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New Horizons  
**Russia's Foreign Policy:  
Lost in Time**

By Major Charles Cox

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Charles B. Cox

9 May 2003

Abstract

Russia's Foreign Policy:  
Lost in Time

A nation's foreign policy is one of the key tools by which a state protects its national interests. Of particular importance is developing a policy with realistic goals and effective strategies to reach those goals.

Russians have yet to come to terms with the fact that they are no longer a superpower with global influence and responsibilities. The Russian economy is weak, their military is in an overall poor state of readiness, and the Russian population is anything but mobilized to support efforts to restore Russia to its 'historic place as a Great Power.' Yet, despite their diminished capabilities, Russia's approach to foreign policy remains relatively unchanged from their days as a superpower. Russia continues to use the foreign policy tactics, techniques and strategy of its Soviet predecessor, even though those methods are clearly obsolete.

This paper discusses the current and future implications of Russia's foreign policy, and the need to revise their methods of formulating that policy.

9 May 2003

Russia's Foreign Policy:  
Lost in Time

A nation's foreign policy is one of the key tools by which a state protects its national interests, by influencing the behavior of other nations, especially those with which it shares a border. Depending upon the state's resources or capabilities, its foreign policy can either be active or passive, confrontational or cooperative. A nation's capabilities take into account its geostrategic location, the strength of its economy, military and the degree to which its citizens are mobilized for or against an issue.

Russians, especially their political elite, have yet to come to terms with the fact that they are no longer a superpower with global influence and responsibilities. The Russian economy is still weak, due to lack of sustained reforms. Their military, which suffered a humiliating defeat during the first Chechen conflict and is still struggling to resolve the conflict there, is in an overall poor state of readiness, and the Russian population is anything but mobilized to support efforts to restore Russia to its 'historic place as a Great Power.' In addition, Russia borders some of the most volatile regions in the world; Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. Yet, despite their diminished capabilities, Russia's approach to foreign policy remains relatively unchanged from their days as a superpower. Russia continues to use the foreign policy tactics, techniques and strategy of its Soviet predecessor, only now they are trying to create a multi-polar world. This should not come as a surprise to anyone considering the fact that Russia inherited many

of the institutions of the former Soviet Union and is having difficulties with these legacies which include, but are not limited to: a very powerful and influential Military Industrial Complex, which includes not only the Ministry of Defense forces but also the heavily armed Internal Security Forces (MVD) and the Border Guards; a Ministry of Foreign Affairs made up of, like the military, former communist officials; and the huge bureaucracy required to operate the centrally planned and executed economy of the Soviet Union. In addition, Russia is having difficulty coming to terms with the increased role that the United States is playing in world affairs, while its own role continues to diminish and may be turning to a more confrontational foreign policy to cover up domestic weaknesses and retain its hegemony over the near abroad.

This paper examines Russia's foreign policy, its development, challenges and future direction. While focusing on Russia's challenges in what they term the "far abroad" (those nations which touched upon the former Soviet Union) and activities in the "near abroad" (the former republics of the Soviet Union), we will also discuss the challenges presented by NATO, and Russian attempts to create a multi-polar world. The tremendous influence over foreign policy that continues to be wielded by the military will also be addressed. With the multitude of countries struggling for control in the region such as: China, the United States, Iran, Turkey and Western Europe, Zbigniew Brzezinski is correct when he writes that Eurasia is the "chessboard" of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with Russia right in the middle.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard, "American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives,"* (Washington, D.C.: Basic Books, 1997) p. 31.

## **Background:**

In 1991, as Russia initially emerged from the break up of the Soviet Union, it embraced the West and Western ideals such as liberal democracy and free market reforms. There was also much talk of cooperation and reconciliation, together with partnership between former Cold War antagonists, to solve threats to international peace and stability. At the same time, Russia itself appeared to be on the path to stability and economic recovery. Then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kosyrev, stated that Russia's primary goal was "to become a full member of the international community."<sup>2</sup> Kosyrev, being a dedicated reformer, as well as a career diplomat understood that democracies do not attack democracies. Logically, the best course of action for a country transitioning from authoritarianism to a form of democracy would be to align itself closely with other established democracies and their security arrangements. "If the purpose of Russian foreign policy was the creation of the conditions in which the new nation could prosper, Kosyrev reasoned, it would be necessary for Russia to gain membership in the club of developed democratic states and their economic institutions...."<sup>3</sup> Russia then dropped the expansionist, confrontational policies of the former Soviet Union. In its place Russia's stated foreign policy objective, as discussed by Vladimir Zaharescu and Stefani Hoffman in their article, The Empire Doesn't Strike Back: A Rejoinder, is the preservation of national territorial integrity, recognizing that

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<sup>2</sup> Alvin Rubinstein, "The Transformation of Russian Foreign Policy," *The International Dimension of Post-Communist Transitions in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Karen Dawisha, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, 2d edition, (Armonk, New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2002) p. 125.

Russia does not face an outside threat.<sup>4</sup> The signals then coming from Moscow were clearly making a positive impression in the United States, prompting William Odom, a noted expert on Soviet and Russian affairs to write, “in Russia we have witnessed an unprecedented development: Boris Yeltsin has been remarkably persistent in breaking up the old Soviet empire and renouncing Russia’s traditional imperialism... Western democracies, particularly the United States, should move swiftly to support him.”<sup>5</sup>

The United States and West European nations did attempt to support President Yeltsin and his group of reformers. Unfortunately, however, looking back it seems if they were doomed to fail from the start. It was a case of Russian expectations, set too high, that could not be met in the short term. By 1993, “Russia’s relative openness had made the Russian people quite aware of the truly enormous gap separating their condition from that of their West European neighbors.”<sup>6</sup> To make matters worse, at the end of 1993, President Yeltsin used the military to solve his dispute with the Russian Parliament concerning which branch of government really had the power. This not only caused many Western nations to wonder just what kind of ‘democrat’ Mr. Yeltsin really was, but also encouraged world leaders to take a hands-off, wait and see approach to dealing with Russia.

For Russia, Mr. Yeltsin and the reformers in his administration, the situation went from bad to worse. In 1994, Mr. Yeltsin tried to use the military to crush the Chechens and restore Russian control to the break away republic. The operation was a

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<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Zaharescu and Stefani Hoffman, “The Empire Doesn’t Strike Back: A Rejoinder, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 29, no. 3 (September, 1998) p. 369.

<sup>5</sup> William E. Odom, *America’s Military Revolution: Strategy and Structure after the Cold War*, (Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1993) pp. 35-36.

<sup>6</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Geostategic Triad: Living with China, Europe and Russia*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2001) p. 57.

complete debacle, and it was not until 1996 that a lasting cease-fire was finally negotiated. Next, NATO took action in Yugoslavia to put an end to the atrocities taking place there, and Russia demonstrated that it was powerless to stop them. After this, it did not take Russian policymakers very long to return to their old ways.

“After a relatively short period of confusion and indecision, Russia adopted a more assertive foreign policy which was based upon its aspirations to play a major role in Europe and Asia.”<sup>7</sup> Over the last few years, therefore, the rhetoric of cooperation has given way in Moscow to threats of confrontation and competition. Evidence of this confronts us practically on a daily basis. For instance, there are provisions in the 1997 and again in the new Russian Military Doctrine wherein “Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons even against non-nuclear states if they form an alliance with countries that have nuclear weapons,”<sup>8</sup> These provisions and statements are clearly threatening to Russia’s neighbors, especially those to the west, like the Baltic States and Slovakia who intend to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004.

More recently, in an effort to maintain Great Power status, Russia used its position on the United Nations Security Council to block U.S. proposals for United Nations (UN) backing of the invasion of Iraq. Whereas in the past, Russia may have considered deploying troops in an effort to prevent the United States from taking action against one of its clients, today President Putin must rely on diplomacy and public opinion. While journalists may not have been very impressed with the recent ‘Shock and Awe’ campaign against Saddam Hussein’s regime, the Russians certainly were.

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<sup>7</sup> John Roper and Peter van Ham, “Redefining Russia’s role in Europe,” *Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda*, ed. Vladimir Baranosvky, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 505.

<sup>8</sup> Margarita Balmaceda, “Ukraine, Russia, and European Security: Thinking Beyond NATO Expansion,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 45, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 1998) p. 23.



Russia appears to feel they have been pushed aside by an ever more powerful and globally assertive United States, which, since September 11, 2001, has begun to challenge Russia in its historical sphere of influence (Eurasia), as never before, including U.S. military deployments to both Uzbekistan and Georgia.

Russian policy over the next decade will likely continue to become more competitive and less cooperative, especially in its dealings with the United States. The next few years will show us that “Russia’s supreme objective will be to prevent its marginalization in world politics and to reverse the decline of its influence.”<sup>9</sup> For if, as Zbigniew Brzezinski asserts, Eurasian dominance becomes the object of the struggle for global primacy, Russian policy will be to maintain its dominance over regional energy resources while at the same time making the area inhospitable for competitors.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, initial research pointed to this change in Russia’s stance as being purely reactive in nature to the eastward expansion of the NATO. We will see some evidence of this as we look at the Russian responses to NATO’s expansion; together with their arguments that the West is making decisions and taking actions that affect Russia (i.e., Kosovo, the bombing of Iraq in 1998, and most recently, Operation Iraqi Freedom) without consulting Russia. However, this is but a small part of a larger picture. For there was a time when Russia viewed the expansion of the Alliance as a positive development that would help Russia in the long term. Until they realized that the Allies had no intention of including Russia in the expansion.

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<sup>9</sup> Victor Israelyn, “Russia at the Crossroads: Don’t Tease a Wounded Bear,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 1 (winter 1998) p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard, “American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives,”* (Washington, D.C.: Basic Books, 1997) p. 31.

### **Institutional Legacies:**

The first issue concerns the making and implementation of foreign policy decisions. One might think that it is fairly simple, that the Foreign Ministry makes these decisions based upon input from relevant branches of government and the President. In Russia, this is not always the case. Some recent events point out that the Russian military establishment, through the Defense Ministry, actually makes and executes much of the foreign policy, particularly where it concerns the near abroad. This is part of the Soviet legacy.

The following are examples of the Russian military establishment making and/or influencing foreign policy to achieve their own objectives. In July of 1992, prior to Yeltsin's trip to Japan, the Russian General Staff feared that Yeltsin was going to negotiate the return of some of the Kurile Islands to Japan. To prevent this, the General Staff circulated a document, which referred to the Islands as being vital for Russia's national security. When this became public, Yeltsin was forced to delay his trip.<sup>11</sup> A similar trip in 1993 to Ukraine was cancelled due to the public voicing of discontent by the Russian military over territorial concessions in the Crimea.<sup>12</sup> Many of these incidents involved then Russian Defense Minister, General Pavel Grachev. In an effort to improve relations with China and work out weapons sales, Grachev traveled to Beijing to meet

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<sup>11</sup> Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval* p. 237.

<sup>12</sup> Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval* p. 237.

high-level officials.<sup>13</sup> General Grachev even began referring to himself as the “mouthpiece and interpreter of the Kremlin’s international priorities.”<sup>14</sup>

Another example of Russian military influence over policymaking involved Grachev, when he traveled to Ukraine in 1995 to sign bilateral agreements with his counterpart in the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, without consulting the Russian Foreign Ministry.<sup>15</sup> A third example of the military’s power over policy making came during negotiations for Russia’s participation in the peacekeeping force in Bosnia. The Russian Foreign Ministry stood aside as General Grachev personally conducted negotiations with NATO.<sup>16</sup> These are just a few examples of the shift in authority of key foreign policy decision-making.

In his article, Frank Umbach notes other ominous signs concerning the growing influence of the Russian military in foreign policy, by noting that in 1994 the General Staff attempted to consolidate all of the nations armed forces under its direct control.<sup>17</sup> The significance of this is that it would appear that the Russian military is striving to become the most powerful institution in Russia. If eventually successful in consolidating the armed forces, the General Staff would have the power to decide who will govern Russia. Umbach provides some insight into the reasons for the undue power of the Russian military establishment. He points out that under the Soviet system the military had always been political and played a significant role in foreign policy development due

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<sup>13</sup> Frank Umbach, “The Role and Influence of the Military Establishment in Russia’s Foreign and Security Policies in the Yeltsin Era,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3. (September 1996) p. 468.

<sup>14</sup> Frank Umbach, “The Role and Influence of the Military Establishment in Russia’s Foreign and Security Policies in the Yeltsin Era,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3. (September 1996) p. 468.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Umbach, “The Role and Influence of the Military Establishment in Russia’s Foreign and Security Policies in the Yeltsin Era,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3. (September 1996) p. 468.

<sup>16</sup> Frank Umbach, p. 468.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Umbach, p. 469.

to the fact that there was not a civilian agency with the background and expertise to offer alternatives.<sup>18</sup> Even if the military establishment played a significant role in foreign policy during the Soviet period, this does not justify the current trend.

In addition to competition from the military, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also has to contend with the Russian Security Council. The Security Council, created by President Yeltsin, has attempted to take control of “near abroad” policy making away from the Foreign Ministry, and was reportedly behind an attempt to have Yeltsin remove then Foreign Minister Kosyrev.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, we can see that Ministerial interests take priority over national interests.

### **Russia and the Far Abroad:**

Russia’s strategy with regard to the West is contradictory. On the one hand they have become dependent upon western institutions to provide financial assistance and are, therefore, seeking to improve their relationship with the West. On the other hand after it became obvious that NATO was going to expand, to the exclusion of Russia, and that Russia’s former subject nations in Central and Eastern Europe were falling over themselves to be first in line to join the Alliance, the Russians responded with anger. Further, they made threats and used the expansion as justification to: improve relations with China and India; forge new relationships with “rogue nations” such as Iraq and Iran; and, more significant yet, to sell arms abroad. We should look at these issues from both the Russian and NATO points of view.

In deciding to expand the Alliance eastward, NATO made a clear choice to support the new democracies being formed in Central Europe over Russia’s objections.

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<sup>18</sup> Frank Umbach, p. 471.

<sup>19</sup> Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, p. 203.

While some view NATO's expansion as a new arrangement that will bring security to Europe, thus benefiting Russia as well as Central Europe,<sup>20</sup> others, like Alexei Pushkov, argue that by expanding the Alliance eastward, the West is isolating Russia, upsetting the existing order in Europe and creating "new dividing lines in Europe."<sup>21</sup> Pushkov, who thinks that the United States is isolating Russia, continues his argument against NATO expansion by stating that, so far, the Russian experience in dealing with NATO has not been a pleasant one. He claims that the Bosnian peace accords were made by NATO and given to Russia, without giving Russia a voice in the planning. He further points out that Moscow risks losing its relevance if it continues to accept this treatment and warns that any attempt to include former republics of the Soviet Union in the next round of NATO expansion would lead to a serious crisis.<sup>22</sup>

William Odom counters the forced isolation assertion by pointing out that Russia has more access to Western institutions than its current weak position merits. He argues, for instance, that Russia's seat on the United National Security Council is no longer warranted, and that through the Founding Act, Russia has also been given a seat at NATO headquarters in Belgium which allows them to observe NATO operations and planning on a daily basis. Russia has even been invited to join with the G7, now commonly referred to as the G8, though one could argue that China or Brazil should have been invited based upon their economic performance. Additionally, the world's financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and European

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<sup>20</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "NATO: The Dilemmas of Expansion." *The National Interest*, no. 53 (Fall 1998): p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Alexei K. Pushkov, "Don't Isolate Russia," *The National Interest*, no. 47 (spring 1998): p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> Alexei K. Pushkov, "Don't Isolate Russia," *The National Interest*, no. 47 (spring 1998): p. 61.

\* According to the article, Alexei Pushkov is a member of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policies and a former speechwriter for Mr. Gorbachev.

Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), have also been open to Russia for some time.<sup>23</sup>

Pushkov responded for the Russians by acknowledging the above-mentioned concessions, and adding that Russia also received concessions through the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE)<sup>24</sup> as well, but that perhaps those are not enough. Pushkov points out that Russia also wants NATO to rule out the forward deployment of forces, conventional and nuclear, in the new states of the Alliance.<sup>25</sup> He further points out that Russia wants a real vote at NATO headquarters and other compensation, or else it might become a “loose cannon” pursuing policies that are potentially against American interests.<sup>26</sup>

Some Russian foreign policy experts think that a new Sino-Russian relationship will serve to counter America’s influence in Eurasia and create the multi-polar balance of power that they are looking for. Bruce Russett and Allan Stam argue that by expanding NATO, the West is forcing Russia to search for new alliances. They predict that Russia may emerge with China as a strategic partner.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the improvement of relations with China has been a Russian foreign policy objective for many years. Gorbachev traveled to Beijing more than once in the 1980’s, long before the break-up of the Soviet

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<sup>23</sup> William Odom, “Russia’s several seats at the table,” *International Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 4 (Oct. 1998) p. 815.

<sup>24</sup> Alexei K. Pushkov, “Don’t Isolate Russia,” *The National Interest*, no. 47 (spring 1998): p. 59.

<sup>25</sup> Alexei K. Pushkov, “Don’t Isolate Russia,” *The National Interest*, no. 47 (spring 1998): p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Alexei K. Pushkov, “Don’t Isolate Russia,” *The National Interest*, no. 47 (spring 1998): p. 62

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Russett and Allan Stam, “Courting Disaster: An Expanded NATO vs. Russia and China,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 113, no. 3 (fall 1998): p. 362.

Union and talk of NATO expansion.<sup>28</sup> If Russia is not being “forced” to look to China for partnership, then what is behind this relationship? The answer is that Russia needs hard currency, and China wants to improve the capabilities of its own military. China is taking advantage of Russia’s weakened position to purchase high quality aircraft, tanks, ships, and even submarines from Russia.<sup>29</sup>

This policy may backfire on Russia in the future, as Chinese migration continues into sparsely populated regions of Siberia. For, as Ariel Cohen points out, while ethnic Russians are emigrating out of the Russian Far East, “up to 500,000 Chinese laborers are immigrating into the Russian Far East from Northern Chinese provinces.”<sup>30</sup> This, together with the fact that the Russian Far East reportedly accounts for 90 percent of Russia’s energy and mineral resources,<sup>31</sup> points to a future when Russians in the Far East may find themselves in a Chinese natural resource colony. Some analysts estimate that the number of “excess” Chinese workers living on Russia’s borders number up to 130 million people.<sup>32</sup> Even if this number has been exaggerated and there are only 10 million, this represents more of a threat to Russian security and interests than NATO’s eastward expansion.

The last region of the “far abroad” is the South. Turkey, Iran and India are the major nations and the focus of Russia’s activities in the region. India, like China, has

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Thornton, “Russo-Chinese Détente and the Emerging New World Order,” *The Roles of the United States, Russia, and China in the New World Order*, ed. Hafeez Malik, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997) p. 231.

<sup>29</sup> Nigel Holloway and Charles Bickers, “China’s Buying Binge in Moscow’s Armory,” *World Press Review*, vol. 44, no. 6 (June 1997) p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Ariel Cohen, “Engaged Realism: US Foreign Policy Toward the New Russia,” *Harvard International Review*, vol. XIX, no. 1 (winter 1996/97): p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Sherman Garnett, “Slow dance: The Evolution of Sino-Russian Relations,” *Harvard International Review*, vol. XIX, no. 1 (winter 1996/97): p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> William Wohlforth, “Redefining Security: Russia’s Intellectual Adjustment to Decline,” vol. XIX, no. 1 (winter 1996/97): p. 59.

been on an arms purchasing binge. Russia's policy with India has been to sell arms. While former Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov, was traveling through the region, he announced Russia's goal of creating a new "strategic triangle" between Russia, China, and India to counter America and NATO.<sup>33</sup> Though this statement was received coolly by both China and India due to the fact that the two countries have had serious border disputes in the past and, as competitors for dominance in that region, neither country seemed keen on the idea of a trilateral alliance. It does, however, show that Russia is getting as much political and diplomatic mileage out of NATO's expansion and the non-UN sanctioned military activities of the U.S. as possible.

Russia's main objectives in the South are to limit Turkey's growing influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, ensuring that regional energy supplies are transported using existing Russian pipelines, and preventing conflicts from spilling over into its territory. This has led to an increase in activity between Russia and Iran. Russia views Iran as key to stabilizing Islamic fundamentalists, as a rival of Turkey and as another ally against the United States through Iran's position as a Persian Gulf state. Russia has also been active in agitating the relationship between Greece and Turkey.

### **Russia and the "Near Abroad"**

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was formed. It included all of the former republics except the three Baltic nations.<sup>34</sup> One of Russia's key foreign policy objectives is the CIS and integrating its members into something that resembles the former Soviet Union. Russia at first did not have a strategy for this and some feel that recently Russia has taken a more

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<sup>33</sup> Unattributed, "Primakov Hails Russian-Indian Relations," RFE/RL Newline vol. 2, no. 244, Part I, 21 December 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, p. 88.



opportunistic and coercive stance with regards to CIS members.<sup>35</sup> This is especially true for those CIS members trying to limit Russia's influence or leave the CIS altogether, like Ukraine. In response to Ukraine's pro-Western leanings, Russia imposed heavy taxes on Ukrainian imports and has stirred up internal dissent over the disposition of the Black Sea Fleet.<sup>36</sup> To further highlight their displeasure with Ukraine's policies towards the West, one day after Ukraine's special partnership talks with NATO, a senior Russian official pointed out that within the guidelines of Russia's new Military Doctrine, "Russia could indeed carry out a pre-emptive nuclear strike in a post-NATO expansion scenario."<sup>37</sup> In response, Ukraine has sought to improve relations with those countries trying to bypass the Russian oil pipelines from the Caspian Sea, in an effort to reduce Russia's influence.<sup>38</sup>

Since Russian armed forces were still deployed throughout the former Soviet Union during the early 1990's, they were also in a position to influence events. Using a "Russian Monroe Doctrine," the Russian military justified violating the sovereignties of the NIS in order to protect both its interests and ethnic Russians.<sup>39</sup> In Georgia the Russian military is suspected of having caused the stirred up trouble in the Abkhazia region, knowing that the Georgian government would request their help in settling the dispute. In this way Russia was able to insert "peacekeepers" into a nation that had been turning Westward.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Sergei Grigoriev, "Rhetoric and Reality: Post-Soviet Policy in the Near Abroad," p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> Sergei Grigoriev, "Rhetoric and Reality: Post-Soviet Policy in the Near Abroad," p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Margarita Balmaceda, "Ukraine, Russia and European Security," p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Margarita Balmaceda, "Ukraine, Russia and European Security," p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Frank Umbach, "Military Role in Foreign and Security Studies," p. 475.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Pipes, "Weight of the Past: Russian Foreign Policy in Historical Perspective," p. 56.

Peacekeeping has emerged as one of the key tools by which Russia exerts its influence in the “near abroad.” Russia has used peacekeepers within Russia itself, bilaterally with other CIS nations and sometimes under the auspices of the United Nations. Susan Clark provides some examples of Russian peacekeeping that shed light on what was really happening and why the United Nations has stopped recognizing these forces as peacekeepers. Her first example concerns Moldova and the presence of the Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army, then under the command of General Alexander Lebed. Instead of performing as peacekeepers, the 14<sup>th</sup> Army became politicized as Lebed chose to support one side in the dispute, the Dniester Separatists.<sup>41</sup> Another example of trying to exert influence under the guise of peacekeeping concerns Tajikistan. In order to end the ongoing civil war, Russia agreed to send the 201<sup>st</sup> Division to Tajikistan. Upon arrival, the unit was promptly placed at the disposal of pro communist forces in the country and not used to separate belligerents, but to actually support one side against the other.<sup>42</sup> This coercive meddling, as Grigoriev points out, can sometimes have undesired results. The best example of this is Russia’s Chechnya debacle. Not only did the Russian forces kill many thousands of ethnic Russians, their military failures showed the rest of the CIS that Russia is no longer all-powerful. This has had the affect of, at the very least, softening Russian threats of military intervention.<sup>43</sup> President Putin has already demonstrated that direct confrontation with the United States and the West is to be avoided, by not raising a protest over the Baltic States being included in the latest round of NATO expansion.

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<sup>41</sup> Susan Clark, “Russia in a Peacekeeping Role,” p. 129.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Krickus, “The Case for Including the Baltics in NATO,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 45, no. 1, (Jan/Feb 1998): p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Sergei Grigoriev, “Rhetoric and Reality: Post-Soviet Policy in the Near Abroad,” p. 23.

Though Russia still has the ability to create trouble in the region, its military record of late would indicate that will not be a serious threat to Europe for some time. Economically, Russia can still cause trouble for the developing nations of Central Europe, which are still heavily reliant on Russian exports of energy products. However, Russia is tied to Western financial systems and is not likely to risk jeopardizing loans and aid. The Russian government has by now realized that they have forever lost the nations of Central and Eastern Europe to the West, along with their ability to influence or coerce these nations to do Moscow's bidding. However, Russia still exerts influence over its "near abroad" to its west. Through the tactic of refusing to ratify treaties regarding international borders, and by arguing that ethnic Russians living in the Baltic States are being mistreated, Russia hoped to keep these states weak and unstable, to obstruct their bid for NATO and EU membership. While this policy has failed, Russia continues to use all political, economic, and military pressures within their limited means to prevent the "near abroad" countries from joining Western institutions. (One of NATO's requirements for prospective members is that they are not involved in any territorial disputes, nor can they have territorial claims on other NATO members.)

Another example of Russia's influence in the near abroad concerns Ukraine and Russia's refusal to recognize that the Crimea is now part of an independent Ukraine. The real reason for this approach is that Ukraine has also begun to lean westward and in recent years has strengthened its bilateral relations with the United States and NATO in general. According to Sergei Baburin, the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Duma, the "treaty with Ukraine must not be ratified at any cost."<sup>44</sup> He argues that if the treaty to ratify the border with Ukraine is completed, that Russians should not be surprised to

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<sup>44</sup> Sergei Baburin, *Nezavissamaya Gazeta*, 14 January 1999. p. 4.

wake up one day and find that Sevastopol (a major port in the Crimea) is a NATO base. For proof of this Baburin quotes a speech by President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine in which Mr. Kuchma points out that NATO is the “most effective structure for collective security in Europe,” and that the goal of Ukraine is to join European structures of security.<sup>45</sup> Mr. Baburin continues by providing misleading information designed for consumption by his domestic audience. He portrayed the multi-lateral Sea Breeze 1998 exercise as having included shore operations on the territory of Crimea under the code name “mutiny on the shore.”<sup>46</sup> As one of the United States’ planning officers participating in the Sea Breeze planning conference in Odessa, I can say with some certainty that this is false. The “ground” training portion took place at a site not far from Odessa. The Ukrainians wanted to use the site at Sevastopol, but knew that this would create problems with the Russians.

In his article, Why Moscow Opposes NATO Expansion, Boris Kazantsev continues arguing Russia’s position. He states that NATO’s inclusion of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic will create “new dividing lines in Europe” (a common argument from the Russian side), without doing anything to improve European security.<sup>47</sup> During her 1997 testimony before the Senate Armed Forces Committee on NATO, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated, “enlarging NATO will not create new lines of division, because the new members will not be the last.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the only dividing lines being created are the Russian red lines, beyond which they say NATO

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<sup>45</sup> Sergei Baburin, *Nezavissamaya Gazeta*, 14 January 1999. p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Sergei Baburin, *Nezavissamaya Gazeta*, 14 January 1999. p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Boris Kazantsev, “Why Moscow Opposes NATO Expansion,” *International Affairs*, vol. 44 no. 3 (1998) Int Affa

cannot expand.<sup>49</sup> In addition, these “red lines” have shown, much to the embarrassment of Moscow, a tendency to move as NATO expansion talks move forward.<sup>50</sup>

What Moscow has failed to take into consideration concerning the use of “red lines” and other threatening language, is that the United States is determined to ensure that the Newly Independent States (NIS) successfully transition to liberal democracies with market economies. Instead of being threatened, the West appears determined to support these nations and to defend, even if only economically, the sovereign rights of these nations to choose their own path. Russia, if it is truly a democratic nation, should accept this.<sup>51</sup>

It is evident even after this shallow look at Russia’s policies towards the “near abroad” that Moscow thought that the other nations of the CIS would want to maintain close ties. It must have come as a shock to them when the majority of these nations looked elsewhere. It was not until NATO made the final decision to expand, without including Russia, and Western nations started improving ties with CIS nations, especially those in the Caucasus, that Moscow decided to play a greater role in the CIS and the “near abroad.”

### **Conclusion:**

First, it should be evident that Eurasia is going to be the focus of international competition as we enter into the next century. It is also obvious that while Russia occupies the most important geostrategic position in Eurasia, its system of government

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<sup>49</sup> Karl-Heinz Kamp, “NATO Entrapped: Debating the Next Enlargement Round,” *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): p. 171.

<sup>50</sup> Karl-Heinz Kamp, “NATO Entrapped: Debating the Next Enlargement Round,” *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): p. 175.

<sup>51</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, “NATO: The Dilemmas of Expansion,” *The National Interest*, no. 53 (fall 1998): p. 17.

and Soviet institutional legacies will prevent it from dominating the region. Our analysis clearly shows how Russian foreign policy is influenced by these institutions, and that no one man makes policy in Russia.

In consideration of Russia's policy toward the "far abroad," we may conclude that Russia will continue to use the excuse of NATO's eastward expansion to sell arms, and strengthen its ties with nations hostile to the West, especially the United States. In the "near abroad" we have seen Moscow's definition of "peacekeeping" operations. These are situations, sometimes created by the Russian military, designed to put Russian soldiers back in CIS nations to pressure these nations to submit to Moscow's will. In addition, Russia is determined to control energy resources coming out of the "near abroad." Finally, if Russia hopes to recover any portion of its previous political weight in the world order, it must first accept its new role as a former superpower, adjust its foreign policy accordingly, and implement true reforms within its own government and the process by which their foreign policy is developed.

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