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**From Cooperation to Confrontation:
Russia and the United States since 9/11**

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Research of the Program in Arms Control,
Disarmament, and International Security
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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PART ONE
Introduction

The enthusiastic expectations of the early 1990s about the emergence and likely consolidation of democracy across the former Soviet Union, as well as about the successful integration of Russia into the Western community of democratic states, have been dissolved by a combination of Western, especially U.S., triumphalism and the realities of Russian political culture and the resulting authoritarian political system that has emerged in Russia. Dmitry Trenin and other analysts¹ have correctly noted that throughout the 1990s Russian interests were downplayed, or simply ignored, by Washington and Brussels, largely on the assumption that Russia was, in fact, finished as a great power and did not have to be taken into account when they were making important foreign policy and security decisions. As the United States pushed through its policy preferences in a broad range of areas—the restructuring and expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), military intervention in former Yugoslavia, a unilateral and assertive response to the terrorist attacks of September 2001 and the resulting invasion and occupation of Iraq and policy toward the broader Middle East, the emplacement of a missile defense system in Central Europe, attempts to limit Russian influence on the development and distribution of natural gas resources from Central Asia, etc.—Moscow’s interests and concerns were simply left out of the policy calculations or, if raised, they were quickly brushed aside as irrelevant or hostile.²

Throughout the 1990s Russian leaders often voiced their strong objections to U.S. initiatives, as when President Boris Yeltsin stormed out of a meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on Chechnya in 1999, but generally were in no position to do anything more than complain, then eventually to acquiesce to those initiatives—such as NATO expansion in Central Europe in 1998 or the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia during the 1999 confrontation over Kosovo. As a result Russian-U.S. relations visibly deteriorated throughout the 1990s and reached the point in early 2001—little more than a year into the administration of President Vladimir Putin and almost immediately following George W. Bush’s takeover of the White House—of mutual diplomatic expulsions and recriminations.³ Throughout the 1990s the specific issues that increasingly divided Moscow and Washington, after the very brief period of Russia’s virtually identifying its policy with that of the United States, concerned a growing series of issues that continue to divide the two countries today. They began with NATO expansion and the more general incorporation of former Soviet dependencies and even constituent republics—from Bulgaria to Estonia, with Ukraine and Georgia as future targets—into what Moscow views as a U.S.-dominated political and security sphere, and included NATO

¹ See, for example, Dmitri V. Trenin, (2007) *Getting Russia Right*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment; and Vladimir Rukavishnikov, (2007) ‘Choices for Russia: Preserving Inherited Geopolitics through Emergent Global and European Realities,’ in Roger E. Kanet, ed., *Russia: Re-Emerging Great Power*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 54-78.

² For example, Senator Jesse Helms, then the powerful chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was especially outspoken in dismissing the relevance of Russian concerns. In introductory remarks before the Committee on Foreign Relations he dismissed Russian objections to possible US changes in the ABM Treaty by noting that the hearings would proceed from the presumption that the ABM Treaty had ceased to exist and that attempts to revise it would be defeated. See U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations (1999) *Ballistic Missiles: Threat and Response: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate One Hundred Sixth Congress First Session April 15 and 20, May 4, 5, 25, 26, and September 16, 1999*. Washington: Government Printing Office. See also Jesse Helms, Senator (1999) ‘Amend the ABM Treaty? No, Scrap It,’ *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 January, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/>. See also Andrei P. Tsykankov (2006) *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

³ The author has dealt with the evolving nature of Russian-U.S. relations in several earlier publications. See, for example, Roger E. Kanet and Nuray Ibryamova (2001) ‘Verpaßte Gelegenheiten? Amerikanisch-Russische Beziehungen in den 90er Jahren,’ *Osteuropa*, 51, 8, 985-1001; Roger E. Kanet (2001) ‘Zwischen Konsens und Konfrontation: Rußland und die Vereinigten Staaten,’ 51, 4/5, 509-521; Roger E. Kanet and Nouray V. Ibryamova (2002) ‘La sécurité en Europe centrale et orientale: un système en cours de changement,’ *Revue d’Études comparatives Est-Ouest*, 33/1, 179-203; Gabriela Marin Thornton and Roger E. Kanet (2005) ‘The Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States,’ in Roger E. Kanet, ed., *The New Security Environment: The Impact on Russia, Central and Eastern Europe*. Aldershot, UK/Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, pp. 165-182; and Roger E. Kanet and Larisa Homarac (2007) ‘The U.S. Challenge to Russian Influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus,’ in Kanet, ed., *Russia: Re-Emerging Great Power*, pp. 173-194.

intervention in former Yugoslavia, criticism of Russian domestic political developments, and a series of other events. After a brief attempt to reestablish a collaborative relationship on the basis of equality after the terrorist attacks in the United States of September 2001 and after the beginnings of the turnaround in the Russian economy, President Putin seemingly decided that Russia should 'go it alone,' that continued efforts to gain acceptance as an equal participant in the various 'Western clubs' would fail and that Moscow would always be treated by the West as an outsider. Russia simply had to pursue its own political agenda, regardless of the reactions of Washington or Brussels. Moreover, Putin's plans for reasserting central control across the length of Russia did not mesh well with Russia's stated commitment to democratization. The concept of 'sovereign democracy,' first used in 2005 by Vladislav Surkov, Russia's Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, quickly emerged as a theoretical explanation and justification of Russia's independent, even unilateralist, approach to foreign and security policy, as well as the top-down approach to domestic political control. By the December 2007 Parliamentary elections, 'sovereign democracy' had become part of the political program of United Russia, Russia's governing party now headed by President Putin himself.⁴

One major result of the Russian leadership's redefinition of Russia's role in world affairs during the past decade has been Russia's emergence as a revisionist power—one committed to rolling back many of the geopolitical changes that occurred after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and to returning Russia to the status of a major world power. This involves, first and foremost, Moscow's reasserting its position as the dominant actor in former Soviet space, in the areas along its periphery that it views as areas of Russia's 'privileged interests,' as President Dmitry Medvedev put it in an interview soon after Russia's military intervention in Georgia in August 2008.⁵ Closely related to the reassertion of Russian influence in immediate border areas, however, has been the commitment to challenging the global dominance—or attempted dominance—of the United States.⁶ Thus, since the U.S. decision to invade Iraq, Moscow has increasingly and loudly criticized virtually all aspects of U.S. policy—foreign and domestic—and has gone out of its way to collaborate, at least rhetorically and symbolically, with states that share Russia's opposition to U.S. unilateralism, such as Venezuela and Cuba.⁷

The objective of the present essay is to track recent Russian relations with the United States—focusing on the period between the U.S. intervention in Iraq in spring 2003 until the end of 2008—to support the argument that Russian leaders have decided to pursue a policy of independence, even confrontation, in their relations with the United States, as well as with Europe, as an integral part of a new assertive approach to achieving policy objectives. As noted above, Russian relations with the United States had gradually deteriorated during the 1990s, as Russia's leadership recognized that the policies introduced at the outset by President Yeltsin and his first foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, were simply idealistic and unworkable. They assumed that Russian interests coincided with those of the West, including the United States, and that the West would provide the type of financial support that would rapidly rebuild the collapsed Russian economy. Even before President Yeltsin replaced Kozyrev with Yevgenii Primakov as foreign minister in the run-up to the 1996 presidential election, Russian policy had begun to shift from its strong pro-Western orientation to an approach that was much more critical of the West and focused on what were viewed as Russia's immediate interests—e.g., the status of ethnic Russians in what was then termed 'the Near Abroad,' the reestablishment of relations with long-

⁴ Graeme Herd (2009, forthcoming) provides an extensive discussion of the concept 'sovereign democracy' in 'Russia's Sovereign Democracy: Instrumentalization, Interests and Identity,' in Roger E. Kanet, ed., (in press) *A Resurgent Russia and the European Union*. Dordrecht: ROL Publishing. For a discussion of the concept of identity as it impacts Russian foreign policy see Andrei Tsygankov (2008) 'Self and Other in International Relations Theory: Learning from Russian Civilizational Debates,' *International Studies Review* 10/4, 786-94.

⁵ Dmitry Medvedev (2008) 'Medvedev Sets Out Five Foreign Policy Principles in TV Interview,' *Vesti TV*, 31 August; *BBC Monitoring*, translated in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2008-163*, 2 September. For the most comprehensive recent treatment of recent Russian policy toward other former Soviet republics see Bertil Nygren (2007) *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia: Putin's Foreign Policy Toward the CIS Countries*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

⁶ For the argument that the United States is not, nor can it be, a global superpower because of the limitations of its capabilities and the rise of political competitors, see Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet, eds. (2008), *From Superpower to Besieged Global Power: Restoring World Order after the Failure of the Bush Doctrine*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, esp. chs. 1, 15.

⁷ For an extensive discussion of recent Russian criticisms of the United States and the West in general see Vladimir Shlapentokh (2008) 'Behind the Five-Day War: The Ideological Backing of Putin's Regime,' *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2008-195*, 23 October. See also Clifford J. Levy (2008) 'Russia Adopts Blustery Tone Set by Envoy,' *The New York Times*, 28 August, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/28/world/europe/28moscow.html?hp=&pagewanted=print>.

time Soviet allies, and resistance to what were viewed as Western attempts to take advantage of temporary Russian weakness to gain advantages in the areas of Central and Eastern Europe that had broken free of Russian domination a few short years earlier.

The following discussion of Russian-U.S. relations is divided into four sections: the first outlines the deteriorating relationship in the final years of Yeltsin's presidency; the second treats the revival of Russia as a major power under Putin and Medvedev; the next examines in some detail the impact of that revival on Russian relations with the United States; and the fourth and final section outlines possible future scenarios for the relationship.

PART TWO
The End of the Yeltsin Era

President Yeltsin's appointment of Yevgenii Primakov as foreign minister in 1996 did not really usher in a new era in Russian foreign policy, although Primakov emphasized more than had his predecessor the fact that Russia had been and remained a great power, despite its current economic and political problems, and that its foreign policy should be based on this reality. He argued that Russia would not accept dependence on outside powers and was committed to the creation of a stable multipolar world in which Russia's relations with the United States would be based on an 'equal partnership.'⁸ Despite the fact that Kozyrev had emphasized the importance of Russia's ties to the West, even while increasingly pursuing Russia's interests elsewhere, Primakov justified Russia's policies in pragmatic terms of Russian national interest, not theoretical ties to the democratic West. This meant, for example, a focus on Russia's primacy in security and political developments within the territory of the former Soviet Union—a point that is central in current Russian policy a decade later.

The Russians increasingly opposed U.S.-initiated United Nations economic sanctions against a number of countries—all viewed as important potential international partners for Russia. At the time of U.S. and British military air strikes in Iraq in retaliation for repeated Iraqi refusals to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors in late 1998, President Yeltsin spoke of 'gross violations of the UN Charter.' When the West began to bring pressure on Yugoslavia in 1998 over the issue of Kosovo, the Russians placed Yugoslav territorial integrity far above the issue of human rights and threatened various forms of retaliation if the West bombed Yugoslavia.

The issue that raised the most serious Russian concerns at this time—an issue that is even more important a decade later⁹—was NATO's decision to proceed with eastward expansion into former Soviet-controlled Europe. Moscow's multifaceted campaign against the extension of membership to Central European states prior to the Madrid meetings of NATO in July 1997 included pressure on the applicant countries and threats that the expansion would in effect initiate a new cold war in relations between Russia and the West. However, when NATO invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to join the alliance, Russia reluctantly accepted the decision without any of the retaliatory responses that had been threatened. Once it became obvious that their efforts to forestall the expansion of NATO eastward were doomed to failure, the Russians seem to have accepted reality and attempted to gain whatever benefits they could out of that acceptance. They shifted their opposition to NATO expansion from East Central Europe to the Baltic states—but also failed to stop the inclusion of those states seven years later. The push in Washington in 2008 to extend NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine no doubt was important in triggering the much more aggressive Russian response. The key difference from the earlier periods in explaining Moscow's reaction was the much stronger economic and even military position from which it was operating in 2008 and the significant shift in Russia's policy orientation under Putin.

Although NATO and Russia signed the Russian-NATO Founding Act in May 1997 that was to provide a clear framework for Russian-NATO relations, and Russia was granted membership in an expanded 'G-8', in fact neither of these relationships fulfilled Russian objectives. The Russia-NATO Founding Act failed to serve as an effective means for Russia to pursue its foreign policy interests. While the Act did not provide Russia with anything approximating veto power over NATO decisions, it did call for consultation on important security issues. In fact, NATO largely ignored Russia's increasingly vehement complaints about its refusal to consult on issues ranging from the former's attempts to arrest Serbs as war criminals and to implement various aspects of the Dayton peace accords. At the same time, Moscow was excluded from full participation in those 'G-8' meetings at which meaningful decisions concerning international financial matters were likely to occur. But,

⁸ Evgenyi Primakov (1998) 'Rossiia ishchet novoe mesto v mire,' (interview with E. Primkov), *Izvestiia*, 6 March 1996; Dmitrii Gornostaev (1998) 'Novoe v staroi kontseptsii Primakova,' *Nezavisimaa gazeta*, 17 March.

⁹ In a nationally televised interview in August 2008 President Medvedev stated: 'We do not need illusions of partnership. When we are being surrounded by bases on all sides, and a growing number of states are being drawn into the North Atlantic bloc and we are being told, 'Don't worry, everything is all right,' naturally we do not like it.' Cited in Levy, 'Russia Adopts Blustery Tone.'

given the disastrous state of its economy, Moscow had little hope of exercising any real influence within the group.

In the attempt to diversify their foreign relations in the late 1990s the Russians pursued policies aimed at strengthening ties with a number of countries throughout Asia—several of which had been important clients of the former USSR. This occurred despite strong and repeated opposition from the United States. Central to this effort was the ‘strategic partnership’ with China, whose leaders shared Russia’s growing concerns about U.S. unilateralism and global dominance. A number of high-level meetings between the two countries during 1997 and 1998 raised the issue of the threat of U.S. global hegemony and condemned NATO expansion, as well as the growing pressure that NATO was bringing against Yugoslavia. Simultaneously, Moscow strengthened relations with Iran and rebuilt relations with India, both of which along with China represented important markets for Russian military and nuclear technology.¹⁰ These initiatives, which had the dual objective of generating additional exports and strengthening Russia’s position as an independent world power, brought Russia almost immediately into direct conflict with U.S. policy objectives. At this time the United States opposed the sale of advanced military equipment to India, because of its potential destabilizing effect on the regional military balance, and the delivery of nuclear technology to Iran, which it viewed as a ‘rogue’ state that was likely to challenge regional security, as well as the long-term interests of the West.¹¹

When President Boris Yeltsin plucked Vladimir Putin from political obscurity in August 1999 and began to groom him as his successor, the state of Russia’s relations with the United States had reached a post-cold war low. However, even though Russia pursued policies that were in direct conflict with U.S. foreign policy objectives, the central component of bilateral Russian relations with the United States remained stable. Moreover, given its generally weak position because of its economic dependence on the West, Moscow often was forced to back down when faced with U.S. opposition. As should be clear, most of the issues that divide Russian-American relations in early 2009 have their roots in political and security developments a decade earlier. What has changed is the unwillingness of Moscow to accept a position of weakness or dependence in their relations with the West. It is important to recall that throughout the prior decade the United States, and the West more generally, had benefited geopolitically from the weakness of the Russian Federation. From Moscow’s perspective, they were encroaching on Russia’s legitimate sphere of influence and, in effect, pursuing policies that de facto were designed to contain future Russian influence.

¹⁰ On Russian policy in Asia in the late 1990s see Gilbert Rozman, Mikhail G. Nosov, and Koji Watanabe, eds. (1999) *Russia and East Asia: the 21st Century Security Environment*. Armonk, NY/London: M.E. Sharpe for East/West Institute, New York. See, also, Peter Truscott (1997) *Russia First: Breaking with the West*. London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 54-58; and Jerome M. Conley (2001) *Indo-Russian Military and Nuclear Cooperation: Lessons and Options for U.S. Policy in South Asia*. Lanham, MD/New York/Oxford, England: Lexington Books. Negotiations with China resulted in 2001 in the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which provides an important forum for the two states to coordinate their foreign and security policies with those of the countries of Central Asia.

¹¹ A decade later disagreements concerning the development of Iran’s nuclear program remain central to the differences between Moscow and Washington.

PART THREE

Putin, Medvedev and the Rebuilding of Russia as a Major Power

Early in his presidency Vladimir Putin made clear his commitment to reestablishing Russia's position as the preeminent regional power and important international actor. Essential preconditions for the fulfillment of these objectives, as described in the 'Foreign Policy Concept' that he approved, were the internal political stability and economic viability of Russia.¹² Russia had to overcome all evidence of and inclinations toward separatism, national and religious extremism, and terrorism. Putin moved forcefully and, in most cases effectively, in reasserting central governmental control in Russia. The economy, while still not flourishing, had shown strong signs of turning around with growth rates of 4.5, 10.0, and 5.0 percent in the years 1999-2001.¹³ High growth rates continued, and even expanded in the following years—not merely in the oil and gas sector, but across broad sectors of the economy.¹⁴ These political and economic gains, however, occurred along with growing disregard for the civil liberties and democratic processes to which Putin's government was nominally committed. His anti-corruption campaign, for example, soon became a catch-all that targeted those who in any way challenged his policies or were concerned about the authoritarian turn in Russian politics—such as those associated with the independent national media, which was basically silenced by the end of Putin's second term as President.

In the foreign policy realm Russia under Putin continued to seek allies who shared its commitment to preventing the global dominance of the United States that represents, in the words of the 'Foreign Policy Concept,' a threat to international security and to Russia's goal of serving as a major center of influence in a multipolar world. Most of the issues on which Russia and the United States disagreed already in the mid-1990s continued to plague that relationship. In other words, until the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 there was little evidence that the disagreements dividing Russia and the United States during the 1990s would disappear soon—in particular since they derived from core elements of their respective foreign policy commitments. In fact, after a very brief hiatus immediately following 9/11, those issues reemerged and continue to undermine Russian-U.S. relations in 2009.

However, Putin's success in dealing with the major domestic problems challenging the Russian state meant that Russia increasingly faced Europe and the United States from a position of increased stability and strength. Putin's reassertion of central control over the territory of the Russian Federation—by eliminating the election of provincial governors, by suppressing domestic opponents and critics (especially the independent media) and by playing on the fears of Russian citizens of domestic terrorism, crime, and general chaos—played an important role in strengthening the Russian state, which under his predecessor at times seemed on the verge of collapsing. Besides rebuilding the foundations of the Russian state at great cost to political liberty and democracy as a precondition for Russia's ability to reassert itself as a major power, Putin and his associates benefited greatly from the exponential rise in global demand for gas and oil—at least until the global economic collapse of fall 2008—and the ensuing revitalization of the Russian economy. This, in turn, has contributed to Russia's ability to pursue a much more active and assertive foreign policy, as many analysts have noted.¹⁵ What the longer term

¹² *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* (2000) Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, 28 June, <http://www.mid.ru/mid/eng/econcept.htm>; also available in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2000-#4403*, 14. July 2000, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson>. See also 'Kontseptsiiia natsional'noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii,' *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie* (Internet Version), 11 July 2000, http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2000-01-14/6_concept.html.

¹³ Central Bank (2001) 'Main Macroeconomic Indicators,' Central Bank of the Russian Federation, http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/credit_statistics/

¹⁴ *Russian Economic Report*, no. 16. The World Bank in Russia, June 2008, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRUSSIANFEDERATION/Resources/rer16_Eng.pdf

¹⁵ However, as some analysts have argued, the revived role of Russia as a regional and global political actor is based extensively on oil and gas production and exports, despite recent improvements in other aspects of the Russian economy. See, for example, Kathleen J. Hancock (2007) 'Russia: Great Power Image versus Economic Reality,' *Asian Perspective*, 31, 4, 71-98; Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss (2008) 'The Myth of Putin's Success,' *Foreign Affairs*, 87, 1: 68-84; and Rajan Menon and Alexander J. Motyl (2007) 'The Myth of Russian Resurgence,' *The American Interest Online*, 2, 4, 96-101, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/article.cfm?Id=258&Mid=8>.

impact of the collapse of the global economy since fall 2008 and the dramatic drop in energy prices will have on the Russian economy and on Russia's ability to pursue an assertive foreign policy is yet to be seen.

Thus, Putin was quite successful, and fortunate, during the eight years of his presidency in establishing the economic and political foundations for a strong centralized state as the prerequisite for Russia's reasserting itself as a major player in international political and security affairs. While the voices calling for Russia to resume its role as a great, global power in the 1990s were strident but not realistic, similar voices have today taken over the dominant position in Russian politics and are based upon realistic expectations of achieving many of their goals. Supporters of this policy position begin with former President Putin himself, as made clear in his statement to the Russian parliament and people that 'the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.'¹⁶ This comment was followed early in 2007 by Putin's broad attack on virtually all aspects of U.S. policy delivered at an international security conference in Munich that made clear Russia's new assertive and nationalistic approach to foreign policy, beginning with its relations with the United States.¹⁷ As Mark Beissinger notes, Putin's comments imply that the 'persistence of the Soviet empire would have been preferable to the East European democracies or to the current fifteen states that now cover former Soviet space.'¹⁸ The rhetoric emanating from Moscow since the military incursion into Georgia, in particular that of President Medvedev, confirmed the image of a revisionist state intent upon reestablishing its dominant role, at least along its periphery, and one that simply will no longer deal with the rest of the world on any other terms except those that it sets.¹⁹

By May 2008, when Putin turned the presidency over to his successor Dmitry Medvedev, Russia had reemerged as a major player in European economic and political affairs and the dominant actor in most of post-Soviet space. The foundation of this new role has been Russia's semi-monopoly over the extraction and distribution of natural gas and oil across much of Eurasia, and the growing direct influence that this semi-monopoly provides over the economies of neighboring states. The gas war between Russia and Ukraine in January 2009 and its implications for European consumers of Russian gas make clear the importance to Moscow of its control of oil and gas exports in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives and its willingness to use that leverage.²⁰

¹⁶ President's speech to the Federal Assembly, April 2005. BBC Monitoring. 'Putin Focuses on Domestic Policy in State-of-Nation Address to Russian Parliament.' Source: RTR Russia TV, Moscow, in Russian 0800 gmt 25 April 2005; translated in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2005-#9130*, 25 April 2005, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/>. For recent discussions of the commitment of Russia's political elites to regaining great power status, see Ingmar Oldberg, 'Russia's Great Power Ambitions and Policy under Putin,' in Kanet, ed., *Russia: Re-Emerging Great Power*, pp. 13-30, and Rukavishnikov, 'Choices for Russia.' Public opinion surveys in Russia indicate that a majority of Russians support the return of Russia to great power status. Fifty-one percent of those surveyed in early 2008 expected Putin's successor to return Russia to a preeminent global role, while only nine percent expect the next president to establish good relations with the West. 'Half of Russians Yearn for Super-Power Status' *Angus Reid Global Monitor*, 4 February 2008; reprinted in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2008-#2008*, 4 February 2008, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/>.

¹⁷ 'Putin Slams US for Making World More Dangerous,' *DW—World.DE Deutsche Welle*. 10 February 2007. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2343749,00.html>. See also, 'Not a Cold War, but a Cold Tiff: Russia and America' (2007) *The Economist*, 17 February, pp. 60-61; and Stefan Wagstyl (2007) 'The Year Russia Flexed Its Diplomatic Muscle,' *Financial Times*, 17 December; reprinted in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2007-#257*, 17 December, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/>. What most Western commentators and analysts missed in Putin's remarks was his assertion that Russia was willing to work with the United States as an equal in areas related to the continued reduction of nuclear weapons and other arms control measures. Vladimir Putin (2007), 'Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy', delivered 10 February 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html> (accessed 2 March 2009).

¹⁸ Mark R. Beissinger, 'The Persistence of Empire in Eurasia,' *NewsNet: News of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies*, vol. 48, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1-8.

¹⁹ Levy, 'Russia Adopts Blustery Tone.' See also President Medvedev's State of the Nation address in November 2008. 'Russian President Medvedev's First Annual Address to Parliament,' Rossiya TV, 5 November 2008, translated in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2008-#292*, 6 November 2008. From Moscow's perspective, however, its policy goals are not revisionist, but rather are intended to reestablish Russia's legitimate position in the aftermath of the West's having taken advantage of Russian decline in the immediate post-cold war period.

²⁰ It is important to note that in the Ukrainian-Russian confrontation over gas supplies, as in the Georgian-Russian military conflict in summer 2008 over South Ossetia, Russia alone was not at fault. The leaders of both Ukraine and Georgia contributed significantly to the confrontations. On European reactions to the policies of these countries see Paul Taylor (2009) 'Europeans Souring on Ukraine, Georgia'. Reuters, 14 January; reprinted in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2009-#11*, 16

Before turning to a more detailed discussion of specific developments in Russian relations with the United States in the recent past, it is important to discuss, at least briefly, the relationship between the growing assertiveness in Russian foreign policy and domestic political developments. As Russia's leaders abandoned the halting efforts at democratization that characterized the first decade of the Russian Federation and increasingly reestablished the institutions and policies of a traditional authoritarian state, they have also seized upon economic growth and Russian nationalism as the foundations on which to build support from broad segments of the population. The economic boom of the past decade that resulted in more than doubling the gross domestic product per capita of the Russian population has been an important element in the popularity of former President Putin and in the support for his policies. However, the question arises about the Russian people's willingness to continue to support an essentially authoritarian regime in a period of serious economic downturn, such as the one that engulfed Russia at the end of 2008.

Public opinion polls as well as anecdotal information indicate widespread public support for the return of Russia to great power status; more specifically Russians overwhelmingly supported the Kremlin's decision to invade Georgia in August 2008.²¹ Related to this broad sense of nationalism, the Putin-Medvedev leadership has increasingly focused on the dangers to Russia presented by foreign enemies, of which the United States is virtually always listed first. The most recent version of the *Foreign Policy Concept* issued by President Medvedev in late July 2008, immediately prior to the intervention in Georgia, represents a break with earlier versions of the *Concept*, even though it in effect merely codified changes that had already occurred over recent years.²² First, unlike the *Concept* issued at the beginning of the Putin presidency, it focuses on external, rather than internal, challenges to Russian security—with U.S. global dominance at the very top of the list. In line with the extensive discussion of 'sovereign democracy' in Russia, the *Concept* stipulates that global competition is acquiring a civilizational dimension, which suggests competition between different value systems and development models within the framework of universal democratic and market economy principles. The new *Concept* maintains that the reaction to the prospect of loss by the historic West of its monopoly in global processes finds its expression, in particular, in the continued political and psychological policy of 'containing' Russia.²³ The document emphasizes throughout Russia's independence and sovereignty as the foundation on which all of Moscow's relations with the outside world must be built.

A resurgent nationalism, integrated with an almost paranoid concern for security,²⁴ underlies Moscow's current approach to the outside world. As both Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev have repeated on numerous occasions, Russia is a major power whose interests have simply been ignored by the West, especially a would-be hegemonic Washington. With the return of Russia's power base—especially in economic terms—Russia simply will not stand by and permit those interests to be pushed aside. It will not permit itself either to become a dependent supporter of U.S. policy initiatives or to be shunted aside into the 'dustbin of history.' We turn now to an explicit examination of the specifics of the Russian-U.S. relationship as they related to the rise of Russia as a major regional actor.

January 2009. For a perceptive analysis of the Ukrainian-Russian gas war see Heronim Petrovič, 'Farce ums Gas: Russland, die Ukraine und die EU-Energiepolitik', *Osteurop*, vol. 59, no. 1, pp. 19-35.

²¹ 'Half of Russians Yearn for Super-Power Status'; see, also Anne Barnard (2008) 'Russians Confident That Nation is Back,' *The New York Times*, 15 August, <http://www.nytimes.com>.

²² 'The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: 31.07.2008', MaximsNews, News Network for the United Nations and the International Community, <http://www.maximsnews.com/news20080731russiaforeignpolicyconcept10807311601.htm>. See also Shlapentokh (2008) 'Behind the Five-Day War'.

²³ 'The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: 31.07.2008.'

²⁴ It is important to recognize that the U.S. decision to pursue a policy of *de facto* containment of Russia beginning already by the mid-1990s, as noted elsewhere in this article, has reinforced Moscow's concerns for security and for its future role in areas adjacent to Russian territory and viewed as crucial to Russia's long-term interests.

PART FOUR

Russia and the United States since 9/11

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, President Putin offered Russia's support to the United States in its initial response to the attacks. This initiative opened a brief period in which relations between the United States and Russia were generally cordial—more cordial than they had been in a number of years. The divisions that had characterized the policies of the two countries in the late 1990s continued to exist, but were overshadowed by the obvious areas of collaboration between the two countries—especially in the area of combating terrorist threats. Russia supported the initial U.S. military intervention against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, in part by facilitating U.S. access to air bases in Central Asia that proved to be important in the U.S. pursuit of military operations in Afghanistan. However, by summer and fall of 2002, as the Bush Administration pushed for military intervention and regime change in Iraq, the relationship rapidly unraveled. In fact, the Russian Federation, along with key U.S. NATO allies France and Germany, comprised the core opposition within the UN Security Council to U.S. demands for direct military intervention against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It is from this point that we can track the deterioration of relations between Moscow and Washington—a deterioration that by early 2009, at the time of the transfer of presidential power from George W. Bush to Barack Obama in Washington, had reached the level of confrontation on a variety of issues of central concern to the foreign policy of both countries. These issues concerned, first and foremost, the relative standing and role of the two countries in the international system. More specifically, however, tensions concerned Russia's lack of input in key global discussions about future security, the West's political, security, and economic encroachment in areas viewed in Moscow as Russia's sphere of influence, and the West's position on a whole series of developments. In the following pages we will discuss briefly a number of these issues that divide Moscow and Washington and the likelihood of their resolution in the near term.

U.S. Unilateralism and the Russian Response

Among the most central and consistent themes in Russian foreign policy in recent years has been the call for the reestablishment of a multipolar international political system in which all major powers, including especially Russia, have an equal voice. This theme has been a core element in most of the major speeches of Russian leaders over the past decade, even prior to the resurgence of Russia as a major international player and the decision in Moscow to challenge the United States on a broad array of policy issues. The 2000 version of *The Russian Foreign Policy Concept*, for example, made the point throughout that Russia was committed to a multipolar approach to international security and that '[t]he strategy of unilateral actions can destabilize the international situation, provoke tensions and the arms race, aggravate interstate contradictions, national and religious strife.'²⁵ In his strongly critical attack of the United States, NATO and the West more broadly, presented at an international security conference in Munich in 2007, President Putin noted: 'The United States has overstepped its borders in all spheres—economic, political and humanitarian—and has imposed itself on other states. . . . One-sided illegitimate action hasn't solved a single problem and has become a generator of many human tragedies, a source of tension.'²⁶ The tone of Moscow's criticism did not let up after the 'transfer of power' from Putin to his presidential successor Dmitry Medvedev, as the latter criticized the United States for encouraging Georgia's 'barbaric aggression' against South Ossetia in August 2008 and for using the ensuing Russia-Georgia war as an excuse further to expand NATO.²⁷

This source of division between the United States and the Russian Federation has been one that is at the root of many of the other areas of disagreement for more than a decade and is one that will in the future be difficult to resolve. It concerns the very way in which the leaderships of the two countries view themselves and

²⁵ *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2000*. The 2008 version of *The Foreign Policy Concept* echoes these points: 'The unilateral action strategy leads to destabilization of international situations, provokes tensions and arms race, exacerbates interstate differences, stirs up ethnic and religious strife, endangers security of other States and fuels tensions in international relations.' 'The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: 31.07.2008'.

²⁶ 'Putin Slams US for Making World More Dangerous'.

²⁷ 'Medvedev Speech at the National Unity Day Reception', www.Kremlin.ru; reprinted in *Johnson's Russia List, JRL 2008-#201*. 4 November 2008, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-201-36.dfm>.

their dealings with the rest of the world. Despite the change in administrations in Washington and the likely abandonment of the most egregious elements of a unilateralist and assertive U.S. nationalist foreign policy, U.S. decision makers will continue, as they have for more than two centuries, to view the United States as an ‘exceptional’ state, one destined to provide global leadership.²⁸

Such an approach to dealing with Russia is likely to continue to bring with it problems, for in very many respects the Russians have a similar view of themselves as unique masters of their own destiny, completely independent actors, and a legitimate global power. This is the message that Putin, Medvedev and other Russian leaders have been so insistent in conveying over the course of the past five years, or so. ‘Sovereign democracy’ as the theoretical underpinning of the Russian political system is termed, calls for Russian unilateralism in foreign and security policy, in so far as that is possible.

Moscow and the U.S.-EU Challenge to Russia’s Sphere of Influence

Quite a number of the sources of conflict between Russia and the United States—and the West more generally—result from what the Russians view as a deliberate attempt to undermine their country’s legitimate interests in regions of special interest to them and the attempt to limit and contain Russia’s revival as a great power. This reaction relates to the dramatic shift in the status of the territory between the Russian Federation and Western Europe, all of which was until quite recently a part of a Soviet-dominated ‘empire’—either internal or external—and most of which is now integrated into Western economic, political and security institutions. NATO and EU expansion eastward has been viewed in Moscow as the result of purposeful Western programs aimed at expanding the West’s geopolitical dominance in Europe and directly undermining Russia’s role and its long-term security. The Russians ignore the fact that the initiative for inclusion came from the Central European peoples themselves, and that the West was, in fact, responding to these initiatives. What they see is the dramatic change in the geopolitical relationships throughout the region.

Ever since the most recent expansions of NATO and EU membership into formerly communist Europe, relations between Russia and those organizations have deteriorated significantly. In part, this has resulted from the much more assertive efforts of Moscow to reestablish its influence in the broader Central and East European region—witness the periodic confrontations between the Russian Federation and Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia. On the other hand, as Joan DeBardeleben has demonstrated in the case of the European Union, the entrance of postcommunist members into the EU has added a significant level of complexity to EU-Russian relations, as members such as Poland and the Baltic states have made demands on the organization to take a stand on a variety of issues that have challenged Russian policy.²⁹ Poland, for example, stymied efforts to renegotiate a new EU-Russian Partnership and Cooperation Agreement for more than a year in response to Moscow’s embargo of the importation of Polish meat products, which the Poles viewed as politically motivated.³⁰

Some of the new members of the European Union have been strongly critical of bilateral deals negotiated with Russia by other EU member states to build new gas pipelines from Russia to Europe that will bypass their territory. Once again Poland has been the most vocal in its concerns about the implications of such a pipeline for both its interests and for the future development of an EU energy policy.³¹ Among the new challenges to the Russian-EU relationship, however, perhaps the most visible have related to the active role that Poland,

²⁸ There is an extensive literature dealing with this topic, much of which is cited in Roger E. Kanet (2008) ‘A New U.S. Approach to Europe?: The Transatlantic Relationship after Bush.’ *International Politics*, 45, 3, 348-363 and Kolodziej and Kanet, eds., *From Superpower to Besieged Global Power*. The foreign and security policy team surrounding President Obama shares this perspective, if not the means of implementing it, of its predecessors. Writing on this topic for a Russian audience, Andrei P. Tsygankov has summarized the arguments concerning ‘American Exceptionalism’ in ‘Otnosheniia SShA s Rossiei v sovremennoi amerikanskoi politologii’. *Mezhdunarodnye Protsessy*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2008), <http://www.intertrends.ru/eighteenth/005.htm> (accessed 12 March 2009).

²⁹ Joan DeBardeleben (2007) ‘The Impact of EU Enlargement on the EU-Russian Relationship’, in Kanet, ed., *A Resurgent Russia and the European Union*.

³⁰ Ahto Lobjakas (2007) ‘EU Suspects Political Motives in Russia-Poland Meat Row,’ *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 22 May, <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1076640.html> (accessed 31 January 2009). Similar Lithuanian objections were finally overcome in November 2008. Scott Wacholtz (2008) ‘EU to Resume Russia Talks,’ *Markets.com*, 11 November, <http://www.markets.com/story/Political-5292008-Europe-EUtoResumeRussiaTalks.php> (accessed 31 January 2008).

³¹ ‘Poland Wants Talks with Russia, Germany on Pipeline’ (2008) *RFE/RL Newslines*, 12, 5, part 1, 8 January.

Lithuania, and other postcommunist states played in supporting political reform in Ukraine, Georgia and even Belarus—political reform that has generally been interpreted by Moscow as a challenge to its interests.³² During and after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in late 2004, which forced new elections and brought to power in Kiev Western-oriented leaders, the Polish government was among its most active advocates and supporters in Europe.³³ Postcommunist EU member states also backed developments in Georgia associated with the Rose Revolution of 2003 that brought to power in Tbilisi a Western-oriented government.³⁴

We have been focusing on the impact of EU expansion into what the Russians view as their legitimate sphere of interest and influence. Although this development obviously does not impinge directly on the Russian-American relationship, it has clear implications for it. First of all, there is the fact that all of the new member states of the EU also joined NATO since 1998. Moreover, as a group they have generally supported U.S. foreign and security policy—for example, politically in the run up to the Iraq War and militarily in contributing to the U.S.-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. When former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld divided U.S. allies into ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe, the majority of those favorably included in the latter group were the postcommunist states of Central Europe. The position of these countries in backing the United States is quite understandable given the history of the second half of the twentieth century and the concern that some of these governments have had about the impact that the revival of a strong Russia might have for their future security.³⁵ It is always important to recall that, contrary to Moscow’s picture of an aggressive United States and/or Western Europe attempting to take advantage of Russia’s weakness during the 1990s and pushing eastward to contain the revival of Russian influence, the countries of the region vigorously pursued membership in both NATO and the EU as part of their ‘return to Europe’ and, one must recognize, their escape from Russia.

The most recent illustrations of Russia’s reactions to what is viewed as challenges to Russian honor or Western incursions into legitimate Russian spheres of influence have been the so-called cyber-war conducted against Estonia in 2007,³⁶ the mounting pressures against Georgia that culminated in military intervention in August 2008 and the ensuing diplomatic recognition of the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the gas war with Ukraine in January 2009. All three of these developments were more complex than this simple listing implies. But the element that ties them together is the attempt by an increasingly assertive Russia to make clear to its near neighbors that on issues on which Moscow has a strong position, it is willing to use the capabilities at its command—capabilities that have increased over the past decade—in order to accomplish its goals. Whether the matter concerns what the Russians view as dishonor to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War and an interpretation of the ‘liberation’ from Nazi domination seen as demeaning to Russia, as in the case of Estonia, or the growing friction between Georgia and Russia ever since the shift in Tbilisi to a government

³² President Medvedev pointedly noted: ‘We really proved—including to those who sponsored the current regime in Georgia—that we are able to protect our citizens.’ First, and primarily, he was referring to the United States, which had been pushing Georgia’s membership in NATO, but also to Poland and other postcommunist states, which had supported the Saakashvili government. Office of the President, ‘Address to the Federal Assembly’ on 5 November 2008. http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/11/05/2144_type70029type82917type127286_208836.shtml (accessed 31 January 2009). In like vein, Prime Minister Putin also presented the Russian intervention in Georgia as a response to cold-war style provocations by the United States. Cited in Clifford J. Levy (2008) ‘Putin Suggests U.S. Provocation in Georgia Clash’, *The New York Times*, 29 August.

³³ Taras Kuzio (2004) ‘Poland Plays Strategic Role in Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution”’, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, The Jamestown Foundation, 9 December, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=27278 (accessed 31 January 2009).

³⁴ See Brian Whitmore (2008) ‘Will Brussels Get Tough with Moscow?’ *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, 13 July, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1183415.html>.

³⁵ National debates about joining NATO made clear that for virtually all those countries requesting membership, concerns about Russia and their own future security played an important role. See, for example, Gale A. Mattox and Arthur R. Rachwald, eds. (2001) *Enlarging NATO: The National Debates*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

³⁶ In 2007 after the Estonian government decided to move a Soviet war memorial from the center of Tallinn to its international military cemetery, Russians—in both Estonia and in the Russian Federation—mounted attacks on the Estonian government in Tallinn and its embassy in Moscow. This was followed by the cutting off of Russian oil and coal deliveries, and a massive cyber attack that virtually closed down the information technology sector of this former Soviet colony. See Judy Dempsey (2007) ‘EU and NATO Seek to Quell Russia-Estonia Spat’, *International Herald Tribune*, 3 May, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/05/03/news/union.php>; ‘Bronze Meddling: Russian Hypocrisy and Heavy-Handedness Towards a Former Colony’ (2007) *The Economist*, 5 May, p. 65; and ‘A Cyber-Riot’ (2007) *The Economist*, 12 May, p. 55.

committed to establishing greater distance from Moscow and closer ties with, even integration into, Western institutions, the leaders in Moscow will no longer stand back and watch Western influence increase. In the case of both Ukraine and Georgia the added factor of Washington's pushing for admission of the two states into NATO in spring 2008 no doubt played a role in the Russian decision to forestall such a development.³⁷

From Moscow's perspective U.S. actions in Central Asia in conjunction with the Russian-backed expansion of military involvement after 9/11 as part of the war on terror also raised concerns about U.S. meddling in an area of special Russian interest. Yet, the expulsion of the Americans from Uzbekistan in 2005 and the ensuing solidification of Russian relations with most of the countries of the region have largely removed the United States as a competitor for influence in Central Asia.³⁸ But from Moscow's perspective the issue of the U.S. role in undermining Russian influence in neighboring states and facilitating, even encouraging, their entrance into Western institutions, especially NATO, remains a serious impediment to improved Russian-U.S. relations.

Russian Charges of a U.S. Military Threat

Distinct from, but closely related to, the matter of U.S. and Western challenges to Russia's sphere of influence as discussed in the prior section of this essay is the stated Russian concern that the United States and NATO represent a serious threat to Russian security. Putin and Medvedev have both asserted that the NATO alliance's placement of forces in countries immediately along Russia's borders undermines the level of mutual trust and, thus, requires Russia to respond in like fashion.³⁹ The Bush Administration's decision to go ahead with the development and placement of the first stage of an anti-missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland and the decisions of the two Central European countries to finalize the agreements despite Russian opposition provide clear evidence of the serious divisions in Russian relations with the United States, but also of the nature of Moscow's relations with its former client states. Washington has simply not taken seriously Russian leaders' regular assertions that they view the placement of an anti-missile system, even one as modest in size as that currently planned, as a challenge to their own long-term security. Nor have the Russians accepted Washington's arguments that the system is meant solely and exclusively as possible protection against rogue states—read Iran—that might develop nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the speed with which the Poles and Czechs finally ratified the agreements with the United States in August 2008—after long domestic debates—made clear that the Russian military intervention in Georgia and revived concerns about the long-term nature of their relations with Russia played a major role in their decisions.⁴⁰ No doubt President Medvedev's address to the Russian Parliament on 5 November 2008 reinforced concerns throughout Central Europe, as he announced the likely deployment of Russian missiles in the Kaliningrad Region along the Polish border and that capabilities for electronic warfare against NATO would be expanded in the area.⁴¹

³⁷ See Luke Harding (2008) 'Bush Backs Ukraine and Georgia for NATO Membership,' *Guardian.co.uk*, 8 April, <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=40813> (accessed 1 February 2009). In response to the most recent U.S. efforts to push membership, France, Germany, Norway, Luxembourg, Spain, Italy and as many as four other current NATO members rejected American arguments. See Judy Dempsey (2008) 'U.S. Presses NATO on Georgia and Ukraine,' *The New York Times*, 25 November.

³⁸ See Kanet and Homarac, 'The U.S. Challenge to Russian Influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus'. The announcement in early 2009 by the government of Kyrgyzstan that it would not renew the lease to the United States for the continued use of an airbase and that Russia had provided a large new loan was the most recent evidence of both Russia's concern about the continued U.S. presence in Central Asia and its growing influence. See Ellen Barry and Michael Schwartz (2009) 'Kyrgyzstan Says it will Close US Base,' *New York Times*, 3 February, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/04/world/europe/04kyrgyz.html?partner=rss&emc=rss> (accessed 28 April 2009). See also Batybek Abdrisaev (2009) 'The Russification of Kyrgyzstan,' *Foreign Policy* (April 2009), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4810&print=1 (accessed 5 April 2009).

³⁹ Cited in Ricks and Whitlock, 'Putin Hits U.S. Over Unilateral Approach'.

⁴⁰ Both the final Polish and Czech decisions to sign the agreement for the placement of radar and anti-missile systems in their countries occurred soon after the Russian intervention in Georgia and were, no doubt, influenced by concerns about Russia's more assertive role in the region. Russian officials reacted immediately by noting that this decision would likely result in Poland and the Czech Republic being targeted by Russian missiles. See Thomas Shanker and Nicholas Kulish (2008) 'Russia Lashes Out on Missile Deal,' *The New York Times*, 16 August; Nicholas Kulish (2008) 'Georgian Crisis Brings Attitude Change to a Flush Poland,' *The New York Times*, 21 August.

⁴¹ Dmitry Medvedev (2008) 'Russian President Medvedev's First Annual Address to Parliament,' *Rossiia TV*, 5 November; translated in *Johnson's Russia List*, *JRL2008-#202*, 6 November 2008. In late January 2009, after the inauguration of President Barack Obama and indications that U.S. policy would likely be reevaluated, the Russians announced that they

Thus, the issues of NATO expansion and the absorption of additional former Soviet republics, as well as the introduction of U.S. anti-missile defenses into Central Europe, appear to be non-starters in terms of their impact on the possibility of a normalization of Russian relations with the United States. Only a complete change in the way that the Russians view these issues, or a U.S. decision that the cost involved in continuing to pursue them is too high, is likely to remove them as serious hindrances to improved relations. There is some evidence that the new Obama administration is not committed either to developing a missile defense shield or to further NATO expansion, but this is a matter that will only become clear with the passage of time.

Russian Gas and Oil Exports and U.S. Efforts at Economic Containment

Already in the mid-1990s, as part of an overall approach toward Russia that had much in common with a strategy of containment, the United States began to advocate the development of oil and gas pipelines to Western Europe that would skirt Russian territory and, thus, reduce the potential of Russia's gaining further leverage over either Central Asian exporters or the Western purchasers of energy.⁴² During the past decade, as Moscow began to use the supply of gas and oil to neighboring states as an explicit foreign policy tool,⁴³ Washington became even more concerned about Western energy dependence on Russia and renewed its role in encouraging the development of alternative routes for the delivery of energy, especially natural gas, from the new fields in Central Asia to the West. The Russians, understandably, have viewed this U.S. initiative—especially in conjunction with the expansion of NATO eastward—as a continuation of a policy of containment.

U.S. efforts since the 1990s to contain Russian influence over the delivery of energy to Europe have failed to accomplish their objectives; Russia has effectively outmaneuvered the United States in its relations with the oil and gas producing countries of Central Asia. Although several pipelines have been completed that avoid Russian territory, Moscow has been successful in recent years in reestablishing solid political and economic relations with the authoritarian regimes of Central Asia. They have signed new agreements with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other major energy producers that will result in expanded supplies of gas and oil destined for European consumers through the existing and planned pipeline network that crosses Russian territory.⁴⁴ At the time of the Russian intervention in Georgia Moscow signed new agreements with Central Asian producers for the expansion of their gas exports through Russia, rather than via southern pipelines favored by the United States.⁴⁵ This is all part of a Russian effort to increase control over the flow of oil and gas to Europe as a

were no longer planning to place missiles in Kaliningrad targeted on Poland and the Czech Republic. 'Russia Ready not to aim Iskander Missile Systems against USA' (2009) *Pravda.ru*, 28 January, http://english.pravda.ru/russia/politics/28-01-2009/107026-russia_iskander_usa-0 (accessed 2 February 2009). The indications that the new Obama administration might consider delaying deployment of the defensive missile system has raised speculation of possible improvement in Russian-U.S. relations. See, for example, Michael A. Fletcher (2009), 'Obama Makes Overtures to Russia on Missile Defense', *Washington Post*, 3 March, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/03/AR2009030300028.html> (accessed 27 April 2009).

⁴² See Robert Ebel and Rajan Menon, eds. (2000) *Energy and Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Lanham, MD/New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; and Charles E. Ziegler (2005) 'Energy in the Caspian Basin and Central Asia,' in Kanet, ed., *The New Security Environment*, pp. 210-218. The first of the new pipelines, the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline, was opened in May 2005. It begins in Azerbaijan and brings oil from the Caspian area via Georgia to the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. At the same time, however, a gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey under the Black Sea has also begun operating. The Russian intervention in Georgia brings into question the longer-term viability of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Furthermore, the likelihood that investors will go ahead with another planned pipeline—the Nabucco Pipeline—from Central Asia to Europe via Georgia is significantly diminished, in the view of the author.

⁴³ The most comprehensive treatment of Russia's political use of energy supplies to neighboring states, as part of a policy in which economic tools have complemented more traditional military capabilities can be found in the work of Bertil Nygren. See especially Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia*. See also Roger E. Kanet (2008) *The Return of Imperial Russia: Russia and Its Neighbors*. ACDIS Occasional Paper, Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, <http://acdis.illinois.edu/publications/207/publication-TheReturnofImperialRussiaRussiaandItsNeighbors.html>.

⁴⁴ See Melissa Hahn (2007) 'Moscow Achieves Success with Kazakh Oil Deal,' *Power and Interest News Report*, 29 May and Andrew E. Kramer, 'Central Asia on Front Line in Energy Battle,' *The New York Times*, 20 December 2007, pp. C1, C6.

⁴⁵ M.K. Bhadrakumar (2008) 'Russia Takes Control of Turkmen (World?) Gas,' *Asia Times*, 30 July, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/JG30Ag01.html; People's Daily Online (2008). 'Russia Busy with Intense

prelude to being in a position to influence, indirectly at least, the political orientation of key European governments on issues such as the status of secessionist regions of Moldova and Georgia, Russian policy in Chechnya, etc.⁴⁶

Russia and important Western partners have also put into place plans for the future distribution of oil and gas to Europe that will greatly reduce the possible interference of current transit states such as Ukraine and Belarus, as well as Poland, by avoiding those transit states altogether. The so-called gas war between Russia and Ukraine in January 2009 provides probably the best evidence, from a Russian perspective, that it has to reduce this dependence.⁴⁷ The planned Nord Stream pipeline under the Baltic Sea directly from Russia to the coast of Germany,⁴⁸ as well as the more recently announced South Stream pipeline that will run under the Black Sea from Russia directly to Bulgaria, will expand Russia's domination over the gas markets of Europe, while reducing the possibility of countries such as Ukraine, Belarus or Poland disrupting those flows.⁴⁹ Overall, Russia has positioned itself effectively to control the production and distribution of energy across almost the entirety of former Soviet space and, thus, to Europe as well, as part of former President Putin's commitment to establish Russia as a major global actor. The dependence on external sources for virtually all gas and oil needs of some countries in the European Union and their willingness to cut bilateral deals with Russia outside the context of a common EU policy (notably Germany), has greatly aided Russia in its attempt to employ energy as a foreign policy tool. It has also contributed to the divisions within the European Union and between the United States and key EU member states on the issue of the future of EU energy policy. However, the impact of the January 2009 Russian-Ukrainian gas war has, at least for the time being, influenced European states to reconsider the implications of their dependence on Russia for energy.⁵⁰

Other Outstanding Disagreements

In addition to the issues discussed here a long list of other serious policy disagreements divided Moscow and Washington as the new Obama Administration took control of U.S. foreign policy. These include a number of outstanding territorial issues such as Russia's refusal to recognize the Western-supported independent state of Kosovo, but also Russia's recognition—in part, in retaliation—of the independence of the Georgian breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and subsequent virtual incorporation of the two into the Russian Federation. In both of these cases the United States and Russia have taken opposed positions. But this issue, as we have already noted earlier, is part of the much broader concern of Russian and U.S. policy toward those states in Eastern Europe that have declared that it is their intention to join NATO and the European Union. The status of both Russian-Georgian and Russian-Ukrainian relations and the impact of their conflicts on Moscow's policy toward Washington remain toward the top of the list of priorities.

Central Asia Diplomacy,' *People's Daily Online*, 4 September, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/6493220.html>. For a recent discussion of the issues involved in the EU's energy dependence on Russia see Roland Götz (2009) 'Pipeline-Popanz: Irrtümer der europäischen Energiedebatte,' *Osteuropa*, vol. 59, no. 1, pp. 3-18. Two important studies of Europe's energy supplies and its dependence on Russia are Susanne Nies (2008), *Oil and Gas Deliver to Europe: An Overview of Existing and Planned Infrastructures*. Paris: IFRI, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/200904/20090406ATT53473/20090406ATT53473EN.pdf> (accessed 27 April 2009); and Jeffrey Mankoff (2009), *Eurasian Energy Security*. Council Special Report No. 43 (February 2009). New York: The Council on Foreign Relations, http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Eurasia_CSR43.pdf (accessed 27 April 2009).

⁴⁶ This statement and others that emphasize the political aspects of Russian energy exports and policy should not be interpreted to mean that economic benefits are not also an important factor that influences policy decisions. Russia pursued the policy, in place for a decade and a half, of selling gas and oil to other post-Soviet states at discounted prices. It should also be noted, however, that at least in the short term the Russian economy seems to have paid a substantial cost for Moscow's decision to 'resolve' its disputes with Georgia by military intervention. Even before the current global financial collapse, foreign investments began to flee Russia. See 'Investors pulling out of Russia,' *BBC News*, 22 August 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7576333.stm> (accessed 13 March 2009). See also Andrei P. Tsygankov (2009) 'Russia's superpower strategy runs out of gas.' *Asia Times Online* 17 January, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/central_asia.html (accessed 20 February 2009).

⁴⁷ See 'Russia, Ukraine and gas: War-war, not jaw-jaw' (2008) *The Economist*, 15 January.

⁴⁸ 'Poland Wants Talks with Russia, Germany on Pipeline' (2008), *RFE/RL Newline*, 12, 5 part 1, 8 January.

⁴⁹ 'Eastern Europe, America and Russia: Pipedreams' (2008) *The Economist*, 26 January, p. 50

⁵⁰ 'EU Urged to Reconsider Strategic Energy Goals,' (2009) *EurActiv.com*, 22 January, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-urged-reconsider-strategic-energy-goals/article-178733> (accessed 2 February 2009).

Just as important, however, is the divergence between Moscow's and Washington's assessments to date on carrying out the 'war on terror', to use former President Bush's phrase. Although the matter of U.S. policy in Iraq no longer dominates bilateral relations as it did immediately prior to and after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the two countries continue to differ seriously on this issue. The matter of Russian treatment of the former breakaway republic of Chechnya has also been an issue of some importance, since the United States—as well as the European Union—has periodically condemned the Russians for their brutal treatment of both insurgents and the population at large. But the manner in which the United States has conducted its 'war on terror' without real input or consultation with other states, including especially Russia, has contributed to the friction between the two states.

Over the past several years the Russians have also pursued a very visible policy of establishing closer ties with states openly critical, even hostile, to the United States and to U.S. interests. This includes the expansion of economic ties with Cuba and Venezuela, accompanied by showy collaborative military exercises,⁵¹ as well as vetoes of Western efforts in the United Nations to expand pressures on the murderous regime in Zimbabwe and to bring a halt to the ethnic cleansing in Sudan.⁵²

Finally, Moscow has begun to 'show the flag' far from Russian territory, as illustrated by its collaborative military operations with the Venezuelans and the recent flexing of its military muscles with the resumption, after more than fifteen years, of naval and air patrols off the northern coasts of Scandinavia and the planting of the Russian flag at the bottom of the Arctic.⁵³ These activities, along with the regular very critical attacks on the United States and on U.S. policy, appear to have several purposes. First, to reaffirm the position that Russia is an independent and an important world actor that can and will pursue its own interests, and, second, to build—or rebuild—a set of relationships with states that share Russia's opposition to Washington's policies and will support it in various international venues.

⁵¹ See Clifford J. Levy (2008) 'Russia and Venezuela Confirm Joint Military Exercises,' *The New York Times*, 8 September; 'Russia and Venezuela Boost Ties,' *BBC News*, 26 September 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7636989.stm> (accessed 2 February 2009); Michael Schwartz (2009) 'Russia and Cuba Take Steps to Revive a Bond,' *The New York Times*, 31 January.

⁵² See James Bone and David Robertson (2008) 'West Suffers Historic Defeat as China and Russia Veto Zimbabwe Sanctions,' *Times onlineOnline*, 12 July, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article4319552.ece> (accessed 2 February 2009); and Evelyn Leopold (2006) 'Russia, China Block Sudan Sanction,' *Global Policy Forum*, 17 June, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/sudan/2006/0417block.htm> (accessed 2 February 2009).

⁵³ See 'Intelligence Brief: Russia Reasserts Power with Thermobaric Weapons and Bomber Runs' (2007) *Power and Interest News Report*, 8 November; 'The High North: The Arctic Contest Heats up,' *The Economist*, 11 October 2008, p. 70; and Jyri Häkämäies (2007) 'Minister of Defense Jyri Häkämäies at CSIS in Washington.' 9 June, http://www.defmin.fi/speeches?663_m+3335.

PART FIVE
A Possible Future Scenario

Where is this relationship likely to go in the near term? Analysts agree that for both countries an improvement is important, if they are going to be able to deal with issues of importance to each of their national interests. First and foremost, the issues of international terrorism and the challenges from militant Islam are matters of concern to both governments, and cooperation in dealing with them remains important. In fact, despite the serious deterioration in relations in recent years and the heightened hostile rhetoric, collaboration in this area, in particular concerning military operations against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, has continued. The solution of other matters of mutual interest to Moscow and Washington, such as the possible development of nuclear weapons by Iran,⁵⁴ an important issue on which the two countries have not agreed, are likely possible only with an improvement in bilateral relations and a less confrontational approach than that which we have witnessed in recent years. In some respects Russian-U.S. relations in recent years have followed a path described best by the cycle of escalation described as a 'security dilemma.' After each decision by one side or the other to pursue a particular policy—whether the U.S. decision to begin building a protective missile shield or the Russian decision to 'solve' its problems with Georgia by military intervention—the level of mutual hostility rose and led to a retaliatory action on the part of the other side.

Although most of the issues that divide the two sides are matters viewed as serious and central to interpretations of national interest and, thus, not easy to resolve, the election of a new U.S. president who has indicated a commitment to implementing a new approach to relations with the rest of the world provides opportunity for a new start in Russian-U.S. relations. In fact, after closed discussions on 26 January 2009, the Russian ambassador to NATO implied that Russia and NATO were in the process of regularizing relations suspended in the wake of the Russia-Georgia war of summer 2008.⁵⁵ This information, added to the announcement that Russia will not deploy Iskander missiles targeted on U.S. facilities in Poland and/or the Czech Republic,⁵⁶ and considered within the context of a possible new orientation in U.S. foreign policy under President Obama, raises hope of possible improvement in relations between the two countries. In an interview with the Italian press in early February 2009 former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who spoke by telephone recently with President Obama and was at a meeting with President Medvedev, said there are grounds to be optimistic about relations between Russia and the United States.⁵⁷

Issues in the Russian-U.S. relationship that must be handled almost immediately concern, in particular, arms control—a matter largely ignored during the entire Bush administration. For example, the Bush Administration decided to let the START treaty of 1994, which monitored and limited a variety of nuclear weapons, simply expire in 2009 rather than negotiating a renewal or an extension of the agreement.⁵⁸ This decision, plus the call for the updating of U.S. nuclear weapons by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, among others, led the Russians to declare that the United States was engaged in a 'drive for strategic domination.'⁵⁹

⁵⁴ See Rose Gottenmoeller (2008) 'U.S.-Russia Cooperation on Iran: Aftermath of the Summer War in Georgia', *Pro and Contra*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July-August, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=22449&prog=zru> (accessed 1 February 2009).

⁵⁵ Warren Mass (2009) 'The Expanding War in Afghanistan,' *New American*, 28 January, <http://www.thenewamerican.com/world-mainmenu-26/asia-mainmenu-33/735> (accessed 1 February 2009); 'Russia Welcomes NATO's Willingness to resume Cooperation', *RIA Novosti*, 5 March 2009, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20090305/120443337.html> (accessed 13 March 2009); and Roger McDermott (2009) 'Russia, NATO, and the "Obama Factor",' *Asia Times online*, 31 January, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/KA31Ag01.html (accessed 1 February 2009).

⁵⁶ 'Russia Ready not to aim Iskander Missile Systems against USA'.

⁵⁷ 'Grounds for optimism over Russia-U.S. ties—Gorbachev' (2009) *RIA Novosti*, 2 February, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090202/119925467.html> (accessed 2 February 2009). See also Olga Pavlikova (2009) 'Vladimir Putin Appreciated Barack Obama's Stand' (2009) *Gazeta*, 27 January; translated in *Johnson's Russia List*, *JRL 2009-#1827*, January 2009.

⁵⁸ Wade Boese (2008) 'START Decision Put Off to 2009', Arms Control Association, December, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_12/START (accessed 2 February 2009).

⁵⁹ Yuri Baluyevski, former chief of the Russian general staff, cited in Stephen Sestanovich (2008) 'What Has Moscow Done: Rethinking U.S.-Russian Relations,' *Foreign Affairs*, 27, 6, p. 18. In response to plans announced during the Bush Administration by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to develop a new generation of U.S. nuclear weapons to replace aging

President Obama has made clear that he does not support the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons, despite the views of his Defense Secretary.⁶⁰ This set of developments may set the stage for the countries to negotiate an extension of the START treaty rather than pursue a costly and potentially dangerous nuclear arms race.

The new tone promised in American foreign policy is likely to improve the environment in which Russian-U.S. interactions occur—at least at the rhetorical level.⁶¹ Moreover, there exists a substantial area of overlapping interests between the Russian Federation and the United States relating to other aspects of arms control, international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and now the global economic slowdown. However, there is one set of issues where U.S. and broader Western compromise would appear to be impossible, without their abandoning principle. Russia cannot be permitted to veto the continuation of the development of close ties between former Soviet republics and clients with the West. The rush to membership in the EU and NATO that began with the collapse of the external and internal Soviet empires two decades ago was not orchestrated in Washington or Brussels, but rather in the countries which had just escaped half a century, or more, of Soviet domination.

Whether Moscow's new-found assertiveness in its relations with its near neighbors will undercut prospects for improved relations will depend almost entirely on Moscow's flexibility in dealing with these countries as sovereign equals and not as a part of a revitalized 'Greater Russia.'⁶² What is clear is that the areas of mutual interest exist between Moscow and Washington where both sides could benefit by renewed cooperation, that the new administration in Washington seems willing to back off from some of its predecessor's policy initiatives deemed most unacceptable in Moscow, and that some in Moscow seem willing at least to test a possible return to a less assertive approach to the Russian-U.S. relationship.⁶³

ones, the Russians announced in December 2008 that Russia would commission 70 new strategic nuclear weapons. See Tom Parfitt (2008) 'Russia Boosts Nuclear Spending with an Order of 70 Strategic Weapons,' *Guardian.co.uk*, 23 December, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/23/dmitri-medvedev-barackobama> (accessed 2 February 2009).

⁶⁰ Mark Thompson (2009) 'Obama's Showdown over Nukes,' *Time.CNN*, 26 January, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1873887,00.html> (accessed 2 February 2009).

⁶¹ In the early weeks of his presidency Barack Obama sent a letter to his Russian counterparts suggesting that he would not proceed with the deployment of a new missile defense system in Europe, if the Russians would help in bringing pressure on Iran to stop the development of nuclear weapons. Peter Baker (2008) 'Obama Offered Deal to Russian Secret Letter', *The New York Times*, 2 March 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/washington/03prexy.html> (accessed 13 March 2009).

⁶² See Nygren's *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* for the most comprehensive recent treatment of this issue. See also Kanet, *The Return of Imperial Russia: Russia and Its Neighbors*.

⁶³ Former Senator Bill Bradley has made a cogent call for a normalization of U.S. relations with Russia in 'The Russia Opportunity', *Foreign Policy*, (March/April 2009), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4768 (accessed 30 March 2009).