
Russia as a Post-Imperial Power

Russia's extraordinary economic recovery since 1999 has fueled its transformation from a reluctant follower in the 1990s to an obstructionist with aspirations to revise the world from a unipolar to multipolar order.¹ Russia's initiatives have been colored with such *schadenfreude* over the trials of the George W. Bush administration that Russian leaders often come across as self-appointed critics-in-chief of the United States rather than genuinely interested in reform of the institutions of global governance.

Russia's recovery is only part of Moscow's rather Darwinist perspective of the increasing tilt in the global economic balance of power toward large emerging-market economies and hydrocarbon producers—two categories in which Russia figures prominently. Thirty years ago when the Group of Seven (G-7) was formed to manage the global economy, its member countries constituted more than 60 percent of the world economy; today those countries are no longer so dominant and account for only 40 percent.

During the 1990s, both Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin considered that they shared the same Western values, which could be described as market democracy. Today, the Russian leadership no longer subscribes to those values. Its capitalism persists but is increasingly becoming state capitalism, and political freedom in the Western sense has been curtailed.

Given these changes in Moscow's perspectives, it was bound to re-evaluate its interests in the international system. President Vladimir Putin did so starkly in his famous February 10, 2007, speech at the Wehrkunde Security Conference in Munich, when he made essentially two points: (1) that the United States was behaving irresponsibly in managing global

1. Sections of the chapter derive from Andrew Kuchins and Richard Weitz, "Russia's Place in an Unsettled Global Order: Calculations in the Kremlin," in *Powers and Principles: International Leadership in a Shrinking World* (Stanley Foundation Project, 2009, forthcoming).

affairs and (2) that the international system of American hegemony was evaporating and being replaced by genuine multipolarity. Most commentary focused on the first point and missed the importance of the second, which Putin summarized:

The combined GDP measured in purchasing power parity of countries such as India and China is already greater than that of the United States. And a similar calculation with the GDP of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) surpasses the cumulative GDP of the EU. And according to experts this gap will only increase in the future. There is no reason to doubt that the economic potential of the new centers of global economic growth will inevitably be converted into political influence and will strengthen multipolarity.²

Putin and his colleagues elaborated on this theme in a series of important speeches in 2007, and the call for a “new international architecture” of global governance became a campaign theme of the Russian parliamentary/presidential electoral cycle of 2007–08.³

Russians are right to point out that institutions of global governance are anachronistic and often ineffective, but their own capacity to contribute to a solution is less obvious because of their emotionally charged view of the past 20 years. The Kremlin considers many changes since the late 1980s illegitimate, because Russia was too weak to assert its positions. In its narrative, the West, mainly the United States, took advantage of Russian weakness through North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement in 1997, the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, abandonment of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2001, endorsement of regime change (the “color revolutions”) on Russia’s borders in 2003 and 2004, promotion of missile defense, and recognition of Kosovo in 2008.⁴ The Russian elite sees these Western moves as detrimental to Russia’s national interests.

Russian political leaders see themselves as “realists” and describe their foreign policy as pragmatic and driven by national interests. When they discuss international relations, they rarely talk of public goods or norms, and they receive US and European references to them with cynicism or, more often, with defensive hostility about double standards. They view American efforts to promote US values as hypocritical justifications for the promotion of US interests—and, ultimately, influence and hegemony.

Rather than norms and public goods, Russian leaders and political analysts frame their country’s international cooperation in terms of *realpoli-*

2. Vladimir V. Putin, speech and the following discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 10, 2007, www.kremlin.ru (accessed on February 20, 2008).

3. For more on this point see the article by Clifford Gaddy and Andrew Kuchins, “Putin’s Plan,” *Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2008): 117–29.

4. This argument is set forth in Gaddy and Kuchins, *Washington Quarterly*.

tik bargains and tradeoffs of interests. For example, if the United States wants Russia to take a stronger position to isolate Iran, Washington is expected to compensate Moscow by halting NATO enlargement or the deployment of missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. One of Russia's most oft-repeated grievances is the US betrayal of the supposed gentleman's agreement between George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990 to allow the unification of Germany as long as NATO would not deploy new bases on the territory of former Warsaw Pact countries. US officials contest the Russian interpretation, thus illustrating the problem with such unwritten exchanges. In reality, such "tradeoffs" on major issues seem fairly rare in international relations. And in the case of perhaps the most significant such example during the Cold War, the US withdrawal of nuclear forces in Turkey to resolve the Cuban missile crisis remained secret until decades after.⁵

The Russian government holds one norm dear, that of national sovereignty, but it applies it very selectively. Russian policy is itself rife with double standards when it comes to the sovereignty of countries like Georgia and Ukraine. President Dmitri Medvedev made this eminently clear in his September 2008 remarks on Russian television presenting the five principles that would guide his country's foreign policy:

First, Russia will comply in full with all of the provisions of international law regarding relations between civilized countries.

Second, Russia believes in the need for a multipolar world and considers that domination by one country is unacceptable, no matter which country this may be.

Third, we are naturally interested in developing full and friendly relations with all countries—with Europe, Asia, the United States, Africa, with all countries in the world. These relations will be as close as our partners are ready for.

Fourth, I see protecting the lives and dignity of Russian citizens, wherever they may be, as an indisputable priority for our country, and this is one of our foreign policy priorities.

Fifth, I think that like any other country, Russia pays special attention to particular regions, regions in which it has privileged interests. We will build special relations with the countries in these regions, friendly relations for the long-term period.⁶

This formulation, which analysts dubbed the Medvedev Doctrine, is a striking contrast to the idealistic universalism that marked Mikhail Gorbachev's new political thinking of the late Soviet period. It bears a strong resemblance to traditional realist balance-of-power thinking. Many

5. Interestingly, President Medvedev spoke out against consideration of such "tradeoffs" as detrimental to Russia's interest in a major speech in Berlin in June 2008. See his speech to political, parliamentary, and social representatives, June 5, 2008, www.kremlin.ru.

6. Dmitri Medvedev, interview on Euronews television channel, Moscow, September 2, 2008, www.kremlin.ru (accessed on February 17, 2009).

Western analysts interpreted Medvedev's speech as aiming at a diminished role for NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). A European security framework that would allow for Russia's privileged relations with neighbors and special spheres of interest sounds straight out of the 19th century playbook of great powers, including the American Monroe Doctrine that justified the United States' repeated violations of the sovereignty of its neighbors. Such anachronistic notions are nonstarters in 21st century Europe, where the trend is toward common and cooperative security institutions.

Yet there have been indications of Russian willingness to be more cooperative and constructive. In the early months of the Medvedev administration, prior to the conflict with Georgia, the new Russian president used distinctly different language regarding the challenges of global governance—offering positive proposals rather than complaints about Kosovo, missile defense, NATO enlargement, and other contentious issues.

In his June 2008 speech in Berlin, President Medvedev proposed that Europe, Russia, and the United States draft a binding treaty on European security.⁷ This proposal, which Medvedev repeated in a major speech in Evian, France, in October,⁸ strikes at the heart of the contradictory nature of contemporary Russian foreign policy. Although it seemed to signal a move toward improved international relations, the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 offered the starkest evidence that nearly 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, Americans, Europeans, and Russians together have not succeeded in making Europe “whole, free, and secure.” Europe will not be secure until Russia feels fully vested in regional security institutions.

But there is an even more fundamental contradiction between Russia's domestic economic growth goals and its increasingly belligerent insistence on its “hypersovereignty.” Russia is more integrated today in the global economy than it has ever been. But as its ambitious strategic economic goals for 2020 make clear, the best-case growth scenarios for Russia require much deeper integration with the West, first and foremost Europe but also the United States and Japan.⁹ These partners are far more important for trade, investment, technology, and management transfer than the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), China, Iran, Venezuela, and the rest of the world. Despite its deepening economic integration and the imperative for more such integration, Russia's political ties

7. Speech at footnote 5.

8. Dmitri Medvedev, speech at World Policy Conference, Evian, France, October 8, 2008, www.kremlin.ru (accessed on December 15, 2008).

9. Andrew Kuchins, Amy Beavin, and Anna Bryndza, *Russia's 2020 Strategic Economic Goals and the Role of International Integration* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008).

with the West have been worsening in recent years. This unsustainable contradiction is counter to Russia's national interest.

Russia: A Post-Imperial rather than Neoimperial Power

Until recently, Russian foreign policy was characterized by geopolitical decline, which began with the Soviet Union's failed invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and a draining war that spotlighted Moscow's overextension during a decade of economic stagnation. The ensuing demise of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union, both in 1991, dramatically accelerated the process. With the Soviet collapse, Russia was transformed overnight from an international superpower to a recipient of international humanitarian aid. It experienced the nadir of its global power and influence during the 1990s, a traumatic period when Russia lost a civil war on its own territory in Chechnya and twice found itself virtually bankrupt. Most Russians regard this decade as a modern-day Time of Troubles (*Smutnoe Vremya*), the designation for the interregnum between the Rurik and Romanov dynasties from 1598 to 1613.

For much of the post-Soviet period, Western policymakers were principally concerned about the implications of Russia's weakness, its ability to secure nuclear weapons and materials, and more broadly its ability to effectively govern its territory. After the financial crisis in 1998, however, the Russian economy began to dramatically recover, and pundits and policymakers qualified Russia as resurgent. With the cutoff of gas to Ukraine in January 2006, the term "energy superpower" gained currency. In the wake of the August 2008 war in Georgia, many observers describe Russian foreign policy as expansionist, even neoimperial.

Russia continues to transition from its historical empire toward becoming a nation-state. As Dominic Lieven has pointed out, no empire has ended as peacefully as the Soviet Union (although the bloodshed was significant in Chechnya and Tajikistan).¹⁰ But the country is less than two decades into this transformation; this largest land empire in world history was built over the course of several centuries, so it is reasonable to expect that its transformation will require at least another generation.

As Russia redefines itself, it seems clear, even with the Georgian war, that its territorial ambitions are largely a thing of the past. No serious political actor seeks to incorporate Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, or other neighboring former Soviet nations into a Russian state. Russia does not have sufficient financial, demographic, or military resources for such a grandiose project; Russia's rulers have their hands full with the sparsely populated and resource-rich lands in Siberia and the Far East and North.

10. Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

Russian territory in the northern Caucasus presents other challenges, with its dense Muslim population that is not welcoming to ethnic Russians. Aside from a few overly quoted theorists of Eurasian geopolitics like Aleksandr Dugin, the Russian population has hardly any imperialist appetite. Russians have realized the costs of empire that helped catalyze the movement for their country's independence nearly two decades ago.

The current Russian political elite sees the megalomaniacal ambitions of the Soviet Union as an aberration in Russian history. They prefer the 19th century's concert of powers as a model for global governance. They believe Russia is a great power and should be treated as one, which is, of course, a major departure from the early 1990s' notion of a democratic Russia as a fundamentally new state and close ally of the world's old democracies in North America and Europe. In contrast, Putin and Medvedev present themselves as succeeding the Russian tsars—the style of their inaugurations (or coronations) is unmistakable.

By the standards of the current *realpolitik*, the Russian leaders measure states in terms of power and influence. One modification of the traditional realist approach is to distinguish not only hard but also soft power. Russia wants the ex-Soviet states to defer to Moscow on issues such as foreign policy orientation and military alliances with third parties. The concept of “near abroad” as a sphere of privileged Russia access is central to Moscow's demands on its neighbors, and the Kremlin sees this as its Monroe Doctrine.

The Kremlin opposes democracy at home but is even more concerned about new democracies serving as fig leaves for the expansion of US power in Russia's backyard. The vehemence of the Russian response to the Georgian attack in South Ossetia reflected Moscow's view of Georgia as a US “client” state. Putin and company view Mikheil Saakashvili's status as a democratic leader with utter cynicism and disdain; their reaction to Washington's support for Saakashvili brings to mind John McEnroe's attitude toward tennis umpires: “You cannot be serious!” Russia's armed response was designed to deter another “US client,” Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, from testing Moscow's resolve to protect its interests in that country.

President Medvedev is just the most recent Kremlin leader to have claimed privileged interests in the CIS. It is important, however, to distinguish a sphere of interest from a sphere of influence, a term both Putin and Medvedev have been careful not to use. A sphere of influence is a well-known concept of the imperialist 19th century when Russia's sphere included Northern Persia and Manchuria: When necessary, Russia could militarily occupy those territories and place them under its direct rule. In the 20th century, Moscow exercised even tighter control over its satellites through the Warsaw Pact. In contrast, in a sphere of interest third parties have limited rights, which, in the cases of Georgia and Ukraine, according to Russia means no NATO membership or foreign military bases.

The Commonwealth of Independent States: A Marginal Organization

The Commonwealth of Independent States has been far more like the British Commonwealth than a successor to the Soviet Union. It has been reasonably successful in helping the former Soviet republics to manage their independence: In 1991 few among them knew how to conduct foreign policy; all needed some mechanism to communicate with the other parts of the former empire; and all wanted guarantees that their borders would remain intact. The populations were mostly content with continued access to the former imperial space for ordinary people—no visas were needed for travel, and people could choose their country of residence and citizenship. To the leaders, the CIS provided a platform for regular summits, which they used for solving problems bilaterally. The early CIS summits resembled the meetings of the former Soviet Communist Politburo, but without the general secretary: only a *primus inter pares*. Compared with the former Yugoslavia, the dismantlement of the USSR was very gentle.¹¹

Thus the CIS was a useful tool to support nation-building. All 12 new states have so far survived, which was hardly a given in 1991; relations among most of the former Soviet republics are bilateral; and all of the CIS countries are now securely integrated in the global community.

The CIS has completely failed, however, as an instrument of post-Soviet integration between Russia and its neighbors. The CIS and its suborganizations have signed many agreements, but few have been ratified and even fewer implemented. Furthermore, the CIS has no mechanisms for imposing its rules, rendering it ineffective. Moscow tried to push for more integration than the other states were interested in, while gradually reducing the resources it offered. Curiously, when Russia obtained sufficient money to change course in the 2000s, it chose the commercial expansion of Russian companies rather than regional integration.

For Russia, the CIS has proven unwieldy. It has created several smaller arrangements; the three most important are the Russia-Belarus Union State, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the EurAsian Economic Community (EurAsEC). None of these organizations is particularly tight-knit. Nations join them to improve relations with Russia, but since these organizations are largely consultative, they do not generate any real benefit to Russia.

With respect to the Russia-Belarus Union State, the union-state is a fiction; Belarus is emerging as a separate nation-state, and its merger with Russia can be ruled out. Russia has a notoriously difficult relationship with Belarusian autocrat President Aleksandr Lukashenko. Yet improba-

11. Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Åslund, and Sherman Garnett, *Getting It Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

ble as it may sound, Lukashenko, the most “Soviet” figure in the entire post-Soviet space, has turned out to be the true father of Belarusian independence, having accomplished what early nationalists failed to do: He gave the new nation a sense of identity.

The CSTO, originally established in 1992 as the CIS Collective Security Treaty, was founded in 2002 by the presidents of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan; Uzbekistan joined in 2006. It should certainly not be compared with the Warsaw Pact as there is neither political control exercised by Moscow nor an integrated military structure. The CSTO is a consultative body where Moscow is not challenged, but national interests clearly prevail over collective ones. Tellingly, no member of the CSTO apart from Russia has recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

EurAsEC was founded as the CIS Customs Union in 1995 and renamed in 2000. Until recently, it included Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—that is, the countries closest to Russia. (Uzbekistan, the last to join, suspended its membership in 2008.) Although its purpose was to be a customs union, it has never been and is not likely to become one, because Russia is unwilling to negotiate customs tariffs and as a large producer of many products prefers higher tariffs than the other member states do.

Despite the existence of these regional organizations, the real problem behind Russia’s tenuous relationships with its “near abroad” is that Moscow does not offer anything to its close neighbors. It has cut virtually all subsidies and has not formed any effective trade community or security alliance. Meanwhile, it threatens its neighbors with cuts of gas or oil supplies and frequently imposes unannounced trade sanctions. As a consequence, the post-Soviet states focus on improving relations with other countries and not with Russia.

NATO Enlargement: A Thorn in Russia’s Side

NATO’s first collaborative program with Russia and other postcommunist nations was the strictly bilateral Partnership for Peace, launched in 1994. After the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were accepted as members of NATO in 1997, the organization, in order to accommodate Russia, adapted the Partnership for Peace to sign the Founding Act on NATO Cooperation with Russia. The purpose was to give Russia a strong institutional position vis-à-vis NATO but keep it outside the organization, an approach described as a “voice but no veto.” In the spring of 1999, however, Russia experienced its most severe crisis with NATO, when the organization bombed Slobodan Milosevic’s Yugoslavia in response to his ethnic cleansing in the Serbian province of Kosovo. Russia-US and Russia-NATO relations reached a post-Soviet low. Yet in 2002 NATO and Russia

formed the NATO-Russia Council, which was supposed to raise their relationship to a new level.

On September 11, 2001, President Putin was the first international leader to reach President Bush after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York—apparently he was able to do so thanks to the old hotline between the Kremlin and the White House. That telephone call and the NATO members' evocation of Article V of the organization's statutes on mutual defense aroused high expectations for NATO-Russia cooperation. Until the Georgia war, the NATO-Russia Council was a useful vehicle for cooperation between the alliance and Russia. Significantly, Moscow has signed and ratified agreements with NATO allowing it to transport military goods to Afghanistan, although NATO has largely preferred transporting through Pakistan.

Increasingly, however, Russia views NATO as a tool for the expansion of US power. Moscow has little or no trouble with the European Union or with the membership of European countries such as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom in the Atlantic alliance because the Russian leadership has some confidence in those countries' ability to say no to the United States. In contrast, Moscow regards the excommunist states, and particularly the former Soviet republics, as anti-Russian, weak, and not fully sovereign. When Poland and the three Baltic states became members of the European Union in 2004, Moscow foreign policy pundits started calling these four countries the "new aggressive minority" in the European Union. From the Kremlin's perspective they are not states so much as platforms for use by the Pentagon as Washington pleases. Because Russians have an exaggerated sense of the importance of their country as a US adversary, they wonder, Why does the United States want so many platforms so close to Russia's borders? What is the United States really up to? What is the hidden agenda? All too often their answers presume worst-case scenarios.

According to Moscow, NATO has no role in the CIS. The Partnership for Peace was all right, but NATO membership for any CIS country or US permanent military presence threatens Russia's security interests; thus in Georgia, for example, Russia demonstrated that it was ready to act to make others respect its security interests. Russia is more relaxed toward lower levels of NATO involvement: It tolerates symbolic participation of CIS countries (for example, Armenia and Kazakhstan) in US-NATO operations outside the CIS; and it did not protest the dispatch of troops from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine as part of the coalition of the willing. The US military air base Manas in Kyrgyzstan was established in the wake of 9/11 with Russian consent. Similarly, Uzbekistan let the alliance use its Karshi-Khanabad air base, but in July 2005, soon after the Andijan massacre, the Uzbeks, supported by Moscow, asked the US Air Force to leave. At present, however, Moscow is focusing its anti-Western, anti-NATO protests on membership action plans for Georgia and Ukraine.

Mutual concerns about Afghanistan's security appeared to engender a modicum of Russia-NATO cooperation. After the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, however, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov suggested that Russia might suspend Moscow's agreement with NATO for the transportation of nonlethal equipment through Russia and through consenting Central Asian countries for use in Afghanistan. He pointedly told reporters that "The fate of NATO is being decided in Afghanistan" and that "Russia needs cooperation with NATO no more than NATO needs Russia."¹²

Looking ahead, however, when Russia and the West begin looking for areas to restore their relationship, Afghanistan and Central Asia may offer opportunities. Russian policymakers express less unease about the Western military presence in Central Asia than about NATO military activities in Eastern Europe, Ukraine, or the southern Caucasus. Of course, it helps that no influential voices call for extending NATO membership to the Central Asian governments. In addition, Russia and NATO share an interest in preventing a Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan. For several years, Putin and other Russian officials have urged NATO to cooperate with the Russian-led CSTO on joint operations to counter Afghan narcotics trafficking. Since NATO is still having trouble ensuring security in that country, greater cooperation with Russia to curb terrorism and narcotics trafficking makes sense.

The Georgia War and Its Fallout: Demonstration for Ukraine?

Russia's 2008 war with Georgia had a lengthy prehistory in a long-unresolved ethnic conflict, and assignment of the burden of guilt depends on the start date of the chronology. Since the early 1990s, Georgia has wanted to restore control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which seceded during the Georgian civil war in 1991–92. More recently, Georgian President Saakashvili, first elected in January 2004, has sought close links to the United States and NATO and has sent 2,000 soldiers to Iraq. Since 2006, Russia has imposed an almost complete trade and transportation embargo against Georgia. Russia demanded that Georgia pledge not to apply for NATO membership, but in early 2008 the nation applied for a membership action plan (it was turned down at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April but the organization promised membership at an unspecified date). Russia demanded that Georgia not host US forces on its territory; Georgia has acquired both military training and small arms from

12. See for example the exchange in "Secretary's Remarks: Remarks with Secretary Gates, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov," March 18, 2008, www.state.gov/secretary.

the United States in addition to its purchases of arms from Israel, Turkey, and Ukraine.

In July 2008 Georgia held a military exercise in which 600 servicemen trained alongside about 1,000 US forces. In parallel to that exercise, across the border in the north Caucasus, a much larger Russian force trained and remained on high alert afterward. In early August, military activity began escalating in South Ossetia. The war itself began with Georgia's attack against Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, during the night of August 7, but Russian troops were prepared and executed a massive counterattack, routing the Georgian forces. The fighting ceased on August 12 after French (and EU) President Nicolas Sarkozy negotiated a ceasefire between Moscow and Tbilisi.

This incident marked the first time in nearly 30 years (since the Soviet attack on Afghanistan in December 1979) that Russia sent its troops across the border to take on an enemy. The Russian action was limited in the sense that the army did not take Tbilisi, depose the Saakashvili government, or damage pipelines through Georgia. But it crippled the country's military infrastructure and deployed forces deep into Georgia to ensure that its people felt the consequences of their military defeat. The Russian hope was apparently that Saakashvili would be held responsible for the misadventure and be replaced by a politician ready to "accept realities" and make a "peace with deference" with Russia.

Just a few weeks later, on August 26, Russia took the unprecedented step of recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Although it referenced the Western recognition of the independence of Kosovo in February 2008, the two cases were very different. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are tiny and Abkhazia has only a small minority of Abkhaz. Russia based its decision on the large number of Russian citizens in the two territories, but most of them had become "citizens" through a recent Russian distribution of passports. In its unilateral recognition of these two tiny territories, Russia violated its long-standing principle of opposing any secession. Belarus and Kazakhstan refused to condone Russia's acts, although they did not protest publicly. Only one country, Nicaragua, followed Russia in its recognitions. Russia thus found itself in a new international isolation, but it refused to concede.

Although both Putin and Saakashvili had consistently demonstrated their enmity in public, the Russian-Georgian five-day war came as a shock to the international community. It also indicated that Russia's leaders had significantly lowered their threshold for international armed intervention. Through this war, Russia sent a warning to other post-Soviet states about what could happen if they become too close with Washington. Ukraine was the indirect target of the warning, but it was also of concern to Azerbaijan and other CIS countries.

Until 2008, Russian leaders had publicly upheld Ukraine's territorial integrity, including Crimea; but in his speech at the NATO summit in

Bucharest on April 4, President Putin discarded this position. He challenged Ukraine sharply and at length, effectively threatening to end its existence, with the following arguments: “one-third of the population are ethnic Russians,” from “Russia the country obtained vast territories in what is now eastern and southern Ukraine,” “Crimea was simply given to Ukraine by a CPSU Politburo’s decision, which was not even supported with appropriate government procedures that are normally applicable to territory transfers,” and an attempted NATO membership “may bring into question Ukraine’s existence as a sovereign state.”¹³ To many listeners this sounded like a conditional declaration of war in case Ukraine tried to join NATO.

As with Georgia, Moscow’s apparent hope is that Ukraine’s pro-Western, pro-NATO President Viktor Yushchenko will be replaced in the 2010 election by someone who would chart a middle course between NATO and Russia—one who more explicitly accommodated Russia’s wishes. But Moscow does not seem to oppose Ukraine’s EU aspirations.

US-Russia Relations: Increasingly Strained

Practical and substantive changes in the US and Russian administrations over the past two decades have contributed to the increasingly strained relationship between the two countries. In the 1990s, the Bill Clinton administration organized a number of bilateral government meetings, notably through the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission; President Bush, in contrast, focused on informal bilateral meetings with President Putin (although there were 27 of these compared with the 18 meetings between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin) and minimized formal agreements between the two countries. The economic assistance agenda that was prominent in the 1990s ended with Russia’s economic recovery in 1999, and democracy and human rights have fallen by the wayside as Russia has rejected any criticism in these spheres. The extensive discussions of energy cooperation in the 1990s have largely ceased. During the Bush administration, US-Russia relations were dominated by strategic military issues, such as nuclear nonproliferation, Iran, strategic arms reductions, and nuclear security. Trade was another subject of discussion, but the most important topic was Russia’s accession to the WTO, which has been suspended. The US-Russian agenda has now narrowed to little more than arms control.

US-Russia relations are thus at their lowest point since 1986 before Gorbachev and Reagan’s successful summit in Reykjavik. President Medvedev, in his annual address to the nation the day after Barack Obama’s

13. “What Precisely Vladimir Putin Said at Bucharest,” *Zerkalo nedeli*, April 19, 2008, www.mw.ua (accessed on December 1, 2008)

election, made clear that he did not foresee any improvement in relations between the two countries.

The United States and Russia have the largest nuclear arsenals in the world and they share a long and rich history of negotiated agreements in arms control and nonproliferation. But without deep cooperation between them, the nonproliferation regime will likely collapse, rendering the world a much more dangerous place. The good news is that the Russians want to return to this agenda; indeed, they would argue that they were more responsible in this regard than the Bush administration.

Even as its economy has rebounded, Russia remains in decline from a strategic military standpoint. The country has become more reliant on its nuclear deterrent since the deterioration of its conventional forces in the 1990s, but the aging of its nuclear arsenal leads Moscow to prefer deeper cuts in strategic weapons than Washington. Russian policymakers still believe that stabilizing the strategic competition with Washington is in Moscow's interests. When Prime Minister Putin, at a September 2008 meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi, was asked whether he supported the proposal from US statesmen Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William Perry, and George Shultz to make the world free of nuclear weapons,¹⁴ he replied positively. But he added important caveats by noting recent major developments in conventional weapons technology (including the promise of nanotechnology) that are blurring the difference in power between nuclear and conventional weapons. He also expressed concern about missile defense and its potential to erode strategic stability.¹⁵ Putin's remarks indicated that the Russians are prepared to engage with the Americans in deep nuclear cuts but only in a broader context of agreements on strategic stability that address missile defenses as well as conventional weapons. Russian strategists are worried that deep nuclear cuts plus US advances in defense may make the world "safe for American conventional weapons dominance." Despite the United States being mired in Iraq and Afghanistan, to Russia the United States still looks as though it is on the march—developing missile defense, outspending Moscow at about a 10:1 rate, enlarging NATO, and calling for new bases in former Warsaw Pact countries.

In their April 2008 meeting at Sochi, then presidents Putin and George W. Bush issued the Strategic Framework Declaration, aimed at "moving the US-Russia relationship from one of strategic competition to strategic partnership." This can be an excellent foundation for fundamentally changing

14. George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, "Toward a Nuclear-Free World," *Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 2008.

15. Putin made these comments on September 11, 2008 in Sochi, when he met with the Valdai Discussion Club. While there is no transcript of the meeting, one of the authors attended and took notes.

the negative momentum in the US-Russia relationship if the Obama administration shows some flexibility and ingenuity.

Since March 2007, Russian and American negotiators have been discussing the contours of a new bilateral arms control accord to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), set to expire in December 2009. In the 2002 Russian-American Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), known as the Moscow Treaty, Washington and Moscow committed to reducing their nuclear arsenals to between 1,700 and 2,200 “operationally deployed strategic warheads” by December 31, 2012. This figure is lower than some of the limits imposed by START, but SORT’s verification depends heavily on the extensive on-site inspections, data exchanges, and other compliance measures articulated in START. Thus, if START expires without a new agreement, both governments will, as of December 2009, be severely hampered in their ability to verify any strategic arms control.

Russian negotiators have pushed for a new legally binding treaty that would replace START and supersede SORT. The Kremlin wants the new accord to be more detailed than SORT, whose limits Moscow sees as insufficient to ensure predictability and parity in the Russian-American strategic balance. Russian representatives also seek to require the United States to destroy the warheads removed from its active stockpile rather than simply placing them in storage. Russian leaders are concerned that the earlier agreements enable the United States to simply “upload” these warheads back into US strategic systems and thereby quickly reconstitute its pre-START II force.

In the Strategic Framework Declaration, Moscow and Washington affirm that any reductions in their nuclear arsenals will represent “a further step in implementing our commitments” under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Yet, under NPT Article VI, “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith . . . on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.” Given the NPT’s call for nuclear weapons states to relinquish their arsenals, many NPT signatories believe that Russia and the United States must make more drastic reductions—possibly total elimination—to meet their NPT obligations.

Russian political and military leaders have stridently denounced American plans to erect a comprehensive ballistic missile defense network beyond US territory. In particular, Moscow objects to US steps to deploy ballistic missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic by 2012–13. The Kremlin rejects the US explanation that these deployments are to counter threats from the South, notably Iran, claiming instead that they threaten Russia’s strategic nuclear forces. Russian leaders fear that this deployment is part of a future global US system, a fear that drives their insecurity about their country’s future strategic stability. Like NATO enlargement, the Russian anxiety about missile defense stems from the

concern that the United States and its European allies are advancing unilaterally without Russia to alter European and global security arrangements to Moscow's detriment.

The tensions between Russia and the United States over Georgia have claimed, at least temporarily, a significant nonproliferation and economic casualty: the US-Russia Agreement for Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation (123 Agreement), which was signed on May 6, 2008, after nearly two years of negotiations. The proposed 30-year accord would facilitate the flow of technologies, materials, and equipment for nuclear research and nuclear energy.¹⁶ But in early September President Bush withdrew the agreement from congressional consideration.

The Russian government and nuclear industry had sought the cooperation agreement to enhance their ability to expand the country's role as a provider of international nuclear fuel services, as Russia has considerable excess capacity to manufacture or reprocess uranium fuel for foreign customers. Yet most of the world's nuclear fuel originates in the United States. Until a 123 Agreement is in place, countries are prohibited from sending their nuclear fuel of US origin to Russia. Despite the possibility of increased competition, many representatives of the American nuclear industry endorsed the proposed Russia-US agreement. They wanted the option of importing Russian nuclear technology as well as selling American services and equipment directly to Russian buyers—provided the Russian government opened its nuclear market to foreign competition and established a comprehensive liability regime for commercial nuclear activities.¹⁷ Arms control experts who backed the accord emphasized the importance of giving Moscow some financial incentives that might increase its cooperation with Western countries to constrain Iran's nuclear weapons program. They hoped that, by offering Russian nuclear energy companies new markets, the Russian government would find it more acceptable to reduce nuclear cooperation with Iran.¹⁸

Other than the United States, Russia possesses more nuclear material suitable for manufacturing weapons and relevant expertise than any

16. Section 123 of the US Atomic Energy Act of 1954 requires the United States to negotiate a separate bilateral accord with each country before they can cooperate on commercial nuclear projects. These accords obligate the recipient country to obtain Washington's approval to use any US nuclear material or equipment for uranium enrichment, reprocessing, or transfer to a third party. US Department of State, US-Russia Agreement for Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation (123 Agreement), May 15, 2008, www.state.gov (accessed on December 26, 2008).

17. Jack Spencer, "Russia 123 Agreement: Not Ready for Primetime," Heritage Foundation, May 15, 2008, www.heritage.org (accessed on December 1, 2008).

18. Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn, "Help Russia Help Us," *New York Times*, May 30, 2008. See also Miles A. Pomper, "Bush Sends Russia Nuclear Energy Pact to Hill," *Arms Control Today* (June 2008), www.armscontrol.org (accessed on January 10, 2009).

other country. For years, experts have considered the hundreds of tons of fissile material located in Russia to be the most vulnerable to falling into the wrong hands. The Strategic Framework Declaration commits both countries to “expand and strengthen” their joint Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which aims to improve coordination of nonproliferation programs that contribute to averting nuclear terrorism. Although it began as a bilateral Russian-American initiative, the Global Initiative has gained widespread international support, and as of July 2008, 75 countries were full partners.

After the initial US-Russian Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) effort helped Russia and other former Soviet republics dismantle unwanted Soviet-era strategic weapons systems, focus shifted to enhancing the safety and security of residual weapons against illicit trafficking by terrorists and other nonstate actors. The CTR priority in recent years has been joint efforts to lessen third-party proliferation threats. This new focus holds the most promise for future Russian-American threat reduction cooperation because it moves from the donor-recipient dynamic of earlier CTR programs to one of joint partnership against common threats. Russian and American experts have already engaged in periodic discussions about applying CTR-like programs to other countries, especially in North Korea and Pakistan.¹⁹

Flourishing Friendship with China

In contrast to the deteriorating relationship between the United States and Russia, friendship has flourished between Russia and China as never before. Moscow’s attitude toward China reflects its sense of identity as a uniquely Eurasian power, but its China policy during the past 15 years has been driven by pragmatic considerations. In 1996 Presidents Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin established a strategic partnership, which appeared long on rhetoric and short on substance, but since Putin assumed power in 2000 economic and political cooperation between Russia and China has deepened. Moscow may not wish to form an alliance with Beijing, but growing Russian irritation with the United States and Europe has benefited the China-Russia relationship.

A consistent thread running through Russian attitudes toward China from the Yeltsin era to the present is that China offers important leverage with the West. As President Yeltsin explained in 1995:

China is a very important state for us. It is a neighbor, with which we share the longest border in the world and with which we are destined to live and work side by side forever. Russia’s future depends on the success of cooperation with China. Relations with China are extremely important to us from the global politics per-

19. David E. Hoffman, “Lugar, Nunn Push Arms Security Program,” *Washington Post*, August 28, 2007, www.washingtonpost.com (accessed on January 10, 2009).

spective as well. We can rest on the Chinese shoulder in our relations with the West. In that case the West will treat Russia more respectfully.²⁰

In 2000 Vladimir Putin echoed Yeltsin's reasoning during his first tour of Asia: "Russia is both a European and an Asiatic state. It is like a bird and can fly well only if it uses both wings."²¹ Yet Russia's perspective on China is based on the traditional *realpolitik* of the dynamics between rising and falling great powers; in this Darwinist framework, Russian appreciation of China has risen with the deterioration of US-Russia relations. When Moscow protested US support for NATO expansion in 1997, the 1999 war in Kosovo, and the development of national missile defense, the Yeltsin administration gravitated toward Beijing. More recently, US support for democracy promotion as well as increased US influence in the post-Soviet states drove the Putin administration even closer to China. Like Yeltsin before him, Putin repeatedly invoked an improvement in ties with China as an alternative to a more pro-Western foreign policy if Washington did not pay greater attention to Moscow's interests.

Tellingly, as new president in May 2008, Dmitri Medvedev chose Kazakhstan and China for his first foreign visits. He and China's president Hu Jintao signed a Sino-Russian joint declaration on foreign affairs, which claimed that Russia and China share nearly the same views on almost all major international issues—missile defense, opposition to expanding military alliances, rejection of the militarization of outer space, and support for China's position vis-à-vis Tibet and Taiwan. The two presidents also reaffirmed cooperation on bilateral energy projects and signed important economic and trade agreements. The rhetoric from Moscow and Beijing indicates that their relations have never been better, and the economic data support this claim: Trade between the two countries has grown exponentially, reaching \$40 billion in 2007—a jump of more than 40 percent from the previous year.²²

Yet Russia's trade with China contradicts the development goals set by Moscow in its Concept of Long-Term Socioeconomic Development of the Russian Federation to 2020 (Russia 2020), in which Russia aims to reduce its overreliance on exports of raw materials and encourage more innovation-based development to diversify its economy. (To that end, the 2020 plan suggests that Europe, Japan, and the United States will play a much greater role in Russian economic modernization.) Russian exports to China are overwhelmingly raw materials, such as crude oil and timber, especially as military technology exports fall, so greater economic ties

20. Boris Yeltsin, quoted in Alexander Lukin, *The Bear Watches the Dragon* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003, 305).

21. Vladimir Putin, introductory remarks at a meeting on the Development of the Urals Federal District, July 14, 2000, www.kremlin.ru (accessed February 17, 2009).

22. "Chinese Exports to Russia Expected to Increase," *China Daily*, March 3, 2008, www.chinadaily.com.cn (accessed on September 30, 2008).

with China do little to promote Russia's diversification. Moreover, Russian arms exports, a long-standing cornerstone of Sino-Russian economic cooperation, have become an unexpected bone of contention. After years of importing Russian military technology, the Chinese have replicated not only Russian automatic rifles and rocket launchers but also SU-27S fighters. China has, therefore, reduced its imports of Russian military technology and even exports its own versions to traditional Russian clients such as Angola, Ethiopia, and Syria.

China, the fastest-growing petroleum consumer in the world, has viewed Russia as an important alternative source of oil and gas. Russia, in turn, has used China to frighten its European customers who are nervous about diminishing supplies. Until recently, however, the Chinese have been frustrated by the slow development of the Sino-Russian energy relationship and by competition for Central Asian resources (notably in Turkmenistan, but also in Kazakhstan). Yet aside from growing demand, Chinese companies have little to offer in the development of Russian greenfields in eastern Siberia and the High North, projects that will entail large capital expenditures and great technical challenges. To the extent that foreign companies will be allowed to participate in the development of the Russian hydrocarbon sector, Western businesses have a significant advantage over Chinese firms.

Despite these advantages, however, the United States should keep in mind that during troughs in Russia's relations with the West, the Chinese have come to the financial aid of Russian oil giant Rosneft twice in the past four years: first in December 2004 when China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) lent Rosneft \$6 billion to finance the purchase of former prime Yukos asset, Yuganskneftegaz, and again in February 2009 when CNPC completed a \$25 billion loan package to the deeply indebted and leveraged Russian oil major (\$15 billion to Rosneft) and the similarly leveraged pipeline monopoly Transneft (\$10 billion).²³

There are striking similarities, however, between the maturing ideological foundations that underpin Russia's and China's outlooks on the world and their global roles. The Putin administration began promoting an emerging ideology, described by Russians as "sovereign democracy," that presents Putin as the leader who restored stability and set Russia on the road to recovery by adapting democratic values and institutions to Russian values and traditions. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described the foreign policy analogy to sovereign democracy in a January 2007 speech:

The fundamental principles of Russia's foreign policy—pragmatism, multiple vectors, and consistent but nonconfrontational protection of national interests—

23. "China Offers \$25 billion Oil Loan," *Moscow Times*, February 18, 2009. This deal may also reflect heightened Chinese leverage in the bilateral relationship resulting from the global financial crisis.

have gained broad international recognition. . . . Many countries have come to realize that a new, safer, fair, and democratic world order, whose foundations we are laying together, can only be multipolar, based on international law, and regulated by the UN's unique legitimacy and central role.²⁴

Lavrov's rhetoric has much in common with the rhetorical and operational foundations of Chinese foreign policy, called the Beijing Consensus, which Joshua Cooper Ramo described as principally a socioeconomic development model that the Chinese have successfully implemented. Despite the similar name, it differs substantially from the so-called Washington Consensus promoted by the US government, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.²⁵

Two major points of the Beijing Consensus resonate with the Kremlin's sovereign democracy and have implications for Russia's foreign policy. First, there is not just one correct path to development; a country must experiment to find the path best suited to its culture and traditions. Most Russians today view the advice of Western advisers and multilateral organizations as having failed and exacerbated Russia's socioeconomic problems, so they are interested in exploring non-Western alternatives.

Second, global power is shifting from the unipolar model of the 1990s to a genuinely multipolar world. The Russians consider themselves one of several emerging powers and Putin is especially enamored with the idea of the joint emergence of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China); Russian and Chinese cooperation on a number of issues seems to support Putin's outlook. In the UN Security Council, for example, the Chinese have consistently followed Russia's lead both in votes against sanctions on Iran, Burma, and most recently Zimbabwe and on the importance of the territorial integrity of Serbia when negotiating the status of Kosovo.

A more serious example of Sino-Russian coordination is the decision in 2005 by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—the intergovernmental group consisting of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—to request clarification from the United States about its plans for withdrawing from military bases established in Central Asia after September 11, 2001. The 2005 gathering of SCO foreign ministers in Moscow also included representatives of states that had recently acquired observer status—India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan. In his opening remarks, Putin crowed about the fact that three billion people, virtually half the global population, were represented at the gathering and noted that the “SCO has gone far beyond the framework of the task originally set for it.”

Yet Russian elites remain ambivalent about the emerging Chinese superpower. Russian public opinion about China tends to be quite positive

24. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, January 29, 2007, www.mid.ru (accessed on February 17, 2009).

25. Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: Foreign Policy Center, 2004).

but probably reflects Russian national television, which promotes Putin's sunny outlook on China. In April 2007 the VTsIOM public opinion research center reported that 63 percent of Russians viewed China as either a strategic partner or ally, yet at the same time 62 percent saw the involvement of Chinese companies and workers in the development of mineral resources in Siberia and the Russian Far East as dangerous for Russia.²⁶ Many Russians fear that China will eventually take over the almost unpopulated Russian Far East.

The Russia-Georgia war tested the Russian-Chinese friendship. China strongly opposes any secession because of its own predicaments in Taiwan, Tibet, and Sinkiang and refused to condone Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. China thus demonstrated that it may value its relations with Russia but will be reluctant to fully align with Moscow.

Russia as Energy Superpower

The extraordinary rise in oil prices transformed Russia in less than 10 years from a case of near bankruptcy to one of the world's largest creditor nations. Yet Russia's role as a major player in global energy security—especially as a gas supplier in Europe—is a matter of debate. There are many areas of concern: the terms and extent of foreign investment in Russia, Moscow's dominance over pipelines in the Eurasian region, and the reliability of Russian supplies of gas and oil. The Russian government denies that its intentions are anything but commercial and maintains that it is a reliable supplier, but other governments in the region watch it with trepidation and justifiable distrust. After all, three of the most significant events of the Putin years pertained to oil and gas: the Yukos affair and the 2006 and 2009 gas disputes with Ukraine. The Yukos affair marked a dramatic power shift and the recentralization of political and economic authority back to the Kremlin. In Ukraine Moscow seemed to be punishing the nation for the Orange Revolution and for its rejection of the Kremlin's favored presidential candidate (from the Kremlin's point of view, Russia's political and economic/commercial interests coincided in the Ukrainian gas disputes). In addition, the coincidence that Russia took this step on the very day that it assumed chairmanship of the G-8, with energy security as its main theme, added to the fallout. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was one of the first international figures to accuse Russia of using energy as a "political weapon." Regardless of the merits of Gazprom's negotiating position, cutting off gas supplies was a public relations fiasco for Moscow. In January 2007 Gazprom undertook a similar cut of its deliveries to and through Be-

26. "Rossiane khotiat druzhit'siia s Kitaem, no na rasstoianii" ["Russians want to be friendly to China, but from a distance"], Vserossiiskii Tsent Izucheniia Obshestvennogo Mneniia Press Release no. 674, April 16, 2007, <http://vtsiom.ru>.

larus because of another pricing dispute. Concern in Europe about excessive dependence on Russia and the need to diversify supplies has been intensifying ever since, and the resonance is loud in Washington as well.

There are two important questions about Russia's contributions to regional and global energy security: (1) Will consumers of Russian oil and gas be vulnerable to Moscow's political whims, or are the Russian companies and state taking measures to ensure adequate supply to meet domestic and foreign demands?²⁷ (2) Will Europe be able to develop a common energy policy toward Russia? Russia naturally takes advantage of Europe's inability to act collectively on energy by providing attractive terms to politically favored clients such as France, Germany, and Italy, but the recent threats are enhancing the desire among EU members for common action.

Russia and the other countries in the region are competing to determine whether Russia will control the gas and oil pipelines from the former Soviet Union to Europe. The Kremlin has pursued a concerted strategy to augment Russian domination of pipeline infrastructure and views efforts to develop alternative pipeline routes that bypass Russia as hostile. It did accept the construction of the large private and foreign-owned Caspian Pipeline System from Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk in the 1990s, but it was forced to accept the US-supported Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline from Azerbaijan to the Turkish Mediterranean coast.

The current big competition is whether European countries will build the Nabucco and Transcaspian pipelines to supply Central Europe with gas from the Caspian Basin or whether Gazprom's South Stream pipeline project through the Black Sea to Italy will outcompete it. Related disputes have prevented Russia and Europe from agreeing on the Energy Charter Treaty, which Moscow has refused to ratify principally because of Gazprom's refusal to renounce its monopoly of domestic gas pipelines.

The gas dispute with Ukraine in January 2006—Gazprom shut off gas supplies for two days to that country and, therefore, partially to eight European customers as well—raised questions about Moscow's reliability as a supplier. The complete and much longer supply disruption in January 2009 confirmed Gazprom's unreliability. Whether Russia is a responsible stakeholder on energy security depends on where you sit. Germans have had positive experiences, unlike residents of the Baltic States, Belarus, the Caucasus, Moldova, Poland, or Ukraine. However, Russian behavior is not so different from that of other large hydrocarbon suppliers when a high-price environment enhances their leverage. When prices are skyrocketing, Russian companies are not alone in revisiting contracts, production-sharing agreements, and equity stakes that were negotiated

27. Vladimir Milov, *Russia and the West: The Energy Factor* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008).

when prices were much lower. The recent demonstration in Georgia, however, of Moscow's willingness to use force outside its constitutional borders marks a new development bound to affect the calculations of all neighboring states on a wide variety of issues, including energy.

The controversy surrounding the gas cutoffs to Ukraine has obscured two underlying problems: the growing strain between supply of and demand for Russian gas and the Kremlin's decision to end its subsidization of the CIS countries with cheap gas. Gazprom's production has been stagnant for years, while the demand for Russian gas both abroad and at home is steadily rising. All production growth after 2000 has come from independent Russian gas companies, and they are increasingly constrained or nationalized. This brings us back to the Yukos case and the push for greater state intervention in the energy sector. Is the Russian state killing the goose that lays the golden egg? Is the ruling elite interested in enlarging the country's energy-sector pie—or merely getting larger pieces for themselves?

Democracy and Human Rights

US and European support for democracy promotion in Russia has been increasingly controversial in Russian-Western relations and ultimately ineffective. When Russia started the first Chechnya war in December 1994, Western criticism was limited, as Russia was recognized as a democracy; most criticism was domestic. When Russia launched the second Chechnya war in September 1999, domestic criticism was contained, whereas the West was more critical, but the Kremlin simply ignored the criticism. Beginning in 2000, Putin systematically undermined political and civil freedoms, but gradually and always with some formal, legal excuse that minimized foreign criticism. In response to Western criticism of Russia's authoritarian drift and accusations of human rights violations, corruption, and other abuses, officials countered with a steady refrain of double standards.

More recently, Russian leaders were alarmed by the color revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005), especially after Ukraine's Orange Revolution inspired George W. Bush to speak eloquently about democracy and peace in his second inaugural address in 2005.²⁸ With support from China and other authoritarian governments in the region, Russian leaders sought to break this momentum. Putin condoned the massacre by Uzbek security forces in Andijan in May 2005, and the wave of democratization seemed to be over as the authoritarian capitalists mobilized. As Thomas Carothers observed in 2006, "The growing backlash [against

28. Much of the discussion on democracy promotion is derived from Andrew Kuchins, "État Terrible," *National Interest* (September/October 2007): 92–96.

democracy] has yet to coalesce into a formal or organized movement. But its proponents are clearly learning from and feeding off of one another.”²⁹

Russia’s somewhat liberal approach to economic integration contrasts starkly with the Kremlin’s posture in the debate between national sovereignty and international intervention to promote democracy and address human rights abuses. In these areas, Russia under Vladimir Putin developed what Sarah Mendelson called a sense of “hypersovereignty.”³⁰

Russia has also taken steps—in alliance with China and others—to systematically thwart the efforts of international organizations responsible for establishing and defending human rights. Russia’s relationship with OSCE and the Council of Europe, which both address human rights concerns, has been tense for years as Moscow has aggressively sought to reduce their role in election monitoring and human rights protection.

For all these reasons, practitioners and academics working on democracy promotion and human rights increasingly view Russia more as a determined spoiler than a responsible stakeholder.³¹ The West has largely accepted that it can do little about human rights in Russia and has toned down its criticism, which does not seem likely to lead to any concrete benefits and which the Kremlin simply ignores.

Conclusion

This review of selected major issues in Russia’s foreign policy illustrates several points. First, the nature and goals of future Russian foreign policy will depend primarily on how the country develops domestically. The big contrasts between Russia’s foreign policy in the 1990s and the 2000s are largely due to two factors: domestic political values and economic strength. The drastic downturn in Russia’s economic situation at the end of 2008 and the uncertainty about its duration have radically altered the assumption of a relatively high oil price on which the Kremlin has operated for the last several years.

Second, the international oil price appears to be the most important determinant of Russian foreign policy. A high oil price has closely correlated with more assertive and aggressive Soviet and Russian foreign policy for the last 40 years. The first oil crisis in 1973 culminated in the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Mikhail Gorbachev’s and Boris Yeltsin’s rapprochement with the West and retrenchment of Russian international

29. Thomas Carothers, “The Backlash against Democracy Promotion,” *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (2006): 55–68.

30. Sarah Mendelson, “Russia Today: In Transition or Intransigent,” testimony before the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, May 24, 2007, www.csis.org (accessed on February 1, 2009).

31. Mendelson, “Russia Today.”

power coincided with low oil prices; Putin's "resurgent Russia" of the past five years has been facilitated by a massive inflow of gas and oil revenues. The two peaks of hydrocarbon revenues around 1980 and the summer of 2008 correspond to the last two instances of Russian military engagement in conflicts abroad.³²

If the current low oil prices endure and history is a guide, there should be a change in the substance and tone of Russian foreign policy toward greater accommodation to the West. Foreign policy decisions will be constrained by their economic costs; for example, the recent foray of the Russian navy into Latin America may seem an unaffordable luxury in the next year. The Obama administration may thus find a more pliable partner in Russia in the coming year. The danger, however, is that the Kremlin will react to growing social and political unrest due to economic hardship with a brutal crackdown, which would naturally be accompanied by a more isolationist, prickly, and dangerous foreign policy, particularly toward its neighbors.

A third aspect of Russian foreign policy is that the Russians are ingrained practitioners of *realpolitik*. Their international outlook is pragmatic and realistic. That is why the oil price is so important for Russian foreign policy.

A fourth consideration is Russia's actual interests. In its attitude toward its near abroad, Russia behaves as any traditional great power—wanting to have influence—and its greatest sources of influence on the world stage are its nuclear arms and its energy assets. The nuclear arms are likely to have a positive influence, as they promote Russian partnership with the United States. The energy assets have a negative influence when prices are high, but should be a source of international cooperation in times of more moderate energy prices.

Finally, as a large open economy and a great power, Russia has a considerable interest in being a full-fledged participant in the international system and its governance. The overall challenges of reforming institutions of global governance weigh most heavily on the United States, since Americans played the lead role in creating the existing system. But the unipolar moment is fading, as is the broader historical dominance of the West that has lasted for nearly 300 years. Russia is not very different from other large emerging powers in that it will likely behave more responsibly to the extent that its leaders believe they participate in the shaping (and reshaping) of international political, security, and economic institutions. Russians appear eager to play a more leading and vocal role, including by championing the interests of other powers that were not involved in crafting the existing institutions.

32. For more on this argument, see Andrew C. Kuchins, *Alternative Futures of Russia* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007) and Samuel Charap and Andrew Kuchins, *Economic Whiplash in Russia: An Opportunity to Bolster U.S.-Russia Commercial Ties?* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2009).