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Back to the Front: Russian Interests in the New Eastern Europe

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About this series

The Donald W. Treadgold Papers publication series was created to honor a great teacher and great scholar. Donald W. Treadgold was professor of history and international studies at the University of Washington from 1949 to 1993. During that time, he wrote seven books, one of which — *Twentieth Century Russia* — went into eight editions. He was twice editor of *Slavic Review*, the organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, and received the AAASS Award for Distinguished Contributions to Slavic Studies, as well as the AAASS Award for Distinguished Service. Professor Treadgold molded several generations of Russian historians and contributed enormously to the field of Russian history. He was, in other ways as well, an inspiration to all who knew him.

The *Treadgold Papers* series was created in 1993 on the occasion of Professor Treadgold's retirement, on the initiative of Professor Daniel Waugh. Professor Treadgold passed away in December 1994. The series is dedicated to the memory of a great man, publishing papers in those areas which were close to his heart.

Glennys Young, Editor
Sabrina P. Ramet, Editor (1994-2001)

About the author of this issue

Janusz Bugajski is the Director of East European Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C. His most recent book is *Political Parties of Eastern Europe: A Guide to Politics in the Post-Communist Era*, (M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

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With the fall of communist regimes and the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Eastern Europe, Moscow lost its political and military domination over its former satellites. But as the 1990s progressed, the Kremlin sought to regain much of its influence and leverage and to limit Western penetration into the region. Above all, it endeavored to rebuild Russia's role as a "Great Power" on both the European and "Eurasian" stages.

This paper examines Russian policy toward the former East European bloc by distinguishing four major sub-zones: Russia's European Commonwealth, the Baltic region, the Central European states, and the Southeast European countries. The European CIS were viewed in Moscow as important for regaining a broad sphere of influence and power projection on two continents. The Baltic states were considered as a vital buffer against Western influences on the former Soviet territories. The Central Europeans have been perceived as a potentially negative source of influence over its CIS neighbors and hence required some degree of international neutralization. The South East European or Balkan region was considered as an important zone of interest for Russia because in an arena of conflict and crisis, Western influences could be more effectively challenged and Moscow's role enhanced.

The Russian authorities have not fully come to terms with their colonial past and their subjugation of various parts of Eastern Europe since tsarist times. Formal apologies or material reparations were not forthcoming from Moscow after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, even though Russia inherited the old Soviet political structure, its administrative apparatus, and most of its resources and assets. Indeed, the Kremlin refused to acknowledge that Russian policies throughout most of the twentieth century stifled Eastern Europe's economic development, retarded its political evolution, and undermined the region's efforts to become part of an emerging pan-European economic and security structure. Unlike Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia was not held accountable for its actions in the region and this has contributed to breeding resentment and suspicion throughout Eastern Europe with regard to Russian motives and Western duplicity.

Russian-East European relations have remained deeply imbued with negative perceptions among the region's governments and citizenry in regard to Moscow's policies and goals. Such

negative views contribute to the structuring of official reactions, foreign policies, and security postures. These in turn have an impact on Russian policy and contribute to the further straining of bilateral relations, especially when the Kremlin harbors suspicions over the ambitions of its former subordinates. In order to explore Russian state policy and its impact on East Europe, it is helpful to evaluate the conceptual and political underpinnings of Moscow's foreign policy. After an initial period of confusion, Russian state nationalism has been consistently on the rise since the unraveling of the USSR in 1991.¹ During the 1990s, nationalism and statism became important ideological and mobilizational devices of several Russian leaders. A pan-ethnic Moscow-centered statism came to the fore in which Russia was depicted as a significant power that needed to rebuild its influence.

The former Soviet bloc was viewed as a primary venue for Moscow's objectives. Russia's "imperial temptation" operated on the principles of "self-proclaimed spheres of influence abroad in more or less open disregard for the sovereignty of neighboring states."² Russia's multi-ethnic "imperialist consciousness" has been much more pronounced and widespread than any mono-ethnic chauvinism. Moreover, the flexible and adaptable definition of "Russian" contributed to making the state potentially more expansive than if it was based on precise ethnic criteria. Although few politicians believed that Russia still embodied any global mission, such as pan-Slavism, pan-Orthodoxy, or pan-Communism, the authorities sought to include a broad category of populations under the rubric of "Russian," whether co-ethnics, co-nationals, co-religionists, or co-linguals, while posing as protectors of smaller and vulnerable non-Russian nations. With the loss of empire and global status, Moscow's elites experienced a painful post-imperial malaise precipitating debates over Russia's global role.³ In essence, these disputes were focused on the rationale, methods, and strategies for restoring Russia's global status.⁴

The Russian "isolationist" trend, favoring non-involvement in the former Soviet republics and a limited global role, had little political mileage because it was widely perceived as weak, cowering to Western interests, and in conflict with Russia's historical traditions. While Russia lost any pretense to a historical global mission, it also became heavily dependent on the West for credits and investments. Hence, national isolationism

and economic protectionism would have been tantamount to further erosion of Russia's influence.

In the first few years of the Yeltsin administration, under the impact of the late Soviet era and the Gorbachev-Shevardnadze "new political thinking," Moscow was relatively accommodating toward the West and flexible toward its former East European satellites, while pursuing a policy of "radical democratization" at home. This position began to change between the middle of 1992 and early 1993, as Moscow's foreign policy became more assertive, expansive, and confrontational.⁵ Key policy documents adopted in 1993, including the foreign policy concept and the new military doctrine, were characterized by marked suspicion of Western intentions and a resolve to restore Russia's waning position as a global power. The liberal reforms initiated by Prime Minister Egor Gaidar were viewed as destructive of Russian interests and pandering to American influences.

Even the "westernizing" Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev began to adopt a more stridently nationalist and anti-Western position. For Kozyrev, the entire East European zone remained as a "sphere of Russia's vitally important interests."⁶ Such trends were reinforced after the December 1993 Duma (parliamentary) elections, which boosted the influence of nationalist and Communist parties and steered the Yeltsin administration on a more aggressive course. In the fall of 1993, Kozyrev openly claimed that Russia possessed strategic interests in all former Soviet territories and warned that "power vacuums" open to "enemy forces" would not be tolerated.⁷ Regional conflicts outside of Russia's borders were depicted as the major threat to Russian national security. In the perceptions of Russian politicians and strategists, Moscow's decreasing influence in Eastern Europe generated instability, as it exposed the region to "internal contradictions" by removing the bipolar shield.⁸

With the appointment of Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov in January 1996, Russia took a more active and expansive position toward its former satellites. Russia's new policy makers criticized the lack of a coherent policy during the Gorbachev years and immediate post-Warsaw Pact era. Under Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet foreign policy attempted to limit the security maneuverability of the liberated states by seeking to prevent them from joining NATO and by ensuring their neutrality or non-aligned status. In retrospect,

however, this was perceived in Moscow as naiveté, given the overwhelmingly negative perceptions of Russia in the former bloc countries and given alleged Western “ambitions” toward Eastern Europe.

Various commentators noted a persistent lack of realism in Russian assessments of their capabilities in the international arena despite the economic and military weakness of the state.⁹ Few if any political leaders resigned themselves to the *permanent* loss of the former Soviet republics, which were perceived as part of Russia’s traditional historical heritage. One overwhelming historical burden continued to cast a long shadow over the country: the fact that Russia gained an empire before it became a state and a coherent nation. This helped to explain persistent Russian claims to the identity and territory of various neighbors and why the ex-Soviet republics were not considered fully sovereign entities, but classified as the “near abroad.” The borders of these new states were not viewed as normal state frontiers but as Russia’s “outer border,” which Moscow had a historic right to guard and guarantee.

The disintegration of the union of Soviet republics was seen among a range of political leaders as a greater calamity than the collapse of the Communist system. A number of policies were therefore pursued to regain influence in these “lost territories.” The country’s elites argued that Russia had to be the guarantor of political stability and military security throughout the former Soviet Union and needed to ensure some semblance of order within and among these states. They also viewed Russia as a protector of weaker neighbors against unwelcome Western and Islamic influences.

Divisions materialized between the ultra-nationalists and expansionists on the one hand who favored forceful takeovers and, on the other hand, state leaders who preferred to pursue a gradual process of domination through such levers as defense programs, foreign policy, and economic manipulation. Nevertheless, the overall pursuit of “Great Power” status continued to generate substantial support in the military and security services. Russian commentators traditionally justified their state’s territorial expansionism by claiming that for centuries Russia had simply been seeking “security.”¹⁰ At the same time, reassurances were periodically offered that the era of Russian imperial expansion was over indefinitely.

The events of the late 1980s and early 1990s were described by officials in Moscow as a final and irreversible Russian military retreat from Eastern Europe, supposedly in a gesture of magnanimity and goodwill. Officials and scholars alike have refused to acknowledge that in reality Russia lost the Cold War and had little ultimate choice but to withdraw its military forces and to allow satellite states to re-establish their independence. It failed in the Cold War for two major reasons: its political-economic system unraveled and its domination was terminated because of overwhelming East European opposition and ultimate Soviet weakness. The "liberation" of Eastern Europe was not undertaken by Moscow because of any conversion to democratic rule, but because of a sober calculation that the burden of the East European empire had become too onerous and Moscow was desperate for modernization and financial assistance from the capitalist West.

Despite Soviet military withdrawal and the ouster of ruling proxy parties throughout most of Eastern Europe, Moscow continued to assert that it possessed "legitimate foreign and security interests" in the region. Suspicions thereby persisted that the Kremlin was intent on regaining some control over each country's foreign and security policy and disabling the East Europeans from joining institutions such as NATO. The majority of states remained deeply skeptical of Moscow's intentions and did not welcome any form of inferior status. Vehement Kremlin opposition to NATO as the primary structure of European security was perceived as a threat by many East European governments because it was pointedly aimed at denying them the right to exercise their security and foreign policy options.

To help justify their aspirations, Russian officials warned that new West-East divisions were emerging within Europe. They claimed that NATO enlargement in particular was creating tensions and conflicts on the continent. But they refused to acknowledge that persistent assertions about such divisions contributed to generating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Moscow sought to highlight the consolidation of various divisions on the continent, including that between the "Orthodox East" and the "Catholic and Protestant West." Russian policy analysts claimed that the Atlantic Alliance acquired a more pronounced anti-Russian position with the entry of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999.

According to these pronouncements, NATO's attitude toward the Orthodox Slav world subsequently became more negative.¹¹ Moscow failed to point out that states opposing NATO accession or not canvassing for membership were, in general, laggards in the reform process and invariably controlled by special interest groups and populist, nationalist, and protectionist politicians. It appeared that the existence of such regressive states suited Russian policy goals, regardless of their ethnic or nominal religious affiliation.

Russian authorities depicted NATO as yet another "grand design" to "encircle" Russia, to achieve an overwhelming strategic superiority, to marginalize, isolate, and "de-Europeanize" the country, and eventually to promote Russia's disintegration. The West was described as deliberately seeking to weaken Russia as a competitor on the world market and as a "Great Power," especially in the arms trade and in space technology.¹² The U.S. was described as a new hegemon that disguised its objectives with cooperative rhetoric. The Kremlin consistently called for a "multi-polar world" in which Russia would maintain an influential position rather than a "unipolar" one dominated by Washington.

In official Russian calculations, NATO should either have been dissolved after the Warsaw Pact disbanded or transformed into a harmless political association under overall OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) control. In such an arrangement, Russia would play a significant role. It is difficult to ascertain whether the NATO threat as trumpeted by Russian leaders was a genuinely perceived challenge or a "contrived threat evoked for political advantage."¹³ On occasion, this threat was deliberately exaggerated in order to mobilize domestic public opinion and to gain leverage with the NATO states. The U.S. remained as the generic adversary and a focal point for Russian unity, even if cooperation with Washington in numerous arenas was deemed necessary.

The Kremlin occasionally issued warnings that NATO enlargement would stimulate a nationalist eruption in Moscow, strengthen the position of anti-Western zealots, and undermine international cooperation on a range of issues, from arms control and weapons proliferation to handling regional crises and conflict management. Such forms of essentially "strategic blackmail" carried some resonance in Western policy circles, but also raised even greater fears in Eastern Europe that ambitious neo-imperialism continued to be a central factor in Russian policy.

Moscow and its Western supporters claimed that Russia lacked the resources, capability, and intention to dominate the Eurasian heartland and that it posed no threat to American and European interests.¹⁴ However, such contentions assumed that domination necessarily had to come in the military sphere or that capabilities necessarily matched objectives. The “front line” states of Eastern Europe were clearly not impressed by Russian arguments and pressed for NATO membership to guarantee their security on a permanent basis, regardless of leadership changes and policy alterations in Moscow. Indeed, Kremlin opposition to their accession in itself raised fears that Moscow harbored hidden objectives and this accentuated their aspirations for entry into the Alliance.

Russian intellectuals and policy analysts persistently warned against “isolating Russia” and creating an anti-Western backlash in the country. By “isolation” they meant NATO enlargement and the curtailment or disregard of any Russian role in deciding the foreign and security policies of former Soviet satellites. According to this position, Russia had already offered the maximum “geopolitical concessions” to the West and remained a “regional superpower” that simply could not be ignored.¹⁵ Issued in 1993, the Basic Principles of Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation defined as a military threat any “approach of military blocs and alliances toward Russia’s borders.”¹⁶ The revised military doctrine from April 2000 stated that a major security threat to Russia would be “an enlargement of military blocs and alliances” along Russia’s borders. In this fashion, NATO enlargement was depicted as a hegemonic American attempt to dominate the European continent and eliminate any indigenous process of “Europeanization.” Allegedly, the U.S. was seeking to impose not only its political and economic dominance, but also a “cultural uniformism” and a “primitive mass culture” on the European populations. NATO and globalization were therefore highlighted as the Trojan horses for American planetary control.

The alleged Washington offensive was intended to prevent the “reintegration” of the post-Soviet countries, create conflicts between these states and Moscow, and weaken or fracture Russia itself. NATO and the U.S. were purportedly intent on ousting Russia from “the regions of its traditional presence and influence.”¹⁷ In response to these stated threats, anti-Western and anti-liberal coalitions gained ground in

Moscow throughout the 1990s, seeking a tighter integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and adopting a more combative anti-NATO posture. Almost the entire spectrum of Russian political leaders remained adamantly opposed to Alliance enlargement and only grudgingly accepted the NATO-Russia Founding Act in May 1997 that provided Moscow with a consultative voice in NATO debates.

Russia's leading politicians asserted that the country's international weakness was only temporary and that it would recover its global position once it underwent an internal "renewal." Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov in the summer of 1998 praised the achievements of [nineteenth century] Prince Aleksandr Gorchakov who restored Russia's strength and geopolitical reach after the disastrous Crimean War.¹⁸ Such statements highlight how the Russian elites find it difficult to adjust to a post-colonial status, in which Russia has become a mid-level power with restricted international influence.

In order to revive Russia's status, on several occasions during the 1990s it has suited the Russian administration to re-stoke some version of the Cold War. For example, Russia's Armed Forces Chief, General Anatoli Kvashnin, has periodically launched into stinging diatribes against Washington, claiming that NATO was a major security threat to Russia.¹⁹ His premises and arguments were reminiscent of the Soviet era. Russian officials periodically demonstrated how Russia remained virtually surrounded by unfriendly powers or by regional trouble spots. For centuries, as the Muscovite empire expanded its borders largely through conquest, the perception of outside threat was deliberately employed by Russian governments to justify militarism, hostility toward the outside world, and the imposition of an internal state of siege.

In essence, despite its defeat in the Cold War, regardless of the collapse of the Communist bloc, and irrespective of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the political and military elites in Moscow have not fully recognized their post-imperial status. All former colonial powers, including Britain and France, have experienced psychological and political traumas in adjusting to their reduced role in world affairs. But in Russia, the de-imperialization process has proved especially problematic because the imperial temptation still served some vital political interests. Russian officials, military commanders, commercial leaders, and virtually the entire political establishment firmly

believed that Russia remained a global “superpower” with vital national security interests across Europe and Asia.

Moscow has been adamantly opposed to NATO’s enlargement, as well as its expanded security obligations in Southeastern Europe. In Kremlin estimations, without Russian supervision if not domination, the entire area from the Baltic to the Pacific was threatened either by chaos or NATO domination. Russian officialdom exploited the NATO issue for two main purposes. First, by attacking the Alliance, they calculated that they would gain economic and financial concessions from the West to help pacify their nationalist opposition. And second, Moscow has consistently fed its populace with a steady diet of fear with regard to external dangers and foreign interference in Russian affairs. Having lost its capacity to challenge NATO militarily and technologically, Moscow tried to demonstrate to its own public that Russia was still capable of standing up to the U.S. and pursuing its own distinct agenda.

Irrespective of Moscow’s perceptions, NATO’s expansion has not presented a security threat to Russia, but rather a challenge to Russia’s predominant influence in the post-Communist states. The notion of NATO as a pan-European security structure was unacceptable for Moscow, whose officials insisted that NATO enlargement would result in the return of two hostile “camps.” Contrary to Russia’s sometimes heavy-handed propaganda, the vast majority of East European states from Estonia to Albania view NATO as a security provider and not a regional destabilizer. Moscow was unwilling to face the question of why virtually the entire region desired NATO membership. Almost every government contended that their inclusion in the Alliance would actually lessen anti-Russian sentiments stemming from a historically grounded sense of threat from the East.

In the perceptions of the East Europeans, there was a second reason why NATO enlargement increased regional security. The prospect of incorporation pushed aspirant states into implementing the relevant criteria for membership, including democratic consolidation, civil-military reform, ethnic co-existence, and the forging of inter-state treaties. This process contributed significantly to stabilizing Russia’s western borders. Rationally speaking, it would directly serve the interests of a democratic Russia to support NATO inclusion for all the East European states. This would lessen the security uncertainties in parts of the region and allow the Kremlin to focus on more pressing

domestic and foreign security problems. However, such an approach also required a profound break with Russia's great-power traditions.

Russian policy retained a measure of contradiction: while a nationalist core sought to limit Western influence, the leadership feared isolation and redundancy in comparison with Western technological and economic advances. The rise of nationalist forces in the mid-1990s forced President Yeltsin to replace Foreign Minister Kozyrev in early 1996 with Primakov, a hard-line figure considered a stronger champion of Russian interests.²⁰ A more hard-nosed policy line became evident under Primakov, especially in terms of opposition to NATO enlargement and the integration of the former Soviet republics. Indeed, the anti-NATO card became a useful device to mobilize or distract public opinion and to underscore the government's patriotic credentials. In this context, the new Russian constitution in 1994 gave more powers to the presidency and strengthened its role in the foreign policy process.

In the framework of this revived assertiveness, energy dependency proved a valuable trump card for Russia in relations with its former satellites. Privatized, but state-connected oil and gas companies assumed an important domestic role and in Moscow's foreign relations. Energy officials maintained high-level political links and as the military-industrial complex declined, the energy sector soared. The energy industry exerted substantial influence through its foreign connections, joint ventures, ownership shares in foreign energy companies and subsidiaries, and because of foreign dependence on Russian energy. This enabled them to exert a significant impact on political developments in neighboring states. Oil and gas companies have on occasion diverted supplies from more lucrative western markets to nearby states in order to gain political advantages for Moscow. Thus, the desire for political influence occasionally conflicted with the goal of short-term profitability.

Many observers of Kremlin politics believed that multiple actors with a great deal of latitude conducted Russian foreign policy, especially in the early 1990s. This included various ministries and energy and commercial interests, such as *Gazprom* and *Lukoil*.²¹ However, there were congruencies

between government and business, where Moscow sensed advantages in the acquisition of economic control by Russian companies, which could then help secure favorable trade agreements and influence local interest groups in targeted states. Moreover, the Russian government held substantial shares in the energy companies and under President Vladimir Putin, it endeavored to exert more direct control over the most critical Russian industries in order to mobilize them more effectively on behalf of state policy.

In recent years, especially since Putin assumed the Russian presidency in early 2000, there has been a renewed focus on consolidating a strong central government and pursuing a policy of *derzhavnost* or authoritarian statism. This would enable Russia to project and rebuild its eroded international status and was supported by a range of political forces. This “Russia First” policy was also a reaction to what was perceived in Moscow as the failures of Westernization, the shortcomings of liberalism, and alleged American aims to weaken Russia. Under the Putin presidency, “statist nationalism” was consolidated as the governing idea and *modus operandi*. It was backed by a range of political, military, and state security figures and a large segment of the intelligentsia. After the March 2000 presidential elections, Russian foreign policy became more forceful, coherent, coordinated, and methodical in terms of goals, strategies, and tactics.²² This was due to a combination of factors, including frustration with Russia’s weakness during the 1990s, fear of the growing gap between American and Russian capabilities, and the need to look tough and determined for Russia’s domestic audience in order for Putin to maintain widespread public support. Indeed, Putin legitimized his rule by displaying his determination to defend Russia from disintegration; hence the crushing of the Chechen rebellion became his initial priority.

Critics argued that during Yeltsin’s tenure, foreign policy was too accommodating and failed to project Russian “national interests.”²³ The appointment of Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov provided a degree of continuity with the hard-line Primakov but injected new vigor and assertiveness into foreign policy. While seeking cooperation, investment, and economic aid from the West, Putin’s Kremlin played on nationalistic and patriotic themes and used anti-Western rhetoric domestically to maintain the support and motivation of the army and security services.

Putin attempted to inject greater coordination between state organs, business interests, and intelligence services in pursuing a more united foreign policy. Analysts argued that "private interests" barely existed in Russia at such high levels, as so many organizations were interconnected with the state apparatus.²⁴ The ex-KGB evidently regained much of its power, while democrats, moderates, and pro-Westerners were squeezed to the political margins. Putin actively promoted the Russian intelligence and security apparatus and their staffing and funding were no longer subject to budgetary scrutiny. At least seventeen high-ranking ex-KGB officials were promoted to senior Kremlin positions within the first year of Putin's presidency, many of whom were responsible for political repression under the Soviet regime. The intelligence services were also buttressed in their foreign operations, given Russia's economic and military weakness. Espionage activities were markedly beefed up in various regions, including Eastern Europe.

In the initial phase of consolidation, Putin sharpened Russia's relations with the West. The President's self-declared priorities were to strengthen the central government, revive the economy, reinvigorate the armed forces, and reassert Russia's status as a global power. In both the domestic and international arenas, Putin was openly committed to reviving Russian power and influence as a credible rival to NATO and the U.S. Domestically, Putin pledged a strong-arm government that would resolutely fight crime and corruption, eliminate terrorist and separatist groups, restore law and order, and shield the population against economic hardship. However, such objectives seemed unlikely to be achieved by democratic means but through the imposition of a new authoritarianism that Putin's circle believed would benefit from broad public support. Indeed, the new President sought to recentralize power and reign in Russia's rebellious regions and economic interest groups.

According to Andrey Piontkovsky, Director of Moscow's Strategic Studies Center, Putin displayed "complete disregard for human life, cynicism, and hypocrisy, and a willingness to use war and the deaths of thousands of Russian soldiers and innocent civilians as a public relations instrument in his election campaign." Although Putin spoke often about the "rule of law," during the elections he asserted his belief in a strong state as a "traditional Russian value," while rejecting the "Anglo-Saxon model of liberal governance" because it was "ill-suited for

Russia." Press censorship returned, as Putin's election campaign chief proclaimed that the President held the right to control the media in order to achieve "national accord." Despite repeated promises to fight corruption and curtail Russia's oligarchs, Putin allowed unprecedented violations of anti-monopoly legislation by business owners closely connected to the Kremlin. The new Russian leader was not intent on challenging trusted oligarchs who could serve his political objectives.

Putin's election raised concerns among Russia's neighbors. The strengthening and expansion of security, police, and intelligence forces was especially troubling for countries that had been subject to Russian pressure in the past. In foreign policy, Putin was attempting to balance various interests, some of which were in conflict.²⁵ In particular, he tried to reconcile some moderate elements in the Foreign Ministry with hard-line forces in the Defense Ministry, while consolidating broad parliamentary support. The President also drew the mammoth energy industries more closely into foreign policy decision-making through personal connections, state ownership of energy shares, and government energy contracts. In January 2000, Acting President Putin approved the new National Security Concept and in April 2000, he signed Russia's new military doctrine. The National Security Concept focused on Russia's economic crisis as the main source of national insecurity. The military doctrine emphasized various possibilities to counteract NATO expansion. The military budget was increased and the President sought to rally political and public support for Russia's defense and security agencies.

Putin's Kremlin has set for itself several priority-objectives in foreign policy. These included the internal centralization of foreign and defense policy decision-making, the promotion and projection of Russia's great power identity, the undermining of the U.S. as the sole superpower by inhibiting America's range of maneuverability, the creation of alliances with countries that are wary of U.S. influence, the exploitation of conflicts between Washington and its European allies, and the use of strategic resources to gain economic and political influence in Russia's former empire. It also continued to trumpet the notion in western capitals that without the inclusion of Russia and consistent NATO-Russian cooperation, East European security simply could not be guaranteed.

In seeking to limit American influence in Europe, Moscow has traditionally sought a stronger European bloc independent of

the U.S. The European Union (EU) has been perceived as a potential counterbalance to American interests that would also help further Russia's goals. Such hopes have remained unrealized as the EU has primarily evolved into a vehicle for economic and institutional integration, rather than a coherent mechanism for an assertive security and foreign policy. The European Security and Defense Initiative (ESDI) may have breathed some new life into Kremlin expectations, but its actual development and implementation continues to be viewed skeptically on both sides of the Atlantic.

With regard to EU expansion eastward, Moscow has been relatively neutral, but concerned that the process could also work against Russian interests. Some Russian analysts claimed that the inclusion of Central European and Baltic states could restrict trade and investment between the new EU members and Moscow and even contribute to isolating Russia.²⁶ Throughout the 1990s, Moscow also endeavored to raise the prestige of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to enable it to replace NATO. With Russia holding veto power in the organization, the OSCE was perceived as a useful tool in projecting its objectives.²⁷ It pushed the idea of a grand "security structure" under the OSCE umbrella to counter the "dangerous" American-led trend of "humanitarian intervention" – an alleged disguise for expanding NATO domination.

In this broad strategic perspective, the Putin government intended to rebuild a broad sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Numerous avenues were pursued to achieve such an objective, such as forging new alliances, assisting authoritarian regimes, and supporting political groups and economic interests that were opposed to NATO membership and growing American influence. In this context, for much of the 1990s, Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia constituted a useful wedge for Russia to exploit the Balkan conflicts to its advantage by creating disputes between the U.S. and its European allies and undermining the case for NATO involvement. In contrast to that of Russia, it was clearly in America's "national interest" to have secure and democratic countries throughout the eastern half of Europe that assume membership in international institutions and enable Washington to gradually disengage from the region, without precipitating any new insecurities. But to guarantee such a scenario, the U.S. may need to remain closely engaged in the developmental process and not abandon its long-

term interests to either Russian ambitions or ineffective European Union policies.

Following the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York on 11 September 2001, the Kremlin responded rapidly to exploit the new anti-terrorism campaign to its advantage. Moscow began to manipulate Western fears of global terrorism in order to achieve two overriding objectives: to give Russia a role in NATO decision-making and to consolidate Moscow's influence along the CIS borders. During a visit to Berlin on 26 September 2001, Putin confirmed his willingness to cooperate with the West in the struggle against "Islamic terrorism." The cooperative Kremlin had its sights set on gaining political and strategic advantages from America's eagerness to forge a new global coalition against terrorism. At a time when Washington was preoccupied with Osama Bin Laden, the Kremlin calculated that it could take the steam out of the significance of NATO enlargement. During a visit to Brussels on 3 October 2001, Putin stressed at NATO headquarters his yearnings for NATO to become a "political organization" and not a security alliance.²⁸

The Russian leadership sought access to NATO decision-making and influence over U.S. policy from the Balkans to Central Asia. The Kremlin also canvassed for an international seal of approval as the primary "peace-keeper" in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Throughout the 1990s, Moscow expanded its "peace-keeping" operations in the ex-Soviet space with little regard for a UN or OSCE mandate.²⁹ The Kremlin claimed that Muslim radicalism constituted a threat to Russia and its neighbors and sought to camouflage attempts to extend its reach as a struggle against fundamentalism and terrorism. Moscow calculated that Washington would accede to Russia's increasing pressures on its "near abroad" while it was preoccupied on other fronts.

In terms of NATO's future, Putin calculated that if he could not prevent NATO expansion, then the most sensible strategy would be to try to influence the organization from within. A new NATO-Russia Joint Council, or R-NAC (Russia-North Atlantic Council), was launched in the spring of 2002 through which Moscow would have a voice in certain Alliance deliberations. The new body would replace the Joint Permanent Council, established in 1997, which gave Russia only a consultative role. Moscow would not participate in NATO's integrated military command but would be involved in decisions

on a range of issues, including arms proliferation and peace-support operations. Putin claimed that Russia could drop its opposition to Baltic inclusion if Moscow gained "voting rights" in the Alliance.

East European governments carefully observed what new arrangements the Alliance entered into with Moscow because this would have a direct bearing on their security. The three Central European countries (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) that were already NATO members and opposed giving Russia any significant voice in decision-making. Although they recognized that Putin had become more cooperative and that it was preferable to have a stable NATO-Russia relationship, they remained concerned that Moscow could block certain NATO initiatives. Czech President Vaclav Havel was the most outspoken over the new rapprochement between Moscow and Brussels. According to him, any attempt to integrate Russia into NATO would hurt the identity of the Alliance and turn it into another "talking shop." NATO aspirants were even more perturbed by Russia's increasing involvement in the Alliance. The Baltic states feared that this would jeopardize NATO's effectiveness as a union for mutual defense, bolster Russia's assertiveness vis-à-vis its former satellites, and undermine the stringent criteria for NATO membership that they had labored so hard to meet.

Instruments of Foreign Policy

As mentioned above, Moscow has distinguished between four main zones in Eastern Europe. Within each region, Moscow has tried to influence foreign and security policy, benefit from local divisions and rivalries, limit the course of Western integration, and obstruct forms of regional cooperation that countered Russian objectives. The Kremlin's successes have varied between regions and states. In some cases, it exerted critical leverage over a country's foreign priorities. In other instances its influences were limited or short-lived. And on occasion its policies have backfired as suspicions about Russia's motives have propelled several states in a more determined westward direction. The Russian arsenal deployed within the former satellite zones of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has included an assortment of weaponry. Some levers have proved more advantageous and successful in certain countries than others, but often a combination of tools have been employed to promote Russian

interests and expand Moscow's influence. Among the most evident weapons have been the following:

1. Diplomatic Pressures: The Kremlin has applied political pressures against states that emerged from the defunct Soviet Union in order to influence their security and foreign policy orientation. High-level and sometimes ostentatious visits by Russian dignitaries or the deliberate snubbing of certain governments have served as standard diplomatic devices to extract concessions or voice approval or disapproval for certain policies. Treaties and other inter-state agreements have also been used to exert pressure on East European governments. For instance, even when bilateral treaties were signed with neighbors such as Moldova and Ukraine, their ratification by parliament was delayed or indefinitely postponed. Opposition by the Russian legislature appeared to be a smokescreen for Russia's non-compliance with an existing international agreement. This was reminiscent of the "good cop/bad cop" routine and intended to extract maximum concessions from the targeted country by gaining greater advantage from reworking an agreement.

2. Propaganda Attacks: Moscow's official or indirect control over numerous television outlets that broadcast programs to most former Soviet republics has become a useful tool in influencing public opinion and political elites in neighboring states as well as in Russia itself. This has been evident in Belarus and Ukraine, where a majority of citizens regularly watch Russian mass media programs. Furthermore, Russian Federation public opinion has often been deliberately inflamed against certain governments in order to justify Kremlin pressures against recalcitrant neighbors, as in the Baltic states. The capability to influence public opinion both at home and abroad was a key reason why Putin tightened government controls over the broadcast media.

3. Disinformation Campaigns: Propaganda attacks are supplemented by disinformation campaigns against particular governments or specific politicians in nearby states. They may be depicted as dangerously "Russophobic" and thus their accession to NATO would poison the West's relations with Russia and introduce unstable states into the Alliance. Russian officials warned that including too many states from Eastern Europe would strengthen NATO's anti-Russian character. Such assertions were

intended to deter NATO from accepting new countries because they could engender conflicts with Russia. Moscow has also claimed that NATO enlargement and NATO's new missions in the Balkans were unsuccessful and did not promote European security. Russian politicians asserted that the NATO presence was responsible for regional instability, rather than being a crucial factor for disabling military hostilities.

4. *Military Threats:* Military threats have been made by Moscow in response to policies it has not favored, such as moves toward NATO integration. According to Russian leaders, Alliance expansion would provoke a renewed arms race and spur Russia to deploy new weapon systems. Kremlin officials warned that Russia would suspend various nuclear and conventional arms-control agreements, deploy nuclear warheads along its western borders, and form a strong military pact in the CIS. Moreover, Russia's military doctrine published in 1993 provided for first-use of nuclear weapons under threatening circumstances. All such statements and warnings have been perceived in Eastern Europe as direct threats to their security. Moscow has also offered security guarantees to various states, including the three Baltic republics, in order to woo them away from NATO and discourage Alliance leaders from issuing invitations. These offers were viewed in the Baltic capitals as attempts to entrap them in a permanent alliance with Russia.

5. *Peace-Keeping Deployments:* Moscow has either fomented or capitalized on rebellions in several neighboring CIS states and then pressed for the injection of Russian troops as long-term peace-keepers. It has established itself as the primary self-empowered peace-keeping force on the territory of the former Soviet Union. It has unilaterally decided which conflicts it should promote, at which juncture it should intercede, and for how long its troops should remain. Such a policy has exerted enormous pressure on the targeted government, as its choices are often limited between civil war and territorial disintegration or foreign occupation disguised as peace-keeping. Russian units have been deployed in Transnistria in Moldova, but have not been a fully neutral party in the conflict. Moscow has encouraged or tolerated separatist movements in the CIS that enabled it to gain leverage over incumbent governments. As "Eurasia's gendarme," the entire space of the former USSR is proclaimed as a sphere of "vital

interest" to Moscow, which has sought UN recognition for the CIS as an "international organization" that would enable regional peace-keeping deployments without prior UN Security Council approval.

6. *Energy Controls:* As the dominant energy source, Russia has sought to deepen the dependence of East European states. The promotion of dependence and vulnerability is a form of political leverage. Energy and other strategic resources can be decreased or severed in order to exert pressure on particular governments. The threat of potential economic chaos as a result of energy shortages has generated powerful pressure on neighboring governments to synchronize their policies with the Kremlin. Russian buyouts of key oil and gas projects and infrastructure (such as pipelines, refineries, and storage sites) allowed Moscow to maintain additional leverage over neighboring states.

In a longer-term perspective, Moscow has pursued geo-strategic dominance in the crucial energy sector throughout the region. Russian companies have increased their share in emerging energy markets and have employed hundreds of former Soviet intelligence officers closely linked with the Putin administration. Russian energy firms have created joint ventures with local private enterprises, whose products are dependent on the import of Russian raw material. Such arrangements enable Russian companies to create strong local consortiums that are fully dependent on Russian suppliers. The Russian authorities and energy companies thus balance political advantages with economic costs in their "fuel diplomacy" toward Eastern Europe.

7. *Economic Levers:* Moscow has focused on acquiring strategic industries for business groups tied to the Russian state. Even the official Russian press has noted that business and government work in tandem to promote Russia's national interests. The Kremlin has encouraged state-connected companies to buy up key sectors of the East European economies in order to gain economic and political influence and favorable terms of trade. Trade has also been used as a weapon, as an enticement through subsidies of various products and raw materials, and as a punishment through partial or complete cutoffs in supply or the imposition of double tariffs on imports. Large debts owed to Russia by CIS states provided opportunities for Moscow to either demand their prompt payment or offer debt forgiveness in exchange for Russian

ownership of strategic assets, such as pipelines or military equipment. Russian firms have exploited the privatization process to purchase key industries and obtain various advantages in competition with local enterprises, such as easier finances and cheaper raw materials. The main sectors targeted are the energy, banking, and telecommunications industries.

8. *Ethnic Divisions:* The manipulation of ethnic tensions among neighbors has been most conspicuous in Latvia and Estonia. Persistent allegations of mistreatment of Russian minorities has enabled Moscow to use the issue as a bargaining chip in dealing with questions such as military deployments, economic and trade relations, diplomatic recognition, and even qualifications for membership in international organizations. Policy makers viewed the Russian ethnic and Russian-speaking *diasporas* as a valuable form of political influence over local governments and their foreign policy directions. The Russian Orthodox Church has also been vocal in “defending” the allegedly endangered Orthodox faithful, especially in multi-denominational neighboring states, and thereby assisted in intensifying Moscow’s political pressures. Russian media outlets have additionally zeroed in on indigenous ethnic frictions in several East European countries in order to depict some of the democratic governments as failing to meet “European standards.”

9. *Discrediting Governments:* Several avenues have been pursued to undermine the credibility of pro-Western governments, parties, and politicians. The Kremlin has benefited from the political immaturity, inexperience, and weakness of many administrations, especially in the CIS countries, thus injecting its influence and agenda. In terms of NATO enlargement, Moscow has sought to undermine efforts by incumbent governments to meet the criteria for Alliance membership. This has involved media campaigns where the trustworthiness of East European officials has been questioned, often by the planting of disparaging information. Some have been accused of corruption, susceptibility to blackmail, or of maintaining contacts with foreign intelligence services. This becomes particularly troubling to NATO leaders when candidate state officials are expected to deal with sensitive Alliance information. Disinformation campaigns have also been conducted against opposition leaders whose policies run counter to Russian interests in an effort to prevent

their election to governmental office. Russian intelligence services and media outlets have exacerbated political conflicts and sought to discredit or compromise politicians who opposed Moscow's interests or who favored NATO membership. Kremlin agencies possess volumes of personal information acquired during the Soviet era, which they can use against selected political leaders.

10. Political Influences: Russia has exerted political influence through a multitude of channels especially as the Kremlin benefits from its Soviet-era political connections. In CIS states, the Kremlin seeks increasing control over police, security, military, and intelligence organizations, and in some cases, has applied direct pressure to implant pro-Russian sympathizers in key positions. Moscow has developed strong local economic interests in neighboring states and funded parties, media outlets, or other organizations that can promote its goals. Russian companies tied to their mother organizations in Russia have also developed political lobbies in some countries. For example, the oil giant *Lukoil* has established dummy companies that made campaign contributions to pro-Russian political parties in Ukraine and the Baltic states. The appointment of politically-connected Russian politicians as ambassadors to neighboring states also engenders a more intensive involvement in domestic politics and may resemble a quasi-colonial relationship.

11. Inflaming Social Discontent: Russian propaganda has exploited the issue of declining living standards to promote social discontent in neighboring countries whose policies conflict with those of the Kremlin. Moscow has benefited from the inherent weakness of civil society in nearby states and the immaturity of the political elites. It has located "soft spots" in the political systems to expand its influence, including some parliamentary bodies and government ministries. Energy shortages caused by supply restrictions can also fuel social discontent and unrest against an incumbent administration, thus serving as a potential form of pressure.

12. Supporting Isolationist Groupings: Moscow has pursued close ties with leaders and parties who were criticized or ostracized by the West for their democratic shortcomings. It has not distinguished between diverse ideological interests and deliberately cultivated ties with the extreme left, the radical right,

and the populist “center” where feasible and where it served the Kremlin’s agenda. Indeed, estrangement or self-isolation from the West by particular regimes has assisted the Kremlin in carving out a sphere of influence with excluded governments. An anti-reformist administration can also discourage Western business investments, which are often viewed in Moscow as exerting unwanted influences over the targeted country’s political system and security posture. Western firms are also competitors for Russian firms seeking to purchase strategic enterprises and besides, they encourage greater legality and transparency in business practice that could be detrimental to the operations of some Russian companies.

13. Manipulating Criminal Networks: East European governments remain deeply concerned about the activities of Russian criminal networks, both for their destabilizing socio-economic elements and services to political interests in Moscow. The Russian *mafia* greatly expanded its activities throughout the region during the 1990s and established regional networks in such illicit endeavors as drug smuggling, money laundering, international prostitution, and migrant trafficking. In some countries, Russian syndicates have been in competition with local gangs, while in others they collaborated and complemented each other. Analysts in the region contended that Russian intelligence services coordinated several criminal groups abroad and directed a proportion of their resources to exert economic and political influence in parts of Eastern Europe.

14. Penetrating Intelligence Services: Since the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact military structure, Russia’s revamped Foreign Intelligence Service (SVRR), the Federal Security Bureau (FSB), and military intelligence (GRU) have become more active in Eastern Europe. The region is now viewed as a potentially hostile international environment. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Moscow no longer controls a guaranteed conduit of information and decision-making through the subordinate governing Communist Parties. Former intelligence and counter-intelligence contacts have been utilized, especially as many East European governments have a limited new pool of agents and continue to employ experienced professionals with former KGB connections. Public and periodic revelations about the extent of Russian espionage activities also paradoxically serve Moscow’s objectives

by discrediting the competence of government agencies in states aspiring to NATO membership and seeking closer ties with Western services. A substantial increase in Russian embassy staff has also been recorded in almost every East European capital during the 1990s, raising suspicion that espionage activities have been greatly reinforced.

Restoring a Commonwealth

The key mechanism through which Moscow has pursued the re-creation of a broad sphere of influence and dominance on the territories of the former Soviet Union is the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The CIS was established in December 1991 following the annulment of the Union Treaty of 1922 that had created the USSR. The CIS was conceived as a mechanism to bind the smaller countries closer to Russia and prevent their drifting completely away from Moscow's orbit. In the early 1990s, Russia was too preoccupied with domestic issues and improving its relations with the West to pay sufficient attention to the Soviet successor states. The CIS focus became more pronounced after 1992, when the Commonwealth was defined by the Kremlin as a zone of Russia's "primary interests" or Russia's "historic territory." Meanwhile, the term "near abroad" began to dominate official views of Russia's neighborhood, signifying the necessity of a "special relationship" with Moscow for all the former republics, regardless of their internal development and foreign policy aspirations.³⁰

The "near abroad" was depicted as a priority area because of Russia's "vital interests" in these countries over which it needed to exert predominant or exclusive influence. The entire region was seen as vital because of its alleged historical, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and political interconnectedness. Russian leaders considered the CIS as a natural sphere for its political, economic, and security interests, while outside influences were depicted as a threat.³¹ An important economic calculation was also involved, as Moscow sought to ensure access and control over the major transportation routes and energy pipelines that linked the region.

President Yeltsin needed the CIS phenomenon to prove to the Russian public and the country's elites that although the Soviet Union was dissolved, a Greater Russian sphere of interest continued to exist. In its new approach toward immediate neighbors, Russia became less intent on full incorporation because

this was viewed as an economically expensive proposition. Instead, it was focused on selective domination in key spheres, such as energy, industry, and the military. Through such channels, it could strongly influence a country's foreign and security policies. While neo-imperialist Russian nationalists and the Communist opposition insisted on a rapid absorption of the "near abroad" in order to restore Russia's global stature, the Kremlin and most foreign policy experts considered CIS "integration" as a long-term possibility with no demarcated timetables. Its pace and depth remained contingent upon economic costs and political benefits. Security interests needed to be balanced with budgetary requirements, as Moscow did not envisage assuming major new burdens much beyond essential military expenditures.

The CIS and direct bilateral instruments have enabled Moscow to apply a Eurasian version of the "Monroe Doctrine" in its former dominions. The doctrine was first expounded publicly in 1992 by Evgenii Ambartsumov, the chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs.³² The objective was to reintegrate former Soviet territories around the Russian core primarily through economic instruments. Russia's Foreign Intelligence Services in the FSB issued a report in 1994 stating that Russia must play a dominant role on former Soviet territories.³³ The policy was elaborated in May 1996 by Russia's Council on Defense and Foreign Policy, an institution with close links to the government. It underscored that Moscow needed to focus on exerting leadership and expanding economic domination, rather than seeking outright political control.³⁴

Even if the CIS structure was not fully integrated, it provided Moscow with a valuable vehicle for political influence, enabled Russian personnel to dominate various CIS organizations and committees, and provided Moscow with a sense of leadership and continuity as a global superpower. It also helped to counter attempts by Western governments and institutions to integrate these states. In practical terms, under the CIS umbrella, Russia gained access to the military facilities of its former dominions, controlled their air defenses, and focused on the outer border of the CIS as its military frontier. Russian leaders viewed themselves as security leaders and underpinned their policies with a "civilizing" mission of bringing democracy and prosperity to the Soviet successor states.³⁵ Although it depicted the CIS as a voluntary association, the Kremlin's support for other CIS

governments was conditional on their acceptance of the Russian model for integration. Moscow reserved for itself all key positions in the CIS structure and dominance over its most important institutions.

Moscow's long-term objective for the CIS was to create a tighter federation or inter-state union, highly dependent on the Russian center, but without necessarily expanding Russian territory.³⁶ This would entail the development of supra-national organs in various domains, including political, economic, and military structures controlled from Moscow. The goals included an economic union patterned on the European Union (EU), styled as the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), a single military-security structure under Russian command, and close and centralized political coordination of security and foreign policy priorities.

Political cooperation within the CIS has proved extremely weak, as the structure was not transformed into a single state entity. Unlike EU integration, the CIS process was not viewed as a "pooling of sovereignty," whereby Russia would surrender some of its powers and prerogatives to supra-national institutions. On the contrary, Moscow pressed for "asymmetrical sovereignty," in which CIS neighbors surrendered elements of their independence to the Kremlin, which assumed the decisive voice in Commonwealth affairs. The majority of CIS members have defended their independence against Moscow's potential encroachment. Moreover, there has been little sense of common identity or joint citizenship in the CIS and this has been compounded by the organization's bureaucratism and lack of meaningful resources from each member state.

Moscow accepted the formal independence of its neighbors while pursuing economic and military integration and gaining influence over their foreign policies. These objectives were concretized in two official documents: the Basic Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, issued in January 1993, and the Basic Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, released in November 1993. Various pretexts justified Russian domination in the Commonwealth, including defense against a radical Islamic threat from the Caucasus and Central Asia that could spill over to Russian territory and precipitate Western intervention. Within the European CIS, the notion of a large Slavic alliance between Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus was propagated as the fulfillment of

the "coming together" of the three purportedly closely related peoples.

NATO was depicted as a hostile alliance and a dangerous competitor in the region, seeking to lure the CIS states westward and isolate Russia from Europe and the Middle East. Officials in Moscow stressed that any outside attempts to interfere with the integrative processes among any of the former Soviet republics would be viewed as unfriendly acts.³⁷ According to Russian analysts, CIS integration was threatened by the efforts of Western powers and trans-national corporations to establish control over key industries, communications, transportation, and natural resources. NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program was attacked as a mechanism to bind CIS militaries with NATO counterparts. Allied-designed bilateral military cooperation and training programs for CIS officers allegedly hampered the progress of Commonwealth integration. Furthermore, the assimilation of any former Soviet republic into the Western sphere was attacked as part of a long-term plan to build a *cordon sanitaire* around Russia. Any moves to draw Ukraine, Belarus, or Moldova into the Central European Visegrad initiative or even the development of cooperative contacts between Polish and Ukrainian militaries were perceived as part of this Western strategy of subterfuge.

A persistent theme of Russian policy toward the CIS has been Moscow's often exaggerated portrayal of the position of ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking populations in neighboring states. This was particularly evident in countries that opposed Russia's integrative efforts or were determined to join NATO. Defense of Russian co-ethnics has been a component of all major foreign policy and military doctrines of post-Soviet Russia. The forward deployment of the Russian military in CIS states was also described as a form of protection for Russian minorities in all nearby countries.

Additionally, Moscow has attempted to pursue a common foreign policy among CIS members. One striking example was the attempt to forge a joint position against NATO enlargement from the West and Islamic encroachment from the South. Such efforts have proved difficult because of the diversity of positions among Commonwealth governments.³⁸ Unlike in Soviet times, the Kremlin did not seek to closely regulate domestic political developments but simply to assure itself that the incumbent governments would not adopt policies at odds with Russian objectives. To this end, economic controls and political

connections could keep each of the CIS countries in line. A decree issued in September 1995 set the goal of deeper CIS economic integration under Russian leadership, including a Customs Union and a Payments Union.

Since the mid-1990s, Moscow has adopted an increasingly assertive position by promoting a number of integration initiatives inside the CIS framework. These have included military accords such as the Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security and the formation of a Union with Belarus.³⁹ In March 1996, a Joint Chiefs of Staff of the CIS was established under the chairmanship of the Russian general staff and an "Integration Agreement" was signed in Moscow the same month. The Kremlin pursued the notion of a broad CIS defense alliance under overall Russian command in which there would be a common patrolling of external CIS borders and the construction of Russian military bases in all CIS states. Moscow claimed that the creation of a unified armed force would ease the burden of maintaining a number of small armies. In October 2000, the Presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (RBKKT) upgraded their 1992 Collective Security Treaty and gave Russia a dominant military position. Russian officials thereby claimed that they were defending the country's security interests against outside threats.

The GUUAM states (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova) were especially weary of entering any onerous security agreements and sought closer ties with NATO. Each country remained suspicious of Russia's motives within the Commonwealth and viewed the CIS as an impediment to their foreign policy and an attempt to impose supra-national structures. The GUAAM initiative was presented in Moscow as an attempt to destroy the Commonwealth from within – a policy purportedly followed in close consultation with Washington. For Russian officialdom, Ukraine was considered to be the driving force of this "anti-Russian axis" allegedly aimed at the "destruction of Russian statehood."⁴⁰

Despite these intentions, throughout the 1990s there was little real progress toward meaningful CIS integration especially beyond the Russia-focused RBKKT. Of the hundreds of documents drafted by the CIS by 1998 only 130 had been signed by all member states.⁴¹ In addition, Russia and its neighbors continued to impose tariffs on imports in order to protect their domestic producers and to raise revenues. Some analysts calculated that the turnover of goods among CIS countries actually declined during the 1990s,

given the dissolution of the Soviet internal market, economic depression, severe financial constraints, and increasing trade diversification. Part of the reason for the lack of progress in integration was the deep-rooted suspicion among several states that Moscow considered the CIS to be a means for restoring its control and not as an alliance of equal states. The CIS was plainly an instrument of Kremlin policy rather than a mechanism through which the smaller Commonwealth members could counter-balance predominant Russian interests. There were also practical reasons why CIS integration remained obstructed. In the early 1990s, Moscow pressed ahead with radical economic reforms without consulting its allies; this undermined the premise of CIS coordination in economic policy and contributed to the breakdown of economic ties between former Soviet republics.

Under President Putin pressures increased to forge a more effective Commonwealth. The principle of "integration at different speeds" has been applied, with a greater focus on differentiated bilateral relations. Russia's new Foreign Policy Concept asserted that the CIS states must be subordinated to Moscow's interests in a number of arenas, including security questions, the combating of "extremism and terrorism," the coordinated use of natural resources, and the rights of Russian speakers. Early in 2000, the new Russian President pushed for the creation of a CIS Counter-Terrorism Center and a CIS Rapid Reaction Force that would allow Russian security forces to intervene in all CIS countries when this was deemed necessary. The majority of CIS members remained suspicious of such initiatives, viewing them as a hidden threat to their national independence.

The provisions of a law passed in the Duma in July 2001 allowing Russia to incorporate either all or part of other countries acutely disturbed several CIS partners.⁴² Some governments viewed the measure as pressure to follow Moscow's lead or face disintegration. In this context, neighboring states grew alarmed by Moscow's plans to promote usage of Russian language among their citizens; this was perceived as an ominous step toward future territorial claims. The transformation of the CIS into an integrated security organism was depicted in Moscow as a defensive move against further NATO encroachment. Russia regarded itself as the primary defender of former Soviet borders; it declared an obligation to preserve military bases and border guard troops in all CIS countries and maintain mutual air defense agreements.

Officials and security experts have favored the reintegration of much of the former USSR through Russia's economic dominance. Such a strategy would also prevent the unwanted NATO influence and counter the formation of coalitions at odds with Russian objectives. The political use of strategic resources has been a consistent ploy of Russian energy companies linked with the Russian administration. Moscow has positioned itself as the economic, political, and cultural "center of gravity" in Eurasia.⁴³ According to some Russian analysts, Putin has taken several important steps toward restoring Russia's "great power" status.⁴⁴ They point to the country's shifting trade balance, whereby Moscow is reestablishing economic interdependence within the CIS and increasing volumes of trade.

In the case of heavily dependent states, Russian energy enterprises have created joint ventures with local private firms or with industries dependent on Russia's raw materials. These firms then dominated the energy and other sectors while remaining fully dependent on Russian "mother" companies. The local enterprises also developed into strong domestic interest groups lobbying on behalf of their Russian "partners" for favorable trade deals and investment opportunities, while supporting Moscow's foreign policy goals. In a further move at economic integration, in July 2001, the International Exchange Association of CIS member countries and the Moscow Interbank Currency Exchange signed an agreement calling for the creation of "a single financial space" within the CIS. The agreement established rules for clearing barriers among the CIS countries and for common legal arrangements on currency matters. Some Russian commentators voiced concern that many CIS countries will become economic liabilities for Moscow rather than political assets—the recipients of substantial Russian aid rather than productive partners.⁴⁵

Russia's relations with Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova were considered to be of the highest priority and a "vital interest" of Moscow's foreign policy.⁴⁶ Hence, the Kremlin sought to play an active and dominating role in these states. The first "overseas" visit of President Putin on 16 April 2000 was to the Belarusian capital Minsk. Above all, Russia sought to prevent CIS members from falling under the control of "outside alliances," such as NATO. As a result of Russian pressure and unstable domestic developments, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova all recognized Russia as their "strategic partner." Moscow used various

historical and strategic arguments to legitimize its policies toward Belarus and Ukraine. Common Slavic and Orthodox heritage was frequently invoked, as many of Russia's elites viewed the three nations part of one *ethnos* that needed to remain in a single political and military structure. The Russian Orthodox Church claimed that the three peoples could not live apart, since they converted to Christianity at the same time and shared a common history.

Moscow has exploited the economic difficulties and political turmoil of its CIS neighbors in order to expand its influence. This has proved easier in Belarus, a country characterized by a weak sense of national identity and whose President, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, maintained a robust dictatorship, and harbored ambitions to become a pan-Slavic leader. In Ukraine, Moscow's exertions have proven more difficult because of the aspirations of many Ukrainians for a separate state and the pro-Western orientation of a sector of the Ukrainian political elite. With regard to Moldova, peace-keeping has proved to be a useful tool for exerting influence over an unstable state and maintaining Moscow's strategic position.⁴⁷ Russia has not been constrained in its peace-keeping operations in the "near abroad" in terms of legitimacy, rules of engagement, collateral damage, or public scrutiny. In several CIS states, Moscow has combined peace-keeping with counter-insurgency or defended one of the sides in the conflict, such as the Transnistrian separatists in Moldova.

Moscow has taken upon itself the role of "Eurasian peace-keeper," even without a formal UN mandate and despite complaints that NATO was acting unilaterally in the Balkans. The Kremlin presented its peace-keeping missions as CIS operations even though it has not received such a mandate from other Commonwealth states. Moscow has not permitted either the UN or the OSCE to assume peace-keeping operations in any of the former Soviet territories, despite the fact that it demanded such operations in the Balkans instead of NATO missions. In all of its peace-keeping interventions, Moscow has frozen the armed confrontations in order to "establish Russia as indispensable to any solution of that conflict."⁴⁸ It thereby developed strong political leverage over the incumbent governments and its troops were in effect transformed into a quasi-permanent occupation force.

Belarus: For the Russian authorities, a close relationship with Belarus was viewed as an imperative, not only from a strategic perspective, but in order to project an image of Russia's continuing

“Great Power” status. Throughout the 1990s, Belarusian foreign and security policy remained focused on a close relationship with Russia.⁴⁹ With the assumption of power by President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in July 1994, this orientation became even more focused. Lukashenka undercut the country’s independence and pursued a close union with Russia. He preferred a strong bilateral relationship between Belarus and Russia or a core mini-USSR with Kazakhstan and Ukraine, rather than supporting Moscow’s attempts to establish a functional but disparate CIS as a successor to the Soviet Union.

Similarly to most former Soviet republics, Belarus has been almost totally dependent on Russian energy supplies. Moscow has remained one of Minsk’s major trading partners, accountable for roughly 80% of its imports and 90% of its exports, and its economic interest groups maintained a close connection throughout the decade. Most of Russia’s regions also pursued direct trade links with Belarus. Moreover, nearly 70% of Russia’s exports to Europe passed through Belarus, one of the major transit countries in the region. Hence, Moscow was in turn highly dependent on Minsk’s cooperativeness and compliance. During Putin’s presidency, the pace of attaining control over Belarusian energy infrastructure has accelerated and economic pressures have been applied to gain Minsk’s compliance. Lukashenka asserted that the Kremlin was resorting to “unprecedented” political pressure to force through the sale of the *Beltransgaz* gas transportation and storage company to *Gazprom*. He also strongly objected to Putin’s proposal that Belarus simply become a federal unit inside Russia, as this would marginalize his position in Minsk.

Lukashenka’s foreign policies were generally in tune with Russian interests. Despite calls by Western powers for Russia to take a more active pro-democracy role in Belarus, the Kremlin seemed content to let Lukashenka determine the outcome of the September 2001 presidential elections through the regime’s tight media controls and harassment of the opposition. Moreover, the pro-Western movement was weak and disorganized and of little threat to Russian interests. Minsk’s anti-NATO rhetoric suited Moscow, even when Lukashenka’s eccentric behavior appeared to be embarrassing.

In February 1995, Moscow and Minsk concluded a treaty of “friendship and cooperation.” Between 1995 and 1997, Russia and Belarus signed various agreements abolishing border controls,

creating a monetary union, and structuring a confederative relationship. In April 1996, a treaty was initialed establishing the Community of Sovereign States. In April 1997, Yeltsin and Lukashenka called for a "Union" between the two countries and in May 1997, they formally signed a Union Charter. Lukashenka's ultimate objective may have been to obtain a senior position in the inter-state structure and to assure Belarus long-term economic support, including the management of its energy debt and beneficial trading agreements. In December 1998, an additional series of documents were signed furthering the integration process.⁵⁰ Yeltsin needed the Belarusian connection to uphold some measure of public support for his "Greater Russian" foreign policy and to remove the issue as a rallying point among nationalists and communists.

Although Moscow desired close political supervision and military dominance over Belarusian territory, it tried to avoid any major economic commitments and remained concerned that the country could become an enormous burden on Russia's budget. The December 1998 agreement declared the "unification" of the two states and a year later in December 1999, the two presidents signed a treaty committing Russia and Belarus to establishing a confederal state. Lukashenka's move was overwhelmingly popular in Belarus, where in some opinion polls almost 90% of the population supported the creation of a single state.

The Russian authorities exerted substantial influence on Belarusian politics not only through their support for Lukashenka but through the state television media, which was widely viewed in Belarus. For instance, during the summer of 2001, a number of critical programs were aired on pro-Kremlin Russian television channels, pressuring Minsk to make compromises with Moscow on various economic deals. Moreover, observers believed it highly unlikely that Lukashenka would have won the September 2001 elections if the Russian media had campaigned to discredit him in the eyes of the Belarusian public and presented the programs of opposition candidates.⁵¹

In the military realm, a plan was devised via the Treaty on Collective Security to create three coalition military units in the CIS: in Central Asia, Caucasus, and Belarus, with a joint headquarters in Moscow. The objective was to develop a common military structure focused on peace-keeping missions to be conducted by CIS member countries within the Commonwealth area. Moscow also planned the creation of a 300,000 strong

military corps combining Russian and Belarusian forces that would be deployed along the borders of the Baltic states if they gained NATO membership. To guarantee Belarusian compliance with Moscow's security objectives, Moscow exerted influence in determining personnel in the Belarusian Ministry of Defense, including the choice of the Minister himself. Such moves were assisted by the fact that Belarus had undergone minimal democratic reform in the state apparatus, military structure, party apparatus, and police and internal security networks.

Moscow and Minsk made plans for a joint military doctrine, a common command structure and air defense, legislative integration, a joint defense industry, and the common use of military infrastructure and bases. Moscow viewed Belarus as the most useful forward base against NATO's eastward expansion. Hence, it needed to guarantee the permanent presence of Russian forces on Belarusian territory and complete command over its airspace. Moscow believed that a significant Russian military presence in Belarus and in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad would discourage further NATO expansion or deter any stationing of NATO troops on the territories of new members such as Poland. Moscow and Minsk have also proposed the creation of an "East European" regional force to purportedly counter terrorism and contribute to the emerging "Eurasian security architecture." The suggested name is significant in that it presupposes a region-wide scope regardless of the position of many East European states.

A Russia-Belarus Union would remove the prospect of a Baltic-Black Sea belt of states, an idea initially promoted by Ukraine's President Leonid Kravchuk. The idea only received a lukewarm reception in Poland and the Baltic states, as they were more interested in moving toward NATO rather than devising some new undetermined regional structure. Over the coming years, observers envisage the steady transfer of decision-making powers from Minsk to Moscow as a more integrated and centralized joint state emerges.⁵²

Ukraine: Since the breakup of the USSR, few Russian politicians have been willing to accept the permanent independence of Ukraine. In Russian self-identity, Ukraine continued to be viewed as the historic origin of Russian statehood and the westernmost province of "Mother Russia." The Kremlin has not planned for a military invasion or a wholesale takeover of the country. Moscow's

ideal scenario for Ukraine appears to be the country's "Belarusification" by virtually abolishing inter-state borders and creating a close political and military alliance directed from Moscow. Under both the Kravchuk and Kuchma presidencies during the 1990s, Kyiv resisted pressures for close integration with either the CIS or with Russia. It insisted on only participating in bilateral and CIS projects that directly benefited Ukraine. It opposed the establishment of CIS coordinating structures and supra-national bodies and avoided integration in the political and military spheres by refusing to sign the collective security treaty in Tashkent in May 1992.

For most of the 1990s, Moscow's exertions produced only limited results because of Kyiv's pro-Western aspirations. However, during the late 1990s, Ukraine became more vulnerable to Russian influences, largely because of the political turmoil surrounding President Leonid Kuchma. The Kremlin exploited Kuchma's ostracism by the West by posing as a more reliable ally. Power struggles between political interests, industrial lobbies, and state structures continue to swirl around the country and provide opportunities for the Kremlin to pull Ukraine into a tighter orbit. The Kremlin has engaged in various forms of subterfuge, including energy blackmail, economic buyouts, the discrediting of pro-independence politicians, attempts at diplomatic isolation, and the manipulation of ethnic issues.

Kuchma stood accused by his opponents throughout 2001 of cracking down on media freedoms and of playing a role in the disappearance and murder of a critical journalist Georgiy Gongadze. The entire episode was believed by some Ukrainian observers to have been engineered by local secret services in close collaboration with their Russian counterparts. Although the President survived the ensuing storm, the Ukrainian parliament, dominated by a coalition of Communists, Socialists, Russophiles, and regional oligarchs, turned its fire on Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko. The Ukrainian legislature passed a vote of no-confidence in the reformist and pro-Western Yushchenko government, which promptly resigned, while Kuchma survived. Analysts concluded that plutocrats and special interest groups linked with Moscow were determined to sabotage or derail the Yushchenko program, which threatened their semi-legal business enterprises. The relative success of Yushchenko's administration in stabilizing the economy and pursuing structural reform had been

increasingly undermined by political ploys and by oligarchic groups fearful of transparency and Western business competition.

Meanwhile, Kuchma was plainly willing to sacrifice Yushchenko in order to remain as head of state, deflect attention away from his own political problems, and ultimately make a deal with the oligarchs while moving closer to Moscow. Kuchma's domestic travails reinforced Ukraine's "tilt to the East," while discouraging Western governments and businessmen from dealing with what was perceived as an increasingly repressive and corrupt government.⁵³ The Kremlin exploited the opportunities afforded by Ukraine's political turmoil. It offered support to President Kuchma in an effort to draw the country into a tighter Russian orbit. Thus, Putin visited Kyiv in the midst of the political crisis in a display of support for Kuchma, just as criticisms increased in the West against the President's alleged tolerance of human rights abuses. At the Putin-Kuchma summit in Dnipropetrovsk in February 2001, the two leaders agreed to deepen economic and technological cooperation and to reconnect Ukraine to Russia's energy grid.

Russian capital investment in Ukraine has dramatically increased as the country's political instability has discouraged potential Western investors from participating in the privatization process. Russian enterprises have acquired oil refineries, banks, aluminum plants, and parts of the broadcast media. Ukrainian analysts were concerned that these sizable Russian buyouts would jeopardize Ukraine's sovereignty, especially as Putin seemed intent on making Russian business serve state policy. Some analysts believed that Moscow could offer a swap of the Ukrainian debt to Russia in return for Russian private ownership of some key Ukrainian assets such as gas pipelines and oil facilities.

During the 1990s, the Ukrainian state remained precariously balanced between West and East and Moscow was perturbed that their "younger brother" had moved steadily closer to the Atlantic Alliance through various initiatives, such as NATO's Partnership for Peace program and the Gore-Kuchma Commission. Furthermore, the country became *per capita* the third largest recipient of American aid. At the same time, Kuchma needed to maintain some equilibrium in his ties with Moscow in order not to alienate the large Russian-speaking population or the still-powerful *ex-nomenklatura* that maintained many of its traditional political and economic links. During the early Yeltsin

years, such a balancing act was possible because Moscow perfunctorily accepted the reality of Ukrainian independence and was preoccupied with its internal power struggles. The Yeltsin government did not raise territorial or minority questions, although Russian parliamentarians did sometimes threaten Kyiv, even laying claim to Sevastopol and Crimea. In July 1993, the Duma declared Sevastopol a Russian city and openly encouraged separatism among the Russian majority in Crimea. Yeltsin officially distanced himself from such initiatives.

Moscow only signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership with Kyiv in May 1997, in which both sides pledged to respect each other's territorial integrity. The Treaty regulated the status of the Black Sea fleet and eliminated the previous ambiguity surrounding Moscow's recognition of Ukrainian borders, where it had previously promised "respect for borders," provided Kyiv remained "within the framework of the CIS." The Treaty was finally ratified by both chambers of the Russian parliament during 1999. Despite this move, by May 2002 Moscow had still not demarcated the common border.

Under Putin, foreign policy was energized in terms of objectives, enticements, and pressures although the President did not raise any territorial questions with Ukraine. The Kremlin became more assertive with its former Soviet satellites and was believed to possess a more extensive blueprint for dominating Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. In order to bring Kyiv more firmly under its control and steer it away from the West, the Kremlin engaged in various forms of subterfuge and subversion. As mentioned above, the diverse methods have included energy blackmail, economic buyouts, media propaganda, the discrediting of pro-independence politicians, attempts at diplomatic isolation, manipulation of ethnic issues, threats of direct military intervention to protect Russian ethnics, lingering territorial claims by stoking the Crimean question, and challenging the ownership of the Sevastopol naval base.

If Russia builds new energy pipelines bypassing Ukraine, Kyiv's leverage with Moscow will further decrease.⁵⁴ Energy supplies have been manipulated as the major tool of Russian policy toward Kyiv, with Ukraine dependent for over 40% of its basic needs upon Russia and heavily indebted to its energy monopolies.⁵⁵ Moscow's ability to injure Ukraine's economy through energy blackmail, the raising of prices, or by calling in the state's debts has created a serious threat to the country's social and political

stability.⁵⁶ Moreover, pressures to integrate into the CIS gradually reduced Ukraine's sovereignty, while bilateral arrangements between Moscow and Kyiv have increasingly undermined Ukraine's ability to administer its own economy. Russia engaged in an "energy war" with Ukraine in 1993-1994, during which cuts in deliveries crippled sizable portions of the economy. Moscow sought specific Ukrainian concessions as payment for its Soviet-era debts, including full Russian control over the Black Sea Fleet and the surrender of Ukraine's nuclear warheads. Moscow desisted from imposing a full energy embargo partly because of the negative impact on its own energy revenues and partly because it wanted to hold this weapon in reserve. With Ukraine also heavily dependent on Russian markets for much of its industry, Russia possessed a powerful trade weapon at its disposal. However, Moscow also faced a dilemma in that the closure of Ukrainian industries could harm Russian enterprises. It cannot be excluded that the authorities in Moscow may still be willing to sustain a smaller blow in order to inflict a more powerful one on an obstreperous neighbor.

In a switch of strategy, from 1994 onwards Moscow halted energy blackmail and sought instead to gain ownership of Ukraine's energy facilities. The Kremlin calculated that too much energy pressure could restrain Russia's ability to transport natural gas to Western Europe through Ukrainian territory and thus affect its hard currency revenues. *Gazprom* tried to gain a majority stake of 51% in the pipelines crossing Ukraine, but its schemes were initially blocked by the government in Kyiv, while parliament prohibited the privatization of the oil and gas industries. Concerted attempts to dominate the Ukrainian energy sector continued into the Putin presidency.

The Russian minority question has been exploited by Moscow to apply political pressures on Kyiv. Russian officials have demanded dual citizenship for Russian ethnics in Ukraine and used this as a pretext to delay the signing of a bilateral friendship treaty. Kyiv understandably rejected such proposals, as they would have allowed Moscow to claim some jurisdiction over regions where Russian-speakers predominated and undermine the authority of the Ukrainian government. The administration remained concerned about possible Russian support for regionalism and separatism in Crimea and the eastern areas of the country, especially as questions about the permanence of Ukraine's borders have been raised by Russian politicians.⁵⁷

The Crimean issue was manipulated by Russian leaders to prevent the Ukrainian government from fully consolidating independence and moving in a pro-Western direction. In January 1992, the Russian parliament formally examined the legality of the transfer of Crimea from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction in 1954. Although neither the Yeltsin nor Putin administrations have openly questioned the status of Crimea, they evidently approved of such debates as a means of influencing Ukrainian policy. Crimean controversies were also linked with festering disputes over the final territorial status of the port city of Sevastopol and the division and basing of the Black Sea Fleet. Observers concluded that Kyiv was confronted with an ultimatum from Moscow: either to make concessions on the Black Sea Fleet or face more fundamental questions over its control over the Crimean peninsula.⁵⁸ Despite Moscow's subsequent calming of the dispute, none of the legislation passed by the Russian parliament claiming Crimea was subsequently repealed.

Some Ukrainian officials and opposition politicians remained anxious that Moscow could employ various forms of blackmail and intimidation to ensure Kyiv's compliance with its strategic goals. Moscow's machinations could contribute to splitting the state and society between a pro-Western, independence-minded western Ukraine and a pro-Russian and anti-NATO eastern Ukraine. In such potentially unstable conditions, all of Ukraine's western neighbors were thus carefully monitoring developments in Kyiv. In order to shield themselves from negative Russian influences, the authorities in Kyiv tried to counterbalance Moscow's position by establishing closer relations with other CIS members within the aforementioned GUUAM grouping. GUUAM was formed in 1997 and consisted initially of four states that feared Russian domination: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova; they were later joined by Uzbekistan. The GUUAM states rejected Russian pressures to join a CIS collective security agreement. Ukrainian authorities were fearful of being left alone to face Russia in the eventuality of a NATO expansion into Central Europe. Kyiv grew concerned in the mid-1990s that NATO enlargement would assign Ukraine to a Russian sphere of influence and divide the continent into two competing blocs.

Although President Kuchma asserted on different occasions that Ukraine would not join the Russia-Belarus Union, Moscow planned to gradually entice Kyiv in this direction. The

political crisis in the fall of 2000, following the assassination of the investigative journalist Gongadze, provided an opportunity for the Kremlin to move closer to Kyiv by offering political support to an embattled President. Western criticisms of Kuchma's policies toward the Ukrainian media were countered by Russia's backing for Kyiv. In a move that evidently pleased Moscow, in the fall of 2000, the Western-oriented Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk was replaced by Anatoli Zlenko, whose first foreign visit in his new capacity was to Moscow.

The importance of Ukraine to the Kremlin was underscored with the appointment of former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as Russia's new ambassador to Kyiv in May 2001. Chernomyrdin was also declared the economic and trade envoy of the Russian President in Kyiv. The new ambassador promptly criticized Kyiv's policy of neutrality and intimated that such a stance could undermine Ukraine's "strategic interests."⁵⁹ He openly interfered in Ukraine's parliamentary elections in March 2002 by publicly supporting the pro-presidential parties. Furthermore, the Russian embassy in Kyiv became more assertive in expressing its "concerns" over the rights of Russian ethnics and Russian speakers in Ukraine in such areas as education and language use.

Russian economic interests in Ukraine continue to expand and Russian companies have invested heavily in the most strategic Ukrainian industries. Some analysts estimated that in the year 2000 alone, over \$200 million was spent in buying up important Ukrainian assets, including oil companies, refineries, banks, metallurgical complexes, and chemical factories.⁶⁰ According to Sergei Markov of the Kremlin-associated Institute of Political Research, improving relations between Russia and Ukraine was the result of a calculated policy.⁶¹ It was intended to engender a closed economic alliance that would facilitate the entrance of the two countries into the EU. By evidently creating an "Eastern European common market," to include countries that were "unwanted by Europe," such as Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, they could allegedly make faster progress toward eventual EU membership.

While seeking to leverage Ukraine's energy dependency for political benefits, Moscow also tried to shield itself from potential Ukrainian instabilities. In particular, it moved to decrease Russian dependence on Ukraine as a major transit country for its energy supplies to Central and Western Europe.⁶²

Russian major gas company *Gazprom* has been active in building alternative routes for Russian exports: for example, with a pipeline projected through Belarus and Poland and another planned from Poland to Slovakia to bypass Ukraine.

Attempts to dominate the Ukrainian energy sector accelerated under Putin. Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov and his Ukrainian counterpart Anatoliy Kinakh agreed in August 2001 to establish an "energy union" and in October 2002 crafted an inter-state gas consortium. The Ukrainian opposition issued alerts about the perils of Russian economic dominance and in February 2003, Socialist Party spokesman informed parliament that Russian businesses jeopardized Ukraine's national security by acquiring oil refineries, raw-aluminum production, communications, and other strategic enterprises. The progress of neighboring Central European states toward EU membership is also reinforcing the dependence of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova on the Russian market, and the Schengen regime is likely to strengthen this process. To compound its problems, Ukraine has become enmeshed in a CIS Free Trade Zone with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. The arrangement was approved in August 2003 and led to protests by some Ukrainian lawmakers that it would further undercut the country's sovereignty and limit its prospects for EU entry.

In the military arena, in January 2001, Moscow and Kyiv concluded a cooperation treaty that undermined any intensified participation of Ukraine in NATO's partnership programs. According to several clauses of the treaty, Russia would obtain an unlimited right to organize military exercises on Ukrainian territory, form common naval units, and jointly produce armaments. Although Kyiv consistently opposed the creation of any new military blocs on the territory of the former USSR, this position weakened as Russian influence continued to expand.

Ukraine's parliamentary elections on 31 March 2002 were closely monitored in Moscow. Russia appeared keen to capitalize upon its growing success in reorienting Ukraine's foreign policy eastward. The main threat to Kremlin policy and Russia's increasing influence in Ukraine was former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko and his *Our Ukraine* bloc.⁶³ Russian language media outlets in Ukraine have manufactured a "Brzezinski plan," a conspiracy supposedly concocted by a group of U.S. policy makers and advisers to overthrow President Kuchma and replace

him with Yushchenko. The scheme was allegedly modeled on the ouster of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. According to Russian sources, the "Brzezinski plan" was behind the "Kuchmagate" scandal that erupted in November 2000, when incriminating tapes illicitly made in Kuchma's office were released, leading to Ukraine's largest-ever opposition demonstrations. In effect, the trumpeting of a "Brzezinski plan" proved a classic example of disinformation that deflected attention from possible Russian involvement in the scandal.

Controversial Kremlin strategists and Putin imagemakers Gleb Pavlovskii and Marat Gelman, joint owners of the Fund for Effective Politics (FEP), provided maximum publicity for the "Brzezinski plan." The FEP was engaged in various suspicious activities during the Ukrainian election campaign together with the pro-Moscow Social Democratic Party (SDPU-O), whose main target was Yushchenko. Apart from the Communist Party, only the SDPU-O, , supported Ukraine's membership of the Russia-Belarus Union. SDPU-O leaders also raised the question of changing the 1989 law on languages by adding Russian as a second "official language."

According to Taras Kuzio, the SDPU-O was also the main backer of the extreme nationalist and anti-Western, Rukh for Unity (NRU-ye) splinter group created only three days before the "Kuchmagate" scandal began.⁶⁴ The NRU-ye and the Progressive Socialists played the role of "radical opposition" parties on the right and left of the political spectrum respectively, but closely controlled or influenced by the executive. This was similar to the position occupied by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party in Russia. The NRU-ye controlled the Ternopil-based "Tryzub" paramilitaries led by Colonel Yevhen Fil, who orchestrated violence at a demonstration in March 2001 in order to discredit the anti-Kuchma opposition.

The SDPU-O also attempted to blacken ex-premier Yushchenko's character. It forged an agreement with the FEP to provide "campaign advice" and created a fake Yushchenko website. FEP and its SDPU-O allies were reportedly also behind Ukraine's second taping scandal, that of Yushchenko and Kyiv Mayor Oleksandr Omelchenko in early January 2002. The tape was released by the civic group For Trustworthiness in Politics, which was closely linked to the SDPU-O and the NRU-ye and which aimed to discredit Yushchenko.

Ukraine's parliamentary elections became the scene of fierce competition over the country's future direction. While the pro-Russian parties and most of the substantial economic interest groups would prefer to see Ukraine "rejoin Europe together with Russia," the pro-Western organizations wanted to see more rapid integration, regardless of Russia. The latter option has been promoted by Yushchenko and his allies; the former by Russian officials and their Ukrainian partners. On the eve of Ukraine's elections, Yushchenko claimed that statements issued by some Russian officials constituted "direct interference in Ukraine's internal affairs and its electoral process."⁶⁵ He was referring to a pronouncement by Russian presidential administration chief Aleksandr Voloshin, who singled out specific parties for praise in strengthening Russian-Ukrainian relations, while condemning others for their "anti-Russian positions." *Our Ukraine* also accused Russian politicians of provoking anti-Western sentiments and deliberately seeking to bloc Ukraine's access to the Euro-Atlantic structures by artificially fanning "anti-Western hysteria."

Moldova: Russian authorities condemned the first independent Moldovan government for its alleged "Romanianism" and its attempts to subdue the Slavic populations along the Dniestr River, including the outlawing of the Russian language. The Transnistrian situation was depicted by Moscow as an instance of defending the rights of Russians in the "near abroad" although Russian ethnics only constituted 25% of the population in Moldova's Transnistrian enclave.⁶⁶ The new independent Moldovan government initially did not join the CIS after parliament refused to ratify membership in August 1993. Moscow then applied economic pressures, including the imposition of punitive agricultural tariffs. Following the election of a more accommodating government in Chisinau, CIS membership was eventually ratified in April 1994.

The Transnistrian issue has been the main bone of contention between Russia and Moldova. The pro-Russian region broke away from Moldova in 1990 over alleged fears that Moldovans would seek reunification with their ethnic kin in neighboring Romania. Armed conflicts followed in 1992 and several hundred people died in seven months of fighting between pro-Russian separatists and Moldovan security forces. Fighting subsided in July 1992 with a Russian-mediated settlement enforced by Russian troops already stationed in the region. A final accord on the region's political status has yet to be adopted, despite

a series of agreements under international mediation by Russia, Ukraine, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The Moldovan authorities were initially labeled “adventurist” by Russian spokesmen for seeking the destruction of the Transnistrian republic. In its pursuit of peace-keeping as a weapon to regain influence over Moldova, Moscow used its 14th Army already stationed in the country to assist the Transnistrian separatists through supplies of weapons, resources, and training. The Kremlin claimed that it was upholding its impartiality.⁶⁷ The Russian military was commanded by General Aleksander Lebed, a key Yeltsin supporter with broad backing in Russia, even though Moscow had no mandate from the CIS to launch its mission in Moldova.

Russian military pressure and energy blackmail, with Moldova almost completely dependent on Russian supplies, as well as the threat of a division of the country, persuaded the Moldovan government to formally join the CIS. After the mid-1990s, there was increasing Moldovan cooperation with Commonwealth economic initiatives and moves toward closer links with Romania were blocked. The Moldovan authorities had little choice but to make compromises with Moscow, fearing a much graver scenario of instability.

Moscow used Transnistria as a political counterweight to the Moldovan administration. In the light of potential Romanian membership in NATO, the Russian military deployment in Moldova was depicted as an understandable “counter-measure.”⁶⁸ Moreover, Russia was reluctant to accept the authority of the United Nations in its peacekeeping missions in any area viewed as part of Moscow’s “vital strategic interests.” The Moldovan authorities complained in vain that Russian forces were not neutral in the conflict and were not suitable peace-keepers because they openly supported the Transnistrian separatists.

Moscow persistently delayed implementing agreements on evacuating its troops from Transnistria.⁶⁹ It wanted an open-ended deployment and Moldovan compliance. Numbering approximately 2,500 troops, Russian forces remained in Transnistria despite the complaints of the Moldovan government and regular agreements on troop withdrawals. Under a 1999 OSCE agreement signed in Istanbul, Moscow pledged to withdraw its troops and arsenal from Transnistria by the end of 2001. However, it commenced only a very limited evacuation as of July 1999. Although the Russian side

claimed it would vacate the territory on schedule, only old armaments were destroyed or removed, and even this provoked protests by Transnistrian leaders. The deadline was extended until the end of 2003 but this too would not be met by Moscow.

Russian generals urged the Kremlin to repudiate the OSCE agreement and maintain a permanent base in Moldova as a staging point for Russia's military projection toward the Balkans.⁷⁰ In addition, Moscow asked the Chisinau government to join the CIS treaty on the "joint protection of external borders." This would have involved the deployment of additional Russian troops and their positioning in western Moldova, outside the Transnistria region. Russian proposals for closer military ties were rejected by the Moldovan authorities. Although Moscow and Chisinau signed an interstate treaty in 1990, the Russian parliament consistently failed to ratify it and the Kremlin expected Moldova to include protocols enhancing Russian influence over Moldovan security and foreign policy before a new treaty was confirmed. Moldova provided a poignant example of how the Russian parliament was employed to delay the implementation of bilateral treaties and apply pressure on the "near abroad."

Moscow persisted in drawing Moldova into a tight military pact. Pressures were exerted to form a joint council on regional security issues in which Moldova would need to consult with Russia before it adopted any policy initiatives. General Anatoly Kvashnin, chief of the General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces, even proposed that Chisinau legalize Russia's military presence and confer basing rights for Russian troops.⁷¹ Moldovan officials responded that the country's constitution prohibited the stationing of foreign troops on its territory.

The overwhelming Communist Party victory in the February 2001 Moldovan elections encouraged Moscow to conclude that the country would veer more toward its orbit. Indeed, the victors declared that Russia was Moldova's "strategic partner" despite the country's formal stance of neutrality. After the elections, a treaty was finally signed and declared to be the first step in Moldova's progress toward the Russia-Belarus Union.⁷² Upon his election in April 2001, Moldova's Communist President Vladimir Voronin asserted that improving ties with Russia was one of his top priorities, along with resolving the Transnistrian dispute.⁷³ Voronin and Putin signed the treaty during the Moldovan leader's visit to Moscow in November 2001. Both legislatures ratified the document by an overwhelming majority

despite a pro-Transnistrian lobby in Russia's Duma. The treaty was a disappointment to Transnistrian leaders who wanted the document to mention the existence of a "common state" composed of Moldova and Transnistria.

At the same time, Moldova had to agree to compromises to gain official Russian recognition of its territorial integrity. It had to comply with Moscow's insistence that Russia was the main arbiter and guarantor in the Transnistrian dispute. Furthermore, the document gave the Russian language partial official status in a country where some 65% of the population of 4.4 million spoke Moldovan. Chisinau pledged to provide "necessary conditions in accordance with Moldovan law" for those who wanted to study in Russian.

Moscow began to exercise political and economic pressures on the Transnistrian leadership to abide with Kremlin policy. For example, in February 2002 *Gazprom* cut gas supplies to a major Transnistrian steel enterprise on the grounds that it had not paid for its deliveries. The separatist Foreign Minister Valerii Litskay accused Russia of trying to impose economic pressure on the self-proclaimed republic. He stated that the decision to cut supplies coincided with the visit to the region of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov.

Pro-Romanian and independence activists grew especially anxious over the creeping Russification of Moldova after the 2001 elections. Protests were staged in the capital between January and April 2002 against what was perceived as the deliberate elimination of Romanian national identity. Demonstrators objected to the introduction of compulsory Russian-language classes in schools and the inauguration of new history textbooks that questioned Moldova's Romanian heritage. The Voronin government also planned to recentralize the state by introducing changes in the territorial administration while creating a more politically compliant judiciary. In February 2002, with escalating public protests, the government annulled the decision to introduce compulsory Russian-language classes. It also declared a moratorium on replacing the teaching of the "History of Romanians" with the "History of Moldovans." The crisis threatened to challenge the legitimacy of the government and soured relations between Russia and Romania, who mutually accused each other of interference in Moldova's internal affairs.

Moldova remained dependent on Russian energy and its foreign trade was geared toward Russia. With its political

breakthrough in Chisinau, Moscow made plans for further inroads into the Moldovan economy and the domination of its mass media. During Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov's visit to Chisinau in October 2001, he was reportedly given a list of some sixty Moldovan enterprises that were slated for sale and seeking Russian investments. Figures indicated that during the previous year Moldova was the number one destination *per capita* for Russian direct investment, followed by Belarus and Ukraine.

Kaliningrad: The Kaliningrad exclave bordering Poland and Lithuania constituted Moscow's remaining outpost on the Baltic Sea and was perceived as a significant security asset containing a major military base. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it also became a major source and transit point of smuggling and organized crime in the wider region. Both neighboring Poland and Lithuania endeavored to establish cooperative relations with the Kaliningrad authorities. This raised fears in Moscow that Warsaw and Vilnius were seeking to gain control over the region and sever it from Russia.⁷⁴ Debates have raged on as to the extent of the *oblast's* autonomy and whether it was advisable to establish close relations with neighboring states and the EU. Some policy makers favored turning the area into a free economic zone to attract foreign investment. But this would necessitate major economic reforms and political decentralization that could undermine Kaliningrad's ties with Moscow.

Moscow has proved unwilling to give Kaliningrad a special status, fearful of creating a precedent for other Russian regions that may seek greater autonomy. Under Putin, there was a tightening of controls over Kaliningrad and limitations on the freedom of maneuver of the local governor, especially in his foreign contacts. This included the blocking of several projects between Kaliningrad and neighboring states. The Kaliningrad authorities needed to clear all their political, security, and economic initiatives with Moscow. The objective was to control the exclave more effectively and determine its level of cross-border interaction, out of fear that the *oblast* could evolve toward autonomy and independence.

Political leaders in Kaliningrad have proved to be less concerned about Baltic accession to NATO than their Moscow counterparts and favored closer ties with both Warsaw and Vilnius. Moscow continued to give mixed signals about the economic development of Kaliningrad. Intensive ties with Poland

and Lithuania could pull the region away from Russia itself, while neglect and deterioration could also spur separatist feelings. In an example of Moscow's resistance, the Russian government opposed the establishment of modern and effective border crossings.

Poland and Lithuania were adamantly opposed to the Russian idea of a special transit corridor to Kaliningrad from Russia proper. As both states moved closer toward EU accession, they needed to adopt the Schengen criteria, according to which the EU drops internal border controls but adopts a strict visa regime for countries outside the Union, including Russia. Such a policy could exacerbate growing economic disparities between Kaliningrad and its neighbors and could generate instability in the isolated territory. Meanwhile, EU officials were concerned that Kaliningrad's well-established networks of organized crime could exacerbate existing problems if border security failed to be strictly enforced.

Moscow viewed with suspicion any supra-national structures among the CIS states that bypassed Kremlin control or the emergence of any rival power centers. It sought to undermine any new regional structures between the Baltic and Black seas that could involve Kaliningrad and replicate the Visegrad initiative in Central Europe, moving the former Soviet republics toward NATO. For the Kremlin, any challenge to its regional dominance was condemned as a threat to Russia's national security.

Obstructing a Baltic NATO

Russian political leaders did not believe that they could realistically integrate the three Baltic countries into the CIS or any other super-state structure. Instead, they sought to place Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in an undefined "neutral zone" between NATO and the CIS and between Central Europe and Russia. In this way, NATO influences would be minimized and Russian security interests would be safeguarded. In the Kremlin's view, former Soviet borders, including those of the Baltic republics, retained a measure of validity as the major parameters of exclusively Russian influence and a barrier against Western penetration. Russian officials persistently claimed that the Baltic states entered the USSR voluntarily and legally at the close of World War Two. This has outraged the Baltic governments and reinforced their assertions that Moscow has a grand design to reabsorb their territories. Soon after regaining independence, the three Baltic republics dismissed any prospect of joining the CIS.

Membership in this Moscow-centered organism was perceived as incompatible with NATO and EU integration. The Commonwealth was viewed as another attempt to promote Russian control over neighboring states.

After an initial period of cordiality between the Russian government and the Baltic republics during the collapse of the USSR, Moscow's position hardened. The planned Soviet troop withdrawal was made an issue in bilateral negotiations, in which the Kremlin expected additional conditions to be fulfilled by the Baltic side, especially in the arena of minority rights. Due largely to Western pressures and incentives, Russian troop withdrawal was eventually completed by 1994, despite Moscow's persistent criticisms of Baltic treatment of the Russian minority.

During the first year of Putin's tenure, stress was placed on preventing NATO membership for the three Baltic states. Their potential inclusion was condemned as a provocative move against Russia and an attempt to isolate Russia from Europe through the construction of a *cordon sanitaire*. Officials asserted that the inclusion of any Baltic country would permanently sour relations with Moscow and provoke unspecified countermeasures. It would change the "balance of forces" in the region and derail any closer ties between Russia and NATO.

Unable to significantly influence internal political developments, the Kremlin tried to isolate the three states internationally. Moscow promoted tensions with and within the three Baltic countries in order to block their accession to NATO, since good relations with neighbors mark an important prerequisite for Alliance membership. It also manipulated the Russian minority question to depict the three governments as repressive and failing to meet European standards for minority protection and human rights.

An assortment of political and economic tools were employed by Moscow to disqualify the Baltics from meeting the criteria for NATO membership by depicting them as unstable entities.⁷⁵ In the arena of ethnic politics, Moscow's new foreign policy concept raised fresh concerns over the treatment of twenty million Russians residing in the "near abroad." The Kremlin claimed the right to represent and defend the interests not only of Russian ethnics throughout the former USSR, but also of populations whose primary language was Russian as a result of decades of official Russification.

When he was Russia's Foreign Minister, even the recognized "Westernizer" Andrei Kozyrev played the Baltic card when it suited the Kremlin's political postures. He claimed that the position of Russian minorities in the three republics was a vital strategic issue for Russian diplomacy.⁷⁶ On different occasions, statements have been made and reports issued that a massive exodus of Russians has been taking place from the Baltic states because of ethnic violence and official discrimination. Some commentators even claimed that a policy of apartheid has been pursued by the three Baltic governments. International organizations have countered such claims and failed to find evidence of gross human rights violations.

As all three Baltic governments adopted policies of greater inclusion and largely met Western standards, the minority issue became less acute through the latter part of the 1990s. However, Moscow remained intent on manipulating the ethnic issue at convenient moments. Such an approach heightened concerns in the Baltic capitals that a future nationalistic regime in Moscow could even employ military means to support secessionist movements aiming to establish new Russian enclaves in the pursuit of a "Greater Russia."

The Putin administration intensified the external ethnic question. In late 2001, the Russian President launched a policy initiative designed to increase the level of ethno-linguistic tensions in the Baltic states.⁷⁷ Putin publicly urged Russians and Russian-speakers in all three countries to demand official status for the Russian language and numerical quotas in national government bodies according to their proportion of the population. He cited the Macedonian peace agreement of August 2001, maintaining that Russians should gain the same status in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as the Albanian community was in the process of achieving in Macedonia. The Russian President was partly motivated to protest the OSCE decision to close its monitoring missions in Estonia and Latvia, on the grounds that human and minority rights were sufficiently respected. Some have argued that Moscow was concerned about the assimilation of Russian ethnics and improvements in their conditions, as this could remove a potentially useful card for political exploitation.

Moscow also raised territorial issues with Estonia and Latvia to maintain pressure on their governments. Final frontier delineations remained unratified. It calculated that unsettled border disputes would make a country ineligible for NATO

membership. Russian state campaigns against the Baltic states proved to be counterproductive, stirring animosity against Moscow and stiffening Baltic determination to join NATO. All three countries remained anxious about Russia's long-term intentions and petitioned for full membership in all of Europe's major institutions as a form of durable protection and security.⁷⁸

Until the close of 2001, Moscow was vehemently and publicly opposed to Baltic inclusion in NATO and waged an intensive diplomatic campaign to dissuade accession. During most of the 1990s, the Russian authorities orchestrated threatening rhetoric against the Baltic countries, advocated economic warfare, and denounced their policies toward the Russian minorities.⁷⁹ Some Russian leaders even called for military measures to coerce the three republics into submission, while Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov demanded a revision of certain post-Soviet borders.

When cajoling and outright threat did not have the desired effect, but further consolidated Baltic resolve, the Kremlin resorted to offering enticements and inducements to the three capitals. At the Vilnius summit for East European leaders held in September 1997, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin proposed various confidence-building measures styled as the "Baltic Initiative." This included such proposals as neutrality and unilateral Russian security guarantees if the three states remained outside NATO. Moscow also proposed the demilitarization of the Kaliningrad exclave to assuage Baltic fears of a military threat, offered joint control of Baltic airspace, and joint military exercises. All such proposals were dismissed by the Baltic governments as tactical maneuvers to regain a sphere of influence, limit Baltic sovereignty, and exclude NATO from the region.

Russian authorities calculated that open opposition to NATO enlargement would be counterproductive: alliance consensus on a second wave of expansion would demonstrate Russia's waning global influence. This could rebound negatively on Russian public opinion of its leadership and isolate the country from the West. Unable to dissuade NATO leaders from enlargement, the Kremlin tried to disqualify them as worthy contenders. The most fortuitous avenue was the deliberate manufacture of domestic and external problems, so that NATO leaders would consider Baltic accession as importing fresh problems into the organization. By exacerbating tensions with

Moscow, Russian officials could argue that poor inter-state relations "objectively" disqualified these countries from NATO. In this strategy of blackmail, Moscow could unilaterally derail relations with any country and then claim deterioration in bilateral relations. However, by September 1997, Russian Premier Chernomyrdin finally would announce that Moscow would at long last sign border agreements with the three states.

In the political and propaganda arenas, Moscow depicted the Baltic governments as essentially fascistic and xenophobic, whose leaders were linked with former Nazi collaborators. The alleged "fascist revival" was evident in official tolerance for the rallies of former SS soldiers, repression of the Russian minorities, and other human rights violations. Russian authorities were also outraged by demands for financial compensation to the victims of Stalinist occupation and mass deportation. The Lithuanian parliament adopted a law on compensation for material damages sustained by the country as a result of Soviet annexation. The Estonian and Latvian governments expressed political support for the Lithuanian initiative. Such moves provoked Moscow into claiming that it considered Baltic incorporation into the USSR to have been voluntary. Officials even claimed that Vilnius, Tallinn, and Riga should be grateful for the Soviet contribution to their economic development.

Moscow endeavored to control energy transit routes through the Baltic states, as this was both financially and politically profitable. It also tried to foster divisions between some Baltic leaders, claiming for instance that Estonian and Latvian businessmen were skeptical about NATO accession and would prefer to expand trade and political ties with Russia. Nonetheless, Russian trade with the Baltics has not grown significantly, although the ice-free Baltic ports do still serve as major transit points for Russian exports. Some Russian business interests have been opposed to economic warfare, arguing that this could negatively influence Russian exports.

Attempts have been engineered to discredit the Baltic intelligence and security services, whether to increase inter-state animosities or to disqualify them from NATO. In June 2000, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) announced that it had uncovered a Lithuanian agent in the double employ of Lithuania's State Security Department and the CIA who was tasked with collecting information about FSB operations to sabotage its counterintelligence activities. According to the FSB, the political

objective of the Lithuanian authorities was to discredit Russia in the eyes of the United States. This supposedly demonstrated Vilnius's unreliability as a partner and an ally, even as the country was becoming a credible contender for Alliance inclusion.

Some observers noted a policy of deliberate differentiation practiced by Moscow vis-à-vis the three Baltic states.⁸⁰ While Lithuania appeared to be favored in the late 1990s, Latvia was depicted as a major anti-Russian offender and corresponding pressures were applied. Primakov introduced these wedge tactics to try and disrupt Baltic solidarity and keep all three governments off balance. The pressure on Estonia seems to have been more consistent and predictable, while it has intensified on different occasions in relation to Latvia. The undermining of inter-Baltic cooperation was designed to serve Kremlin interests by disrupting a united foreign policy front and weakening arguments that the Baltics generated regional stability.

Estonia: In the first few years after the restoration of Estonian independence, the question of Russian troops was of prime importance for Tallinn. Although only a few thousand soldiers remained in Estonia by 1993, their presence contributed to maintaining tensions between the two states, especially as Moscow was reluctant to formalize an agreement on their withdrawal. The Russian government and parliament often linked the troop issue with the treatment of the Russian minority, constituting some 28% of the population.⁸¹ An accord between Presidents Lennart Meri and Boris Yeltsin was concluded in July 1994 when Moscow agreed to remove its forces, while Tallinn accepted the principle of "social guarantees" for thousands of retired Soviet military officers.

In its efforts to depict Estonia as a repressive state, Moscow delayed signing various treaties with Tallinn, including a border agreement. Estonian and Latvian insistence that the 1920 Treaties of Tartu and Riga be recognized by Moscow led to charges that both countries harbored claims to Russian territory. In reality, Tallinn and Riga accepted as unchangeable the Russian annexation of several thousand square kilometers of land in eastern Estonia and eastern Latvia at the close of World War Two. Alleged territorial aspirations by the Baltic governments were presented as evidence that Estonia and Latvia had failed to meet the criteria for NATO accession. Even though both countries acceded to all of Russia's demands over border demarcations,

Moscow still refused to formalize a border agreement. Tallinn dropped language referring to the Tartu Treaty of 1920, which had marked the first Russian recognition of Estonian independence. The Kremlin put forward new demands that a bilateral commission be established allowing Moscow to monitor inter-ethnic relations. This proposition was rejected by Tallinn, which perceived it as a mechanism for interfering in Estonia's internal politics. Continuing Russian pressures and the 1994 unilateral demarcation of the common border by Russian troops was received in Estonia as evidence of neo-imperialism.

Moscow's preoccupation with the minority question generated suspicion that the ethnic question was being cynically manipulated to destabilize the state and to promote Russian influence.⁸² The Russian minority was widely viewed by Estonians as a potential fifth column representing Moscow's imperial designs. Threats from the Kremlin and the Duma against Estonian sovereignty reinforced these suspicions.⁸³ Estonian leaders argued that some minority representatives were not so much fearful of human rights violations, but of a loss of the privileged positions they held under the previous system. Estonia's fears were exacerbated as public opinion in Russia was whipped up by the official media to depict the country as Moscow's chief enemy.

Moscow's use of the minority issue as an instrument of foreign policy was weakened by two factors: the international response and the decline of the ethnic Russian population. The OSCE and the Council of Europe found no pattern of officially sponsored discrimination against the Russian minority in Estonia. Estonia's and Latvia's citizenship laws were described as being consistent with European standards, to the chagrin of Russian officials. In December 2001, the OSCE missions in the two Baltic states were closed down despite Moscow's objections.

With regard to Russian demographics, from a total of some 474,800 people in Estonia in 1989, the numbers declined to about 353,000 a decade later.⁸⁴ This was reflective of a more general Russian demographic collapse, as well as the assimilation and out-migration of Russian ethnics from the former Soviet republics. However, statistics also demonstrated that Russians were not evacuating the "oppressive" Baltic states any faster than they were the "fraternal" countries of Belarus or Armenia. Indeed, more Russians were likely to stay in Estonia because of greater economic opportunities and higher living standards than in Russia itself.

At different times, Moscow imposed economic sanctions on Estonia, in protest against the treatment of the Russian minority and Baltic insistence on the withdrawal of all Russian troops. There were periodic bans on food imports and the imposition of double customs duties. In 1992, Estonia and its two Baltic neighbors experienced a shutoff in Russian energy supplies that was only terminated when Moscow realized that it was losing substantial energy revenue. The effect of economic pressure was to convince the Baltic governments that they needed to speed up their integration into Western structures and limit their economic dependence on Russia. Estonian membership in the EU will perhaps further estrange Tallinn from Moscow.

Russian state propaganda depicted the Estonians as essentially racist and "anti-Russian." This had a significant impact on Russian public opinion. In an opinion poll conducted by the Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion in May 2001, Estonia was viewed as the "biggest threat to Russia," even scoring ahead of the U.S.⁸⁵ For a decade, the Russian media presented Estonians as repressing the Russian population and laying claims to Russian territory. Instructively, of all three Baltic countries, Estonia has proved the most successful in preventing Russian businesses from gaining control over strategic domestic industries. Estonia's high economic growth rate and its turn to Western markets has also enabled it to resist Moscow's economic blackmail.

Russian pressures on Estonia continued: in February 2002, the Estonian Foreign Ministry decided not to respond to seven demands submitted by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgenii Gusarov as preconditions for improving bilateral relations.⁸⁶ The demands included accelerating the tempo of the naturalization process for Russians, so that 15,000-20,000 Russians would be granted Estonian citizenship each year, registering the Estonian Orthodox Church as a subject to the Moscow Patriarchy, creating favorable conditions for the Russian language in those districts where there is a Russian-speaking majority, allocating more funds for Russian-language higher education, providing social guarantees to former KGB officers and their families by changing provisions in the Estonian law on aliens, and halting investigation into crimes against humanity committed by former Soviet army veterans. Such demands served to worsen relations between Moscow and Tallinn.

Latvia: Russian authorities or the Duma have exacerbated conflicts with Latvia over the country's language and citizenship laws in order to present the large Russian minority, forming some 30% of the population, as a victim of discrimination.⁸⁷ Official Moscow exploited the presence of small numbers of Latvian SS veterans to claim that the country was veering toward fascism and threatening its Russian minority. In 1998, the televised participation of the commander-in-chief of the Latvian armed forces in a march of SS veterans in the capital Riga generated a tougher Russian position toward the country. A similar outcry was generated when a Russian World War Two anti-fascist partisan was convicted on charges of war crimes.

A major media assault on Latvia was conducted in March 1998 when Latvian police dispersed an unauthorized march by Russian pensioners. Moscow accused Riga of massive human rights violations. Small explosive devices were discovered at the same time near the Russian embassy and near Riga's one remaining synagogue. Latvia was branded in the Russian press as pro-Nazi, anti-Russian, and anti-Semitic. Subsequently, Russia restricted exports from Latvia and stopped trans-border bank transfers. The mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, accused the Latvian authorities of genocide and ethnic cleansing in order to raise tensions between the two states and terminate the hesitant policy of rapprochement. A number of Russian leaders called for greater protection by the state of its *diaspora* abroad.⁸⁸

The Kremlin has exploited internal political and ethnic tensions in Latvia to its advantage. Of the three Baltic republics, Latvia has received the most intensive attention from Moscow over the treatment of the Russian-speaking minority. The local Russian leadership also contributed to stoking tensions in the country. As the Latvian share of the population has risen during the past decade, Moscow accused the authorities of persecution. It insisted that before initialling a border agreement, Latvia had to abide by Kremlin demands on the position of the Russian minority.

Russian ethnics have decreased in Latvia from approximately 905,500 in 1989 to around 710,000 by the late 1990s. Moscow feared that its leverage in Latvia would decline alongside its demographic contraction and that Russian ethnics would play a shrinking role in Latvia's political and economic life and prove unable to advance Moscow's interests. Cognizant of its potentially declining influence, the Kremlin persistently attacked Riga for thwarting the naturalization of ethnic Russians, even

though countries such as Germany imposed tougher restrictions on citizenship than Latvia. Observers also believed that Moscow's pressures were useful for minority leaders, as it enabled them to secure additional economic and social benefits.

Writing in *Nezavisimaia gazeta* on 13 January 2001, Igor Igoshin, a Russian foreign policy analyst, urged Moscow to use its nationality policies to promote its foreign policy goals.⁸⁹ Igoshin identified the ethnic question as a key foreign policy issue with which the Russian government could promote its agenda. This would need to involve more intensive support for the Russophone population in all former Soviet republics. Such *diasporas* were capable of becoming a serious internal political factor, which could have a "positive influence" by lobbying on behalf of Russian state interests. Moscow could use such groups, despite its general foreign policy weakness.

Igoshin argued that Russia's economic presence, its ability to direct the flow of goods across some countries, and its willingness to conduct propaganda campaigns gave it the means to impact Russian communities abroad and through them, the indigenous governments. In the longer-term, Moscow could use its ethnic policies to promote the unification of Russia with several former Soviet republics. Vulnerable countries, such as Latvia, could eventually support such proposals if Moscow skillfully exploited the "nationality question."

Russia's authorities had evidently crafted a long-term strategy for dominating the Latvian economy and exerting an overwhelming influence on its foreign policy. According to the Russian parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, these included plans to control the rail system, gas and oil pipeline links to the Baltic coast, the shipping service, and the ports of Riga, Ventspils, and Liepaja.⁹⁰ Russian government and business interests also sought the ability to funnel money through Latvia's banking system without any controls.

Latvian officials concluded that only EU integration would enable the country to resist pressures by Russian business, criminal networks, and intelligence services. Indeed, analysts believe that Russian organized crime exerts a bigger influence in Latvia than the other two Baltic republics. Latvian banks have remained important for money laundering operations and for channeling cash from Russia to political parties, media outlets, and other pro-Moscow interest groups throughout the Baltic region. The Russian authorities continue to view Latvia as the

“weakest link” in the Baltic chain and the laggard candidate for both NATO and EU membership.

Lithuania: Moscow delayed ratifying a border treaty with Vilnius, although an agreement was signed in October 1997. Territorial pressures continued with a Duma resolution in 1998, passed by a large majority, claiming that the Klaipeda area along the Baltic coast was Russian soil. Although this did not represent the official position of the Russian government, failure to ratify a border treaty with Lithuania by the end of 2001 raised tensions in the region. In the military arena, Moscow wanted a free hand in transiting its military across Lithuania to its outpost in Kaliningrad, but Vilnius successfully arranged a transit regime that required prior notification and no stopovers for rail and road traffic.

Moscow has been less successful in engineering ethnic conflicts in Lithuania as the Russian share of the population at the time of independence in 1991 stood at only 8%. This figure has since declined from 344,500 in 1989 to about 280,000 in 1999. Moreover, Vilnius granted citizenship to all ethnic Russian residents and allowed Russians in Kaliningrad visa-free travel to Lithuania soon after gaining independence. Although few official complaints were lodged by Moscow about the position of Russian ethnics, minority issues were raised on occasion to depict Lithuania in a poor light when it suited Moscow's foreign policy goals. Anti-Jewish and anti-Russian incidents have featured prominently in the Russian media to discredit Vilnius in Western eyes as the country's candidacy for NATO began to be taken seriously.

Russian authorities have been politically active in pursuing their agenda within Lithuania, either working through Russian minority organizations or establishing their own small, but well endowed political parties. *Gazprom* and *Lukoil* were believed to have created such organizations and to have financed their political and election campaigns.⁹¹ Attempts have also been made by Russian diplomats to bribe certain parliamentarians into opposing or questioning NATO accession or limiting Vilnius' relations with the United States. In January 2003, Lithuanian opposition leaders claimed that Russia was spending large sums to gain influence over Lithuania's political life.⁹²

On certain occasions in the early 1990s, Russia also used energy as a weapon against Lithuania, either by withholding scheduled deliveries or imposing higher prices. This was intended to pressurize the authorities and to raise the prospects of social

unrest through a painful energy squeeze. Vilnius remained intent on diversifying its energy sources to protect itself against Moscow's pressures, even though new supplies often proved more expensive.

Some political power has been accumulated by Russian-speaking groups active in the economic sector and engaged in business relations with Russia. In 1998, the Association of Russian Businessmen "Compatriots" was founded, comprised of 24 Lithuanian enterprises, employing mostly Russian ethnics. The "Compatriots" then joined the International Union of Public Associations *Rusj Jedinaja*, which was established in September 2000, and whose objectives included the creation of independent Russian economic, educational, and cultural structures in the "near abroad." In essence, however, Russian-speaking inhabitants did not pose any essential threat to Lithuania's independence.

Russian companies have been keenly interested in purchasing major oil and transportation companies that Lithuania was in the process of privatizing. Several intermediary companies such as *Stella Vitae* and *Itera Lietuva* were purchased by a combination of Lithuanian private investors and *Gazprom*. Although Lithuania did not have as much Russian investment as either Latvia or Estonia, Russian companies sought to acquire several important industries, including fertilizer plants and petrol distributors. To protect itself against unwelcome Russian economic penetration, Vilnius introduced laws to prevent investors from a foreign states to dominate economic sectors of strategic importance. The government also focused on investigating "capital of unclear origin" to prevent it from gaining a foothold in the economy.

Russian media moguls have purchased some local media outlets in Lithuania and Russian commentators have sought to influence the domestic debate on NATO enlargement. They raised doubts about the advisability of the Alliance accepting Lithuania's accession by arguing that the new NATO members were performing poorly economically. To undercut the drive for NATO, Russian propaganda also focused on the EU as a much more prescient priority and raised the prospect of a European security structure outside of NATO as a preferable solution for Lithuanian security.

Lithuanian analysts have been alarmed over Russian efforts to penetrate the energy chain through concerted attempts to control production, processing, transit, distribution, and associated services. Moscow has also tried to incorporate Lithuania into its electricity grid that spans much of the region. As an indication of

Lithuania's concerns over growing Russian influence, the government initially sold the *Mazeikiu* oil refinery to an American company rather than to a Russian energy enterprise. This decision was based primarily on political calculations rather than economic criteria, as Vilnius wanted to avoid more intensive dependence on Russia.

Lithuania was given several ultimatums that *Lukoil* would cut off its supplies unless it was allowed to acquire majority shares in the pipeline project running from Belarus to the Baltic Sea and in the *Mazeikiu* refinery. After dismissing Russian threats, *Lukoil* shut off crude supplies to Lithuania nine times for brief periods between 1999 and 2001. The cutoffs forced *Mazeikiu* into heavy debts and deprived Lithuania of crucial tax revenue. Russia's second-largest oil producer *Yukos* offered a new deal to *Mazeikiu* in August 2002, promising adequate supplies, while buying out *Williams*.⁹³ Following a government decision not to buy a 27% stake, *Yukos* acquired a 54% stake in the refinery along with operational control over the entire complex. Lithuanian analysts voiced concern over the implications of the takeover by a powerful Russian company in the absence of a Western partner.⁹⁴

In September 2001, Russian Prime Minister Kasyanov notified his Lithuanian counterpart Algirdas Brazauskas of *Gazprom's* hopes to purchase a 25% share of the Lithuanian gas company *Lietuvos Dujos* and another 25% share in that company through *Gazprom's* Lithuanian affiliates. Vilnius proved extremely reluctant to agree to this form of Russian investment, but Moscow believed that it would eventually succeed in securing Brazauskas's approval for the deal. Kasyanov also sought to promote the extension of a transit corridor from Kaliningrad to the Lithuanian border at Klaipeda that Russian companies were pursuing. Russia's moves were accompanied by a media campaign aimed at discrediting Western capital.

Under both Yeltsin and Putin, the Russian authorities attempted to reassure their neighbors that Russia's "national interests" had become "normal," non-imperial, and indistinguishable from those of other democratic global powers.⁹⁵ No Baltic leaders were convinced by such pronouncements and the drive for a NATO umbrella continued unabated. Indeed, Vilnius and other capitals believed that postponing the accession of the Baltic republics could encourage Russia to be more assertive and provocative, thus worsening relations at a time when the West was seeking to expand the sphere of European security. While NATO's

ambiguity invariably stimulated Russian adventurism, clear policy decisions removed the confusion and undercut latent tensions.

A majority of political actors in Moscow continued to oppose Baltic state membership in NATO. However, the Kremlin needed to be mindful that too vigorous an opposition could backfire if NATO expanded regardless of Russian protests. Moscow would then be perceived as weak and unable to have any impact on trans-Atlantic security decisions. Some Russian commentators also believed that the country should be rewarded with a halt to further NATO expansion for its support of the post-11 September anti-terrorist coalition.⁹⁶ However, the Putin leadership calculated that acquiescence on Baltic membership, coupled with a more pronounced voice for Moscow in NATO's deliberations, would weaken the Alliance and undercut the relevance of enlargement.

In order to remove the three Baltic states from the Russian political agenda, Baltic analysts argued that all three should be included in NATO simultaneously. This would prevent future conflicts with Moscow over subsequent membership, lessen the opportunities for stoking rivalries between the three countries, and provide a secure framework for their development. Delays in Baltic accession could also enable Russia to increase its international leverage and political influence by gaining firmer control over strategic sectors of the local economies.

Neutralizing Central Europe

The Central-East European region that was once part of the Soviet bloc has been categorized in Moscow as either the "far abroad" or the "middle abroad," thus giving the area a special status for Russian influence. The region is then further subdivided into the Central European and Balkan zone with a distinctive role assigned for Moscow by each. In the Central European states of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, Russian policy has been demilitarized and de-ideologized.⁹⁷ However, the region's importance has remained twofold: as a bridge to the wealthy EU and as a buffer against Western penetration of the Commonwealth states. Economic ties, especially in the energy and financial sectors, together with enhanced Russian intelligence operations, have been the primary mechanisms for gaining influence in these new democracies.

Soon after the Central Europeans regained their independence from the Soviet bloc in 1989-1990, the Soviet government attempted to place limitations on their foreign policy decisions, particularly in the security arena. The objective was to guarantee their neutrality and non-alignment with NATO. Pressures were exerted on them to sign bilateral agreements with Moscow that contained security clauses restricting any feasible alternatives. In 1990-1991 the so-called "Kvitsinsky-Falin Doctrine" was intended to convince the Central Europeans to agree to a permanent "non-bloc" status in the treaties they concluded with the USSR. Such attempts were rejected by Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague, who viewed their independence merely a result of Moscow's weakness, rather than stemming from any fundamental change in Russian foreign policy.

Most governments feared that Russia could in the future revert to a more aggressive posture. Hence, a potentially short-lived window of opportunity had opened to catapult the newly liberated states into the Western security structures as a guarantee against future Kremlin ambitions. The Central Europeans continued to believe that the majority of Russian policy makers refused to accept them as equal players but as pawns in a broader struggle for dominance with the Western powers on the European continent. Furthermore, while Russia claimed to be the sole successor of the USSR, it had only accepted the benefits without bearing any of the responsibilities.

The first few years of the 1990s were marked by turmoil and confusion in the Kremlin over an appropriate policy toward Central Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a loose "Kozyrev Doctrine" emerged in 1992, named after the Russian Foreign Minister. It stated that Moscow's "strategic task" was to prevent the East-Central European countries from forming a buffer that would isolate Russia from the West. It was equally important for Moscow to prevent the West from pushing Russia out of the region.⁹⁸ Russia's 1992 Foreign Policy Concept underscored these objectives. Moscow also anticipated significant Western economic assistance for its domestic reform process and as a reward for its withdrawal from Central Europe. When the Western response was viewed as disappointing, Russian policy toward its former satellites was heavily criticized by sectors of the foreign policy elite.⁹⁹

A tougher policy line emerged during 1994 when it became apparent that three former Warsaw Pact states were pushing stridently for NATO membership.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, much of Russian policy toward the region focused principally on the NATO question and how to prevent the Central Europeans from joining the Alliance. The leaders of all major political parties in Russia openly opposed NATO enlargement and Central European inclusion, considering such a process to be a direct challenge to Russia's security interests. In deflecting such an outcome, Moscow consistently tried to deal with NATO over the heads of the Central Europeans and attempted to broker some new deal short of NATO enlargement. According to a foremost Russian foreign policy ideologue, Aleksandr Dubin, Moscow needed to promote neutrality in Central Europe and elsewhere, with a maximum degree of domestic freedoms, but ultimately dependent on Russia for its security. This was a post-Soviet version of "Finlandization."¹⁰¹

Once it became evident that NATO would expand into Central Europe regardless of Russia's position, the Kremlin tried to water down the implications. It demanded guarantees that the new Alliance states would be nuclear free and would not host integrated NATO military units. In fact, NATO was not preparing either to position nuclear weapons on the territory of new members or to station combined Alliance forces. At the same time, the question of NATO enlargement was not negotiable with any outside power while the Kremlin idea of "partial membership" for the Central Europeans was a non-starter. Russia's opposition to Central European membership convinced these countries to strengthen their integration with the West so as not to be further exposed to Russian pressure. Government officials also argued that their accession to NATO would actually enhance their self-confidence and improve their future relations with Russia by placing them on a more equitable basis without fear of Russian domination. This in itself could serve Allied policy goals in stabilizing relations with the Kremlin.

Moscow also expressed concern about the Visegrad Group initiative as a pro-Western and anti-Russian bloc. The initiative was launched by Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, and Bratislava in the early 1990s to help coordinate their foreign and security policies.¹⁰² In November 1993, a new Russian military doctrine was issued that underscored the need to maintain the "friendly neutrality" of the Central European countries. Membership of any of these states

in the Atlantic Alliance would evidently be perceived as a direct threat to Russian security.

As an alternative to NATO, Moscow proposed the transformation of the OSCE into a security mechanism to which NATO, the West European Union, and the Council of Europe would be subordinate, thus effectively providing the Kremlin with veto powers over NATO policies. Moscow also proposed giving the Central Europeans security guarantees, in unison with the larger Western powers in an attempt to divert their plans for joining NATO. All such proposals were rejected.

Moscow employed economic instruments to gain political influence over Central Europe's governments. This policy was formulated by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Oleg Davydov and supplemented by Evgenii Primakov when he became Foreign Minister in 1995.¹⁰³ The objective was to build "bridgeheads" for Russian state and private capital in the region, to gain control or influence over strategic sectors of the Central European economies, and to use the region as a springboard for economic expansion westward. Hence, four main areas were earmarked for penetration: energy, armaments, banking, and trade.

After the break up of the COMECON economic bloc, commercial and trade ties between Russia and its former satellites dissipated, as both sides increasingly turned their attention toward competing for Western markets and investments. The East Europeans and Russians had little to offer each other by way of trade, private investments, capital, and technology. To try and regain its Central European market, Moscow proposed the creation of a "COMECON II" as an integrated economic alliance and a counterpart to the EU. Such vaporous proposals of little economic substance were dismissed as impractical throughout the region. A new economic union would have had little practical value because of the poor economic condition of each state, the legal chaos and criminalization of the Russian economy, and fears of Russian economic and political domination. Furthermore, Russia still held debts to all the Central European states from the "COMECON I" era, although many of them subsequently incurred energy debts to Russia.

All the Central European states were eager for membership in the EU. Although Russian authorities were not opposed to their accession, they expressed some reservations about the negative impact on Russia.¹⁰⁴ Moscow was fearful of economic

discrimination through more stringent border controls and visa regimes that could further estrange it from the former satellites and isolate Russia from the European mainstream. Russian analysts criticized the distancing of the Central European states from Russia and their evident "anti-Russian" positions. They bemoaned the fact that Russia's economic position in the region had significantly weakened as a result of a decline in trade. Officials in Moscow also claimed that the Central European governments attempted to interfere in the integration processes within the CIS and acted as negative influences within Russia's "near abroad" by encouraging pro-American and pro-NATO political forces. Contacts between Central European and European CIS militaries, parliamentary bodies, media outlets, and business concerns were frequently criticized in Moscow.

It was difficult to estimate the precise level of Russian business investment in Central Europe, especially since much of this reached the region as non-Russian capital through third countries. In addition, semi-legal businesses and illegal money-laundering activities continue to obscure the situation. The Russian authorities have also tried to create debt relationships with the Central Europeans especially through energy dependency and negative trade balances that could promote their political goals. Slovakia and Hungary in particular have incurred substantial trade deficits with Russia in recent years.

Moscow has periodically played the pan-Slavic card in Central Europe. This was not based so much on notions of political unification, but sought to appeal to latent anxieties over "Germanization," "globalization," and the elimination of distinct Slavic cultures.¹⁰⁵ According to some Russian policy-makers, only the influence of Russia could prevent cultural or ethnic domination, while a strong Russian-German alliance would ensure security, identity, and development for all Central Europeans. Moscow calculated that after an initial spell of euphoria, each Central European state would turn toward Russia in the economic sphere because of the importance of Russian raw materials and markets. It hoped to use economic levers to foster political collaboration. In reality, political, economic, and cultural ties between Central Europe and Russia have greatly diminished. This was especially the case in the early 1990s as each state with the exception of Slovakia endeavored to pull away as rapidly as possible from any post-Soviet dependence. The various bilateral

friendship societies and exchange programs were also terminated and educational and scholarly contacts, curtailed.

With the election of Putin, Moscow appeared to inject more pragmatism into its relations with the four Visegrad states. During 2000-2001, political relations with Russia visibly improved as demonstrated by the mutual visits of foreign ministers, including a trip by Polish Foreign Minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski to Moscow in February 2001. Putin's Kremlin realized that it needed to adapt to an enlarging and developing EU and to harness its potential so that Russia would not be left with only disadvantages from Central Europe's planned accession to the Union. At the same time, the Kremlin remained concerned that the Central Europeans could serve as attractive models for the neighboring CIS states and undermine their growing dependence on Russia.

Poland: The Russian authorities seemed resigned to the loss of Poland as a buffer state and satellite at the close of the Cold War. Nonetheless, Russian strategists still perceived the country's full integration into the Western system and especially its accession to NATO as a challenge to Kremlin influences over the Baltics, Ukraine, and Belarus. The democratic Polish governments were treated with suspicion throughout the 1990s. Some neutralization of Polish eastward influences was deemed essential by the Russian authorities. Moscow was suspicious of close cooperation between Warsaw and its eastern neighbors, fearful of Polish and Western influences that could permanently tear Ukraine and Belarus away from Russia. Hence, Polish political, cultural, and economic influences were carefully monitored and periodically attacked.

Successive Polish governments pursued a course to normalize relations with Russia and did not adopt any overtly hostile positions during the 1990s. Warsaw dropped all financial claims resulting from the environmental damage caused by Soviet troops stationed on Polish territory. In October 1990, Poland established relations with the then-Soviet Russian republic and soon after signed a Declaration on Friendship and Good Neighborliness. Although Warsaw reoriented much of its foreign trade westward, it remained highly dependent on Russia for energy supplies.

Relations between Moscow and Warsaw were initially fairly cordial, but a number of problems soon arose as a consequence of Russian attempts to restrict Poland's security

and foreign policy maneuverability. Yeltsin's confrontation with the Russian parliament in October 1993 and his use of the army convinced Warsaw that Moscow was set on a more assertive course. Foreign Minister Kozyrev exemplified the Russian position during a visit to Poland in February 1994 when he attacked Poland's goal of NATO accession and claimed that such a move would undermine Warsaw's relations with Moscow. The reinvigoration of Russian state nationalism buttressed Poland's demands for NATO entry.¹⁰⁶

According to many, the chief purpose of accusing Poland and its neighbors of "Russophobic" tendencies was to disqualify these countries as NATO candidates. Their allegedly poor relations with Russia would have a negative impact on Alliance-Russian relations. An additional goal was to create doubts and rifts between Polish politicians over the country's security and foreign policies, which it was claimed were antagonizing a powerful neighbor. In an illustrative example of Moscow's tactics, an incident in October 1994 at a Warsaw railway station in which some Russian travelers were roughly treated by Polish police was exploited by the Russian Foreign Ministry as evidence of rising anti-Russian sentiments. On several occasions, state-owned Russian media deliberately fanned the image of growing Polish-Russian tensions.

Moscow employed various tools to thwart or complicate Poland's entry into NATO. There were strong suspicions that Russian intelligence services were involved in discrediting Polish Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy. Oleksy resigned his post in January 1996, following allegations by the Polish interior minister that he spied for Moscow when he was a military intelligence agent under the former Communist regime. The leaked details came from the files of the former Communist secret police. Russian secret services had an interest in fabricating or exaggerating the disclosures to heighten suspicions in the West about Poland's reliability as a NATO partner and the trustworthiness of its top politicians.¹⁰⁷ The allegations were dismissed after a prosecutor found there was insufficient evidence to pursue the case. Regardless of the facts, this incident terminated Oleksy's political career.

Relations with Russia remained strained after Poland's accession to NATO in 1999, largely because of the incessant propaganda attacks from Moscow and the Kremlin's endeavors to demonstrate that the new NATO members would have an

adversarial relationship with Russia. In early 2000, several Russian diplomats were expelled from Warsaw for reportedly engaging in espionage activities that were considered threatening to Poland's security. Moscow capitalized on the expulsions to heat up tensions with Poland and to stage demonstrations outside the Polish embassy in Moscow.

In the economic sphere, Russian capital has tried to secure a foothold in Polish banking and to establish branches of Russian banks and other financial agencies. Several financial structures were established with funds transferred by the FSB, Komsomol, and other political organizations and privatized state enterprises. According to Balmaceda:

The shadowy connections between the business and financial sectors on the one hand and the world of politics, the secret services, and the *mafia* on the other, have been made still more complicated by the establishment of the so-called Financial-Industrial Groups (FIGs). FIGs complicate the situation because they bring under one roof industrial and financial concerns, so making them an even more formidable lobbying force.¹⁰⁸

Russia's energy giants have also bought large shares in local energy enterprises and sought to control Polish pipelines and refineries in what Warsaw officials have dubbed as "non-transparent tactics." Moreover, representatives of several Russian companies and financial institutions have engaged in economic espionage and other covert operations under the camouflage of legitimate business activities. Such attempts at penetration could make the Central European economies more vulnerable to sabotage or criminality.

Hungary: Russia has tried to find common ground with some former satellites as an enticement for establishing a new alliance. One of the ploys adopted by Moscow vis-à-vis Budapest was to try and link the extra-border Russian and Hungarian minority questions as a basis for inter-state cooperation.¹⁰⁹ A declaration of cooperation in this arena was signed in November 1992 but remained on paper only as Hungary avoided becoming associated with Russia's more aggressive policy toward its neighbors in defense of its large *diaspora*.

Russian capital has also increased its role in Hungary. According to official records, around \$51 million of CIS capital has

been invested in Hungarian privatization, but the actual amount is estimated to be in excess of \$200 million during the 1990s.¹¹⁰ Among the larger Hungarian companies controlled by *Gazprom* was the chemicals firm *Borsod Chem*. In a major foreign affairs speech delivered on 11 February 2002 in Boston, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban alluded to Russian economic penetration by pointing out that for the first time in history Russian capital was flowing into Central Europe. However, according to the premier, the question remained whether this “can be considered foreign trade or foreign policy.”¹¹¹

Czech Republic: In its annual report for the year 2000, the Czech counterintelligence service (BIS) asserted that Russian intelligence agencies were attempting to penetrate Czech ministries for the purpose of collecting classified information.¹¹² Czech agencies reported a significant increase in espionage and special influence activities by Russia’s intelligence services.¹¹³ Russian networks constructed a web of lobbying agencies to “influence the decision making process in local governments, disseminate misinformation, undermine the country’s credibility abroad, and make the Czechs suspicious as regards to the course of action taken by the authorities.” The latter has included casting doubts about the country’s NATO membership, especially over the high costs of Czech involvement in foreign military missions and the corresponding cuts in welfare benefits.

According to the BIS report, there was a link between the increased activity of Russian secret services and Putin’s rise to power in 2000. The BIS claimed that Russia was trying to “build a system of pressure agencies” to influence decision-making at the local administrative level, as well as to spread false information aimed at discrediting the Czech Republic. These efforts were geared toward casting aspersions on the country’s NATO membership and its costs, as well as to raise questions on Czech participation in NATO peacekeeping operations and the purchase of new fighters for the Czech air force. There are even reports of Russian intelligence services displaying an increased interest in nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare, following the beginning of testing operations at the Temelin nuclear power plant on the Czech side of the border with Austria.

Czech secret services also reported increased economic activities of Russian secret services and their contacts with extremist groupings, local police, military personnel, and local

government officials. Russian military intelligence has endeavored to penetrate several Czech ministries, including Transport and Defense, in order to obtain classified information and strategic technologies. As in other states, the purchase of media outlets and internet providers has also facilitated Russian intelligence penetration. Russian organized crime groups engaged in financial fraud and the infiltration of business, financial, and governmental structures. Some maintained close contacts with Czech businesses and banks or they established trading companies that focused on the purchase of real estate.

Fears also surfaced that some personnel in the state apparatus were unreliable to share classified information with in the Alliance because of their Communist pasts and ties with Russian secret services.¹¹⁴ In February 2002, the Czech media reported that American officials were pondering whether to provide Prague with access to top-secret information on its nuclear weapons. According to the report, Premier Milos Zeman's close adviser Miroslav Slouf, who had a Communist past, together with several other individuals close to the Prime Minister, jeopardized Prague's credibility among its NATO allies. Such suspicions served Moscow's interests in that they sowed distrust within the Alliance, undermined high-level cooperation, and could contribute to undercutting support for further NATO expansion.

Slovakia: Moscow viewed Slovakia as the "weak link" in Central Europe. This was a direct consequence of Bratislava's foreign policy approach throughout most of the 1990s under the Vladimir Meciar administration. The governing elite considered relations with Russia as a strategic alternative to NATO and European integration. This was partly a legacy of more popular pan-Slavism within Slovakia and economic calculations by the ruling party.¹¹⁵ Some Slovak leaders viewed the country as a potential bridge between Russia and the West, thus justifying the building of close relations with Moscow. They calculated they would acquire significant economic benefits from such an arrangement, while preventing a potential loss of power and privilege that would have accompanied opening up the country to stronger Western influences.

Under the Meciar regime, Slovakia became the only Central European state that accepted the "Kvitsinsky doctrine" and signed a basic economic treaty with Russia in order to revive industrial sectors beneficial to the government.¹¹⁶ Economically,

this helped to ensure the maintenance of the Slovak machine building and arms industries, which were an important component of the ruling MDS (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) support base. These heavy industries were threatened by streamlining or closure in the event of full-scale economic reform and Slovakia's Western integration.¹¹⁷ Politically, Meciar could thereby distance himself from Western criticism and receive Moscow's acquiescence and support for his authoritarian rule, which was styled as the "Slovak way of transition."

Slovakia's exclusion from the first round of NATO enlargement was considered a diplomatic success in Moscow. The Kremlin attempted to foster a sense of impending crisis in Central Europe on the eve of NATO enlargement, but failed to dissuade the Allied decision. In the aftermath of NATO expansion, Moscow warned against the creation of any multi-state alliances in the region that would exclude Russia from one of its traditional spheres of influence. Such an alliance would become especially threatening if it included former Soviet republics such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine.¹¹⁸ By the time a new democratic government was elected in Slovakia in October 1998 that successfully pushed for NATO entry, Moscow had less of a stake in helping the country's leadership.

In contrast with its Central European neighbours, the Meciar government did not attempt to curtail Slovakia's strategic dependence on Russian energy. By the mid-1990s, Slovakia's economic dependence on Russia reportedly exceeded what it was before 1989. The EU and Prague expressed their discontent with the proposed establishment of a free trade zone between Slovakia and Russia. Although Bratislava hesitated in forging such an agreement, pressures from Moscow did not cease. In purely economic terms, Russia was less interested in a free trade zone with the small Slovak market and more focused on buying out key strategic sectors. During Russian Premier Chernomyrdin's visit to Bratislava in April 1997, eight new Slovak-Russian agreements were signed, including the establishment of a joint Slovak-Russian company *Slovrusgas* that was to become the owner of gas transit pipelines through Slovak territory.

Moscow offered "security guarantees" for Slovakia's neutrality in an effort to keep the country outside NATO. The Meciar government welcomed such assurances and was the only Central European administration that stressed Russian objections to NATO enlargement while distancing itself from the expansion

process. Tensions with the West over the regime's domestic policies pushed Bratislava closer to Russia. Slovakia also joined the Surgut Agreement in 1993, a CIS-based energy council that was intended to develop Russian oil and exports on a multinational basis. Slovakia became the first non-former Soviet republic to join a CIS body. The Surgut arrangement proved to be a failure and ceased to exist by the close of 1994. Nevertheless, Russia and Slovakia maintained their "strategic energy cooperation" throughout the Meciar era. Agreements signed in April 1997 involved increases in the transit of Russian gas through Slovak territory, thus deepening Bratislava's dependence on Russian energy without significantly expanding Slovak trade and exports to Russia. Russian plans to construct a pipeline system through Belarus and Poland to the West could eventually lessen Slovakia's importance as a transit country, while upholding its position as an energy dependent state. Russian capital has been especially active in Slovakia during the 1990s, particularly in the areas of banking, energy, and transportation, illustrated by the sale to *Yukos* of 49% of the shares in the country's oil pipeline operator *Transpetrol*.

Exploiting Balkan Conflicts

Moscow has harbored a long-term ambition to establish a permanent presence in the Balkans. Since the end of the Cold War, Moscow's Balkan policy has been two-tracked: to limit American and NATO influence in the region and to raise Russia's stature and presence throughout Southeast Europe. Although in a clearly inferior military position to that of the U.S. and NATO, the Kremlin viewed the Balkans as an opportunity to gain leverage through crisis and to create a counter-balance to growing American influence. Furthermore, the emerging Caspian-Black Sea energy network reinvigorated Russian concern that it not be excluded from the area.

The Kremlin obstructed an effective Western policy toward the former Yugoslavia in order to enhance its prestige in the Balkans and to weaken the credibility of NATO's projected new missions in Europe's troublespots. Russian Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov favored a strategy that focused on states and regions where the West was facing problems, such as the Balkans. Moscow adopted a clear pro-Serbian stance during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, undermined international

efforts to apply effective pressure on Belgrade, and sought to prevent any NATO deployments in the former Yugoslavia.

Despite its concentration on the region, Moscow has suffered various setbacks in Southeast Europe. The restoration of the Serbian-occupied territories to Croatian control after 1995 was perceived as a serious defeat for Moscow's support of the Yugoslav project. Even more troublesome, NATO's relative success in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the summer of 1995 onwards in the military realm was viewed negatively by Russian policy makers, as it enhanced the credibility of the Alliance as the key institution of collective security in Europe.

The NATO military operation against Serbia-Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 was condemned by Moscow as an aggressive and imperialist war against a "brother Slavic" nation. The attempted genocide and expulsion of Albanian residents from Kosova was depicted as a justifiable policy by Belgrade directed against "Albanian terrorists." With the NATO victory and the stationing of Alliance troops in Kosova, Moscow participated in the peace deployment in order to maintain its foothold in Yugoslavia.

After 1998, Moscow also lost a key traditional ally in the Balkans when the new democratic government in Bulgaria declared its intention to join NATO and curtail its political and economic dependence on Russia. Moscow employed a legion of measures, including diplomatic threats and energy blackmail, to try and coerce Sofia back into line, but its efforts backfired. The Kremlin's heavy-handed approach persuaded the Bulgarian authorities to buttress their determination to join the trans-Atlantic security system.

Russian leaders expressed concern that NATO would assume a more prominent role throughout the Balkans and permanently exclude Moscow as a serious regional player. With Bulgaria and Romania poised for NATO membership, the Alliance in control in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosova, and strong American influence in Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia, Russia possessed few strong cards or allies at its disposal in the region. Serbia-Yugoslavia remained the Kremlin's one remaining reliable link in Southeast Europe.

Officials in Moscow charged that Washington and its NATO allies deliberately undermined the authority of the United Nations during the bombing of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999. The UN was bypassed and discredited while the "system of

international relations was destabilized” by NATO action.¹¹⁹ According to Russian commentators, Washington raised NATO to a position in which it could use force whenever it saw fit, regardless of the decision of the UN Security Council. NATO’s new Strategic Concept, adopted at the height of the war with Yugoslavia in April 1999, was purportedly designed to weaken the UN’s decision making role. Meanwhile, the OSCE had failed to evolve into an efficient mechanism for conflict resolution and European security.

In Moscow’s view, during the course of the 1990s, NATO was transformed into a tool of exclusively American global interests and each instance of military force was depicted as a blow “objectively” aimed at Russia’s security. In the words of officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the NATO action disrupted the “geopolitical balance” and called into question state sovereignty and “the entire international legal order.”¹²⁰ In Moscow’s estimations, the White House used its operations in Yugoslavia to slow down the creation of a European defense organization and maintain American dominance through NATO.

Russian officials warned against the “Yugoslav variant,” whereby NATO has allegedly adopted an aggressive military posture that could be applied to other crisis spots, including parts of the former Soviet Union.¹²¹ Some military figures and members of parliament suggested that Yugoslavia was being used as a rehearsal for an invasion of Russia.¹²² According to Russian analysts, the Kosova war demonstrated that America was intent on using its military power to “shape its new global policy” regardless of the diverse interests of other states.¹²³

NATO’s new Strategic Concept was cited by Russian officials as an instrument and justification for NATO intervention around the globe. Its language was allegedly kept deliberately flexible in order to permit all manner of “extended interpretations.” Moscow warned that if Russia dismantled its intercontinental missiles, it would become an ideal target for the U.S. to eliminate its remaining global influence and carve up the Russian Federation. Russian spokesmen were especially fearful over a Chechen debacle, which could provide an opportunity for future NATO intervention, whereby the principle of “humanitarian intervention” could have primacy over its state sovereignty. In these estimations, the “nationalities question” would be exploited as a vehicle for Washington’s interference and domination via support for all manner of separatist movements.

An additional Russian claim about NATO action in Serbia asserted that America's hidden agenda was to strengthen the dollar and to destabilize the emerging *Euro* as a major international currency.¹²⁴ Europe had failed to develop reliable instruments to uphold its economic interests; as a result it was automatically subordinated to NATO's "military interests." Washington allegedly valued competition above allied partnership and viewed NATO primarily as an instrument to pursue its own interests while infringing on the interests of junior partners.

One benefit of NATO's Yugoslav operation, according to Russian analysts, was that it drew together all political forces in Russia, revealed the nature of American policy, and allowed for the emergence of a more concerted foreign policy.¹²⁵ Moscow condemned NATO air strikes as illegal, canceled military cooperation with NATO, recalled Russia's military representative from NATO headquarters, expelled Alliance representatives from Russia, and terminated the Partnership for Peace (PfP) agreement. However, Moscow could not ultimately influence Allied decision-making, although its condemnations of NATO may have stiffened Belgrade's resistance to meeting the conditions for ending the NATO bombing campaign.

In the aftermath of the NATO operation in Kosova, pro-Western states in the Balkans have expressed concern over a rapid American or Allied departure from the region that could leave them exposed to renewed Russian interference. Hence, they pushed for NATO and EU integration not only to ensure their security and prosperity, but also to stymie Moscow's potentially dominant or destabilizing influences.

Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina: According to Russian analysts, the U.S. was intent on acquiring new protectorates in the Balkans, whereby Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosova provided valuable inroads.¹²⁶ Ignoring the persistent opposition to troop deployments within the U.S. and the aversion of the administration to foreign commitments, Russian analysts believed that the White House sought to expand its influence through military occupation cloaked as peace-keeping.

In the former Yugoslav republics, Moscow has a decade-long history of opposition to NATO involvement. During the drive for independence by Croatia and Slovenia in 1990-1991, Moscow vehemently opposed the disintegration of Yugoslavia and provided diplomatic and political support to the Slobodan

Milosevic regime in Belgrade. Russian contingents participated in the UN deployments in Eastern Slavonia, one of the territories occupied by Serbian paramilitary forces in Croatia after the war for independence. The Russian "blue helmets" in Croatia established close ties with local Serbian forces and earned a negative reputation for their involvement in black marketeering. The Croatian military offensive to recapture lost territories in the summer of 1995 was described in Moscow as an American deployment of proxy forces to defeat the Serbian cause and as evidence of escalating American interference in the Balkans.

Throughout the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russia regularly rejected any military intervention against Serb targets and only grudgingly supported the sanctions regime against Yugoslavia. Concerns over deteriorating relations with Moscow contributed to dissuading the Clinton administration from pursuing the more forceful measures that it initially demanded.¹²⁷ The Kremlin supported the cantonization of Bosnia to consolidate substantial Serb territorial gains. Consequently, it was excluded from the American sponsored rapprochement between Croatian and Bosniak leaders that resulted in the creation of the Bosnian Federation in March 1994.

Moscow resolutely opposed military strikes against Bosnian-Serb forces in the summer of 1995, despite ongoing massacres of civilians, military attacks on UN "safe havens," and the capture of UN troops as hostages by Serbian forces. It consolidated the Serbian position by concluding a military agreement with Belgrade in February 1995. Russian officials urged the strengthening of the UN deployment in Bosnia even though the mission had failed to protect vulnerable civilians from systematic "ethnic cleansing" campaigns.

The Yeltsin government regularly played on the notion of a historical and deep-rooted Serbian-Russian friendship to discourage any resolute Western action against the Bosnian-Serb military, as this would have evidently provoked a confrontation with Russia. This alleged pan-Slavic solidarity was useful for both foreign and domestic political reasons.¹²⁸ Internationally, it helped to raise Russia's stature as a substantial global power. Domestically, it undercut the position of ultra-nationalists and communists who berated Yeltsin for acquiescence to "NATO imperialism."

As Washington took a more active role in Bosnia during the summer of 1995, the Russian position in the conflict seemed

to weaken. Thus the Allies pushed for military intervention following the massacres of Muslim civilians in Srebrenica and Moscow's opposition proved futile, despite its vehement anti-NATO rhetoric. The Kremlin was not a key player in the forging of the Dayton Accords in November 1995, as the Serbian side was forced to negotiate directly with NATO leaders. Nevertheless, Russian patronage may have encouraged resistance among Bosnian-Serb leaders in the belief that Moscow would find a way to exert pressure on their behalf during negotiations.

Once opposition to air strikes and a more robust Alliance intervention dissipated, Russia agreed to make troop contribution to the NATO mission to maintain its influence among the Bosnian Serbs. In order to regain some credibility, Russia participated in the peace-keeping force in Bosnia under a NATO command. But it was not permitted to acquire its own sector in the divided country and had to work closely with NATO commanders. The Russian brigade was subordinated to an American general who was also commander of the IFOR (Implementation Force). Such an arrangement disabled Russia from playing a decisive role in Bosnia's post-war evolution. However, it accepted the two-entity *status quo*, in which it pursued especially cordial relations with the political and military leadership in Bosnia's Serb Republic who opposed the consolidation of an authoritative all-state government in Sarajevo.

Kosova and Albania: The Russian authorities have regularly employed the anti-Albanian card to serve their strategic interests. Since the NATO intervention in Kosova in March 1999, officials have depicted the Albanian nation as the chief danger to Balkan stability. They accused the Alliance of having trained and deployed KLA (Kosova Liberation Army) "terrorists," and asserted that it was now reaping the harvest of this mistaken policy in Kosova and Macedonia. Throughout the Kosova crisis in the late 1990s, Moscow endeavored to expand its influence in the region to balance what it saw as growing NATO interference that undermined Yugoslav sovereignty. NATO military involvement was depicted as a blatant attempt to break up Yugoslavia and establish a dangerous precedent for other "humanitarian interventions." NATO was allegedly to be tacitly supporting the Albanian "ethno-terrorists" in Kosova in its war against Belgrade because, similar to that of the Bosnian Muslims, their goals coincided with that of Washington.¹²⁹

Moscow used the NATO intervention to depict the Alliance as acting "unilaterally" without a UN mandate. Paradoxically, it soon suited Moscow's objectives to be the first to dispatch troops into Kosova without prior UN approval in a move designed to preempt NATO. The Kremlin's belligerent and non-cooperative stance throughout the NATO military campaign was a ploy designed to gain a good bargaining position.¹³⁰ The Kremlin calculated that the West would offer Russia various valuable incentives in order to avoid a permanent East-West rupture. Russian officials have invariably acted hostile in order to gain advantages, restarting cooperation at a calculated moment so as not to be left out of eventual decision-making.

During the NATO bombing campaign, Russian leaders threatened a military response, which did not materialize. However, Moscow did dispatch jet fighters to Serbia, which were intercepted and impounded in Azerbaijan. Russia's military leaders announced that they intended to send an expeditionary fleet to the Adriatic. In the end, only one Russian military ship reached Montenegrin waters in mid-April 1999. Moscow also supplied the Yugoslav military with intelligence information during the war, as the NATO assault was closely monitored by Russian radar and space-based observation systems. Military leaders claimed that their data avoided greater human losses in Serbia. Despite the hawkish statements of some military and political leaders, more realistic views predominated, cognizant of the country's weakness and the self-defeating nature of any confrontation in the face of NATO's onslaught against the Milosevic regime.

As NATO prepared to deploy its ground troops in Kosova, the Russian authorities quickly dispatched a military contingent to Pristina airport to create a *fait accompli* of a separate Russian sector. According to Russian sources, the 12 June 1999 deployment to Pristina by Russian paratroopers was part of a more elaborate plan by military commanders and the President's office to establish a major presence in the territory.¹³¹ Moscow intended to transfer another 3,000 to 4,000 troops into Kosova through Pristina airport to gain control of a broad area next to the Serbian border and claim it as a Russian sector in advance of NATO deployments. The entire operation was to be coordinated with Belgrade, but proved unsuccessful because Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria refused to provide overflight rights to Russian forces. Attempts to carve out a Russian zone of control in Kosova proved

unsuccessful, as NATO leaders opposed potential partition. In the estimations of Kosovar Albanian observers, the Russian army was primarily dispatched in Kosova to protect Serbian enclaves in the territory.¹³² But Moscow had few diplomatic or military levers to press its case and had to be satisfied with a small force under overall NATO command.

Moscow also lacked modern peace-keeping units and was unable to bear the financial costs of a substantial troop deployment. Some observers argued that the Kremlin preferred a UN force in Kosova primarily because a NATO deployment obliged each participating country to pay its share of the costs, which for Russia meant somewhere in the region of \$150 million a year. The Bosnian battalion *alone* was already consuming half of the Duma's annual budget for peace-keeping operations.

Moscow commentators claimed that Albanians were incapable of democratic government, inherently violent, and fundamentally anti-Western. As alleged proof, they pointed to developments in Albania and the growth of the "terrorist" Kosova Liberation Army and its supposed criminal empire. Moscow conveniently camouflaged evidence that the Serbian *mafia* dominated much of the central Balkans. Instead, it alleged that any Albanian state generated instability throughout the region, undermined the process of European expansion, acted as a conduit of illicit materials into the continent, and provided a gateway for fundamentalist Islamic forces.¹³³

Following the demise of Milosevic, Moscow wanted American and European policy makers to conclude that the major sources of insecurity and conflict in the region were radicalized Albanians. Militants and extremists had apparently "hijacked Albanian politics" throughout Southeast Europe and democratic forces were either helpless bystanders or willing accomplices. Such contentions provided a useful cover for the state terror inflicted by Belgrade to keep Yugoslavia together, precipitating and perpetuating many of the ethnic conflicts in the region.

Russian officials consistently assigned collective blame on the Albanians for much of the organized crime in the Balkans. In March 2001, two days before an official visit to Tirana, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov declared that wherever there was an Albanian majority, crime and human trafficking were rampant.¹³⁴ Such statements were perceived as racist in

Tirana and indicated Moscow's intent to reinforce the historical alliance between Russia and Serbia. Russian policy toward Kosova and Macedonia were viewed in Tirana as efforts to create a Slavic-Orthodox axis against Albanians. Politicians and public opinion in Tirana were outraged by Russian accusations of Albanians' supposed Islamic fundamentalism. During his meeting with Albanian officials, Ivanov complained that the international Islamic terrorist network began in Afghanistan, operated through Chechnya, and ended with Albanians in Kosova and Macedonia. This stretch of territory was often described in Moscow as the "arc of instability."

Under Putin, the Kremlin sought to shore up the Vojislav Kostunica administration in Belgrade, restore Kosova to Yugoslavia, and expand its influence throughout Southeast Europe. Despite NATO's success in halting genocide in Kosova, the Kremlin charged KFOR with failing its mission, allegedly tolerating Albanian militancy, and promoting regional destabilization. It challenged NATO to either destroy the Albanian guerrillas and their support base or abandon the Balkans altogether. According to Putin, during his trip to Belgrade in June 2001, the Balkan region was seriously threatened by "religious intolerance and extremism, which have their main sources in Kosovo."¹³⁵ During his periodic trips to the region, Foreign Minister Ivanov claimed that NATO's "passive reaction" to the spread of the Kosova conflict into Macedonia threatened peace in the entire region and encouraged other ethnic and territorial conflicts. He asserted that the NATO intervention had failed to solve the region's problems, while indicating that Russia favored more effective solutions.

During Putin's unexpected visit to Kosova in June 2001, he stressed Russia's interests in the Balkans and mirrored his predecessor Yeltsin in his support of Belgrade.¹³⁶ Both the Yugoslav and Russian Presidents claimed that international tolerance of "Albanian extremism" was to blame for the ongoing instability in the region. Putin also lashed out at the planned November 2001 general elections and asserted that Kosova's Serbs should boycott the ballot and not participate in setting up joint democratic institutions. Both Putin and Kostunica proposed the organization of a regional conference to chart the future of the Balkans. Implicit in this was the maintenance of all current borders and the preservation of the Yugoslav structure, denying independence to both Kosova and Montenegro.¹³⁷

Serbia: The Milosevic regime gave substantial opportunities for Russia to exploit the Balkan conflicts, creating wedges between the U.S. and its European allies, and weakening the case for further NATO enlargement or mission expansion. However, the potential disintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the independence of Montenegro constituted an uncomfortable problem for Moscow by potentially undermining its influence in the region.

Moscow's support for Serbia and the preservation of the federal structure throughout the wars of Yugoslav succession had little to do with pan-Slavic "Orthodox solidarity" and more with the desire to promote Russian state interests in the Balkans. According to one commentator, "it was not ethnic nationalism but rather state nationalism that prompted Russia to take side with the Serbs."¹³⁸ Although the Yeltsin government was not enamored with Milosevic, the Balkans remained one of the few regions in Europe where the Kremlin felt it could still exert some influence. Indeed, the crisis helped Russia to re-establish a position which had diminished since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The international sanctions imposed on Belgrade for fomenting war in the region both isolated the country from the West and allowed for pro-Russian sentiment to resurface in Serbia.

Some analysts argued that the Kremlin favored a continuing crisis, if not outright war in the Balkans, in order to help divert Western attention from its own policies inside the CIS and the Russian Federation. This also served to complicate trans-Atlantic Allied relations and prevented the steady progress of Balkan states toward NATO membership. Above all, it provided the Kremlin with renewed leverage in Southeast Europe because of its relative influence in Belgrade and a seat at the table in the six-nation "Contact Group" designed to resolve the Yugoslav crises.

During the disintegration of Tito's Yugoslavia, Moscow supported the Milosevic project of a "Greater Serbia" cloaked as the preservation of Yugoslavia, as this could fortify Russian leverage in the region. Political groups in Moscow, with the evident blessing of the Kremlin, encouraged and assisted militant ethno-nationalist groups in Serbia to pursue their campaign for territory. During the sanctions against Yugoslavia, Moscow acted as an economic lifeline for Belgrade, especially through its energy

supplies. Trade networks between Serbia and Russia developed throughout the Milosevic years. Serbian companies such as *Progres*, closely linked with officials in Belgrade, developed a lucrative business in oil and grain.¹³⁹ Similar deals were made in the telecommunications and banking sectors. Members of the Milosevic administration and his inner circle of supporters stood accused of substantial financial gain through many of these joint ventures, which helped to prop up the internationally sanctioned Serbian regime.

Moscow was also suspected of providing weapons systems to Belgrade during the 1990s. The Yugoslav Air Force was reportedly supplied with long range surface-to-air missiles and the Yugoslav Army with various rocket systems. In blatant opposition to NATO policy, Moscow conferred awards on several Yugoslav military leaders, including the army chief of staff and future Defense Minister General Dragoljub Ojdanic, for their "heroic defense of the country." Ojdanic was one of several Serbian leaders indicted for war crimes by the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. The General paid a clandestine visit to Moscow in May 2000, despite the protests of Western leaders, where he met with top Russian military and defense officials.¹⁴⁰

Close contacts were maintained between the two militaries and Orthodox churches, as well as between parliamentary and executive bodies. The Serbian regime persuaded its people of the notion that Russia was fully supportive of Milosevic's policies and would defend the country against Western intervention. Moscow depicted Serbia-Yugoslavia as the victim of Western aggression, whether through economic sanctions, diplomatic pressures, or military actions. The Kremlin and the Duma deliberately disregarded the culpability of Belgrade for fuelling the Yugoslav wars and described these conflicts as either internal power struggles or a Western conspiracy to carve up Yugoslavia. In official Russian estimations, American policy toward Serbia was designed to suppress Serbian national interests and to establish a puppet regime in Belgrade. Serbia's "independent stance" allegedly thwarted NATO's plans for regional domination and set a bad example for other East European states to exert their sovereignty and independence.

Although the Yeltsin government sought to prevent NATO intervention in both Kosova and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was ultimately powerless to intercede. Nonetheless, international intervention in both territories served to provide Moscow with an

avenue for its reinvolvement in the region. Moscow's role in the Contact Group for the former Yugoslavia gave Belgrade some diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis the international community. Furthermore, the Kremlin persistently lobbied for the lifting of economic sanctions against Serbia in order to weaken European resolve. Serbia, for its part, insisted on Moscow's engagement in all aspects of the "peace process" and thereby helped to raise Russia's prestige as a regional player.

Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev weathered the storm of domestic criticisms of their allegedly ineffective policies in the former Yugoslavia and the loss of Russia's status as a world power.¹⁴¹ NATO's long-term presence marginalized Russia's role in the region, bypassing the UN Security Council where Moscow exercised a veto. The Milosevic regime exploited Russian opposition to Yugoslavia's disintegration and NATO involvement to their advantage, both for domestic and foreign consumption.¹⁴² They manipulated the image of a strong "big brother" Russia to convince the public that Moscow was Serbia's protector and would intervene in the event of a showdown with NATO. This served to stiffen Belgrade's resistance against Allied demands over Kosova in the calculation that Serbia could depend on Russia's support.

Notions that Yugoslavia would join the Russia-Belarus Union and some new military bloc as an alternative to NATO were largely propaganda ploys by the embattled Serbian leadership. Moscow often capitalized on these statements, as during a visit to the region by Russian Defense Council Secretary Yuri Baturin in October 1996. He suggested that Russia was interested in establishing a military base along the Montenegrin coast as a visible counter to the growing NATO presence in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Moscow faced a major dilemma in its response to the NATO war against Serbia. It sought to oppose NATO's military action and demonstrate its prowess and pro-Serb credentials, while at the same time avoiding a major rupture with the West, on whom it remained dependent economically. The outcome was a combination of inflammatory rhetoric and impotent action, with an eventual restoration of relations. Influential Russian commentators applauded the war, as it would allegedly initiate the "collapse of the U.S. global empire."¹⁴³ Some strategists argued that an American quagmire in Yugoslavia would ultimately serve Russian interests in the Balkans. If indeed the NATO missions in Bosnia and Kosova had unraveled, this could have presented a

bonus for Moscow, as Russian policymakers would claim that the Strategic Concept adopted at the 1999 NATO Summit was a failure. Such a scenario would also seriously undermine support for further rounds of Alliance enlargement and any new NATO missions in the Balkans.

The Kremlin was dismayed that it was ignored as a "strategic partner" in NATO decision making over Kosova. It subsequently focused its energies on campaigning for the preservation of the FRY and Kosova's eventual reintegration with Serbia, perhaps prolonging the NATO bombing campaign. Belgrade calculated that Russian support would prevail over Western pressure to comply with the Rambouillet accords. Eventually, under the leadership of Viktor Chernomyrdin, Moscow realized that NATO would not back down from its demands on Milosevic and Russian authorities assumed the role of mediators between the West and Belgrade.

As the Milosevic regime disintegrated during the fall of 2000, it became clear that Washington and Moscow had fundamentally different objectives in Serbia and the wider region. While the U.S. wanted Serbia to emerge as an anchor of regional stability with a pro-Western administration, Russia preferred to maintain the country as a source of regional uncertainty that questioned or undermined the process of NATO's institutional and operational expansion. Both Putin and the Russian Duma expressed fears that Serbia could swing in a strongly pro-Western direction after Milosevic was dislodged from power. Moscow displayed a lukewarm reaction to the presidential election victory of Vojislav Kostunica in October 2000. Its strong support for the Milosevic regime was evident in its initial acceptance of fraudulent election results, despite the mass protests of Serbian citizens. The Russian authorities only recognized Kostunica's triumph once the security forces took the side of the opposition. Moscow then attempted to pose as a power broker in order to regain its influence with Belgrade.

Despite some vehement anti-American statements by Kostunica during the election campaign, Putin remained uncertain about his policies once in power. There were fears that a post-Milosevic Serbia, similar to its neighbors, would petition for NATO membership and strengthen its ties with the American military. Nevertheless, once Moscow realized that the Milosevic era was over, it courted the new Yugoslav leadership and even claimed that Foreign Minister Ivanov was instrumental in ensuring a smooth

transition of power from Milosevic to Kostunica.¹⁴⁴ The Kremlin threw its weight behind the new Serbian leadership and sought to ingratiate itself with Belgrade by claiming that the West needed to atone for its 1999 bombing campaign by bearing all the costs of Serbia's reconstruction.¹⁴⁵

The new Yugoslav President displayed a cool approach toward the U.S. and paid his first foreign visit to Moscow in late October 2000. He seemed willing to use Serbia's ties with Russia as a lever against Western influences and believed that Moscow's political support would be substantial as Russia remained fearful of its diminishing influence in the Balkans. However, Russia gave Belgrade only limited economic support other than energy in comparison with the Western powers.

Montenegro: Russian authorities have been adamant about the necessity of preserving a Yugoslav federation, even if it only consisted of two units, Serbia and Montenegro. For the Kremlin, the existence of Yugoslavia was important for two reasons: it countered secessionist pressures throughout the continent that were also present in the Russian Federation and it maintained the largest state in the Balkans that had proven to be Russia's most reliable ally since the end of the Cold War. The Montenegrin government was therefore encouraged by Moscow throughout the 1990s to remain in a federal structure. Moves toward independence were depicted as nefarious Western attempts to dismember the remnants of Yugoslavia. After the ouster of Milosevic in October 2000, the Western powers sought to discourage the Montenegrin administration from pressing forward with a referendum to "regain" state independence. As this goal coincided with that of the Western capitals, Moscow took more of a backseat in the dispute between Belgrade and Podgorica. In essence, EU pressures against Montenegrin statehood were supported by Moscow and served Russian interests. The union agreement between Serbia and Montenegro forged by EU Security High Representative Javier Solana in March 2002 was therefore welcomed in Moscow as a mechanism for keeping the federation together.

Macedonia: In 1992, President Yeltsin recognized Macedonian independence. It was a difficult decision as he risked alienating the nationalist-Orthodox bloc who opposed the disintegration of Yugoslavia and favored Serbia in all regional conflicts. Moscow's calculation throughout the 1990s was seemingly to build on a future

alliance with Macedonia and to draw the country closer to what was perceived as an essentially pro-Russian Serbia and Bulgaria.

During the spring of 2001, Albanian insurgents in Macedonia seemed to play into the hands of the anti-Albanian lobby clustered around the governments in Belgrade and Moscow. The Kremlin's intention was to transform the perceptions of Albanians as victims of ethnic war to terrorists determined to destabilize the entire region. Such a strategy served to strengthen the case for preserving Yugoslavia and increase Russian influence in Southeast Europe. According to proponents of the Belgrade-Moscow axis, Albanian political leaders in each Balkan state were secretly plotting for a "Greater Albania." The goal of this Belgrade-Moscow axis was to engender the negative image of Albanians as terrorists, criminals, drug-smugglers, and Islamic fundamentalists. Serbian and Russian propaganda was determined to refashion Western public perceptions of Albanians as the equivalent of Europe's Taliban menace. Meanwhile, NATO was either being duped into supporting their cause or the U.S. was deliberately creating a "stronghold of crime and terrorism" in the Balkans.

The eruption of armed conflict between Albanian guerrillas and Macedonian security forces in the summer of 2001 shifted attention away from the problems in Serbia and the unwillingness of Belgrade to surrender Milosevic and other high-ranking war criminals to The Hague tribunal. It also buttressed those who called for greater economic and military assistance to Belgrade as a counterweight to growing "Albanian extremism." The Macedonian crisis also undercut the position of those calling for Kosovar statehood and independence, as this was depicted as promoting militancy and regional instability. It reinforced arguments that Albanians were ill-suited for self-government and needed to remain under international wardship and eventual Serbian control. Macedonia's Albanian guerrillas were described as a part of an essentially Kosovar movement determined to provoke ethnic war inside the vulnerable Macedonian state.

Macedonia's Albanian insurgency reinforced calls in Moscow for the preservation of the Yugoslav state as an important counterweight to the specter of "Albanian expansionism." Indeed, both Belgrade and Moscow endeavored to forge closer political and military links with Skopje in "Slavic solidarity" against rising pan-Albanianism. The Ohrid agreement arranged by the EU and U.S. in the summer of 2001 to integrate the

Albanian minority more fully into all state institutions was thus viewed with deep scepticism in Moscow and perceived as giving too many concessions to Albanian nationalists.

Bulgaria: Bulgaria has remained almost completely dependent on Russian gas supplies.¹⁴⁶ During the last decade, Russia also increased its export of crude oil to Bulgaria: between 1992 and 1995, the import of oil grew from 30% to over 73%. According to Bulgarian analysts, "this enormous increase, especially in 1993-1994, is probably geo-politically directed to tie Bulgaria to Russia."¹⁴⁷ Since the early 1990s, *Gazprom* has taken an active part in Russian diplomacy and its directors have almost always accompanied the Russian President and Prime Minister abroad. This "gas diplomacy" has been one of the most important elements of Russian policy towards Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁸

In the 1990s, Bulgaria experienced a form of energy blackmail implemented by *Gazprom*, which was made possible by several Bulgarian Socialist governments. The joint Bulgarian-Russian venture *Topenergy* served as a conduit for Russian pressure and was established with the consent of Socialist Prime Minister Andrej Lukanov in the early 1990s. Although the treaty between the two countries required that the two countries acquire equal state-owned shares in the venture, in 1997 *Gazprom* possessed over 54% (a blocking quota) in *Topenergy*. In the summer of 1997, 17% of *Topenergy* shares were held by private Bulgarian companies also connected to *Gazprom* and *Multigroup* (a semi-legal international cartel with high political connections). Bulgaria's state-enterprises therefore owned only 28.3% of the shares.¹⁴⁹

Bulgaria was not only left completely dependent on Russia's gas supplies, but it could not influence any business decisions of the energy monopoly. Through the penetration of *Gazprom* and *Topenergy*, Russia was selling gas to Bulgaria for a one-third higher price than that offered to a country such as Germany. After a pro-Western government took power in Sofia 1997, this arrangement was revoked. Simultaneously, the Bulgarian gas company *Bulgargas* signed a contract with Turkmenistan in an attempt to diversify gas supplies. However, Russia continued to pressure Bulgaria to buy significant quantities through *Gazprom* as a condition for obtaining a lower price. In the oil sector, *Lukoil* purchased 58% of Bulgaria's largest

refinery and through its Bulgarian subsidiaries has dominated Bulgaria's oil market.¹⁵⁰

Moscow preferred to have a Socialist administration in Sofia, as they tended to be more accommodating to Russian interests than any pro-Western government. Therefore, when the Socialists returned to power in December 1994, Moscow's influence climbed, further anticipating that Sofia would be a staunch opponent of NATO enlargement. By contrast, the oppositionist Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) was perceived as a dangerous element that would move the country closer to NATO. The election victory of the UDF in April 1997 was considered a setback in the Kremlin as the new Bulgarian administration embraced the prospect of NATO membership. According to Bulgarian political analysts, the Russian authorities invested enormous amounts of money to undermine the UDF government between 1997 and 2001.¹⁵¹ Resources were earmarked for the mass media and several rival political parties to discredit the UDF and promote the more trusted Socialists. Russia's foreign intelligence services remained particularly active in Bulgaria. In March 2000, a major spying scandal erupted between the two states when the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry gave Moscow one week to withdraw three diplomats from Sofia.¹⁵² They were reportedly implicated in the arrest of a retired senior Bulgarian military intelligence officer, Colonel Yani Yanev, and the chief of a Defense Ministry archive, who were accused of delivering military secrets and other classified intelligence material to Russian diplomats in Sofia.

Moscow reacted angrily to the incident and expelled three Bulgarian diplomats from Moscow. The Kremlin also accused the Bulgarian government of conducting an "anti-Russian campaign" and pandering to American interests. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksander Avdeev warned Sofia that its determination to draw closer to NATO would undermine the country's chances of friendly relations with Russia.¹⁵³ Russian leaders were perturbed after once again "losing" Bulgaria in the aftermath of the general election victory of the King Simeon movement in June 2001, which prevented the Socialists from regaining power. The new Bulgarian authorities made it abundantly clear that they would seek NATO membership as

their foreign policy priority, even after the Socialist Georgi Parvanov was elected President in November 2001.

According to Balkan analysts, Moscow was intent on making the region safer and more profitable for its own oligarchic lobbies and criminal cartels, linked with the re-energized FSB structure promoted by Putin. Bulgaria and the nearby region provided a potential bonanza for organized crime and quasi-legal Russian business activities. Several illicit deals were uncovered by Bulgarian intelligence services on the part of Russian companies, including money-laundering schemes. Five Russian businessmen were subsequently expelled from Bulgaria during 2000. The most notorious among them was Mikhail Chorny who was involved in purchasing several Bulgarian banks, media outlets, telecommunications companies, and a football team, Levski FC.¹⁵⁴ Chorny was believed to be a leader of Russia's *Solntsevskiaia* organized crime syndicate and of having close relations with Russian oligarchs and officials.

In early 2001, a project for setting up an "economic growth council" caused controversies in Bulgaria when it transpired that it could greatly increase Russian influence over the country's economy.¹⁵⁵ The new body was intended to be a permanent consultative organ with the government on issues of economic policy, including investment priorities, utilization of EU and World Bank funds, and promotion of private business. Four of the nine members of the council were to be representatives of the *Vazrazhdane* Business Club, thus ensuring the dominance of an organization with close ties to Russian business interests. The initiative was postponed after an outcry by Bulgarian officials, economists, and business groups who charged that the council would create a monopoly for an organization that was involved in large-scale corruption.

Bulgarian Deputy Premier and Economic Minister Nikolai Vasiliev claimed in January 2002 that his country hoped to attract \$1 billion in Russian investments over the next few years.¹⁵⁶ According to Vasiliev, Sofia viewed Russia as "an immense market and a considerable source of investment whose potential has not yet been fully captured." The government evidently sought to attract Russian investors in the privatization process, including the energy sector. Vasiliev discussed with *Gazprom* officials the stalled project of building an oil pipeline from Burgas to Alexandropolis, Greece and increasing the transit of gas via Bulgarian territory to Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia.

In its relations with Bulgaria, Moscow was angered by its exclusion from plans for a regional peacekeeping initiative in which the U.S. was involved. All the south Balkan countries, including Greece and Turkey, agreed in 1998 to establish the Multinational Peace Forces South East Europe (MPFSEE) to be trained and deployed in future crisis points. The brigade headquarters were located in the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv. The Russian Foreign Ministry strongly criticized Russia's omission from the decision-making process as an attempt to push the country out of the Balkans.¹⁵⁷ It also complained that the peacekeeping force would be "fully bonded" to certain "non-regional organizations and countries" – a reference to NATO and the U.S. It viewed the new arrangement as an attempt by Washington to gain preponderance in the region through its Balkan allies, consolidate NATO's *diktat*, and eliminate Russian influence.

A Russian connection was suspected by Bulgarian commentators over the press reports that surfaced at the end of March 2002 claiming that a secret meeting of Osama bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* terrorist network took place in Sofia to discuss US and European embassy targets in Sarajevo. Bulgarian authorities staunchly denied the reports and launched a full investigation into its source.¹⁵⁸ As one Bulgarian journalist would assert:

It does not take much of an effort to recognize the familiar tactics of Moscow. Moscow understood that it cannot stop NATO's enlargement, neither can it distract Bulgarian institutions from achieving their goal to receive an invitation to NATO in November in Prague. This is why during the last two months, Russia adopted a new strategy – it does everything possible to discredit Bulgaria before its NATO allies. During their visits to Sofia recently, the Duma's president Genadii Seleznyov and other Russian parliamentarians suddenly started saying that relations between the two countries have never been more promising.¹⁵⁹

Romania: Russian officials have cast aspersions on Romanian foreign policy and questioned Bucharest's reliability as a potential NATO ally. For instance, the Moscow-influenced Communist authorities in Moldova fueled speculations that Bucharest would promote "revanchism" toward Moldova if it were admitted into NATO.¹⁶⁰ Such statements served to complicate Romania's candidacy for the Alliance. Persistent political tensions in Moldova

have been manipulated by Moscow against Bucharest. This was evident during the demonstrations in Chisinau in February 2002 organized by the opposition movement against the introduction of Russian as a state language. The episode was presented by the Russian media and government spokesman as a Romanian provocation aimed at annexing Moldova. Romanian officials, in turn, charged Moscow with engineering a crisis in order to break the pro-Romanian block, more fully subordinate Moldova, and discredit the government in Bucharest.

President Putin's first trip to the Balkans in June 2001 was designed to send three messages. First, Russia wanted to be considered a major global and regional player despite its economic weakness. Second, the Kremlin sought to demonstrate that although Central Europe had largely slipped from its grasp and the Baltics appeared to be heading toward NATO membership, the Balkans remained prime territory for Russian activities. And third, Putin's visit to Belgrade was intended to cement the alliance with Belgrade against threats to Yugoslavia's survival. Putin's presence was depicted as a landmark pilgrimage by the leader of a superpower. Russia's self-aggrandizement in Belgrade was complimented with attempts to discredit NATO and its evident failure to prevent war and instability. Putin's summit meeting with President Bush in Slovenia in June 2001 similarly enhanced the Kremlin's self-image as an important international player.

Russia's failure to "regain" Bulgaria in 2002 made Serbia even more imperative for Moscow as its bridgehead in the region. It was also intent on pulling Macedonia into the "Orthodox bloc" and exploited the Albanian insurgency as a useful opportunity to offer assistance and protection to Skopje. Moscow was also determined to hold Yugoslavia together. For this purpose, Putin proposed holding an international conference where "territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders" would be guaranteed. According to Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, Russia considered Yugoslavia as its key partner in the Balkans and Central Europe.¹⁶¹ Putin's Moscow remained committed to this partnership and the preservation of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity.¹⁶² The Russian authorities under both the Yeltsin and Putin leadership maintained two overriding objectives in the Balkans: first, to become a regional player in order to gain international prestige and regional leverage, and second to counter what Moscow viewed as NATO penetration throughout Southeast Europe.

Summary and conclusions

Moscow's goals in Eastern Europe revolve around six long-term strategies. First, Russian officials seek to exert predominant if not exclusive influence over the foreign policy and security postures of nearby states formerly in the Soviet zone of influence. This is depicted as a means for stemming and reversing Moscow's decline as a major international player.

Second, the Kremlin is focused on obtaining economic benefits and monopolistic positions through targeted foreign investments and strategic infrastructural buyouts. This would also give Moscow substantial influence over any country's economic, financial, trade, and investment policies, as neighboring capitals become more dependent on it.

Third, Moscow wants to ensure East European dependence on Russian energy supplies and economic investments. This dependence can then be steadily converted into long-term, predictable inter-governmental political influence. Close connections between the Kremlin and large Russian companies, whether through executive appointments, the promotion of overseas operations, or financial, legal, and police instruments, demonstrates that foreign and economic policy are closely intertwined in Russia.

Fourth, Russian authorities seek to limit the pace and scope of Western institutional enlargement and integration, especially with regard to the security and military arena in the CIS states. This is viewed as a means of restricting American "hegemony" and strengthening Russian security. Such a policy is also aimed at preventing these countries from participating in any U.S.-led political or military coalitions opposed by the Kremlin.

Fifth, the Kremlin plans to use the broader East European region as a springboard for rebuilding a larger sphere of predominant influence and global "Great Power" status. The region would thereby become a gateway to Moscow's influence throughout the continent rather than a barrier against it.

And sixth, Russian officials aim to undercut or damage the trans-Atlantic or European-American relationship and Eastern Europe's ties to Washington in order to reinforce the European-Russian or "Eurasian" strategic "poles" and thereby balance American "unipolarity."

Moscow's objectives in Eastern Europe help to clarify the nature of the post-Soviet state and the direction of Russia's foreign policy. Clearly, Russia will continue to be a major player in the region, in particular as a primary energy supplier. It will use its economic weight to pursue political pressures and gain influence over certain countries foreign and security policies. The East European states will face the challenge of trying to balance Russia's presence with preserving their sovereignty, especially in the case of countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, which have moved closer into the Russian orbit. Other countries that are more open to world markets and foreign investment and are members of NATO and the EU will be able to diversify their economic and political interests and may be less susceptible to Russian influence.

East Europeans harbor mixed feelings about a potentially stronger and more prosperous Russia. If indeed Russia were to stage a sustained economic recovery accompanied by political stability and policy cohesion, its pressures throughout the region would likely increase. On the other hand, an unstable and economically backward Russia could also become a source of regional insecurity. The most palatable and secure solution is a relatively weak but stable Russia, either with growing links to the West or relatively isolated from Europe, but with restricted foreign policy capabilities. Apprehensions are voiced in the region that if Russia bolsters its economy, it could become more aggressive and expansive. It may be preferable to have a weak Russia, as long as this does not result in violent disintegration. Although Russian actions will remain restricted by the country's capabilities, Moscow will seek to influence decisions that it interprets as confining its freedom of action, especially in the former Soviet sphere. In particular, Western moves to integrate the CIS states or to construct energy lines that bypass Russia will be seen as directly threatening Russian security interests.

In terms of East European priorities, EU and NATO membership were viewed as overarching goals. Some capitals also sought a coordinated "Eastern" policy and a common energy policy. As several states moved closer to the EU, they proposed an "Eastern Dimension" in the Union approach toward Russia and the CIS, through the encouragement of Western investment and association with the EU. Ultimately, they possess limited tools to influence Russian foreign policy and remain concerned that Russia uses their cooperation to exert "great power" rather than to become a potential partner. Commentators underscored that political circles

in Russia do not treat their former proxies as equal partners. Instead, they endeavor to reach accords with the major power centers in Washington and Brussels over the heads of the former satellites, disregarding the security concerns of their nearest neighbors. The NATO-Russia Council was privately criticized in Eastern Europe as it "brought Russia into our house again, through the back door."¹⁶³

Connections between the East European states and Moscow will have an impact on a range of internal and external decisions, from economic and energy policy to security postures and capabilities. Potential vulnerability to Russian inducements or pressures may complicate their Western integration and influence on their bilateral relations with Washington. The EU would prefer that Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and other former Soviet republics reintegrate with Russia, as this will supposedly ensure greater political and economic coherence and guarantee vital energy supplies to Western Europe across these territories. At present, Moscow supplies over 15% of fuel provisions in the EU and this dependence is likely to accelerate in the coming years. Russia is keenly interested in increasing supplies and fostering European dependence; this is one of the interpretations of Putin's description of the EU as Russia's "strategic partner."

Russia's eagerness to establish closer ties with the Western powers following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks were a strategic calculation to gain political and economic benefits.¹⁶⁴ Putin had made the modernization of the Russian economy a high priority and was looking for Western assistance and investment. Nevertheless, Russia's military leadership and much of its policy circles harbored strong suspicions about Putin's strategy and were waiting in the wings to gauge his impact. In the event that Western assistance proved disappointing and the economic reform effort was unsuccessful, a reversal to a more nationalistic approach could be envisaged.

Russian officials have not been opposed to Eastern European entry into the EU. Paradoxically, EU enlargement may be more immediately damaging for Russian interests than NATO expansion. The economic gap between Europe and Russia could accelerate and an expanding EU will affect border controls and visa requirements under the restrictive Schengen requirements to the detriment of excluded countries.¹⁶⁵ The EU expects the Eastern European candidate states to strictly apply Schengen border controls as a precaution against mass, uncontrolled

immigration and the spread of criminal networks. The introduction of economic and trade legislation and ecological and accounting standards in line with EU requirements could mean new hurdles for CIS exporters. EU regulations also require greater transparency in financial transactions than are currently in place in Eastern Europe, potentially scaring off some Russian companies.¹⁶⁶ East European capitals fear that a strict application of Schengen will negatively affect their relations with their eastern neighbors that will be excluded from the EU for the foreseeable future.¹⁶⁷ In some cases, it will mean abrogating several bilateral agreements on free cross-border contacts.

The Russian authorities have sought closer links with the EU, initially through the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), formalized in June 1994 in the economic and trade arenas. They have endeavored to expand this arrangement to political and security issues. However, Moscow has made it clear that it is not seeking membership or even associate status, as Russia is unwilling to submit to any supranational EU authority. Russia seeks Western investment, technology, and trade in order to rebuild the state and regain broader influence. However, full integration with the West, including the EU, would mean becoming a non-imperial middle-level power on a relatively meager economic level. In such a schema, incorporation in the EU would restrain Moscow's behavior and could stifle its ambitions.

Moscow increasingly views the EU as an organization with international influence. It will therefore seek a "strategic partnership" that could remove NATO's relevance, marginalize the smaller European states, and limit American influences.¹⁶⁸ The Kremlin favors the development of a European security pillar in order to simultaneously establish a close relationship with the European Union and limit America's role. It has supported a permanent EU-Russia Council and regular EU-Russia Summits that can oversee the implementation of joint decisions in the security arena. This would contribute to giving the Russian government a more prominent official role throughout Eastern Europe, especially in unstable regions.

In comments to journalists in May 2003, Putin reiterated his statement that "if Europe wants to be independent and a full-fledged global power center, the shortest route to this goal is good relations with Russia."¹⁶⁹ Moscow will continue to seek more substantial influence over those states that are for the foreseeable future excluded from the EU and NATO, and thus may look toward

Russia for protection. The Kremlin also aims to neutralize the maneuverability of the Central Europeans, even though they are already NATO members and moving toward the EU. The Kremlin has sought Western acquiescence in re-orienting much of the western CIS countries under its political and security umbrella. Russia has promoted itself as a regional stabilizer against the dangers of weak states, authoritarian governments, Islamic fundamentalists, criminal organizations, and terrorist networks. It has thus suited Moscow to have internally unstable or authoritarian regimes on its doorstep that not only cast Russia in a positive light, but also reinforce its contention that Russian influences are positive.

Moscow has depicted the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as a counterbalance to the prevalent "NATO-centrism" in Europe.¹⁷⁰ Russia's foreign policy doctrine has stressed the importance of cooperation with the EU and the significance of the CFSP. In seeking to limit American influence, Moscow has traditionally sought a stronger European bloc independent of the U.S. Hence, the EU as a potential counterbalance to American interests would also help further Russia's goals. Such hopes have yet to be realized as the EU has evolved into a vehicle for economic and institutional integration rather than a coherent mechanism for a coherent security and foreign policy.

Most East European capitals have expressed concerns that emerging European security plans could push America out of Europe, before any continental military credibility has been established. Hence, there is marked hesitation in supporting EU security proposals among staunchly Atlanticist governments who fear that Europe cannot stand up to Moscow's pressures and inducements on its own. Anxieties have also been expressed about a Kremlin "divide and rule" strategy that could decouple the Alliance, decapitate America from Europe, and leave the East Europeans stranded. Russia clearly seeks more effective influence over EU economic and foreign policy.¹⁷¹ Through increasing EU dependence on energy supplies, Russia could also maneuver itself into an indispensable position in decisions pertaining to Euro-Atlantic security.

End Notes

¹ See Astrid S. Tuminez, "Russian Nationalism and the National Interest in Russian Foreign Policy," in Celeste A. Wallander, ed., *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 41-68.

² See Mette Skak, *From Empire to Anarchy: Postcommunist Foreign Policy and International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p.140.

³ A useful synopsis of Russian political orientations toward the outside world soon after the collapse of the USSR can be found in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴ A thoughtful analysis of these issues can be located in Peter Truscott, *Russia First: Breaking with the West* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997).

⁵ For some details consult Suzanne Crow, "Why Has Russian Foreign Policy Changed?" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, Vol. 3, No. 18 (6 May 1994), pp. 1-6.

⁶ See Kozyrev's statement on 14 February 1994, quoted by *Interfaks* (14 February 1994).

⁷ See *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (22 September 1993).

⁸ See Andrzej Czarnocki, "Russia and East-Central Europe," in Andrzej Dumala and Ziemowit Jacek Pietras, eds., *The Future of East-Central Europe* (Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 1996), pp. 208-218.

⁹ Witold Rodkiewicz, "Rosja i jej Sasiedzi—Postimperialny Syndrom," in *Russia and its Neighbors* (Institute of Strategic Studies, No. 40, Krakow: Meritum Publishers, 2000), pp. 11-21.

¹⁰ For a recent example of Russian defensiveness, see Aleksei Arbatov, "A Moscow Perspective," in Christopher Lord, ed., *Central Europe: Core or Periphery?* (Handelshøjskolens Forlag: Copenhagen Business School Press, 2000), pp. 181-192.

¹¹ According to N. Narochnitskaia, "Russia and the 'Eastern Issue'," *International Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (1999), p. 25.

¹² A helpful analysis can be found in Leon Aron, "The Foreign Policy Doctrine of Postcommunist Russia and its Domestic Context," in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *The New Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998), p. 27.

¹³ Bruce D. Porter, "Russia and Europe After the Cold War: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies," in Wallander, ed., p.136.

¹⁴ See Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "A U.S. Policy for Russia," *FPRI E-Notes* (25 April 2001).

¹⁵ For a valuable exposition of Russian self-perceptions in the Putin era by a leading professor at Moscow State University, see A. S. Panarin, "Polozenie geopolityczne Rosji: Alternatywne scenariusze u progu XXI wieku," in *Political Science Studies*, Vol. 4: History and Geopolitics: Russia on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century (University of Warsaw, 2000), pp. 38-78.

¹⁶ See *Osnovnye polozheniia voiennoi doktriny rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Moscow, 1993).

¹⁷ See A. Gousher, "External Challenges to Russia's National Interests," *International Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1999), pp. 162-167.

¹⁸ Cited in Peter Rodman, "Russia: The Challenge of a Failing Power," in Robert Kagan and William Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), p. 84.

¹⁹ Based partly on the author's participation with General Kvashnin at a conference at the Russian Foreign Service Academy in Moscow in November 1999.

²⁰ Primakov's positions can be found in *Gody v bol'shoi politike* (Moscow: Sovershenno Sekretno, 2000).

²¹ See for example, Thomas E. Graham, "Russia's Foreign Policy," paper delivered at a symposium at the Royal Defense College, Evere, Belgium, 1 March 2000 and located on the web site of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

²² For a Russian perspective on President Putin's foreign policy decision-making, see V. Kremeniuk, "The Ideological Legacy in Russia's Foreign Policy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2001), pp. 18-26.

²³ A useful analysis can be found in Stuart D. Goldman, "Russia," *Issue Brief for Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 22 June 2001).

²⁴ In support of Putin's more forthright policies, in June 2001 the first Conference of Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian nations was held in Moscow. The leader of the Russian delegation was the Chairman of Parliament Gennadi Seleznyov, who claimed the conference was a platform for the extensive unification of the three nations and an enticement to other states to voluntarily join the emerging union.

²⁵ For instance, see Jim Nichol, "Russian President Putin's Prospective Policies: Issues and Implications," *Report for Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 17 April 2000).

²⁶ Consult B. Pichugin, "Russia and the European Union's Eastward Expansion," *International Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January-February 1996), pp. 90-96.

²⁷ A standard Russian promotion of the OSCE can be found in A. Alekseev, "Russia in European Politics," *International Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2001), pp. 37-44.

²⁸ For some details on Putin's trips, consult Breffini O'Rourke, "Russia: Putin's Brussels Visit Underscores EU Ties," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 1 October 2001. See online version at

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⁴¹ Refer to Liz Fuller, "Back to the USSR?" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Newsline*, Vol. 5, No. 147, Part I (6 August 2001).

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⁴³ Useful details can be found in "Will the Union be Reborn?" which analyses a document produced by Moscow's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, in *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 15 (26 July 1996), pp. 32-35, 62.

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⁶¹ See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Newsline*, Vol. 5, No. 241, Part I (21 December 2001) and *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (20 December 2001).

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⁷⁰ Cited in Stephen J. Blank, "Putin's Twelve-Step Program," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2000), p. 155. The article presents a level-headed assessment of Putin's domestic and foreign policy ambitions.

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⁸⁶ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 32, Part II (19 February 2002).

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⁸⁸ For some details on the Latvian incident, see Mel Huang, "Latvia's Marching Season," *Central European Review*, Vol. 10, No. 25 (26 March 1999).

⁸⁹ Consult Paul Goble, "Exploiting Ethnic Issues as a Foreign Policy Strategy," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Security Watch*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (22 January 2001).

⁹⁰ K. Smith, *Baltic-Russian Relations*, p. 19.

⁹¹ Much of the information in this section was obtained from both governmental and private sources in Vilnius during the author's visits to Lithuania in May 2001 and April 2002.

⁹² "Lithuanian MP Claims Russian Money Being Used in Election Campaign," *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (3 January 2003). Moscow invested up to \$2.8 million on the presidential election campaign and bought access to the Lithuanian media, while alleged links between Russian intelligence services, businessmen, and the President's office led in January 2004 to impeachment proceedings against President Rolandas Paksas for evidently endangering Lithuania's national security.

⁹³ Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus was eventually persuaded by ex-British Foreign Secretary David Owen, chairman of Yukos' international division, who pledged that the company was a "transparent, profit-oriented, long-term investor." Owen agreed to serve on the supervisory board of the refinery. Yukos also planned to establish a Baltic-wide filling station network. See "A Slippery Patch for Russian Oil," *Business Week On Line* (13 January 2003). Vilnius was outraged that operational control of

Mazeikiai was transferred from *Williams* to *Yukos* without the knowledge of the Lithuanian government.

⁹⁴ Consult Michael Wines, "Vilnius Journal: Is Big Brother Being Replaced by Big Oil Company?" *The New York Times* (19 September 2002). The opposition conservatives warned that Russian capital could in the long-term challenge Lithuanian democracy and a Western model of development regardless of NATO and EU membership. See *BNS*, Vilnius, 30 August 2002.

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⁹⁶ Keith C. Smith, *Baltic-Russian Relations*, p. 3.

⁹⁷ For the 2000 version of Russia's foreign policy concept and references to Central and Eastern Europe, see *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, No. 8 (2000).

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¹⁰¹ Consult Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki: geopoliticheskaya budushchee Rossii* (Moscow: Arktogetia, 1997).

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¹⁰⁵ For example, see Panarin, "Polozenie geopolityczne Rosji," p. 66-68.

¹⁰⁶ A helpful overview of Polish foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia can be found in Ilya Prizel, "Warsaw's Ostpolitik: A New Encounter with Positivism," in Ilya Prizel and Andrew A. Michta, eds., *Polish Foreign Policy Reconsidered* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 95-128.

¹⁰⁷ See the interview with Poland's ex-Minister of Internal Affairs, Andrzej Milczanowski, in *Siec Polska* (Washington, DC, 27 April 1997). According to Milczanowski, at one point Primakov assured Yeltsin that Russian intelligence services had the necessary means to influence Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski to block Poland's entry into NATO.

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¹⁰⁹ Some information on these attempts can be found in Laszlo Poti, "The Hungarian-Ukrainian-Russian Triangle: Not Like Rubic's Cube," in Balmaceda, p. 127-163.

¹¹⁰ See for example, *Nepszabadsag*, (3 February 1998).

¹¹¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 28, Part II (12 February 2002).

¹¹² *CTK*, (24 October 2001).

¹¹³ See the Czech Security Information Service, *Annual Report 2000*. See online version at www.bis.cz/eng/vz2000/vz2000_10.html

¹¹⁴ See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 35, Part II (22 February 2002).

¹¹⁵ For a useful analysis, see Laszlo Poti, "The Triangle with Five Sides: Patterns of Relations between Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, and Russia," in Balmaceda, p. 220-230.

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- ¹²³ A. Fedorov, "New Pragmatism of Russia's Foreign Policy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (1999), pp. 46-52.
- ¹²⁴ See M. Deliagin, "America's Real Goals in Yugoslavia," *International Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (1999), pp. 75-84.
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¹⁵⁵ See Galina Alexandrova, "Bulgarian Vazrazhdane Business Club Attempt to Dominate Bulgarian Economy Fails for the Time Being," *Capital* (12 January 2001).

¹⁵⁶ *ITAR-TASS* (21 January 2002).

¹⁵⁷ See the Jamestown Foundation *Monitor*, Vol. 4, Issue 179 (30 September 1998).

¹⁵⁸ *Balkan Times Online* (25 March 2002).

¹⁵⁹ Kristina Georgieva, "Moscow has an Interest in Mixing Sofia with al-Qaeda," Bulgarian electronic paper *Mediapool.bg* (25 March, 2002). During the same visit to Sofia, Dmitrii Rogozin, the Russian Duma's Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, claimed that "Russia is not going to line up for NATO membership, we advise Bulgaria not to line up either." See *Dnevnik* (12 February 2002).

¹⁶⁰ Consult Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 9, Part II (28 March 2002).

¹⁶¹ *Tanjug* (18 April 2001).

¹⁶² During his visit to Moscow in October 2001, Kostunica issued a joint statement with Putin declaring a "strategic commitment" between the two states in several spheres, including political, economic, and scientific relations. See *Tanjug* (27 October 2001).

¹⁶³ A sentiment shared in conversations with analysts and officials in Prague in June 2003.

¹⁶⁴ See for example, "Russia and NATO: The Beginning of a New Relationship?" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Russian Political Weekly*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (21 January 2002).

¹⁶⁵ The Schengen Agreement establishes conditions for the free movement of people in 13 of the European Union's 15 current member states. It also imposes tighter restrictions on the EU's "outer border" with non-member states.

¹⁶⁶ See Todd Prince, "A Wary Eye is Cast Over EU's Influence on Trade," *The Moscow Times* (18 April 2002). East European entry into the EU could increase their exports to Russia as they will be looking for new markets, but much depends on the extent of Russian protectionism.

¹⁶⁷ An excellent paper on the Schengen issue and its impact on the region was written by Joanna Apap, Jakub Boratynski, Michael Emerson, Grzegorz Gromadzki, Marius Vahl, and Nicholas Whyte, "Friendly Schengen Borderland Policy on the New Borders of an Emlarged EU and its Neighbours," *CEPS* (6-7 July 2001). The

authors claim on p. 3 that “the strict application of the Schengen border regime in general, and visa policy in particular, will directly affect and reinforce the growing socio-economic and psychological gap between the two parts of Europe.”

¹⁶⁸ For a useful discussion of the Russian-European relationship, see Michael Emerson, *The Elephant and the Bear: The European Union, Russia, and their Near Abroads* (Brussels: Center for European Policy Studies, 2001).

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¹⁷⁰ See the commentary on the ESDP in *Krasnaia zvezda* (14 October 1997).

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