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Russian Policy Toward the Middle East Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge for Putin

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The Donald W. Treadgold Papers
Jackson School of International Studies
Box 353650
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-3650
(206) 221-6348
treadgld@u.washington.edu

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.

Sabrina P. Ramet
Editor, 1995 - 2001

About the author of this issue

Robert O. Freedman is the Peggy Meyerhoff Pearlstone Professor of Political Science at Baltimore Hebrew University and Visiting Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of four books, most recently *Moscow and the Middle of the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), and the editor of twelve books, including *Israel's First Fifty Years* (University Press of Florida, 2001). His newest book, *The Middle East Enters the 21st Century*, is now in press.

It has now been ten years since the Soviet Union collapsed and one year since Vladimir Putin replaced Boris Yeltsin as the President of the Soviet Union's most important successor state, the Russian Federation. Given this time span, it is appropriate to evaluate Russian policy toward the Middle East over the last decade. This paper will analyze the main thrust of Russian policy toward the Middle East under Yeltsin, and will also examine the degree to which it has begun to change under Putin, who, after becoming Prime Minister in August 1999, became acting President in January 2000 and then was elected President two months later.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, its chief successor state, Russia, faced a far different strategic situation from that faced by the Soviet Union. With a host of new states on Russia's southern borders, six of them Muslim, the Russian leadership faced a series of new challenges in its dealings with the Middle East. This was to affect its Middle East priorities, as compared to those of the Soviet Union. In addition, while Soviet policy toward the Middle East was, at least until 1988, the mid-point of Mikhail Gorbachev's term as communist party leader, ideologically driven to a greater or lesser degree, the policies of Yeltsin were to prove far more pragmatic. Yeltsin's policies were also far more disjointed than those of his Soviet predecessors, as a number of often conflicting interest groups sought to openly influence Russian policy in the Middle East. On the other hand, Yeltsin's successor, Putin, has brought some of these groups back under control. Third, to a far greater degree than in the Soviet period, Russian policy making in the Middle East became an issue in Russia's domestic politics as Yeltsin, in response to an increasingly right-wing Russian Parliament (Duma), sought to tailor Russian policy toward the region at least to some degree to satisfy his critics in Parliament. Putin, working with a much more supportive Duma through December 2000, did not have to face this problem although his nationalist policies were in tune with the majority of the Duma. After exploring these major changes, along with the economic and military weaknesses which greatly hampered Russia's foreign policy, this study will briefly analyze Russia's four

most important regional relationships: 1) Iran (Russia's key regional ally); 2) Iraq (which has seen the greatest changes in Russian policy during the Yeltsin-Putin period); 3) Turkey (with which Russia has had a very mixed relationship); and 4) Israel (with which Russia has developed a very close relationship — quite the reverse of the situation in the Soviet era). This essay will conclude with an evaluation of the main Middle Eastern challenges facing Vladimir Putin, Yeltsin's chosen successor as Russia's President.

Background

New regional priorities

When the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, Russia suddenly found itself with fourteen new neighbors, six of them (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan [in Transcaucasia] and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan [in Central Asia]) directly bordering the Middle East. Since four of these states (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan) and two other states bordering or close to Russia on its southern border (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) were experiencing a revival of Islam, which had long been suppressed under communism, concerns about Islamic radicalism were added to the geopolitical concern in Moscow about the future direction of these countries' foreign and domestic policies.¹ Russia also had concerns about drug and arms smuggling, as well as creating a new defense perimeter along Russia's southern frontier (most Soviet defense installations on Russia's south now lay in the newly independent states) and, consequently, what happened in these new countries became of paramount importance for Moscow. While regaining at least a modicum of control over these countries became a primary objective of Russian policy during the decade of the 1990s, the Russian leadership soon found itself in a competition for influence with the United States and its NATO ally Turkey. It was also initially concerned that Iran's radical Islamic regime would seek to spread its influence in Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Thus, Russia's primary foreign policy foci in the Middle East became Iran and Turkey, as Moscow found itself dealing with them not only in such bilateral areas as trade and arms sales, but also in the geo-

politics of Transcaucasia and Central Asia. These regions presented increasing challenges to Moscow given the two wars in Chechnya, the civil war in Tajikistan, the rise of the Islamic radical Taliban regime in Afghanistan, an Islamic insurgency in Central Asia, and the Russian-American energy competition over the oil and gas resources of the Caspian Sea.

If Turkey and Iran were Moscow's first priority in the Middle East, given their cultural and geographic proximity to Transcaucasia and Central Asia, the second main Russian priority was the Persian Gulf. In the oil-rich and strategically important region Moscow sought, albeit without a great deal of success, to balance its policy among Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. These countries, through much of the Yeltsin era (until the election of Mohamed Khatami as Iran's President in May 1997, which led to an improvement in Iranian-GCC relations), were often at odds with each other, as were Iraq and the United States, which put Moscow in a very difficult position. All of these elements created complications for Russia.

The third, and by far the least important priority for Moscow, was the Arab-Israeli zone composed of Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinians. During most of the post-World War II Soviet period this region was of primary importance to Moscow, as the Soviet leaders sought to construct an "anti-imperialist" Arab unity based on Arab hostility to what the USSR called the "linchpin" of Western imperialism, Israel. In one of the major transformations of its policy, Moscow now sees Israel as its closest collaborator among this group of states. Not only is Israel Russia's leading trade partner in the Arab-Israeli zone, it is also home to one million Russian-speaking former residents of the USSR who have kept close cultural ties with their former homeland. Additionally, Russia and Israel, despite serious differences over Russia's supply of atomic energy and missile technology to Iran, have developed a close collaboration in developing military equipment for sale to Third World countries.

In sum, Russia's regional priorities have shifted dramatically since the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Moscow's primary focus on Central Asia and Transcaucasia significantly affecting Russian policy toward the Middle East.

The impact of domestic politics

Following the shock of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in response to the highly pro-American policy of Yeltsin in the Middle East and elsewhere during his first year as President of an independent Russia (1992), opposition to his policies began to grow in Russia's Duma which served as the most important sounding board for elite opponents of Yeltsin's foreign policy. As successive Duma elections in December 1993 and December 1995 produced increasingly hard-line, nationalist, and anti-Yeltsin majorities, Yeltsin, who had dissolved the Duma by force in October 1993, chose increasingly to tailor his policies to meet Duma criticism.² Indeed, following the 1995 Duma elections, Yeltsin fired his pro-Western Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, and replaced him with the far more hard-line Yevgeny Primakov, a former KGB and FSB operative, with extensive experience in the Middle East, who was highly respected in the Duma. Indeed, until he became Prime Minister following the August 1998 economic crisis, Primakov could be seen as Yeltsin's ambassador to the Duma.

Within the Yeltsin-era Duma there were three major groups. On one end of the spectrum were the "Atlanticists", who placed primary emphasis on good ties with the United States and wanted Russia to be part of Western civilization. On the issue of Russian policy toward the "Near Abroad", the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union, the Atlanticists stressed normal diplomatic relations, without Russia seeking to impose its will from a dominant position. In the area of economics, the Atlanticists advocated rapid economic reform and privatization.

In the center of the Russian political spectrum were the "Eurasianists". They advocated a balanced foreign policy approach for Russia, with equal emphasis on Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. On the issue of relations with the Near Abroad, they advocated an assertive policy so that Russia would be clearly the dominant outside power. Finally, they advocated slower economic reform and privatization than the Atlanticists.

The group on the far end of the Russian political spectrum in the Duma was the odd combination of ultra-nationalists and unrepentant Communists. This grouping was outspokenly anti-American (and anti-Israeli), called for the re-establishment of Russian hegemony in the Near Abroad and,

while divided on the issue of privatization, agreed that Russia should be a strong centralized state. In the period 1993–99, as the Duma moved steadily to the right, Yeltsin took an increasingly harder line in Russian foreign policy, especially toward the Near Abroad and the Middle East. While there were brief interludes of moderation in Russian policy such as when Sergei Kiriyenko became Prime Minister in April 1998 and other reformers held positions of power, his replacement by Primakov in August 1998 returned Russia to a hard-line policy. While the Duma has, at least initially, been far more supportive of Putin, himself a strong Russian nationalist with an often confrontational policy toward the United States, especially in the Middle East, it remains to be seen whether Putin will be able to retain the Duma's support given the huge economic, political, and foreign policy challenges facing Russia.

Quasi-independent centers of Russian foreign policy-making under Yeltsin

As the Duma moved noisily to the right in its foreign policy pronouncements, something Yeltsin had to keep in mind despite the Duma's relatively limited powers, the organizations actually carrying out Russian foreign policy remained badly divided and often came into conflict with one another. While Yeltsin and his presidential staff, in theory at least, had the last word in Russian foreign policy, the Russian president, especially in the 1996–99 period, was both ill and also preoccupied with domestic politics. Consequently, there was almost a battle royal among a number of groups and institutions seeking to project their views on Russian foreign policy. The most important of the institutions, at least in theory, was the Russian Foreign Ministry. Yet, Kozyrev proved particularly ineffectual, not only in leading, but also in coordinating Russian foreign policy, and this was one of the reasons he was replaced. Among the most influential of the Russian foreign policy-making groupings, and one that successfully stood up to the foreign ministry on a number of issues, including the development of the oil resources of the Azeri section of the Caspian Sea, was the oil and gas grouping made up of Lukoil, Gazprom, and Transneft. These companies were closely linked to former Russian Prime

Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who had served in that post from 1992 to 1998. Putin has moved to curb their power, however, and it remains to be seen how much influence they will retain over policy-making.

Another major influential group in Russian foreign policy-making was made up of the reformers such as Boris Nemtsov and Anatoly Chubais, who were appointed Deputy Prime Ministers in March 1997. Once in power, they were very influential in watering down the union between Russia and Belarus, and they also encouraged the 1997 agreement between Russia and Ukraine to divide the Black Sea fleet. While the causes of both domestic reform and a more moderate foreign policy suffered when they became involved in a clash with some of the oligarchs during the summer of 1997 over the privatization of major Russian industries, as a result of the April 1998 government shake-up by Yeltsin, they nonetheless retained very important positions. Boris Nemtsov became *primus inter pares* among the three Russian deputy prime ministers (he sat in for Kiriyenko when the then Russian Prime Minister was outside of Moscow), and Anatoly Chubais became the head of Unified Energy Systems, a very important energy conglomerate. Finally, Chernomyrdin's successor as Russian Prime Minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, was himself numbered among those reformers who were foreign policy moderates. Indeed, when he was energy minister, he publicly stated that Russia was not opposed to the controversial oil pipeline route from Azerbaijan through Georgia to the Turkish port of Ceyhan in the Mediterranean.³ Yet the collapse of the Kiriyenko government in August 1998, before it had the opportunity to pursue serious domestic reforms, also meant an end to the moderation in Russian foreign policy. Putin has sidelined most of the reformers, although he did appoint Kiriyenko as one of his regional plenipotentiaries (see below).

Another very important group involved in the making of foreign policy under Yeltsin were the banking and media magnates, known as oligarchs, who have been in and out of government positions. Perhaps the most important of these was Boris Berezovsky who, as Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council (October 1996–November 1997), helped to finalize the agreement to end the first war in Chechnya. Vladimir Potanin, who served as Deputy Prime Minister from July 1996

to March 1997, was allied to Berezovsky in 1996 in the effort to help re-elect Yeltsin. He broke with Berezovsky during the summer of 1997 over the purchase of Rosneft, a major Russian oil company. Despite their divisions, the magnates had a similar philosophy which could be termed "make money, not war," and generally were supportive of a moderate foreign policy in which the pursuit of economic gain rather than geopolitical advantage was the main strategy. One of the main changes under Putin has been a crackdown on such oligarchs as Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky and he has greatly weakened their influence on policy-making.

In addition to these influential non-governmental groups, there are a series of major government ministries besides the Foreign Ministry which have been active in making foreign policy. Included among these is the Russian Defense Ministry, which played an important role in Russian policy toward both Tajikistan and the Armenian-Azeri conflict, as well as in Russia's two wars with Chechnya. While the rapid turnover of defense ministers from 1995 to 1997 (Pavel Grachev to Igor Rodionov to Igor Sergeev) temporarily weakened the influence of the Defense Ministry, the second war in Chechnya, as well as the U.S.-Russian conflict over Kosovo, helped it regain influence — often at the expense of the Foreign Ministry. In December 1996, there was a major public disagreement between the Russian defense and foreign ministers over Iran. While Primakov was visiting Iran in an effort to bolster Russian-Iranian relations, then Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodionov was warning that Iran could be a military threat to Russia.⁴ In addition, the movement of Russian forces into the Priština airport in Kosovo also apparently caught the Foreign Ministry by surprise. Yet the Russian military itself is badly divided over strategies to reform the armed forces, especially regarding the allocation of funds to the army vs. the strategic rocket forces, weakening their overall influence in Russian policy-making under Putin.⁵

Another major actor under Yeltsin was the Russian arms sales agency, Rosvooruzheniye, which appeared to be willing to sell arms to any country in the world to make money, regardless of the political consequences, as in the case of the proposed SAM-300 sale to Cyprus, which had the potential of precipitating a war (see below) between Russia and Turkey. Still

there were clear disagreements about Russian arms sales policy within the Russian establishment, as the then Secretary of Russia's security council, Andrei Kokoshin stated in 1998: "One of the main principles of the export of weapons should be the interest of our national security, our defense security, rather than commercial interests."⁶ Putin has moved to bring arms sales under his direct control by combining Rosvooruzheniye with Promexport to form a new arms sales agency, RosboronoExport.

Another important foreign policy force is the Ministry of Atomic Energy headed by Yevgeny Adamov. It has been pushing the sale of Russian nuclear reactors throughout the world, and its efforts to sell nuclear technology to Iran has provoked a major clash between Russia and the United States. Adamov's policies seemed to have Putin's support as well as Yeltsin's. Finally, in recent years, Russian regions and autonomous republics, such as Astrakhan and Tatarstan, have become increasingly important in Russian foreign policy, sometimes taking positions at variance with that of the Russian Foreign Ministry as in the case of the Muslim Republics who backed the Turkish position on Cyprus.⁷ To deal with this problem (among others), Putin has asserted control over the regions through the appointment of seven plenipotentiaries, five of whom have military or KGB backgrounds.

In sum, the Russian foreign policy-making apparatus under Yeltsin was badly divided, something Russian observers were quick to note. Indeed, in commenting rather caustically on the multiple divisions in Russian foreign policy-making, the Russian daily newspaper *Kommersant* stated:

It is impossible to pursue an integrated foreign and foreign economic policy today (in part) because Russia's political and economic elite, including its ruling elite, not only is not consolidated, but has split into competing, hostile factions, groups and groupings that are openly battling each other. It would be simply foolish for our foreign partners not to take advantage of this circumstance at any talks with Moscow.⁸

Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin, has sought to put an end to these divisions and thereby strengthen Russia's foreign policy

stance. His success in this endeavor, however, remains to be seen, although he has made major strides in his first year in office.

The impact of Russia's military and economic weakness

Traditionally, countries operating in the foreign policy arena have had two major instruments with which they have pursued their foreign policy goals. First and foremost has been the threat or actual use of military force. Second, and increasingly important in the post-cold war international environment, has been the economic instrument, usually in the form of the granting of economic assistance or the denial of trade. A country's diplomacy ideally maximizes the utility of both foreign policy instruments. The problem that Moscow faces at the beginning of the twenty-first century is that both its military and its economic instruments of foreign policy are very weak and there are very few resources to back Russian diplomacy, in the Middle East or elsewhere.

In the area of military power, despite still possessing an extensive — albeit deteriorating — array of nuclear weapons (which are of limited utility in post-cold war crises), Russia has very little in the way of capability. The disastrous performance of the Russian army in the first Chechen war and its highly problematic performance in the second have shown just how weak the Russian armed forces have become. Indeed, in mid-December 2000 Russia had to totally reorganize its military operations in Chechnya after suffering a number of stinging attacks by the Chechen rebels.⁹ Despite efforts by Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev to reform the army, little progress was made. Under Yeltsin graft and corruption were endemic, and there were numerous cases of soldiers and sailors not being paid for months at a time. Other problems limiting the Russian military's conventional war fighting capability were that its air force pilots had very few hours to train in the air, and that much of the Russian army and navy's military equipment has sharply deteriorated. Compounding the problem was a drop in spending on the Russian military under Yeltsin, which was estimated in 1999 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) to have dropped by 30 per cent per year since 1992.¹⁰ While the dash of Russian paratroops to the Priština airport in

Kosovo at the start of the NATO peacekeeping effort there and Russian bomber forays to test U.S. defenses in Iceland and near the West coast of the United States captured the headlines, they served primarily as a smokescreen for the decline of Russian military power under Yeltsin.

Putin has begun to move to shore up the Russian military in a number of ways. First, he has decided to cut the number of civilian and military staff in the army by 600,000 people over the five year period 2001–06. These numbers include 365,000 soldiers and sailors, 130,000 civilians, and 105,000 troops in other quasi-military forces such as Ministry of Interior troops,¹¹ border guards and railway troops. Putin also appears to have begun to crack down on graft and corruption in the Russian military by indicting Colonel General Georgi Olernik on suspicion of embezzling \$450 million dollars.¹² Perhaps most important of all Putin has moved to increase spending on the Russian military-industrial complex by 50 per cent, hoping thereby to strengthen both Russia's military and its economy. Whether or not this proves successful remains a very open question. Indeed, Putin still appears to be plagued by many of the same problems which beset Yeltsin. Thus, the sinking of the Russian submarine *Kursk* may well have been caused by the lack of training of its crew, and Putin's mishandling of the crisis was widely criticized. Similarly, the Russian "buzzing" of the U.S. armada in the Sea of Japan on 17 October 2000 seemed another attempt to cover up Russian weakness by a showy maneuver.¹³ More to the point, Putin's decision to cancel a major naval exercise in the Mediterranean following the *Kursk* incident demonstrated the real weakness of the Russian military.

If Russia has serious problems militarily, its economic strength is even more problematic. Even before the collapse of the ruble in August 1998, the Russian economy had been in sharp decline. In 1997, before the crisis, Russian gross domestic product was only 58 per cent of the 1989 figure, and economists of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development have estimated that it declined another 3.5 per cent in 1998.¹⁴ While Russia continues to be the recipient of IMF loans — another sign of its economic weakness — it has yet to create a climate which fosters domestic investment, let alone one which would attract substantial foreign investment, because of fuzzy tax laws, local "partners" (some of whom are

Mafia) who do not respect partnership agreements, and numerous other problems, including product counterfeiting and differences between the provincial and federal governments on taxation, regulation, and the protection of foreign investments.¹⁵ Russia also suffers from a chronic problem of capital flight, with an estimated \$100 billion having left Russia during Yeltsin's era. As if all these problems, along with deteriorating infrastructure and a continuing inability to collect taxes, were not enough, the Asian crisis of 1998 also struck a major blow at Moscow, as some of Russia's Asian arms clients had to defer their purchases of Russian arms. Indeed arms sales, which along with oil are Russia's main exports, fell from a high of \$5.3 billion in 1995 to only \$2.3 billion in 1998, although with the Asian recovery arms sales rose to \$4.1 billion in 1999.¹⁶ Perhaps the only bright spots in the Russian economy — something which has greatly helped Putin — have been the rapid rise in oil prices in 1999 and 2000, which has enabled Moscow to have a bit more breathing room, and the fact that the drop in the value of the ruble made many imports prohibitively costly, thus invigorating some Russian industries. Nonetheless, without serious structural reform, a problem Putin has only begun to work on, the Russian economy will remain in deep trouble, and Russia, dependent on aid from the United States, West Europe, and Japan, may well remain a recipient of economic assistance, rather than a donor, as it was in the days of the USSR. This greatly restrains the ability of Moscow to seriously influence events in the Middle East, as well as elsewhere in the world, and President Putin's plan to invest more heavily in Russia's military industrial complex, while helpful to him politically, may not bode well for the health of the Russian economy as a whole.¹⁷ Boris Yeltsin, in an interview with *Rossiskaia gazeta* on 13 May 1998, acknowledged Russia's economic weakness, noting "Today's global centers of attraction stand because of their economic rather than military might." He went on to say that Russia had not inherited a solid economic foundation from the Soviet Union, and that "redressing this abnormality is both a domestic and foreign political task."¹⁸ The implications of Russian economic weakness were made clear in a 14 February 1998 *Izvestiia* commentary on Moscow's inability to get the newly independent states of Central Asia and Transcaucasia to follow Moscow's lead on Caspian Sea oil policy:

Pressure can be used effectively only by those who have strength, economic, political and military strength. And, what is far more important, intellectual strength. Judging from the fact that the leaders of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia are more and more persistently bypassing Russia as they pave the way to the West for their countries and their resources, our country doesn't have that combination of strength. Trying to exert pressure without having strength makes one look ridiculous. An individual can afford to do this. But a state, never.¹⁹

Putin also recognized Russia's economic weakness. In a "State of the Federation" speech on 8 July 2000 calling for major economic reforms, he noted that despite "favorable external economic conditions" (high oil prices), Russia's economy was still weak and its growth was precarious.²⁰ The IMF was more blunt in its criticism, noting that Russia's progress in implementing structural reform has been disappointing despite improvements in its macro-economic situation.²¹ While Putin has pushed a tax code through the Duma, whether the tax laws can be enforced and other necessary legislation implemented remains an open question.

In the face of the divisions within the Russian foreign policy-making establishment under Yeltsin, and Russia's severe military and economic weaknesses, Kozyrev, Primakov, and Primakov's successor as Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, adopted two overall strategies. First, in order to achieve a modicum of cohesion in Russian foreign policy, it has been necessary for successive Russian Foreign Ministers to line up as many as possible of the quasi-independent actors, as well as the Duma, in favor of a particular policy. In the case of Russian policy toward both Iran and Iraq, they were able to build a consensus; in the case of Russian policy toward Turkey, however, the contradictions that existed during Kozyrev's era were exacerbated under Primakov. However, with a centralizing Putin as president, who gives every indication of preventing any challenges to his power, Ivanov may now find it easier to control Russian foreign policy.

A second strategy employed by Primakov and Ivanov in the face of Russia's economic and military weaknesses has been to seek allies with similar interests, such as France, so that Russia does not have to operate alone and can create, in the words of both Primakov and Putin, a multipolar world, not a unipolar world dominated by the United States. In some cases, as in Russian policy toward Iran, this strategy has met with success; in others, such as the Iraqi crisis of February 1998, it was to take the intervention of the U.N. Secretary General to save Russia from a possible diplomatic fiasco. This was, however, a fate Russia suffered ten months later, in December 1998, when despite a great deal of bluster, it could not prevent a U.S.-British attack on Iraq. The paper will now turn to the four case studies to illustrate the dynamics of Russian policy toward the Middle East.

Russia and Iran

Iran is Russia's closest ally in the Middle East. Russia has been providing a nuclear reactor and sophisticated military equipment to Iran as well as diplomatic support against U.S. efforts to isolate it. The two countries are also diplomatic allies against the Taliban in Afghanistan, in helping to maintain peace in Tajikistan and in trying to curb Azerbaijani efforts to develop their nation into a strong state. Nonetheless, the Russian economic collapse of August 1998, coupled with internal developments in Iran, and Russia's second war in Chechnya threatened to erode relations.

The rapid development of Russian-Iranian relations has its origins in the latter part of the Gorbachev era. After alternately supporting first Iran and then Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, by July 1987 Gorbachev had clearly tilted toward Iran. The relationship between the two countries was solidified in June 1989 with Hashemi Rafsanjani's visit to Moscow, where a number of major agreements, including one on military cooperation, were signed. The military agreement permitted Iran to purchase highly sophisticated military aircraft from Moscow including MIG-29s and SU-24s. At a time when its own air force had been badly eroded by the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war, and by the refusal of the United States to supply spare parts, let alone new planes to replace losses in the F-14s

and other aircraft which the United States had sold to the Shah's regime, the Soviet military equipment was badly needed.

Iran's military dependence on Moscow grew as a result of the 1990–91 Gulf War. Not only did the United States, Iran's primary enemy, become the primary military power in the Gulf, with defensive agreements with a number of GCC states — which included prepositioning arrangements for U.S. military equipment — but also Saudi Arabia, Iran's most important Islamic challenger, acquired massive amounts of U.S. weaponry. Given Iran's need for sophisticated arms, the pragmatic Iranian leader, Hashemi Rafsanjani, was careful not to alienate either the Soviet Union or Russia. Thus, when Azerbaijan declared its independence from the Soviet Union in November 1991, Iran, unlike Turkey, did not recognize its independence until after the USSR collapsed. Similarly, despite occasional rhetoric from Iranian officials, Rafsanjani ensured that Iran kept a relatively low profile in Azerbaijan and the newly independent states of Central Asia, emphasizing cultural and economic ties rather than Islam as the centerpiece of their relations. This was due in part to the fact that after more than seventy years of Soviet rule, Islam was in a weak state in the countries of the former Soviet Union; the leaders of the Muslim successor states were all secular Muslims, and the chances for an Iranian-style Islamic revolution were very low. Indeed, some skeptics argued that Iran was simply waiting for mosques to be built and Islam to mature before trying to bring about Islamic revolutions. Nonetheless, the Russian leadership basically saw Iran as acting very responsibly in Central Asia and Transcaucasia, and this was one of the factors which encouraged it to continue supplying Iran with modern weaponry — including submarines — despite strong protests from the United States.

During Kozyrev's period as Russia's foreign minister, Russian-Iranian relations rapidly developed. Russia was selling Iran not only arms, but also nuclear reactors and other industrial equipment. Yet, economic gain was only one of Russia's many interests in Iran. As in the case of Russian-Iraqi relations, Yeltsin could use the close Russian-Iranian relationship to demonstrate to the nationalists in his Duma that he was independent of the United States. Oil and natural gas development was a third major Russian interest in Iran. Again,

despite U.S. objections, in 1997, Gasprom along with the French company Total, signed a major agreement with Iran to develop the South Pars gas field. Finally, a greatly weakened Russia has found Iran a useful ally in dealing with a number of very sensitive Middle Eastern, Caucasian, Transcaucasian, and Central and Southwest Asian political hot spots. These include Chechnya, where Iran kept a very low profile in the first Chechen war despite the use of Islamic themes by the Chechen rebels in their conflict with Russia; Tajikistan, where Iran helped Russia achieve a political settlement, albeit a shaky one; Afghanistan, where both Russia and Iran have stood together against Taliban efforts to seize control over the country; and Azerbaijan, which neither Iran, with a sizeable Azeri population of its own, nor Russia wishes to see emerge as a significant economic and military power. In addition, as NATO expands eastward, many Russian nationalists call for a closer Russian-Iranian relationship as a counterbalance, especially as Turkey is seen by many Russians as closely cooperating with its NATO allies, in expanding its influence in both Transcaucasia and Central Asia. Finally, Iran has, so far at least, been an ally for Russia in its efforts to limit the independent development of Caspian Sea oil and natural gas by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.

These interests and policies were already in place when Yevgeny Primakov became Foreign Minister in January 1996, and he sought to further deepen the relationship. Nonetheless, he also had to cope with increasing frictions in the Russian-Iranian relationship. First, as noted above, in December 1996, then Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodionov — while Primakov was in Tehran — mentioned Iran as a possible military threat to Russia, given Russia's weakened position.²² Second, because of Iran's own economic problems, it has not had enough hard currency to pay for the weapons and industrial equipment it wants to import from Russia. Indeed, despite predictions of several billions of dollars in trade, Russian-Iranian trade was only \$415 million in 1996, less than Russia's trade with Israel.²³ Third, Russian supplies of missile technology to Iran have caused increasing conflict with the United States (and Israel), and although Russia in late 1997 very publicly expelled an Iranian diplomat for trying to smuggle missile technology, and in January 1998 promised to stop selling "dual use" equip-

ment to Tehran, the issue has become a serious irritant in Russian-American relations, with particularly sharp criticism of Moscow coming from the U.S. Congress.²⁴ Finally, since 1995, Iran has increasingly thrust itself forward as an alternative export route for Central Asian oil and natural gas. This comes into direct conflict with the efforts of the hardliners in the Russian government to control the oil and gas exports of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, so as to limit their freedom. While Iran, which remains dependent on Russian exports of military equipment, has sought to defuse this problem by trying to organize tripartite projects with Russia and the Central Asian states, Iranian availability as an alternate export route remains a major problem for Moscow, one that will become even more severe if there is a rapprochement between the United States and Iran, which might lead to the termination of U.S. efforts to prevent foreign investments in Iran's oil and natural gas pipeline and well infrastructure.

Indeed, the election of Mohamed Khatami as Iran's President in May 1997 gave rise to the possibility of just such a rapprochement. Khatami, following his election, began to promote a policy of domestic reform and liberalization, along with a policy of rapprochement with the Arab world, Europe, and the United States. While conservative forces in Iran did not strongly oppose the rapprochements with the Arab world and Europe, as both were aimed at strengthening Iran's diplomatic position, they did take exception to his policy of domestic liberalization and to his policy of rapprochement with the United States, which held out the possibility of lifting U.S. sanctions against Iran under the 1996 Iran-Libya Sanctions Act. The rapprochement began at the beginning of 1998 with Khatami's speech on CNN directed toward the American people. This was followed by a speech by U.S. President Clinton reciprocating Khatami's offer of improved relations, by the visit of a U.S. wrestling team to Tehran, by the U.S. waiving of sanctions against the French, Russian, and Malaysian companies planning to develop Iran's South Pars gas field, and then by a major speech by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in which she offered Iran a path of reconciliation. The offer, however, was never picked up by Khatami because in the summer of 1998 a conservative counter-attack forced him to halt the rapprochement.²⁵ Meanwhile, during the summer of 1998, a

successful Iranian missile test strengthened the position of those in the United States who called for the sanction of Russian companies which provided Iran with missile help. With the collapse of the Russian economy in August 1998, Russia's government was hard put to resist the U.S. pressure and indeed promised it would do its utmost to prevent the transmission of missile technology to Iran. On the other hand, however, Moscow remained concerned that the aborted rapprochement between Iran and the United States might be restarted, and Russia might see its position in Iran erode, especially if a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement would lead to American acquiescence in the building of oil and gas transit pipelines through Iran. Given the fact that Iran's economy was in very difficult straits, the economic temptation inherent in a rapprochement with the United States was clearly evident to Moscow. A further complication to the U.S.-Russian relationship came with what proved to be a temporary elevation of Primakov to the position of Russian Prime Minister in September 1998, following the economic crisis and the ouster of the pro-Western Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko. Primakov, and the communist forces in the Duma who supported him, wanted a tougher line toward the United States and their advocacy became more shrill following the U.S. bombing of Iraq in December 1998 and its bombing of Serbia in the Spring of 1999.

At the same time Yevgeny Adamov, head of Russia's Atomic Energy Ministry, continued to press for the sale of additional nuclear reactors to Iran, something the United States strongly opposed. In November 1998, Adamov visited Tehran, and, to spur the lagging Bushehr nuclear reactor construction project, signed an agreement which transformed Bushehr into a turnkey project in which Russian technicians, not Iranians, would build the project, whose target date for completion was May 2003.²⁶ The end result was that in the 1998-99 period Yeltsin followed what might be termed a "minimax" policy toward Iran, trying to maintain the maximum amount of Russian influence in Iran while at the same time seeking to minimize the damage to U.S.-Russian relations caused by the Russian-Iranian relationship. Meanwhile, Russian-Iranian relations were further complicated by the Kosovo crisis, where Iran championed the Albanian Kosovars and Russia the Serbs, and even more so by Russia's decision to invade Chechnya in August

1999, leading to the killing of numerous Chechens, something which Iran, which was now head of the Islamic Conference, had to protest.

Pipeline Politics

While Russia continued to cooperate with Iran in the nuclear field, however much it protested that it was not helping to provide Tehran with missile technology or nuclear weapons assistance, the two countries stepped up their cooperation over the politics of the Caspian Sea, if not over its legal status. Iran, with little oil of its own in its Caspian coastal shelf, had opposed the Russian-Kazakh agreement of July 1998, which partially divided the Caspian Sea²⁷ and continued to call for an equal sharing of the sea's resources. Efforts of the United States to promote the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and the TransCaspian gas pipeline, however, drew Iran and Russia closer together. Both became increasingly concerned about Azerbaijan's and Georgia's willingness to cooperate ever more closely with NATO,²⁸ a development which was reinforced by the decision at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul on 18 November 1999 to move forward with the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Perhaps even more disconcerting to both Russia and Iran was a second action at the OSCE meeting, the "intergovernmental declaration of intent" to construct a TransCaspian gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Baku, which would then transport the gas to Turkey.²⁹ Moscow had been hoping to become Turkey's main natural gas supplier through the "Blue Stream" gas pipeline (see below), while Iran had hoped to supply Turkey with gas from Turkmenistan through its own pipelines. From Iran's point of view, both the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and the TransCaspian pipeline were projects which struck at the heart of its aspirations. First, Iran wanted Caspian oil and natural gas to go through its territory to foreign markets, not through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Second, the strengthening of Azerbaijan that would result from the two projects were they ever to be consummated, was something also to be avoided, especially given the increasingly close ties between the United States and Azerbaijan. Consequently, soon after the agreements at the OSCE were signed, both Russia and Iran sought to un-

dermine the economic rationale for the projects. The Russian gas company, Gasprom, which had been haggling for two years with Turkmenistan over prices for transporting Turkmen gas, suddenly — and perhaps on the urging of the Russian government — came to an agreement with Turkmenistan to buy the gas at \$36 per 1,000 cubic meters and agreed to purchase a large share of Turkmen gas in the year 2000, thus possibly deterring Turkmenistan (which was haggling with Azerbaijan, which had just discovered its own large natural gas field, over transport arrangements) from moving ahead rapidly with the TransCaspian gas pipeline.³⁰

For its part Iran sought to persuade the major oil companies not to go ahead with Baku-Ceyhan, for financial reasons. Thus Iran cut the cost of its oil swaps with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan by 30 per cent, beginning in the year 2000. As Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs, Mehdi Hosseini, frankly stated, "The reduction would give Iran the upper hand in competing with 'political alternatives' for the export of Caspian crude."³¹ Yet, while Iran and Russia were acting in concert to try to stop both the Baku-Ceyhan and TransCaspian pipelines, in the long run their interests in Caspian Sea oil and natural gas differed. Russia wanted the routes to go through its own territory so that it could better control the states of Transcaucasia and Central Asia. For its part Iran continues to openly profess — with support from a number of foreign oil and gas companies — that it can provide the cheapest and safest route for the transshipment of Caspian oil and natural gas. As Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi stated, "We believe in diversity of routes for the transfer of energy, but consider Iran as the best route to the south, east and west."³² Still, in the short run at least, Moscow and Tehran cooperated on the Caspian Sea and both benefited from the sharp rise in oil prices that took place in 1999, which had been made possible by increased cooperation among Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.

Kosovo and Chechnya

While on the issues of nuclear cooperation and opposition to the Baku-Ceyhan and TransCaspian pipelines, Russia and Iran had similar interests, on the question of the sec-

ond Chechen war, which erupted in August 1999, their interests came into conflict. Unlike the situation during the first Chechen war, 1994–96, Iran was now the head of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and purported to seek the welfare of Muslims everywhere. Thus, Iran urged the United States and Britain to stop bombing Iraq before Ramadan began in late December 1998. During the Kosovo fighting, while Iran and Russia backed different sides, the issue never seriously strained Russian-Iranian relations. Chechnya, however, was to prove to be a different situation, particularly as stories of Russian soldiers massacring Chechen civilians began to leak out. The Iranian leadership, itself divided between reformists and conservatives, was on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it had important state-to-state interests in Russia, from the construction of the Bushehr nuclear reactor complex to the acquisition of sophisticated Russian military equipment. On the other hand, as the self-proclaimed defender of Muslims throughout the world, and as the head of the Islamic Conference, Iran could not sit idly by while Russian troops slaughtered the Chechens, who were overwhelmingly Muslim. Consequently, while emphasizing that Chechnya was an internal affair of Russia, Iran gradually increased its criticism of Moscow's behavior. For its part, Moscow became increasingly critical of Iran, but just as Iran sought to play down the conflict, so too did Moscow. Thus, as the fighting intensified in September, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Rega Assefi, stated: "The Islamic Republic of Iran, while honoring Russia's territorial integrity, does not regard violent and hostile acts as a suitable way of dealing with recent incidents in Chechnya and Daghestan. The government and people of Iran cannot but deplore the continued armed operation by the Russian troops in the Northern Caucasus."³³ When Iran then offered to cooperate with Moscow to settle the crisis peacefully, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov replied in a note to Iran (and other Muslim states) on 12 October that "We are concerned over the attitude of Islamic countries to the events in Chechnya. However, it is a domestic Russian problem, and we intend to settle it independently, without any aid or interference."³⁴ Moscow stepped up its criticism of Iran in November, listing it, along with a group of other states, as a country suspected of aiding the Chechens.³⁵ Indeed Moscow was already on record as warn-

ing the Islamic Conference not to help the Chechen rebels, as Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov had pointedly noted, "It is clear that any form of support for the terrorists' actions will be viewed as rude interference in the internal affairs of the Russian Federation, with all the logical consequences."³⁶ Nonetheless, as the war intensified, Moscow allowed a visit of representatives of the Islamic Conference, led by Iran, to Russia and the North Caucasus in mid-December, and also permitted the Muslim states to send humanitarian aid to the Chechen refugees. While the Islamic Conference delegation kept its criticism of Moscow relatively low key, it noted that it considered the military operations to be "disproportionate" to the acts of violence which had provoked them. The OIC delegation also bemoaned the massive loss of life which had taken place.³⁷ When the fighting continued through Ramadan, Iran's criticism increased, and Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, after leading another OIC mission to Moscow, told visiting Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Giryory Karasin that the continued human catastrophe in Chechnya was "unacceptable to the Muslim world and that it would bring an unpleasant picture from Russia to the region and the Muslim world."³⁸ He called upon Russia to stop the military operation in Chechnya, adding that the Chechen crisis could be resolved only through political means. In response, Karasin thanked Iran for its efforts to bring an end to the Chechen crisis, for the humanitarian assistance it had delivered to Chechen refugees, and stated that Russia would launch a political drive to resolve the Chechen crisis.³⁹ Nonetheless, despite the increasing tension over Chechnya, both sides played down the conflict and the issue did not seriously harm Russo-Iranian relations. Indeed, in the view of some Muslims, Iran's criticism of Moscow was not strong enough, and the Saudi-owned London daily *Al-Sharq Al-Ansat* stated in an editorial on 27 January 2000 that Kharrazi was guilty of "stabbing the Chechen Republic in the back" by continuing to emphasize that the Chechen war was an internal Russian affair.⁴⁰

In sum, on the eve of the Iranian Majlis elections of February 2000, Chechnya had become an irritant in the Russian-Iranian relationship, but one both the Iranian leadership, and Yeltsin's successor as president, Vladimir Putin, sought to keep within limits. Nonetheless, the overwhelming victory of the moderates in the Majlis elections, also had to be of concern to Mos-

cow because for many of the reformers who were elected, an improvement in U.S.-Iranian relations (and the subsequent hoped-for improvement of the Iranian economy, which continued to be beset by high unemployment and inflation, which would result once the United States removed economic sanctions) was an important policy goal.⁴¹ Yet the moderate Parliament found itself checkmated by the conservative forces in the government and by the Iranian supreme religious authority, Ayatollah Khomeini, who opposed their reform efforts, and Iranian President Khatemi did not appear able to overcome them. Indeed, in a press conference at the United Nations in September 2000, Khatemi urged the reformers in his country not to be impatient. The Iranian President, evidently under the pressure of Iranian conservatives, also attacked the United States for not "confessing" its involvement in the coup which overthrew the Mossadegh regime in 1953, for its economic sanctions against Iran, and U.S. opposition to the building of pipelines through Iran from the Caspian. He also berated the United States for its condemnation of Iran for the arrest and conviction of a group of ten Iranian Jews as spies⁴² — a development which had strained U.S.-Iranian relations. The Iranian President, who had met Russian President Putin the previous day, also stated that he hoped to forge a closer relationship with Russia:

We share a lot of interests with Russia. We both live in one of the most sensitive areas of the world. I believe the two countries can engage in a viable and strong relationship. Russia needs a powerful and stable Iran. A stronger relationship would allow both countries to marginalize external powers that are seeking destructive ends and which do not belong in the region.⁴³

The Khatemi statement seemed to put aside, at least in the short run, the possibilities of a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement, even though there was an informal meeting of U.S. and Iranian Parliamentarians during the U.N. summit, and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazmi participated in a U.N. meeting which sought to end the civil war in Afghanistan.⁴⁴ Still, in a clear effort to reinforce Russia's relations with Iran, Moscow announced

that Russia would build a second reactor at the Bushehr complex,⁴⁵ and that Russia would withdraw from the 1995 agreement with the United States to cease selling arms to Iran.⁴⁶ Even so, Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev, perhaps in an attempt to avoid further upsetting the United States (the U.S. Congress was already furious with Russia for the sale of missile technology to Iran), assured the United States that only “defensive” arms would be sold to Tehran during a meeting of the Russian and U.S. defense ministers in Brussels.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, despite Russian efforts to reinforce ties with Iran, if the power of the conservative clergy in Iran weakens — and rising public discontent in Iran with the Islamic establishment seems to indicate such a possibility — then a rapprochement with the United States may again become a strong possibility. Whether Putin can manage this situation without a serious erosion in Russian influence in Iran, will be a real test of his diplomatic skills.

Russia and Iraq

In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse, Yeltsin adopted an anti-Iraqi policy, not only voicing support for the sanctions against Iraq but also dispatching two warships to help enforce the anti-Iraqi embargo in the Persian Gulf. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev made a visit to the GCC states at the end of April 1992 in an effort to get financial support from the oil-rich kingdoms. He succeeded in getting a promise from Oman of \$500 million for the development of Russia’s oil and gas industry and \$100 million for the modernization of its oil fields.⁴⁸ While fending off criticism of Russian arms sales to Iran, Kozyrev sought to promote Russian arms sales to the GCC states. (This was also the goal of then Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, who visited the United Arab Emirates in January 1993 and headed a Russian delegation to the International Weapons Fair in Abu Dhabi in February.)

Although this pro-GCC, anti-Iraqi policy was followed by Yeltsin throughout 1992, the Russian leader soon ran into strong criticism. On the far right of the Russian political spectrum was Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who attacked Yeltsin for selling out Iraq, a Russian ally, and called for the unilateral lifting of

sanctions on Iraq. More moderate, centrist Russians also questioned the wisdom of Russia's close cooperation with the United States on the embargo, given Iraq's \$7 billion debt to Russia and its potential as a future market. On the other side were those who asserted that a unilateral lifting of the embargo would not only seriously damage U.S.-Russian relations (and jeopardize billions of dollars of aid from NATO states), but also alienate the oil-rich states of the GCC, which Moscow had cultivated since the days of Gorbachev. In addition, they argued, by aiding the GCC states and avoiding any rapprochement with Iraq, Moscow could offer the GCC states an alternative to the protection of the United States and other NATO states.

By January 1993, political pressure from the center and right of the Russian political spectrum began to have its effect on Yeltsin, a politician who always tacked with the political wind. At that time, Yeltsin began to attack the renewed U.S. bombing of Iraq (although the Russian Foreign Ministry, under the leadership of the then very pro-U.S. Andrei Kozyrev, initially supported the bombing). In addition, Yeltsin began to authorize visits to Iraq by Russian government ministers, and Iraqi ministers began to visit Moscow. In February 1993, Yeltsin sent Igor Melichov, the deputy director of the Middle East Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry to Iraq. These low-level contacts were, however, insufficient for Yeltsin's opponents. In April 1993, the former deputy defense minister of the USSR, General Vladislav Achalov, and Duma speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov's chief of staff, journeyed to Iraq with a group of right-wing Parliamentarians. In Iraq, Achalov said the Russian people and the former USSR had never betrayed Iraq, but that the Soviet and Russian leaderships had. *Izvestiia*, on 8 April 1993, responding to Achalov's visit, stated that Iraq would continue to be a place of pilgrimage for the Russian opposition as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power.⁴⁹

In June 1993, following the abortive Iraqi attempt to assassinate former President George Bush, who was visiting Kuwait, the United States again bombed Iraq. Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev supported the U.S. attack (of which Washington had apprised Moscow in advance), noting: "We cannot consider hunting presidents, even former ones, to be normal. Tolerating this would be tantamount to endorsing a policy of state terrorism."⁵⁰

Yeltsin's parliamentary opponents denounced the attack on Iraq, and the Supreme Soviet lodged an official protest. Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, by now an opponent of Yeltsin, condemned Kozryev for his approval of the U.S. attack, asserting that such support meant "ignoring Russia's own national interests."⁵¹ Meanwhile, Yeltsin upgraded Russia's diplomatic contacts with Iraq, dispatching an economic delegation, headed by Oleg Davydov, the minister of external economic relations, to Baghdad in August.⁵²

When the crisis between parliament and Yeltsin escalated into a full-scale confrontation in late September 1993, there were rumors in Moscow that Saddam Hussein was bankrolling Yeltsin's opponents.⁵³ Nonetheless, Yeltsin's victory meant the temporary defeat of his pro-Iraqi opponents, led by Khasbulatov. This may have accelerated negotiations between Moscow and Kuwait on a defense cooperation agreement, which was signed during a visit by Kuwaiti Defense Minister Ali Sabah al-Salim al Sabah to Moscow in late November 1993. According to *Kommersant*, the treaty called for Russia to aid Kuwait in the "elimination of the threat to sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity and repelling aggression."⁵⁴

The treaty was a clear rebuff to Iraq, which still refused to recognize Kuwait's independence or the newly demarcated Iraqi-Kuwait border, and to Iraq's supporters in Moscow, as were the joint naval maneuvers conducted by Kuwait and Russia in the Persian Gulf in late December 1993. Having concluded the treaty with Kuwait (thus satisfying the GCC states), Yeltsin then moved toward Iraq. By the spring of 1994, Russian diplomats began to argue that since Saddam Hussein had begun to comply with U.S. demands on surveillance of its nuclear weapons capability, some gesture acknowledging his changed behavior should be made. One such Russian gesture was an invitation to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to visit Moscow in July 1994. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Kolokov, in an *Izvestiia* interview, stated that Aziz had been told by Moscow that Russia opposed lifting sanctions until Baghdad recognized Kuwait's independence, agreed to the demarcation of their mutual border, and tried to ascertain the fate of missing Kuwaiti soldiers and civilians. If Iraq did these things, Kolokov indicated, Moscow would vote to lift the sanc-

tions. If they were lifted, Moscow would even resume arms sales to Iraq, thus edging out Western states which would otherwise gain the economic benefit at Russia's expense.⁵⁵ At the time, any such supply of arms to Iraq, of course, would have damaged Russian-GCC relations because the GCC states would see Russia arming both their major enemies, Iran and Iraq. Needless to say, such action by Russia would also have severely harmed Russian-American relations, which by the fall of 1994 had become strained over a number of issues, including Bosnia, the expansion of NATO, and Russian arms sales to Iran.

In October 1994, however, Russian policy toward Iraq suffered a major embarrassment. At that time, Saddam Hussein again moved his army toward Kuwait, an action which precipitated a massive U.S. reaction. President Clinton moved U.S. troops to Kuwait and warned Saddam not to invade. Yeltsin sought to exploit the situation by sending Kozyrev to Baghdad, where he claimed to have elicited Saddam Hussein's promise to pull back his troops and recognize Kuwait's border and sovereignty — in return for a gradual lifting of the sanctions. Not only was this deal rebuffed by the United States and Britain, it became a moot point because Iraq's parliament did not meet to recognize Kuwait and the Iraqi-Kuwait border. The end result of the crisis was a further strengthening of relations between the United States and the GCC states and a major embarrassment for Russia. The situation was not alleviated to any major degree when Kozyrev returned to Iraq in November and belatedly extracted the desired promises from the Iraqi parliament.

Despite this embarrassment, Moscow continued to pursue its policy of improving relations with Iraq. At the end of January 1995, an Iraqi parliamentary delegation visited Russia and was received by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Deputy Foreign Minister Posuvaliuk warned in February that unless the U.N. Security Council responded to Iraq's positive steps, the situation in the region would further deteriorate.⁵⁶ In August 1995 the Russia deputy foreign minister, who was also the country's highest ranking Middle East specialist, asserted that Russia was "doing more work than others to normalize Kuwait's relations with Iraq." (Kozyrev visited Kuwait on 2 August, the fifth anniversary of the Iraqi invasion, to offer Kuwait reassurance.) He also noted that Iraq's "disarmament file is

close to being closed and work on the biological file is proceeding in the same direction."⁵⁷

Much to Russia's discomfort, however, the temporary defection of Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Hussein Kamil, to Jordan led to Iraq's disclosure of hidden weapons information. Perhaps seeking to make the best of the situation, a Russian foreign ministry spokesman said, "It is unimportant what considerations Iraq took into consideration in deciding to lift the previous veil of secrecy on military programs. In the end, not motives but the result plays a more important role." The spokesman went on to say that Moscow hoped that the reaction of Washington and of other Russian partners in the U.N. Security Council "will be adequate to Baghdad's new demonstration of readiness to fulfill the U.N. resolutions."⁵⁸ Neither the United States nor the GCC states were persuaded by the Russian logic, however, and the sanctions remained in effect. Meanwhile the Russian Duma, dominated by right-wing forces, voted overwhelmingly on 21 April 1995, to lift the sanctions against Iraq and set forth three goals for Russian policy: 1) to pressure the U.N. Security Council to repeal the embargo; 2) to collect Iraq's debt if the embargo were to be partially lifted; and 3) to support Russian business investment in Iraq and large-scale cooperation with that country.⁵⁹

The victory of right-wing and communist forces in the Duma elections of December 1995 was good news for Russian-Iraqi relations. In January 1996, Yevgeny Primakov, an old friend of Saddam Hussein, replaced Andrei Kozyrev as foreign minister. While Primakov stated that Russia would continue to observe the sanctions against Iraq and would not lift them unilaterally, the advent of Primakov may have convinced Saddam Hussein to begin to bargain in earnest with the United Nations for an oil-for-food agreement, an action he took one week after Primakov's appointment.⁶⁰ And, in order to help entice Russia into backing the Iraqi position even more strongly during the Security Council debates, Iraq made a multibillion dollar agreement with Moscow in mid-February 1996 for oil development and the training of Iraqi oil specialists.⁶¹

By the time Primakov became Russia's foreign minister, it was clear that Yeltsin had three major interests in developing Russia's relationship with Iraq. First, he wanted,

through international diplomatic activity, to demonstrate both to the world and to a hostile Duma that Russia was still an important factor in the world, despite its weakened condition, and was both willing and able to oppose the United States. Indeed, as Andrei Piontkowski of the Center for Strategic Studies in Moscow stated during the October-November 1997 Iraqi crisis, "For thirty years we were a superpower equal to the United States. Now the political elite is in a difficult period, feeling diminished, and compensates at least by standing up to the United States on minor issues."⁶² The second interest Yeltsin's Russia had in Iraq was regaining the \$7 billion dollars which Iraq owed to Russia, something which could not be achieved until sanctions against Iraq were lifted. The third interest in Iraq is in acquiring contracts for Russian factories and oil and gas companies, although the actual activities of these companies cannot begin until sanctions are lifted.

To spur the Russians to greater efforts to lift the sanctions, Saddam Hussein has cleverly dangled major contracts before influential Russian companies, such as Lukoil, which were part of a multi-billion dollar agreement to develop the West Kurna oil field. The deal, reminiscent of the oil concessions when Iraq was a colony of Britain, enabled Lukoil to keep 75 per cent of the profit and also freed the company from paying Iraqi taxes.⁶³ Given the nature of this "sweetheart deal", Lukoil has become a major factor in the "Iraqi lobby" in Moscow, pushing for the lifting of sanctions. In addition, even before sanctions were lifted, Russia had become the major purchaser of Iraqi oil under the U.N.-approved oil-for-food agreement, and committed itself to purchasing 36.7 million barrels in 1997.⁶⁴

Given these interests, Primakov's behavior in both the October-November 1997 and January-February 1998 Iraqi crises was perfectly understandable. Following the expulsion of U.S. weapons inspectors, and the departure of the other inspectors causing the United States to threaten to attack Iraq, Primakov, with dramatic flair, called U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright back from her visit to India, met with her and other members of the U.N. Security Council at 2 a.m. in Geneva, Switzerland, on 20 November, and with the help of France, which also has major economic interests in Iraq and also opposed the U.S. use of force, obtained their agreement to a deal whereby all the weapons inspectors, including the

Americans, were allowed to return to Iraq in return for a vague promise to work for the lifting of sanctions. For the moment, at least, Primakov and Yeltsin could bask in international acclaim for having averted a U.S. attack on Iraq. As Aleksei Pushkov, a correspondent for *Nezavisimaya gazeta* noted, "The denouement — perhaps a temporary one — of the latest crisis involving Iraq that was achieved by Primakov demonstrated the ability that Russia still has in world affairs, even in its current very weakened state."⁶⁵ Moscow's efforts to defuse the crisis indeed did prove short-lived, as in January 1998 Saddam began backtracking on the agreement reached with Primakov by prohibiting inspections of his "palaces" and other sites where chemical and bacteriological weapons activities were suspected. As the United States and Britain massed military forces in the Persian Gulf, and an attack on Iraq appeared imminent, Primakov again scurried to defuse the crisis, although this time the Russian diplomatic effort was far more disjointed than it had been in November 1997. First, with deputy foreign minister Viktor Posuvaliuk in Baghdad, the Russian foreign ministry claimed it had reached a satisfactory agreement on inspection of the palaces, only to have that agreement immediately repudiated by Baghdad. Then, perhaps to regain the initiative for Moscow, Yeltsin himself seemed to take over leadership of the Russian diplomatic effort, threatening a world war if the United States bombed Iraq and pledging that Russia would not allow such an attack under any circumstances. Then, he asserted that U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan would go to Iraq, before Annan had agreed to do so. While Annan was ultimately to go to Baghdad and negotiate an agreement satisfactory to both the United States and Iraq, it is clear that unlike the November 1997 crisis, Russia had ceded the diplomatic initiative to the U.N. Secretary General. To be sure, Moscow benefited by the fact that Yeltsin's bluff was not called, and by the Security Council's decision to allow Iraq to sell more oil which may enable Russia to get an early start in refurbishing Iraq's oil fields. Nonetheless, with all its diplomatic activity, Russia was very far from getting the sanctions lifted, and in the late fall of 1998, even its diplomatic efforts proved unable to prevent a U.S.-British attack on Iraq (at that point Yeltsin's bluff *was* called) when Saddam once again interfered with the weapons inspection process. Indeed, Russia could only stand by, fulminating, while

the United States and Britain carried out air strikes against Iraq in late December. Nonetheless, Moscow, while had long sought to lift the embargo against Iraq, seized on the U.S.-British attack, not only to severely criticize the United States, but also to push for the lifting of the embargo. A sick Boris Yeltsin, under attack from communists in his Parliament who sought to impeach him, used the U.S. attack to try to demonstrate Russia's continuing importance in the world, despite its serious economic problems. He denounced the attack and withdrew, albeit only for a short time, the Russian ambassadors from the United States and Great Britain. Russian ambassador to NATO Sergei Kiseljjack went so far as to accuse the United States of launching the strikes just to test its newest weapons.⁶⁶ In addition, Moscow sought the ouster of UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler, whom Russia's deputy UNSC representative, Yuri Fedotov, said, "we just don't trust."⁶⁷ Yeltsin also sought to increase the role of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in dealing with the post-attack political situation in which Saddam Hussein refused to readmit the UNSCOM inspectors.

While the inconclusive discussions at the United Nations were proceeding, Saddam Hussein was seeking to recapture the initiative in the Gulf, although once again his heavy-handed actions appeared to backfire. Thus, after offering virtually no resistance to the joint U.S.-British attacks, Saddam declared the U.S. no-fly zones "null and void" and began to launch attacks against U.S. and British planes patrolling the zones. The end result of the process was the further weakening of Iraq's defense capability, although the amount of material destroyed, and Saddam's ability to rebuild it, was difficult to judge.⁶⁸ U.S. military attacks against Iraqi air defenses were to continue during the rest of the year and into 2000, and again despite diplomatic protests, there appeared nothing Russia could do to end them, although there was a report in the Russian press that Moscow, despite the sanctions, was secretly supplying weapons and spare parts to aid the Iraqi defense effort.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Iraq, as it had in the past, sought to pressure Russia to take a more active role in pushing for the lifting of sanctions. Thus, in July 1999 it issued a warning to Lukoil that it could lose its contract to develop the rich Qurna-2 oil field unless it began work there.⁷⁰ While this warning

prompted Lukoil to seek the Russian Foreign Ministry's help in lifting the sanctions, the issue was not settled until October when a memorandum of mutual understanding was signed between the two countries. Reportedly the discussions dealt not only with the implementation of the earlier agreements on the Qurna and Rumelia oil fields, and the second stage of the Hadisia-Rumelia oil pipeline, but also with the possibility of Russia prospecting for oil in an as yet undeveloped section of Iraq's western desert.⁷¹ Following the meeting Russia's new Fuel and Energy Minister, Viktor Kalyuzhny, who had headed the Russian delegation, argued in an interview with *Moscow News* that since other countries like Turkey, Algeria, and India were breaking the embargo on Iraq, Russia should as well, and stated that within two months Russia would "define its stand and decide on its policy line" on the sanctions issue.⁷² Whether Kalyuzhny, whose opposition to the Turkish-Russian Blue Stream gas pipeline project had earlier been overruled (see below),⁷³ was speaking for the Russian government, remained to be seen.

Perhaps in response to Iraqi pressure, or trying at the minimum to secure business for its firms seeking sales in Iraq, in November Moscow tried again to broker a Security Council agreement. Its strategy was two-fold. First, it joined with France and China to sponsor a resolution calling for the suspension of sanctions in return for Iraq's agreement to accept a new weapons monitoring agreement. Second, it called for the United States to release the holds it had placed on the sale of Russian oil and power plant equipment to Iraq. However, Moscow, facing an escalation of its war in Chechnya, then offered to trade off a more "flexible" position on Iraq in return for the United States not raising the issue of Chechnya at the U.N. Security Council.⁷⁴ Iraq, however, not only repudiated the Russian proposal, it denounced the still-divided Security Council decision at the end of the month to extend the "oil for food" program for only two weeks and announced it had stopped selling its oil, only to resume selling it several weeks later.

Meanwhile, Moscow continued to work at the United Nations for a new Security Council resolution. After extensive haggling with the United States and despite the visit to Moscow of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Aziz, who called on Moscow to veto the resolution then under discussion, Russia chose not to exercise its veto on the new Security Council resolution. The

resolution, No. 1284, on which Russia along with France, China, and Malaysia abstained, set up a new U.N. inspection agency, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to replace UNSCOM, and demanded Iraq provide "unrestricted access and provision of information," and allow UNMOVIC teams "immediate, unconditional, and unrestricted access to any and all areas, facilities, equipment records, and means of transport they wish to inspect." The resolution also reiterated Iraq's obligation to repatriate all Kuwaiti and third country nationals which it held, and requested the U.N. Secretary General to report to the council every four months on Iraq's compliance with this part of the resolution. The resolution also held out some potential benefits for Iraq, including permission for Hajj pilgrimage flights; the removal of the ceiling on the amount of oil Iraq could sell; possible increases in the amounts of oil, spare parts, and equipment to be imported (this would also be of benefit to Russian oil companies), following an evaluation of Iraq's existing petroleum production and export capacity; and, most important, following reports from the executive chairman of UNMOVIC and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Iraq had cooperated in all respects with UNMOVIC and the IAEA, the sanctions on the import of civilian goods to Iraq would be suspended for a 120 day period that would be renewable.⁷⁵

The Iraqis were initially furious with the resolution and with Russia for not vetoing it. The Iraqi newspaper *Babel*, controlled by Saddam Hussein's son Uday, asserted "Iraq will not implement or respect this resolution which maintains the embargo and turns Iraq into a protectorate led from the outside with Iraqi money, and indefinitely maintaining the embargo."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, a member of the Iraqi parliament, Yusuf Hamdan, denounced the "cowardliness" of Russia, China, and France for not vetoing the resolution.⁷⁷ Earlier, Iraq had threatened France — and by implication perhaps Russia as well — with an article in *Babel* asserting that Iraq should break off diplomatic relations with France and expel French oil representatives if France supported the resolution.⁷⁸ By contrast, the Iraqis sought to entice U.S. oil companies to pressure the U.S. government to lift sanctions (the same strategy it had used on Russian oil companies), reportedly offering concessions to U.S. oil companies once sanc-

tions were lifted. Indeed, Iraq's Vice Minister of Oil, Farz al-Shobin, said that U.S. oil companies were welcome in Iraq and bemoaned the fact that "the U.S. government prevents them from talking to us."⁷⁹

Despite the "carrot and stick" approach of Iraqi diplomacy, the sanction resolution passed and Iraq continued to find itself isolated in world affairs. Possibly for this reason, only a few days after the passing of the resolution, Iraq agreed to go ahead with a \$419 million deal with the Russian firm Technoprom Export to resume construction of a large power station that had been interrupted by the invasion of Kuwait and the sanctions regime.⁸⁰ In making this move, Baghdad may have hoped that the somewhat looser regulations of UNSC 1284 and its emphasis on the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, might enable it to import the previously banned equipment. Indeed, despite the Iraqi rejection of UNMOVIC, much depended on whom the U.N. would select for its chairman. Russia vehemently opposed Rolf Ekeus (who was supported by the United States), the first UNSCOM chair who had been nominated by UNSG Kofi Annan, and the United States ultimately acquiesced in the second nominee, Hans Blix, the former head of the international Atomic Energy Agency.⁸¹ Blix had been severely criticized for not discovering Iraq's efforts to develop nuclear weapons before 1990, and it remained to be seen if he would prove a more vigorous inspector as head of UNMOVIC. The selection of Blix may be seen as a small victory for Russia — and Iraq — and Blix's comment that his inspection teams would not force their way into suspected weapons sites in Iraq, but would defer to U.N. headquarters to resolve any confrontations,⁸² must have been good news for both Russia and Iraq, since such a procedure would weaken the inspection process. Moscow won another small victory when its former ambassador to the U.N., Yuli Vorontsov, was chosen as U.N. Undersecretary General with responsibility for solving the problem of the 600 missing Kuwaiti prisoners from the Gulf War, although, depending on how aggressively Vorontsov, a diplomat with extensive Middle East experience, pursued his mandate, a degree of friction with Iraq was a possible outcome of the appointment. Nonetheless, Iraq's unwillingness to accept UNMOVIC inspectors or even allow Vorontsov into Iraq to check on the missing prisoners, coupled with the U.S. unwillingness to push UNMOVIC when Blix said

his inspectors were ready,⁸³ made the U.N. operation by September 2000 appear to be a dead letter. In these circumstances, Russia, supported by most of the Arab world, began to whittle around the edges of the sanctions by supporting "humanitarian" flights to Baghdad, and suggesting that Iraq might be more amenable to the lifting of sanctions if the United States and Britain stopped their flights to police their self-proclaimed "no fly" zones in Iraq.⁸⁴

Nonetheless, Russia's basic dilemma with Iraq continued, one that now confronts Putin, as it had Yeltsin. Unless Russia could both convince the United States to moderate its position on Iraq, and convince Iraq to agree to Security Council Resolution 1284 linking the suspension of sanctions to renewed international inspection of suspected Iraqi WMD sites, any unilateral move to lift sanctions would cause a very serious crisis in U.S.-Russian relations (already badly strained by the war in Chechnya, the NATO intervention in Kosovo, and a possible unilateral U.S. change in the ABM agreement under a Bush Administration). Perhaps an even worse result of such a unilateral lifting of sanctions, from Putin's perspective, would be a grave weakening of the United Nations at a time when Moscow has sought to use the international organization to curb U.S. power.⁸⁵ It is questionable whether Moscow would be willing to absorb these costs to satisfy a problematic ally like Iraq.

Russia and Turkey

Unlike Russian-Iranian or even Russian-Iraqi relations, where the majority of key Russian foreign policy actors support close relations, thus making first Kozyrev's, then Primakov's, and finally Ivanov's stewardship of the relationship a relatively easy task, in the case of Turkey, there were sharp disagreements which, until 1999, seriously hampered the Foreign Ministry's efforts to manage a coherent policy. On the one hand, Russia has numerous interests in pursuing a good relationship with Turkey. First, until the 1998 economic collapse, trade between the two countries ranged between \$10 and 12 billion a year, making Turkey Russia's main trading partner in the Middle East. Not only are Turkish construction companies active throughout Russia, even acquiring the con-

tract for the repair of the Duma, damaged by the fighting in 1993, but there is a large flow of Russian tourists to Turkey, especially to Istanbul and Antalya, and Turkish merchants donated \$5 million to Yeltsin's reelection campaign in 1996. Second, Turkey is a major purchaser of natural gas from Russia, thus giving Gasprom a real incentive to promote Russian-Turkish relations. Third, Turkey purchases military equipment from Russia, including helicopters that had been embargoed by some NATO countries (including, until recently, the United States) because of concern that they would be used in Turkey's ongoing conflict with its Kurdish minority. On the other hand, there are serious problems in the relationship. First, Turkey is competing for influence with Russia in the Near Abroad, especially in Trans-caucasia and Central Asia. Second, Turkey is pushing an oil export route for Azeri oil, which would go through Georgia and Turkey to its Mediterranean port of Ceyhan rather than to the Russian port of Novorossisk, via Chechnya. In addition, concerned about the ecological dangers of supertankers going through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, Turkey sought to limit such traffic, thereby leading Russia to threaten to build an alternate pipeline route from the Black Sea through Bulgaria and Greece, until 1999 a major enemy of Turkey. Third, Russia has complained that the Turks were active in aiding the Chechen rebellions and thereby threatened Moscow's control of the North Caucasus. Underlying the tension in the Russian-Turkish relationship are memories of centuries of confrontation as the expanding Russian empire came into conflict with an Ottoman empire on the decline, and Turkey is also uneasy about Russian support for the terrorist PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) and about the continued Russian military presence in Armenia and Georgia, near Turkey's northeastern border.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Turkish President Turgut Ozal and some of the Turkish elite saw the opportunity of expanding Turkish influence into Azerbaijan and throughout Central Asia. Such a development would also enhance Turkey's relationship with the United States after the cold war ended, when Turkey could serve as a bulwark against Iranian-inspired Islamic radicalism. Ozal's initial optimism led him to pledge more than \$1 billion in credits for the newly independent Central Asian states in such areas as banking, education, and transportation. In addition, Turkey estab-

lished direct air communications with the region; Turkish television beamed programs to the Turkic-speaking countries of the former Soviet Union; and Turkish businessmen established numerous joint ventures in these new countries.

In February 1992, two months after the collapse of the Soviet Union, James Baker, Secretary of State of the United States, Turkey's main ally, paid a visit to Central Asia. *Pravda* complained that Baker was doing more there than the entire Russian Foreign Ministry. It warned that the United States was drawing the Islamic states of the former Soviet Union both into the orbit of U.S. policy and into the U.S. view of the world — away from Russia, "their closest neighbor and natural ally."⁸⁶ The U.S. actions were linked by the Russian right to America's NATO ally, Turkey. Because of its Turkic culture and linguistic ties to Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, Turkey was seen as seeking to create a Turkic alliance on the southern periphery of Russia. In doing so, it was using such devices as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone, which it created, and the Economic Cooperation Organization, in which it shared leadership with Iran.⁸⁷ This Russian concern was not baseless; the late Turkish president Turgut Ozal, had noted in March 1993: "Whatever the shape of things to come, we will be the real elements and the most important pieces of the status quo and new order to be established in the region from the Balkans to Central Asia. In this region, there cannot be a status quo or political order that will exclude us."⁸⁸

Beside those in Moscow who feared Turkish political expansion, others were initially concerned by the threat of "fundamentalist" Islam emanating from Iran, which could infect not only the Muslim states of the former Soviet Union, but also the Muslims who live in Russia. For this reason they saw the secular Islamic model of Turkey as a useful counterweight to Iranian Islamic radicalism.⁸⁹

By 1993, the Russian leadership was taking a calmer view of both the threat of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia (the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the second Chechen war were later to reawaken the concern) and the danger of Turkish competition in the region. While Turkish assistance was welcomed by the leaders of Central Asia and Azerbaijan, it did not lead to the rapid expansion of Turkish influence. In the first place, having just rid themselves of one "big brother", the Central Asians had no desire for another, and they sought

to maximize their ties with a number of states in order to avoid dependence on any one.⁹⁰ The economic problems of these states (with the exception of Turkmenistan) were great: rapid inflation, overpopulation, underemployment, water shortages, severe ecological damage, and more. Turkey simply did not have the economic capacity to meet their needs, especially as its own economy was reeling from a 70 per cent annual inflation rate. Another factor was the resurgence of the Kurdish uprising, which diverted Turkish attention from Central Asia to more pressing needs at home. Similar concerns of Turkish policy makers were the fighting in the former Yugoslavia, pitting Bosnian Muslims, supported by Turkey, against Serbs, and for a brief period, Croats as well; the continuing conflict with Greece over Cyprus; and, above all, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁹¹ The death of President Ozal, ironically just after he had completed a tour of Central Asia in March 1993, also seemed to weaken Turkish efforts to gain influence in the region, and Turkish leaders had to be disappointed that the Central Asian Muslim leaders did not back the Turkish position on such issues as Cyprus.

In the Transcaucasus, Turkish influence also declined. When the pro-Turkish Azeri president, Abulfaz Elchibey, was ousted in June 1993, he was replaced by former Soviet Politburo member Gaidar Aliev. While certainly not a pawn of Moscow, as he was subsequently to demonstrate, Aliev was less anti-Russian and less pro-Turkish than Elchibey had been. (Aliev has resisted the placement of Russian troops on Azerbaijan's border with Iran, although he did agree to Azerbaijan's reentry into the Commonwealth of Independent States.) The Turks not only proved unable to halt the advance of Armenian forces into Azerbaijan, but also could not protect their protégé, Elchibey.

In 1993, Moscow began to use economic pressure to gain political obedience from the states on its southern periphery, posing a problem for Turkey. By initially closing pipelines to Kazakh exports of oil and natural gas (Moscow was later to revise its policy on this), and by seeking to pressure Azerbaijan to reroute the oil it would get from its Caspian offshore oil fields through Russia, rather than through Turkey, Moscow sought to limit Turkish influence.⁹² When Turkey responded to this pressure by threatening to limit Russian oil tanker shipments

through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, Russia, in turn, responded by planning a pipeline that would circumvent the straits by going through its traditional ally, Bulgaria, and Turkey's enemy, Greece, to the Mediterranean. Nonetheless, Turkey continued its activist policy. At the end of October 1994, Turkey hosted a conference of the leaders of the Turkic states of the former Soviet Union. At the conference, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel noted that "instead of one, there are seven Turkish flags since the collapse of the Soviet Union" — a remark that reportedly greatly irritated the Russians.⁹³ Moscow may have taken comfort from one paragraph of the conference's final declaration — that the heads of state reaffirmed their belief in a social order based on *secularism* (my emphasis). The Russians could not have been happy, however, with another paragraph in which the heads of state welcomed the construction of natural gas and oil pipelines to provide Europe with these fuels via Turkey.⁹⁴

Throughout 1995, despite its economic problems, Turkey continued to compete with Russia in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. During the summer of 1995, Turkey extended credits to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Speaking at the third Turkic summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in late August, President Demirel urged the Turkic-speaking states to rid themselves of their dependency on "other powers".⁹⁵ The final communique of the summit emphasized the need to develop joint projects in oil and natural gas.⁹⁶ With the diplomatic groundwork prepared, Turkey stepped up its lobbying efforts to convince the Azerbaijani International Operating Company (AIOC) to send oil from Baku through Georgia and Turkey to the Mediterranean (the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline), as well as from Baku to Russia. Turkey's lobbying proved successful when, on 9 October 1995, the consortium endorsed routes through both Russia and Turkey. Should the pipeline through Turkey be constructed as planned, Turkey's position in both Central Asia and the Transcaucasus would be strengthened, as would the independence of new states of the region vis-à-vis Russia; Russia's position in these critical regions of its "near abroad" would be correspondingly weakened, in what both Turkey and Russia appeared to see as a "zero sum game" influence competition.

During the 1992–95 period, while the two states were competing in Transcaucasia and Central Asia, their bilat-

eral relations were mixed. On the positive side both countries now shared a desire to lift sanctions against Iraq.⁹⁷ In addition, the Russians, long interested in gaining markets for their weaponry, signed arms sales agreements with Turkey. Russia provided helicopters and combat vehicles in partial repayment of the debt of the former Soviet Union to Turkey, which Moscow inherited.⁹⁸ Ironically, at a time when Turkey was under fire from its NATO allies for its repressive acts against the Kurds, Russia had thus become an important, if only partial, substitute arms supplier. Moscow, however, was not above using the Kurdish issue to pressure Turkey. For instance, in February 1994 Russia hosted "The History of Kurdistan" conference, which was cosponsored by an organization affiliated with the PKK — an action protested by the Turkish Foreign Ministry.⁹⁹ For its part Russia was unhappy about what it saw as Turkish aid to the Chechen rebels in the first Chechen war.¹⁰⁰ Yet another area of conflict between Ankara and Moscow was the Russian effort to increase the number of heavy weapons it could station in the Northern Caucasus under the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) treaty — claiming instability in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan — something Turkey strongly opposed.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, trade, including the "suitcase trade", rose to \$10 billion by 1995, Turkish construction companies became active throughout Russia (even securing, as noted above, the contract to repair the Duma building which had been damaged in the conflict between Yeltsin and Parliament), and Turkey became a favorite vacation spot for Russian tourists.¹⁰² Thus, when Primakov became Russia's foreign minister in January 1996, he faced a decidedly mixed bag as he sought to forge Russia's policy toward Turkey. Unfortunately for Primakov, until January 1999, several months before he was to step down as Prime Minister, Russia's policy appeared to become even more confused than it had been in the 1992–95 period.

In looking at Russian-Turkish relations in the 1996–98 period, it often appeared that Russia's right hand did not know, or worse, perhaps did not care what its left hand was doing. Thus, in January 1997, the Russian arms firm Rosvooruzheniye, which, as mentioned above, had been selling helicopters to Turkey that helped it suppress its Kurdish rebellion — even as the Russian foreign ministry had been flirting with Kurdish na-

tionalists by allowing formal Kurdish conferences in Moscow — agreed to sell a sophisticated surface-to-air missile system, the SAM-300-PMU-1, to the Greek Cypriot government on the divided island of Cyprus. While the Greek Cypriots claimed that the missiles would be there only to defend their section of the island against the Turks who occupy the northern section, the hundred mile range of the missiles reaches into southern Turkey, and if deployed would seriously complicate Turkish air maneuverability. Turkey took the threat of these missiles so seriously that it inspected on various pretexts, ships going through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and warned that it would not allow the missiles to be deployed.

While tensions were rising between Turkey and Russia in the political-military arena, they were improving on the economic front. Gasprom chief, Rem Vakhirev, told Itar-Tass on 3 November 1997 that Gasprom would build a natural gas pipeline under the Black Sea from Russia to Turkey (the "Blue Stream" project) and would increase the supply of gas to Turkey from 3 billion cubic meters per year in the year 2000 to 16 billion cubic meters per year in the year 2010, thus providing Turkey with about half of its expected natural gas needs.¹⁰³ Viktor Chernomyrdin, then still prime minister, came to Turkey in mid-December 1997 to finalize the pipeline deal and also signed a series of other agreements. In an important political agreement, the two countries agreed to abstain from actions likely to harm the economic interests of either of them, or threaten their territorial integrity.¹⁰⁴ If taken literally, that would mean Russia would not interfere with the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, if that route is selected as the main export route from Azerbaijan, and there were rumors that Turkey would hire Russian companies to help build the pipeline to Ceyhan. Nonetheless, despite the good feelings engendered by the natural gas agreement and the Chernomyrdin visit, there was no movement by the Turks on lifting the limits on tanker traffic through the straits, and despite rumors to the contrary, no promise by Russia to drop the missile sale to Cyprus. Indeed, at the end of January 1998, Primakov stated that Russia intended to honor the deal in the absence of an agreement on the demilitarization of Cyprus — something to which the Turks were very unlikely to agree.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, if the mis-

sile deal were to have proceeded and the Turks had made good on their threats to destroy the missiles — possibly killing a number of Russian technicians in the process — a serious blow would have been dealt to Russian-Turkish relations. Fortunately for the future of the relationship — and for overall stability in the Middle East — the Russian economic crisis intervened and in 1999, Moscow chose cooperation over confrontation with Turkey even as Russian trade with Turkey dropped precipitously because of the Russian economic crisis. On the question of deploying the SAM-300, Greece, under heavy U.S. pressure, chose to deploy the missiles in Crete, rather than in the Greek area of Cyprus to which Greece was allied in an air-defense agreement.¹⁰⁶ As noted above, Moscow, through statements by Primakov, had gone out on a limb in advocating the deployment of the missiles on Cyprus, together with Russian technical and air defense personnel, as a cold war type geopolitical move against the United States in the Mediterranean. However, a weakened Moscow did not have the political clout to reverse the Greek decision and acquiesced in the deployment of the missiles on Crete. While Turkey was not pleased by the Crete deployment, it was far less objectionable to Ankara than a deployment on the volatile island of Cyprus would have been.

Moscow was to suffer another blow in 1999 in what appeared to be its efforts to create a geopolitical bloc on its southern border which would have been pitted against Turkey. During the period Primakov was foreign minister, it appeared as if Russia was seeking to put together an alignment, if not an alliance of itself, Iran, Armenia, Syria, and Greece — all of whom were to a greater or lesser degree in conflict with Turkey — which would be opposed not only to Turkey but also to its ally Israel, both of which were associated with a *de facto* alignment of the United States, Turkey, Israel, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. On 11 July 1999, Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskandrian stated that Armenia had no plans to join a three-way defensive alliance with Greece and Iran, and Armenia also began serious negotiations with Azerbaijan to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, an effort, however, which was slowed by the assassination of the Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian in late October 1999.¹⁰⁷ Russia suffered another blow to its hoped-for alignment when Greece and Turkey began to improve relations. After being embarrassed

by its involvement in protecting Kurdish terrorist leader Abdullah Ocalan, Greece moved to improve ties with Turkey and took the opportunity to help Turkey in the aftermath of the very severe earthquake which hit Turkey in August 1999.¹⁰⁸ When an earthquake hit Greece three weeks later, a Turkish rescue team reciprocated the Greek gesture by coming to Greece's aid. As relations warmed, Greece in early September made a major step toward improving relations with Turkey by removing its objection to Turkey's entry into the European Union.¹⁰⁹ The Greek gesture, coupled with some movement by the Turks to improve the treatment of their Kurdish minority, helped to lead to an EU invitation to Turkey to apply for membership. Meanwhile, Greek-Turkish relations continued to improve rapidly and, during a visit by Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou (who had replaced the anti-Turkish Theodoros Pangolos) to Turkey, the two states signed a series of agreements including cooperating in fighting organized crime, preventing illegal immigration, promoting tourism, protecting the Aegean environment, and protecting investments. The two countries also agreed to begin direct talks on reducing military tension in the Aegean, and Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem even raised the possibility of joint maneuvers in the Aegean.¹¹⁰ The two countries, under U.S. prodding, also began discussions on the thorny problem of Cyprus, and, as the rapprochement continued, observers began to recall the period of warm detente in the 1930s between Ataturk and Venizelos.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, yet another problem for Soviet alignment hopes came in early October when the Greek Deputy Foreign Minister, Yano Kranidiotis, journeyed to Israel to discuss defense cooperation. The Greek move was a major blow to Primakov's hopes to fashion a pro-Russian alignment of Armenia, Syria, Greece, and Iran.

As its diplomatic position in the Middle East weakened and as its economy further deteriorated, Russia stepped up its efforts to improve its economic ties with Turkey. The centerpiece of this effort was the "Blue Stream" project as Russia sought to preempt a competing natural gas pipeline agreement from Turkmenistan to Turkey (which required the controversial pipeline across the Caspian),¹¹² and possibly, competition from Azerbaijan as well, where a major natural gas field was discovered in 1999. In early February 1999, the Italian oil firm

ENI signed a memorandum of understanding with Gasprom to proceed with the construction of the 400 kilometer pipeline along with a compressor station near Dzhubga on Russia's Black Sea coast,¹¹³ and later in the month the project got support from the Dutch banking company Abn-Amro Holding. With a contract given to the Italian firm Saipem Spa with extensive experience in building deep-sea natural gas pipelines, the project seemed to be nearing the "take-off" stage.¹¹⁴

But at this point the rapid changes in the post of Russian Prime Minister began to affect the implementation of the project. During the spring of 1999 Primakov was reportedly ready to sign a resolution for government support of the Blue Stream project, but before he could do so, he was ousted by Yeltsin. A second problem arose when the new Fuel and Energy Minister Viktor Kalyuzhny voiced objections to the plan. Although Kalyuzhny was overruled by Yeltsin, who ordered Russia's new Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin to move the project ahead, Stepashin himself was then fired by Yeltsin and it was not until late August that Russia's third Prime Minister in 1999, Vladimir Putin, began to push the project, leading to a parliamentary hearing on 16 September 1999.¹¹⁵

Putin and Turkey

Faced by a very difficult economic situation, and pursuing an increasingly difficult war against the Chechens, Putin not only continued Primakov's policies of cooperation with Turkey, but carried them further. First, in the face of international competition Putin stepped up Russian support for the Blue Stream project. Thus, in early December 1999 he persuaded the Russian Parliament to approve \$1.5 billion in tax breaks for the construction of Blue Stream (although financing still remained a problem), and Gasprom and ENI signed a contract for the construction of the underwater section of the pipeline.¹¹⁶ This led Turkish Minister of Energy, Cumhur Ersumer, to note that Russia had pulled ahead in the race to supply natural gas to Turkey.¹¹⁷ Cooperation intensified in late October 2000, when Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov journeyed to Turkey where he signed a number of agreements. Kasyanov made clearer than ever before Russia's policy change toward Tur-

key with his statement "Our main mutual conclusion is that Russia and Turkey are not rivals but partners and our governments will from now on proceed from this understanding."¹¹⁸ Kasyanov also pledged that Blue Stream gas would flow to Turkey by the fall of 2001 and also promised to increase natural gas supplies to Turkey through other routes during the late fall and early winter of 2000–01.¹¹⁹ Moscow, in an effort to get a major military contract from Turkey also cut the price it was charging for the new Russian-Israeli KA-50 combat helicopter to come in well below the U.S. Bell King Cobra helicopter, which Turkey was considering purchasing from the United States.¹²⁰ The two countries also promised to step up cooperation of their law enforcement and secret police forces in the war against terrorism, and stated it was their goal to increase trade back up to the \$10 billion per year level it had attained before the Russian economic collapse of August 1998.¹²¹

Despite this marked effort by Russia to improve relations with Turkey, a number of important problems complicated the rapprochement. First, the increasingly close military ties between Russia and Armenia, although primarily directed against Azerbaijan, were also worrying to Turkey. Nonetheless, Ankara had to take satisfaction over the agreement reached with Moscow at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul in November 1999, under which Russia agreed to pull all of its 2,600 troops out of Moldova by 2002 and to dismantle two of its four bases in Georgia by 2001. That agreement also stipulated that a state cannot deploy forces in another state without the host country's consent, a provision aimed at protecting such countries as Azerbaijan.¹²² Still, Russia had more offensive military equipment on its southern flank than the CFE permitted — something which greatly concerned Turkey — so Turkey, and the United States, stated that they would not present the revised CFE pact to their legislatures for ratification until Moscow came into compliance with the treaty.¹²³ Second, the Baku-Ceyhan project was also moving ahead. The rise in the price of oil, and Turkey's increased willingness to financially support construction of the project, made the pipeline a more desirable undertaking for the oil companies extracting petroleum from the Caspian Sea.¹²⁴ Should this project be completed — it received a strong endorsement at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul in mid-Novem-

ber 1999, and a feasibility study was approved in October 2000 — it would reinforce Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia, and further weaken the Russian position in the Southern Caucasus, as well as in Kazakhstan, from which part of the oil for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline would have to come unless oil, as well as gas, was found in Azerbaijan's new natural gas field.

Turkey also stepped up its activity in Central Asia in the fall of 2000, as its new President Ahmet Sezer not only visited Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, but also sent two planeloads of arms and ammunition to Uzbekistan to help it combat Islamic insurgents.¹²⁵ This came into direct conflict with Russia's efforts to use the threat of "Islamic fundamentalism" in the region reflected by the emergence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan which was reportedly aided by the Taliban, to bring the Central Asian states more under its control. In addition, although Russia and Turkey had come somewhat closer on the issue of the straits, Turkey continued to warn about overcrowding of the straits by oil tankers and other vessels, and accidents reinforced the Turkish argument that the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was the safest way to transport Caspian Sea oil.¹²⁶ Finally, Turkey was uneasy about the Russian military build-up in the North Caucasus as a result of the Chechen war and had embarked on its own military building-up.

In sum, despite these continuing challenges from Turkey, Putin, like Yeltsin before him, realizing Russia's economic weakness, has, at least for the time being, chosen the path of economic cooperation rather than geopolitical confrontation with Turkey.

Russia and Israel

The Yeltsin period

The Russian-Israeli relationship, like the Russian-Turkish relationship, reflects a conflict between Russian economic interests seeking a good relationship with Israel and Russian hardliners and geopoliticians who seek benefits for Russia out of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Unlike the case of Russian-Turkish relations, however, the geopolitical advocates did not come

to the fore until Primakov, an advocate of close Russian-Arab relations, became foreign minister and they receded somewhat when Putin became Russia's president. Russia has a number of interests in Israel. First, on the economic front, there is extensive trade which crossed the \$500 million mark in 1995 (although it would later dip because of Russia's 1998 economic crisis), making Israel Russia's second leading trade partner in the Middle East after Turkey. Second, on the diplomatic front, a close relationship with Israel enables Russia to play, or appear to play, a major role in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Third, with almost 1,000,000 Russian-speaking Jews now living in Israel, Israel has the largest Russian-speaking diaspora outside the former Soviet Union, and this had led to very significant ties in the areas of cultural exchange and tourism. The fourth major interest is a military-technical one as the Russian military-industrial complex has expressed increasing interest in co-producing military aircraft with Israel, especially since many of the workers in Israel's aircraft industry are former citizens of the Soviet Union with experience in the Soviet military-industrial complex.

From the Israeli point of view, there are four central interests in relations with Russia. The first is to maintain the steady flow of immigration, which has provided Israel with a large number of scientists and engineers. The second interest is to prevent the export of nuclear weapons or nuclear materials to Israel's Middle East enemies, including Libya, Iran, and Iraq. The third goal is to develop trade relations with Russia, which supplies Israel with such products as uncut diamonds, metals, and timber. Russia is also the site of numerous joint enterprises begun by Israelis who had emigrated from the former Soviet Union. Finally, Israel hopes for at least an even-handed Russian diplomatic position in the Middle East and, if possible, Russian influence on its erstwhile ally, Syria, to be more flexible in reaching a peace agreement with Israel.

During Kozyrev's period as Russia's foreign minister, there were relatively few diplomatic-political disputes, although Israel expressed displeasure at Russian arms sales to Iran, which Israel considers an enemy. When disputes between Israel and its Arab neighbors took place, such as the one over Lebanon, Russia under Kozyrev took a very even-handed approach and was a strong supporter of the Oslo I and Oslo II

accords and the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994. However, after Primakov took over as foreign minister, Russia became far more critical of Israeli activities, whether in Lebanon when Shimon Peres was prime minister, or toward the Palestinians after Netanyahu took control of the Israeli government. As the Israeli-Palestinian peace process floundered under Netanyahu, Primakov thrust Russia forward both as a mediator — to gain world recognition for Russia's increased diplomatic role, just as he did during the Iraqi crises — and also to reduce Arab dependence on the United States, which was perceived by many Arabs as siding too closely with Israel. The end result was a chilling of Russian-Israeli political relations.¹²⁷

Initially, when Binyamin Netanyahu became Israel's Prime Minister after defeating Shimon Peres in the May 1996 Israeli elections, there was hope for an improvement in Russian-Israeli relations. In 1997, both Netanyahu and Yisrael B'Aliyah leader Natan Sharansky, a former Refusnik (a Soviet Jew denied permission to emigrate), made successful visits to Moscow, with Netanyahu giving Russia a \$50 million agricultural credit and discussing the purchase of Russian natural gas. There were also agreements in the military sphere as Russian and Israeli firms signed an agreement to co-produce an AWACS aircraft, and in addition, there was a joint proposal to provide advanced helicopters to Turkey.¹²⁸ The Israeli food manufacturer TNUVA also filmed a "milk in space" commercial abroad the Russian space station Mir,¹²⁹ and there were frequent visits back and forth of security officials (including Vladimir Putin) as the two countries stepped up their cooperation against crime and terrorism.

But by the end of 1997 and throughout 1998 relations again soured. Netanyahu canceled further discussion of the natural gas deal because of the Russian supply of missile technology to Iran, Russia expressed (as did the United States) its unhappiness with Netanyahu's policy toward the Palestinians, the economic collapse of August 1998 in Russia damaged Russian-Israeli trade, and the rise in anti-Semitism that coincided with Primakov's elevation to the post of Prime Minister in September 1998 also hurt relations.

The situation was to change once more at the beginning of 1999. With an Israeli election campaign underway, Netanyahu suddenly changed his position on Russia. Acting

on the [mistaken] supposition that if Israel improved its relations with Russia, he would win the votes of Russian immigrants in a hotly contested election, Netanyahu not only supported Russia's quest for additional IMF aid, but through his Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, actually questioned, as had the Russians, the NATO intervention in Kosovo.¹³⁰ Primakov (who was soon to be deposed by Yeltsin) responded to the Israeli initiative by letting it be known that he was hoping for a Netanyahu victory,¹³¹ and subsequently Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov advised Arafat against proclaiming a Palestinian state on 4 May 1999, a major concern of Israel at the time.¹³² The ploy by Netanyahu failed however, as the Russian immigrant voters voted their local concerns — particularly concerns about their religious status in Israel — and supported Netanyahu's opponent, Ehud Barak.¹³³

The Putin period

Several months after Barak's election Putin became Russia's Prime Minister and quickly became deeply involved in the war against Chechnya — a development which was to affect Russian-Israeli relations positively. Barak met Putin in Oslo and raised with him, as he had with Yeltsin on a trip to Moscow in early August, the dual Israeli concerns about the sale of Russian military technology to Iran and the rise in anti-Semitism in Russia. While Putin was not to be responsive on the issue of arms to Iran, he was far more forthcoming in denouncing anti-Semitism than Yeltsin was (although he did not go as far as some Russian Jewish leaders wanted).¹³⁴ Nonetheless, his conflict with Vladimir Gusinsky, an oligarch who was also a leader of the Russian Jewish community, became an issue not only for Russian Jews, but also for Russian-Israeli relations.¹³⁵

In the period before the outbreak of the Al-Aksa Intifada at the end of September 2000, there were a series of ups and downs in Russian-Israeli relations. Israel, despite its displeasure with Russian arms sales to Iran, asked Moscow to intervene in the case of the imprisoned Iranian Jews, and Moscow did so, although the effectiveness of the Russian intervention is not clear.¹³⁶ On the other hand, to please the United States on the eve of the Camp David II summit with the Palestinians,

Israel unilaterally canceled the sale of the joint Israeli-Russian AWACS plane to China, something Moscow did not like.¹³⁷ But the issue of greatest importance to the relationship, at least from the Russian point of view, was Israeli support for Russian actions in Chechnya, with one Russian official stating that "Israel helps us break the Western information blockade of Russia over Chechnya."¹³⁸ Israel also helped Russia by sending medical supplies to the victims of the Moscow apartment house bombings claimed by Putin to have been perpetrated by the Chechens, and also gave medical treatment to wounded Russian soldiers. Israeli help to Moscow over Chechnya was to pay diplomatic dividends when the Al-Aksa Intifada broke out in late September 2000, when Putin took a very different position from that taken by Primakov during similar crises in the 1996-99 period. In contrast with Primakov, Putin not only was evenhanded, but even seemed to tilt toward Israel as the crisis developed. Thus, the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Sergei Ivanov, linked the violence on the West Bank and Gaza to the Taliban's increased activities in Afghanistan and Central Asia and to extremist activity in Chechnya, a position also espoused by Putin's adviser, Sergei Yastrzhembsky. The Russian Duma, unlike its anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic predecessor which went out of office in December 1999, took a very evenhanded position, voting 275-1 to blame not Israel, but "extremist forces" for the escalation of the conflict,¹³⁹ and Putin himself called on both Barak and Arafat to take "decisive measures" to put an end to the violence, normalize the situation, and restore a direct dialogue.¹⁴⁰ When Arafat journeyed to Moscow in late November 2000, he may have been seeking to shift Moscow to the anti-Israeli position of the Primakov period. If so, he was to be sorely disappointed. The expected three day visit lasted only a few hours and Putin, who had been excluded from the U.S.-sponsored Sharm el-Sheikh summit, and who used Arafat's visit to show that Moscow was still a factor in world affairs, reiterated his evenhanded position urging both Arafat and Barak to resume their dialogue and even arranging a three-way telephone conversation to get Barak and Arafat talking again, although this lasted only for a brief period.¹⁴¹ Moscow also abstained in the Security Council vote of 19 December (which went down to defeat) on a Palestinian demand to deploy a U.N. observer force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹⁴²

Despite Putin's shift to an evenhanded position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and Russia's important diplomatic economic and military ties with Israel,¹⁴³ there are countervailing pressures in Moscow preventing too close a Russian-Israeli alignment. These include:

- 1) Pro-Arab elements in Russia's Foreign Ministry and in the increasingly influential secret police who hope to restore the close ties Moscow had in the Arab world in Soviet times.
- 2) Anti-Semitic forces who are also anti-Israel. They are primarily found in Russia's communist party and among Russia's ultra-nationalist politicians.
- 3) Russia's arms sales agency, Rosoboronoexport. The new arms sales agency has been given a high priority in Putin's efforts to revitalize the Russian economy. Indeed, Russia's Prime Minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, has stated that the proceeds from the arms sales are to be invested in the development of new technologies for the economy. What makes this problematic for Israel is that Russian arms sales to Iran, an enemy of Israel, are already a matter of major concern. Should these be followed by arms sales to Syria (assuming Saudi Arabia is willing to pay for the arms — a possibility if the Intifada escalates and draws in Syrian forces), a deterioration in Russian-Israeli relations could well result. The situation would worsen even more if the U.N. sanctions on Iraq were lifted — or if Russia decided to break them unilaterally (both unlikely prospects at the current time), because in the past Moscow had been a major weapons supplier to Baghdad.
- 4) Russia's Muslim community. Approximately 20 per cent of the Russian population, they are still rather quiescent politically. Nonetheless, the Russian leadership must take their views into consideration, given the dangers of radical Islam not only in Chechnya and elsewhere in the North Caucasus and the Russian Federation, but also in Central Asia.

Because of the conflicting pressures on Putin, the Russian leader has chosen to take an evenhanded position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. He may be expected to seize on such events as Arafat's trip to Moscow to demonstrate that Russia is still an important player in world politics and thereby satisfy right-wing elements in Russia. However, until he succeeds in revitalizing Russia's economy and military power, Russia will be at best a marginal influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Conclusions

In looking at the pattern of Russian policy toward the Middle East under Boris Yeltsin, and his successor, Vladimir Putin, several conclusions can be drawn. First, Russia, during a period of growing economic and military weakness, has basically been on the defensive in the region. Its priority has been to try to re-establish Russian control over Transcaucasia and Central Asia, while also putting down successive rebellions in Chechnya, in the Northern Caucasus. This geostrategic situation has strongly influenced its policies toward Iran and Turkey, countries which are deeply involved in the politics of both Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

In the case of Iran, which, during the Yeltsin era, basically cooperated with Russia in a series of regional conflicts from the civil war in Tajikistan, to resisting Taliban control in Afghanistan to supporting Armenia against Azerbaijan, very strong political ties developed which, at least until the time of writing (20 December 2000), have withstood the challenges posed by the second Russian military intervention in Chechnya. Iran has become a major trading partner of Russia (although the exports are primarily on the Russian side), as well as a major customer for Russian military equipment and nuclear technology. In the multipolar world which Russian leaders have hoped to see develop, Iran is a primary ally. There are, however, two issues on the horizon which have to concern Putin. The first is the possibility of a rapprochement between the United States and Iran, if, following the overwhelming victory of moderates in the February 2000 Majlis elections, Iranian President Mohammed Khatami, who desires such a rapprochement, manages to defeat his con-

servative opposition which has launched an attack against him. A second concern and one related to the first concern is that as the result of a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement, the United States might remove its opposition to investment in pipelines carrying Caspian oil and natural gas from Central Asia and Azerbaijan through Iranian territory to the Persian Gulf. Russia would face problems should such pipelines materialize as this would reduce the dependency of these states on Russia both as a market and as a transit route for their energy exports.

In the case of Turkey, which, unlike Iran, has had a more confrontational relationship with Russia, Moscow, perhaps out of necessity, seems to have settled on a policy of economic cooperation rather than one of geopolitical confrontation. After clashing with Turkey over Chechnya, the Kurds, and a projected SAM missile deployment on the Greek section of Cyprus, as well as over the proposed Baku-Ceyhan oil and Transcaspian natural gas pipelines, Moscow was able to restore friendly relations with Ankara. Indeed, by 1999 the centerpiece of Russian-Turkish relations had become the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline connecting Russia and Turkey across the bottom of the Black Sea. Assuming that the project is successfully completed — a major assumption — Blue Stream will turn Turkey, already Russia's leading trading partner in the Middle East, into one of Russia's leading economic partners in the world and this, in turn, should mitigate other areas of Russian-Turkish friction. However, Putin still has to contend with the fact that an increasingly prosperous Turkey (despite its economic crisis of December 2000), with improving ties to Greece and an invitation for EU membership, might also be an increasingly attractive economic partner for Azerbaijan, Georgia, the states of Central Asia, and possibly even Armenia if the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is settled. How Putin balances Russia's growing economic ties with Turkey, with Turkey's continuing geopolitical challenge to Russia in Transcaucasia and Central Asia will be an interesting test of his diplomatic and political skills.

A second conclusion about Russian policy toward the Middle East which can be drawn from this study is that Russian policy under Yeltsin was hurt by multiple and often con-

flicting actors. Elements which have influenced Russian policy in a major way include the energy companies, especially Lukoil and Gasprom, the oligarchs, the defense and atomic energy ministries, the arms sales company, and, to a lesser degree the Russian Duma and Russia's regions. Unlike Yeltsin, Putin, so far at least, seems intent on cutting down on the freedom of action of a number of these actors. He has already moved to limit the power of regional governors and is in the process of cracking down on the oligarchs and curbing the energy companies (some of which are linked to the oligarchs) and is bringing Russia's arms sales agency under tighter control. With a far more supportive Duma than Yeltsin enjoyed, Putin may succeed in this endeavor, adding a degree of cohesion to Russian foreign policy that has been lacking over the last ten years.

A third conclusion which can be drawn from this study is that, as it was in Soviet times, the Middle East has become an area of conflict between Russia and the United States. Conflict has been the case in the U.S. quarrel with Russia over its supplies of missile technology and nuclear reactors to Iran, as well as its sale of conventional weapons to the Islamic Republic. Yet, for reasons mentioned above, Iran has become so important to Russian regional policy that Russia has been willing to incur the ire of the United States to maintain its alliance with Iran. Conflict has also been present over Russian policy toward Iraq. Since 1994, Russia has pressed the United States to agree to the lifting of sanctions on Iraq, has sought to prevent the United States from attacking Iraq when Saddam Hussein interfered in inspections of weapons of mass destruction, and has severely criticized the United States when the attacks have occurred. Nonetheless, although its oil companies would profit if sanctions were lifted and it would stand a better chance of recovering the \$7 billion in Iraqi debts and get contracts for its power companies, not only has Russia not unilaterally broken the U.N. sanctions regime, it has also acquiesced in the establishment of a new inspection system for Iraq — in the teeth of Iraqi protests. In large part this has been done to maintain the legitimacy of the U.N. as a factor in world affairs checking unilateral U.S. actions. This is one Yeltsin policy Putin gives every indication of continuing. This was reflected in the July 2000 foreign policy report of Putin's foreign min-

ister, Igor Ivanov, which stressed that the U.N. remained central to Russian foreign policy.

Finally, by contrast with most of the post-World War II Soviet era, there has recently also been a modicum of co-operation between Russia and the United States in the Middle East. This has particularly been the case in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Russia strongly endorsed the U.S.-sponsored Oslo I and Oslo II interim agreements between Israel and the Palestinians as well as the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty of 1994. While Primakov, when he took office in January 1996, sought a more independent role for Russia in Middle East diplomacy, especially the diplomacy surrounding the conflict in Lebanon in April 1996, and unsuccessfully resisted the U.S. efforts to solve the conflict without Russian participation, the economic crisis of 1998 lowered Russia's profile in the Arab-Israeli conflict, only a tertiary area of interest to Russia in any case. Putin, burdened by the Chechen war, has switched back to a more evenhanded position on the conflict, while at the same time maintaining Russia's close economic, cultural and even military ties with Israel. Such a strategy, in an area of less than vital interest to Russia, enables Putin not only to project Russia as a great power in its role as a co-sponsor of the Arab-Israeli peace talks, but also to maintain a sphere of cooperation with the United States at a time when U.S.-Russian relations are strained in a large number of other areas.

In sum, the Middle East legacy which Putin inherits as the leader of a weakened Russia is a rather modest one, befitting a country which has fallen from the ranks of a superpower. Whether Putin will be able to revitalize Russia so that it can play a more important role in the region is a very open question.

[Editor's note: This paper was completed before the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, after which Russia and Iran, among other states, lent their support to the American call for concerted action to thwart further terrorist activities.]

Endnotes

1. In November 2000, Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev said the greatest danger for Russia's security was posed by threats originating from the North Caucasian and Central Asian directions (*Rossiskaia gazeta*, 25 November 2000, trans. in FBIS-NES-2000-1124, 25 November 2000).
2. For studies of politics in the Duma, see Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myth and Reality* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); and Stephen White, *Russia's New Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
3. Cited in gligori@aol.com, 28 March 1998 (gligori@aol.com is an on-line service specializing in Central Asian and Transcaucasian affairs).
4. See Robert O. Freedman, "Russian-Iranian Relations Under Yeltsin," in *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3, (1999) p. 268.
5. For an analysis of the influence of the Russian military on policy, see Vicken Cheterian, "Russia's Disarmed Response," in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (September 2000), p. 3.
6. Cited in *Wall Street Journal* (11 March 1998), p. A17.
7. Cited in Stephen DeSpiegeleire, (WEU Institute for Security Studies), "Gulliver's Threads: Russia's Regions and the Rest of the World" (unpublished paper) presented at the Slavic Research Center International Symposium, Sapporo, Japan, 22-25 July 1998.
8. *Kommersant Daily*, 23 August 1995, trans. in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* [hereafter CDSP], Vol. 47, No. 34 (1995), p. 25.
9. Andrei Shukshin, "Exasperated Russia changes tactics in Chechnya," Reuters (Moscow), 15 December 2000, published in *Johnson's Russia List*, No. 4690 (15 December 2000). ([David Johnson@erols.com](mailto:David.Johnson@erols.com) is an on-line service specializing in Russian affairs.)

10. *Washington Times* (21 June 1999), online version at www.washtimes.com.

11. *Financial Times* (10 November 2000), p. 12.

12. Cited in *The Washington Post* (14 December 2000), p. A38; and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Newsline*, Vol. 4, No. 241, (14 December 2000), online version at www.rferl.org.

13. *Washington Times* (1 December 2000), p. A4.

14. *Financial Times* (16 April 1999), p. 2. See also *Financial Times* (24 September 1999), p. 3.

15. For a recent example of such problems, see *Wall Street Journal* (30 June 1999), p. 19. See also *Financial Times* (22 February 2000), p. 14.

16. For an analysis of Russian arms sales, see Richard F. Grimmett, *Conventional Transfers to Developing Nations 1992–1999* (Washington: Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, 18 August 2000), p. 6. Note: these figures include Russian arms sales to China and India, which are now Russia's main customers.

17. Andrei Musatov, "Putin to use defense industry to bolster country's economy," in *Russia Journal*, 21–27 December 1999, p. 13.

18. *Rossiskaia gazeta* (13 May 1998), trans. in *Johnson's Russia List*, No. 3277 (14 May 1998).

19. *Izvestiia* (14 February 1998), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 50, No. 7 (1998), p. 17.

20. Reuters report, cited in *Johnson's Russia List*, No. 4391 (9 July 2000). See also *New York Times* (9 July 2000), p. 3.

21. *Financial Times* (10 November 2000), p. 12. Russia also hopes to join the World Trade Organization, but has a difficult road ahead. See *Financial Times* (15 December 2000), p. 7. *The Economist*, in an article in November 2000, rated Rus-

sia dead last on corporate governance among key emerging market economies, after Turkey, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Czech Republic. See *The Economist* (18 November 2000), p. 80.

22. Robert O. Freedman, "Russia and Iran: A Tactical Alliance," in *SAIS Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer-Fall 1997), p.93-110.

23. Source: U.S. Government sources and Russian customs data.

24. See *New York Times* (18 November 1997), online version at www.nytimes.com; and *Kommersant Daily* (27 January 1998), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (1998), p. 22.

25. For a study of U.S.-Iranian relations during this period, see Robert O. Freedman, "American Policy Toward the Middle East in Clinton's Second Term," in Stephen J. Blank (ed.), *Mediterranean Security in the Coming Millennium* (Carlisle, Penn.: The Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, 1999), pp. 371-416.

26. Viktor Vishniakov, "Russian-Iranian relations and regional stability," in *International Affairs* (Moscow), Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 1999), p. 152.

27. See Yuri Merzliakov, "Legal status of the Caspian Sea," in *International Affairs* (Moscow), Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 1999), p. 37.

28. See M. A. Guseinova, *Politika SSha v Zakavkoz'e i Interesy Rossii* (Moscow Institute of the U.S. and Canada, 1999), pp. 14-18; and *Ettela'at* (Tehran), 15 February 1999, online version at www.ettelaat.com.

29. *New York Times* (19 November 1999), p. A1.

30. For a Russian view of these events, see *Izvestiia* (21 December 1999), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 51, No. 51 (19 January 2000), p. 12; and *Moscow News* (26 January-1 February 2000).

It was also rumored, however, that Gasprom was running short of gas and needed Turkmen gas to meet its many commitments.

31. Cited in *Ettela'at* (23 November 1999), online version at www.ettelaat.com.

32. Cited in *Ettela'at* (24 June 1999), online version at www.ettelaat.com.

33. Cited in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Iran Report*, Vol. 2, No. 41 (18 October 1999), online version at www.rferl.org.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Segodnia* (10 November 1999), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 51, No. 45 (8 December 1999), p. 1.

36. Cited in Reuters (5 August 1999), online version at www.reuters.com.

37. *Ettela'at* (10 December 1999), online version at www.ettelaat.com.

38. Cited in *Ettelat'at* (28 January 2000), online version at www.ettelaat.com.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Cited in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Iran Report*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (7 February 2000), online version at www.rferl.org.

41. This was clearly the concern of some of Russia's Iranian specialists. See N. M. Mamedova, "Novii etap politicheskoi zhizni Irana," [New Stage in the Political Life of Iran], in Vladimir Isaev (ed.), *Blizhnii Vostok i sovremennost'* (Moscow: Institute for the Study of Israel and the Near East, 2000), p. 132.

42. Cited in *New York Times* (8 September 2000), p. A13. See also *Washington Post* (28 November 2000), p. A1.

43. Cited in *Washington Times* (8 September 2000), p. A12. For his part, Putin had singled out Iran for special mention in his new foreign policy doctrine.

44. *Washington Post* (16 September 2000), p. A14.

45. Cited in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Newsline*, Vol. 4, No. 232 (1 December 2000), online version at www.rferl.org.

46. Itar-Tass (24 November 2000), cited in FBIS-SOV-2000-1124 (24 November 2000).

47. *New York Times* (6 December 2000), online version at www.nytimes.com.

48. *Izvestiia* (5 May 1992), trans. in CDSP, Vol. 44, No. 18 (1992), p. 15.

49. See also the commentary in *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (16 April 1993), trans. in CDSP, Vol.45, No. 15 (1993), p. 22.

50. *Izvestiia* (29 June 1993), trans. in CDSP, Vol.45, No. 26 (1993), p. 13.

51. Interfax (28 June 1993), cited in *Commonwealth of Independent States and the Middle East* (hereafter *CIS/ME*), Jerusalem, Vol. 18, No. 6 (1993), p. 28.

52. *Segodnia* (13 August 1993), in *CIS/ME*, Vol. 18, No. 8 (1993), p. 3.

53. *Komsomalskaia pravda* (26 October 1993), in *CIS/ME*, Vol. 18, No. 10 (1993), p. 31.

54. *Kommersant* (1 December 1993), trans. in FBIS, *Daily Report* (FSU), 2 December 1993, p.11.

55. *Izvestiia* (9 August 1994), trans. in CDSP, Vol. 46, No. 32 (1994), p. 18.

56. Interfax (2 February 1995), cited in *CIS/ME*, Vol. 20, Nos. 2-3 (1995), p. 37.

57. *Krasnaia zvezda* (3 August 1995), trans. in FBIS, *Daily Report* (FSU), 4 August 1995, p. 9.
58. Interfax (24 August 1995), extracted from FBIS, *Daily Report* (FSU), 25 August 1995, p. 13.
59. *CIS/ME*, Vol. 20, Nos. 4–5 (1995), p. 46.
60. See the report in *Financial Times* (26 January 1996), p. 4.
61. See the report in *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (18 February 1996), p. 3.
62. *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (28 November 1997), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 49, No. 48 (1997), p. 11.
63. Cited in *Washington Post* (13 November 1997), p. A29.
64. Cited in *Wall Street Journal* (4 November 1997), p. 19.
65. *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (28 November 1997), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 49, No. 48 (1997), p. 11.
66. *Financial Times* (19 December 1998), p. 2.
67. *New York Times* (22 December 1998), p. A18.
68. *New York Times* (3 February 1999), p. A1; and *ibid.* (18 November 1999), p. A6.
69. *Segodnia* (17 February 1999), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 51, No. 8 (1999), pp. 3–4). See also *Washington Times* (22 February 1999), online version at www.washtimes.com.
70. *Moscow News*, No. 25 (7–13 July 1999), p. 7.
71. *Moscow News*, No. 38 (6–12 October 1999), p. 7.
72. *Moscow News*, No. 39 (13–19 October 1999), p. 7.
73. *Moscow News*, No. 36 (22–28 September 1999), p. 7.

74. *New York Times* (19 November 1999), p. A20.

75. For the text of UNSC Resolution #1284, see the U.N. website at www.un.org. The resolution was clearly a compromise. Initially Russia wanted only a period of sixty days for Iraq to show compliance, while the U.S. had demanded 180 days. See *Washington Post* (11 December 1999), p. A24.

76. *New York Times* (20 December 1999), p. A10.

77. *Washington Times* (18 December 1999), p. A1.

78. *New York Times* (6 December 1999), p. A12.

79. *Wall Street Journal* (24 November 1999), p. 14.

80. *Washington Times* (22 December 1999), online version at www.washtimes.com. The equipment for the plant, however, would have to be approved by the U.S., which continued to have a concern about the importing to Iraq of "dual-use" equipment.

81. *New York Times* (27 January 2000), p. A8. See also *New York Times* (28 January 2000), p. A8.

82. *New York Times* (5 February 2000), p. A8.

83. *Washington Post* (31 August 2000), p. A25.

84. Agence France Presse (5 December 2000); interview, Russian diplomat, Washington, DC, 18 December 2000; and Moscow Radio (30 November 2000), cited in FBIS-SOV-2000-1130, 30 November 2000.

85. The importance of the U.N. to Russia was reiterated by Foreign Minister Ivanov in presenting Russia's new foreign policy doctrine to reporters in July 2000. "The organization of the United Nations must remain the main center of regulating international relations in the twenty-first century. Russia will resolutely oppose any attempts to lower (the United Nation's) role and that of its Security Council." Reuters (10 July 2000), cited in *Johnson's Russia List*, No. 4395 (11 July 2000).

86. *Pravda* (19 February 1992), trans. in FBIS, *Daily Report* (FSU), 20 February 1992, p. 43.

87. Vladimir Kulistikov, "Turks from the Adriatic to the Great Chinese Wall are a threat to Russia," in *New Times* (Moscow), No. 20 (1992), p. 3.

88. Cited in Stephen J. Blank, "Turkey's strategic engagement in the Former USSR and U.S. interests," in Steven Blank, et al. (eds.), *Turkey's Strategic Position at the Crossroad of World Affairs* (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, 1993), p. 56.

89. See *Izvestiia* (7 February 1992), trans. in CDSP, Vol. 44, No. 6 (1992), p. 18.

90. Interview by the author, Uzbek Foreign Ministry, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 30 September 1993. See also Islam Karimov, *Building the Future: Uzbekistan Its Own Model for Transition to a Market Economy* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan Publishers, 1993).

91. Turkish correspondent Semih Idiz called 1993 a year that forced Turkish diplomats into a "crisis management mode". See *Turkish Times* (1 February 1994), p. 1.

92. For a Russian view of the threat that the Turkish pipeline system would pose to Russia, see *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (13 May 1993), trans. in CDSP, Vol. 45, No. 14 (1993), pp. 16–18. For a Western view arguing that Moscow is practicing economic warfare over the pipeline issue, see Stephen Blank, *Energy and Security in Transcaucasia* (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, 7 September 1994).

93. Cited in a report in *Washington Times* (5 November 1994), online version at www.washtimes.com.

94. Istanbul Declaration in the *Turkish Times* (3 November 1994).

95. Cited in *Turkish Times* (1 September 1995).

96. *Ibid.*

97. During her visit to Moscow in early September 1993, Turkey's new prime minister Tansu Ciller, was quoted as saying, "President Yeltsin has agreed to cooperation between Turkey and Russia to lift the anti-Iraqi embargo," in *Washington Times* (10 September 1993), online version at www.washtimes.com.

98. *Izvestiia* (21 July 1994).

99. See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Research Report*, Vol. 3, No. 18 (6 May 1994), p. 9.

100. Interviews by the author in Turkey in June 1996 indicated that while the Turkish government was apparently not directly aiding the Chechen rebels, private groups in Turkey, especially Islamic groups, were assisting the Chechens.

101. Moscow scored a partial success on the CFE issue in late May 1996, when it was given an additional three years to reduce its heavy equipment. See *Boston Globe* (2 June 1996), p. 10.

102. The Laleli district in Istanbul is a center of Russian-Turkish "suitcase trade," and it was primarily merchants from this district who sent the money to aid Yeltsin's campaign. See the report in *Turkish Times* (23 June 1996). So many Russian tourists now come to the Turkish resort of Antalya that by 1996 there was a special Russian newspaper for them there, *Antalia dlia vas* (*Anatolia for you*).

103. Cited in gligori@aol.com, 12 November 1997.

104. Cited in *Moscow News*, Nos. 51–52 (25 December 1997–8 January 1998), p. 6.

105. See *Financial Times* (28 January 1998), p. 2.

106. *Washington Times* (19 November 1999), online version at www.washtimes.com.

107. *Financial Times* (12 July 1999).

108. See *Washington Post* (10 November 1999), p. A32.
109. *Washington Post* (6 September 1999), p. A22.
110. *Financial Times* (21 January 2000), p. 7.
111. *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (27 January–2 February 2000).
112. "Bechtel, G.E. seek oil company help to finance \$2.5 billion pipeline," ambolla@aol.com, 22 February 1999. This is a webservice which specializes in Transcaucasia and Central Asia.
113. *Financial Times* (4 February 1999), p. 6.
114. *Wall Street Journal* (25 February 1999), p. 10.
115. For a chronology of these events, see *Moscow News*, No. 36 (22–28 September 1999), p. 7.
116. *Financial Times* (4–5 December 1999), p. 5.
117. *Wall Street Journal* (17 February 2000), p. 12. Meanwhile, Iran was also a competitor in the Turkish natural gas market and an agreement to extend for three years the existing twenty-two month contract was negotiated in February 2000 (amboll@aol.com), 24 August 2000.
118. Quoted in *Rossiskaia gazeta* (25 October 2000), trans. in FBIS-SOV-2000-1025 (25 October 2000).
119. Itar-Tass Press review (26 October 2000), trans. in FBIS-SOV-2000-1026 (26 October 2000).
120. Moscow Interfax, in English (25 October 2000), cited in FBIS-SOV-2000-1025 (25 October 2000).
121. Itar-Tass Press Review, (26 October 2000), trans. in FBIS-SOV-2000-1026 (26 October 2000); and Agence France Press, 28 October 2000.

122. *Financial Times* (20–21 November 1999), p. 5.
123. *Ibid.*
124. *Washington Post* (6 November 1999), p. A19. Nonetheless, serious security problems with the pipeline remained, although they may be partially overcome if the feasibility study, authorized in October 2000 is done properly.
125. Cited in *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 197 (7 November 2000), online version at www.taklamakan.org.
126. *Washington Times* (16 February 2000), online version at www.washtimes.com.
127. These events are discussed in detail in Robert O. Freedman, "Russian and Israel Under Yeltsin," in *Israel Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 140–169.
128. See *Izvestiia* (20 June 1997), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 49, No. 25 (1997), p. 28.
129. *Washington Post* (21 August 1997), online version at www.washingtonpost.com.
130. *Ha'aretz* (9 April 1999), online version at www.haaretzdaily.com. See also *Kommersant* (23 March 1999), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 51, No. 12 (1999), p. 24.
131. *Ha'aretz* (9 April 1999), online version at www.haaretzdaily.com.
132. *Vremia* (7 April 1999), trans. in *CDSP*, Vol. 51, No. 14 (1999), p. 22.
133. For an excellent analysis of this issue, see Oded Eran, "Russian immigrants, Russia, and the elections in Israel," in *Analysis of Current Events (ACE)*, Vol. 11, Nos. 5–6 (May/June 1999), pp. 13–15.
134. *New York Times* (19 September 2000), p. A3.

135. *The Forward* (22 October 2000), online version at www.forward.com; and *Ha'aretz* (15 December 2000), online version at www.haaretzdaily.com.

136. Interviews at the Russian Embassy, Tel Aviv, June 2000, and Israeli Foreign Office, Jerusalem, June 2000.

137. *Moscow News*, No. 30 (1–7 August 2000), in *CDSP*, Vol. 52, No. 31 (2000), pp. 19–20.

138. Interview, Russian diplomat, Washington, D.C., May 2000.

139. Interfax in English (13 October 2000), cited in FBIS-NES-2000-1013 (13 October 2000); and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Newsline*, Vol. 4, No. 200 (16 October 2000), online version at www.rferl.org.

140. Reuters, "Russia's Putin calls for end to Mid-East violence," 14 October 2000, online version at www.reuters.com.

141. *New York Times* (25 November 2000), p. A3.

142. *Ha'aretz* (19 December 2000), online version at www.haaretzdaily.com.

143. For a recent review of Russian-Israeli economic ties, see Andrei Fedorchenko, "Rossiisko-izrail'skie ekonomicheskie sviazi" [Russian-Israeli Economic Ties], in *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 2 (2000), pp. 62–69. In December 2000, Moscow also put into orbit an Israeli spy satellite.

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