant, part of this picture.

Moscow's quest for a global role has brought Russia into a (perhaps short- to medium-term) strategic embrace of China. As Moscow prioritizes its competitive relationship with the United States, the Russian relationship with India is often viewed through the prism of the India-U.S. relationship. Moscow's actions in the post-Soviet space and in the Middle East reflect Putin's vision of a Russia that is relevant and significant as a major player in international politics and as an equal of the United States. Moscow's budding relationship with Pakistan and Putin's decision to work with the Afghan Taliban should be viewed as part and parcel of Russia's desire for greater relevance in Afghanistan. According to Pakistan's former military attaché,

We should not forget that there was a time when there was a Quadrilateral Coordination Group consisting of China, Pakistan, US, and Afghanistan to discuss reconciliation in Afghanistan in 2016. This threatened Russia and it entered into separate talks with China and Pakistan regarding Afghanistan.<sup>210</sup>

While New Delhi agrees with Moscow on combating terrorism, India's leadership has consistently held back from any diplomatic engagement with the Afghan Taliban, which has successfully targeted Indian assets and personnel in Afghanistan in terrorist attacks. Moscow's sponsorship in late December 2016 of talks on Afghanistan with Pakistan and China, and excluding India, may have been aimed at pleasing Islamabad.<sup>211</sup> When New Delhi and Kabul protested their exclusion, both India and Afghanistan, along with Iran, were invited to talks in February.<sup>212</sup> In April 2017, Russia hosted eleven countries, including Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asian states, to multi-nation talks on security and national reconciliation in Afghanistan. Wary of Russia's role, the United States, which was invited, declined to go. Neither did the Afghan Taliban.<sup>213</sup> If the India-Russia nexus comes to be viewed by both sides in tactical rather than in strategic terms, merely as a way to continue a mutually indispensable arms relationship, the "special and privileged partnership" may come to be

questioned on both sides. In the short- to medium-term, however, neither country is likely to jeopardize their still strong bilateral partnership.

Nevertheless, unlike the United States, Russia until 2014 had not flirted with Pakistan and has not criticized India for its behavior in Kashmir, nor has India criticized Russia about Chechnya or its lagging democratic development. There is a history of trust in this relationship that has certainly been absent in the relations between New Delhi and Washington. Moscow continues to feel that over the long term Beijing, unlike New Delhi, may yet emerge as a potential rival to Russia, and this is yet another reason why Moscow has continued for a half-century to cultivate friendship with India and to ensure that its military potential does not lag behind China's. While Pakistan's importance to Russia has remained relatively high because of Moscow's concerns about the stability of Afghanistan and the states of Central Asia, Pakistan's political elites remained cool due to Russia's traditional pro-Indian “tilt.” But small signs of change are evident, as we will discuss below.

Upon his appointment as foreign minister in January 1996, Primakov had listed non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among Russia's priority interests. Nevertheless, Moscow has not been in the forefront of international efforts to this end, and Washington has publicly accused it of assisting both Indian and Iranian nuclear programs. Thus, it was not especially surprising when the Russians failed to heed the U.S. call for G-8 sanctions against India and Pakistan when those countries tested nuclear weapons in May 1998. The Russians expressed regret, and Yeltsin—acknowledging that the Indian explosion had “put us on the spot”—promised to “make every effort to somehow overcome the problem” during his scheduled visit to “our very good friend” India later in 1998. Although Moscow must have shared the global concern about the heightened risk of nuclear war, it evidently saw no benefit in alienating India in the face of an irreversible reality.

After the events of September 11, 2001, changed the strategic calculus both globally and in South Asia, Russia joined with the United States and China to press more urgently for a settlement in Kashmir. Indeed, India and Pakistan came close to full-scale war in the year following the Al-Qaeda attack on the United States. Borrowing Washington's reasoning, India claimed a right to carry the fight against terrorists into the states that supported them. The Russians—seeing a parallel in their own conflict in Chechnya—showed considerable sympathy for the Indian position. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov declared in New Delhi that there should be no “double standards” in the fight against terrorism.<sup>214</sup> Nevertheless, Presidents Bush and Putin cooperated in efforts to restrain the Indians, and Bush pushed hard to gain key concessions from Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. In June, Putin—at the behest of the G-8—sought without evident success to bring Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and Musharraf together at a meeting they all attended in Kazakhstan. The Russian press proudly noted that this was the first occasion in the long South Asian conflict on which Moscow was speaking “on behalf of all the world's leading countries.”<sup>215</sup>

Musharraf's evident willingness to cooperate with the anti-terrorist coalition paved the way for his three-day visit to Moscow in February 2003. The results of the trip were said to be "modest": three relatively insignificant agreements on internal security, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic cooperation. Pakistan had hoped to conclude an agreement to participate in a joint gas pipeline with Russia, Iran, and India, but no such pact was signed. Putin was at pains to reassure India about the talks, calling Vajpayee prior to Musharraf's arrival and issuing a statement saying that development of constructive relations with Pakistan would take place "without damage to our traditional partners." Musharraf stressed that he was not asking Russia to mediate the Kashmir dispute. He did, however, offer assurance to the Russians that Pakistani territory would not be used to support terrorist activity, notably adding that Chechnya was a Russian domestic problem.<sup>216</sup> The one surprise was Musharraf's public expression of a desire for Pakistan to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The previous year, the Russians had reacted positively to the prospect of Indian membership in the group, but they refrained from any clear reaction to Pakistan's expression of interest.<sup>217</sup> At SCO's 2005 summit in Shanghai, India with Russia's support and Pakistan with China's support were granted observer status. Both countries sought membership in that body and were admitted as full members in June 2017.

Bowing to domestic political opposition, Musharraf resigned as president in August 2008 a few months after the inauguration of President Medvedev. Musharraf was succeeded in September 2008 by President Asif Ali Zardari. If the warmth exuded by leaders were a measure of the strength of a relationship, Russian-Pakistani ties appeared to be on an upswing under Medvedev and Zardari. Before their first stand-alone summit meeting in Moscow in May 2011, the two presidents met four times on the sidelines of multilateral meetings, with the most noteworthy being in Sochi in September 2010. The Sochi summit brought together leaders of Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan in a quadripartite format to discuss the Afghan situation. In a joint appearance with Zardari, Medvedev called for regular political dialogue and an expansion of opportunities for bilateral economic cooperation.<sup>218</sup> But a continued indication of Pakistan's low profile in Russia is bilateral trade, which had peaked in 2008 at \$600 million and dropped the following year under the impact of the financial crisis to \$400 million. Nevertheless, in a joint statement Medvedev and Zardari again spoke of their interest in forging a closer relationship, and signed agreements in the areas of energy and agriculture and agreed to join together in combating terrorism and drug trafficking.

In 2014, after a visit to Islamabad by Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Moscow lifted its embargo against sales of offensive weapons to Pakistan, signing an agreement for the delivery of four Mi-35M Hind-E assault helicopters.<sup>219</sup> In September–October 2016, the two countries conducted their first bilateral tactical exercises (Friendship-2016) at Pakistan's special forces training center in Cherat. Moscow has often sent mixed signals on Pakistan. In November 2016, following

a visit to Islamabad by Aleksandr Bortnikov, director of Russia’s Federal Security Service, Pakistanis reported a clear Russian interest in joining in the China-sponsored China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project that would allow land access to the Chinese-built Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea.<sup>220</sup> Such participation was later categorically rejected by the Russian foreign ministry. One Russian observer cautioned that Russia’s Pakistan policy is tactical rather than strategic, responding more to extrinsic factors, such as Russia’s poor relations with the West, its “bid” for a “global role,” its “interests in Central Asia and the Middle East,” and its “commitments to China.”<sup>221</sup>

Over the past half-century, the one constant hostile relationship in South Asia has been the conflict between India and Pakistan, and the one constant friendship has been that between Moscow and New Delhi. As a consequence, Moscow has been—and probably will continue to be—constrained in its ability to develop a strategically deeper relationship with Pakistan as long as the India-Pakistan rivalry continues. With all the other states that are involved in the region, Russia enjoys positive relations. Back in 2002, one journalist had stated that Russia seems to be intent on forging a “triangle of strategic stability, security and suppression of international terrorism with its corners in Moscow, Beijing, and New Delhi.”<sup>222</sup> Were Moscow’s outreach to Pakistan to go beyond tactical moves, this “triangle of strategic stability” that Russia has sought to cultivate may lose New Delhi as one of its vectors.

### **Beyond the Borders of the CIS: Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America**

The post-Cold War period witnessed a considerable decline in the level of Moscow’s interest and activity in the substantial regions of the “non-West” that are distant from the borders of the former Soviet Union. Facing a greatly reduced threat from the United States and China, and increasingly burdened with the financial costs of trying to maintain its global reach, the USSR under Gorbachev had participated in settling regional conflicts in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This had allowed it to cut substantially the level of its involvement in these three regions.

As we noted in Chapter 4, Moscow’s pressure on Vietnam to withdraw its troops from Cambodia helped to bring about the Sino-Soviet rapprochement, but it also allowed the Soviets to cut back the cost of their presence in Vietnam. Whereas the number of Soviet-Vietnamese summits in the Gorbachev period had averaged two per year prior to his visit to Beijing, there were none in 1990, and there was only one—described in the Russian press as “difficult and complicated”—in 1991. Trade between the two states was moved to a hard currency basis in January 1991, precipitating a fall in Moscow’s share of Vietnam’s trade from 60 percent in 1990 to 2 percent in 1996. In May 1992 the last Russian military advisors were withdrawn from Vietnam. Vietnam’s premier Vo Van Kiet visited Moscow in June 1994 to sign new economic agreements, but the talks did not produce a new

“cornerstone” document to replace the 1978 security treaty. Kozyrev journeyed to Hanoi in July 1995 to announce a Russian-Vietnamese agreement to keep the former Soviet naval base at Cam Ranh Bay open through 2004—a decision that was reversed by Putin in October 2001. Russia withdrew from the base in 2002.<sup>223</sup> But little progress was made in settling the issue of Vietnam’s \$10 billion debt to Russia until 2000. During a visit to Moscow by Vietnam’s prime minister, it was announced that 85 percent of the debt had been forgiven by Russia (although part of this cancellation was deemed to be a substitute for Russian rental payments for Cam Ranh Bay). Vietnam agreed to pay the remaining \$1.7 billion (later reduced to \$1.5 billion) over a twenty-three-year period.

Settlement of the debt issue cleared the way for Putin to visit Vietnam in March 2001—the first official visit ever by a Russian leader. Coming on the heels of a visit by President Clinton the previous autumn, Putin’s trip—one of many he made to Asia in his first year—clearly sought to reassert Moscow’s interest in cultivating ties with Vietnam. The two states signed a declaration of “strategic partnership,” and discussed Russian participation in oil exploration and electrical power projects. Vietnam’s payments on its debt were evidently to be cycled back as Russian investment in such projects. As for the inevitable discussion of arms sales, it appeared that Vietnam was prepared to pay cash. Although Hanoi accounted for just fewer than 2 percent of Russian arms exports in 2000, it showed interest in purchasing fighter planes, missile attack craft, and air defense systems. Vietnam has emerged as the largest buyer in Indochina of Russian arms, signing \$5.5 billion in contracts over 2009–10 for the delivery of submarines and modern aircraft (SU-30 fighter jets) and the establishment of facilities for their maintenance and service. During President Truong Tan San’s visit to Russia in July 2012, several agreements were signed, the most significant of which was the planned Russian construction of a nuclear power plant in Vietnam. In November 2016, Vietnam’s National Assembly voted to pull out of the agreement based on considerations of high cost, low demand, and safety.<sup>224</sup> In March 2013, during a visit to Vietnam by Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, the two sides reached important agreements on naval cooperation. Since Russian withdrawal from the base at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam opened an adjacent berthing facility in 2016 to receive foreign military vessels for maintenance and refueling.<sup>225</sup> In contrast to the healthy pace of military cooperation, trade has been picking up slowly from low initial volumes. Bilateral trade increased steadily from \$2 billion in 2009 to \$3.7 billion in 2012, barely inching up to \$3.89 in 2016, but the overall trade turnover was meager, even though Vietnam was Russia’s largest trading partner in Indochina. By contrast, the total volume of U.S.-Vietnam trade was several times higher.<sup>226</sup>

There has been much greater Russian interest in the enormous market potential of the non-communist countries of Southeast Asia. Russia joined the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council in 1993, and Moscow’s representatives attended the annual conferences of the foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN), first as observers and then as official “dialogue partners,” as well as the ASEAN forums on regional security. At the 1996 foreign ministers’ conference, Primakov described ASEAN as an “influential center of the developing multipolar world” and stated Russia’s desire to have open access to the ASEAN free-trade zone scheduled for 2003. With Japan’s assistance, the Russians finally were admitted to the APEC club late in 1997, and Putin attended the annual APEC summits, though without expectations that Russia’s membership would produce “a shower of gold.”<sup>227</sup> In September 2012, Russia hosted the APEC summit in Vladivostok where leaders discussed ways to promote trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region.

When it came to Russia’s most competitive product, until recently there was relatively little interest among the ASEAN nations. As of 1997, only Malaysia had concluded a substantial arms deal with Moscow, and this was negotiated with considerable difficulty. A visit from Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi to Malaysia in March 1993—the first to that country by a Russian leader—underscored Russia’s interest in selling MiG-29M fighters. In the ensuing months, arms dealers from several Russian agencies were reported to be practically tripping over one another in Kuala Lumpur, each seeking to be the “lead agency” entitled to a sales commission. In the process, U.S. arms merchants entered the competition, substantially cutting their prices and ultimately dividing the Malaysian order. By the time Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets concluded the deal in June 1994, it was for only eighteen MiG-29s at a price of \$775 million, part of which Russia accepted in palm oil. Nevertheless, the transaction was seen as a breakthrough for Moscow in the lucrative Southeast Asian arms market. President Putin visited Malaysia twice in 2003, once for an official visit (August) and once to attend a meeting of the OIC (October). The prime ministers of Malaysia made official visits to Russia in 1999, 2002, and 2007. During Putin’s August 2003 visit, the two countries signed a \$900 million arms deal for the purchase of eighteen SU-30MKM fighter aircraft, with Malaysia offsetting part of the cost through the supply of palm oil to Russia.<sup>228</sup> During President Putin’s 2016 bilateral meeting with the Malaysian prime minister in Sochi, where Russia was hosting an ASEAN-Russia summit, the two sides discussed the report of the Joint Investigation Team on the 2014 downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 in Ukraine. The prime minister characterized their bilateral relations as “satisfactory.” Putin and he explored avenues for military cooperation and the establishment of an FTA (Free Trade Agreement) with the EAEU, but no substantive agreements were signed.<sup>229</sup>

As tensions with China over the South China Sea have risen, countries in Southeast Asia have shown greater interest in military modernization, and some have turned to Russia as a source of military hardware, especially combat aircraft. Economic relations between Indonesia and Russia focused primarily on arms. In 2003 Indonesia’s President Megawati Sukarnoputri was in Moscow to sign a declaration of “friendly relations and partnership” and to discuss the purchase of weapons for its army and air force. After the visit, a deal was concluded for the

purchase of \$192 million in equipment. In December 2006, Putin paid a visit to Indonesia—the first by a Russian leader in fifty years—on his way to the APEC summit in Australia. In addition to commercial agreements said to be worth about \$4 billion, Russia agreed to extend a \$1 billion, ten-year credit to allow Indonesia to buy additional military equipment. In 2008, Indonesia signed a \$400 million deal for the purchase of infantry fighting vehicles. During his May 2016 state visit to Russia, President Widodo expressed an interest in the purchase of Russian Kilo-class submarines and SU-35 fighters but there have been no formal defense contracts.<sup>230</sup>

Moving from Southeast Asia to Africa, the civil war in Angola was another conflict in which Gorbachev's consent to a political settlement finally enabled the Soviet Union to extricate itself from a long and costly military involvement. The termination of this conflict, together with the de-escalation of violence in the Horn of Africa, provided an opportunity for Moscow to slash its expensive aid programs in sub-Saharan Africa, from a volume of 12.5 billion rubles in 1989 to 400 million rubles in 1991. To continue making soft loans to countries essentially peripheral to Moscow's interests would be to throw good money after bad, since by the end of 1991 these states already owed 14 billion rubles—16 percent of the total debt outstanding to the USSR.

Angola alone owed the equivalent of \$5 billion—an amount equal to that owed by all the other sub-Saharan African states combined; and like some of the other major debtors to the former Soviet Union, it simply refused to repay the debt to the new Russian government. So the Angolan government informed Foreign Minister Kozyrev, who was visiting the country as part of a five-day tour of Africa in February and March of 1992. There was little the Russians could do about the situation, and in fact they agreed to resume limited shipments of defensive weapons to Angola in 1993, when the civil war resumed. Ten years later there were still about 100 Russian military advisors in Angola to help with training troops and maintaining costly military hardware.<sup>231</sup>

Kozyrev's trip was intended to demonstrate that Russia was not giving up its global interests, but the facts argued otherwise. In light of the economic difficulties on both ends, there were few trade opportunities; indeed, Africa accounted for only 2 percent of Russia's foreign trade in 1992. Shortly after Kozyrev's trip, the foreign ministry announced that it was closing nine Russian embassies in Africa as an economy measure.

South Africa was the one country of sub-Saharan Africa in which the Russian government had initially perceived significant trade and investment possibilities. The primary destination on Kozyrev's 1992 tour was Pretoria, where he participated in ceremonies to establish diplomatic relations with the F.W. de Klerk government. President de Klerk paid a state visit to Moscow in June of the same year and announced that South Africa would extend a 100-million-rand credit to Russia. Yeltsin's communist predecessors in the Kremlin had long given support to the African National Congress (ANC), but the change of Moscow's

ideological orientation was so dramatic that it was June 1993 before an ANC delegation was even received at the Russian foreign ministry. Thus when ANC leader Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa in May 1994, Moscow found itself in the awkward spot of having to rebuild its relationships with the former revolutionaries who now headed the government. Not surprisingly, the area in which progress was most notable was in the field of “military-technical cooperation.”

Not until 2001, as Russia hosted another African president—Nigeria’s Olusegun Obasanjo, the first high-level visitor from his country since 1974—was there further evidence of a serious interest on Moscow’s part in expanding its economic and political ties in Africa. Unlike most other countries on the continent, Nigeria had only a small debt (\$50 million) and significant natural resources. Moreover, it had an appetite for arms and an apparent ability to pay for them. Signing the Declaration of Friendly Relations and Partnership, Putin assured his visitor of Russia’s interest in “military-technical cooperation,” as well as in helping to produce and refine Nigerian oil and gas. With a burst of exuberance, one press account declared, “as of yesterday, Nigeria became not only one of Russia’s chief partners in Africa, but also a kind of staging area for Russian political and economic expansion on the Africa continent.”<sup>232</sup> This judgment proved highly premature, however. Although Russian companies did step up their activity after 2005 in seeking opportunities for investment in African oil, gas, and mineral reserves, the level of Moscow’s economic stake in the continent lagged well behind that of the West and even that of Beijing.

As evidence of Russia’s continuing low level of involvement in Africa, Putin’s trip to Africa in September 2006, with 100 Russian businessmen in tow, took him to opposite ends of the continent—Morocco and South Africa—with no stops in between. The visit to South Africa—the first ever for a Russian leader—was the occasion for the signing of a Treaty of Friendship and Partnership and for discussion of possible arms sales, but it was largely symbolic, failing to produce significant breakthroughs for Moscow in trade and investment with southern Africa’s largest economy.<sup>233</sup> South Africa has emerged as Russia’s largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa, but the 2012 bilateral trade turnover was only \$964.4 million. This meager figure points to sub-Saharan Africa’s small imprint on Russia.<sup>234</sup> So, while many bilateral agreements have been signed on various areas of cooperation, particularly with Nigeria and South Africa, very few have been implemented. As one South Africa-based observer has noted, “whereas the Soviet Union was extensively engaged in Africa, Russia has almost entirely abandoned the field to other foreign players during the past two decades.”<sup>235</sup> Putin has not reprised his 2006 trip to Africa, but Moscow demonstrated revived interest in re-establishing ties with Soviet-era allies on the continent with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s March 2018 five-nation visit to Angola, Ethiopia, Namibia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. In Harare, Zimbabwe, Lavrov made reference both to Russia’s clout and Moscow’s seriousness about engagement with African



countries: "Russia is a superpower. We are now taking the relationship [with Zimbabwe] to a new level."<sup>236</sup>

Latin America was the other region of low priority for Yeltsin's Russia, and there would have been relatively little activity at all had it not been for the need to look after the very sizable investments Moscow had made over a period of three decades in Cuba. Fidel Castro had enjoyed more success than most other Third World leaders in keeping the Soviet Union involved in his country during the Gorbachev period. Indeed, a friendship treaty between the two countries had been concluded during Gorbachev's April 1989 trip to Havana. Although the treaty made no reference to defense cooperation or to consultations in case of threat, Soviet weapons continued to flow to Cuba.

After August 1991, however, Gorbachev evidently felt that he needed the support of the United States badly enough that—without consulting Castro—he announced that the brigade of Soviet troops that had been stationed in Cuba since 1979 would be withdrawn. Relations between Moscow and Havana deteriorated rapidly on all fronts, especially after the ideological shift in Russia. The level of trade between the two fell in 1992 to 7 percent of the 1991 volume, and Cuba stopped making payments on its debt to Moscow (which was estimated by Russian officials to total \$20 billion). Russia made it clear that Cuba would receive no more credits for the purchase of arms, and it demanded that Russian specialists remaining in Cuba be paid in hard currency. Finally, Russia voted in the UN Commission on Human Rights to condemn Cuba for mass violations of human rights. For his part, Castro announced in September 1992 that the nuclear power plant at Juragua, which was being constructed with Soviet assistance at a cost to date of \$1.2 billion, would be mothballed. "And so the last beacon of 'fraternal cooperation' in Cuba is being extinguished," wrote a Russian journalist.<sup>237</sup>

However, the shift in Russian policy toward "pragmatic nationalism" under Yeltsin soon produced a halt to the deterioration of relations. Moscow evidently decided that it needed to maintain some level of trade relations with Cuba in order to recoup any of its huge debt, and it also was reluctant to lose a key military asset in Cuba—an electronic tracking station and listening post at Lourdes that was capable, among other things, of tracking U.S. missile launches. In November 1992 the two countries concluded an important but limited trade agreement—essentially a bartering of two products—which contemplated the delivery of 1.5 million tons of sugar in return for 3.3 million metric tons of Russian oil and other petroleum products. They also agreed in principle to continue construction of the nuclear plant, contingent on finding a third country to provide financing. Although they failed to resolve the question of the Cuban debt, they did agree that Russia could continue to lease the Lourdes facility. This agreement was supplemented the following summer with a Russian promise of \$380 million in credits to Cuba to allow continuation of the construction of a dozen vital projects. Included in this amount was \$30 million to pay for the mothballing of the Juragua power plant.

In December 1993 a Cuban delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Lionel Soto visited Moscow to renew the barter agreement, while seeking to expand trade by establishing direct relationships between Cuban and Russian firms. There were abundant signs of discord in the conversations. The Cubans reportedly demanded an annual lease payment of \$1 billion for the Lourdes station; the Russian Ministry of Defense agreed to pay one-sixth that amount. Soto gave an interview in which he refused to speak of a Cuban debt, but rather referred to "mutual obligations"—a brazen concept according to which Moscow actually owed Cuba considerable sums: "We estimate your country's military presence and the losses Cuba has incurred as a result of the unilateral renunciation of economic obligations at approximately \$40 billion."<sup>238</sup>

As domestic political winds in Russia continued to shift toward the hard-liners, the government demonstrated that its foreign policy was not subservient to the United States by making more concessions to Castro. In October 1994, Russia—which had previously abstained on the issue—voted in the UN General Assembly in favor of urging the United States to lift its embargo on Cuba. The following spring, Moscow shifted its vote from "yes" to "abstain" on the question of condemning Cuba for human rights violations. The Russian first deputy minister of defense visited Cuba in November 1994 to conclude an arrangement for paying an annual rent of \$200 million on the Lourdes communications facility, to be paid in energy resources, lumber, and military spare parts.

Continuing the pressure on Yeltsin, the Duma held hearings on Russian-Cuban relations in January 1995, with the Cuban ambassador present as an honored guest. The Ministry of Finance reported that in just three years the volume of Russian-Cuban trade had declined 92 percent, from \$9 billion to \$710 million. Recent barter agreements had not been fulfilled by Cuba, whose sugar production had fallen sharply. The ministry estimated Cuba's debt at 17 billion transferable rubles, which Moscow deemed equivalent to the same number of dollars. Noting that Havana had made no payments since 1991, the official added that Cuba was insisting that the debt should be calculated at a ratio of \$1 per 50 transferable rubles. Notwithstanding these adverse economic trends, nationalist legislators called for full restoration of political and economic ties, and for punishment of those responsible for the collapse of the Cuban economy.

In May 1996 Yevgeny Primakov paid an official visit to Cuba, where he declared that relations with Cuba were now a foreign policy priority for Russia. The Russian foreign minister devoted most of his energies to denouncing the Helms-Burton Act, recently passed by the U.S. Congress, which sought to punish foreign companies that did business with Cuba. In an unusual gesture, Fidel Castro brought a large government entourage to the Russian Embassy to meet with Primakov, and he expressed satisfaction with the visit as he saw Primakov off. Nevertheless, there appeared to be little that was achieved, beyond the political showiness; the concrete fruits seemed limited to one agreement on cultural and scientific cooperation.

Primakov, however, did not confine his Latin American journey to Cuba. His visit extended also to two important oil-producing countries—Mexico and Venezuela—whose economies, though currently depressed, had long-term growth prospects, and whose foreign policies had occasionally demonstrated irritation with Washington. In both countries, Primakov signed agreements on cooperation in economic, scientific-technical, and cultural fields, as well as on joint efforts to combat crime and trafficking in illegal drugs. The following year, the peripatetic foreign minister was back in Latin America, visiting Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia, and spreading his message about the necessity of multipolarity in world politics. As he had elsewhere, Primakov won the plaudits of the Russian press for his efforts to demonstrate independence in Russia's foreign policy, and to further its continuing interests in the world beyond the former USSR. As the foreign minister expressed his objective, "As a great power, Russia naturally should have multilateral ties with all continents."<sup>239</sup>

However, the debt problem continued to plague Russian-Cuban relations and even placed a damper on President Putin's attempt to rekindle the relationship with his state visit of December 2000. By this time, Cuba had finally acknowledged a debt of \$20 billion but continued to counterclaim \$15 billion owed to it as a result of Russia's sudden break in economic and military ties. Amid speeches condemning manifestations of unipolarity by Cuba's neighbor to the north, Putin acknowledged that the break in relations had been a "historic mistake." He said that Moscow was prepared to write off 70 percent of the debt if Havana would agree to repay the balance on the terms utilized by the Paris Club of creditor nations. Cuba demanded that 90 percent be written off and that the Paris Club not be involved in the repayment.

Putin apparently left Cuba under the impression that Moscow's terms on the debt repayment had been accepted. Apart from signing a relatively minor set of agreements, the two leaders also toured the Lourdes facility, a vital listening post for the Russians, and they agreed to abandon construction of the Juragua nuclear plant. After Putin's departure, the Russians experienced what one journalist called the equivalent of "Kim Jong Il's joke." The head of the Cuban parliament's committee on the economy reiterated that Cuba would not agree to discuss its debt to Russia in the framework of the Paris Club. He flatly declared that all of Russia's proposed compromises on the size of the debt write-off and repayment terms were unacceptable to Cuba.<sup>240</sup> Putin did not return to Cuba, but in September 2006 he sent Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov to Havana to make another attempt to reach a financial settlement. Fradkov made no effort to get a settlement of the Soviet-era debt, but concentrated instead on restructuring the terms of the loan that Yeltsin's regime had extended in 1993. But as the Russians had discovered in other regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, in Cuba they found themselves competing with China for investment and trade opportunities.<sup>241</sup>

In October 2001, as part of the post-September 11 move toward the United States, Putin had announced that the Russians would pull out of the Lourdes

facility—thus removing a major irritant to Washington while leaving Castro with an additional \$200 million annual hole in his budget. Seven years later, when the Russians were no longer interested in mollifying the United States but were instead eager to retaliate for the U.S. insistence on locating a missile defense in Poland, the prospect of Moscow’s security cooperation with Havana again surfaced. At the end of July 2008, Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin and Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev visited Cuba. Although the visit ostensibly concentrated on trade and energy issues, there was discussion in Moscow about a possible Russian return to Cuba in the context of countering Washington’s plans for military installations in Eastern Europe. No less a source than Prime Minister Putin, at a cabinet meeting where Sechin reported on the trip, declared: “We should re-establish positions in Cuba and other countries.”<sup>242</sup>

The Cuban debt issue was finally resolved in February 2013, following Prime Minister Medvedev’s visit to the island. Russian Industry and Trade Minister Denis Manturov explained that an unspecified part of the \$30 billion debt would be written off and the remainder (again unspecified) would be restructured. The debt cancellation is part of a larger deal (\$650 million) under which Cuba may lease Russian civilian aircraft for use by the Cuban carrier Cubana. Russian naval ships would also be allowed to refill in Cuban ports but there would be no Russian military presence on the island itself.<sup>243</sup> In 2014, President Putin made a much-heralded visit to Latin America, with Cuba, Nicaragua, Argentina, and Brazil on his itinerary.<sup>244</sup> In Havana, he erased 90 percent of Cuba’s debt, specifying that the remaining \$3.5 billion would be paid in equal semi-annual disbursements over ten years that would in turn be invested in Cuba.<sup>245</sup> In Managua, Nicaragua, Putin discussed military cooperation with President Ortega. The stops in Argentina and Brazil were largely goodwill visits.

In December 2016, Russia and Cuba signed a defense technology agreement to modernize Cuba’s defense industry through 2020. The two countries have been in talks since 2016 about re-establishing the military base at Lourdes that Russia vacated in 2002.<sup>246</sup> With the re-election of Ortega as president of Nicaragua, Russia’s relationship with the country warmed. In 2015, Ortega allowed Russian naval vessels to dock in Nicaraguan ports following on earlier agreements that allowed them to patrol coastal waters. Nicaragua has been the recipient of 50 T-72 tanks. In Moscow’s eyes, Nicaragua has replaced economically strapped post-Chavez Venezuela as a reliable ally in the Western hemisphere.<sup>247</sup>

Until the drop in oil prices at the end of 2014 triggered economic collapse, followed by violent unrest and political instability, the richest opportunities in Latin America in the Putin era were found not in Cuba but in Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela, and again the bond rested in part on a common resentment of American power. Beginning in 2005, Venezuela signed contracts for a large amount of Russian military equipment, including 100,000 AK-103 Kalashnikov assault rifles. The United States objected to the deal, noting that Venezuela had only half that number of men in its own armed forces, and charging that Chavez

was intending to distribute the weapons to insurgent and terrorist groups in Latin America.<sup>248</sup> All told, Venezuela had purchased about \$3 billion in weaponry (including twenty-four SU-30MK2 fighters) from Russia by the time of Chavez's July 2006 visit to Moscow.<sup>249</sup>

On a subsequent visit two years later, he was expected to sign contracts for an additional \$1 billion worth of arms, including anti-aircraft missile systems and diesel submarines. During this 2008 visit (his seventh as president), where he was received by President Medvedev, Chavez called for the formation of a "strategic partnership" between Russia and Venezuela to combat the "American threat." But Medvedev seemed far less interested in this notion than in the business opportunities Chavez was offering in his oil-rich nation, which were highlighted when three large Russian firms (TNK-BP, Lukoil, and Gazprom) signed agreements to explore for oil and gas in the Orinoco Valley.<sup>250</sup>

Medvedev returned the visit in November, meeting Chavez on the deck of a Russian warship that had ventured to Venezuelan waters as part of a fleet participating in joint military exercises. Although the ambitions of both states had necessarily by this time been scaled back by the collapse of oil prices, Medvedev's trip into Washington's backyard sent a distinct message of "payback" for U.S. involvement in Ukraine and Georgia.<sup>251</sup> In September 2012, during the visit to Caracas by a Russian delegation, eight new accords were signed for joint ventures in oil exploration and construction of oil and non-oil infrastructure. By the time Chavez died in March 2013, Russian-Venezuelan ties were the closest of any in Latin America. During his fourteen-year presidency, Venezuela became a close ally of Russia, supporting Russian positions on most problem issues in international politics and signing multiple lucrative arms and energy deals with Russia. The new Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro lost no time in visiting Moscow in July 2013, where more joint energy projects were announced, including a joint venture between Rosneft and Petróleos de Venezuela, SA for offshore projects.<sup>252</sup> Venezuela's economic nosedive after 2014 put an end to Russian plans to invest over \$17 billion in order to quadruple oil output in six years.<sup>253</sup> The country has also been wracked by civil conflict and a rollback of democracy.

While certain areas have had a higher priority than others, on the whole Moscow's interests in the non-West in the period since the ending of the Cold War have been distinctly more limited than in the prior period. The termination of the global ideological and geopolitical struggle with the United States, together with the significant limitations on Russia's ability to project economic influence, initially caused a reorientation of Moscow's priorities to those areas that border the post-Soviet states. Russia's economic recovery, sparked by the sharp spike in oil and gas prices during the latter years of Putin's presidency, has prompted a higher level of activity, particularly in select areas of Africa and Latin America where opportunities for investment in energy resources could be found.

As we have noted above, however, the end of the Cold War has not brought peace to the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Thus, the inescapable

fact that billions of dollars in advanced weaponry continues to be Moscow's dominant export to these regions is a sobering portent that future conflicts could pose even greater dangers to world peace.

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## Putin's Quest for Partnership in a Multipolar World

### **Continuing the Struggle for a "Multipolar World"**

Vladimir Putin's first two presidential terms coincided with the emergence of global terrorism as one of the dominant issues of international politics. In Chapter 1 we identified the international structure as one of the determinants of the foreign policies of states. Political scientists disagree over how to define the international structure or what to deduce from that structure, but there is general agreement that the end of the Cold War witnessed the transformation from a bipolar structure to something else—arguably, unipolar in the military realm and multipolar in diplomacy, in economic interactions, and in transnational relations. Whatever the structure and however dominant its position, the United States was never able to exercise control over world affairs. Nothing illustrated this more than the challenge to the United States posed at the turn of the millennium by the emergence of Islamist terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

Although there had been earlier attacks by Al-Qaeda against the United States, the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City and part of the Pentagon in northern Virginia on September 11, 2001, marked the emergence of a full-scale war between radical Islamist purveyors of terrorism and the West. That attack had a profound impact on international politics, although it did not fundamentally change the international system. The world remained a state-dominated system with no centralized authority to govern or to protect individual states. But since September 11, terrorism has moved to the top of the agenda for the United States. And, certainly since the horrible events in Russia of August and September 2004—the destruction of two civilian airliners by hijackers, an attack on a Moscow subway station, and the unbelievably cruel attack by terrorists on a middle school in Beslan, North Ossetia—it also has been at the top of the agenda for Russia. Terrorism itself is not new in world affairs, but this twenty-first-century variant had some special features:

1. it was global in scope and organized not by states but by groups operating independently of states;
2. the terrorists fought in the name of religion and claimed to be motivated by a fundamentalist vision of Islam and/or a desire for revenge against the claimed oppression of Muslims.

Between his accession to the presidency on January 1, 2000 (first as acting president and then, after March 26, 2000, as elected president) and September 11, 2001, Vladimir Putin pursued a pragmatic, cautious, and nuanced policy that revealed no clear-cut orientations. It displayed a mix of Atlanticist and Eurasianist (“pragmatic nationalist”) perspectives. One could have concluded that he was either groping toward a post-Yeltsin direction or that he was testing the waters with several options. In fact there was speculation from the beginning both within Russia and abroad about the direction in which Putin would take the country. Was he a liberal or a nationalist? Was he pro-West or anti-West? His career in the KGB and its successor, the FSB, suggested a possible hard-liner; but his apprenticeship with the liberal Anatoly Sobchak indicated a more progressive bent. Boris Yeltsin said that he chose Putin in the belief that he was dedicated to democracy and market reform.<sup>2</sup>

It soon became apparent that Putin hewed more toward the policies of Yeltsin’s later years than to those of his earlier years, that is, closer to the foreign policy line of Yevgeny Primakov than to that of Andrei Kozyrev. Of course, Putin himself had been a part of Yeltsin’s foreign policy team, serving as director of the Federal Security Service and secretary of the Security Council, as well as occupying the office of prime minister during the second half of 1999.

The most visible change that Putin brought to Russia’s foreign policy was a heightened level of presidential activism. In his first year as president, he logged two dozen foreign trips. This desire to travel came as a surprise to political observers, who reckoned that his major priorities were domestic, and who noted not only that his foreign experience had been limited to his years as an intelligence agent in Germany but also that he had never even traveled extensively within his own country. However, the high volume of Putin’s foreign travel appeared less startling in light of the fact that many of these journeys were made to former Soviet states—certainly the area of highest priority for him—and that most of these, as well as many that were farther afield, were connected to his search for solutions to pressing economic or security problems at home.

Also evident from the president’s travels was his stated determination to make Russian foreign policy less reactive. A prominent example of Putin’s proactive foreign policy was the effort he made to seize the initiative in dealing with the problem of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and associated missile delivery systems. Rather than simply condemn the American plan to build a national missile defense against such threats, as Yeltsin had done, Putin sought to demonstrate alternative means, both diplomatic and technological, for dealing

with the prospect of "rogue" missiles, and he carried his case to the capitals of America's European allies.

Putin also appeared to have a steadier hand on institutional and personnel arrangements related to foreign policy. There was a remarkable contrast with Yeltsin in the continuity in Putin's government. Not only were the frequent ministerial shuffles absent, but also missing was the propensity to create new councils and advisory bodies in the foreign policy realm. Although the size and power of the presidential administration were undiminished, the tendency to involve powerful outsiders (Yeltsin's "family") in key decisions was no longer evident. Early in Putin's term he apparently muscled the oligarchs out of their prominent political role, and he also significantly reversed the creeping regionalism of the Yeltsin years. Governors were removed from the Federation Council and subordinated to supraregional presidential representatives; the new State Council that was created as an evident sop is strictly advisory. Although Putin's predilection for appointing former KGB officials to high positions was frequently cited as a retrogressive move, this trend actually began during Yeltsin's tenure in office.

The domination of parliament by forces loyal to him and the virtual disappearance of political opposition gave Putin a freer hand in policymaking, but also he was freed at the beginning of his presidency from the necessity to "hold the begging bowl" before the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its Western supporters. The combination of positive trade effects from the ruble devaluation of August 1998 and the surge in prices for exported oil produced positive economic growth and significant enhancement in Russia's budget revenues. When conditions for further loans from the IMF became too stringent for their liking, Russian officials were able for the first time to walk away.

Early in his administration, Putin outlined a conceptual framework, which highlighted major differences with the West. He described two fundamentally different models of a new world order, distinguishable by their degree of polarity (a concept we introduced in Chapter 1). One, identified as "unipolar," was a world dominated by a group of highly developed countries and backed by the economic and military might of the United States. Such a world operated by the principle of "might makes right" and substituted for the traditional principles of international law new doctrines of "limited sovereignty" and "humanitarian intervention."

Unipolarity led to wars such as the one in Kosovo and the expansion of military alliances in Europe. The alternative vision—advocated by Russia—was "multipolarity." This model was based on the reality of globalization, interdependence, and the sovereignty of states. No state or bloc should be hegemonic. In place of NATO, the Russian-preferred model relied on the United Nations for international security. As for Europe, Russia supported integration and unification, which should include East and West. Again, in place of NATO, Putin initially argued for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the ultimate determiner of continental security.<sup>3</sup>

In reality, the world does not lend itself to a clear dichotomy between unipolar and multipolar. The world is never ordered around pure models of any kind, and governments are forced to confront a recalcitrant reality in contradictory and often ambiguous ways. Thus, in his first two terms in office, Putin's policies were neither purely pro-West nor purely anti-West. He challenged the United States on several important issues, most notably with his opposition to national missile defense and NATO expansion, but at the same time he tried to maintain the partnership with the West begun by Yeltsin.

### **Putin's Struggle to Preserve the ABM Treaty**

Nothing illustrated this duality of purpose better than Putin's initiatives on arms control and disarmament. Within weeks of his presidential victory, Putin successfully mobilized the Duma to ratify the START II treaty. He personally lobbied the deputies on the floor of the Duma. He not only accomplished what Yeltsin was unable to do in eight years, but he did so with an overwhelming vote of 288 to 131; however, this "gift" to the United States came with strings attached. A condition specified in the ratification was that the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty of 1972 had to be maintained intact. In other words, Washington could have START II or missile defense, but not both.

This diplomatic and parliamentary success was enlarged on April 21 with the ratification by the Duma of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Here again, Moscow adroitly secured multiple objectives. Adoption of the CTBT supported Russia's overall policy toward non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. It also put pressure on the United States to do the same. The CTBT was a controversial measure in the United States. President Bill Clinton signed the treaty, but the U.S. Senate refused to give its consent to ratification. This was an issue that Moscow successfully used to put the United States on the defensive before the international community.

No single issue dominated Russian-American relations in the early years of the new millennium as much as the American proposal to build a national defense against a missile attack—dubbed by Russia's Marshal Igor Sergeyev as "son of Star Wars." Put on hold by the Clinton administration because of unsuccessful scientific tests to establish its workability, national missile defense had strong support in the U.S. Congress and particularly within the Republican Party. George W. Bush, who became president in January 2001, strongly committed his administration to moving forward on missile defense. The primary rationale was the need to protect the United States from possible future missile attacks by "rogue" states such as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. On this issue, Moscow was adamant. Russia's military argued that an American defense against missiles would neutralize Russia's ability to retaliate against a nuclear attack. This fear was expressed bluntly in the newspaper *Vremya*:

If America develops a missile defense umbrella in violation of the 1972 treaty, Russia's nuclear potential will effectively be castrated, and the main external constraint on world domination by the U.S. will be eliminated.<sup>4</sup>

Under the terms of the 1972 ABM treaty, national ballistic missile defense systems were prohibited. Thus, a major part of the Russian strategy was to persuade the United States not to abrogate that agreement. Putin's campaign on behalf of the ABM treaty (and against national missile defense) was sophisticated and multipronged. It involved both negative and positive inducements. As noted earlier he linked the ratification of START II with preservation of the ABM treaty. Putin understood that a negative attack alone would have limited effect. He therefore embarked on a campaign to offer positive inducements as alternatives to the U.S. program.

The first summit between Putin and an American president took place in Moscow in June 2000. He and Clinton discussed missile defense, but could not reconcile their differences. Immediately after the Moscow summit, the Russian president embarked on a European tour. In Italy, he offered an alternative to the U.S. plan. He proposed that Russia, the EU, and NATO jointly develop a missile defense system for Europe. It was a clever ploy, a good example of political gamesmanship. Capitalizing upon Europe's strong doubts about the American plan to jettison the ABM treaty in favor of national missile defense, the idea seemed to offer a reasonable alternative. In due course, however, Europe could not bring itself to side with Moscow over Washington on an issue vital to Atlantic security.

There were, however, other arrows in Putin's quiver. In November 2000, he launched a new disarmament initiative, proposing a radical reduction in the number of warheads in the U.S. and Russian arsenals. He proposed a reduction to 1,500 warheads for each side by the year 2008, but again only if done within the framework of the ABM treaty. Putin was known to favor deep cuts in nuclear weapons in order to help finance the modernization of Russia's conventional forces. Russian officials let it be known that Putin was prepared to cut strategic warheads to 1,000.<sup>5</sup>

During the last year of the Clinton administration and the first year of the Bush administration, Putin engaged in a diplomatic offensive to impress on Washington both that a missile defense shield was unnecessary and that building one would be counterproductive. Toward the former end, he met with the leaders of two of the so-called rogue nations to discuss ways to control the spread of ballistic missile technology. In August 2000, he made a surprise visit to North Korea where, among other things, he attempted to persuade Kim Jong Il to abandon his quest to develop missiles capable of hitting Japan or the United States. Putin claimed that Kim offered to forgo ballistic missile development in return for Western assistance in launching civilian satellites. Kim's offer was never formally acknowledged. In March 2001, Putin met with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami to discuss



ways to control the spread of ballistic missile technology. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz visited Moscow in July and was assured by Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov of Russia's commitment to lifting the economic sanctions against Iraq.

Russia's biggest diplomatic success came on November 20, when the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution co-sponsored by Russia, China, and Belarus in support of the 1972 ABM treaty. The resolution was supported by eighty-eight members, with only five in opposition. Additionally, sixty-six members abstained.

Opposition to missile defense was only part of Putin's strategy to counter what Russians perceived to be U.S. global hegemony. Another approach was to build a political coalition to act in concert as strategic partners. The obvious candidates for such a coalition were the states once allied to the former Soviet Union. Toward that end, Putin visited China within four months after his election as president. He and Chinese President Jiang Zemin signed a joint declaration expressing concern over U.S. plans to build a national missile defense system. Additionally, they pledged strategic cooperation between Russia and China, and joint efforts to establish a multipolar world and the maintenance of a global balance of power. In July 2001 Jiang and Putin signed in the Kremlin the Treaty on Good Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation. Though the two sides claimed that this was not a military alliance nor overtly directed against any particular country, the treaty constituted a major political act designed to challenge the architecture of global security as articulated by the American president. In the treaty Russia gave full support to China's contention that Taiwan was an integral part of China; opposed the American plan of missile defense; rejected NATO's humanitarian intervention in the Balkans; and pledged military and "military-technical" (arms sales) cooperation with China. Taken as a whole, the Russian-Chinese treaty was Putin's strongest challenge to the world order envisioned by the Bush administration.

The most publicized of Putin's international travels to former Soviet allies was his visit to Cuba in late 2000. He began his wooing of Fidel Castro by noting that Yeltsin's policy of breaking relations with Havana after the Soviet collapse had been "a historical mistake." The last Russian leader to come to Havana had been Mikhail Gorbachev (in 1989), a man whose reformism completely baffled the Cuban leader. Among the several issues on which the Cuban and Russian leaders agreed was that, in the coming millennium, mankind should not have to live under the domination of a single power.

The relationship between Putin and the incoming George W. Bush administration began with a confrontational edge. In March 2001 Washington announced the expulsion of some fifty Russian diplomats in retaliation for the revelations about Robert Philip Hanssen (an FBI agent who spied for Moscow). Putin played down the incident, but he expelled an equal number of U.S. diplomats. That same month he agreed with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami to resume the sale of conventional arms to Iran after a hiatus of more than five years. The rhetoric

of both Bush and Putin suggested that each would be less accommodating to the other than their predecessors had been.

Washington and Moscow both had powerful incentives to maintain good relations. Neither administration wanted to undermine its domestic goals; in both countries, these had priority over foreign policy. The problem was how to reconcile sharply conflicting positions on several issues, particularly missile defense.

That was the challenge confronting Putin and Bush when they met for their first summit conference on June 18, 2001, in an ancient castle near the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana. To the surprise of some, the two leaders displayed considerable warmth and rapport. "I looked the man in the eyes," said Bush. "I was able to get a sense of his soul." Putin described his satisfaction with his counterpart: "When a president of a great power says that he wants to see Russia as a partner and maybe even as an ally, this is worth so much to us."<sup>6</sup> While their differences were not resolved at this summit, in this respect their meeting might be compared to the first meeting between President Ronald Reagan and President Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva. It provided an opportunity for each leader to take the measure of the other.

Although we are focusing on the geopolitical ramifications of Putin's global diplomacy during the initial years of his presidency, we want to point out that economics, too, were an important factor for the new Russian leader. In all of his visits, Putin worked hard to expand Russian markets and to secure, as much as possible, repayment of the debts owed to Russia. Under Putin, Russia relaxed some of the rules governing the export of arms to Iran. In 1999 and 2000, Russia signed contracts for the sale of ammunition to Libya and for the repair of armored vehicles and air defense systems. With Iraq, sizable contracts were blocked by the UN sanctions. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivanov vowed that Moscow would work "actively and aggressively" to get them unfrozen. With Cuba, the central economic issue was Cuba's debt to Russia, estimated at \$20 billion. Castro wanted Moscow to cancel it altogether. Debt cancellation was one of the Cuban leader's main themes in foreign affairs, but Moscow was not singing that song; Putin wanted at least partial repayment.

### **Russia's Realignment with the United States**

The September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States by Islamist terrorists changed the environment of international politics in a fundamental way. On that day, nineteen Arab hijackers seized four passenger planes in the United States and with three of them destroyed New York City's World Trade Center and a section of the Pentagon in northern Virginia; a fourth was downed in a Pennsylvania field by passengers before it could make its way to attack the U.S. Capitol building or the White House. In all, about 3,000 lives were lost. The human and economic losses were enormous and the psychological impact profound. This attack precipitated a major shift in the foreign policies of both the United States and Russia.<sup>7</sup>

Vladimir Putin's reaction was immediate and unambiguous. He was the first foreign leader to call George W. Bush to offer his sympathy and support. In doing this he had to overcome resistance from within his administration, particularly among the generals. The decision to ally with the United States against terrorism was taken at a meeting of the "power ministries" on September 22 in a session lasting six hours. Two days later Putin appeared on national television to declare his nation's readiness "to make its contribution to the war on terrorism."<sup>8</sup>

In making common cause with the United States against terrorism, Russia hoped to gain some of the benefits that are shared between allies. But there was a deeper motivation. Russia had for years viewed itself as engaged in its own war against Islamist extremism and thus found in the Bush administration a natural and powerful ally against a common enemy. Chechnya was, of course, the most immediate concern to Putin. But the threat of Islamic fundamentalism went well beyond the Caucasus. In the 1990s, as we discussed in Chapter 8, Moscow had observed with concern the radical transformation of Afghanistan under the Taliban. Kabul fell to the Taliban in September 1996, only a month after the fall of Grozny to Chechen rebels.<sup>9</sup> Muslim fundamentalists in Afghanistan gave support to the insurgency in Tajikistan. Many Russians feared that Islamic fundamentalists wanted to create a "greater Islamic Caliphate in Central Asia, including parts of Russia itself."<sup>10</sup>

Russian cooperation with the United States in the war against Islamist terrorism was substantial. An unprecedented sharing of intelligence information took place. American aircraft were permitted to fly over Russian territory. We have already discussed in Chapter 6 the building of United States military bases in the CIS countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Of particular importance was the coordination between the U.S. military in Afghanistan and the Northern Alliance that Moscow was able to facilitate because of its longtime support of the anti-Taliban struggle. Putin was able to win his suspicious generals over to this policy by pointing out the benefits to Russia of a more secure southern flank.

For about a year after September 11, 2001, Putin remained steadfast in his commitment to the partnership with the United States. It served Moscow's interests as well as Washington's. However, Moscow soon discovered that many of the expected benefits of the partnership were elusive. The hoped-for moratorium on criticizing Russia over its Chechnya policy was slow to materialize. A statement by the U.S. Department of State spokesman accusing Russian troops in Chechnya of the "disproportionate use of force against civilian installations" and "ongoing human rights violations" was poorly received in Moscow. Equally distressing were meetings in early 2002 between official representatives of Western countries and representatives of Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov accused the West of engaging in a policy of "double standards." Nor did George W. Bush's State of the Union address identifying Iraq, Iran, and

North Korea as an “axis of evil” and the source of world terrorism go over well in Moscow. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov argued that other states—indeed U.S. allies, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan—were also culpable.

More serious was the problem of missile defense. In December 2001, George W. Bush announced that the United States was unilaterally withdrawing from the ABM treaty. His intention was to build a limited land- and sea-based ballistic missile defense, which could not be done within the confines of the ABM treaty. His decision to do so had been telegraphed from the beginning of his administration, though that did not make it any easier for the Kremlin to accept. Despite rumblings from Russia's military and political elites, Putin failed to make an issue of Washington's decision. However, as they had threatened, the Russians subsequently withdrew from the START II treaty.

Another contentious arms control issue involved the terms of a new agreement, to replace START II, which would further reduce nuclear weapons. Under the cancelled START II agreement, nuclear weapons were supposed to be limited to 3,500 warheads each. Moscow was anxious to lower that number because it could not afford to maintain so large a force. Realistically, the Russians could afford no more than 1,500 warheads. The Bush administration agreed to a reduction, but it wanted the specific number to be spelled out in a bilateral declaration rather than in a formal treaty.

When the two presidents met in Moscow in May 2002, they signed a Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which compromised some of the differences, but which required Moscow to make the most substantive concessions. Putin got the treaty commitment he wanted, but it comprised a meager three pages and permitted either side to withdraw in the relatively short period of three months. The number of warheads permitted ranged from 1,700 to 2,200. What made this new strategic treaty undesirable to many in the Russian military was the provision that the warheads reduced could be stored rather than physically destroyed. While Moscow was free to store as many weapons as Washington, it simply lacked the economic means to keep up with the United States. Everyone understood the asymmetry of the treaty, but it was the best Russia could get from the Bush administration at the time.<sup>11</sup>

George Bush had hoped to offer as a gift to his host at the Moscow summit the repeal of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, a relic of the Cold War that the U.S. Congress enacted in 1974 to prod the Soviet Union to permit Jewish emigration. A repeal of the amendment would have made it possible to export state-of-the-art computers and other high-tech products to Russia. Congressional refusal to comply with Bush's request added to Russia's discomfiture and undermined Russia's hopes to enter the American market with its exports.

Even more important to the Russian economy was the formal U.S. recognition of Russia as a market economy. That was important for American investment in Russia as well as for Russian admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO). George W. Bush promised Putin that he would push hard for such recognition,

and he delivered on the promise only one month after the summit. (Nevertheless, Russia was to remain outside the WTO for another decade.)

The Moscow summit was proclaimed a success by both leaders. Bush claimed the nuclear pact signaled the end of the Cold War (hardly a new observation), and both presidents proclaimed their states' mutual friendship. Putin displayed the necessary diplomatic tact to conceal his disappointment in the arms agreement. He could do this in part because the arms control issue was not one directly threatening Russia's security. Certainly the concern about terrorist threats trumped worries over a nuclear attack from the United States.

Another security issue of concern to Moscow was Russia's relation to NATO and the question of NATO expansion. Here too, as with arms control, Russian prestige was an important factor. Because Moscow could not stop the United States from proceeding with enlargement of NATO despite Russian objections, there was widespread resentment among the country's political elite and in public opinion generally.

Moscow's concerns were addressed at a foreign ministers' meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, held at roughly the same time as the Moscow summit, aimed at formulating a new relationship between Russia and NATO. The Russia-NATO Founding Act of 1997 was revised to give Moscow a greater voice in some of NATO's decisions. On specific issues such as terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation, crisis management, and European theater missile defense, Russia would have a voice equal to that of the other nineteen members. This was described by some as the "20" format as opposed to "19 vs. 1." Military decisions were excluded from issues of joint consultation, and in no sense was Russia moving toward membership in the alliance. Nevertheless, this concession by the West helped salve some of Moscow's unhappiness with Europe and the United States.<sup>12</sup>

On July 12, 2002, Vladimir Putin made a major foreign policy address to an assemblage of the nation's top foreign policy leadership, including the heads of Russia's diplomatic missions abroad. In that speech he challenged the skeptics around him who doubted the value of having the United States as a partner. "Partnership with the United States," he said, is an "unconditional priority" and "the key elements of our foreign policy must be to counter the threat of terrorism."<sup>13</sup> A seminar of prominent Russian scholars met at the same time to analyze Russia's foreign policy. They inferred the existence of a "Putin Doctrine" whose features were realism, abandonment of the goal of pursuing parity with the United States, and integration with the West as the key to economic progress.<sup>14</sup>

## **War in Iraq**

Throughout 2002 the threat of war in Iraq dominated international politics. As a guide to foreign policy, the "Putin Doctrine" was too general to predict how Moscow would react to the growing threat of an American military assault on the

regime of Saddam Hussein. The long-standing conflict between the United States and Iraq had intensified in 1998 with the expulsion by Saddam of the inspectors authorized by the United Nations to find and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. While the international community clamored for the return of UN inspectors, the Bush administration increasingly came to believe (particularly after September 11) that only the removal of Saddam from power could protect U.S. security and foster peace in the Middle East.

Russia found itself in a dilemma not unlike that faced by Mikhail Gorbachev during the 1990–91 Gulf crisis. Moscow agreed that Saddam had to be divested of weapons of mass destruction, but it believed that this could be accomplished by resuming the inspection process. The Kremlin firmly opposed a military assault on Iraq. To bolster its argument against war, Moscow insisted that only the United Nations could legally sanction the use of force. Of course, with the veto in the Security Council, Russia could always prevent UN action.

Moscow's opposition to an attack on Baghdad was partially dictated by economics. Iraq was indebted to Russia by some \$8 billion, going back to the days of the Soviet Union. Moreover, Lukoil, the giant Russian oil company, had numerous lucrative contracts with the Iraq government. Russia was Iraq's largest trading partner, with turnover exceeding \$2 billion annually. On the other side of the ledger was the importance of American investment in Russia, which Putin valued highly. In January, Tariq Aziz, Iraq's deputy prime minister, went to Moscow to argue Saddam's case—just as he had done years before when Iraq had invaded Kuwait—and Vladimir Putin, not wishing to break ranks with the United States, refused to receive him.

Throughout much of 2002 the United States and its European allies argued over whether inspections (if resumed) or force was the way to deal with Iraq. Russia urged Baghdad to re-admit UN inspectors. In September, making what some believed to be a pre-emptive move of his own, Saddam agreed to allow inspectors to return to Iraq unconditionally. Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov voiced his country's enthusiastic approval: "Thanks to concerted efforts, we have succeeded in averting the threat of a military scenario, and in putting the process back on a political track."<sup>15</sup> His enthusiasm was unwarranted. Washington was determined on a regime change, which could be achieved only by war.

On November 6 George Bush obtained congressional approval for war against Iraq. He then sought from the United Nations a resolution authorizing the same. On November 8 the UN Security Council resolved unanimously that Iraq surrender weapons of mass destruction within thirty days and permit the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) unrestricted right to inspect every nook and cranny in the country in order to verify compliance with the demand.<sup>16</sup> In the event that there was any doubt that this was not the authorization for war desired by President Bush, Russia, France, and China issued a joint statement that the Security Council resolution "excludes any automaticity in the use of force."

But automaticity was precisely what the Bush administration had in mind. In the face of mounting global opposition to war, Washington turned to Moscow for assistance. Just as his father had appealed to Gorbachev face-to-face in 1990, George W. Bush sought to obtain what support he could from Vladimir Putin. While Russia's endorsement of war was never in the cards, Bush did hope to soften Moscow's opposition, at least publicly. On the surface the brief Putin-Bush summit exuded cordial pleasantries. The American president conveyed his approval of the controversial Russian operation the previous October to free hundreds of Chechen-held hostages in a Moscow theater. For his part Putin took a benign attitude toward the NATO decision at the Prague summit in November to enlarge the alliance from nineteen to twenty-six members, including the three Baltic republics. But behind the scenes sharp differences remained. Putin sought, unsuccessfully, American guarantees that a post-Saddam regime would honor Russia's economic interests in Iraq (particularly Iraq's huge debt and Lukoil's numerous contracts).<sup>17</sup>

None of the political maneuvering that took place in late 2002 and early 2003 significantly changed the position of any of the great powers involved in the Iraqi crisis. Iraq insisted that it possessed no weapons of mass destruction. The United States, supported by Britain, was determined to go to war; and Russia, France, Germany, and China continued to oppose war in favor of inspections. On January 27, 2003, Hans Blix, head of UNMOVIC, and Mohamed ElBaradei, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director, reported to the UN Security Council on the results of their inspections of Iraq. It was a mixed message. Hans Blix praised Iraq's cooperation in the process but warned, "Iraq did not appear yet to have come to a genuine acceptance of disarmament."<sup>18</sup> No weapons of mass destruction were found, but neither had Baghdad provided evidence of the destruction of the stocks of prohibited biological and chemical agents or Scud missiles it was thought to have. A story in the Russian press summed up the situation with the byline, "It's clear that nothing is clear."<sup>19</sup>

On the day following Blix and El Baradei's report, President Bush delivered his State of the Union address to the U.S. Congress. He left no doubt that the United States was preparing for war against Iraq. That policy was opposed by a large preponderance of world opinion. But the opinion with the most significant implications was that of America's European allies. On the issue of going to war with Iraq, eight NATO allies supported the United States: Britain, Hungary, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and the Czech Republic. Opposition to the United States was led by France and Germany. Russia, not an ally, but a partner, opposed going to war, but did so in a less strident manner.

Franco-German opposition to war was offensive to the Bush administration in a way that Russian opposition was not. First, the United States expected better from its allies. But more importantly, the rhetoric of the French and Germans conveyed a strong sense of anti-Americanism. Indeed, Gerhard Schroeder's re-election campaign in the fall of 2002 openly appealed to German anti-American sentiment.

The French were, if anything, even more strident. By contrast, Putin opposed the war but carefully sought to avoid offending the United States.

A major consequence of the Iraq controversy was the rupture of NATO. At the very time that NATO was expanding its membership, it was becoming divided into pro- and anti-American wings—or, as U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld put it, into “Old” and “New” Europe. Putin obviously did not cause this rupture, but he took advantage of it. Bush’s National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was widely quoted as telling associates that the United States would “punish France, ignore Germany, and forgive Russia.”<sup>20</sup> (The condescending tone was certainly not lost on the Russians.) Nevertheless, Putin remained on good terms with all the parties, while relations between Europe and the United States were strained.

In the early months of 2003 the Bush administration made its final push for UN endorsement of the use of force against Iraq. Secretary of State Colin Powell on February 6 delivered an impassioned appeal before the Security Council. Russian diplomacy was under pressure to maintain some kind of balance between its opposition to war and its unwillingness to break with the United States. A flurry of brief summit meetings of Europe’s leaders sought to work out a common position. With Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, a supporter of the United States, Putin intimated that Russia would show flexibility. But with Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroeder, Putin reaffirmed the Kremlin’s opposition to the use of force. He took the occasion of a visit to Paris to reiterate a theme he had articulated before to justify the Russo-French-German position. He described an emerging European entente as a step toward the building of a multipolar world. “This is,” he said, “the first attempt since the time of World War II to find a solution to a serious international crisis outside the framework of [politico-military] blocs.”<sup>21</sup>

On February 24, Washington finally introduced a resolution before the Security Council authorizing military action if Saddam failed to disarm. Moscow still hoped to avoid being forced to veto the U.S.-British draft. As a last-ditch effort to persuade Saddam to capitulate, Putin sent Yevgeny Primakov to Baghdad. Primakov was the same diplomat used by Mikhail Gorbachev during the crisis over Kuwait more than a decade earlier. He was no more successful in 2003 than he had been in 1990 and 1991.<sup>22</sup> In March, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov announced that he would if necessary join France (and likely China) in vetoing the American resolution. In the face of certain defeat, the United States and Britain withdrew their resolution. When it went to war, Washington would be forced to act without the endorsement of the United Nations and against the overwhelming opinion of the international community.

War began on March 19 with an air strike intended to decapitate the regime by killing Saddam Hussein. The air strike failed, but the military campaign that ensued was successful. Within three weeks Baghdad had fallen to coalition forces. Popular reaction in Russia to the war was initially overwhelmingly hostile. In the State Duma, the most moderate of the resolutions that were debated condemned “U.S. aggression against Iraq.” The Communists proposed that Russia withdraw



from the partnership with the United States in the fight against terrorism. But Foreign Minister Ivanov helped defeat that measure by warning against letting the anti-terror coalition become a casualty of the war. However, he did recommend postponing ratification of SORT. While the Russian government confronted a public unsympathetic to the American-led war, Vladimir Putin himself made it clear that “for political and economic reasons, Russia does not have an interest in a U.S. defeat.”<sup>23</sup>

As the dust of war in Iraq settled—briefly, as it turned out—Putin sought to repair the damage to relations with the United States, while at the same time avoiding a rupture with the leaders of the anti-war coalition in Europe. In mid-April, for example, the Russian president hosted a brief summit in St. Petersburg with Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroeder at which the trio agreed that the post-war reconstruction of Iraq must be under the aegis of the United Nations. At the same time, in May a compliant Russian parliament went ahead with ratification of SORT. As a further earnest of its commitment to the Russo-American strategic partnership, Russia supported a UN Security Council resolution in May that lifted the sanctions imposed by the United Nations on Iraq. This was an important step toward legitimizing the American war in Iraq.

We have stressed the balancing act that Putin pursued in his relations with the West. In so doing, he was engaged in what is traditionally referred to as balance-of-power politics. Putin’s focus was by no means limited to the great powers in the West. As he balanced the United States and Europe against each other, so also did he balance China against the United States. In May, Putin invited Hu Jintao, China’s newly chosen president, to a summit meeting in Moscow. Their joint declaration took a relatively moderate position toward the United States. Though they shared a similar geopolitical view of international politics (i.e., preference for a multipolar world), they also found common cause with the United States in opposing Islamic militancy.

China has for years sought to suppress the movement of its Uighur minority in the western province of Xinjiang for autonomy from Beijing’s rule. A Turkic people, the Uighurs are Muslims of the Sunni sect and by and large consider themselves to be members of a world Muslim community.

At the Hu-Putin summit, both leaders affirmed the closeness of relations between their countries and their joint commitment to fighting terrorism. One very tangible achievement of the summit was the creation of a formal structure for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), uniting Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This new structure serves Russia’s interest in three important ways:

1. it counterbalances American influence in Central Asia;
2. it combines the weight of Russia and China in the global balance of power;
3. it provides a vehicle for cooperation with those nations fighting terrorism.

## Partnership Frayed

The initial military success of the American-led invasion of Iraq brought neither peace to the victors nor stability to the country. Within a year the coalition found itself engaged in a protracted guerrilla war in which its superior firepower was unable to suppress suicide bombers and kidnappers. The United States was in a quagmire and sought what assistance it could get from the United Nations, its European allies, and its Russian partner. Vladimir Putin in theory never wavered from his commitment to partnership with the United States in the war against Islamist terrorism. But on a wide range of issues the United States and Russia clashed, and neither was prepared to make major concessions to the other simply for the sake of their partnership. Moscow objected to Washington's plans to build a strategic missile defense; to the Pentagon's unwillingness to destroy deactivated nuclear warheads; to the apparent American plans for long-term military presence in Central Asia and Georgia; and to Washington's criticism of Moscow's Chechnya policy, as well as to the Jackson-Vanik Amendment that remained on the American legislative books until the end of 2012.

Nor was Moscow in complete harmony with Europe, notwithstanding their common position against the war in Iraq. The EU and Council of Europe were, if anything, more critical than the United States of Russian human rights violations, particularly in Chechnya. In December, an OSCE session criticized Russia for maintaining military bases in Moldova and Georgia. Moscow in turn expressed dismay over British, Danish, and German refusal to extradite Akhmed Zakayev, a Chechen separatist leader. This, Moscow said, reflected a double standard between the West and Russia in the war on international terrorism. Additionally, Moscow and Brussels were at odds over the terms of Russia's admission to the World Trade Organization and over the question of extending the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Russia and the EU to the ten new EU states admitted in 2004. After tense negotiations and some concessions to Moscow by the EU, agreements were reached in April and May on both of these matters. In any event, Moscow's relations with the EU's leading members, France and Germany, remained especially close during this period. Indeed, Putin was hosting President Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder for a summit at his vacation resort on the Black Sea on September 1, 2004, at the very time of the tragic seizure of a school in Beslan, North Ossetia, by pro-Chechen terrorists.

One issue that both united and divided Russia and the West was the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This problem involved particularly Iran and North Korea. As we discussed in Chapter 8, Russia's relations with Iran are important for economic as well as geopolitical reasons. Moscow assisted Iran in the construction of a nuclear power plant at Bushehr. Financially, the project involved nearly \$1 billion in revenue to Russia and the fate of thousands of jobs in Russia's nuclear power industry. The United States and many Europeans suspected that Iran had a covert aim to build a nuclear weapon. Russia professed to believe that

Tehran's interest in nuclear energy was for peaceful purposes only. When the G-8 leaders met in Evian, France, in the summer of 2003, they agreed that countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was a top priority. While agreeing with that objective, Putin still insisted, "Russia is cooperating with Iran and will continue to cooperate with that country."<sup>24</sup> For its part, Tehran agreed to return the spent nuclear fuel from the Bushehr reactor to Russia as well as submit to international inspection by the IAEA.

Iran's credibility on this issue was undermined when the IAEA discovered that Iranian scientists had concealed illicit activity (involving uranium enrichment) for almost two decades. In order to obtain assurance about Iran's nuclear program, Britain, France, and Germany persuaded the IAEA to press Iran to sign an "additional protocol" to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that would require it to permit IAEA inspectors to visit nuclear facilities without prior notice. Iran balked at the IAEA demands, threatening even to withdraw from the NPT. The European powers sought Moscow's assistance in obtaining Iranian compliance. Moscow found itself caught in the middle between conflicting parties, all of whom it wanted to accommodate. Washington's position in this struggle differed from that of its European allies and Russia. The Bush administration was convinced that oil-rich Iran had more than enough energy and had embarked on a nuclear program primarily in order to acquire nuclear weapons. Washington wanted the IAEA to declare Iran in violation of the NPT and to have the UN Security Council consider economic sanctions on Iran. Europe and Russia both opposed imposing sanctions on Iran. On October 20 the foreign ministers of Britain, France, and Germany flew to Tehran to persuade the government to accept the IAEA demand to adhere to the additional protocol. Iran agreed to do so and to suspend its enrichment of uranium in return for a promise of Western technological assistance. Vladimir Putin, in Bangkok when this agreement was reached, hailed the outcome as a "great day for Europe." His euphoria was premature.

As a show of support to Russia, the Iranian government chose to announce its acceptance of the IAEA protocol and the temporary suspension of uranium enrichment in Moscow on November 10. At the same time, it was announced that Russia would soon begin building a second power-generating unit at Bushehr. Washington continued to insist that Iran had a weapons program. Remembering Israel's 1981 attack destroying the Iraqi Osirak nuclear reactor, Iran sought Russian assistance in air defense. According to press reports Moscow agreed to supply \$1.6 billion worth of weapons to Tehran—most of it air defense equipment.<sup>25</sup>

What seemed to be progress toward a solution to Iranian nuclear proliferation in 2003 proved illusory. Negotiations by the European powers over technological assistance to Iran broke down in 2004. In July the Iranian government announced that it had restarted building centrifuges that are used to enrich uranium, adding fuel to the American argument that Tehran is seeking an atomic weapon. Although Europeans and Iran again reached agreement on the centrifuges at year's end, Tehran insisted that it was not permanently halting its "peaceful"

nuclear programs. Iran's more aggressive posture in 2004 complicated Russia's desire to reconcile its ties to that regime and its commitment to work with the West to stop nuclear proliferation.<sup>26</sup>

North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) posed a different set of problems for Russian diplomacy. Kim Jong Il's regime openly acknowledged its nuclear weapons program. On December 31, 2002, the DPRK abrogated the Framework Agreement signed in 1994 with the Clinton administration that froze its nuclear program in exchange for economic assistance. Afterward it used its nuclear program as a bargaining chip to demand direct bilateral negotiations with the United States, leading to a non-aggression pact between the two countries. The Bush administration rejected those demands, agreeing to negotiate with North Korea only in a multilateral context. In 2003, under Chinese initiative, multilateral negotiations were begun that ultimately included South Korea and Japan.

Russia, as much as any country, fears Pyongyang's nuclear capability, recognizing that this would destabilize the region and likely provoke Japan and South Korea to follow suit. Participation in the multilateral negotiations was vital to Russian prestige. Russia, though hardly sympathetic to Kim Jong Il's regime, is a longtime friend of the DPRK, and Putin had a personal relationship with Kim Jong Il that was matched by few other world leaders. Moscow believed that Russia could play a better mediating role than any of the other parties involved. Perhaps as a diplomatic ploy to play the United States and Russia against each other—just as the United States sought to use China to pressure North Korea—Kim Jong Il agreed in July 2003 that Russia should join the talks, enlarging the negotiating group from five to six. But several rounds of talks failed to stop or even slow the DPRK's efforts to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>27</sup>

### **Putin's Second Term: The Paradox of Partnership**

National elections were held in Russia in late 2003 and early 2004—in December for a new parliament and in March for the presidency. The results gave Putin a second term with a thoroughly compliant parliament. By democratic means, Vladimir Putin acquired virtually autocratic powers. Dominating Russia's new parliament was the party endorsed by Putin, United Russia. Altogether the pro-administration forces garnered 325 seats in the Duma, more than enough even to amend the constitution. Paralleling his success in December, Putin won reelection to a second term in a landslide, claiming 71.2 percent of the national vote. Now more than ever, Putin was in a position to pursue his foreign and domestic agendas unconstrained by an internal opposition.

The initial reaction of the West and CIS member states to Russia's parliamentary elections was generally negative. A largely critical assessment of the election campaign was issued by the OSCE's International Election Observation Mission, which complained particularly about the unbalanced media coverage. In both

Europe and the United States there was talk of a tougher Russian foreign policy, and among many of the CIS member states there were fears that the nationalists in Russia would push for a more hegemonic policy.

Indeed, on a range of issues Russian relations with Europe and the United States showed signs of strain. Two were particularly contentious. One involved Russia's relations with its neighbors, and the other, NATO's expansion into the Baltic states. At a meeting of the OSCE in December, Moscow was scolded for keeping military forces in Georgia and Moldova against the wishes of those governments.<sup>28</sup> Moscow resented European efforts to influence the outcome of the conflict between Moldova and Trans-Dniester. Nor was the Kremlin pleased with the closeness of ties between Washington and Georgia. In December, Donald Rumsfeld visited Baku to discuss the possibility of basing U.S. mobile forces in Azerbaijan. Moscow saw this visit as part of a pattern of expanding American influence in the South Caucasus.

Although Putin had initially soft-pedaled his reaction to avoid harming his relations with the United States, it became clear as the "partnership" frayed that NATO's second round of expansion was more disturbing to Moscow than the first round in 1999 had been. On March 29, 2004, seven new members joined the alliance—Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Not only did the alliance now extend close to major Russian cities, but also it incorporated three states that had once been united with Russia. Russian prestige was dealt a severe blow. Though NATO was a coalition of states then more or less friendly to Russia, the new balance of power would leave Russia more exposed and vulnerable than it had ever been in modern times. NATO immediately announced its intention to begin aerial surveillance of the airspace over Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, a step viewed by the Russian military as "unfriendly." Defense Minister Ivanov complained that combat jets would be a mere "three-minute flight away from St. Petersburg."<sup>29</sup>

Another Russian complaint about NATO enlargement was that it rendered obsolete many of the arrangements worked out in 1990 in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty. To Russia, the CFE agreement was important as a protection against the superior military forces in the West and as an instrument for stability in Europe. The CFE had been modified in 1999, but ratification was never completed because of the continuing presence of Russian troops in Moldova and Georgia. With the 2004 enlargement of NATO, the CFE would again need to be modified to be relevant to Europe's new distribution of military forces.

Early in 2004, Moscow announced its refusal to support an initiative on counter-proliferation introduced by George W. Bush six months earlier in Krakow, Poland. The U.S. president sought international agreement to seize ships and aircraft in international waters and airspace if there was suspicion that they were transporting weapons of mass destruction or components for them. Of particular concern to the United States was trade in such weapons by North Korea and Iran. Moscow, however, changed its position in May, when it voted to support

Bush's Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in a UN Security Council resolution. Moscow's price for its endorsement was the deletion of any specific reference to Iran and North Korea as states guilty of violating the NPT.<sup>30</sup>

A turning point in the struggle between Russia, Europe, and the United States over Iraq came in June when the UN Security Council unanimously agreed that the military occupation of Iraq would formally end by June 30, 2004, and that power would be transferred to an interim government that would rule the country until elections (no later than January 2005) for a National Assembly.<sup>31</sup> To reach this consensus all sides had to make concessions: the United States, by agreeing to give up its rule in Iraq early, and opponents of the war, by permitting the United Nations to recognize the legitimacy of the changes wrought by the war.

On May 26, 2004, Vladimir Putin delivered his annual message to the nation's parliament. Such messages in all countries are studied as indicators of where the country is going in domestic and foreign policy. This message was notable for its focus on domestic affairs. Nonetheless, in the area of foreign policy a theme stressed by Putin was continuity in the policy of partnership with the United States. "[O]ur line in the struggle against terrorism," he said, "remains unchanged and consistent. . . . I consider the task of strengthening the anti-terrorist coalition to be among the most important."<sup>32</sup>

Russia's continuing partnership with the United States was paradoxical, in that Putin maintained it even in the face of U.S. policies that conflicted with important Russian interests, notably anti-missile defense, NATO expansion, the war in Iraq, and NATO intervention in the space of the former USSR. The likely explanation for this paradox was Putin's pragmatism. He reconciled his administration to policies that were inevitable; those he could not prevent. This acquiescence to the inevitable was noted explicitly by Russia's new foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, at a NATO-Russian summit in Istanbul in the summer of 2004. Referring to the expansion of the alliance's influence in the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia as "an objective reality," Lavrov was thereby conceding the necessity—in accordance with Russia's larger economic and political interests—of cooperating with the West.<sup>33</sup>

However, there was little doubt that Moscow's declining control in the former Soviet space continued to be troubling both to Russia's political elite and to much of the Russian public. The Baltic states were now part of the West; Moldova had defied Moscow, with EU encouragement; American military advisors were in Georgia; Azerbaijan and Ukraine sent troops to Iraq; the United States had military bases in Central Asia; and Moscow's preferred candidate was not allowed to gain power through a fraudulent election in Ukraine. Taken together, these developments constituted a major geopolitical decline for Russia. On the other hand, the terror attacks of August and September 2004 underscored Russia's continuing inability to resolve the festering conflict in Chechnya or to shut that hapless region off from assistance rendered by foreign extremists. With its vulnerability to internal and external threats thus newly exposed, Moscow needed the cooperation

of the West more than ever. How Russia's leaders would accommodate to this dilemma during the remainder of Putin's second term was one of the big issues in Russian foreign policy.

As it unfolded, Vladimir Putin's second presidential term (2004–2008) did indeed change the direction of Russian foreign policy. It was not a radical change, because its roots were events that developed during his first administration. Putin's stance became noticeably more assertive and hard-line. Abandoning the spirit of cooperation of his mentor, Boris Yeltsin, Putin increasingly demanded that Russia be recognized as a great power—the geopolitical equal of the United States and Europe—and be given commensurate weight in the resolution of global issues. Thus, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov claimed in late 2007,

The part of the world community commonly referred to as the Euro-Atlantic region would be well served by tripartite mutual understanding on the part of the US, Russia and the European Union . . . [S]uch a “troika” might be able to “steer the world boat into calm waters.”<sup>34</sup>

Added to Russia's previous concern for recognition of its interests was the demand for recognition of its status in the world: in a word, prestige. Though not always appreciated as such, prestige is an important component of power.<sup>35</sup> One of the facets of power is recognition by others that a state possesses the capacity to exert it. Russia, because of its size, always had the potential to be powerful, but after the Soviet collapse it was too weak to be recognized as a great power. During the latter half of the decade Russia's economic growth steadily enhanced its political power.

### **Beslan and the Shift Toward Authoritarianism**

On May 27, 2004, Vladimir Putin addressed the Deputies to the Federal Assembly, Russia's parliament, declaring, “For the first time in a long time, Russia has become a politically and economically stable country. . . . Our goals are absolutely clear. They include a strengthening of Russia's position in the world.”<sup>36</sup> Putin's optimism reflected what appeared to be a steadily improving economy. Russia had recovered from the financial crisis that preceded his presidency. High oil prices generating enormous oil revenues had begun to enhance his country's political clout. By contrast, American prestige was in a steady decline because of the debacle in Iraq. Though in reality the United States was not as weak nor Russia as strong as these factors suggested, the perceptions of the great powers favored Russia.<sup>37</sup>

A seminal event occurred early in Putin's second term with profound effect upon domestic and foreign policy. On September 1, 2004, a band of thirty-two well-armed terrorists seized School No. 1 in the North Ossetian city of Beslan, taking some 1,200 people hostage. The assault was planned by the Chechen militant Shamil Basayev and executed by his “martyrs' brigade.” Their object was the

removal of Russian forces from Chechnya and the release of Chechen prisoners. After a three-day standoff the school was stormed, with disastrous consequences for the hostages. Three hundred forty-four hostages were killed in the shoot-out, most of them children. Addressing the nation after the tragedy, Putin stated, "we failed to understand the complexity and danger of processes occurring in our own country and in the world as a whole. . . . We showed weakness. And the weak are trampled on."<sup>38</sup>

An immediate consequence of the Beslan massacre was Putin's decision to centralize Moscow's control over Russia's regions by discarding the popular election of regional governors and republic presidents and giving the Federation president the power to nominate them. Beslan was viewed as a classic lesson that Islamist terrorism required a stronger central government to deal with it. It is widely believed that the rise of Islamist terrorism probably contributed to the general backsliding on democracy in Russia that took place during Putin's second term.<sup>39</sup> As the Russian president moved toward authoritarianism he found himself increasingly at odds with the West on a range of foreign policy issues.

Already sensitive to Western charges of brutality toward Chechens, the Russian government was outraged when some Western sources suggested that Moscow's handling of the Beslan crisis contributed to its terrible consequences. With some bitterness the Russians failed in their effort to force Europe's governments to extradite terrorist suspects to their home government. Moscow was angered further when 115 American and European foreign policy specialists and former and current political leaders published a stinging criticism of Putin's authoritarian regime and foreign policy aggression. Putin's deputy chief of staff described these critics as "people still living out the phobias of the cold war."<sup>40</sup> A debate about human rights was fought out in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg, already viewed by many in Russia as an institutional setting for systematic attacks on Russia.

Though there has been greater rapport between Russia and the EU than between Russia and the Council of Europe, Moscow has been unhappy with what it has viewed as anti-Russian tendencies in the EU following the addition of members of what used to be the Eastern bloc. In particular, the pressures for democratization of the CIS member states have enhanced Russian suspicions that Europe is seeking to substitute pro-Western regimes for pro-Russian ones.

East-West relations were not totally antagonistic. George W. Bush's re-election in November was widely hailed in Moscow. Putin, reflecting the goodwill established during their respective first terms, described Bush as a strong, consistent, reliable partner. While Europe was more engaged in the fight for human rights and democracy, Moscow shared with the United States the primacy of the battle against international terrorism.

Presidents Bush and Putin had their first post-re-election summit in the Slovak city of Bratislava on February 24, 2005. Both leaders affirmed the positive relationship between their respective countries. No significant agreements were



reached, nor were any issues of serious disagreement aired. Bush raised the problem of Russia's retreat on democracy, but accepted Putin's assurances that there would be no further backsliding on democracy at home.

### **The Struggle for Central Asia**

Differences over democracy were not limited to Putin's domestic politics. A major bone of contention during 2004–2005 was the struggle over what kinds of regimes would be tolerated in the post-Soviet space. Beginning in 2003 in Georgia with the “rose” revolution, which brought Mikheil Saakashvili to power, several other anti-authoritarian revolutions took place within member states of the CIS: the “orange” revolutions in Ukraine and Moldova and the “tulip” revolution in Kyrgyzstan. Particularly damaging to Russian prestige and geopolitical position was the defeat in Ukraine of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich by the relatively pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko. Contributing to Russia's diplomatic defeat in Ukraine was Putin's blatant but unsuccessful attempt to influence the outcome. In each of these “revolutions” popular forces, supported by the West, opposed authoritarian figures who were backed by Moscow. The fall of Akayev in Kyrgyzstan was seen by some as the last straw. Some Russian commentators even saw in the trend the possibility that the United States would attempt to dismember the Russian Federation. Efforts by the United States to support a free press, fair elections, and civil society in the CIS—accentuated following Bush's second inaugural address pledging U.S. opposition to tyranny—were viewed by Moscow as subversive. Responding to a reporter's question about American promotion of democracy in the CIS, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov responded:

When we talk about spreading democracy and freedom around the world, Russia proceeds from the premise that inculcating these values in a given society from outside is (1) impossible and (2) dangerous on account of the consequences such attempts could have. Two circumstances must be taken into account. First, there cannot be any single model of democracy. . . . And second, democracy has to grow and mature from within.<sup>41</sup>

Putin's instinctive response to Western pressure in the CIS, and particularly to what he perceived as the threat of new “color revolutions” in Central Asia, was geopolitical. In June he initiated a dialogue among Russia, China, and India. A meeting of the foreign ministers of these countries was held in Vladivostok to consider measures to be taken to promote stability in Asia and to prevent the spread of revolution. Unspoken but clearly understood was the desire (at least on the part of Russia and China, if not India) to organize a counterweight to the United States in Central Asia. A month later the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (composed of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) met in the capital of Kazakhstan as a follow-up to the meeting in Vladivostok. The concluding declaration of the organization stated that the

military phase of the NATO-led counter-terrorist operation in Afghanistan was finished, and that the allied forces needed to set a timetable for the withdrawal of American military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Eventually the United States was pressured to abandon the bases in both countries. In July Washington was told to vacate the Kashi-Khanabad air base in Uzbekistan within six months. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Uzbekistan had become a partner with the United States in the fight against Islamist terror. This followed significant American economic aid. However, Washington-Tashkent relations suffered as a result of the harsh repression of dissident forces by Karimov in the Andijon incident (discussed in Chapter 6). Moscow, by its strong support of Karimov, successfully moved Uzbekistan into its camp. Early in 2009, Kyrgyzstan's president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, with substantial financial assistance from Moscow, appeared ready to expel the United States from its Manas air base. However, the Kyrgyz regime was persuaded to back down from the closure order when the United States agreed to triple its rent payments and change the name of the facility to Transit Center at Manas International Airport. Eventually, however, in January 2013, following Bakiyev's ouster and with continuing inducements from Russia (discussed in Chapter 6), the new Kyrgyz government reaffirmed its decision to close the facility when the lease expired in July 2014.

### **Iran and Proliferation**

Iran poses a dilemma for Russia. Moscow shares with the West a commitment to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. At the same time it has strong economic ties to Iran and is reluctant to apply the rigorous sanctions against Iran that the United States has demanded. Russia has constructed a nuclear plant at Bushehr. It would like to obtain the contracts for additional plants that Tehran is planning to build. The central issue in contention between Iran and the West is Iran's program of uranium enrichment. Enriched uranium is a fuel used in nuclear reactors for peaceful purposes; if refined, it can also be used as the fissionable fuel for nuclear weapons. Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, elected in June 2005, came into office determined to press ahead with uranium enrichment. Putin lavishly congratulated Ahmadinejad on his election, promising to continue Russo-Iranian cooperation in the field of atomic energy.

In August Iran resumed on a small scale its program of uranium enrichment. Thus began a new cycle of tension between Iran and the West, with Russia in the middle. Britain, France, and Germany lodged a complaint with the IAEA, the United Nations organ principally responsible for monitoring violations of the Nuclear NPT, of which Iran is a signatory. The United States sought to have the issue referred to the UN Security Council for consideration of possible sanctions against Iran. Russia opposed this action on the grounds that no evidence existed that Iran had a nuclear weapons program.

Moscow was put on the spot in the fall of 2005 when the Board of Governors of the IAEA proposed a strongly worded resolution critical of Iran's nuclear program. Putin personally tried to persuade Ahmadinejad when he met him in New York at the UN General Assembly's annual session. But Ahmadinejad was blunt in his refusal to give up uranium enrichment. In the end Russia chose to abstain on the vote in the IAEA—thus finessing the issue in a way favoring the Western powers. The IAEA resolution was, however, watered down to give Iran an opportunity to back down before the issue would be referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions. Iran's willingness to buck not only the West but Russia as well set a pattern that continued during Ahmadinejad's presidency.

A possible compromise was worked out late in the year that might have gotten Russia off the hook. As approved between Presidents Bush and Putin, it would have permitted Iran to enrich uranium but under conditions that would have satisfied the United States and Europe that no fissionable fuel was being produced. Under this proposal, Iran would be permitted to enrich uranium in Russia under Russian supervision. Iran would have no control over the degree of enrichment in a facility that would be built on Russian territory.<sup>42</sup> Tehran did not initially accept the idea but kept open the option for further discussions. Russian authorities, still hoping to shield Iran from UN sanctions, were deeply disappointed.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps as an inducement to Tehran and to strengthen its economic ties, Moscow agreed to sell twenty-nine surface-to-air missiles to Iran. In so doing, Moscow risked a worsening of relations with Washington and also increasing pressure to impose sanctions on Iran. Russia's problem was further complicated by vitriolic rhetoric coming from Iranian President Ahmadinejad denying the Holocaust and seeming to threaten the destruction of the state of Israel. Moscow was annoyed at Tehran's provocative and uncompromising behavior, but along with China steadfastly resisted efforts by the Western powers to impose sanctions on Iran. Iranian negotiators successfully divided Russia and China from the Western powers by keeping open the option to consider a joint venture with Russia to enrich uranium, as well as by threatening to deny IAEA inspectors access to Iranian territory if Security Council sanctions were imposed.

Finally in March, Tehran categorically rejected Moscow's plan for a joint uranium enrichment venture. Anticipating the possibility of UN sanctions, Iran threatened to use its oil supplies as a political weapon and to withdraw from the NPT altogether. Moscow remained steadfast: along with China, it opposed UN sanctions. China imported 13 percent of its oil and natural gas from Iran, and Russia needed Iran for its market in nuclear technology. Moscow was determined not to be caught in the fight between Iran and the United States.

Intensive negotiations continued through the spring and summer among the Group of Six (the United States, Russia, France, Germany, China, and Britain) over a set of proposals that might induce Iran to abandon uranium enrichment. Moscow's position remained steadfast: negotiation, yes; sanctions, no. The Group of Six negotiating group worked out a set of incentives to induce Iranian

compliance. No deadline was set for a response from Tehran, though the United States—growing impatient with Iranian stalling—let it be known that it expected a reply by the time the G-8 summit convened in St. Petersburg in mid-July.

When the deadline passed with still no word from Iran, it became apparent that sanctions of some sort were inevitable. In September, Russia announced an ingenious plan to entice Iran to join with it in a joint venture enriching uranium. At a General Assembly session of the IAEA, Russia revealed the planned opening of an international uranium enrichment center in Angarsk and invited “all countries” to participate. Presumably Iran could participate without being singled out or appearing to capitulate to outside pressure. To no one’s surprise, Tehran did not take the bait. Perhaps to demonstrate its own capability for gamesmanship, Tehran suggested that Iran and France set up a joint venture to enrich uranium. The joker was Iran’s insistence that the operations take place on Iranian soil. Paris rejected the idea.

A sign that Moscow’s objection to UN sanctions was weakening came in November when Russia joined the other fourteen Security Council members in voting to impose sanctions against North Korea for detonating a nuclear device on October 9 and by so doing, seriously eroding the global non-proliferation cause. Russia did not easily abandon its anti-sanctions policy; its vote came only after intensive diplomatic negotiations that softened the sanctions originally proposed. And, although Russia denied any connection, the North Korean resolution was immediately preceded by another Security Council resolution extending the presence of Russian peacekeepers in Georgia for an additional six months.

By late 2006 Russia had come to accept the inevitability of sanctions against Iran. In part, its recognition reflected Moscow’s own antipathy to the possibility of Iranian enrichment of uranium to weapons-grade level. But Moscow still wanted sanctions to be limited in order to maintain a dialogue with Tehran. An important issue dividing Russia from the Europeans was the Russian-built nuclear plant at Bushehr. France in particular wanted it to be covered by sanctions. When agreement on the text of a Security Council resolution was finally reached in December, Moscow had won significant concessions. Bushehr was excluded from sanctions. Also, against American preferences, Moscow was permitted to keep intact its military-technical cooperation with Iran, most notably its contracts for an air defense system. On the other hand, the UN sanctions did have teeth. Iran was required to suspend all uranium enrichment, including research. All UN members were “advised” to take necessary measures to prevent Iran from acquiring materials, equipment, or technology that would facilitate enrichment, reprocessing, or the development of nuclear-weapons delivery systems.<sup>44</sup>

Though Russian interests in Iran were strong, their relations with Iranians were not always easy or congenial. A serious dispute erupted at the end of March when Russia failed to deliver the necessary nuclear fuel to the Bushehr nuclear plant because of Tehran’s failure to make adequate payment. Completion of the plant was set back until later in the year. A downside of the *contretemps* was that it

strengthened Tehran's argument on the importance of being able to manufacture its own nuclear fuel. Another Russian slap at Tehran was Russia's willingness in March to support tougher UN sanctions on Iran for its continued refusal to suspend its program of uranium enrichment. This second sanctions resolution froze the financial assets of twenty-eight organizations and individuals involved in Iran's nuclear and missile programs. It also imposed a ban on arms exports from Iran, a provision strongly desired by the United States.<sup>45</sup> But Russia's UN ambassador was careful to ensure that the resolution's wording did not in any way affect any of Moscow's arms or other contracts with Iran.

The second Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on Iran resolved none of the fundamental problems between Iran and those seeking to stop nuclear proliferation. To the annoyance of the U.S. president, Ahmadinejad told the General Assembly at its fall convocation that "the nuclear issue of Iran is closed." Earlier he had bragged that Iran had brought 3,000 centrifuges into operation to increase its enrichment of uranium. Negotiations soon resumed among the Group of Six on the subject of imposing a third round of sanctions against Iran. Putin was compelled to resume his delicate balancing act as he sought to maintain credibility with both his Western and Eastern partners. Recognizing that pressure for imposing further sanctions was building, he agreed in October to meet with Ahmadinejad in Tehran. This was the first visit by a Russian or Soviet leader to Tehran since Stalin participated in the Tehran Conference in 1943, and it gave a powerful boost in prestige for the Iranian leader in his confrontation with the West.

The meeting in Tehran involved the five leaders of the Caspian Sea states. The principal agenda item was a discussion of the legal status of the Caspian Sea, specifically to determine each state's zone of national jurisdiction.<sup>46</sup> Other subjects discussed were a commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, the non-use of force in relations among the Caspian five, and opposition to terrorism. Though no major initiatives were achieved by the summit, the political impact was an enhancement of Russia's influence with both Iran and the United States. Moscow's interest was to move Iran toward a cessation of uranium enrichment and to dissuade the United States from considering the use of force against Iran. With the United States Putin was a partner in keeping Iran nuclear-free; with Iran he was a partner in diminishing U.S. influence in the region.

As the impetus for further action against Iran mounted, Russia took another step toward accommodating its erratic partner. Late in 2007, Moscow began the delivery of the fuel necessary for the operation of the Bushehr nuclear power plant. Russia defended the action to its Western partners by stressing that Bushehr would operate under the supervision of the IAEA. In accordance with a Russian-Iranian agreement, the spent nuclear fuel (from which the fissionable fuel plutonium might be extracted) would be returned to Russia. The Bush administration did not oppose the fuel shipments to Iran, even arguing that the shipments were evidence that Tehran had no need to acquire the capability to manufacture its own

fuel. At about the same time, the Iranian defense minister announced the sale by Russia of five battalions of S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Iran. This was Moscow's second major contract for Iran's air defense since 2005. Washington was deeply troubled.

A third UN resolution against Iran became inevitable because Tehran simply flouted the provisions of the previous two. Resolution 1747 had specifically provided for a third if Iran ignored its provisions. And Moscow, though strongly preferring negotiations to sanctions, never denied that Iranian possession of a nuclear weapon was unacceptable. Early in 2008 the text of a third Security Council resolution was worked out by the Group of Six. Resistance within the Council was overcome in part when Mohamed ElBaradei, the IAEA director, disclosed that intelligence reports revealed that Iran had secretly engaged in research on how to make nuclear weapons. Iran charged that the reports were fabrications, but to no effect. Adopted on March 3, the resolution authorized inspections of cargo suspected of carrying prohibited equipment to or from Iran. It tightened monitoring of financial institutions in Iran and extended travel bans and asset freezes.<sup>47</sup> There was little hope, however, that this fresh round of sanctions would resolve the conflict, which most observers believed would continue to plague the parties well beyond the upcoming presidential elections in the three countries most involved.

### **Missile Defense in Europe**

Russo-American relations deteriorated in 2007. The United States continued its criticisms of Russia's domestic authoritarian practices, particularly the suppression of opposition to Vladimir Putin; the prosecution of "oligarch" and former Yukos oil company CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky was seen as a threat to the rule of law; Kosovo remained a point of irreconcilable difference; Moscow insisted that the United States negotiate with Iran, Syria, and Hamas instead of threatening any of them with sanctions or force; Moscow resented U.S. sanctions against Russian companies accused of engaging in military cooperation with Iran; and Russia was especially upset by Washington's plan to set up missile defenses in the Czech Republic and Poland. Russia's objections to American foreign policy were summed up in a caustic speech that Vladimir Putin made before the Conference on Security Policy in Munich, Germany, in February. He stated:

Today we see an almost totally unrestrained, hyperinflated use of force in international relations—military force that is plunging the world into an abyss of conflict after conflict. . . . We are seeing ever-increasing disregard for the fundamental principle of international law. Moreover, certain norms—in effect almost the entire system of a single state, namely the United States, . . . have crossed over their national borders in all spheres and are being imposed on other states in the economic, political and humanitarian realms . . . . Needless to say, this is extremely dangerous.<sup>48</sup>

Of the several issues in contention between Russia and the United States during the Bush-Putin years, none generated more distrust toward the United States within the Kremlin than the American plan to build a missile defense in Europe. On September 3, 2007, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov gave an important speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in which he stated:

It should be understood that for all the non-confrontational nature of Russia's foreign policy, there are some "red lines" for us, namely, when a real threat arises to our national security or to the existing international legal order. Here we have no choice but to respond and to uphold our position to the end. Such issues include plans to deploy bases of the U.S. global missile defense system in Europe.<sup>49</sup>

Russia's objection is rooted in basic geopolitics. Russia has always opposed ballistic missile defense, from the time of Gorbachev and his opposition to the "Star Wars" proposal of Ronald Reagan. When President George W. Bush unilaterally withdrew from the ABM treaty in December 2001, he was in effect putting Russia on notice that his administration was committed to some form of ballistic missile defense. That decision set Russo-American relations on a contentious course throughout the Bush-Putin presidencies. Moscow views missile defense as a threat to its own nuclear deterrent and by implication to its status as a great power. Russia's nuclear arsenal is one of the elements that distinguishes it as a great power. To diminish that arsenal is to diminish its possessor. The problem is not a genuine loss of power—virtually no one imagines Russia using those weapons in warfare—so much as it is a loss of prestige.

Late in 2006 the United States approached the Czech Republic and Poland with proposals to build elements of a missile defense in their countries. The United States planned to build a radar station in the Czech Republic and a missile interceptor base in Poland. Washington's rationale was to establish a European shield against potential missile attacks by Iran or North Korea. Although there was some division within the Russian military as to how serious a threat these bases might be to Russia, the preponderant view was that Moscow could not accept them. The problem was that Moscow's bargaining chips were limited. Moscow initially responded with threats. General Yuri Baluevskii, chief of the General Staff, threatened that Russia might withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty signed in 1987. An implication was that the Russian armed forces might then target missile defense bases in Europe with medium- and short-range missiles.

A more promising strategy was to encourage negotiations, which, if they could not kill the plan, might circumscribe it in ways possibly acceptable to Moscow. One idea espoused by the Russians was a plan to develop a joint missile defense system with the United States. Another project encouraged by Moscow was for a European missile defense under NATO control. President Bush readily reciprocated Putin's interest in negotiations. The Pentagon made known that

it would be willing, for example, to share radar reconnaissance data with the Russian military as well as certain elements of its missile launch early detection technology. Washington realized the dangers that an all-out Russian fight against deployment in Europe could pose for building a consensus among its European allies. By no means were all Europeans enthusiastic about Washington's plans for missile defense. In April 2007, Robert Gates made his first trip to Moscow as Secretary of Defense to try personally to persuade Putin that missile defense was not aimed at Russia and that Washington was anxious to share data with Moscow. The Russian president was not persuaded.

Putin shifted course in late April and adopted a stronger tactic against American policy. Addressing the Federal Assembly, he declared a moratorium on Russia's observance of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. This agreement, signed in 1990 when Mikhail Gorbachev was in power, established limits on conventional arms for the Eastern and Western blocs in Europe. In 1999 the CFE treaty was amended to satisfy Russian demands for changes in the flank restrictions as a result of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the breakup of the Soviet Union. However, the West had refused to ratify the amendments (favorable to Russia) because of Russia's refusal to withdraw its troops from Moldova and Georgia. In his speech Putin charged the United States and Europe with pursuing a policy of arms buildup. Concurrently, the Kremlin announced the successful test of a new intercontinental ballistic missile (the RS-24).

In June the G-8 leaders met in Germany for the annual summit meeting. Putin used the occasion to play a bit of gamesmanship with his American partner. He proposed that the United States and Russia jointly organize a missile defense using a radar station that Russia was then leasing in Azerbaijan. He argued that his plan was superior to establishing a radar in the Czech Republic because it could encompass the whole of Europe, not just part. Whatever the seriousness of the Russian initiative, there was little doubt this gambit would not go far. Within days Robert Gates, without rejecting the possibility of a joint U.S.-Russian base in Azerbaijan, officially rejected the idea of canceling the missile defense facilities in the Czech Republic and Poland. Moscow had hoped that an American rejection of its initiative would create a backlash from its European allies, if for no other reason than it would have countered Russia's threat to retarget its missiles on Europe if Bush's plan went forward. But here too Moscow was disappointed. There was no backlash.

Three weeks later, as a guest of the Bush family in Kennebunkport, Maine, Putin pushed his plan for missile cooperation by proposing creation of a center in Moscow for sharing missile-launch data. He further suggested that Russia would welcome a multi-nation warning system built in southern Russia as an alternative to new installations in Eastern Europe. Both leaders professed friendly relations between their countries, but neither changed his position on missile defense in Europe. Nor did the so-called "lobster summit" produce new agreement on any major issue. Moscow's public statements on its proposals for Russo-American



cooperation on missile defense suggested that if Washington agreed, then a qualitatively new era in relations with the United States could be created. But when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice officially rejected Putin's proposals, the mood in Moscow darkened. In mid-July Putin officially carried through on his earlier threat to suspend compliance with the CFE.

The best that Russia could do under the circumstances was to press Washington to hold off construction of launch sites until Moscow could detail its concerns and explain the consequences of deployment. Washington agreed to a series of negotiations going into the fall. At the same time, General Yuri Baluevskii persuaded the government of the Czech Republic to delay until 2008 a final decision on building the radar station. A combination of arguments was persuasive:

1. strong opposition to missile defense among the Czech public;
2. the possibility that a Democratic administration would reverse Bush's decision;
3. the Russian threat to target defense facilities with its missiles.

In the waning year of his and Bush's second terms, Putin was prepared to engage in a full-court press to stop what he believed to be a major threat to Russia's geopolitical position in Europe. Further, to enhance its diplomatic offensive Russia tested what it claimed to be the world's most powerful non-nuclear explosive device, the "father of all bombs," a bomb with the destructive power of a nuclear weapon but without the radiation. *Izvestia* claimed that its purpose was "to curtail US and NATO military activity along Russia's perimeter."<sup>50</sup>

The negotiations continuing through the fall of 2007 went beyond missile defense to include the CFE and START disarmament treaties. The atmosphere of the talks was not helped by the refusal of the OSCE to monitor Russia's parliamentary elections in December because of conditions imposed on the monitors by Russia. Vladimir Putin accused the United States of participating in a conspiracy to discredit the Russian elections. Even more distressing to Moscow was NATO's announcement that a summit would be held in Bucharest in April 2008 to consider inviting Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia into the alliance. Beyond that lay the possibility—much more worrisome to Russia—of bringing Georgia and the Ukraine into NATO at a future date. As the year ended, Russo-American relations were more contentious than at any period of the Putin presidency. Some in the Kremlin spoke of a new cold war.

In March 2008 Putin prepared to turn over the presidency to Dmitry A. Medvedev. By then it was clear that Putin's campaign to derail George Bush's plan for missile defense in Europe had fallen short of success. That was only one of many issues between the two countries on which Russia had been forced to acquiesce. Missile defense, abandonment of the ABM treaty, NATO expansion, and Kosovo, among others, had contributed to a growing anger in Russia toward what it perceived as an aggressive and uncompromising Bush administration.

Notwithstanding these differences, both countries professed to see in the other signs of friendship and potential partnership.

### **War in the Caucasus**

On March 3, 2008, the Russian people elected Dmitry A. Medvedev as the third president of the Russian Federation. Did this mean the end of the Putin era? Certainly not. Putin ended his presidency with the highest popular ratings since legitimate polling began in Russia. It was widely assumed that he could have amended the Russian constitution and won re-election for a third term. As it was, he decided to pick a successor and share power with him as prime minister, or head of government. As planned, Medvedev on May 7 chose Vladimir Putin to be his prime minister. Exactly how that duopoly would work out was not clear at the time. As we have described in Chapter 5, under the Russian constitution the power over foreign policy resides in the office of the presidency. In the short run, Putin and Medvedev would have to work out the distribution of powers between them. In the only previous case in modern Russia of powers being shared between two leaders—the post-Khrushchev leadership of Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksey Kosygin—ultimately one individual won out, and it seemed reasonable to assume that such would be the case between Putin and Medvedev.

Given that Medvedev lacked the background in the security services that characterized so many of Putin's associates, and that he had voiced sentiments on economic and political issues that seemed "softer" than those of Putin, there were some observers who anticipated a more "pro-Western" orientation under the new president. Putin himself sought to put to rest the notion that Russia under Medvedev would be less assertive of its national interests and less nationalistic in its orientation. At a press conference in Berlin in March 2008, just a few days after the presidential election, Putin declared:

Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev will not have to try to convince people of his liberal views. But he is no less a Russian nationalist, in the good sense of the word, than I am. I don't think our partners will find him easier to deal with. At any rate, he is someone who is patriotic and who will most energetically assert the interests of the Russian Federation on the world stage.<sup>51</sup>

Barely months after the new leaders took office, war broke out in the Caucasus, ushering in the biggest crisis in Russia's relations with the West since the end of the Cold War. We described in Chapter 6 the attack on the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali by Georgian forces, followed by a full-scale invasion of Georgia by Russia. As we noted, the struggle between Georgia and its provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Russia's involvement in that struggle, had been brewing for a decade and a half. That war should have broken out in August 2008 was less a result of Georgia's grievances with Russia than of Russia's grievances with the West, in particular with the United States. In short, antagonism between Russia

and the West lay behind the war in the Caucasus as much as antagonism between the principal parties.

The roots of these Russian grievances with the West went back to the Clinton-Yeltsin years (covered in Chapter 7) when, against strong Russian opposition, NATO expanded eastward by admitting the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, countries that were once Soviet satellites. Russian anger intensified when NATO was enlarged to include the Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, states that were a part of the former Soviet Union. In the years that followed, the United States pursued a number of policies that the Putin administration viewed as provocative—threatening to Russian security and in some cases humiliating. Among these were NATO's war on Yugoslavia, an ally of Russia; George Bush's unilateral abrogation of the ABM treaty; ballistic missile defense; encouraging oil pipelines in the Caucasus that bypassed Russian territory; and support for democratic forces in the Commonwealth of Independent States that were hostile to Russia.

Russian opposition to these policies was motivated in large part by antagonism toward the West and the accompanying feeling of humiliation that resulted from its inability to influence Western behavior. The roots of antagonism were nourished by several elements: a carryover from the Cold War, a sense of security vulnerability, and a lack of prestige. Mikhail Gorbachev summed up Russia's attitude after the outbreak of war with Georgia as follows: "There is much talk now in the United States about rethinking relations with Russia. One thing that should definitely be rethought: the habit of talking to Russia in a condescending way, without regard for its positions and interests."<sup>52</sup>

Leading up to the war in the Caucasus, three events in particular exacerbated already existing tension in Russo-Western relations:

1. independence of Kosovo;
2. missile defense in Europe;
3. proposed admission of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO.

Following the expulsion of Serbian forces in 1999, Kosovo had been temporarily put under the UN's administration. For almost a decade Serbian and Kosovar negotiators had sought with no success to find an acceptable solution to the status of Kosovo: either independence or integration into Serbia as an autonomous region. The majority (Muslim) population overwhelmingly demanded full independence. Russia's position was that Kosovo belonged to Serbia. Their argument was that under international law the principle of territorial integrity trumped the principle of national self-determination. On February 17, 2008, the Kosovo parliament unilaterally declared independence in defiance of Serbia and Russia. Within days the United States and most of Europe recognized the new state. Russia knew it could not stop Kosovo's action, but Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, warned the West that "recognition of Kosovar independence will make Russia adjust its line toward Abkhazia and South Ossetia."<sup>53</sup>

Independence for Kosovo may have been a blow to Russian prestige, but the issue of the planned deployment of United States missile defenses in Eastern Europe impinged on its security. Despite American assurances that a missile defense system stationed in Poland and the Czech Republic was directed against Iran and not Russia, the Kremlin was convinced that such a system could be expanded to negate Russia's nuclear deterrent. For almost two years Washington had been negotiating with Prague and Warsaw over installation of a radar tracking station in the Czech Republic and a battery of interceptor missiles in Poland. In July the Czech Republic formally agreed to accept the radar (subject to parliamentary approval). Polish compliance was not formalized until days after the war in Georgia began. At that point Poland was able to up its demands on Washington to receive in addition a top-of-the-line Patriot air defense system capable of downing short-range missiles as well as aircraft. The inclusion of Patriot missiles in the agreement only confirmed Moscow's suspicions that Russia, not Iran, was Washington's real intended target.

The factor that most seriously angered Russia in the buildup to war was the proposed expansion of NATO to include Georgia and Ukraine. Georgian membership in NATO would have put the United States in the heart of the Caucasus with direct access to the oil and pipelines of the Caspian Sea basin. Ukrainian membership would have been even more catastrophic for Russia because of the historical ties between the two Slavic states, the large Russian population in eastern Ukraine, and the location of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol in Crimea. A NATO summit in April 2008 met in Bucharest to consider the question of further expanding NATO membership. In the months preceding the summit, Washington had actively pushed for both Georgian and Ukrainian membership. George W. Bush argued that the democratic "rose" and "orange" revolutions in those countries warranted their admission to NATO. Europe, however, was ambivalent. Seven nations, led by Germany and France, opposed Bush and were able to defeat a Membership Action Plan for the two countries (though Croatia and Albania were approved). At the same time, Russia was officially put on notice that eventually the two former Soviet republics would become members: "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO," read the summit declaration.<sup>54</sup> Thus, in the struggle for dominance among the post-Soviet states, Russia's prospects faced serious challenges.

The August war in the Caucasus was short, but from Moscow's position, effective. It demonstrated to Georgia and Ukraine that affiliation with the West would come at a price. But additionally it demonstrated to the West that Russia was prepared to act forcefully to protect its spheres of influence among the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (or, more precisely, among members and former members, since Saakashvili withdrew Georgia from the organization in the wake of the war).

Russia's actions in the war did not constitute a change in the balance of power vis-à-vis the West, for the balance had in fact already changed. A decade earlier,

Russian power was at a nadir. By the end of Putin's second term as president, Russia had become an economic powerhouse. While a significant element of that power was the high price of oil and gas (its principal export), the fact was that Putin had brought Russia into the global economy and given it macroeconomic stability.<sup>55</sup> In sum, Russia's war on Georgia was a demonstration that Russia had recovered its status as a great power and was demanding recognition as such.

The United States and Europe demonstrated that they understood the situation. Washington and Brussels condemned Russia's actions but made no sign of using or threatening to use force to change the outcome. There was talk of expelling Russia from the G-8 and denying membership in the World Trade Organization, relatively benign measures. More significantly, Condoleezza Rice, by then U.S. secretary of state, acknowledged that the United States would not continue to press for Georgia's membership in NATO in the near future.<sup>56</sup> For its part, Russia announced its intention not to continue to participate in the NATO-Russia Council. Previously it had stopped participation in the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. And on August 26, 2008, Moscow raised the stakes even higher by granting recognition to Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

The war in the Caucasus in 2008 heralded a new stage in Russo-Western relations. In no sense was it a return to the Cold War, with its heavy ideological component. But clearly Moscow was moving toward a more vigorous pursuit of its interests. The issue confronting the United States was well summed up by Sergei Lavrov, Russia's sometimes testy foreign minister: "It is up to the American side to decide whether it wants a relationship with Russia that our two peoples deserve. The geopolitical reality we'll have to deal with at the end of the day will inevitably force us to cooperate."<sup>57</sup>

## Notes

1. Islamist terror was also directed against Arab governments that were friendly to or allied with the United States.

2. Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 327.

3. The text of Russia's foreign policy concept can be found in *CDPSP* 52, no. 28 (2000), pp. 7–9, and *CDPSP* 52, no. 29 (2000), pp. 6–8.

4. Stanislav Kondrashov, "Language of Gestures in Putin's Diplomacy," *Vremia MN*, in *CDPSP* 52, no. 52 (2000), p. 6.

5. Patrick E. Tyler, "With U.S. Missile Defense, Russia Wants Less Offense," *New York Times*, November 15, 2000.

6. Frank Bruni, "Leaders' Words at First Meeting Are Striking for Warm Tone," *New York Times*, June 17, 2001.

7. Some scholars question the degree to which September 11 changed Russian policy. See, for example, *Realignments in Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Rick Fawn (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 1–8.

8. Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), p. 206. Support for Putin's pro-American policy was opposed by some among Russia's political elite. See Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Whose World Order?*

*Russia's Perception of American Ideas After the Cold War* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), pp. 120–24.

9. Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 48.
10. Dmitri Trenin and Aleksei V. Malashenko with Anatol Leiven, *Russia's Restless Frontier: The Chechnya Factor in Post-Soviet Russia* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), p. 166.
11. For the terms of the treaty and the Russian reaction, see "Russia, U.S. to Sign New Strategic Arms Treaty," *CDPSP* 54, no. 20 (2002), pp. 1–4, and "Putin, Bush Sign Treaty to Cut Weapons," *CDPSP* 54, no. 21 (2002), pp. 1–6.
12. "New Council Will Give Russia Role in NATO," *CDPSP* 54, no. 20 (2002), pp. 4–7, and "Russia-NATO Summit Formalizes New Relationship," *CDPSP* 54, no. 22 (2002), pp. 1–5.
13. "Putin Sets Policy Priorities for Russian Diplomats," *CDPSP* 54, no. 28 (2002), p. 5.
14. "Is There a 'Putin Doctrine' in Foreign Policy?" *CDPSP* 54, no. 31 (2002), p. 1.
15. "Iraq Agrees to Arms Inspections; U.S., Russia at Odds," *CDPSP* 54, no. 38 (2002), p. 4.
16. UN Security Council Resolution 1441, November 8, 2002.
17. The most that Bush would commit was to "be respectful" of Russia's economic interests in a new Iraq. Georgi Bovt, "A Gentlemen's Agreement with Specifics," *Izvestia*, November 23, 2002, in *CDPSP* 54, no. 47 (2002), pp. 2–4.
18. Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), p. 148.
19. Evgenia Slutskaya, "It's Clear That Nothing is Clear," in *Novye Izvestiia*, January 29, 2003, p. 3, in *CDPSP* 55, no. 4 (2003), p. 1.
20. "Europe and Uncle Sam," *The Economist*, September 4, 2003.
21. "Have Russia, 'Old Europe' Formed 'Antiwar Entente'?" *CDPSP* 55, no. 6 (2003), p. 2.
22. For Primakov's earlier missions, see Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 393–95.
23. Statement made in interview with *Izvestia*, April 4, 2003, in *CDPSP* 55, no. 13, (2003), p. 8.
24. "Iran's Nuclear Aims—a New U.S.-Russian Conflict?" *CDPSP* 55, no. 22 (2003), p. 6. Iran cooperated with Russia to end the civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s.
25. Aleksandr Reutov, "Iran Gives In to the IAEA," *Kommersant*, December 19, 2003, in *CDPSP* 55, no. 50 (2003), p. 18.
26. "Iran Says It Will Not Give Up Uranium Enrichment Program," *New York Times*, August 1, 2004.
27. David Sanger, "Diplomacy Fails to Slow Advance of Nuclear Arms," *New York Times*, August 8, 2004, p. 7.
28. At a summit meeting of the OSCE in Istanbul in 1999, Russia agreed to withdraw its armed forces from Georgia. See "Is Conflict with U.S. Brewing in Russia's Backyard?" *CDPSP* 55, no. 49 (2003), pp. 13–14.
29. Thom Shanker, "Russian Faults NATO Opening to Baltic States," *New York Times*, August 15, 2004, p. 10.
30. Natalia Ratiani, "Moscow Finally Supports Bush Initiative," *Izvestia*, June 1, 2004, in *CDPSP* 56, no. 22 (2004), p. 20. See also *CDPSP* 56, no. 5 (2004), p. 19.
31. UN Security Council Resolution 1546, January 8, 2004.
32. "Putin Delivers a New Kind of Annual Message," *CDPSP* 56, no. 21 (2004), p. 5.
33. "U.S., Russia Encounter Friction at EU, NATO Summits," *CDPSP* 56, no. 26 (2004), p. 8.

34. Sergei Lavrov, "What Guides Russia in World Affairs," *CDPSP* 59, no. 36 (2007), p. 1.
35. The classic analysis of the role of prestige as a component of power is Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), chap. 6.
36. *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, May 27, 2004, p. 3, in *CDPSP* 56, no. 21 (2004), p. 1.
37. Andrei P. Tsygankov describes the framework of Russia's foreign policy under Putin as "Great Power Pragmatism." See *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 158–62.
38. *CDPSP* 56, no. 36 (2004), p. 5.
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41. *CDPSP* 57, no. 21 (2005), p. 6.
42. David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "Bush and Putin Want Iran to Treat Uranium in Russia," *New York Times*, November 19, 2005, p. 5.
43. *CDPSP* 57, no. 46 (2005), p. 14.
44. UN Security Council Resolution 1737, December 23, 2006.
45. UN Security Council Resolution 1747, March 24, 2007.
46. Russia wanted national jurisdiction to extend fifteen miles from the shoreline. Kazakhstan wanted jurisdiction to be thirty miles out, and Azerbaijan wanted to divide the sea into equal sections of 20 percent for each state. A settlement was deferred until a later summit.
47. "Security Council Imposes More Sanctions on Iran," *New York Times*, March 4, 2008, p. A8.
48. "Putin Assails US, Declares Unipolar World Defunct," *CDPSP* 59, no. 7 (2007), p. 1.
49. Lavrov, "What Guides Russia in World Affairs?" p. 3.
50. Igor Iavlanskii, "On Whose Head Did the Parachuting Barrel Fall?" *Izvestia*, September 13, 2007, p. 3.
51. "Who Is Mr. Medvedev?" *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, March 11, 2008, in *CDPSP* 60, nos. 10–11 (2008), p. 19.
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53. C.J. Chivers, "Russia Warns It May Back Breakaway Republics in Georgia," *New York Times*, February 16, 2008, p. A3.
54. "NATO Puts Off Membership for Georgia, Ukraine," *CDPSP* 60, no. 13 (2008), p. 9.
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## Russia and the United States

### A New Cold War?

#### **Putin's Return**

As we noted in Chapter 9, when Putin's second term as president ended in 2008, the promise of a post-Cold War era of close partnership between Russia and the West had already been shattered. In successive developments, such as NATO-led interventions in the Balkans, NATO and EU expansions that brought both organizations to Russia's reduced post-Cold War borders, the 2003 war in Iraq, and the deployment of limited missile defense systems in former Soviet satellite states, Russians and their leaders saw a deliberate Western attempt to denigrate and demean what had once been a mighty superpower. In the interregnum between 2008 and Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, when Dmitry Medvedev was president, the war in Georgia initially continued the skid in Russia's relations with the West. Thereafter, however, there were serious but ultimately unsuccessful attempts to heal the breach, such as the Obama administration's overture in 2009 to "reset" relations between the United States and Russia.

At the beginning of his third term in office in 2012, President Putin's disenchantment with the West led him to adopt strategies—including a plan, discussed in Chapter 5, to deploy "soft power" resources—that were designed to reassert Russia's power and global status. The crux of these strategies included efforts to:

1. hold the line by preventing the Westward "defection" of Georgia and Ukraine through a combination of economic coercion and appeals to both co-religionists (Orthodox believers) and Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the east and in Crimea;
2. drive a wedge between the United States and European countries through the creation of Russian news channels, such as RT and Sputnik, that would not only offer Russia's perspective on global developments but also serve to highlight policy differences;



3. undermine the faith of citizens both in the United States and in Europe in their democratic institutions through the amplification (both overt and covert) of divisive issues in social media and Russian news channels;
4. embark on a campaign to support illiberal and far-right forces in the West that are opposed to multiculturalism and globalization but sympathetic to nativism and sovereignty, “traditional” and “conservative” cultural norms, and the Russian model of soft autocracy;
5. insinuate Russia back onto the center stage of global politics through calculated moves, such as the military intervention in Syria, exploiting Western differences with Iran, and promoting Moscow as an important intermediary on North Korea.

Whether or not Russian interference affected the electoral outcomes in the United States or Europe, it seems clear that President Donald Trump’s “America First” agenda, Britain’s vote to leave the European Union (“Brexit”), and the resurgence of rightist parties in Europe have fractured transatlantic comity and generated doubt about the ability of the United States to exert global leadership. By default, if not by design, such a strategy has supported many of the objectives that Putin sought to achieve. As Putin began his fourth term as President of the Russian Federation in 2018, talk of a new Cold War between Washington and Moscow was widespread in the American press and political arena.

### **Barack Obama and the “Reset” of US-Russian Relations**

In February 2009 U.S. Vice President Joe Biden announced the new administration’s intent to “reset” the relationship with Russia. At their first meeting, in Geneva the next month, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented a symbolic “reset button” to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (who indelicately pointed out that the label had been mistranslated as “overload”—*peregruzka*, instead of *perezagruzka*).<sup>1</sup> This foul-up initially appeared portentous. Although a friendly first meeting at the G-20 summit in London in April between Presidents Obama and Medvedev resulted in a joint statement pledging the two sides to move beyond “Cold War mentalities” and to work on an ambitious agenda of cooperation on nuclear arms,<sup>2</sup> progress toward the “reset” program was slow to materialize. This was not only because of Prime Minister Putin’s skepticism, but also because of mixed signals emanating from the new U.S. administration.

Prior to Obama’s departure from Washington for the July 2009 summit in Moscow, the signs were not good. Both sides seemed to be cautioning against high expectations. As indicated in an April joint statement, major issues were on the table, including a new nuclear arms limitation treaty to replace the one that would expire in December; assurance that U.S. troops in Afghanistan would have secure supply routes; insistence on stronger sanctions against nuclear weapons programs in North Korea and Iran; and ensuring the reliable supply of Russian oil

and gas to Western markets. The U.S. president did not help his cause with a statement in an interview given just before his departure for Moscow, which suggested that Russia's most powerful and most popular leader, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, quite unlike his protégé, President Medvedev, was a "cold warrior."

I think that it's important that, even as we move forward with President Medvedev, that Putin understand that the old cold war approach to U.S.-Russian relations is outdated—that it's time to move forward in a different direction. I think Medvedev understands that. I think Putin has one foot in the old ways of doing business and one foot in the new.<sup>3</sup>

Obama's chief White House advisor on Russia, former Stanford professor Michael McFaul—who made his reputation by criticizing Putin's authoritarianism and insisting on promoting democracy in the former Soviet states, and who would later become U.S. ambassador to Russia—further muddled the waters when he chimed in with the charge that Russian leaders "think of the world in zero-sum terms, that is, if it's two points for Russia it's negative-two for us." In the same White House briefing, McFaul signaled that two issues of great importance to Russia's security interests—the prospect of further expansion of the NATO military alliance into Ukraine and Georgia, along with plans for missile defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic—were simply not open for bargaining. "We're not going to reassure or give or trade anything with the Russians" on these issues, he said. "So we don't need the Russians, we don't want to trade with them."<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, these were precisely the assessments that Putin and his colleagues had arrived at during their dealings with the George W. Bush administration. As Moscow saw it, for the past half-dozen years Washington had been obsessed with encircling its former Cold War adversary with military and economic constraints that would prevent it from asserting its legitimate national interests and reoccupying its deserved place as one of the globe's great powers. Evidence of Washington's "unilateralist" stance had long infuriated not only the leaders of Russia but also those of China and of some of Washington's key European allies. As the Russians saw it, both the Clinton and Bush administrations had combined an insistence on spreading American-style democracy with a willingness to use military force to achieve this objective. Washington initiated wars in Kosovo and Iraq, notwithstanding the requirements of the UN Charter. When Moscow complained, it was ignored and accused of playing the role of "spoiler."

Whereas Republican presidential nominee Senator John McCain was clearly viewed in Moscow as an anti-Russia "hawk," especially after the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war, when he declared "we are all Georgians now" and demanded that Russia be expelled from the G-8, Obama's campaign had promised a changed foreign policy that would move away from this "zero-sum" thinking—away from the perception that the United States wanted to press its military and economic power advantage to ensure its continuing global dominance.

But once Obama won the election and began to choose his foreign policy team, the Russians could not have been reassured that change was coming. During her own campaign for the nomination, the new secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, had alluded to President Bush's famous initial impression of the Russian leader with the comment, "by definition, Vladimir Putin doesn't have a soul."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, prior to the July 2009 summit, there were signs that the United States still had not fully committed to "reset." Efforts to paint Putin as a "cold warrior" and to drive a wedge between him and his protégé, President Dmitry Medvedev, were certain to backfire. And insistent public declarations that U.S. positions on fundamental issues were set in stone hardly seemed an invitation to negotiate. More fundamentally, the imagery that Obama's team was using reflected a basic mischaracterization of Putin's policies. Early in Bush's first term, Putin had tried to forge a genuine two-way partnership with Washington, and he was rebuffed. A strong case could be made that the Russians abandoned talk of partnership only after receiving repetitive signals that the United States was not interested. Worst-case thinking and Cold-War stereotypes had persisted in the attitudes of officials in both governments, and this mirror-imaging, in which each side played off the rhetorical excesses of the other, was all too reminiscent of the earlier era of superpower confrontation. And so, predictably, Putin, during his two-hour breakfast with Obama at the summit, subjected the American president to a stern lecture that implied that "reset" was largely a chance for the new administration to correct the mistakes of its predecessors.<sup>6</sup> Obama evidently did not want to hear more, canceling a dinner at Putin's home in favor of spending private time with his own wife and daughters.

Russian perceptions of "mixed messages" from the Obama administration were further stimulated when Vice President Joe Biden traveled to Georgia and Ukraine just two weeks after the Moscow summit to reassure those countries that the "reset" with Russia did not mean a lessening of U.S. support for them. In Kiev, he explicitly stated that the United States, rejecting the notion of a "privileged sphere of interests" for Russia, would continue to back NATO membership for Ukraine. And in Tbilisi, in a "rousing speech" to the Georgian parliament, he reasserted American support for Georgia, while cautioning its government against resuming its military confrontation with Moscow. Upon his return to Washington, the vice president exacerbated the distress in Moscow by giving an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* that "made blistering criticisms of Russia's failing economy, loss of face and a leadership that is 'clinging to something in the past.'"<sup>7</sup>

At the Moscow summit Russia and the United States agreed to give priority to negotiating a new START agreement to replace the one that was to expire in December. But the talks proved stickier than expected, in part because the two sides disagreed over whether the offensive missile reductions should be conditioned on a U.S. promise to forgo missile defenses altogether. Well before the treaty was concluded, in September 2009, Obama removed a major irritant when he set aside—ostensibly on technical grounds—a Bush administration

plan to place missile defense components in Poland and the Czech Republic, to which Moscow had strongly objected. Instead, the missile defense system was to be reconfigured to focus on intercepting short-range and medium-range missiles, rather than longer-range rockets. But the Russians wanted guarantees in the treaty that missile defenses that threatened their own capabilities would not be resuscitated. American negotiators reportedly believed at the end of a trip to Moscow in January 2010 that all the issues had been resolved, only to have the Russians again raise objections about missile defense, this time as a result of a Romanian announcement that the reconfigured system would be hosted on its territory. Pressuring President Obama in vain for a joint statement limiting missile defenses, the Russians finally—after angry exchanges—agreed to a compromise that allowed Moscow to withdraw from the treaty if it considered itself threatened by American missile defenses.<sup>8</sup>

A full year after agreeing to begin treaty negotiations, Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed the “New START” treaty in Prague on April 8, 2010. In the meantime the previous START treaty had expired, but unlike the 2002 Treaty of Moscow, the New START treaty adopted the strict inspection requirements of the original START agreement. The new treaty committed each country to reduce strategic nuclear arms down to a limit of 1,500 deployed strategic warheads or 700 deployed launchers within seven years. Although the actual reductions amounted to barely one-quarter of each side’s deployed arsenals, Obama reportedly saw the treaty as a baseline for moving toward his objective of even deeper cuts. However, even this modest treaty encountered significant ratification difficulties in the U.S. Senate. Not until September, and only after attaching resolutions calling for major funding for modernization of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and for guarantees that there would not be limitations on missile defenses, did the Senate Foreign Relations Committee find enough Republican votes to recommend ratification. The ratification vote by the full Senate finally squeaked through on December 22. The margin, 71 to 26—the closest ever for an arms control pact between Moscow and Washington—evoked considerable doubt that “reset” had enough congressional support to sustain further agreements.<sup>9</sup>

The primary gain for the American side at the July 2009 Moscow summit was a Russian agreement to allow transit of NATO troops and armaments across their airspace to the Afghan theater, but even this concession took almost a year to implement. Another “plus” for the United States, which Medvedev had hinted at, was realized in June 2010, when Russia joined other UN Security Council permanent members in approving tightened sanctions on Iran. True, the sanctions were not as harsh as Washington had wanted, but that was possibly more the fault of Beijing than Moscow. Russia’s willingness to approve them was partly a result of its own growing suspicion of Iran’s nuclear program and partly a mark of its greater confidence that the Obama administration was more committed to the avoidance of military force than its predecessor. The Iran picture continued to be mixed, however. After numerous delays and despite U.S. concerns, Russia began

fueling the nuclear reactor it built for Iran at Bushehr; and Russia continued as a supplier of conventional defensive arms to Iran, though it delayed shipment of its most powerful systems.<sup>10</sup>

“Mixed picture” best describes the state of “reset” relations in the former Soviet republics, where the Bush administration had actively challenged the notion that Russia had “privileged” interests. Ukraine and Georgia were major irritants as candidates for NATO membership. But the defeat of Ukraine’s pro-West President Yushchenko and the hasty deal cut by his successor, the pro-Russia Viktor Yanukovich, which traded a lengthy lease for Russia’s Black Sea Fleet for concessions on gas prices, produced considerable relaxation in Moscow. As for Georgia, the outcome of the 2008 war made that country’s membership in NATO a far more distant prospect, and disputes over the would-be secessionist regions were far from being settled. A 2011 resolution passed by the U.S. Senate, which condemned Russia’s “occupation” of these regions, evoked a sharp rebuke from Russia and provided evidence that Georgia could again become a cause of U.S.-Russian discord.<sup>11</sup>

In Central Asia, some observers saw Moscow’s hand in the violent overthrow of Kyrgyzstan’s President Bakiyev, since his ouster followed only shortly after he had reversed himself on the issue of closing the American air base at Manas. (As we described in Chapter 6, a rather blatant bribe in the form of economic aid from Moscow had evidently been trumped by a higher bid from Washington.) But in the environment of “reset,” conflict between the United States and Russia was avoided during the 2010 revolt in Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, the United States appeared to be more interested than Moscow was in having Russian peacekeepers intervene.

On the larger issue of NATO enlargement, although Ukrainian and Georgian memberships were on the “back burner” after the Bucharest NATO summit and the war in the Caucasus, the Russians stepped up their campaign on behalf of President Medvedev’s initiative, first announced in June 2008, for an alternative “European security treaty,” which would have created an overarching pan-European security architecture. The Russian proposal focused considerable attention on the seemingly ad hoc manner in which a “European security architecture” had been designed in the post-Cold War era. From Russia’s perspective, the basic question was how Russia fits into a system of European security. Should it be accepted as a great power, or simply as another European state? Should it be viewed as a partner or as a potential adversary? And, if a new European security architecture was to be constructed, what institutional mechanism would govern decision making for security issues in Europe? Almost twenty years after the process of enlarging NATO began, these questions continued to be unanswered.

Reactions to the Russian proposal in the West characterized it as a plan to substitute some vague new arrangement for the existing security agreements—and, in particular, to totally replace NATO. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov elaborated on

Russia's proposal in a June 2009 speech. The treaty would not have been needed, he said, had the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) been institutionalized and transformed into a "full-fledged regional organization within the meaning of Chapter VII of the UN Charter." This would not even have necessitated the "liquidation" of NATO. But instead the West took a different path, expanding NATO by "nipping off" pieces of former Warsaw Pact territory, and in the process destabilizing these countries by encouraging (unnamed) "ruling regimes to embark on an irresponsible policy and military adventures."

Lavrov laid out "four principal semantic building blocks" of a new European security treaty: 1. a confirmation of the basic principles of relations between states (respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-use of force, etc.); 2. setting out basic principles for the development of arms control regimes; 3. enunciating the principles of conflict settlement—first of all, the inadmissibility of the use of force to reach solutions; 4. setting forth mechanisms for countering new threats and challenges, including terrorism, drug trafficking, and the spread of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>12</sup>

The initial Western responses to Medvedev's and Lavrov's proposals sought to channel the discussion into the OSCE. But the Russians regard the OSCE as "an inept organization from the point of international law," unable to undertake legally binding commitments.<sup>13</sup> Representatives of NATO member states who commented on the proposal invariably stressed that it should not be used as a device to sideline the Atlantic Alliance. In his first public speech as secretary general of NATO, former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen addressed the NATO-Russian relationship. Of all of NATO's relations, he said, none holds greater potential, and yet none "is so much burdened by misperceptions, mistrust and diverging political agendas." The NATO-Russia Council could be "rejuvenated," he said, to reinforce practical cooperation in such areas as terrorism, non-proliferation, missile defense, Afghanistan, counter-narcotics, and maritime security. With reference to President Medvedev's proposal, Rasmussen said, "to the degree that these ideas demonstrate Russian concerns about being marginalized in European security, I believe that a NATO-Russia dialogue could provide real added value." Nevertheless, he referred to OSCE as the "primary forum" for such discussions.<sup>14</sup>

In a speech to the Munich Security Conference on February 6, 2010, Lavrov pointed out that the Russian side had listened to the comments of others and had removed from the draft such "politico-military issues" as arms control, confidence-building measures, conflict resolution, and response to contemporary threats and challenges. Those will be addressed in the OSCE, and "in the Draft Treaty we have left no practical things, but only one principle—the principle of the indivisibility of security." Why not, he asked, make this legally binding? Lavrov pointedly posed his question as "a kind of test of the members of the Euro-Atlantic 'family.' . . . Will the pan-European space be a truly, in legal terms, single space. Or will it be divided into 'spheres of influence?'"<sup>15</sup>

In the most authoritative American response, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton addressed the Medvedev proposal and the broader subject of European security in a speech delivered in Paris at the end of January 2010. She voiced strong support for some of the same principles that the Russians had stressed in their proposal: “security in Europe must be indivisible . . . security cannot be a zero-sum game. The security of all nations is intertwined.” The secretary of state spoke of a commitment to explore ways that NATO and Russia could improve their partnership, cooperating on missile defenses and a new CFE treaty. But Russian leaders could not have been happy to hear some of her other comments about their concerns. Clinton declared that the enlargement of NATO had increased “security, stability, and prosperity across the continent” and that in turn had “actually increased Russia’s security and prosperity.” NATO would remain open to any country that aspired to membership and could meet the requirements. The United States would continue to emphasize human rights and democracy in its approach to European security. And finally, although the United States shared some of the goals of the proposed treaty, “we believe that these common goals are best pursued in the context of existing institutions, such as the OSCE and the NATO-Russia Council, rather than by negotiating new treaties as Russia has suggested—a very long and cumbersome process.”<sup>16</sup>

The rebuff to Russia’s proposed European security treaty was followed by a new effort, led by NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, to create a more meaningful partnership between the alliance and Russia. At its 2010 summit in Lisbon, NATO adopted a new “strategic concept” that declared:

NATO poses no threat to Russia. On the contrary: we want to see a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia, and we will act accordingly, with the expectation of reciprocity from Russia . . . Notwithstanding differences on particular issues, we remain convinced that the security of NATO and Russia is intertwined.

The strategic concept also announced NATO’s determination to enhance political consultation and practical cooperation with Russia in such areas of shared interest as “missile defense, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, counter-piracy, and the promotion of wider international security.” To this end, the allies pledged to “use the full potential of the NATO-Russia Council for dialogue and joint action with Russia.” At the same time, however, the Russians could not have been pleased that the drafters of the document restated their determination to leave the door to NATO membership “fully open to all European democracies which share the values of our Alliance, which are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and whose inclusion can contribute to common security and stability.” In particular, the strategic concept expressed the intent of the alliance to “continue and develop” its partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia.<sup>17</sup>

By the time of the NATO summit meeting, the activity in the NATO-Russia Council had intensified to the point that President Medvedev traveled to Lisbon

to meet with President Obama and other leaders for discussions that centered on the prospects for joint development of missile defense systems in Europe. The Russian president declared that Moscow's involvement in such a project would be possible only if Russia were invited to participate as an equal partner, "not as window dressing."<sup>18</sup> Despite Secretary General Rasmussen's evident enthusiasm for a stronger Russian tie to NATO, perhaps forged in the process of building a cooperative missile defense "security roof" for the Euro-Atlantic community, significant obstacles were proven to exist. In particular, the Russian skepticism about whether the United States would welcome or permit genuine partnership in the building and operation of a missile defense system seemed warranted, especially in light of the lukewarm and carefully hedged comments that emanated from Washington about the idea. Medvedev's warning clearly indicated that an offer for participation that Moscow regarded as "window dressing" could result in a renewed arms race.

A possible new opening for addressing the missile defense issue came in March 2013, when the new U.S. secretary of defense, Chuck Hagel, announced, in the face of recent provocative statements from North Korea, that the United States would expand its deployment of missile interceptors on the west coast of the United States. Concerns about the Pentagon's recent budget cuts were cited as an additional factor in the *New York Times* article announcing Hagel's decision, but curiously, the article did not even mention that Hagel's announcement also called for cancellation of "stage 4" of the proposed missile defense system being put in place by the United States in Europe—the very issue that had occasioned such strong negative reactions from Russia.<sup>19</sup> The immediate reaction from Moscow was that Hagel's decision was not viewed as a concession to Russia. But a more considered reaction from analysts in both the United States and Russia saw opportunity in the cancellation of the plans to deploy land-based SM3-IIB interceptors in Europe—the very long-range plans that Russia had said posed the greatest threat to Russia's strategic deterrent.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow (and then NATO Deputy Secretary General) Alexander Vershbow expressed hope that Washington's announcement would dispel Russia's concerns and lead to new talks. Acknowledging that the new U.S. plans made the situation "less ambiguous," Vershbow declared that "there is now no reason for concern that the system going into Europe will have any effect whatever on Russia's strategic deterrent."<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the Russians did not seem likely to drop their demand for legally binding guarantees that the U.S. defenses would not be aimed at Russia—a non-starter for the U.S. Congress. And a jointly developed system, proposed by Putin in 2007 and again in 2010, still faced large legal, intelligence, and technological barriers. In any event, by the end of March Russian officials began to offer more nuanced responses to Secretary Hagel's announcement, capped off by an announcement that Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu and Hagel would resume consultations on the missile defense issue.



Progress on this front would not be easy, given the political forces in both countries that saw the difficulties in their relationship as (in Sergei Karaganov's words) "a problem better to have than to solve." However, a deeper obstacle resided in the persisting attitudes on both sides related to the question of "who won the Cold War?" As explained by Karaganov and Timofei Bordachev:

Russia's elite, which views itself as the victor in the struggle against totalitarian Communism, has never considered its country defeated in the Cold War. Meanwhile, the West has been trying to treat it as a defeated country, which has laid a deep foundation for a new and potentially rough confrontation. The solution is simple: the Old West will have to either try to "finish off" Russia or to conclude an honorable peace with it and thus finish, once and for all, the "unfinished" Cold War.<sup>21</sup>

On the whole, a persuasive argument can be made that Russia's reaction to NATO enlargement and the U.S. plan for missile defense in Europe is rooted not in a perception of actual military threat but rather as a threat to Russia's status as a great power. Thus, as one American analyst has written, "Russian policies on European security became reactive to perceived Western efforts to undermine Russia's aspirations regarding its global status."<sup>22</sup>

The missing element in the U.S.-Russia "reset" was a commercial cooperation, and it was unlikely that Washington and Moscow could really move past their current testiness without an expansion of their economic relationship. A healthy and growing trade and investment alliance could have helped to recruit the business stakeholders in both countries that could have ensured more durable ties. Medvedev's visit to Washington in June 2010 was supposed to focus on this, and indeed the Russian president's visit to Silicon Valley was a strong signal of his interest in attracting U.S. investment in Russia's announced "high-tech" priorities. "Modernization" of the Russian economy was the hallmark of Medvedev's program during his presidency, and he and his foreign ministry explicitly declared that this agenda would not advance unless Russia dropped its hostile attitude and proactively sought closer economic ties with the West. With the United States in particular, there was a long way to go: bilateral trade volume was about \$40 billion in 2012—up from \$25 billion in 2009 but barely above its volume before the global financial crisis. This was a level that was just over 7 percent of the volume of U.S. trade with China, where stakeholders in both countries have had a great influence on the moderation of potential rivalry.

One high-tech arena in which the two sides agreed to greater cooperation was in the realm of commercial nuclear trade, technology transfers, and joint research. Greater civilian nuclear cooperation had been agreed upon by the two states in May 2008, but President Bush withdrew the accord from the congressional docket in September of that year in protest of Russia's war with Georgia. President Obama resubmitted it in May 2010, and the agreement took effect in December. Since Russia is the world's largest supplier of uranium for nuclear power plants,

whereas U.S. domestic supply meets only 20 percent of its needs, the nuclear power industry was especially eager to expand trade cooperation in this realm.<sup>23</sup>

Russia was the last member of the G-20 to join the WTO, finally acceding in August 2012 after almost two decades of negotiations. Russia's entry required the United States to establish Permanent Normal Trade Relations with Russia. This entailed removing restrictions imposed by the Cold War-era Jackson-Vanik legislation, adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1975 to pressure the USSR to allow its Jewish citizens to emigrate. Successive U.S. presidents had promised their Russian counterparts that this obsolete trade restriction would be removed.

Immediately after the 2010 summit with Medvedev the United States had announced that it was expelling eleven Russian "illegals" who were living in the United States under false pretenses. Details released about this "spy scandal" revealed it to have been relatively harmless, and even some Russian commentators noted that the expenditure of Moscow's funds and energies in cultivating a "spy ring" that was seeking information readily available on Google and in the *New York Times* was symptomatic of the persistence of Cold War mentalities in Russian spy agencies.<sup>24</sup> The most positive sign that came from this incident was the low-key manner in which the two countries handled the "scandal" and the subsequent swap of agents.

Many of the same American observers who were ostensibly alarmed by the Russian "spies" were also critical of the Obama administration's adoption of a lower volume in its discussions of the quality of Russian democracy. Although the State Department's annual human rights reports continued to document violations of the rights of dissenters and especially of journalists, the new administration appeared to be far less inclined to "lecture" on this point. Putin was especially prickly in his attitude toward Bush-era lectures from hardliners like Vice President Dick Cheney, but even this skeptic of "reset" was initially vocal on the positive differences he was seeing. In September 2010, in a meeting with foreign experts on Russia, Putin called Obama a "deep, profound person" whose "sincerity is not in question . . . . We have a good and similar perspective on global problems."<sup>25</sup>

### **"Reset" in Need of Rescue?**

The Cold War-era détente foundered in part because of tactical maneuvers driven by domestic politics, and the same fate seemed likely to await "reset." Russian analyst Aleksey Pushkov, the former chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the State Duma, has written of détente that "tactics changed but the two countries remained fundamentally opposed to each other." If, he wrote in 2010, the two sides saw each other only as temporary, instrumental partners to help with immediate priorities (for the United States, Iran and Afghanistan; for Russia, investment and entry into WTO), then such a tactical alliance was bound to fail. On the other hand, Pushkov said, if both sides were ready for a deep reconciliation, "reset" would have a future from which both sides would benefit.<sup>26</sup>

Whatever benefits “reset” was to reap had been achieved by the time presidential election politics began to heat up in the United States and Russia in 2011. In addition to the approval of the New START treaty and Russian consent to the fourth round of UN sanctions on Iran, substantial American troops and cargo were now flowing through Russia to Afghanistan. Washington was preparing the path for Russia’s accession to the WTO, had eased pressure for further NATO enlargement, and was no longer lecturing Russia about deficiencies in its democratic development. In the United States, Republican triumphs in the mid-term 2010 elections and declines in Obama’s popularity raised the prospect that the president’s re-election would not be easily achieved. As for Russia, Putin and Medvedev had announced in September 2011 their intent to exchange (“castle”) their respective positions in 2012, and as the economy continued to stagnate and parliamentary elections loomed in December, the dominant United Russia Party seemed to be the target of greater public discontent. When the results of the Duma election were announced, massive protests were staged in Moscow and St. Petersburg, amid angry denunciations of fraud. Secretary of State Clinton weighed in with the verdict that the elections had been “neither free nor fair”—to which Putin responded by accusing her of having helped encourage and fund the Russian protests.<sup>27</sup>

In October 2011, “regime change” had come to Libya, with the “revolting slaughter” (in Putin’s words) of Muammar Qaddafi by rebel forces, aided by the force of Western arms. As we described in Chapter 8, Prime Minister Putin had pointedly disagreed when President Medvedev had been persuaded to abstain on the UN Security Council vote in March 2011 that authorized the use of force for protection of Libyan citizens. In the wake of Qaddafi’s fall, Russia was not only resisting the imposition of sanctions against the Syrian regime, which was facing a growing “Arab Spring” uprising, but it also rejected calls for stiffer sanctions against Iran in the wake of an IAEA report on suspicious Iranian nuclear activities.<sup>28</sup> At a December United Russia rally, hard-line Russian politician Dmitry Rogozin took the concerns about the Arab Spring further, charging that the United States had interfered in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, and now was “thinking about Russia and waiting for a moment when it is weak.”<sup>29</sup>

Accusations that the United States was trying to incite an “Arab Spring” or “color revolution” situation in Russia were heightened with the arrival in Moscow of the new American ambassador, Michael McFaul. As noted above, as Obama’s chief adviser on Russia and a prominent academic critic of Russia’s “unfinished” democratic transition, McFaul had already attracted notice among Russian politicians. When he quite ostentatiously met with opposition politicians on his second day on the job, the new ambassador was heavily criticized by the leading Russian television networks. Aleksey Pushkov labeled him a “diplomatic amateur” who could not differentiate between the role of the head of a democracy-promoting NGO and an official state representative.<sup>30</sup>

As expected, Vladimir Putin was re-elected as Russia’s president on March 4, 2012, facing a very weak field of opponents, and he kept his promise to appoint

Dmitry Medvedev as prime minister. But Putin seemed certain to have a much rockier third term than his first two. Recurring political protests against Putin were a new phenomenon, and appeared likely to worsen if economic performance declined. At the start of Putin's third term, little real economic reform had occurred since his first term. An economy lacking diversity meant that the state budget was perilously dependent on oil prices staying above \$100 per barrel. And Europe's economic difficulties did not bode well for Moscow, since the EU was responsible for 50 percent of Russia's trade and almost 80 percent of its investment. In the face of Putin's lavish electoral promises to increase defense spending and social programs, budget deficits and inflation were forecast. Decaying infrastructure, income inequality, and poor public health portended continuing economic fragility. Instead of investing at home, Russia's richest businessmen continued to send their wealth overseas.

Politically, the United Russia Party was weaker and future electoral challenges to its domination were likely to be more meaningful. The North Caucasus remained restive, and terrorism was a continuing threat. And it seemed probable that the Kremlin would witness more intra-elite competition, especially between advisers who favored more privatization and diversification in the economy (Medvedev's camp) and those who wanted to further consolidate state control (such as Putin's ally Igor Sechin, whom he placed in charge of the vital oil sector). However, for all of its faults, Putinism might prove the best environment that advocates of "reset" could hope for; if Putin's regime were to fail, Russian public opinion polls indicated it would not be replaced by liberalism, but more likely by an even stronger brand of nationalism.

Some of Putin's campaign speeches, given wide exposure in Russia media, had been particularly tough on the United States. But in their own presidential election year, Americans were also quite familiar with campaign excesses—none more publicized than Republican Mitt Romney's sweeping assertion that Russia was America's "number one geopolitical foe." There was ample evidence that Putin's foreign policy would not veer into an ideological anti-U.S. direction but would continue to be pragmatic. The critical foreign policy requirement for Putin was to ensure that Russia had a place at the bargaining table and that its interests were not ignored. In a campaign article published in February 2012, he said that Russia wants to participate actively in the global order: "everything we do will be based on our own interests and goals, not on decisions other countries impose on us. Russia is only treated with respect when it is strong and stands firm on its own two feet." Almost plaintively, he wrote, "We have presented our arguments more than once. But unfortunately our Western partners ignore and dismiss them."<sup>31</sup>

Putin skipped his initial post-inauguration opportunity to meet with Obama and his G-8 counterparts, declining to attend the May 2012 gathering at Camp David because he was too busy picking "his" (actually Medvedev's) cabinet. He and Obama did meet briefly in June, on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting in Mexico City, but little of substance was achieved. Domestic politics continued to intrude

into the relationship. Although elections were over in Russia, anti-Putin protests continued, especially in Moscow. And the U.S. presidential election was heating up. In the face of continuing deadlock over missile defense, Obama (overheard on an inadvertently open microphone) had in fact promised Medvedev, when they met in Seoul in March, that he would have “more flexibility” to deal with the issue after the November election. During his own campaign Putin’s rhetoric on the alleged threat posed to Russia by U.S. missile defense was especially harsh: “Americans are obsessed with the idea of securing absolute invulnerability for themselves . . . Absolute invulnerability for one nation would mean absolute vulnerability for everyone else.”<sup>32</sup> The chief of the Russian General Staff had gone so far as to declare that Russia might launch a pre-emptive strike if the missile defense got too close to its borders. But, as Obama’s comment indicated, the U.S. administration deemed the idea of compromise on the issue to be politically dangerous.

Through the fall of 2012, the Russian government continued to display extreme sensitivity on the issue of outside interference in its internal affairs. In September the U.S. government was hastily shutting down aid programs funded by the Agency for International Development (USAID)—many dating back to the desperate days of the early 1990s in Russia—in the face of a Russian order that they be closed by October 1. A new Russian law put some of the same non-governmental organizations that were receiving USAID funding under pressure to register with the government as “agents of a foreign power.” Most attention was focussed on Golos, an independent election-monitoring organization that had exposed fraud in the December parliamentary elections, and Transparency International, an anti-corruption organization.<sup>33</sup> The stir over this incident had not yet ended when Putin announced Russia’s withdrawal from a twenty-year partnership with the United States, the very successful Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which had worked to dismantle and safeguard nuclear and chemical weapons on former Soviet territory. Considerable funding from the U.S. government had been devoted to the program, but the Russians argued that they were now strong enough to reject such foreign assistance.<sup>34</sup>

Even more inflammatory were the mutual recriminations at the end of 2012 over U.S. congressional action regarding the granting of Permanent Normal Trade Relations to Russia. More than twenty years after the disappearance of the USSR, congressional critics of Russia’s domestic politics were not inclined to give up Jackson-Vanik without a fight, and they insisted that it be replaced by legislation they called the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act. Adopted in a lopsided vote by both chambers in December 2012 and signed by President Obama, this legislation was ostensibly designed to punish the Russian officials said to be responsible for the young lawyer’s death in a Russian prison in the midst of an investigation into alleged tax fraud. The Russian government and much of the Russian media strenuously objected to this legislation, seeing it as egregious interference into their domestic affairs.

The State Duma reciprocated by passing legislation banning the entry into Russia of an equivalent number of U.S. officials alleged to have violated human rights (of international prisoners held at Guantanamo and of Russian nationals imprisoned in the United States for arms and drug trafficking). But the Duma went even further, using the Magnitsky Act as an excuse to ban the adoption of Russian orphans by Americans. President Putin signed the bill into law. (This was dubbed the “Dmitry Yakovlev” act, named after a Russian toddler who died in 2008 as a result of neglect by his adoptive American parents.) This exchange of legislative volleys was widely publicized by the media of both countries, plunging the relationship into even deeper hostility.

As these episodes confirm, at the center of Putin’s foreign policy was an insistence on the principle of national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. This same principle undergirded the most prominent dispute between Moscow and Washington in 2013—Russia’s opposition to the use of force to bring about regime change in Syria. Ever since the United States and NATO waged an air war against Russia’s ally, Serbia, in support of Kosovo in 1999, the Russians (and the Chinese) have forcefully argued that outside military force cannot legitimately be used to bring about regime change or even secession of ethnic minority regions, even in cases of humanitarian crisis. (In adhering to this principle, the Russians are clearly mindful of their own experience with Chechnya, and the Chinese with their experiences in Tibet and Xinjiang.)

The Russians clearly felt that they were deceived in the spring of 2011 when they were persuaded to abstain in the UN Security Council to allow NATO and the Arab League to undertake limited air strikes to protect civilians in Libya from Qaddafi’s forces. As described in Chapter 8, that “limited action” turned into full-scale regime change.

In the case of Syria, which was a staunch Soviet ally during most of the Cold War, the Russians repeatedly refused in the Security Council (together with China) to consent to any sanctions on the regime, ranging from condemnation to outright military action. While it was true that Russia has a long-standing alliance with the Assad regime that brought not only commercial benefits (including arms sales) but also access to the only port its navy could use on the Mediterranean (Tartus), it did not seem to be the case, as some critics alleged, that it was only Russian arms that were keeping the regime afloat; the arms flow from Iran was far more essential. Nor did it appear that if Russia withdrew its support that Assad would fall, or even that if Moscow and Beijing lifted their Security Council vetoes that a regime change in Syria would follow.

The situation was far more complicated, and Russia’s backing was only one of Assad’s supports. The fragmented and diverse nature of the Syrian opposition forces, which included many foreign jihadist elements, worried Moscow (as well as the United States). Russia did not relish the prospect of having a radical Sunni Islamic regime so near its own sensitive Sunni Muslim territories. The Russian government had also shown concern about the likely fate of the large

number of Russian citizens in Syria, estimated at 40,000—many of them the wives of Syrians who had studied in the USSR. Stressing that avoidance of chaos in Syria was his chief objective, and that a diplomatic solution was the only way to achieve that goal, Putin in December 2012 sought to distance himself from the Assad regime, stating “we aren’t a defender of the current Syrian leadership.”<sup>35</sup>

Sensitive to criticism that its vetoes were protecting Assad’s forces as they escalated the brutality of their actions against Syrian civilians, Russia sought to defuse the crisis through diplomatic means. The effort seemed aimed at preserving some of Moscow’s influence with Arab states that were opposing the Syrian regime, but nothing came of the Russian proposal.<sup>36</sup> In July 2012 the Russians went further, inviting a delegation of Syrian opposition leaders to Moscow to try to broker talks, while signaling that they would be delaying shipments of Russian arms to the regime.<sup>37</sup> In May of 2013 Lavrov joined with the new American secretary of state, John Kerry, in calling for an international peace conference on Syria, to be held in Geneva. The prospects for such a conference diminished, however, when the disunion in the Syrian opposition became more acute and when the tide in the civil war seemed to shift back toward the government, lessening any prospect that Assad would be willing to negotiate his own departure.<sup>38</sup>

The Russian and American positions on Syria diverged even more during the late summer of 2013, following the sarin gas attack on the east Damascus suburb of Ghouta, reportedly killing more than 1,400, including 426 children. A year earlier Barack Obama had declared that use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime would constitute a “red line” for the United States, evoking a military response. After Secretary Kerry presented the U.S. intelligence community’s conclusion about the regime’s guilt in the gruesome attack, Obama declared that the United States would respond with “a shot across the bow” in order to punish Assad and deter future use of chemical weapons. However, he abruptly postponed the “shot,” declaring that he would first seek legislative authorization for a military strike—something the U.S. Congress proved very reluctant to give. Lobbying for international support at the G-20 meeting in early September in St. Petersburg, Obama appeared to be competing with Putin, who was arguing that responsibility for the attack was not clear, and insisting that only the UN Security Council could legitimately order a military response.

Although Obama and Putin had a brief but intense discussion on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting, there was no evidence of any breakthrough on the Syrian issue. However, a seemingly offhand remark by Secretary of State Kerry, at a news conference in the wake of the St. Petersburg meeting, revealed that there was indeed an opportunity for the two sides to cooperate on a possible resolution. Asked if anything could be done to avoid a military strike by the United States, Kerry replied that it was possible if Assad were to surrender all of his chemical weapons to the international community, though he quickly added that this “obviously” was not about to happen. Shortly thereafter, Foreign Minister Lavrov

called Kerry to express his interest in the idea and the two promptly agreed to meet in Geneva to discuss it.

President Obama had already scheduled a national television address, presumably for the purpose of trying to persuade the American public to support a limited military strike on Syria. Though he clearly kept the military option in reserve, Obama expressed his preference for a diplomatic solution to the challenge posed by Syria's chemical weapons. In a highly unusual move, President Putin weighed in directly on the discussion in the United States by submitting an "op-ed" column to the *New York Times* that argued in favor of the diplomatic proposal and condemned the unilateral use of military force.<sup>39</sup>

To the surprise of many observers, Kerry and Lavrov were able to agree in Geneva on a framework for international inspection and control, including a timetable for Syria to declare its chemical weapons stocks, readmit inspectors, and turn over (within a year) control of the weapons to UN authorities. The agreement called for enforcement action by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter should Syria fail to comply. But Russia continued to insist, over the objections of the United States, Britain, and France, that there should be no explicit commitment to employ military force if Syria were to default on its commitments.

Many international observers (including, quite prominently, the government of Israel) regarded Putin's gambit as nothing more than a bold effort to protect the Assad regime from an American strike, while covering for the Damascus regime as it evaded compliance with the disarmament requirements. Publicly as well as privately, the Russians professed their intention to press Assad to fulfill his promises. Putin had gambled that a successful disarmament initiative would not only add to Russia's international stature, but that it would also stave off further chaos in Syria and the wider region. While his op-ed essay stressed that Moscow was intent on upholding the principle in international law that forbade states from unilaterally employing force, for purposes other than self-defense, without permission of the UN Security Council, Putin had another, more self-serving, objective. If Assad's chemical weapons were not secured, Russia could not be confident that some would not fall into the hands of rebel fighters. The more extreme of these forces included not only an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, but also a contingent of Chechen fighters. With the Winter Olympics scheduled for Sochi, Russia—only 700 miles from Damascus—in February 2014, chemical weapons in the hands of Muslim extremists could pose a mortal threat to Putin's cherished Olympics project.

To the surprise of skeptics, and despite the difficult environment of a chaotic civil conflict, Syria appeared to be adhering to the agreed timetable for declaring its chemical weapons stocks and turning them over to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the international body tasked with arranging for their destruction. Putin had gained international prestige for his adroit diplomacy that averted a military strike by the U.S., and Moscow was clearly pressing



Damascus to abide by its agreement. Motivated as it was both by defense of international norms and by self-interest, Russia demonstrated in this crisis not only that it would continue to play a major role in the Middle East, but also that close cooperation between Moscow and Washington could serve the interests of both countries.

The September 2013 G-20 meeting, hosted by the Russians in St. Petersburg, was originally to have been preceded by a Putin-Obama summit in Moscow, but the United States called off the meeting on August 8. The year had begun with reports quoting U.S. officials—irritated at the perceived “anti-American” tone emanating from Putin’s Kremlin—to the effect that the Obama administration was “resetting” the “reset,” choosing to disengage from Russia by giving it the “cold shoulder.”<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Obama evidently decided to pursue his long-standing objective of achieving deeper cuts in the global stock of nuclear weapons, announcing his intention to pursue another arms reduction treaty both in his February State of the Union address and in a major speech in Berlin in June. The United States seemed to have believed that prospects for a new round of START cuts had been enhanced by the March announcement of the planned cancellation of the part of the missile defense program that had most concerned Moscow. Following a visit by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon to Moscow in April—delivering a letter from Obama in which Putin’s advisor Yuri Ushakov saw “positive signals”—Obama accepted Putin’s invitation to meet before the G-20 summit.<sup>41</sup> The positive vibes continued later in the month when the Russians appeared to be very helpful in the investigation of the ethnic-Chechen Tsarnaev brothers following the terror attack at the Boston Marathon.

However, appearances of progress in the U.S.-Russian relationship in the first part of 2013 were fleeting. Differences over missile defense had not disappeared, and the escalation of the civil war in Syria accentuated the contrasting positions of Moscow and Washington. But it was the bizarre case of Edward Snowden that grabbed the public spotlight in June and July and that appeared—deceptively—to be most directly responsible for the new rupture in relations. Snowden was a contractor working for the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) who departed from his post in Hawai’i and landed in Hong Kong determined to expose secret NSA programs for collecting vast amounts of data about the patterns of telephone calls of American citizens. Following publication of these revelations in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, Snowden came under pressure from the U.S. government, which regarded him not as a “whistle-blower” but as a traitor.

Seeking a safe haven, he left Hong Kong, evidently to go to a friendly (i.e., anti-American) country in Latin America. Planning to reach his destination by transiting through Moscow, Snowden found himself isolated in the transit area of Sheremetyevo Airport when the United States cancelled his passport and put heavy diplomatic pressure on Western Hemisphere countries that might have granted Snowden asylum. From the time of his June 23 arrival in Moscow,

where he was effectively stranded at the airport, Russian television and vociferous nationalist politicians seized on his plight as an example of America's hypocrisy in "persecuting a human rights crusader" while attacking Russia's government for the same activity.

Pressed for a reaction, Putin declared about Snowden that "the sooner he chooses his final destination, the better it will be for him and for us." If he were to stay in Russia, the president said, "he must cease his work aimed at inflicting damage to our American partners." At the same time, the Russian government made it clear that they had no intention of turning Snowden over to the United States in the absence of an extradition treaty. Declaring that Snowden was in effect trapped in Moscow by American pressures, and yet aware of his own dilemma given the way the incident was being portrayed in the Russian media, Putin clearly wished that the American would go away: "Such a present for us for Christmas," he told one Russian audience. The next day, he showed awareness of the risks that Snowden's continued presence in Moscow ran for U.S.-Russian relations: "Bilateral relations . . . are far more important than squabbling about the activities of the secret services."<sup>42</sup>

However, bilateral relations appeared to fall victim to the Snowden affair, as Obama on August 9 called off the scheduled September meeting with Putin. Although Foreign Minister Lavrov asserted that the meeting had only been "postponed," not canceled, historians recalled that this was the first bilateral Washington-Moscow summit to be canceled since Dwight Eisenhower called off a planned trip to Moscow in June 1960 amid recriminations about the U-2 affair. Appearances were deceiving, however. Although the media focused on the Snowden case, and then on Russian human rights issues—especially new legislation banning "gay propaganda" in Russia—the U.S. administration acknowledged that the summit was not likely to have produced results. As one official said, "there wasn't an agenda that was ripe." The lack of progress toward agreement on arms reduction, missile defense, and Syria meant that holding the summit would have resulted in evident failure.

Nor was the focus by the U.S. media on a "new anti-American ideology" in Russia following Putin's return to the presidency justified by the facts. Comparing the foreign policy environment during Medvedev's presidential term with the atmosphere after Putin's return to the Kremlin betrayed a lack of understanding that Putin had been the dominant figure in the making of Russia foreign policy for the entire period since 2000. Unfortunately, President Obama seemed to encourage this portrayal by an undiplomatic and widely publicized reference to Putin's body language during prior meetings ("he's got that kind of slouch, looking like the bored kid in the back of the classroom"). And yet less attention was paid to the American president's conclusion: "the truth is, is that when we're in conversations together oftentimes it's very productive."<sup>43</sup>

What this suggested was that there was still an opportunity for Washington and Moscow to make real progress in their relations on major issues where they both

had vital interests and needed each other's cooperation. Barack Obama seemed to confirm this when he said of the Russians, one day before calling off the summit:

There have been times where they slip back into cold war thinking and a cold war mentality. And what I constantly say to them, what I say to President Putin, is that's the past and we've got to think about the future, and there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to cooperate more effectively than we do.<sup>44</sup>

## **Crisis in Ukraine**

The agreement on Syrian chemical weapons in the autumn of 2013, followed quickly by the P5+1's interim agreement on nuclear enrichment with Iran's new government—described in Chapter 8—seemed to confirm the potential in partnership, even while underscoring the obstacles. Part of the difficulty was indeed overcoming the hold of stereotypes from Cold-War conflicts that are still deeply ingrained in sectors of the domestic political environment—and not just in Russia, but in both countries. Both Obama and Putin had earned reputations as pragmatists, but there appeared to be rising currents of ideological hostility surrounding the two leaders. This testy domestic political atmosphere was a prominent factor in the development of what was widely seen as the worst crisis in Russian-American relations since the end of the Cold War—Russia's military incursion into Ukraine's Crimea peninsula. Following President Viktor Yanukovich's failure to sign Ukraine's trade and cooperation agreement with the European Union in November 2013—described in Chapter 6—continuing popular unrest in Kiev, with incidents of violent police response, culminated on February 21, 2014, in Yanukovich's flight first to Kharkiv and then through Crimea to Russia. A transitional government then confronted the difficult task of moving Ukraine out of its near-bankruptcy under politically volatile conditions. Russian politicians and media portrayed these events as an unconstitutional coup d'état engineered by extremist and anti-Russian forces.<sup>45</sup> The American political and media view, in stark contrast, was that popularly supported pro-Western forces had put Ukraine back on the path to democracy.<sup>46</sup>

On the pretext of safeguarding the ethnic Russian majority in Crimea from attacks by Ukrainian ultranationalists (which it termed “fascists”), Russia suddenly and stealthily augmented its military forces legally based in Crimea. Beginning on February 27, 2014, masked soldiers—their uniforms stripped of insignia—were stationed outside key government installations. On March 1, 2014, the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia's parliament, voted to authorize President Putin to deploy Russian troops in Ukraine (and not specifically in Crimea alone). Responding to President Obama's condemnation of the Russian military activity, the Federation Council also suggested that Putin consider recalling Russia's ambassador from the United States.

The rhetoric on both sides quickly became more heated. In the United States, Republican Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, blaming Obama's

“reset” policy and general “fecklessness” in foreign policy, spoke of a “new cold war” emerging between the United States and Russia.<sup>47</sup> Russian media and politicians accused the United States and its European allies of having conspired with Ukrainian rightists to depose the legitimate government. The Russian charge was bolstered by the release of a tape of an intercepted phone conversation between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt. On February 6, with Yanukovich still in the presidency, the two diplomats were discussing the composition of the next Ukrainian government, while deriding (with an indelicate four-letter word) efforts by the EU to mediate the conflict.<sup>48</sup> In a March 4, 2014, press conference, his first public statement on the crisis, Putin clearly suggested that the United States had engineered the change of government in Ukraine:

And it is not the first time our Western partners are doing this in Ukraine. I sometimes get the feeling that somewhere across that huge puddle, in America, people sit in a lab and conduct experiments, as if with rats, without actually understanding the consequences of what they are doing. Why did they need to do this? Who can explain this? There is no explanation at all for it.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, what had begun as a choice for Ukraine between stronger economic ties with the EU or with Russia evolved into a full-scale struggle for power in Ukraine and then into a diplomatic and propaganda confrontation between the United States and Russia. President Obama stated that if Russia did not pull its troops out of Crimea, the United States and its allies would inflict heavy costs on Moscow, in the form of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Putin, in turn, denied that Moscow had in fact committed aggression in Ukraine and insisted that Russia’s primary concern was “humanitarian”—to prevent what he claimed would be further cases of violence by Ukrainian extremists against Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Though both presidents were leaving space for a diplomatic resolution of the crisis, both appeared to be operating in domestic political environments that encouraged tougher responses.

The response from America’s European allies ranged from angry denunciations of the Russian action and calls for strong responses by the French and by most East European states to a cautious response from Germany—the European state with the most significant ties to the Russian economy and the most dependent on energy imports from Russia. But the Europeans did promise a \$15 billion loan to Ukraine (matching Putin’s November offer, since withdrawn). And the IMF prepared to put together an economic relief package for Ukraine’s badly stressed economy, though it was clear that its terms would impose heavy pain on the Ukrainian population. Economic pain was also in prospect from Gazprom, which announced that it would cease selling gas to Ukraine at a discounted price. In his press conference, Putin acknowledged that Yanukovich had severely mismanaged Ukraine’s economy, and he expressed willingness to discuss future economic relationships—but only with a Ukrainian government that he deemed “legitimate.”

There were sharply diverging interpretations of legitimacy in this crisis. President Obama declared:

There is a strong belief that Russia's action is violating international law. I know President Putin seems to have a different set of lawyers making a different set of interpretations, but I don't think that is fooling anybody. I think everybody recognizes that, although Russia has legitimate interests in what happens in a neighboring state that does not give it the right to use force as a means of exerting influence inside of that state.<sup>50</sup>

For his part, Putin accused the United States of using a double standard—freely intervening without UN approval when it suited its interests (citing Iraq, Afghanistan, and even Kosovo) but branding Russia's actions as violations of international law. There were also strong differences over the legitimacy of the plans by Crimea's pro-Russian regional parliament to hold a referendum to ratify its vote to rejoin Russia. Denouncing the plan, the U.S. president proposed that if Putin were genuinely concerned about protecting Crimea's Russian population, he should accept a plan to place international observers in the province.

Given that there was no real evidence that Crimean Russians (or Russian-speakers elsewhere in Ukraine) were in imminent danger—although some elements in the victorious coalition in Kiev were in fact ultra-nationalist firebrands—Putin's objectives obviously ranged well beyond the professed “humanitarian” concerns. Although its lease on the Sevastopol base for its Black Sea Fleet had been extended until 2042, Russia saw a hostile government in Kiev as a threat to its security interests, especially when talk about NATO membership was revived. Pro-Russian legislators, having gained control of Crimea's parliament, duly passed a “declaration of independence,” and the result of a March 16 referendum, conducted by the parliament, was proclaimed an overwhelming expression of popular desire to affiliate Crimea with Russia.

Three days later Putin addressed the Russian Federal Assembly to call for a vote annexing Crimea and Sevastopol. Citing the precedent of Kosovo (whose declaration of independence the Russians had bitterly denounced), Putin repeated the now-familiar litany of complaints about Western orchestration of “color revolutions,” expansion of NATO, and installation of missile defenses on Russia's borders. He concluded: “I would also like to remind you that Kiev had previously announced that Ukraine would join NATO as soon as possible . . . There would be NATO warships in the city of Russian military glory.”<sup>51</sup>

Russia's claim to Crimea, which proved to be wildly popular with the Russian population—and not just ultra-nationalists—was likely intended to make future Ukrainian governments even more sensitive to Moscow's interests out of fear that Kiev's rule over Russophone provinces in eastern Ukraine might also be at risk. These concerns, combined with Ukraine's precarious dependence on Russian energy supplies and the Russian market, initially appeared to make an outright break with Russia untenable. Added to these security and economic concerns, of

course, were Moscow's deep historical and cultural ties to Ukraine, which caused Putin—and most people in the Russian Federation—to view Ukraine as vital to Russia's core interests.

As the charges and countercharges flew in the heat of the crisis, Western diplomats were urging authorities in Kiev to avoid provoking violent conflicts and to engage their Russian counterparts in negotiations. For their part, U.S. and EU governments moved swiftly to suspend Russia's membership in the G-8 and—more significantly—to enact sweeping economic sanctions against Russia. On March 6 President Obama signed an executive order that ordered travel bans and freezing of U.S. assets against individuals (to be determined later by the Departments of Treasury and State) who were deemed responsible for the intervention in Crimea and the undermining of Ukrainian democracy and institutions. On March 17, as Putin prepared to sign the annexation decree, the EU instituted a travel ban of its own against Russian individuals deemed to be responsible for undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity, adding that it was prepared to reverse its decisions and re-engage with Russia when it starts actively contributing to finding a solution to the crisis. However, as the conflict expanded throughout 2014, additional rounds of sanctions banned business transactions in the U.S. and EU by certain Russian firms and banks. Most tellingly, U.S. and EU energy companies were forbidden to extend technological cooperation or services to the Russian oil and gas sectors.

Russia responded with sanctions of its own, banning food and other agricultural imports from the EU and other countries that had enacted sanctions against it (including Canada and Japan). Although the economic impact fell hardest on Russia, it is estimated that the cost to the EU of these various restrictions exceeded 100 billion euros by 2015. These costs adversely affected some of the EU's most fragile economies, but the bloc stayed united in its determination, albeit under sharp pressure from Washington. In October 2014 Vice President Biden claimed that the sanctions regime resulted from "America's leadership and the president of the United States insisting, oft times almost having to embarrass Europe to stand up and take economic hits to impose costs." The result, he said, had been

massive capital flight from Russia, a virtual freeze on foreign direct investment, a ruble at an all-time low against the dollar, and the Russian economy teetering on the brink of recession. We don't want Russia to collapse. We want Russia to succeed. But Putin has to make a choice. These asymmetrical advances on another country cannot be tolerated. The international system will collapse if they are.<sup>52</sup>

European hopes for a quick "re-engagement" with Russia were shattered when pro-Russian activists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine (together known as the "Donbass") organized militias, seized government buildings, and staged "independence" referenda in May. Although Putin had recommended a postponement of the vote, widespread fighting broke out between forces supported by the Kiev government and separatist forces—augmented by

Russian paramilitary troops and supplied with Russian arms. Elections held in the rest of Ukraine on May 25 resulted in the choice of billionaire businessman Petro Poroshenko as the new president. “Oligarch” owner of a large confectionery manufacturing operation (and dubbed the “Chocolate King”), he had served as a government minister in both the Yushchenko and Yanukovich administrations. His government was recognized by Western powers, but Russia continued to claim that it had originated in an unconstitutional coup d’état.

Labeling the separatist forces “terrorists,” Poroshenko vowed to re-establish control over the Donbass and Crimea. The intensifying civil war attracted greater international attention and sharper Western criticism on July 17 when Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was shot down over separatist-held territory on a flight from Amsterdam, killing 295 passengers and crew. Both sides possessed the Buk surface-to-air missile system used in the tragic strike, but the separatists and their Russian supporters denied responsibility.

In the summer of 2014 Ukrainian forces went on the offensive, and they appeared poised to retake the separatist-held territories by August. But Russian reinforcements advanced across the border, pushing the Ukrainian fighters back and threatening to push farther into the country’s heartland. A hasty peace deal between Ukraine, Russia, and the separatists, negotiated in the Belarusian capital under the auspices of the OSCE, halted the onslaught. But this agreement, known as Minsk I, soon broke down, and intense fighting—with heavy casualties, including thousands of civilians—was again raging in various parts of eastern Ukraine in early winter of 2015. On January 27 the Ukrainian parliament adopted a resolution labeling the Russian Federation as an aggressor state and the self-proclaimed Luhansk and Donetsk “Peoples Republics” as terrorist organizations. But there were reports of conflict in Kiev between Poroshenko, who favored cease-fire negotiations, and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who supported a military solution and appealed for lethal arms aid from the West. Against this background a new accord—a “Package of Measures for Implementation of the Minsk Agreements” or “Minsk II”—supported by Poroshenko and Putin, with active support from French President Hollande and German Chancellor Merkel, was signed on February 12, 2015 by the heads of the two rebel “republics,” by former Ukraine President Leonid Kuchma (representing the Kiev government), by the Russian ambassador to Ukraine, and by a representative of the OSCE. The agreement called for:

- an immediate and full cease-fire in the Donbass region;
- pullback of heavy weapons, to be monitored by OSCE;
- grants of pardon and amnesty, and exchanges of hostages and “illegally held persons”;
- access for humanitarian aid;
- restoration of control of the state border to Ukraine *on condition of* the fulfillment of a change in its constitution (by the end of 2015) granting decentralization and special status to particular districts in the east.

Implementation of the Minsk II agreement immediately ran into difficulties. Hostilities continued for a few days in the area of most intense conflict, near Debaltseve, delaying the pullback of artillery by a week. Moreover, legislation on “special status” passed by the Ukrainian parliament in March 2015 was condemned as a departure from the agreement both by right-wing nationalists in Kiev and by separatist leaders and their Russian patrons.

In the years since the summit in Minsk, fighting has erupted on numerous occasions, with mounting casualties. Elections in the Donbass have been repeatedly postponed. The Ukrainian government and its Western backers have condemned Russia for its failure to pull its forces back from Ukrainian territory. The Russian government, in turn, has insisted that the necessary constitutional changes that were to be preconditions for the restoration of border control have not been carried out. Nevertheless, no new foundation for settlement of the conflict has been negotiated, and all sides have continued to insist on the necessity of implementing the terms of Minsk II.

Putin’s popularity ratings in Russia soared in the wake of the annexation of Crimea. Delegates to the annual Munich Security Conference in February 2015 laughed at Foreign Minister Lavrov when he said that Russia’s action in response to the Crimean referendum had been in accord with the self-determination clause of the UN Charter, adding that the annexation of East Germany by Bonn had taken place without a referendum. A film shown on Russian television on the first anniversary of the annexation (“Crimea: The Way Home”) emphasized Putin’s personal role in pursuing Russia’s national interests, asserting that he had been ready to put Russia’s nuclear forces on alert had the West attempted military intervention in Ukraine.<sup>53</sup>

Although the fighting in Ukraine has been only sporadic since the signing of the Minsk II agreement, it nonetheless resulted in several hundred casualties a year in 2016 and 2017—with the total since the outbreak of the crisis by then exceeding 10,000. Prospects for a resolution of the crisis satisfactory to all sides remained dim, and so the most favorable outcome from Moscow’s standpoint was to add this one to the list of “frozen conflicts” in the former Soviet space, stabilized to a degree that would induce the EU at least, if not the U.S., to lift sanctions on Russia.

Toward this end, in September 2017 Putin proposed that a United Nations peacekeeping mission be deployed on the front lines of the Donbass conflict to protect OSCE observers overseeing enforcement of the cease-fire and weapons provisions of the Minsk II agreements. Poroshenko countered with a demand that any peacekeeping force operate not just on the front lines—essentially serving to demarcate a *de facto* separation from Ukraine—but within the entire Donbass territory, extending to the border with Russia. He insisted that such a force must not include Russian forces, lest it follow the unsatisfactory example of the Russian-dominated “peacekeeping” exercise in Trans-Dniester, which has essentially prevented the re-integration of that territory with Moldova. Although this



disagreement on its scope and mission had yet to be resolved, the governments of Canada and Germany voiced strong support for establishing a UN peacekeeping mission in Ukraine as the best acceptable avenue for de-escalating the conflict and possibly even removing it as a major point of contention between the West—or, at the very least, the EU—and Russia.

### **Moscow and Washington at Odds over Syria**

As we discussed in Chapter 8, Syria has been Russia's longest-standing ally in the Middle East. Home to a Russian naval base—and as of 2016, also an air base—Syria has also been a leading customer for Russian arms sales. When Putin expanded Russia's military involvement there at the end of September 2015, President Bashar al-Assad's regime appeared to be near collapse. The expanded Russian intervention presented an opportunity for Putin to re-assert Russia's role as a major power in the Middle East, while demonstrating its military capabilities (and testing new weaponry) and re-stating its opposition to Western-backed "regime change" in the region (citing the examples of the recent interventions in Iraq and Libya). Under the cover of fighting ISIS in Syria, Putin's intervention was depicted as a step toward the creation of a broad anti-terrorist coalition. Inviting the U.S. and the EU to cooperate in this fashion could also, Moscow hoped, lead to a diminution of the significance of the Ukraine crisis as a wedge in its relations with the West—and possibly eventually to the lifting of crippling economic sanctions.<sup>54</sup>

Russia used the Syria intervention as both a showcase and a training ground for its military forces. In October 2017 Russian naval vessels launched cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea against Syrian targets. This was the first combat use of the new Kalibr attack missile system and of the Caspian missile-launch flotilla. The strike could have been launched from Russia's Latakia base in Syria, but Russia wanted to test its new equipment and demonstrate its capabilities.

If Putin hoped to use his military show to persuade the United States to engage in joint operations in Syria, and then to parlay their "partnership" in Syria into an eventual abandonment by Washington of Ukraine-generated sanctions, he was soon disappointed. Beyond necessary moves at "de-confliction" to avoid accidental engagements between their respective forces, Washington demurred from closer cooperation, even refusing to receive a delegation led by Prime Minister Medvedev for presentation of specific measures. One day before a meeting of foreign ministers of Russia, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Turkey was to take place in Vienna, in search of a political solution to the Syria conflict, Putin summoned President Assad to Moscow, as if to demonstrate his ability to orchestrate a solution. At his annual meeting with the Valdai Discussion Club a few days later, Putin laid out his plan for Syria, stressing the need:

- to preserve Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
- to pool efforts to pursue the fight against ISIS;

- to create conditions that would allow the Syrian people to determine their own fate;
- to gain international cooperation in accomplishing Syria's post-war socioeconomic reconstruction.<sup>55</sup>

In a speech to the Russian parliament on December 4, Putin elaborated on this appeal for a “united anti-terrorist front that will be based on international law and function under the aegis of the UN.” He squarely blamed Washington’s policy of “regime change” in the Middle East for the rise of extremist terrorist groups in the region:

We know whose idea it was to get rid of undesirable regimes and harshly impose their own rules. And what was the outcome? They started this mess, tore down government systems, invited conflicts between different groups of people, and then washed their hands of the situation . . . leaving the door open for radicals, extremists and terrorists.<sup>56</sup>

Russia’s expanded military involvement in the complex Syrian conflict did not merely complicate its relationship with the United States, which was still backing forces that were fighting for the removal of Russia’s ally, Assad. Turkey was also a vigorous opponent of the Assad regime, and in November 2015 a Russian SU-24M bomber was shot down on Syria’s border with Turkey by a Turkish F-16 after briefly violating Turkish airspace. The Russian pilot was killed by anti-Assad fighters on the ground. Russia demanded that Turkey accept blame and apologize for the incident, and to enforce its demand it froze a number of joint projects (including the Turkish Stream gas pipeline), sanctioned the import of certain Turkish goods (branded the “war on Turkish tomatoes”), and halted Russian tourism to Turkey.

After several months of tense relations, the breach healed when the Turkish government evidently decided that its opposition to Assad would take a back seat to its fear that Kurdish forces in Syria, which were allied with opposition Kurds in Turkey, might parlay their struggle against Assad into a *de facto* autonomous Kurdish region in Syria. This apparent change of heart was reinforced in July 2016 in the wake of a failed coup d’état against President Erdoğan by military forces allegedly allied with regime opponent Fethullah Gulen—who was self-exiled in the United States. The American refusal to extradite Gulen enflamed Erdoğan’s suspicions that Washington had supported the coup. The U.S. condemnation of human rights violations in the ensuing harsh crackdown by Erdoğan against thousands of his domestic opponents furthered exacerbated Ankara’s relations with Washington. In the face of their common hostility with the U.S., Turkey and Russia overcame their differences over Syria. Smoothing the way, Erdoğan sent a letter of apology for the death of the Russian pilot. In an August visit to St. Petersburg, concluding agreements to resume full economic relations, the Turkish president five times referred to Putin as “dear friend.” However, the path ahead

was not likely to be entirely smooth, since Russia supports the Syrian Kurds, while Turkey views them as hostile forces allied with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara labels a "terrorist" organization.

In the closing year of the Obama administration, Secretary of State John Kerry continued his quest to negotiate a cease-fire and peace talks in Syria, encouraged by Russia's continued insistence that it was not wedded to Assad's indefinite continuance in power. On February 27, 2016, following talks between Kerry and Lavrov, Putin announced in a special televised address that a partial cease-fire had been achieved, under the terms of which the U.S. and Russia would continue to target ISIS and Al-Qaeda forces in Syria. This opened the way for Putin to give the order on March 14 to withdraw the "main contingent" of Russia troops from Syria, declaring that the military's objectives had been "generally accomplished."

According to a Russian press report, the defense ministry claimed that 2,000 "bandits" from Russia (i.e., Muslim terrorists from the Caucasus) had been "taken out," and that the Russian air force had destroyed many of the oil facilities exploited by ISIS, while aiding Syrian forces in gaining a "second wind" to achieve a "turning point in the fight against terrorism." Of special significance, according to this report, was the fact that U.S. and NATO military commanders had been forced to re-evaluate the level of Russia's combat readiness and military capabilities: "the Russians have forced the Americans to respect them." The report concluded: "We are withdrawing from Syria, but Russia is staying in the Middle East."<sup>57</sup>

The proclamation of a Russian "withdrawal" proved to be highly premature. The cease-fire did not hold and fighting raged on in Syria, but Secretary Kerry continued his efforts to stop the fighting on terms acceptable to the U.S. A Russian press report in July claimed that he called Foreign Minister Lavrov almost every day in search of an agreement for military cooperation and intelligence-sharing against terrorist forces in Syria—often in the face of opposition from the Pentagon—and that the Russians had learned "to both manipulate Kerry and trust him."<sup>58</sup>

Despite the persisting efforts by Kerry to find a basis for cooperation with Russia in Syria, the Obama administration left office without a resolution to the conflict. Against the backdrop of newly elected President Donald Trump's lack of commitment to regime change and his less hostile posture toward Russia, there was doubt that the U.S. would continue to support the Syrian opposition forces. Rather, the proclaimed focus of the new administration's military policy in Syria was the defeat of ISIS. But in April a Syrian aerial attack on a town in Idlib province, killing seventy-two, left a chemical residue, and Trump ordered a retaliatory attack by U.S. cruise missiles on the Syrian air base. Putin's spokesman declared that the U.S. attack inflicted substantial damage on U.S.-Russian relations, while U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson complained that Russia had been "either complicit or simply incompetent" in reining in Assad's forces. Russia's proclaimed triumph in accomplishing the removal of all chemical weapons from

Syria had been exposed as hollow. And despite the change in administration in the U.S., Syria continued to be a significant point of contention between Washington and Moscow. Secretary Tillerson proved to be far less ardent than Kerry had been in asserting a U.S. role in bringing about a peaceful settlement, and the major diplomatic activity toward seeking a peace settlement was now clustered around Russia in partnership with Iran and Turkey. While this put Russia front and center, and while the guarantor states did succeed in establishing four de-escalation zones, Moscow's inability to broker a full settlement did not redound to its credit.

As we noted above, Putin's announcement in March 2016 that the main contingent of Russian forces was being withdrawn from Syria proved premature. And so in December 2017, as he began his campaign for re-election, he staged another "victory" celebration intended to reassure the Russian public that there would be no more battlefield losses. On his way to a state visit in Egypt, Putin made a surprise stop at the Hmeimem air base in Syria, where he met President Assad for talks. But his major objective was to declare "mission accomplished" for Russian forces in Syria. They had delivered a devastating blow against the "most battle-worthy group of international terrorists . . . who directly, brazenly and openly threatened our country." Syria's sovereignty had been preserved, and in the process Russia's armed forces had revealed their growing power and high combat capability, he claimed. He announced (as he had twenty months earlier) that "most of the Russia contingent in Syria will be going back to Russia." Those remaining would be clustered around the Russian naval and air bases.<sup>59</sup>

What Putin did not reveal was that large numbers of Russian nationals, remaining in Syria as "contractors," continued as active participants in the fighting. This fact became evident in February 2018 when "dozens" of Russians (and maybe as many as 200 personnel from the former Soviet states) were killed in an American air attack while advancing with Syrian troops on a position held by the U.S.-led coalition fighting ISIS. Although the Russian and American military commands were in close contact to avoid direct engagement of their troops, the "deconfliction" measures apparently did not apply to mercenary Russian troops. In response to reports of the casualties by Russian bloggers and complaints from opposition politicians, Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, told journalists, "We only handle the data that concerns Russian forces servicemen. We don't have data about other Russians who could be in Syria."<sup>60</sup>

### **Election Interference: Accusations and Consequences**

The cumulative strains on the U.S.-Russia relationship from the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria were starkly evident long before the Obama administration left office. Whereas Putin earlier had emphasized, in his much-quoted 2007 speech at the Munich Security Conference, that the priority was to build a common global security architecture, in his Valdai speech in October 2014 he declared that a "historic turning point" had left no hope of partnership with the U.S. under its

present policies. Depicting Obama's Washington as a global bully which felt free to topple "inconvenient regimes" that refused to do its bidding, he rebutted the claim that Russian aggression had been responsible for this situation.

I want to point out that we did not start this . . . The allegations and statements that Russia is trying to establish some sort of empire, encroaching on the sovereignty of its neighbors, are groundless. Russia does not need any kind of special, exclusive place in the world—I want to emphasize this. While respecting the interests of others, we simply want for our own interests to be taken into account and for our position to be respected.<sup>61</sup>

One of Russia's most astute foreign policy observers, Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of *Russia in Global Affairs*, in November 2014 delivered a sobering verdict about the futility of further talks between Russia and the United States: they have nothing new to say to each other.

A deep chasm . . . stems not from differing ideologies, but from divergent perceptions of the world—past, present and future . . . Putin also has little reason to change his approach to the U.S. First, he sincerely believes that US foreign policy is destructive and completely senseless. Second, his anti-U.S. stance does more than anything else to boost his popularity at home. Third, Russia has greatly intensified its relations with the countries of the non-Western world, and that requires Moscow to position itself—at least to some extent—as an alternative to the U.S. And finally, speaking before the UN [in September 2014], Obama put Russia on a par with Ebola and the Islamic State. It would be strange for Moscow, finding itself placed in such company, to put forward proposals for the resumption of dialogue.<sup>62</sup>

Lukyanov's point about Putin's popularity had been dramatically asserted at the prior month's Valdai meeting by Putin's then-first deputy chief of staff (later promoted to Duma chairman), Vyacheslav Volodin, who bragged about Putin's post-Crimea popularity rating of 84 percent, claiming (in a much-quoted phrase): "If there is Putin, there is Russia; but without Putin, there is no Russia."<sup>63</sup> Perhaps not wanting to go so far, Putin in the same setting echoed the notion that his policies met with the wide approval of the Russian people: "I am the biggest nationalist in Russia. However, the greatest and most appropriate kind of nationalism is when you act and conduct policies that will benefit the people."<sup>64</sup> However, Putin's approval rating among Western leaders was quite the opposite, as evidenced by the fact that not one of them accepted his invitation to attend the Victory Parade in Moscow in May 2015, marking the 70th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

As the fall of 2016 approached, forthcoming elections were on the minds of both Western and Russian leaders. In Russia, elections for the State Duma were scheduled for September 2016, and the next presidential election was due in spring 2018. In Britain, a June referendum on membership in the European Union resulted in the shocking decision to leave ("Brexit"). France and Germany both faced elections in 2017, with strong challenges expected in both countries from

populist forces urging more nationalist policies. And in the United States, a new president was to be elected in November 2016, opening an opportunity for a new approach to Russian-American relations. On both sides of what Lukyanov had called a “deep chasm,” there were growing expressions of concern and anger at charges of foreign interference in these elections.

Russian journalists decried attempts to “smear” Putin and his associates with accusations of corruption. A film entitled “Putin’s Secret Riches,” aired by the BBC in January 2016, showed a high-ranking official of the U.S. Treasury Department claiming knowledge of widespread corruption among Putin and his allies. The White House press secretary, asked about this statement, said that it “best reflects the administration’s view on the matter.” Putin’s own press spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, responded that “such unprecedented statements” were intended to create “a negative atmosphere around the head of state in order to exert pressure and influence during the upcoming election campaign.” Fyodor Lukyanov supported the sentiment: “So what is Moscow supposed to think when it hears [such statements] and remembers the events in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, where regimes collapsed after the U.S. made resonant accusations against their leaders.”<sup>65</sup> Putin himself weighed in on the interference theme later in the month when he charged personnel of the FSB with the task of curbing “the activities of those who are attempting or might attempt to use nationalistic, xenophobic or radical slogans to divide our society . . . our ill-wishers abroad are preparing for these [Duma] elections.”<sup>66</sup>

Much more explosive in their corruption allegations against prominent Russian associates of Putin—as well as against dozens of other foreign politicians and businessmen—were the “Panama Papers,” released in April. Millions of files from the database of a large offshore law firm based in Panama contained the details of money-laundering and tax evasion involving twelve foreign leaders, among many others. Although Ukraine’s president was among them, much of the worldwide press attention was directed at Putin. Dmitry Peskov’s reaction followed a pattern: Western spy agencies were behind the leak, which was intended to destabilize Russia before its elections.<sup>67</sup>

The candidacy of Hillary Clinton for the U.S. presidency was a particularly bitter pill for Putin and his colleagues, who had seethed when the then-U.S. secretary of state, at an international forum, blasted the 2011 Duma elections as neither free nor fair, calling for a “full investigation” of charges of fraud. Putin responded that hundreds of millions of dollars in “foreign money” was being used to influence Russian politics, and that Clinton had personally incited the large protests that broke out in Moscow and St. Petersburg after the election. “She set the tone for some actors in our country and gave them a signal. . . . They heard the signal and with the support of the U.S. State Department began active work.”<sup>68</sup>

Thus it is not at all surprising that Russia preferred the Republican candidate Donald Trump to Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. But the American political scene was muddled in the summer and fall of 2016 when U.S. intelligence agencies

linked Russian hackers to the release by WikiLeaks of thousands of emails lifted from servers at the Democratic National Committee. Although Russian officials, from Putin on down, steadfastly denied culpability, on October 7 the directors of the Department of Homeland Security and of National Intelligence declared that the U.S. intelligence community was confident that the Russian government had been responsible for the breaches in an attempt to interfere with the U.S. election process.

Given their undeniable hostility toward Clinton, it was hard for the Russians to hide their preference for Trump, but there is no sign that they—like most American observers, and reportedly like even key members of the Trump campaign team—actually expected that he would win. In an August interview published in the *Moscow Times*, none of the four “leading experts on American politics” questioned predicted a Trump victory. Although some analysts speculated that Trump’s policies would be more favorable for Russia—in part because of his stated aversion to regime change—there was also concern expressed about his unpredictability.<sup>69</sup> Thus, acting not from a genuine belief that they could elect Trump, the Russians’ primary impetus was a “tit for tat” payback for perceived American interventions both in Russia and against pro-Russian regimes. To the extent both that Clinton’s public standing could be damaged and that America’s oft-proclaimed democratic processes could be called into question, the Russians could expect to record a propaganda victory.

When the U.S. intelligence agencies published their public report on January 6, 2017—with the CIA and FBI expressing “high confidence” and the NSA “moderate confidence” in the judgment of Russian interference, including via Russian-controlled media outlets RT and Sputnik—the Russian response was again denial. One journalist detailed five “fake premises” in the report:

1. Russian media are actively interfering. “RT’s influence on the American electorate is inconsequential.”
2. Russian interference impacted the election outcome. “The cause of Clinton’s defeats in the Midwest was not some plot hatched in the Kremlin, but the difficult economic situation in the industrial region . . .”
3. There is a pro-Russian lobby in the U.S. that influenced the outcome. “Russia has no forces that could affect elections in the U.S.”
4. There is a link between the Russian information campaign and the vote for Trump. “Relations with Russia have never been a priority for the voters who swung the election.”
5. There is a direct cause-effect link between Russian efforts and election outcomes. “The authors of the report are deliberately conflating Russia’s intentions to sway the Western community with some results of Russian propaganda. This is roughly the same as claiming that VOA [Voice of America, the official U.S. radio broadcast to the Soviet Union] destroyed the USSR.”

The author concluded that the intelligence report had been issued by the departing Obama administration “to leave a legacy of relations with Russia that are so badly spoiled that Trump would be hard pressed to repair them any time soon.” Asking how Russia should respond, he wrote: “The answer is very simple: We shouldn’t.”<sup>70</sup>

And indeed, Russia did not respond in kind to the sanctions that Obama imposed in January 2017 to punish Moscow for its election interference. When the departing president ordered the expulsion of thirty-five employees of the Russian Embassy and the New York Consulate-General, the Russian foreign ministry proposed the traditional response of expelling a similar list of thirty-five Americans, but the Kremlin opted not to react. Trump had clearly encouraged Putin to expect a friendlier U.S. approach to Russia, but the domestic political environment in the U.S. in the first few months of the new administration complicated any such policy change. A number of congressional investigations into Russian interference in the election (and on any possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia) were opened, followed in May by the transfer to a special counsel of an investigation that had been launched by the FBI director, who was fired by the president (admittedly, because of the Russia investigation).

These growing pressures in the U.S. Congress and in much of the American media, combined with perceived inaction on the part of the White House, led to a legislative mandate calling for a new round of economic sanctions against Russia in the summer of 2017. The “Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act” was passed with such an overwhelming majority that Trump did not dare to veto it, though he called it “seriously flawed.” Significantly, the new law restricts the power of the president to ease or lift sanctions. On this occasion, Putin did respond, though more to Obama’s January sanctions than to the new legislation, which had not yet been implemented. In July Putin ordered cuts in the U.S. diplomatic staff and facilities in Moscow. The U.S. retaliated in August by demanding that Russia close its San Francisco consulate and its trade missions in New York and Washington.

When the deadline came for the president to implement the new congressional sanctions, he again drew back from inflicting pain, declining to impose the economic measures specified. However, the administration did comply with the requirement that it publish a list of senior Russian officials for possible further punishment. The very fact of publication was denounced by Putin as an “unfriendly act,” even though the failure to impose the additional punishment struck congressional critics as “appeasement.” Accordingly, the Russian government again did not take any retaliatory actions.<sup>71</sup>

Shortly afterward, yet another revelation of Russian interference drew intense media and public interest in the U.S. Robert Mueller, the special counsel investigating Russia-related misdeeds, indicted thirteen Russians associated with the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, including a close associate of the president nicknamed “Putin’s cook.” They were charged with violations of



U.S. law in the process of stealing the identities of American citizens, posing as political activists, and using the emotional issues of immigration, religion, and race to manipulate through social media a campaign in which those issues were already inflammatory. Mueller did not allege in these indictments that these activities involved collusion with the Trump campaign or had an impact on the outcome of the election. Indeed, the existence of these “trolls” (people who deliberately sought to sow controversy on the Internet) was not previously unknown. The independent Russian television network Dozhd had televised an interview in October with an “ex-troll” who had worked at the firm. It quoted him as saying “our task was to set Americans against their own government, to provoke unrest and discontent, and to lower Obama’s support ratings.” As far back as 2014, the Russian trolls had been ordered to attack Hillary Clinton, reminding Internet users “about her wealth, her husband’s legacy, and various corruption scandals.”<sup>72</sup>

Although most Americans’ attention in 2017 was focused on Russia’s interference in the U.S. presidential election, the year witnessed several other very critical elections in Europe that were also thought vulnerable to Russian threats. Russia had close ties to the French right-wing populist National Front and its candidate for the French presidency, Marine Le Pen. She visited Putin in the Kremlin in March, a month before the first round of the election. She entered the runoff in second place, bringing her extreme nationalist party closer than it had ever been to political power. The May 7 victory of Emmanuel Macron, who ran as a stalwart supporter of the EU, came despite a variety of personal and political attacks on him, many linked to Russia. The shadow of Moscow’s anti-Macron media presence and whatever cyber-attacks it was able to conduct had no visible impact, however, and Putin was invited to an elaborate ceremony at Versailles in May. There, however, he stood at Macron’s side as the new French president denounced Russia’s “lying propaganda” and cyber-intrusions by Russians into his campaign.

Russian hackers and media were also accused of interference in parliamentary elections in the Netherlands (March 15), the United Kingdom (June 8), and Germany (September 24), but in none of these cases did they appear to have material impact on the outcomes or did politicians that could be considered pro-Russian prevail. The one exception might have been Austria (October 15), which elected a right-wing politician who was friendly toward Russia and called for the gradual cancellation of sanctions.

### **A New Cold War?**

As noted above, the various investigations of Russian malfeasance that were generating such enormous noise in American domestic political life after the 2016 presidential election left the new Trump administration with very little opportunity to carry through with its declared intention of putting Russian-American

relations on a more normal footing. In his first (and only) news conference of 2017 Trump said: “I would love to be able to get along with Russia.” When Presidents Trump and Putin connected on the telephone eight days after the inauguration, they reportedly spoke about coordination aimed at defeating ISIS in Syria. But despite speculation in Russia, Trump did not discuss easing sanctions. No high-level face-to-face meeting occurred until April 11, when Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met with Putin and Lavrov in Moscow for a tense meeting in the wake of the U.S. air strike on a chemical weapons site in Syria. A more pleasant encounter among Tillerson, Lavrov, Ambassador Sergei Kislyak and Trump took place in the White House on May 10. Only a TASS photographer was present to record the occasion, where Trump reportedly exposed an Israeli military secret to the visiting Russians.

Not until the G-20 meeting in Hamburg in July did Trump and Putin meet. Their encounter lasted more than two hours. A second meeting, previously unscheduled, lasted another hour. Secretary Tillerson reported that there was “very positive chemistry” and Foreign Minister Lavrov pronounced it “constructive.” Trump raised the issue of Russian interference in the U.S. election and insisted on clear guarantees going forward, but Putin denied the accusations and demanded proof of the charges. According to Lavrov, Trump “accepts these statements” of denial from Putin—a position he took again after meeting Putin at the Asia-Pacific summit in November. On neither occasion did Trump publicly indicate that sanctions would be eased.

The failure to launch a new “reset” in Russian-American relations evidently did not stem from a lack of trying on Moscow’s part. In September 2017 BuzzFeed News revealed—and U.S. officials confirmed—that Russia had approached the Trump administration in the early spring with an ambitious proposal for an immediate “wholesale restoration of diplomatic, military and intelligence channels.” In the words of Russia specialist Angela Stent, the Russian proposal “just ignores everything that caused the relationship to deteriorate and pretends that the election interference and the Ukraine crisis never happened.”<sup>73</sup> That the high hopes—which had caused the Russian Duma to burst into applause when Trump’s victory had been announced—were dashed so soon reveals a lack of sophistication in Moscow’s understanding of the American domestic political environment. As Kimberly Marten has asked, “How could the Kremlin believe that the administration of President Donald Trump could ignore” the challenges in Ukraine, Syria, and North Korea and Russia’s challenges to NATO “when it was being investigated both by Congress and an independent prosecutor for collusion with Russia?”<sup>74</sup>

In the wake of these disappointments in the U.S. and Europe, Russia can increase the priority of its dealings with its non-Western partners, and especially China. But, as we have noted, there are limits to this relationship, since China values its business ties with the U.S., and Russia fears subordination to China’s economic strength. Nor have Russia’s ties with the other “BRICS” states (India,

Brazil, and South Africa) expanded much, given the economic limitations on both sides. And so, Russia cannot ignore the West, and it must step up its use of “soft power” resources to seek the best outcomes possible. But even then Moscow can continue to anticipate rocky relations with the West.

It would be naive to expect that either Russia or the U.S. would cease its interference in the elections or broader internal politics of other states. A study by Dov Levin of Carnegie Mellon University has shown that the U.S. attempted to influence the elections of other countries eighty-one times between 1946 and 2000. In the same period, the USSR/Russia did so thirty-six times.

These acts, carried out in secret two-thirds of the time, include funding the election campaigns of specific parties, disseminating misinformation or propaganda, training locals of only one side in various campaigning or get-out-the-vote techniques, helping one side design their campaign materials, making public pronouncements or threats in favor of or against a candidate, and providing or withdrawing foreign aid.

Levin estimates the average effect of “partisan electoral interventions” to be only about a 3 percent increase in vote share.<sup>75</sup>

This concept of “tit for tat,” widespread during the Cold War conflict, is likely to persist. Fyodor Lukyanov explains the motivation from Russia’s perspective:

How should Russia’s involvement in the West’s internal affairs be understood? The guiding spirit could be expressed this way: You should feel as vulnerable as we did during your expansion and the impertinent advance of your model. . . . Judging from the hysterical reaction in the United States and Europe to the Kremlin’s possible interference in their internal processes . . . the West was not strong enough psychologically to cope with this feeling of vulnerability.<sup>76</sup>

Another respected Russian analyst, Dmitri Trenin, has forecast that the current impasse with the West is likely to persist for some time to come. “Russia will not invade NATO territory unprovoked, but incidents along the new front line, stretching from the Arctic to the Baltic to the Black Sea and elsewhere, may occasionally endanger peace” between Russia and the West.<sup>77</sup> As for Washington, a new National Security Strategy document released by the Trump administration in December 2017 also foresees a continuing standoff with Russia. The document mentions Russia 25 times, portraying it as a threat, seeking to weaken U.S. influence and divide it from its allies.<sup>78</sup> Significant changes in the spring of 2018 in the national security personnel of the Trump Administration saw the replacement of two relatively moderate voices by more “hawkish” ones. Rex Tillerson was dismissed as secretary of state and replaced by Mike Pompeo, and General H.R. McMaster was forced out of the position of national security advisor and replaced by John Bolton. These changes in President Trump’s foreign policy team appeared to make it even more likely that anti-Russia rhetoric and hostility would prevail in Washington.

As if to underscore this portrayal of a threatening Russia, Putin's annual address to the Federation Assembly featured an unusual video display simulating the performance of what Putin claimed were new and highly capable strategic nuclear weapons. The address, on March 1, 2018, came only seventeen days before the presidential elections and a day after Russia's Perviy Kanal (First Channel) aired a "debate" among presidential candidates that Putin pointedly ignored. Putin's speech served as his election platform and was clearly intended to heighten popular interest (and voter participation) in what had become a meaningless electoral contest—especially since Putin's most vocal political opponent, Aleksey Navalny, had been excluded from the ballot.

Putin's address was a classic "guns and butter" formula, in which he promised improvements in the economy, environment, public welfare, and infrastructure that he said would further reduce the level of poverty in the country and open opportunities for rising prosperity for broad sections of the population. The domestic agenda was notably devoid of specific details about how these lofty goals would be achieved, or why the non-petroleum sectors of the economy would be expected to undergo revival when they had been languishing during the years of his reign when oil prices had been high and Western sanctions had not been levied.

While the majority of his television audience was probably more interested in domestic prosperity, it was the "guns" half of his lengthy address—intended to reassure the Russian electorate that the country's defenses were secure and to warn the West—that generated most headlines outside of Russia. Putin justified the development of new weapons in the now-familiar contexts both of NATO enlargement and of Washington's deployment of missile defenses in Europe in the wake of its departure from the ABM treaty. The most dramatic of the video simulations claimed to portray a nuclear-powered missile flying a low and circuitous route around Western defenses to approach Florida—a putative target likely chosen because President Trump was spending so much time in the state at his Mar-a-Lago estate. Putin claimed that the Russian weapons—which he acknowledged were not fully operational or deployed—were strictly intended to restore a deterrent state of mutual assured destruction.

I should note that we have conducted the work to reinforce Russia's defense capability within the current arms control agreements; we are not violating anything. I should specifically say that Russia's growing military strength is not a threat to anyone; we have never had any plans to use this potential for offensive, let alone aggressive goals.

He even raised the prospect of further bargaining with the U.S. and others toward imposing further limitations and reductions of strategic weaponry. The thrust of his message, however, was expressed in a defiant tone, much-quoted in the Western press: "Nobody really wanted to talk to us about the core of the problem, and nobody wanted to listen to us. So listen now."<sup>79</sup>

Do these recent events portend a new Cold War? Jack Matlock, a former U.S. ambassador to the USSR during the last years of the Cold War, sees important differences:

So why has there been diminished cooperation in areas vital to both countries? Unfortunately, in a series of inconsiderate actions by the United States and its allies followed by a succession of disproportionate reactions by Russia, a Cold War atmosphere has been revived on both sides. Actually, the underlying cause of the Cold War—the ideological standoff between capitalism and communism—is no longer present. There is no fundamental reason for the United States and Russia to consider themselves enemies . . .<sup>80</sup>

What policymakers in both Russia and the United States were witnessing in the second decade of the twenty-first century was not a return to the Cold War—an ideological zero-sum struggle in a bipolar international system—but a return to competition among great powers. This is explicitly recognized in the new U.S. National Security Strategy—“after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned”—and it has been a theme stressed by both Putin and Lavrov as they have drawn parallels between present-day diplomacy and that of the nineteenth century. For Russia in particular, as it has experienced turbulent changes of its political system twice since then, the surest guide to understanding its foreign policy is to return to the tsarist-era aphorism often cited by Yevgeny Primakov: “Russia doesn’t have permanent enemies, but it does have permanent interests.”

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## Epilogue

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### The Trump-Putin Summit and the Future

Ever since the arrival of Yevgeny Primakov at the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation in 1996, Russia's aim has been to transform the quasi-unipolar international system that had emerged immediately following the Cold War and to achieve the return of Russia as a great power in a genuinely multipolar system. In such a system, there would be no "indispensable nation" to lead—no one state that formulated the rules of the international order and set its agenda. As President Boris Yeltsin had complained in 1997, "Someone is always dragging us toward a unipolar world and wanting to dictate unilaterally, but we want multipolarity."

As the United States in the 1990s directed a process of enlargement of NATO and supported an expansion of the European Union into territories formerly under Moscow's sway, Primakov even envisioned a counter-balancing "new pole" of Russia, China, and India. When Vladimir Putin inherited the Russian presidency in 2000, he initially followed Primakov's competitive playbook. But in September 2001, he had sensed an opportunity to ally with the global leader by forging a cooperative relationship with the United States. Against the strong advice of Moscow's diplomatic and military establishment, he pursued a "strategic partnership" with George W. Bush, only to have his "wish list" of Russian goals ignored. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 saw Putin's Russia joining France and Germany in opposition. The "color revolutions" of 2003–05 left Putin convinced that the U.S. was seeking to undermine pro-Moscow regimes on Russia's borders. And by 2007, in his speech at the Munich Security Conference, Putin was bitterly attacking the U.S. for its "ever-increasing disregard for the fundamental principle of international law" and its "extremely dangerous" efforts to "impose" its system on other states.

We have seen that the attempt by the administration of Barack Obama to "reset" U.S. relations with Russia in a less confrontational direction quickly failed. Increasingly, the term "new Cold War" entered the domestic political lexicon in both countries. Putin's strategic path toward restoration of Russia's great-power role called not only for a challenge to America's leadership but also for encouraging trends that would disrupt the unity of the West. And then, quite unexpectedly, the outcome of the U.S. presidential election in 2016 seemed to

present a new opportunity to repair the relationship between Washington and Moscow, as part of a broader process of reformulating the international order.

In this new context, President Donald Trump, and not Putin, was the system-disruptor. Trump's "America First" agenda, far from asserting an even bolder leading role for the U.S., seemed to challenge the very notion of a common set of objectives for the "West" and for both its strategic military alliance and the "liberal international economic order" that the U.S. and Europe had constructed since World War II. Even more to Putin's liking, Trump appeared to be moving the U.S. away from his predecessors' policies of promoting "democratic transformation" and "regime change." Trump's was a more nationalist and self-regarding foreign policy agenda, in which there was no expressed preference for non-authoritarian partners, and in which the U.S. no longer assumed an outsized share of the costs of upholding the international order. Combined with a personal style that was widely perceived as impetuous—even bullying—Trump's foreign policy seemed to cast the United States in a distinctly different role. It was a role that Vladimir Putin understood could work to Russia's advantage.

Putin's new path, evident by the beginning of 2017, envisioned Trump both as a partner in achieving objectives pursued by Moscow and amenable to Washington and as an instrument for abandoning U.S. global leadership and furthering Russia's efforts to erode the unity of the Western bloc. The chief complicating factor in this strategy was the domestic political environment, chiefly in the U.S. but also, increasingly, in Russia itself.

In this environment, as we observed in Chapter Ten, it appeared extremely unlikely that even the beginnings of a positive relationship between Washington and Moscow could be forged, and yet Donald Trump persisted in his stated belief that it was both possible and desirable. However, before he would encounter Vladimir Putin in a summit, he engaged during the spring and summer of 2018 in other foreign interactions that had direct bearing on Putin's strategic agenda. The most significant of these were:

1. increasingly contentious U.S. trade relationships with close allies, as well as with China;
2. tightened restrictions on the immigration flow at the U.S. southern border;
3. the ongoing conflict with North Korea over its nuclear weapons program;
4. contending views of the status and future of the NATO alliance.

During his election campaign, Trump had appealed to voters in the industrial "rust belt" and others whose jobs had been eliminated or threatened as a result of increased global trade. He attacked not only what he termed "unfair" and "foolish" trade deals, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), but also U.S. laws and policies pertaining to both illegal immigration—targeting peoples coming to the U.S. from its southern

border, who he claimed were responsible for soaring crime as well as displacement of U.S. workers. Trump was not the only politician in the West who was seeking to win over voters who saw themselves as victims of “hyper-globalization.” Most notably in the United Kingdom, with “Brexit,” but more broadly in other parts of the European Union (especially Greece and Italy), adverse trade flows and especially swelling levels of migration had become rallying cries for rapidly growing populist parties. As we have noted, these rising levels of popular anxiety and anger in both the U.S. and Europe became targets for a variety of instruments of propaganda and fabricated social media posts emanating from Russia.

Almost immediately after his inauguration as president, Donald Trump began to implement large parts of his “America First” agenda. He withdrew the U.S. from the closing stages of formation of the TPP, and he put Canada and Mexico on notice that he was demanding a renegotiation of the terms of NAFTA. His administration issued a fumbled set of directives seeking to temporarily ban the entry of persons from a number of Muslim-majority countries. He pressured Congress to appropriate funds to build a more extensive barrier on the southern land border of the U.S. (“a great wall”)—though he had campaigned on the slogan that “Mexico would pay for the wall.” He suspended the Obama administration’s program that provided a path to legalization of status for young people who had been illegally brought to the U.S. from abroad (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA), and he demanded that Congress include significant changes to immigration policies as a price for restoring a version of the program. And in April the Justice Department announced a policy of “zero tolerance” relating to immigration on the southern border. Until halted by U.S. courts and a strong popular outcry, the administration was implementing a controversial policy of separating children from detained adults, most of whom were fleeing social unrest and violence in Central America.

In March 2018, President Trump launched a wider assault on current U.S. trade policies. “Tweeting” that “trade wars are good, and easy to win”—and later that “our Country was built on Tariffs”—he announced his intention to impose stiff tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, citing legislation that allowed the president to order such actions in the name of national security. Initially there were discussions about exempting such close allies as Canada, Mexico, and the EU from these tariffs. But in June, despite their vows to retaliate, the tariffs went into effect against these countries, as well as against China and others. The Trump Administration threatened a broader trade war with China, warning in March of \$50 billion in tariffs in retaliation for Chinese theft of intellectual property. By the end of the summer, both Washington and Beijing were threatening to impose tariffs on each other targeting \$200 billion of traded goods.

The impact of these actions on Washington’s Western partners was on stark display at the annual meeting of the Group of Seven (G-7), held in June in Quebec, Canada. Even before arriving, Trump insisted that Russia—which had been expelled from the Group of Eight after its seizure of Crimea—should be

re-admitted to the “club.” Amid growing trade tensions with the assembled allies, Trump quarreled with a communiqué that referred to their commitment to “the rules-based international order”—refusing to sign the document even after “the” had been changed to “a” at his insistence. And as he departed from Canada, on his way to the Singapore summit with “a very talented man,” Kim Jong Un, Trump assailed the G-7 meeting’s host, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, over Canada’s trade practices, attacking him as “very dishonest and weak.”

The sharp contrast in Trump’s behavior with his G-7 allies and the North Korean dictator was not lost on observers—including those in Russia. Attending an SCO summit in China, Putin dismissed criticism of Russia in the G-7 communique as “creative babbling” and greeted Trump’s comment about Russian membership by saying the group was welcome to have its next meeting in Moscow. At the same time Putin welcomed the Trump-Kim summit, saluting China for its role in helping to defuse tensions between the two leaders.

The Russian press did not portray the results of Trump’s meeting with Kim with anything near the president’s own hyperbole—“a very great moment in the history of the world”—although Russia did welcome the resulting relaxation of tensions on the peninsula. During the preceding year, amid a series of North Korean tests of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, Trump and Kim had traded increasingly bellicose threats. Deriding Kim then as “little rocket man,” Trump promised that if the North Koreans did not cease their threats “they will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.” Kim replied that “I will surely and definitely tame the mentally deranged U.S. dotard with fire.” But under strong pressure from China and increasingly severe sanctions, the DPRK froze its testing program in November. In February, the North and South Koreans joined in a unified team at the winter Olympics in Seoul. And in March, the South Korean president suggested to Trump that Kim was willing to meet him directly to discuss denuclearization. With breath-taking speed, a meeting of the U.S. and North Korean leaders—long sought by the DPRK—had been agreed to.

Although the Kim regime committed at Singapore to “complete denuclearization,” that term was left open to interpretation, and there was notably no mention in the communiqué of the U.S. demand for “complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement” (CVID) of the North Korean nuclear program, nor did it even mention Pyongyang’s missile program. This condition was left for subsequent negotiations between the North Koreans and Secretary of State Pompeo. To the evident surprise of his South Korean allies, Trump agreed to the cancellation, while negotiations continued, of their joint military exercises (which he referenced with North Korea’s own terminology, as “war games” perceived as “provocative”). One Russian journalist noted the contrast between this result and the final statement issued after the fourth round of six-party talks in 2005 (in which Russia participated), which not only called for CVID but for North Korea to rejoin the nonproliferation regime, under the inspection authority of the IAEA, and he suggested that one possible positive result of the Singapore summit was

that Russia would again find a place at the bargaining table as it and the five others were reassembled for another round of multilateral talks.<sup>1</sup>

Trump had claimed, as he returned to the U.S. from Singapore, that America and the world could “sleep well tonight” since the nuclear threat from North Korea had been ended. Evidently eager to continue his summitry, the American president followed up his Singapore summit with the announcement that he would be meeting Vladimir Putin in Helsinki on July 16, after his meeting in Brussels with NATO leaders and his first state visit to the United Kingdom. As with the Singapore summit, foreign policy professionals expressed concern that there appeared to be little time for extensive prior preparation of an agenda and a negotiating position, especially given Trump’s well-known impatience with detailed briefs. As a high-profile real estate developer (and co-author of *The Art of the Deal*), Donald Trump clearly valued face-to-face contacts and trusted his instincts and talent for bargaining. As he departed for the meetings in Europe, he told the assembled reporters:

“So I have NATO, I have the U.K.—which is somewhat in turmoil . . . And I have Putin. Frankly, Putin may be the easiest of them all. Who would think? Who would think?” Asked if he considers Putin a friend or a foe, Trump said: “I really can’t say right now. As far as I’m concerned, he’s a competitor. I think that getting along with Russia, getting along with China, getting along with others is a good thing, not a bad thing . . . I’ve said that many times for many years. So we’ll see.”<sup>2</sup>

In one sense—judging from initial surface appearances—he proved to be right. While the two meetings with allies were marked with turbulence and controversy, Trump’s mood following his long one-on-one meeting with Putin was composed—perhaps even deferential. However, the surface composure proved to be of extremely short duration.

In advance of the NATO summit, Trump reportedly sent a strongly worded letter to nine of his allies warning that the U.S. would no longer pay for European security if Europe did not increase its own contributions. After the meeting, where he reportedly chided his allies on this point, he took credit for the “billions” in additional funds that he said European members were contributing or pledging, and he suggested that the expected amount perhaps should be increased from 2 percent of GDP to 4 percent. However, having learned their lesson in Quebec, Trump’s national security staff had taken pains to ensure that the meeting’s final communiqué was drafted before Trump’s arrival, and he reportedly was not shown the 23-page final product which—among other matters—extended an offer of membership to Macedonia.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Russians could not have been pleased with the substantive result—expansion of the alliance to 30 members and an increase in its expenditures—they could take comfort in the anxiety evident among the allies. Among Trump’s widely publicized affronts were his comment that Germany’s dependence on imports of

gas left it “totally controlled by Russia” and his questioning, in a post-summit interview, of NATO’s crucial Article 5 commitment: asked by his interviewer why, if new member Montenegro is attacked, he should send his son to defend it, Trump replied that he had asked himself the same question, adding that Montenegro has “very aggressive people” who could drag the alliance into World War III.<sup>4</sup>

After his meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels, President Trump proceeded to the United Kingdom for a state visit. Its results, to Putin’s probable delight, seemed to drive a larger wedge in the U.S.-U.K. relationship. Trump was received by Theresa May at Blenheim Palace, Churchill’s ancestral home, and by the Queen at Windsor Castle—thereby notably avoiding the huge crowds of protestors assembled in London. But he still could not escape controversy. As he dined with the prime minister, the British tabloid *The Sun* published an interview in which he speculated that May had “wrecked” Brexit because she had not followed Trump’s advice on tactics, likely costing herself a future trade deal with the U.S. He went on to praise May’s rival Boris Johnson, who had just resigned in protest as Foreign Secretary, saying that he would make a great future prime minister. For good measure, he criticized London’s Muslim mayor, Sadiq Khan, as “terrible” on terrorism and crime, and he blasted Europe’s relatively open migration policies, warning that “you are losing your culture.”<sup>5</sup> Currently engaged in a very tense confrontation with the United Kingdom over the Skripal poisoning case, Putin could not have been upset to learn of the ever-widening rift between the United States and its most steadfast ally.

And so, as Trump had predicted, he proceeded to his meeting in Helsinki following what *The Economist* had also anticipated: “the once unthinkable spectacle of an American president treating his Russian opponent better than he has just treated his allies.”<sup>6</sup> As he awaited Putin’s arrival, Trump tweeted, “Our relationship with Russia has NEVER been worse thanks to many years of U.S. foolishness and stupidity and now, the Rigged Witch Hunt.” The Russian foreign ministry responded with a “re-tweet”: “We agree.”<sup>7</sup> At the press conference following their meeting, Trump reiterated that the relationship had never been worse, but then added: “However, that changed as of about four hours ago.”

As Fyodor Lukyanov has observed, if the summit results were to be judged by “classic” foreign policy standards, they would be “deemed moderately successful.”<sup>8</sup> The very fact that this was the first bilateral meeting in nine years was notable, since rarely—even in Cold War days—had Russian-American summits been so infrequent. Putin described the talks as “frank and businesslike” and deemed them “very fruitful” and a “success.”<sup>9</sup> Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was more expansive, describing the meeting as “better than super.” In an interview after the summit, Putin acknowledged that his expectations had not been high, and he had been anticipating merely a “warm-up” meeting. “But it turned out different, our discussion proved to be really thoughtful.” Trump is a “very competent man, he’s in the know, he listens. On some issues he stands by his opinions.”<sup>10</sup>

Trump described the talks as “direct, open, and deeply productive.” It was necessary, he said, to find ways to cooperate in pursuit of shared interests. The meeting was just the “beginning of a long process;” representatives of the two national security councils would meet to follow up. Defending his decision to meet, Trump declared, “I would rather take a political risk in pursuit of peace than to risk peace in pursuit of politics.”

The substantive issues discussed by Trump and Putin were briefly mentioned at the press conference—primarily by Putin—and included all of the subjects that might have been expected. Among the “plethora of regional crises” named by Putin as subjects of the talks were Syria, Korea, Iran, and Ukraine. He portrayed the conflict in Syria as largely concluded, and he mentioned the need for the two parties to establish a process of peace and reconciliation, overcoming the humanitarian crisis and facilitating the return of refugees. He also addressed the need to separate the forces of Syria and Israel, to bring peace to the Golan Heights, and to provide security for the state of Israel. He made note of Trump’s special attention to this aspect of the Syrian conflict—an emphasis that Trump amply confirmed, perhaps for reasons of domestic politics, in his own comments on Syria.

On North Korea, Putin said that he was glad that the issue there was “starting to resolve,” and he complimented Trump on his personal engagement there. On Iran, Putin expressed Russia’s concern about Trump’s decision to withdraw from the JPCOA. Trump’s sole reference to Iran was his stated determination not to allow Tehran to profit from “our successful campaign against ISIS.”

With respect to Ukraine, Putin said that the two leaders paid special attention to securing “bona fide implementation of the Minsk Agreements by Kiev,” and expressed his annoyance that the U.S. had not been more “decisive in nudging the Ukrainian leadership to comply.” Especially in light of fears in some Western quarters that he would acknowledge Russia’s annexation of Crimea—occasioned by his earlier non-committal responses to questions on the subject—it was interesting that Trump did not mention Ukraine. Indeed, it was left to Putin, in response to a reporter’s question, to assure listeners that Trump had not strayed from the official U.S. posture and “stands firmly by it.” It emerged after the conclusion of the summit that there had been discussion about holding a referendum in the Donbass territory of Ukraine—an idea immediately shot down by the government in Kiev. Asked after the BRICS summit about Trump’s reaction to this idea, Putin replied, “I will abstain from commenting on this for now. It is a very delicate, sensitive subject that requires additional analysis.”

Putin also spoke in some detail about the discussions on the topic of strategic stability. He said that the two powers needed to “fine tune their dialogue” on such subjects, including extension of the “New START” treaty, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missile defense, implementation issues with the INF treaty, and the non-placement of weapons in space. Trump’s comments on security cooperation were limited to the realm of counter-terrorism.



On August 7 *Politico.com* wrote about what it termed “a leaked Russian document” containing a list of arms control issues that Putin shared with Trump in Helsinki.<sup>11</sup> (The Russian news agency TASS reported on the Politico report the next day, lending it additional credibility.) Among other items, it proposed a five-year extension for “New Start” and a reaffirmation of their commitment to agreements covering intermediate-range missiles. It also noted increasing tension in East Central Europe and suggested that the two sides “take measures to prevent incidents while conducting military activities” there. The document called for follow-up discussions, to be led by the American deputy secretary of state and the Russian deputy minister of foreign affairs. According to the article, the Pentagon “seems eager to revive the ‘strategic stability’ talks, which were suspended last year.”

At the post-meeting press conference, Putin also floated a proposal for an “expert council,” composed of specialists on bilateral relations drawn from both sides, which would look for fruitful “points of contact”—i.e., a positive agenda for U.S.-Russian relations. He also proposed the formation of a group to focus on business relations—a high-level working group “bringing together the captains of Russian and American business.” However, this idea was said shortly after the summit to be “dead in the water,” especially given that many of the potential Russian participants were currently under the American sanctions imposed in 2017.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in their effort to institutionalize and broaden the dialogue between the two sides, the Russians proposed working groups on counter-terrorism and on cyber-security. The latter idea had been mentioned by Putin to Trump at the Hamburg meeting a year earlier, and had quickly been rejected by the White House, which saw it as especially inflammatory in the face of charges of Russian cyber-attacks against U.S. democratic processes.

As noted above, Lukyanov judged that if the post-summit discussions had focused on these issues, the meeting would have been deemed a successful start to resumption of the Russian-American dialogue. And many observers in the United States were in fact pleased that Trump had initiated the meeting, which appeared to open an opportunity to reduce hostilities. But in fact, most of the questioning at the Helsinki press conference, and the overwhelming amount of press coverage in the Western press thereafter, focused not on arms control or regional issues but instead on Trump’s odd way of handling the issue of Russian election interference.

We have already examined the use by Russia of covert methods, primarily in cyberspace—via both computer hacking and exploitation of social media—to interfere in critical elections in the U.S. and Europe. Though Moscow hoped thereby to influence the outcome of the votes, it concentrated on the more readily achievable tactic of exacerbating distrust and division already stirring in the electorates of the U.S. and the European Union. We have also shown that Putin had a clear distaste for the 2016 Democratic candidate for president, Hillary

Clinton. That he preferred a victory by the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, he admitted on the global stage, in the press conference following his meeting with Trump (though he appeared not to answer a second question about whether he had directed Russian authorities to aid in Trump's win).

The U.S. media had been fixated for more than a year on the investigation, led by special counsel Robert Mueller, into suspected Russian election interference and possible collaboration between Russians and the Trump campaign. Indeed, just three days before the summit, Mueller's team had indicted twelve Russians affiliated with its military intelligence agency (GRU) on the basis of evidence that they had conducted election-related cyber-attacks. No American collaborators were named in the indictment, though Mueller appeared to be circling around some suspected individuals. So dominant was the attention being given to the "Russia probe" that Trump was motivated to assert "no collusion" on numerous occasions, and a significant cohort of Republican politicians agreed with Trump that the investigation was a "witch hunt" and that Mueller should be removed. Not only the investigation itself but broader policy toward Russia loomed large in the U.S. political debate, as "hard-line" U.S. politicians routinely condemned not only the election interference but also Russian behavior in Ukraine, Syria, and a variety of other arenas, and pressure was mounting in the Congress for additional sanctions to be levied on Russia.

In the Helsinki press conference, the U.S. president seemed to ignore or defy this troubled political environment. Although he soon amended his comment, Trump declared that in their conversation Putin had again denied responsibility for the widespread election interference detected by U.S. intelligence agencies and attributed to Putin, and that he saw no reason "why it would be" Russia that had interfered. Trump's stance, seemingly taking the word of the Russian leader over that of his intelligence advisors, stirred a firestorm of criticism in the U.S.—and not just from Democratic politicians. The late Republican Senator John McCain observed, "No prior president has ever abased himself more abjectly before a tyrant." Council on Foreign Relations president Richard Haass tweeted that "'America First' resembled nothing so much as Russia first." Former CIA director John Brennan declared Trump's behavior "nothing short of treasonous."

From Moscow, Lukyanov—who had clearly, like so many Russians, been hoping that the summit would launch a constructive dialogue—wrote an uncharitable review of Trump's performance.

Trump must have realized that the first question he would be asked would be about this, and it was easy to predict a direct question, too, about whom he trusted—Putin, or his own special services. And with this in mind he should have prepared in advance some very cunning, or just ideally vague, reply. The U.S. president did not do that, but launched into the same arguments as always—about the Democrats' servers, Hillary's e-mails, and so on. . . . What is the outcome? No one is interested in the content or results of the talks, and

Trump was met by a real tsunami of accusations, most innocuously, of weakness and incompetence, and more frequently, of treachery.<sup>13</sup>

Trump compounded his error when he welcomed (as “an incredible offer”) Putin’s apparent openness to allowing the Mueller team to interrogate the GRU suspects. For Putin—ever obsessed with “tit for tat” when it came to covert activities—had stated a condition: the investigation must be a mutual effort. The Mueller team could be present while Russian authorities interviewed the indicted individuals, but the U.S. would then allow Russian law enforcement personnel to be present for questioning of “officials including the officers of law enforcement and intelligence services of the United States, whom we believe have something to do with illegal actions on the territory of Russia.” Although he mentioned in public only investor William Browder (not an “official” and not even an American), who had been the major instigator of the “Magnitsky Act,” Putin had apparently told Trump that his list of suspects included the former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul.

President Trump’s national security advisers moved swiftly to try to repair the damage and shore up the U.S. position, and in so doing they further reduced the benefits that Putin had hoped to gain from the Helsinki summit. First they pressured Trump to amend his remarks about Russia’s responsibility for election interference (to “I don’t see any reason why it would *not* be” Russia). On July 25, Secretary of State Pompeo released a statement, labeled the “Crimea Declaration,” that reiterated America’s refusal to accept the legality of Russia’s seizure and annexation of Crimea. In Congressional testimony he compared it to the “Welles Declaration,” a U.S. statement issued in 1940 that refused to recognize the Soviet annexation of the three Baltic states—a policy that lasted for 50 years. He also reaffirmed that there would be no relief from U.S. sanctions on Russia until it returns Crimea to Ukraine—a stance that had been cast in doubt by the president’s earlier comment, “We’re going to have to see.”

On August 2, five senior U.S. intelligence officials appeared at a White House press briefing to discuss defensive efforts that were underway to safeguard the upcoming 2018 elections from foreign interference. According to Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, “The Russians are looking for every opportunity regardless of party, regardless of whether or not it applies to the election, to continue their pervasive efforts to undermine our fundamental values.” FBI Director Christopher Wray said the FBI had not yet seen foreign attempts at interfering with election infrastructure for the midterms, but that divisive information was being spread from overseas.<sup>14</sup>

Later in August, there occurred yet another example of what one writer termed the “pushmi-pullyu” nature of U.S. policy toward Russia (with the president seemingly headed in one direction and the rest of the government in the other, like Dr. Doolittle’s two-headed llama). This time a new round of sanctions was imposed on Russia.<sup>15</sup> A 1991 law that required the government to impose

sanctions against a government that was found to have used chemical weapons was applied to punish Russia for its alleged attack in Salisbury, United Kingdom, against its former intelligence agent and his daughter, which utilized Novichok, a banned chemical weapon.

The sanctions, which were to go into effect on August 22, banned U.S. exports to Russia of certain sensitive products usable for military purposes. They were expected to have little effect, since the volume of such trade was quite low. However, the law called for tougher sanctions, including restrictions on flights to the U.S. by Russia's Aeroflot airline, to be imposed in November if Russia failed to provide reassurance against further weapons use and admit inspectors. The U.S. had already responded to the attack on the Skripals by expelling sixty Russian diplomats earlier in the year.

The value of the ruble fell after the newest sanctions were announced, and the Kremlin and foreign ministry heatedly repeated their denials of involvement in the Salisbury attack, claiming that Russia had destroyed all its stock of chemical weapons the previous year. The Russian press reported that the Trump administration's application of sanctions under the 1991 law was probably intended to head off Congressional passage of the proposed "Defending American Security from Kremlin Aggression Act," which would demand a U.S. investigation into Putin's wealth and—more ominously—impose restrictions on U.S. investment in Russia and a ban on U.S. citizens buying Russian sovereign debt, making it impossible for Russia's biggest state banks to operate inside the U.S. In Senator Lindsey Graham's words, these would be "crushing sanctions."<sup>16</sup>

The adverse impact on Russia's economy from the new sanctions, both those imposed and impending ones feared, further darkened the mood of the Russian public. The ebullient popular reaction to the success of the Russia-hosted World Cup in July was soon followed by disappointment that Putin's summit gambit had evidently failed to bring an improvement in Russia's standing in the West. According to the respected Levada public opinion survey, Putin's approval rating dropped 15 percentage points (though it was still 64 percent). Another poll reported that only 45 percent of respondents said that they would now vote for Putin in a presidential election—a five-year low.<sup>17</sup> A more important factor in the growing Russian unhappiness, however, was the government's proposal for reforming state pensions, primarily by raising the retirement age (for the first time in ninety years) from 55 to 63 for women and from 60 to 65 for men. Levada reported an 89 percent unfavorable polling result for the government's plan, as small demonstrations broke out in 150 Russian cities.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, just one month after the Helsinki summit, confusion abounded in both Moscow and Washington about the course of bilateral relations. Just as John Bolton had maneuvered to prepare the final communiqué for the NATO summit prior to his boss's arrival, Trump's hard-line national security advisers appeared to be trying to circumvent any impulses he might have had toward softening the U.S. position toward Russia. Though this was by no means confirmation of the

conspiracy theories circulating among some of Trump's supporters about the machinations of the "deep state," it was oddly reminiscent of the sharp turn in Russia's relations with the U.S. early in Putin's presidency, when he had resisted the stern warnings from his national security advisers and attempted to forge a "strategic partnership" with Washington. Of course, in that case, Putin had been able to face down his harder-line critics, whereas Trump had thus far not succeeded in following his instincts toward a marked improvement in relations with Moscow.

Beyond the uncertainty that surrounded the future direction of bilateral Russian-U.S. relations, there was considerable debate about the future direction of the international system. A group of more than 500 international relations scholars in the U.S. expressed alarm at what they said were attacks by President Trump against the international institutions supporting the international order. Acknowledging that the "global order is certainly in need of major changes," they asserted that these were "absolutely not the reckless ones President Trump is pursuing."<sup>19</sup> There were abundant signs that the unity of the West had fractured. One notable development was an escalating quarrel between the U.S. and Turkey, a key NATO ally, intensified by the detention in Turkey of an American clergyman accused of subversive activities. This led to the imposition of sanctions on Turkey by the U.S. President Putin wasted no time in reaching out to President Erdoğan to offer Russia's support. Added to recent efforts by Moscow to strengthen its ties to two other disaffected members of NATO and EU, Italy and Hungary, this episode strengthened the impression that Putin was not counting on the improvement of relations with Trump but was rather pursuing a strategy of simultaneously challenging American leadership and exacerbating Western disunity. Whether he is likely to achieve his vision of securing a leading role for Russia in a new international order will ultimately depend not only on his own diplomatic skill but also on the outcome of the turbulent domestic political debate in the United States.

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