

# Introduction

*Andrew C. Kuchins*

**F**or students of international relations, the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the most significant event of the second half of the twentieth century. The Cold War definitively ended, and the bipolar conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union no longer framed international politics as it had for more than forty years. The “long twilight struggle,” as George Kennan termed the Cold War at its outset, was over, and although it has become politically incorrect to say so, one cannot deny that the West won. The Soviet edifice, including the East Central European allies, unraveled so quickly, however, that any euphoria felt by the West with the disappearance of its longtime adversary was mixed with feelings of shock and tinges of foreboding about possible anarchy in a vast territory armed with tens of thousands of nuclear weapons.

But for Russia there was no euphoria as 1991 drew to a close and the Soviet flag went down on the Kremlin for the last time. Democrats who had supported newly elected President Boris Yeltsin in his moment of historic and heroic defiance against the August 1991 coup plotters at the Russian parliament building had rightfully exulted, but the exultation was not widely shared outside Moscow and St. Petersburg. Most Russians were pre-occupied with securing food and other goods as the Soviet economy collapsed, leaving shops perhaps more empty than at any time since World War II. Life would only get more difficult for the vast majority of Russians as

price liberalization implemented in January 1992 eliminated the lifetime savings of millions of citizens virtually overnight. Goods returned shortly to stores, but ravaging inflation left prices beyond the means of most.

The Russian Federation embarked on the daunting path of simultaneously building a market democracy almost from scratch and developing a national identity and foreign policy for a country that, while still massive, was reduced to borders close to those of the Russian Empire of the seventeenth century. Russia, which for centuries in the Tsarist era was regarded as a great power and for the second half of the twentieth century as a superpower, found itself the recipient of humanitarian aid and a supplicant for large-scale economic and financial assistance. Violent conflicts flared along its periphery in Moldova, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (many of which Russia instigated and/or supported), and then in 1994 the Yeltsin administration disastrously attacked rebellious Chechnya, resulting in a civil war on Russian territory that it did not win. The central government's control over the Russian Federation dissipated to such an extent that many questioned the future viability of Russia.

In perhaps the most surreal moment of the last ten years in Russia, the Yeltsin government ordered the bombing of the parliament building, the Russian White House, in October 1993 to oust rebel legislators, many of whom had been former allies of Yeltsin, including Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov. Russia teetered on the brink of civil war as the army carefully deliberated whether to follow the order of the president, which it did with much trepidation. The bombed-out, smoking hulk of the parliament, which only two years earlier had symbolized the victory of Russian democracy, tragically testified to the enormous difficulties of transforming Russia into a “normal” country. The subsequent victory of the fascist buffoon Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and his misnamed Liberal Democratic Party in the December 1993 parliamentary elections marked a low point in a decade littered with low points for beleaguered Russians.

On the evening of those parliamentary elections, I recall being at the headquarters of a truly liberal democratic party, Russia's Choice—which was led by former acting prime minister Yegor Gaidar—as the early returns came in from the Russian Far East showing the strong performance of Zhirinovskiy as well as the Communists. The festive atmosphere of the early evening dissolved into despondence as the scale of the electoral defeat for Russia's Choice became clear. The planned television broadcast of a huge party for Russia's Choice was cancelled when it was evident there was noth-

ing to celebrate. Oddly, it seemed as though many that night did not see the electoral defeat coming, but I wondered how they could not, given the social, economic, and political trauma of the previous two years.

After the elections of 1993, the first shots were fired in the United States and the West of a “Who Lost Russia?” debate, echoing the vituperative “Who Lost China?” debate after the victory of the Chinese communists in 1949. The Clinton administration and the International Monetary Fund received most of the criticism either for not doing enough to support the Russian transformation or for intervening too much with advice supposedly inappropriate for Russia. The voices of doubters about the eventual success of Russia’s efforts to become a market democracy became louder, and some of the optimists more carefully calibrated their positions. It was not entirely coincidental that the idea for expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began to generate more momentum within the Clinton administration and in some Western European quarters in 1994 as Russian realities darkened. The Clinton team, led by then national security advisor Anthony Lake, couched NATO expansion in the broader policy framework of enlargement of the community of market democratic nations in Europe, but the policy also conveniently served for many as a hedge against things going badly in Russia.

Perceptions of Russia hit rock bottom with the financial crisis of August 1998 when Russian economic progress was seemingly exposed as a chimera (in 1997 the Russian stock market had outperformed all other emerging markets). The prevailing discourse about Russia in both scholarly as well as media commentary increasingly emphasized the weakness and endemic corruption of the Russian state as a different kind of threat than the powerful Soviet Union of Cold War days. Official statistics indicated that the country had lost half of its GDP in less than a decade—a staggering collapse, if true, that made the Great Depression in the United States look like a pinprick. A demographic crisis of epic proportions loomed as the death rate, especially for working-age Russian men, far outstripped the birthrate. Another nasty war in Chechnya erupted in the fall of 1999, and the Russian military distinguished itself primarily for human rights violations. Legendary bluesman Albert King lamented in his song “Born Under a Bad Sign”: “If it weren’t for bad luck, I wouldn’t have any luck at all”; for Russia it seemed that the only kind of news was bad news during the 1990s. When at the end of the millennium Boris Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as president, his popularity ratings were in the single digits and his image badly damaged internationally.

The decade of the 1990s will likely be regarded historically as another *smutnoe vremya*, a “Time of Troubles,” for Russia, akin to the original Time of Troubles at the end of the seventeenth century when Russia experienced extreme disorder after the long reign of Ivan the Terrible. The calamitous period of civil war and economic depression after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution may also be regarded as such a dark moment in Russian history. But was it really unexpected that efforts to reform Russia and overcome the enormously debilitating legacy of more than seventy years of Soviet rule would involve massive dislocations and difficulties? Did anyone really think that achieving the goals of transforming Russia into a market democracy and integrating Russia more deeply into a rapidly globalizing international system would be easy? Was it not self-evident that life would initially become more difficult for the great majority of Russians and citizens of the Soviet Union before there would be a chance for improvement?

The answers to these questions are that nobody truly thought that Russia’s transition, transformation, or whatever you want to call it would be easy, and it was implicitly assumed that things would get worse before they got better. Naturally the economic and social trauma of adjustment would bring serious and unfortunate political consequences for those in power and deemed responsible: the Yeltsin administration and, by guilt of association, the Western countries, leaders, and institutions perceived to be supporting Russia’s policy course. Given the ponderous weight of the decades of bad policy decisions by the Soviet leadership, perhaps the more appropriate question is the one asked by Stephen Kotkin in his recent book *Armageddon Averted*: “Why weren’t things worse?” Maybe we should be relieved that the most apocalyptic scenarios imagined and even predicted by many for Russia did not come to pass. There has been no nuclear conflict resulting from the disarray of the Soviet nuclear weapons complex. Russia did not break down into large-scale civil war. The Russian leadership did not seek to reestablish the Soviet empire by force.

Still, while avoiding the worst-case scenarios is obviously good, it is only a start in evaluating and reaching judgments, tentative as they may be, about what has happened in Russia in its first post-Soviet decade. Analyzing the political, economic, social, and foreign and security policy challenges for Russia of the past decade as well as charting the path ahead was the task for the authors of this volume. Reaching balanced conclusions on issues that have generated so much controversy both within and outside of Russia is particularly challenging because expectations of what was possible varied for

many participants and observers of Russia's transformation. Analytical challenges are further complicated because the study of Russia has been deeply politicized. For example, although the future of Russia does not attract the same level of interest that the Soviet Union did during the Cold War, U.S. policy toward Russia was one of the only foreign policy issues that generated some debate during the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign as the Republicans sought to tar Al Gore for his association with Clinton administration Russia policy and his relationship with former Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin in particular.

It is not possible to cover the entire waterfront of the past ten years in Russia in a single volume. We have tried to describe the core features and some of the central debates of the past decade of Russian trials and transformation. The authors were not asked to write in an academic, heavily footnoted, monograph style; rather, we have requested thoughtful essays that will be both compelling to the specialist community and accessible to a broader audience. The volume is somewhat arbitrarily divided into four parts: (1) leadership; (2) economic development; (3) Russian society; and (4) foreign and security policy challenges. (The placement of Anatol Lieven's chapter on Chechnya into the final section of the book does not reflect any political statement on our part. Rather, it was placed there because Lieven's essay primarily addresses the foreign and security implications for Russia of these tragic wars.)

## Leadership

The extraordinarily important role of leadership, from tsars to general secretaries to presidents, has long preoccupied students of historical and contemporary Russia. President Putin in effect acknowledged the validity of this preoccupation when he commented, "From the very beginning, Russia was created as a supercentralized state. That's practically laid down in its genetic code, its traditions, and the mentality of its people."<sup>1</sup> Although Russian presidents are now democratically elected—and democratically elected national and regional political figures as well as the judiciary provide some checks and balances to executive power—Russian political institutions such as political parties remain weak and underdeveloped. The 1993 constitution further strengthened presidential power in Russia. The focus on presidential power immediately brings us to two of the most

controversial questions of the past ten years: What is the legacy of Boris Yeltsin, and what are the intentions of Vladimir Putin? And the second question may be appended by addressing what capacity Putin has to implement his intentions.

Boris Yeltsin was an oversized political personality during revolutionary times. Undoubtedly he had tremendous deficiencies as a political leader. He sporadically engaged in the day-to-day management of Russia, and his attention and behavior grew more erratic as his health declined during his tenure. While Yeltsin himself may not have personally benefited, his administration was thoroughly corrupt, and this damaged Russia's image. The decision to go to war in Chechnya was a colossal mistake. In his assessment in this volume, Michael McFaul argues that other key mistakes by Yeltsin included his failure to adopt a new constitution and call for new parliamentary elections immediately after the thwarted coup in 1991 and his failure to push economic reform more aggressively. Nevertheless, as McFaul notes, Yeltsin can point to some major achievements that include destroying the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, relatively peacefully dismantling the largest empire on earth, and introducing electoral democracy in a country with a thousand-year history of autocratic rule. He did not cancel presidential elections in the spring of 1996 even when his prospects looked very bleak and his closest advisors advised him to do so. At the end of his second term, he willfully stepped down and was succeeded according to the provisions of the Russian constitution.

It is nearly impossible to overestimate the degree of difficulty of the task Yeltsin faced. He inherited a devastated economy, a political system in total disarray, and a state with brand new borders. He needed to undertake a tri-fecta transformation: build a market economy where almost no market institutions existed, establish a democratic polity in a country with a thousand-year autocratic tradition, and develop a foreign policy identity and orientation for a nation that had only existed in modern history as an empire. There was no elite consensus on how to proceed on any of these tasks. To further complicate matters, as McFaul notes, while the Soviet regime collapsed in 1991, many constituent elements of the old system remained in place to block reform efforts. It is perhaps understandable that the leader facing these Herculean tasks would often disappear from the public for long stretches since the job was so overwhelming.

Thomas Graham assesses the Yeltsin period far more critically than McFaul by arguing that the fragmentation, degeneration, and erosion of

state power during the 1990s brought Russia to the verge of state failure, and that these “processes had their roots in the late Soviet period, but they accelerated in the post-Soviet period as a consequence of Yeltsin’s policies and Western advice.” Part of the problem stems from the emergence of an independent Russia as a historical accident, a by-product of the power struggle between Yeltsin and Gorbachev. The denouement of this power struggle was accompanied by a massive extortion of state property by greedy insiders. The Yeltsin regime became closely tied to, even dependent on, a few oligarchs who controlled massive and in many cases ill-begotten assets. They were most noteworthy for corruption, asset stripping as opposed to wealth creation, and their cavalier disregard for social welfare. In cahoots with the Yeltsin regime, these “clans” drove Russia spiraling into socioeconomic decline. The Russian military was, of course, not exempted as conditions and morale were allowed to deteriorate to appalling conditions.

Not only was the authority of the central government tremendously weakened, but its ties with regional governments eroded. The regional governments of Russia suffered from many of the same maladies as the central government because corruption was endemic throughout. While the Soviet regime was characterized by a strong central government, the nascent Russian regime was noteworthy for its weak center and weak regions. Political power had fragmented to such an extent that on taking power Putin acknowledged that the future viability of the Russian state was threatened.

On the domestic front, at least two goals of Vladimir Putin seem clear: to restore the authority of the Russian state and to set the Russian economy on a path of long-term, sustainable growth. Both of these goals are central to Putin’s efforts to restore Russia’s power and influence in the world. Pursuant to the first goal, to restore the “vertical of power,” as the Russians put it, Putin has taken a variety of measures to reduce the influence of all sources of power outside the presidency, including regional governors, oligarchs, political parties, the Duma, independent media, and civil society. Lilia Shevtsova asserts that the Russian president has succeeded to the extent that politics have nearly vanished and quotes a Kremlin insider who states his satisfaction that politics have “become rather boring.” The ideological struggles that colored the 1990s have been replaced with a steely-eyed pragmatism that suggests that Deng Xiaoping’s famous maxim—that it does not matter whether a cat is black or white but whether it catches mice—may be quite apt for Putin as well.

Putin has benefited from Russia's stronger economic performance in the past two years as well as by his image as a vigorous, take-charge, and capable leader, a sharp contrast to his feeble and less engaged predecessor. Consequently his popularity ratings have been consistently high, and by one poll he was even named the sexiest man in Russia. Certainly his allure in this regard is enhanced by his background as an espionage agent. As Shevtsova argues, Putin has carefully husbanded this resource but will need to risk his popularity to undertake further, more painful reforms ultimately required. In addition, if he continues to rule in a patrimonial style relying on cadres and personal relations, he will become increasingly liable to fall back into Yeltsin's style of rule that depended on a narrow circle of favorites and oligarchs. Indeed, his adherence to "imitation democracy" may ironically result not in a strong presidency but rather in merely the appearance of power.

Stephen Holmes accepts the premise that power has been deeply fragmented in Russia but suggests that this phenomenon has deep structural roots that cannot be explained only by Yeltsin's ineffective leadership. The greatest problem for Russia now is the huge gap between the massive challenges Russia faces and the state's resources to address them. This structural mismatch will not go away soon, and it raises serious questions about the ultimate effectiveness of Putin's consolidation of power. Power to do what? It is one thing for him to conduct a successful assault on Vladimir Gusinsky's media empire. Gusinsky was perhaps the easiest target of the so-called oligarchs because of his financial indebtedness, so this may not be a terrific test of presidential power. If Putin were able to cut down the arbitrary power of a much more deeply rooted and powerful institution like the Office of the Procuracy, that would be a convincing demonstration of power.

While what Holmes dubs the "school of hope" alleges that Putin is a liberal in authoritarian clothing and the "school of fear" believes the opposite, Holmes is firmly entrenched in the "school of doubt" about Putin's capacity to bring any fundamental change to how Russia is governed. The state resources at his disposal are too meager, and Russian society lacks adequate constituencies to support a rule-of-law system that protects property rights and brings greater predictability to state-society relations. If Putin continues to rely on security services as the key institution for the restoration of order in Russian society, this will obviously have a detrimental impact in establishing the rule of law and fostering confidence in the business community. Security services typically manipulate an atmosphere of uncertainty for purposes of intimidation and control. The rash of spy cases, political use



of the tax inspectorate, and other extralegal methods of control have effectively intimidated Russian civil society to such an extent that in the view of many civil society leaders, a Brezhnev-like atmosphere is returning.

Neither Graham, Shevtsova, nor Holmes are particularly optimistic about where Putin's leadership is taking Russia. Holmes' assessment of Putin, however, is somewhat more forgiving because he places greater emphasis on the deep structural constraints facing the Russian president.

## Economic Development

Russian economic policy has been hotly debated over the last ten years, as one would expect of an economy that according to official statistics has contracted by over 40 percent. Some of these debates are reflected in the three contributions in this section by Joel Hellman, Anders Åslund, and Clifford Gaddy. The most fundamental difference concerns the question of whether Russia is now on a path toward sustainable economic growth. Joel Hellman remains concerned that a weak legal system and enduring doubts about property rights and the propriety of privatization will constrain robust and equitable growth. Clifford Gaddy doubts Russia can maintain the high growth rates averaging about 5 percent since 1999 because structural reforms remain inadequate. Anders Åslund is most bullish on Russia and is confident that continuing reform efforts will fuel high growth rates in the years ahead.

The privatization of state property has been one of the most controversial issues in Russia for the last decade. Hellman suggests that the reformers may have been mistaken in their belief that once assets were privatized, the new owners would become a powerful constituency for a legal system that effectively guaranteed property rights. Another alternative exists, and it more aptly describes the unfolding economic conditions in Russia. As long as there is valuable property available for redistribution, the existing powerful owners may prefer to perpetuate the conditions that provide them advantages in the redistributive process, despite the adverse impact this may have on the value of their previously acquired property rights. Borrowing from Leon Trotsky's notion of "permanent revolution," Russia seems to be perpetuating a climate of "permanent redistribution."

This logic argues that powerful businesspeople and entrepreneurs will oppose the development of any institutions that may prevent them from

being able to acquire valuable assets at below market prices. Rather than allocating resources to enhance the value of existing properties, the most successful and dynamic entrepreneurs make considerable investments in “capturing” politicians and bureaucrats who can assist in the acquisition of additional assets. The environment of permanent distribution in the Russian economy has encouraged asset stripping, theft, capital flight, low investment rates, barriers to market entry, and deterioration of Russian physical and human capital. It also helps explain the emergence of staggering differences in wealth distribution that make Russia one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of the gap between the rich and the poor.

Anders Åslund challenges the conventional wisdom that the Russian economy contracted by nearly 50 percent during the 1990s, but even here it is a “good news, bad news” phenomenon. The good news is that the Russian economy has not declined that much; the bad news is that this is primarily due to a huge overestimation of the size of the Russian economy (and the Soviet economy before it) at the start of the decade. The overestimation of the size of the Soviet and Russian economies has many causes, but much of it boils down to deeply wasteful production of shoddy goods for which there was little demand in the first place. Regardless of your intellectual or ideological persuasions, anyone who traveled to the Soviet Union in the 1980s and spent time perusing the shops and department stores where normal citizens shopped knows there is validity to Åslund’s argument. The Soviet economy was value detracting rather than value adding. His conclusion is that in 1991 Russia’s economy was about the size of Brazil’s, and ten years later it is still about the size of Brazil’s.

Clifford Gaddy concurs that misallocation of resources was a monumental problem for the Soviet economy, but unfortunately it remains a hallmark of the Russian economy today. The Soviet Union simply built too many inefficient enterprises in places that made little or no economic sense. An innovative measurement of this misallocation may be measured in “thermal space,” or people living and working in very cold places. In contrast to other industrial nations in cold climates, the Soviet Union’s “per capita temperature” significantly declined over sixty years, and it has changed very little in the last ten, suggesting that Putin’s assertions in the fall of 2001 that the Russian economy is “very dynamic” are spurious.

In his state of the union message for 2001, Putin established the goal of 7 to 8 percent annual growth for fifteen years for the Russian economy, a rate that would bring it to the per capita level of Portugal, one of the least well-

off members of the European Union. This would, of course, be a tremendous achievement for Russia, especially if this wealth is more evenly distributed to a growing middle class. Gaddy is quite skeptical, however, about maintaining these growth rates in the near term. In his view, most of Russia's impressive economic growth beginning in 1999 can be almost entirely explained by high oil prices and the short-term effect of the 1998 devaluation. This is not to say that fundamentally more sound economic policies have not been implemented in the last two years. Some have, and they have resulted in greater technical efficiency, but they are inadequate to address the more fundamentally debilitating legacies of decades of misallocation or to support more than modest growth.

## Russian Society

While one can debate the merits of Russia's efforts to reform its economy and the prospects for sustainable growth, there is no doubt that the last ten years have been traumatic for tens of millions of Russians as the Soviet socioeconomic safety net that guaranteed employment, health care, subsidized housing, and more has shredded under the stress of market reforms. As Judyth Twigg argues, the Soviet state's role in guaranteeing a basic level of material comfort and survival was an important source of legitimacy for the regime. The unprecedented poverty, material inequities, and pervasive insecurity have unanchored Russian society and damaged national identity.

Not surprisingly, women and children have been most deeply impoverished by changes that have resulted in many more broken families. The most powerful indicators of poverty during the last decade have been the birth of an extra child and the growing numbers of homeless children and social orphans. Low Russian birthrates reflect both financial insecurity and lack of confidence among many that their social and economic circumstances will improve. Alarming growth in alcoholism and drug addiction also reflects psychological despair and contributes to a public health crisis of catastrophic proportions. Rapid growth of infectious diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, poses further threats to an already shrinking and sickly Russian population. In his 2001 state of the union address, Putin rightly identified the demographic crisis as a major threat to Russia, but there is no indication that the Russian government and society have the vigor required to address some of these monumental problems. Twigg does point to a growing

middle class that now comprises about 15 percent of the population. This would number the Russian middle class between 20 and 25 million, or the size of a medium European country.

In his chapter that addresses the impact of these human capital trends on Russian security, Harley Balzer notes not only that the current crisis results from imperial deconstruction and economic transition, but that its roots are deep and not easily reversible. But if current trends are not reversed, the human capital of Russia will be quantitatively and qualitatively less capable of securing Russia's place in the global economy. Migration has been looked on as one means of alleviating adverse demographic trends (including "brain drain"), but this policy will have to be managed very carefully to avoid explosive social tensions. Already it is probable that the two most rapidly rising populations in Russia in the coming decades will be Muslims and Asians (most likely Chinese).

Two of the Soviet Union's greatest achievements are the development of an educational system that brought high levels of literacy to nearly the entire population and the promotion of science and mathematics that were truly world class. The fate of the Soviet educational system and its strengths in science and technology reflect both the broader changes in Russian society of recent years and the Soviet legacy of a militarized society. As the Russian population has become increasingly differentiated, high education levels have been maintained and in some ways improved for a very narrow elite, but the drop-off from elite institutions has become steeper. Russian science has suffered major blows from brain drain with many of the best and brightest having left their impoverished laboratories for the West. Still, pockets of excellence remain that provide a foundation for the future, and traditional Russian excellence in science and mathematics does bode well for Russians and Russian firms playing a greater role in the global information economy.

### **Russian Foreign and Security Policy Challenges: From Superpower to Embittered Role Player**

After World War II, former Soviet foreign ministers Molotov and Gromyko were fond of saying that no major international issue could be resolved without the participation of the Soviet Union. Of course, this was a bit of an exaggeration since the Soviet Union was not a major player on interna-

tional economic issues, but on security issues their contention was no idle boasting. In the security realm it was a bipolar world, and the Soviet Union allocated tremendous resources to match the U.S. nuclear arsenal and to develop power projection capabilities to compete with the United States for influence in developing countries from Asia to Africa to Latin America. For much of the Cold War, many regarded Soviet conventional capabilities as superior to those of NATO. But this awesome military might was oddly juxtaposed with the Soviet Union's virtual abstention from the rapidly globalizing economy.

Mikhail Gorbachev concluded that Soviet power was ultimately not sustainable in conditions of domestic economic decline—a decline that was exacerbated by isolation from the world economy and excessive military expenditures. Gorbachev's motivations for reforming Soviet socialism also stemmed from concern about the decline of national morale in an overly repressive society. His perestroika strategy involved reforming the Soviet economic and political system, and this required support from the West as well as economic resources reallocated from military spending to the civilian economy. Requirements of reduced military spending and goodwill and support from the West led Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to initiate a remarkable geostrategic retrenchment involving the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the unification of Germany, and a series of arms control agreements. In effect Gorbachev wanted to trade ending the Cold War for joining the world economy and fostering prosperity at home. To his great credit he succeeded beautifully on the first goal, and to his great disappointment failed miserably on the second task. Rather than reviving Soviet socialism, Gorbachev unleashed a process that got out of his control and resulted in the demise of the Soviet Union.

The goals set forth by Gorbachev have for the most part continued to guide Yeltsin and now Putin. And all three leaders have also come to understand that giving up geopolitical power is much easier than restructuring the economy and building prosperity. As a consequence of the policies of Gorbachev and his successors in the Kremlin, Russian power and influence in world affairs dropped more precipitously and rapidly than that of any major power in peacetime in modern world history. The most fundamental challenge for Russians in the last decade has been to fashion a foreign and security policy that matches the country's limited means. The ends and means problem has been complicated by the psychological residue of centuries of great-power and superpower status. Stephen Sestanovich suggested

in 1996 that Russia needed to go into “geotherapy” to help ease the transition to its diminished international status.<sup>2</sup>

Dmitri Trenin argues that Russian security policy continues to struggle with both an elite mind-set mired in Cold War thinking and a force structure designed for the Cold War that is neither affordable nor capable of addressing Russia’s most pressing threats. Although the Marxist-Leninist ideological framework has been dropped, much of the Russian security elite has adopted anachronistic geopolitical concepts that instinctively identify, for example, NATO expansion as a threat to Russia. Expansion of the alliance followed by the military campaign against Serbia confirmed for them the dangers presented by the West and informed the most recent iteration of a national security doctrine that describes the West in threatening terms for Russia. Unless and until Russia definitively concludes that the United States is not a potential enemy, reconfiguring the inherited Soviet defense structures to confront effectively what Trenin believes should be Russia’s real defense concerns will not be feasible. It appears that President Putin has made his strategic choice to integrate with a nonthreatening West, and the September 11 attacks on the United States and the subsequent war on terrorism afford him an opportunity to consolidate this position.

Russia’s most pressing real-time and near-term threats exist to its south. What Winston Churchill famously described as Russia’s “soft underbelly” now consists of a set of weak and unstable states in the Caucasus and Central Asia that for the past ten years have been prone to conflict, religious (most often Islamic) extremism, terrorism, and drug trafficking. Trenin argues that Moscow’s challenge will be to stabilize the region, but this is a task well beyond the capacity of Russia by itself. It will require that Russia and other states with interests and influence in the region abandon a competitive, zero-sum approach to work cooperatively to address regional security threats that pose dangers to all. Trenin believes that Russia’s main security problem in the future will be the vulnerability of the Far East and Siberia, but here the principal challenge will be to develop and implement a coherent development strategy for a region that has experienced this transition decade even more traumatically than the rest of the country.

Through the vicissitudes of Russia’s relations with the United States and the West during the 1990s, Russia steadily improved relations with China in the East. Often the triangular dynamics among Washington, Moscow, and Beijing have been interpreted by analysts and political elites in traditional geostrategic terms of balancing through alternative alliance and quasi-

alliance relationships. Andrew Kuchins argues that this kind of interpretation of the Sino–Russian relationship is fundamentally flawed and that the likelihood of the emergence of a Sino–Russian alliance directed against the United States or a U.S.–Russian alliance directed against China is extremely small.

For Russia, constructive ties with China are naturally an important component of its overall foreign policy because the two countries share a very long and historically contentious border. But for economic, political, and cultural reasons, Russia's ties with Europe and the United States will remain the most important foreign policy orientations for any foreseeable future.

In the 1990s Russian sales of military technology and weapons to China were the most visible and controversial sector of an overall disappointing economic and trade relationship. Even though there are plans for this relationship to deepen to include collaboration on research and development of new systems, Russian supplies of energy, principally oil and natural gas, will be increasingly important in a far more robust economic relationship. This will be part of the broader development of the growing role of Russian and Central Asian energy in Northeast Asia, and it will be a means of more deeply integrating Russia into a region where historically military and security issues have dominated Russia's engagement.

The security threats for Russia to its south result primarily from the failures and difficulties in state building in the former Soviet republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Martha Brill Olcott's chapter explores many of the faulty assumptions about the nature of the challenges these states face and how regional policies based on these assumptions are increasing rather than alleviating the risks of regional instability. Although the Central Asian political elites were among the least desirous of independence, many assumed that independence could help them in addressing some of the maladies developed during the Soviet Union and even be a source for a better life. Ten years later, however, state institutions, with the exception of the security services, remain as weak or weaker, and the already meager quality of life has diminished. The weakness of the individual states has pushed them to establish regional organizations, but weak states make for weak partners.

In particular the assumption that Islam is inherently dangerous and needs to be contained has fueled authoritarianism and repression throughout the region. The repression of Islamic groups and civil society at large has been most pronounced in Uzbekistan under President Islam Karimov. The

blanket repression there of Islamic groups—fundamentalist, modernist, conservative, and otherwise—has significantly contributed to the radicalization of those groups. This vicious circle of government repression and societal radicalization is self-perpetuating, and it is exacerbated by inadequate economic development strategies resulting in pervasive poverty. Despite Uzbekistan being the most “natural” state and the logical aspirant for regional hegemony, misguided state policies may render it the most fragile.

The most pressing security challenge for Russia from the south has been and, of course, remains Chechnya. Chechnya is a domestic problem for Russia, but the two military efforts there since 1994 have been the greatest preoccupations for the Russian military as well as their greatest shames. As Anatol Lieven writes, the causes of the war are not that unusual in a world where many national groups seek to remove their territories from the control of larger states. And like many civil wars or wars of national liberation (depending on your perspective), this fight has been ferocious, with abundant atrocities committed by both sides. The brutal tactics of the Russian military, like many antipartisan campaigns, have strengthened the rebels’ ability to recruit new soldiers who seek revenge for their relatives who have been killed and for their homes destroyed.

Lieven is not optimistic about the current conflict ending anytime soon, as the political and national risks and costs of withdrawal for the Russians outweigh the costs of current casualties and potential gains of peace. He compares Russia’s conflict in Chechnya with that of Turkey in Kurdistan, India in Kashmir, and other conflicts that defy resolution. Because Putin’s political rise was so tied to the terrorist attacks in Russia in the fall of 1999 and the onset of the second Chechen war, it may be harder for this president to reach a political agreement to halt hostilities than it was for the Yeltsin administration, even though more and more political and military figures will admit privately that the war is a mistake.

The challenges that Chechnya, the Caucasus, and Central Asia present for Russia reflect a broader post–Cold War security agenda in which civil and ethnic strife both contributing to and resulting from state failures has seemingly overshadowed Cold War fears of nuclear Armageddon and great-power, hegemonic wars common until the advent of nuclear weapons. The U.S.–Soviet nuclear standoff was the defining element of the Cold War, and ten years past the Soviet collapse, the United States and the Russian Federation remain locked in a deterrent relationship. Despite this apparent stasis in the bilateral nuclear relationship, Rose Gottemoeller argues that a quiet



revolution has been under way in how the United States and Russia relate to each other on nuclear matters. A variety of efforts—such as formal verification measures from existing arms control agreements, joint programs to eliminate components of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal and to prevent proliferation, high technology cooperation like the international space station, and others—have fostered a great deal of collaboration and transparency between the U.S. and Russian nuclear and military security establishments.

This history of cooperation and the personal relationships developed can provide a much stronger foundation of trust to help the United States and Russia take steps to move their nuclear relationship further from its dangerous Cold War legacies. The Bush administration assumed office in 2001 intent on developing a new framework for strategic cooperation with Russia. Missile defense is a controversial aspect of the new framework envisioned by President Bush, but other aspects such as deep reductions in strategic nuclear forces and de-alerting strategic weapons that remain on operational deployment enjoy much broader consensus. Reaching consensus about the nature of the new offense-defense relationship poses a key challenge for U.S. and Russian leadership. But even in cases where high-level consensus has existed—such as the agreement in June 2000 between Presidents Clinton and Putin to establish a joint center in Moscow for sharing early warning data—legal and procedural problems can and have stymied implementation. Gottemoeller acknowledges that it is possible that legal and procedural issues around liability and access to Russian facilities may be used as proxies for internal Russian opposition to cooperation with the United States.

In his chapter on U.S.–Russian relations, James Goldgeier points out that three times in the twentieth century the United States and Russia have cooperated in significant ways: in the 1940s to defeat Germany and Japan; in the 1970s to curb the nuclear arms race; and in the early 1990s to promote a Soviet then Russian transition. In each case there were either powerful international or domestic forces pushing cooperation. In Goldgeier's view it is not clear that such forces exist now. September 11 was a shock that promoted extensive cooperation in the war to oust the Taliban from Afghanistan, but it is not certain if the broader terrorist threat will help consolidate the U.S.–Russian relationship. The emergence of an aggressive China hostile to the interests of the United States and Russia could bring Washington and Moscow together, but that is definitely not something for which to wish.

And after the disillusionments and mutual suspicions at the end of the 1990s, neither a Bush nor a Putin administration carries favor with their political constituencies with promotion of strong U.S.–Russian ties.

Europe, however, is the place where the United States and Russia need each other to achieve the broader goals of their foreign policy agendas. The U.S. goal of enlarging the Western zone of peace and prosperity to a Europe “whole and free” requires that Russia be more thoroughly integrated. Because of their proximity to Russia, Europeans are particularly concerned about dangers that might spill westward from instability in Russia. These concerns drive traditional Western European states like Germany, France, and Great Britain to urge the United States to remain engaged with Russia despite difficulties and frustrations. As Goldgeier and Trenin argue, Russia must have good relations with Europe, and it appears that Putin understands that this is possible only if Russia has good relations with the United States as well. Simplistic and flawed notions of NATO as the “bad Europe” and the European Union as the “good Europe” that seemed to animate Putin’s first year in power have been discarded.

Finally, we need to stay realistic about our expectations of what is possible. Excessive expectations for U.S.–Russian relations ten years ago only sharpened the sense of mutual disappointment as the inevitable difficulties ensued later in the decade. Even in the much more cooperative environment generated in the second half of 2001, differences remain in the relationship. This is to be expected—all countries, even allies, experience differences, sometimes quite acrimonious. Although the United States and Russia may never experience the brief euphoric high of 1991–1992, neither are they likely to descend again to a new cold war. Similarly, we can also hope that Russia has already endured the worst of times domestically as the glacial ice of the Soviet legacy slowly melts into history.

## Notes

1. N. Gevorkyan, A. Kolesnikov, and N. Timakova, *Ot pervogo litsa: Razgovory s Vladimirom Putinyim* (From the First Person: Conversations with Vladimir Putin) (Moscow: Vargius, 2000), pp. 167–8.

2. Stephen Sestanovich, “Geotherapy: Russia’s Neurosis and Ours,” *The National Interest* (September 1996).