
Russia: managing contradictions

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By the time new American presidents have settled into the White House, they usually understand one thing about Russia: it is a difficult country to live with. But it usually takes them a full term to discover something else: Russia is a museum of contradictory truths.¹ The country's power has always concealed anxiety. Its weaknesses have always shrouded ambition. Its Eurasian expanse and perspective instils, in equal measure, a sense of vulnerability and prominence, a 'right' to 'equality' in all regions to which it is proximate and a demand for pre-eminence in areas that are historically its own. Even during the relatively congenial mid-1990s, Russia was too distinct and too proud to 'simply dissolve into the schema of European diplomacy' (in the words of Boris Yeltsin's press secretary in 1994).² Yet apart from the period of Leninist messianism, it has never possessed the distinctiveness, self-confidence or cultural integrity to become, like China or India, 'the other' with respect to Europe. Like an only child needing company and fearing intrusion at the same time, Russia seeks a seat at the top table of today's European and Euro-Atlantic clubs, while claiming exemptions from the values and standards that make them clubs.

To the Russian mind, contradiction is part of life itself, and life's complexities and ironies call for contradictory thoughts and approaches. To the American mind, contradictory thoughts are a sign of stupidity and contradictory approaches a sign of guile. But this is an attitude that Russians find difficult to comprehend. The United States has been unique in its ability to dominate international institutions and stand apart from them. Long before the George W. Bush administration, Russians marvelled at America's apparently presumptive right to lead the world and, without any shame at the inconsistency, heap opprobrium on Russia for trying to remain 'leader of stability and security' over the finite territory that it once possessed. Russians have no difficulty adding colour to this picture. From their vantage point, the United States is a country absolute about defending its own sovereignty but strident in warning others that 'sovereignty is no defence'; carefree in equating itself with the 'international community' but ready to disregard that community (and the UN) the moment its national interests intervene; passionate in elevating democracy to a universal norm but assiduous in financing and arming autocratic, kleptocratic and despotic allies in

the pursuit of 'energy security' or the 'war on terror'. From Russia's perspective, the United States has mastered the contradictions of life very well.

The Russian image of American hypocrisy, part parody but part reality, overlooks another reality: the widespread attractiveness of the United States and the alliances and institutions that it has formed, inspired or led. Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has occasionally led with bravado, but more often with sobriety and occasionally with reluctance. Some of its alliances (with Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, for example) have added to the stock of antipathies and turbulence in parts of the world undergoing (for reasons that transcend US policy) convulsive clashes between modernity and its opponents. Yet America's core alliances in Europe, the Far East and Australasia have made a profound contribution to the security, stability and prosperity of regions and operate with a degree of collegiality that has few precedents in history. Its allies might wish the United States were wiser, but they rarely have wished it to be weaker. Since 1991, the Russian Federation has been spared many of the dilemmas and burdens that a global power faces. Its relationship with its own allies (and those who resist alliance with it) is burdened by the Soviet legacy – macabre and sanguinary by any comparison to American 'hegemonism' – by its ambivalences towards that legacy and by its very old-fashioned craving for respect.

Although Russian negative perceptions of the United States have a long pedigree, they have achieved an unusual piquancy in recent years, and it is no exaggeration to say that President Barack Obama took office at a uniquely low point in the post-Cold War US–Russian relationship. Ironically, this decline is less attributable to the Bush administration's policy towards Russia than to the resonances generated by its policies elsewhere: the western Balkans, Iraq and, not least, NATO enlargement and missile defence. So far, the last two have been regarded as 'anti-Russian' by definition, irrespective of any evidence provided or explanation offered, and this imperviousness to evidence and explanation already constitutes one of the main challenges facing the new US administration.

THE ELUSIVENESS OF TRUST

It would be entirely artificial to pick one defining moment that marked the deterioration in the US–Russia relationship since the last period of high expectations in the weeks and months following 11 September 2001. The Rose and Orange Revolutions of 2003–04 were clearly profoundly important watersheds. Midway between these two upheavals, President Vladimir Putin darkly hinted that Western governments were complicit in the slaughter of schoolchildren in the town of Beslan in 2004.³ Nevertheless, the Western political class as a whole did not come to terms with the depth of the divide until Putin's speech at the 43rd Munich Security Conference on 10 February 2007. Since then, a key question on the minds of those who are now working in the Obama administration has been whether trust can be restored. For minimalists in that administration, the 'resetting' of relations is designed to explore the degree to which this is possible;

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for maximalists, the restoration of trust is assumed to be possible, and the 'reset' is designed to restore it.

The beginning of wisdom is to recognize that there have been only two periods of mutual trust since 1991 and that both were based on unrealistic expectations. American expectations during the first period, which extended roughly from 1991 to 1994, were conditioned not only by triumphalist and historicist thinking, but by American experience. Political establishments in the United States and most European countries had long persuaded themselves that capitalism, prosperity and liberalism went hand in hand. Far too many politicians, officials and consultants ignored far too many warnings that in Russia, the absence of civic traditions and effective institutions would produce rigged markets rather than free markets, the transformation of unaccountable bureaucratic power into unaccountable financial power and illicit alliances between the state, business and organized crime. In their more hopeful beliefs the architects of Western policy were encouraged by the self-designated liberals and economic radicals who featured so prominently in President Yeltsin's initial policy team. Western triumphalism and Russian 'romanticism' reinforced one another in ways that became increasingly unwelcome to those outside this magic circle. Far from helping Russia through the 'birth pangs of democracy', the pronounced character of Western support for Boris Yeltsin's reformers and their narrowly macro-economic model of reform made the United States an inadvertent protagonist in a process that, not for the first time, gradually persuaded much of the country, 'not for the first time in Russian history, that Western models and values are irrelevant, if not downright harmful, to their peculiarly Russian circumstances and predicaments'.⁴

Western governments were also wrong to assume that, once the dust settled, Russia would be reconciled to the post-Cold War status quo. In 1992, Russia acquired borders that it had never possessed before and which, to much of the country, made no sense in economic, security or civilizational terms. Far from regarding these realities as a new and legitimate status quo, the 'liberal' leadership regarded them as temporary.⁵ The first Foreign Ministry report on the subject in September 1992 defined the integration of the former Soviet space as a 'vital interest' to be pursued by 'all legitimate means', including 'divide and influence policies'.⁶ Very few at the time regarded this as an anti-Western interest. To the contrary, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and others believed that Russia's integration into the West would prove to be the antidote to Soviet disintegration and provide the basis for reintegration on 'democratic', post-Soviet terms, with US support.⁷ The 'Russia first' policy prevalent in Washington and other Western capitals until the mid-1990s did nothing to discourage them. Nor did it discourage the hopes of Russia's liberals that the end of confrontation would lead to an 'equal' position for Russia in Europe: in other words, veto-wielding prerogatives in decision-making on matters of pan-European importance.

By the time the liberals, pejoratively dismissed as 'romantics', were moved aside by the more traditional 'centrists' of the Russian establishment, warnings of a divergence of perspective between Russia and its Western partners had become

not only evident but 'loud'.⁸ It was not in 2004 but 1994 (at the start of NATO's UN-sanctioned bombing campaign in Bosnia) that Boris Yeltsin told the Foreign Intelligence Service that 'ideological confrontation is being replaced by a struggle for spheres of influence in geopolitics' and warned that 'forces abroad' wanted to keep Russia in a state of 'controllable paralysis'.⁹ Five years later, NATO's intervention in the Kosovo conflict (which was not UN-sanctioned) entrenched these views across the political spectrum.

By the close of the Yeltsin era, US policy-making circles were coming to terms with the re-emergence of four elements of continuity in the 'new' Russia:

- a growing emphasis on geopolitics, which, with its emphasis on power and 'struggle', had begun to fill the intellectual vacuum left by the demise of Marxism-Leninism;
- displacement of the Western priority (and priority of integration into Western institutions) by integration of the post-Soviet 'near abroad' as a vital and irreducible interest, no longer predicated on Western support;¹⁰
- increasingly open designation of the external CIS borders as the defence perimeter of the Russian Federation itself;¹¹ and
- the considerable recovery of influence by the country's military and security establishments, which in their mentality and working culture remained Soviet establishments in all but name.

The chronic economic dislocations inside Russia, the deepening of tensions between state and society, the *de facto* privatization of state institutions by sectoral and clan interests, and continued *mnogogolosiye* ('multi-voicedness') in the formation and execution of policy sharply constrained the potential of these trends and limited their visibility abroad. Nevertheless, a considerable souring of relations had set in well before Vladimir Putin came to office.

Today it is easy to forget that many US policy-makers (not least President Bush) saw Putin's accession to power as a fresh start. His candour about Russia's past mistakes,¹² his elevation of a new generation of technocrats and reformers, his assault on the oligarchs 'as a class', his streamlining of regulations and lowering of taxes; his emphasis on foreign trade and investment, and his pronounced emphasis on 'pragmatism' as the basis for foreign relations (even the hint that Russia might entertain NATO membership) secured a broadly favourable image for Putin in the West until the onset of the YUKOS affair in 2003. Yet outside the post-Soviet 'near abroad', the more significant departures from the Yeltsin era were discerned by few:

- The restoration of the state, and the transformation of security services, armed forces, the defence-industrial complex and the energy sector into instruments of national power and pillars of national revival.
- The emergence of a strong geo-economic impulse to policy and, with the restoration of the 'administrative vertical' in Russia, politically usable economic power. The *Energy Strategy of Russia to 2020* (published in 2003, before the rise in global energy prices) stated that 'the role of the country

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in world energy markets to a large extent determines its geopolitical influence'.¹³

- The coming of age of a new, post-Soviet class – moneyed, self-confident, European in outlook but nationalistic and illiberal; and, in parallel with their maturation, a state-fostered restoration of national pride on the basis of a selective, but potent fusion of pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet values.¹⁴
- A shift in emphasis in the new foreign policy *Concept*¹⁵ from the strengthening of mutual interests towards the 'firm promotion of national interests'.¹⁶
- In the 'near abroad', a similar shift away from 'fraternal' ties towards a policy described as 'clear', 'specific', 'cold' and 'far tougher'¹⁷ – and, with this, a 'more active' utilization of hard and soft power to 'promote in neighbouring countries groups of influence orientated towards Moscow and a gradual weakening and neutralization of pro-Western circles'.¹⁸

Were it not for the events of 9/11, more might have been made of these tendencies by policy-makers in the West. Instead, to all intents and appearances, they vanished in that carnage. President Putin immediately grasped that the attack had changed the coordinates of world politics, and he rose to the occasion over the stationing of US military forces in Central Asia and the resumption of cooperation with NATO. Yet he never lost sight of Russia's core interests. Whereas Western governments viewed the post-9/11 world with foreboding, he viewed it as an opportunity. It was the West that now needed Russia. With fair justification, he assumed that the new partnership would untie his hands against 'Islamic extremism' in the north Caucasus, which was juridically part of Russia. With little justification, he assumed that the West would also acquiesce in Russia's dominance over newly independent states, which were not. He also assumed that by conceding Russia's right to its own policies towards Iraq and Iran, the West had forfeited its right to criticize these policies and ask how they furthered partnership. Within little more than a year, old differences reappeared, and the second, brief period of trust dissipated. Even before the coloured revolutions of 2003–04, a fresh round of recriminations was under way.

Yet it was the Rose Revolution in Georgia and, even more, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine that launched Russia on the trajectory that reached its nadir with the Russia–Georgia war of 2008. To Russians persuaded that *samostoyatel'noy Ukrainiy nikogda ne budet* ('Ukraine will never be able to stand alone'), these were Western 'special operations' from beginning to end. Not only were they seen as marking an ominous turn in an intensifying geopolitical rivalry, they were also seen as a major intensification of the West's *Kulturkampf* against Russia and its political order. After the post-9/11 partnership with the United States and years spent cultivating the EU, these developments were seen as nothing short of a betrayal.

To be sure, NATO enlargement played a major role in this dynamic. To the Russian military establishment and by now the overwhelming majority of

the political establishment, NATO was and remains an anti-Russian military alliance. Claims that it has become a political-military alliance dedicated to the strengthening of common security are regarded as risible and insulting. These views have at least two sources. The first is the geopolitical determinism of the military establishment, which has acquired influence well beyond this narrow milieu. Whereas Western security elites define threat in terms of intention and capability, their Russian counterparts define it in terms of space: by the presence of foreign forces in areas in the vicinity of Russian territory, whatever their ostensible purpose and irrespective of whether the host countries have invited them or not.¹⁹ Within this schema, the Russian defence perimeter includes the former Soviet space, whether or not the countries that inhabit this space agree. The second source of Russian views is NATO's policies, which have hardened perceptions about its aims and character. The 1999 Kosovo conflict was a turning point in this context.²⁰ It removed any pretence that NATO was a strictly defensive alliance. The war in Iraq (wrongly seen in Russia as a NATO operation) only reinforced this conclusion.

Yet within two years of the Orange Revolution, there was a new element to Russia's estrangement from the West: self-confidence. As Putin said at Munich in February 2007, 'we have a realistic sense of our own opportunities and potential'. He also had a realistic sense that the United States and its allies had become globally overextended, that NATO programmes of cooperation in Russia's 'near abroad' lacked teeth, that the weaknesses of NATO's partners were chronic and that NATO itself was profoundly divided about its future course. NATO hoped that the formula agreed by its heads of state at their summit in Bucharest in April 2008 – no formal offer of Membership Action Plans (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia, no timetables, but an existential commitment that 'Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO' – would lower the temperature. Instead, it raised it. By then, the gap between Western aspirations and capability had all the appearance of bluff. In August 2008 the bluff was called.

Had the West been willing to learn more lessons from the Soviet collapse and teach fewer of them, it might have been possible to avoid illusions, anticipate (and articulate) differences and diminish resentment. Had the West been less reassured by its own good intentions and more conscious of the precedents its actions would create in the minds of others (as over the independence of Kosovo), it still might have acted as it did, but been better prepared for the consequences.

Nevertheless, the West did not 'lose' Russia, and it is naïve to suppose that it could have 'won' it.²¹ Unlike post-war Germany, post-Cold War Russia was not in the West's trusteeship. It was not defeated in war and occupied. It was not governed by Western authorities and administrators. No Western policy could have spared Russia economic trauma. No Western agency could have reconstructed the elites of the country or persuaded Boris Yeltsin to dismantle the iron core of the military and security system. No Western policy or power could have induced Russia to abandon the myths of a 'common history' with Ukraine or to come to terms with the actual legacy of Soviet power in the former USSR.

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Although the West might have given more substance to its magnanimity – by cancelling the USSR's debt, for example – it is Russia's leaders who must answer for their failure to make the historic choice to establish a state (like Adenauer's Germany) that based its legitimacy on a repudiation of the state that preceded it. Instead, they chose to have it both ways: to create a 'successor' state based on rejection as well as continuity with the state that preceded it. Inevitably, many of Russia's neighbours viewed this stance as an attempt to reclaim some of the prerogatives of the Soviet past while denying responsibility for it. It is unrealistic, not to say unreasonable, to expect former adversaries, as it were overnight, to grant 'equality' to a state that was so historically ambivalent about a predecessor that had extinguished their independence.

The anti-Enlightenment philosopher Joseph de Maistre once said, 'we do not invent ourselves'. In a not entirely different spirit, T.S. Eliot once remarked that 'mankind cannot cope with much reality'. The post-Cold War years vindicated both of these warnings. The collapse of Communism could not restore an Enlightenment heritage that Russia never possessed or dispose of the imperial mentality in a country where state and empire were never distinguishable. After too much reality, it was not surprising that Russia did not find itself 'at the end of history', but at the beginning, 'rediscovering the historical, cultural and geo-political imperatives that make Russia Russia'.²²

NATIONALISM, RESENTMENT AND DISORIENTATION

One year before Barack Obama took office, Russia's policy towards the West was based on three foundations: nationalism, resentment and self-confidence. Today, it is based upon nationalism, resentment and disorientation. The global financial crisis – which some in Russia predicted would be visited upon others only – accounts for much of this disorientation. But there are two other factors: the unhealthy configuration of power in the country and the failure to secure pre-eminence in the former Soviet Union after the Russia–Georgia war.

There have been several waves of official reaction to the financial crisis since the summer of 2008: first, denial and a public front (based on an ardent wish) that Russia would remain an 'island of stability' and a 'safe haven' in the turmoil; second, behind-the-scenes panic as the real economy slid rapidly downhill; and third, relative calm as oil prices began to rebound in early 2009. But only now has genuine disorientation set in, as the truth dawns that even as oil prices recover, the economy recovers less. The explanation for this truth, well expressed by a number of Russian experts, is that the strategy of commodity-led growth ignored and repressed structural flaws in the economy that have now assumed malignant proportions: monopolization (which explains why prices rise even when income falls); a level of bureaucratic sclerosis and corruption not seen even in the Yeltsin era; and chronic underinvestment in the domestic energy market (which consumes as much oil and gas as Japan, India, the United Kingdom and Italy combined).²³ To these realities, one half of the Russian policy-making elite has been deaf and the other half apprehensive, anxious and blocked by the first half.

Given the realities of power in Russia, it is not difficult to understand why. Vladimir Putin, who as prime minister bears overall responsibility for the economy, lacks an economist's understanding of it. Having convinced himself that the restoration of the 'vertical of power' restored Russia's economic prospects, he cannot now accept that it is the single greatest factor that hinders them. President Dmitry Medvedev might be able to accept it, but in the words of one Russian expert, he has 'no appetite for tough decisions' and has a 'lack of character that cannot be compensated by social skills'.

Yet there are deeper reasons than these. Those who run the country now own it. Whereas 50 per cent of Russia's GDP was controlled by seven relatively independent bankers in the 1990s, by 2006 five senior Kremlin officials chaired companies that produced 33 per cent of national wealth. These individuals are most unlikely to champion a reform that would deconstruct the system they constructed. Moreover, that system could only have been constructed by emasculating the representative institutions that made their appearance in the chaos of the 1990s. Legislators, judges and bureaucrats who are drummed into submissiveness do not act when factories and social services shut down in their localities. They await instructions. Flying visits by Putin and his deputies now substitute for the normal workings of government. This absence of democratic normality – scrutiny, feedback, argument and the countervailing powers that compel leaders to pay heed to them – has aggravated every unhealthy characteristic of an inbred, opaque and self-referential elite. It is not surprising that, while Medvedev and Putin remain trusted by the public at large, informed circles now openly express a sense of futility and foreboding.

Foreboding would also be a rational response to the change in relations between Russia and its neighbours after the war with Georgia in August 2008. One month after that conflict, President Medvedev boasted to members of the Valdai Club (the annual gathering of international experts on Russia) that his country was no longer 'weak and defenceless' and would no longer 'tolerate' the West's 'unfair and humiliating' policy in 'traditional areas of interests' defined by 'shared, common history' and the 'affinity of our souls'.²⁴ Yet, one year later within those 'traditional areas', that affinity is less reciprocated than at any time in recent decades. Russia's use of armed force against Georgia has profoundly alarmed its other neighbours. No member of the Commonwealth of Independent States²⁵ has followed Nicaragua's example and recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. To add insult to injury, four heads of state failed to attend the August 2009 CIS summit; Belarus (a member alongside Kazakhstan of a 'Union State' with Russia) has accepted an invitation to join the EU's Eastern Partnership that Russia condemns and has instructed its citizens to respect Georgian laws in the newly 'sovereign' states; Tajikistan has issued a decree downgrading the status of the Russian language; Kyrgyzstan has restored basing rights to the United States (and charged Russia a heavy tariff for new bases); Turkmenistan has declared its support for the Nabucco pipeline project (which Russia reviles); Uzbekistan's officials openly express disquiet about Russia's motives to American visitors;²⁶ and the Russian-sponsored mediation

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effort over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh has fallen apart. As Boris Nemtsov (a former Acting Prime Minister of Russia) lamented: 'we have no remaining friends, only enemies ... To put it simply, we have fallen out with everyone'. If in August 2008, Russia could plausibly blame the West for its difficulties, that is no longer possible.

Yet instead of following Nemtsov's advice to look in the mirror and draw conclusions, on 11 August 2009 Medvedev took an aggressive step backwards. His very public letter to President Victor Yushchenko of Ukraine reiterated every Orwellian utterance that fills even Russophile Ukrainians with apprehension. Russia and Ukraine are 'two sovereign states'.²⁷ Yet 'for Russia, Ukrainians since the dawn of time have been and remain not only neighbours, but a brotherly people', from which it follows that Ukraine, in contrast to other 'sovereign states' is obliged to maintain 'tight economic cooperation' and 'solidly kindred, humanitarian ties' with Russia. Although less than two years had passed since Putin called Ukraine's statehood into question at the NATO summit, and barely a month since he termed any attempt to separate Russia and 'little Russia' a 'crime', Medvedev saw fit to remind Yushchenko that a 'Russian threat to Ukraine's security ... as you perfectly well know does not exist and never will'. Barely a year after Russia went to war in response to Georgia's 'barbarous assault' against South Ossetia, Medvedev declared that Ukrainians who supplied arms to Georgia 'fully share responsibility with Tbilisi for these absolute crimes'. Inevitably, his letter was read not only as a clumsy attempt to influence Ukraine's presidential elections, but also as a warning of trouble in the future.

CURBING ENTHUSIASMS

On the face of it, the dynamics and discourse on display in Russia's neighbourhood could not stand in greater contrast to the principles set out in Russia's proposals for a new European Security Treaty (EST). Analysis of these proposals from their initial articulation by President Medvedev in Berlin on 5 June 2008 to the publication of a draft EST on 29 November 2009 raises a number of questions.

This is most notably the case with regard to the cardinal principle that President Medvedev set out on 8 October 2008 at the World Policy Conference in Evian: the creation of an international system 'equal for all states ... without zones with different levels of security'. Set against his condemnation of the 'NATO-centric approach', the clear premise behind the call for equality is that it does not yet exist. For it to emerge, the 'strengthening of the positions of the Russian Federation in international affairs' must be accepted (in short its role must be enhanced), while other actors must not overstep their 'legitimate' interests and scope of activity (in short their role must be diminished).²⁸ The United States must adhere strictly to international law and accept the reality of a 'polycentric international system' not 'ruled from a single capital'. However, it must decline calls for assistance from other national capitals.²⁹ 'Equality' must replace the 'NATO-centric approach' but Russia has a right to maintain ('like

other countries in the world’) regions of ‘privileged interests’, i.e. ‘with our close neighbours’.³⁰ NATO must halt its ‘mechanical enlargement’, even when it occurs by invitation. It must confine itself to issues of ‘hard security’ within the ‘geographical limits of the alliance’, even if within these geographical limits no issues of hard security exist. The EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) must eschew ‘double standards, respecting the national and historical peculiarities of each state’; but must raise no objection when Russia fails to respect them in the former USSR.³¹ Gazprom must (in the words of its CEO, Alexei Miller) be recognized as a ‘global energy leader’, and the EU has no right to use anti-monopoly regulations to block its ‘legitimate ambitions’ even where the pursuit of these ambitions violates the laws of member states and international best practice.³²

President Obama gave a distinctly guarded welcome to President Medvedev’s proposals during their first meeting on the eve of the G20 London summit in April 2009. Since June 2009 the so-called Corfu process, under the OSCE chairmanship of Greece, has institutionalized the dialogue with Russia on Europe’s security architecture. But it has done so on the basis of three principles at variance with Russian proposals:

- The OSCE, as an inclusive body of 56 states, should remain the framework for this dialogue.
- The dialogue should cover all aspects of security, including human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
- The dialogue must not presuppose a conclusion or lead *a priori* to a ‘binding’ security treaty.

In response, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserts that EST and Corfu are ‘mutually overlapping but not mutually replaceable approaches’.³³ Russia will be satisfied with nothing less than an entirely new process, leading to a binding security treaty. Otherwise, as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warns, there will be a full-scale renationalization of security (which can only mean *by Russia*, since NATO and the EU make decisions by consensus).³⁴ The continuity between Medvedev’s initial proposals in Berlin and the draft EST demonstrates a striking imperviousness to the ideas, principles and concerns of Russia’s supposed partners.

The inescapable question that follows is what chances the US ‘reset’ initiative has of overcoming this imperviousness. The Moscow summit on 6–8 July 2009 produced one significant commitment – to conclude a successor to the July 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1), which lapsed on 5 December 2009 – and one significant agreement (to allow lethal military equipment to transit Russia by air to Afghanistan).

Now both of these initiatives are foundering. The follow-on to START has aroused the anxiety and suspiciousness of Russia’s military establishment. Critics warn of a net diminution of Russia’s deterrent capacity in the face of a new, phased US missile defence programme (which replaced the February 2007 Bush missile defence initiative in September 2009), the unrestricted

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development of US precision-guided conventional munitions, the progressive obsolescence of Soviet-era strategic nuclear forces and the calamitous setback to Russia's sea-launched ballistic missile programme caused by the latest failure of the Bulava missile in December 2009.³⁵ The Obama administration's substantial concessions over conventional warheads, nuclear missile modernization and inspection have done little to alter mindsets, and on 29 December Prime Minister Putin firmly established the link between a new offensive arms accord and ballistic missile defences.³⁶

The Afghanistan transit accord has also run into the buffers of the system. Thanks to unspecified 'technical problems', instead of 12 heavy US transports transiting Russia to Afghanistan on a daily basis as envisaged at the July summit, only one test flight had taken place by 31 December 2009. Those who heard Lavrov express Russia's worries about a NATO defeat in Afghanistan might find this surprising.³⁷ Yet Lavrov has not expressed support for a NATO victory, and this is not a trivial distinction. Much of the military and security leadership fear that a stabilizing, consolidating Afghanistan under NATO auspices would complicate Russia's relations with China, India, Pakistan and Central Asia (where it already finds itself under pressure), as well as providing a further impetus for energy transit projects to bypass Russia. It would compromise Russia's self-perceived pivotal role and set back its ambitions for the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization)³⁸ and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) to become the pre-eminent security bodies in Central and South-west Asia.³⁹ It would also set back Russia's ambitions to have a decided influence in Afghanistan itself, not as a US partner, but as an independent actor, with its own breadth of experience and hard-earned wisdom and without the 'democratic' baggage that comes with US support.⁴⁰

In the aftermath of the Moscow summit, Washington did not claim any breakthrough on the second issue of global importance, Iran. This is not surprising. Until recently, Moscow's operative principle was the 'great game', not partnership with the United States. The interests of powerful financial groups in Russia possibly take precedence over both. Economic ties with Iran are of structural importance: greatly beneficial to the high-technology sectors of the Russian economy, which Moscow believes the West seeks to weaken. In the boardrooms of Gazprom and Rosneft, the continuation of tension between Iran and the West is preferable to Iran's re-emergence as a full player on global energy markets. Moreover, Russia has strong reasons to ensure that Iran continues to show restraint with regard to Azerbaijan (where there are ethnic ties), Armenia (where there are historical ties) and the states of Central Asia (where there are elements of both). It is equally keen that Iran, like Russia, should continue to oppose the construction of a trans-Caspian gas pipeline to supply Nabucco. There is, in short, a complex of interests at work and a complex of players inside Russia.

Nevertheless, Moscow has recently demonstrated marked concern at Tehran's defiance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and shown greater willingness to act in concert with the Western members of the 5+1

group (notably, in securing an IAEA resolution censuring Iran and transferring the issue to the UN Security Council). How much this is due to the US reset is, for the moment, unclear. In summer 2009, Israel provided a sharp reminder of its ability to act independently and in ways that could prove damaging to Russia. The seizure of the Russian vessel *Arctic Sea*, most likely by Israeli commandos, and the messages subsequently conveyed in Prime Minister Netanyahu's semi-secret visit to Russia caused at least a minor panic in Russia's security establishment.⁴¹ It is too early to say whether Moscow's tougher position is an isolated episode, a tactical repositioning or the start of a trend towards closer cooperation with Washington.

So far, the US administration has been sober in its expectations about the reset. Nevertheless, in his interview with the *Wall Street Journal* on 25 July 2009, Vice President Biden came to a sound conclusion and a questionable one. The sound conclusion, as noted above, is that Russia's problems are serious and 'over the next fifteen years ... not sustainable'. The questionable one is that the gravity of these problems will induce Russia to accommodate itself to the interests of others. Biden's qualification – that in the short term, Russia could become more belligerent – should not be a qualification, but the focal point of near-term attention. Long-term forecasts can be skewed out of recognition by wilfulness, ingenuity and miscalculation in the near term. The emphasis on the need for 'calculated decisions' in Russia begs the question: who calculates? Important as it is to understand the art of the possible over the next 15 years, the more urgent task for Washington and Brussels is to understand what Putin and Medvedev might do during the next two. It would be prudent to proceed from three assumptions.

First, the financial crisis does not create a 'need' for moderation in Russia's policy. It creates pressure. In January 2009, Russia's response to this pressure was to lock in its comparative advantage with Ukraine and make aggressive use of residual margins of strength. Whatever Ukraine's responsibilities for the winter gas crisis, financial pressure on Gazprom produced immoderation rather than moderation. The November accords between Putin and Ukrainian Prime Minister Tymoshenko – and the likelihood of a reset initiative by the new Ukrainian president – make it likely that a repetition of this scenario will be avoided. But for how long? Financial, market and production conditions now make it ever more uncertain that Russia's flagship pipeline projects will be financed or that there will be enough gas to fill them. These constraints only increase the importance of Ukraine's Gas Transit System and its management. Sooner or later, that system could come under assault as Ukraine, burdened by an economic crisis far more dire than Russia's, finds that it cannot pay its gas bills. The dynamics of tension and the risks of harsh action are not alleviated by the financial crisis, but worsened by it.

Second, Russia's priority in its own neighbourhood is not stability but influence, and this has been evident under all three Russian presidents since the Soviet collapse. While homilies about the danger of Ukraine's destabilization are issued at regular intervals by part of the policy-making elite in Moscow, the fact is that

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Russia has invested heavily in the tools of destabilization and identified every nodal point of fragility in that country. In the states of the south Caucasus (and Russia's own republics in the north), Moscow's policy of 'divide and influence' has been pursued with malign and damaging effect for these states and Russia itself. Outside initiatives (e.g. the EU's Eastern Partnership) that do not envisage a 'privileged' role for Russia are vehemently opposed, whatever their intended or real benefits. It would be imprudent to suppose that the structural deficiencies of the Russian economy, which become ever more plain as time advances, will alter this priority. But it might for a time recede. Such an interregnum, if it arises, will buy time for systemic change in neighbouring countries, should local elites and their Western partners be prepared to take advantage of it. For countries which value their independence, qualitative change – of public institutions, administrative cultures and the relationship between business and the state – will be the only way to defeat this post-Soviet syndrome until systemic change in Russia finally cures it. As a Russian interlocutor of the author said in 2009, 'we would love to interfere in Poland, but we can't find any way of doing it'.⁴²

The third prudent assumption is that intra-elite relationships will be the principal determinant of change inside Russia and in its foreign policy. To be systemic, such change would have to be political as well as economic. Today, economic pressures are being managed within the conventions of the system by the groups that define these conventions and benefit from them. So far, the crisis has not been deep enough to alter paradigms about Russia's political or economic model, or its model of relations with the outside world. One could do worse than to accept Stephen Blank's verdict that 'Russia's problem is a structural one, inherent in the Russian system and Russia's ongoing efforts to carve a larger role ... than it can sustain'.⁴³ Or, as Ira Straus put it with a less deterministic edge:

If Russia wants a strong and stable influence in the post-Soviet space, it will try to do it together with the West. If instead what it wants is pride in its influence against the West, it will keep on running into bad news, and manic-depressive mood swings between moments of triumph and moments of despair.⁴⁴

In sum, while external factors set the scene, systemic, intra-elite and temperamental factors produce the play. The West is not doomed to be a spectator. Its challenge is to set the scene. But this requires a degree of purpose and fibre that has not always been present in Western policy.

IMAGINATION AND REALISM

Imagination and realism are required in three areas. First, it is time to face the uncomfortable truth that we are rarely seen by others as we see ourselves, and this is certainly the case for the United States *vis-à-vis* Russia. NATO enlargement, military intervention in Kosovo (and subsequent recognition of its independence), the Iraq war (perceived by many in Russia as a NATO operation), the establishment of military bases and facilities in former Warsaw Pact countries and support for Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili vindicate, in

Moscow's eyes, the core premises of the Putin–Medvedev policy. Yet the main explanation for Russian attitudes is Russia. Without understanding the way the Darwinian system of power relations, undiluted geopolitics and aggressive geo-economics interact and reinforce one another, Western governments will not understand why their policy has been interpreted so negatively or why so many of their Russian interlocutors are deaf to explanation and argument.

A second, more uncomfortable truth is that, although the West possesses an abundance of policy instruments in Russia's neighbourhood, for the first time since the early 1990s it has no effective policy there. The previous US administration often acted as if Russia had no legitimate interests in the former Soviet Union. Some policy-makers pushed to the limit the sound principle that non-member states be afforded no 'right of veto' over NATO's future enlargement, excluding any accommodation or discussion about the modalities of the process. At a number of levels, US diplomacy was as professional as it could be. But public diplomacy, which was often shrill and moralistic, was undiplomatic. The tone of US policy failed to take into account not only the sensibilities of Russians but the anxieties of Ukrainians, most of whom see NATO as an anti-Russian instrument. The tone of NATO's public diplomacy – bland, formulaic and clichéd – came across in the local environment as elusive and dishonest despite the best efforts of NATO's local representatives to enliven and give substance to the discourse. Russians and Ukrainians 'know' that Russia's Black Sea Fleet will have to leave Crimea before Ukraine joins NATO and that Ukraine–Russia defence–industrial cooperation will end. But NATO does not know these things and does not necessarily believe them. Most of its members are distinctly open-minded on these subjects and predisposed to find acceptable solutions, but how many in the region know this?

Yet these issues, which deserved articulation in 2005, have been overtaken by the Russo-Georgia war. Today the issue is fundamentally more serious. How does NATO re-establish credibility with those in partner countries who now believe that war is possible, who perceive that the former Soviet borders are no longer sacrosanct, who fear that questions long regarded as settled (e.g. the status of Crimea and Sevastopol) can be reopened at any moment, who grasp that 'civilizational' and 'humanitarian' factors (e.g. the status of the Russian diaspora) can constitute a *casus belli* and who are now convinced that where there is no Article 5, there is no collective defence? If NATO does not address this question, it will forfeit influence. If the United States does not lead this exercise, it will not take place.

To many, a failure by NATO to rebuild its influence in the former USSR would simply be a belated recognition of geopolitical reality. Yet these realities can no longer be understood in nineteenth-century terms. We are no longer living in a world where small powers quietly accept what great powers dictate. Empire, spheres of influence and the balance of power – principles long associated with the European international order between 1648 and 1914 – had by the early twentieth century become synonymous with international and internal disorder, not to say misery, and no explanation of the origins of the First World

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War has standing if it ignores the fact. Ignoring this history is the surest way of repeating it.

Third, we need to ask whether the institutions that *we* deem central to the relationship between Russia and the West – NATO, the EU and the OSCE – are fit for purpose. The first two display a combination of common interests, shared values and collective capacity that does not exist elsewhere and would be uncommonly difficult to replicate. But neither they nor the OSCE have succeeded in reconciling Russia to the post-Cold War system that these institutions have largely created.

For one thing, the core premises of the NATO–Russia relationship have not been reassessed in an explicit or concerted fashion since the 1990s, and the Alliance is possibly no longer capable of adopting such an assessment. The Russia–Georgia war did not change paradigms. It only deepened divisions. NATO’s emerging New Strategic Concept, the first since 1999, may extract some coherence from these divisions, but the NATO–Russia Council, which did not meet once between the April 2008 Bucharest summit and the start of the war in Georgia, plainly failed to rise to the occasion. Although some lessons have been learnt, Russia is no longer prepared to believe that the Council will give adequate weight to its interests or status.

The EU, for its part, has defied sceptics by developing security-enhancing capacity alongside NATO rather than at cross-purposes with it. With predictable detours and inhibitions, it is also adopting a strategic and proactive approach to energy security, to Russia’s neighbourhood and to Russia itself. Yet its terms of engagement do not engage Russia. Russia retains its proclivity for bilateral relations with European states, as opposed to deepening relations with the European Union, and this proclivity is displayed more flagrantly now than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Moscow oscillates between indignation towards the European Commission and smug confidence that its core bilateral partnerships will reduce disagreeable initiatives (e.g. the Eastern Partnership) to impotence. It is equally confident that new member states can be marginalized, intimidated or bought.

The OSCE has also defied sceptics. Contrary to apprehensions in the mid-1990s, it has not become Russia’s chosen instrument. Its three specialized institutions and 19 field operations have acquired substantial autonomy, have concentrated overwhelmingly on the Helsinki Final Act’s soft security ‘baskets’ and have done so largely east of Vienna, in defiance of blunt Russian warnings.⁴⁵ During the three rounds of voting that demarcated the stages of Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) became a *de facto* guarantor of peaceful regime change. This evolution explains Putin’s outburst at Munich in 2007 at those who were ‘trying to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries’.⁴⁶ At the same time, Russia set stringent constraints on ODIHR’s election monitoring in Russia’s presidential and State Duma elections – constraints that were swiftly adopted by Russia’s partners in the CSTO – and in 2008 Russia terminated the

OSCE field operation in Georgia.

Russia no longer accepts the centrality of these institutions. Its preoccupations of the 1990s – enlarging its prerogatives inside NATO and securing a pre-eminent role for the OSCE – have been overtaken, as both Medvedev's security proposals and Russia's tough termination of the OSCE's mission in Georgia demonstrate. Russia's representatives lament the fact that 'twenty years after the end of the Cold War, there still is no reliable, comprehensive and integrated security architecture throughout the area extending from Vancouver to Vladivostok'.⁴⁷ But NATO and the EU have brought peace to a large part of Europe in large part because their members accept common standards as to what takes place within these jurisdictions. Whose security will benefit if others are denied the right to embrace these standards and join these institutions? Why should liberal democracy be excluded from a discussion of European security when it has brought so much security to Europe? Russia's draft EST is not only unsound but impractical.⁴⁸ It is a flawed document that calls for discussion and scrutiny. This is because it sums up everything that is problematic about Russia's relationship with Europe. Russia's rejection of established institutions also raises a compelling question: how can it find security in a system with which it refuses to integrate? Russia has brought this conundrum upon itself, and it cannot avoid responsibility for it. But the Euro-Atlantic community cannot walk away from it either.

US CAPACITY: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS

No country can assess the adequacy of its capacity until its objectives are defined. The United States is a global power, and it must think globally. It remains the only country with the means to deploy hard and soft power in almost any part of the world. Within its purview are threats that are highly unconventional and potentially apocalyptic in character. The most intuitive conclusion to reach is that, where Russia is concerned, the top US priority must be to enlist that country's help in addressing those global threats where it enjoys influence: Afghanistan, Iran and, more generically, counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation and missile defence. A number of distinguished observers have made this point forcefully.⁴⁹ Yet for three reasons, the argument is open to question:

- It conflates global US priorities with the priorities that should govern the US–Russia relationship. If Russia could make the difference between success and failure in Iran or Afghanistan, the argument for doing so might be strong. But it cannot, at least not at an acceptable cost to itself. Its own national interests place stringent limits on the degree to which it would either support or obstruct US policy. Russia's capacity also has limits.
- There are other areas of long-standing US interest – not least on the Eurasian continent – where Russia has greater capacity to be helpful or cause harm. If Russia is to sacrifice important interests of its own in Iran or Southwest Asia, it will demand a price in areas of primary importance

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to itself: its 'near abroad' and Europe. If the United States is not willing to pay that price, then its policy will lack realism.

- If the United States *is* willing to pay this price, it will lack wisdom. The precondition of the US ability to act globally is not cooperation with Russia, but stability and security in Europe. Those who claim that this is no longer so need to ask how the United States would meet its global challenges if conflict returned to Central and Eastern Europe and if the West's core institutions, NATO and the EU, were not only divided but in disarray or on the point of dissolution.

With respect to Russia, the challenge for the United States is to achieve three objectives in a way that makes them mutually reinforcing. The broad and primary objective must be to advance Western interests in Central and Eastern Europe, the Black Sea region and across Eurasia. It has been rightly said that:

The main aim of Western policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s was to manage a peaceful transition in Europe as a whole. Policy towards Russia fitted into this wider picture, but could not be, for the West, its sole or determining preoccupation.⁵⁰

Similarly today, the United States and other Western actors have an interest in consolidating the outcome of the 1990s transition in Central Europe, maintaining the security and self-confidence of NATO's newer members, providing Russia's neighbours with the assistance and support they need to remain independent *de facto* as well as *de jure*, strengthen energy security, support a safe and predictable environment for trade and investment and diminish new and existing regional threats in the form of terrorism, weapons proliferation and transnational organized crime.

The second objective is to find sustainable and mutually beneficial accommodations with Russia. The West will not be able to do so unless it is willing to live with Russia as it is. That will entail a mature understanding of differences between Russian interests and those of the West, a dispassionate acceptance of differences of political culture, a disciplined understanding of the realities of power (which in the former Soviet Union do not always favour us) and prudent expectations. Where US capacity is essential but insufficient (as is arguably the case in Ukraine and the South Caucasus), the West must consider how to rebuild it. But it should never again allow toughness to become a substitute for strength. Firmness, prudence and patience are required in equal measure if we are to diminish misunderstanding, limit tension and identify areas where we can cooperate with Russia to mutual advantage. Under Russia's present political dispensation, these areas are likely to be limited.

The third objective should be to transform the West's relationship with Russia, because in the long run Europe will not be fully secure, let alone 'whole', until Russia feels secure in Europe. The pursuit of this objective is likely to outlast the efforts of one US administration because it depends upon a far from simple task: changing thinking and practice in Russia. Russia's current security

paradigm is 'outmoded, distrusted, damaging to Russia's neighbours and harmful to every tendency in Russia that we seek to encourage'. It will not change if the West legitimizes it. If we inadvertently legitimize it, we will create demoralization, uncertainty and instability across the Black Sea and Caspian regions.⁵¹ We will also be encouraging Russia to devise roles that are beyond its capacity to sustain and which damage its own well-being as well as that of others.

The tension between the second and the third objectives is obvious. But it is not insurmountable. Russia's current security paradigm is not unchangeable, and there is a distinguished corps of politicians and thinkers inside Russia who understand that, by maintaining its present course, Russia is isolating itself. The recent past provides examples (e.g. the Gorbachev and early Yeltsin years) where the premises governing state policy changed radically and for the better. As of today, it is impossible to determine whether the current economic crisis will change Russia for the better, for the worse or not at all.

What Americans can determine is the policy of the United States. That policy will not accomplish its objectives by means of what Lavrov has called a 'messianic' approach, let alone by reverting to the norms of containment. Neither will it succeed by adopting the unhistorical and morally desensitized approach of the neo-realists.

The realization of these objectives has two prerequisites. The first is the articulation of principles that are clear and defensible. In place of the presumptively evangelical notion of a 'Europe whole and free', the United States and its European partners would achieve greater dividends by upholding the right of every sovereign state to choose its own model of development and its own partners. That right is reflected, at least in principle, in the Russia–Belarus Union State and the CSTO, as it is in NATO and the European Union. By denying that right to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, it is Russia, not the West, that maintains a double standard. The second principle should be that Russia's values are Russia's business as long as they remain Russia's business. Once they undermine the West's values-based institutions, they become our business. Russia has a right to its choice, but it must accept the consequences. The West cannot allow it to compromise the integrity of Western laws and regulatory structures or export to Europe the 'system of understandings' that characterizes the relationship between business and the state in Russia. Neither can it concede to Russia a right to undermine new democracies in the common neighbourhood.

The second prerequisite is a two-track policy. The first track, consistent with the reset initiative, would develop cooperation with Russia and explore the limits of it. It would address issues of importance to the United States (which should include the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as well as strategic arms, the High North as well as Afghanistan), issues of mutual importance, such as energy security, and issues of particular importance to Russia, such as relations with NATO and Europe's security architecture. We have nothing to fear from a discussion of the latter issue. But we must be prepared for it. If Russia demands that the discussion takes place outside the OSCE, it should be asked why. If it insists that discussion be confined to hard security, we should

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explain why that would not advance security. We should not be bullied into accepting the desirability of a new treaty until its desirability is demonstrated. We also should be prepared to have our own ideas tested, and we should be open to persuasion. As Joschka Fischer famously said, ‘in a democracy, you have to make the case’. The same holds true for a negotiation.

The second track, as already discussed, should complement the ‘reset button’ with what Samuel Charap has called a ‘recommit button’ in relations with Russia’s neighbours, particularly Ukraine and Georgia.⁵² But if this effort is limited to rhetorical reiteration of support for independence, territorial integrity and ‘open doors’ it will only arouse cynicism. Many countries in the former Soviet region are traumatized by the Russia–Georgia war and its dispiriting aftermath. If the United States and its allies cannot rebuild confidence in tangible ways, the internal equilibrium of these countries will suffer, as will their external security. Beyond these two traditional partners, the United States must also explore fresh opportunities, which surely are present, to develop more beneficial relationships with Belarus, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan – and, with due care, the countries of Central Asia.

Both tracks should aim to foster an accurate understanding of US motives and interests, encourage cooperative approaches and instil prudence. At the same time, they should aim to foster an awareness of the international resonances generated by Russia’s domestic choices and arrangements. *In extremis*, Russia like any state might need to act decisively and unilaterally. But US policy will fail if Russia acts on the basis of an erroneous reading of US interests or without a proper understanding of the likely consequences.

The capacity of the United States to achieve these objectives will depend upon:

- (1) the adequacy of its resources (financial and political as well as military) and the prestige that accrues to any country from the intelligent management of its own affairs;
- (2) the solidity of its relationships with old and new allies and, within these alliances, the ability to live with differences and manage disagreement;
- (3) the extent to which it is prepared to treat Russia as a priority in its own right, rather than a ‘variable’ requiring attention only in the context of other strategic issues;
- (4) the ability to demonstrate the appeal, effectiveness and adaptability of Western models by example – very difficult after the financial crisis – rather than by rhetoric.
- (5) the ability to demonstrate clarity and consistency, particularly in providing timely and well-targeted support to friends and allies who come under pressure.

Above all, US capacity, and that of the West as a whole, will not reach its potential until enough people in the West realize that Russia’s future will affect their own.

NOTES

- 1 Although I am guilty of abusing this phrase, its author is the poet and critic Remy de Gourmont.
- 2 Vyacheslav Kostikov, *Trud*, 22 February 1994.
- 3 'On the whole, we have to admit that we have failed to recognize the complexity and dangerous nature of the processes taking place in our own country and the world in general. In any case, we have failed to respond to them appropriately. *We showed weakness, and the weak are trampled upon. Some want to cut off a juicy morsel from us while others are helping them. They are helping because they believe that, as one of the world's major nuclear powers, Russia is still posing a threat to someone, and therefore this threat must be removed*' [author's emphasis]: President Putin's Televised Address to the Nation, 4 September 2004 (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts: Former Soviet Union*, 28 April 1994; hereafter *SWB*).
- 4 James Sherr, 'Living with Russia in the Post-Soviet Era', Camberley: Soviet Studies Research Centre, paper F31, July 1992, p. 8.
- 5 In the words of State Secretary Gennadiy Burbulis, an overtly pro-Western liberal, 'there is a logic that will bring the former Soviet republics back again our way. The West will not take them as they are'. Cited in Jeff Checkel, 'Russian Foreign Policy: Back to the Future?', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 16 October 1992.
- 6 Deputy Foreign Minister Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, *Strategy and Tactics of Russian Foreign Policy in the New Abroad* [*Strategiya i taktika vneshney politiki Rossii v novom zarubezh'ye*], government memorandum, September 1992, p. 4 (author's copy).
- 7 Hence in February 1993, Yeltsin called upon the United Nations and other international bodies to 'grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability' in the former Soviet Union – and did so in the hope that such support would be forthcoming.
- 8 As Kostikov said, 'Russia is a great power and has begun to say this loudly' (see note 2 above).
- 9 At a closed address on 27 April 1994, excerpted (and partially paraphrased) by ITAR-TASS, *SWB*, 27 April 1994.
- 10 As early as October 1992, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev stated, 'in the future our foreign policy will continue to defend Russia's vital interests, even in these cases where it is contrary to the interests of the West' (*Izvestiya*, 8 October 1992). On replacing Kozyrev in January 1996, Evgeniy Primakov defined Russia's top foreign policy priority as 'the strengthening of centripetal tendencies on the territory of the former USSR'. Transcript of press conference [*Zapis' Press-Konferentsii Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii E.M. Primakova*], 12 January 1996 (author's translation).
- 11 Although this emphasis appeared as early as the draft military doctrine of May 1992, which stated that 'Russia starts from the assumption that its security and that of other CIS states are indivisible' and defines the 'presence' and 'build-up' of foreign forces in adjacent countries as a 'military danger'.
- 12 Vladimir Putin, 'Russia at the Turn of the Millennium', speech, December 1999.
- 13 Energy Strategy of Russia to 2020 [*Energeticheskaya strategiya rossii na period do 2020*], Government of the Russian Federation, 28 August 2003, No. 1234-g.
- 14 As Putin declared in his 'Millennium' speech, 'Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence. They determined the mentality of Russians and the policy of the government throughout the history of Russia, and they cannot but do so at present.'

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- 15 The *Concept of Foreign Policy* was approved on 28 June 2000 and published on 7 July (and in English on that date in *SWB*) – hereafter *Concept*.
- 16 Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Address to the National Press Club, Washington, DC, 27 April 2000.
- 17 For example, by the state-controlled ORT television on 18 April 2000: ‘Kyiv is sure that from now on Russian–Ukrainian relations are going to be on a much tougher and more pragmatic footing than before’; and *Izvestiya* the same day: ‘It seems that the new Russian President is prepared to be far tougher towards the Commonwealth countries than his predecessor was. ... The warm style of contact between the “brother Slavs” is being replaced by the cold, businesslike style of contact between foreign policies linked to one another by legal obligations’.
- 18 As Dmitry Trenin wrote in 2004, ‘Resting on strengthening economic links, Moscow will definitely be able to secure political loyalty from the CIS countries. ... The principal instrument for realizing the “CIS project” will be the achievement of understandings with the governing elites of the CIS. This will demand long-term and painstaking work to create and promote in neighbouring countries groups of influence orientated towards Moscow and a gradual weakening and neutralization of pro-Western circles’. ‘The CIS Project – The New Priority of Russian Foreign Policy?’ [*Proyekt SNG – noviy prioritet rossiyskoy vneshney politiki?*], February 2004 (author’s copy).
- 19 Thus the November 1992 Concept of Foreign Policy states that Russia ‘will vigorously oppose all attempts to build up the politico-military presence of third countries in the states adjoining Russia’, adding the ‘urgent’ task of strengthening ‘the unified military-strategic space’ (Interfax, 2 November 1992).
- 20 See James Sherr and Steven Main, ‘Russian and Ukrainian Perceptions of Events in Yugoslavia’, Conflict Studies Research Centre, RMA Sandhurst, 25 April 1999: ‘The most serious consequence of the Kosovo crisis is likely to be the legitimisation of anti-Western perspectives which Russia’s moderates have thus far kept under control. ... In the worst, but far from implausible case that an anti-Western leadership comes to power [after Yeltsin], four axes of breakout would arouse interest: (1) “reviving Russia” by a “strong”, regulated economic policy and by a stronger and larger “Slavic core” (to Ukraine’s possible peril); (2) a serious long-term commitment to revive Russia’s military power; (3) the Balkans, where “intelligence struggle” will be enlisted to undermine Western allies and clients; (4) a search for “strategic partnerships” with India, China and possibly Arab countries and Iran’.
- 21 In this view, I am very much in agreement with Sir Andrew Wood, who recently stated that Russia has been ‘very much the main actor here, and Western policies towards the country have been a contributory rather than a principal factor in determining what has happened’. ‘Reflections on Russia and the West’, REP Programme Paper 08/01, November 2008, www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/12710_1108russia_west.
- 22 James Sherr, ‘The New Russian Intelligence Empire’, *Problems of Post-Communism* 42(6) (November–December 1995): 11–17.
- 23 See, for example, Vladimir Milov, President of the Institute of Energy Policy (and former Deputy Minister of Energy), ‘The Power of Oil and Energy Insecurity’, Moscow: Institute of Energy Policy, April 2006; *The EU-Russia Dialogue: Competition v Monopolies* (Paris: IFRI, September 2006); Vladislav Inozemtsev, ‘The Resource Curse and Russia’s Economic Crisis’, Russia and Eurasia Programme Roundtable Summary, Chatham House, London, March 2009.
- 24 Author’s notes from Valdai Club lunch, Moscow, 12 September 2008.

- 25 The members of the regional organization of former Soviet republics are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Although Ukraine initially joined the CIS, its Foreign Ministry insists it is not a member, as it never signed the organization's charter. Georgia left the CIS after the war of 2008.
- 26 Andrew C. Kuchins and Thomas Sanderson, 'Central Asia's northern exposure', *New York Times*, 5 August 2009: 'Uzbek officials are deeply sceptical of Moscow. They believe the Russians see their interests best served by continued instability in Afghanistan'.
- 27 'Appeal to President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko' [*Obrashchenie k prezidentu ukrainiy Viktoru Yushchenko*], <http://kremlin.ru>.
- 28 *Concept*.
- 29 Dmitry Medvedev, 'Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation' [*Poslanie Federal'nomy Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii*], 5 November 2008, Presidential website and in English in *SWB*.
- 30 Interview with the television company NTV on 31 August 2008, published on the presidential website the same day.
- 31 *Concept*.
- 32 Text of Alexei Miller's address to EU ambassadors, Moscow, 18 April 2006, p. 1. [*Rasshiprovka viystupleniya Predsedatelya Pravleniya OAO 'Gazprom' Alekseya Millera na vstreche s poslami stran Evropeyskogo Soiюза v rezidentsii posla Avstrii*].
- 33 Vladimir Vorontkov (Director of Department of Pan-European Cooperation, MFA Russia), 'Statement at the Joint Meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation and the OSCE Permanent Council', 15 September 2009, FSC-PC, DEL.28/09, www.osce.org.
- 34 'Statement by Sergei Lavrov at the opening session of the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference', 23 June 2009.
- 35 For a damning assessment of these prospective accords, see Pyotr Belov, 'Experts Concerned about Russia's Nuclear Deterrence Potential', Interfax, cited in *Johnson's Russia List*, hereafter *JRL*, 30 November 2009. For a more nuanced assessment see Pavel Baev, 'Strategic Countdown and Russia's Escalating Instability', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation), 30 November 2009.
- 36 Vladimir Putin, 'Russia must build missiles to counter US ABM threat', ITAR-TASS, 29 December 2009 (cited in *SWB*).
- 37 Meeting with Valdai Club, 10 September 2009.
- 38 A group comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.
- 39 Jacob Kipp, 'More Reboot or a Real Strategic Overload?', *Eurasia Defence Monitor* 6 (229) (14 December 2009), Jamestown Foundation, Washington, DC.
- 40 Marlène Laruelle, *Beyond the Afghan Trauma: Russia's Return to Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation), August 2009.
- 41 On the *Arctic Sea* affair, see Yuliya Latynina, 'Recovered ship may have been delivering Russian arms to Syria or Iran', *Novaya Gazeta*, 21 August 2009, cited in *SWB*; and 'Missing channel pirate ship carried Russian arms for Iran', *Sunday Times*, 6 September 2009. On Netanyahu see 'Israeli Prime Minister paid secret visit to Russia – 7 September', *Yediot Aharonot* (cited in *SWB*, 9 September 2009); and 'Israeli President behind US–Russian accord not to deploy missiles', *Ma'ariv*, 21 September (cited in *SWB*).
- 42 Private interview with the author.
- 43 *Russia Profile*, Weekly Experts Panel, 'Bad Signs for Russia in the Post-Soviet Space', introduced by Vladimir Frolov, 31 July 2009.

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- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Gusev at the November 2000 meeting of the OSCE: 'We have been warning our Western partners that we oppose the use of the OSCE for interference in the internal affairs of the countries situated to the east of Vienna. This time we are sending a clear signal: we won't allow this to happen', *Financial Times*, 23 January 2001.
- 46 Vladimir Putin, 'Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy', Munich, 10 February 2007, cited <http://kremlin.ru>.
- 47 Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko, 'NATO enlargement is a frightful destabilization of security in Europe' [*Rasshirenie NATO chrevato destabilizatsiei situatsii v Evrope*], 2 April 2009, www.rian.ru/politics/20090402/166796711.html.
- 48 It is laden with provisions that are perilously selective or permissive (Articles 6–11) or encroach on the autonomy of alliances and the confidentiality of their deliberations (Article 3), and it contains provisions that cannot possibly bind because they are intrinsically open to interpretation (e.g. the thrice reiterated obligation in Articles 1 and 2 not to act in ways that affect the 'security of any other Party').
- 49 See, for example, *The Right Direction for US Policy toward Russia: A Report of the US Commission on Policy toward Russia*, published by the Belfer Center for Science & International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School and the Nixon Center, March 2009. The Commission, chaired by Senators Chuck Hagel and Gary Hart, and directed by Dmitry Simes, consists of 22 serving and former political figures, officials, diplomats and experts. See also Robert Legvold, testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, US Congress, 25 February 2009; Thomas Graham, *Resurgent Russia and US Purposes* (New York: The Century Foundation, April 2009); and *US–Russia Relations: Facing Reality Pragmatically* (Project Co-Directors: Andrew Kuchins and Thomas Gomart) (Washington, DC: CSIS & IFRI, July 2008), p. 6.
- 50 Wood, 'Reflections on Russia and the West'.
- 51 James Sherr in Conflict Studies Research Centre, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, Ministry of Defence, 'Material Offered in Evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee', May 2007; HCDC, *Russia: A New Confrontation*, Tenth Report of Session 2008–9, Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 30 June 2009, pp. EV134–40, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/200809/cmselect/cmdfence/276/276.pdf>.
- 52 Samuel Charap (with Laura Conley, Peter Juul, Andrew Light and Julian Wong), *After the 'Reset': A Strategy and New Agenda for US–Russia Policy* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, July 2009), pp. 3ff.