

A Unilateral U.S. and a Resurgent Russia: U.S.–Russian Relations 2000–2008

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Abstract

This paper will analyze U.S.–Russian bilateral relations from 2000–2008. It will give an overview of the foreign policy objectives of both nations followed by an examination of the bilateral relationship in areas such as arms reduction, nonproliferation, missile defense, terrorism, the Iraq war, U.S. involvement in former Soviet states, Russia’s relations with critical nations, and the Georgia–Russia conflict of August 2008. Each of these subsections will show that there are points of contention, but also opportunities to work cooperatively. The objective of this paper is to illustrate that U.S.–Russian relations have deteriorated significantly since their relatively high point in 2001, and although there were opportunities for collaboration on areas of common interests, they were not fully exploited because U.S. foreign policy was focused on the war in Iraq. Though U.S. foreign policy has been largely unresponsive to the resurgence of Russia, relations are not yet damaged beyond repair. The U.S. can begin to forge a new relationship with Russia by collaborating on nonproliferation issues, renewing bilateral negotiations on arms control such as the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, and utilizing international organizations to which Russia is a party whenever it is in the U.S.’ interest. Consistent with neorealist expectations, cooperation on common security interests is a definitive way to better the bilateral relationship between these two nations.

Introduction

In 2000, political transitions occurred in both Russia and the United States. Vladimir V. Putin became President of the Russian Federation, and George W. Bush was elected at the end of the year to become the 43rd President of the United States of America. Over the first two years of their presidencies, U.S.–Russian relations improved substantially. After the first meeting of the two heads of state in June 2001, President Bush stated that he had peered into President Putin’s eyes, gotten a sense of his soul and felt they could work together (Goldgeier “To Russia”). The two leaders called for a strategic partnership based on cooperation over issues of common interest. They both agreed that the United States and Russia were partners and that they would be able to collaborate during their first terms as presidents. The tone from this first Bush–Putin meeting was positive as both presidents stated their desire for more meetings and a fresh outlook for a new era in U.S.–Russian relations (Wyatt 1). Despite the initial good will and friendly rhetoric, U.S.–Russian relations have deteriorated over the past eight years. By the end of his first term, President Bush had the U.S. on a path of unilateralism and preemptive action. President Putin ended his first term with a recentralized government and a revitalized economy which gave Russia a stronger international voice. Their second terms were marked by deteriorating relations resulting from the U.S. unilateral action in Iraq and most recently Russia’s military actions in Georgia.

The first two sections of this paper cover the foreign policy objectives set forth by each nation’s leadership from 2000–2008. The next section explores U.S.–Russian arms control and reduction agreements beginning with the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and ending with the

controversy over missile defense systems in Europe. The subsequent section discusses U.S.–Russian collaboration in fighting terrorism followed by a section on the U.S. invasion of Iraq and Russia’s response. The next section focuses on U.S. involvement in former Soviet states whether through NATO or unilaterally, and Russia’s relations with China, Iran, and North Korea. This is followed by a discussion of the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 that highlights the underlying tensions in the region and the U.S. and international response. Finally, this paper will offer policy recommendations for the Obama administration geared to improve U.S. relations with Russia.

The main objective of this paper is to illustrate that U.S.–Russian relations have deteriorated significantly since Presidents Bush and Putin took office. Although there were opportunities for collaboration on areas of common interests, U.S. foreign policy was focused on the war in Iraq. Despite the unresponsive nature of U.S. foreign policy to the resurgence of Russia, relations can still be repaired. A better bilateral relationship can be formed by cooperating on common security interests such as nonproliferation issues and the renewal of bilateral negotiations on arms control such as the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Both nations can also work together through international organizations to work on common security issues. With a stronger effort by both nations to increase dialogue and arms negotiations, the U.S. and Russia can begin to repair relations and work towards a less adversarial future.

U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives 1989–2008

The 1980s saw a great transformation in U.S.–Soviet relations. The decade began with massive military buildup and high tensions and ended with arms reduction talks and political diplomacy between the two world powers. The 40 year policy of containment, established in George Kennan’s 1946 ‘Long Telegram,’ had finally come to an end. Under this policy, the United States had sought to contain the spread of communism throughout the world through the economic buildup of Europe with the Marshall Plan and the expansion of democracy and proxy wars with small communist, or wannabe communist, countries under the Truman Doctrine. This mindset has been difficult to alter even in the aftermath of the fall of communism because the U.S. had been following the containment approach for four decades. This section will look at U.S. foreign policy towards Russia beginning with the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and the impact his reforms had on U.S. foreign policy under the first Bush administration. Next, the section explores the foreign policy goals of the Clinton years and ends with an examination of the objectives of the second Bush administration in its foreign policy towards Russia.

President Reagan entered the oval office in 1980 declaring the Soviet Union to be an evil empire. He dramatically increased defense spending and began his pet project known as the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which aimed at developing a missile defense system from the ground and space. However, once Gorbachev landed on the world scene, Reagan's tone began to change. At a 1985 summit in Geneva, Reagan was able to meet and talk with Gorbachev and determined that there was a chance to work with the Soviet leader. The next two summits ended in stalemates largely in part due to Reagan's commitment to SDI, but in the third summit Gorbachev made significant concessions without receiving much in return (Wolf 1). The talks

culminated with the 1987 signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in Washington that reduced nuclear weapons on both sides and greatly improved relations (Wolf 1).

During George H.W. Bush's first year in office the international system experienced huge transformations. 1989 saw the crumbling of communism in Eastern Europe, the Berlin Wall, and the end of the Cold War. In this new system, President Bush and his secretary of state James Baker defined the administration's foreign policy goals toward the USSR as ending the Cold War and normalizing relations between the U.S. and USSR. President Bush was a conservative leader whose foreign policy was marked by skepticism towards change and favored caution and gradualism to rash action (Hurst 9-11). This propensity for caution was exactly what was needed in such dynamic times. By allowing Gorbachev to carry out reforms without U.S. involvement, President Bush helped to alleviate tension between the two nations.

Just as Gorbachev began to define Soviet foreign policy by focusing on a balance of interests rather than military power, so too did President Bush. But while Gorbachev sought to reduce Soviet involvement abroad (other than strengthening economic and diplomatic ties), President Bush showed a strong commitment to internationalism, believing that prosperity and freedom within the United States were linked to the assertive pursuit of our interests abroad (Hurst 10). It was therefore important that the U.S. actively engage in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in order to influence international trade and security (Ripley 209).

Not everyone within the Bush administration held such an optimistic view of Soviet intentions for reform. Vice-President Dan Quayle along with Secretary of Defense Richard

Cheney and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Robert Gates believed that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were not trying to turn the USSR into a democratic state, but rather were looking to revitalize it (Hurst 47). Members of the administration also debated the political future of Gorbachev. A National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) in late 1989 predicted that Gorbachev would succeed in his reforms while maintaining his position, and therefore the U.S. should give him full support. Others in the intelligence community argued that if Gorbachev's reforms were successful they would end his political career either through the breakup of the USSR or a coup. They believed that if he wished to stay in power he would crackdown on the opposition. Thus, in their view, it was better to support more radical reform leaders like Boris Yeltsin (Hurst 47).

President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker thought that U.S. interests were best served by supporting Gorbachev. President Bush was therefore reluctant to meet with other Soviet reform leaders fearing it would alienate Gorbachev (Hurst 47). President Bush did, however, agree that there was a degree of uncertainty surrounding the potential success of Gorbachev's reforms and that Baker's idea of working with him to lock in changes was important. Whether or not Gorbachev's reforms led to his political demise, the administration was wise to continue supporting him rather than overtly supporting opposition leaders since the domestic political situation in Russia at this time was very fragile (Hurst 48).

President Bush's policies were not much altered once President Yeltsin took office. Because Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin sought to align Russia's interests with those of the West, President Bush easily obtained Yeltsin's acquiescence on U.S. foreign policy decisions. However, the Bush administration did not take the opportunity to provide swift and effective

economic aid to Russia possibly resulting from his concern that helping Russia too much could hurt his chances of reelection (Simes 2).

President Bush lost his bid for reelection in 1992 and Bill Clinton became the next president. After facing criticism for not articulating a foreign policy plan, President Clinton gave a speech in September of 1993 to the United Nations General Assembly in which he outlined his four point foreign policy agenda. His foreign policy called for strengthening relations with market democracies, fostering new democracies and market economies wherever possible, supporting the liberalization of hostile states while countering any aggression, and finally, promoting democracy and market economies in the regions with great humanitarian problems (Wittkopf 39). Another component of his foreign policy was his “Russia First” policy that emphasized cooperation and engagement with Russia. This policy was centered on the belief that a democratic Russia would be peaceful and pro-West (Kubicek 548). During President Clinton’s first term, Secretary of State Warren Christopher believed that engaging with a reforming Russia was an important U.S. interest. As Secretary Christopher understood it, a collapse of Russian democracy would create an insecure future for the U.S. as there could be a renewed nuclear threat and greater instability. The Clinton administration therefore sought to create a strategic alliance with a democratic Russia in order to mobilize international support for democratic reforms in Russia and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Failing democracies and economies in the former Soviet Union could easily prompt the sale of nuclear equipment or intelligence to high international bidders (Cox 643-645).

The Clinton administration therefore became highly involved in Russia’s transition. The administration sent economic advisors both from the U.S. government and also from the IMF to

help jumpstart the ailing Russian economy. The IMF recommended “shock therapy” for the new Russian government suggesting they implement many new policies simultaneously. These policies included privatization, price and trade liberalization, monetary reforms, and fiscal reforms. Because economic reform was strongly linked to the democratic process, disagreements among Russian leaders caused the economic policies of the 1990s to be a mix between shock therapy and gradual reform throwing the economy into chaos. The government used foreign borrowing while oil prices were high and the Russian financial system collapsed as oil prices dropped (McFaul).

According to some analysts, including D. Simes, the Clinton administration was not helping Russia, but taking advantage of Russia’s weakened economy in order to make political and economic gains. Accordingly, President Clinton and his administration attempted to define Russia’s national interests for Russia, which generated a fair amount of resentment. The U.S. even went so far as to condone President Yeltsin’s heavy handedness and subsequent dissolution of the Duma which led to a new constitution with consolidated powers for the president (Simes 2). By allowing President Yeltsin to secure his power base, the U.S. continued to have a Russian leader who was responsive to U.S. interests.

The first test of Clinton's Russia policy came with the conflict in Bosnia in 1992–1995, as the US and Russian approaches to the problem were radically different. Russia had historical ties to the Serbs and therefore called for a common international policy in dealing with Bosnia rejecting a purely Western solution to the problem. Initially, Russia took an impartial stance and joined peacekeeping efforts, and the Russian government even agreed to UN sanctions levied against Serbia in order to appease the West. But President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev

faced much opposition from nationalist factions in Russia. As a result, President Yeltsin and Kozyrev were forced to amend their pro-Western position and began to oppose military intervention (Kubicek 551-553). Although Russia was unable to influence NATO to avoid airstrikes, it was granted a voice in the peace process both through the Contact Group and as a party to the Dayton Accords (Headley 240). However, by 1999 Russia's influence had deteriorated since a yearlong conflict in Kosovo led NATO to use air strikes in order to force Milosevic's army to withdraw from the region ("NATO Topics: Kosovo"). This policy was adopted without any regard for Russia's opposition to intervention. Russia condemned all NATO air strikes, but the U.S. and NATO continued with the bombings and President Yeltsin faced continued domestic pressure as a result of his inability to assert Russian authority in the region.

U.S. success in defining the international agenda gave President Clinton and his advisors the confidence they needed to begin promoting NATO expansion as a foreign policy priority. Therefore by the end of 1996 the "Russia First" policy had come to an end, and it was replaced by a serious push for NATO expansion. The push originated from the express desire of Central European nations such as Poland and the Czech Republic to join NATO. Having spent the first term prioritizing good U.S.–Russian relations, the Clinton administration saw an economically and politically weakened former superpower that could for the first time in half a century be ignored. As a result, NATO expansion proved to be the single most important foreign policy issue of President Clinton's second term.

In April of 1997, for the first time in decades, the Secretaries of State and Defense appeared together before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defense Secretary William Cohen both asked for Congressional support of

NATO's plans to accept new members. Secretary Albright framed the importance of NATO expansion as being completely in line with America's interests. She believed that the political and military alliance would protect against war in Europe while also defending the strides towards democracy in the region (Kozaryn 1). Secretary Cohen mirrored these remarks adding that in order to maintain peace, prosperity, and democracy effectively and efficiently, the U.S. must do so collectively with European nations. Finally, Secretary Albright commented on the importance of strengthening NATO–Russia relations and encouraging Russia to work with NATO through a partnership for peace (Kozaryn 1).

In the context of policies towards Russia that at least rhetorically promoted cooperation, the fundamental question remained – why was one of the main foreign policy objectives of Clinton's second term the expansion of NATO, a product of the Cold War. The answer might be found in the position of some administration officials who called for 'neocontainment' – a policy geared at expanding NATO to the former boundaries of the Soviet Union or even within those boundaries. Neocontainment was viewed by others within the administration as contrary to U.S. interests since it would serve to isolate and antagonize Russia (Wittkopf 160). Unable to escape decades of distrust aimed at the Soviet Union, policymakers felt U.S. security would increase as NATO expanded. As NATO turned fifty years old, its mission was being redefined in the post-Cold War world, but the underlying theoretical need and desire for NATO's original goal of containing the USSR perhaps remained.

President George W. Bush took office in January 2001 without articulating a clear set of foreign policy objectives. Foreign policy goals included the continuance of President Reagan's push for a national missile defense system and President Clinton's NATO eastward expansion.

Although President Bush developed an affinity early on for President Putin, his policies would not bring Russia to the forefront of U.S. foreign policy priorities. The U.S. would work jointly with Russia when it was in their interest to do so. As the newly inaugurated president of a nation with global military predominance and a strong economy, President Bush was not immediately under pressure to define his foreign policy. That was until the terrorist attacks on September 11th. Facing a fearful citizenry, President Bush and his advisors were quick to propose how the United States would respond to the attacks. Foreign policy advisors to President Bush included Vice-President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. The initial response was to invade Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom in order to capture Osama bin Laden, wipe out al-Qaeda, and overthrow the Taliban. There was a good amount of international support, and for those countries that did not monetarily or militarily aid the action, there was at least an understanding of the U.S. military action in Afghanistan. Though it did not want to provide military support, Russia did allow the U.S. and NATO to use former Soviet bases in Central Asia in order to run the operation.

About a year after the terrorist attacks, and with troops still in Afghanistan, the Bush administration outlined what would become known as the Bush Doctrine of U.S. foreign policy. Heavily influenced by the neoconservative members of his administration such as Vice President Cheney and Secretary Rumsfeld, President Bush's new doctrine was outlined in the National Security Strategy of the U.S. in 2002. The strategy recognized U.S. military dominance and strong political and economic influence globally, held accountable nations that would harbor terrorists, made preemptive action against nations or terrorists acceptable, and sought to bring

freedom to every corner of the globe (“The National Security” 13-17). Acting unilaterally to secure U.S. interests and security would also become a component of the doctrine. The following year the U.S. invaded Iraq circumventing the UN Security Council. This National Security Strategy also devoted a portion to relations with Russia. It noted that the U.S. was building a new relationship with Russia based on strategic interests and the reality that Cold War adversarial approaches were over. The strategy called for cooperation in the areas where common interests align, especially the global war on terrorism, and it mentioned that differences still exist between the two countries (“The National Security” 26-27).

During his second term in office, President Bush faced a war in both Afghanistan and Iraq, an increasingly large national debt, a slowing economy, and international disdain for U.S. unilateralism and preemptive action. Russia continued to be secondary in U.S. foreign policy objectives, even as Russia’s economy and domestic political situation stabilized and Russia gained a louder voice regionally and in world affairs. U.S. support for the Color Revolutions as well as outspoken support for Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO continued to stoke up resentment in Russia. The objective of creating a European missile defense system through NATO also deepened the rift between the U.S. and Russia. Thus, during this time frame the Bush administration was mostly unresponsive to changes in Russian domestic and foreign policy.

Russia Foreign Policy Objectives 1989–2008

An underlying tenet of Soviet foreign policy until 1985 was the Marxist-Leninist theory that conflict between socialism and capitalism was inevitable (“Marxism”). However, this

fundamental concept was completely refuted by the new General Secretary Michael Gorbachev. Instead of continuing hostile relations with the U.S. and the buildup of Soviet Union's military, Gorbachev's New Thinking Policy called for interdependence among nations, universal human rights, the balancing of interests (not power), and freedom of choice by sovereign states (Larson 77). Gorbachev ushered in a new (and final) era of U.S.–Soviet relations when he implemented Perestroika and Glasnost, which entailed both economic and political reforms (Larson 77). His commitment to arms reduction talks, normalizing relations with the U.S. and other policies greatly changed how President Reagan and President Bush interacted with the USSR.

Gorbachev's political career ended with the collapse of the USSR and the election of Boris Yeltsin as president of the Russian Federation. Yeltsin was immediately faced with four foreign policy realities. First, the Soviet Union's disintegration left Russia with a smaller territory. Second, the country was undergoing an economic and social crisis with increasing inflation, deficit, and decreased production and productivity. Third, the foreign policy leadership was nonexistent because all those previously involved in foreign affairs were part of the Communist Party. Lastly, the international environment had changed from a bipolar to more of a multipolar system or even a unipolar system characterized by U.S. hegemony (Arbatov 6-8). As a result of these realities, multiple foreign policy factions formed and competed for President Yeltsin's attention. They were the pro-Western group, the moderate liberals, the centrist and moderate conservatives, and the neo-communists and nationalists (Arbatov 9-13). The pro-Western group most heavily influenced President Yeltsin's government in the first few years and was supported by the foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev. This group desired political and

economic integration with the West and made many concessions to the West in pursuit of this goal.

The pro-West group lost esteem after Russia was slighted time and again by the West whether economically because they did not receive much aid from the U.S. or on the international political scene since Russia was being treated as a former world power. Yegor Gaidar, President Yeltsin's go-to economist and acting Prime Minister strongly advocated the economic reforms recommended by the U.S. and IMF. These reforms, an economic 'shock therapy,' were expected to help jump start the Russian economy, but failed miserably and sent the country into a deep and long lasting recession. Gaidar was never confirmed by parliament and was largely criticized for the reforms (Erlanger 1-2). Learning the hard way that the pro-West approach would not hold up amidst the domestic turmoil and nationalist resurgence, President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev began to reevaluate Russia's foreign policy as a new U.S. president – President Clinton – was elected. President Clinton's "Russia First" policy was initially well received, but as NATO strengthened instead of fading away as a Cold War relic, President Yeltsin and his foreign policy advisors became more wary of cooperation. The 1997 Founding Act was a means for the U.S. to placate Russian fears because it stipulated that NATO would not put nuclear weapons in any of its new member states and that a NATO–Russian Council would be created to communicate the actions of the organization. This gave Russia a small voice, though not a veto by any means (Kubicek 555). And when NATO went its own path using an air campaign against Serbia over Kosovo, Russia felt slighted by the lack of consultation. Furthermore, the defensive nature of NATO was undermined by the out-of-area

offensive action taken in Serbia, which happened without UN approval and consequently without Russian involvement or approval (Saunders 1-2).

With an economy in tumult and political unease, the increasingly unpopular Yeltsin resigned in 1999, turning the reigns over to his hand-picked Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin. As the newly elected president in 2000, President Putin authored a paper entitled “Russia at the Turn of the Century” that outlined the position of the nation and goals he hoped to achieve. The first part of his paper focused on the need to revitalize the economic situation of his country. He then discussed traditional Russian values such as patriotism, Russia as a great world power, need for strong state power, and emphasis on the group and not the individual. Thus, President Putin called for a strong state in the Russian tradition of centralized government while keeping intact democracy and the Russian constitution. Regarding the economy, President Putin argued that a long-term strategy would be necessary to encourage dynamic growth. The country would also need to attract foreign investment, export more energy resources, create balanced budgets, integrate into world economic structures, battle corruption, and develop an effective financial system (Putin 227-233).

In “The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation” President Putin defines the interests and goals of his foreign policy. President Putin begins by outlining how Russia will help form a new world order in which the United Nations and the UN Security Council should regulate international relations and maintain peace and security. He then discusses how to strengthen international security through further bilateral nuclear arms reduction with the United States, promoting nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, international peacekeeping efforts to resolve conflicts, preserving the ABM Treaty, and combating international terrorism. In the

section referring to NATO, President Putin calls for cooperation with the organization but is critical of NATO expansion. President Putin also details the continued development of friendly relations with Asian countries like China and India while further developing relations with Iran and both Korean states (“The Foreign” 9).

Immediately upon taking office, President Putin worked to reshape the governmental power structure by creating a strong, centralized executive power. He limited the parliament’s power by dissolving the upper chamber and ensuring that the Duma, or lower chamber, would approve all his policies. President Putin has also curtailed freedom of the press, detained journalists and limited the activities of nongovernmental organizations. His widespread popularity, along with a strong public desire for a stronger state, allowed President Putin to accomplish this power recentralization (Votapek 186). In turn, by consolidating power, quelling political unrest, and strengthening his popularity and influence domestically, President Putin was able to present a stronger and more forceful Russia abroad.

The focus on growing and stabilizing the economy was apparent during President Putin’s first term. After President Putin took office, the economy grew around seven percent every year during the first four years (Goldman 96). However, Goldman argues that the growth resulted from the increased demand and price of oil and gas spurred by China and India’s economic growth, as well as the policies carried out by Vladimir Putin’s predecessor as Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov (Goldman 96). President Putin greatly benefited politically from a world event that he did not influence (an increase in oil prices) since Russia’s public could coincide the rebounding of the economy with his rise to power. The legislature also adopted a new tax code that would facilitate the stabilization and strengthening of the Russian financial sector (Votapek

185). In turn, a stronger Russian economy, especially in energy exports, gave the country and its leader a more powerful voice in world affairs.

In summary, during his first term, President Putin recentralized the government, was backed by massive public support, stabilized the economy, and strengthened ties with the West and nations not allied with the West. President Putin's foreign policy was marked by a focus on Russia's interests and security. He worked with Iran and North Korea to sell arms, promoted better deals for Russian businesses, and ensured that Russia had a seat at important Western negotiations. President Putin also worked with the West to better relations and reestablish Russia's role as a global leader. By doing all of this, he laid the groundwork for the re-emergent Russia we see today.

President Putin's second term was marked by a resurgence of Russian influence not only in former Soviet states, but also in international politics. With a stabilized economy, tighter reigns over government corruption, and repression of the media President Putin entered his second term with political security domestically and thus the ability to act more strongly on foreign policy. He viewed the collapse of the USSR as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century" because overnight tens of millions of Russians were left outside of Russia's territory (Associated Press). President Putin's reemphasis on traditional Russian nationalism and assertiveness within global politics resonated with the Russian people and further secured his popularity. The idea that Russia is powerful once again is widely supported by the public. Under the guise of creating a stronger Russia, President Putin has been able to craft a more authoritarian government while maintaining public support. Russia's control over natural gas exports to Europe gave President Putin significant leverage to initiate more assertive policies abroad. His

diplomacy and dealings with China, Iran, and North Korea solidified Russia's role in international talks and negotiations. In the 2008 elections, President Putin honored the term limit of the Russian presidency and did not run for reelection. President Putin's anointed follower, Dmitry Medvedev, won the elections and his party, United Russia, remained in power. In turn, President Medvedev appointed Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister securing his continued influence in the new government.

Nuclear Arms Reduction and Missile Defense

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the number of nuclear weapons held by the two superpowers had reached 47,000 with the United States' arsenal containing 27,000 and the USSR's with 20,000 (Drell 30). At this point both nations began negotiating the limitation and production of these weapons. Through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) the United States and the Soviet Union began to discuss limiting the number of warheads in each arsenal though still allowing for the existence of multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs). In 1972, still within the scope of SALT I negotiations, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was signed along with the Interim 5 Year Agreement. These agreements limited the strategic missile defense technology, the number of deployed ICBMs and SLBMs, and any modernization programs relating to missile defense (Drell 30).

The following decade was marked by an increase in the Soviet arsenal to 39,000 warheads while the United States decreased to 23,000. Little was accomplished in the SALT II negotiations because President Carter, in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan,

withdrew the treaty from Senate consideration. Not long after, the Soviets deployed SS-20 missiles targeted at Western Europe, evoking a response from NATO to deploy missiles as well. With the election of President Reagan the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI or Star Wars) was undertaken as a way to protect the U.S. from missile attacks through technology. The program would attempt to develop a defensive missile shield, deployment of which would be in violation of the ABM Treaty (Drell 30).

However, with Gorbachev's rise to power the 1986 meeting with Reagan in Reykjavik reopened discussions on arms limitations and introduced the negotiation of arms reductions for the first time. The Reykjavik meeting led to an agreement – The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty – that banned all intermediate range ballistic missiles from both nations' arsenals (INF Treaty). This led to the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START I) by President George H.W. and Mr. Gorbachev in 1991. START I stipulated a reduction in the number of strategically deployed warheads to a maximum of 6,000 for each country. The treaty also called for unprecedented levels of on-site inspection and verification as the reductions took place. The START I reductions were completed by December 2001 (Drell 31).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program was passed by Congress in order to aid Russia and other former Soviet member states in the destruction of surplus nuclear arms. Through Nunn-Lugar, former Soviet states were given U.S. funding and help in dismantling and destroying nuclear, chemical, and biological weaponry and delivery systems (“Richard G. Lugar”). This program recognized the potential for chaos in these fledgling countries and the possibility of losing control of nuclear

weapons to other nations or organizations. The Nunn-Lugar program led to the elimination of nuclear arsenals in Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

The START II treaty was negotiated by Presidents Bush and Yeltsin in 1993 and was approved in both the Senate and the Duma. It called for larger reductions in strategic nuclear warheads to 3,000–3,500. The Treaty was amended in 1997 because Russia was concerned with the pace of the reductions. The U.S. Senate did not ratify the amendment and other amendments to the ABM Treaty, which the Duma had stipulated as conditions for Russia's adherence to START II. As a result, the treaty never entered into force and since the U.S. withdrew in 2002 from the ABM treaty, START II has been indefinitely postponed. A framework for START III was developed in 1997 by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin; however this was to begin once START II entered into force, which has yet to happen ("U.S.-Soviet").

An area of common interest in U.S.–Russian bilateral relations from 2001–2004 was nuclear arms control and reduction. As the two nations with the greatest stockpiles of nuclear warheads, the U.S. and Russia have long worked on reducing arms and nonproliferation in other nations. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology is viewed by both nations to be contrary to their security interests. Halfway through their first terms as president in May of 2002, Presidents Bush and Putin signed a treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT) in Moscow. The signing of this treaty called for each party to reduce and limit deployed nuclear warheads not to exceed 1,700–2,200 by December 31, 2012. It also concluded that the START Treaty would remain in force until 2009 and that a Bilateral Implementation Commission would meet twice a year to implement the new treaty ("Treaty" 185-186). However, the Bush administration opposed signing a follow-up to START or allowing explicit reductions in non-deployed warhead arsenals.

However, one area that remained a point of contention was National Missile Defense. Russia had been resistant to a U.S. National Missile Defense (NMD) for many reasons. First, they argue that the missile defense runs counter to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. As the United States continued to develop the program, the Russians viewed it as a violation of the treaty. A second reason why Russia opposes American missile defense is the impact such a system would have on Russia's nuclear deterrence. And while Russia still had great potential in the area of weapons technology, it was unfeasible for Russia to develop its own NMD because of the expense that it would entail (Votapek 192). Instead Russia favored the United States working within the bounds of the ABM Treaty to amend it.

Russia had good reasons to oppose NMD beyond a possible effect on deterrence. By using strong rhetoric against the NMD program, President Putin could attempt to gain some tradeoffs whether financially or technologically in return for U.S. development of the program. The United States decided to go ahead with its NMD program, pulling out of the ABM Treaty in January 2002. While very much opposed to the U.S. withdrawing from the ABM Treaty, President Putin did not react with any measures, and the Moscow Treaty was signed later in that year. President Putin tried to negotiate an exchange of Russian consent for NMD with more warhead reductions on the part of the United States. The negotiation was only partially accomplished in the Moscow Treaty which called for reduction of both nations' arsenals. And because Russia was going through a period of rebuilding and transformation, President Putin did not have enough sway to keep the U.S. within the ABM treaty. President Putin's tame response to the US' pulling out of the ABM Treaty can also be explained by the relatively long period of time it would take the U.S. to develop a working NMD that could affect Russian deterrence. The

system was (and is) still very much in its trial stages and may never become fully functional (Votapek 192). Additionally, President Putin's real disagreement with missile defense lies in the scope of potential NATO missile defense systems in Europe as discussed in a later section.

Terrorism – A Common Threat

In the wake of September 11th, U.S.–Russian relations improved as Russia reached out to the U.S. and offered some assistance in fighting global terrorism. While the Russians did not want to help by sending troops to Afghanistan, President Putin did outline a five points program of Russian cooperation in the war on terror. According to the document, Russia would first help in developing active international intelligence sharing with regards to terrorist activity. Second, Russia would open air space to humanitarian aircraft aiding the anti-terrorist operation. Russia would also allow the United States and other nations involved to use former Soviet military bases and air fields in Central Asia. Fourth, President Putin announced that Russia would be ready to aid in international search-and-rescue operations when necessary. Finally, Russia would cooperate with the Afghan government and coordinate deliveries of arms and combat vehicles to aid the fledgling government (Rogov 353).

President Putin lived up to his word when in 2002 Russia allowed the U.S. to establish a military presence in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in order to build bases and facilitate operations in Afghanistan. Russia also stood to benefit from this cooperation. Since President Putin's main goal domestically was economic reconstruction, and he had molded his foreign policy to serve this objective, President Putin hoped that by allowing U.S. military presence in

the region he could eliminate terrorism without having to increase military expenditures. The cooperation on Central Asian bases was a clear example of the U.S. and Russia working together when common security interests are at stake since in President Bush and President Putin's first terms both desired stability and the elimination of terrorism in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Kupchan 1-2).

During his second term as president (and following the U.S. invasion of Iraq) President Putin became less supportive of U.S. military facilities in Central Asia. In 2005 the Uzbek government closed the air base Karshi-Khanabad (K2) to U.S. forces in response to U.S. criticism of Uzbek human rights policies (Wright). The closing of K2 was only a minor setback to U.S. operations in Afghanistan as the U.S. had assurances from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that their bases would remain open. However, in February of 2009 Kyrgyzstan announced that it would shut down the U.S. air base Manas which had been central to U.S. operations in Afghanistan. The planned eviction of the U.S. from Manas coincided with an over \$2 billion financial aid and credit plan from Russia to the Kyrgyz parliament (Reuters). Kyrgyz authorities denied Russian involvement in their decision to require U.S. forces to leave within six months. The U.S. began negotiations with Uzbekistan to recommence use of K2 (Reuters). Should the U.S. be unable to secure a new deal with Uzbekistan, the Russian's also have military bases in Central Asia that could be utilized. The usage of these bases would certainly not come without preconditions.

President Putin also capitalized on President Bush's new interest in fighting global terrorism to end U.S. criticism of his military actions in Chechnya. The George W. Bush administration had initially agreed with the Clinton administration's position on Chechnya – that

Russia had a right to protect its sovereignty and territory, but the methods used were condemned. However, following the terrorist attacks on September 11th, President Putin's argument that Russia too was dealing with fundamentalism and terrorism in Chechnya was more persuasive (Menon 1). The United States lessened its criticism of Russia as President Putin offered condolences and support.

Finally, following the terrorist attacks the Bush administration redefined the importance of Russia's relationship to U.S. interests. Since Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and therefore has a veto, the U.S. recognized the necessity of having Russian cooperation should the U.S. want to take action with international approval. And as mentioned before, improved relations Russia allowed the U.S. to use former Soviet bases in Central Asia for the military actions in Afghanistan (Rogov 352). By finding a common enemy – terrorism – the U.S. and Russia saw an opportunity to cooperate and assist one another.

The Iraq War

Good relations between the U.S. and Russia following the attacks on September 11th would not last. The Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq in 2003 without UN approval greatly strained U.S.–Russian relations. U.S.–Russian relations over the second Iraq war stood in stark contrast to U.S.–Soviet relations during the first Gulf War. Though the Soviet Union had a longstanding relationship with Iraq, Mr. Gorbachev joined the U.S. in condemning the 1990 Iraqi invasion of its neighbor country, Kuwait, after negotiations with Iraq had failed. The two powers released a joint statement two days after the invasion of Kuwait and then continued to work

together through the UN Security Council to pressure Iraq to withdraw using sanctions and resolutions. The Soviet Union would have preferred to continue negotiations and UN sanctions to force Iraq to withdraw, but in the end the U.S. started an air campaign and brought in a coalition of ground troops. Although Mr. Gorbachev did not favor a military solution, he was careful not to criticize the U.S. and damage the newly strengthened relations (“Frontline”).

President Yeltsin’s administration forcefully opposed U.S. involvement in Iraq. Foreign Minister Primakov’s reasoning was that he was against the unipolarity enjoyed by the U.S. Another, stronger reason was that Iraq had a large debt to Russia that could be repaid if sanctions were lifted, and Russia’s energy companies were interested in obtaining contracts in Iraq. In 1997 the U.S. threatened to attack Iraq after UN inspectors were kicked out, and Russia and France negotiated a deal in which Iraq allowed the UN inspectors to return. However, Saddam Hussein continued to deny inspectors access to certain sites which led to increased conflict with the UN, but since the U.S. was not acting unilaterally Russia lessened its support for Iraq and even abstained from voting on Security Council resolution 1284. Because Russia did not use its veto, the resolution passed calling for Iraq’s compliance with inspectors in exchange for a lift on the sanctions on civilian goods to Iraq. Iraq continued to not comply with the resolution, and sanctions were not lifted. Russia’s stance remained the same until the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Tsygankov 103-104).

Though President had supported the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks on September 11th, he chose to join the opponents of U.S. military intervention in Iraq. As the U.S. began to signal that military intervention in Iraq was its goal in 2003, Russia increased pressure and tried to exert its influence on Iraq to comply with UN requirements

pertaining to WMD searches. President was not convinced by the links the Bush administration had drawn between Hussein and Al Qaeda, nor did he agree that the U.S. should act without UN approval. There were also Russian economic considerations. Despite the chilling of Iraq–Russia relations in the late 90s, Russia’s oil interests in Iraq persisted as Hussein promised Russian companies contracts in return for support. President could also calculate that a war in Iraq reduced Russian chances to collect the debt owed by Iraq. Finally, by not supporting the U.S. intervention in Iraq, President Putin also stood to gain allies in Europe (Tsygankov 141-142).

As a result, Russia strongly opposed any potential UN Security Council resolution that would allow for intervention and infringement of Iraq’s sovereignty. Russia hoped to prevent U.S. intervention in Iraq by stressing that the U.S. must act through the UN. Because the U.S. and Great Britain invaded Iraq without UN approval, relations between the U.S. and Russia began to wane. Russia continued to call for the end of operations in Iraq up until the fall of Baghdad. Unable to persuade the U.S. and Great Britain to withdraw troops, President Putin was left with few cards to play. A failure on the part of the U.S. and Great Britain would not be desirable to Russia because of the instability it would create in the region. U.S.–Russian tension over the invasion of Iraq gradually eased as Russia supported the UN Security Council resolution recognizing the interim Iraqi government (Fyodorov 470-472).

US Influence in Former Soviet States

A few years after being appointed General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, Mr. Gorbachev made it clear to the West that he would allow Eastern European nations to determine

their own political futures. As a result free elections and political transitions took place in several countries, and the Soviet Union's vast expanse of controlled territory began to recede. After the official collapse of the USSR and Yeltsin's rise to power in 1991, U.S. policy under President Clinton supported the expansion of NATO into the newly democratized nations in Eastern Europe. Because of the high level of influence that the U.S. exerts in NATO it is difficult to make a clear distinction between U.S. and NATO policies. Therefore this section will cover NATO enlargement, NATO intervention in Kosovo, and U.S. involvement in the Color Revolutions in some of the former Soviet republics.

In June of 1989 Secretary Baker stated in a speech that normalized relations between the Soviet Union and the U.S. would be dependent upon free elections and self-determination for Eastern Europe and East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) (McEvoy-Levy 53). President Bush visited Poland and Hungary in July of 1989 to assess the situation in Eastern Europe. His reaction to the changes was cautious, and he was careful in Poland to praise both the communist government and the Solidarity movement for the advancements toward a more competitive political system (Hurst 44-45). In hindsight, his reluctance to push for more rapid reforms in Eastern Europe was a good policy decision as these developments occurred without U.S. involvement while still serving our interests. Had President Bush taken a more active role, there could have been Soviet backlash towards these Eastern European nations and the bloodless transition may not have occurred. President Bush's trip to Eastern Europe also allowed him to return to the United States with a favorable outlook claiming to the media 'Perestroika is for real' and that an interim summit with Gorbachev would be held. Also in July of 1989 Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze began discussing Eastern Europe at the Paris

Conference on Cambodia. Shevardnadze assured Baker that the Soviet government would not respond with force to any democratization process taking place in Eastern Europe (Hurst 44-45). True to their word, the Soviet leadership allowed free elections to be held in Poland and Hungary without intervention, and also accepted German reunification and membership into NATO.

NATO expansion was a trying issue in the relations between the U.S. and Russia. Since the organization's former function was collective security against and containment of the USSR, Russia was against its expansion from the beginning. Russia viewed NATO as a relic of the Cold War that no longer served a purpose and therefore saw its continued existence and possible expansion to be a serious foreign policy concern. As a result, Russia tried to maneuver in order to marginalize NATO. Foreign Minister Primakov wanted to make the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) a collective defense organization that would be superior to NATO. Russia also argued that if Eastern European nations join NATO they should be given only a limited membership status – that is political status – and would not allow for U.S. or NATO arms on their soil. When it was clear that NATO would not dissolve, Russia desired a partnership with NATO and a veto on expansion decisions. The end result was the Partnership for Peace (PFP) created in 1994 as a means to calm Russia's fears of NATO. This program was joined by Eastern European nations, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nations, and eventually Russia (Kubicek 554-555). PFP did not, however, stipulate collective defense of member nations nor did it give Russia a veto. It instead invited these states to participate in NATO training exercises and joint military actions in humanitarian and peacekeeping effort (Ripley 210). Russia and NATO also signed a document in 1997 known as the “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between Russia and NATO” which created the

Permanent Joint Council. In this council Russia would be consulted during the decision making processes when the issue was of relevance to Russia, but it did not grant Russia the veto that it desired (Tsygankov 101). Despite the new partnership and Russia's vehement opposition, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland sought membership in 1994 and joined NATO in 1999 becoming the first former Warsaw Pact nations to join the alliance ("NATO").

For historical and strategic reasons, Russia opposed NATO intervention in Serbia during the 1990s. Not only did Russia have longstanding relations with its Slavic counterpart, but it was also fundamentally against military intervention in a sovereign state by NATO (and in particular the US) without a UN Security Council resolution. Despite this opposition Russia did end up supporting the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and signed the 1995 Dayton Accords. However, NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 proved to be a breaking point in NATO–Russia relations. In Russia's opinion, the air strikes over Belgrade showed that NATO was no longer solely a defense oriented military alliance since Serbia had not attacked a member nation. Furthermore, Russia wanted such humanitarian issues to go the Security Council so it could be a party to the decision or exercise its veto power. In response, Primakov cancelled negotiations with the IMF and the US, suspended Russia's participation in the NATO–Russia Council, and ordered NATO representatives to leave Russia. Despite these actions Russia did get involved in the resolution of the conflict by pressuring Serbia to accept the conditions for peace and the autonomy of Kosovo (Tsygankov 105).

As in the 1990s, Russia continued to oppose NATO's expansion and Western influence in former Soviet states. Although Yeltsin had cut off ties with NATO following the military action in Serbia over Kosovo, President Putin desired to work cooperatively with the military

alliance. He hoped that by increasing dialogue and rejoining the NATO–Russia Council in 2002 NATO and Russia would work together on common strategic interests and coordinate common threats were present (Rogov 366). As a result, NATO–Russia relations improved in the early years of President Putin’s first term. In 2003 a plan of cooperation was agreed upon between Russia and NATO that worked towards better exchanges of military technology and information and joint military exercises (Fyodorov 477).

However, without much regard for Russia’s opinion or possible reaction, the second round of NATO enlargement began in 2002. As a result, in 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia were invited to join (“NATO”). Russia was particularly concerned with accession of the Baltic States. The second round was different from the first one in two forms: Russia was particularly concerned with accession of the Baltic States, and the Bush Administration lacked concern for Russia’s potential reaction because Russia was no longer central to American foreign policy. It is also important to note that the main source of animosity in U.S.–Russian relations in the late 1990s was over Kosovo and not related to NATO enlargement. NATO–Russian relations had improved following the September 11th attacks because of a mutual desire to end terrorism (Goldgeier 2). Therefore President Bush and the rest of NATO’s leaders were far less hesitant in going against Russia’s vision for Eastern and Central Europe as they considered and implemented further enlargement.

One issue that Russia is more opposed to than NATO expansion is the possible development of missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. At the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, President Bush obtained NATO endorsement for a missile-defense plan in the Czech Republic. The Bush administration contended that a missile-defense system in Europe

is essential to respond to threats from Iran, but President Putin remained firmly against to the idea and maintained that the system would start a new arms race. (Erlanger “NATO”). President Putin also appointed a prominent nationalist, Dmitry Rogozin, to be Russia’s permanent representative to NATO. Rogozin called NATO’s new move to build missile defense systems “like the worst script for ‘The Terminator’... To take down one Iranian missile, the antimissile system will have to use 10 antimissiles. We may not detect one Iranian missile, but we will detect 10 or 100 antimissiles coming from Poland and the Czech Republic. It means that our machine immediately launches, and the ballistic missiles start turning towards Washington. Here is a brilliant example of a new blockbuster. I would call it ‘TerminATOR.’” (Finn, *Putin Names*). Rogozin’s position is a clear example of Russia’s intense opposition to a missile defense system in Europe.

Another aspect of Russia’s relations with the West was the creation of pro-Western governments in former Soviet states which resulted from Western policies and became a point of contention with Russia. These processes, known as the Color Revolutions, took place in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) and placed the U.S. and Russia on opposing sides of the elections. In both cases, the pro-West candidates won. Long regarded as buffer zones between Russia and the West, the change of governments in Georgia and Ukraine left Russia with greater perceived security threats. The 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia saw the election of Mikheil Saakashvili and the end of Shevardnadze’s presidency. Similar to Yushchenko’s Ukraine, Saakashvili hoped to strengthen ties with the West, particularly with the United States. He also sought Georgia’s accession into NATO. Since his election, Saakashvili has succeeded in building close ties with the U.S. and as a result the U.S. strongly supported Georgia’s admission into NATO (Karatnycky

1). In November 2004 Ukraine's Orange Revolution took place. Many Ukrainians took to the streets to protest the fraudulent election results that claimed that Pro-Russian Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich had defeated the favored pro-U.S. opposition leader Victor Yushchenko. As a result, Ukraine's high court called for new elections, and Yushchenko won the presidency the following month (Karatnycky 1). Throughout the campaign, the western-backed Yushchenko faced many obstacles. Yanukovich was portrayed favorably by the government run national television while Yushchenko was constantly getting negative press. He was also being followed by a member of the government's security force. Most notably, Yushchenko suspiciously suffered from dioxin poisoning that weakened and scarred his body. During the campaign, President Putin not only promoted Yanukovich by giving interviews and holding meetings, but he also allowed Russia to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to help Yanukovich win. The defeat of the Kremlin-backed candidate was a blow to Russia's influence in the region. The U.S. and EU supported Yushchenko's bid for the presidency by providing election monitors through the OSCE. Yushchenko's main goal was to firm up the market economy and democracy in Ukraine in the hopes of integration with the EU (Karatnycky 1-5).

Russia's Relations with Iran, North Korea, China

After taking office in 2000, President Putin strived to develop better relations with many nations, some of which were not allied with the West. In doing so, he insured that Russia's presence would be necessary at important negotiations between the West and these states. This also allowed President Putin to counterbalance shortcomings in Russia's relations with

developed nations with cooperation from countries not in alliance with the West. Russia could enjoy better trade relations with these states than the West and also reduce the threat these states could pose to Russia's security (Votapek 191). Of Putin's foreign policy, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said, "since he conducts foreign policy by his perception of the national interest, he is not beyond exploiting the differences within the West to enhance Russia's position" (Ratnesar). In this spirit, President Putin strengthened ties with Iran, North Korea, and China.

In 2002 President Putin slightly changed Russian foreign policy toward Iraq and Iran to work more cooperatively with the United States due to the improvement in U.S.–Russian relations. Instead of blocking UN sanctions on Iraq as it had the year before, Russia stressed the obligation Iraq had to prove it had no weapons of mass destruction. He also responded to President Bush's "axis of evil" speech by cancelling the Iranian foreign minister's scheduled visit to Moscow. However, Russian domestic interests did not allow for a substantial change in foreign policy towards these nations since Russian companies had invested heavily in those countries and were given many perks in exchange for Russian support (Sestanovich 1-2). President Putin's emphasis on developing a multipolar world can be seen in Russia's maintenance of relations with these nations.

Russia has a long history of arms sales to Iran having been Iran's main supplier since 1990. While Russia's largest markets for arms sales are China and India, its status as Iran's main supplier has meant decent relations and consistent sales. In return, Iran often secures Russia's opposition to UN sanctions on Iran. Though Russia voluntarily agreed to suspend advanced weapons sales to Iran from 1995–2000 it has become more difficult in recent years to gain

Russia's cooperation in implementing sanctions on Iran (Beehner 1-2). Russia has also maintained that Iran's nuclear program is safe and being developed for the purpose of energy development. Similarly to the US, Russia views proliferation of nuclear weapons as detrimental to its security. But as long as Iran continues to maintain that it is enriching uranium for the purposes of nuclear energy, Russia will most likely continue to oppose sanctions. Russia's potential to veto leaves the UN Security Council little room to maneuver and convince Iran to cease its uranium enrichment program (Beehner "Russia-Iran").

Russia's relations with North Korea present a different story from that of Iran. North Korea boldly pulled out of the nonproliferation treaty and openly states that it is developing a nuclear weapons program. Because Russia is not interested in the proliferation of nuclear weapons in East Asia, it is more likely to take a firm stance on North Korea than it would on Iran as was seen when President Putin condemned North Korea's test of its first nuclear weapon (Beehner "Russia, Iran"). Since Russia sees the proliferation of nuclear weapons to be a threat to its security, and because the U.S. refused to hold bilateral talks with North Korea, Russia was able to get a seat at the table for the Six-Party Talks. The Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear program began in 2003 and include the US, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, China, and Japan. Russia's position at the table for these talks allows it to exert influence and support China in calling for non-sanction remedies to end North Korea's program (Zissis 1-2).

Russia's collaboration with China in the Six-Party Talks extends to the energy sector as well. At a meeting between the Russian and Chinese leaders in 2006, a multitude of deals were signed relating to energy, telecommunications, security, and transportation. The deals have led to the strongest Sino-Russian relations since Stalin and Mao's time. China's robust economy has

led to great increased energy needs. New energy deals between the two countries include oil, gas, coal, electricity, and nuclear transfers. The formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has allowed for cooperative work on Central Asia security issues and military exercises. Both nations have even converged a bit on foreign policy issues relating to their common desire to counterbalance U.S. hegemony (Pan 1-3). China has also been one of the largest purchasers of Russian arms over the past eight years accounting for a 40 percent share of Russian arms sales at its peak. However, Russia has had to find new markets for its arms as China has steadily reduced its purchases and begun to build its own weapons based on Russian technology (Isachenkov).

The August War

In early August Georgian troops entered armed conflict with forces in the region known as South Ossetia. Responding to this action, Russia invaded Georgia in the name of peacekeeping and the protection of Russian citizens within South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another region of conflict within Georgia (“A Scripted War”). Nicolas Sarkozy, the President of France and the European Union, was the one to facilitate negotiations with Russia in order to ease the conflict and bring about a ceasefire. In this final section of the thesis I will briefly discuss the history of the relations between Russia and Georgia and underlying tensions. Then, I will describe the conflict, U.S. and international responses, and the negotiated cease-fire. Finally, I will look at the implications of Russia’s reemergence as an active military force in the region.

Georgia was essentially under Russian/Soviet rule between 1801 and 1991. The nation experienced a brief independence between 1918 and 1921 before it became a republic of the

Soviet Union. However, Georgia was technically an autonomous state under Soviet rule and kept a government, though the Soviet leadership decided on who would lead the republic. Georgia declared its independence from the USSR in April of 1991 (“Georgia” State Dept. 1). Ethnic and civil strife between 1991 and 1995 was pervasive in Georgia. Ceasefire agreements in separatist regions were maintained by Russian peacekeeping troops in Abkhazia and UN peacekeepers in South Ossetia.

Beginning with President Shevardnadze, the nation moved towards a more sound market economy and structured democracy (“Georgia” State Dept. 2). Growing dissatisfied with the economy and corruption, the Georgian people elected a pro-Western government in the 2003 Rose Revolution. Since then, the government has fought corruption and reformed the economy. There has also been a strong desire to join NATO. Under President Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia has formed a strong bond with the United States in particular. Although Georgia had largely stabilized after 1995, there were unresolved separatist movements in multiple regions. Abkhazia was declared autonomous and had de facto independence and in 2005 Saakashvili proposed autonomy for South Ossetia.

When we look at the civil unrest in Georgia it is crucial to note the assertive nationalist policies implemented by the first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia. In his short reign he advocated creating a “Georgia for the Georgians” by restricting the rights of many Georgian minorities. This led minorities to feel a stronger bond with the USSR and later Russia because the superpower could protect their rights. The Abkhazians and South Ossetians in particular were concerned with protecting their cultural rights and self-rule. As a result, they were denounced as traitors and there were violent clashes between ethnic Georgians and these groups. The rights of

minorities began to be restricted in 1989 when Georgian was made the sole official language. Those in power also banned regional parties from participation in general elections. In 1990 the government revoked the autonomous status of South Ossetia. All of these policies led to an ineffective government, corruption, and anti-Russian sentiments. Gamsakhurdia's era pushed modern Abkhazians and Ossetians to overwhelmingly desire secession. Then in 1992 there was a coup d'état that overthrew Gamsakhurdia and saw the leadership of former Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Also during the coup, there was an assault on Abkhazia. This then backfired because the Russians supplied the Abkhazians with weapons and they in turn forced 200,000 ethnic Georgians out of the region. The more liberal policies of Shevardnadze were too late as Abkhazia and South Ossetia had already achieved de facto independence (English 2).

The Georgian government's policies are not the only problem underlying this conflict. Russia certainly did a lot to encourage the separatist movements in Georgia. These policies can be traced to the breakup of the Soviet Union when thousands of ethnic Russians were left in former republics overnight. As argued above, President Putin has been quoted as saying the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical disaster of the century (Friedman 3). Fearful that its former republics would join NATO, Russia has tried to reassert influence in the region through the Commonwealth of Independent States, energy and economic ties, and a strong presence of peacekeeping troops. Russia fundamentally opposes Western encirclement and sees the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) as attempts on the West's part to check Russian influence. NATO has also made plans to install missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Significantly, Georgia, Moldova, and the Ukraine had all made bids for NATO membership this past year and were denied. Russia was especially influential in swaying key NATO votes from allowing Georgia's admittance.

Presidents Putin and Medvedev have also been actively encouraging the separatist movements in Georgia. Russia have been issuing Russian passports to Abkhazians and South Ossetians for the past eight years. Thus there were Russian "citizens" in these regions giving Russia a vested interest to protect them (Chivers 2). Following Georgia's recognition of Kosovo's independence this year, Russia established official legal ties with the governments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russian encouragement of the separatist movements in Georgia helped to destabilize the region further. Finally, the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline that carries oil and natural gas to Western Europe runs through Georgia and partially through these separatist regions. It is important to note that Russia does not have control over this pipeline and therefore desires greater influence in Georgia for economic reasons as well as political and security reasons (Gearan 1).

Armed conflict in Georgia began in early August 2008 when Georgia exchanged fire with South Ossetian troops. A South Ossetian attack on a Georgian military truck prompted Georgia to fire on the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali. The two sides were due to have negotiations through a Russian diplomat on August 7th; however this did not occur. Instead on August 7th Georgia began to shell and invade Tskhinvali. The Russian army responded by entering Georgia with ground and air troops in order to protect the Russian citizens in the conflict regions. Western powers agree that Saakashvili's actions in South Ossetia were rash and a catastrophic

mistake since Russia finally had a rationalization to bring troops into Georgia (“A Scripted War” 3). Georgia gave Russia the grounds to invade, and the Russian military was more than prepared.

The Russian invasion was viewed as disproportionate by the international community because Russia not only occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but also blockaded the port of Poti, sank Georgian vessels, destroyed infrastructure and blockaded the main east-west highway, and bombed and partially occupied Georgian towns like Gori (“A Scripted War” 4). Within two days Russia had defeated most of the Georgian army forcing them to retreat. By August 11th Russian troops were expanding into Georgia proper and moved within forty miles of the Georgian capital, Tbilisi (Friedman 2). Looking at the chart below shows just how disproportionate the Russian invasion was. Georgia is largely outnumbered in each category clearly showing that Russia could have used much less force to obtain its stated objective of securing Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Cohen 1).

In any conflict there are always two different versions of what occurred. Russia says that Saakashvili broke a ceasefire in order to launch an offensive on the South Ossetian capital and ethnically cleanse villages there. The Georgians hold that the South Ossetians broke the ceasefire, and they acted in defense of national unity (“A Scripted War” 3). Georgia also claims that Russian troops were in position to invade and had troops in the Roki tunnel ready to engage Georgian troops. Russians claim to have been surprised by Georgia’s actions in South Ossetia and were responding in order to protect their citizens (Chivers 2).

What mattered to the international community was the importance of upholding the territorial integrity of Georgia proper. On September 2nd the leaders of the European Union agreed to condemn Russia’s actions and postpone talks on a new partnership agreement between

the EU and Russia until Russian troops withdrew from Georgia proper to pre-conflict positions (“Europe Stands” 1). International response was viewed as weak as there were no economic sanctions implemented. Many EU nations rely heavily on Russian gas and oil, and this created dissension on how best to handle the conflict. As the president of France and the EU, Nicolas Sarkozy represented the international community in Moscow to discuss a ceasefire agreement with Russia. President Medvedev signed the agreement on August 12th. The plan was agreed to by both Georgia and Russia and was comprised of six points: agreement not to use force, an end to all military operations, allows access for humanitarian aid in conflict regions, requires Georgia’s armed forces to return to their permanent bases, requires Russia’s armed forces to withdraw to pre-conflict positions, and calls for international negotiations regarding the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and how best to ensure security in the region (“Nicolas Sarkozy” 1). Although this plan was signed on August 12th, Sarkozy had to return to Moscow on September 8th in order to reassert the importance of following the ceasefire since Russia was still in Georgia proper. This new deal called for Russia to be out of the port of Poti within seven days and out of Georgia proper by October 1st (“A Deal, for Now” 1). Russia complied, but only after sharp threats from the United States the following day (Barry 1).

NATO also played a role in this conflict and conflict resolution. Back in April, NATO agreed to deny a membership action plan to Georgia though stating it would be offered one in the future. The U.S. and some other NATO members fervently support Georgia’s entrance, however some do not. This largely stems from the fear by some NATO members that the collective defense principle of the organization will lead to entanglements in the Caucasus if Georgia is admitted. In response to the conflict, NATO sent 26 ambassadors to Georgia in order to assess

damage and see if foreign ministers from NATO will reconsider offering the membership action plan to Georgia in December of 2008 (Dempsey 1). It is unclear yet whether the conflict with Russia will speed Georgia's admittance into NATO or slow it.

The United States' reaction to the conflict was initially to back the international community through NATO and encourage Sarkozy's negotiations. The U.S. called for international pressure in order to get Russia to back down. However, when Russia failed to comply with the ceasefire agreement President Bush issued a warning and sent Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to assess the situation. Joint military exercises with Russia were cancelled as well (Barry 1). On September 4th the U.S. announced that \$1 billion in aid would be given to Georgia demonstrating a U.S. commitment to Georgia (Myers 1).

In the end Russia did withdraw its troops from Georgia proper and the ceasefire was upheld. However, conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia will not end with a ceasefire. President Medvedev signed treaties with the governments in these two separatist regions guaranteeing them protection from future attacks. The treaties also allow Russia to build military bases within the regions and station additional troops. If implemented, these steps would violate the ceasefire. Russia has also formally recognized the independence of these territories (Barry 1). What has been learned through this conflict is that Russia can reassert itself militarily within its sphere of influence without strong repercussions. It is clear that this new power results from the energy ties that the EU has with Russia, and U.S. concern that it needs Russian cooperation and influence when dealing with Iran and North Korea. It remains to be seen whether Russia will build bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but the international community will only go so far in pressuring Russia. The separatist regions will not be absorbed

by Georgia anytime soon, and as long as the sovereignty of Georgia proper is respected by the Russian army, it is unlikely that negotiations about the status of these territories will occur in the near future.

Policy Recommendations for the Obama Administration

Within the first few months of the Obama administration, Russia has displayed mixed signals. Shortly after Barack Obama won the election in November 2008, President Medvedev delivered a speech asserting that Russia would place short-range Iskander missiles near its border with Poland and Lithuania to counter the proposed NATO missile defense systems (Mankoff). President Medvedev later took a less threatening position, and the plan was abandoned. However, the Kyrgyz government announced in February that it would close the U.S. base, Manas, coinciding with its acceptance of Russia aid (Barry “News Analysis”). However, President Medvedev stated days later that he would continue to support U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan and would offer Russian air space in place of the Kyrgyz route (Mankoff).

Despite these mixed signals from Russia, there is a definite desire on both sides for more discussion, and an observable shift in U.S. rhetoric toward Russia. The clearest example of this was Vice President Biden’s remarks at the 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy. His remarks outlined U.S. and world security issues, and he discussed U.S.–Russian relations at the end in optimistic terms. On the topic of NATO missile defense, the Vice President stated that, “we will continue to develop missile defense to counter the growing Iranian capability, provided

the technology is proven and it is cost-effective. We'll do so in consultation with you, our NATO allies, and with Russia" (Biden 45th Munich Conference). Vice President Biden continued by saying that a gain made by NATO is not a loss for Russia and that "it's time to press the reset button and to revisit the many areas where we can and should be working together with Russia" (Biden 45th Munich Conference). This was followed by a discussion of what Russia and NATO can agree upon such as defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, securing loose nuclear weapons and preventing their spread, and renewing the START Treaty and further reducing arms. Vice President Biden also mentioned that the U.S. and Russia will not agree on issues such as the independence of separatist regions in Georgia, though he followed this by saying that "the United States and Russia can disagree and still work together where our interests coincide. And they coincide in many places" (Biden 45th Munich Conference). Also of importance was a private letter sent to President Medvedev from President Obama in February 2009 suggesting that the U.S. could slow or halt the deployment of a missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland if Russia would join the U.S. in stopping Iran's development of long-range weapons (Baker). The two presidents will meet for the first time in early April, but Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov have already had their first meeting. They discussed plans to renegotiate the START Treaty, U.S. flexibility on missile defense, and the possibility of increased support from Russia in dealing with Iran (Landler).

The Obama administration has many opportunities to mend U.S.–Russian relations over the next four years. It will be critical that the first meeting between President Obama and President Medvedev runs smoothly and that the two leaders develop a good rapport. Continued

meetings between Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Lavrov will also be important for establishing better relations and negotiations with Russia. It is necessary to outline the issues of common interest between the two nations, and then work collectively. These issues include continued arms reduction talks, work on nonproliferation, and combating terrorism. Renewed bilateral negotiations on arms control and reduction through the START framework would be a constructive way to better relations. The U.S. must also attempt to work more collaboratively with Russia in Central Asia now that the base in Kyrgyzstan is closing. The stability of the region is critical to Russian security, and if approached correctly, Russia will agree it is in its interest to help the U.S. in its attempt to stabilize Afghanistan. Already the President Medvedev has offered Russian airspace to the U.S. in the possible closing of the base in Kyrgyzstan. Dependence on Russia for Afghanistan operations could help align U.S. and Russian interests in the region; however, dependence on Russia for Afghan operations also gives Russia the ability to obtain more concessions in other areas of interest (Mankoff).

Furthermore, the U.S. can continue to use the Eastern European missile defense system as a tool for negotiation. Russia has opposed possible deployment of missile defense systems in Eastern Europe since the first mention of the plan. The Obama administration has correctly identified missile defense as a possible concession in order to make gains in other areas of the bilateral relationship. The U.S. and NATO can also choose to relieve regional tension by better integrating Russia into the discussions on missile defense systems. In terms of obtaining Russian help in stabilizing Central Asia, the U.S. could articulate exit timetables from Central Asia and from Iraq to further mollify Russia. As for dealing the authoritarian nature of Russia's government, the U.S. should consider its relations with Russia as similar to those with China;

encouraging democracy and free elections is acceptable, but refusing to work with a powerful authoritarian government will not serve U.S. interests. Another effective way for the U.S. to improve relations with Russia will be to work through international organizations whenever possible. Much of Russia's resentment has spawned from a lack of input in international affairs. With a renewed focus on diplomacy, collaboration on common interests, and legitimizing international organizations, the U.S. and Russia will improve relations.

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