

# U.S.-Russian Relations Ten Months After September 11

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When American Airlines #11 exploded into the North Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, in one respect, it was like the neutron Enrico Fermi sent smashing into the core of a uranium atom in 1934, changing the world, but in ways only half-perceived. True, the scientific community recognized that the split atom released “nuclear energy” more powerful than a million steam engines, and so their minds turned to imagining industrial technology in a world of limitless electricity. As late as 1938, the year Fermi received his Nobel prize, thoughts were more of what Mussolini had lost in losing Fermi by way of industrial advances than, as one newspaper of the day put it, “the admittedly far-fetched potential for so-called ‘nuclear bombs.’”

By the morning after September 11 our generation too knew the world had changed, and we too seized on one side of the event’s implications. In our case, the darker side. Then and since our minds have been on what lies ahead when the suicidally enraged show how limitless is the pain they would cause, given the chance. Behind the preoccupying fear over global terrorism looms the discomforting awareness that a whole segment of humanity identifies more with the terrorists than with us, so alienated are they. And, beyond that, in vaguer terms, Americans contemplate uneasily how their new vulnerability makes vulnerable accustomed ways of life and, worse, perhaps cherished values.

But the effect of September 11 has another less remarked side. It has created opportunity: at home by binding the community together, arresting the trivialization of our political life, and focusing our attention on tasks that should have been attended to long ago. Least noticed, however, it has also created radically new possibilities in international politics. First, were we to seize it, the chance now exists to put the decisive bilateral relationship of our age—that between the United States and China—on a more solid footing. Because, however, this relationship remains precariously balanced between progress and deterioration, if mismanaged, the opportunity could as well push in the wrong direction. The outcome in no small part links to a second area of opportunity, and the focus of this essay: the revolutionary shift in Russia’s relations with the West, including with the United States. We will return to the China issue in that context.

The third opportunity is less evident, more elusive—yet, the most historic. For, September 11 faces the United States more sharply and clearly with the preeminent challenge of the 21st century: how and where the United States will lead. Such is the preeminent challenge, because U.S. primacy turns out to be the dominant fact of the new century, and no event has dramatized it more starkly than the war on global terrorism. Going back more than a decade, ever since Charles Krauthamer dubbed it the “unipolar moment,” we have sidled up to

and argued over the significance of America's hegemony. Much of the argument has been over how unapologetically unilateralist we should be or can be. Indeed, whether this much matters in a world in which untamed capital, the Internet, and the flows of desperate peoples, drugs, disease, and crime have rendered the state, any state, less sovereign. September 11 changed that. Its grim wake underscored how central the state remained—none more than the uniquely preponderant United States—and how much the dark, underside of globalization had increased the importance of the state performing its role well.

As the battling parties in the earlier debates are learning, events vindicate neither the partisans of a gruff, self-confident, unilateral, address-the-problem-and-let-others-follow approach nor those who yearn for a time when peace and order are maintained by the United Nations and various other collective-action agencies. So, in this moment of U.S. ascendancy, the argument slowly shifts to the best way of balancing (U.S.) unilateralism with multilateralism. The opportunity, however, is much greater. The unilateralism debate is over how things are to be done—by no means an inconsequential matter—but the higher stake concerns what is to be done. This too bears on our subject.

### **Where Are We?**

Since the events of September, no relationship has changed more fundamentally than that between the United States and Russia, above all because of the revolution in Russian foreign policy. Although incomplete and far from out of harm's way, the change runs deeper than often recognized. Putin's swift and vigorous support of the United States after the terrorist attacks understandably captured peoples' attention. This, together with the advances that then followed—setting aside earlier obstacles over national missile defense, accepting a new U.S. military presence in Central Asia, developing a camaraderie leader-to-leader—not only warmed U.S.-Russian relations, but served to punctuate Russia's striking shift toward alignment with the United States and the West.

Noteworthy as this shift is, however, it matters less than its underpinning. Russia's post-September alignment with the West represents far more than a mere tactical choice or simply a better way of going about long-standing Russian aims. Putin's dramatic moves entail something much more fundamental. Russia—or at least Putin and his allies—has settled a critical ambivalence that until September 11 plagued the country's foreign policy and left it torn between contrasting notions of the world outside. Until then, for many within the foreign policy establishment and, it seemed, a part of Putin himself, the international setting remained a traditionally menacing place, in which the state of military balances mattered; NATO's steady expansion toward Russian borders assumed first-rank importance and its actions over Kosovo posed a direct threat to Russia; U.S. unilateralism constituted a key challenge to be thwarted; and the virtues of a multipolar order served as the standard mantra. Yet, for others, including another part of Putin, so was the world increasingly engulfed by the powerful forces of globalization; and there amidst the tyranny of global capital flows, the refinement of trading agglomerations, and an information and communications revolution, the fate of Russia's own domestic transformation would be decided.

Although many signs indicated that Putin himself was increasingly drawn to the second image and had begun to toy with ways of escaping the corners into which Russia had painted itself in its preoccupation with the first image, the country's foreign policy remained suspended between the two images. Its core strategic choices, unresolved. And its strategy, incoherent. All this Putin abruptly ended in September 2001.

In doing so, he was settling a whole series of fundamental issues. Russia's national leadership had now made a crucial strategic choice. To do what Putin did in the wake of the September attacks was more than acting sympathetically with the United States. It was to throw Russia's lot in with the West—in the process, ending the earlier equivocation over whether to

tilt toward the West or China or the “rest” (as in the “West versus the rest”) or none of the above and, thus, “fortress” Russia on its own. But in doing this, he was also reconciling himself to what could only be a junior partnership with the United States, given the asymmetry of power and influence between the two countries. Moreover, to be aligned with the West not only meant accepting realities that until then few Russians could, but also accepting that Russia’s ability to contest objectionable U.S. policies would be no greater than any of the United States’ allies.

For those Russians who cannot abide the choice that Putin made, who remain in the thrall of a more traditional notion of the threats the world poses, his subsequent concessions appear not merely misguided, but treasonous. In May, the leader of the Communist Party formally condemned a policy that “threatens the very existence of the country.” Said he: “Reliable allies have been sold out. Russian bases in Vietnam and Cuba vital for our country’s security have been closed. American soldiers have appeared in Central Asia and in Georgia. Soon U.S. aircraft will land at the airfields of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The CIS and Russia are already being proclaimed the sphere of the U.S. vital interests. The strategic encirclement of Russia is being completed with full consent of Mr. Putin and his team.”<sup>1</sup>

Putin and his critics, however, are ships passing in the night. Not only does he no longer share their image of the outside world or suffer an ambivalence that at least nods toward their view, he has adopted an entirely different foreign policy agenda. The most profound dimension of the transformation in Russian foreign policy is here—in the recasting of agenda. Without denying that the change had, indeed, begun before the events of September or arguing that all concerns over NATO, the United States’ nuclear posture, or manifestations of U.S. unilateralism have evaporated, Putin’s Russia is now fixed on a very different order of tasks.

Putin’s first and overriding priority is to synchronize his domestic and foreign agendas, which inevitably means featuring economics. More than any recent U.S. president, his preoccupations are at home. Not by chance has the focus of his last two “state of the union” addresses to parliament been devoted ninety percent to domestic issues, with only a few fleeting paragraphs on foreign policy. In this year’s address, he opened his comments on foreign policy by discussing the World Trade Organization. Russia, he said, “no longer” had “a choice of whether or not to integrate into the world economic space.”<sup>2</sup> Two months later, in a June press conference, he characterized the idea of Russia remaining outside the WTO as “dangerous and stupid.” He concluded his state-of-the-union remarks by stressing that “a fundamental feature of the contemporary world is the internationalization of the economy and society.” To be a part of that world, he stressed, the standard of success is “best practice”—“best practice in everything, in business, science, sport, in the rate of economic growth, in the quality of the work of the state apparatus and the professionalism of the decisions which we all take.”

Thus, when Putin turns to the outside world, beginning with his immediate neighbors, his first priority is to increase the benefits Russia can derive from a broader and deeper economic involvement. All that he does is of a piece—whether securing “market economy status” from the major economic powers or promoting a common Ukrainian-Russian approach to the European Union; pushing for the creation of a “common European economic space” or pressing ahead with WTO membership. In Kiev, Tbilisi, or Astana, the pressure to coordinate energy transit strategies, to open the door to Russian direct foreign investment, or to promote ties among defense contractors may at times seem heavy-handed, but it reflects a far different order of priority from only a few years ago.

This shift in priorities radiates through the rest of Russia’s foreign policy agenda, and has two critical effects. First, it diminishes the urgency

<sup>1</sup> Gennady Zyuganov, “Oboronnyi shchit gotovitsya k slomu,” *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, May 18, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> BBC Monitoring, Russia TV, April 18, 2002.

and immanence of alternative preoccupations. NATO's evolution and activities lose their centrality; the United States' massive military advantage, imperious approach to designing the strategic nuclear regime of the future, even the arrival of U.S. troops on the territory of the former Soviet Union loom less large; and the need to watch catlike for any encroachment on Russia's strategic positions in bordering regions shrinks.

Second, it leaves room for Russians to rethink old assumptions. Rather than accent latent traces of U.S.-Russian rivalry and within the post-Soviet space, until recently, a not-so-latent strategic competition, those who share the new perspective emphasize instead that "Russia's and the United States' geopolitical interests don't contradict each other; in fact, they tend to coincide."<sup>3</sup> Looked at objectively, they argue, the United States by bringing down the Taliban regime and sending al Qaeda on the run did what Russia had not been able to do for itself: reduce the security threat from the south. This is for starters. On the largest and most pressing security issues facing Russia—other than the threats from within—whether the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), fighting terrorism, enhancing energy security, or even stabilizing Russia's northeast frontier in Asia, Russia and the United States have every reason to act together.

The weakening of old fears and the incipient rethinking of security interests have eased the way to more constructive approaches to issues that once vexed U.S.-Russian relations. For example, the tradeoff between a new Russia-NATO mechanism and a new Russian equanimity in the face of further NATO expansion would neither have worked nor come about in the first place had it not been for the changes occurring on this other front. Nor, almost surely, would the Moscow Treaty have sufficed to offset the United States' unilateral abrogation of the ABM agreement and determination to do with its strategic forces what it chooses.

One should not misunderstand, however, Russia's rapprochement with the West—historic as it is—it does not mean that Russia has forsaken its relationship with China or, for that matter, Iran. Nor does it mean that Russia will follow a course in dealing with these states and many others that buttresses U.S. policy. Putin and his people lately have hinted that Russia may not complete the Bushehr nuclear reactor in Iran, evidently because the Iranians are balking at returning the spent fuel to Russia and complying with the international inspection regime promised by Moscow. Were the Bush administration to move against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime, Russia would not likely fall on its sword over the issue. But these and other traces of a greater readiness to humor U.S. expectations should not be read as the first stage in a process of bringing Russian policy into conformity with U.S. policy. Putin's Russia will continue to foster an energetic and full relationship with China. It will have its own agenda in relations with India. It will favor a different approach to Iran. And it will exhort a role for institutions (such as the UN Security Council) and political strategies (such as diplomatic engagement with trouble-makers) that the United States will often find unacceptable.

Because of the fundamental turn in Russian foreign policy, however, the basis for a radically different U.S.-Russian relationship now exists. Coupled with the evolution in Russia's relations with Europe, therefore, were this potential realized, the prospect opens of at last deflecting, perhaps even resolving the historically troubled question of Russia and the West. In these early phases, partisans of the Putin revolution sketch a dramatically different agenda for the two countries. Rather than a set of measures to prevent U.S.-Russian relations from boiling over or unraveling, their agenda would have the two countries put their combined shoulders to the wheel.<sup>4</sup> Together the two countries are a more formidable force for combating global terrorism

<sup>3</sup> Andrei Piontkovsky, "Problems for the Foreign-Policy Elite," *The Russia Journal*, March 15-21, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> No one has made the case more clearly or better than Dmitri Trenin in "Sealing a New Era in U.S.-Russian Relations," *The Moscow Times*, May 27, 2002.

than either alone, and each has an equal stake in succeeding. Putin, after all, rallied to the United States' side so swiftly after September 11 not merely because he sensed an opportunity, but even more because he felt his own earlier drumbeat of concern over international terrorism had been vindicated.

From there, they envisage the United States and Russia as partners managing what Dmitri Trenin calls "strategic stability" in the twenty-first century: no longer so much to make safe the nuclear balance between themselves, but to counter "the growing danger of further proliferation of WMDs and their use in regional crises," most of which are nearer Russia than North America. Trenin would define cooperation between the United States and Russia in developing theater missile defense as part of this effort, and, on this score, trends in official circles appear to be moving in his direction.

So too does partnership increasingly figure in the way Putin and his supporters tout the potential for cooperation between the United States and Russia in the energy sphere. When he first sounded the theme in a *Wall Street Journal* interview in February, he presented his country as a reliable alternative to "traditional sources" of energy, "located in areas of conflict in the Middle East."<sup>5</sup> "Russia," he said, "is clearly of growing significance as an energy supplier to world markets and as a source of stability for the world economy."

And partnership is the phrase they use, somewhat more gingerly in this case, to evoke the two countries' common stake in seeing China well and safely integrated into the international community. Some, such as Trenin, stress the importance of promoting China's continued domestic transformation and evolution into "a responsible and predictable player on the international stage." Others focus more

on guaranteeing a strong and dynamic Russian presence in its own far east, lest Chinese power too easily flow across the border. But either way, addressing the challenge of China forms another area of U.S.-Russian cooperation.

In this sense, the new arrangement between Russia and NATO is but a microcosm or prototype of the relationship Putin and his allies have in mind. Seen in this light, it is the synergy between a new mechanism and a new agenda—or at least those aspects of the agenda that are new—that counts. For, in the struggle against global terrorism, the effort to control weapons of mass destruction, and the management of regional conflicts, NATO genuinely needs Russia. Russia merits a place in the counsels of NATO, and NATO in alliance with Russia becomes a valuable resource of Russian foreign policy. Those who embrace Russia's turn toward the West go further. In the words of Alexei Bogaturov, in the twenty-first century no longer is Western Europe or Northeast Asia the United States' critical "strategic rear," but the vast turbulent region stretching from eastern Turkey to western China and along Russia's south.<sup>6</sup> As the United States girds to cope with the threats emanating from this area, no country would bring more as an ally than Russia, says Bogaturov.

While the Bush administration has scarcely been pushed to clarify its fundamental strategic choices to the same degree, and, while the change in U.S.-Russian relations owes much less to the change in its policy than to that in Russian policy, it has welcomed the chance to put the relationship on a different footing. The clearest and most sophisticated expression of what the Administration has in mind comes in a speech given by Richard Haass, the director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff.<sup>7</sup> "U.S.-Russian relations," he said, "are of course still evolving from a Cold War relationship dominated

<sup>5</sup> Karen Elliott House, "Putin Says Bush Shouldn't Go It Alone When Deciding How to Deal With Iraq, But the Russian President Reaffirms Global Importance His Nation's Close Ties to Its Former Cold War Foe" *The Wall Street Journal*, February 11, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Alexei Bogaturov, "Russia-U.S.: Is It Rapprochement or a Political Game?" *Vek*, no. 15 (May 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Richard N. Haass, "U.S.-Russian Relations in the Post-Post-Cold War World," Remarks to RAND Business Leaders Forum, Tenth Plenary Meeting, The Mark Hotel, New York, New York, June 1, 2002.

by efforts to prevent what we could do to one another to a new post-post-Cold War one based on promoting what we can do with each other.” Quoting President Bush’s remark to the German Bundestag a week earlier, he stressed that this is Russia’s “best chance since 1917 to become a part of Europe’s family,” indeed, to be fully integrated into the world economy and its key financial institutions as well as to integrate its security with the rest of Europe by “normalizing” its relations with Europe’s multilateral institutions. “Indeed, the most important and challenging task at this stage,” he said, “is to define a long-term positive agenda for the bilateral relationship. It has to be about more than eliminating old Cold War threats and fighting terrorism, important as those are. The relationship must be based on new opportunities for cooperation.”

His list is not much different from the Russian: energy cooperation, because “Russia contributes to the diversity of global energy supplies and could become a key player in stabilizing global oil prices;” the economic development of the Russian far east, “a region that has been experiencing socio-economic deterioration,” where “a revival . . . would have positive reverberations in China, Korea and Japan;” Central Asia, “where the United States and Russia have a shared interest in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, in halting drug and weapons trafficking, and more broadly in promoting stability, moderation, trade and development;” and “the large and demanding multilateral agenda” extending from “managing regional crises such as those in the Middle East and South Asia” to “transnational challenges such as HIV/AIDS, drugs, and human trafficking.”

### **The Perils**

What stands in the way of this historic transformation of the U.S.-Russian relationship? What could derail contemporary Russia’s still more historic struggle to resolve its conflicted relationship with the West? Not, in my view, the

often offered explanation. Putin’s new course does face opposition at home, but deep-seated resistance to the very essence of the policy tends to be confined to increasingly marginal political groupings, such as the Communist Party, and pockets of the bureaucracy, including parts of the military. A broader portion of the political elite lends at best tepid support, unpersuaded that the United States means to reciprocate or unimpressed by the bargains that Putin has struck to this point. Even his own defense minister grouses about talk of an expanding U.S. military presence in Central Asia, long after Putin has waved away concern over the arrival of the Americans. Military operations in Afghanistan have ended, he said, and, therefore, there is no need to deploy any foreign military contingent in Kazakhstan. Russia, in fact, would view the presence of NATO troops in Kazakhstan as “a threat to security and stability in Central Asia.”<sup>8</sup>

Putin, however, so towers over the political scene in Russia that none of this has the makings of an obstacle capable of undoing the course he has set. Bureaucratic obstinacy, including in the foreign ministry, can nick the policy and distort this or that aspect of it. But it seems safe to predict that only if Putin’s general political position disintegrates—and that is only likely if Russia slides into serious economic difficulty—will critics of his foreign policy have an opening. Even then an assault on the new foreign policy course would be more an instrument than a source of opposition. Meanwhile both public opinion and sentiment among the political elite are gradually evolving toward, not away from, greater acceptance of the policy. Symptomatically, the minority who strongly favor the policy have grown noticeably more self-confident and assertive.

If for now Russia’s part in the rewriting of the U.S.-Russian relationship is less at risk than many fear, then what does threaten it? Three perils, I believe. First, the impediments on Russia’s easy integration into the world economy. Putin’s new agenda will not be smooth sailing.

<sup>8</sup> On Kazakh Commercial TV, BBC Monitoring, February 13, 2002.

Entry into the World Trade Organization will require wrenching decisions affecting the economic interests of powerfully entrenched actors within Russia—indeed, whole sectors, such as aluminum, steel, civil aviation, food processing, and pharmaceuticals—as well as the revision of a vast range of legislation, perhaps as many as a 1,000 laws. Promoting Russia’s integration with (not into) the European Union promises to be still more difficult, because Russia’s engagement with Europe is so much more extensive and complex.

A mild foretaste of the intricacies ahead comes from the \$20 billion program pledged at the G-8 summit in Kananaskis in June to help Russia liquidate 40,000 tons of chemical weapons and 150 nuclear submarine cores. The money does not come without strings attached.<sup>9</sup> Not only must Russia provide donors a degree of access and transparency in these programs so far resisted, it must also pledge that the funds will not be subject to the “taxes, customs, deductions and other duties” applied in the past; that legal immunity will be granted to all Western participants in the program; and that Russia will “fulfill” its “obligations to global partnership,” presumably a reference to U.S. demands on Iran, biological weapons, and the like. And, if the politics of working all this out seems a challenge, imagine the politics of bringing Russian domestic energy prices up to the international level demanded by the Europeans before Russia can enter the WTO.

At every turn, the process will involve complex and potentially disruptive “two-level games,” to use the political science term. That is, national leaders will have to pick their way not only through negotiations with external parties, but simultaneously with demanding parties back home. A two-level game between the United States and the EU over, say, steel quotas produces one political effect, when for all four sets of players the game is familiar and long accepted. It is likely to produce another political effect, far less modulated, when for

some of the key players the game is not.

The second peril relates to the U.S. side. It is not auspicious when the most elaborate and sophisticated—indeed, the only elaborate and sophisticated—assessment of a radically different U.S.-Russian relationship comes from an assistant secretary of state. Haass’ speech fits within the spirit of comments made by President Bush, Secretary Powell, and Dr. Rice on various occasions, but none—including the president in his five meetings with Putin—has yet provided a concrete and conceptually coherent outline of the outcome they seek. Some within the Administration, even before the post-September changes, alluded to a new kind of U.S.-Russian relationship. Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, for example, in July 2001, defending plans to abandon the ABM agreement, argued that this would be “to replace that framework of dealing with each other as potential adversaries with a framework of dealing with one another as potential allies—and if that’s too strong a word, perhaps it is at least countries with major security interests in common.”<sup>10</sup> But this came from someone who to that point had not given much thought to conceiving ways the two countries might be converted to “potential allies,” and, indeed, who had been one of the blunter critics of Putin’s Russia.

The Joint Declaration signed by the two countries at the May Moscow summit promises that “we are achieving a new strategic relationship. The era in which the United States and Russia saw each other as an enemy or strategic threat has ended. We are partners and we will cooperate to advance stability, security, and economic integration, and to jointly counter global challenges and to help resolve regional conflicts.” But for these words to lead to the dramatic new reality they imply, the United States needs to do its share—probably more than its share—in devising projects, methods, and occasions to bring it about. Even more will it need to invest time and energy in engaging the Russians, and

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Golts, “A \$20 billion Payoff Disguised as Aid,” *The Russia Journal*, July 5-11, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Shanker, “White House Says the U.S. Is Not a Loner, Just Choosy,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 2001.

slowly, brick by brick, tediously constructing the multiple realms of a new relationship.

That according to reports is not what many in the Administration have in mind.<sup>11</sup> In general, they want to avoid carefully plotted undertakings and the entangling processes attending them. Even filling in the unfinished detail of the Moscow Treaty, such as developing the transparency measures for monitoring the removal and stockpiling of nuclear warheads, apparently repels them, if it means formal negotiations. Nor, it is said, has the Administration made much of an effort to think of ways by which the ambitious program in the Joint Declaration can be given practical content. Nothing guarantees that the process of capitalizing on the extraordinary possibilities of the moment will not run out of gas for want of effort by one or the other side.

The third peril is both longer-term and more profound, for it concerns the fate of trends within Russia itself. The simple historical fact is that the United States does not have enduring alliances with major powers that are not democracies and the lasting partnerships within the West are among industrialized, market, democracies. One need not share the bitter perception of many Russian democrats that Putin's turn toward the West rests on a Faustian bargain granting him a free hand to proceed down an authoritarian path to recognize the ultimate limit placed on the kind of relationship that Russia can have with the United States and its Western allies by the nature of the society that it becomes.<sup>12</sup> Putin, Bush, and the communiqués they sign speak of common interests and common values. Common interests there are. Common values remain to be demonstrated. Putin's notion of "managed democracy" does not turn him into an autocrat-in-the-making, but it does suggest that creating the ultimate foundation for partnership has some distance to go.

## The Possibilities

How different the world will be in twenty years if a democratic and economically revitalized Russia is a genuine partner of the United States, addressing side-by-side fundamental threats to international comity and welfare; if no great power is locked in strategic rivalry with another and no combination of them lined up against one or more of the rest; and, if U.S. leadership in international politics is the more effective because other major players see its methods and ends as wise and fair. Whether any or some of this comes to pass will depend in no small measure on what is made of the current historic opportunity in U.S.-Russian relations.

The weave, however, is complex. Start with the problem of the United States' sudden arrival with military force in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The issue does not end with Putin's casual blessing or even with talk of the two sides cooperating in these areas. The two countries are not safely free of competitive pressures, particularly here, where a surplus of potential trouble exists. Putin may have decided that nothing was to be gained by a super-agitated response to the deployment of U.S. special forces in Georgia and troops and aircraft in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. But, if one is to judge from his loyalty to the adjective "temporary" when discussing these deployments and his insistence that responsibility falls to Russia, China, and the Central Asian countries for the region's security, he has not yet fully embraced the idea of Russia and the United States teamed together to deal with instability when and if it erupts.

Neither is it evident that the Bush administration has yet thought through the implications of its new inchoate commitments in what is a far more vital geopolitical sphere than many have yet recognized. For, Central Asia, in particular, forms the unstable core of Inner Asia, the vast expanse incorporating Russia's south, China's border regions, and south Asia's northern tier.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Rose Gottemoeller, "From Summits to Sleepovers," *The Moscow Times*, June 17, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> For an illustration of the democrats' suspicion, see, Dmitri Furman, "The Flight of the Two-Headed Eagle," *Obshchaya Gazeta*, May 30, 2002.



It is an area—the only area in the world—surrounded by four nuclear powers, two of whom recently teetered on the brink of war. It contains multiple points of friction, from Kashmir to the Fergana Valley to northwest Kazakhstan to China's Xinjiang province, all of them capable of bleeding into a larger conflict. It is populated by regimes whose stability is universally suspect. And it contains wealth—particularly in energy resources—that will make it increasingly important to both Asian and European consumers. The United States is now there because of the war to the south, but its military presence has already significantly skewed political dynamics within the region. In these circumstances, for the United States to talk vaguely about promoting economic development and democracy in Central Asia and invite Russia to do the same, rather than to engage Moscow in a serious, sustained dialogue over respective roles if the lid begins to blow off, misses the point.

None of this makes sense, however, if China is left standing to the side. China will be a decisive actor in Inner Asia, not the least because it forms an integral part of the region. Alas, China's part is its underdeveloped northwest territories, including Xinjiang, precisely where it feels most vulnerable. In part, because of this sense of vulnerability, and, in part, because of the general state of Sino-U.S. relations, China has not welcomed the arrival of American military power in Central Asia. On the contrary, while excusing a temporary deployment in the context of a war that it supported, China's leadership has not only vigorously opposed an extended U.S. presence, but has treated the prospect as a direct threat to China.

Both to defuse an unnecessary source of tension in Sino-American relations and as a constructive step in fostering a safer outcome in Inner Asia, the United States has an interest in engaging China on the issue, and here Russia can help. A three-way dialogue over the threats to stability in Inner Asia would draw together the three states most able to contain escalating violence within the region (and conversely the

three states that, if any two are at loggerheads, most diminish the chance of containing it). The threesome has already effectively acted in unison to ease the second Indo-Pakistani crisis, and it may not be the last time that their combined effort is necessary to control the situation. Given India's possible interest in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (an institution comprising Russia, China, and four Central Asia states) and the West's rising stake in Central Asia, might it not make sense to bring the NATO-Russia Council together with the SCO to discuss what might be done to promote stability in the region?

Advancing great power cooperation in Inner Asia and, for that matter, in the Caucasus as well accords with a still larger stake. This is a rare moment in history. For the time being and almost uniquely in the last 300 years of international politics, strategic rivalry among the major powers has disappeared. None of them defines any of the others as a primary security threat; none strains to amass military power against another; and none labors with alliances intended to thwart aggressive designs assigned to another. To imagine where this might come undone, however, turns us in two directions: first, to the Far East, where managing relations between the United States and China and Japan and China remains a test not yet passed, and, second, to the post-Soviet space, where in the 1990s an incipient jostling between the United States and Russia had already begun.

Its manifestations were in the jockeying over pipelines, the suspicion with which Russia viewed activities like Partnership for Peace exercises in neighboring states, the quiet nurturing of alignments with favored states, and the polarization of groupings—such as Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUUAM) and the collective security cluster within the CIS—in the region. While these trends have dissipated, none has disappeared entirely, and in some Russian quarters they simmer unabated, sustained by U.S. troops on former Soviet soil and the impending enlargement of NATO across former Soviet borders. Thus,

there is an historically constructive negative point to seeing Putin succeed with the new Russian foreign policy agenda. Important as it is to reap the positive advantages of Russia integrated into the world economy and engaged as a partner in managing the ills of our new age, it is as important to preclude the return of a competition resembling the past, even if confined within what were the boundaries of the former superpower rival.

It is good that General Tommy Franks has a Russian colonel on his staff; that U.S. Special Forces and Russia Spetznaz forces patrol together in Kosovo; that representatives of the U.S. Joint Staff and the Russian General Staff, together with space defense forces from both countries, have joined in exercises designed to defend against a simulated short-range ballistic missile attack; that Russia, the United States, and Great Britain have done a five-day war game, where under UN mandate they act to halt piracy at sea; and that U.S. and Russian military forces are about to share the same military base in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>13</sup> But this must be set against the background of a Russian reorientation that depends on the political strength of one man, a reorientation that, for all the pressures in and outside Russia favoring it, has not yet been embraced by the great majority of the Russian political establishment. Thus, making of the apt and impressive agenda laid out in the Joint Declaration in Moscow in May something more than good will takes on vastly greater meaning.

Finally, the rarity of the moment and the possibilities in U.S.-Russian relations converge in one last critical sphere—in shaping the next phase of the nuclear world we cannot escape. Currently U.S. preponderance has permitted the United States to dictate the shape of the U.S.-Russian nuclear relationship, and, in the end, Putin has bowed to an outcome he cannot prevent. In the process, he and parts of the Russian security establishment are slowly coming to accept the possibility of working with the United States in setting the role missile defense will play

in the next phase. But these are opening gambits, and they lead in unknown directions—quite likely into space and the uncertainties competition there will bring; most likely to a set of Chinese responses that will further complicate the Indo-Pakistani nuclear nexus and draw the Japanese across the nuclear threshold.

The United States may for some time enjoy technological leads permitting it by means of its own choosing to cope with the threats that lie ahead. In the modern era, however, history has not worked out well for states that assumed they could unilaterally impose a security order of their own devising and make it last. If we are to do better, we need partners willing to join us in constructing a mutually acceptable strategic nuclear regime, which in turn can serve as a basis for containing and redirecting nuclear trends occurring outside the U.S.-Russian relationship. Russia remains the obvious and most important candidate.

Are we, however, doing all that we might to foster that partnership? On this score, it seems to me inauspicious that Russians who are the strongest advocates of cooperation with the United States find it necessary to defend the Moscow Treaty by trumpeting effects that scarcely contribute to a broader and more stable strategic nuclear regime. Sergei Rogov, for example, praises the agreement for proving again that Russia remains the only nuclear interlocutor the United States deems worthy of engaging, for again restoring Russia's MIRV option, and for exempting Russia's large store of tactical nuclear weapons at a time when, because of weaknesses in conventional capabilities, "present Russian military doctrine puts much greater stress on nuclear containment than the Pentagon."<sup>14</sup> After all, the process of shaping the overall architecture of an evolving international nuclear environment—including the effort to control who gets their hands on WMD—is simply an extension of the process by which a new Russia and a changing China are integrated into the international community and the flip side of a process

<sup>13</sup> See Walter Pincus, "Anti-terror Campaign Binds U.S., Russian Militaries," *The Washington Post*, May 3, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Sergei Rogov, "Is It Surrender or Transition to Partnership?" *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozrenie*, May 24-30, 2002.

by which the United States and Russia actively seek to avoid an early return to strategic rivalry among major powers.

It would be a romanticism uncharacteristic of my Norwegian forbearers to suggest that we are sufficient masters of our fate to guarantee a future world with a well-integrated and prosperous Russia, devoid of potential conflict among the great powers, and happily reconciled to U.S. leadership for as long as its primacy lingers. Poor historians would we be, however, to underestimate how far short we could fall if we, the United States in particular, fail to try.