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**The War on Terrorism and the
Revived U.S.-Russian Relationship**

by

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Abstract

Despite the high hopes for collaborative relations between the United States and Russia at the time of the creation of the Russian Federation, growing frictions in relations between the two states led, by spring 2001 to virtual confrontation. These frictions derived from very different perspectives on national objectives that had emerged in Washington and Moscow. While Russia was committed to reestablishing its place as an important global power, the U.S. political elite had virtually written Russia off as an unimportant actor in the international system. But, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 seemingly changed the nature of the relationship between the two countries. This occurred primarily because President Putin of Russia, who had concluded that Russia's future lay with and in the West, seized the opportunity afforded by the global war on terrorism to restructure Russia's foreign policy and reopen opportunities for closer involvement with the United States and the West more broadly. Putin accepted the U.S. position on virtually all outstanding issues on which the two countries had been divided – NATO expansion, the U.S. development of a missile defense system and the abrogation of the 1972 ABM treaty, U.S. involvement on territory of the former USSR, etc.

So long as the Russian leadership is willing to act as a junior partner to the United States – much as the countries of Western Europe have done during the past half-century, at least in the security arena – the emerging relationship is likely to remain stable. Only within the context of the Western community is Russia able to fulfill its political, economic and security objectives. During the summit meeting in Moscow in May 2002 Russia, in effect, recognized that its relationship with the United States is asymmetrical, not one based on a presumed equality. The Russians, moreover, have renounced the

costly and fruitless strategic and geopolitical contest that has characterized their relationship with the United States, even during the 1990s. Yet, for the relationship to prosper the United States cannot simply demand that Russia accept its interpretation of events or its policy orientation, as it has tended to do in the recent past. Serious issues remain to cloud the relationship, including the question of Russian exports of nuclear technology to Iran and the apparent commitment of the Bush Administration to bring down the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq regardless of the position on Iraq taken by its partners.

In March 2001, shortly after taking office as President of the United States, George W. Bush seemingly set the tone for his administration's relations with Russia, when he announced the expulsion of fifty Russian diplomats charged with spying. This represented the nadir of U.S. relations with Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union less than a decade earlier. After a brief honeymoon period in Russian-U.S. relations immediately after the creation of the Russian Federation, a number of issues arose that gradually soured the relationship – disagreements on the level of U.S./Western economic assistance, NATO military intervention in former Yugoslavia, NATO expansion eastward into former communist Europe, Russian policy in the “Near Abroad” and in Chechnya, Russian military and nuclear energy exports, growing evidence of domestic corruption in Russia, etc. At least some of these rifts were to have been expected, since the initial foreign policy orientation of the Russian leadership under President Boris Yeltsin and his foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, was based on assumptions about the international political system and the coincidence of Russian interests with those of the West that were not fully realistic. Yeltsin's foreign policy almost immediately generated strong opposition across a broad range of the Russian political elite – including among a very substantial segment of those committed to establishing a liberal, democratic state. This pressure resulted in an important shift in Russian policy. By early 1996, when Evgeny Primakov replaced Kozyrev as foreign minister, Russia was already pursuing policies meant to distance itself from the United States and to rebuild the foundations of Russia's role as a world power. (Kanet, 2001, pp. 511-15; Truscott, 1997, *passim*). This was to be the case for the next five years.

On the U.S. side the shift in attitudes and policies toward Russia was also noticeable. Despite official statements by the Clinton Administration of Russia's long-term importance for the security and welfare of Europe and the world more broadly, U.S. policy was increasingly made without reference to Russia – or, at least, without reference to the concerns of Moscow. Moreover, powerful conservative forces within the Republican Party and the U.S. Senate, made clear their views of Russia's basic irrelevance to U.S. interests.¹ With the arrival in Washington in January 2001 of George W. Bush and his new foreign policy and security team – many of whom had earlier made their names as “cold warriors” in the administrations of Presidents Reagan and the elder George Bush – the prospects for the relationship seemingly deteriorated. One of the very first actions of the new administration was the decision, in a review of U.S. policy conducted by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsford, that Russia was not central to U.S. interests. The view of Russia as a declining power underlay the initial tough approach to Russia that included the expulsion of Russia's diplomats, as noted above (Kettle, 2001; Melloan, 2001).

As Christopher Layne has argued, U.S. policy toward Russia over the course of the past decade has been but an extension of the post-World War II U.S. strategy aimed at preventing the emergence of other great powers. (Layne, 2002; Schwarz and Layne, 2002).² Throughout the long period of the Cold War the United States acted consistently to counter Soviet influence globally, but also to ensure its own dominant position within

¹ Senator Jesse Helms, the former powerful chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was especially outspoken. In introductory remarks before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Helms stated that the hearings would proceed from the presumption that the ABM Treaty had ceased to exist and that attempts to revise it would be defeated (Helms, 1999; U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 1999.)

² The argument is also made in various forms in the collection of essays that comprise “Through the Looking Glass,” 2001, and in Brooks and Wohlforth, 2002..

its own alliance structures. Since the end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Soviet Union, U.S. policy – even under President Bill Clinton who seemingly recognized the important changes that globalization was bringing to international relations and to the U.S. role – was committed to maintaining U.S. predominance. As Layne puts it, “Today, the United States apparently has firmly consolidated its global hegemony. Surely, no great power in the history of the modern international system (since approximately 1500) has ever been as dominant as the United States in global politics” (Layne, 2002, p. 237).³ Although the Clinton Administration spoke of the central importance of Russia to the future of U.S. and world security, Russian interests were generally ignored with they came into conflict with U.S. objectives – as in the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, in NATO expansion, and in Russian military sales to long-time clients.

Yet, all these differences in Russian-U.S. relations seemingly came to an end with the disastrous terror attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. In the ensuing months U.S. unilateralism was muted and, more important, President Vladimir Putin committed himself and his country to full support for the U.S.-led global war on terrorism. By early summer 2002 the two countries had agreed to a dramatic reduction in nuclear weapons, to an interactive Russian relationship with NATO, to U.S. military involvement in regions of the former Soviet Union, and to the elimination of restrictions on U.S.-Russian trade. In other words, to cite Secretary of State Colin Powell, the shift in relations represents “a seismic seachange of historic proportions.” (Powell, 2001) But, to what extent is the dramatic shift in Russian-U.S. relations likely to be permanent? Is the

³ Brooks and Wohlforth (2002, p. 21) make the same point as follows: “If today’s American primacy does not constitute unipolarity, then nothing ever will. The only things left for dispute are how long it will last and what the implications are for American foreign policy.” For Immanuel Wallerstein (2002) the answer to that question is quite clear; U.S. dominance has already begun to wane.

change in the relationship a strategic or merely a tactical shift in foreign policy positions on behalf of one or both of the countries involved? Those are the central questions to be addressed in the present paper. NATO expansion, the development of a U.S. national missile defense system, and Russian exports of nuclear technology have been among the policy areas in which the two sides have had serious disagreements in the past and will be discussed here primarily as illustrations of the degree to which disagreements on key issues have been resolved, or merely “papered over.” The argument of the paper will be organized into four sections dealing with 1) the evolution of Russian foreign policy from 1991 to 11 September 2001; 2) key outstanding issues in Russian-U.S. relations during that same period, including the issues of NATO expansion and national missile defense; 3) the reasons for President Putin’s dramatic policy shifts after September 2001, including the Russian concerns about the possible impact of terrorism on Russian stability; and 4) future prospects for Russian-U.S. relations, including in the general area of fighting terrorism.

Russian Foreign Policy from Kozyrev to Putin

Despite pursuing a decidedly pro-Western policy during 1992 and into 1993, Moscow began to develop aspects of a more independent policy orientation, in part as a reaction to domestic pressures and in part because of the growing evidence that the West, including the United States, was not about to fulfill the unrealistic expectations of economic assistance that underlay that policy. While the liberal forces around President Yeltsin saw Russia’s future tied closely to the West, others argued that such a policy orientation was “romantic” and unrealistic and ignored Russia’s fundamental interests,

especially in what they called the “near abroad” and in relations with long-term friends in the Middle East, Asia, and the Balkans.⁴ The view of Russian identity among a wide spectrum of the political elite, including many of President Yeltsin’s supporters, was based on an imperial conception of Russia that excluded the separate political identity of Ukraine and Belarus and assumed a dominant Russian position throughout the former Soviet space. In practical terms this meant the need for an immediate reorientation of Moscow’s focus on the “near abroad.”

As part of the gradual policy shift, the Russians advocated expanding the role of the all-European CSCE peacekeeping organization as an alternative to enhancing NATO’s activities; they negotiated collective security pacts with some members of the CIS to deal with potential and existing challenges to stability; they continued the normalization of relations with China based, in part, on arms exports. Moreover, after initially accepting the idea of Poland’s entering NATO, President Yeltsin – and the entire Russian political establishment from left to right -- soon began to criticize any effort to expand NATO into East-Central Europe. The shift in Russian policy that began during 1993 was closely related to the domestic power struggle between Yeltsin and the Russian Parliament during summer and fall 1993 that culminated in Yeltsin’s use of military force against the latter. In part that confrontation emerged because of very different views concerning the reforms that had been imposed on the Russian economy and their drastic impact on most of the population. The success of the nationalists in the December 1993 elections for the new Duma provided clear evidence of the strength of the public protests against the hardships that Yeltsin’s market reform policy had brought to most people. By

⁴ Alexei Arbatov (1993, 1997) provides two excellent reviews of the growing criticism of Russian policy ‘and of the gradual shift that occurred during 1992-1996.

then it had also become clear that, despite substantial Western loans, the level of economic assistance expected in Moscow was not going to become available.⁵

During the next two years, until Kozyrev was replaced as foreign minister, Russia continued to pursue a foreign policy that emphasized the importance of relations with the United States and the West, while simultaneously engaging in more assertive policies within the CIS and in rebuilding some of the relationships with developing countries that had been virtually abandoned in recent years. It was during this period that the majority of the Russian political elite reached agreement on the general guidelines of Russian foreign policy. Top priority in the foreign policy area went to the geographic region of the former Soviet Union, “the near abroad.” Besides agreeing on the importance of Russia’s continued role as the regional hegemon, they also were committed to the retention of Russia’s status as a nuclear power and to the reestablishment of Russia as a world power.⁶ These objectives remain at the center of Russian policy today, although President Putin has modified substantially the approach to accomplishing them.

Yeltsin’s appointment of Evgeny Primakov as foreign minister in January 1996 did not really usher in a new era in Russian foreign policy. Although the tone of policy and the public justifications for it became more assertive and nationalistic, the substantive content followed the lines already established under Kozyrev. Primakov emphasized

⁵ Although this is not the place to discuss the direct role of the United States and other Western governments, as well as international financial institutions, in pushing economic reform policies in Russia that had such disastrous results, it is important to note that by the mid-1990s many in Russia blamed the United States and its Western allies for much of the economic disaster. See Shiraev and Zubok, 2000, pp. 87 ff.

⁶ This policy orientation was outlined in the foreign policy statement signed into law by President Yeltsin in April 1993 and pursued a pragmatic nationalist approach that emphasized domestic development over international affairs. Although “The Fundamental Positions of the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation” was never published, Leon Aron (1998, p. 25) cites an unpublished version in his possession; see, also, Chernov, 1993.

more than had his predecessor the fact that Russia had been and remained a great power, despite its current economic and political problems, and that its foreign policy should recognize this fact. Russia would never accept dependence on outside powers and was committed to the maintenance of a stable multipolar world in which the relationship between Russia and the United States would be based on an “equal partnership.” (Primakov, 1996; Gornostaev, 1998) Although Kozyrev had emphasized the importance of Russia’s ties to the West even while increasingly pursuing Russia’s interests elsewhere, Primakov justified policies in pragmatic terms of Russian national interest. This meant, for example, a continuing focus on Russia’s ability to exert its primacy in security and political developments within what Moscow considered its sphere of influence – i.e., the territory of the former Soviet Union. Closely related to this and to Russia’s commitment to ensuring a transition to a multipolar world was the objective of strengthening the role of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe [OCSE] and the UN Security Council – where Russia exercised influence – in place of NATO and other Western institutions from which it was excluded.

Early in 1998 the Russian economy continued to experience serious problems. In August of that year the global economic and financial problems that had begun in East Asia contributed to an almost total meltdown of the Russian economy. Personal savings disappeared, agriculture – already down more than 60 percent since 1990 – collapsed, as did most other sectors of the economy. In an attempt to sidestep the growing opposition to his government and its policies, Yeltsin appointed Foreign Minister Primakov, who commanded the support of the left in the Duma, as prime minister, while turning once again to Washington and the West for support to bolster the Russian economy.

As part of the effort to diversify their foreign relations the Russians in the second half of the 1990s successfully pursued policies aimed at strengthening ties with a number of countries throughout Asia – several of which had been important clients of the former USSR. This occurred despite strong and repeated opposition from the United States. Central to this effort was the announced “strategic partnership” with China, whose leaders shared Russia’s growing concerns about global U.S. dominance. A number of high-level meetings between the two countries during 1997 and 1998 raised the issue of the threat of U.S. global hegemony and condemned NATO expansion, as well as the growing pressure that NATO was bringing against Yugoslavia. By early 2001 the commitment of George W. Bush to move ahead with the development of a national missile defense system catalyzed Russian-Chinese policy collaboration. Moreover, an important part of the improving relationship between the two countries was the growth of Russian exports, especially of a wide range of military equipment.

Simultaneously, in the late 1990s Moscow strengthened relations with Iran and rebuilt relations with India, both of which represented important markets for Russian military equipment and nuclear technology.⁷ These initiatives, which had the dual objective of generating additional exports and strengthening Russia’s position as an independent global actor, brought Russia almost immediately into direct conflict with Washington’s policy objectives.

When President Boris Yeltsin plucked Aleksandr Putin from political obscurity in August 1999 and began to groom him as his successor, the state of Russia’s relations with

⁷ On Russian policy in Asia see Rozman, Nosov, and Watanabe, eds., 1999; Truscott, pp. 54-58; 1997; and Conley, 2001.

the United States had reached a plateau. Moreover, several developments had occurred that were especially relevant for Russian policy. First, and probably most important was the renewed challenge from Chechen separatists that, in effect, provided the new prime minister with the opportunity to present himself as the forceful political leader needed to destroy the terrorist challenge and to stabilize the political and economic situation in Russia. After a reported terrorist bombing of an apartment building in Moscow, Putin initiated a massive military campaign in fall 1999 that brought Moscow *de facto* control of most of the secessionist republic. This bold initiative generated support among the majority of the Russian population and played a role in Putin's resounding electoral victory in spring 2000 – even though the brutality of the policy raised serious criticism in the West, including censure by the Council of Europe.

Relations with the United States had also been seriously strained because of the U.S. and British bombing of Iraq and, even more, because of NATO's campaign against Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and his attempt to expel the majority of the ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. Although Russia strongly opposed NATO's military interventions – made evident by President Yeltsin's walking out of an OSCE meeting in November 1997 -- the United States and its NATO allies simply ignored that opposition. Thus, when Vladimir Putin took over as interim president on 1 January 2000, he inherited these and an entire series of additional conflictual issues in Russia's relations with the United States, and the West more generally, that included the restructuring of the Russian debt, NATO and EU expansion, the U.S. commitment to move forward with a missile defense system, the longer term future of Yugoslavia and the Balkans, and so on.

Yet the general parameters of Russian policy, including policy toward the United States, were set early in Putin's presidency and derived directly from the policy lines established in Moscow in the late 1990s. Putin made clear his commitment to reestablishing the place of Russia as the preeminent regional power and as an important international actor. An essential precondition for the fulfillment of these objectives, as the "Foreign Policy Concept" approved by Putin indicates, primacy must be given to the internal political stability and economic viability of Russia. (Foreign Policy Concept, 2000; "Kontseptsii natsional'noi bezopasnosti, 2000). Russia must ensure against separatism, national and religious extremism, and terrorism. Putin moved forcefully and, in many cases effectively, in reasserting central governmental control in Russia. The economy, while still not flourishing, had shown strong signs of turning around with growth rates of 4.5, 10.0, and 5.0 percent in the years 1999-2001 (Central Bank, 2001). These political and economic gains, however, were made with little regard for the civil liberties and democratic processes to which his government is nominally committed. His anti-corruption campaign, for example, soon become a catch all that seemingly targeted those who in some way challenge his position or are concerned about the authoritarian turn in Russian politics— such as those associated with the independent media..

In the foreign policy arena Putin continued to seek allies who shared Russia's commitment to preventing the global dominance of the United States that represents, in the words of the "Foreign Policy Concept," a threat to international security and to Russia's goal of serving as a major center of influence in a multipolar world. Most of the issues on which Russia and the United States disagreed already in the mid-1990s continued to plague that relationship, as we will see below. In other words, until the

terrorist attacks on the United States in mid-September 2001 there was little evidence that the seemingly enduring issues that divided the two countries throughout the 1990s would disappear soon -- in particular since they derived from core elements of their respective foreign policy commitments.

Before beginning a discussion of the shifts in Russian policy since 11 September 2002 and the longer-term prospects for Russian-U.S. relations, we will first trace in more detail the essential elements of U.S. foreign policy and the factors that contributed to the tensions in Russian-U.S. relations by mid-2001, immediately prior to the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

U.S. Russian-U.S. Relations, 1991-2001

As noted at the outset of this essay, it is important to recognize that a primary objective of U.S. policy since the end of the Cold War – as was the case with U.S. policy throughout the Cold War – has been the establishment and maintenance of U.S. foreign and security policy dominance. Throughout the 1990s this objective was clear in U.S. policy toward both opponents and former opponents, such as Russia, as well as in relations with long-term allies. Even during the administration of President Bill Clinton, who regularly emphasized the importance of globalization and of the necessity of full U.S. involvement in collaborative efforts to establish the mechanisms for the resolution of global problems, the United States always made clear that it expected to be the dominant actor in the organizations or agreements that emerged. Within NATO, for example, even though the United States strongly criticized its European allies for not bearing their fair share of the costs of maintaining security, the Clinton Administration

was concerned about the commitment of its European partners to the development of a joint, EU-based, foreign and security policy that was not an integral part of NATO and, thus, not dependent upon overall U.S. approval.⁸

During the presidential electoral campaign of 2000 George W. Bush and his spokespersons made clear that their approach to foreign policy making and to relations with the rest of the world would be much more assertive than that of their Democratic predecessors and would focus solely on the interests of the United States as defined in Washington and be far less concerned about the reactions or sensibilities of foreign countries.⁹ The result, from virtually the first day in office of the new Bush Administration, was a policy of unilateralism that seemed bent on reversing virtually all aspects of U.S. support for and involvement in international agreements. Over the first year and a half of his presidency, for example, George W. Bush has renounced the Kyoto Protocol on global warming; refused to support the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court to try war criminals; threatened to withdraw from U.N.

⁸ Indeed, there have been voices in the United States that have questioned the plans for a Common European Defense and Security Policy (CESDP), arguing that it can lead to a waste of European military assets, the alienation of NATO members outside the EU, and the creation of rival military structures that might make it difficult for the United States and the EU to respond coherently to future crises (Drozdiak, 2000). The most serious objection has been the perception of the Europeanization of the alliance as a step toward the eventual decoupling of the alliance. From a more practical point of view, the leadership in Washington could scarcely imagine security crises that would not involve NATO and the United States. Hence, behind Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's (2000, p. 4) argument of "no duplication, no decoupling, no discrimination," the United States seems to have been able to impose on the EU the perspective that its new force is not to be seen as a European army distinct from NATO, that it can be used only for peacekeeping purposes, and that its use will almost always involve NATO in one way or another. Thus, the U.S. position has combined an attempt to accommodate the European endeavor, while keeping NATO intact – and the United States in a leadership position in the continent's security (Croft, *et al.*, 2000, p. 510; Pond, 2000, p. 11).

⁹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (2002) maintains that the international system is currently operating at three different levels -- at the traditional level of power politics where military power is crucial and the United States reigns uncontested; at the level of economic power and influence, where the EU matches or outdistances the United States in many areas; and at the level of nongovernmental activities. However, the United States leadership, in his view, continues to focus only on the first level. In his words, "Those who recommend a hegemonic American foreign policy based on such traditional descriptions of American power are relying on woefully inadequate analysis."

peace-keeping operations unless U.S. troops were granted full immunity from any possible international legal oversight; abrogated the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Defence Treaty; begun questioning the nuclear test ban treaty signed in 1995; introduced punitive tariffs against steel imports and expanded subsidies for U.S. farm products, both in apparent disregard for the regulations agreed to in the World Trade Organization. Perhaps the clearest example of Washington's disdain for the views of others can be seen, not in the words of the "hawks" in Washing, but in those of Secretary of State Colin Power, usually regarded as the most "European" and most "internationalist" member of the Bush Administration. After the Bush-Putin summit meetings in Moscow and the establishment of a NATO-Russia Council in spring 2002, he insisted that U.S. policy remained as "multilateralist" as it ever had been. Our task, he explained, is to try to persuade our friends that our policies are right. But if that fails, "then we will take the position we believe is correct and I hope the Europeans are left with a better understanding of the way in which we want to do business."¹⁰

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks in September 2002 the Bush Administration backed off from the most assertive aspects of its unilateralist rhetoric and emphasized the need for international cooperation to fight the war on global terrorism. Yet, despite the decision of NATO to view the attacks as an act of war against the alliance that brought Article 5 into effect, the United States has not called upon the alliance to play an active role in military operations in Afghanistan against Al Qaeda or the Taliban. Rather, it has relied almost exclusively on bilateral arrangements with individual partners – arrangements that are of more tactical importance and that it can more easily control. With the rapid initial victory in Afghanistan in fall 2001, the Bush

¹⁰ Cited in Charles Krauthammer, "The Axis of Petulance," *The Washington Post*, 1 March 2002.

Administration reverted to policy positions that largely ignored the concerns and interests of other key international actors, including European allies. At times U.S. policy under George W. Bush is guided by rigid ideologically based assumptions that ignore the views of European allies, assert the absolute correctness of U.S. positions, and advocate the almost indiscriminate use of military force to accomplish objectives.¹¹

We return now to a brief overview of Russian-U.S. relations over the course of the first decade of Russia's existence after the demise of the Soviet Union and to a discussion of the central issues of conflict that divided the two countries prior to the attacks of September 2002. When the Russian Federation emerged in December 1991 as a fully independent state President Yeltsin was faced with task of forging a new strategy that would depend, first, on the type of state that he wished to create and the most important interests that had to be protected before he could begin to develop a vision of Russia's place in the world. The first months of the new Russia – in fact, much of the Yeltsin era – was characterized by indecision, contradictory policy initiatives and, at times, even policy chaos in the foreign, as well as the domestic, policy arenas. At the very outset Foreign Minister Kozyrev set the parameters of a clearly pro-Western policy perspective based on a very positive view of the West's intentions. He argued that militarism and imperialism were things of the past and that global economic

¹¹ An article by the well-known and influential conservative columnist Bill O'Reilly (2002) states this view most clearly. After criticizing Germany and the EU for "inhibiting the war on terror" because of their concerns about the U.S. use of military tribunals and their opposition to capital punishment, he charges them with "constantly intrud[ing] on our right of self defense." He concludes by asserting: "The United States cannot win the war on terror with allies that won't help us and with a justice system [in the EU] that considers foreign enemies to be common criminals." Robert Kagan (2002) has recently developed the intellectual underpinnings of the argument that, as the single dominant global power, U.S. interests increasingly diverge from those of its long-term allies. Kagan in effect justifies the unilateralist thrust in U.S. policy based on this growing divergence of interests and on the massive gap in capabilities between the United States and the rest of the world.

interdependence and the spread of political democracy were in the process of transforming the very nature of international politics. (Kozyrev, 1990) For Kozyrev and the liberals who staffed important positions in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia had to end its decades of isolation from the Western world. To do this required the creation of effective institutions to support and nurture the emerging democracy and market economy. They emphasized the importance of focusing on universal human rights as the way to integrate Russia into the family of democratic states and to revive Russia as a normal great power. Central to this policy was the commitment to establish a close partnership with the United States, as outlined in a “Charter for Russian-American Partnership and Friendship” signed in Washington 1992. Simultaneously Russia recognized the independence of the CIS states and began withdrawing troops from the Baltics and the Caucasus. Throughout 1992 Russia continued to pursue other policies that, in fact, supported U.S. policy positions – in Iraq, in the emerging conflicts in Yugoslavia, and elsewhere.

However, voices of opposition, even among moderate liberals, arose in Russia almost immediately condemning Yeltsin and Kozyrev for abandoning Russian interests in their excessive and futile concern for Western good will and financial support.¹² As we have already noted, during the next year, or so, debate raged in Moscow about the basic orientation of Russian policy and, even more fundamentally, about the identity and nature of the new Russia and policy, in fact, began to diverge from the solidly pro-Western positions taken in 1992. Russia’s increasingly vocal claims about its status as a global

¹² The strong criticism of Russian policy, in fact, built upon similar condemnations of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze for supposedly “capitulating” to the interests of the United States and dismantling both the Soviet empire and the Soviet security system.

nuclear power and some of its policy initiatives, especially toward its near neighbors, began to generate concern and criticism in the United States. These included Russia's evident meddling, including military support for secessionist groups, in the domestic affairs of other CIS countries, and the decision to use military force to crush the rebellion in Chechnya (Lynch, 2000). Although Western states did not challenge Russia's legitimate concerns about territorial integrity, the massiveness of the response raised serious reservations in the West, as well as throughout East-Central Europe. At the same time domestic political pressures, including those from the Duma, brought Russia into increasing conflict with the United States and NATO on the latter's decision to use military force against the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Moscow also came into increasing disagreement with the United States over sanctions brought against Saddam Hussein's Iraq at the time of the Gulf War. All of these issues remained at the center of the deterioration of Russian relations with the United States during the second half of the decade.

Even more serious a concern for the Russians was the Western commitment to moving ahead with the eastward expansion of NATO. As others have demonstrated most conclusively, the primary factors that drove the decisions about NATO expansion in the West had to do with the viability of the organization and the perceived need to find a new rationale for an organization whose original mission had disappeared (Aybet. 1999; Black, 2000; Kaufman, 2002). U.S. leaders, concerned that the demise of NATO would reduce the U.S. ability to influence developments in Europe, soon played the leading role

in the pushing forward the decision to move ahead with expansion.¹³ Russian leaders expressed concerns that NATO expansion would create a new division in Europe and sow distrust that could lead to a new confrontation.¹⁴ They also argued that NATO expansion played into the hands of non-democratic and anti-Western nationalist forces in Russia and weakened the position of true “reformers.” But, recognizing the futility of its opposition and desirous of having some influence on NATO policy, Moscow finally implemented its agreement to participate in the Partnership for Peace in summer 1995.

Before continuing our examination of Russian policy and relations with the United States it is important to assess the overall nature of those relations during the four years that Andrei Kozyrev served as foreign minister. First of all, as we have already noted, the changes that occurred in Russian policy began already during Kozyrev’s tenure. Moreover, most of the issues that have divided Russia and the United States in recent years had emerged as concerns already by 1995 – Russian policy in Chechnya and the CIS, NATO expansion, developments in former Yugoslavia, and Russian arms sales to a number of long-term clients.

These differences emerged for several reasons. First and foremost, important aspects of the overall interests of the two countries – as perceived from Moscow and Washington -- did not coincide. This became evident quite soon after the collapse of the Soviet state, as the United States attempted to mold the new Russia in its own image,¹⁵

¹³ Among the many important analyses of NATO expansion Goldgeier’s (1999) study of U.S. decision making and Mattox and Rachwald’s (2001) focus on national debates on the question in Europe are especially useful.

¹⁴ Although the Russians generally did not oppose the expansion of the European Union, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov (1998) has warned that Russia has underestimated the negative implications of EU expansion, as well as those of NATO expansion.

¹⁵ This argument is developed most fully by Stephen F. Cohen (2000).

without at the same time being willing to provide the type of support expected or really taking into account the social, political, and economic realities of the country. In its attempt to impose its model on Russia the U.S. government contributed unwittingly to the wholesale robbery of Russia's patrimony by corrupt forces that gathered around President Yeltsin. The end result was a failure of economic reform, the disastrous impact of this failure on the majority of the population, and the alienation of the majority of the Russian people for whom the United States was seen as the supporter [even creator] of an increasingly unjust and corrupt system. On the other hand, the government of President Yeltsin succeeded, despite these problems, in gaining and holding the almost unflagging support of the United States and most of its allies, who saw in Yeltsin's domestic opponents a completely unacceptable alternative hostile to the creation of a democratic society and a market economy.

The gap between important U.S. policy objectives and those of Russia remained during the latter half of the 1990s. For example, the Russians increasingly opposed the use of largely U.S.-initiated United Nations economic sanctions against a number of countries – most of which were viewed in Moscow as important potential international partners. Russia wanted the UN to bring to an end the economic sanctions against both Iraq and Yugoslavia. In the former case Russia was concerned both about a former long-term ally and about Iraq's inability to repay the substantial debts that had accrued in the Soviet period. At the time of U.S. and British military strikes in retaliation for repeated Iraqi refusals to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors in late 1998, President Yeltsin spoke of "gross violations of the UN Charter." When the West began to bring pressure on Yugoslavia once again in 1998 over the issue of Kosovo, the Russians supported the

Yugoslav right to do virtually anything to protect its territorial integrity and threatened various forms of retaliation if the West bombed Yugoslavia.

The issue that raised the most serious response in Moscow in this period remained the question of NATO's expansion eastward. Prior to the Madrid meetings of NATO in July 1997 at which a final decision was to be made about possible expansion, Moscow orchestrated a multifaceted campaign that included pressure on the applicant countries and threats that the expansion would in effect initiate a new cold war in relations between Russia and the West. In fact, however, when NATO decided to invite the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to join the alliance, Russia reluctantly accepted the decision without any of the retaliatory responses that had been threatened.

Once it became obvious that their efforts to forestall the expansion of NATO eastward were doomed to failure, the Russians seem to have accepted reality and attempted to gain whatever benefits they could out of that acceptance. They shifted the focus of their opposition to NATO expansion from East Central Europe to the Baltics. In addition, on 27 May 1997 Moscow signed the Russia-NATO Founding Act that was supposed to provide clear parameters for the relationship between Russia and the Western Alliance. In return, Russia was granted membership in an expanded "G-8". During the rest of the year Russia participated in a U.S.-led military exercise in the Baltic Sea and continued to cooperate with Partnership for Peace activities.

In fact, however, neither of these relationships really fulfilled Russian objectives. Moscow was excluded from full participation in those "G-8" meetings at which meaningful decisions concerning international financial matters were likely to occur. Moreover, given the disastrous state of the Russian economy, there was little that it could

hope to exercise any real influence within the group. At the same time the Russia-NATO Founding Act also proved to be unsatisfactory as a means for Russia to pursue its foreign policy interests. While the Act did not provide Russia with anything approximating veto power over NATO decisions, it did call for effective consultation on important security issues. In fact, over the next two years NATO largely ignored Russia's increasingly vehement complaints about its refusal to consult on issues ranging from the former's attempts to arrest Serbs as war criminals and implement various aspects of the Dayton peace accords.

Another issue of great importance arose to complicate U.S.-Russian relations by the end of the 1990s. Ever since President Reagan's decision to initiate the development of a anti-missile defense system to protect U.S. territory from possible missile attacks, the Soviet and Russian governments have voiced their serious concerns that the development of such a system would have major destabilizing effects on the international security system. Although modest research continued on the project in the late 1980s and through the 1990s, it was not until the final years of the Clinton presidency that the matter became an issue of importance in U.S.-Russian relations. By then key members of Congress, in particular conservative Republicans, began to push for the actual development of a missile defense system. Although President Clinton first seemed willing to go forward with the program, he finally reversed his decision – presumably in the face of strong domestic and international opposition, as well as cost projections and evidence of likely technical limitations.

Even during the electoral campaign of 2000 George W. Bush and his spokespersons made clear that, if he were elected, the United States government would

move ahead with development of an antiballistic missile system and would withdraw from the 1972 ABM treaty which put limitations on testing and deployment of such a system. This is precisely what the new administration did, although the terrorist attacks of 11 September delayed the formal announcement of the final decision. Already during 2000 and 2001 President Putin stated Russia's clear opposition to U.S. policy and sought support for the Russian position in Western Europe and in China – with very positive results in the latter country. He has also generated some interest in Europe for alternate proposals for a regional missile defense system. Russia's concern, which was ignored by the advocates of a missile defense system in the United States, is that the development of a small U.S. system will merely be the first step in undermining the relevance of Russia's nuclear arsenal which serves as the sole remaining claim to Russia's great power status (Solovev, 2001).

Thus, by summer 1991, little more than half a year into the presidency of George W. Bush and one and half years into Vladimir Putin's presidency, U.S.-Russian relations were apparently on a collision course.¹⁶ The leaderships of the two countries had established objectives that they viewed as important to their national interests that were in direct conflict with one another. Russians were increasingly frustrated by Washington's clear disregard for their importance in world affairs and by apparent U.S. disregard for Russian interests – as in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and in U.S. efforts to restrict Russian involvement in the development of oil and gas reserves in the Caspian Basin (Ebel and Menon, 2000). The mutual diplomatic expulsions of early spring 2001

¹⁶ For a careful analysis of the state of Russian relations with the West at the time see the excellent article by Alla Kassianova (2001).

initiated by Washington were but the most visible indication of the seriousness of the tensions in bilateral relations.

The War on Terrorism and the “New” Russian-U.S. Relationship

As we have demonstrated, by late summer 2001 Russian relations with the United States had deteriorated significantly since the highly optimistic period ten years earlier. Most important, the basic objectives of the two countries seemed to be in direct contradiction with one another in a number of areas deemed important in both Moscow and Washington (Kanet, 2001, Kanet and Ibryamova, 2001). The view of President Putin and the political elite in Moscow of Russia as the major regional power and their commitment to reestablishing its role as a global power – despite its current very weak resource base – and the long-established tendency in Washington to interpret what is best for the world through the lens of U.S. interests [exacerbated by the fact that the political right now controlled policy making in the United States] had resulted in a whole series of disagreements, even conflicts, between the two countries. Putin’s ongoing efforts to consolidate power in Russia – both his and that of the central government – contributed to the souring of relations. But the most serious areas of Russian-U.S. policy discord in September 2001, in descending order of priority, were the U.S. commitment to the construction of a missile defense system, a second round of NATO expansion eastward, U.S. opposition to the massive and seemingly indiscriminate Russian use of force against rebels in Chechnya, and U.S. efforts to limit the Russian role in the exploitation of Caspian Basin oil and gas reserves.

Yet, virtually over night the terrorist attacks in the United States changed all of this – at least for the short and medium term. Immediately after the attacks President Putin contacted President Bush by telephone to offer his and his people’s condolences to the American people and to pledge full support for whatever responses the United States might take. But, Putin’s commitment was not merely rhetorical. Less than two weeks later he announced a five-point plan to support the United States in its war on terrorism: the Russian government would 1) share intelligence information with the United States, 2) open Russian airspace for U.S. flights, 3) cooperate with Russia’s Central Asian neighbors to provide similar overflight rights, 4) join in international search and rescue efforts, and 5) increase direct humanitarian and military assistance to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Over the course of the next nine months, and often despite strong opposition at home, President Putin responded in other ways that would have been virtually unthinkable in summer 2001 (McFaul, 2001). This included expanded Russian cooperation with NATO that culminated in spring 2002 in the creation of the new formal relationship between Russia and NATO; the agreement in principle announced at the November 2001 summit meetings in the United States between Putin and Bush of the dramatic reduction in nuclear arsenals which was then formalized in Moscow six months later; the basic Russian acceptance of the U.S. decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty of 1972 and to move forward with the development of a national missile defense system; Russia’s resistance to OPEC’s to cut global oil production and the adverse effects that this would have on the West; basic acceptance of NATO’s impending decision to admit a number of new Central and East European states to full membership (Aron, 2002). In

other words, on almost all outstanding issues of disagreement Russia has withdrawn its opposition.

Putin's shift in policy has elicited opposition in Russia within conservative elements in the military and security organizations. In particular they have been concerned about his willingness to accept a U.S. military presence in Central Asia – a region in which they had already been actively involved establishing a presence in the exploitation of oil and gas reserves, while also attempting to limit or even exclude Russia (Rutland, 2001). Many argue that Putin is giving away far too much to the Americans with little promise of anything substantial in return – much as Gorbachev and Yeltsin had done before him.¹⁷

The question that arises immediately concerns the reasons for the shift in Russian policy under President Putin and the likelihood that the change is likely to lead to a long-term stable Russian-U.S. relationship. Various explanations have been given for Putin's response, ranging from the view that this is but a short-term tactical move to the position that Russian policy since September 2001 is the logical outcome of the major changes in Russian domestic politics that have occurred during the past decade. Zbigniew Brzezinski tends toward the former position when he questions whether Putin and the Russians have yet abandoned their yearning for empire (Brzezinski, 2001).

The latter position is argued most forcefully by Leon Aron (2002) and is supported by the arguments of other U.S. and Russian analysts (Colton and McFaul, 2001; Kuchins, 2001; Trenin, 2002). In Aron's argumentation, Putin has finally recognized that Russia's future lies with Europe and the West. The attempt to rebuild

¹⁷ Gordon Hahn (2001) provides a good analysis of the obstacles that Putin has faced in developing a new approach to relations with the United States.

Russia as an independent power center juxtaposed against the United States and Western Europe is not a feasible short- or long-term strategy. Moreover, in coming decades the interests of Russia are likely to diverge significantly from those of China, thus making a long-term alliance with that country of questionable value. “If Russia’s foreign policy has changed,” he maintains, “it is because in the past decade Russia itself has become a changed country. Russia’s voters in the 1990s decisively chose the pro-reform and pro-Western Yeltsin, despite his many flaws, over his nationalist communist alternative. Currently a stable pro-reform majority continues to support the creation of the underpinnings of a functioning free market economy and a political democracy – flawed though they both may be.¹⁸ In other words, Aron argues, Putin has recognized, as have many others in Russia, that Russia’s future lies in and with the West. Immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 2001 he seized on the opportunity to revamp Russia’s relations with the United States and the West and to accelerate the normalization of Russia’s relations with the West and of integrating Russia into Western institutions.¹⁹ Putin has seemingly accepted the realities of the post-Cold War world, in which the United States is the dominant state and in which Russia will have to play by the rules established by the West during the past century, and more.

Aron’s argument tends to downplay an additional factor that, in the view of the present author, has also played an important role – namely the concern that President Putin and others in Russia have about the real and potential challenges to the stability of

¹⁸ For recent positive, though less “glowing,” assessments of domestic political developments in Russia under President Putin see *Economist* (2002b), Vogel (2002), and Filippov (2002).

¹⁹ The argument for such a policy is made most cogently by Dmitri Trenin, who argues that Russia has “no realistic alternative to joining the expanding West other than Russia’s being the proverbial *ostrov nevezheniya*, an island of bad luck” (2002, p. 292).

the Federation from the non-Russian, heavily Muslim, southern portions of the country, as well as the potential appeal of Islamic fundamentalism in the new states of Central Asia that abut Russian territory. The war in Chechnya is the most visible, but by no means, the sole example of this challenge. By joining with the United States in the global war on terrorism Putin has been able to deflect criticism of its behavior in Chechnya.

Prospects for Russian-U.S. Relations

Most of the improvements in Russian-U.S. relations since September 2001 are attributable to shifts in Russian policy, not changes in the positions taken by Washington. Virtually across the board Moscow has stepped back from positions that it had taken in the past – as recently as the first year of Putin’s presidency. A second round of NATO expansion that will likely include one or more of the Baltic states,²⁰ the development of a U.S. missile defense system and the renunciation of the 1972 ABM Treaty,²¹ a nuclear arms reduction agreement that lacks detail and specificity of the sort initially expected by Vladimir Putin and the Russians, a U.S. military presence throughout former Soviet Central Asia²² all represent issues on which the Russians have withdrawn, or at least

²⁰ Even before the terrorist attacks of September 2001 Russia had begun to soften its criticism of further NATO expansion (Newhouse, 2001; Gornostayev, 2001). On current candidates for membership see Gordon and Steinberg (2001), *Economist* (2002a), AND Szayna (2002).

²¹ Rather than risking the nuclear arms reduction agreement that was so important for Moscow, the Russians have accepted the fact that the United States is proceeding with the development of a missile defense system and has withdrawn from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. President Putin said on Russian television the U.S. move to abrogate the treaty was mistaken, but not unexpected, and he indicated that he wanted to keep Moscow’s warming relationship with Washington on track (Harnden, 2001). The one concrete reaction to the U.S. withdrawal was the announcement on 14 June that Russia was withdrawing from the START II Treaty because of the expiration of the ABM Treaty (Isachenkov, 2002).

²² In an interview in early June 2002 President Putin (2002) stated that, by supporting the U.S.-allied military action in Afghanistan, “Russia meant to protect its own security interests, as well as the interests of its partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States, with whom it had consulted beforehand.” According to Putin, “stability in Central Asia still depends directly on the situation in Afghanistan.”

muted, their opposition in order to facilitate the objective of re-establishing Russia's economic and political stability and its long-term role in the international community.

Putin recognizes that Russia needs the West and needs to be integrated into "Western" institutions, if it is ever to regain a measure of its former "greatness." He recognizes, as well, that the U.S.-led war on international terror is of immediate interest to Russian security, given its geopolitical location along the northern edge of the Muslim world and its substantial number of Muslim citizens.

So far what have been the concrete returns for Russia? Probably most important, in the short term at least, has been the virtual disappearance of Russian policy in Chechnya from the U.S. political radar screen. Putin has been able to make the case in Washington that the Chechen rebels are part of the larger terrorist network with links to Al Qaeda. Questions in official Washington of Russian human rights violations in Chechnya, and elsewhere, have virtually disappeared. Another matter of great importance for the economic well being of Russia was the U.S. decision in April 2002 to suspend remaining cold war restrictions on trade with Russia and the designation of Russia as a market economy – with all the economic benefits that come with that designation.²³ Also of economic importance for Russia will be the joint decision to slash the number of nuclear weapons systems by roughly two-thirds. It has been clear for a number of years that maintaining its aging nuclear arsenal was an enormous financial drain on the Russian economy. But, without an agreement from the United States to parallel arms reductions, Moscow was not really in a position to act unilaterally.

²³ The arguments supporting this decision are laid out in testimony before Congress by Under Secretary of State Alan Larson (2002).

We return now to the questions posed at the outset of this paper concerning the likely durability of the shift in Russian policy and in Russian-U.S. relations. Before addressing the question it is important to reiterate a point made earlier: the improvements are largely the result of shifts in Russian foreign policy, not changes in the policies of the United States. NATO expansion and the development of a missile defense system will go forward as envisaged by the Bush Administration. For the time being, at least, Russia has decided to “live with” these developments because, in the view of President Putin and his advisors, Russia’s long-term viability and welfare depend on Russia’s successful integration into the Western community. Russia cannot go it alone; nor can it serve as the core for a successful counteralliance to the United States and/or Western Europe. Yet, to establish a lasting positive relationship with the United States at this time, Russia must recognize that the unilateralism that it so strongly opposed a short time ago will not disappear – it is for the foreseeable future a central element of the U.S. view of the world. As I argued above, the leadership in Washington is not about to accept any challenge to its role as dominant world power (Miller, 2002) – nor is Russia in any position to provide that challenge.

So long as the Russian leadership is willing to act as a junior partner to the United States – much as the countries of Western Europe have done during the past half-century, at least in the security arena – the emerging relationship is likely to remain stable. Only within the context of the Western community is Russia able to fulfill its political, economic and security objectives. During the summit meeting in Moscow in May 2002 Russia, in effect, recognized that its relationship with the United States is asymmetrical, not one based on a presumed equality. The Russians, moreover, have renounced the

costly and fruitless strategic and geopolitical contest that has characterized their relationship with the United States, even during the 1990s. Yet, for the relationship to prosper the United States cannot simply demand that Russia accept its interpretation of events or its policy orientation, as it has tended to do in the recent past. Serious issues remain to cloud the relationship, including the question of Russian exports of nuclear technology to Iran and the apparent commitment of the Bush Administration to bring down the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq regardless of the position on Iraq taken by its partners.

On a more positive note, as Nikolai Zlobin (2002) has argued, what the Bush Administration has offered and President Putin has accepted is a commitment to create a new relationship that is not based on detailed and codified agreements laid out in hundreds of pages of treaty text, but rather one based on shared views and expectations – much like the relationships that the United States has with its long-term West European partners. Many in Washington now see Russia as an important strategic partner in the long-term struggle against terrorism, especially that which has emerged within the Muslim world. Thus, the basis exists for the emergence of a stable U.S.-Russian relationship. So long as Washington is prepared to accept the fact that it will not be able to dictate the specifics of the relationship and so long as the leadership in Moscow recognizes the importance to Russia of integration into the Western community and is the reality of Russia's post-Cold War status, the relationship can continue to evolve. It is possible, as well, that over time it may well evolve in ways in which the relationships between and among the United States and its Western partners evolved to be based on a broad range of mutual interests that extend far beyond the external challenges that were

so very important at the outset of the relationship -- the Soviet threat in the one case, international terrorism in the other.

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