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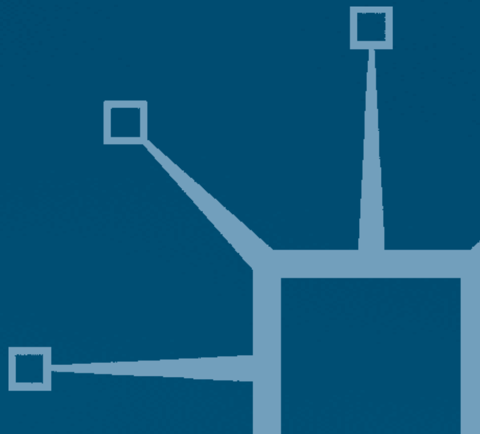
Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era

Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking

Bobo Lo



Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era

Also by Bobo Lo

SOVIET LABOUR IDEOLOGY AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE STATE

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Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking

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Visiting Fellow
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Russia

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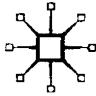

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First published 2002 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN 0–333–77593–7

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lo, Bobo, 1959–
Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: reality, illusion and mythmaking/Bobo Lo.
p.cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0–333–77593–7
1. Russia (Federation) – Foreign relations. 2. Post-communism – Russia (Federation) I. Title.

DK510.764.L6 2002
327.47 – dc21 2002025238

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham and Eastbourne

To dear friends everywhere

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Acknowledgements

Many friends have contributed significantly in the making of this book. I have been especially blessed in developing close relationships with some remarkable individuals, and their influence on this work and my life has been immense. Among the many Russians who have helped guide me through the shoals of post-Soviet foreign policy, I should like to mention three names in particular: Tatiana Parkhalina, whose courage in the face of adversity was a tremendous personal inspiration; Dmitri Trenin, whose creative thinking informs many of the ideas in this book; and Kostya Eggert, whose support and knowledge have kept me going in good times and bad. Of course, no book would become a reality without hard but fair examination by dedicated readers. Roy Allison and Alex Pravda were kind enough to read through the text, challenge many of the arguments, and at least enhance my chances of producing something worthwhile. More generally, Glenn Waller, Deputy Head of Mission at the Australian Embassy in Moscow, played a key role in forcing me to think critically about Russia, eschewing the obvious in favour of a deeper analysis of often opaque developments. Much of the planning and research for the book was carried out at Wolfson College, Oxford, where I was a Visiting Scholar in 2000. For this, I owe the college and Chris Davis in particular a great debt. He and Antonia made me feel extremely welcome, and displayed an uncanny knack in picking me up whenever life looked a little grey. Similarly, Riitta Heino and Alex Pravda have been very generous in putting me up and feeding me whenever I have lobbed into St Antony's and disrupted proceedings at the Monday-night lecture series.

Neil MacFarlane was very open with his time and in making available the resources of the Centre for International Studies at Oxford University, where I benefited also from the invaluable assistance of Marga Lyall. I should like to recognize a wonderful group of friends, dispersed throughout the world, whose tolerance of my foibles and all-round unreasonableness has been nothing short of heroic. Thank you Stephanie Zarikow, Lizzy Fisher, Ros and Simon Harrison, Lyn and Bruce Minerds, Linda Kouvaras and Richard Ward, Stephen Shay and Nicola Cade, Agnes Waller, Gareth Meyer and Penny Xirakis, Hilde Svartdal, and Les Holmes. Finally, none of this would have been possible without the support of my family: my mother, father, Helen, Hsiao, Didi and Ping.

1
Introduction

> I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. But there may be a key, and that key is Russian national interest.
>
> Winston Churchill

This book sets out to explain the complex nature of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era, from the collapse of the USSR in December 1991 and the accession of Boris Yeltsin to the end of Vladimir Putin's second year as President of the Russian Federation. The tale narrated in the coming pages is a messy one, beset by innumerable contradictions and flavoured by human personality to an uncommon degree. When Winston Churchill speculated that the key to understanding Russia might be 'national interest', he could little have imagined the extent to which, more than half a century later, the foreign policy of the largest of the post-Soviet successor states would so reflect the perversity of human nature. Far from exhibiting an underlying if specific pragmatism, Moscow's relations with the outside world have been liberally streaked with irrationality – at least as we might understand it in the West – and dominated by fundamental dichotomies: continuity and change, consensus and conflict. Easy assumptions about a broader 'national interest' and common priorities have been challenged by the politics of sectionalism and personalities, with rationality and logic acquiring multiple, contradictory forms. We enter a realm of smoke and mirrors in which little is as it seems, and where illusion and mythmaking are as much a part of reality as 'reality' itself.

Attempting to conceptualize the foreign policy of the past decade is a daunting, perhaps even foolhardy endeavour. How does one explain its

myriad twists and turns, and emerge with a more or less coherent picture from the chaos of competing ideas and interests? Can one speak of a discrete approach with a common thread, or is it more useful instead to dismiss it as a loose amalgam of constantly shifting bits and pieces, devoid of meaningful conceptual or philosophical bases? Given the obvious difficulties, there is a temptation to sidestep all this disorder by focusing on individual issues and countries, as many have done. Yet such an unambitious response, while being 'safe', avoids critical questions that need to be examined sooner rather than later. What have been the driving forces behind Russian foreign policy? To what extent do attitudes towards international relations and issues reflect an ongoing and arduous quest for a new post-Soviet identity? How will the experience of the Yeltsin years shape Moscow's interaction with the world in the new millennium?

This book has been written in the conviction that it is indeed possible to make sense from what, in many instances, appears nonsense. The tortuous course of foreign policy in post-Soviet Russia offers an untidy but by no means inexplicable story. With the retirement of Boris Yeltsin a matter of relatively recent memory, it is appropriate and timely to take stock. While judgements will continue to be made about his administration's achievements and failures for years to come, it is encumbent on scholars even at this early stage to attempt to draw some threads and themes together, discern meaning and understand context. Many of the assessments must necessarily be provisional and tentative, yet this in itself is no reason to evade the challenge, particularly with the benefit – more than two years after Yeltsin's departure – of a little hindsight. The very different style of Vladimir Putin provides an excellent yardstick against which to assess the impact of the Yeltsin legacy both on Russia's perception of itself and its relations with others.

And, make no mistake, the importance of this task is beyond question. As the Yeltsin administration lurched from crisis to crisis, it became fashionable in the West to denigrate Russia's place in the world, to argue that its obvious fall from grace translated into an ever greater and lasting irrelevance in international affairs, whether as a factor for good or ill. The image of an embattled and befuddled President seemed to epitomize a tottering Russia, the 'sick man' of Eurasia, mirroring the dramatic decline of the Ottoman Empire 100 years earlier.[1] It has taken the advent of the younger and vigorous Putin to supply a useful corrective to this complacent impression. Russia's superpower days are long over, it may still be groping for a viable strategic conception, and its decision-making processes remain archaic and ineffectual, but, for all that, it continues to matter. One does not have to believe that it is a 'great power' to recognize

that it is in the international community's best interests to do all it can to understand the forces driving Russia's relations with the outside world.

Searching for consensus

The turbulence of the USSR's disintegration and subsequent Yeltsin years offered fertile soil for two contrasting psychological tendencies within the elite. The first, the desire for change, was reflected in a reform agenda that set out not only to revolutionize thinking and practice in all aspects of Russian life, but in the process sought to destroy the old Communist *nomenklatura* and administrative structures. Political, economic and societal reforms were more than just basic 'goods', necessary to furnish Russia with fresh values and identity; they were motivated also by the quest for political supremacy of the new over the old. Crucially, the matter was also personal. It was not simply Communism, its ideology and system, that was being targeted, but Communists as people. Throughout his presidency, Yeltsin retained an unwavering personal animus towards this 'other' – the past *and* its representatives – one that infused his whole approach to rule. This combination of the ideological and the personal engendered an unusually fractious political environment, in which implementation of a demanding and controversial domestic reform agenda was undermined by bitter conflicts between the executive and legislature, in addition to more 'normal' problems like political corruption, lack of will and myopia.

On the other hand, the instability of the recent past encouraged an equally natural constituency in favour of order and predictability. The rapid pace of events and uncertainty of their outcomes fostered a hankering for a breathing space, in which to take stock of developments and/or consolidate the changes that had occurred, before, possibly, moving on to the next set of challenges. Part of this sentiment stemmed from a fear that things had spun out of control, part of it was due also to a certain lassitude or 'reform-fatigue'. An important element within this more 'conservative' mentality was the sense that not all in the *ancien regime* had been bad, that some principles and practices from the past were worth retaining. While it might be too much to expect the smooth emergence of a new post-Soviet society and accompanying national identity, there appeared no *prima facie* reason to rule out the possibility of a middle ground in which continuity coexisted with change, the inherited with the introduced. Such a consensus might not be perfect; disagreements, sometimes major, would occur in many areas of public life and policy. But a basic framework could evolve, whose parameters

would frame the 'acceptable' from the outrageous and the destructive, providing in the process some core values and interests around which people and institutions might coalesce.

Foreign policy appeared to many as a logical candidate for just such a marriage of traditional and 'modern' principles and impulses, especially after initial illusions about a post-Cold War 'equal partnership' with the United States had been dispelled. Unlike the struggle for political power or the introduction of market economics, it was not immediately obvious why there could not be rough agreement on how to manage Moscow's external relations. After all, most of the political class believed that Russia should continue to act as a 'great power' in one form or another, but also that it should build better relations with the West, subscribe to regional and global integrationist trends, and give greater emphasis to economic priorities. Principles of territorial integrity remained a given, as was the proposition that a nation's foreign policy should serve to promote the welfare of its citizens. At the same time, the combination of an increasingly tense political atmosphere and worsening socioeconomic crisis placed a premium on 'stabilization' in at least one sphere of post-Soviet political life. Even Yeltsin [1992, p. 1], notwithstanding his combative instincts, was inclined to view this objective favourably [*see* also Pravda, 1996, p. 220]. In foreign policy, unlike in domestic affairs, the idea of consensus acquired the status of an intrinsic virtue, somewhat akin to other general notions like peace, security and prosperity.

And yet, one of the most striking paradoxes of the post-Soviet era is the disparity between this near universal support for the principle of a foreign policy consensus on the one hand, and the resounding failure to achieve it in practice. Tellingly, Russians themselves were rarely able to agree on if, let alone when, this had been achieved. Far from subscribing to the conventional Western view that 'consensus' emerged some time in 1993 [*see* Light, 1996, pp. 22–3, 35; Malcolm, 1996, pp. 131–2; Aron, 1998, pp. 24, 51; Garnett, 1998, p. 68],[2] many local commentators argued that it was not until Yevgenii Primakov succeeded Andrei Kozyrev as Foreign Minister in January 1996 that Russian foreign policy 'began, for the most part, to rise above conflicts between the executive and legislative branches' [Pushkov, 1997a, p. 2]. While such judgements were as much politically as intellectually motivated, the fact that they were made at all, let alone with such certainty, indicated that influential members of the political class simply did not believe that a consensus existed at any time in the first four years of the Yeltsin period, and even then thought that one only *started* to develop after Kozyrev's departure. Noting that 'it took time to figure out Russia's exact place in international

relations and to determine its priorities, interests and tasks,' Igor Ivanov [1998c, p. 6] situated the process (*not* the completion) of consensus-building only 'in the past two or three years'. Liberal commentators were even more sceptical. Otto Latsis's [1999b, p. 1] observation, in connection with Yeltsin's attendance at the 1999 Istanbul OSCE Summit, that '[f]or the first time in a long while, almost complete national accord has been reached,' suggested that no consensus – on domestic or foreign policy – existed until the Chechen-related bombing incidents in Moscow served to unite public and elite opinion behind a second war in the north Caucasus.[3] Kozyrev's [2000, p. 6] bitter criticism of 'centrism', which he defined as 'balancing on the brink of outright confrontation with the US and the West' and the attempt to 'drive Russia back into Asia,' emphasizes how little credence he attached to any supposed commonality of perception and purpose across the political spectrum. His distinction between 'Russia's interests' as he saw them and the 'national state interests' policy of the 'centrists' and 'statists' could hardly have constituted a more explicit affirmation of non-consensus.

Conceptualizing Russian foreign policy

The debate over consensus and non-consensus highlights one of the signal features of the Russian approach to external relations under Yeltsin: the discrepancy between its mythology and iconology on the one hand, and actual policy-making on the other – the 'reality, illusion and myth-making' that is the subtitle of this book. We should not be surprised by this phenomenon; all governments to a greater or lesser extent indulge in creative mythmaking and illusions, and in Russia this was raised almost to an art form during the Soviet era. What is striking, however, is the extent to which many outside observers have swallowed the official line as enunciated in various policy concepts and statements. Gullibility over alleged successes in the 'virtual economy' has been paralleled by a largely unquestioning attitude to what in many areas and aspects could be called a 'virtual foreign policy'. A major objective of this book, then, is to untangle the confusion between fact and fiction, reality and mythmaking, and to identify without prejudice the essential characteristics of Russian foreign policy-making. In presenting these, I will argue the following:

(1) **The single most important feature of Russian foreign policy during the Yeltsin period was its 'sectionalized' character.** Far from any consensus emerging, the political class was deeply divided over underlying concepts and values, policy priorities, and the means with which

to realize them. In the absence of any clear sense of the national good, the conduct of external relations reflected the dominant reality of the times: the volatile interplay between generally opposing – but occasionally allied – influences and interests. The product of this fluid interaction was a foreign policy rich in expediency, but with little unifying logic, consistency or even continuity. Despite the best efforts of some to put a gloss on things, there was no consensus – because the conditions that might have made this possible were almost entirely lacking. Fundamental disagreements over Russia's identity and place in the world; contrasting perceptions of the post-Cold War global environment; the intense intrusion of domestic politics into foreign policy; an institutional context at once Byzantine and anarchic; and a President committed to maintaining and expanding his personal power through divide-and-rule tactics – all these militated against the development of a consensual approach to external relations. These differences could not help but impact severely on the government's management of concrete priorities. In virtually no major area of policy interest did the Kremlin succeed in making common cause with its numerous critics, whether it was the 'partnership' with the United States, CIS-related issues, the handling of various Balkans crises, or in its overall performance in the international arena. Even in cases, such as NATO enlargement, the Kosovo conflict and National Missile Defense (NMD), where there were similarities in threat perception, divisions opened up quickly on the critical question of how Moscow should respond in defence of its interests.

(2) While it would be wrong to suggest that foreign policy became something of a sideshow, its standing relative to domestic priorities decreased in comparison with the Soviet period. Consistent with this trend, **one of the most notable phenomena of the Yeltsin years was the pronounced politicization of foreign policy.** In addition to lack of agreement on questions of identity and global perception, the regime faced enormous difficulties – some of its own making – in conducting any kind of 'sensible' or far-sighted foreign policy in conditions of chronic political uncertainty and socioeconomic crisis. In this climate, policy-making became overwhelmingly reactive and vulnerable to deal-making. Among the chief casualties of this fecklessness were effective priority-setting and policy implementation.

(3) **Russian foreign policy placed a very high value on creative illusion- and mythmaking.** From the outset, the Yeltsin administration devoted as much time and energy to demonstrating that Russia had

emerged from the Soviet shadow as a cooperative yet still powerful world force, as it did to working towards this objective. The outcome was what might be called the Potemkinization of Russian foreign policy – creating the illusion of coherence and vision via major policy statements such as the Foreign Policy and National Security Concepts and the Military Doctrine. Far from being a meaningful guide to policy action, however, such motherhood documents were important mainly as an indicator of political fashion, as a rationalizing mechanism designed to reconcile – at least in public – contradictions within the elite, and as a surrogate for real policy action. More concretely, the administration sought to perpetuate a number of foundation myths, most notably the primacy of CIS issues, the conflation of multipolarity and multilateralism, and the notion of a 'diversified' or geographically 'balanced' foreign policy.

(4) **The 'de-ideologization' of Russian foreign policy has been greatly exaggerated.** While much of the content and terminology from Soviet times was jettisoned, ideology in various forms played a central role in policy formulation and execution. What happened, however, was that uniformity was lost. In keeping with the relatively pluralistic nature of post-Soviet society, several ideologies entered into play. Thus, the liberal agenda emphasized integration with the West and the 'economization' of foreign policy; the imperial syndrome was based on the centrality of CIS affairs; great power ideology was premised on Russia's continuing status as a geopolitical world power; 'independent' foreign policy called for 'diversification'; and ideas of foreign policy retrenchment advocated 'concentration' on a narrow set of priorities. Notwithstanding critical commonalities, each of these ideological currents brought a distinct perspective and mindset to foreign policy-making, materially affecting the choice of priorities and the way these were managed. At the same time, just as in the Soviet system, ideology continued to serve instrumental purposes. In an environment dominated by expediency rather than principle, bureaucratic bodies, political figures and economic actors of all persuasions employed ideological discourse to package more prosaic and materialist ends.

(5) **The Russian political class continued to view foreign policy in predominantly geopolitical terms.** In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse, there was much talk in Russia and the West about the obsolescence of geopolitics and the corresponding primacy of economic objectives. These hopes have yet to be realized. Although awareness of economic imperatives increased, geopolitics remained dominant, an

attachment highlighted by the prominence of traditional pol-mil and security issues. The recentness of the Soviet past meant that elite thinking continued to be conditioned by zero-sum equations, balance-of-power notions and 'spheres of interests', while developments on the ground – Russia's ongoing socioeconomic crisis, instability in the CIS periphery, NATO enlargement, the Kosovo crisis, American plans to develop a strategic missile defence system – ensured that the evolution of a balanced foreign policy would be difficult and protracted. The post-Soviet version of geopolitics may have been less harsh and confrontational than its Cold War predecessor, but the geopolitical mindset became stronger if anything.

(6) **Russian foreign policy was overwhelmingly Westerncentric, although *not* pro-Western**. For all the mythmaking about Russia straddling East and West as some mystical Eurasian entity, or the priority of CIS-related affairs, the West retained its dominant position in Moscow's world-view. Moreover, this Westerncentrism continued to take the United States as its principal point of reference. During the Yeltsin period, America represented the single greatest external influence on Russian foreign policy, whether in relations with the IMF, in terms of the strategic disarmament agenda, in determining the level of Russian interest in regional and global issues, or in shaping elite perceptions of national identity.

(7) **The overall approach of Russian foreign policy during the Yeltsin years was reactive and *ad hoc***. Policy-makers consistently sought to give the impression of strategic vision and long-term thinking. But the competition between sectional interests within the elite had an anaesthetizing effect on policy. Decision-making was driven by lowest common denominator principles, based on the avoidance of risk. The outcome, largely accidental, was a 'pragmatism by default' instead of the consensus sought by the regime. Although policy stasis had the unwitting benefit of staving off potentially disastrous actions, it contributed crucially to a deterioration of Russian foreign policy positions worldwide.

(8) **The most distinctive strategic feature of Russian foreign policy under Putin has been its 'securitization'**, institutionally and in the choice and handling of priorities. Although the new President has been reluctant to commit himself to a particular philosophy, a more unified, coordinated and above all activist approach to external relations is already evident. That said, many of the changes have been more

stylistic than substantive, and the prospect of a 'normal' foreign policy in the fully integrated Western sense continues to be an uncertain one. Basic features from the Yeltsin period – mythmaking, the geopolitical mentality, Westerncentrism – remain even while they have undergone a face-lift. In the meantime, it is unclear whether the cessation of the overt sectionalization of the 1990s represents the emergence of a genuine and lasting consensus or merely a temporary accommodation in response to the reality of Putin's political dominance. Whatever the case, however, there is no doubt that Russia has enjoyed something of a resurgence as a regional and global actor.

Methodological approach and chapter outline

With the experience of both a policy and academic background, it is my belief that the complexities of Russian foreign policy require an approach that is broad in scope and conceptually based, rather than one that treats it as a compilation of discrete individual issue areas, or attempts to squeeze events into the straitjacket of some fashionable paradigm of international relations theory. In the first place, there exists a clear demand for a treatment that examines the subject in its post-Soviet entirety. While the omission of this until now is unsurprising, a comprehensive view is fundamental to any serious understanding of past, present and future Russian attitudes towards the world. There have been a number of insightful analyses of the foreign policy of Yeltsin's first term. But inevitably these have presented only a partial picture, lacking the benefit of the hindsight afforded by a longer perspective. Second, it is important to examine Moscow's foreign policy preoccupations in their wider conceptual and ideological context. The danger of an issue- or area-based approach is a tendency towards superficiality – the mere reporting of developments with little effort to analyse the forces behind policy continuity and change – and an inability to identify broader trends across different subject and geographical areas. The result is frequently a lack of coherence and perspective. Theoretically based analyses attempt to address these difficulties, but suffer in many cases from an obvious air of unreality. It is often not apparent what connection, if any, exists between various artificially constructed models and the substance of foreign policy decision-making. One emerges with the impression of an artful intellectual game, based not on relevant experience but on the selective use and interpretation of data to fit predetermined patterns and theses – clever in its own fashion, but offering little insight into the way things actually operate.

This book is divided into seven chapters, each of which centres on a particular theme and set of issues. Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 examines four key determinants of Russian foreign policy: (i) perceptions of national identity and the search for a new post-Soviet persona following the collapse of communism; (ii) Russian views of the post-Cold War global environment; (iii) the impact of domestic political and economic factors on foreign policy-making; and (iv) the interaction between institutional and individual actors within the political elite. Chapter 3 looks at the foreign policy debate. It analyses the role and impact of ideas in the foreign policy context, considering in turn each of the principal ideological currents: the liberal foreign policy agenda; the imperial syndrome; 'great power' ideology and the nationalist impulse; the notion of an 'independent' foreign policy based on 'national interests'; and, finally, ideas of 'retrenchment'. In many ways, Chapter 4 goes to the heart of the matter. As its title 'Illusion and Mythmaking' suggests, the purpose here is to disentangle fact from the sundry fictions surrounding the conduct of foreign policy. After evaluating the function of the major policy document – the Foreign Policy Concept, National Security Concept, and Military Doctrine – this chapter dissects several seminal myths: the alleged priority of CIS-related affairs; the deliberate blending of multipolarity and multilateralism; and the smokescreen of 'diversification'. In similar vein, Chapter 5 challenges the common but facile assumption following the end of the Cold War about the death of geopolitics. To this end, it considers the reasons for its enduring appeal, before examining various dimensions of zero-sum thinking, balance-of-power concepts, and notions of spheres of influence.

If the focus in Chapters 2–5 is on the realm of ideas and concepts, then Chapter 6 is about the actual conduct of foreign policy viewed through the prism of the Yeltsin administration's handling of priority areas. These have been grouped thematically: security issues, nuclear and conventional; questions of territorial integrity and of conflict and crisis management; and domestic political and economic imperatives. The chapter concludes with a brief summation of the practical policy implications of the maelstrom of polarized mindsets, anarchic policy-making conditions, disinformation, dominance of geopolitics, and sharply conflicting priorities. Finally, Chapter 7 reviews President Putin's first two years as they relate to the foreign and security policy agenda. It adopts a comparative approach, measuring key aspects of the current administration's performance against that of its predecessor. In drawing parallels and identifying differences, the chapter offers some thoughts about how Russian foreign policy might evolve in the future.

Sources

One of the more striking aspects of Russian foreign policy-watching is the gulf that exists between many Western academic perceptions and those of Russian diplomats, politicians and journalists – in other words, the people who deal with the issues on an everyday, direct, basis. There are several explanations for this, but perhaps the most critical is the former's excessive reliance on published materials without a corresponding feel for the mechanics of policy-making, the erratic genesis of and politicking behind major policy documents, and the prejudices of various actors and commentators. It is my hope that this book will avoid the worst of these problems by finding an appropriate balance between academic and non-academic material, written and oral. It is partly the fruit of a painstaking examination of a wide range of written sources – daily newspapers, current affairs magazines, academic journals and books both Russian and foreign. More importantly, however, it is the product of ideas developed through countless exchanges with Russian policy-makers and thinkers, as well as personal observation and reflection, over a four-year period (1995–99) during which I served as First Secretary and then Deputy Head of Mission at the Australian Embassy in Moscow. I owe an enormous debt to a large number of Russian friends and acquaintances who, from an early stage, set about disabusing me of my more naive assumptions and providing enlightenment about the true nature of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era.

2
The Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy

This chapter is about the context of foreign policy-making – cultural, external, domestic and institutional. The first part focuses on the search for a post-Soviet national identity and the debate over Russia's civilizational location. Questions of *spetsifika* ('uniqueness'), Slavic heritage, 'European-ness', the relationship with Asia, and Eurasianism not only highlighted ideological and cultural affinities among the elite; they were critical in determining attitudes towards the new nation's place in the world – as global, regional or even 'normal' power – and choices about the conduct of external affairs. Under Yeltsin, the issue of identity emerged as one of the most divisive elements in post-Soviet society, a perpetual source of conflict that ensured that foreign policy, like domestic affairs, would be characterized by fragmentation and sectionalization instead of the consensus the administration hoped to achieve.

The end of bipolarity and advent of a new post-Cold War strategic order were momentous events in the history of the twentieth century, and it is hardly surprising that they should have had a major formative influence on Russian foreign policy. During the post-Soviet period, much of the haphazard course followed by the Kremlin was attributable to an unpredictable and often alien international environment. Faced with ever more Protean challenges, policy-makers reacted in increasingly *ad hoc* fashion. Unable to reconcile itself to Washington's global leadership, Moscow promoted the vision of 'multipolarity'. But consensus on this was almost entirely lacking. The Yeltsin administration was never able to decide whether it saw the world as benign or hostile and, as a consequence, gave out signals that were at once confused and confusing. In this connection, it was scarcely assisted by the third of our key determinants: the impact of domestic factors on policy formulation and implementation. It is a commonplace to note the nexus between domestic and

external policies – this is true of just about any country in the world. But what was unusual was the *degree* to which Russian foreign policy became 'politicized' – a collection of bargaining chips that was exploited, at times quite shamelessly, for narrow political advantage.

Finally, this chapter examines the institutional context. Largely because of its murky and indeterminate nature, this element of the policy process has been somewhat neglected. And yet without a proper consideration of the *dramatis personae*, the rules under which they played, and the means by which they attempted to achieve their objectives, a vital component to understanding the workings of Russian foreign policy is missing. The last section focuses on three aspects of this dimension: the relations of conflict and cooperation between institutional actors; the disproportionately large role of personal factors and relationships in shaping policy; and the mechanics and structures of foreign policy coordination.

The search for identity – Russia's place and role in the world

The most immediate task facing the new Yeltsin administration was to establish Russia's international identity in a formal sense. Accomplishment of this objective has tended to be taken for granted, no doubt because the massively centralized nature of the Soviet system encouraged a natural conflation of Russia with the USSR. Yet, the former's confirmation as the legal successor of the Soviet Union was arguably the major achievement of the administration's first year in power. It contributed critically to preserving the trappings and some of the substance of Russia as a great power, such as a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and ensured a relatively smooth transfer of the USSR's international treaty – including nuclear weapons – rights and obligations to Moscow [Kortunov, 1993, p. 13].

However, for all its importance, Russia's anointing as the formal successor state of the Soviet Union was tangential to the debate over national identity. It was one thing to inherit the legal status and even bulk of the defunct empire's assets and responsibilities, but it was quite a different challenge to find answers to difficult questions about Russia's nature and role in the post-Cold War environment. As Yeltsin [1994a, p. 1] admitted more than two years after the Soviet collapse, the Russian state had yet to assume 'a worthy place in the world community'. The implications of his remarks were unambiguous: in order to play a meaningful part in global affairs Russia would need to develop a clear sense of

what it stood for, a system of core values and priorities, and foreign policies capable of promoting them.

Issues of geographical and civilizational identity

The Yeltsin administration did not lack for historical antecedents in this quest. Since Peter the Great, if not earlier, questions of identity and orientation had been integral in shaping elite attitudes to a whole host of domestic and external issues. The problem facing the leadership was the opposite – an excess of ideological and historical baggage that militated against fresh approaches to old problems. Nowhere was this difficulty embodied more clearly than in the ancient debate over Russia's *spetsifika* or 'uniqueness'. As the liberal journalist Konstantin Eggert [in Eggert and Lo, 2000] remarked, while Russians would acknowledge that every country is to some extent unique; 'they tend to believe that their country … is more unique than others'. Thinkers from Karamzin and Tyutchev to the present day have consistently reinforced this notion, arguing that Russia cannot be judged according to standards accepted elsewhere in the civilized world and must therefore follow its own path of political and economic development. In the foreign policy context, such ideas have tied in to broader issues of geographical and civilizational identity. What exactly is Russia beyond its formal status as the main successor state of the Soviet Union? Although most Russians would claim to know what it is to be Russian, there is very little agreement on what this means. Is the key to be found in the country's persona as cradle and principal representative of the Orthodox civilization [Huntington, 1998, pp. 45–7], or should we look instead to notions of 'Eurasian-ness', in which Russia assumes an almost mystical identity that transcends continents? To what extent is Russia an integral part of Western European culture, as Vladimir Putin [2000a, p. 156] has proclaimed? Is Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov [2000a, p. 9] justified in insisting that Russia 'was, is and always will be an Asian power', or does John Stephan's summation hold true: while Russia is *in* Asia, it is still not yet *of* Asia? [*see* Blank and Rubinstein, 1997, p. 273]. Alternatively, has Russian national identity been virtually emasculated by 70 years of Communist Party rule which, in Anatol Lieven's [1999, p. 64] memorable phrase, sustained a 'vampirical relationship with Russian traditions and sentiments' – exploiting them cynically while at the same time divesting them of substance. With no consensus on what Russia should be – beyond an unfocused desire to be prosperous and influential – Moscow's conduct of external relations has reflected the influence of several, often directly opposing world-views.

Russia's Slavic identity

One of the more incontrovertible theses would seem to be that Russia retains a deep sense of Slavic identity, whether in the shape of a commitment to maintain so-called Slavic values by defending the rights of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet Union, recreating in some form or other a 'Slavic Union' with Ukraine and Belarus, or promoting pan-Slavist solidarity with 'kin' peoples in Southern and Eastern Europe. This Slavic emphasis carries serious implications for the management of Russian foreign policy. The most important is an implicit distrust of the West. In some respects, the Slavist orientation during the Yeltsin years was a continuation of the nineteenth-century Westernizer–Slavophile debate, which concerned itself principally over whether Russia needed to borrow from the West in order to become a strong nation, or whether it should rely on the 'classical' Russian virtues incorporated in the concepts of autocracy (*samoderzhavie*), Orthodoxy (*pravoslavie*) and 'nation-mindedness (*narodnost*) [Neumann, 1996, p. 25]. While things have moved on in the intervening 150 years, many of the underlying assumptions have remained unchanged, in particular, an often irreconcilable opposition between Western and Slavic values. To some, the former represent a dangerous cultural imperialism that Russia must combat by relying on the strength of its traditions and practices, in other words, the Russian *spetsifika*. Consistent with this mindset, recourse to Slavic terminology in the Yeltsin era often became shorthand for a crude anti-Westernism. During the Kosovo crisis, Communist Party leader Gennadii Zyuganov [1999, p. 1] played the pan-Slavist card for all its anti-Western worth. Proposals to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of 'fraternal' Belarus were supplemented by calls to send volunteers to defend Serbia and for withdrawal from agreements with NATO and sanctions regimes against Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya. On a broader level, Zyuganov linked his comments to criticisms of the 'pro-American group in Russia's ruling elite,' whose efforts to serve America's interests had 'destroyed' the Soviet Union, 'disarmed' Russia, and 'knocked down [its] military potential to a level that poses no danger to the US'.

An emphasis on Slavic identity also has critical consequences in determining foreign policy priorities. Not only does it presuppose the minimization of political and economic dependence on the West, but it is also premised on a correspondingly increased interest in traditional Slav areas, notably the former Soviet Union. Iver Neumann's [1996, p. 41] observation – that nineteenth-century pan-Slavism 'favoured an active Russian foreign policy towards Russia's Western borderlands, and did not shy away from the increased tension with Europe that such a policy

would necessarily entail' – is apposite to the post-Soviet period. Thus, the former presidential foreign policy advisor, Sergei Stankevich [1992b, p. 2], justified a much more assertive approach to the former Soviet Union (FSU) largely on the basis of Russia's 'ethnocultural closeness' to the Slavic and Turkic peoples. Issues of Slavic identity have also influenced Moscow's handling of diaspora issues. Leaving aside the question of its actual commitment to the task (*see* Chapter 4), the Yeltsin administration was at least sufficiently motivated by such considerations as to declare, repeatedly, its solicitude for Russians living in the FSU. Similarly, ideas of CIS economic integration represented for some a conscious Slavic choice in favour of a more introspective or 'self-reliant' policy approach as against the liberal agenda of integrating Russia into the Western-dominated global economic system [Becker, 1996–97, p. 130]. Although there were practical reasons for this – including the sense that Russia was ill-equipped to head for the 'open seas of market economics' [Ivanov, 1999c, p. 6] – part of the motivation was emotional and civilizational, a choice between *svoi* (one's own) and *chuzhie* (outsiders). Significantly, key government figures [for example, Primakov, 1994, p. 6] saw a tight nexus between the resolution of diaspora-related tensions and the creation of a common economic space in the CIS.

Third, Russia's Slavic identity has been used as a tool to pursue wider foreign policy objectives. In this context, it has mattered little that elite and public attachment to a broader pan-Slavism, extending to the Balkans, has been tenuous at best [*see* Yeltsin, 1995b, p. 1; Bowker, 1995, p. 87].[1] During the Kosovo crisis, playing up emotional/historical bonds reduced Moscow's vulnerability to the charge that its opposition to NATO actions was simply great power posturing while, more generally, helping to 'legitimize' Russian involvement in the Balkans. As a 'kin country' [Huntington, 1998, p. 295], it could promote the fiction that special ties with the Serbs allowed it to play a unique and indispensable mediating role [Ivanov, 1999a, p. 2].

Russia's 'European-ness'

If Russia's Slavic identity is centred on notions of exclusiveness and *spetsifika*, then the issue of its 'European-ness' by contrast emphasizes principles of commonality and inclusiveness. Russia, though a country with certain characteristics, is by virtue of a common history and culture part of mainstream European civilization, from which it cannot allow itself to be marginalized. Over the past 300 years, significant elements of the governing class have highlighted the importance of integration into Europe – for political, strategic and economic reasons.

Growing ties with the rest of the continent provided Russia with the bases of a modern identity. Isaiah Berlin [1994, p. 118] observed that the triumph over Napoleon and the subsequent march to Paris 'generated in [Russia] a sense of herself as a great European nation, recognised as such; as being no longer a despised collection of barbarians teeming behind a Chinese wall, sunk in medieval darkness … '. Yet, Berlin [ibid., p. 181] added, Russia's sense of European-ness was also coloured by ambivalence: 'on the one hand, intellectual respect, envy, admiration, desire to emulate and excel; on the other, emotional hostility, suspicion, and contempt, a sense of being clumsy, *de trop*, of being outsiders … '.

Although Berlin was writing about the mid-nineteenth century, his comments are as applicable to the modern age where the issue of European-ness has rarely strayed from the centre of foreign policy thinking. In his 1984 speech to the House of Commons, Gorbachev [*Pravda*, 19 December 1984, mentioned in Neumann, 1996, pp. 161–2] declared that Russians were Europeans first and foremost. Although he was later to be pilloried for his excessive attachment to the West, his message of a 'Common European Home' achieved a positive resonance that extended even to his many critics. For the latter recognized that close participation in pan-European processes was a *sine qua non* of Russia's influential involvement in world affairs. With the collapse of strategic bipolarity, this perception has become even more pronounced. It ties in not only with closer political and economic relations with Western European countries, but also more generally with an understanding that Russian involvement in Europe is 'critical to its sense of self-worth' [*U.S.–Russian Relations …* , 2000, p. 169]. Setbacks such as NATO enlargement and the alliance's military operations during the 1999 Kosovo crisis have only reinforced this message. In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Putin [2000a, p. 156] should have reaffirmed that Russians are fundamentally European, wherever they live.

Russia and Asia

The same cannot be said of Russia in Asia. Indeed, the problem here is that significant sections of the elite continued to see the East as the 'other'. If Slavism is the home of spirituality and Europe the source of intellectual enlightenment and progress, then Asia represents for many a savage barbarian past. Grossly outmoded as most stereotypes tend to be, the idea of Asia as essentially alien and hostile has been one of the greatest obstacles to Russia's integration into the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, notwithstanding the considerable improvement in Russo-Chinese relations over the past decade, the myth of millions of Chinese illegal

immigrants flooding into Russia's depopulated Far East remains a potent one.[2] Similarly, despite near final demarcation of the Russian–Chinese border, its very length ensures that China continues to be seen by many as the major long-term security threat. This sense of Asia as alien is reinforced by demographic and physical realities. Some proponents of the 'Russia is an Asian power' view [for example, Ivanov, 2000a, p. 9] have argued this on the basis that the greater part of Russian territory lies in Asia, along with substantial reserves of raw material resources. Yet the fact that only 30 million Russians live east of the Urals, and less than 7 million of those in the Russian Far East, confirms that such areas have long been virtually colonial in nature – territories to be exploited rather than lands reflecting Russian spiritual and intellectual values. The absence of Asian-ness in the Russian identity has been exacerbated by the inattention of successive Russian (and Soviet) governments towards Asian countries. And despite steps in recent years to give greater substance to relations, the overwhelming majority of Russians do not, and will not ever, consider themselves to be Asian.

Eurasianism

What many influential policy-makers and thinkers have attempted to do instead is to present the idea of Russia as the Eurasian power *par excellence*. Eurasianism in its political guise is essentially an amalgam of several ideas of identity and, as such, answers to a range of emotional and intellectual needs. In the first place, like the Slavic identity, it embodies the principle of *spetsifika*. Russia transcends mere continents, with attempts to force it 'solely' into Asia or Europe being 'ultimately futile and dangerous' [Lukin, 1992b, p. 58]. Its individuality confers on it the ability to accomplish things which no other country, or even group of countries, is able to achieve. Chief among these is a self-declared role as guarantor of stability on the vast Eurasian land mass. Second, Eurasianism highlights Russia's sheer geographical dimensions, which allow it to claim by right national interests that extend to all points of the compass. The Eurasianist logic necessarily implies a global rather than regional perspective on international affairs, obliging Moscow 'to deal simultaneously with all the main power centres of today's world – the United States, Western Europe, Japan, China and the Islamic World' [Rogov, 1994, p. 5]. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, this globalism, as much as the possession of destructive nuclear weapons, is central to conceptions of multipolarity and of Russia as a 'great power'. Third, Eurasianism reconciles Slavic individuality with aspirations of inclusiveness. Russia, belonging to no-one and yet to everyone, is presented as an

integral player in Europe and in Asia, in the affairs of the industrialized North as well as the unpredictable politics of the South. Fourth, Russia's 'geographical interstitiality', and the belief that this enables it 'to synthesise and, therefore, unite East and West' [MacFarlane, 1993, p. 7], is a core principle of Eurasianism. It is on the basis of the idea of Russia as bridge between East and West that Moscow has sought at various times to increase its international clout through a 'mediating' role – whether in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), successive conflicts in the Balkans, the United Nations, or on the Korean peninsula. Finally, Eurasianism has served as insurance against failure. The alleged particularity of Russia's role has, on occasion, 'compensated' for its inability to influence proceedings. Ultimately, it can always be argued, Moscow brings a 'unique' approach to the table. In sum, Eurasianism is a catch-all that provides, in the eyes of its proponents, justification for Russian involvement in just about every international issue of significance.

The role and importance of Russia in the global system

Perceptions of identity – Slavic, European, Eurasian – have been central to the debate about the part Russia should play in the post-Cold War global environment, whether it should attempt to reinvent itself as a 'modern' power or continue to emphasize, within reasonable limits, its traditional strengths of military power and international influence-brokering. Responses to this question have been complicated by conflicting definitions of 'great power-ness'. What exactly constitutes a 'great power' in the post-Cold War world? A second key issue concerns the extent to which Russia, notwithstanding its obvious decline in fortunes over the past 10–15 years, can still legitimately pretend to an influential position in global affairs. Should it bow to *force majeure* and content itself with a more modest role as regional power, or is it indeed 'doomed', as Kozyrev [1994b, p. 3] argued, to being a great power on the world stage with all the privileges and responsibilities flowing from that status?

Irrespective of how much sincerity or cynicism one imputes to conceptions of great power status, this theme has been a key element of Russian foreign policy over the past ten years. Its most significant outcome has been to ensure a consistently globalist line in Moscow. As Primakov [1997b, p. 4] stated during a trip to Latin America, 'as a great power … Russia naturally should have multilateral ties with all continents, with all the regions of the world'. Crucially, he identified a close linkage between Russia's status as a great power and its obligation to fulfil a global counterbalancing role [*see* Pushkov, 1997b, p. 4]. This notion of global responsibility has been one of the few areas of near-consensus

in foreign and security policy. For all the many differences between Primakov and Kozyrev, they agreed on the importance of Russia's playing a leading *global* role in the post-Cold War environment. The sobriquet, 'Russian messianism' [*see* MacFarlane, 1993, p. 7] has frequently been applied to describe nationalist/patriotic tendencies; yet it was Kozyrev [1994c, p. 59] who called for a 'constructive partnership' between Russia and the USA 'to influence positively the course of world affairs' – surely the most messianic project of all.

It is true that some critics have, from time to time, prescribed a more modest approach, cutting back the globalist agenda to a largely regional set of priorities. This tendency, which I call 'retrenchment', is discussed in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that such views have been confined to a small minority and have tended to surface after Russian diplomacy has suffered a severe setback, for example, following NATO air-raids against the Bosnian Serbs in 1994 and full-scale military operations against Belgrade during the Kosovo crisis. For the majority, however, pursuit of a regionalist agenda has rarely been considered incompatible with a global outlook. In the same way that Russia is at once Slavic, European and Eurasian, so it has been seen as a power with both regional and global responsibilities. Indeed, these have often been mutually reinforcing; Russia's global stature (no matter how residual this may appear to others) strengthens its clout in the FSU, while conversely its close political and economic ties with CIS members give it a significant pull over a large and highly unstable part of the planet.

The question of Russia's global outlook is intimately connected with the issue of its imperial identity – not so much Moscow's 'imperial' ambitions, but the extent to which the country's 'imperial past' – tsarist and communist – has moulded conceptions of nationhood. Russia as state and Russia as empire have led parallel lives [*see* Light, 1996, p. 36]. With the end of the USSR and the simultaneous collapse of state and empire, it faced the immense challenge of developing a post-imperial identity in conditions of chronic political and economic uncertainty, and with no clear model to emulate. The outcome, as in other areas of the quest for identity, has been something of a curate's egg – neither one thing nor the other. On the one hand, few in the political class have shown interest in reconstituting the Soviet Union. On the other hand, an 'imperial syndrome' remains implicit in many elite attitudes towards the CIS and more generally in the belief in Russia's global mission. At the same time, there has been little sign of Moscow's moving away from ideas of *derzhavnost* ('great power-ness') towards the paradigm of a 'normal power'. The view that it would be no bad thing to be a 'relatively minor

country' [Furman,1999, p. 4] has had few takers. Far more typical is the opinion that Russia, by virtue of its imperial past and identity, simply does not have the option of becoming a nation-state like the others.[3]

Russian foreign policy as a reflection of the search for national identity

It has been said that Russia's origins and continuing history as an empire-state have made its search for identity 'a process of defining relations with the outside world' [Pravda and Malcolm, 1996, p. 289]. In fact, the connection between identity and the conduct of foreign policy extends further than Russia's imperial legacy. The multiplicity of identities reveals a deeply fractured society or, as Huntington [1998, p. 138] would have it, a 'torn country'. Far from being abstractions with few practical consequences, it explains much of the fragmentation of Russian foreign policy during the past decade. There was no consensus, because in large part none was possible in the absence of any commonality of world-view. If the majority of the elite subscribed to the notion of Russia as 'great power' or took the West (and in particular the United States) as their external frame of reference, they differed in just about every other aspect of identity, civilizational orientation and strategic culture. Each of the national identities outlined above presupposed quite distinct orientations in foreign policy, not to mention often radically different sets of priorities. Occasionally these were able to be reconciled, or rationalized within some sort of overarching foreign policy conception, but more often than not they were incompatible, intellectually and practically. The regime would sometimes play up one or the other identity – Western, Slavic, Eurasian – but never for long enough or with sufficient conviction to offer a more or less consistent vision for the new Russia.

The impact of these differences was especially stark in relation to the balance between CIS-related priorities and an integrationist line with the West. In principle, there was no contradiction between the two, and indeed a polity with more tightly knit and coordinated institutional structures (the old Soviet Union?) might have managed to balance these preoccupations. But the record shows that the Yeltsin administration was unable to do so (*see* Chapter 4). In the hothouse political climate of the 1990s, policy choices came to be judged not only on their content, on the direct consequences for Russia's political and economic interests; they took on a disproportionate and complicating symbolism as well. Thus an emphasis on CIS integration represented for proponents and opponents alike 'the obverse of rejecting close partnership with the

West as the foundation stone of Russian policy [Becker, 1996–97, p. 130]. And the quarrel over the Russia–Belarus Union became heated not as a result of sober analysis of its costs and benefits, but because the issue became a weather-vane signalling the direction of the country's future development and identity.[4] In the circumstances, it is ironic that many Western commentators [for example, Light, 1996, pp. 22–3; Aron, 1998, pp. 25–8; Menon, 1998, pp. 101–2] have seen the CIS as one of the pillars of the alleged foreign policy consensus that emerged from 1993. For it was precisely here where issues of civilizational location conspired to ensure the opposite outcome. Well might Russia have had 'overriding interests' in the former Soviet space [Menon, 1998, pp. 101–2], but that did not prevent influential sections of the elite from showing minimal interest in it nonetheless. Their sense of being Europeans first, as opposed to predominantly Slavic or Eurasian, meant they would always regard CIS-related issues as second-class, even retrograde – a view that put them fundamentally at odds with others within the administration, not to mention the Communist-Nationalist opposition. With the Kremlin incapable of reconciling such contradictory strands, it is no surprise that Russian policy in this area should have been so feckless and ill-defined.

Likewise, although Westerncentrism turned out to be one of the main features of post-Soviet foreign policy, this did not necessarily reflect a general or even conscious pro-Western choice. Many in the political class sought 'diversification' and a geographically 'balanced' foreign policy between East and West (*see* Chapter 3), only to be frustrated by events and realities on the ground. The Westerncentrism that characterized Moscow's external relations was in many respects little more than a cumulative and unintended outcome of individual responses to what Russians are fond of describing as 'objective facts'. 'Pragmatism' it might have been, but it was very much a pragmatism under duress. As might have been expected, the type of Westerncentrism varied considerably. Whereas for many so-called 'liberals' this choice reflected heartfelt conviction, for others the commitment to cooperation with the West was grudging and highly conditional, susceptible to the lure of civilizational and ideological alternatives and much less understanding of the upsets that crop up even in the closest of relationships. A similar ambivalence was apparent in Moscow's handling of the rapprochement with Beijing. At one level, there was broad agreement on the importance of developing closer ties with Russia's largest and most populous neighbour and as a rising political, military and economic force in the world. But, as with the CIS–West dichotomy, closer ties were often appreciated less for their

innate worth than as an expression of Moscow's displeasure with Western actions [Trenin, 1999, p. 10]. The setting up of a conceptual opposition between East and West, frequently exacerbated by tensions between China and the United States, engendered an atmosphere in which an emphasis on China became synonymous with the rejection of Western values and identities. In other words, in the post-Soviet context policy stances were rarely taken at face value, but were nearly always associated with wider allegiances – a consideration that undermined the development of consensus even in the most apparently favourable of circumstances.

Challenges and opportunities – Russia's view of the global environment

Attitudes towards the post-Cold War 'world order'

Russia's search for a post-Soviet identity has been greatly complicated by the emergence of a new post-Cold War 'world order'. During a period in which few of the traditional realities of global politics have survived intact, it is unsurprising that policy-makers should have reacted so erratically to outside stimuli. The Yeltsin administration's response was to combine bits and pieces from virtually every possible mindset: speaking the language of multipolarity but continuing to treat America as the principal point of strategic reference; embracing the West while remaining deeply suspicious of its ulterior motives; striving for integration with the world community but in haphazard fashion; and extolling the coming of the Asia-Pacific region yet abstaining from whole-hearted involvement with it. Different groups at various times may have developed more or less holistic conceptions of the world, but post-Soviet Russia – the unwieldy amalgam of all these – has given birth to no such thing.

One of the few holdovers in strategic thinking from the Cold War has been the view that America provides the benchmark against which Russian perceptions of the world – and therefore Russian foreign policy – must be measured. During the Yeltsin years, the political establishment continued to behave as if Washington's political, military, economic and informational pre-eminence was the one constant in world politics. There were understandable historical and emotional reasons for this. As Georgi Arbatov [1994, p. 97] observed, '[o]ur people have lived too long in a two-superpower world not to look carefully at American policy and international behavior, not to measure our policy against American policy'. The legacy of the past has been buttressed by contemporary realities. Far from Russia's relations with America becoming 'less significant'

following the end of bipolarity [Shearman, 1995, p. 117], they have been pivotal to Moscow's foreign policy calculations on many of the crucial issues of the 1990s. As Arbatov [ibid., p. 90] noted, Russia–USA cooperation was – and remains – critical to successfully meeting many of the challenges of the post-Cold War era, such as nuclear and conventional arms control, non-proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), international terrorism and other non-conventional security threats. Even Yevgenii Primakov, the chief proponent of geographical 'balance', admitted that relations with Washington held a 'special place' in Russian foreign policy, this 'despite all efforts to diversify it' [*see* Kondrashov, 1997b, p. 3]. On numerous occasions, the political class has effectively acknowledged that Moscow's capacity to influence developments has been directly contingent on American goodwill. Thus, during the lengthy stand-off over NATO enlargement, policy-makers paid little heed to the Europeans, let alone the Visegrad states seeking alliance membership. Despite Primakov's apparent commitment to a multipolar world, he dealt almost exclusively with Washington in the belief that only the USA could shape developments [Eggert, 1997, p. 3].[5] Similarly, during the Kosovo crisis, Moscow pursued a consistently Americacentric line in the conviction that Washington – not London, Paris or Bonn – called the shots. Yeltsin's threat that Russia would not get involved in the armed conflict in Yugoslavia 'unless the Americans push us into it' [in Gornostaev, 1999b, p. 1] said volumes both about the extent of the continuing obsession with the USA and the unreality pervading much of the Kremlin's thinking at the time.

It follows from the logic of Russia's Americacentric view of the world that the political class in general has attached little credence to claims that the world is becoming more multipolar. In this connection, some Western commentators [for example, Blacker, 1998, p. 183] have confused Russian perceptions in this regard with broad intentions. The point is not that such well-known advocates of multipolarity as Primakov believed the world to be so constructed, but rather that they *sought* the creation of a new post-Cold War order in which American influence would be counterbalanced by that of other 'poles' – Western Europe, China, Japan, India, and so on. Unlike his predecessor Kozyrev [1994b, p. 3] who claimed that a 'multipolar' world had indeed emerged, Primakov preferred the more common view that its formation was very much a work in progress. Soon after becoming Foreign Minister, he [1996b, p. 3] spoke of the 'transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world,' while the signature document of multipolarity – the 1997 Russian–Chinese 'Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the

Formation of a New International Order' – emphasized that the parties would 'make efforts to further the development of a multipolar world', thereby clearly indicating that much needed to be done before this could become a reality [*Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 April 1997, p. 2]. The issue, according to Foreign Minister Ivanov [2000a, p. 9], was of the struggle between 'two fundamentally different approaches to forming a new world order … One … aimed at building a one-dimensional model dominated by the group of most developed countries and backed up by the economic and military might of the USA and NATO … [the other] based on the profound conviction that the objective tendency in the development of civilization is towards multipolarity, to which there is no reasonable alternative'.

Ivanov's comments highlighted the dualism of the Yeltsin administration towards the post-Cold War international order: on the one hand, anxiety about the new imbalance in Russia–USA relations and Washington's global ascendancy; on the other hand, a sense of hope regarding the possibilities for increased political and economic interdependency on terms advantageous to Russia. During the post-Soviet period, the balance of emphasis came to be determined less by the alleged political or ideological inclinations of various individuals – Kozyrev, Primakov, Yeltsin – than by concrete developments such as the Bosnian crisis in 1994–95, the prolonged quarrel over NATO enlargement, American/British bombings of Iraq, and the NATO military operation against Slobodan Milosevic in the spring/summer of 1999. During these times, overt optimism about the 'objective' tendencies towards a more 'civilized' multipolar world would give way to acute pessimism and anguish about American 'hegemonism' and the threat of a 'slide to confrontation'. It was hardly coincidental that Yeltsin's [1994c, p. 1] warning of a 'cold peace' in Europe should come at the end of a year dominated by acute disagreements with the West over the handling of the Bosnian crisis and NATO enlargement, or that the Kosovo conflict should provoke Ivanov [1999a, p. 2] into claiming that the alliance's military operation against Yugoslavia posed a threat to world order. Conversely, events such as the 1997 Yeltsin visit to China, the Russia–NATO Founding Act, Russia's accession to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping, were greeted as events presaging a new epoch of international understanding and cooperation, in which Russia would assume its rightful role.

The rapidly alternating current between optimism and pessimism in Russian views made for inconstancy and lack of clarity. With no consensus as to either Russia's identity or the nature of the post-Cold War

environment, policy-makers lacked important conceptual blocks with which to build a reliable framework for relations with the outside world. As a result, the conduct of foreign policy assumed a largely *ad hoc* flavour, lurching from crisis to crisis. Sometimes, there would be attempts to understate the differences in, say, Russian–American relations, by distinguishing between 'common goals' and 'tactical' disagreements [Kozyrev, 1995c, p. 9]; on other occasions, however, the Russian government would do just the opposite, such as when First Deputy Foreign Minister Avdeev threatened that Western objections to Russian actions in Chechnya could lead Russia and the USA 'to the brink of armed conflict' [in Gankin, 1999b, p. 1]. Unsure of where to place their bets in an increasingly unpredictable world, whether to view it as benign or hostile, or how best to maximize opportunities and minimize risks, Moscow was apt to dabble in a little bit of everything, more in hope than conviction. In sharp contrast to Soviet times, the outcome was a globalism riddled by acute contradictions: an emphasis on European integration coexisted uneasily with America's continuing role as strategic reference point; a desire for closer relations with Western political and economic institutions was diluted by suspicions that the latter were out to undermine Russia; praise of Asia-Pacific 'dynamism' was counterbalanced by the modesty of trade and economic ties with the region; and assurances of positive interest in Islam contrasted with the evidence of Moscow's diminishing role in the Middle East and its alarm, even hysteria, over the fundamentalist menace to Central Asia and the Caucasus. Furthermore, the impact of these uncertainties on the policy process was exacerbated by the administration's penchant for instrumentalism. It was rarely clear whether a 'shift to the East' represented a sea-change in its world-view, or whether it was motivated by tactical considerations, as a means of pressuring the West.

The impact of domestic factors on foreign policy-making

One of the most noteworthy aspects of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era has been the extent to which it has been shaped by domestic factors. The confused conduct of external relations during this period owed much to lack of clarity on questions of identity and the nature of the global environment. But a large part of the incoherence and lack of focus within the Yeltsin administration arose also from the unstable political context in which it was operating. In such conditions, it was to be expected that policy-making would, in many

instances, reflect the dictates of lowest common denominator politics. Specifically, the changed climate following the fall of Communism impacted on the foreign policy process in the following ways: (i) it opened it up to greater public scrutiny and criticism; (ii) it increased the number and weight of foreign policy actors; (iii) domestic political and economic imperatives influenced the choice of priorities and their implementation; and (iv) the administration was frequently tempted to pursue a 'strong' (or quasi-confrontational) foreign policy to blur its failure in managing the domestic agenda.

'Democratization' in Russian foreign policy

The most obvious consequence of the end of Soviet totalitarianism for foreign policy was that it opened up this previously narrow preserve of the elite to the public eye. In remarking on the challenge the new Russia faced in pursuing an effective foreign policy in democratic conditions, Lukin [1992b, pp. 69–70] foreshadowed 'more openness, more conflict, and a greater number of players with different interests who have not yet mastered the art of mutually beneficial interaction'. This, together with 'the need to maintain popularity and public support,' would make it 'less predictable'. Relatedly, Kozyrev [1995c, p. 8] claimed that public opinion and parliament were now at least as important in Russian foreign policy as they were in the USA and Western Europe.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the 'democratization' of foreign policy occurred in ways that were at once uneven and contradictory. In the first place, public participation or even interest in Russia's external affairs continued to be limited, including at election time [Abarinov, 1995b, p. 9]. Moreover, the absence of grassroots political and social organizations ensured that, in any case, there were few channels through which mass opinion could be voiced. Not only is it difficult to prove a single case where the government was pushed into making policy choices by public pressure,[6] but there are, on the contrary, a number of examples where the Kremlin and the opposition acted in apparent defiance of the electorate's wishes. Thus, during the Kosovo conflict only 2.8 per cent of those surveyed in a VTsIOM poll agreed with Communist–Nationalist calls to provide military support to Belgrade. After resolution of the crisis, at a time when much of the elite was continuing to express hostile sentiments *vis-à-vis* NATO and the USA, another VTsIOM poll revealed that an overwhelming 66 per cent of respondents described their feelings towards the USA – the 'arch-villain' of the Kosovo piece – as 'positive or mostly positive', as against only 22 per cent 'negative or mostly negative'. (The difference was

even more pronounced on the question of feelings towards 'Americans as a people': 78 per cent versus 10 per cent, with the rest undecided.) [Golovachov, 2000, p. 1] Generally speaking, claims by policy-makers that public pressure limited their freedom of manoeuvre in the conduct of individual policies were disingenuous and self-serving. Most people were indifferent to foreign policy issues at a time when there were so many other more pressing concerns.

However, for all the misrepresentation, public opinion was nevertheless a critical element in foreign policy-making. First, politicians often believed that public attitudes *might* matter, particularly around election time, and that it was important to second-guess what they might be. Malcolm and Pravda [1996, p. 17] rightly identified public opinion as a '*point d'appui* for government opponents', one which affected the 'political calculus of a foreign policy which remains centred on the interests of elite groups'. It was, for example, hardly coincidental that Primakov replaced Kozyrev six months before the 1996 Presidential elections. In the circumstances of the forthcoming struggle between the forces of democratic 'light' and Communist 'darkness', the Yeltsin administration was anxious to remove one potentially significant variable by 'depoliticizing' foreign policy. The result – successful at least as far as Yeltsin was concerned – was that it was barely discussed during a long and bitter election campaign [*see* Karaganov, 1996b, p. 5]. Public opinion also mattered in a climate where domestic and external policies were often indistinguishable from one another. Vladimir Zhirinovsky's success in the 1993 Duma elections did not reveal popular dissatisfaction with the conduct of foreign policy, nor even a broader anti-Westernism, but rather resentment against the (Westernizing) politicians responsible for painful economic reforms. But the outcome was the same as if the administration's management of external affairs had been the target of public opprobrium. An overtly pro-Western foreign policy became difficult to sustain because the very people who might have driven it had been discredited.

In highlighting the problems arising from the democratization of foreign policy-making, Lukin [1992b, p. 70] was particularly mindful of the increased role of the legislature and its 'difficult relations' with the executive, which often produced 'stalemate rather than close cooperation'. His comments foreshadowed nearly a decade of acute conflict between the two branches of government that was to impact significantly on the conduct of Russia's external relations. Whereas under the Communist regime the duopoly of the Foreign Ministry and the Party Central Committee's International Department had ensured predictability and manageability in decision-making, the conspicuous part played by the

post-Soviet parliament, in particular the Duma (lower house), introduced an important destabilizing element.

Perhaps the best summation of this influence was provided some years ago by Alex Pravda [1996, p. 218] when he wrote that parliament 'had an impact on foreign policy less as a body exercising formal accountability than as a forum articulating and amplifying opinions which affected the political climate in which executive decisions were made'. Although Pravda was referring to the period up to the 1996 Presidential elections, his comments hold true for the whole of the Yeltsin period. On the one hand, it is difficult to identify instances where Duma (previously Supreme Soviet) pressure forced or persuaded the administration to alter its approach to specific issues.[7] The late cancellation of Yeltsin's visit to Tokyo in September 1992 was perhaps one example, but even here the evidence is inconclusive.[8] In fact, as Pravda [1996, p. 219] observed, the Duma's penchant to challenge the administration openly on the conduct of foreign affairs tended to lessen not increase its policy influence. The latter also found it useful on occasion to use this resistance (and/or public opinion) as an alibi for inaction or as a means of securing a better deal. Recalcitrance over issues such as the islands dispute with Japan could always be justified on the grounds that Russian elite and popular opinion 'would never accept' territorial concessions, while delays over START-2 ratification were seen as useful in pushing the Americans towards further major cuts in strategic nuclear weapons through an improved START-3 treaty [Maslyukov, 1998, p. 6].

That said, there is little doubt that ongoing tensions between the executive and legislature severely constrained foreign policy-making. Preoccupied with a problematic domestic reform agenda, the administration preferred, as with direct public opinion, to avoid testing the Duma's strength on external policy. This was not so much a case of consensus-building as the fact that many of these issues either did not matter enough for the executive to push the argument, or could be prosecuted with less political cost if pursued more discreetly. An example of the first was START-2 ratification, where for much of his presidency Yeltsin literally had it within his gift to secure the necessary number of votes to ensure passage,[9] but rarely showed the sustained political will to achieve this result. By contrast, the administration's *de facto* acceptance of NATO enlargement while continuing to proclaim strong opposition to it highlighted the distinction between policy presentation and execution. In this case, it was well understood that Russia had no choice but to reach an accommodation with the alliance, but for reasons of face and political advantage it felt obliged to sustain the fiction of the 'unacceptability' of

enlargement. In sum, the legislature may not have been strong enough to impose a predominantly nationalist logic on the Kremlin, but it was able to undermine the latter's commitment and capacity to pursue a liberal post-Soviet vision for Russia's relations with the outside world. In this way, the mixture of paralysis and sharp policy swings that undermined the pursuit of domestic reforms was paralleled in the foreign policy sphere.

Institutional and individual actors in Russian foreign policy

If the process of democratization constituted a uniquely post-Soviet source of decision-making, then the bureaucracy's continuing prominence in foreign policy served as a reminder of the communist past. Unlike the former, whose impact on administration behaviour was principally psychological, the influence of the government apparatus was at once multidimensional and more tangible. Early hopes, expressed in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet fall, that its power would give way to that of the people turned out to be misplaced. If anything, the part played by bureaucratic actors increased.

At the same time, the institutional environment became immeasurably more complex, partly as a result of democratization but mainly because of the unstable domestic climate which created real uncertainties and 'empty' spots in the exercise of executive power. The bureaucracy was now one whose various components were allowed much greater latitude than before, unconstrained by the former discipline of the Party and largely unaccountable to new democratic institutions and processes. This had several consequences, the first of which was the proliferation of actors. Second, befitting the more open society Russia had become, different institutions now lobbied publicly for their interests. In contrast to the tight control of foreign policy during the period of MFA and Central Committee duopoly, individual ministries regularly broke government ranks by issuing separate policy statements and undertaking independent initiatives. Others, too, joined in the fray. These included some of the 'coordinating' presidential structures – such as the Security and Defence Councils – as well as economic actors and instrumentalities whose interests, nominally private, were often intimately associated with those of different parts of government.

Personal factors and relationships presented an additional, complicating dimension. This phenomenon was not new; in Soviet times they were frequently the only means of overcoming the system's blockages

and inefficiencies. But the importance of such ties became heightened in conditions of bureaucratic anarchy, fragile democratization and power vacuums (during President Yeltsin's many periods of illness). And although the administration attempted to introduce order, whether by emphasizing the 'presidential' nature of decision-making or establishing new cross-ministry structures whose brief was to coordinate policy, these efforts brought little but further confusion.

The institutional context

The collapse of Communist party rule left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as the primary institutional actor in post-Soviet foreign policy. Although, like other areas of the bureaucracy, it was profoundly shaken by the demise of the USSR, the Foreign Ministry benefited from the removal of the Party Central Committee as an alternative policy-making body. The commentator Andranik Migranyan [1994d, p. 3] thus lamented that Yeltsin was 'almost totally dependent' on the MFA, in contrast to Soviet times when 'the Communists realized that foreign policy is too serious a matter to be entrusted to diplomats alone'. This primacy was confirmed periodically in official policy statements. For example, Yeltsin issued decrees in 1992 and 1995 stating that the Foreign Ministry remained the 'chief coordinator' of foreign policy, and ordering other government bodies with outside dealings to clear their actions with it [Yusin, 1995, p. 3]. At the same time, both Kozyrev and Primakov were fiercely protective of the ministry's central role in decision-making. Shortly after Yeltsin's re-election, Primakov asserted that what interested him most of all in his relations with the 'power-yielding' officials in the administration – Anatolii Chubais, Aleksandr Lebed (Chairman of the Security Council) and Igor Rodionov (Minister of Defence) – was 'their understanding that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the interdepartmental coordinator of Russia's foreign policy'. In declaring that Russia could not have 'several departmental foreign policies' but 'only one foreign policy – that of the state', Primakov left little doubt of his meaning [in Kondrashov, 1996b, p. 3].

Nevertheless, although the Foreign Ministry's leading role in policy was now stronger in a formal sense, in practice things were not so simple. The impact of democratization and the removal of Party controls gave other government ministries and instrumentalities greater scope in which to assert their individual agendas. Chief among the beneficiaries of the freer bureaucratic environment was the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Russia's military leadership, which had traditionally kept out of politics, exhibited under Yeltsin a new and strong interest in the conduct

of foreign policy, particularly in CIS and security affairs. In the former case, the MFA's neglect of relations with the FSU republics effectively invited the MOD to take the leading role in conflict management [Baev, 1996, p. 38]. And while it is far from clear whether the operations of Russian forces in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdniestria were the initiatives of local commanders or planned from Moscow [Malcolm, 1996, p. 125], the bureaucratic outcome was indisputable: an enhanced role for the MOD in foreign affairs which it was to retain even after the policy profile of the FSU declined after 1993. In subsequent years, there was substantial military input in virtually every security-related issue of consequence – NATO enlargement, national threat assessments, Chechnya, strategic arms control, the former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, on certain issues, such as the deployment of Russian peacekeeping contingents in the CIS, Bosnia and Kosovo, important decisions were made without prior consultation with the MFA and sometimes to its considerable embarrassment.[10]

Although the impact of the other key 'power' (*silovye*) institutions – the Interior Ministry, the security apparatus – was more discreet, it was by no means negligible. At one level, significant elements within these bodies helped to create, together with the senior military, a constituency for conservative nationalism within the bureaucracy. Although the direct influence of this group was limited, their proximity to the levers of power, not to mention control of troops, established them as a major check on the liberalization of foreign policy [Kondrashov, 1995a, p. 3]. Their presence in the political elite served also to heighten the profile of security issues. For example, in one of the first signals of Russian opposition to NATO enlargement, Primakov [1993, p. 3], as then head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS), presented a report ('Prospects for NATO Expansion and Russia's Interests') that emphasized many ideas later synonymous with his time as Foreign Minister, including the primacy of geopolitics, notions of balance of power, and the spectre of a *cordon sanitaire* dividing Russia from Europe.

Much of the influence of institutions like the military, the Interior Ministry and the security and intelligence apparatus was channelled through interdepartmental bodies like the Security and Defence Councils. Although the first named, in particular, was originally seen by some as an alternative policy-making body at least equal in power to the Foreign Ministry [Yusin, 1992a, p. 5], its participation in foreign policy turned out to be ineffectual and 'episodic' [Malcolm, 1995, p. 29]. By late 1993, it was already clear that it could no longer compete in policy terms with the MFA [Mlechin, 1993, p. 3], and in the latter years of the Yeltsin

administration its brief became more or less restricted to Chechnya. The role of the Defence Council was even more peripheral. Founded in 1996, it had little independent significance, being instead a forum for predictable views on security issues such as NATO enlargement [*see Kommersant-Daily*, 15 November 1996, p. 4].

However, the real importance of such Councils lay not in their direct responsibilities and capabilities, but in the fact that they existed at all. The early establishment of the Security Council (May 1992), in particular, signalled the executive's determination to restrict the MFA's policy primacy and, in the process, lessen its own dependence on an institution that retained many features of the Soviet past. Tensions between the Presidential apparat and the Foreign Ministry were to become a *leitmotiv* of the Yeltsin presidency, and prove a real bugbear for both Kozyrev and Primakov. Early expectations that the latter's appointment as an 'authoritative' Foreign Minister would see an end to this struggle [Pushkov, 1996a, p. 5] turned out to be misplaced; four months later Primakov was already complaining about 'raids' on his foreign policy [*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 10 January 1997, p. 2]. The presence of often informal elements within the Presidential Administration affected not just the mechanics of decision-making, but indeed the handling of specific issues such as NATO enlargement, the territorial dispute with Japan and the Kosovo crisis. Although it was sometimes difficult to discern a consistent Presidential Administration line in Russian foreign policy, its influence tended to be a moderating one: support for an early accommodation with NATO in the first half of 1997 [*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 10 January 1997, p. 2]; flexibility in the search for a formula to resolve the islands dispute with Japan;[11] and a less implacably hostile position on the NATO operation against Milosevic [Marsov and Ulyanov, 1999, p. 3].

One of the distinctive phenomena of the post-Soviet landscape was the greatly increased importance of economic actors in the public and private sector alike [Saivetz, 2000, pp. 25–8]. While this was most tangible in domestic affairs, their input in foreign policy formulation should not be underestimated. Although it has been claimed that the diversity of objectives among various economic groups and lobbies meant that they 'punched below their potential weight' [Pravda, 1996, p. 184], they were nevertheless able to exert a significant influence in some areas. This was largely due to the intimate association between government and business interests characteristic of the Yeltsin period [Saivetz, ibid., p. 26]. On the question of Caspian Sea energy development, for example, the economic ministries and Lukoil were able to enlist the support of Prime Minister Chernomyrdin to override the legal

and political objections of the MFA [Mekhtiev, 1994, p. 3]. Similarly, on the symbolically important issue of the Russia–Belarus Union, the alliance of liberal reformers (Chubais, Gaidar) and corporate economic interests (Berezovsky) proved sufficient to emasculate the Union treaty, in the process foiling the formidable combination of the MFA, MOD, the Duma and Moscow Mayor Luzhkov [Volkova, 1997, p. 1; Polezhaev, 1997a, p. 3]. Other instances that illustrated the growing significance of economic players and interests were the activities of Rosvooruzhenie which frequently concluded weapons contracts in defiance of the Foreign and Defence ministries [Yusin, 1995, p. 3], and the Ministry of Atomic Energy (MINATOM) which pursued its own separate agenda, particularly with Iran [Kirichenko and Potter, 1999, p. 38]. The significance of economic actors was also reflected in the accent on selected economic priorities – such as accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) – and, more generally, in the emphasis on Russia's integration into the global economy. Although the 'economization' of Russian foreign policy was not comprehensive – as will be seen in Chapter 5 – the impact of economic interests on policy was arguably as great as that of more plausible actors, such as the 'power' ministries.[12]

The influence of personality and personal relationships

It was inevitable that foreign policy actors should trust in strong personal ties at the expense of weak institutions. Whereas the latter's future was often uncertain, the former represented continuity. Significantly, for many in the elite the relative failure of Kozyrev and success of Primakov as Foreign Minister was as much personal as ideological. Yeltsin [1995c, p. 9] attributed the MFA's failure to 'coordinate' foreign policy activity to Kozyrev's alleged inability to work with other ministers, while Karaganov [1995b, p. 2] blamed the absense of policy consensus on the foreign minister's inconstancy and untrustworthiness. Conversely, Primakov was widely viewed as a strong and reliable figure, proof of the maxim that 'authority is not given, but taken' [Gankin, 1996, p. 10]. In addition to his personal gifts, he had the benefit of a far more substantial personal and bureaucratic background than his predecessor, including close ties with the media, academia, the security and intelligence community, and the foreign policy establishment.[13]

The quality of individual relationships determined access, and access meant policy influence. The energy lobby's ties with Chernomyrdin, a former head of Gazprom, were decisive in overriding MFA objections to Caspian Sea economic development (*see* above), while the oligarch Boris Berezovsky's membership of the Yeltsin 'family'[14] was critical in

persuading the Kremlin to dilute the 1997 draft Russia-Belarus Union Treaty. More routinely, close links between business and government meant that the Yeltsin administration found it difficult to refuse favours to special interests, particularly in foreign trade [Malcolm, 1996, p. 139]. Russia's slow progress along the path of WTO accession owed less to 'discriminatory' treatment by Western countries [Shokhin, 1993, p. 4] than to Moscow's reluctance – in response to domestic lobbying – to meet benchmark targets for subsidy, tariff and non-tariff reductions, and for trade liberalization in general [*Economist Intelligence Unit*, 29 January 2001]. And although it is true that lobbying as a 'co-ordinated and institutionalised political activity remained poorly developed' [Pravda, 1996, p. 186], this did not lessen its effectiveness as a tool for promoting the narrow agenda of Russian business interests.

Personal factors were critical in another sense. In contrast to the shadowy world of personal relations among the elite and special interests lobbying, the personality of Yeltsin himself was a very public influence on post-Soviet foreign policy – both as a source of strength and weakness. On the one hand, his engaging manner and history as Russia's first democratically elected leader were important assets in developing closer relations with other world leaders and establishing Russia's international profile on a qualitatively new basis. He made an important personal contribution to the considerable improvement in relations with China and Japan, while at the same time working very hard to maintain interaction with major Western powers – notably the USA and Germany – on a businesslike footing even during the worst periods of mutual tensions, such as during the lengthy spat over NATO enlargement and the Kosovo crisis. In these instances, Yeltsin's belief in the primacy of good relations with the West effectively moderated the harder-line positions of the MFA and MOD [Eggert, 1997, p. 3; Marsov and Ulyanov, 1999, p. 3]. On the other hand, his personal style had many negatives, the most serious of which arose from his divide-and-rule approach to power. The veteran Soviet dissident and historian Roy Medvedev [2000, p. 5] attributed the President's political longevity to his ability 'to change for both better and worse' and his emphasis on power rather than ideology. However, this political dexterity was ultimately destructive to the emergence of a coherent or consensual foreign policy. In the absence of strong leadership and a stable institutional framework, conditions were ripe for policy paralysis and bureaucratic anarchy – a situation aggravated by Yeltsin's failing health during his second term. Another consequence of the Yeltsin style was the obverse of one of its advantages. The personalization of major power relations often degenerated into their

over-personalization, reflected in the substitution of show for genuine substance. His considerable personal vanity was a serious weakness that was exploited by his peers. One scathing but accurate commentary noted, in reference to the Kosovo peace settlement, that Western leaders had 'found the key' to Yeltsin by giving him 'what he loves more than anything else – universal attention and honour' [Tregubova, 1999a, p. 3]. Finally, the Russian leader suffered from a serious inability to control his emotions. Throughout his presidency, he veered wildly from overblown declarations of 'eternal friendship' to half-cocked initiatives to angry denunciations of Western actions and threats of Russian countermeasures. In view of such erratic behaviour at the top, post-Soviet foreign policy could not help but lack consistency.

Foreign policy coordination, structure and processes

One of the most common official clichés of the Yeltsin period was the notion that Russian foreign policy was 'presidential'. Right from the outset, Kozyrev [1992c, p. 3] emphasized that '[i]t is the President, as the bearer of the democratic mandate of the people, who determines Russia's foreign policy'. Such a description, however, begs important questions, with Yeltsin's policy fluctuations and varying levels of engagement presenting immediate problems of definition. What does 'presidential' actually mean? In this connection, it is interesting that few attempts were made to delineate this so-called 'presidential' foreign policy – as if through fear of finding nothing of substance. The term, 'presidential', tells us very little about Yeltsin's thinking and masks the degree of bureaucratic conflict. Certainly, the President was the ultimate decision-maker, but he hardly constituted a rich source of independent ideas on individual issues, let alone possessed an overall conception for Russian foreign policy. Like other heads of state, he took advice, and at a time when the institutional and political context was at its most sectionalized and ideological interests widely divergent, this was often contradictory. The label of 'presidential', then, became a sort of seal of approval on whatever policy line happened to be in vogue, as well as a band-aid to preserve the image of unity within the administration.

In fairness, the executive attempted to draw the sting out of acute policy disagreements by establishing, from time to time, interdepartmental or supradepartmental structures to improve foreign policy coordination: a Foreign Policy Commission within the Security Council in December 1992 [*see* Petro and Rubinstein, 1997, p. 98]; a Foreign Policy Council in December 1995; and the President's Foreign Policy Administration in September 1997. But far from improving government coordination the

formation of such bodies generated further confusion and undermined the position of existing structures such as the Foreign Ministry. In particular, the creation of the Foreign Policy Council in 1995 and Foreign Policy Administration in 1997 were seen at the time as presaging the dismissal of Kozyrev and Primakov respectively [Bai and Charodeev, 1995, p. 1; *Segodnya*, 17 October 1997, p. 3], while the original Foreign Policy Commission was a largely impotent body [Malcolm, 1995, pp. 30–1]. The same was true of the position of the President's foreign policy advisor. Its original incumbent, Dmitrii Ryurikov, was seen as a nondescript figure and a Kozyrev man [Mlechin, 1993, p. 3], while Sergei Prikhodko, who occupied the position in Yeltsin's last years, was considered an acolyte of his predecessor, Sergei Yastrzhembsky.[15] The latter, on the other hand, represented for many observers a definite source of rival advice (and ambition) to Primakov and the Foreign Ministry. Most notably, much was made of the fact that he and not the Foreign Minister was at Yeltsin's side during the famous 'no ties' summit at Krasnoyarsk with Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto (at which both countries agreed to work to resolve the territorial dispute by the year 2000).[16]

It is tempting to view the presence of disparate elements in foreign policy decision-making as parts of the same game. Yeltsin himself was inclined to such explanations, for example glossing over Russia's contradictory approach to the Kosovo crisis by claiming that the government had 'simply divided [functions] a bit, in order to move along parallel courses and work to accomplish a single Russian task' [in Guly, 1999, p. 1]. The facts, however, expose the flimsiness of such claims. In the case of the CIS, complaints by Kozyrev and senior MFA officials left little doubt of the seriousness of policy conflicts within the bureaucracy. In a scarcely veiled attack on the MOD, Fedor Shelov-Kovedyaev [1992, p. 1] – then First Deputy Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs – claimed that the MFA had been forced to 'make efforts to minimize the consequences' of 'unprofessional interference' in CIS policy [*see also* Kozyrev's comments about MFA non-participation in IFOR discussions – in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 November 1995, p. 1]. Some seven years later, the story was much the same. The open recriminations following the Chernomyrdin–Ahtisaari deal that concluded the Kosovo crisis revealed extensive policy polarization within the government [Gornostaev and Korotchenko, 1999, pp. 1, 6; Sysoev, 1999b, p. 1],[17] while the MFA's conspicuous confusion over the takeover of Pristina airport by Russian peacekeepers [Kalashnikova and Smirnov, 1999, p. 1] exposed an embarrassing lack of consultation.

Some years ago, Karaganov [1996a, p. 2] identified the principal problem of Russian foreign policy as a 'desperate lack of coordination… and… government discipline'. The solution, as he saw it, was to strengthen 'the coordinating mechanism' and re-establish 'the practice whereby the state apparatus and the ruling elite defend the same set of positions outside the country – notwithstanding all possible and necessary differences over these at home… '. In fact, the difficulty was not so much the lack of coordinating mechanisms, but their plethora. This had the effect of, first, devaluing their utility and, second, adding further layers to an already oversized foreign policy bureaucracy. More importantly, however, the failure of the Yeltsin administration to defend the same set of positions was due to personal rather than institutional factors. Whether at home or abroad, the President simply did not want a unified bureaucracy with a common purpose and ethic. From the very beginning, his primary concern was to reserve for himself the 'role of supreme arbiter' [Mlechin, 1992, p. 10], balancing competing institutional and political interests. In that sense, Russian foreign policy could properly be described as 'presidential' since Yeltsin's political priorities – in particular, the need to consolidate and strengthen his personal position – set the tone for Moscow's relations with the outside world. Coordination, structure and process were, in the final analysis, what the President through his actions allowed them to be.

Conclusion

All four major determinants of Russian foreign policy – the search for identity, perceptions of the global environment, the nexus between domestic and external politics, and the institutional context – were highly fluid. In reviewing the Yeltsin era, it is hardly surprising that Moscow's conduct of foreign affairs should have been so uneven or that an elite consensus, no matter how rough, failed to emerge given the absence of any conditions that might have made this possible. In the first place, the quest for a post-Soviet identity pertained directly to the controversial issue of Russia's place in the world. Differences over whether it was principally Slavic, European or Eurasian, a global or regional power, empire or nation-state, were crucial in shaping the conduct of external relations, determining the choice and implementation of priorities. It could not be otherwise. These were not idle debating points, but went to the heart of the political and economic society that Russia should seek to create. From the first days of the Yeltsin era, this reality was well understood across the political spectrum. Thus, liberal support for integration

with the West was informed by their conviction that Russia belonged firmly in the European tradition, while the Communists attached priority to CIS affairs precisely because they believed in the primacy of Russia's Slavic, imperial and Eurasian roots.

Polarized perceptions of the post-Cold War world were another important source of division in post-Soviet foreign policy-making. They reinforced – and were reinforced by – biases over national identity, and predisposed foreign policy actors to emphasize or downplay particular priorities and policies. Even when there was some commonality of view over, say, the undesirability of NATO enlargement, there was little on the implications for Russia's wider relationship with the West. In terms of how it should view the world, Kozyrev's [1995c, p. 9] emphasis on the distinction between 'tactical differences' and 'strategic goals' in Russia's relations with the USA was at odds with the Primakov recipe of 'diversification'. Such differences were highlighted by the nexus between domestic politics and foreign policy. The liberal pursuit of an ambitious economic reform agenda was closely related to their sense of both Russia's European identity and the importance of integration with the West which, if not necessarily benign, was likely to be more beneficial than any notional alternative. By contrast, the opposition belief that 'radical' reforms were destroying the economic and spiritual fabric of Russia found corollaries in conspiracy theories about nefarious Western intentions as well as the more general feeling that the world was an unfriendly place.

Finally, ideological and political conflicts were exacerbated by an institutional climate that was at once multifaceted and cynical. The triumph of sectional interests over broader conceptions of the national good was as evident in foreign policy as it was in domestic politics – unavoidably so, given the fusion between the two. Even if the conflicts over identity, perception and ideology had been less acute, the sheer selfishness of most Russian political actors would have been sufficient *in itself* to prevent the formation of a meaningful consensus. Brought up with a zero-sum (or *kto kogo* – 'who wins over whom') mentality, the elite's predilection was to the politics of competition and opportunism. Consensus, based on a lasting confluence of interests, was an unrealistic ambition because few really believed that it was possible at a time of endemic political uncertainty. In these circumstances, the natural response was to seize the main chance and give priority to short-term and sectionalist goals, a conclusion that only confirmed the fractured character of Russian foreign policy.

3
Recasting the Ideological Debate

One of the principal theses put out by the Yeltsin administration was that Russian foreign policy became 'de-ideologized' after the fall of communism. In his first statement as Foreign Minister of the new Russian state, Kozyrev [1992a, p. 3] declared an end to ideological confrontation by asserting that the 'developed countries of the West' were Russia's 'natural allies,' a sentiment later formalized in the MFA's draft foreign policy guidelines [Kozyrev, 1992d, p. 2]. Kozyrev understood 'ideology' in foreign policy principally in the somewhat narrow terms of the Soviet past, but some Western commentators have gone further by claiming that ideology as such has played no meaningful role in post-Soviet politics: 'Russia today is not ideological ... for the present, at least, the Russians, in throwing off Marxism-Leninism, seem to have rejected all ideologies' [Stent, 1995, p. 206]. The 'de-ideologization' thesis is also implicit in the claim that, sometime in 1993, the political elite reached a 'centrist' foreign policy consensus based on Russia's national interests in place of the ideological divide between 'liberals' and 'nationalists' that had dominated the first 12–18 months of the Yeltsin administration.

This chapter focuses on the clash of ideas and ideologies as they affected the development of post-Soviet foreign policy. It argues that ideology, far from having become extinct, remained a potent factor both in the struggle over policy formulation at home and in Russia's international relations.[1] Although its function and content changed, if anything this transformation gave new life to what had been very much a beast in decline during the later Gorbachev years. Whereas Communism as a body of thought had lost all but its instrumentalist content by the time of the USSR's demise, the democratization and pluralization of society created the opportunity for new ideologies to emerge while not excluding the old. The ideological landscape in the post-Soviet period was, for all the

cynicism and amorality of political dealings, considerably richer and more varied than its predecessor. At the same time, the brave new world without ideological differences originally envisaged by Kozyrev and others turned out to be a chimera. True, these were by no means as institutionalized as they had been during the Cold War, but they continued to underpin tensions in Russia's relations with the West. Finally, ideology played a central role in preventing the emergence of a foreign policy consensus. Not only was the political elite unable to reconcile bitter conflicts over basic values and ideas, but these often supplied a moral and intellectual rationale – sometimes sincere, sometimes hypocritical – for the primacy of group interests and the consequent sectionalization of foreign policy.

One of the major challenges in analysing post-Soviet ideas and ideological trends is that of categorization. Russians and foreigners alike have resorted to a bewildering array of labels in an attempt to cover the full spectrum of foreign policy views. Margot Light [1996, p. 34] used the terms, 'Liberal Westernizers,' 'Fundamentalist Nationalists' and 'Pragmatic Nationalists'; Vladimir Lukin [1992b, pp. 65–6] divided opinion into three 'schools of thought' – 'ideologized democratic internationalism', 'crude Russian chauvinism', and 'self-restrained democratic nationalism'; while Alexei Pushkov [1993–94, pp. 78–81] identified four main groups – the 'radical democratic wing', 'moderate or statist democrats' (*demokraty-derzhavniki*), 'statist bureaucrats', and 'the so-called radical opposition to Yeltsin's rule'. Such typecasting, tempting and plausible though it is, nevertheless has drawbacks. The most important is inflexibility. Labels, once given to a particular individual – say, Kozyrev or Primakov – tend to stick, almost irrespective of the policies they pursue or the ideas they espouse subsequently. Insufficient account is taken of the changing allegiances of participants seduced one way or another by self-interest and short-term political imperatives. Long after Kozyrev started embracing the rhetoric of CIS integration and Russia's 'dignity' and 'prestige', he continued to be tarred as a 'wet' liberal. Conversely, Primakov has been permanently stigmatized by some, particularly in the West, as an unabashed *homo sovieticus* and Cold War warrior, largely on the basis of his reported intelligence past[2] and attempted last-ditch mediation with Saddam Hussein before Operation Desert Storm. Generally speaking, there has been an excessive concentration on the alleged ideological preferences of particular individuals and groups at the expense of the ideas themselves. Labels are also highly normative, and often reflect the commentator's biases as much, if not more so, than those of the subject. For example, it does not take a genius to work out from the categorizations of Lukin and Pushkov where their sympathies lie.

I will therefore examine ideas in their own right, identifying five ideological currents: (1) the liberal agenda; (2) the 'imperial syndrome'; (3) 'great power' ideology and the nationalist impulse; (4) the notion of an 'independent' foreign policy; and (5) ideas of foreign policy retrenchment.[3] Although there is considerable overlap between them, each of these categorizations describes a particular perspective brought to the foreign policy debate. The liberal agenda emphasized integration with the West and the 'economization' of foreign policy; the imperial syndrome was based on the priority of CIS affairs; great power ideology was premised on Russia's continuing status as a world player; independence in foreign policy called for 'diversification' and 'geographical balance' while continuing to attach importance to Russia's relations with the West; and, finally, retrenchment advocated a reorientation back towards a narrow set of core priorities.

The liberal agenda

Moral universalism, the Western example and notions of 'partnership'

In its purest form, the liberal agenda was an extension of Gorbachevian 'new thinking' with its emphasis on universal human values ('humanistic universalism') and common interests [*see* Brown, 1997, pp. 221–5]. Kozyrev's claim that Russia and the West were natural allies was based, in the first instance, on the conviction that the commonalities between them far outweighed any purported differences, and that Moscow's extended period of exclusion from mainstream global processes had been an aberration. It followed from this that Russia's interests were best served by its 'continued movement along the path of political, economic and cultural integration into the family of civilized states' from which it had been excluded during 70 years of Communist rule [Dashichev, 1994, p. 4] – in other words, an internal *mission civilisatrice* involving the country's emergence from a modern dark age. A second, related, assumption of the liberal agenda was its understanding of civilization as Western civilization. There was from the outset a basic dichotomy between the West as the embodiment of progress and prosperity in contrast to the backwardness and regression of the East (and/or South) [*see* Berlin, 1994, p. 118]. Even vocal critics of Kozyrev's allegedly slavish Westerncentrism, such as Vladimir Lukin [1992b, p. 75], claimed that while:

> there have always been and always will be tensions and disputes [within the democratic community] … they are the problems of a

> common civilization with a shared system of values based on the ideas that human life is precious and the individual comes before the state.

In like spirit, some eight years later a report on Russian–American relations prepared by the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy – an institution headed by another stringent Kozyrev opponent, Sergei Karaganov – asserted that:

> the two countries share the same basic values, of a commitment to democracy and human rights, to the supremacy of law, and to respect for the rights of private property and of political, ideological, and religious diversity [*Rossiisko-amerikanskie otnosheniya* ..., 2000, p. 15].

These assumptions carried important consequences for the liberal foreign policy agenda. Most conspicuously, they ensured that its advocates would look to the West as both the model and the means for Russia's 'harmonious incorporation into the international democratic community ... ' [Kozyrev, 1992d, p. 2; joint Clinton–Yeltsin declaration at Vancouver in April 1993 – *Izvestiya*, 6 April 1993, p. 1]. The logic here was not simply civilizational, emanating from a sense of European identity, but also keenly self-interested. In the wake of the Soviet collapse, the priority was to rebuild the country on the foundation of new ideas and values – a political democracy, market economy and a civil society – and Western assistance was seen as crucial to realizing this objective. As Yeltsin [1992, p. 1] put it, the overriding priority was to ensure 'favourable external conditions for the success of the political and economic reforms that have been initiated'. This emphasis on foreign policy primarily as a means of achieving domestic policy ends was characteristic of the liberal agenda, and one that distinguished it from other ideological tendencies.

'Partnership' in its various forms was central to liberal conceptions of foreign policy. Originally, it represented little more than an unsophisticated post-Soviet version of bipolarity. Just as the Soviet Union and America had confronted one another during the Cold War, so they would now work together to establish peace and prosperity throughout the world. Kozyrev [1994c, p. 59] was the most consistent advocate of 'strategic partnership' with Washington as the principal means 'to influence positively the course of world affairs'. Although he denied any imputation of a 'condominium', his vision of the two sides' exercising influence 'catalytically through a constructive partnership' [ibid.] illustrated the extent to which he – and many other liberal thinkers – saw

the world primarily through a bipolar Atlanticist prism. Subsequently, the evident unreality of this approach, and growing awareness of the importance of Western European institutions and states, had the effect of expanding liberal interpretations of 'partnership'. Yet the issue was never resolved satisfactorily. In particular, there was a palpable tension in liberal thinking between an inclination towards a European cultural-historical heritage on the one hand, and over fifty years of superpower tradition in which America had been the dominant 'other'. Intellectually and emotionally, the liberal foreign policy agenda leant towards Europeanization and 'partnership' with Western European institutions and processes; instinctually, however, many so-called 'liberals' found it hard to escape from the Americacentrism that had informed their political upbringing.

Self-interest and 'economization'

Over the period of the Yeltsin presidency, instrumentalist considerations exercised a growing influence on the liberal agenda. Ideas of 'partnership' and 'integration' with the West evolved steadily from the original, purist connotation of a meeting of minds and spirit into a more directly self-interested interpretation that focused on the benefits of closer cooperation as well as the compelling symbolism of participation in Western-dominated global processes and institutions. Subscribing to the West's moral-civilizational messages became less the basis for a qualitatively new society, than Moscow's ticket to the world. Although it remained important that Russia be seen as a 'democratic, free and peace-loving state that poses no threat either to its own citizens or other countries' [Kozyrev, 1992a, p. 3], the emphasis shifted to more materialist ends. To this purpose, the liberal agenda promoted the 'economization' of foreign policy, whether through 'mobilizing international support for Russia's economic reforms' [MFA's 1992 draft Foreign Policy Guidelines, in Kozyrev, 1992d, p. 2], attracting Western public and private investment into the economy, obtaining relief from mounting obligations under the old Soviet debt, or improving market access for Russian exports. Even in the face of the adverse consequences associated with reform (falling living standards, open inflation and rising unemployment), disenchantment with supposedly low aid levels[4] and resentment at the West's slowness to recognize Russian progress in introducing a market-based economic system [Shokhin, 1993, p. 4], the liberal agenda continued to believe in the indispensable contribution of Western countries and institutions to the nation's economic and political health. Relations with international financial institutions (IFIs) – principally the IMF – assumed

particular importance, extending well beyond the traditional liberal constituency. Thus, during the Kosovo crisis Prime Minister Primakov was at pains to insulate the issue of IMF assistance from the overall deterioration in Russia's relations with the West: 'Kosovo is one thing, while our talks with the International Monetary Fund are something else entirely' [in Lapskii, 1999, p. 7].

The emphasis on 'economization' went beyond the protection and promotion of Russian economic interests. Financial assistance from the West had a critical political dimension – as moral and practical support for Yeltsin in his domestic power struggles. This was especially the case in the lead-up to the 1996 Presidential elections when Western indulgence over bilateral and multilateral financial packages provided him with the wherewithal to fund extravagant election promises, most notably in meeting the huge backlog in payments of state salaries and pensions [Service, 1998, p. 538].[5] More generally, the West's backing was seen as having a legitimizing effect at home and abroad. The 1994 Russia–EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and Russia's accession to international economic groupings became important as much for their symbolic value as for more prosaic reasons. Kozyrev [1995b, p. 139] sought membership of organizations like the GATT and the OECD as a sign that Russia had arrived as a global economic and political actor, while Yeltsin described the signing of the PCA as a 'strategic choice' in favour of integration into the world community, in which Russia was now 'a most important and equal partner' [in Visens, 1994, p. 1].

Liberalism and the paradox of non-consensus

It is somewhat ironic that many critics of liberal 'romantic masochism' [Lukin, 1992b, p. 65] accepted substantial elements of its agenda, in particular acknowledging the importance of domestic political and economic priorities. Primakov protégé Igor Ivanov, in claiming that 'a broad consensus on key foreign policy principles emerged in Russia' during 1998, identified near the top of this list 'promoting optimal external conditions for the continuation of economic reforms in the country and the strengthening of its democratic institutions' [in Sokolov, 1999, p. 1] – the liberal foreign policy rationale almost to the letter. The nexus between the primacy of relations with the West and the success of the domestic policy agenda was to prove surprisingly resilient in the face of numerous upsets in later years. The question arises, therefore, as to why Kozyrev and other foreign policy 'liberals' attracted such condemnation at a time when many of their ideas and assumptions appeared to be widely accepted.

This apparent paradox has several explanations, the first of which relates to the mistaken assumption that foreign policy became de-ideologized after the fall of the Soviet Union. Andranik Migranyan [1992a, p. 7] put it rather well when he noted that,

> [w]hile it used to be asserted that our interests clashed with the interests of the West everywhere, now, on the contrary, it is asserted that they coincide everywhere. Despite its ostentatious rejection of ideology, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is conducting an active ideological policy under the slogans of a civilized foreign policy.

Far from agreeing that Russian foreign policy had reoriented itself from 'ideological precepts' towards the country's 'vital interests' [Chernov, 1993, p. 1], some observers [Pushkov, 1995b, p. 5] asserted that key liberal notions such as an 'equal' or 'strategic' partnership between Russia and the USA were based much more on 'ideological desires' than on any 'firm foundation'. The second major criticism of liberalism arose from resentment at the suggestion, at least early on, that the West was the fount of all that was right and good in the world, that is, the moral universalism of Western values. In this context, Lukin [1992a, p. 4] referred caustically to 'ideologized "neo-Cominternists" who reduce foreign policy reality to a confrontation between absolute "democratic good" and equally absolute "anti-democratic evil" and who see Russia as a "newly recruited foot soldier for good" led by a tough and gallant American general…'. Relatedly, many argued that Russia under Kozyrev had blindly pursued what might be called the 'politics of assent'. The sobriquet, 'Mr *Da*' ('Mr Yes'), was conferred on him [*see* Rogov, 1994, p. 1], reflecting widespread elite resentment at Russia's perceived over-amenability in supporting the West on issues such as UN sanctions against Yugoslavia. Another charge against Kozyrev was that he 'politicized' foreign policy-making by enlisting it into the domestic political struggle. According to Pushkov [1995b, p. 5], the Foreign Minister 'deliberately emphasized the ideological dimension and took an active personal part in domestic ideological battles'.[6] The consequences of this were compounded by lack of trust in his personal integrity [Karaganov, 1995b, p. 2]. In this context, the steady toughening of Kozyrev's foreign policy language over the course of his tenure did little to restore his credibility. On the contrary, commentators such as Pushkov [1994, p. 6] barely disguised their scorn when Kozyrev declared his support for the first Chechen war: 'Faced with a choice between the ideology of liberalism and the ideology of power, Kozyrev chose the latter, as should have been expected.'[7]

Much of the assault on the liberal foreign policy agenda was subjective and impressionistic, in keeping with the fractious climate of post-Soviet politics. It was also more of a general than specific nature, relating to broad questions of ideologization, politicization, feelings of national humiliation, personal dislike, rather than to specific differences in the handling of issues. While there were occasions when liberal policy was attacked on substance – for example, over intended concessions to Japan in 1992 over the disputed islands, and Russia's agreement to the imposition of UN sanctions on Yugoslavia – on the whole, Kozyrev and the liberal line were primarily suspect because of their close association with Yeltsin in a sharply polarized political climate. In this connection, the fashionable allegation about Kozyrev's neglect of CIS affairs compared to the attention given to them by his successor does not stand up to serious scrutiny. As will be seen later, for all the rhetoric about their high priority the Yeltsin administration – whether with Kozyrev, Primakov or Ivanov as Foreign Minister – devoted considerably fewer resources and energy to the former Soviet Union than it did to relations with the West. In one of the fairer summations of Kozyrev's term, one observer [Velekhov, 1995, p. 9] remarked that it was the Foreign Minister's lot to temper 'all the dissonant notes of public opinion, smoothing over and interpreting in the world arena all the zigzags in position and spasms of wounded public self-esteem' of Yeltsin and various government ministries. Kozyrev was charged with giving 'an outward semblance of consistency … to a situation that had no consistency or dynamics of development and was endlessly marking time or going around in circles'. Although it is overstating the case to claim that the Minister 'learned to regard himself as a secondary figure who did not particularly have to be taken into account and on whom nothing depended in the overall scheme of things' [Yusin, 1996, p. 3], he enjoyed nothing like the policy freedom given to his Soviet predecessor, Eduard Shevardnadze [Mlechin, 1992, p. 8]. The ultimate paradox of the liberal agenda, then, lay in its duality. On the one hand, the controversies and animosities that it excited embodied the divisiveness of Russian foreign policy during the post-Soviet period. On the other hand, many of its principal ideas – the primacy of domestic priorities as foreign policy objectives, the heightened emphasis on the 'economic factor' – were absorbed by self-declared opponents of Western-style liberalism. Interestingly, even at the zenith of Primakov's political fortunes, Igor Ivanov [1998c, p. 6] was anything but critical of the Kozyrev period: 'I do not think it was so much a period of romanticism as a period of formation and searching. Many events occurred not because we had

been consciously moving towards them; rather, they came about spontaneously and independently of us. It took time to determine Russia's place in international relations, its priorities, interests and tasks'.

The imperial syndrome

The former Soviet empire might be described in terms of three concentric circles. The outermost consisted of independent 'client' states – Cuba, Vietnam, several countries in the Middle East and Africa – where Soviet influence, although often critical, was indirect. In the second circle, the former Warsaw Pact members, Moscow's diktat was much more intrusive and impinged directly on their sovereignty. As the experience of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 showed, Russia could exercise the option of military intervention when unable to arrange things politically. Finally, the constituent republics of the Soviet Union made up the innermost ring. Unlike the countries of Eastern Europe these were not even formally independent entities, their territorial status instead being that of a strictly limited 'autonomy'. With the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the decline in Soviet influence worldwide, it was inevitable that conceptions of empire would change radically. By the time the Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991, the empire appeared to have disappeared altogether and been replaced by a Russia striving to become a 'normal' nation-state and fully accepted member of the community of democratic nations.

In practice, however, this progression was anything but straightforward. The post-Soviet era witnessed many manifestations of what might be called the 'imperial syndrome' – the sense of past empire and present and future imperial mission. On the one hand, the fall in Russia's strategic and economic fortunes led to a marked neglect of relations with former client states. These ranked consistently well down the list of foreign policy priorities, at the level of rhetoric never mind in terms of actual policy. But, on the other hand, the imperial syndrome continued to influence much of Moscow's outlook on the world. In particular, the space of the FSU was viewed by large sections of the political class as a fundamental 'sphere of influence' in which Russia, by right of historical heritage, geographical proximity, strategic importance, and economic interdependence, must continue to play the leading role. The case of Central and Eastern Europe was slightly different in that Moscow was concerned less to retain a lasting presence in the region, than to prevent the West from taking over what until so recently had been part of Russia's imperial pale. As will be seen in Chapter 5, opposition to NATO

enlargement owed as much to this sense of loss as it did to *bona fide* geostrategic and security concerns.

The messianic strain – Russia's 'special role' in the CIS

The notion of Russia's natural right of influence in the space of the FSU was embraced from the beginning by a wide body of opinion ranging from the Communist-Nationalist opposition to many 'centrists'. In August 1992 Yevgenii Ambartsumov, then Chairman of the Supreme Soviet's International Affairs Committee, presented a report on the state of Russian foreign policy[8] that declared:

> As the internationally recognized legal successor to the USSR, the Russian Federation should base its foreign policy on a doctrine declaring the entire geopolitical space of the former Union to be the sphere of its vital interests [in Eggert, 1992, p. 6].

Subsequently, such sentiments were co-opted by such so-called radical liberals as Kozyrev. At the 1992 Summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Stockholm, he announced that the FSU was 'in essence post-imperial space, on which Russia will have to defend its interests using all available means, including military and economic means' [in Yusin, 1992b, p. 6]. Although he later claimed that the speech had been a 'tactic' to draw international attention to the consequences of an opposition victory in Russia, Kozyrev was to absorb such sentiments in subsequent policy statements [Light, 1996, p. 81]. Barely a year later, he [1994c, p. 69] demanded that 'Russia's special role and responsibility within the former Soviet Union must be borne in mind by its Western partners and given support' – a far cry from his disclaimer in January 1992 that 'Russia is not after a special position in the family [of the CIS]' [in MacFarlane, 1993, p. 10].

The case for close Russian involvement in the FSU was multifaceted. First was the security rationale. Generalized fears of 'encirclement' [Lukin, 1992b, p. 61] and of an 'arc of crisis' on Russia's periphery [Stankevich, 1992a, p. 4] were fuelled by a series of protracted conflicts – in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdniestria, Tajikistan – as well as long-standing security threats such as Islamic 'extremism' and its alleged domino effect on Central Asia and Russia [Primakov, 1996c, p. 2]. Additionally, the case for Russia's continuing *droit de regard* over the CIS embraced economic, moral, political and civilizational dimensions. The economic justification centred on the idea that the dependence of all the FSU countries (including the Baltic states) on Russia entitled

Moscow to remain the nucleus of intra-FSU trade relations [Pushkov, 1993–94, p. 89] and, indeed, to push for 'economic reintegration' of the post-Soviet space [Kozyrev, 1994c, p. 69]. On a more emotive level, a persuasive case for Moscow's leadership of the FSU arose from the situation of the estimated 25 million-strong Russian diaspora living on the territory of the former USSR, about whose fate former senior Presidential Advisor Stankevich [1992a, p. 4] insisted Russia could not be indifferent. This issue derived further notoriety from the recognition that public advocacy of the rights of the diaspora was a well-regarded trump card, going to the heart of the 'politics of patriotism' [Sestanovich, 1994, p. 93]. Finally, the security, economic and political arguments for Russia to maintain a dominant position within the FSU were buttressed by quasi-mystical references to its 'civilizing' role – what the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev once identified as 'the messianic strain in Russian culture' [in MacFarlane, 1993, p. 7]. In this spirit, Stankevich [1992a, p. 4] asserted that Russia's global mission was 'to initiate and support a multilateral dialogue of cultures, civilizations and states. Russia the conciliator, Russia the unifier, Russia the harmonizer'. Although he was referring more generally to its Eurasian mission, Stankevich made it clear that the principal test for this lay in Russia's approach towards the FSU.

Russia's 'Monroe Doctrine' – interventionist policies and attitudes in the CIS

The term, 'Monroe Doctrine' (*doktrina Monro*) appears to have been first coined in the FSU context by Migranyan in August 1992. He [1992a, p. 7] argued that Russia, not the USA or NATO, should determine 'the fate of the geopolitical space of the former USSR,' and referred to the historical precedent of the American Monroe Doctrine in the early nineteenth century. Although Migranyan foresaw 'accusations of great power behaviour,' he believed that a similar doctrine could be applied to the FSU, in large part because the USA treated the 'entire world, including certain areas of the former USSR, as the zone of its vital interests'. At the same time, he gave few clues as to what this might entail. Although he demanded that ethnic minorities and expatriate communities 'be taken into Russia's bosom,' he added that this should be done 'in accordance with the norms of international law'. Subsequently, it became clear that what Migranyan [1994a, p. 4] was advocating was not some sort of aggressive brand of nineteenth-century imperialism, or even a variation of the Brezhnev doctrine [Pipes, 1997, p. 73],[9] but a generalized recognition of Russian primacy in the geopolitical space of the former Soviet Union.

Some Western critics have cited various instances of military intervention in the FSU to support the thesis of Moscow's imperial and 'proto-imperial' ambitions. Zbigniew Brzezinski [1994, p. 72] argued that Russia must necessarily choose between being an empire or a democracy, and pointed to 'the growing assertiveness of the Russian military in the effort to retain or regain control over the old Soviet empire'. While acknowledging that Russian involvement in places such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdniestria might have begun as the 'spontaneous acts of rogue military commanders in the field,' he asserted that such behaviour had become 'formalized' by late 1993. According to him, what was envisaged in the longer term was a 'confederal arrangement in which Moscow would dominate a cluster of satellite states' [ibid., p. 75]. More specifically, he identified a particular threat to Ukraine, whose independence was widely seen in Moscow as an 'abnormality' [ibid., p. 74]. The inference of the Brzezinski thesis, also taken up by like-minded writers such as Richard Pipes [1997, pp. 67–8], was that the Yeltsin administration had something like a grand plan for the CIS.

In fact, the picture is far murkier. In the first place, there was a general understanding that Moscow could no longer pretend to a revival of the USSR. As Primakov [1994, p. 6] noted, when still head of Foreign Intelligence, 'no significant political organization that condemns the break-up of the USSR is setting as its goal the restoration of the Union in its previous form and capacity'. Second, while much of the elite shared what Pipes [1997, p. 71] termed a 'patrimonial mentality' *vis-à-vis* the FSU, only a small minority supported an actively imperialist approach towards the region. Russian military participation in various conflicts and ongoing 'peacekeeping' operations has rarely been disinterested; yet it was never true that 'Russia as umpire is not very different from Russia as empire' [Brzezinski, 1994, p. 74]. Far from there being a consistent pattern of aggressive Monrovian interventionism, Moscow's behaviour has been largely reactive and opportunistic, if only because political and economic constraints dictated that this should be so. It was one thing to speak about Russia's 'special role' and the importance of safeguarding the rights of Russian expatriates; it was quite another to pursue such beliefs to their logical end – the liberal application of military force and its associated costs – in the face of determined domestic and foreign opposition. Significantly, even prominent 'Monrovians' favoured a highly selective approach to intervention. Migranyan [1994b, p. 5], for example, inveighed against military involvement in Central Asia on the grounds that this would only increase the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, exacerbate the conditions of the local Russian population, and

could 'turn out to be a catastrophe for the young Russian democracy and market reforms'.

Throughout the Yeltsin period, most proponents of an assertive policy towards the FSU took the view that Moscow could not avoid becoming embroiled in regional conflicts, rather than believing that this was intrinsically desirable. The reactive character of the imperial syndrome was reflected also in the anxiety that if Russia did not maintain some kind of security presence in the CIS – whether in the form of peacekeeping contingents or quasi-permanent bases – then other powers would take advantage of the confusion. While some commentators [for example, Migranyan, 1992b, pp. 20–1] initially focused on the potential threat posed by Iran and Turkey in the Transcaucasus, the more common fear was that the USA and American-dominated organizations such as NATO would exploit Russian weakness to muscle in on the former Soviet space. The Russian 'Monroe Doctrine', therefore, differed fundamentally from the American original in motivation and temper. It was in reality an anti-doctrine with no discernible strategic programme, encompassing disjointed responses to growing Western interest in the FSU. In Pavel Baev's [1996, p. 104] excellent summation, it was not a case of 'traditional imperialism stemming from a position of strength, but of quasi-imperialism from a position of weakness' whose main priority was conflict management. Ultimately, the imperial syndrome was 'imperialism' in an indirect sense only. It was more a state of mind than the basis of concrete interventionist action, and more a broad categorization embracing a range of ideas and attitudes than a unitary concept. The prime, but often imperfectly understood and incoherently expressed objectives were influence and status. The first was embodied in a continuing if unfocused desire to shape developments in ways most beneficial to Russian interests, while the second was a more abstract or psychological aspiration – to ensure that Russia continued to be accorded its due as the dominant power, not just in the FSU, but also on the Eurasian land-mass.

'Great Power' ideology and the nationalist impulse

Some Western commentators have drawn a distinction between 'ideology' and 'great power' considerations. In asserting that 'the ideological clashes of the Cold War are over for good,' Rodric Braithwaite [1994, p. 12], the former British Ambassador to Russia, observed that '[g]reat-power rivalry will not disappear with the end of ideology'. Similarly, Angela Stent [1995, p. 256] predicted a new Russia–USA rivalry that

would be 'of a great power, rather than ideological, nature'. Such fine distinctions appear contrived, however, in that they presuppose an extremely narrow definition of 'ideology'. In fact, the demise of state communism did not mean that ideology itself had died, but simply that one, albeit major, ideological current became obsolete. If we interpret ideology more generously – as a 'predispositional influence' on policy thinking and decision-making [Pravda, 1988, p. 239] – then there is no reason to exclude the re-emergence of Russia's sense of 'great powerness' (*derzhavnost*) as one of the key strands of the post-Soviet foreign policy debate. Certainly, proponents and opponents alike believed it to be a sufficiently coherent body of thought and associations as to be called an 'ideology'. Vladimir Shumeiko, feeling that the new Russia, like its predecessor, needed to have its own ideology, focused on the 'revival of Russia as a mighty state' as the 'animating idea of all government policies' [in Sestanovich, 1994, p. 94], while Alexei Pushkov [1995b, p. 5] remarked that 'the idea of a great Russia expresses ... a need to create a new national ideology that would reflect both the corporate interests of the Russian political leadership and the growing power of Russian national capital'. From his opposing liberal perspective, the journalist Konstantin Eggert [1995, p. 3] described the main characteristic of 'great-power status' as 'the predominance of ideological schemes over practical considerations'.

Globalism and the 'indispensability' of Russia

The abiding principle of great power ideology was the belief in Russia's global status – a subject touched upon in the previous chapter. It was a basic assumption of *derzhavnost* that Russia must think and act as an intercontinental power. While this might not entail participation in *every* issue around the world – as in Soviet times – Russia had an *ipso facto* 'right of involvement' in any matter it deemed sufficiently important to its interests. No-one but itself could exclude or marginalize it from the processes of international decision-making. In a word, Russia was 'indispensable'.

The notion of 'indispensability' had several aspects. First, it assumed Russia's innate right to belong to every major international organization. For example, expansion of the G-7 to the G-8 was viewed as confirmation that there was 'no getting along without Russia in world affairs' [*Rossiiskie vesti*, 20 June 1995, p. 2] and that no important issue would be decided without it. A second, closely related, point was that solutions to international problems were 'inconceivable' without Russian participation [Igor Ivanov press conference, in Sokolov, 1999,

p. 6]. Referring to the 'common interest' between Washington and Moscow in the first year of the post-Soviet period, Lukin [1992b, p. 73] wrote that America needed Russian help in crisis resolution in and outside the CIS and to preserve a 'stable world order'. The 'indispensability' argument transcended more immediate realities such as Russia's domestic political uncertainty, economic difficulties and declining military power. Georgi Arbatov [1994, p. 101] echoed a common sentiment when he promised that it would emerge from its current crisis and recover strength and influence. Underpinning such assumptions was the notion that Moscow could always bring something to the negotiating table, whatever its apparent weakness and no matter how unlikely this prospect seemed to others. Accordingly, when Benjamin Netanyahu's victory in the 1996 Israeli general elections foreshadowed a slowing-down of the Middle East peace process, Primakov emphasized that this made Moscow's involvement all the more imperative: 'now it will be harder for the Israelis and the Arabs to reach an agreement without Russia … we have levers that [the Americans] do not have for bringing the two sides closer together' [in Kondrashov, 1996a, p. 3].

A natural corollary of the indispensability thesis was a strong emphasis on ideas of prestige and 'dignity'. In essence, the argument ran that Russia, as a power without whom the world could not manage its affairs, must be treated as such. This theme of Russia receiving its due was integral to great power ideology – both in general terms and in specific instances. It was reflected in frequent demands that Russia 'be treated with respect' [Yeltsin's 1994 Victory Day address, in Braithwaite, 1994, p. 11], and was rarely absent from discussions about putative Russian involvement in international decision-making. It went to the heart of what Kozyrev [1994b, p. 6] described as the 'consultation reflex' – the notion that the West, before undertaking any significant international action, should as a matter of course check with or at least inform Russia about what was to take place. During the post-Soviet period, this question was to crop up repeatedly in connection with Western military action against the Iraqis, the Bosnian Serbs and, most dramatically, the Milosevic regime in Belgrade. The Russian attitude was exemplified by Kozyrev's insistence, following NATO air-strikes against the Bosnian Serbs in April 1994, that '[t]rying to make such decisions without Russia is a big mistake and a big risk' [*Segodnya*, 12 April 1994, p. 1]. Indeed, the matter of consultation was so important that it sometimes outweighed the rights and wrongs of the issue itself. In August 1998 Yeltsin expressed outrage at American air-strikes against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan,[10] not because he disagreed with the action itself but because

Washington had only informed him after the event [*see* comments by Yastrzhembsky, in *Izvestiya*, 22 August 1998, p. 3]. As one commentator [Abarinov, 1995a, p. 1] remarked after NATO struck Bosnian Serb positions near Pale, Moscow 'is not against air raids – it is against not being consulted'.

The obverse of pointing out the risks of the West's failure to consult with Moscow was to highlight the benefits of Russian participation. From early 1994 on, an increasingly strong current of triumphalism and positive reaffirmation became evident in official pronouncements. At its most benign, this took the form of a restrained self-satisfaction. After one of the periodic crises in UN–Iraq relations had been temporarily defused following mediation from Moscow, Deputy Foreign Minister Posuvalyuk [1997, p. 2] mused that the international community was 'increasingly coming to realize that Russia ... is now oriented towards conducting an energetic and constructive foreign policy. Many countries have confidence in the balanced line we are pursuing.' A more typical manifestation of the triumphalist mentality, however, was Primakov's suggestion in October 1998 that Russian threats of a 'dramatic shift' in relations with NATO and of 'many changes in our policy orientation' had intimidated the alliance into postponing military action against Milosevic [*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 15 October 1998, p. 1]. Such posturing sometimes smacked of desperation, in which small 'wins' were celebrated as manifestations of Russia's effectiveness as a world power. For example, the dramatic takeover of Pristina airport in June 1999 by Russian peacekeepers was celebrated even by moderates such as Lukin as a reminder to the West that 'it cannot treat Russia like some lackey' [in Charodeev, 1999, p. 3].

The nationalist impulse

Evidence as to the existence of a significant nationalist impulse in post-Soviet foreign policy is mixed. On the one hand, as Anatol Lieven [1999, pp. 53–4] has argued persuasively, Russian nationalism has been 'weak', particularly in comparison to other states in the FSU. He identifies, *inter alia*, the lack of mass political organizations among the diaspora; few attempts at secession; the non-appearance of nationalist paramilitary forces; the failure of mass nationalist parties in Russia; and the administration's lukewarm attitude towards Russian nationalist positions. Lieven [ibid., p. 63] ascribes several causes to this (non-) phenomenon, the most important of which is that the Soviet state was 'explicitly founded not on nationality but on ideology ... and an ideology which contained genuine and important elements of 'internationalism'. 'The core idea of

Russian nationalism as shaped by Soviet rule,' he [ibid., p. 65] writes, 'was of the Russian nation not as a separate ethnos but as the leader of other nations.'

The difficulty with Lieven's conception of nationalism is its narrowness. If one adopts a broader view, a strong case can be mounted to argue that the nationalist impulse has often been very powerful. The persistence, indeed increasing attraction, of notions of *derzhavnost* in the lexicon of Russian foreign policy points to such a conclusion. There was little of 'weak' nationalism (in the Lieven sense) in demands that Russia be treated as a great power with all the dignity accompanying such a status. If it is true that nationalism has not been able to serve as a unifying ideal [Kutkovets and Klyamkin, 1997, p. 3], then this has not stopped the political class from embracing its terminology nonetheless, as the 1999 Kosovo crisis demonstrated so eloquently. The nationalism of that time and of the post-Soviet era more generally may not have been as cohesive as some others in history, but it did exist – even if sometimes only in the 'victim-like form of a humiliated Fatherland surrounded by enemies and in need of defence ... ' [Agafonov, 1999, p. 1].

If one can talk about a 'weak' nationalism, then it is more appropriate to do so in terms of one fuelled by insecurity than of a weak nationalist impulse as such. Emil Pain [1994, p. 9] thus linked Russia's assertiveness in the FSU to the inferiority complex that had emerged in response to its growing weakness; as with the imperial syndrome, much of the motivation behind repeated affirmations of great power status was defensive, a means of psychological compensation (or even 'hypercompensation') [Parkhalina, 2000b, p. 41]. The nexus between weakness, domestic and external, and the nationalist impulse was apparent in the widespread currency of conspiracy theories. It might have been predictable that the 'patriotic' Communist-Nationalist opposition would blame the country's troubles on Western states and institutions. But equally Yeltsin and Kozyrev accused the West on many occasions of attempting to deny Russia its rightful place as a great power. Yeltsin's [1994b, p. 3] reference, in an address to the leadership of the Foreign Intelligence Service, to unnamed forces abroad 'that would like to keep Russia in a state of manageable paralysis', exemplified this mindset.[11]

The nationalist impulse was consequently a strange phenomenon – an amalgam of negative emotions and political expediency rather than the product of deliberate conception. As with much of Soviet and post-Soviet ideology, it was sometimes difficult to discern whether it was heartfelt or instrumental given its uneven application. While nationalism was important in reinforcing regime legitimacy [Mandelbaum, 1997, p. 85]

and counterbalancing policy failures in the domestic arena [Kolesnikov, 2000, p. 9], the Kremlin took care to check its more radical manifestations – not just in the FSU, but also more widely in the management of foreign policy. Light's [1996, p. 34] term, 'pragmatic nationalism', is useful in indicating the limits that Moscow attempted, and often succeeded, in imposing on ideological excess. But for all that we should not underestimate the strength or sincerity of much of the nationalist impulse. If nothing else, Russia's recent imperial past established an image of itself as a great nation and global power – crucial elements in any powerfully felt nationalism. It was secondary whether this originated out of Soviet 'internationalism' or Russian 'nationalism'; the sense of 'greatness' – or, conversely, of 'national humiliation' – remained compelling.

An 'independent' foreign policy

Although the idea of an 'independent' foreign policy is generally associated with Primakov, it originated under his predecessor who lost few opportunities to reiterate this theme, including in a famous article on Russia–USA relations ('The Lagging Partnership') in the influential American journal *Foreign Affairs*. In noting that the 'only policy with any chance of success is one that recognizes the equal rights and mutual benefit of partnership for both Russia and the West, as well as the status and significance of Russia as a world power,' Kozyrev [1994c, p. 61] insisted that 'Russian foreign policy inevitably has to be of an independent and assertive nature'. Despite this, however, an 'independent' foreign policy soon became popularized as a 'golden mean' between 'communist confrontation' and 'liberal-romanticism' [Gankin, 1996, p. 10]. Shying away from the supposed pro-Western excesses of the liberal agenda associated with Kozyrev, while at the same time recognizing the futility of a return to Cold War animosities, it embodied for many of its supporters a properly 'balanced' foreign policy based on Russian 'national interests', 'diversification' and 'constructive non-alignment'. Of all the post-Soviet ideological trends, it was the most popular and influential, and formed the basis of what many commentators have described as the consensus that emerged from 1993. At the same time, it has been subject to more misinterpretation and disinformation than perhaps any other single area of foreign policy-making. Indeed, in many respects, it stands as the epitome of the curious blend of reality, illusion and mythmaking that characterized the post-Soviet period.

The first principle of 'independence' in foreign policy was the primacy of 'national interests' over ideological and/or civilizational biases.

As a *Pravda* correspondent [Barakhta, 1992, p. 3] put it, 'Russia, like other great states, cannot have permanent friends. It has only permanent national interests' – a tenet embodied in the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept [Chernov, 1993, p. 1]. As it turned out, this bland assumption begged more questions than it answered. Different groups inevitably had conflicting conceptions of Russia's national interests. Far from being non-ideological, emphasizing this point sharpened the intensity of policy struggles. For supporters of the liberal foreign policy agenda, national interests were bound in political and economic integration with the West. By contrast, when Primakov [1996d, p. 4] identified them as '[s]tability, an end to conflict situations on the territory of the former Soviet Union, the development of integrative processes in the post-Soviet space, and Russia's territorial integrity,' he borrowed substantial elements from the imperial syndrome and great power ideology. It was consequently hardly surprising that Kozyrev [2000, p. 6] should later attack this foreign policy approach as representing the 'interests only of the most retrograde segment of our national state bureaucracy, our military machine, and the 'centrist' and 'statist' ideologues who serve them'.

The genesis of an independent foreign policy as a reaction to the 'over-Westernization' of Russia's external outlook presupposed an increasing emphasis on 'diversification'. In his 1992 address to the MFA, Yeltsin [1992, p. 1] foreshadowed a 'full-scale foreign policy with multiple vectors. While developing our relations with Western countries ... we must work with equal diligence in the eastern direction ... '. Subsequently, Primakov expanded on its philosophy and principles. Even before becoming Foreign Minister, he [1993, p. 3] advocated 'a multivector policy' in the context of building an 'integral system of collective security in Europe,' a vision he [1996a, p. 13] was later to extend to the whole globe. Diversification and a geographically 'balanced' foreign policy stressed the establishment of closer relations with China, promoting integration processes within the CIS, and the restoration of traditional links with former client states such as India and the more radical Arab regimes.

At one level, the drive to diversify stemmed from a belief that Russia was overly dependent on Western good intentions regarding political rapprochement, economic assistance and post-Cold War security arrangements. Its advocates typically appealed for hard-headed 'realism' and 'pragmatism' in place of the 'romantic' illusions that allegedly informed the liberal foreign policy approach [Primakov, 1996d, p. 4]. It also grew out of a belief that the major Western powers were exploiting

Russian weakness to ignore its interests and that Moscow needed to respond by opening up options. The Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' USA and Canada Institute, Sergei Rogov [1994, p. 4], claimed in this regard that Russian acceptance of Washington's global leadership had 'led to a situation whereby Russia is presented with *faits accomplis*'. Subsequently, the linkage between the policy of diversification and unfriendly Western behaviour became tighter in reaction to perceived Western attempts to establish a unipolar world in which Russia would be relegated to the margins [Gankin, 1996, p. 10].

In civilizational terms, the emphasis on diversification signified a reaffirmation of Russia's Eurasian identity and *spetsifika*. Although the notion of multiple vectors was based on sound intellectual foundations – it made obvious sense to have good relations with as many countries as possible – its spirit was as much emotional as rational. It spoke directly to feelings of national *amour-propre* and *derzhavnost*. Too close an identification with the West became seen as tantamount to a subjugation of national identity and interests. Russia, it was argued, could never hope to be an equal of the West on the latter's terms [Pushkov, 1995b, p. 5]; it could only remain a major global actor or great power as long as it preserved a distinct (or 'independent') identity.[12] This entailed highlighting its 'Eurasian-ness' as the moving spirit of an independent and balanced foreign policy, and multipolarity as the means of preserving Russia's international standing. Primakov's [1997a, p. 2] aim of establishing Russia as 'one of the influential centers of a multipolar world' was grounded in the conviction that failure to realize this would inevitably lead to its marginalization from world affairs and reduction from global to largely regional power. The only way of achieving 'equal partnership' with the West was to encourage the development of a global environment that would enable the 'emergence of a broad field for manoeuvring, for multivector diplomacy'. In this way, 'independence' and multipolarity tied in directly with conceptions of Russia as a great power.

Neo-Gaullism

Neo-Gaullism was a somewhat more benign variant of an 'independent' foreign policy. In contrast to diversification and multipolarity, it advocated an essentially pro-Western posture, but one more questioning of Western values and policies than the liberal agenda was said to be. Although the concept of neo-Gaullism is most frequently associated with Karaganov [Baev, 1996, p. 176; Petro and Rubinstein, 1997, pp. 152–3], it was first suggested by Lukin [1992a, p. 4] who pointed to the example

of Charles de Gaulle and his pursuit of 'a more independent foreign and military policy,' one that asserted his country's 'greatness'. According to Lukin, the key to the French president's success was 'a mix of dependence and independence most in keeping with its national spirit and interests'. Karaganov's [1995a, p. 5] later version was more unashamedly pro-Western, approving a vigorous assertion of Russian interests, 'but within the framework of a strategic alliance with the West'. Although he was unforthcoming on specifics, in an interview with the author in late 1998 he suggested that Russia should follow the Western line on the 'big issues', confining any disagreements to 'minor' or 'secondary' matters. As with other 'independence'-related concepts, neo-Gaullism was a vague notion susceptible to multiple interpretation, and Karaganov [1995a, p. 5] himself admitted that such ideas had only limited applicability given that post-Soviet Russia was not the same as De Gaulle's France (that is, not a key member of the Western alliance). Ironically, although he contrasted neo-Gaullism to the 'whatever-you-say' diplomacy pursued under Kozyrev, the latter all but embraced the neo-Gaullist prescription of close cooperation with the West with provisos. In his 1994 *Foreign Affairs* article, Kozyrev [1994c, p. 62] argued that 'a firm and sometimes aggressive policy of defending one's national interests is not incompatible with partnership,' and sought to implement this approach as far as possible.

The instrumentalization and ideologization of 'independent' foreign policy

Distrust of Western motives led to concepts like diversification and multipolarity being exploited in an instrumental sense, as leverage or 'retaliation' to ensure that broader Russian interests were given their proper due. Dmitri Trenin [1999, p. 10] has pointed in this context to the 'extensive use and abuse' of the 'China factor' by Russian politicians, whereby proposals for an anti-American alliance with Beijing were motivated primarily by the urge to respond to NATO enlargement rather than by a serious interest in Russia–China relations. The sincerity or otherwise of post-Soviet ideological rationalizations will be the subject of the next chapter. However, it is worth noting here that instrumentalism in the main served to 'ideologize' what might otherwise have been relatively neutral concepts. To influential elements in the political class, 'independent' became shorthand for anti-Western or anti-American; the 'vigorous' pursuit of 'national interests' meant an emphasis on 'confrontation' or 'quasi-confrontation'; 'diversification' signified playing both sides of the fence in a traditional balance-of-power game as well as

flirting with 'rogue states'; and 'multipolarity' was premised on Russia's continuing station as a global power. Pushkov [1999, p. 3] put his finger on the problem when he remarked that Russia's 'alternative' or 'independent' foreign policy line was 'by no means innocuous. No matter how much we say that it is not an anti-American policy but a pro-Russian one, that our aim is not to spite the USA but to protect our own national interests ... many people in America are convinced that we are always "poking them in the eye" and deliberately pursuing an anti-American policy'. Such suspicions were not entirely unfounded. At a time when the instrumentalization of concepts in general was rife, it was not surprising that different political forces should attempt to co-opt terminology for tactical advantage. In the end, allegiance to an 'independent', national interests-based foreign policy became, like other vague concepts such as 'the market' and 'democracy', all things to all people as well as a prerequisite of political competitiveness.

Foreign policy retrenchment

Dismayed by the spectacle of repeated foreign policy setbacks and Russia's diminishing influence in international affairs, some commentators advocated what, in economic language, might be called a deflationary foreign policy, involving ideas of 'selective engagement', 'concentration', 'a pause' and 'restraint'. The common theme here was the belief that Russian foreign policy had over-extended itself and should therefore focus on a few key priorities. Karaganov [2000, p. 11], for example, saw 'selective engagement' (*izbiratelnaya vovlechennost*) as the opposite of multipolarity – which he defined as an 'activist Russian foreign policy aimed at maintaining geostrategic balances on every front, counteracting the creation of a unipolar world, and vigorously promoting closer ties with the CIS countries'. In arguing that the latter was anachronistic and costly, he proposed instead that Russia should 'pursue a vigorous defence of a very narrow range of genuinely vital national interests'. These would be designed to realize its 'chief and indisputable strategic priority ... the achievement of sustainable and rapid economic growth and – to that end – the rational integration of Russia into the world economy'. Consistent with this, there would be an end to the futile pursuit of the 'phantom of great power status'.

Although Karaganov [ibid., p. 11] described 'selective engagement' or 'concentration' (*sosredotochenie*) as a 'relatively new concept for Russia's foreign policy strategy,' the idea of a limited disengagement was hardly novel. Migranyan [1994d, p. 1] proposed just such an approach more

than five years earlier. Describing the previous three years of Kozyrevian foreign policy as a combination of 'hectic but fruitless activity, improvisation, incompetence and … abrupt reversals of position,' he called for 'a fundamental reassessment'. Russian foreign policy needed to 'take a pause'. Moscow should refrain from 'empty initiatives, visits and idle debates,' and not push to accede to 'any structures or alliances that are not waiting for us and are not happy to see us'. Specifically, he focused on relations with CIS countries as the number one priority, highlighting in the process the primacy of strategic and geopolitical over economic interests. In similar vein, Yurii Borko's [1995, p. 5] concept of 'restraint' (*sderzhannost*) was based on the premise that foreign policy activism should be 'commensurate with the pace of internal change in the country. That is the only way Russia can really back up its claims to participation in world politics'. Although Borko differed significantly from Migranyan in his highlighting of economic priorities (such as expanded Russia–EU cooperation), he agreed that Russia should not be in a hurry to join international groupings such as the G-7 or the Council of Europe, or even to 'formalize' Russia–NATO 'special' relations.

Despite major differences over what Russia's core priorities should be, ideas of retrenchment were rooted in a shared perception that Moscow needed to take a time-out in which to recuperate and draw the appropriate lesson. Unlike other ideological currents, it exuded a certain defeatism, and tended to crop up in the wake of 'humiliating' foreign policy setbacks. Thus, Migranyan's comments came shortly after the 1994 NATO summit in Brussels when the alliance committed itself to eastward enlargement over Moscow's strongly expressed objections (and threats); Borko appeared to be responding to the failure of Russian diplomacy to avert NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions near Sarajevo in August 1995; and it was scarcely coincidental that Karaganov's remarks should follow the severe deterioration in relations with the West as a result of the 1999 Kosovo crisis – a deterioration that 'reinforce[d] the likelihood of Russia's self-isolation' [Karaganov, 2000, p. 11]. In essence, retrenchment represented more a state of mind (often of fleeting duration) than a coherent body of thought, reflecting an instinctive feeling that 'something had to be done' rather than any clear sense of what to do.

Ideology and (non-)consensus

This chapter has centred on the context and interplay of ideas instead of the actors who participated in the struggle for and against them.

As noted earlier, too much has been made of the alleged biases of individuals, with insufficient regard for the way in which thinking changed according to fashion and context. One conspicuous illustration of this flawed approach is the over-reading of the nationalist rhetoric of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the nominally hard-right Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). The conventional view is that he was an 'extreme nationalist' who subscribed to an aggressively expansionist policy [Mikoyan, 1998, p. 115]. In fact, the record of Zhirinovsky and the LDPR in the Duma reveals a consistent pattern of pro-administration behaviour on important votes, domestic (for example, the 1998 impeachment proceedings against Yeltsin) and foreign (START-2). Paradoxically, the strong belief within the Russian political establishment that LDPR votes could always be bought gave them the image of being a relatively safe pro-government constituency.[13] Unlike some of the more hard-line communists, they were seen as having few ideological hang-ups.

On a more substantive level, it is important to acknowledge that there were many commonalities in the way Kozyrev and Primakov managed foreign policy, notwithstanding obvious differences in ideological and administrative background. Kozyrev [1994c, p. 63] was as committed as his successor to the idea of Russia as a 'great power', and wrote about the efforts of Russia and 'other rising centers of influence' to obtain 'a greater role in world affairs' given the obsolescence of a 'Pax Americana or any other versions of unipolar or bipolar dominance'. While they might sometimes have disagreed on the criteria for 'greatness', both firmly believed in Russia's global mission and the strategic climate – a multipolar world – in which this was to be fulfilled. As for Primakov, for all his alleged anti-Westernism, he well understood that Russian foreign policy must – for all sorts of political, security, economic and historical-civilizational reasons – remain Westerncentric for the foreseeable future. It is stretching credulity to juxtapose the conventional, but superficial, image of Kozyrev as a doe-eyed innocent unaware that the West was taking advantage of his weakness, with the idealized representation of Primakov as a tough and experienced pragmatist, unhindered by ideological baggage in his relentless pursuit of the Russian national interest. Even critics of Kozyrev recognized his difficult operating environment, acknowledging the problem of managing a stable course in foreign policy under a President infamous for policy U-turns and other unpredictable behaviour.[14] As one commentator observed, it would be naïve to attribute Kozyrev's journey from advocate of Russia–USA strategic partnership to 'great power' champion of Russia 'exclusively [to] his personal beliefs [*Moskovskie novosti*, no. 61, 10–17 September 1995, p. 4].

And although Primakov evinced a rather more consistent approach throughout the 1990s – in various guises from Foreign Intelligence Chief to Foreign Minister to Prime Minister – he too was bound by Soviet traditions of government discipline and political self-interest to embrace highly contradictory positions. Lest we should forget, it was Primakov who negotiated the Russia–NATO Founding Act and who, but for Kosovo, would almost certainly have managed to persuade the Duma to ratify START-2 in the spring of 1999.[15] Although the post-Soviet bureaucratic environment allowed institutional actors more scope than before, they were hardly free agents, able to indulge their ideological prejudices at will. Ultimately, Kozyrev and Primakov were 'public servants', faced with the choice of either following presidential directives or getting the sack.

But if it is a mistake to over-personalize the debate, then it is equally wrong to assume, from the overlap between ideological strands, that there was an underlying consensus among policy-makers. In reviewing the foreign policy arguments during the post-Soviet era, one is struck by how often perspectives and emphases were severely at odds, as well as by the impact this had on the selection and management of policy priorities. To take one salient example, the main objectives of the liberal agenda were integration with the West and the economization of Russian foreign policy. For most advocates of great power ideology and an 'independent' line, however, geopolitical priorities came first. This did not by any means exclude common ground – indeed, this had to be found for any sort of policy to function – but the mindset of each was very different and often in conflict over specific issues: NATO enlargement, relations with China, the Russia–Belarus Union, WTO accession. Moreover, as Pravda and Malcolm [1996, p. 290] rightly noted, '[i]ndividuals and groups often had a mixture of attachments: value-based, functional, and politically instrumental'. Ideology served to 'legitimize' self-interest, to cloak the venal in something like presentable garb by providing a moral veneer. Thus, in opposing START-2 ratification, the Communists did not admit that their opposition was motivated by a desire to extract additional funding in other areas of the budget (for example, social services) or by personal animus;[16] they, quite naturally, put the argument in terms of a 'principled' stance of *la patrie en danger* [Sadchikov, 1998, p. 1]. Unfortunately, the use of ideology and ideological devices – however insincere – militated against flexibility and the development of consensus. Not only did they constitute an additional barrier to problem-solving, but they also established quasi-formal

positions on individual issues from which it was difficult to resile and which constrained the government's freedom of policy manoeuvre. In the end, the mutually reinforcing interplay of self-interest and ideological values, both pseudo and *bona fide*, served to widen already pronounced cleavages between sectional groupings, and further undermine the effective conduct of foreign policy.

4
Illusion and Mythmaking

It is a natural tendency of governments of all species to present foreign policy as the outcome of a well-thought-out conceptual process. Indeed, the main function of what is often known as 'public diplomacy' is to obtain broader 'understanding' and approval of the government's approach to international affairs. It was therefore inevitable that the Yeltsin administration should embark on this course upon coming to office. Although it did not possess the Western experience in public diplomacy, it could and did borrow from Soviet traditions of mythmaking and, further back still, the legacy of 'Potemkinization' from the period of Catherine the Great.[1] At the same time, it faced the challenge of demonstrating to the outside world that Russia had emerged from the Soviet past as a new and vibrant force, much more disposed to cooperation yet in no way to be underestimated as a spent power. The leadership understood that it was just as important to show that Russian foreign policy had reinvented itself as it was to accomplish this feat.

This chapter focuses on several examples of this crucial aspect of foreign policy. The first is the phenomenon of Potemkinization itself – creating the illusion of coherence and vision via major documents such as the Foreign Policy Concept, the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine. Although such documents were sometimes useful indicators of policy trends and shifts, their importance was above all presentational. They served less as a framework for concrete policy action than as a rationalizing mechanism designed to reconcile the contradictions that dominated Russian foreign policy during the 1990s. In contrast to the fractiousness of real life, the major policy statement served up an image of harmony and intellectual justification. The second section examines the specific case of Moscow's approach towards the CIS. It highlights the vast discrepancy between the mythology surrounding

the primacy of the former Soviet periphery in Moscow's world-view, and the shallowness of the administration's actual interest. In many ways, the importance of the CIS was the great post-Soviet myth, the epitome of the ancient official tradition of embellishing form to simulate substance.

The conflation between multipolarity and multilateralism was the most important example of creative image-making during President Yeltsin's second term. Moscow declared its commitment to a brave new multipolar world, to the primacy of international law and multilateral decision-making processes based on the United Nations, and presented itself as the leading light in the emergence of an alternative rational consensus in contradistinction to America-centred unipolarity. In reality, however, Russian policy-makers continued to think in terms of 'big issues for big players', based roughly on the early nineteenth-century idea of the 'Concert' of great powers.[2] Allegiance to any 'democratization' of world affairs was at best partial, being either nominal or, at its most narrowly self-interested, an instrument with which to beat the United States. The merging of the multipolar and multilateral lexicon was, in turn, paralleled by the mixing of the language of 'diversification' with the fact of Moscow's predominantly Westerncentric orientation. While the administration talked a good game regarding the need for a 'balanced' foreign policy, the governing class from Yeltsin down continued to look and go west. Notwithstanding marked improvements in Russia's relations with China and India, Western countries – particularly the USA – and institutions remained the prime point of strategic reference.

The Potemkinization of Russian foreign policy

It was Vladimir Lukin [1994, p. 13] who, in the foreign policy context, noted Russia's 'passion for mere show, the Potemkin village syndrome'. He was referring specifically to Moscow's triumphalism and subsequent disappointment over yet another failed attempt to mediate between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Western powers. In this chapter, however, the term 'Potemkinization' will be used more generally to describe the administration's use of major policy statements to convey an impression of unity and sincerity of purpose that was fundamentally at odds with the real – fragmented and opportunistic – nature of foreign policy.

Foreign Policy Concepts – their role and importance

The major foreign policy statement is the post-Soviet spiritual successor to the USSR's Five-Year Plan. Even allowing that the latter focused on

socioeconomic priorities, the similarities are striking. Like the Five-Year Plan, the Foreign Policy Concept is a long-term 'strategic' document intended to provide a conceptual framework within which policy is formulated and implemented. Second, it reflects the political realities and mood of its time. If it is frequently misleading as a guide to action (*see* below), it is nevertheless useful in pointing to some of the pressures and influences on the policy-making process. Third, and the most underestimated aspect, such statements are to a large extent meant to create an alternative reality that is largely divorced from the true state of affairs. Some of this is by design, to paint the situation as better than it is; but part of it is also genuinely self-delusionary, a case of worthy intentions out of touch with reality. A fourth similarity is that Western commentators assign to the major foreign policy statement, as they did to the Five-Year Plan, an almost biblical importance, with each phrase and word scrutinized in order to discern some hidden nuance. To a large extent, it can be said to have become the subject of a new, post-Soviet Kremlinology.

Foreign Policy Concepts are inevitably the product of compromise between sharply conflicting views and interests. They deal for the most part in generalities that allow ample scope for subjective and selective interpretation. They are also encyclopaedic in scope, touching on virtually every conceivable area of policy interest. The result is a highly eclectic document, heavily influenced by lowest common denominator principles. If one takes the example of the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept, it covered themes as diverse as the 'de-ideologization' of foreign policy and its orientation towards the nation's 'vital interests'; Russia's continuing status as a 'great power'; the importance of security, human rights and economic integration in the FSU; revival of ties with Eastern Europe; relations with the West, in particular the EU; promotion of Russia's 'step-by-step … incorporation into European structures'; the strategic disarmament agenda; improved access for high-tech exports to the American market; consolidating the 'breakthrough' in Russia–China relations; the threat of nuclear proliferation in Northeast and South Asia; efforts to settle the Middle East conflict; and Russian arms exports [Chernov, 1993, pp. 1, 3]. The 2000 version – approved by Putin but prepared under Yeltsin – is, if anything, even less focused. It talks of working towards a 'multipolar system of international relations'; the 'globalization of the world economy'; strengthening the role of 'international political and economic institutions and mechanisms' such as the G-8, IMF and the World Bank; and promoting regional and sub-regional integration processes in Europe, the Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America [*Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki …*, 2000, p. 6].

The general nature of the Foreign Policy Concept casts genuine doubt as to whether it could ever have been considered seriously as a policy framework. Certainly, Kozyrev believed it could not. In response to early criticisms about the absence of a Russian foreign policy concept, he [1992c, p. 3] protested: 'No country has an official description of its national interests ... In the abstract, [a foreign policy concept] simply does not exist. If it does exist ... then it consists in the fact that we, in becoming a democratic state, are drawn to other democratic states and see them as friends and potential allies.' Although later that year Kozyrev [1992d, p. 2] was to submit the MFA's draft Foreign Policy Guidelines for discussion by the Supreme Soviet, this apparent turnaround did not reflect a new-found belief in the Foreign Policy Concept's utility as a policy tool, so much as the impact of political imperatives. It seems clear that he was instructed by Yeltsin to come up with a 'concept', and may also have felt that he needed to do something to answer his growing number of critics (certainly the preamble to the draft Guidelines suggests this). In other words, the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept was a political rather than operational necessity, its existence *ipso facto* intended to signify a more ordered and strategic approach towards foreign policy management. Subsequently, the notion of a Concept became relatively routine, one of the standard components found in the governance of any major regional or global power. It came, in this connection, to assume a role very similar to that of a White Paper in Western democracies.

Despite its limitations as a policy document, the Foreign Policy Concept was undoubtedly useful in patching over serious contradictions between the liberal agenda, the imperial syndrome, and great power ideology. The result might be described as a 'consensus' on an 'independent foreign policy' in the sense that it purported to find a middle way between the two 'extremes' of 'excessive euphoria' and 'gloomy pessimism' [Chernov, 1993, p. 1]. Yet to argue, as some [for example, Petro and Rubinstein, 1997, p. 100] have, that the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept demonstrated the emergence of a *bona fide* as opposed to nominal consensus is tantamount to misreading regime propaganda as fact. The reality is that any policy document that calls itself 'national' will highlight commonalities and minimize differences. Given that this would be the case in the most transparent of Western democracies, it is all the more to be expected in the quasi-democracy of post-Soviet Russia with its opaque decision-making processes. It is naive to assume that the 'consensus' of an official policy document *actually* reflects a confluence of often widely disparate views within government. There was little

shared philosophical approach in, say, the liberal emphasis on the economization of foreign policy priorities on the one hand, and the agenda of great power ideologists on the other. It was just that, as in the days of the USSR, these differences were subsumed – *à la* Leninist democratic centralism – for the sake of regime (formerly Party) unity.

What the Foreign Policy Concept did reveal, however, was political fashion and context. Thus the 1993 version emphasized the primacy of CIS-related affairs, not because the Yeltsin administration was necessarily pursuing a more active policy towards the former Soviet Union, but because it felt the need to advertise that it was doing so. At a time of acute political and economic uncertainty, it made sense to minimize areas of contention by co-opting the communist-nationalist opposition as far as possible. Besides, paying lip service to the FSU in the Foreign Policy Concept committed the regime to very little and did nothing to change local realities in hotspots such as Abkhazia, Transdniestria and Nagorno-Karabakh, where events proceeded more or less regardless of Moscow. Conversely, the discrediting of the liberal foreign policy agenda during 1992–93 was reflected in the toning-down of economic priorities relative to geopolitical objectives and language [Chernov, 1993, pp. 1, 3]. This did not mean that the liberal agenda was thrown out; Russia's pursuit of accession to the Paris and London Clubs, not to mention the continuing importance of relations with international financial institutions, indicates otherwise. But it was politic in the tense climate of that time to cut back on the rhetoric of Westernism and its association with an 'alien' moral universalism. And just as the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept mirrored the prevailing obsession of the political class about the FSU, so the 2000 version illustrated the impact of the Kosovo crisis of the previous year. Here, the main accent was on such themes as the adverse consequences of American attempts at unipolar domination at the expense of multilateral structures and mechanisms, in particular the UN, and the corresponding importance of multipolarity and collective security [*Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki*…, 2000, p. 6]. It was not that the CIS had suddenly become less important; rather, it had lost its 'current-ness' while global questions had regained their domestic political ascendancy.

National Security Concepts and the Military Doctrine

Although the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine were documents of different scope,[3] their genesis showed many of the same influences. Like the Foreign Policy Concept, they were more an indicator of trends and fashions in the government's thinking (and of the

political class more generally) than a reliable guide to policy-making. The 1997 National Security Concept identified the main threats to Russia as domestic political instability, economic crisis and social penury [Rybkin, 1997, pp. 1–2; Aron, 1998, p. 32; Antonenko, 1999–2000, p. 134], mainly because the Yeltsin administration, following its struggle for political survival in 1996,[4] saw its own legitimacy as contingent on the resolution of these problems; in a sense, it was the regime's security as much as Russia's that was at stake. In the same politically minded spirit, regional security concerns received comparatively little emphasis because the Kremlin was anxious not to draw unnecessary attention to the bitterly unpopular first Chechen war (1994–96). In terms of an external audience, the emphasis in the 1997 Concept on priorities such as accession to the G-8, WTO, APEC and the corresponding minimizing of conventional threat assessments arose largely because the administration wanted to present Russia as unthreatened and therefore unthreatening, a suitable partner for expanded trade and investment with the West.

By late 1999 the setting had changed dramatically. The combination of the Kosovo conflict and the second Chechen war amounted to a political imperative that could not be disregarded. Domestic political and socio-economic concerns – even taking into consideration the adverse effects of the August 1998 financial crash – gave ground to more traditional threat perceptions such as the West's (read: the USA's) alleged attempts to impose its diktat on the world. It was similarly predictable that international terrorism should emerge at the top of the agenda; its inclusion in this way tapped into the mood of the political elite and the public at large, and served to 'legitimize' the Putin administration's conduct of the Chechen war at home and abroad. On the other hand, it was typical of the document that it should present, and that the West should swallow, the notion that Russia was still capable of responding powerfully to perceived external threats. The case of the supposed lowering of the 'utilization threshold' of nuclear weapons was a notable case in point. Although there was no substantive change of policy [Safranchuk, 2000, p. 5], the Russian government saw value in conveying this illusion in a controlled way, allowing Western policy actors and thinkers to 'draw the lesson' without at the same time being panicked into a disproportionate reaction.

It was much the same story with the Military Doctrine, notwithstanding its relatively specific nature. The original post-Soviet version reflected both the high profile of CIS conflict issues in 1993 and, relatedly, the emergence of the Ministry of Defence as a key foreign policy actor. In reserving the right to maintain 'troops, bases and installations' on the territory of CIS states [Litovkin, 1993, p. 2], Moscow also established a

clear marker for foreign consumption that it regarded such areas as being within its sphere of influence. As with the National Security Concept, the revised 2000 version of the Military Doctrine responded to a greatly changed international climate. It was not so much that the administration believed, as a result of the Kosovo crisis, in a renewed 'threat of direct military aggression against Russia' [Antonenko, 1999–2000, p. 134],[5] but that there was an overwhelming political compulsion to react to the West's perceived aggression. The Military Doctrine, like the subsequent Foreign and National Security Concepts, was a means of highlighting the depth of Russian opposition to NATO actions; non-revision of these flagship documents after such a 'provocation' would have sent entirely the wrong message. The importance of this consideration outweighed any issue of the practicability (or otherwise) of the doctrine's provisions as a blueprint for Russia's military development in the twenty-first century. As its drafters in the MOD were well aware, strategic planning was virtually meaningless at a time when paucity of funds – not to mention lack of political will – precluded the significant downsizing and restructuring of Russia's armed forces.[6] The best that could be done in the circumstances was to promote the illusion that Russia, like any other advanced nation, was capable of producing considered and balanced thinking in response to fast-moving developments in the international security environment. In this connection, the Military Doctrine, like its conceptual cousins, constituted something of a badge of honour.[7]

The CIS – fact and fiction

One of the great misconceptions of the post-Soviet period is the myth that, after a short period of 'Atlanticism' in 1992–93, the Yeltsin administration viewed the CIS as Russia's number one foreign policy priority. That this claim should have been so assiduously promoted by the Kremlin was to be expected. Given its interest in depoliticizing foreign policy, the administration identified early on a requirement to be *seen* to be giving attention to CIS-related issues, in particular those with a strong domestic resonance such as the rights of Russian-speakers in the other FSU states. However, talking up such issues was hardly the same as placing them at the top of the foreign policy agenda, as an examination of key aspects of Russian policy towards the CIS illustrates.

Conceptualizing policy towards the CIS

Much of the difficulty in comprehending post-Soviet policy towards the CIS arises from the fact that the administration itself had little idea of

what it hoped to see emerge out of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moscow had no experience in conducting interstate relations with the former Union republics, and almost no trained personnel for the job [Shelov-Kovedyaev, 1992, p. 5]. This lack of a knowledge base was in inverse proportion to the complexity of the problems. From the beginning, there were a number of philosophical and practical conundrums. The first was to determine whether the CIS *qua* organization should be the mechanism for a 'civilized divorce' of the other FSU states from Russia, or whether it should instead become the engine of their political and economic reintegration, albeit on a new basis. For some [Lipskii, 1992, p. 3], the former was a major achievement in itself, since it had effectively averted or minimized the outbreak of conflicts over division of the Union's assets. However, a more common view was that the states of the FSU were bound by long-time political, economic and cultural-historical association within the Russian empire and then the Soviet Union to continue to interact (or 'integrate') with one another, and that to this purpose the 'early creation of effective CIS mechanisms … must become a paramount objective of Russian diplomacy … ' [Rogov, 1994, p. 5].

The second issue concerned the nature and identity of the CIS as an organization: should it be a Commonwealth of more or less equal and sovereign independent states in which Russia would simply be *primus inter pares* or the vehicle by which Moscow would reassert its influence over the space of the former Soviet Union? At times, Moscow highlighted the potential of the CIS to become 'an influential regional organization that would stimulate prosperity and cooperation throughout the post-Soviet space' [Ivanov, 2000a, p. 9]. But on other occasions a more unashamedly self-interested agenda was in evidence, such as in the regular references to the FSU as a historical Russian sphere of interest [*see* comments by Kozyrev in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 January 1994, p. 1]. This conflict between a quasi-idealist vision and an atavistic imperial syndrome was never properly reconciled, although, as the complaints of CIS leaders at the 1997 Moscow [*see* Shermatova, 1997, p. 8] and Chisinau [*see* Budakov, 1997, p. 1] summits revealed, the general feeling outside Russia was that the Kremlin saw the CIS principally as an instrument of geopolitical control rather than as a qualitatively different interstate association along the lines of, say, the European Union.

The matter of self-interest affected two other questions in turn. One concerned the channels through which Russia should pursue CIS-related objectives. Should it work to develop multilateral mechanisms and institutions centred on the CIS – the Customs Union, the Collective Security Treaty, Joint Air Defence – or was it better off operating through relatively

well-established bilateral channels between the former Soviet republics, as with Belarus? On the one hand, the credibility of the CIS as organization was at stake; on the other hand, its nascence (and cumbersomeness) complicated the pursuit of Russian policy priorities, such as effective conflict resolution. This dilemma was encapsulated by Yeltsin [1995a, p. 4] when he sought to justify Russia's military presence in various CIS states: 'We want to and will act jointly, but for the present Russia is the only force capable of separating warring parties within the former USSR… '.

Even more significantly, the CIS served as the focus for a protracted debate about the appropriate balance between the costs and benefits of Russian involvement. How much should Moscow invest by way of human and financial resources in order to give life to the CIS as a whole and to maintaining close ties with individual CIS members? As Yeltsin [1994a, p. 2] put it: 'Russia is for the strengthening of the Commonwealth… [but i]ntegration must not be detrimental to Russia itself or involve the overstraining of our forces and resources, both material and financial'. To some, such as Primakov [1994, pp. 1, 6; *see also* Migranyan, 1994d, p. 3], the costs while real were all the same necessary to protect Russia's longer-term political, security and economic interests. Others, however, believed that reintegration would draw vital resources away from the primary task of Russia's own economic recovery and development [Pain, 1994, p. 9], while there was also resentment at the dependence mentality and ingratitude of governing elites in the FSU [Airapetova, 2000, p. 5].

The final conundrum concerned the problem of differentiation. To what extent was *all* the FSU important, or should Russian policy treat CIS-related issues on a largely case-by-case or region-by-region basis. In reiterating that the post-Soviet space is a 'zone of Russia's vital interests', the influential Deputy Head of the Duma's Defence Committee, Alexei Arbatov [1994, p. 2] admitted this was 'by no means true in equal measure, or true everywhere in the long term'. Once again, the issue was never satisfactorily resolved. For example, the proximity of the Transcaucasus to well-populated and sensitive Muslim areas of Russia made it a prime subject for policy attention. But the situation was less clear with respect to Central Asia. Even such a strong advocate of a CIS-centred foreign policy as Migranyan [1994b, p. 5] argued that the latter should effectively be abandoned and the local Russian population repatriated, while Alexei Arbatov [1994, p. 1] warned against Russia being drawn into conflicts 'alien to its interests'. Primakov [1994, p. 6], on the other hand, emphasized the vital role of Central Asia in defending against the threat of a radical and expansionist Islam.

In sum, at no stage during the post-Soviet period did a consensus emerge on policy towards the CIS. It was all very fine to declare, as in the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept, that '[t]op priority is accorded to relations with the former Union republics' [Chernov, 1993, p. 3], but it never became clear what this meant. The complexity and ambiguity of many CIS-related issues and concepts lent themselves to multiple interpretations and contradictory approaches. Far from CIS policy being one of the foundations on which a foreign policy consensus emerged some time in 1993, it acted in precisely the opposite way, exposing instead the sectionalization of Russian attitudes towards the outside world.

CIS integration

Nowhere was this more evident than in the case of CIS integration. On the face of things, this was one of the major priorities of post-Soviet foreign policy from at least early 1993. The Foreign Policy Concept that year stated that 'Russia's interests are served by a policy that seeks to achieve the maximum possible degree of integration among the former Union republics in all spheres of their vital activities,' including an economic union and 'common market', a collective security treaty for mutual defence, joint peacekeeping and conflict resolution, a common 'external' border, and the coordination of foreign policy positions [Chernov, 1993, p. 3]. Primakov [1994, p. 6] perceived it in primarily security terms: crisis management; counteracting the threat of Islamic 'extremism'; resisting attempts by other regional powers to increase their influence; and, more generally, in 'creating a stable situation along the perimeter of [Russia's] borders and … preventing conflicts from having a provocative influence on certain regions of the Russian Federation'. Even the creation of a 'common economic space' was more a security than an economic objective, 'virtually the only way to lessen tension in interstate relations'. Although Primakov's geopolitical view of the CIS was clearly driven by Russia-first considerations, with barely a nod to the ideal of Commonwealth members having roughly equal decision-making powers, he also sought to justify integration by emphasizing 'the objective nature of the centripetal trends that are showing up in various areas of the former Soviet Union'. In other words, integration was part of a natural historical dialectic, irrespective of one's attitude towards it [Primakov, 1997b, p. 4].

From the outset, however, CIS integration suffered a chequered history. The most obvious difficulty was the palpable inequality of its constituent parts. There was no getting away from the reality that all the other CIS members, even major states like Ukraine and Kazakhstan,

had been politically and economically dependent on Russia for at least 150 years (and in some cases longer), and especially so during the Soviet period. At the same time many of these states were, in the first flush of an unaccustomed sovereignty, opposed to Moscow's efforts to reassert its primacy over the space of the FSU. The tension between these largely irreconcilable perspectives emasculated the CIS, creating lasting mutual resentment in the process. Yeltsin's [1994a, p. 2] comment that integration should not strain Russia's resources tapped into a widespread feeling among its elite that the other CIS members were trying to have it both ways: to assert their independence (sometimes in direct opposition to Moscow's interests), while continuing to expect aid and trade on highly favourable terms and, in some cases, military assistance to help local regimes consolidate their fragile hold on power.

In practice, integration on a qualitatively new basis was a non-starter. Most of the time, this failure was reflected in the inability to implement intra-CIS agreements and commitments. But there were also occasions when even the standard façade of solidarity surrounding the regular summit get-togethers broke down in mutual recriminations. At the 1997 Moscow Summit Russia ended up being the only party to sign the meeting's banner document, the 'Concept for Integrative Development,' while Presidents Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan and Lukashenko of Belarus strongly criticized its management of the CIS [Sytaya, 1997, p. 3]. Such was the extent of the failure of integration that even 'successes' like the 1997 Russia–Belarus Union treaty were notable principally for what they did *not* achieve. Lukashenko, its most enthusiastic advocate, had sought a 'Union state' with a common leadership, political institutions and economic conditions and policies. But what he obtained was effectively just a 'scrap of paper' with little policy relevance.[8] In an unusually frank interview, Igor Ivanov [1998b, p. 6] admitted in autumn 1998 that 'we have a union more on paper than in fact,' while Lukashenko condemned the final (1999) version of the treaty as a 'farce' and expressed resentment that Russian politicians were simply exploiting the Belarus factor in the lead-up to the 1999 Duma elections [Pletnev, 1999, p. 5].

Lukashenko blamed frustration of the union agenda on the dark hand of the Presidential Administration and unnamed Russian ministries [Chubchenko, 1999a, p. 3]. But the real problem was that the Kremlin was never able to decide what it wanted out of the Union treaty with Belarus or from CIS integration more generally. In addition to the conflicting goals of Russia and the other CIS members, there was the usual dichotomy between the urge to reassert Moscow's dominion over

the FSU as a sphere of vital strategic interests and an equally powerful concern to limit the costs of such a project. For every claim that union with Belarus would strengthen Russia's military-strategic and economic position [Nikonov, 1997, p. 2], there was a countervailing argument that it would instead undermine the country's development towards a political democracy, market economy and civil society [Latsis, 1997, p. 2; Malkina, 1999, p. 1]. The result of this clash between the imperial syndrome and the liberal foreign policy agenda was, in effect, a 'hegemony on the cheap'.[9] Moscow continued to proclaim CIS integration as an article of faith, but in practice the absence of government consensus ensured that the process would run into the sands. As Yeltsin acknowledged in his final State of the Nation address, the Commonwealth had 'so far failed, both economically and politically, to develop into a reliable mechanism for ensuring conditions conducive to mutually beneficial cooperation' [Gornostaev, 1999a, p. 3].

Throughout the post-Soviet era, the tendency was, if anything, towards disintegration rather than the other way round. This was evident in several areas. In the first place, the growth of interregional associations such as the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) grouping was significant, not so much as evidence of effective cooperative arrangements, but for its symbolic value: for the first time, CIS member states were organizing themselves to move out of Moscow's direct orbit. More importantly, economic interdependence between CIS member-states fell sharply as they turned to embrace the opportunities offered by increased interaction with outside parties. Although Russia's links with the other CIS states remained substantial, they declined from about 75–80 per cent of total trade in 1990 to just over 20 per cent in 1995 [*see* Becker, 1996–97, pp. 118, 126–7; Tuleev, 1996, p. 3], although the 1998 financial crash with its four-fold devaluation of the rouble helped to reverse this trend somewhat.[10] Significantly, too, the other CIS littoral states of the Caspian Sea – Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan – showed greater interest in foreign than in Russian participation in various extraction and pipeline projects. Meanwhile, it was becoming clear that Moscow regarded CIS cooperation as something of an oxymoron. Nothing better illustrated its severely diminished status in Russian foreign policy than the complaint by Aman Tuleev [1996, p. 3], then Minister for CIS Cooperation, that 'noble goals have been proclaimed, but the actual possibilities for translating them into reality are still few … we do not have the necessary rights, resources or powers to conduct a real policy of cooperation with the CIS countries … '.

Diaspora issues

The disjunction between declared policy and lack of political will was especially pronounced in the administration's handling of diaspora issues. On the one hand, Moscow lost no opportunity to proclaim its solicitude for Russian-speakers living elsewhere in the FSU. It was, for example, a standard theme in Yeltsin's annual State of the Nation address, with his 1994 edition calling for 'close attention' to be paid to the 'problems of people of Russian descent who live in neighbouring states'. At the same time, his [1994a, p. 2] reference to 'Russia's duty – not in words but in deeds – to put an end to [discrimination against expatriate Russians]' indicated that, for all the supposed primacy of CIS and specifically diaspora affairs during 1993, little had been done for these people.

Part of the difficulty was Moscow's tendency to view diaspora issues through an instrumentalist prism. As Alexei Arbatov [1994, p. 2] pointed out:

> [b]y demonstrating that concern for Russian speakers is a genuine motive for Russia's policy, not a pretext to exert pressure and interfere, Moscow would have the right to call to account those regimes that violate their rights.

Instead, the administration frequently exploited concerns about institutionalized discrimination against the diaspora to apply crude pressure on FSU governments [Afanasyev, 1994, p. 24]. This was apparent in its handling of relations with the Baltic states where, on one famous occasion, Kozyrev left open the option of using armed force to protect Russian expatriates [Gornostaev, 1995, p. 1]. When Moscow introduced trade sanctions against Latvia in the spring of 1998 following clashes between police and Russian pensioners in the centre of Riga, it was motivated by several considerations, none of which pertained to the condition of Russian speakers in Latvia: 'The Russian authorities were trying to kill several birds with one stone: to … make their neighbours respect them; to distract public opinion from the government crisis [the sacking of the Chernomyrdin government]; to make a gesture towards the national-patriots on the eve of the Duma vote on the nominee for Prime Minister; and, finally and most importantly, to present a step taken out of necessity (a cutback in oil exports) as a noble impulse aimed solely at defending oppressed compatriots … ' [Yusin, 1998b, p. 3].

The issue is not that the Russian government was unjustified in protesting about discrimination against the Russian minorities in the

FSU. Their treatment was often shabby, and several 'host' governments certainly had a case to answer. However, throughout the Yeltsin period, the rights and wrongs were scarcely relevant except insofar as they could be turned to domestic political advantage. No more eloquent testimony of official indifference to the plight of expatriate Russians exists than the fact that Putin's meeting with members of the Russian community in Uzbekistan in late 1999 was said to have been the first by a Russian leader with any of the FSU diaspora in the entire post-Soviet period [Airapetova, 2000, p. 5]. Moscow failed to provide even the most rudimentary practical support. Lieven [1999, p. 59] has noted, for instance, the unwillingness to fund Russian-language television broadcasts to many diaspora areas, let alone entertain more ambitious and costly ventures. Policy was all words and minimal action. It was also very much a case of the leadership allowing elite preferences to influence the 'mood' [Pravda and Malcolm, 1996, p. 303] and not the specifics of foreign policy-making. The way the Kremlin dropped the question of Crimean local autonomy in order to facilitate conclusion of the 1997 bilateral treaty with Ukraine was further indication of how unimportant diaspora issues were in the greater scheme of things [Lieven, 1999, p. 60].

Moscow's relations with individual CIS states

It is an obvious but surprisingly overlooked truism that, just as Russia was a lot more equal than the other CIS members, so the latter differed in their importance to Moscow. One of the most common errors of post-Soviet watching has been the tendency, inherited from the period of the USSR, to treat the FSU as a unified entity. Nothing could be more misleading. Russian policy towards, say, Ukraine differed in virtually every respect – origins, formative influences, priorities and modalities – from that towards Kyrgyzstan or for that matter the other constituent republics of the former Soviet Union. It is therefore meaningless to say that the CIS *as a whole* was/is the top priority of Russian foreign policy. Relations with Commonwealth members need to be seen on a region-by-region basis.

Ukraine

By far the most important of Russia's relationships with individual CIS member-countries was with Ukraine. For many reasons – historical, political, security, economic – this assumed a primacy within FSU affairs that was never called into serious conceptual question. In the first place, the association went back further and deeper than ties with any of the

other FSU states. Their more than 300-year union[11] ensured that Ukraine occupied an important niche in Russia's imperial syndrome or identity [*see U.S.–Russian Relations …*, 2000, p. 174]. In contrast to the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, it was considered much more part of Russia proper than a colony and supplied many of the Soviet Union's top governing elite, for example, Brezhnev and Khrushchev. This meant that, when the separation came in 1991, it had a much more profound effect on the Russian psyche than the secession of the other republics [*see* Primakov's comments regarding the legacy of 'unitarianism' – in Kondrashov, 1996b, p. 3].

More concrete realities reinforced the strength of traditional historical and cultural links. During Soviet times, Ukraine was the ultimate buffer zone between Russia and the West. Although the end of the Cold War and the country's subsequent denuclearization[12] reduced the direct strategic impact of an independent Ukraine, its territorial extent (largest in Europe after Russia), sizeable population (50 million) and geographic position along the fault-line between Westernizing Central Europe and Russia, made it a logical subject for Moscow's continuing attention. The need for a pliant Ukraine to act as a buffer against a direct Western military threat might have passed, but the Yeltsin administration nevertheless remained extremely sensitive to the possibility that improving relations between Kyiv and the West could undermine Russia's geostrategic position precisely when the latter was at its most vulnerable [Zatulin and Migranyan, 1997, p. 2]. This consideration became especially pertinent in the wake of the NATO decision to expand membership eastwards to embrace Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Negotiations on the division of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet and a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership,[13] which had dragged on for some six years, were finalized in May 1997 after Moscow realized it had no option but to cut a deal with NATO over the best conditions under which enlargement would take place. As Presidential Press Secretary Yastrzhembsky acknowledged, 'Ukraine and NATO are two very closely intertwined things. The closer our relations with Ukraine, the less of a headache there will be with NATO' [*Kommersant-Daily*, 31 May 1997, p. 1]. Ukraine was also important commercially. In 1996, it accounted for 46 per cent of total Russian trade with CIS countries, (although this figure fell to around 35 per cent in 1998 and 1999 – *Tamozhennaya statistika …*, 2000, pp. 7, 9; *Tamozhennaya statistika …*, 2001, pp. 7, 9), as well as being the largest importer of Russian gas and oil (which supplied some 80 per cent of its total needs) [Mroz and Pavliuk, 1996, pp. 58, 61]. Kyiv's failure to pay its energy bills was a constant source of friction

between the two countries, and the size of the resultant debt (an estimated US$1.4 billion) [Zinets, 2001, p. 5] ensured that Ukraine would remain a constant economic as well as political-security preoccupation. Indeed, relations with Ukraine offered something for everyone in the Russian foreign policy elite: economic priorities for advocates of the liberal agenda, security objectives for great power ideologists and supporters of an independent foreign policy line, and a pan-Slavism for believers in a CIS-first outlook.

Yet, what should have been a primary foreign policy priority by force of tradition and logic was somehow left unfulfilled. Although there was no in-principle disagreement about Ukraine's importance, in practice relations were neglected for the greater part of the post-Soviet era, a fact noted by commentators of various political persuasions [Karaganov, 1995a, p. 5; Eggert, 1995, p. 3; Zatulin and Migranyan, 1997, p. 2]. Interestingly, the administration itself tacitly acknowledged that ties with Ukraine were subordinate to other priorities, namely Russia's wider relationship with the West. Yastrzhembsky's earlier comment regarding the nexus between NATO enlargement and the Russia–Ukraine Bilateral Treaty suggested that the latter was not so much important *in itself*, but as an instrument to arrest the growing strategic imbalance in Europe. As James Sherr [1997, p. 46] pointed out at the time, the agreements with Ukraine were only the most important in a series of moves – including the Chechen peace treaty, the May 1997 Moldovan accords and renewed efforts at conflict resolution in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh – 'to eliminate sources of tension and find the room…to allow Russia to put its house in order' in response to NATO's eastwards expansion. The government's instrumentalist handling of the relationship demonstrated that, once the usual CIS-related posturing was set aside, it was a secondary priority in all but name.

Belarus

Relations with Belarus were at once the biggest success and most egregious failure of Russian policy in the CIS area. In one sense, there was a considerable meeting of minds, if measured by the number of agreements and high-level meetings. However, as with Ukraine, very little was done to put the Belarus relationship on a new footing. Despite ambitious talk of union, Sherman Garnett's 1998 [p. 77] prediction that the gulf between 'the intended policy of integration of the two states and the reality of continued separation' would widen, has been validated. The bottom line, as often the case in CIS-related affairs, was the absence of political will to translate sentiment into practical achievement.

As Lukashenko's disappointed comments on Russia–Belarus integration (*see above*) suggested, the main problem was a lack of elite consensus on how to approach relations with Minsk. Another was the feeling that Belarus could be taken for granted. Its quasi-'rogue state' status[14] meant that, notwithstanding its supposed political and strategic assets, there was no rush to obtain its favours. Although a 1997 report by the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy – 'Bringing Russia and Belarus Closer Together' – insisted that '[u]nder no circumstances should one think that Belarus has no alternative to a policy of rapprochement with Russia' [*NG Stsenarii*, no. 5, 29 April 1997, p. 2], there was very little urgency amongst the Russian political class as a whole. As one journalist [Malkina, 1999, p. 1] put it, 'Belarus will be there when the time comes [to embrace integration] and will not have got entangled in any other dubious alliances.' The extent of Russian complacency was reflected in Lukashenko's frequent – and justified – complaints that Moscow (i) failed to consult Belarus before undertaking major foreign policy and security initiatives;[15] (ii) repeatedly spurned Belarus's integration proposals, thereby making Minsk understand the error of 'tilting wildly towards the East' [in Chubchenko, 1999a, p. 3]; and (iii) 'used' Belarus for purely domestic political purposes [Pletnev, 1999, p. 5].

Transcaucasus

If Russia–Belarus relations revolved around the theme of integration, then the Transcaucasus was principally important to Moscow as the main theatre of conflict management in the FSU. The most serious post-Soviet conflicts – the Georgian civil war, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh – were located in this region. And, unlike in Transdniestria and Tajikistan, there was a strong conviction that vital political, security and economic interests were at stake. The proximity of these conflicts to Russia's sensitive Muslim regions – particularly the North Caucasus – and to strategic pipeline routes from the Caspian Sea heightened perceptions of strategic vulnerability. In contrast to Central Asia, the 'Islamic threat' was seen as much more tangible and immediate, having direct implications for Moscow's conduct of two bloody wars in Chechnya and, potentially, for the security of Russia's lower Don and Volga regions [Migranyan, 1994b, p. 8]. The domino theory that was a somewhat far-fetched construct in Tajikistan or eastern Uzbekistan acquired a measure of plausibility in the Transcaucasus.

The region was also viewed as one of considerable economic sensitivity and importance. Although like Central Asia, the Transcaucasus bordered on the Caspian Sea, it derived added significance as an energy

transit as well as producing region. Moreover, its relative proximity made it a more attractive target for growing Western resource investment. It was not coincidental that Russia's most serious disagreements over Caspian Sea-related issues should occur with Azerbaijan over the division of oil resources,[16] with Georgia and Azerbaijan over pipeline routes,[17] and with the West – in particular, the United States – over the latter's involvement in the Transcaucasus side of Caspian Sea oil operations. By contrast, tensions in Russia's energy relations with Central Asia were more subdued, mainly because the opportunities for external involvement there were seen as more limited. Whereas the United States at times espoused an assertive policy of developing relations with the Transcaucasus states, China as the 'other power' in Central Asia deferred to Russian sensitivities by assuming a modest profile.

The Transcaucasus, then, remained a region of priority interest to Moscow throughout the post-Soviet period. That said, this focus was anything but sustained, with policy being essentially reactive, as well as less than successful. If it is overstating the case to claim that Russia was 'being squeezed out of the Transcaucasus' or that its future presence in the North Caucasus was in jeopardy [Zatulin and Migranyan, 1997, p. 2], then it is nevertheless true that it lost considerable ground. This was partly an outcome of *force majeure* in the shape of the opening-up of the region during the 1990s. But much of the fault lay with a Kremlin whose idea of a Transcaucasus policy was to lurch from one exercise in crisis management to another, and a foreign policy apparatus whose segmentation and lack of coordination militated against the effective pursuit of Russian interests. As with CIS-related policy elsewhere (for example, Ukraine), Moscow often became energized only when outside parties showed an interest in 'infringing' on its turf. This 'negative drive' was the antithesis of the conceptual clarity policy-makers sought to convey.

Central Asia

The perceived threat of Islamic 'extremism' has dominated post-Soviet Russian policy towards Central Asia. Although less direct than the Caucasus variety, at different times it has assumed significant proportions in the consciousness of at least part of the political elite. Thus Primakov [1996d, p. 2] justified the Russian military presence in Tajikistan as a necessary forward defence against a wave of Islamic extremism, emanating from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, that threatened to sweep over Central Asia and have an 'extremely negative impact both on Russia's security and on prospects for the development of the CIS'. Others,

however, argued equally strongly that Russia had no business in becoming closely involved in attempts to turn back the Taliban: 'a one-on-one war with Islamic fundamentalism in the south is just not our war' [Bovt, 1998, p. 3]. The presence of the 201st Motorized Division in Tajikistan was widely criticized as a waste both of taxpayers' money and 'the blood of Russian soldiers' [Mlechin, 1995, p. 1], as well as being a 'quagmire from which an exit will not be easy' [Latsis, 1994, p. 4]. Such views were far from being the preserve of liberal journalists; Migranyan [1994b, p. 5] and Alexei Arbatov [1994, p. 1] were similarly anxious that military intervention could end up exacerbating instead of alleviating the problem. The former, indeed, believed that the Islamic threat from Central Asia had been considerably exaggerated, and that there would be no 'serious threat to Russia's interests for a long time'. Even if Islamic fundamentalism became dominant in Central Asia, Russia 'would always have time to fence itself off ... by establishing new borders with the countries of Central Asia'.

As in other areas of foreign policy-making, difference of perception resulted in a minimalist line. On the one hand, Moscow continued to station troops in Tajikistan. On the other hand, it invested few resources in countering the threat of Islamic 'extremism' nor was it able (or willing) to coordinate effectively with Central Asian states in establishing joint security arrangements. Even when faced by an apparently 'clear and present danger', as in August 1998 following the Taliban capture of the opposition stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif, the government offered mixed signals. Foreign Ministry spokesman Nesterushkin's statement that 'Russia and the Commonwealth's other members reserve the right to take any measures to safeguard their borders' [in Mikhailov and Shumilin, 1998, p. 4] appeared to leave open the possibility of a vigorous armed response by Moscow. Yet a day later First Deputy Foreign Minister Pastukhov felt compelled to clarify that Russia had 'no plans for active military intervention in northern Afghanistan' [in Yershov and Merinov, 1998, p. 2].

Kazakhstan

The case of Kazakhstan was somewhat different from elsewhere in Central Asia in that the policy agenda here was both much broader and more substantive. First, Moscow had a vital stake in promoting the denuclearization of a newly independent nuclear weapons state. Second, Kazakhstan's sheer size and strategic location – on the civilizational faultline between Orthodox north, Islamic south and Sinic east – meant that political and security developments there merited careful monitoring.

Third, the presence of a large native Russian-speaking population (more than 40 per cent – Russell, 1995, p. 58), not to mention a considerable historical-colonial tradition, created a ready-made constituency in favour of close ties with Almaty. Fourth, as a Caspian Sea littoral state Kazakhstan was a key player in the exploitation and transportation of regional energy resources. All logic suggests, therefore, that it should have been a major preoccupation for a range of Russian foreign policy interests. However, as elsewhere in the CIS, there was a significant discrepancy between what *should have been* and what *was* [*see* Karaganov, 1996a, p. 2]. Part of the reason for this lay, ironically, in the country's relative stability. Unlike the Transcaucasus, there were no conflicts that demanded immediate policy responses from Moscow, while Kazakhstan was somewhat removed physically and emotionally from developments in Afghanistan. Compared to Kyiv, its flirtation with the West was more or less limited to maximizing exploitation of its energy resources; there were no joint military exercises with the United States or NATO to concern Russia. Almaty also moved fairly smoothly on denuclearization, with little of the complicated horse-trading that characterized Ukraine's transition to non-nuclear weapons state (NNWS) status. Its policies towards the diaspora were less provocative than those of many other former Soviet states. Finally, while criticizing the operation of the CIS and entertaining the idea of more ambitious pan-regional bodies such as the Eurasian Economic Community, President Nazarbaev nevertheless remained one of the Commonwealth's more loyal supporters, playing an active part in the quadrilateral Customs Union and the Collective Security Treaty. Participation in these structures, for all their toothlessness, tended to enhance Kazakhstan's image as a generally positive player in Moscow's eyes [*see* Primakov, 1996b, p. 3]. Unfortunately, such cooperativeness meant that it was often taken for granted. In this sense it suffered something akin to the Belarus syndrome; its trade dependence on Russia (nearly half of total imports – Shishkov, 2001, p. 98), and the reluctance of other outside parties (the United States, China) to assume substantial political and security commitments in the region, encouraged an underlying complacency that Kazakhstan 'would always be there' [*see* Dokuchaeva *et al.*, 1997, p. 6].

The failure of implementation in CIS policy

One of the few areas of agreement on CIS-related issues was that the vast majority of CIS agreements were worthless, a point conceded on occasion by President Yeltsin himself [*see* Budakov, 1997, p. 1]. The history of the Commonwealth appeared to demonstrate that implementation

of agreements was in inverse proportion to their quantity. As Belarus's Ambassador to the United States [Tsepkalo, 1998, pp. 109–10] noted some years ago, of the more than 700 intra-CIS agreements, 'none seems to work'. The obvious point – but one which many observers [for example, Mark, 1996–97, p. 154; Brzezinski, 1994, p. 73] have failed to grasp – is that the large number of agreements and mechanisms was in no way a barometer of the commitment of Russia (and other member-states) to CIS affairs. Instead, the proliferation of institutional links was often a surrogate for action. And while it is an inevitable shortcoming of foreign policy-making everywhere that decisions frequently go unimplemented, what was especially damning was that *all* the CIS's principal objectives, without exception, suffered this fate. If one runs down the checklist – CIS integration, Russia–Belarus union, Customs Union, Collective Security Treaty, joint peacekeeping operations, Joint Air Defence system, Common Economic Space, intra-CIS free trade – the record makes dismal reading. Worse still, this sustained lack of achievement was accompanied by a deterioration in Moscow's relations with many former Soviet republics as well as by a weakening of its political and economic positions in the region.

The prime cause of this failure was the lack of administration interest in the FSU. An unwillingness to bring significant political, human and financial resources to bear; a reactive approach towards problems; the disproportionate role of instrumentalist considerations; the fact that so many of Russia's relations with CIS states centred on a tiny handful of issues – all these pointed to the secondary status of the CIS among Russia's external priorities, as well as to the crippling effect of non-consensus on decision-making. In the circumstances, the Yeltsin administration did remarkably well in sustaining the illusion of policy interest in the face of compelling evidence to the contrary. If 'success' is measured not by the regime's ability to get things done but by the extent to which it was able to convince others of the sincerity of its rhetoric, then the case of the CIS stands as a monument to the virtues of Potemkinization as well as to humankind's infinite capacity to believe.

Multipolarity and multilateralism – form versus substance

The decline and fall of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War bipolarity left policy-makers with the immense challenge of reinventing Russia in such a way as to maintain its position and status in the world. Although Kozyrev [1994c, p. 59] and some others nursed hopes that the 'strategic partnership' between Russia and the United States would

'influence positively the course of world affairs' (*see* Chapter 2), it soon became clear that attempts to recast bipolarity in these terms would come to naught. Not only did the Russian political class find the scenario implausible but, more importantly, Washington showed little disposition to share global leadership with a country that had been its main enemy for the past half century and which was now in strategic and economic freefall. The chief value of multilateralism and multipolarity was therefore instrumental from the start; they were viewed as vital means of justifying a global role for Russia and of mitigating (to the extent possible) the United States' dominance of international affairs. The mythology here was relatively sophisticated, and Moscow exerted strenuous efforts to persuade other nations of the sincerity and depth of its commitment. Nevertheless, the elements of illusion and mythmaking were no weaker. There emerged, in particular, a fundamental disjunction between the rhetoric of a surface allegiance to UN-based multilateralism, the primacy of international law and 'political-diplomatic' methods in conflict resolution on the one hand, and an often selective and self-interested approach to their application in practice.

Multilateralism in theory and practice

The primacy of the UN

The first principle of post-Soviet multilateralism was the primacy of the UN as the supreme decision-making body in global affairs. This was enshrined in many policy documents, including the 1997 Russo-Chinese 'Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Formation of a New International Order', signed by Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin. Article 4 of the Declaration called for strengthening the role of the UN and the Security Council, and asserted that 'the UN's place and role in the world as the most universal and authoritative organization ... cannot be supplanted by any other international organization' [*Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 April 1997, p. 2]. Moscow's UN-first line was a logical response to Russia's diminishing importance in the post-Cold War world. With the end of inter-bloc confrontation, there was an unmistakable tendency in many countries, great and small, to pay less heed to its sensibilities. Furthermore, the assumption that Russia would be distracted by regional (that is, FSU) problems encouraged a sense that it was no longer essential to include it as a matter of course in the resolution of broader international questions. Moscow found itself in an invidious position whereby it was neither feared, respected (due to its severely weakened state) nor even loved (with memories of past oppressions being all too

fresh). In these altered circumstances, membership of the P-5 in the UN Security Council stood as one of its few remaining levers of international influence, all the more significant in the comparatively idealist atmosphere of post-Cold War multilateralism.

As a rule, the Yeltsin administration highlighted the UN's pre-eminence whenever it felt threatened by marginalization. It was thus consequent that the issue should be raised in the context of various conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Kosovo) and American/British military action against Iraq. In the former instance, the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept linked 'enhancing Russia's role in settling the Yugoslav conflict' with 'ruling out armed outside intervention without the UN Security Council's sanction' [Chernov, 1993, p. 3]. Consistent with this logic, the raising of the UNSC's and, by extension, Russia's profile and influence depended similarly on containing American 'unipolarity' and its alleged pretensions to the 'role of supreme arbiter trying ... to supplant the Security Council' [*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 September 1996, p. 1]. The great attraction of multilateralism for Moscow was that it diffused power and authority among a greater number of players – or at least gave the impression of doing so. To some extent, it compensated for or at least blurred the growing gap between the two former superpowers. It was therefore natural for Russia to insist on the UNSC's continuing role in international dispute settlement, because this forum was one of the few where it could aspire to a rough equality with the United States as well as claim major power status by 'right' and precedent.

The thinness of Moscow's commitment to multilateralism was exposed, however, whenever it was the primary player.[18] Throughout the Yeltsin era, it firmly resisted attempts to 'internationalize' the settlement of disputes in the former Soviet Union because it felt, with some justification, that this would erode its pre-eminence as the 'regional superpower' [term used by Aron, 1998, p. 27]. So, while the OSCE became the centrepiece of Russian conceptions of European security 'for the twenty-first century' [Yeltsin, 1994c, p. 6], Moscow strove simultaneously to minimize the organization's mediatory role in the FSU, most notably in peacekeeping arrangements in Nagorno-Karabakh.[19] Similarly, the UN was welcome only insofar as it provided moral authority for Russian-managed operations. Multilateralism was not some abstract ideal to which Russia had a particular emotional or even intellectual attachment [Petro and Rubinstein, 1997, p. 283], but an instrument to be used selectively to promote specific policy aims. In the European security environment it served as a useful ideological counterpoint to the NATO-dominated reality; in the CIS, however, genuine multilateralism (rather than the

ersatz CIS variety) represented a potential geopolitical threat or, at best, a nuisance.

International law and 'political-diplomatic' methods in conflict resolution

In promoting the idea of the UN as principal global decision-making body, the Yeltsin administration worked assiduously to establish a public distinction between the rules and conventions of the international system on the one hand, and the methods of 'power' and 'force' on the other. Or, as Igor Ivanov [1998a] put it pithily in his address at the 1998 General Assembly, Russia believed in the need for 'the force of law to prevail over the law of force'. Subsequently, the Russian Foreign Minister [2000a, p. 9] was to claim that a Western-centred world order 'would inevitably result in the establishment of the principle that "might makes right" in international relations, along with policies of diktat and double standards'. Moscow's motives in advocating the primacy of international law were a combination of principle and self-interest. In the first case, many in the administration retained a quasi-ideological/legalist allegiance to the international system of rules and conventions. Warts and all, it represented a more or less comprehensible and stable way of conducting international affairs, one to which they had become accustomed. 'System' in this context equated readily with conceptions of 'order' (*poryadok*), important to the psyche of Soviet/Russian officialdom. Second, there was an obvious need to respond to the changed global environment, to be sensitive to the message that political-diplomatic processes and not military pressure were the *lingua franca* of the new world politics.

But by far the most important motive behind Russia's promotion of the virtues of the international system was its self-preservation as a great power in the post-bipolar world. Posing as the champion of multilateralism offered it the opportunity to present itself as a leading light in an alternative rational consensus, one that challenged both the primacy of the United States and the moral universalism of Western values. Sergei Markov [1998, p. 3] touched on this when, in the context of Primakov's mediation efforts with Iraq,[20] he remarked that '[i]n insisting on a strictly diplomatic resolution of the crisis, Russia ... is expressing publicly what many others are thinking but are not yet venturing to say openly'. According to Markov, 'for the first time in recent years our diplomacy, despite its weakness, has been able to become the informal leader of a certain coalition'. Crucially, Russia appeared to have no viable alternative. As Nikolai Kosolapov [1993, p. 11] observed, it

needed to participate in constructing a new UN- and multilaterally based democratic international system to make up for its lack of effective traditional foreign policy instruments, such as military power. The use of 'forcible methods' in international politics was 'unacceptable' principally because Russia, except in very few instances, was no longer able to resort to them as in the Soviet past; only the United States (and its allies) could exercise this option. 'Forbidding' the use of force, then, was critical to attempts to contain American power to manageable proportions while at the same time masking the extent of Russia's own decline. This lesson was underlined whenever Washington undertook military action, whether against the Serbs, Iraq or terrorist targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. On these occasions, the political class interpreted such operations mainly in terms of the damage to Russia's international position. Thus, during the Kosovo crisis Migranyan [1999, p. 6] warned that NATO success in Operation Allied Force would establish 'a new world order once and for all, with the USA holding undivided dominion over the world,' and result in Russia losing 'the last vestiges of its status as a significant player both in international relations … and on the territory of the Russian Federation itself'. In similar vein, Pushkov [1999, p. 3] observed, following the peace settlement, that 'the USA would have shown more regard for Russia's interests in Europe only if it had achieved less during its operation … '.

The CIS is an interesting example of the administration's Janus-like approach to international law and 'political-diplomatic' methods. Although it had little interest in the 'internationalization' of dispute settlement (*see above*), Moscow at the same time understood the utility – on its own terms – of international endorsement of Russian peacekeeping operations in the FSU via a UN or OSCE mandate [Chernov, 1993, p. 3]. However, it was not prepared to allow international scrutiny and legal niceties to restrict its freedom of action. The dictum that negotiations must always prevail over the use of force was not necessarily applicable to the FSU, where the Russian government arrogated to itself the right to conduct military operations when and where it saw fit [Yeltsin, 1995a, p. 4]. And the patience and restraint it counselled the West to maintain in conflict situations in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia was often not replicated in its own dealings with FSU states – notably Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan and even Latvia – not to mention in its brutal conduct of two Chechen wars. If, in the end, the scale of Russian military activity in the former Soviet space turned out to be limited [Arbatov, 2000, pp. 2–3], then this was not because of the constraining effect of international legal norms and Western public opinion, but

because of more prosaic problems like policy infighting in Moscow, degraded military capabilities and scarce financial resources.

Principles of sovereignty and non-interference

Migranyan [1994b, p. 8] once proposed that Russia pursue a dualist foreign policy, one with the countries of the 'Near Abroad',[21] the other with the rest of the world. Although his recommendation attracted little direct support, Moscow's approach to ethical-legal issues in international relations often appeared to follow an FSU/non-FSU dichotomy. The selective approach of the administration to multilateralism and international norms was paralleled in its attitude to sovereignty issues. In the wider international environment, Russia stood as one of the most vocal defenders of the principle of state sovereignty against the intrusion of moral and legal extraterritoriality [*see* Yeltsin–Jiang joint declaration, in Gornostaev and Chernyakov, 1999, p. 6]. This was reflected in its soft position on human rights abuses in other countries;[22] vigorous rejection of international criticisms of such abuses within the Russian Federation (particularly in Chechnya) [comments by Yeltsin, in Tregubova, 1999b, p. 1]; repeated calls for UNSCOM inspections of Iraqi facilities to respect Baghdad's sovereign rights [joint Primakov and Tariq Aziz statement, in Gornostaev, 1997b, p. 1]; and, most conspicuously, its rejection of the principle of 'humanitarian intervention' during and after the Kosovo crisis [Ivanov, 2000a, p. 9; Putin, 2000a, p. 160].

But it was quite another story with the former Soviet Union. In reserving the right to intervene militarily and maintain quasi-permanent bases on the territory of other CIS states, Moscow applied very different standards to notions of sovereignty and non-interference. And although its actual efforts in support of the Russian diaspora were half-hearted, this was not because it doubted the propriety of adopting an extraterritorial approach. Virtually from the beginning, the Kremlin gave itself the option of intervening on behalf of Russian-speaking minorities [Yeltsin, 1994a, p. 2] – a sort of 'humanitarian intervention' that paid scant heed to the recently acquired sovereignty of FSU states. In contrast to Russia's generally 'Asian view' of human rights [Yusin, 1999e, p. 4], the CIS's place as a Russian 'sphere of influence' brought with it different rules of morality and legality.

As elsewhere, instrumentalism provided the key to understanding Russian attitudes. The main criterion was the extent to which a 'principled' stance on international moral-legal questions could assist the fulfilment of more strategic objectives, such as Russia's continued projection as a major regional and global actor. An emphasis on sovereignty and

territorial integrity in the context of Iraq and Kosovo was intellectually consistent with ideas such as the primacy of the UN and multilateral decision-making processes, and the non-applicability of force as an instrument of international relations. But the real point was that together they were intended to serve up an image of Russia as a law-abiding member of the international community at a time when many countries viewed the United States in just the opposite way. Their effective promotion was therefore integral to fostering a revised identity for Russia, one that would enable it to retain great power status through its standing as principal defender of the post-Cold War international system of values. In the context of the FSU, on the other hand, more urgent and concrete priorities such as conflict resolution, the 'Islamic threat' and diaspora issues outweighed such relatively abstract considerations. Multilateralism, sovereignty and non-interference tended to be viewed as luxuries that restricted rather than increased freedom of manoeuvre. Besides, Russia had many more options at its disposal; as undisputed regional hegemon, it hardly needed to search for ways to remain relevant.

'Big issues for big players' – elitism and the Concert of great powers

One of the most seductive myths of the post-Soviet era was the conflation of multipolarity and multilateralism. Soon after becoming Foreign Minister, Ivanov [1998c, p. 1] declared that the 'democratic, multipolar world order' sought by Russia required that 'there be no diktat on the part of any one state or group of states, that the views of all countries, regardless of their size or military power, be taken into account…'. Subsequently, he [2000a, p. 9] was to describe multipolarity as a 'philosophy of international life based on the realities of the era of globalization,' adding that '[o]nly by basing the new world order on the principles of interdependence and sovereign equality of all the international community's members… can we fully address the national interests and distinctive features of individual states within the framework of a common international process, and guarantee them equal security and a worthy place in the world community'. Such high-sounding phrases conveyed a deeply misleading impression. In the course of numerous declarations and through its foreign policy behaviour, the administration revealed that it saw multipolarity as something quite distinct from multilateralism, even while there were some similarities. Whereas the latter was about the 'democratization' of international affairs from a bipolar system to one in which, in Ivanov's words, all nation-states would have a say in the way the world was run, multipolarity was plutocratic to the core.

The days of bipolarity might be over, but Russia was far from ready to accept a diminished status as 'just another nation' [*see* Baranovsky, 2000, p. 451]; at the very least, it sought formal recognition of its great power status.

It was a condition of this status that Russia should participate in all major international organizations and groupings, especially those with limited membership. Thus, belonging to the G-8 was critical, not because Moscow thought it could really influence the group's deliberations, let alone global affairs, but as an indication that Russia had 'arrived' [Yeltsin, 2001, pp. 136–7]. Participation in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and Balkans Contact Groups was viewed in much the same light. Especially in the former case, few believed that Russia could play more than a secondary role.[23] What counted, however, was the *idea* of influence; image, if not everything, was certainly the most important thing. The obverse of this brand of international elitism was a consistent line aimed at ensuring that the magic circle of the world elite not be extended so far as to devalue the exclusivity, and undermine the relevance, of 'great power-ness'. This consideration informed, for example, Russia's lukewarm attitude towards UN reform [Yeltsin, 1995d, p. 1] and firm opposition to proposals restricting the use of veto power in the UN Security Council [*Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki*…, 2000, p. 6].[24] Part of the motivation here was a fear inherited from Soviet times that the resultant loss of flexibility could undermine Russian interests in the event of an adverse vote. But Moscow was also acutely conscious that P-5 membership constituted one of the few remnants of past glories, and that dilution of its privileges in this respect would represent another blow in its struggle to remain a global player. Relatedly, much as the Yeltsin administration trumpeted the OSCE as the centrepiece of European security and the embodiment of consensual decision-making processes in which all members were equal [Ivanov, 1998c, p. 6], it nevertheless found it an unwieldy body [Migranyan, 1997, p. 2]. It consequently sought the creation of an 'Executive Committee' [Yusin, 1994, p. 3] or 'European Security Council' along the lines of the UNSC, in which the major powers – the USA, Russia, Germany, UK, France, and so on – would make the major decisions [Yeltsin, 1995d, p. 9].[25]

There was consequently a basic contradiction between an overarching ideology of multilateral inclusiveness on the one hand, and the exclusivist instincts of a former superpower on the other. This schizophrenia ran across the political spectrum, as prevalent among advocates of the liberal foreign policy agenda as it was favoured by 'great power' ideologists. There was a shared belief that Russia was 'special', a conviction

which, in its most virulent form, was expressed in threats that Russia and China would 'dictate to the world' [Yeltsin's comments, in Gornostaev, 1999e, p. 1]. More usual and credible, however, were ideas that recalled the Concert of Europe in the early nineteenth century, albeit one of a more democratic bent [Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, pp. 17–18]. Lukin [1992b, p. 74] thus called for 'a new world order based on the "concert" of great democratic states, which Russia is destined by nature and providence to join'. While the format of elitist attitudes and behaviour changed from bipolarity to multipolarity, the instincts remained the same. Far from wanting to 'mix it' with the hoi-polloi of the international community on a more open and 'democratic' basis, Moscow – and Yeltsin personally[26] – was never more comfortable than when, in collegial fashion, it was dealing with the big issues with the other big players.

Diversification and Westerncentrism: the issue of geographic orientation

The pursuit of multipolarity in Russian foreign policy was predicated on the need for Moscow to abandon its traditional Westerncentric bias in favour of 'diversification'. As we saw in the previous chapter, this was motivated by rational and emotional considerations: on the one hand, a sense that Russia was overdependent on good relations with the West, on the other, a yearning to reaffirm Russian identity and *derzhavnost*. In particular, there was broad recognition that Russia needed to develop closer ties with the 'expanding Asian Pacific "locomotive"' [Karasin, 1997a, p. 16]. With this in mind, the administration proclaimed a network of so-called 'strategic partnerships' across the globe, extending beyond the West to major Asian powers like China [Yeltsin–Jiang joint declaration, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 April 1997, p. 2], India [Yastrzhembsky, in Reutov, 1997, p. 1] and Iran [Dannreuther, 1999–2000, p. 148], as well as CIS member-states [Putin, in Dubnov, 1999, p. 6] and even Cuba [Soskovets, in Felgengauer, 1995b, p. 2].

In practice, however, 'diversification' became yet another of the foundation myths of Yeltsin's foreign policy. Notwithstanding the illusion of 'balance', Moscow's approach to international affairs continued to reflect an overriding Westerncentrism. Despite talk about straddling East and West as the Eurasian pole, of turning eastwards, or assigning 'top priority' to the CIS, there existed an implicit understanding that the West must remain the prime policy focus. Like it or not – and many clearly did not – it was the latter which set the agenda, whether in international security, the globalized economy, or world affairs more generally. And although many commentators were wont to distinguish

between Kozyrev's alleged pro-Westernism and the 'pragmatism' of Primakov [Mlechin, 1996, p. 6], a Western-oriented (though not *pro*-Western) world-view remained one of the salient features of this period – even if it was packaged differently under different Foreign Ministers. It was entirely indicative that Moscow's chief preoccupations – NATO enlargement, the strategic disarmament agenda (the START process and NMD/ABM), international crisis management *vis-à-vis* Iraq and the Balkans – revolved around the West, and that in eight years the President should fail to pay a single bilateral visit to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa or Latin America. Critically, too, the motivating spirit of Russian interpretations of multilateralism, multipolarity and 'diversification' was fundamentally Westerncentric; these said less about a geographically balanced approach than about the desire, as Primakov [1996b, p. 3] put it, to respond to 'negative trends ... in international affairs', in other words, an American-centred unipolarity. Thus the wooing of China, the most important of the non-Western bilateral relationships, was driven as much by this rationale as by more transparent security and economic concerns.[27] The real choice was not about opting for other civilizations and political cultures as an alternative frame of reference, but about the way Russia should interact with the dominant Western model; it was here where the clashes in perceptions of identity and 'national interests' were played out (*see* Chapter 3).

What this Westerncentrism revealed also was that the issue of geographic orientation was largely out of Moscow's hands. Given the gravity of Russia's difficulties at home and abroad, it was easier to respond to the agenda of others than to undergo the painstaking process of a major conceptual revolution and its implementation. The United States lay at the centre of policy attention because it was the foremost military, economic, technological and cultural power[28] in the world. Since there was no significant area of international affairs where Washington did not play a leading role, it was inevitable that Russian foreign policy should be above all things Americacentric – an orientation cemented by the geopolitical strain within the political class (*see* Chapter 5), reliance on Washington's financial and political support, and the fact that the USA alone had the capacity to destroy Russia. Although there was dissension within the elite about the degree to which relations with America should be 'partner-like', there was little question that a functional relationship with it must remain the foundation of any viable foreign policy.

Even within the framework of a broad Westerncentrism it is difficult to make the case that the administration's approach to international affairs became more diversified. For although there were some signs of

'Europeanization' – in particular, the growth of two-way trade with EU members to more than a third of total volume [*Tamozhennaya statistika* ..., 2000, p. 7] – Moscow's approach to Western Europe during the 1990s exuded an underlying complacency and neglect.[29] It took three years before the much-heralded Russia–EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) entered into force,[30] while public policy responses to NATO enlargement and the Kosovo conflict were directed almost exclusively at Washington instead of the major European capitals. Particularly during Kosovo, the Kremlin assumed – wrongly – that President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright had been the main force behind military intervention.[31] It seemed to operate under the general assumption that Western Europe was manipulable: either by the United States or, in an ideal scenario, by Russia against the United States (witness the clumsy attempts to undermine the Transatlantic security consensus over Kosovo and American strategic missile defence). If Western Europe remained a priority area, it was as much for its association with America as on its own merits.

Conclusion

It is tempting to dismiss the mythmaking of the Yeltsin era as mere self-indulgence, a product of an unfortunate combination of stereotyped thinking, ideological inertia and vainglory. There were certainly large doses of all three in the administration's external outlook; sometimes its disinformation was gratuitous and counterproductive, and it could clearly have done more to create a transparent and practical foreign policy. However, one should be wary of dismissing the illusion and mythmaking of this period as all venality and no science. Much of it was a natural response to the radically changed circumstances confronting Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. At a time when the fortunes of all the other major powers and many smaller countries were ascendant, its own were in conspicuous decline. Perhaps the administration should have revised its expectations and pushed the country along the path of becoming a normal power and stable nation-state. But it is no great surprise that it failed, through lack of inclination and experience, to do so. Having made the decision in effect that Russia should remain a 'great power', it then faced the challenge of defying gravity. The long-term answer would have been to establish the foundations of a modern great power – a properly functioning political system, powerful economy and a strong and reliable military. But post-Soviet Russia had none of these, and even with the best will in the world these were unlikely to emerge in the near future.

So the Yeltsin administration, by default, went for the only plausible alternative – simulation instead of substance. If Russia could not be a great power, then it could at least act like one. All the myths discussed above pertained to this purpose. The misrepresentation of the CIS's importance was intended to help preserve Russia's position as regional hegemon; multipolarity was central to Moscow's global pretensions; and diversification was a means of expressing freedom and independence in thought and action. Finally, the major policy document – the Foreign Policy Concept, above all – was the glue that bound and codified the sum of illusions and myths. The outcome was a 'virtual' or 'Potemkinized' foreign policy, an alternative reality in which nothing was quite as it seemed, and where truths, half-truths and outright falsehoods were conflated in such a way as to make them often impossible to tell apart.

5
The Geopolitical Strain

One of the principal assumptions following the end of the Cold War was that geopolitics would become increasingly anachronistic. The removal of the bipolar confrontation of the past would be replaced by a new, positive-sum politics, while Russia's national interests would be defined not in terms of 'geopolitical alignment' but instead in the 'establishment of a high standard of living for its population and the preservation of human rights' [Kozyrev, 1992b, p. 5]. While there would inevitably be differences on individual issues, the end of ideological confrontation between Russia and the West, and the de-ideologization of international affairs in general, would foster a cooperative atmosphere that would enable disagreements to be resolved on their merits, free from the baggage of the past.

By the end of the Yeltsin presidency, however, it was evident that these expectations had been misplaced. Economic factors and priorities certainly became more important, but they had yet to present a serious challenge to the continuing primacy of geopolitics in Russian foreign policy. Just as ideology retained its importance in Moscow's world-view, so did zero-sum principles, balance-of-power concepts and notions of spheres of influence. For all the talk and deeds of international cooperation in promoting political stability, economic development, environmental protection and civil values, old-fashioned political-strategic competition showed few signs of abating. Indeed, with the enlargement of NATO eastwards and the outbreak of the Kosovo conflict, geopolitical attitudes within the Russian political elite hardened, if anything.

This chapter examines four key aspects of geopolitics in Yeltsin's Russia. First is the phenomenon itself, whose durability at a time of globalizing and 'economizing' trends elsewhere was one of the more curious features of international politics during the 1990s. Notwithstanding realization of the obvious – that Russia could not in the foreseeable future match the United States – the memory and habits of the Soviet past were so strong that, as if through inertia, Moscow continued to think in terms of a circumscribed geopolitical calculus. This strategic culture was founded, in turn, on three conceptual building blocks: (i) a zero-sum mentality; (ii) the balance of power; and (iii) spheres of influence. The first of these was the life-blood of a geopolitically-based foreign policy. Driven by a *kto kogo* ('who wins over whom') mentality in which for every winner there must be a loser, zero-sum equations were crucial in shaping Moscow's approach towards a whole range of issues: NATO enlargement, Iraq, Kosovo, strategic missile defence. If zero-sum was the 'soul' of geopolitics, then balance-of-power notions supplied its flesh and bones. Having made the judgement that the world remained a competitive and sometimes hostile place, the Yeltsin administration faced the task of adjusting to this reality by negotiating suitable arrangements to promote national security and economic interests. With the rough bipolar parity a thing of the past, it attempted to develop a range of mechanisms – alliances, 'strategic partnerships', pan-continental 'consensual' institutions, multipolarity, arms control agreements – that would, at least in part, 'compensate' for Russia's declining position in the world and in particular *vis-à-vis* the United States. The multiplicity of mechanisms indicated not so much the emergence of an identifiably post-Soviet way of looking at the world, as recognition that the pursuit of geopolitical ends now required more multidimensional and subtle tools. Similarly, the concept of spheres of influence or 'zones of special interests', the final element of the geopolitical triad, took on a different cloaking in the Yeltsin era. No longer able to rely on military instruments to assert its primacy, except in the most restricted of circumstances, Moscow was nevertheless reluctant to jettison the principle along with the means. It continued to view the CIS as a region for the projection of Russian influence, and Eastern Europe as a buffer zone in which Moscow's interests must be accorded priority. The bitter if ineffectual campaign against NATO enlargement highlighted the importance of such ideas, as well as the primacy of geopolitics more generally.

The resurrection of geopolitics

It was Richard Pipes [1997, pp. 76–7] who provided one of the more insightful explanations of the enduring appeal of geopolitics. He juxtaposed Russia's 'true national interests' based on a 'pro-Western alignment and integration into the world economy' with the 'emotional needs' of the political class which inclined it 'towards reliance on military power'. Although the former represented the rational path, the latter course was 'alluring because catching up with the West militarily would be much easier for Russia than catching up economically'. The dichotomy identified by Pipes was especially stark in the circumstances in which the Yeltsin administration found itself upon coming to power. On the one hand, it recognized that Russia needed to escape from its Soviet past and reinvent itself as a modern, non-threatening nation [Kozyrev, 1992d, p. 2]. On the other hand, the country lacked the wherewithal to execute these ambitions within a reasonable time-frame *whilst* remaining a great power. Initially, the Kremlin hoped that Russia could become a 'modern great power', one whose possession of destructive nuclear weapons potential and global reach would be paralleled by a growing capacity for constructive involvement in fields as diverse as the promotion of political and strategic stability, development of economic cooperation, and WMD non-proliferation. However, it soon lost faith in this best of both worlds outcome, particularly once it became clear that Western assistance would not magically conjure up Russia's smooth transformation into a flourishing society. It could either be modern or it could be 'great', but not both at the same time – at least not in the near future.

So a choice had to be made. To what extent should Russia accept that, for the time being at least, the requirement for internal political and economic reconstruction would limit its ability to be a major international player? Or should it strive to hold on to what it had – military power second only to the United States – and rely on its well-known trumps, hoping that in the meantime things elsewhere would somehow muddle through because other countries would see the 'Yeltsin experiment' as being too important to fail?[1] In the end, the administration plumped for the familiar, resorting to the short-term fix over the long-term solution. Progress towards democratization, a market economy and civil society was uneven, while military reform and downsizing was postponed endlessly. Meanwhile, Russia continued to portray itself as a great power, demanding a seat at the high table of world powers on the basis of past pedigree rather than current achievement – a course that

meant highlighting geopolitical and strategic considerations over potentially nebulous economic potential and political good intentions.

With hindsight, this outcome was predictable – for several reasons. The most critical was the sheer weight of cultural-historical tradition. No Russian leadership – tsarist, Communist or post-Soviet – had known any other way of managing external relations. In an overwhelmingly statist society it was inevitable that geopolitics, the traditional stuff of intergovernmental relations, should greatly outweigh economic priorities. Furthermore, the country's turbulent history, marked by invasions and territorial depradations from many directions, predisposed its ruling elites towards a foreign policy posture rich in suspicion and heavily reliant on military power. There was a natural gravitational pull towards political-military calculus instead of the economic interdependency characteristic of countries that have experienced more 'normal' (that is, peaceful) historical development. In this connection, it is not sufficiently appreciated just how much of a departure Gorbachev's 'new thinking'[2] represented in comparison with the prevailing foreign policy mindset, not just of the Soviet Communist party, but also of its tsarist predecessors. Geopolitics had not simply been the main game; it had been the only game. Given this background, it was unrealistic to expect that the new Russian government could have overturned the inclinations of centuries and reinvented foreign policy virtually overnight. Even in the best-case scenario for relations with the West, diminution of the geopolitical strain – as with political democratization and the development of a civil society – would have been the task of generations and not years.

As things turned out, this process was dogged from the outset by difficulties, unavoidable and otherwise, that would ensure that the heralded decline of geopolitics would be anything but linear. In the first place, the elite's predominantly geopolitical mindset was reinforced by perceptions of Western attitudes towards, and treatment of, Russia. In addition to disappointment over assistance levels, there was growing resentment that the West, while using the discourse of shared human values and positive-sum outcomes, was simultaneously taking advantage of Russian incapacity in the finest classical realist traditions of 'might is right' [Pushkov, 1995b, p. 5].[3] While in the first two years of the Yeltsin era such sentiments were relatively restrained, the emergence of NATO enlargement as a live issue in the autumn of 1993,[4] together with mounting policy disagreements over the former Yugoslavia, engendered a feeling that Russia needed to take active measures in response to geopolitical encroachment from the West [Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, p. 8]. As Primakov [1996a, p. 13] noted soon after becoming Foreign

Minister, expansion of the alliance would 'create a new geopolitical situation for Russia,' one which it could not ignore. Later, the Kosovo crisis and NATO's military operation against Slobodan Milosevic reinforced already strong sentiment about alleged nefarious intent on the part of the West.

Another factor exacerbating the geopolitical strain was the chronic instability in Russia's periphery. As related in Chapter 3, there was a distinct imperial syndrome both within and outside the administration, one that would have existed even if the post-Soviet transition in countries such as Georgia and Azerbaijan had proceeded more smoothly. But what enhanced the appeal of geopolitics was the presence of ongoing conflicts in a number of neighbouring republics, plus the opportunities this instability appeared to offer to outside powers to increase their influence at Russia's expense [*U.S.–Russian Relations* ..., 2000, p. 175]. Unlike regional economic cooperation (for example, in transnational pipelines) which demanded an extended time-frame, conflict resolution became a preoccupation of the here and now. Beyond the CIS, too, geopolitics had an immediacy lacking in other aspects of foreign policy. NATO enlargement, and the crises in Bosnia, Iraq and later Kosovo, were more tangible than long-term economic phenomena such as globalization.

The pervasive domestic uncertainty of the times contributed critically to the continuing attraction of geopolitics. In an environment where decision-making was motivated principally by short-term tactical imperatives rather than any strategic vision of the national interest, the result was effectively a 'dumbing-down' of foreign policy. The unsophisticated nature of the Russian polity led to an excessive focus on issues that were both more 'accessible' (to elite and general public alike) and easier to politicize; to a large degree, everyone could be an 'instant expert' (that is, have an opinion) on NATO enlargement, Bosnia or Kosovo. By contrast, international economic questions, such as WTO membership, Paris Club debt, participation in Asia-Pacific economic development were highly technical and lacking in political resonance. The chaotic institutional context of post-Soviet Russia, too, was ill-suited to the type of policy development and continuity necessary in order to prosecute external economic priorities. It was more important for foreign policy actors to demonstrate agility in reacting to fast-breaking developments – almost invariably geopolitical crises – than to develop long-term strategies which might soon be invalidated. Personal factors, particularly the role of Yeltsin himself, aggravated the situation. The President's constant politicking, interest in (and comparative understanding of) geopolitics, and ignorance of economic issues enhanced

the profile of security and pol-mil issues at the expense of other priorities. Even if they had so wished, institutional players could hardly avoid responding to this atmosphere.

Zero-sum mentality

Under Yeltsin, Russia's zero-sum mentality centred almost exclusively on the United States. Notwithstanding early declarations of a new era in transatlantic relations, Moscow took a dim view of the inexorable rise of the United States following the end of the Cold War. Such an attitude was, in the first place, predicated on the belief that untrammelled success for Washington would obviate the need for significant Russian participation in many global issues, such as international conflict settlement. Migranyan's [1999, p. 6] judgement in relation to the NATO intervention over Kosovo – that only if it failed would Washington and its allies 'retain a certain amount of respect for us as a country that still matters' – was typical. The cases of Iraq and the Middle East Peace Process appeared to demonstrate that Russian influence in the region was inversely proportional to the success of American military and mediation efforts respectively. As his reaction to Netanyahu's victory in the 1996 Israeli elections indicated, Primakov for one believed that the greater Washington's difficulties the more opportunity there would be for Moscow to carve out a niche for itself [Kondrashov, 1996a, p. 3 – *see* Chapter 3]. Implicit in this logic was an acknowledgement of the limits to Russia's influence, that in many instances its precipitous international decline restricted it to playing an opportunistic role. Sustaining the illusion of 'indispensability' (Chapter 2) depended on the failure of others, opening up the possibility for Russia to make good its claims.

But the zero-sum mentality was driven by more than rational or quasi-rational considerations. As with the geopolitical strain more generally, emotional factors were central. At one level, petty jealousy and what might be termed the 'culture of envy'[5] supplied a powerful impetus. It was unsurprising, given widespread feelings of 'national humiliation', that sections of the elite should feel a certain *schadenfreude* at American foreign policy setbacks. At the same time, such sentiments were heightened by perceptions of the United States' 'arrogance of power' [Pushkov, 1997b, p. 4] and 'almost maniacal desire' to achieve a unipolar world [Kozyrev, 1994b, p. 3]. One of the more unhelpful claims emanating from Washington was the assertion that the United States – and not the Russians as well – had won the Cold War, in effect 'earning' itself the right to establish an America-centred world order. Such a spin

rammed home the central message of zero-sum politics: that for every 'winner' someone must always 'lose' out. Even in cases – such as Germany and Japan – where the vanquished had emerged successfully from the consequences of defeat, a clear divide separated them from the victors. In Russia, political uncertainty, socioeconomic crisis, declining global status and even cultural degradation appeared to make the gulf unbridgeable. As a consequence, many in the political class tended all the more to view the conduct of international relations as being based on cut-throat competition rather than benevolent, positive-sum cooperation.

NATO enlargement and European security – the zero-sum/positive-sum dichotomy

This mix of the rational and the emotional came together most dramatically over the issue of NATO enlargement or, as its critics would have it, 'expansion'. There have been many arguments supporting and opposing what was, arguably, the most controversial development in post-Cold War geopolitics. Adherents consistently justified enlargement on the basis that it was not directed at Russia but, instead, at advancing security and stability to Central and Eastern Europe [*see* President Clinton's speech in Warsaw in July 1994, in Asmus *et al.*, 1995, p. 7]. Far from endangering international security, the argument ran, failure to enlarge would jeopardize the recent democratic gains in the region, and risk 'rekindling nationalism and reviving old patterns of geopolitical competition and conflict' [ibid., p. 9]. The matter, therefore, was not whether Russia had 'won' or 'lost' the Cold War, but of consolidating hard-won achievements that benefited all. As outlined in the 1997 Founding Act [p. 3], Russia and NATO,

> [p]roceeding from the principle that the security of all states in the Euro-Atlantic community is indivisible ... will work together to contribute to the establishment in Europe of common and comprehensive security based on the allegiance to shared values, commitments and norms of behaviour in the interests of all states.

In other words, this was the ultimate positive-sum enterprise.

Almost without exception,[6] however, the Russian political class took a contrary view. Indeed, NATO enlargement became one of the issues where the liberal foreign policy, great power and 'independent' agendas coincided to form a rough, if limited, consensus. Liberal views were reflected in the concern that 'expansion' would 'encourage the growth

of anti-Western and imperial political forces in Russia' [Kozyrev, 1995c, p. 4]. At a time of acute domestic difficulty, it would be seen as 'the consummation of a "grand design" to destroy Russia as a European power once and for all' [Alexei Arbatov, 1996, pp. 104–5]. Self-declared 'centrists' and advocates of *derzhavnost*, on the other hand, focused on the overtly geopolitical dimension. Primakov [1993, p. 3], while acknowledging that NATO was unlikely to use enlargement as a springboard for direct attack, nevertheless insisted that the alliance's move to the 'direct proximity' of the Russian border would necessitate 'a fundamental rethinking of all defensive concepts'. As Foreign Minister he [1996d, p. 4] subsequently reiterated this theme by asserting that NATO's expansion into 'the space of the Warsaw Pact' would change Russia's geopolitical situation for the worse. In this connection, Moscow highlighted the issue of NATO military infrastructure in the new member states, demanding a formal commitment that nuclear weapons not be deployed in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic (*see* Yeltsin's speech at the signing ceremony of the Founding Act – 1997b, p. 1).

But in the end, the most compelling consideration was that enlargement became a metaphor symbolizing and formalizing NATO's victory in the Cold War [Gankin, 1996, p. 10] and, correspondingly, Russia's relegation to the periphery of European and world affairs [Trenin, 2000, pp. 15–16]. Although a small minority argued that Russia–NATO relations should not be seen in zero-sum terms, the Kremlin was only fitfully able to summon up the fortitude to emphasize the 'positive aspects of engagement over the negative ones of enlargement' [Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, p. 10]. Not only had the Warsaw Pact disintegrated, but it had defected *en masse* to the opposition – and this notwithstanding promises allegedly given by the then US Secretary of State James Baker to Gorbachev in 1990 that the West would not take advantage of German reunification to expand the alliance eastwards [*see* Gornostaev, 1997a, p. 4]. The common conclusion was that NATO had effectively 'conquered', at virtually no risk and comparatively little cost, large territories which until very recently had been dominated by Moscow. It was entirely consequent, therefore, that Russia should propose periodically that the alliance transform itself into 'one of the instruments in a pan-European system of collective security' headed by the OSCE [*see* remarks by Grachev, 1995, p. 1] or become an organization 'oriented to crisis prevention and resolution and collective peacekeeping under the mandate of the UNSC and OSCE' [Rodionov, 1996, p. 4]. Political-strategic calculations contributed to the development of such proposals, but 'face' and appearance were the crux. Kozyrev's [1995c, p. 12] complaint – that

arguments in favour of enlargement in 'one way or another always boil down to the thesis of a threat from Russia – if not from today's democratic Russia, then possibly from the imperial Russia of tomorrow' – posited a nightmarish vision of an expanding, increasingly integrated Euro-Atlantic community, against the spectre of a beaten, marginalized and essentially friendless Russia [Zagorskii, 1996, p. 9; Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, p. 10; Trenin, 2000, pp. 15–16]. By emasculating NATO or at least diluting its remit, Moscow hoped to blur the distinction between perceived winners and losers; in this way, the alliance, and not just Russia, would be making concessions to a former enemy while acknowledging the changed climate in Europe.

To some extent, NATO understood the importance of finessing the modalities of enlargement, and the 1997 Founding Act was designed to be as inclusive as possible. Unfortunately, the majority perception within the Russian establishment was that it merely papered over the cracks. Moscow, which had sought explicit, legally binding guarantees regarding non-deployment of nuclear weapons in the east as well as a NATO commitment to transform itself into a 'political' organization [Yeltsin, 1997a, p. 2; Kondrashov, 1997a, p. 3], in the end signed a document containing none of these. And although Yeltsin [1997b, p. 1] claimed that the Founding Act would 'make it possible for [Russia and NATO], acting as equals, to discuss and … adopt joint decisions on basic questions of security and stability affecting our [both sides'] interests,' Migranyan's [1997, p. 1] judgement that Russian diplomacy had 'not been able to avoid the fate of a defeated power' more accurately reflected elite perceptions at the time. Later, these were to be powerfully reinforced by the lessons of the Kosovo conflict which exposed the limits of Moscow's influence in Russia–NATO consultative mechanisms like the Permanent Joint Council (PJC).[7]

Balance of power – theory and practice

Of all the concepts influencing the conduct of foreign policy in the post-Soviet era, balance of power was the most important. At a time of anarchy in Russia's external relations, it stood as one of the few consistent guiding principles – as relevant under Kozyrev as it was in the later Primakov years. It manifested itself in different guises, but remained throughout an integral part of the calculus of the Yeltsin administration. Bipolar condominium, multipolarity, 'partnership', strategic stability – all were ideas grounded in conceptions of the balance of power, from which they derived much of their development, logic and political appeal.

Russia as the great 'balancer' – bipolar and multipolar approaches

In its most elemental form, the balance of power was bipolar. With the end of the Cold War a matter of very recent memory, Moscow originally sought an equilibrium with the United States – even while it perceived the widening gap between them. Figures like Kozyrev [1994c, p. 59] saw partnership with its erstwhile foe as critical to 'the transformation of an unstable, post-confrontational world into a stable and democratic one'. The key premise here was that Washington 'did not have the capability to rule alone' [ibid., p. 63] and that other powers would both want and need to fill in the substantial gaps where American power was lacking. As Georgi Arbatov [1994, p. 103] argued:

> Americans and Russians need not love one another … it will be enough if they understand that they need each other, that they need to cooperate with one another, and that the international community needs them to attempt this.

Underpinning such arguments was an implicit assumption that a *Pax Americana* – or dominance of a single power – was unhealthy as well as impractical. It was in this context, for example, that the scholar Karen Brutents [1994, p. 4] called for the reanimation of Russia's 'indispensable' role as a 'balancing factor' – that is, a force for equity and moderation – in the Middle East Peace Process.

Subsequently, when it emerged that Russian and American perceptions of Moscow's global role differed substantially, the Yeltsin administration moved away from this somewhat nebulous and idealistic conception of 'balance' into one that borrowed more directly from the Cold War competitive bipolar model as well as from nineteenth-century classical traditions. There emerged the Primakovian notion of Russia as 'counterbalance to the negative trends … in international affairs' [Primakov, 1996b, p. 3 – *see* Chapter 4]. This would involve Moscow moderating Washington's 'excessive and not always wisely used might by, among other things, playing the role of mediator and alternative diplomatic and political centre' – an aim which, it was claimed, other powers (for example, France and China) desired it to play and which was crucial to Russia's continuing identity as a 'great power' [Pushkov, 1997b, p. 4]. But it soon became apparent that the role of counterbalance was not one which Moscow was capable of fulfilling alone. Such had been Russia's decline that no-one, including itself, could picture it as a credible 'alternative' to the United States.

The Kremlin consequently pursued a two-track approach to balance-of-power politics at the global level. The first avenue was that of multipolarity understood as 'revised bipolarity'. This viewed the international balance in terms of the United States colossus on one side, set against a constellation of weaker but nevertheless still influential poles on the other.[8] If Russia could not act as a counterbalance on its own, the logic went, it could all the same act in concert with others to restrain Washington from policies and actions that ran counter to common interests. For such a strategy to work required the development of a network of 'strategic' relationships – with China, India, the EU (specifically Germany, France and the UK), and even Japan. While it was absurd to anticipate the formation of a 'grand alliance' in opposition to American 'hegemonism', such partnerships could nevertheless be very useful in 'balancing' Washington's policies in specific issue areas at various times. Cooperation with, say, Beijing on political and strategic questions – Iraq, Kosovo, arms transfers, missile defence – would go hand in hand with making common cause with the EU and Japan against the effects of American trade diplomacy. This form of balance-of-power politics was more fluid than the relatively static model of the early nineteenth century (not to mention of the Cold War era), and recognized that different situations demanded often fluctuating unions of interest. In this context, Moscow's declared aversion to formal alliances not only reflected the knowledge that would-be candidates such as China and India were uninterested in tying themselves in this way, but also a broader understanding of the obsolescence of such institutionalized commitments and the inadvisability of concluding arrangements that might close off important geopolitical options, foremost of which being a renewed rapprochement with Washington. Although Primakov occasionally flirted with axis-building, as in his proposal for a Moscow–Beijing–New Delhi 'triangularism' [Pakhlin, 1998, p. 7], more representative was the conviction that such ideas were 'little more than a relic of Russian political thought' [Trenin, 1999, pp. 37–8] and that national interests would instead be better served by a 'flexible policy of diverse partnerships with individual countries or groups of countries interested in building ties with Russia' [Kokoshin, 1998, pp. 199–200]. It was scarcely coincidental that, pursuant to this argument, virtually every major relationship conducted by Moscow should acquire the exaggerated epithet of 'strategic'. This was not just positive reaffirmation or wishful thinking, but reflected an approach designed to allow Russia 'more room for maneuver on a global scale' [ibid., pp. 199–200], as well as ensuring its continuing high-profile participation in mainstream international political and economic processes.

The second track in the administration's pursuit of a counterbalancing role centred on the system of international values. The idea behind this was that it was important presentationally to highlight a positive set of notions as opposed to relying on the tired components of an overt anti-Americanism. Resort to principles of sovereignty, international law and norms of behaviour represented, then, an attempt to rally a new consensus centred on Russia, one in the spirit of post-Cold War cooperation and non-confrontation, yet with the practical effect – it was hoped – of constraining Washington's global pre-eminence (*see* Chapter 4). In presenting a value-based 'rational alternative', the Russian government could and did make the case against NATO's adherence to 'bloc politics' and the 'unsanctioned' use of military force in defiance of international norms and conventions and UN authority, while portraying itself as the embodiment of post-Cold War international morality [Markov, 1998, p. 3; Sergeev, 1998, p. 7; Ivanov, 2000a, p. 9]. Consistent with this approach, much of Moscow's case against the continued existence of NATO [Kozyrev, 1995c, p. 11; Rodionov, 1996, p. 4] or of the USA–Japan alliance in North Asia[9] rested on the claim that they were 'anachronisms', whose *raison d'etre* was out of step with contemporary requirements. By contrast, a wider pan-continental body such as the OSCE was an institution based on consensus and inclusiveness. Although such arguments were not devoid of sincerity, their main purpose was instrumental: to use new language and devices in the service of long-standing balance-of-power objectives. Thus, the main value of institutions such as the UN (General Assembly as well as Security Council), OSCE and ARF was that they offered Washington minimal scope in which to make its political, military and economic superiority count. Within their framework Russia and the other major powers could genuinely aspire to 'restrain' America, whether by force of numbers or the requirement for all important decisions to be made on the basis of consensus.[10]

Balance of power and the nuclear dimension

Nuclear parity was the last remnant of the former bipolar balance of power. Whatever the breadth and depth of Russia's decline, one trump was indisputable: a destructive potential sufficient to annihilate the world many times over. Although the end of the Cold War greatly reduced the importance of nuclear factors in global politics, they continued to play a critical role both in Russian self-perceptions as a great power and national security assessments [Alexei Arbatov, 2000, p. 16]. While the degradation and diminishing longevity of the nuclear arsenal meant that it would be increasingly difficult to maintain absolute parity – quantitative and

qualitative – with the United States and its allies,[11] this understanding did not translate into a readiness to abandon the principle of strategic stability as embodied in a prohibitive power of deterrence. At a time when many in the West were talking about the growing irrelevance of nuclear weapons as a military and even political tool, Moscow's attachment to the nuclear balance remained one of the most enduring manifestations of the geopolitical strain in Russian foreign policy.

That said, this dimension of balance-of-power politics underwent significant alteration. First, balance became a relative term. As former Deputy Defence Minister (and architect of Russian military reform) Andrei Kokoshin [1998, p. 141] noted, already in the 1980s Soviet military thinking was differentiating between 'military-strategic parity' and 'strategic stability', that is, between exactly equal numbers and quality of nuclear warheads – increasingly difficult to achieve – and the ability to maintain adequate deterrent power to safeguard Russia's security and other vital national interests – an altogether more accessible objective [*Rossiisko-amerikanskie otnosheniya . . .* , 2000, pp. 121–2]. With the end of the Cold War, the concept of 'rough equivalence' [Wilkening, 1998, p. 104] became even more pertinent, balancing political and economic feasibility with defensive sufficiency. This 'relativism' was reflected in a more enlightened approach towards strategic arms control. Far from wishing to preserve the nuclear arsenal at former levels, Moscow pushed instead for ever lower benchmarks. Not satisfied with START-2 reductions down to 3500 warheads each, it argued consistently for a START-3 level of 1500 warheads and even lower.[12] As the governing elite recognized, the choice lay not between absolute parity and (relative) strategic stability, but between strategic stability and instability, that is, the threat that the nuclear imbalance between Washington and Moscow might, in time, assume more than merely statistical proportions. It is indicative that, with the depoliticization of such issues following Yeltsin's departure from office, the Duma ratified both START-2 and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in short order. Preserving some sort of nuclear balance of power depended, in the long run, in reducing the numbers of warheads to levels that Moscow could reasonably hope to maintain.

The growing popularity of relativist concepts went hand in hand with the transformation of the nuclear factor from a narrow defence emphasis to one focusing on its broader geopolitical significance. As the then Defence Minister Grachev observed in connection with the 1993 Military Doctrine, '[w]e view nuclear weapons . . . primarily as a *political* [author's italics] means of deterring aggression, not as a means of conducting military operations' [in Litovkin, 1993, p. 2]. The subtext of such remarks was

that the key to national security derived more from the fact that their possession conferred great power status, than on Russia's destructive capacity as such. Alexei Arbatov [1996, p. 110] thus anticipated that nuclear equality would require that Washington 'continue to treat Russia with respect'. Strategic stability metamorphosed from a question of numbers into one centring on principles of equality and cooperation in decision-making.

Its changed nature was highlighted by the ongoing controversy over American plans to introduce a National Missile Defense (NMD) system which, if realized, would necessitate modification and possibly abrogation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Russian policy documents and statements from 1999 on repeatedly made the point that NMD would undermine strategic stability and force Moscow to take 'adequate measures' in order to protect national security [*see Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki* ... , 2000, p. 6]. Yet the issue was plainly less about actual levels and direct security threats than balance-of-power 'principles' and speculative long-term projections regarding capabilities. Policy-makers understood that, even in a worst-case scenario, NMD would have minimal impact on the effective operation of Russia's still massive nuclear weapons stockpile [Maslyukov, 1998, p. 6].[13] As it turned out, the failure of early tests showed that much work needed to be done before one 'rogue' missile, let alone hundreds, could be successfully intercepted.[14] But all this was secondary to the real essence of the NMD/ABM controversy, which concerned the nuclear balance of power in its most geopolitical form. In taking the decision to proceed with NMD development, Washington conveyed an unequivocal message that, while hoping for cooperation from Russia, it would be prepared to act alone if necessary. There would no longer be, as in the old days, an equilibrium of nuclear interests and the associated 'respect' referred to by Arbatov [*see* Golotyuk and Mikheev, 1999, p. 1], but a new and worrisome situation in which America (and, in time, emergent powers like China) could and would proceed beyond Moscow's capacity to counter effectively in *geopolitical* terms.[15]

Balance of power and the regional dimension

Although the Yeltsin administration approached balance-of-power issues principally through a global geopolitical and nuclear prism, the regional dimension was just as important in its own way – whether in Central and Eastern Europe, Northeast Asia or the CIS periphery. First, regional balances contributed to the overall global balance-of-power mosaic. The bilateral relationship between Moscow and Beijing was an obvious prerequisite to establishing a larger multipolar consensus

in opposition to America-centred 'unipolarity'. Similarly, broadening relations with the major European powers – Germany and France in particular – was part of chipping away at the Western security consensus, or at least leavening its impact on Russia (for example, on issues such as NMD and Kosovo) [Yusin, 1999d, p. 1]. Here, regional balance of power became synonymous with balance of interests. As for the CIS vicinity, closer ties with Iran and Turkey were fundamental to preserving as much as possible of the *status quo ante* and understandings of Soviet times, when the regional balance of power strongly favoured Moscow. In this part of the world at least, Russia could genuinely claim 'regional superpower' status [Aron, 1998, pp. 33–5], a condition essential to sustaining more ambitious global aspirations. Russia's vast territorial extent meant that its actions must necessarily impact on a large number of nations in various regions, many of them highly volatile. Even if it was no longer the primary actor in these regions, it could still serve as a constructive or negative influence; in this way a cumulative impact on regional balances would translate into a larger international relevance.

Regional balances were also about reinforcing national security. The most formal representation of this dimension was the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) which set strict limits on the numbers of military personnel, arms and infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe. Russia's determined campaign to 'modernize' the CFE – particularly over 'flank' limits – arose from a justified belief that strategic realities in Europe had changed radically [Grachev, 1995, p. 1]. With the scenario of a NATO assault across the Rhine plain having given way to more localized threat perceptions relating to Russia's southern periphery, Moscow sought to modify the CFE so as to permit the deployment of greater numbers of troops and hardware to the North Caucasus region where, for much of the decade, it was engaged in a heavily resource-intensive conflict against Chechen separatists [Alexei Arbatov, 1996, p. 115].[16] In this instance the CFE's importance was more practical than symbolic. But it was another story with NATO enlargement and, specifically, the deployment of alliance troops and infrastructure to the three new member-states. What motivated Russian demands for restrictions was not concern that the movement of relatively small numbers of troops and materiel eastwards would tilt the conventional security balance towards NATO. The issue was one of principle – balance-of-power principle. Just as Moscow objected to modification of the ABM treaty, so it sought to quash any suggestion that the basic bipolar balance between Russia and NATO could be subject to revision, no matter how nominal. In contrast to flank limits, which although a practical

issue was literally peripheral to the main European game, the NATO enlargement/CFE linkage contained a compelling symbolism – one which Moscow sought to exploit by obtaining concrete concessions, such as the substitution of 'national' for 'bloc-to-bloc' ceilings within the CFE treaty [Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, p. 14].[17]

Although the situation with Russia's other frontiers was very different – for one thing, there was no unified opposition 'bloc' *à la* NATO – balance-of-power considerations remained integral nonetheless. In Asia, the Russo-Chinese rapprochement transformed Moscow's security outlook. Although some influential figures [for example, Defence Minister Rodionov, *see* Korotchenko, 1996, p. 1] continued to view China as a threat, the Russia–China and Shanghai quinquelateral border and CBM (confidence-building measures) agreements[18] removed for at least 15–20 years any serious Chinese threat along the 4000-km common frontier, as well as ensuring that Beijing's involvement in Central Asian affairs would be essentially supportive [Felgengauer, 1996, p. 5]. Moscow's evident satisfaction at these agreements [*see* Yeltsin–Jiang Joint Declaration, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 April 1997, p. 2], which were based on balance of power and balance of interests, reflected appropriate recognition of their value to Russia's security interests in what had long been vulnerable areas. Similarly, in the CIS context, accommodation with Iran and Turkey contributed materially to alleviating a fraught security environment. In the latter case, for all Moscow's fears about pan-Turkism and revival of the Ottoman Empire, Ankara decided that the nature of its regional balance with Russia necessitated a pragmatic, non-millenarian approach. Balance-of-power considerations enhanced mutual respect and perceptions of common interest, instead of fostering an unhelpful rivalry.[19]

Finally, balance of power was important in an instrumental sense: as a conduit to important regions where Moscow had either lost influence or never had it. The 'strategic partnership' with China, and ideas such as the quadrilateral dynamic – involving Russia, the USA, China and Japan – were viewed as building blocks in the development of a more substantial presence in the Asia-Pacific region [Karasin, 1997b, p. 5], and Northeast Asian security affairs in particular (including direct participation in negotiations on the Korean question).[20] This motivation was supplemented by ambitions to be the 'counterbalancer' within a regional multipolar dynamic. Ideally, China would see Russia as an important contributor in offsetting the United States and its allies, for example, Japan [Bovt, 1999b, p. 1; Gornostaev, 1999e, p. 6], while Tokyo (and Washington) would welcome Russian involvement in

restraining an increasingly assertive Beijing [Bovt and Chudodeev, 1997, p. 4; Menon, 1997a, p. 142]. Either way, Russia would be given greater scope to perform the composite role of broker/moderator which significant sections of its elite had long envisioned for it – albeit at a regional rather than global level.

The regionalization of balance-of-power issues presented policymakers with something of a dilemma. On the one hand, the competitiveness often intrinsic to these was conducive to realizing the strategic objectives of integration and enhanced international relevance. As suggested earlier, there was a sense that a meaningful role for Moscow was predicated to some extent on continuing tensions and differences among others. Given Russia's limitations, a calm and predictable global climate did not necessarily suit its purposes. For example, in North Asia an end to Sino-Japanese or Sino-American rivalry could threaten to marginalize it altogether,[21] while a successful conclusion of the Middle East Peace Process would inevitably lead to the protagonists concentrating on economic development – an area where the West enjoyed an overwhelming superiority. On the other hand, the greater cooperativeness in regional balance-of-power equations was critical to Russian security. It was right that Moscow should play up the achievement of border agreements with China and the Central Asians, and attach importance to security arrangements with potential regional rivals such as Turkey and Iran in the face of common threats (for example, terrorism and an aggressively proselytizing Islam). The existence of diverse national interest requirements ensured that there would be no single Russian approach to regional balance-of-power issues, but a flexible attitude that treated them on a case-by-case basis.

Spheres of influence

Chapter 3 discussed the question of spheres of influence in relation to Russia's 'imperial syndrome' in the FSU. The focus here is on the impact of such notions in shaping geopolitical conceptions in general. Like the zero-sum mentality and balance-of-power calculations, spheres of influence remained central in the world-view of significant sections of the ruling class. Although Russia's declining powers hampered the realization of these ideas, the mentality that spawned them proved remarkably resilient, shaping not only attitudes towards the CIS, but also impacting on the wider relationship with the West.

Attachment to spheres of influence reflected, in the first place, a desire to preserve as much as possible of the Cold War *status quo* – or at

least to moderate its transformation. While it was obvious that Central and Eastern Europe had gone west never to return, and that the newly independent states of the FSU would develop closer ties with the outside world, Moscow nevertheless hoped to buy time. For too rapid a change would leave Russia little or no breathing space in which to adjust to new realities and relations, and threaten to consign it to the outer sphere [Rogov, 1994, p. 4; Pushkov, 1995a, p. 11]. Insistence on spheres of influence equated to a call for attention, reminding the West that Russia, despite its difficulties, continued to matter and could not be ignored. Another source of their appeal arose out of concepts of *derzhavnost*. Aspirations of global reach and influence were hardly credible if Russia could not even claim to be the primary player in neighbouring regions. Spheres of influence were for many a *sine qua non* of 'great powerness' [*see* Pain, 1994, p. 9]. Third, belief in the continuing relevance of balance-of-power considerations in world politics implied a corresponding conviction in the value of spheres of influence. For one half of the former bipolar 'partnership' to be able to influence the entire world while the other struggled to impose its views on former compatriots was not simply embarrassing; it demonstrated that the balance of power had altered irrevocably and on a massive scale. It was therefore logical that Moscow, from time to time, should posit the idea of the CIS – its 'natural' sphere of interest – as a political/military bloc either in opposition to NATO enlargement [comments by Rodionov, in Korotchenko, 1996, p. 1] or as one of the constituent elements in the international security system [Rogov, 1994, p. 5]. Claiming spheres of influence would not alter the reality of the shifting global balance, but it might help disguise it – illusion was as important as substance. Fourth, calling a region a sphere of interest or a zone of strategic/vital interests conferred a certain 'moral right' of interference. It opened up a quasi-legal/quasi-legitimate option of, say, intervening on behalf of the Russian-speaking diaspora [Migranyan, 1993, p. 13], retaining a military presence on the territory of CIS states [Kozyrev, in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 January 1994, p. 1], strenuously opposing NATO enlargement [Pushkov, 1995a, p. 1], or frustrating Western policy objectives in the Balkans and Iraq [Antonov, 1997, p. 3]. Finally, the notion of spheres of influence resonated domestically, not only touching vulgar national pride and *amour-propre*, but also communicating an impression of policy activism. Reiterating that developments in the FSU, Eastern Europe and the Balkans involved Russia's 'special' interests became a kind of political placebo, with which the administration hoped to disarm its many critics.

This diversity of rationales explains the inconsistency of Moscow's attachment to such ideas. At times, various justifications had a mutually reinforcing effect and coalesced to form a rough consensus, at least at the level of broad principle. The rubric, 'sphere of influence', reached out to the full gamut of elite perceptions and concerns, tapping into the classic liberal fear of marginalization/isolation from the 'civilized' world, great power sentiments, geopolitical calculations, quasi-moral beliefs and political self-interest. However, the eclecticism of its origins made for a lack of clarity and purpose as well as confusion of means. For example, Moscow would sometimes determine that its FSU-related interests would be better served by underplaying or even denying an interest in spheres of influence with their somewhat imperialist connotations. And even geopolitically oriented thinkers like Primakov understood the importance of timing and location. During a 1997 visit to Latin America, he asserted that the emergence of a multipolar world would lead to the extinction of the policy of 'dividing up interests and influence in various regions of the world' [in Sokolov, 1997, p. 4], a statement interesting for revealing how political context could sometimes water down otherwise dominant geopolitical biases and proprietorial attitudes.

Spheres of influence and Russia's relations with the West

The dualism and instrumentalism that marked Moscow's approach to sovereignty, multilateral decision-making and 'political-diplomatic' methods was evident also in its approach towards spheres of influence. When Russia's strategic and security interests were seen to be directly affected, as in the FSU, these acquired concrete meaning. Globally, however, the priority was different: Washington's spheres of influence were both much more numerous and effective, so it made sense to dismiss the concept *sui generis* as obsolescent. This dichotomy was well illustrated by administration responses to: (a) Western security and economic involvement in the CIS; (b) NATO enlargement.

Western involvement in the CIS

Although Russia's imperial syndrome under Yeltsin was primarily defensive, few things united the disparate elements of the ruling elite so much as Western attempts to develop closer links with the FSU republics. Although less publicly than NATO enlargement, the CIS's emergent relations with the outside, predominantly Western, world was an issue where there was a relatively solid consensus – at least at the level of threat perception. The breadth of Russia's interests in the CIS

meant that outside involvement, in particular from the United States, struck a chord across the political spectrum. For advocates of a liberal, 'economized' foreign policy, growing American participation in Caspian oil development and pipeline construction projects – for example, Baku–Ceyhan – threatened to displace Russian economic interests from the one region where they continued to enjoy a comparative advantage [Mikhailov and Smolnikov, 1998, p. 5]. To the more geopolitically inclined, expanding ties between CIS countries and the West foreshadowed a 'creeping' imperialism that would inexorably take over what had until so recently been integral parts of the Soviet Union (unlike Eastern Europe which had at least been nominally independent). Paradoxically, the general realization that Moscow was devoting insufficient time and funds to CIS problems only aggravated elite sensitivities, as did the propensity of American policy-makers and thinkers to declare the CIS a 'zone of free competition' [in Krutikov, 1998, p. 6] and the Caspian a 'priority region' where the US would like to have a '100 percent presence' [comments by US Special Envoy for Caspian affairs, Richard Morningstar, in Shiryaev, 1998, p. 2]. As some American commentators [Jaffe and Manning, 1998–99, p. 121] observed, US policy towards the region tended to counteract Russian concerns about the high costs of involvement in Central Asia and the Caucasus, lending instead 'an air of urgency … to meddle in the region's affairs'. Closer security ties between NATO and some CIS member-states, involving participation in military exercises under the Alliance's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and the attendance by the GUUAM members[22] at NATO's 50th Anniversary Summit in Washington, appeared not only to sound the death-knell of the CIS Collective Security Treaty, but more seriously set up the eventual possibility of 'two blocs … emerging in the post-Soviet space … [with] no commonality of goals to speak of' [Korbut, 1999a, p. 5]. In this case, the significance of spheres of influence was far from abstract, but cut directly to Moscow's most intimate geopolitical insecurities [Trenin, 2000, p. 17].

NATO enlargement

One of the axioms of Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin was resistance to any 'attempts to expand and strengthen military blocs' [joint Yeltsin–Jiang declaration, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 April 1997, p. 2] – a transparent allusion to NATO enlargement. This rejection of 'bloc-based politics' appeared to negate the very principles behind spheres of influence and zones of special interest. In fact, the opposite was true. Much of the Russian opposition was motivated by the conviction that Eastern

Europe, while clearly 'lost' forever, must on no account be permitted to defect unconditionally to the West. In effect, Moscow sought the 'Finlandization'[23] of Eastern Europe; if it could not hold onto its former satellite states, then it should at least strive to ensure their neutral status and preserve them as buffer states [Trenin, 2001, pp. 153–4]. The sphere of influence was tacit; Russia no longer laid any claim to primacy, but demanded a residual voice that would enable it to veto attempts by other powers – that is, the Western alliance – to take over this mantle. NATO enlargement directly undermined this objective. The West, led by the United States, was seen to extend its reach right up to and even including CIS states (for example, Ukraine). Unlike in the CIS, where Moscow could realistically hope to remain the regional hegemon for many years, the most it could achieve in Central and Eastern Europe would be to dilute the consequences of the rapidly changing balance of power. It is therefore not surprising that the government should have given so much emphasis to pan-continental consensual structures and institutions such as the OSCE and European Security Charter, 'comprehensive' models of European security, and notions of 'indivisibility' and 'community'. Once it became evident that Russia could not compete with the West in terms of spheres of influence, it followed that it should do everything possible to invalidate the 'game' itself. For all that, however, the elite continued to believe very much in their existence – only this time in a defensive rather than the imperialist spirit of Soviet times.

Changing the paradigm: towards a 'balanced' foreign policy?

To argue that the geopolitical strain underpinned the conduct of foreign policy under Yeltsin is not to deny that economic issues and priorities increased markedly in profile and importance. From a position of almost total neglect, they came to occupy a by no means negligible portion of the attention of policy-makers. Indeed, on occasion they outweighed geopolitical objectives. The neutering of the Russia–Belarus Union and the energy lobby's defeat of the MFA over Lukoil participation in Caspian Sea development stand out as instances where economic interests of one kind or another were decisive in determining the Kremlin's position. Another notable example of their importance was the matter of large-scale transfers of high-tech weaponry to China[24] over the objections of many in the defence establishment and in defiance of conventional geopolitical logic and tradition. The continuing influence of the liberal foreign policy agenda ensured, too, that Moscow would pay

greater heed to notions such as Russia's integration into global political and economic processes, and to philosophies of interdependence over overt competition. The political class for the most part recognized that Russia could not go it alone, and that it would need to be responsive to globalizing and geoeconomic trends in international relations.[25]

The Yeltsin administration's brand of geopolitics was also a different beast compared to its Soviet predecessor, with core ideas – zero-sum, balance of power, and spheres of influence – being packaged more cleverly. For one thing, these terms were mentioned relatively infrequently, and often references were critical or dismissive of the concepts themselves. As we saw earlier, Moscow subscribed to many of the principles of the new post-Cold War world politics and, linguistically at least, could scarcely be faulted. Integration, community, consensus, partnership, international norms, multilateralism – these were all part of the post-Soviet lexicon. In practice, also, Russian geopolitics changed substantially. The *kto kogo* mentality of zero-sum games lacked the hard edge of the former era of 'confrontation'. When the latter did occur, it was very much implicit. Notwithstanding extravagant claims, for example during the Kosovo crisis, that tensions between Russia and the West had the potential to escalate into actual conflict [Yusin, 1999c, p. 1; Antonenko, 1999–2000, p. 124], this was never a prospect at any time during the post-Soviet period. Similarly, balance of power no longer signified some bipolar *mano a mano* opposition, but was now a much more complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Spheres of influence, too, had become a relative and inconsistently applied concept, with Moscow well aware of its frailties in this area.

The geopolitics of the Yeltsin period, then, was different in style and substance from the traditional model. Yet the development of this 'kinder', more cooperative version should not blind us to the ascendancy of geopolitics *qua* foreign policy mindset. This was not just a question of rhetoric – brandishing multipolarity, speaking of geopolitical threats, and so forth – but of concrete realities, such as the fact that throughout these years security issues remained at the top of Russia's external priorities. (Even in the first, halcyon months of translatlantic cooperation, when there was much talk of Russia's integration into the Western community, it was strategic disarmament which headed the policy agenda.) If zero-sum equations, the balance of power (in its various dimensions) and spheres of influence supplied the theoretical framework of a geopolitically motivated foreign policy, then NATO enlargement, the START process, conflict management in the CIS, NMD/ABM and Kosovo represented an endless focus of high-level attention. For all the talk (and, to

some extent, reality) of the 'economization' of foreign policy, at no stage did economic goals threaten to displace traditional geopolitical and security concerns.

Nor could and should they have been expected to, given the constraints outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The question must therefore be posed in comparative terms. How does one measure the importance of non-geopolitical priorities in the overall scheme of Russian foreign policy? To what extent did their appearance and the transformation of geopolitics itself reflect a growing maturity and the (albeit slow) emergence of a more integrated approach to international relations? Or did we witness instead during the latter years of the Yeltsin administration a geopolitical revanchism in the wake of NATO enlargement, the Kosovo crisis and the stand-off over NMD/ABM [Trenin, 2000, p. 15]? The answer lies somewhere in the middle. On the one hand, there is no doubt that economic priorities 'arrived' under Yeltsin.[26] It is significant, for example, that Primakov, often criticized for old-style geopolitical thinking [Eggert, 1998b, p. 1; *see also* Bai, 1998, p. 6],[27] was sufficiently cognizant of the importance of Russia's economic interests to go out of his way to disengage negotiations with the IMF from the quarrel over Kosovo [Lapskii, 1999, p. 7 – *see* Chapter 3]. The broadening of security definitions in the 1997 and 2000 National Security Concepts to encompass threats posed by economic decline and social problems was similarly testament to a growing consciousness and sophistication among the elite.

On the other hand, the formation of a 'balanced' foreign policy remained elusive. Not only did foreign economic priorities fail to displace geopolitics, but even within their own terms their importance waxed and waned. Taking the example of the Russia–Belarus Union, at times economic considerations were relegated to the background while the supposed geopolitical advantages of closer union – such as 'strategic depth' and even ideas like the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus – were touted [Rodionov, 1996, p. 4; Zyuganov, 1999, p. 1; *see also* Yusin, 1999a, p. 1]. The 'economization' of Russian foreign policy was an erratic process, especially vulnerable to the vagaries of extraneous phenomena such as periodic crises (Bosnia, Iraq, Kosovo, NMD) and domestic political instability (the constant conflict between executive and legislature). A second problem was the discrepancy between theory and practice. Accession (actual and attempted) to predominantly economic fora and groupings such as the G-8, Paris and London Clubs, APEC, WTO and OECD did not necessarily imply a professional attitude towards their business. Participation was important above all because it

conferred status – exactly the reason why some countries opposed Moscow's involvement in such bodies. In APEC, for example, several members sought to block Russian accession because of fears that this would lead to a loss of focus and change the grouping's work from primarily economic preoccupations to a more political and politicized agenda [Golovnin, 1997, pp. 1–2].[28] In this context, Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin's [1997b, p. 5] reaction to the decision to admit Russia was revealing and, to some, disturbing: '…I see nothing objectionable in the idea of the four major APEC countries [USA, Russia, China and Japan] beginning to pursue flexible forms of cooperation aimed at resolving not only economic but also political questions, for example, in the field of strategic security'.

Karasin's comments regarding APEC highlighted a notable aspect of the Russian approach to economic issues during this period, namely, their 'geopoliticization'. This was especially evident in the dynamic of Russia–EU relations, where a marked increase in economic cooperation was matched by a campaign to, effectively, substitute the EU for NATO as the Western alliance's chief security body. The administration consistently promoted EU enlargement as the 'acceptable' alternative to NATO 'expansion' [Dannreuther, 1999–2000, p. 160; Alexei Arbatov, 1996, pp. 106–7; Nikonov, 1994b, p. 4], even though some observers [Trenin, 2000, p. 17; Baranovsky, 2000, p. 453] understood that the former could ultimately pose the greater threat to Russian interests. As Alexei Arbatov [ibid., pp. 106–7] put it, the EU was seen as a 'logical and legitimate institution whose main objective is European integration' while NATO was 'an instrument of the Cold War created to counteract the Soviet Union'. Unsurprisingly, the steady transformation of the EU from a largely economic grouping into one giving increasing attention to political and security affairs was welcome to Russian policy-makers. It raised hopes not only that the EU might in time displace NATO, but also more generally that the major European powers would move out of the United States' orbit to the detriment of the latter's role and influence in European political and security affairs [Danilov, 2000, pp. 51–2]. In this connection, the emergence of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), together with the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within NATO, represented more promising and practical avenues for the promotion of Russian security interests than the OSCE whose credentials as an alternative to NATO or as the basis of a new pan-European architecture became increasingly discredited [Zagorskii, 1996, p. 9; Migranyan, 1997, p. 2; Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, p. 17; Rogov, 1999, p. 5; Baranovsky, 2000, pp. 453–4]. Much the same geopolitical

mentality coloured Russian reaction to the 1999 EU Common Strategy, where the stress was less on the prospects for expanded economic cooperation with Russia's largest trading partner, than on the Strategy's political and security aspects [*see* Ivanov, 1999a, p. 6]. At the same time as economic thinking and priorities became more important and influenced what had previously been an almost exclusively geopolitical agenda, so the geopolitical strain in its turn impacted on the management of economic issues. Somewhat ironically, as in the West, the outcome of this interaction was a more holistic foreign policy, in which it was sometimes difficult to distinguish pol-mil and security from economic interests, and vice-versa. But whereas in the rest of the developed world the overall trend was characterized by the growing primacy of the latter, in Russia the situation was reversed. Geopolitics, for all its evolving nature, remained king.

6
A Question of Priorities – the Practice of Foreign Policy

As Foreign Minister Primakov [1996d, p. 4] was fond of repeating, Russia did not have permanent enemies (or friends), but permanent interests. Implicit in this statement was the assumption that there were certain timeless priorities – stability, territorial integrity, conflict management in the FSU, CIS integration – on whose importance everyone could agree, even while they might differ over the policy detail. Primakov's assumption about an in-principle agreement on strategic objectives was integral to the 'independent' foreign policy he advocated, and goes to the heart of the trendy thesis that Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin was characterized principally by a broad consensus.

The line taken in the coming pages challenges this comfortable view. It will be argued that, on the contrary, few areas of Russian foreign policy have been as contentious as the debate over priorities. Competing institutional and ideological perspectives expressed themselves in contrasting perceptions of Russian interests and the way these were to be pursued, in turn reinforcing the sectionalization of Moscow's approach to international relations. Although various official statements pretended at a measure of conceptual clarity and order, the administration was never able to maintain a consistent position on either the balance of priorities or even the criteria by which they should be measured. Indeed, the post-Soviet period was remarkable for the diversity and changeability of views on this dimension of policy-making; the importance of priorities rose and declined in response to fashion and circumstances, often for reasons only marginally related to a larger national interest.

It is a testing exercise to identify Russia's major policy preoccupations, to cut through innumerable contradictory and self-serving public utterances and determine how much time, energy and resources the administration actually invested into promoting or defending particular

Russian interests. The evidence is often hard to quantify and conclusions necessarily impressionistic. An equally thorny problem relates to paradigm. In the past, most scholars have sought to assess the balance of priorities by, plausibly enough, adopting a predominantly geographical approach. Instead of talking about specific policy priorities or interests, they have focused instead on country/area categories: Russia–USA relations, Russia and the CIS, Russia in the Asia-Pacific, and so on. As remarked in the Introductory Chapter, however, this approach frequently fails to differentiate between the relative importance of issues within a geographical category or to identify commonalities across different geographical areas – in other words, there is a critical loss of context.

The path taken here looks to avoid these problems by laying out the areas of prime policy significance in a thematic way, concentrating in particular on three aspects of the administration's *modus operandi*: (i) its approach to the problem of prioritization itself; (ii) its handling of security priorities; and (iii) the promotion of domestic political and economic interests. Although this is by no means a perfect solution, it has the merit at least of approximating the mindset of policy-makers during this period. Contrary to what one might imagine from many Western writings, they tended to see issues in functional rather than country-by-country terms: security, territorial integrity, balance of power, power projection, global status, economic integration. Individual countries or even continents were important principally because of where they stood in relation to Russian interests in these areas; friendly or cooperative ties were not so much intrinsically desirable as the means to achieve particular ends. Thus, the relationship with Washington was pivotal because it impacted crucially on Russian interests across the board – security, geopolitical, economic. Conversely, one of the reasons why many CIS-related priorities failed to receive their due was that Moscow did not take the new sovereign states of the FSU seriously and was not especially interested in developing bilateral or multilateral cooperation with them *except* as an aid to managing conflict and other security concerns and in limiting outside 'encroachment'.

The final section examines the relationship between priority-setting and the conduct of external relations. To what extent can one speak of a definable Russian foreign policy or should we accept – reluctantly from a political scientist's perspective – that it cannot be encapsulated except as a series of largely random and unconnected events, responses and policies? As foreshadowed in Chapter 1, my contention is that Moscow's overall approach reflected the dominant realities of the times: the primacy of sectional interests over any consensus vision of the national

good, and the consequent factionalization and fragmentation of policy. It was this environment which ensured that much of the Kremlin's handling of business would be *ad hoc* and reactive. Strategically, sectionalization had an anaesthetizing effect on policy, with different groups and interests neutralizing one another. There emerged a kind of broad church in the Anglican tradition, encompassing all manner of views and tendencies while at the same time emasculating them of real content – a sort of 'vampirization' of policy [cf. Lieven, 1999, p. 64]. The outcome, almost entirely accidental, was a lowest common denominator conservatism that conveyed the illusion of consensus, but which amounted to little more than a pragmatism by default.

Prioritizing in Russian foreign policy

Many of the misconceptions about Russian foreign policy priorities originate in the mistaken assumption that the political class agreed for the most part about their nature and order. This premise of consensus (and constancy) is evident in such bald yet contradictory statements as '[c]learly, the region of greatest importance to Russia is the CIS' [Petro and Rubinstein, 1997, p. 312] and '[f]or the Kremlin, economic progress and democratic stabilization emerged [in 1993] as the key objectives to which the country's external activity was to be subordinated' [Aron, 1998, p. 25]. In fact, the balance of priorities and the method of prioritization alike were viewed in different ways by different groups with often opposing agendas. Contrary to common supposition, it was here where the sectionalization of Russian foreign policy emerged most clearly. Once the administration moved beyond the usual *pro forma* commitments to security, economic prosperity, territorial integrity, international cooperation – features of virtually any foreign policy – it found itself torn between competing claims on its attention. As noted in Chapter 3, the liberal foreign policy agenda was inclined to highlight domestic political and socioeconomic priorities, believers in the imperial syndrome to emphasize the CIS, and the so-called *derzhavniki* to advocate Russia's restoration as a 'great power' in the geopolitical sense. Although the fit was far from absolute, in general choices about priorities arose from particular preconceptions about Russia's identity, the global environment, domestic politics and institutional realities. Since these varied considerably, it was logical that perceptions about the relative importance of priorities should do so as well.

Predictably, official policy statements shed very little light on how the government viewed this whole question. In the first place, these

documents were apt to indulge in vague motherhood objectives to which few could reasonably demur, but which in practical policy terms had little meaning. For example, with the exception of CIS integration, no-one in the Russian elite would have disagreed with any of the priorities on Primakov's list of 'permanent interests'. What country in the world would not want for itself stability, secure frontiers and an end to destabilizing conflicts on its periphery? Likewise, only the perverse could have taken issue with Igor Ivanov's [1998c, p. 6] view that Russia's foreign policy should seek to establish 'favourable external conditions for solving our internal problems,' in particular to promote the well-being of its citizens. Another barrier to enlightenment was the tendency of such documents to portray just about every aspect of foreign relations as 'important'. For example, the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept [Chernov, 1993, p. 3] referred, *inter alia*, to the 'fundamental importance' of an integrationist policy in the FSU; the 'great importance' of 'developing and improving the peace-keeping mechanism'; the need to 'focus on relations with the countries of Eastern Europe'; 'special mention' *vis-à-vis* 'enhancing Russia's role in settling the Yugoslav conflict'; the 'great significance' of relations with Western Europe; the urgency of consolidating the 'breakthrough' in relations with China – 'from our standpoint, the region's most important state in geopolitical and economic terms'; the need for 'close attention' to be paid to the 'threat of nuclear weapons proliferation in Northeast Asia and on the Hindustan [*sic*.] subcontinent'; and the continuing 'priority' of the Middle East Peace Process and efforts to 'create a multilateral security system in the region'. Ironically, the substantial section on Russian–American relations was one of the few areas where these epithets were underplayed – even though it was clear, from the number of common 'interests' mentioned, that the much devalued term, 'priority', was more applicable here than elsewhere. Although the 2000 version of the Foreign Policy Concept adopted a more thematic approach, the list of priorities had if anything lengthened. The document highlighted notions of multipolarity; issues of sovereignty and non-interference; reducing the 'role of force' in international relations, including through raising the UN's 'effectiveness'; 'strategic stability' and the preservation of the ABM treaty; non-proliferation of WMD; the fight against international terrorism; creating better conditions for Russian commercial interests abroad, attracting foreign investment and managing the problem of external debt; and protecting the rights of the Russian diaspora in the FSU. In the section, 'Regional Priorities', the Concept noted that strengthening the Russia–Belarus Union was a 'task of the first importance'; relations with European member-states were 'a traditional priority orientation of

Russian foreign policy', with relations with the EU being 'of key importance'; 'Asia has great and ever increasing significance,' with 'one of the most important directions … [being] the development of friendly relations with the leading Asian states, most notably China and India'; 'the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan offers a real threat to the southern borders of the CIS and directly affects Russian interests'; and 'a priority task for Russia is the revival and consolidation of its position, especially economic, in [the Middle East]'. [*Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki …*, 2000, p. 6]

This undiscriminating approach owed much to the function of the major policy document as a means of neutralizing policy differences for public consumption (*see* Chapter 4). It suited the administration to be inclusive of as many priorities as seemed plausible: responding to the reality of America's global power, highlighting CIS integration, paying due acknowledgement to Western Europe and China, and so on. Eclecticism was intended to enhance consensus, both in policy terms and as a reflection of the broad-based political make-up of the Yeltsin administration. Vagueness of definition was a means of accommodating a wide spectrum of opinion while not committing the government to delivering measurable outcomes. Being all things to all people was also useful in preserving options abroad; after all, most countries like to be told they are important. The purpose behind the breadth of functional priorities was similar. In balancing geopolitical 'truths' (Russia 'remains a great power') and priorities (the 'special urgency' of security problems) with strongly expressed concerns about 'a weakening of Russia's economic independence, degradation of its technological and industrial potential, and its permanent specialization as a fuel and raw materials source in the world economy,' the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept [Chernov, 1993, p. 1] covered many political/ideological bases.

At the same time, determining priorities was as much a response to immediate domestic and international context as a reflection of allegedly 'permanent' or self-evident national interests. It was hardly coincidental that Yeltsin [1994a, p. 2] should use his 1994 State of the Nation address to describe the prevention of a 'new global war – hot or cold' as 'the most important of [international policy] priorities', singling out the need in particular to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. A month earlier a summit with President Clinton had resulted in a tripartite agreement with Ukraine whereby the latter agreed to give up its nuclear weapons, while in subsequent weeks the threat of Western military intervention in Bosnia and the increasing prominence of the NATO enlargement issue revived fears of a serious deterioration in Russia's relations with the West. Similarly, when Primakov [1996a, p. 13] identified

'creating the best external conditions conducive to strengthening the territorial integrity of our state' and 'strengthening centripetal tendencies in the territory of the former USSR' as Russia's two top foreign policy priorities, he was not simply giving vent to his personal convictions. There were clear political imperatives involved, the most important of which was the removal of foreign policy as an issue in the lead-up to what promised to be extremely hard-fought Presidential elections that summer [Karaganov, 1996b, p. 5]. In this instance, the Yeltsin administration sought to 'sanitize' its foreign policy by hijacking the priorities of the Communist-Nationalist opposition. More recently, there was a causal relationship between the prominence of functional priorities in the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept – in particular, working towards multipolarity and the UN's primacy in international decision-making, and responding to international terrorism – and the 1999 Kosovo conflict and the war in Chechnya. None of the above is to deny that there were long-term priorities or interests. But they were not carved in stone; their importance fluctuated for all sorts of reasons, good and 'bad', objective and subjective.

The primacy of security issues

For all the haphazard nature of priority-setting, there can be little argument that security issues dominated Russia's external agenda throughout the Yeltsin period. This was not only the result of the geopolitical strain described in the previous chapter, but also a response to specific security concerns and threat perceptions. These issues may be bracketed as follows: (i) the strategic disarmament agenda and non-proliferation of WMD; (ii) 'geopolitical disadvantage' and the question of 'inclusiveness'; (iii) conventional security threats, including issues of territorial integrity and non-traditional security; and (iv) crisis and conflict management, in the CIS and more generally.

The strategic disarmament agenda and WMD non-proliferation

With the break-up of the USSR into 15 sovereign states, the strategic disarmament agenda assumed immediate priority at a number of levels. In the first place, it concerned the creation of a safe, post-Cold War strategic environment. The issue was no longer limited to mutual arms reductions between Russia and the United States, but now related to the denuclearization of the other, former Soviet nuclear weapons republics – Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Unless this could be achieved, then Moscow's worst fears about nuclear proliferation would be realized.

From the beginning, it applied considerable efforts to implementing strategic disarmament objectives – and with some success. It concluded the START-2 treaty in January 1993, completed agreements on the respective denuclearization of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine by February 1994, and in March 1997 persuaded the Americans to extend the START-2 destruction timetable for missile delivery vehicles as well as discuss further reductions of benchmark levels under a START-3 once the Duma ratified START-2. In the circumstances, it was to be expected that Yeltsin would describe the prevention of 'global war' as 'the most important' of foreign policy priorities [1994a, p. 2 – *see above*] and later identify the partnership with the United States – specifically, agreement over START-2 – as the 'greatest foreign policy achievement' of his first term in office [1995c, p. 9].

Much of the interest in strategic disarmament issues originated in the belief that only nuclear weapons had the capacity to destroy the new Russia. But the matter went beyond immediate security threat perceptions. First, Moscow had lost the capacity to match Washington in nuclear missile development, with its existing stockpile becoming increasingly obsolescent [Maslyukov, 1998, p. 6]. If it failed to reach agreement on lower levels, then the gap with the United States would expand exponentially, perhaps to the point of undermining strategic stability [Maslyukov, ibid., p. 6; Wilkening, 1998, pp. 103–4]. Second, nuclear arms control impacted on the larger question of Russia's global identity. If it wanted to present itself as a strong yet above all constructive player in world affairs, then it needed to show that it was willing to enter into the post-Cold War spirit of things. Reductions in the Soviet nuclear arsenal were an obvious way of demonstrating this – especially attractive given the enormous expense and difficulty of maintaining, let alone modernizing, its weapons. Interestingly, when Yeltsin sought to justify the overt Westerncentrism of Russian foreign policy during 1992–93, he did so by arguing that reaching strategic arms control agreements with Washington had been necessary in order 'to lay the foundation … on the basis of which it would be easier, afterwards, to build relations with any country, be it from the West or East, Europe or Asia' [in Crow, 1993, p. 52]. Progress on the strategic disarmament agenda became a prerequisite for the 'normal' development of Russian foreign policy. Third, strategic disarmament was a *quid pro quo* for Western trade, aid and investment [Karaganov, 1998, p. 5]; it was an indicator of Russia's 'normalization', without which there was little prospect of the external assistance the administration deemed vital to both the success of domestic reforms and its political survival. Fourth, a disposition to

disarm was critical in terms of promoting the non-proliferation agenda. It was unrealistic to expect the other CIS nuclear-weapons states to disarm if Russia was unprepared to make concessions. Relatedly, it was also useful in strengthening the moral case against the development or expansion of nuclear weapons capability by non-recognized nuclear powers like India, Pakistan and Israel (the 'nuclear threshold states'), as well as by countries like the DPRK and Iran.[1] The Russian attachment to non-proliferation was not restricted to altruistic concerns about a safer (and cleaner) world. Nuclear weapons represented its 'edge', almost the sole basis of its continuing claims to be a global power with attendant status and 'rights' (or at least some of them) [Alexei Arbatov, 1996, p. 110; Kondrashov, 1995b, p. 3]. Moscow understood that opening up the 'nuclear club' would devalue one of the few remaining criteria of its 'greatness'; here, 'less' equated with 'more'. Finally, the necessarily sedate pace of progress of arms control negotiations meant that, even with the USA (or any other country) no longer posing a direct military threat to Russia, the strategic disarmament agenda would represent a long-term source of unfinished business. As a report by the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy observed, 'questions of nuclear security and the reduction of nuclear arsenals will remain at the top of the Russian–American agenda for years to come' [*Rossiisko-amerikanskie otnosheniya* ..., 2000, p. 121].

Nevertheless, the Russian commitment to strategic disarmament and associated issues of non-proliferation under Yeltsin was equivocal at best. As with a number of CIS-related priorities, what should have been primary concerns were, at various times, relegated to secondary status by side-issues. The lengthy saga over START-2 ratification was a notable case in point. Although a succession of Foreign and Defence Ministers called on the Duma to ratify the treaty, and Yeltsin himself repeatedly promised Western leaders this would happen,[2] for the most part the Kremlin showed little political will to carry out a difficult but certainly not impossible task. At regular intervals, ratification was derailed by crippling security conditionalities involving NATO enlargement [Alexei Arbatov, 1996, pp. 107–8] and the ABM treaty [Maslyukov, 1998, p. 6], fanciful expectations regarding a prospective START-3 agreement [ibid.,], or by individual crises such as the US/UK air-strikes against Iraq in December 1998 [Karaganov, 1998, p. 5][3] and, most spectacularly, the NATO military operation over Kosovo.[4] Strategic disarmament issues assumed their highest policy profile when the overt and hidden agendas coincided, as in the campaign over NMD/ABM. Here, a combination of balance-of-power notions, long-standing suspicions of Western

intentions and domestic political considerations guaranteed the issue a disproportionate notoriety. By contrast, less glamorous priorities like nuclear safety, export controls, and the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons lacked the quality of political resonance. Because few sectional interests stood to gain from promoting solutions in these areas – indeed, sometimes just the opposite [Kirichenko and Potter, 1999, pp. 38–9] – policy action by and large took place only under direct pressure from the West. Thus, legislation on dual technology export controls was belatedly introduced in July 1999 after Washington had earlier that year introduced sanctions against several Russian research institutes and threatened to withdraw funding from a number of assistance programmes. Even when policy-makers committed to legislation and signed up to the relevant international conventions and agreements, there was little disposition to devote significant resources to their implementation – as evidenced by the Russian failure to keep up with the timetable for destroying chemical weapons stocks under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention.[5] As a Carnegie Endowment report [*U.S.–Russian Relations …*, 2000, p. 167] observed:

> the financial desperation of strategically and economically vital agencies and enterprises … create strong cross-pressures on the state to do less than utilize to the fullest extent possible whatever export control capabilities it does possess.

This unhelpful climate was exacerbated by a frequent temptation to 'tweak the West's nose' by flirting with so-called 'rogue' states. As a result, throughout the 1990s the Russian position on non-proliferation was consistently softer than that of the West. At the same time as Moscow reiterated its adherence to the non-proliferation regime, it did little to restrict the flow of missile and nuclear technology to Iran [Eggert, 1998a, p. 1; Steinberg, 2000, pp. 17–19; Orlov, 1999, pp. 185–6];[6] reacted mildly to nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in May 1998 [*see* Primakov's comments opposing the imposition of sanctions, in Zubko, 1998, p. 3]; called for the closure of the missile and nuclear files on Iraq and the lifting of UN sanctions against that country [Primakov and Tariq Aziz joint statement, in Gornostaev, 1997b, p. 1]; and denied that the North Korean missile programme posed any serious threat to the global non-proliferation regime, much less justified Washington embarking on NMD [*see* comments by Leonid Ivashov, in Koretskii, 1999a, p. 1]; also Kapralov, 2000, pp. 12, 18; Ivanov, 2000c, pp. 18–19]. Economic imperatives and sectional interests, such as those of MINATOM [Kirichenko

and Potter, 1999, p. 30], impinged on traditional security considerations to a far greater degree than before, while understandings of security – including strategic security – were susceptible to increasingly diverse and self-interested interpretation.

Despite the spottiness of the Kremlin's commitment, however, strategic disarmament remained a priority area. The biggest difference, now, was that there appeared to be greater opportunity to exploit it for instrumental purposes. Playing hard-to-get over START-2 ratification was thus a lever to extract concessions from the West – whether in negotiating a better deal over subsequent reductions in strategic stockpiles, obtaining more advantageous arrangements over NATO enlargement and CFE 'modernization', or in pressuring the USA and other major Western powers to adopt a less assertive stance on Iraq or Kosovo. In the case of NMD, the official line that American deployment (and abrogation of the ABM treaty) would undermine 'strategic stability' masked the real substance of Russian concerns, namely, the threat to its global political standing and role in international decision-making (*see* Chapter 5). But such instrumentalism, cynical though it was, served nonetheless to maximize the policy relevance of these issues; the fact that there were so many reasons – real and notional – to 'justify' elite interest in the strategic disarmament agenda ensured that it would remain a prime focus of government attention.

Issues of 'geopolitical disadvantage' and inclusiveness

One major aspect of the transformation of Russian threat perceptions under Yeltsin was the gradual evolution of purely security concerns into generalized feelings of geopolitical vulnerability. With few believing that the West posed a direct military threat to Russia [*Voennaya doktrina* …, 2000, p. 4 – Chapter 5], 'geopolitical disadvantage' became the most important security preoccupation of the Russian political class during the post-Soviet period. It was symptomatic that the 2000 version of the National Security Concept [*Kontseptsiya natsionalnoi bezopasnosti* …, 2000, p. 6] should highlight, among external dangers to national security, 'attempts by other states to counter Russia's consolidation as one of the centres of influence in a multipolar world'. This emphasis guaranteed the prominence of many essentially secondary issues. Thus, the detail of NATO enlargement became the centre of attention, instead of the substantive question of how best to develop the Russia–NATO relationship [Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, pp. 9–10; Parkhalina, 2000b, p. 39]. Although the alliance bore some responsibility for this state of affairs, policy-makers were apt to view Russia–NATO

agreements and structures – the 1997 Founding Act, the Permanent Joint Council, the Partnership Programme – through a determinedly geopolitical prism: as ways of containing enlargement rather than as the basis for developing cooperation in areas of mutual security interest such as peacekeeping, confidence-building measures and countering common threats of WMD proliferation. The high profile of NATO enlargement owed much also to the consideration that it appeared easier to grasp. Not only did it speak to Russian geopolitical and historical traditions, but it also came across as a discrete issue. By contrast, relationship-building has always been an uncertain and protracted business, all the more so when it involves the reversal of long-held stereotypes.

Geopolitical calculations led to events in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq sidetracking the Russian leadership into the blind alley of supporting political leaders of ill repute – Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein – instead of prosecuting its primary security, political and economic interests [Yusin, 1998a, p. 3; Guseinov, 1999, p. 3]. Since substantial elements of the ruling class continued to see the West in largely adversarial terms, ephemeral and illusory goals such as notions of 'greatness' and prestige became mainstream priorities. Moscow's fixation on Iraq and the former Yugoslavia was only marginally motivated by the existence of important Russian economic interests in those countries.[7] As in Soviet times, manoeuvring for geopolitical advantage lay behind its intensive diplomatic efforts. In the FSU, the geopolitical obsession translated into a fundamentally negative approach; instead of recasting relations with the former republics to strengthen its own national security and the collective security of CIS member-states (not to mention economic cooperation between them), Moscow subordinated these objectives to the spurious ambition of countering Western 'encroachment'. In this connection, there were commonalities between the CIS, the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle East as subjects of Russian foreign policy. The record shows that all these areas were badly neglected by Moscow, whose 'interest' was for the most part reactive. Resources were invested not in developing productive bilateral and multilateral relations, but in responding to individual events and/or actions by outside, predominantly Western, parties. As a result, the banner issues in the CIS and the former Yugoslavia became crisis and conflict resolution (*see below*); in Eastern Europe, NATO enlargement; and in the Middle East, UN sanctions and Western military action against Iraq.

The spectre of Russia's marginalization from the international security community emerged out of perceptions of geopolitical disadvantage.

Administration interest in the 'indivisibility' of European security [*Founding Act…*, 1997, p. 4] and a 'comprehensive concept' of global security [Yeltsin–Jiang statement, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 April 1997, p. 2], and in participation in Asia-Pacific security structures such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD), were more than idle propaganda; they reflected an intense desire for inclusiveness. There might be little prospect of implementing a 'new European security architecture' centred on the OSCE and a European Security Charter, but at least such ideas offered a palatable conceptual alternative to the prevailing NATO-centred model of European security [Kozyrev, 1995c, p. 11], just as the ARF and multilateral security cooperation – e.g., the Shanghai Five Agreement on border confidence-building measures – supplied a useful counterpoint to the United States' network of alliance relationships and substantial force presence in the Asia-Pacific [Lang, 1999, p. 3]. Such alternatives appeared to offer increased possibilities for bringing Russia closer to the international mainstream, enabling its diminishing security voice to be heard, and improving its chances of developing the 'alternative rational consensus' to American global leadership discussed in Chapter 5. Much the same yen for inclusiveness informed proposals for participation in a pan-European missile defence system or for bilateral missile cooperation with the United States. These were attempts not only to deflect Washington from proceeding with the development of interceptor systems, but also to promote Russia's participation in global and continental integrationist processes in the one area – security – where its interests were most easily identifiable and its presence readily justifiable. Notwithstanding regular utterances to the contrary, it is unlikely that Russian policy-makers thought seriously that NATO could be displaced as the premier security institution in Europe, or that missile defence cooperation was truly feasible (the lack of detail in Russian proposals makes one suspect not). But that was no reason not to use all possible means to contain and disguise the extent of geopolitical disadvantage, and maximize the opportunities of being included in a wider security community. These, for good or ill, were undoubted priorities.

Conventional political-security priorities and threat perceptions

The issue of territorial integrity

Like other aspects of security, perceptions about conventional threats changed markedly after the end of the Cold War. Even taking into account the degradation of its armed forces and power projection capabilities, it was clear that Russia faced no direct threat to its territorial

integrity from another nation-state or group of states [Yeltsin, 1996, p. 2; *Voennaya doktrina ...*, 2000, p. 4]. Although the principle of territorial integrity was frequently mentioned in major policy documents as a key priority, such affirmations did not reflect insecurity about external attack, so much as other security and political concerns. The most important of these was the fear of territorial break-up. Although domino theories regarding the Islamic menace sweeping up into the Don and Volga basins [Migranyan, 1994b, p. 5; Mikoyan, 1998, p. 121] were not widely favoured, there was a fear nevertheless that bits of southern Russia might 'drop off' unless Moscow reimposed its authority through vigorous action.

Territorial integrity in principle and practice were often two different things. At times, as in the case of the second Chechen war, the cause of territorial integrity was buttressed by other compelling arguments. Thus, the war was popular among the elite and general public not so much for purely territorial ('what we have we hold') reasons, but because of the general belief that intervention had been necessary in order to prevent the North Caucasus region – Dagestan and Ingushetia as well as Chechnya – from becoming a constant source of terrorist threat, rampant crime and political and religious extremism that would directly undermine the security of Russia and its citizens. Where such supplementary considerations were absent, the administration's position on territorial integrity tended to be less clear-cut. For example, in the Russian Far East, Moscow adopted a fairly relaxed attitude towards border demarcation with China and dampened speculation about expansionist ambitions on Beijing's part. On the islands dispute with Japan it exhibited a disposition to compromise, even while acknowledging the difficulty of making concessions at a time when Russia felt itself to be so weak.[8] The arrangements offered to Tokyo might have fallen well short of the ideal,[9] but Moscow's willingness even to reconsider the matter showed that the issue of territorial integrity could be diluted or finessed if the *quid pro quo* – large-scale Japanese trade and investment – was sufficiently attractive. Although the hard line of Primakov and the Foreign Ministry eventually prevailed (assisted by the President's inability to concentrate on any one issue long enough to follow it through), a number of influential figures – including Presidential Press Secretary Yastrzhembsky, First Deputy Prime Minister Nemtsov and Prime Minister Kiriyenko – were known to support a softer approach.

Consequently, the main significance of 'territorial integrity' as foreign policy priority was indirect. It represented for many a potent 'legitimizer' in areas of abiding domestic political and national security

concern, such as Chechnya. Under Yeltsin and then Putin, the government used it to 'justify' all manner of military and police actions, no matter how barbaric. Compared to most foreign policy-related issues, it was relatively easy to achieve consensus on the defence of Russia's territorial integrity, particularly when it was linked so intimately in the popular mind with combating terrorism. Chechnya during 1999–2000 provided a focal point for an almost perfect marriage, from the administration's perspective, between the domestic and the external, and politics and policy. It proved the theory that the detail – or means – of policy was often irrelevant if the larger purpose was vital enough [Alexei Arbatov, 2000, p. 20]. Criticisms from Western countries were easily deflected on the grounds that the latter (i) did not understand the nature and gravity of the situation and the threat to Russian security; (ii) had no right in any event to comment, let alone act; and (iii) had no capacity and/or will to intervene [ibid., p. 21].[10] Conveniently, also, circumstances allowed Yeltsin to manoeuvre his chosen successor into the Presidency and to assert in a very public way Moscow's will over the objections of the West. For once, it seemed, Russia was able to match rhetoric with action – a rare state of affairs that had consequences for other areas of policy. Yeltsin's confident performance at the Istanbul OSCE Summit in November 1999 reflected not just a personal bullishness but also the fact that he enjoyed across-the-board support over Chechnya. Armed with a sense that 'might' (in the form of political and public approbation) as well as 'right' was on its side, the Russian delegation considerably exceeded expectations in achieving its main objectives at the Summit: finalization of an adapted CFE treaty, signing of the European Security Charter, and minimal concessions on outside involvement in the Chechen conflict [Gornostaev, 1999d, p. 1].

Potential adversaries

The government's official position was that it considered no country to be an enemy [Kozyrev, 1994a, p. 6]. As a rule, it preferred to highlight threats – attempts to diminish Russia's global influence, usurpation of the UN's role in international decision-making, 'bloc politics' and NATO expansion, conflicts near Russia's borders, terrorism, Islamic 'extremism', and so on [*Kontseptsiya natsionalnoi bezopasnosti* . . . , 2000, p. 6] – rather than identify individual countries as sources of danger to the Russian Federation. However, prominent members of the Yeltsin administration were wont on occasion to indicate particular countries as posing a long-term threat, unguarded assessments that cast light on the security thinking of significant sections of the foreign policy establishment.

Rarely was this ambivalence in attitudes more apparent than in the case of China. On the one hand, Moscow rejoiced in the rapprochement with Beijing which not only ended decades of bickering over the common border, but also offered the promise of a qualitatively new political and economic relationship [Primakov, 1997a, p. 2; Yeltsin–Jiang joint declaration, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 April 1997, p. 2]. Among the resulting dividends were a vastly improved security climate in a region whose remoteness had long represented a major source of concern to Moscow, as well as increased possibilities for realizing conceptions of a new 'multipolar world order' and what Rajan Menon [1997b, p. 101] called 'strategic convergence' – 'multifaceted cooperation and a convergence of views and interests on important questions of international security'. On the other hand, however, the perception of China as a long-term threat to national security interests died hard. Notwithstanding the almost honeymoon state of bilateral relations, liberals and conservatives alike continued to suggest that, in time, circumstances would emerge to engender increasing tensions between the two. For some [Abarinov, 1996b, p. 5], China represented something of a loose cannon, constantly engaged in territorial disputes (over Taiwan, the Spratley and Diaoyu/Senkaku islands) or in regional rivalries (with India), and whose assistance in 'stabilizing' Central Asia was improbable. Liberal concerns about Beijing's foreign policy assertiveness were reinforced by other, more general worries about the changing balance of power in the Far East [Surikov, 1997, p. 4; Trenin, 1999, p. 44], accelerated by sales of ever more advanced military technology to the Chinese [Chudodeev, 1997, p. 4]. In late 1996, Defence Minister Rodionov identified China among 'certain Asian countries' that were 'sharply' increasing their offensive capabilities and 'trying to expand their zones of influence and diminish the political significance of CIS countries in [solving] key regional problems' [in Korotchenko, 1996, p. 1], revealing in the process a deep-seated mistrust of Russia's most important Asian neighbour within the defence establishment. While there was broad agreement that good relations (or 'normalization') with Beijing were 'an absolute and long-term necessity' [Trenin, 1999, p. 36], this did not mean that Moscow could afford to relax its guard, particularly given that changing demographics[11] could lead to the sinicization and eventually loss of the Russian Far East [comments by Gaidar, in Smolansky, 1997, pp. 31–2; Trenin, ibid., pp. 36, 46].

Notwithstanding such reservations, however, the Yeltsin administration for the most part continued to treat China, if not as an ally, then at least as a vital, well-disposed, partner in regional and global affairs.

It did its best to minimize disagreements over border issues, while playing up achievements in areas as diverse as border confidence-building measures, large-scale arms transfers, long-term economic cooperation agreements in energy development [Yeltsin–Jiang joint statement, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 11 November 1997, p. 7]. This was not so much because of 'official complacency' as some critics [for example, Trenin, 1999, p. 9] have claimed,[12] but reflected more the old axiom that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. Given the centrality of balance-of-power considerations in the Russian foreign policy psyche, it was logical that the administration should look for points of commonality rather than difference with Beijing. If it felt uncomfortable about the demographic imbalance in the Far East or China's rising military and economic potential, then for most this paled by comparison with the perception that both faced the larger (as well as more urgent) 'threat' posed by American 'hegemonism' and 'diktat' [*see* Yeltsin's critical comments, reported in *Kommersant*, 10 December 1999, p. 1]. Either way, regional and global security perceptions ensured that Moscow would continue to devote considerable time and energy to the relationship with Beijing.

Ambiguity also characterized Russia's relations with the Islamic world, where there was a dichotomy between positive official sentiments and underlying prejudices. Publicly, Moscow went to considerable lengths to emphasize that it did not regard Islam as a threat to Russian national interests. Primakov [1994, p. 6] distinguished between the Islamic 'extremism' that was 'having a very negative effect on crisis situations on the territory of the CIS', and Islamic 'fundamentalism' 'which contemplates neither forcible dissemination nor, even less, terrorist methods'. In a subsequent clarification, he [1996c, p. 2] added that, '[a]s long as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Russia does not lead to ethnic discord and civil strife, we must learn to respect and reckon with this phenomenon, which is having a certain influence on the development of our new society'. Part of this benign attitude was motivated by an instrumentalist rationale similar to that which existed in the relationship with China. Anticipation of lasting tensions between the developed West – in particular, the USA – and the Islamic world fuelled an opportunistic outlook in which the latter represented, so to speak, grist to the multipolar mill [Pushkov, 1997b, p. 1]. Even if a disparate Islam lacked the political unity and sense of purpose of, say, China, India or the European Union, it might help Russia to mitigate the consequences of American power projection and Western moral universalism [Felgengauer, 1995a, p. 9; Gornostaev and Sokut, 1998, p. 2]. Like Moscow, the major Islamic nation-states (including American

allies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia) worried about the implications of 'limited sovereignty' and 'humanitarian intervention'. Cooperation between Russia and the Islamic world was important, too, in containing the spread of religious 'extremism'. Iran, viewed by Washington as a fomenter of regional and global instability, was seen in just the opposite way by Moscow – as an ally against international terrorism, ethnic nationalism and separatist tendencies [Saikal, 1996, pp. 272–3]. Both countries were concerned by the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and both had an interest in countering the rise of pan-Turkic sentiment and related threats to their territorial integrity.

But despite these shared interests, the attitude towards Islam among many in the Russian establishment fluctuated between indifference and suspicion. At the most instinctual level, a strong sense of European identity meant that it continued to consider Islam in practice as largely alien to Russian political, historical and cultural traditions. Indeed, some senior figures put forward the idea of Russia as a kind of 'defender of the faith'. Lukin [1992b, p. 71] argued that, 'as a European democratizing power', it could be a 'civilizing and stabilizing influence to help peacefully contain both extreme Islamic fundamentalism and conflicts resulting from ethnic and religious rivalries', while in a speech at the Council of Europe, Foreign Minister Ivanov spoke of Russia 'defending Europe's common borders from a barbarian invasion of international terrorism that is persistently and systematically working to create an axis of influence: Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans' [in Kosyrev, 2000, p. 6]. Although Ivanov was careful to identify international terrorism as the real threat, it can hardly have escaped notice that these regions were all Islamic. The image of Islam as trouble-maker was worsened by the marginal reputation of several prominent Islamic nations – Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria. As in the West, Russian political opinion was often unable (or unwilling) to understand the nuances between various manifestations of Islam: for many, the generic latter was in some way or another associated with terrorism and extremism, as well as with attempts to displace Russia geopolitically [*see* Rodionov's comments, in Korotchenko, 1996, p. 1]. In his capacity as Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, even Primakov [1994, p. 6] indicated unease:

> The situation in the CIS's 'hot spots' has become exacerbated as a result of the 'pulling' into them of other states besides Afghanistan, especially Iran and Turkey. Both these countries are seeking to expand their influence and are laying claim to the role of regional superpowers.

Crucially, also, the Islamic states were too weak to affect the global strategic balance in any significant way. Unlike China, India and Western Europe, they did not represent a unified entity with whom good relations were indispensable – merely desirable (*see above*). Although Moscow continued to pay lip-service to the Islamic world's importance in global processes [Sevostyanov, 1996, p. 31], during the whole of his eight-year presidency Yeltsin did not once visit an Islamic country for a bilateral state visit[13] – a statistic that spoke volumes about the extent of high-level Russian indifference.[14] In the end, relations with Islamic countries were seen as useful only in certain well-defined situations. Iran, for instance, was important as a tool against a perceived Western complacency; in helping to further Russian economic interests in the Caspian sea, nuclear technology and weapons transfers; and in managing bushfires in and around Russia's periphery. But it could never be under Yeltsin a 'strategic partner' in the way others were. Periodic concessions to Washington on the question of Russian nuclear and military cooperation with Iran – most famously the 1995 Gore–Chernomyrdin agreement not to sign new arms contracts with Tehran[15] – showed how Moscow saw the balance of priorities.

When discussing potential adversaries, brief mention should be made of the West and Western security structures such as NATO. As noted in the previous chapter, Moscow's approach here was often more competitive than cooperative. The durability of zero-sum attitudes, the central role played by balance-of-power considerations, institutional inertia (reflected in anachronistic military planning) and serious disagreements on a host of specific issues meant that, in an important sense, the West represented for some the greatest threat of all to Russian foreign policy and security interests. Yet we should be wary of accepting such an unnuanced interpretation, if only because many of the same critics also saw the developed countries of the West – if not the West as philosophical/cultural entity – as essential to reviving Russia's political and economic fortunes. The extent of dependence, real and perceived, on key members of the Western alliance like the USA, Germany, UK and France offered up a real dilemma of perception, one that was even more acute than in the case of China. These countries, in particular the United States, brought out the schizophrenia in post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, which often regarded them simultaneously as 'friend' and 'adversary', 'partner' and 'rival'.

The changing nature of threat perceptions

Under Yeltsin there developed a sense that the most serious dangers to national security and the security of the leadership lay in Russia's political

uncertainty, difficult socioeconomic circumstances, and the emergence of so-called non-traditional threats such as terrorism, crime and drug trafficking. Here, the fusion between the domestic and the external so characteristic of post-Soviet foreign policy became increasingly evident. Indeed, it is questionable whether such issues should be considered 'foreign' and not 'domestic'. Responsibility for their management lay with domestic institutions and personalities, with foreign policy bodies often handling only the external public relations. This was the case, for example, with Chechnya, where the administration's line that this was a 'purely internal affair' [Gornostaev, 1999d, p. 1] was reinforced by the reality that the Foreign Ministry's involvement in policy-making was minimal; its job was limited to 'selling the war' and minimizing its impact on foreign policy interests elsewhere. Functionally speaking, too, the issue of terrorism was more domestic than international. The Defence and Interior Ministries and the Security Council carried the burden of policy responsibility; the prefix 'international' before the word 'terrorism' said less about how Moscow saw this problem than it did about its belief that internationalizing the threat would help 'legitimize' the means used to meet it.

Crisis and conflict management

In important respects, crisis and conflict management stands as the signature preoccupation of the Yeltsin administration's foreign policy. It combined the urgency of the here-and-now with more strategic aims, such as safeguarding and projecting Russia's international status and influence. It represented a marriage between regional priorities and global issues, as well as addressing the gamut of threat perceptions from the immediately tangible such as the spill-over effect of local and regional conflicts, to the more broadly geopolitical – as embodied in the West's increasing involvement in the CIS and Russia's marginalization from decision-making processes in the former Eastern bloc. Significantly, two of the four 'top priority tasks' Primakov [1996a, p. 13] identified in his first interview as Foreign Minister related to the 'settlement of regional, nationality-based, interethnic and interstate conflicts' and 'the development of fruitful international relations that would prevent the creation of new hotbeds of tension … '. Unlike other areas of policy-making, crisis and conflict management issues were critical in practice, not just in theory. Even if the administration's approach was often uneven, circumstances ensured that such issues were rarely out of the public eye. Both in and outside the CIS conflicts and crises were ready subjects for political interest because of their currentness and

apparent simplicity. In contrast to more complex and long-term challenges such as reinventing relations with NATO or facilitating Russia's integration into the global economy, they provided fertile soil for simplistic views, gut reactions and ready 'solutions'. For much the same reasons behind the popularity of geopolitics, crisis management was a major priority because its surface accessibility suited the 'dumbing-down' of foreign policy. Additionally, it was an area where a relative consensus existed. With the exception of advocates of foreign policy retrenchment, nearly everyone agreed that Moscow needed to develop responses to crises in the FSU, Bosnia, Iraq and Kosovo.

The Russian approach to international crisis and conflict management exhibited several notable features, the most important of which was its functional orientation. With few exceptions (for example, in Africa), major international crises *more or less wherever they occurred* were a policy magnet. Iraq and Yugoslavia assumed a disproportionate importance not because Moscow considered these areas to be key geographical priorities but because the major Western powers – in particular the USA – were deeply engaged in them. Russia's interest was derivative, calibrated according to the level of attention shown by others; if this involvement was minimal, then the probability was that Moscow's would be as well. A second important feature of crisis management under Yeltsin was the primacy of participation over results. Membership of the Middle East Peace Process and Balkans Contact Groups was always a higher priority than bringing significant human and financial resources to bear in the search for solutions. This seemingly casual attitude was partly a response to the reality of Russia's limited influence on proceedings, partly a (justified) belief that too prominent a role in such matters would cause more trouble than it was worth. Rather than get embroiled in a thankless and costly exercise between irreconcilable parties, better to have the cachet of formal(istic) involvement while avoiding any responsibility for failure or lack of progress. Third, crisis and conflict resolution was rarely an end in itself so much as a means to achieve wider objectives. In this context, Moscow's shuttle diplomacy in the case of Iraq reflected less an intrinsic desire for peace than the knowledge that conflict, whenever it occurred, tended to reinforce America's global leadership while further undermining Russia's diminishing credentials as an 'indispensable' actor in the Middle East and globally. Conversely, the chief dividend of successful mediation – no matter how short-lived – was not conflict prevention as such but the reassertion of Russia's international importance [*see* Gornostaev, 1997c, p. 1; Pushkov, 1997b, p. 1]. Fourth, the prominence

of crisis management issues was often temporary, suggesting that they were perhaps not so much priorities as individual events that received discrete and *ad hoc* responses. Iraq only counted, it seemed, whenever there was a stand-off over UNSCOM inspections or the United States and UK launched air-strikes against Saddam Hussein, while Kosovo became very much a secondary priority with the end of the war and the emergence of the more mundane challenge of post-conflict reconstruction in the Balkans.

It was much the same story with Moscow's handling of such issues in the former Soviet space, with an evident disjunction between a generally passive approach to bread-and-butter bilateral and multilateral involvement on the one hand, and the keenness of its *public* reaction to incipient and ongoing crises on the other. It was one thing to resist determinedly the 'internationalization' of conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia; it was quite another to make these issues top priorities with the costs associated with a long-term commitment. (In this context, maintaining troops and bases in many of the CIS republics – notably Georgia – was, paradoxically, logistically easier and cheaper than pulling them back to Russia.) Another similarity between crisis management in and outside the CIS was the significant role played by ulterior motives. Conflict mediation in the former Soviet space was not only about containing the security consequences for Russia of local and regional conflicts – although this was important – but also about making the most of 'targets of opportunity' to maximize influence. For example, the combination of Tbilisi's mishandling of the Abkhazia war and the direct (if unsanctioned) involvement of local Russian troops enabled Moscow to extract concessions from Georgian President Shevardnadze that, effectively, consolidated Russia's role as the dominant power in the Transcaucasus [Baev, 1996, p. 119].[16] Likewise, Moscow was able, at relatively little cost, to exploit Azeri setbacks in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to obtain a more pliant line in Baku towards Russian interests.[17] In neither of these instances did the Yeltsin administration have a clear (let alone preconceived) idea about what it wanted to achieve or expend significant energy and resources; to a large extent, the issue was taken out of its hands by local military commanders whose actions turned out to Russia's strategic advantage. But the effect was practically the same as if the Kremlin had deliberately set out to use conflict management as the spearhead for the projection of Russian power in the CIS [as has been argued by Lynch, 2000, p. 4]. This blurring of cause-and-effect is perhaps the main reason why many scholars have mistakenly assumed the CIS to be Russia's top external priority in

the post-Soviet period – a seemingly logical extrapolation from the undoubted fact that the former Soviet Union produced an unending stream of assorted crises and chronic instability over the period of the Yeltsin presidency. In fact, what counted was the basket of conflict-related issues, *not* the region itself. Most of the time, the administration, indeed the political class as a whole, showed only slight interest in relations with the CIS; the latter only became a 'top priority' whenever there was an attention-grabbing crisis or when an outside strategic threat assumed especially conspicuous form (for example, joint military exercises). The outcome of this dysfunctional and short-sighted approach was that Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo received lavish policy attention while more critical issues in Russia's relations within the FSU were neglected.

Promoting domestic political and economic interests

Upon coming to power in December 1991, the Yeltsin administration set itself four strategic reform objectives: (i) establishing a democratic political system; (ii) creating a Western-style market economy; (iii) developing a civil society based on law and values instead of power; and (iv) Russia's integration with the West. Given the fusion of domestic and external policy-making (Chapter 2), and the absence of indigenous models for democratization, marketization and demilitarization, it was natural that the government would define domestic reform objectives as foreign policy priorities as well. Although for some [for example, Kozyrev, 1994b, p. 3], there was an important civilizational component relating to 'common values,' for others the issue was above all practical. Primakov [1996a, p. 13], for example, took care to counterbalance the affirmation that 'Russia has been and remains a great power' by emphasizing the 'need to create an external environment that would, to the greatest extent possible, be favourable to economic development and the continuation of democratic processes in Russian society'.

Economic reform and prosperity

The economic agenda lent itself to a measure of agreement even among ideological and institutional foes. Everyone stood to gain from a flourishing economy with socioeconomic stability, financial solvency, high growth and expanding trade. It also made sense to give priority to areas where the Russian economy was still strong – oil and gas exports, arms sales – or where it stood to derive clear gain, such as more favourable trading arrangements, improved market access, financial and

technical assistance packages, and debt collection from former 'client' states. As Chapter 3 noted, the liberal foreign policy agenda, with its emphasis on economic priorities, reached out well beyond its core constituency to an often distinctly non-liberal audience. More generally, the prevailing Westerncentrism and Americacentrism of the elite constituted in itself partial acknowledgement of the importance of economic goals. For what ultimately distinguished the West from other geographical entities was its wealth and a disposition to share some of it.

However, although a rough consensus existed in broad terms, closer inspection of these priorities reveals a fragmented policy landscape. First, there was no meeting of minds on the type of economy – 'market', 'market-oriented', 'socially-oriented' – that the country should be trying to develop. While this is not the time or place to buy into the debate over Russian economic reform, it is important to note that conflicting views on this subject affected both the choice and handling of external economic priorities. Whereas liberal members of the Yeltsin administration tended to highlight the positive aspects of embracing the West, opponents focused instead on the latter's alleged exploitation of Russian weakness. These contradictory attitudes clashed on specific issues such as foreign debt. Some, such as Anatolii Chubais, saw admission to the Paris Club as bringing Russia into the global financial community and enabling it to participate in decision-making on international debt issues [in Kovalenko, 1997, p. 3]. It was believed that membership would enhance Moscow's prospects for recovering some US$ 120–140 billion from the CIS member-states and client states of the former Soviet Union [Gornostaev, 1997b, p. 1]. Critics, on the other hand, saw a Russia being bled dry, and lobbied hard for cancellation of Soviet-era debt obligations to Paris Club and London Club creditors ['Russia's Struggle … ', 1999]. The outcome, unsurprisingly, was neither one thing nor the other. Moscow continued to repay instalments on public debt as well as IMF loans, but reluctantly, often behind schedule, and to the accompaniment of threats not to pay up in future [*see* comments by Mikhail Kasyanov, in Dolgov, 1999].

Attitudes towards accession to Western economic institutions and trading arrangements were likewise divided. Kozyrev [1994c, p. 70] argued that integration was crucial to Russia's survival as a functioning and (eventually) prosperous nation, and to opening up markets for primary and secondary exports. For example, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU – by far its largest trading partner[18] – was important because, as a country with 'a transitional economy' rather than one 'with a state trade', Russia was now entitled to the benefit of Most

Favoured Nation (MFN) provisions [Visens, 1994, p. 1]. Others, however, emphasized the 'unjustified discrimination against Russia in world markets' [*Rossiisko-amerikanskie otnosheniya ...*, 2000, pp. 113–14] or highlighted the dangers to domestic producers of the opening-up of the economy to Western competition [Koshkareva and Narzikulov, 1997, p. 1]. The outcome, again, was unsatisfactory. Russia joined these organizations or made progress towards accession (for example, in the case of the WTO), but showed little disposition to assume the responsibilities of candidate membership[19] or provide a meaningful Individual Action Plan (IAP) for economic liberalization in the context of APEC.[20] It was a similar story with foreign investment. Yeltsin [1994a, p. 2] described it as 'a mighty area of untapped potential', and there was widespread recognition that the country could not do without it [Georgi Arbatov, 1994, p. 95; *Rossiisko-amerikanskie otnosheniya ...*, 2000, p. 113]. Yet fears that outsiders might exploit Russia as a 'raw materials appendage' and source of cheap labour [*see* Sazonov, 1994, p. 10] and the absence of proper legal and institutional infrastructure ensured that the level of foreign direct investment would remain extremely low and, for the most part, limited to the energy sector.[21]

Sectionalism and the profit agenda

Much of the dichotomy between in-principle agreement that foreign policy should serve economic objectives and disagreement on the modalities of this interaction can be attributed to the very different priority attached to economic prosperity as opposed to economic reform. Officially, these objectives amounted to the same thing: the first depended on the second. But the distinction between them was crucial. In theory, the administration was committed to Russia's integration into the global (Western-dominated) economy, involving liberalization, restructuring, demonopolization, the development of a new enterprise culture, increased competition, and so on. However, inability among the elite to reach consensus on Russia's economic course precluded the emergence of a coherent set of policies. In practice, it proved much easier to promote individual economic interests than a national economic interest as such. Faced by pressure from the agricultural and manufacturing lobbies, the Kremlin retained subsidies, tariffs and non-tariff barriers and even in some cases raised them to new levels [*The National Trade Estimate Report ...*, 2001, pp. 378–81]. Motivated by a desire to maximize export revenues and rescue the declining military-industrial complex, it gave more or less free rein to Rosvooruzhenie, the state arms exporting body, to expand sales to a wide range of customers – some of them

highly unsavoury. In this case, reforming a moribund and unreconstructed sector of the national economy scarcely figured; what mattered were early profits and keeping the industry afloat [Gerasev and Surikov, 1997, p. 20]. Likewise, proposals to demonopolize the Russian gas industry came to grief against the higher priority of extracting immediate dividends from Gazprom's existing export arrangements with European customers [*see* Zmeyushchenko *et al.*, 2001, pp. 12–15]. Generating income in the short term – whether from exports of oil and gas, raw materials, nuclear technology, arms – was more important than establishing solid bases for the development of an effective market economy whose full advantages would not be clear for some time. If a certain 'economization' of foreign policy occurred, then it was marked principally by an opportunistic approach to particular priorities. Well might the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy declare that Russia's main objective in its relationship with the United States was the creation of 'material conditions necessary for the country's rebirth as a strong and prosperous economic power, along the lines of market reforms and on the basis of integration into the global economy'. But the Council's real priorities lay in what it outlined as the 'key tasks' of economic policy towards the USA, most of which were non-structural: securing MFN status for Russian goods and services and the lifting of protectionist barriers against Russian exporters; attracting foreign investment in secondary industry, agriculture and infrastructure; the pursuit of a 'flexible protectionist policy offering selective protection against foreign competition to domestic producers of goods and services'; and reaching agreement about 'civilized competition and the division of spheres of influence in third-country markets in those areas where Russia enjoys large export capabilities (weapons, space services, uranium, and so on)' [*Rossiisko-amerikanskie otnosheniya* … , 2000, pp. 132–3]. Whatever 'opportunities' that appeared to be at hand were seized, even when the consequences of such actions were likely to be negative. Thus, the careless management of missile and nuclear technology deals with India and Iran created complications for Russia's far more important interests involving the United States.[22] Just as the transfer of state-of-the-art military technology and weapons to China arose not out of careful calculation of its implications, but owed itself to short-term economic and geopolitical considerations – increasing export revenue, propping up the military-industrial complex, firing a shot across the West's bows in the global multipolar game. It was typical of the low priority attached to economic reform in foreign policy that Moscow used the various IMF packages doled out to it not in support of industrial restructuring and liberalization but to sustain Yeltsin's political fortunes.

Given ongoing domestic uncertainty, not to mention disappointed expectations about early returns from cooperation with the West, the objective of enlisting foreign policy on behalf of economic reform could never be much more than a paper priority.

Consolidation of political democracy and stability

If economic reform ranked well down the list of Russian foreign policy priorities in practice, then the record of 'democratization' was even more unimpressive. Few other areas showed so vividly the imprint of instrumentalism. In declaring a fully-fledged political democracy to be a major goal of the new Russia, the administration had several ideas in mind, the least of which was to establish properly representative institutions, parties with real policy platforms, and transparent political processes. The most immediate aim of the foreign policy-democratization nexus was to guarantee continuing support for Yeltsin from the developed West. It hardly mattered whether he was a 'democrat' or not; the important thing was that he was seen as such – a 'fact' that facilitated a natural conflation between the President, democracy and right-thinking pro-Westernism. If Western governments were not oblivious to the imperfections of Russian democracy, then they were generally inclined to underplay these in the assumption that there was no satisfactory alternative. For his part, Yeltsin understood that the *quid pro quo* for such support was to emphasize the importance of democratization and democratic institutions. This presentational side of things was all the more important in the light of developments – the violent stand-off with the Supreme Soviet in October 1993, lacunae in the 1996 Presidential elections, two Chechen wars – that appeared to cast doubt on the sincerity of his commitment to democratic ideals. Additionally, with the failure of much of its domestic reform programme and consequent loss of public support, the administration needed all the political and especially financial assistance it could get from the West. Democracy, in this context, constituted the main instrument for resisting Communist revanchism [Lukin, 1992b, p. 66].

The second reason for identifying political democracy as a foreign policy priority was a little less cynical: to ease Russia's introduction into the international community after seven decades of virtual isolation. If Moscow wanted to catch the post-Cold War bandwagon, then it needed to make an effort to respond to the *political* mood of the times – and that meant subscribing to 'democracy-speak' and to the basic appurtenances of a democratic state, such as an elected parliament, regular

elections, and so forth. The alternative, as Karaganov [1996b, p. 5] pointed out, was 'self-isolation'. Once again, it mattered only slightly if the unfolding of this process was less than perfect, since this could be – and was – forgiven as inevitable in the difficult transition from a totalitarian dictatorship to a Western-style democracy.[23] Relatedly, democracy was useful in providing balance to Russia's constant self-assertion as a 'great power'. In the same way as a very public commitment to international law, norms and conventions disguised balance-of-power objectives (*see* Chapters 4 and 5), so the highlighting of democratic values served to dress Russia up not as the obstructive rival of old but a constructive partner who was often unfairly maligned and misunderstood. Democracy, or the appearance of it, was a way of shifting the burden of past guilt and present and future suspicion, while supplying Russia with a cover for behaviour, at home and abroad, that was sometimes anything but democratic. Finally, democracy and democratization were enlisted as means, albeit unsuccessful, in pressuring the West over individual policies that Moscow disliked, such as NATO enlargement. It was in this loaded context that Vyacheslav Nikonov [1994b, p. 4] attached priority to 'the development of Russian democracy', arguing that 'any eastward expansion of NATO would hand very major trump cards to nationalist forces and only bring about the danger that all of us would like to avoid'. With such a diversity of instrumentalist rationales, it was to be expected that the Russian government's commitment to democratization *qua* foreign policy goal would be uneven. While some members of the administration and the political elite undoubtedly took it seriously, the combination of a fraught domestic political climate, the discrediting of economic liberalism, the absence of democratic traditions, and more urgent foreign policy challenges, meant that its importance remained at the level of an article of faith, a symbolic rather than practical priority.

Development of a civil society

Civil society, distinguished by the primacy of law over power, was the least important of the Yeltsin administration's strategic reform objectives – and only a minimal priority in foreign policy terms. This was because, first, its realization would be extremely difficult and drawn-out – a reality acknowledged even by Russian liberals. There were no usable traditions of individual rights, meaningful laws or institutional equity. Centuries of autocratic rule (in which justice was dispensed by the god-like – *vozh* – figure of the Tsar), laden by decades of the Communist Party's command-administrative system, a heavily

collectivist mentality and the Russian *spetsifika*, represented truly barren ground for the realization of Western humanist concepts. The emergence of a civil society was also a process that lacked clear signposts to indicate even partial progress. Whereas it was relatively easy to 'prove' a commitment to the market by introducing financial stabilization, privatization and some liberalization, or 'demonstrate' democratization by instituting more or less free elections and allowing the emergence of political parties (no matter how individualized), the establishment of a strong and independent judiciary or genuine respect for human rights was much harder to quantify.

Such quasi-abstract problems were exacerbated by the fact that pursuit of a civil society was generally viewed as less advantageous in foreign (let alone domestic) policy terms. Even when the linkage was made between values and material benefits, such as in the nexus between the volume of foreign investment and the existence of proper legal infrastructure and eradication of corruption, the emphasis was on predictability and reliability *not* a civil society as such [*see Rossiisko-amerikanskie otnosheniya ...*, 2000, pp. 135–6]. It is pertinent that the most frequent comparison in the foreign investment context was made with China [*see* Tikhomirov, 1997], the very antithesis of a civil society. Likewise, it was enough that Russia should be seen as democratic by the West for it to receive moral legitimation. Although membership of such groupings as the Council of Europe was desirable as a step towards integration into Europe [Abarinov, 1996a, p. 3] as well as on the long-standing principle that Russia should seek to join any body of which it was not yet a member, following through on individual human rights or introducing transparent legal procedures was rarely seen as adding anything of particular value. In the eyes of many, including some liberals,[24] power in its various forms and not 'morals' remained the prime determinant of international influence.

This mixture of complacency and geopolitical thinking was apparent in Moscow's handling of the external aspects of the two Chechen conflicts, particularly the second. Official statements and media commentaries barely bothered to address civil society and human rights concerns. Instead, they accused America of attempting to 'weaken Russia' and 'establish complete control over the North Caucasus' [Igor Sergeev, in Korbut, 1999b, p. 3], insisted that Chechnya was Russia's 'internal affair' [Igor Ivanov, in Gornostaev, 1999c, p. 1] and identified the real issues as 'a complex struggle against international terrorism' [ibid.] and defence of Russia's territorial integrity [Gornostaev, 1999d, p. 1]. These arguments derived added strength from a belief that

the major Western powers, for all their public criticisms, did not care overmuch about what Russia did in Chechnya. Media sources pointed to statements from, *inter alia*, President Clinton, NATO Secretary-General Robertson [Gankin, 1999a, p. 10] and British Foreign Minister Cook [Sysoev, 2000, p. 1], that stressed the importance of maintaining and expanding dialogue and cooperation with Russia. While noting the strong language of Western public positions, even liberal journalists [Yusin, 1999f, p. 3] were inclined to claim that this was 'largely intended for domestic consumption'. The low priority attached to the construction of a civil society and its accompanying values was evident in Moscow's approach towards human rights more generally. Except for a short period during 1992, it consistently underplayed their importance with the instrumentalist exception of the situation of the Russian diaspora in the FSU. Following the Kosovo conflict and NATO's 'humanitarian intervention', the cause of human rights as foreign policy priority was effectively killed off, with the Bishkek declaration of the Shanghai Five in August 1999 [http://russia.shaps.hawaii.edu/fp/russia/bishkek_19990825.html] and the Yeltsin–Jiang summit statement of December 1999 [in Gornostaev and Chernyakov, 1999, p. 6] underlining the absolute primacy of state sovereignty instead.

Sectionalization and the failure of policy

The susceptibility of priority-setting to opposing political currents and short-term concerns had a devastating impact on the policy process. Exhibiting a dilettantism born of expediency, Moscow was never able to sustain its policy focus long enough to follow declared objectives to their logical conclusion. While it paid lip-service to the fate of the Russian diaspora, it devoted minimal resources to alleviating their problems. Although it pushed regularly for START-2 ratification, it found itself sidetracked by other priorities and extraneous developments. Such (non-)outcomes highlighted a fractured and dysfunctional approach to international relations, even when domestic and external conditions appeared to favour more positive outcomes. In this connection, it is instructive to refer back to the two-and-a-half years between Primakov's appointment as Foreign Minister (January 1996) and the August 1998 financial crash. During this time, many of the prerequisites for a new unity were present: a 'centrist' and 'pragmatic' Foreign Minister whom many saw as the embodiment of a 'national interests' consensus; relative political stability following Yeltsin's re-election in July 1996; improving economic indices;[25] near-unanimous condemnation of

NATO's decision to expand eastwards; general support for improved relations with China, Japan and Ukraine. And yet competing groups continued to pursue their separate agendas with only the barest nod to a greater 'good'. Primakov and Gazprom pushed hard for a close Union treaty with Belarus against the bitter and ultimately successful opposition of Chubais, the neo-liberals and oligarchs; advocates of the liberal foreign policy agenda undertook a vigorous but often unpopular campaign to accelerate Russia's integration into the world economy via accession to the WTO and international economic institutions, as well as through tighter links with the IMF; MINATOM and the Foreign Ministry were at cross-purposes over exports of dual technology to Iran, while similar disagreements existed between Lukoil (backed by Chernomyrdin and the economic ministries) and the MFA over exploitation of Caspian Sea resources; and there was a major split over policy towards Japan, with Yeltsin, then heir-apparent Boris Nemtsov and putative foreign minister-in-waiting Yastrzhembsky pushing a concessionary line on the territorial question against the strong objections of Primakov, the MFA, MOD and the communist-nationalist opposition.

Moreover, even when there was concordance of perception on individual issues, for example, the evils of NATO enlargement, there was little or no agreement on how Moscow should proceed. While admittedly more melodramatic options such as publicly reneging on arms control agreements, sanctions-breaking, or security 'counter-measures' were never seriously considered, liberal prescriptions for more cooperative Russia–NATO relations [Davydov, 1996, p. 9; Zagorskii, 1996, p. 9; Pierre and Trenin, 1997a, p. 10] constantly ran aground against the more fashionable narrow focus on enlargement itself [Bovt, 1999a, p. 3]. These were not mere quibbles about modalities nor were they comparable to the vagaries typical of policy-making in any country; they reflected a polarization in attitudes towards such concepts as zero-sum and balance of power – in other words, the very building-blocks of a strategic culture. It was symptomatic that liberal critics should attack Primakov for his 'inflexibility' while describing the eventual decision to negotiate with NATO on preparation of the Founding Act as 'a victory for common sense over absurdity' [Abarinov, 1996c, p. 2] or, conversely, that these same critics should be condemned by Primakov supporters as 'defeatists' who 'underestimated Russia's influence in Europe and the West's interest in Russia as a factor in European and world politics' [Pushkov, 1996b, p. 2].

Moscow's handling of the Kosovo conflict was an especially stark illustration of how the factionalization of elite attitudes over priorities

crippled the practice of foreign policy. On the face of things, NATO's military intervention united the political class as never before, with well-known liberals such as Yabloko leader Grigorii Yavlinsky [in *Segodnya*, 25 March 1999, p. 2][26] joining their political adversaries in condemning the action. But the NATO military intervention remained a consensus-building event in Russia only so long as Moscow could frame its response in condemnatory terms. When it needed to find something extra – be it 'counter-measures', an enhanced mediatory role, participation in post-conflict settlement – then the divisions within the political class re-emerged with a vengeance. Early liberal fears that the NATO action might be exploited as a 'pretext for aggression' in Russian domestic politics, involving a return to Stalinist methods of governance [Privalov, 1999, p. 2] or to an Asiatic 'slavery' [Latsis, 1999a, p. 2],[27] became increasingly strident the longer the conflict went on,[28] while by the first week of April it was already being rumoured that Yeltsin was unhappy with the 'excessively bellicose statements' coming from Russian politicians and senior military figures [Sysoev, 1999a, p. 2]. The appointment of former Prime Minister Chernomyrdin as the President's special representative to the Balkans later that month, although primarily motivated by domestic political considerations,[29] crystallized the competition between different policy courses and their sponsors: the liberals and oligarchs arguing for Russia to cut its losses and salvage some kind of diplomatic role and status by abandoning Milosevic and making common cause with the West; Prime Minister Primakov and the MFA maintaining their legalist line against NATO's use of force; significant elements within the MOD calling for a rethinking of Russian strategic conceptions; more radical figures within the communist-nationalist opposition advocating various 'counter-measures'; and Chernomyrdin responding, to the extent feasible, to the erratic mood swings of his President. Even with the end of the conflict, there was little sign of a coming together of minds: Igor Ivanov's [2000a, p. 9] reference to 'two fundamentally different approaches to fashioning a new world order' and championing of multipolarity – principles enshrined in Russia's 2000 National Security Concept [*Kontseptsiya natsionalnoi bezopasnosti …*, 2000, p. 1] – was diametrically opposed to Sergei Karaganov's [2000, p. 11] conclusion that Moscow should cease pursuing the 'phantom of "great-power" status' and concentrate instead on a 'very narrow range of genuinely vital national interests'. Once again, it cannot be stressed too much that these differences were hardly petty. As the storm of controversy over the deal Chernomyrdin agreed

with Finnish President Ahtisaari demonstrated so vividly, they reflected widely divergent perceptions of Russia's place in the world, the balance of priorities, the type of relations it should pursue with the West and, ultimately, the overall thrust of its foreign policy [*see*, for example, Gornostaev and Korotchenko, 1999, pp. 1, 6; Pushkov, 1999, p. 3].[30] The Russian failure in the Balkans [*see* Levitin, 2000, p. 130] was a microcosm of a foreign policy in a state of rout and confusion, one which had 'not yet determined its basic interests and priorities, let alone a strategy for attaining them' [Trenin, 1999, p. 55].

Pragmatism by default

One of the paradoxes of Russian foreign policy in the Yeltsin era is the contrast between, on the one hand, the lack of consensus within the elite as to either objectives or means, and the fact that Moscow continued nonetheless to treat with the outside world within the bounds of the more or less 'acceptable'. At no stage did it countenance armed conflict with the West,[31] while periodic threats to withdraw from international commitments – arms control agreements (START-2, CFE), non-proliferation regimes (MTCR), trade embargoes (against Iraq, in the former Yugoslavia) – were notable for their emptiness. There might be occasional surprise 'initiatives' – for example, the so-called de-targeting or re-targeting of Russian nuclear missiles[32] – but even these soon lost their capacity to shock. Whatever the notional alternatives, the Yeltsin administration could always be trusted to act in a basically 'rational' way.

But it would be wrong to attribute this 'reasonableness', or what Kozyrev [2000, p. 6] described as the 'safety margin' in Russia's relations with the West, to a conscious process within the political elite. Contrary to conventional wisdom, there was no sense of the latter coming together to establish certain fundamentals of foreign policy behaviour. What occurred was a 'pragmatism by default', arising from the mutual neutralization of sectional interests. It was this which ensured that Moscow would, *faute de mieux*, continue to operate within broad parameters of 'acceptable' international behaviour. With no one group able to impose its agenda for any *extended* length of time, the conduct of foreign policy became characterized by a lowest common denominator conservatism based on the avoidance of risk. Such an unwitting 'compromise' effectively anaesthetized policy-making, good and bad alike. While on the plus side it provided some protection against obviously stupid and dangerous actions, the passivity and contradictions it incorporated worked against the evolution of a common and sustained strategic

purpose and led to a steady deterioration in Russian positions globally – with the West, on the European continent, in key areas of the former Soviet Union such as Ukraine and the Transcaucasus, and even in parts of the Asia-Pacific. The fact that policy was only sporadically pursued with an eye to the long term, or that no selfless conception of the national interest existed, meant that relations with China became subsumed to the specious politics of global multipolarity, ties with NATO and the EU were mired in traditional geopolitical thinking, and a practicable vision of Russia's role in the world remained elusive. At various times, one or other sectional interest would gain a temporary ascendancy that would translate into a more constructive Russian attitude towards relations with NATO, integration into global economic processes, or focused approach towards economic cooperation with Beijing. But invariably this relative state of grace would be short-lived, unable to survive the test of time and events or the diluting effect of countervailing ideological and political influences.

None of this is to deny that there were important trends in Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin. In the preceding chapters we have enumerated a number of them – civilizational, ideological, political and attitudinal – and it is one of the main contentions of this book that various beliefs and mindsets have helped shape Russian attitudes and behaviour towards the outside world. It can even be argued that, at the level of broad principle, much of the elite agreed on the need for a positive approach to foreign policy, involving productive relations with the West, more substantive ties with China and the Asia-Pacific, increased participation in the global economy, due attention to the CIS, and so on. But there is no justification or sense in trying to ramrod these into some kind of overall 'Russian world-view' – realist, 'pragmatic' (in the Primakovian meaning), 'independent', or other – scientifically seductive or convenient though this might be, or to pretend that the Yeltsin administration was able to convert general propositions into the effective management of concrete interests and priorities. Notwithstanding the continuities of the past, post-Soviet society was and is a dynamically evolving and complex, even confused, entity. Lacking a common understanding of the country's place in the world beyond a few pat formulae and bereft in an atomized institutional environment, the Russian political class could not help but mirror these realities, in external relations as much as in domestic affairs. Whether as a result of civilizational bias, political temptation, misreading the issues, ancient prejudices, lack of confidence in government, or sheer practical difficulties, the outcome amounted to the same: the failure to develop a post-Soviet

intellectual and practical consensus. To suggest otherwise is to accept regime mythmaking at face value, mistake illusion for reality, and miss the real essence of Russian foreign policy at this time – a pragmatism by default, based not on a consistent or integrated vision of the world, but shaped by the diverse responses of competing sectional interests.

7 Towards Normalization? Putin and Beyond

When Vladimir Putin succeeded Boris Yeltsin on New Year's Day 2000, Russian foreign policy was at a post-Soviet nadir. With few exceptions – the improving relationship with China being the most notable – the landscape was almost uniformly depressing, with little prospect of improved fortunes in the foreseeable future. The President-to-be faced a daunting array of problems, ranging from a volatile institutional environment and climate of demoralization, to more concrete concerns such as the deterioration in Russia's relations with the West in the wake of Kosovo and other crises. More generally, the country's stature and role as an international actor had declined to the point where few outside Moscow were inclined to think of Russia except in secondary and even peripheral terms. Increasingly, talk of the latter's importance in regional and global affairs acquired a formalistic tone, motivated more by habit and a care not to exclude options than by a sincere belief that Russia mattered.

Some two years later, it is time to evaluate Putin's management of foreign policy and assess the extent to which he has impressed his personal stamp on proceedings. Can one speak of a strategic shift following Yeltsin's departure, or is it more appropriate instead to describe the 'Putin era' as a period of transition and discovery or, more pessimistically, as one of revanchism? While the Brezhnevian stagnation of Yeltsin's second term has only heightened our keenness to establish who Putin is and what he stands for, it is no easy matter to emerge with any confident conclusions. It is testament to the elusiveness of the man and his world-view that since his accession he has been described variously as a Eurocentrist [Kremenyuk, 2001, pp. 16–17], *derzhavnik* [Albats, 2000], *chekist* [*Itogi*, 17 August 1999], a proponent of the primacy of economic priorities ['Vneshnepoliticheskii kurs…', p. 9], and

so on. The number and breadth of his overseas travels have communicated all sorts of signals, many of them contradictory, while a corresponding caution in public statements on international affairs has served to obscure more than enlighten. At the same time, foreign policy post-Yeltsin is very much a work in progress, a typically untidy marriage of old and new. Putin's comparative inexperience at the highest levels of government and limited past familiarity with big picture foreign policy issues[1] have led to an emphasis on political consolidation and institutional stability at the expense of policy development, and on reviewing options rather than pursuing committal courses of action.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the unclear or incipient nature of much of Moscow's management of external relations, it *is* possible to discern some critical trends and features even in this period of transition. And in this last part of the book I propose to do so by examining the Putin administration's approach in relation to the principal themes discussed in earlier chapters – issues of identity and perception, political and institutional context, ideology, the presentation (and misrepresentation) of policy, geopolitics, and the choice and implementation of priorities. Although the picture is still evolving and many uncertainties remain, a comparative approach assists us in distinguishing between strategic shifts and revised modalities, reveals trends in perceptions of and attitudes towards the outside world, and offers clues on how Russian foreign policy might develop in the years to come.

The main conclusion is that the most significant strategic feature of foreign policy under Putin has been its 'securitization' – a term which, like so many others in the post-Soviet political dictionary, lends itself to flexible definition. In this particular context, it refers to three things. First, most literally, it describes the significantly enhanced role of the security apparatus in foreign policy-making – both at the individual level and institutionally – and the impact this has had on the conduct of Moscow's management of international affairs. The second meaning centres on the primacy of political-military over economic priorities. Despite the growing importance of the latter, it is the former which continues to dominate the agenda. Although labels such as zero-sum, balance of power and spheres of influence have become somewhat tainted, their spirit imbues much of Russian foreign policy today. Third, the more subtle and nuanced, yet assertive approach of the current administration is reflected in the interplay between overtly security objectives and economic interests. As a result, there has emerged a more balanced foreign policy – but not in the conventional Western sense. Instead, we are witnessing the intensification of the 'geopoliticizing' trends identified at the

end of Chapter 5, whereby the pursuit of nominally economic objectives becomes the engine for projecting strategic influence and, more ambitiously, Russia's revival as a 'great power'.

The determinants of Russian foreign policy under Putin

Under Putin, questions of identity, perceptions of the global environment, domestic political factors, and the interplay between institutional and individual actors have lost little of their importance as determinants of Russian foreign policy. However, these factors have undergone significant alteration in an uneven and sometimes unpredictable evolution emblematic of the complex blend of continuity and change of the early post-Yeltsin period. Moreover, change has not been limited to individual determinants, but has affected the linkages between them. In keeping with today's more centralized system of governance, their interrelationship has become at once closer, less spontaneous and more understated.

Nowhere are the contrasts between old and new more evident than in relation to issues of identity. Whereas in the sectionalized climate of the Yeltsin period there emerged a veritable cornucopia of competing identities, civilizational and political, the debate has since lost much of its former intensity. The single most powerful factor in effecting this change has been Putin himself. Although he [2000a, p. 156] has echoed Gorbachevian ideas of a 'common European home' by stating his conviction that Russians are 'a part of Western European culture', he has in practice pursued a highly flexible approach to issues of cultural-civilizational location. In particular, he has balanced a personal Eurocentrism[2] by assiduously promoting relations and contacts with non-Western countries and regions. He has thrown himself into a frenetic programme of two-way visits, involving not only the major Western and non-Western powers, but also several countries – North Korea, Cuba – which his predecessor conspicuously ignored. He has also carefully tailored his messages to his audience. When visiting Europe, Putin has spoken the language of European integration [2001c, p. 1]; in relations with the CIS member-states, the emphasis has been on post-Soviet integration and common values and interests arising from a shared past and present [2001b, p. 4]; with China, the focus has turned to 'strategic partnership' in a multipolar world [2000c, p. 6]; and Moscow has sought common cause with the Islamic world on the basis of, among other things, a civilizational front against the menace of international terrorism [2001c, p. 2]. In other words, while issues of

cultural-national identity continue to play a role in foreign policy, they have become more malleable than ever before. Their importance is now almost nakedly instrumental, shaped by political and geographical context rather than personal belief. This generous application of identity has been assisted by the cravenness and political self-interest of the elite. Whereas under Yeltsin, rival sectional groupings felt free to indulge their moral-ideological leanings, it is a very different story in the circumstances of Putin's near-complete dominance of domestic politics. The conflict between opposing civilizational choices has been practically neutralized. And although it may be implicit in the disparateness of Moscow's foreign policy agenda as reflected in the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept, there is very little disposition within the political class to disturb the façade of consensus by arguing the point publicly.

The result, then, is that identity has become less an active agent for influencing foreign policy than a rationalizing device to be used in the service of so-called 'national interests'. Instead of multiple identities being a source of elite cleavages in foreign and domestic policy, they now serve as an all-encompassing set of justifications for Russia's increasing presence and participation in world affairs. Because one or the other identity can be 'switched on' at will, the Putin administration has felt no particular need to make definitive choices as to overall foreign policy orientation. Instead, it has resorted to a form of civilizational universalism, of being all things to all people. The result of this coalescing of identities has been a renewed globalism. With the memory of humiliation over Kosovo having given way to an assertive self-confidence stemming from the conduct of the second Chechen war, there is little sense within the governing class that Russia needs to scale back its ambitions to that of a mere 'regional' power and 'normal nation-state' like the others.[3] Instead, in a chameleon-like process, Russia is at once 'regional' and 'global', 'normal' and 'great power', 'integrated' yet also 'special' and 'different'.

It is one of the apparent paradoxes of Putin's foreign policy that a multi-civilizational mindset should coexist with a continuing assumption that the West's military, economic, technological and cultural primacy remains the abiding reality of today's world. In contrast to the case during Yeltsin's second term, the Putin administration is less inclined to intone the rhetoric of multipolarity. Although the latter continues to feature in documents such as the Foreign Policy Concept [*Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki…*, 2000, p. 6] and National Security Concept [*Kontseptsiya natsionalnoi bezopasnosti…*, 2000, p. 1], the President himself has preferred not to use this loaded term. Part of the

reason is presentational, a desire to avoid gratuitous irritation; but more important is the belief that the West, for good or ill, must continue to be the principal point of reference for Russian policy-makers. As a man of pragmatic bent, Putin understands that the developed Western nations will continue to dominate global affairs well into the twenty-first century, and that notions about a resurgent China (or some other power) capable of challenging this reality are, to say the least, premature. Such thinking derives added impetus from Russia's need, noted by Putin on several occasions (*see*, for example, his September 2001 address to the Bundestag – 2001c, p. 3), for Western trade, investment and political support in acceding to global economic processes (for example, through WTO membership). The world may be becoming more 'multipolar', and relations with China, India and Islamic countries increasingly important, but the number one challenge facing Russia is to improve the terms and conditions of its interaction with the West, *not* to dream of non-existent alternatives. This is not a matter of civilizational preference, but of hard practicalities, of dealing with the world as one finds it, not as one might perhaps wish it. Accordingly, Putin has largely abandoned such Yeltsin-era chimera as the OSCE as Europe's premier security organization, and worked instead to rebuild relations with NATO after their suspension during Kosovo. And it is this pragmatism, even cynicism, which explains why under Putin Russian foreign policy has escaped from the cycle of radically alternating currents of optimism and disappointment characteristic of the 1990s. In place of uncertainty and accompanying *angst* about whether the international environment is benign or hostile (*see* Chapter 2), there is an appreciation of the need for a more even approach to international developments, one that avoids the twin extremes of excessive expectations and an intemperate and quasi-confrontational prejudice.

Continuity and change are also evident in the administration's management of the nexus between domestic political imperatives and foreign policy-making. On the one hand, the latter remains an elite preserve, with the impact of public opinion being even more marginal than under Yeltsin. On the other hand, unlike his predecessor, Putin has not had to worry about electoral unpopularity, a disruptive legislature, obstreperous regional elites, or personal ill-health. Even when things have not turned out optimally, such as the failure to finish off the second Chechen war or the mismanagement of the Kursk accident,[4] there has been no discernible effect on Putin's political position. More than perhaps any leader since Stalin, he has been virtually unchallenged in terms of political authority and direction of policy. With a pliant legislature[5]

and no plausible rival on the horizon, Putin has no 'democratic' excuse for foreign policy inaction or timidity. He can, within broad limits, do more or less whatever he likes. Interestingly, however, this enviable political solidity has not made him complacent. The Russian government's approach to the public diplomacy aspects of the Chechen war, in particular, demonstrates a strong belief in the value of prophylaxis. This conflict, which originated as an essentially domestic issue, has been deliberately and increasingly internationalized by the Kremlin as a means of legitimizing its conduct of military operations. Depicting the conflict as first and foremost a struggle against terrorism has not only helped maintain Putin's personal popularity at around an impressive 70 per cent,[6] but also consolidated a popular perception of a Russia that is able to stand up for its interests *without* at the same time sliding into confrontation with the West, in other words, exhibiting a felicitous combination of strength and rationality. Foreign policy has thus, more than ever, become an extension of domestic political imperatives, in this case a deeply felt desire for law and order in the most conservative meaning.

The greatest transformation has taken place in the institutional context. Just as bureaucratic instability, the over-personalization of policy and politics, and Yeltsin's propensity for divide-and-rule tactics created the conditions for a sectionalized approach to international relations during the 1990s, so today's much calmer operating environment has been conducive to a foreign policy that is more centralized, coordinated and disciplined than at any time since the Soviet collapse. Much of this is due to the increased involvement of the security apparatus in the policy process. Although it played a part during the Yeltsin period, it was difficult to discern a particular security and intelligence presence from the more generalized conservative influence of the 'power' ministries (*see* Chapter 2). The situation has now changed. Not only is a former head of the FSB now President of Russia, but also his closest confidant and former KGB/FSB colleague, Sergei Ivanov, is the nearest approximation to a Vice-President. It is no fluke that the authority and influence of two major institutions – the Security Council and now the Defence Ministry – have risen markedly under the latter's leadership.

But the 'Putin effect' on the bureaucratic environment extends far more than to mere personnel changes. Putin has been careful to balance the introduction of trusted allies like Sergei Ivanov with the retention of many Yeltsin appointees. Igor Ivanov continues to serve as Foreign Minister, Igor Sergeev was Defence Minister until his transfer as Special Advisor on strategic stability in March 2001, and in May 2001 former Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was appointed to the pivotal position of

Ambassador to Ukraine. At the same time, the institutional infighting that was such a feature of decision-making under Yeltsin has been replaced by an unparalleled unity of purpose and execution. Although it would be overstating the case to claim that formerly competing bodies like the MFA, the MOD, the Security Council, the intelligence agencies, and the economic ministries now 'think as one', the important point is that few have been prepared to step out of line and risk the wrath of the President. The effect has been one of *de facto* consensus, and one that has played out in a much more uniform line on previously contentious issue-areas such as involvement in Caspian Sea projects, the Russia–Belarus Union, energy policy towards Ukraine and Georgia, and nuclear cooperation with Iran. Crucially, also, the emergence of a tighter policy approach has translated into a more confident and predictable manner in Russia's external relations, demonstrated most clearly in its handling of the international dimensions of the Chechen conflict and, lately, in its response to the events of 11 September 2001 and after.

The common denominator in the four determinants of Russian foreign policy outlined above is, of course, Putin himself. And this represents as much a source of potential weakness as strength. It should not be imagined that, virtually overnight, Russian society has miraculously abandoned the evils of a selfish sectionalization in favour of an enlightened understanding of the national interest. The differences are dormant, not extinct, a fact that blurs the distinction between a temporary political accommodation born of short-term self-interest, and the creation of a lasting foreign policy consensus. One need only to examine the latest 2000 version of the Foreign Policy Concept to note the scope for bitter policy disagreements to re-emerge, while it remains axiomatic that post-Soviet Russia continues to bear the imprint of strong personalities at the expense of weak institutions.[7] As long as Putin stays in control and is able gradually to implement his vision of a 'dictatorship of law' [Putin, 2000b], then we can expect Russian foreign policy to continue to operate in a measured and 'consensual' fashion. But if he should run into political difficulty, such as might arise from a renewed economic crisis in the country, then many of the conflicts that undermined foreign policy-making during the Yeltsin period could rage once again.

Towards de-ideologization?

Among the oddities of Russian foreign policy under Putin has been the parallelism between an apparent de-ideologization and the survival of many of the ideological strands that influenced Moscow's conduct of

external relations under Yeltsin (*see* Chapter 3). On the one hand, over the past two years there has been little overt ideological conflict between formerly competing sectional interests, and it seems that Putin [2001b, p. 4] has been able to achieve a broad consensus 'on the basis of pragmatism and economic effectiveness'. Ideology these days serves more as a unifier than as a source of division, and there has been a partial return to Soviet-style uniformity. In keeping with today's more stable political climate, it is now more an instrument of national than sectional interests.

But while the landscape has undoubtedly become more peaceful, it is premature to speak of 'de-ideologization'. First, as the wide-ranging nature of documents like the Foreign Policy Concept reveals, the various strands identified earlier remain extant. And it is not simply a question of their nominal importance. In relation to the liberal foreign policy agenda, for example, with its accent on external economic priorities, the Putin administration has pursued a far more vigorous and consistent approach than was evident at any time during the previous decade. Whether measured according to end-goals (a prosperous economy based on competitive secondary industry as well as energy trumps), mindset (a more welcoming attitude to foreign investment) or methods (a tough economic rationalist line on CIS-country debt), Moscow is now clearly more committed to economic liberalism at home and abroad. However, implementation of the economic aspects of the liberal foreign policy agenda is only one part of a composite approach that embraces many ideas directly antithetical to liberalism. The handling of the second Chechen war, manipulation of regional elections and the clamping down on the independent media signal a *de facto* rejection of basic Western political and civil values, while an increasing assertiveness in the former Soviet space – graphically demonstrated in policies towards the Caspian Sea, Ukraine and Georgia – responds to the very essence of the post-Soviet imperial syndrome, namely, the projection of Russian power and influence throughout the CIS. Similarly, while the presentation of 'great power' ideology has become 'softer' and more sophisticated, with little of the breast-beating and petty point-scoring of the past, ideas of *derzhavnost* are implicit in the administration's globalist approach and in a nationalist impulse that shows few signs of abating. In this latter context, the Kremlin's defiantly unapologetic handling of the second Chechen war owes at least as much to a strong desire to reaffirm national 'greatness' and self-confidence after the humiliation of Kosovo as it does to purported fears about international terrorism and the threat this poses to Russian security and sovereignty.

The outcome of the interaction between these multiple strands, then, is neither conflict as during much of the post-Soviet period, nor the discovery of the holy grail of an ideological consensus. What has emerged is a loose eclecticism that accommodates many contradictory ideas and philosophies, with no particular unifying logic other than the restoration of order and control. It is not that a 'national interests' policy based on 'pragmatism' has become more easily identifiable, but that there is now a greater will to pretend that this is in fact the case. Given Putin's probable long-term dominance and the growth of a statist, even semi-authoritarian system of governance, the priority for all but the most ideologically committed is political participation not purity of belief – and this has resulted in an altogether more harmonious, if artificial, approach to differences.

It is a similar story in respect of the 'de-ideologization' of Russia's relations with the West. On the one hand, the Putin administration has indulged much less than its predecessor in ideological caprice and bravado. The President may from time to time declare that Russia is a 'great power', but his manner of doing so has been understated, non-ideological and certainly non-confrontational. Generally speaking, 'great power' identity is portrayed as a reality that entails certain global responsibilities, rather than expressed in the form of a demand for international respect as under Yeltsin. Thus, in rejecting the notion that Moscow needed to choose between East and West, Putin [2001a, p. 6] opined that 'a power with a geopolitical position like Russia has national interests everywhere'. He has also minimized critical references to the West, and shown little enthusiasm for the rhetoric of multipolarity. Although other senior members of the government such as Foreign Minister Ivanov [2001, pp. 6–7] have continued to attack Western behaviour in a number of areas, the President's emphasis has consistently been on the side of conciliation and cooperation. His 2001 Federal Assembly address [2001b, p. 4] was typical in its focus on Russia's increasing integration into the world economy, CIS integration, and closer involvement in 'dynamic processes' in Europe. And he was both quick and steadfast in supporting American actions following the 11 September terrorist attacks against New York and Washington.

But this apparent 'de-ideologization' is partial at best. In important ways, the Putin administration continues to view the world in competitive terms, of 'us' and 'them', notwithstanding its frequent resort to integration-speak. In contrast to the original Yeltsin–Kozyrev vision, there is a strong if generally unspoken belief that Russia and the West are not only separate and sometimes rival centres of power, but that

they also subscribe to different values and interests, even if these sometimes coincide over issues like international terrorism. In this context, radically different interpretations of the Chechnya experience stand as a metaphor for an ideological–civilizational gap in which Russia's emphasis on security runs counter to the West's concentration on human rights abuses. On a somewhat larger scale, there is a real ideological tension between opposing conceptions of the type of international role that Russia should play in the twenty-first century. Whereas the Putin administration is committed to the Shumeiko vision of the 'revival of Russia as a mighty state', the West for the most part wants to see Moscow behave as a 'normal' player which does not seek any 'special' status and is prepared to be bound by group rules and obligations. Although there is no early prospect that such differences will bring a return to the ideological confrontation of the Cold War, one can discern nonetheless an 'ideologization' of Russia's relations with the West in the form of a continuing divergence of core values and perceptions.

Illusion and reality

In few areas is the difference between the Yeltsin and Putin periods more pronounced than in the presentation of foreign policy. It is hardly the case that the illusion and mythmaking that predominated throughout the 1990s has been abandoned in favour of a more transparent approach. But there has been a transformation in the way policy is outlined to a domestic and especially international audience. Whereas under Yeltsin, Moscow's public diplomacy was notable for its extensive use of dramatic and symbolic language and for communicating a surface dynamism that often masked policy inaction, Putin's approach has been businesslike, with illusion and mythmaking assuming more muted yet effective forms.

This shift has been exemplified by Moscow's use of Potemkinization. At one level, there has been substantial continuity, with Putin following through in 2000 on revised versions of the Foreign Policy Concept, National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine. As before, such documents serve principally as an indicator of political fashion and context, and as a rationalizing mechanism that looks to convey an image of consensus and strategic vision. What has changed is that there is now less inclination, particularly at the highest level, to labour such devices, and a corresponding desire to inject substance into what was once largely show. We have already mentioned the decline in references to multipolarity. But equally on specific issues the current administration

has adopted a realist, undogmatic line, as reflected in its discarding of the OSCE as Europe's premier security organization in favour of restoring relations with NATO. It was noteworthy that, notwithstanding his disapproval of the alliance, Putin [2001b, p. 4] should specifically emphasize Russia–NATO cooperation in his 2001 address to the Federal Assembly while omitting any reference to the OSCE.

Most importantly, the Putin administration has succeeded in a relatively short space of time in fleshing out declared intentions with genuine action. Indeed, its approach might even be described as a reverse Potemkinization, in which an assertive agenda is disguised by a modesty of presentation. The example of Russian policy towards the FSU is especially instructive. Whereas previously Moscow was apt to describe the region as Russia's number one foreign policy priority while in practice assigning it only secondary importance, these days the rhetoric is less ambitious but the policies more substantive. Russia has managed to reassert its interests in Caspian Sea energy development and transportation; recovered energy payments from debtor customers like Ukraine and Georgia; increased its geostrategic presence in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia; and developed closer contact with the Russian diaspora and its concerns – all this, while disavowing any suggestion that Russia considers the CIS to be its 'sphere of influence' [comments by Putin, in Dubnov, 1999, p. 6]. Similarly, while eschewing mention of the 'global multipolar order', Putin has *in practice* pursued a far more 'diversified' and multipolar approach than his predecessor. His [2001a, p. 6] rejection of the premise of a geographical leaning in Russian foreign policy has been matched by a commitment to activate its approach to international relations in as many areas as possible. Reciprocal visits and meetings have not only covered the traditional bases of the United States and Western Europe, but also all the other major centres of regional and global power – China, Japan, India, Iran – as well as previously neglected 'client' states. Meanwhile, Putin has been careful not to enter into committal engagements; his whole approach has been about opening up and developing as many options as possible – East, West and South – without closing off others by associating Russia with one side or tendency against another. In this respect, he has generally succeeded where Yeltsin and Primakov failed during the latter half of the 1990s, namely, in avoiding much of the politicization and ideologization of concepts like multipolarity and an 'independent' foreign policy (*see* Chapter 3). Finally, his peripatetic style has been quite successful in fudging the distinction between multipolarity and multilateralism. Because he has been more inclusive in his relations with smaller

countries as well as the great and powerful, referring to processes of 'globalization' rather than 'multipolarity' [Putin, 2001a, p. 3], the somewhat offensive image of elitism and 'big issues for big players' that was such a feature of the Yeltsin foreign policy has faded.

In other words, while illusion and mythmaking have lost little of their importance, their purpose has changed. If previously this was to simulate the idea of Russia as a 'great power' in order to compensate for its no longer being one, then under Putin the rationale has been just the reverse: to convey the message of normality and reasonableness while Russia works hard to rebuild its strategic and political status to that of a major global actor, a *bona fide* world power (*velikaya derzhava*). Moscow's self-perceptions and ambitions have altered little; what is different are the methods used to realize them. With the bankruptcy both of Kozyrevian ideas of 'partnership' with the West [Pushkov, 2000, p. 35] and of notions about Russia's 'divine right' to be considered a great power, the Putin administration has adopted a softly, softly approach that is as disingenuous in its own way but whose modest and unassuming façade makes it more acceptable to others. For the first time in years, Russia is assuming the guise of a responsible and pragmatic international player with a comprehensive range of interests, with the will and, increasingly, the means to pursue them effectively.

Reinventing geopolitics

The juxtaposition between long-standing strategic objectives and changing tactical methods is well illustrated by the current Russian approach to geopolitics. There is now less mention of concepts such as zero-sum, balance of power and spheres of influence, and even the notion of 'geopolitical interests' has given way to more neutral ideas of 'national interests', involving 'strategic stability, disarmament, the expansion of NATO, the forming of the fundamentals of world order in the twenty-first century' [Putin, 2000b, p. 4]. Consistent with the general shift from the loaded language of the past, geopolitics and its constituent parts have become almost unrecognizable – at least in their commonly understood forms. Gone are the clumsy attempts to undermine the Transatlantic security consensus by playing the European card against the Americans, a course of action whose ineffectualness was exposed during the Kosovo crisis and, earlier, over the first wave of NATO enlargement. Little is heard these days about anti-American strategic triangles (Moscow–Beijing–New Delhi) or Russian pretensions

to being the great 'balancer', while labels such as 'spheres of influence' have suffered the same fate as once popular but now largely defunct phrases like 'the Near Abroad'. In their place, the Putin alternative has presented Russia as a key player in regional and global processes, but in a positive and integrationist way rather than the anachronistic, provocative manner of the past. There is a clear understanding that Russia needs to be seen as a nation whose regional and global priorities – security, economic prosperity – are much the same as those of its neighbours, and which is prepared to adapt to and make the best of prevailing realities. It is in this spirit of relative accommodation and flexibility that Putin has worked to improve Russia–NATO relations; obtained the early ratification of the START-2 and CTBT agreements;[8] put forward an initiative for a European Missile Defence system[9] while appearing to keep an open mind on American ideas for missile defence cooperation; sought closer energy ties (and tighter economic complementarities) with major Western European powers such as Germany and France; and, most recently and conspicuously of all, provided intelligence and logistics support to the American-led military campaign ('Enduring Freedom') against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. And while the Russian government has welcomed the establishment of the EU's Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) and the development of the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) [Ivanov, 2001, p. 7], it has done so without falling into the trap of assuming that they are likely anytime soon to usurp NATO as the premier security institution in Europe.

But this transformation in method should not be misinterpreted as signifying the abandonment of long-held assumptions about the primacy of geopolitics. It is somewhat fanciful to imagine that, virtually overnight, an elite headed by a President appointed from the security apparatus could have miraculously 'seen the light' and developed a 'normal' foreign policy along Western democratic lines. Moscow has refined its tactics, *not* revised its strategic thinking or objectives. As its management of a number of priority areas demonstrates, zero-sum, balance of power and spheres of influence remain as pertinent as ever; it is just that their influence on foreign policy has become implicit. Thus, the purpose of the Kremlin's two-pronged approach to Europe – rapprochement with the major European powers, and encouragement of devolutionary tendencies in Western security structures – goes well beyond an apparently modest desire to arrest Russia's marginalization on the continent. It is about mitigating Washington's dominance, an objective driven by the zero-sum logic that an increased role and status for Russia in Europe implies a corresponding diminution of American

pre-eminence within the same. By the same token, concerns about the Bush administration's plans to develop a strategic missile defence system are only tangentially driven by the dangers posed by nuclear weapons proliferation and the end of 'strategic stability'. The real issue, as under Yeltsin, continues to be the rapidly changing balance of power between the former superpower rivals, in particular the fear that the United States is steadily moving to a point beyond Russia's capacity to respond effectively (*see* Chapter 5). Finally, as discussed earlier, Russian policy towards the CIS is in all but name about preserving a natural sphere of influence. Indeed, under Putin Moscow has been much more active and successful in fulfilling its strategic, political and economic objectives across the former Soviet Union, in the process subjecting the other CIS member-states to its dictates to an extent only dreamt of during the Yeltsin era. In the circumstances of a projection of power and influence unprecedented since the fall of the USSR, it costs little and benefits much for Russia to disclaim any formal ambitions to reassert its primacy in the region.

In one crucial area, geopolitics has undergone a substantive as well as stylistic transformation. And this is the developing nexus between economic and geopolitical objectives, the third dimension of securitization noted at the beginning of this chapter. Traditionally in the post-Soviet foreign policy context, there was a tension between the Primakovian emphasis on 'maintaining geostrategic balances on every front' and the 'achievement of sustainable and rapid economic growth' [Karaganov, 2000, p. 11]. In recent times, however, there has emerged a growing complementarity between the two. This has not been confined, as under Yeltsin, to a limited and opportunistic 'geopoliticization' of economic priorities (*see* Chapter 5), but has developed to the point where one can speak almost of their inseparability. It is no longer a question of *either* giving priority to socioeconomic objectives *or* geopolitical interests, but of doing *both*. This fundamentally new mode of thinking arises from two key conclusions. The first draws the basic lesson from the Soviet collapse and early post-Soviet period, namely, that Russia's international weight is directly contingent on the state of its economy. Without financial stabilization, competitive industry, foreign investment, and close participation in economic globalization, there is minimal prospect that Russia can reverse the severe decline in its strategic (not just economic) fortunes. In this schema, economic health and prosperity is viewed as a prerequisite of Russia's revival as a 'great power', not as the basis for an alternative vision in which it limits itself to a diffident role as just another 'normal' (albeit important) nation-state. Second, economic

power is much the most effective means of power projection available to Moscow – currently and probably well into the future. With the massive decline in Russian conventional and nuclear capabilities over the past 10–15 years, and its international political and moral authority still at a low ebb (even after 11 September), economic instruments are arguably all it has at its disposal. In the CIS, it has not been direct political or military pressure but the Kremlin's businesslike stance on energy (gas) payments that has forced Ukraine and Georgia to pay closer heed to Russian strategic interests. Likewise, its approach to Caspian Sea development issues has combined economic objectives and geopolitical projection, and recovered much of the influence dissipated by the Yeltsin administration's uncoordinated policies. Even where relations between 'partners' are of a more equal nature, such as in the case of Russian arms sales to China, India and Iran, and energy exports to Europe, the rationale has been as much geopolitical as economic: to reinforce the message of Russia's continuing strategic importance across the Eurasian land-mass, while generating export revenues and sustaining the nation's military-industrial complex. The outcome of this marriage of the geopolitical and economic may be a more holistic foreign policy, but it is one that bears almost no relation to that originally envisaged by Kozyrev and the liberal agenda or desired by Western politicians. Notwithstanding increasing recourse to economic methods and the sanitization of public presentation, both the underlying spirit and the end-game of Russian foreign policy remain firmly centred in the primacy of geopolitical imperatives.

Foreign policy priorities in the Putin era

Under Putin much of the contentiousness has evaporated from the debate over policy priorities. With the neutralization of ideological tensions within the elite, increasing regulation of the policy-making environment and the President's political dominance, a practical consensus has emerged on the definition and ranking of Russia's external interests. At the same time, Putin's foreign policy style has made it easier to gloss over this issue; it has become more plausible to argue that 'everything is a priority' because the President himself has communicated this message in various contexts. For once, the universalist nature of documents like the Foreign Policy Concept bears some resemblance to reality, whereby Putin is raising the profile of a number of issues simultaneously, rather than a few at the expense of many. When he [2001a, pp. 4–6] assigns, in the course of a single address to the Foreign Ministry, particular priority

to combating international terrorism, 'economic diplomacy', closer ties with the CIS member-states, participation in European integrationist processes, relations with NATO, it is because he regards all these areas as vitally important. Crucially, too, the government is following through on many of its public commitments: there has been a sustained campaign against terrorism, at home (Chechnya) and abroad (support for the West's military operation in Afghanistan); Moscow has been very energetic in pursuing its economic interests across the CIS, in Europe, in arms sales to China, India and Iran; Putin has sought to buy, albeit conditionally, into European integration, whether through a more active engagement with the European Union [Putin, 2001a, p. 6; 2001b, p. 4] or his initiative for a European Missile Defence system; and relations with NATO are closer than at any time since before the Kosovo crisis.

For all that, it is the case that some priorities are more equal than others. In particular, security questions remain at the top of the agenda – a product both of predisposition (of Putin personally and the elite in general) and in response to specific circumstances. Whether judged in terms of policy inputs, domestic political resonance, or international profile, the big issues of today are Chechnya, international terrorism and 'strategic stability'. Although more 'economic' preoccupations like Paris Club debt, WTO accession and the Caspian Sea are assuming greater significance, it will be a long time before they displace security and geopolitical concerns. Simultaneously, there has been a change in the relative importance of various security issue-areas, particularly in relation to threat perceptions. Whereas for much of the previous decade geopolitical 'threats' such as NATO enlargement were at the forefront, in the past two years they have receded somewhat, with issues of international terrorism and territorial integrity, acquiring a much higher profile. Consistent with this evolution of priorities, the subject of threat perceptions has shifted from state to non-state actors. Although Moscow still looks with a jaundiced eye at NATO enlargement and American plans to develop strategic missile defence, the main enemy is the often shadowy menace of domestic and international terrorist organizations – a judgement reinforced by the events of 11 September 2001.

On the liberalist notion that foreign policy should assist the fulfilment of domestic goals, Putin's position has been equivocal. While he [2001b, p. 4] has reiterated that 'the political and economic situation inside Russia ... depends on the competence, skill and effectiveness with which we use our diplomatic resources', it is evident that much of the original Yeltsin reform agenda is becoming increasingly emasculated. Significantly, Putin's 2001 Federal Assembly address emphasized law

and order and economic reform and accountability rather than democratization and civil freedoms,[10] while in advocating that Russia 'should base its foreign policy on ... a precise definition of national priorities', he identified the latter simply as 'pragmatism and economic effectiveness' [ibid., p. 4]. Government actions over the past two years – political manipulation, media control, open tolerance of human rights violations in Chechnya – testify to a growing disregard for many standard Western values. These days, there is little inclination to consider such principles as 'intrinsic goods', essential as the moral fundament to a qualitatively new society. Instead, a narrowly 'pragmatic' mindset prevails, one that concentrates predominantly on the economic dimension of the domestic–foreign policy linkage and absorbs democratic and civil ideals only insofar as they are seen to facilitate Russia's acceptance as a 'normal' member of the global community. It is entirely typical of this approach that Putin should commit his administration to improving the business and foreign investment climate in Russia [ibid., p. 3], while firmly rejecting outside criticisms of military (and 'police') impropriety in Chechnya. And, in circumstances where the instrumentalization of Western values already evident in the past decade (*see* Chapter 6) has gathered apace, public diplomacy is assuming ever greater importance in the pantheon of foreign policy priorities [Putin, 2001a, pp. 6–7] – presenting Russia in as civilized a light as possible while preventing others from limiting its freedom of action.

While there are signs of some important shifts in foreign policy objectives, it is unclear how Putin views Russia's external priorities and overall orientation in the longer term. In the first place, the country's continuing weakness means that it is more often an object than an agent of international developments. Just as the Yeltsin administration felt obliged to respond to particular crises as they occurred, so Moscow is likely in future to be drawn to events over which it has little influence, and in which the United States will more often than not play the central role. This could well detract from the sustained pursuit of strategies of 'Europeanization', 'diversification', and geographical 'balance' – all of which require considerable time and perseverance. The on the whole businesslike approach of Putin suggests that Moscow will adopt less of a scatter-gun, fire-engine approach to international crisis management, but there are no guarantees on this score. Second, there is a tension between the steadfast pursuit of specific policy priorities and interests on the one hand, and the more general question of foreign policy orientation on the other. Much as Putin would like to develop closer relations with Western Europe, China, India, Iran and elsewhere, he

recognizes that the United States' global dominance is an inescapable reality. It is Washington – not Berlin, London, Paris, Beijing or New Delhi – whose position on strategic stability, WMD proliferation, future NATO enlargement, and a host of global economic issues, is and will remain decisive. Likewise, on the matter dearest to his heart – combating terrorism – the United States is the international actor with the greatest capacity to influence developments. Third, there is a natural confluence between the continuing primacy of geopolitics in Russian foreign policy and Americacentrism. As long as the United States remains the sole superpower, and the likelihood of others (for example, China) bridging this gap remains distant, then Moscow will look to Washington in the first resort. And as long as economic priorities are pursued not simply for their own sake, but as instruments of geopolitical power projection, there is little prospect that this attitude will change. Finally, for Russian foreign policy to become more Eurocentric, Eastern or global depends less on Moscow's will than on the disposition of other, more influential, international players – the United States, Western Europe, even China. In this connection, it should be remembered that the Europeanization evident during the first year of Putin's presidency coincided with a period of American foreign policy retrenchment – the last, 'dead' months of Clinton's second term, an extended election hiatus, the bedding-down of the new Bush administration, and the latter's initial strategy of keeping Moscow at arm's length. In the circumstances, Putin had little option but to 'go European'. The real test of Russia's foreign policy orientation and priority-setting will come when the United States steps up its global engagements and commitments, as it is already doing so post-11 September. Only then will it become clear whether the recent changes in Moscow's approach are the product of a temporary concatenation of circumstances or, alternatively, signal a long-term strategic shift.

Conceptualizing Putin's foreign policy

As remarked at the outset, it is difficult at this early stage of the Putin presidency to come up with definitive conclusions about the nature of Russian foreign policy post-Yeltsin. Putin has been concerned to use much of his time in office for familiarization and consolidation, while ensuring that Russia retains, without incurring debilitating entanglements, as many foreign policy options as possible. He appears in no hurry to offer ready answers to the related riddles of 'who is Mr Putin?' and 'where is Russia going?'; for the time being, it suits him that both

he and his country remain mysteries which defy ready stereotyping. It seems probable, too, that he is still developing a vision of the type of society and international actor Russia should be, a process which, given his relatively sparse political (as opposed to administrative) background, can be expected to take some time. As a career intelligence officer, Putin combines conservative and statist political instincts with a superior understanding of the deficiencies and corruption of the Soviet/ post-Soviet system. Although he is no revolutionary, he understands that Russia can neither afford to continue along the shambolic path of the past 10–15 years nor return to the ossified and confrontational past.

Recent Russian foreign policy reflects Putin's personal style, background and instincts. Contrary to common supposition, there have been few radical shifts in terms of substance. Even the case of more activist policies towards CIS-related affairs does not mark a redirection of Moscow's interests so much as a long-overdue effort to impart substance to rhetoric, while the 'economization' of foreign policy priorities is subordinate to traditional geopolitical objectives of power and influence projection. In the meantime, Moscow's world-view remains, notwithstanding a greater disposition towards 'diversification', largely Westerncentric. If the 'normalization' of foreign policy implies moving decisively beyond the traditional bounds of Russian thinking towards the world, then this has yet to take place. At the level of concrete policy, the Putin approach may be summarized as cautiously evolutionary, involving working away at the margins, repackaging many essentially old ideas and concepts, exploiting opportunities as they arise (for example, 11 September), being open to sensible offers of cooperation without prejudice, and assuming little about the good intentions of others. In many ways, he can be seen as a 'pragmatist' in the Soviet sense: a man of the system who plumps for moderately progressive domestic and foreign policies; a flexible builder of political consensus; and a leader who looks to be as inclusive as possible but who also knows how and when to wield the power of his office. His 'philosophical outlook', such as it is, might be described as driven by the principle of 'whatever works'. Although it is a moot point whether a foreign policy based on a morally arid and in many respects unreconstructed 'securitization' can properly be called 'pragmatic', it is nevertheless far more so than its predecessor. Even a cursory survey of post-Soviet foreign policy elicits some stark comparisons: where there was once acute sectionalization there is now a more or less identifiable (if Putin-centred) national interest; in place of the former 'pragmatism by default', characterized and constrained by lowest common denominator politics, we see a more

activist and consensual approach; where Moscow was once sidetracked by all sorts of secondary issues, it is now more focused and practical in terms of both overall policy and the management of primary priorities; and whereas before it seemed that Russia's international importance was chiefly a figment of Yeltsin's imagination, these days there is a renewed conviction that it is once again an important actor with whom other countries want to do business. If Moscow's approach to the world still has a long way to travel before it can be considered 'normal' in the sense of being well-balanced, then it has certainly moved out of the vicious circle of policy stagnation and institutional anarchy of the Yeltsinite past. And although one cannot exclude the possibility of a relapse into bad old habits and practices, under Putin Russia has at least gone some way to re-emerging as a serious factor in regional and world politics.

Notes

1 Introduction

1. Kozyrev [1994c, p. 62] claimed that the world needed Russia 'as a strong member in the family of free, law-based, democratic states and not as a "sick man" of Europe and Asia'.
2. Light [1996, p. 35] claimed that, following an initial phase characterized by polarized views over the extent to which Russia should become Westernized or follow its own path, an elite consensus emerged as to the country's proper role in the world and the correct approach towards international relations. This was embodied by a 'pragmatic nationalism', in which a reassertion of Russia's sense of 'great power-ness' (*derzhavnost*) was combined with a pragmatic attitude towards cooperation with the West. At the broadly conceptual level, it involved Russia forging and asserting a separate identity, being neither specifically East nor West, but rather pursuing 'diversification' – a 'balanced' policy towards both on the basis of Russia's 'national interests'.
3. Although Chechen incursions into the neighbouring autonomous republic of Dagestan provided Moscow with good reasons to intervene militarily, the most critical factor was undoubtedly a series of bombings against civilian targets in September 1999. In particular, two especially bloody attacks in south Moscow were instrumental in rallying public opinion – which had strongly opposed the first Chechen war (1994–96) – in favour of a punitive approach towards the rebel province. Notwithstanding the lack of definitive proof linking the bombings to Chechen groups, elite and public opinion was virtually unanimous in assuming these were to blame.

2 The Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy

1. Yeltsin [1995b, p. 1] asserted that such ideas were 'a thing of the past'. Significantly, during the Kosovo crisis – surely the greatest provocation to pan-Slavism since the outbreak of the First World War – Moscow did nothing concrete in support of the Milosevic regime. Despite threats/promises to provide military assistance to Belgrade and withdraw from UN sanctions regimes, its retaliation was limited to the temporary suspension of military links with NATO. The Kremlin was even more lukewarm towards the Yugoslav president's proposal for an expanded Slavic Union [Gornostaev, 1999b, p. 3]. Yeltsin [2001, p. 264] later described the initiative as 'absolutely politicized, aggressive, and unrealistic'.
2. Chinese illegal migration stood out as an issue where there was considerably more heat (and prejudice) than light. This was reflected in the enormous variation in estimates of its extent. When I visited Vladivostok and Khabarovsk in September 1996, some 'experts' were claiming figures as high as 2–3 million; this, at a time when the total population in the Russian Far East was less than

7 million. The reality was that no-one knew. Significantly, in two visits to the Primorye Goskomstat office – in September 1996 and then again in April 1999 – its Chairman gave me two wildly different estimates: 300,000 and 35,000 respectively. The first estimate came at a time when Primorye Governor Yevgenii Nazdratenko was playing up the issue to reinforce objections to territorial concessions to China in the *krai*. By the spring of 1999, Nazdratenko's priorities had changed. With Beijing giving up its claims in the Tumenkang area, and with Primorye desperately needing outside trade and investment, the emphasis turned to increasing interregional cooperation with the adjoining Chinese provinces. In these circumstances, it clearly made no sense to beat up the 'illegal migration' issue.

3. Alexei Pushkov made this point to me in March 2000.
4. During my posting in Moscow I was struck that my liberal friends, virtually without exception, found the idea of union arrangements with Belarus repugnant on moral as much as intellectual grounds.
5. A military attaché at one of the Visegrad embassies in Moscow complained to me in 1997 that Moscow had consistently ignored the candidate NATO member-states in discussions on enlargement.
6. Although opinion polls during the 1990s consistently showed that most Russians were opposed to giving up the disputed islands to Japan, there is no evidence indicating that these views materially influenced policy-makers.
7. In a survey of 210 members of the Russian foreign policy establishment (including Duma deputies and staffers, members of the Federation Council, officials, academics and think-tankers) conducted in April 2001, fewer than 10 per cent of respondents believed that the major Duma committees or the Duma as a whole had been a dominant influence on Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet period. This compared poorly to the much higher ratings for other actors, such as the President (91 per cent), Foreign Minister and his deputies (52.4), Presidential Administration (47.6), oil and gas complex (36.7) and a number of others ['*Vneshnepoliticheskii kurs…*', 2001, p. 11].
8. Yeltsin was due to visit Tokyo on 13 September 1992. On 10 September, however, the President's Press Service announced that, '[i]n view of all the circumstances and an exchange of opinions with the leadership of the government, the Supreme Soviet and the Security Council, the President of the Russian Federation has decided to postpone his official visits to Japan and the Republic of Korea' [*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 10 September 1992, p. 1]. Although many contemporary observers saw the postponement as the result primarily of strong domestic political opposition to a territorial deal, other factors were critical as well: disappointment at the perceived meagreness of Japanese aid and investment; annoyance with Tokyo's fixation on the islands question at the expense of other bilateral issues (effectively holding these hostage to a territorial settlement); rising 'negative' nationalism in Russia following a series of 'defeats'/concessions at home and abroad – withdrawal from Eastern Europe, demise of the Soviet Union, continuing political and socioeconomic crisis; and, not least, presidential indecision in the face of conflicting advice from different policy-making bodies.
9. A Duma advisor claimed to me that in the lead-up to the START-2 ratification vote in late 1998 the going rate for a deputy in Zhirinovsky's LDPR was US$5000.

10. The most spectacular illustration of the MFA's exclusion from decision-making processes was the seizure of Slatina airport outside Pristina on 4 June 1999 by 200 Russian peacekeepers led by Lieutenant-General Viktor Zavarzin. Not only was Foreign Minister Ivanov not consulted, but he was left completely in the dark – as evidenced by his comment to CNN that 'the mistake will be corrected' [*see* Kalashnikova and Smirnov, 1999, p. 1].
11. In a conversation shortly after the November 1997 Yeltsin–Hashimoto 'no ties' summit in Krasnoyarsk, a senior Russian foreign ministry official told me that the MFA was very concerned that 'unrealistic' expectations had been raised by the Yeltsin proposal, and lamented in this connection that Yastrzhembsky and not Primakov had been by Yeltsin's side.
12. Brief mention should be made of the considerably overrated influence of the regions. It has been suggested that the foreign policy interests of this group were 'quite distinct' from those of Moscow [Malcolm and Pravda, 1996, p. 2], and that these agendas sometimes competed with one another [Trenin, 1999, p. 34]. The example commonly cited in this context is the Russian Far East, where the erratic behaviour of Primorye governor Nazdratenko appeared at times to complicate the broader Sino-Russian relationship. However, many of these differences were superficial and temporary. Although Nazdratenko and Moscow occasionally disagreed on specifics – in particular, the exact demarcation of the common border – each sought to develop closer political and especially economic ties with China. In other words, the strategic objectives of regional and central authorities remained the same. Similarly, in the territorial dispute with Japan the views of the local Sakhalin administration were of marginal interest only. They happened to coincide with majority opinion in Moscow, but there are no grounds for imagining that the latter took them into serious account.
13. Primakov has enjoyed a long and varied career as a journalist, academic, bureaucrat, policy advisor and senior minister. Particular highlights include: eight years as *Pravda*'s 'special correspondent' in the Middle East (1962–70); stints as Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies (1977–85) and of the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO – 1985–89); Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet (1989–90); Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service (1991–96); Foreign Minister (1996–98); and Prime Minister (1998–99).
14. This was a group whose composition was somewhat amorphous. Generally speaking, its nucleus was commonly understood to include, in addition to Berezovsky: Valentin Yumashev, the President's press spokesman and later chief of the Presidential Administration; Tatyana Dyachenko, Yeltsin's younger daughter and 'image consultant'; and Aleksandr Voloshin, who succeeded Yumashev as head of the Presidential Administration [*see* Yeltsin, 2001, p. 295].
15. A well-known TV commentator volunteered this comment to me in autumn 1997.
16. Unsurprisingly, Prikhodko [1997, p. 3] denied suggestions that either he or Yastrzhembsky enjoyed better access than Primakov to the President. But *see* note 11 above.
17. Leonid Ivashov, Head of the MOD's Department of International Military Cooperation and the senior military member of Chernomyrdin's negotiating team, criticized the peace plan as containing 'a number of dangerous

aspects', such as Russia's dependence on NATO's goodwill and the threat to Yugoslav sovereignty [in Sysoev, 1999b, p. 1].

3 Recasting the Ideological Debate

1. Ideology here is understood as a 'predispositional influence' on policy-makers [Pravda, 1988, p. 239].
2. It was a common assumption of many Russians (particularly those of a liberal bent), as well as of foreign diplomats and journalists in Moscow, that Primakov had served as a career intelligence officer while working as a *Pravda* correspondent in the Middle East (1962–70). Whatever the facts of the case, it is certainly true that the cover of foreign correspondent was frequently used by Soviet intelligence operatives.
3. Mention should be made here of Neil MacFarlane's [1993, pp. 8–11] categories: 'a Western orientation'; 'the nationalist reaction'; and 'the Eurasian middle ground'.
4. Shokhin [1993, p. 4] complained that '[e]verything that the West has done so far has been, in the main, only important moral support,' while Kozyrev [1995a, p. 9] claimed that the West had 'missed an opportunity' to work out a Marshall Plan for Russia.
5. Lilia Shevtsova [1999, p. 191] estimated that Yeltsin's electoral campaign cost between US$700 million and US$1 billion, and that during the first six months of 1996 Russia's external debt rose by US$4 billion and its internal debt by US$16 billion, 'sums at least partially attributable to Yeltsin's campaign expenditures'.
6. Much the same comment was made to me by Viktor Kremenyuk.
7. A prominent liberal journalist lamented to me in December 1995 that Kozyrev had sold his principles down the river over Chechnya.
8. It was generally assumed in Moscow that the report's real author was Andranik Migranyan. Certainly, its reference to the Monroe Doctrine – a concept invented by the latter – does not seem coincidental.
9. The Brezhnev doctrine espoused the idea of limited sovereignty. It sought to justify intervention by the 'socialist commonwealth' – in effect, Moscow – in the internal affairs of member-states if developments there were deemed to have an impact on other socialist countries or on socialism itself. The doctrine was used to 'legitimize' the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the crushing of the political liberalization of the 'Prague Spring'.
10. Following the simultaneous bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, President Clinton ordered air-strikes against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan in August 1998.
11. Alexei Pushkov put it to me slightly differently, asserting that the West wanted to keep Russia 'controllably weak', that is, neither strong enough to be able to compete with it, nor so weak as to implode and destabilize security across Eurasia.
12. This point was made to me by Alexei Pushkov in March 2000.
13. As noted to me by a senior Duma advisor.
14. Lukin, for example, admitted that 'Kozyrev was the Minister in a difficult time. No-one would envy him' [in Zhuravlev, 1995, p. 1].

15. This was confirmed to me at the time by well-placed sources in the MFA, Duma and Russian media.
16. A Duma source told me in the winter of 1999 that Zyuganov had been particularly upset by a recent cover on the weekly *Itogi* magazine, which showed a photo of him with a crudely drawn Hitler moustache, accompanied by the caption '*Ego borba*' ('His struggle') – a transparent reference to *Mein Kampf*.

4 Illusion and Mythmaking

1. One of Catherine the Great's particular favourites, Prince Potemkin, was in the habit of putting up façades of prosperous villages (complete with freshly dressed peasants) along the Empress's carriage route in order to hide from her the reality of extreme rural degradation and poverty. Since that time, the term *pokazukha* ('fake show') has come to denote government attempts, particularly during the Soviet period, to promote the fiction of wealth and happiness where little of either existed.
2. The idea of the Concert of great powers dates back to the early nineteenth century, and specifically to the 1815 Congress of Vienna. On that occasion, the victors – Russia, Britain, Prussia, Austria-Hungary – agreed to divide up the post-Napoleonic continent and to cooperate in preserving an autocratic and Christian (as opposed to liberal or revolutionary) Europe.
3. Whereas the Military Doctrine concentrates on military-related security, the Concept of National Security is a more comprehensive document touching on many aspects of security – political, socioeconomic, technological, ecological – in addition to the traditional military and geopolitical dimensions.
4. In a VTsIOM survey in January 1996, only 7.9 per cent of respondents said they would vote for Yeltsin in the first round of the Presidential elections that summer. This compared poorly not only with favourites like Zyuganov (21.2 per cent), Yavlinsky (11.2) and Zhirinovsky (11.0), but also with marginal candidates like General Lebed (10.4) and the eye-surgeon Svyatoslav Fedorov (8.0) [fax received from VTsIOM in September 1999]. In his *Midnight Diaries*, Yeltsin [2001, p. 16] refers to his '3-percent approval rating in the polls' at that time.
5. One story doing the rounds in Moscow at the time was an alleged comment by an American Embassy official that the fact of Russia's ultimate (that is, nuclear) deterrent was sufficient in itself to rule out a 'humanitarian intervention' scenario in Russia or the FSU. Relatedly, a senior Foreign Ministry official made the point to me that the chief consequence of Kosovo was that increasing numbers of countries would want to develop a nuclear capability to protect themselves against similar external intervention. In other words, the NATO action had struck a big blow against the global non-proliferation regime.
6. The lack of progress in implementing military reform became something of a standing joke in Moscow during the 1990s. Notwithstanding innumerable official declarations of intent, very little was achieved. An acute shortage of funds, self-interested conservatism within the military, and lack of political will in the Kremlin, ensured that the goal of a functional – that is, well-trained and properly equipped – armed forces would remain elusive. Even supposed 'achievements' such as the reduction in overall numbers down to

1.2 million by April 1999 [*see The Military Balance 1999–2000*, p. 104] were more nominal than real: many of the positions cut were occupied by 'dead souls' (rather than live bodies) and therefore naturally redundant, while certain groups of military and other 'force' personnel were not counted in official statistics. Similarly, while there was much fanfare about the transition of the armed forces to a four-service structure – army, navy, air force and strategic forces – there is no evidence to suggest that this has led to an increase in efficiency or capabilities. Although the prospects for meaningful reform appear more promising under Putin, the International Institute of Strategic Studies rightly points out that '[m]ilitary reform continues to lack not only economic resources but also the human talent capable of implementing radical modernisation' [*The Military Balance 2000–2001*, p. 109].

7. A very well-respected defence correspondent remarked to me that the most significant aspect about the Military Doctrine was the fact of its existence.
8. The very different priorities of the two Presidents were reflected in their public comments following the signing of the initial Union Treaty in May 1997. Yeltsin stressed the importance of the provisions on freedom of speech and press, unrestricted party political activity, the sanctity of private property, protection of investor rights and support for 'free economic competition'. Lukashenko, on the other hand, placed most emphasis on the intended establishment of supragovernmental Union 'organs of power'. Much of the Russian media were in no doubt that Lukashenko retained aspirations of one day heading a new Russia–Belarus Union state [*see* Polezhaev, 1997b, p. 1].
9. Although the term, 'hegemony on the cheap', was used by R.W. ('Johnny') Apple [2000, p. 112] in relation to American foreign policy, it also fits Moscow's approach to CIS-related issues.
10. The rouble devaluation impacted on the structure of Russia's external trade by making Western imports less affordable than local and CIS-origin items. As a result, the share of total Russian imports from the CIS increased steadily from 26 per cent in 1998 to 27.6 per cent in 1999 to 34.4 per cent in 2000. Belarus was the principal beneficiary of this new environment, supplanting Ukraine as Russia's largest trading partner in the former Soviet Union in 2000 [*Tamozhennaya statistika ...*, 2000, pp. 7, 9; 2001, pp. 7, 9].
11. In 1654, Tsar Aleksei Romanov accepted the proposal of Bogdan Khmelnitsky, the *hetman* of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, to place himself and his followers under Russian suzerainty.
12. The last nuclear weapons components in Ukraine were transferred to Russia in June 1996 [Evstafiev, 2000, p. 220].
13. There were several important outcomes arising from the accords of 28 May 1997. The first was the fact that the two sides were able to reach agreement, a positive result stemming from Moscow's decision to adopt a more cooperative approach to relations with Ukraine. Second, the legal status of Crimea and Sevastopol was resolved, signifying substantive Russian recognition of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Third, the apportioning of the Black Sea Fleet was finalized, along with issues of joint basing, access and leasing arrangements. Finally, progress was made in rescheduling and relief of Ukraine's debt to Russia [*see* Sherr, 1997, pp. 33–47 for a good summation of the costs and benefits of the accords for both sides].
14. Garnett and Legvold [1999, p. 4] note that under Aleksandr Lukashenko Belarus became subject to critical scrutiny by the West not only for its

'increasingly marred human rights record, but also from its substitution of authoritarian for constitutional government'. The latest (September 2001) Presidential elections, in which Lukashenko won in the first round with more than 75 per cent of the vote, were marked by claims of widespread electoral abuses, including the stuffing of ballot boxes. Significantly, the OSCE declined to endorse the elections as democratic [Bogdanovich, 2001, pp. 57–8].

15. Although Lukashenko claimed to support the Russia–NATO Founding Act, he criticized Yeltsin for failing to consult or inform Minsk before announcing that Moscow would remove warheads from missiles targeted at NATO member countries. The Belarus president accused Russia of not considering his country's interests in proposing the initiative, and described this behaviour as 'not that of an ally' (*ne po-soyuznicheski*) [Poletaev, 1997, p. 3].
16. The Russian Foreign Ministry was especially upset by Azerbaijan's decision to sign the so-called 'Contract of the Century' [*see* comments by MFA spokesman Mikhail Demurin, in Mekhtiev, 1994, p. 3]. This contract, which envisaged joint exploitation of Caspian Sea oil with a group of Western companies (including British Petroleum and Amoco), disregarded the MFA's legal stance that none of the littoral states (Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) could exploit the energy resources of the Caspian Sea – 'indivisible' and under 'common ownership' – without obtaining prior consent from all the others. With good reason, the MFA position – demanding a right of veto in all but name – was widely viewed as a transparent attempt to maintain Russian control over Caspian energy development while simultaneously preventing the United States from expanding its presence in the Transcaucasus. Unsurprisingly, economic actors – Chernomyrdin, Lukoil – welcomed the opportunity to become involved in the 'Contract of the Century', while more geopolitically driven interests, such as then FIS chief Primakov, emphasized the danger to Russia's national security interests [Mekhtiev, 1994, p. 3]. In the end, the matter was effectively resolved by increasing Lukoil's share in the Caspian Oil Consortium and ensuring that much of the oil produced would be transported to the West via southern Russia [Bovt, 1995, pp. 1, 4].
17. The most contentious issue here concerned the Baku–Ceyhan pipeline project which, when completed, would carry Caspian Sea oil to the West via Georgia, bypassing both Iran and Russia. Moscow's concerns that others were intending to 'edge Russia out of the energy-rich Caspian region' [Varlamov, 1999, p. 5] were heightened by the signature of an accord on the project between President Clinton and the leaders of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey in Istanbul in December 1999.
18. Charles Krauthammer [1991, p. 25] distinguished between 'real and apparent multilateralism'. The former involved a 'genuine coalition of coequal partners of comparable strength and stature,' such as the coalition between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union during the Second World War. By contrast, 'pseudo-multilateralism' occurred when 'a dominant great power acts essentially alone, but, embarrassed at the idea and still worshiping at the shrine of collective security, recruits a ship here, a brigade there, and blessings all around to give its unilateral actions a multilateral sheen'. Although Krauthammer was of course referring to the United States, the same mentality was evident in Moscow's approach towards peacekeeping in the CIS, in other words, where it was the primary actor.

19. Understanding that control of these would reinforce its primacy in the region as the pivotal power, Moscow insisted on exclusively Russian peacekeepers and even rejected the presence of European observers [Plekhanov, 1994, p. 3].
20. It should be acknowledged that Primakov faced enormous difficulties in mediating between Saddam Hussein, UNSCOM and the American and British governments during 1997–98. The Iraqi President frequently denied UNSCOM access to suspect sites and harassed its inspection teams; UNSCOM under Richard Butler's leadership was regarded by many, particularly in the Russian Foreign Ministry, as heavily biased; and Washington and London resisted moves in the UNSC to close the Iraqi nuclear and missile files or soften the sanctions regime (that is, to show Baghdad 'a light at the end of the tunnel'). Given all the problems, the failure of Primakov's efforts was inevitable – leading to Operation Desert Fox in December 1998 and the subsequent indefinite suspension of UNSCOM operations.
21. The term, 'Near Abroad', is seen as increasingly anachronistic, even offensive. These days, it is usual in Russia to use the more neutral (and factual) description of 'Commonwealth of Independent States'.
22. For example, Russia voted against resolutions in the UN Human Rights Commission condemning abuses in China and East Timor respectively [*see* Chudodeev, 1995, p. 4; Yusin, 1999e, p. 4].
23. Karen Brutents [1994, p. 4] and former Ambassador to Israel Aleksandr Bovin [1997, p. 3] were among the few to argue that Russia could and should assume a primary mediating role in the Middle East Peace Process.
24. This was a constant refrain in my conversations with relevant MFA officials during 1996–99.
25. Somewhat curiously, Brzezinski [1997, p. 56] made much the same suggestion.
26. Yeltsin's *Midnight Diaries* are especially revealing of this elitist mentality. For example, he takes great pride in Russia's acceptance into the G-8 – 'the elite club of states' [2001, p. 136] – as reinforcement of its status as 'one of the most influential countries in the world' [ibid., p. 137].
27. During a time almost exactly contemporaneous with the period of multipolar foreign policy, Asian diplomats frequently expressed to me their irritation that Moscow continued to see Asia as a relative backwater, one whose main purpose was as an instrument to play off against the West. There was a strong sense that Russia was not serious about deepening its involvement in Asia, whether through multilateral fora such as APEC and the ARF or in bilateral relations with individual countries (for example, the ASEANs).
28. In referring to the United States as the 'foremost … cultural power' in the world, I do not in any way mean to suggest that American culture is qualitatively superior to others, simply that, good or bad, it dominates the globe.
29. A senior diplomat at one of the Western European embassies in Moscow complained to me in 1999 about the Russian elite's Americacentrism, adding that it reflected an enduring (and tiresome) geopolitical obsession.
30. The Russia–EU PCA treaty, signed in June 1994, did not enter into force until 1 December 1997.
31. Typically, Yeltsin [2001, p. 258] pinned the blame for the NATO intervention squarely on the United States, alleging that '[t]he Americans found it necessary to stimulate North Atlantic solidarity by any means,' and that Washington was afraid both of 'the crisis in postwar values' and 'the growing strength of European independence'.

5 The Geopolitical Strain

1. The 'implosion' argument was favoured by Yeltsin and his supporters in the West. It was embodied in the 'truth' that a weak Russia would be a 'constant source of danger to the security of mankind' [Yeltsin, 1994a, p. 1].
2. As Alex Pravda [1992, p. 255] put it, '[w]hat distinguished Gorbachev from his predecessors was not so much that he placed domestic priorities first…The real distinction of Gorbachev's strategy lay in the fact that he radically realigned foreign policy to facilitate rather than avoid domestic change and sustained this radical international realignment to help drive fundamental transformation at home'.
3. Interestingly, in a meeting in early 2000 with Australian Embassy representatives, Kozyrev suggested that it had been inevitable that the West would take advantage of Russia's weakness.
4. Although it had been evident for some time that NATO would seek to include Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic into the alliance, the catalyst for the debate in Russia appears to have been Yeltsin's suggestion during a visit to Warsaw in August 1993 that Moscow would not stand in the way of Polish accession [Dannreuther, 1999–2000, p. 151]. Yeltsin later retracted his comments in a letter to President Clinton, and by November the mainstream Russian position had been firmly established [*see* Primakov, 1993, pp. 1, 3].
5. The term, 'culture of envy', was used by Hedrick Smith [1991, pp. 199–200] to describe the 'collective jealousy [in Soviet society] against those who rise above the crowd'. However, it seems perfectly applicable to the foreign policy context where American successes post-Cold War have evoked very similar sentiments, especially in the light of continuing Russian difficulties and setbacks over the same period.
6. The liberal scholar, Yurii Davydov [1996, p. 9], was one of a small minority to underplay the importance of NATO enlargement, claiming that it would become 'peripheral' in the event of the emergence of 'special relations' between Russia and NATO and, subsequently, 'a new system of European security'; *see also* Parkhalina [2000b, p. 39].
7. According to the highly flexible (and indeed ambiguous) wording of the Founding Act [1997, p. 5], the PJC would 'provide a mechanism for consultations, coordination and, *to the maximum extent possible, where appropriate* [author's italics], for joint decisions and joint action with respect to security issues of common concern. The consultations will not extend to internal matters of either NATO, NATO member states or Russia.'
8. I am indebted to Alexei Pushkov for this insight.
9. The USA–Japan Security Treaty posed quite a dilemma for some senior MFA officials. On the one hand, they acknowledged privately the Treaty's positive contribution towards security in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific more generally. On the other hand, they disliked the fact that in doing so it cemented and legitimized the American security presence in the region.
10. Consistent with this approach, Russia rejected attempts at the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit to introduce the principle of 'consensus minus one' [Gornostaev, 1999d, p. 6].
11. According to a study by Dean Wilkening [1998, p. 101], the Russian strategic force would be 'largely obsolete by 2005, with the exception of the bomber force'.

12. On several occasions during 1999 Russian officials suggested to me that they favoured a reduction of benchmark levels to as low as 1000 warheads. Although the failure under Yeltsin to ratify either START-2 or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty suggested a reluctance to engage in arms control, in truth the delay owed more to the President's inability to focus on these issues as well as the intrusion of domestic political factors in foreign policy (*see* Chapter 2).
13. Notwithstanding their strenuous objections to NMD, Russian officials admitted privately that it posed no direct threat to Russia's nuclear strike capabilities.
14. In two major trials in 2000, the 'hit-to-kill' ground-based interceptor failed to hit its designated target [Bowen, 2001, p. 499], although a subsequent test in 2001 proved more successful.
15. In theory, the Russian government had a number of 'asymmetric responses' at its disposal: non-ratification of START-2; withdrawal from the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR); the construction of an indigenous missile defence system; the conversion of the new generation single-warhead Topol-M into a multiple-warhead missile (or MIRV – multiple independent re-entry vehicle) [*see* Gulko, 1999, p. 2]. The practical difficulties were enormous, however. With the growing obsolescence of its nuclear arsenal, non-ratification would have been highly counterproductive; withdrawal from the MTCR would have excluded Moscow from participation in the international control regimes that were part of playing the 'good international citizen'; and developing a national missile defence system would have entailed exorbitant costs with no early prospect of success. The 're-mirvization' of the Topol-Ms was technically feasible, but would have been in flagrant breach of START-2 rules, with consequences potentially far worse than those resulting from simply non-ratification of the Treaty.
16. The need for revised flank limits was reinforced by chronic political and inter-ethnic instability in the Transcaucasus.
17. The benefit to Russia of a system of national and territorial ceilings in place of the bloc-to-bloc (NATO–Warsaw Pact) structure was that the former restricted NATO's flexibility in moving troops and treaty-limited equipment (TLE) to its new member-states. Under the old bloc-to-bloc arrangement, NATO would have been able to do this because the total number of its TLE would have remained well below the levels allowed under the CFE Treaty.
18. In the margins of the Yeltsin–Jiang Zemin Summit in Moscow in April 1997, the leaders of the five states adjoining the former Sino-Soviet frontier – Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – signed an agreement on confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the border regions. This built on progress achieved during Yeltsin's visit to Shanghai one year earlier, in which the various parties undertook not to use force against one another and to refrain from aggressive or unpredictable military actions. Although the Moscow agreement was more concrete in that it established ceilings for ground troops and certain types of matériel, its significance was political rather than military-strategic. In Russia's case, for example, economic constraints had already compelled it to initiate reductions to levels lower than required under the agreement [Bulavinov, 1997a, p. 2].

Although the status of three islands in the Amur river has yet to be definitively resolved, the Yeltsin–Jiang Zemin Summit in Beijing in November 1997 effectively removed the common border as an issue of serious contention. The Presidents' joint statement:

> announced triumphantly that all issues relating to the demarcation of the eastern section of the Russian–Chinese state border … have been resolved, and that [this section] is clearly marked on site for the first time in the history of the two countries' relations. The sides also stated their readiness to complete demarcation work on the western section of the Russian–Chinese border … in accordance with the agreed timetable [*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 11 November 1997, p. 7].

19. That said, they also complicated the ongoing dispute with Turkey over Russia's 'southern flank' in the CFE context [Alexei Arbatov, 1996, p. 115], in the process reminding Moscow of the nexus between domestic and external policy. The internal security objective of suppressing the Chechen rebels acquired an external dimension rooted in a formal reading of the concept of balance of power.
20. Russia was especially interested in expanding the quadripartite (USA, China, North and South Korea) talks on the Korean peninsula to include other parties – Russia, Japan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This was a constant theme in my discussions with the MFA's First Asia Department (China and the Koreas) during 1996–98. By 1999, the Russian position had softened somewhat, with officials saying that Russia would support the Four-Party talks while remaining 'ready to assist' in the (anticipated) event that these would achieve no progress.
21. Similarly, the continuing deadlock in the Korean quadripartite talks was seen as strengthening Russia's case for closer involvement in Northeast Asian security affairs. Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin [1999, p. 6], for example, argued that Russia could play a significant role as a moderating influence on North Korea and, more generally, in enhancing regional stability.
22. Attendance by leaders of the GUUAM member-states acquired an extra edge in the circumstances of NATO military operations against Milosevic and Moscow's consequent boycott of the NATO Summit.
23. The term 'Finlandization' referred originally to the international position of Finland after the Second World War. Although it was not a Soviet satellite or client state, it kept its distance from Western security and economic structures such as NATO and the EU.
24. There are no truly reliable figures for Russian military exports to China, given both the unpredictability of payment arrangements as well as the sensitivity and secrecy surrounding the subject. Most reputable estimates put the figure at around US$ 1 billion per annum.
25. Recognition of this reality was reflected, for example, in Communist leader Zyuganov's attendance at the 1996 Davos World Economic Forum.
26. The nexus between domestic reforms and foreign policy under Gorbachev might be taken as implicit confirmation of the increasing importance of economic priorities. However, the emphasis in the 'new thinking' of that time

was more civilizational and political, focusing on general themes such as 'modernization' [Pravda, 1992, p. 255], 'convergence' and 'civilization' [Brown, 1997, p. 224] rather than on specifically economic objectives.

27. Not the least of these critics was Yeltsin himself. In connection with the rise of anti-Western sentiment during the Kosovo crisis, he [2001, pp. 271–2] raised the spectre of Primakov 'uniting the politicians who dreamed of a new isolationist Russia and a new cold war'.
28. The Australian government, for example, opposed Russian membership of APEC mainly because of two reasons: (i) the very modest level of Russian economic involvement in the Asia-Pacific region; and (ii) fears that Russian accession would change the nature of APEC from an almost exclusively economic grouping to one whose agenda would become increasingly political/strategic.

6 A Question of Priorities – the Practice of Foreign Policy

1. Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) commits all Parties 'to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control'. The article was introduced in September 1967 by Mexico and supported by a number of other Non-Nuclear Weapons States (NNWS) to put pressure on the two nuclear superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, to contribute to nuclear non-proliferation. Since that time, interpretation of Article VI has been the subject of constant wrangling, with the NNWS regularly accusing the nuclear weapons states of failing to meet their obligations under the Treaty [Timerbaev, 2000, pp. 102–3].
2. A liberal journalist claimed to me in late 1999 that Yeltsin had publicly undertaken to ensure Duma ratification of the START-2 bill on 17 separate occasions.
3. A Duma source told me that it had been intended that START-2 would be ratified on the last Friday in December – Christmas Day 1998.
4. MFA and Duma sources at the time confirmed to me that START-2 ratification had been all but approved when NATO launched its air-strikes.
5. As noted to me by a Duma source. In concrete terms, Russia has already missed a CWC deadline to destroy one per cent of its Category I chemical weapons by 29 April 2000. The construction of destruction facilities is also at a nascent stage: work has begun on one site, but two others remain at the planning stage [*see* 'Chemical Weapons Implementation', 2001].
6. It is less clear whether the transfer of Russian missile technology to Iran actually violated the MTCR. Alexander Pikayev [1999, pp. 208–9] considered that the main American concern was 'not so much with a limited leakage of fragmented missile hardware and blueprints, but rather with the prospects that through scientific and university cooperation with Russia, Tehran would be able to build a community of professional missile experts, which represents the main prerequisite for obtaining indigenous missile capabilities'. The latter activity, he noted, might be beyond the scope of the MTCR and therefore permissible under international law.
7. Throughout the 1990s, Russia was the main supplier of oil to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). That said, total trade turnover was modest and

declining – US$ 384 million in 1998, US$ 297 million in 1999 and US$ 251 million in 2000 [*Tamozhennaya statistika* … 2000, p. 9; *Tamozhennaya statistika* … 2001, p. 9].

The main Russian economic priority in Iraq was recovery of the Soviet-era debt, estimated at around US$ 8 billion. Additionally, Iraq's position as a major oil producer appeared to offer the promise – once UN sanctions were lifted – of considerable opportunities for Russian companies, particularly in the reconstruction and development of industry infrastructure.

8. A point made by Vladimir Lukin in a conversation with the author in early 1999.
9. At the Krasnoyarsk 'no ties' summit in November 1997, Yeltsin and Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto agreed 'to make every effort' to conclude a peace treaty by the year 2000 ['52 goda sporili – reshili za 2 dnya', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 4 November 1997, p. 1]. This was widely interpreted – including by more optimistic members of the foreign diplomatic community in Moscow – as an indication that the two sides would soon reach an accommodation over the Northern Territories/South Kuriles – a prerequisite for the conclusion of any Peace Treaty. However, in our discussions with senior Russian Foreign Ministry officials at the time they insisted that Russia would, under no circumstances, give up the disputed islands. The subsequent course of developments was to prove them right. Although a joint sub-commission was formed at Deputy Foreign Minister level to consider the question, the drive for a territorial deal steadily lost momentum and, by the end of Yeltsin's presidency, had ground to a halt. Ultimately, the most the Russian government felt able to offer Tokyo was a kind of joint administration and development of the islands, with legal sovereignty remaining with Russia.
10. In this connection, Kosovo helped 'legitimize' Russia's conduct in Chechnya and, more generally, to reassert traditional understandings of sovereignty and especially non-interference after they had taken a big hit [*see* Putin, 2000a, pp. 157–8]. As Sergei Rogov [1999, p. 5] observed, 'the current war in Chechnya became largely possible because of the war in Yugoslavia; the West has no moral right to lecture us today'. Furthermore, the success of the NATO operation served as a model of what might be achieved through a new military campaign in the rebel province [Alexei Arbatov, 2000, p. 2].
11. When I was serving in Moscow during the second half of the 1990s, the most common juxtaposition of figures was fewer than 7 million Russians in the Far East as against 130 million Chinese in the provinces adjoining the Russian border.
12. Trenin [1999, pp. 41–2] expressed concern about Russia's reliance on nuclear weapons to defend itself in the event of future conflict with China. In his view, the 'enormous investments' necessary to implement such a strategy were 'not readily available'.
13. Although Yeltsin attended the Sharm esh-Sheikh 'Summit of the Peacemakers' in April 1996 and King Hussein's funeral in February 1999, on both occasions his reasons for visiting the region had nothing to do with a bilateral Middle East agenda.
14. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak [1997, p. 1] complained that 'Russia completely ignores us [the Middle East, including Egypt]'.

15. In a press briefing on 30 June 1995, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns claimed that Russia had undertaken not to negotiate any new arms contracts with Iran and also to terminate existing commitments 'within a few years' [State Department report of 30 June 1995, in *www.fas.org/news/russia/ 1995/36333118-36372698.html*].
16. The most important of these concessions was the agreement in March 1995 to establish four Russian military bases on Georgian territory [*see* Aves, 1998, p. 184].
17. Baku was one of the strongest critics of Russian policy in the FSU and was noticeably more successful than Georgia in retaining its freedom of manoeuvre. It successfully resisted attempts to station Russian troops on Azeri soil, was able to conclude the 'Contract of the Century' in the face of heavy opposition from Moscow, participated in NATO's PfP programme, and was a leading light in the GUUAM grouping. That said, under the leadership of former Soviet Politburo member Geidar Aliev, Azerbaijan was nevertheless much more sensitive to Russian concerns than it had been under his predecessors. It joined the CIS in November 1993 and was sufficiently cognizant of Russian strategic and economic interests to increase Lukoil's stake in the Caspian Oil Consortium and route the main pipeline for Azeri oil through southern Russia.
18. According to State Customs Committee statistics, EU countries account for about a third of Russian foreign trade [*Tamozhennaya statistika…*, 2001, p. 7]. Other sources give a figure of around 40 per cent [Portanskii, 1997, p. 1; *Strategic Survey: 2000/2001*, p. 122].
19. *The Economist Intelligence Unit* of 29 January 2001 noted that Russian WTO negotiators 'remain obdurate on subsidisation of agriculture, on protection of Russian services sectors, especially financial, and on export taxes'. Other continuing difficulties include Russia's slack approach to intellectual property rights (as the flood of pirated music and computer software testifies), lack of transparency in customs regulations and their enforcement, and the use of non-tariff barriers (such as arbitrary and redundant certification requirements) to minimize foreign competition in some areas, particularly food.
20. Russia's first attempts at providing an Individual Action Plan for trade liberalization were unimpressive. While some allowance should be made given the recentness of its accession to APEC, the main problem was that its membership was essentially a political decision, owing nothing to its modest economic credentials in the Asia-Pacific. Within the Russian government as a whole, there was insufficient expertise and interest to ensure preparation of a worthwhile IAP – particularly given other more pressing commitments such as WTO accession. During 1998–99, we in the Australian Embassy felt that our only serious interlocutor on APEC matters was the MFA's Department for Economic Cooperation, whose resources were severely overstretched. My diplomatic sources indicate that under Putin the situation has improved somewhat.
21. According to *The Economist Intelligence Unit* of 21 July 2001, Russia has received less than US$ 20 billion in foreign direct investment over the past decade. On a per capita basis, this amounted to US$ 136, compared to more than US$ 1500 in the Czech Republic and nearly US$ 2000 in Hungary. In his 2001 State of the Nation address, Putin [2001b, p. 4] noted that 60 per cent of investment in Russian industry had gone to the fuel and energy sector.

22. In the case of India, agreement to sell cryogenic engines and technology led to American sanctions in May 1992, jeopardizing lucrative contracts in the area of Russian–American space cooperation. By July 1993, the issue had been more or less resolved after Yeltsin agreed that New Delhi should receive the hardware only. This climbdown opened the way for the Russian space agency, Glavkosmos, to participate in American commercial satellite launches and joint manned space flight programmes [Pikayev, 1999, pp. 191–5]. Participation in such projects was placed similarly at risk by the porousness of controls over nuclear cooperation with Iran [Steinberg, 2000, p. 18].
23. In the summer of 1996, a Western European diplomat told me that his Ambassador had given an instruction to Embassy policy staff that 'the Presidential elections shall be deemed fair'.
24. A Russian liberal friend of mine noted the emergence in the late Yeltsin period of a new type of liberal, the liberal-*derzhavnik*, who combined allegiance to economic liberalism with a belief in a strong state and an assertive foreign policy. Andrei Kolesnikov [2000, p. 9] described this in similar terms as 'national liberalism'.
25. For example, the rate of GDP decline slowed considerably during 1995–97. After a fall of 12.7 per cent in 1994, the figures for 1995, 1996 and 1997 were −4.1 per cent, −3.4 per cent and +0.9 per cent respectively [*Obzor ekonomicheskoi politiki …*, 1999, p. 584].
26. Kozyrev was the one prominent dissonant voice, noting that the EU, 'that is, the whole of Europe,' supported the operation: 'It seems that everyone is marching out of step, and that only we are marching in step' [*Segodnya*, 25 March 1999, p. 2].
27. It was a measure of the extent of liberal concern that prominent figures in the Union of Rightist Forces (Soyuz pravykh sil – SPS) – including Gaidar, Nemtsov and Boris Fyodorov – felt moved to undertake a highly unusual and unsuccessful 'peace mission' to Belgrade a few days after the NATO attack. Their initiative was disowned by Foreign Minister Ivanov and harshly criticized by Communist leader Zyuganov [*see* Kamakin, 1999, p. 4]. Unsurprisingly, they were unable to secure a meeting with Milosevic.
28. This point was recognized even by vocal critics of NATO like Migranyan [1999, p. 6].
29. Although the ostensible reason for diluting Primakov's authority in this way was his alleged failure to manage Russian policy responses satisfactorily in reality he was targeted because, with Duma and Presidential elections looming in December 1999 and mid-2000 respectively, he represented a serious alternative around whom non-Communist 'democratic' opinion might unite. As Yeltsin [2001, p. 268] recalled it, '[c]ould I allow Primakov to seize the political initiative slowly but surely and lead the country back to the socialism of yesteryear? No, I could not'.
30. A senior MFA official described the Chernomyrdin–Ahtisaari deal to me as a signal illustration of the dangers of allowing 'non-professionals' to conduct diplomacy.
31. In this connection, the takeover of Slatina airport (*see* note 10, p.179) was a most untypical example of foreign policy 'activism', motivated more by bluff than any desire for confrontation – particularly taking into consideration the

huge disparity in forces on the ground. In his *Midnight Diaries*, Yeltsin [2001, p. 266] writes:

> …I decided that Russia must make a crowning gesture even if it had no military significance. It was not a question of whether we had won the main point. Russia had not permitted itself to be defeated in the moral sense…This last gesture was a sign of our moral victory in the face of the enormous NATO military, all of Europe, and the whole world.

32. Following the signing of the Founding Act in May 1997, Yeltsin announced that Moscow would henceforth 'dismantle' its nuclear warheads targeted at NATO member-states. In fact, the consensus of experts at the time was that he confused 'dismantling' with 'de-targeting'. The latter was essentially meaningless because (i) Russian and NATO missiles were not targeted against each other in the first place; and (ii) missiles could be re-targeted in a matter of seconds [Bulavinov, 1997b, p. 6].

7 Towards Normalization? Putin and Beyond

1. Putin's experience in high-level government and foreign policy is by no means negligible – KGB colonel in East Germany; Deputy Mayor in St Petersburg with responsibility for foreign relations; head of the FSB and then, briefly, the Security Council. But both Yeltsin (First Party Secretary in Sverdlovsk and then Moscow, Candidate Politburo member, RSFSR President) and Gorbachev (First Party Secretary in Stavropol, Central Committee Secretary for Agriculture, member of the Politburo) had far greater experience at the highest levels of government before becoming Head of State. It should be recalled also that both undertook high-profile trips abroad before they assumed office: Gorbachev to the United Kingdom in 1984, and Yeltsin to the United States in 1989 and Japan in 1990.
2. Such foreign exposure as Putin has experienced before becoming President was essentially European: first, during his KGB posting; and then later as Deputy Mayor of St Petersburg.
3. In the elite survey conducted in April 2001 by the Russian Independent Institute for Social and National Questions and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 89 per cent of respondents considered that Russia should be able to raise its global standing. Compared to 1993, there was an increase in the number of those who believed it could once again assume superpower status. Interestingly, this view was favoured not just by supporters of the Communist Party and the LDPR, but also by respondents under the age of 40 ['Vneshnepoliticheskii kurs…', 2001, p. 11].
4. The accidental sinking of the nuclear submarine *Kursk* with the loss of all hands in August 2000 was extremely badly handled by the Russian government in general, and Putin personally. However, despite his ill-advised decision not to return to Moscow from holidaying in the Crimea, Putin's public popularity rating remained largely intact. According to a VTsIOM poll taken shortly after the accident, 65 per cent of respondents approved of his performance as President [in Kovalskaya, 2000, p. 23].

5. Although the December 1999 Duma elections did not give the pro-government caucus an absolute majority, in practice the new balance of representation greatly favoured the Kremlin. The Communists and Agrarians (effectively rural Communists) retained only 130 seats in the new Parliament (down from 220 after the December 1995 elections), while the Luzhkov–Primakov party, 'Otechestvo – Vsya Rossiya' – the main centrist alternative – fell well short of expectations in securing a modest 48 places. The latter's subsequent merger with Putin's party, 'Edinstvo', in December 2001 further strengthened the President's position with the legislature.
6. While Putin's rating has fallen to under 70 per cent on occasion, there have been many other times when it has exceeded this standard. For example, following his response to the 11 September terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Putin's rating attained an impressive 77 per cent [Gallup poll, cited in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 October 2001, p. 1].
7. For example, the foreign policy influence of the Security Council is widely perceived to have fallen since Sergei Ivanov's transfer from Secretary of the Council to Defence Minister.
8. The long-delayed ratification of these two agreements took place literally days before the start of the Sixth NPT Review Conference (Revcon) in April 2000. As a result, Russia was able to deflect onto the USA much of the criticism that the two former superpowers had not done enough to disarm under the terms of Article VI of the NPT – all the more so given the US Congress's continuing failure to ratify the CTBT.
9. Although somewhat short on detail, the Russian proposals for cooperation in 'non-strategic' missile defence envisaged joint threat assessments, technical cooperation and technology sharing.
10. In fairness, it should be acknowledged that Putin has regularly emphasized the importance of legal reform in his annual address to the Federal Assembly.

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