

# A Study of Russian Foreign Policy from 1992 to 2010<sup>\*</sup>

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The history of modern Russian foreign policy is usually traced from the Belovezhskaya Pushcha Accords on the dissolution of the USSR, and from a formal perspective this is correct. Nevertheless, to understand the logic of this political evolution, one must step back a few years earlier. Soviet foreign policy left “Stalin’s overcoat” in all aspects beginning in the late 1980s, which allows us to regard this final period of Soviet history as essentially anti-Soviet and treat it as a direct transition towards post-Soviet Russia.

If we are to look for a symbolic watershed in Soviet foreign policy, then we will probably have to turn to the speech of Mikhail Gorbachev – who at the time was still “just” the Secretary General of the CPSU Central Committee – at the UN on December 7, 1988. Unlike all his predecessors, Gorbachev decided to take unilateral, real steps to reduce armaments. His freshly declared “new political thinking,” with its principles of reasonable defense sufficiency, was transformed into real action.

By March 15, 1989, the Soviet Union had completely withdrawn from Afghanistan and was rapidly reducing its presence in the “third world.” In June of the same year, in a speech before the Council of Europe, Gorbachev spoke of the shared values uniting the West and the USSR, which he was reforming. Moscow had rejected an essential postulate of its entire

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postwar foreign policy: its unconditional dominance in Eastern Europe. It did not oppose the rise to power of a non-communist prime minister in Poland, or the wave of “velvet” anti-communist revolutions in formally allied countries everywhere (except in Romania, where the regime was violently overthrown). The culmination of the “Autumn of Communism” in Europe was the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989.

The abandonment of the German Democratic Republic and, accordingly, of the military and political foothold in the heart of Europe, was crucial. Gorbachev’s unwillingness to support Erich Honecker’s regime, which was reeling as a result of the mass exodus of East Germans to the West, together with Gorbachev’s famous phrase that “life punishes late-comers” and the order to Soviet troops in East Germany to remain neutral during the mass anti-government demonstrations, all determined the fate of the “first state of workers and peasants on German soil.” Almost simultaneously, Europe saw the end both of the Cold War and of “really existing socialism.”

Gorbachev’s meeting with U.S. President George H. W. Bush in Malta in late November-early December 1989 put an end to a whole era, which had begun in 1945 in Yalta. The division of Europe had been overcome, but on the condition that Moscow would abandon claims to hegemony on the east of the continent. Newly united were Berlin (under a united Germany), Germany (under the leadership of the FRG and within NATO), and Europe (in the future, within the frameworks of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions). The fate of the Soviet Union itself, and its place and role in the world, remained unclear – though not for long.

Gorbachev and his supporters had hoped that they would manage to keep the Soviet Union on the path of reform, to transform the essentially unitary state into a modern federation, and in some way, with the West’s help, to overcome its “economic difficulties” and take a position in the world comparable to that of the United States – but unlike during the Cold War, not in opposition to Washington, but in cooperation, and even in “friendly condominium” with it. These hopes were completely unfounded,

and the policy pursued by Gorbachev and his followers was increasingly less adequate for addressing the growing complexity of the reality of the domestic and international situation.

## Russia and the West: from Attempts at Integration to Competition With the Elements of Cooperation

The Russian Federation, having declared itself the chief successor to the collapsed Soviet Union, continued the foreign policy of the “late” Gorbachev era but in a highly radicalized form. President Boris Yeltsin and his minister of foreign affairs, Andrey Kozyrev, publicly renounced communism, which had in fact already been completely eviscerated by Gorbachev. They announced the accession of Russia to the community of democracies, confirmed the rejection of hegemony in Eastern (now renamed Central) Europe, as well as from the position of “big brother” to the former Soviet republics, which had suddenly become independent states.

Moreover, considering the national interests of the new Russia to be virtually identical to the international interests of the United States and Western Europe, Yeltsin and Kozyrev set the goal of formal integration with the countries and structures of NATO and of concluding a treaty of alliance with the United States. The European Economic Community (EEC) occupied them less at that time. Russia’s economy transitioned into a market economy based primarily on advice from the IMF and from American experts who had been invited in as advisers by the Russian government.

The Kremlin quickly met with disappointment. Brussels simply failed to heed Moscow’s readiness to immediately join NATO. In the spring of 1992, the U.S. Congress gave Yeltsin a standing ovation, but Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft considered the conclusion of the agreement of alliance with Russia moot, given the end of the Cold War and the absence of a comparable challenge from a third country. Europe was quickly becoming the “common home” about

which Gorbachev had spoken in Strasbourg – but that home did not include Russia. Finally, criticism of the pro-Western foreign policy intensified within Russia itself. Communist, nationalist, and, to some degree, liberal opponents all began calling for the “defense of Russian national interests.”

Initially, the Kremlin and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to manage the situation. Retaining the general orientation of their foreign policy and fiercely defending against their “red-brown” opponents, they made a claim for Moscow’s leading role in the CIS. From 1992 to 1994, Russia used military force to stop the bloodshed in Moldova, intervened in the conflicts in Georgia and the civil war in Tajikistan, and facilitated the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh. The West did not prevent Russia from “restoring order” along the former imperial borderland, but it also did not support its claims, officially formulated in 1993, to the role of regional security guarantor. At this time, America and Western Europe were concerned primarily with the military and political aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union: the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the completion of the withdrawal of Russian troops from East Germany, Central Europe, and especially the Baltic states.

The fissure in Russian-Western relations occurred as early as 1993, when Bill Clinton’s administration supported the declaration by the leaders of the “Visegrad Countries” (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) stating their desire to join NATO. This step led to the first serious crisis of confidence between Moscow and the Western capitals. The departure of the USSR from Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1990s was a forced step, but it was not critical from the perspective of the traditionally understood national security interests of the country: a broad zone of neutral states formed between the Soviet Union, which was living its final days, and the NATO countries. By the end of the USSR’s existence, its leaders had virtually embraced the concept of the “Finlandization” of Eastern Europe (the so-called Kvitsinski doctrine) as a more effective and less costly means of ensuring security and stability in the Western strategic direction. However, they were too late.

By the autumn of 1993, the leaders of the new Russia, having attempted to solve the problem in a more radical fashion – by means of integration into the Western structures – had to admit their failure. Russia had not become, as they had expected, a new member of the Alliance in the informal capacity of its “vice president.” The Kremlin reached the conclusion that the Western countries – first and foremost, the U.S. – were engaged in promoting their own interests and were not inclined to view Russia as a full, not to mention equal, partner. There was a suspicion, which then grew into a conviction, that there was little belief in Western capitals that Russia’s democratic transition would succeed and that they were hedging against the possibility of the nationalists or communists coming to power.

The Clinton administration, having resolutely bet on Yeltsin and supported his use of force against the Supreme Soviet of Russia on October 3-4, 1993, was then forced to consider the increasing weakness of the reformist forces and, conversely, the growing strength of the nationalists and communists, evidenced by the parliamentary elections of December 12, 1993. In the public circles of the Old and New Worlds, the image of “Weimar” Russia standing on the brink of chaos and nationalist-communist revanche, was widespread.

In a very unpleasant surprise for Yeltsin and then for the public at large, the U.S., Germany, Britain, and France were seen to renege on their commitment, given to Gorbachev verbally, to not expand NATO in the wake of German reunification. Evidence to this effect produced a strong impression on the Russian elites and acted as confirmation of the selfishness and “treachery” of the West, which only “uses” Russia for its own purposes.

Analysis of relevant documents, however, leads to a different conclusion. The assurances of Secretary of State Baker, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and French President Francois Mitterrand were made in 1990 in the context of German reunification. The countries of Eastern Europe that were part of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (which ceased to exist only in 1991) under the Soviet Union

were not and could not have been part of the discussion. No one – neither those speaking with Gorbachev, nor Gorbachev himself – could have foreseen the fate of the USSR and its allies. Of course, the leaders of the USSR, the U.S., Britain, France, and Germany could not make commitments on behalf of the Eastern European states. Finally, the refusal to expand NATO could have become legally binding only with the consent of all members of NATO, and probably with the approval of such a decision by the corresponding parliaments, including the U.S. Senate.

Nevertheless, although the theory of the “treachery” of the Western allies does not hold water, the “insensitivity” of the policy of the Western powers led by the U.S. is obvious. Refusing to consider Russia’s accession to NATO in 1991, and dismissing the request for an alliance between Russia and the U.S. in 1992 and again in 1993, Washington decided to “open” NATO to Central European countries, thereby moving the boundary of NATO right up to the former border of the Soviet Union. In doing this, the U.S. and its allies did not violate any obligations (especially since the Soviet Union no longer existed), but they destroyed the faith in the friendly unselfishness of the West and reinforced the suspicion of the steadfast anti-Russian orientation of Western policy. Political writer Nikolay Danilevsky’s “Russia and Europe,” originally published in the 19th century, was reprinted in 1995 and was an immediate best-seller.

The wars in the Balkans set the emotional background to the changing climate of Russian-Western relations. Moscow considered the nationalist leaders (Serbian Slobodan Milosevic, Croatian Franjo Tudjman, and Bosnian Muslim Alija Izetbegovic) to be players in the same game and of the same “quality,” so it was surprising for the Russians to learn that public sympathies in their country on the one hand and in the U.S. and Europe on the other accrued to the opposing sides of the conflict. Moreover, if the Muslims and Croats, supported by the Americans and Europeans, displayed a tendency towards cooperation, then the Serbs, having become heroes to Russian nationalists and communists, remained the enemy of the two communities and became the main culprits of the war in the eyes of the West.

Through the mechanisms of the Contact Group on the Former Yugoslavia, Russia sought to ensure a balanced approach towards all the belligerent forces but failed to achieve this. It could only feebly protest when, in 1995, NATO aircraft struck at Serbian positions and Croatian forces “cleansed” Serbian Krajina. At the same time, Moscow did not have serious influence in Belgrade, could not stop the Bosnian Serbs from committing crimes such as the Srebrenica massacre, and could act only as a supernumerary at the peace talks in Dayton and Paris. At the end of 1995, Russian peacekeepers joined the NATO operation in Bosnia (IFOR, later SFOR), but under U.S. command. Despite all the praise from its Western partners, the experience of partnership was in the end recognized as unacceptable in Moscow: in the future, the Russian military would not stand under an American commander.

The conflict in the Balkans unfolded in parallel with the war in Chechnya, which had begun in 1994. This thoughtlessly started, ineptly executed, and cruel military campaign contributed to the disillusionment with the new Russia among the public and then within the governments of the West. The image of a recent superpower crushing the pursuit of independence of freedom-loving mountaineers – and furthermore, violating human rights and freedoms – was superimposed on the picture of chaotic politics and criminal privatization, “piratization”, social degradation, and poverty. The popularity of Yeltsin and his inner circle within the country dropped to the single digits, and a communist revanche in the presidential elections during the summer of 1996 seemed not only likely, but practically inevitable.

While the Western (and many Russian) media criticized the Kremlin’s Chechen campaign, the Kremlin itself ever more harshly criticized the “plan to expand NATO eastward.” The January 1996 replacement of Andrey Kozyrev with Yevgeny Primakov as the minister of foreign affairs signaled a tougher policy. The new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated two important goals of Russian foreign policy: the consolidation of the CIS countries around Moscow, and the prevention of NATO

expansion eastward. Despite the high degree of Moscow's dependence on loans provided by the IMF, Russia's objectives not only broke away from Western objectives, but entered into direct conflict with them.

The emerging clash was only deferred as a result of Yeltsin's re-election (and the prevention, thereby, of a "communist revanche"), Russia's defeat in the first Chechen campaign, Russia's accession to the Council of Europe, and the achievement of a compromise on the military and strategic parameters of NATO expansion. In 1997, when Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were invited to join NATO, Russia was admitted to the club of leading industrialized nations, which then became the "Group of Eight" (G8). The possibility remained, though, that the Russian "oligarchs" who organized Yeltsin's re-election and had strong interests in the West, would be able to prevent a sharp deterioration in relations.

The collapse of the Russian financial system in 1998, which led to a severe economic crisis, had serious political consequences, including repercussions on foreign policy. The main objective of the Kremlin became not to continue and intensify the reforms, which had been discredited by public opinion, but rather to stabilize the situation and to organize the transfer of power within the established regime. The decoupling of Russia from the West occurred amid the mutual frustration of both parties. The U.S. gave up on Russia, considering it "hopeless," and the IMF ceased to issue loans to the Kremlin after the default. Yeltsin dismissed the young reformers, reluctantly appointed Primakov as prime minister, and began looking for a successor.

The Kosovo crisis – the final episode of the Balkan wars at the end of the 20th century – entered its acute phase at the exact moment when the Russian authorities were fully absorbed with the problem of resolving the first economic crisis in the country's post-communist history. Moscow could only watch from the sidelines as the U.S. attempted to force President Slobodan Milosevic to stop the violent suppression of the separatist Kosovar Albanians. Nevertheless, the emotional tension in Russia was very strong. When, in March 1999, the Clinton administration decided to



use force against Yugoslavia – and in doing so, to circumvent the UN Security Council and use the armed forces of NATO for this purpose – Moscow viewed it as a sign that Russia had truly lost its great-power status. Russia's international influence collapsed in the spring of 1999 as dramatically as the Russian ruble had in 1998. Moreover, many in Moscow saw NATO's humanitarian intervention as a threat to Russia itself. The parallels between the goals and actions of the Serbs in Kosovo and the Russians in Chechnya were too obvious. The only thing that Russia could still trust in these circumstances was its nuclear arsenal.

The famous “Primakov loop” (when the Russian prime minister ordered a plane with an official delegation headed for the U.S. to turn around over the Atlantic when he learned of the U.S. decision to bomb Yugoslavia) became a symbol of the reversal of Russian foreign policy – a rejection now already not only of integration with the West, but even of more or less close cooperation. It was not by chance that Yeltsin, just before leaving the Kremlin in November 1999, warned Clinton not to forget “for one minute, for one second,” that Russia has nuclear weapons. Amid the extremely tense atmosphere of mass protests against U.S. and NATO policies, of Russian paratroopers' “Pristina dash” that nearly caused an armed confrontation with American troops, and the renewal of the war in the Caucasus in August 1999, Yeltsin, “Russia's first democrat,” remained practically the sole guarantor against the revival of hostility between Russia and the West. Thus, amid not only a financial, but also a political default, ended the first decade of the “new” relationship between Moscow and the West, which had begun in an atmosphere of fantastic hopes.

Vladimir Putin, having accepted the presidency from Yeltsin on December 31, 1999, attempted to rectify the relationship with the West. His first major independent step, which he took against the advice of part of his inner circle and his military advisers, concerned the resumption of relations with NATO that had been ruptured as a result of the Kosovo crisis. In early 2000, Moscow was visited by NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, and the relationship was restored. The emphasis on NATO was

central for “early Putin.” In contrast to his predecessor, Putin did not count on full integration “into the West,” but rather aimed at achieving integration “with the West” by forming a lasting military and political alliance between Russia, North America, and Western Europe.

This course was apparent even before the attacks on September 11, 2001. Putin ordered the closure of Russia’s intelligence center at Lourdes in Cuba and of a naval facility in Cam Ranh in Vietnam. He carefully prepared for his first meeting with the U.S. president in Slovenia in the summer of 2001, and in the course of this meeting was able to win over George W. Bush. Finally, he seized the moment and called Bush on the “hotline” on September 11, expressing Russia’s support for the U.S. It seemed like the new circumstances could not be more favorable for the formation of a global anti-terrorist coalition led by the U.S., with a very significant role for Russia.

From 2000 to 2002, Putin generally sought to build bridges with America and Europe to overcome the accumulated distrust that was based, in his opinion, on the West’s lack of understanding of Russia’s foreign policy objectives. He was ready to make significant concessions to his partners. Primakov’s emphasis on multipolarity had been dropped. Not only India, but also China remained on the periphery of the Kremlin’s foreign policy. Pragmatism came into fashion. Putin was ready to accept the leading role of the United States in the world; he sought not only to avoid undermining the U.S. position abroad, but also to stand back as Washington pursued its global objectives. He decisively helped the U.S. overrun the Taliban in Afghanistan, decided not to respond to the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty, sanctioned the “temporary” deployment of U.S. forces in Central Asia (for the period of operations in Afghanistan), and did not protest against the U.S. training program for Georgian troops.

In return, Putin put forward a list of requests, including economic, financial, and political issues – but the main item on the list was for the U.S. to agree with the position and role of Russia as the leading force in the CIS. Moscow declared that it had no intention of annexing, controlling, or even somewhat oppressing the former Soviet republics. It only wanted to

be free from external interference in the region, from the encouragement of anti-Russian forces there, and from the deployment of foreign troops in the region; finally, it wanted a guarantee that no new members would be accepted into military alliances without Russia's consent. Putin himself privately turned to NATO leadership with a request for Russia's accession to the alliance. He publicly spoke of this, especially, in a televised interview on the BBC, when he asked, "And why not?"

Taking up a new round of reforms amid a severe post-crisis economic situation, Putin saw the modernization of Russia in the context of its "European choice." This idea permeated the Russian president's speech to the German Bundestag in October 2001. Behind the economic reforms and social transformation, Putin saw a strong Russia, similar, in all the most important ways, to countries such as Germany and France. Putin was not a "democrat," but he was not antidemocratic either. He reasoned in more practical terms. Collaboration with the European Union would help Russia get through the transformation process more quickly and with fewer losses.

The end of 2001 through the first half of 2002 was a period of new hopes in Moscow, which soon gave way, once again, to disappointment. The American-Russian dialogue that had run high died out when it was clear that the U.S. was going to attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Washington refused in any way to sanction a "special role" for Russia in the post-Soviet space. Russian aid in the fight against international terrorism was determined to be a debt that did not require compensation. In Washington, the White House quietly laughed at the Kremlin's "price lists" – the reciprocal requests and demands on the United States from Russia.

President Putin had undertaken a rapprochement with the U.S. largely against the advice of his inner circle, and even against his own instincts. He sought to capitalize on the situation in order to form a "special relationship" with the leading world power and expected to get from the U.S. what other U.S. allies had received before – the recognition and consideration of Russian national interests in Washington. In hindsight, such a view seems idealistic and even naïve, but in 2001-2002, it had many

influential followers in Russia as well as certain support in the U.S. This support, however, turned out to be clearly insufficient.

Putin's inability to get meaningful concessions from the U.S. – and most importantly, his lack of foreign policy strategy in general and in particular with regard to the U.S. – weakened the Russian president's position. In early 2003, he gave in to the entreaties of those in Russia and Europe (first and foremost of French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder), who insisted that Russia distance itself from Washington's policy toward Iraq. Moscow, together with Berlin and Paris, comprised the opposition to Washington – in the words of then Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, a kind of new Entente emerged, designed to deter the American friends from reckless behavior.

This deterrence was not successful, but American-Russian relations had been seriously damaged. The relationship, in contrast to the American-German and American-French relationships, had neither much strength, nor a reserve of mutual trust. The Khodorkovsky trial, which had developed in parallel with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, undermined the positive trend that had emerged after September 11. The Russian authorities' actions against Mikhail Khodorkovsky buried the leading American oil companies' hopes of entering the Russian market by buying Yukos. Suddenly, the extent of the difference between Moscow's and Washington's positions on their triumphantly proclaimed energy dialogue became clear: in the end, the Kremlin was thinking not about the transfer of the strategic oil industry to the Americans, but about gaining access to the U.S. oil distribution market!

The American and European media coverage of the Khodorkovsky trial unequivocally branded Russia as a state ruled by an authoritarian government and Putin as an autocrat. The December 2003 Duma elections culminated with the ousting of the liberal and democratic forces from the parliament, and the 2004 presidential elections were essentially non-competitive. Russian domestic policy had in practice become the central factor for determining the American attitude toward Moscow. In vain, Putin and his sup-

porters attempted to draw the Americans' and Europeans' attention to the virtual routing of the Russian Communist Party as a serious contender for power in the country. Russian liberals, who started by supporting Yeltsin against Gorbachev, then came under Yeltsin and who – with reservations – tried to see a modernizer in Putin, turned away from the Kremlin and subjected the nascent authoritarian tendencies to merciless criticism.

For his part, Putin became more and more “closed.” Increasingly, those who are known as the *siloviki* comprised his inner circle. The hostage crisis at the Dubrovka Street theater in October 2002 and the Russian special forces' storming of the building – which, due to officials' lack of coordination, led to the deaths of more than 100 hostages – led Putin to be suspicious of the activities of political refugees, including Boris Berzovsky, Akhmed Zakayev, and others, as well as the governments of their adoptive countries. When the next terrorist attack occurred in September 2004 in the form of the Beslan school siege, which ended with a raid on the building leaving 300 dead, many of them children, the Russian president was forced to make serious choices.

Speaking on September 4, 2004, immediately after the Beslan tragedy, Putin placed responsibility for the attack not only on Islamist terrorists, but also on the West, which was thought to use them in a calculated attempt to weaken Russia, break away important territories, etc. Simultaneously, Putin proposed a plan for political reform, repealing, in particular, the election of governors, which the West immediately estimated would draw Russia still farther from the democratic path of development. For the public in America and Europe, there remained no doubt that “Putin's Russia was heading in the wrong direction.”

In the autumn of that year, Russia and the United States found themselves on opposite sides during the presidential elections in Ukraine. The Rose Revolution in late 2003 in Tbilisi and the student demonstrations that led to Milosevic's resignation in 2000, having developed along similar lines, did not cause particular concern in Moscow. Neither Milosevic nor Shevardnadze were considered pro-Russian politicians. Milosevic irritat-

ed Moscow, and furthermore, Serbia was of only peripheral significance to Moscow (Russian peacekeepers were withdrawn from the Balkans in 2003), while with Georgia there was a hope that it would be easier to negotiate with the new, outwardly pragmatic leaders, than with the “old fox” Shevardnadze. Ukraine, however, was an entirely different matter.

From the very beginning, Moscow saw Victor Yushchenko as a “Western Ukrainian nationalist,” a successor to anti-Soviet partisans Stepan Bandera and Victor Konovalts, who sought to separate Ukraine from Russia. In the eyes of the Kremlin, Yushchenko’s rise to power signaled the real possibility of Ukraine’s accession to NATO, the deployment of American bases on Ukrainian territory, and a fundamental break with Russia at all levels. To prevent this, Putin and his inner circle, including then Presidential Chief of Staff Dmitry Medvedev, wholly and entirely “invested themselves” in the Ukrainian election campaign and in the elections themselves. And here they suffered the most serious foreign policy defeat in all eight years of Putin’s presidency.

As political strategist Gleb Pavlovsky eloquently admitted, Putin and his team had “guaranteed” that Kremlin candidate Viktor Yanukovich would win the elections, but then a revolution broke out in Ukraine that the Russian spin doctors did not have the resources to prevent, much less suppress. The triumph of the Orange Revolution was celebrated in the U.S. and Poland and widely welcomed in Europe and Canada as Ukraine’s attainment of real independence from Russia. In contrast, the mood of the Russian government, and that of Putin personally, was subdued.

The Kremlin preferred to focus not on an analysis of the causes of the revolution, but on revealing American underhanded plotting and the interception of its future plans. At a minimum, it was thought that the Orange Revolution would mean Washington’s acquisition of a major geopolitical foothold in the post-Soviet space, with which it could further reduce Russia’s influence in the CIS countries; in the future, perhaps, they would install a military base. At a maximum, the Kremlin believed, Ukraine was only a rehearsal, a “warm up” for the use of new techniques for effecting

regime change. In Moscow it was feared that now the Americans, based in Kiev, would prepare to seize the Kremlin politically and install a pro-American government.

For all the fantasy of such a scenario, it seems to have been taken seriously in the Kremlin. However, the situation soon changed. The Russian leadership started 2005 in a state of agitation, but ended the year in high spirits. The “color revolutions,” bright at their outset, faded rapidly. In Ukraine, the arrival of the “Orange” politicians marked the beginning of a permanent political crisis; in Kyrgyzstan, the Tulip Revolution of spring 2005 led to the resignation of President Askar Akayev, but not to a re-orientation of Bishkek from Russia towards the U.S. In Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, having had a fallout with Moscow in the summer of 2004, failed to regain control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. More importantly, the U.S. began experiencing increasing difficulties in Iraq. Finally, the sharp rise in the price of oil in 2004 began beating one record after another. The Russian authorities’ conservative financial policy allowed them to begin creating “safety cushions.”

The year 2006 was to bring Russia’s presidency of the G8, seen originally as recognition of Russia not only *by* the West, but also as *a part of* the West. However, on the very eve of the new year, the gas conflict between Gazprom and Ukraine’s Naftogaz culminated. Having failed to make progress during 2005 negotiations, and not having clarified its position publicly, Gazprom was forced to carry out its threat: in the absence of a supply contract, it shut off natural gas supplies to Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Russian monopoly continued to send gas through Ukrainian territory to European consumers. Assuming that Ukraine would be forced to siphon off gas from the export pipe to meet domestic needs, the Russians may have hoped that by doing so, they would gain allies in Europe and tighten their grip on Kiev. However, the exact opposite happened.

The United States and a united Europe began talking about Russia’s use of “energy as a weapon” not only against Ukraine, but also against European countries. Russia’s reputation as a reliable energy supplier – con-

firmed, despite all the difficulties, in 1991 – was dramatically jeopardized. The theme of energy security, introduced by the Kremlin at the G8 summit in St. Petersburg, was reconceptualized in the Western political consciousness as energy security from Russia. Kiev, despite its inability to pay its bills and all its own machinations with gas, came to be regarded as a victim of pressure from Moscow, which was taking revenge on the Ukrainians for their choice in favor of democracy.

The end of 2006 was overshadowed first by the murder of the opposition journalist Anna Politkovskaya in Moscow, and then by the death of Berezovsky's bodyguard Alexander Litvinenko by polonium poisoning in London. Both killings, widely covered and commented on in the world press, were interpreted as the Kremlin's revenge on its enemies and as a means of intimidating the opposition. Russia's public image in the West sank practically to a level comparable to that of the USSR in the fall of 1983, when a Soviet fighter plane shot down a Korean passenger jet, and the Soviet leadership initially denied any involvement in the incident.

Clearly experiencing personal frustration with the continually deteriorating relations with the West, Vladimir Putin decided to publicly and decisively have it out with the U.S. His speech at a conference on international security in Munich in February 2007 contained not only exceptionally harsh criticism of Washington's policy, but also the conditions under which Moscow would be willing to cooperate with America. These included the recognition of the existing political realities in Russia and non-interference in its internal affairs, the equal nature of the relationship, and mutual interests as the basis for interaction. Moscow took several concrete steps to develop this line, from the suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe of 1990, to the renewal, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, of the air patrols near the borders of the U.S. and NATO countries, all with the apparent goal of "forcing the West into partnership."

This policy did not work. In August 2008, Georgian troops attacked the South Ossetian city of Tskhinval, triggering a counteroffensive by Rus-



sian forces. Despite the nonstop provocations from both sides and the “Caucasus” military exercises that were conducted shortly before the attack, the Russian leadership, apparently, did not expect such a large-scale attack. Comparisons with September 11 emerged, only this time with the client and quasi-ally of the United States playing the role of “Al-Qaeda.” In Moscow, there was practically no doubt that the U.S., if it had not encouraged Saakashvili to attack, had at least done nothing to stop him, and then had simply “washed its hands.” Perhaps the most dangerous moment was when the Russian Black Sea Fleet ships were off the coast of Abkhazia, and the flagship of the Sixth American Fleet sailed toward the Georgian coast. American-Russian relations were approaching confrontation at an alarming speed.

### *From Westpolitik to Weltpolitik*

In the period between 2003 and 2005, there was a reversal in Russian foreign policy. After the failure of the attempts to integrate into the West (Gorbachev-Yeltsin) and to establish a mechanism of real partnership with the West (Putin), Moscow embarked on a path of open competition with those whom it continued to call partners. The global financial crisis that hit in 2008, having eased the conflict between Russia and the U.S. over Georgia, was also seen by many in Russia as a factor that could accelerate changes in the balance of power and the distribution of roles in the world – and not in favor of the West. It was believed that future changes could improve Russia’s position.

In 2003, the investment bank Goldman Sachs predicted sustained economic growth and a steady increase in the political influence of non-Western countries. Bank analysts proposed the acronym BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) as the symbol of those forces that are capable of squeezing the U.S., Europe, and Japan out of their privileged position in the modern world.

In Moscow, the report's conclusions were met with enthusiasm. If "integrating" Russia into the West had not been successful and an equal partnership with the West had turned out to be a bluff, then Moscow needed to put a serious bet on multipolarity, even more so because the thesis of a multipolar world, which Moscow picked up from Beijing in the second half of the 1990s, had received such authoritative and vivid confirmation. At international forums and venues, Russia is increasingly positioning itself as the spokesperson and even the intellectual leader of the "new (non-Western) wave." The construction of Russia as one of the world's centers of power envisages zones of attraction and influence around Russia and the gradual bringing down of the U.S. to the position of a "normal great power" – one of the half-dozen global "oligarchs." Russian *Westpolitik* was transformed into *Weltpolitik*.

The transformation has a rich history. In 1989, Moscow finished not one, but two Cold Wars. Over the course of thirty years, relations between the Soviet Union and China were hostile, and at times – for example, in 1969 – the probability of a war between them was higher than between the USSR and NATO. During Gorbachev's Beijing visit and his meetings with Deng Xiaoping and other leaders of the PRC in May 1989, an agreement was reached regarding the normalization of bilateral relations.

Despite the fact that Yeltsin and Kozyrev actively demonstrated their anti-communist attitudes and their commitment to Western democratic values, relations with China were much too important to allow them to deteriorate again. Moreover, both sides felt a need for each other. After the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 4, 1989, China was placed under international sanctions that prohibited it from acquiring weapons in the West and so turned to Russia to buy arms and equipment. For its part, Russia, finding itself in an extremely difficult economic situation after the fall of the Soviet economic model, was forced to turn to China as a source of food and cheap consumer goods, especially for the Siberian and Far Eastern regions. Since 1992, the Russian-Chinese arms trade, officially called "military and technical cooperation," has represented billions of dollars

in annual trade volume. These funds partially helped the Russian defense industry survive its most difficult years, and, of course, the military capabilities of the People's Liberation Army of China grew stronger.

From the mid-1990s, Russian-Chinese relations strengthened to such a degree that their official interpretation began including the prospect of a strategic partnership. The parallel waning of Russia's relations with the West as a result of NATO expansion prompted some Russian commentators to speak of China as a possible partner to Russia in a dispute with the United States and its allies.

The new quality of the relationship allowed Russia to resolve, step by step, its most important geopolitical problem in the east: the issue of its border with China. The first agreement to this effect was concluded back in 1991 by the Soviet Union, and the border was finally formally established in its entirety (more than 4300 km) in 2004. At the final stage, the Russian side made a few minor territorial concessions to its neighbor. The border was not only formally established, demarcated, and delimited, but also, to a significant extent, demilitarized. In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan – all former Soviet republics sharing a border with China – signed an agreement in Shanghai on confidence-building measures, according to which military presence and activities were to be limited within a 100-kilometer strip on either side of the border. Moreover, the five countries established a common forum for the discussion of security and development issues, initially called the Shanghai Five, and, since 2001, known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

In reality, the SCO might as well have been called "China in Central Asia." Beijing, which was first and foremost concerned about securing its western territories – primarily the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with its Turkic-Muslim population – sought to win the sympathy of the new states of the region. Additionally, China was interested in the energy resources of the Caspian and in the markets of the Caspian countries. However, unlike the NATO countries, China was promoting its political and economic position in the post-Soviet space in agreement

with Russia. For the anti-Western forces in Moscow, close collaboration, and even an alliance with China, seemed the only way to resist American domination. In the eyes of these forces, the SCO began to be perceived as a counterweight to NATO. Of far greater importance, however, was the fact that Beijing did not see the SCO as the prototype for a military bloc and did not see Russia as an ally. China preferred to act independently, using Russia when possible but not limiting its own freedom to act. Nonetheless, in the second half of the 2000s, the SCO became an attractive platform for dialogue among Asian countries. Uzbekistan joined as its sixth member, and India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Mongolia gained observer status.

The development of Russian-Chinese relations was not without its problems. Almost immediately after the fall of the USSR, fears concerning “demographic aggression” by China began to spread within Russia. Fanciful numbers about the scale of Chinese immigration into Russia – especially in Siberia and the Far East – were published, sometimes citing public officials. Russian-Chinese military and technical cooperation gave way to fears of another type: while the Chinese air force was buying dozens of Russian MiG and Su aircraft, as well as licenses for the production of hundreds of combat vehicles, the Russian air force did not have the means to update its own aircraft fleet for a decade and a half.

While Russia’s relations with China after normalization at the turn of the 1990s were steadily evolving and generally successful, its relations with Japan were developing unevenly and were often strained. The Japanese government came “to believe in *perestroika*” much later than the governments of the U.S. and the NATO countries did. When this finally happened, there was no longer enough time to address the long-standing territorial dispute over the South Kuril Islands. Gorbachev’s visit to Japan in 1991 was too late to lead to a settlement: criticism of the Kremlin’s geopolitical acquiescence within Russia was becoming increasingly stronger, and moreover, the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic’s leadership, having declared Russia’s sovereignty, refused in advance to recognize the

legitimacy of any territorial changes that were not coordinated with the leadership of the Russian Republic.

After the collapse of the USSR, Yeltsin's attempts to resolve the Kuril issue and conclude a peace treaty with Japan did not yield any tangible results. In the Tokyo Declaration of 1993, the Russian Federation and Japan for the first time recognized the existence of disputed territories and even designated them, but then neither the solemn promise by the leaders of both countries to conclude a peace treaty by 2000, nor the establishment of a "Committee of Wise Persons," which was supposed to find ways to normalize relations, led to a breakthrough. As a result, in 2005 Vladimir Putin offered to resolve the issue on the basis of the Moscow Declaration of 1956, which envisaged the transfer of only Habomai and Shikotan islands to Japan, which together constitute just 7 percent of the territory that Japan still officially claims.

The formally unresolved territorial issue and the absence of a peace treaty between Russia and Japan, however, did not prevent the development of trade and economic relations. In the 2000s, Japanese investment in the Russian economy increased substantially.

In the early 1990s, South Korea appeared to some Russians as one of the most promising countries in North-East Asia. Unlike Japan, it had not made claims on Russia, and unlike China, it had a developed, progressive, and technologically advanced economy. Relations with the Republic of Korea were established by Gorbachev, who visited the country in 1991 (he became the first Russian leader to make such a trip.) Yeltsin abruptly changed Moscow's policy priorities in the Korean peninsula. If during the Cold War Pyongyang was an ally and client of the USSR and Seoul was effectively an enemy and an "American puppet," with the end of the confrontation South Korea came to be regarded as a desirable partner, while North Korea was viewed as "a sanctuary of Stalinism."

However, while minimizing its contacts with North Korea, Russia failed to present itself as sufficiently attractive to South Korea. South Koreans' attempts to do business in post-Soviet Russia were often unsuccess-

ful and led to losses. Moscow managed to “return” to the Korean peninsula only in 2003, when the six-party talks on North Korea’s nuclear issue started – despite the initial decision in 1994 not to invite Russia to participate in the KEDO nuclear energy project. However, Moscow’s attempts to play the role of the mediator between Pyongyang and the international community ended in failure. Neither Kim Jong Il’s trip to Moscow, nor Putin’s visit to Pyongyang (in 2000) yielded meaningful results. It was Beijing that assumed the role of mediator between the U.S. and North Korea. Russia remained a loyal participant in the negotiations, seeking to reach an agreement restricting the North Korean regime’s nuclear ambitions, but at the same time avoiding excessive pressure on Pyongyang so as not to “drive them into a corner.”

With the exception of its closest neighbors – China, Japan, and Korea – Russia’s “profile” in the Asia-Pacific region is barely noticeable. In 1999, Moscow gained membership of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Organization, and in 2012, it will host the organization’s summit in Vladivostok. However, Moscow’s role in APEC beyond summit meetings remains very limited. Since the mid-2000s there has been a modest growth of economic relations with Vietnam, and Russia sells small quantities of weapons and military equipment to the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) (Indonesia, Malaysia) and is seeking to promote cooperation with Myanmar (Burma) in the area of nuclear energy. Russian diplomats participate in ASEAN security forums, but perhaps Russian tourists in Thailand, Vietnam, Bali, and elsewhere may have a higher profile.

During the Cold War, from the mid-1950s, Moscow’s most important political ally outside the “socialist commonwealth” was India. Since 1971, the relationship between the two countries was governed by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance. India was a major importer of Soviet weapons. Large industrial enterprises were built on its territory with the help of the Soviet Union. Delhi was among the few governments in the world that did not condemn the Soviet invasion

of Afghanistan in 1979. In the second half of the 1980s, Gorbachev and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi jointly attempted to offer the world a new vision of international relations.

In the early 1990s, relations with India lost their former foundation and did not acquire a new one. Moscow ceded part of its former authority when, in 1993, it succumbed to U.S. pressure and reneged on its commitment to supply India with cryogenic rocket engines. Relations picked up at the end of the 1990s. In 1998, Prime Minister Primakov spoke publicly about the Russia-China-India triangle as one of the pillars of the future multipolar world. Since 2000, meetings between the upper leadership of Russia and India have become an annual event, but no significant breakthrough has occurred in the development of the two countries' relations.

## RIC and BRIC

Moscow's relationship with Pakistan, hostile since the Cold War and even more burdened by the support that Islamabad provided to the Afghan *mujahedeen* during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (1979-1989), remained cold after the collapse of the USSR. Pakistani security forces became the initiators and organizers of the Taliban movement, which, after the Taliban took Kabul in 1996, came to be regarded in Moscow as a direct threat to the security and stability of Central Asia and Russia's entire southern flank. The creation of nuclear weapons in Pakistan caused more concern in Moscow than perhaps the Iranian nuclear program, due to the radical Islamist influence in Pakistan and the general sense of growing political instability in the country. Only in 2002 did a Pakistani leader once again visit Moscow – thirty years after the previous state visit.

The completion of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in March 1989 did not mean the end of Soviet involvement in Afghan affairs. A group of Soviet military advisers remained in Kabul and, more importantly, the Najibullah government continued to receive Soviet mili-

tary and economic aid. After the collapse of the USSR, Moscow, prejudiced by ten years spent fighting a difficult war, effectively lost interest in Afghanistan. Aid to Kabul was halted in 1992, which inevitably led to the fall of Najibullah and the rise to power of a coalition of *mujahedeen*, who had fought against the Soviet troops. Interest, however, was soon reawakened, at first as a side effect of the civil war in Tajikistan, when the Islamists, crushed with the help of Russian forces, began to use Afghan territory for operations against the Tajik government troops and Russian border guards, and then in the mid-1990s, in response to the Taliban's successes.

In 1996, the Taliban seized Kabul and forced the *mujahedeen* to the Tajik and Uzbek borders. Russia was forced to come together with its recent opponents, who had become a buffer between the radical Islamists and the CIS countries that had not yet gained strength. There was a fear that if the Taliban was not stopped, it would "reach the Volga." Indeed, the Taliban was not limited to Afghanistan. It supported Uzbekistan's Islamic Movement, as well as the Chechens who fought against federal forces. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, recognized by practically no one in the world, recognized the authorities of Ichkeria and allowed the creation of Chechen combat training camps on Afghan territory. In 2000, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov threatened to attack the camps, but Russia had no real ability to carry out the threat at the time.

The situation changed dramatically after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Moscow used its influence to ensure that the Northern Alliance, which it had armed and supported, stood on the U.S. side in the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Russia also helped the United States with intelligence information. After the Taliban's defeat, Russia refused to send its troops to Afghanistan and to compete politically with the U.S. on Afghan soil. Moscow supported the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan's political structure and established contact with Hamid Karzai. At the same time, Russia watched the sharp increase in the flow of drugs from Afghanistan with growing concern.



Recognizing Iran's growing capabilities and influence, Moscow has tried to build a pragmatic relationship with Tehran and to use the mutual estrangement between Iran and the U.S., as well as Iran's semi-isolation from the European Union, to its advantage. Nevertheless, Russian-Iranian relations have not developed smoothly. In the early 1990s, Moscow feared the export of the Islamic revolution to the CIS countries. The first public report of the Foreign Intelligence Service, published in 1993, sounded the alarm about the development of missile and nuclear technologies in a number of countries, including Iran. The theocratic system of government itself, of course, could not elicit Russian sympathy for Iran. At the same time, Moscow discovered that Iran could be a rational and even pragmatic actor. In 1997, the internal conflict in Tajikistan was resolved as a result of the cooperation between Iran and Russia – the only such experience in all the years since the disintegration of the USSR. Tehran took a neutral but effectively pro-Armenian stance on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Finally, Iran refused to condemn Moscow for its actions in Chechnya, and moreover, supported Russia in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Against this backdrop, since the mid-1990s, cooperation between Russia and Iran has developed in a number of sensitive areas, such as nuclear power and military and technical cooperation. The intersection of the two countries' natural gas interests is also clear.

Regarding the Iranian nuclear program, by the end of the 2000s Russian leaders were apparently working from several assumptions. First, if a state with the resources of modern Iran views itself as a power with a twenty-five-hundred-year history, finds itself in a corresponding geopolitical and geo-strategic position, and then sets a goal of building up its nuclear capability – it will certainly achieve its goal. Second, the only way to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is the conclusion of an agreement between Iran and the international community based on reconciliation between Tehran and Washington. Third, the contents of such an agreement should emphasize the international community's respect for Iran's most important interests: freedom from outside interference in its

affairs (including the abandonment of the idea of “regime change”), and recognition of Iran’s role as a regional power. In fact, security and status have historically been the most important goals of all countries – after the U.S. – seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

In Russia, some of the elites would welcome an open conflict between the U.S. and Iran, but the most influential circles still continue to strive for an agreement that would account for the aforementioned parameters. Moscow is not Tehran’s ally, but it also does not under any circumstances seek to become Tehran’s enemy. During the years of the George W. Bush administration, Russia did not support the American policy of sanctions against Iran, believing that such sanctions in the absence of a flexible strategy could only lead to war and even serve as a justification for such a war *ex post facto*. When Barack Obama arrived in the White House announcing a policy aimed at engaging Iran in a dialogue with the United States, the Russian approach became more nuanced. Moscow is aware that for the U.S., the Iranian nuclear issue is a crucial factor in U.S.-Russian relations.

In what is traditionally considered the Middle East (the Arab world plus Israel), Russian policy has undergone a serious transformation. Gone are the ideological, geopolitical, and military/strategic components that defined Moscow’s Middle East policy during the Soviet period. The economic factor, on the contrary, has become very significant. Russian policy toward Iraq under Saddam Hussein was to a significant degree based on a desire to develop Iraq’s oil fields and recover a seven billion dollar debt pending from Soviet times. In other cases (Algeria, Libya, Syria), Soviet debts were almost entirely written off by Moscow in exchange for new contracts with those countries. Using the old ties with former Soviet clients, Russia significantly expanded the geographic reach of its economic activity in the region. Entering the markets of the rich Gulf monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia, as well as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and others, has become an important goal for Russia. Relations with Egypt have also been consolidated.

Without a doubt, Israel has become emotionally the closest country for Russia in the Middle East, and a significant number of the former Soviet Jews have emigrated, now making up almost 20 percent of Israel's population. Diplomatic relations with Israel, severed by the Soviet Union after the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War in 1967, were restored only in the autumn of 1991. Since then, however, they have been actively developing, especially against the backdrop of the war in Chechnya and the rise of radicalism in the Islamic world. Israeli politicians of all persuasions have become frequent visitors to Moscow, and since 2008 a visa-free policy has been in effect between the two countries. At the same time, in order to maintain the goodwill of the Arab countries, Russia occasionally condemns Israel for the "disproportionate use of force," although it is subject to analogous condemnation from the West for its actions in the Caucasus; moreover, Moscow takes a very conservative stance toward Iran, Israel's number one enemy, as well as toward Hamas and Hezbollah, which are regarded by Israel, the U.S., and the EU as terrorist organizations. At the same time, relations between Moscow and the Palestinian authorities, which during Soviet times were very close, have lost their "special" character. Russia takes pride in its participation (since 1991) in the Quartet on the Middle East (along with the U.S., EU, and UN) and its role as an impartial mediator who "magnanimously" ceded the leading role (and the burden of peacekeeping) to Washington.

The current, "almost familial" relationship between Russia and Israel is the polar opposite of the situation during the last quarter-century of the Soviet Union, when Israel and "international Zionism" were regarded as political, ideological, and military adversaries. An almost identical metamorphosis occurred in the relationship between Moscow and Ankara. Since the 1940s, after Stalin's failed attempt to secure Soviet control of the Mediterranean straits, the USSR regarded Turkey as a hostile force. The alliance between Turkey and the U.S., Turkey's membership in NATO (since 1952), and its command of a large army all created an image of an enemy that was easily superimposed on the history of the numerous Russian-Turkish wars of the 17th-20th centuries.

The situation changed in the early 1990s when Turkey became one of the main centers of so-called shuttle trading by small entrepreneurs, which enabled the quick saturation of the Russian market with inexpensive consumer goods. Turkish construction firms have been prominent in Russia since the mid-1990s, and since the second half of that decade Turkey has become the main destination for Russians to book relatively inexpensive vacations. Circumstances have changed, and for the Russians the Mediterranean resort Antalya has replaced Yalta, which is now in independent Ukraine. At the turn of the millennium, Russian-Turkish relations acquired a strong energy dimension. A decade later, Turkey is aspiring to become a major energy hub connecting the countries of the Caspian, Russia, and the Middle East with the European Union.

Throughout the 1990s, Moscow was frequently concerned about the revival of the pan-Turkic ideology and the strengthening of Turkey's role in the Turkish-speaking countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, along with suspicions about Ankara's support of Chechen separatism, but this gradually weakened. Since the mid-2000s, Moscow has regarded Ankara as a key partner in the region. Russia is impressed by the pragmatism of Turkish leaders and their emphatic independence from Washington, particularly evident during the U.S. preparations for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Russia's geopolitical retreat after the collapse of the Soviet Union was reflected in the temporary "deglobalization" of Moscow's foreign policy. Its interests became largely confined to the adjacent European and Asian periphery, and its center of gravity shifted to the CIS region. As for Africa and Latin America – the main fields of rivalry during the Cold War – they practically disappeared from the Russian foreign policy radar screen in the 1990s.

Some revival along these fronts came about in the next decade. Since 2000, when President Putin visited Cuba, ties with Havana have been restored, although there can be no comparison to the strength of the earlier relationship. The Russian leadership was interested more in

economic opportunities than geopolitical footholds. Nonetheless, geopolitics remained, but in a somewhat caricatured form. Since the mid-2000s, Russia began actively developing its relationship with oil-rich Venezuela, whose president, Hugo Chavez, elicited a severe allergic reaction within the U.S. with his extravagant anti-American remarks and escapades. At a time when the Bush administration was actively supporting and arming Georgian President Saakashvili, who caused an equally allergic reaction in Moscow, the demonstration of cooperation with Chavez, including sending strategic bombers and a fleet of warships to Venezuela in 2008, was Moscow's response to Washington's activity near the Russian border. The countries of the so-called Bolivarian Initiative (Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador, supported by subsidies from Venezuela) also enjoyed Moscow's special attention. In return for its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Nicaragua received substantial economic assistance from Russia.

Despite these geopolitical storylines, Moscow's main interest in Latin America remains economic. In 2008, the first ever tour of a Russian leader on the continent focused mainly on promoting projects for economic cooperation. However, the overall extent of Russian-Latin American relations remains insignificant.

In 2009, President Medvedev made a similar tour of African countries. Industrialized South Africa, as well as resource-rich Nigeria, Angola, and Namibia, are regarded as the most promising Russian partners in sub-Saharan Africa. Russia, having endured in the 1990s a most severe period of its own transformation, took a disinterested attitude toward the bloody civil war in Rwanda and the internal conflicts in the Congo, Liberia, and other countries. In the 2000s, Moscow did not support the Western countries' calls in the UN Security Council to exert pressure on Sudanese authorities to put an end to the conflict in Darfur, considering this to be unacceptable interference in Sudan's internal affairs. Russia held an analogous position in 2007-2008 during the acute internal standoff in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, in the late 2000s Moscow demonstrated solidarity with Western countries and the international community as a whole in protect-

ing civilian ships from pirates off the coast of Somalia, and Russia sent its warships into the Indian Ocean.

Such actions underscore Moscow's desire to participate actively in global governance. In Russia, the most important instrument of global governance has been, and continues to be, the United Nations. Immediately after the end of the Cold War, Moscow attempted to turn the UN into what it was designed to be in accordance with the organization's 1945 Charter. In 1992 on a Russian initiative, the first ever summit-level UN Security Council meeting was held. Clearly, Moscow's special inclination towards the UN was determined by Russia's position in the UN system, which Russia inherited from the Soviet Union – with the West's consent. The structure of the Security Council reflected two essential principles for Moscow: the sovereign equality of the five great powers, set above the rest of the world, and the veto power of each of these countries over the Council's decisions.

In the early 1990s, Russia actively proposed the UN model for Europe, where the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was convened back in the mid-1970s, was transformed into the organization of the same name (OSCE, since 1994) with its own security concept (Istanbul, 1999). Moscow sought to ensure that a Security Council of Europe would be formed at the center of the OSCE, and that Russia would become a permanent member of the Council with veto power. As the main regional organization of the Old World, the “enhanced” OSCE would coordinate the activities of all the other European organizations: the EU, NATO, the CIS, etc.

However, to the disappointment of Moscow's idealists, even the UN, freed from the burden of confrontation, proved unable to fulfill the role of a world government, and the OSCE, despite its name, evolved into an even less coherent structure than the CSCE. At the global level, U.S. influence increased tremendously. It was the “sole superpower in a unipolar world,” while in Europe, the central organizations were the “deepened and broadened” European Union (which was reformed in 1993 on

the basis of the European Economic Community, and which adopted a single currency, the euro, in 1999) and NATO, whose membership rose from sixteen in 1991 to 28 in 2009. Russia, it turned out, remained outside the framework of both unions.

As a “consolation prize,” as was discussed earlier, Moscow was invited into the group of leading industrialized nations, which, with Russia’s accession in 1998, was named the “Group of Eight” or G8. However, in the realm of finance, Russia was not admitted, and the group is still referred to as the G7. This discrimination humiliated Russia, which in the 2000s had risen on the swell of oil revenues and which welcomed the establishment of a broader union, the G20, in 2008, to deal with the global economic crisis. The combination of the G8 and the financially and economically oriented G20 suited Moscow better than the double standards of the G7/G8.

During the financial crisis, Russia slowed down the process of its institutional integration into the global economy. In 2009, negotiations on its accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO), which had begun back in 1993, were reformatted. Russia announced a preference for creating a Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan, making the prospect of accession to the WTO even more uncertain. In principle, Russia is seeking to become a member of the WTO and then enter the world economy’s elite – the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – but thus far has looked at WTO membership from the perspective of terms of trade and not as an instrument of economic modernization.

Proceeding from the concept of a multipolar world, the Russian leadership seeks to establish relationships with all the “poles,” while retaining its freedom to maneuver. Since the mid-2000s, Moscow has promoted the idea of coordinating the efforts of the “rising” great powers: Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC). In 2009, the first BRIC summit was hosted in Yekaterinburg. Simultaneously, the RIC (Russia, India, and China) project is being implemented. These structures are aimed more at public relations

than anything else, designed not so much to bring concrete results as to constantly underscore the thesis that the five-hundred years of Western domination in international relations have come to an end, and to simultaneously present the new leaders of global development.

## From Empire to Great Power

Russia, however, is by no means a new leader. It is the successor to a state that emerged more than a thousand years ago in Novgorod and Kiev; her own statehood was formed in the 14th-15th centuries in Moscow; and it was designated a kingdom beginning in the 16th century, an empire from the 18th century onward, and finally, the Soviet state during the “short” 20th century. In 1989-1991, Russia abandoned its global sphere of influence and its buffer and base in Eastern Europe, and finally, it dismantled its historic empire, the USSR. The withdrawal from the empire happened in a flash: less than eight months had passed from the moment the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan to the fall of the Berlin Wall; 25 months later, the Soviet Union was no more. The disintegration of the Eurasian empire was also relatively bloodless in terms of the number of victims – though, of course, only in comparison with the massacre during the partition of India and the wars in Palestine, Indochina, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, etc. The two hundred thousand people killed in Chechnya, in Tajikistan, during the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, and in other “hot spots” of the crumbling Soviet Union is, of course, a horrible figure. Yet the fall of a nuclear power could have led to a catastrophe of an entirely different magnitude.

The main reason this did not occur was the Russian elite’s conscious refusal to embrace an imperial role, which was perceived as a burden, coupled with the rejection of nationalist policies, such as those carried out at the time by Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. For Yeltsin, Prime Minister Gaidar, and Foreign Minister Kozyrev, the most important thing was Russia’s return to Europe and its inclusion in the “civilized world.”



Moreover, Russian politicians were well aware of the significance of the nuclear factor. Moscow's consent to its most painful territorial loss – the recognition of Crimea as a part of Ukraine – was predicated upon Kiev's agreement to give up the part of the Soviet nuclear arsenal that was deployed in Ukraine.

Although the Russian authorities have repeatedly pointed out that, as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union, approximately 25 million ethnic Russians suddenly found themselves on the other side of the Russian border, Moscow has not taken any steps to unite the “divided nation” and has not supported separatist movements in the population centers of Russian minorities in the CIS countries and the Baltic states. In 1993-1994, the Kremlin unambiguously renounced territorial claims on Sevastopol and did not support separatist-minded leaders of the Crimean Autonomy. Neither did Russia support the separatists of northern Kazakhstan, who called their region southern Siberia. There was no talk of any claims on the Estonian border city of Narva, populated predominately by Russians.

The CIS, declared on December 8, 1991, at a meeting between the leaders of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, was not an institution of new integration as some at the time had hoped, but rather a mechanism for “civilized divorce,” in the words of the first president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk. By the summer of 1992, the division of the former Soviet Union's armed forces was completed; in mid-1993, a unified ruble zone ceased to exist; and by 1994, every country of the CIS had set up its own passports to replace the invalidated Soviet passports. On the other hand, attempts to create a common security space, to agree on the joint protection of the “external borders of the CIS,” and to allow dual citizenship in Russia and the former Soviet republics, as Moscow insisted, proved unsuccessful. For each of the newly formed states, independence first and foremost meant independence from Russia.

For Russia, the appearance of new neighbors primarily raised issues of status and security. Yes, Russia had abandoned its empire, but not so that the states, which Moscow had begun calling the “near abroad,” would

turn into bleeding wounds of interethnic conflicts unleashed by “aggressive nationalism” or would fall under the influence of neighboring states that were historically Russia’s geopolitical rivals. As early as 1992, Russian forces intervened in the armed conflicts in Transnistria, Tajikistan, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. In some cases they stopped the bloodshed and established a truce, of which Russia became the guarantor, while in other cases Russia supported one side of the conflict and helped it achieve its goals. In 1993, Yeltsin and Kozyrev suggested that the UN recognize the leading role of the Russian Federation in ensuring security throughout the former Soviet Union. The UN refused, because for many countries, especially in the West, Russian military peacekeeping looked like an attempt to restore the empire.

Thereafter, the “frozen conflicts” became an important instrument of Moscow’s foreign policy in the post-Soviet space. Positioning even small contingents of troops on the Dniester, the Inguri, and in the Tskhinval region allowed Moscow to influence the policies of Moldova and Georgia, not allowing them to drift too far from Russia. The conflict in Tajikistan, settled in 1997, secured the existence of a Russian military base in the country, which was regarded as the only barrier keeping Afghan extremists from Central Asia and the borders of Russia itself.

Meanwhile, Russia’s military presence in other CIS countries was gradually being phased out. In 1993 (at the same time that they left Lithuania, but before Latvia, Estonia, or even Germany), Russian troops left Azerbaijan. By the second half of the 1990s, the “Joint Russian-Turkmen Group” was transformed into the armed forces of Turkmenistan without any fanfare, while joint responsibility for security along the borders of Georgia and Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and China, and Tajikistan and Afghanistan passed over to the new states themselves. By 2008, Russian troops had left Georgian territory including Ajaria, but excluding the conflict zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The Tashkent Collective Security Treaty, signed back in 1992 by Russia and most of the CIS countries, essentially did not function. In order to

enhance political and military cooperation, Russia insisted on the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 1999. Cooperation improved somewhat after this, but the CSTO cannot be compared with NATO or the Warsaw Pact. Not only Uzbekistan – which first left the organization, then returned to it, and then distanced itself from the organization’s decisions – but also Belarus, which has expressed reservations about its participation in the CSTO’s activities, view the CSTO as an *à la carte* organization. The fact that so far none of Russia’s official allies has joined Russia in recognizing the independence of the former Georgian autonomous regions indicates an unwillingness by each of the CSTO countries to be deemed a client – much less a “satellite” – of Moscow.

In addition to Tajikistan and Armenia, where Russian combat troops are positioned, and Belarus and Kazakhstan, where the Russian Ministry of Defense leases several military facilities, Russia, in accordance with the treaty signed with Ukraine in 1997, has the right to a military presence in Crimea, where the main base of its Black Sea Fleet is positioned in Sevastopol. The term of the Russian lease, originally set to expire in 2017, was recently extended by twenty-five years, with the possibility of a further extension.

Russia’s recognition of Ukraine’s independence, which actually occurred over the course of two years from 1997 to 1999 (with the signature of the Big Treaty between Moscow and Kiev and its ratification), is crucial. The Baltic states had always been a foreign body, a kind of “internal abroad” within the empire and then the Soviet Union, while the Caucasus and Central Asia with Kazakhstan were perceived as a colony, Moldova as a buffer zone, and Belarus as a natural continuation of Russia proper. Ukraine was simultaneously both “us,” almost indistinguishable from Russia (in the east and south), and “not us” (in the west). The abandonment of Ukraine as a part of “greater Russia” testified to the final – including the psychological – departure from the position of empire.

By the end of the 2000s, it was possible to conclude that Ukraine had achieved recognition in Russia as a separate state, but not as a foreign

state. In 2005, Gazprom's decision to stop subsidizing the CIS countries and transition these relationships into trade driven by world gas prices effectively signaled the end of the system of imperial preferences. The "near abroad" had become simply the "abroad." This decision, of course, took into account the revolutionary rise to power of the pro-Western Orange Coalition in Kiev in 2004, which the Kremlin tried by all means to prevent. Nevertheless, Gazprom's move had a broader and more fundamental meaning. Everyone had lost the subsidies: both the Western-oriented Ukraine with Georgia and Moldova, and the quite loyal Armenia and Belarus. In those places where the subsidies were partially preserved, the countries had to "pay the difference" in non-monetary form (for example, by giving Gazprom control over their gas transportation infrastructure). More importantly, thereafter, Gazprom (that is to say, Russia) required only one thing from its partners: the full and timely payment for purchased goods. Independence, as they say, begins the moment people begin to pay for themselves. The same holds true for states.

The transition to a new basis for relations turned out to be difficult. In early 2006 and 2009, major gas crises broke out during which Gazprom stopped the gas supply to Ukraine. Consumers in the European Union suffered as well. The gas stoppage struck a painful blow to Russia's formerly impeccable reputation as a reliable energy supplier and forced Europeans to search for alternative sources and fuels. Ukraine, the main cause of the problems with the gas transit, suffered much less in all respects. For its part, Gazprom and the Russian government had since 2005 been actively promoting projects to create gas pipelines circumventing Ukraine: the Nord Stream pipeline along the bottom of the Baltic Sea and the South Stream pipeline across the Black Sea and the Balkans.

Moscow's attempts to include Ukraine in the Single Economic Space with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan (2004) proved futile. Nevertheless, the idea of integration among the other three countries has not been abandoned. Being part of a wider union – the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC, which also includes Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; Uz-

bekistan's position, as usual, is ambivalent) – Moscow, Minsk, and Astana have decided to form a Customs Union. If such an alliance is created, it will be the first real integrative union of post-Soviet states since the fall of the Soviet Union.

However, back in 1996, Russia and Belarus signed an agreement to form a Community consisting of the two countries, which was transformed in 1999 into a union state – the Union State of Russia and Belarus. Nevertheless, despite a number of steps toward integration (the absence of customs borders, the free movement of citizens, the equalization of rights within the territories of both countries, etc.), the Union was stillborn. The point of the Union, right up to the end of 1999, from the Belarusian perspective, was to create an opportunity for the president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, to succeed Yeltsin as the president of a united state, and then for several years, to have Moscow effectively subsidize the Belarusian economy. The result was unexpected: the “most Soviet” president of any of the CIS countries and an outspoken opponent of the Belarusian nationalists, who were trying to build a modern state on the historical foundation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, effectively became the father of Belarusian statehood. By the end of the 2000s there was no doubt in anyone's mind: the Belarusian state had been established.

The primary direction of Russian foreign economic activity in the CIS was not towards integration, but rather towards the economic expansion of Russian companies – first and foremost the energy companies, including the state-run Gazprom and Rosneft, but also private companies (LUKOIL). In the eyes of some observers, the intensity of the Russian gas activity in Central Asia in the early 2000s created the image of a Russian “gas caliphate” on the shores of the Caspian. In reality, the process of independence or “sovereignization” of the CIS countries at some stage affected the energy sector, as well. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, not to mention Azerbaijan, are all deliberately pursuing multi-vector policies, both in the energy sector, and more broadly.

The most important benefit of the CIS from the point of view of the citizens of its member states is the possibility of visa-free travel. Amid a chronic demographic crisis and the economic ascent of 2000-2008, Russia had become an attractive country for millions of immigrants from the former Soviet republics. Russian laws, however, were not particularly favorable for migrant workers and those who wished to acquire Russian citizenship. Many workers remained illegally and were subject to substantial exploitation and extortion. On the other hand, some illegal immigrants were implicated in criminal activities, including drug trafficking. The problems with immigration from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and also (for political reasons) from Georgia were most acute.

The Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 was the culmination of fifteen years of strained relations between Moscow and Tbilisi. The fact that the first anti-Soviet demonstration, on April 9, 1989, was dispersed by Soviet troops and led to bloodshed had not been forgotten in either capital. The federal and republican communist leadership had refused to take responsibility and made the military their scapegoats. In the eyes of the Soviet military, it was Eduard Shevardnadze (minister of foreign affairs of the USSR from 1986 to 1990), who was responsible for the agreement on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, as a result of which soldiers and their families frequently ended up in places entirely unfit for life. The first president of Georgia (May 1991-January 1992), Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was an outspoken nationalist and xenophobe. His policies forced the Abkhaz and Ossetians out of the Georgian state. When Gamsakhurdia was overthrown and Shevardnadze returned to Tbilisi as the head of state, Russian distaste for him was extended to the Georgian state. Georgian forces' reckless campaign in Abkhazia in August 1992 attracted sympathy for the Abkhaz, not only from the militia of the North Caucasus, but also from all those who were not sympathetic to Shevardnadze. In circumstances where Moscow's real policy towards Georgia was determined not by the Kremlin but by narrow special interest groups, relations continued to deteriorate. In 1995, Shevardnadze escaped an assassination attempt and Tbilisi ac-

cused a man who had fled to Russia. In the meantime, Abkhazia, which had been “cleansed” of Georgians, became a foothold for mid-level Russian *siloviki*, and they were able to significantly influence Russian policy towards Georgia. When the Russian government attempted to resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict (through the work of Minister of Foreign Affairs Yevgeny Primakov in 1997), these efforts came up against the intransigence of the Abkhaz leadership. A vicious cycle had been created.

The war in Chechnya played an important role. In 2002, Moscow accused Tbilisi of tacitly allowing and even aiding the actions of Chechen separatists and terrorists who had created a base in the Pankisi Gorge along the Chechen border. Russia introduced a visa regime for Georgian citizens. This was an unprecedented step in relations with a CIS country. Shevardnadze’s somewhat forced rapprochement with the West, especially with the U.S., only magnified Moscow’s suspicion and hostility.

Shevardnadze’s exhaustion led to the gradual decline of his regime. The result was the Rose Revolution in November 2003, bringing the overthrow of Shevardnadze by a group of young politicians, led by Mikheil Saakashvili, whom he had fostered. Initially, the relationship between the new leadership and Moscow was positive and productive. In the spring of 2004, Russian leaders allowed Tbilisi to establish control over Ajaria, which was ruled by a clan that relied on Russian support and troops. Saakashvili, however, crossed the red line in 2004 when he launched a police operation against South Ossetian smugglers in order to regain control over the province. As a result, Saakashvili entirely lost Moscow’s confidence.

The long slide into war likely began in September 2006, when Russian military personnel accused of espionage against Georgia were arrested in Tbilisi and brought to trial. In response, Moscow broke off air and postal links with Georgia, announced the expulsion of illegal immigrants from Georgia, and conducted an operation against businesses held by Georgians, which were allegedly suspected of having connections with criminal elements. Under the pretext of poor quality, Russia imposed an embargo on imports of Georgian wine and mineral water.

The next stage was the decision of the Bucharest NATO session in April 2008 on the issue of granting Georgia and Ukraine a Membership Action Plan (MAP) towards NATO accession. As a result of a compromise between the U.S. position (to grant the MAP) and the position of a number of European countries (Germany, France, etc.), it was decided that NATO would not grant the MAP, but would declare that in the future, Georgia and Ukraine would become NATO members. This decision led to further escalation of incidents in the conflict zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Georgians, by provoking the Russians, sought to prove (mainly to the U.S.) that Russia was the direct heir to and continuation of the Soviet Union. Russia and its allies, by baiting the Georgians into provocations, sought to demonstrate (primarily to the countries of Western Europe) that Georgia, with its unpredictable and unstable leadership, could under no circumstances be accepted into NATO. On August 7, 2008, at Saakashvili's orders Georgian troops began a massive shelling of Tskhinval. Russian peacekeepers were killed. What followed is well known.

The war in the Caucasus confirmed that further NATO expansion eastward is dangerous. The five-day military operations in Georgia remained an isolated incident, yet upsetting the situation in Ukraine and causing conflict in Crimea or on the Black Sea between the Russian and Ukrainian fleets would threaten to produce a clash on a European scale. The process of NATO expansion was halted – and the “Eastern Neighborhood” projects of the European Union came to the forefront.

## A Content Analysis of Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy

Thus, in two decades, Moscow's foreign policy has traveled a difficult road. According to the country's leaders, Russia has learned from its own misconceptions and errors. These lessons in the Kremlin's interpretation can be summarized as follows:



The world is primarily a field of struggle, of rivalry of all against all, and of fierce competition for resources and markets. Cooperation is not the result of politicians' emotions or goodwill, but rather is the product of competition among players, the point of which is to determine the conditions for future cooperation.

In world politics, economics are paramount. Business and money are simultaneously the driving forces and the prize. In business as in war, those means that lead to victory are good, and there is no room for emotions. As is often said in modern Russia, "it's nothing personal, just business."

The values that are so much talked about in the West are no more than a cover for a harsh reality that is fundamentally no different than what exists in Russia (money is king everywhere, the difference is only in the amount.) The promotion of democracy is a tool for promoting Western – primarily American – influence.

Russia is strategically alone, and only Russia needs itself. The major powers are its rivals in the struggle for influence, while the smaller countries are the object and purpose of this struggle.

Russia's most important competitive advantages in the foreseeable future are its natural resources, primarily oil and gas. Its nuclear weapons remain its most important guarantor of security.

Based on this analysis, the Russian leadership draws the following practical conclusions:

- *Realpolitik* is the only reliable policy. You need only adapt it to the circumstances of a global world.
- To survive and thrive, Russia is obliged to be a great power (internally cohesive, independent in the international arena, and extending its influence in the immediate environment). Otherwise, Russia will be torn apart.
- All partners are competitors, and every competitor can become a partner under certain conditions. It is more correct to call them "counterparts" in both cases. In a relationship with any counterpart, one cannot take anything on faith, and one cannot take

anyone at their word. Legally binding contracts are necessary – otherwise, Russia’s counterparts will certainly try to deceive it.

- Foreign policy is to be guided by national interest, which is to be understood (while the nation has not yet been fully formed in Russia) as the interests of the ruling corporation.
- Interests, rather than illusory values and immobilizing ideology, constitute the substance of foreign policy. This approach to foreign policy action consists of the pragmatic management of differing interests.
- Patriotism – an analogue to ideology – is important, both as a means of domestic mobilization and the creation of a solid base for a pragmatic foreign policy.
- Public opinion within countries and at the international level is the result of manipulation by interested parties. The concept of reputation is outdated – replaced by an image that is created and destroyed on demand.
- In the modern world it is necessary to maintain relationships – at various levels, either openly or secretly – with all relevant parties, without ideological or value-motivated exceptions.
- The aim of Russian foreign policy is the formation of a Russian center of power as one of the elements of the emerging world order – the global oligarchy of five or six top players. As part of this multipolar world, the U.S. must descend to the position of one of the great powers. When the American world hegemony becomes part of history – as did the Soviet Union and its empire – then America and Russia will finally become real partners, for example, in preventing a new hegemony of a third party.

## A Critical Understanding of the Russian International Experience

Presented here in an outlined and somewhat pointed form is a guide to action that is startling in its cynicism. At the same time, it must be noted that this cynicism is not unsubstantiated, but rather acquired through Russia's painful experience. In any event, some of those who shape and form current Russian foreign policy were in their time inspired by the fresh wind of Gorbachev's new political thinking that dispelled the leaden atmosphere of traditional Soviet foreign policy, and they hoped along with Yeltsin that Russia would integrate into the Western world under the terms worthy of a great power, etc. The cynicism of Putin's Kremlin is the fruit not of ideology, but of experience rationalized in a particular way.

A definite advantage of this new political thinking is the clear break with imperial tradition. The center of power, the zone of privileged interests, etc., do not imply a restoration of the imperial state, the Russian empire, or the Soviet Union. There is no talk of reunification, consolidation, or even control over neighbors. The goal is the expansion of influence, the model of which is provided by the foreign policies of Russia's main "rivals" in the post-Soviet space – the U.S. and the European Union. In an altered world, Russia's business is Russia itself.

Another distinctive feature of contemporary Russian policy and practice is its "economism." "Russia, Inc." is geared towards making profit. It is, to a high degree, opportunistic. When making decisions, the cost issue is a decisive factor. The most important element making Russian domestic and foreign policy more understandable and somewhat predictable is that Russia is ruled by those who own it. Hence, Russia's policy echoes the well-known formula of U.S. President Calvin Coolidge that "the business of America is business."

Also apparent is the weakening role of traditional militarism in foreign policy. At first glance this contradicts the theory that the Putin administration is dominated by *siloviki*, who mostly retained their positions

with the advent of the Putin-Medvedev tandem. However, it should be borne in mind that the *siloviki* under consideration mainly hail from the special services and are characterized by a completely different ethos than the officers of the armed forces. Moreover – and this is essential – the *siloviki* act not as elements of the “system” (a kind of super-department), but as the members of groups that are often competing in the struggle for “purely concrete” benefits: influence and possessions. Putin and Medvedev willingly demonstrate the strategic power inherited from the Soviet Union and pay attention to the development of strategic nuclear forces, but the state of Russia’s conventional armed forces has been deplorable for twenty years now and Minister Anatoly Serdyukov’s military reform is only just getting started.

In assessing the evolution of Russian foreign policy, we should not forget about the tremendous shock that Russia experienced in the transition from Soviet communism to the current authoritarian capitalism. Among its consequences are the Soviet inertia and nostalgia for what was lost; the persistence of imperial traditions and craving for revanche in some form; the country feeling hurt; the real grudge against the U.S., who “wrongly appropriated victory in the Cold War;” the rise of nationalism amid the wreckage of the imperial state; the unformed nation and absence of opposition amid the decline of the intelligentsia; and the re-evaluation of the role of the West, from “the foreigners will help us,” to “our allies are scum.”

If one were to build a bridge from Medvedev back to Gorbachev, it is easy to conclude that in two decades, Moscow has gone from one extreme to the other. Naïve and often mindless optimism has been exchanged for narrow, pointed, and deliberately down-to-earth pessimism. Despite the complexity of technology (financial flows, etc.), a tremendous simplification of the world occurred in the minds of the leadership. Material factors were cast as absolute, while values were discounted. The outright, but at the same time narrow-minded, self-interest of Russian leaders was capable neither of overcoming the alienation between the rulers and the

ruled within the country, nor of contributing to the growth of respect for Russia abroad. The often mentioned pragmatism, having beaten out all other approaches, had won, but had lost direction. Its failure not only to answer the question “why?,” but also to ask it in the first place, has led to the inability to develop a strategy focused on long-term goals and based on the fundamental values truly shared by society (including by the elites).

The lack of a country’s own strategy inevitably leads to “reactivity” in foreign policy. For several years now, Moscow has acted “in response,” perceiving Washington’s actions on the international stage as directed mainly against Russia, and organizing a “rebuff” to counter them. During these years, the obsession with America has turned into a serious pathology that will be difficult to treat. Moscow effectively does not have a positive agenda – only a negative one. Setting aside all the nonsense, the entire content of Russia’s proposed “new European security architecture” boils down to a few positions: (1) no NATO expansion into the CIS: neither Ukraine, nor Georgia can be brought into the Alliance; (2) no American bases in the CIS and no American military facilities near Russian borders – including those like the missile defense system in Central Europe; (3) no military aid to Russian enemies, in particular to the Saakashvili regime in Georgia. All the items listed here are major Russian concerns, and they not only deserve, but need to be discussed. All the issues mentioned must be resolved in some way or another in order to guarantee Europe’s security. Nonetheless, Moscow’s proposals do not amount to an “architecture,” and the calculation that only “legally binding agreements” can become the building blocks of global and regional security is naïve.

Paradoxically, despite the multiplicity of real interests and the presence of formal institutions safely controlled by the ruling corporation, Russian foreign policy is even more highly centralized than the Soviet policy was a quarter of a century ago. The basis for making key decisions is extremely narrow. Except for the president, the prime minister, and several less visible individuals, the remaining high level officials speak only

in the capacity of performers or promoters. The lack of transparency in the process, the lack of public discussion of possible decisions, the reliance almost exclusively on government sources of information and analysis, and the insistence on bringing the most powerful media outlets down to the level of megaphones for propaganda, all force the designers of Russia's foreign policy to stew in their own juices and hear their own reasoning echoed back to them from their subordinates.

Twenty years after dismantling the Iron Curtain between Russia and the West, the lack of communication and problems with understanding one another have once again emerged. This problem is of an entirely different nature than the issues of Soviet times. Officials of any rank frequently and readily travel to Europe and America. Based on their standard of living and the capital they control, the Russian "higher-ups" belong to the global "upper class," while the officials who serve them belong to the "upper middle class." These people are simply unable *not* to look down on their Western counterparts, who are living off their salary and who are rotated on a regular basis. A small part of the elite is fluent in English and has acquired useful contacts abroad. But those who speak no language other than Russian are also convinced that they know everything, know the price of everything, and that for them, the world contains no more secrets and no "hidden rooms." The problem, however, lies precisely in this conviction. Official Russia has become withdrawn and has ceased to learn.

The lack of communication concerns it less than the lack of recognition. Hence the demands for equality and equity addressed to the West. Having evolved in an environment of abundant resources, the Russian *nouveaux riches* can buy castles and palaces, but they suffer from a lack of invitations into the "best homes." This is a problem familiar even from Russia's history, and it is, of course, solvable – but the price for solving it amounts to the rejection, by those seeking recognition, of the lifestyle to which they have become accustomed. Typically, this becomes possible after a change of generations. In our case, the question is not about age-related changes.

Russia must overcome both its inferiority complex and its superiority complex. With regard to stronger powers (the U.S.), it needs to learn to become self-sufficient. It need not run willy-nilly after Washington, repeating, in its own way, the mistakes of other administrations. It must respect the principles that it has declared. One cannot simultaneously act as the defender of international law and practice legal nihilism at home. Having condemned (from a position of principles) the violation of law on the issue of Kosovo, there is no point in performing the same actions in the Caucasus in the name of political expediency.

In relation to the “lesser brethren” of the international community, Russia must abandon its arrogance, often boorishly expressed, and show them the respect that Russia itself is seeking in its relations with the still-larger international actors. It needs to abandon the caricatured view of the world wherein there are a small number of “sovereigns,” each of which is surrounded by its satellites. It must reconsider not so much its perspective on the history of international relations, but its approach to it. To do this, it should not spar with those who want to interpret the past in their own way, but should open its archives to everyone.

It needs to abandon its extreme self-evaluations. Russia is not the conscience of humankind (although some of its thinkers undoubtedly were); it is not the torch of thought (to pragmatists this is altogether alien); and it is not an intellectual leader (this will require modernizing the whole system of education and scholarly research) – but it is also not a country whose entire contribution to world history consists of being an eternal warning to the rest of humanity.

One could continue this list of serious, but specific issues, yet one thing must be made clear: Russia will be able to obtain recognition from the most developed part of the world and be accepted into its ranks no sooner than its system of power, its government, and its public institutions are of the same sort as (though not necessarily identical to) the systems and institutions of Europe, North America, Japan, India, Australia, and a number of other countries. Theories of “sovereign democracy” are of no use here.

## Prospects for the Future

What can be of help? Of the external circumstances, as paradoxical as it may seem – the world financial crisis that began in 2008. The financial crisis has already saved Russia from moving forward into a confrontation with the U.S., while the fall in hydrocarbon prices will help eliminate distortions in the country's economy. The crisis imposes stringent requirements on the quality of public administration, as well as on the government's economic and social policies.

Other major external factors include the economic development of China, India, and other countries that in the past were even more backward than Russia but that have now surpassed it. Of paramount importance in the long term is the geographical and cultural proximity of a united Europe with its undoubtedly attractive social and political models. It is especially worth highlighting the factor of the modernizing countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. If Ukraine, in its subsequent progress, achieves success not only in democratization but also in institutional development, then the projection of this success onto Russia will have an effect incomparable to anything else.

Of the internal factors, the most important is modernization, to which there is absolutely no alternative in a world of global competition. Russian authorities have recently been forced to admit that mobilization is a clear path into the abyss. Today, the language of economics is the only one that brings the Russian elite closer to the outside world.

However, the modernization of Russia in the 21st century, in contrast to the 18th and 20th centuries, cannot be limited only to the military and economic, or military and administrative spheres. It includes, as an essential component of the project, the gradual building of modern social and economic structures, and this, in turn, will require the formation of democratic institutions and the development of citizens' democratic participation in governance.



Russia is not at all “fated” to modernize. Moreover, the transition to a real modernization agenda is made more difficult by the resistance of influential interest groups. On the contrary, the coalition in support of modernization looks weak and internally non-cohesive, and it seems not to command enough support from a largely passive population. The modernization project could also be hampered by external factors, such as the conflict with the U.S. over Ukrainian membership in NATO, which is still a possibility. In the event of a sharp deterioration of Russian-Western relations in general, Russian leaders might succumb to the temptation of making a “tactical maneuver” and withdrawing to an alliance (in reality, as a “junior partner”) with Beijing, but a strategic orientation towards China is unlikely.

If the commitment to modernization somehow continues, one can assume that Moscow’s current “solo voyage” will come to an end sooner or later. Future Russian governments representing the coalition for modernization will find the current isolation too costly, inefficient, and unsafe. They will see Europe as the most important external resource. In their view, Russia itself will look not like a Eurasian country, but a Euro-Pacific one. The common market of Russia and its closest partners – Kazakhstan, Belarus, and others – will form a single economic space with the EU. Romano Prodi’s well-known formula of sharing “everything except institutions” will turn from a slogan into a reality.

A self-sufficient and self-respecting Russia can afford a broad view of the world. On this basis, it will be possible to build a 21st century foreign policy. This policy will be guided by the realities of the global community: an interdependent economy and financial system, a common information space on the Internet, indivisible security, etc. Under these new circumstances, global governance will turn from a wish into a necessity. Participation in it will depend on a country’s ability and willingness to contribute to the common cause and assume responsibility. The leaders will not be those with the greatest ability to destroy, but rather those who can offer something positive to the other players. In other words, a country’s appeal – and not its deadly potential – will have a defining significance.

20 YEARS WITHOUT THE BERLIN  
WALL: A BREAKTHROUGH TO FREEDOM

Russia has a certain potential and a rich historical experience for realizing its ambitions by means of “soft power,” but realizing this potential depends on its progress in forming a Russian nation, which currently does not exist: the idea of a nation is the idea of freedom. Forming a nation is closely linked with the process of forming a modern political class and a modern political culture. Political, social, and economic factors – both internal and external – are closely intertwined. The processes in question are fundamental and time-consuming. Crises, however, have the ability to “compress” historical time. Russia’s transformation and the evolution of its policies continue.