Dmitri Trenin

Russia and Global Security Norms

Russia has entered the twenty-first century as an autonomous international player—a partner of the West but neither an integrated member of Western security institutions such as NATO nor the core of an Eastern empire that cannot be restored. However the domestic scene develops in the March 2004 presidential elections and beyond, Moscow is determined to stay strategically independent of the United States and to rebuild its great power status by intensifying its ties to the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which, for the first time since 1991, are becoming a priority in Russian foreign policy. On the more global plane, Russia's attitude toward weapons of mass destruction (WMD), particularly nuclear proliferation; activities in the field of arms transfers; and role in its post-Soviet neighborhood will largely define Russia's international position in the beginning of the twenty-first century. If Moscow manages to project economic power in the vicinity of its borders, even as it becomes one of the shareholders of the global security system, Russia will be able to claim a status both satisfying and affordable—something the Kremlin has long been trying to achieve.

Nonproliferation: A Revitalized Priority

Historically, Moscow has taken nonproliferation quite seriously. The Soviet Union regarded its competitive nuclear arms relationship with the United States as the epitome of the bipolar world system that prevailed during the Cold War. Nikita Khrushchev's refusal in the late 1950s to share nuclear secrets with Mao Zedong, against the backdrop of Chinese Communist mili-

Dmitri Trenin is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and director of studies at the Carnegie Moscow Center.

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tary pressure on Taiwan, was one of the prime reasons for the Sino-Soviet split that followed two to three years later. While reluctantly tolerating the token nuclear arsenals of Great Britain, France, and China, all of which Moscow had to consider potentially hostile, the Soviet Union cooperated with the United States to ensure than no new countries joined the nuclear club. Both the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty and the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty attested to the Cold War rivals' common interest in jointly managing the global nuclear situation.

As the Soviet Union was disintegrating in the late 1980s, the military high command in Moscow took great pains to withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from the Soviet borderlands, which were sinking into ethnic conflicts, and to redeploy them in the Russian Federation. By the summer of 1991, none remained in the so-called hot spots. Immediately following the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, Russian authorities made sure that operational control over strategic nuclear forces continued to be maintained in Moscow. The Russian government worked closely with Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus—the three other ex-Soviet states that still possessed such forces on their territory—as well as with the U.S. government to ensure that all strategic nuclear assets of the former Soviet Union were consolidated in the Russian Federation.

Present-day Russia draws much of its remaining international prestige from its standing as a major nuclear power, second only to the United States. Russian leaders are determined to keep nuclear deterrence at the heart of their country's security and defense policy, especially at a time when Russian conventional military capabilities are weak. Even though Russia is cutting its nuclear forces to between 1,700 and 2,200 nuclear weapons under the terms of the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) and the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty and is reducing the status of its Strategic Rocket Force (which has lost its traditional standing as a separate armed service on par with the army, navy, and air force), Moscow has no plans to give up its nuclear weapons. Instead, the Kremlin is working to perfect its arsenal to ensure its sustainability, survivability, and capability to penetrate credibly any missile defense system that can be built in the near future. In a way, Russian political leaders and military commanders nearly unanimously believe nuclear weapons are more important than ever to Russia's national security and its standing in the world.

From Russia's point of view, nonproliferation remains a major policy objective, although for somewhat different reasons than during Soviet times. Today, Moscow has few reasons to worry about the nuclear arsenals of the other United Nations Security Council permanent states. Rather, it is the prospect that weak and potentially unstable nations may acquire nuclear arms that is the current cause for concern. Given the fact that a number of

would-be nuclear powers are situated in the greater Middle East and Asia, that is, along Russia's southern border, Moscow has had to pay close attention to their ambitions. In fact, the first public report produced by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service in 1993, under then-Director Yevgeni Primakov, dealt precisely with this issue.

Nevertheless, unlike the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation since its founding has had to take into account a far broader spectrum of real security threats, many of which, such as ethnic conflicts and civil wars along Russia's periphery, are more imminent and more direct than the threat of nuclear proliferation. In Moscow's hierarchy of security priorities, nuclear nonproliferation has slipped somewhat and, even before September 11, 2001, stood appreciably lower than it did on the U.S. national security agenda. Indeed, some observers consider Russia the least secure of all the world's major powers, with most of the new threats capable of getting at Russians faster and surer than nukes. The September 11 attacks have changed these concerns little, with the assumption being that the United States would be the prime target for nuclear terrorists.

Russia would subscribe to a set of global norms on nonproliferation.

Most of the newly proliferating states, including North Korea, were previously Soviet clients whose contemporary disputes remain with the United States. Although bordering on North Korea, Russia's political leadership and military command have been more relaxed than their U.S. counterparts about Pyongyang's possible use of nuclear blackmail against their nation or its interests. Similarly, China's nuclear deterrence of the United States on the issue of Taiwan does not cause Russian leaders to lose sleep. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Moscow's interests abroad have diminished dramatically, and its influence in volatile regions such as the Middle East as well as South and East Asia has all but evaporated. Russian intelligence estimates of Iran's and North Korea's nuclear programs are markedly more relaxed than those of the CIA.

Moscow has also taken a pragmatic approach, rather than an ideological one, toward the nuclear proliferation issue as such. For Russia, that a given country is on its way to acquiring technical nuclear weapons capabilities is less important than the nature of the proliferator in question. In other words, Russia's response to an apparently nuclearizing state is guided less by theological rejection of nuclear proliferation and more by a strategic assessment of how the prospect of a particular state's proliferation might threaten Russian interests per se. Russia's reaction to the 1998 case of South Asian nuclear proliferation clearly illustrates this tendency.

Whereas the Clinton White House condemned India and Pakistan and imposed sanctions—albeit short-lived—against both countries, Boris Yeltsin's Kremlin responded in a way that clearly discriminated between the subcontinental rivals. From Russia's perspective, India's acquisition of nuclear weapons was essentially nonthreatening. Ever since its independence, India has enjoyed an excellent relationship with Moscow, which was codified in a rare 1971 treaty linking democratic India to the Communist Soviet Union. Russia succeeded the USSR as India's principal arms supplier and was determined to protect that relationship. In the post-bipolar world, India also came to be seen as a useful ally against rising Islamic extremism west and northwest of India's borders and as a potentially useful counterweight against the growing might of China. In fact, Russian strategic thinkers, such as former Security Council secretary Andrei Kokoshin, consider India the only real strategic ally worthy of the title. Thus, unlike Washington, Moscow refused to consider sanctions and allowed business as usual, including military sales, to continue between Russia and India.

Post-Soviet Russia is a regional, rather than a global, player.

By contrast, Russia saw Pakistan, in 1998 at least, as virtually the exact opposite of India. From its inception in 1948, Pakistan was involved in U.S.-led anti-Soviet alignments, starting with the Baghdad Pact/CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) and culminating with Islamabad's role as the rear base for the Afghan mujahideen in the 10-year war that ended in Moscow's humiliating defeat. Neither the forced Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan nor the change from Soviet to Russian leadership helped improve Russian-Pakistani relations. After making peace with the victorious Afghan rebels, Russia faced the menace of a fundamentalist Muslim movement—the Taliban—taking over Kabul, which posed a real threat to Russia's soft underbelly in Central Asia. The 1998 arrival of Pakistani nuclear weapons was an especially troublesome issue in this context.

The 1999 coup in Islamabad was the final straw. Russia's leaders saw an extremist Islamic regime, backed by a military junta with nuclear weapons, poised to subvert former Soviet states and Muslim enclaves in the Russian Federation itself. The Russian-Pakistani relationship only improved after the attacks of September 11 and the defeat of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In 2002, President Gen. Pervez Musharraf was allowed to make an official visit to Moscow, the first by a Pakistani head of state in 30 years. Although clearly concerned about Pakistan's stability as a state and the possibility of its breaking into pieces, Moscow nevertheless accepted the reality and stopped complaining about Pakistani nuclear weapons.

Nowhere do Russian and U.S. views on the perils of nuclear proliferation contrast more strikingly than on Iran. To Washington, Tehran is not only a proliferator of nuclear and missile technology but also a political adversary, a state that sponsors terrorism, and a revolutionary regime that threatens the region's security. Few people in the United States have forgotten the humiliation suffered at the hands of Iranian revolutionary students who held U.S. embassy personnel hostage for 444 days in 1979–1981. Moreover, U.S. policymakers have had to take into account the interests of the key U.S. regional ally, Israel, which sees itself as the prime target of Iran's nuclear and missile programs.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, any fears of Tehran-sponsored Islamic revolution being exported to the former Soviet borderlands disappeared quickly once Moscow concluded that Iran's ayatollahs were primarily interested in maintaining a modicum of stability on Iran's northern borders. Russia managed to recruit Iran as a cosponsor of national reconciliation in Tajikistan following the bitter 1992–1997 civil war there. As a result, local Muslims were integrated into Tajikistan's new government, which remained friendly toward Moscow. Russia scored an even greater coup in 2000 when it received the de facto support of Iran, then chair of the Islamic Conference Organization, a loose assembly of all Muslim states, in Moscow's fight against Chechnya's separatist movement. Tehran discouraged any attempts by its Muslim partners to criticize Moscow publicly for the brutal treatment of Chechen resistance at the start of the 1999–2000 campaign.

As with Russia's relationship with India, the interests of Russia's military-industrial complex substantially determine the Kremlin's attitudes toward Iran. In the case of India, the dominant influence in the post–Cold War period has been that of Russia's aerospace industry, which at one point in the early to mid-1990s hoped to deliver missile engines to its customers in India, only to be denied the chance by Washington's steely arm-twisting of the Kremlin. Eventually, Yeltsin's government had to bow to pressure from the Clinton administration and cancel the delivery of criogene missile engines to New Delhi in exchange for closer U.S.-Russian cooperation in space projects. This was followed in 1995 by the Russian government's pledge to phase out military contracts with Iran. The two cases traumatized leaders of Russia's defense industry, who subsequently vowed that the U.S. government would never again dictate their commercial relations with third parties. With Yeltsin's departure from the Kremlin, they got their way with his successor, Vladimir Putin. The influential Russian nuclear power ministry, Minatom, perhaps best described as a giant, state-owned, but autonomous corporation, perceived U.S. government policy as motivated not only by proliferation concerns, but even more so by the need to eliminate Minatom as a credible competitor on the world market. Having agreed to build a

nuclear reactor in Iran's Bushehr province, Minatom was determined to proceed with the project despite repeated U.S. protests.

The Russian-assisted construction of the Bushehr reactor in Iran, begun under Yeltsin and still not completed in Putin's first term, has become a symbol of Russia's unabashed pursuit of its commercial interests. Despite the relatively insignificant amount of proceeds from Russia's nuclear deal with Iran (about $800 million annually), in the often chaotic conditions of Yeltsin's Russia, the various vested interests were able to profit handsomely, which pushed the rules governing domestic export controls to be bent.

The danger for Russia lies not in losing territory but in failing to develop it properly.

Yeltsin's 1995 announcement of the cessation of military-related transfers to Iran, in response to a U.S. demarche over the proposed sale of a gas centrifuge, marks the only instance in which Moscow has accepted Washington's criticism of its nuclear relationship with Iran and held back. The Kremlin has called all other U.S. protests groundless and has professed to be doing nothing wrong. In a symbolic gesture a few months after taking office in 2000, Putin withdrew from Yeltsin's obligations to exercise restraint in arms and technology transfers to Iran. Even as he was joining the United States and other Group of Eight leaders in 2003 in applying diplomatic pressure on Iran on the nuclear issue, Putin defended the Russian nuclear industry's commercial interests in that country. To prove their case that they are victims of unfair U.S. competition, the Russians often refer to the Clinton administration's plan to build light-water reactors for North Korea under the 1994 Agreed Framework program. Not only were the U.S.-proposed reactors similar to the Bushehr reactor, but those Russian companies that had built North Korea's old reactors were also shut out of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization contracts.

In general, however, nuclear proliferation as a security problem has gained a higher profile under Putin than it had under his immediate predecessor. With the South succeeding the West as the prime source of Moscow's security concern—a process aided by the war in Chechnya—Russia's military and political leaders have started to pay closer attention to the implications of a "second nuclear age." Whereas in Cold War days Moscow was obsessed with the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance, the Russian Federation is paying more attention to the phenomenon of a weak yet nuclear-capable state: an unstable regime here, a divided country there, a local bully in another place, all of which enhance the chance of nuclear weapons actually

being used. Positioned where it is, Russia has no interest in seeing more of its southern neighbors acquire nuclear arms. For this reason, even before September 11, 2001, Russia shared with the United States a fundamental interest in curbing nuclear and WMD proliferation.

Even when Russia agrees with the United States on particular problem cases, such as North Korea or Iran, however, it usually rejects the use of force and favors diplomacy. The Russians not only tend to believe that the local cure proposed by the United States is worse than the disease but also fear that a general militarization of U.S. foreign policy, especially under President George W. Bush, might place Russia at a disadvantage internationally and lead to permanent tensions between the global hegemonic power and a still weak Russia.

Putin has comprehensively strengthened state control in Russia, including in the area of technology, and has attempted to mediate between the United States and those states deemed rogues or members of the "axis of evil," moving Russia closer to the U.S. position on the principle of nonproliferation throughout the world. On the situation in Iraq through March 2003, Moscow was prepared to agree to any kind of international pressure against Saddam Hussein's regime short of war. In the case of North Korea in the same year, Russia joined the multilateral effort to roll back Pyongyang's nuclear program. Although Russia's role was clearly very much that of a supporting cast member, Moscow did not break ranks with the common front dominated by others. With Iran, Russia demanded in mid-2003 that the Iranians send back their spent nuclear fuel to Russia, thus making it impossible to store it for plutonium bomb production, and backed the U.S.- and European-dominated effort to press Tehran to agree to stringent international controls under the International Atomic Energy Agency. Moscow balked on some initiatives, such as the May 2003 U.S. Proliferation Control Initiative, which sought to subject known WMD proliferators to ship and plane checks. Moscow refused to give the United States a blank check to board these vessels and felt slighted by the lack of prior consultation on the part of the White House.

Since the collapse of the Cold War world order, the issue of WMD, especially nuclear proliferation, has been steadily rising on Moscow's scale of priority concerns. Even regarding countries with which it has maintained cooperation in the civilian nuclear field, Russia has no interest in seeing them acquire nuclear weapons. Russia thus shares a fundamental interest with the United States, Europe, and China in restricting membership in the nuclear club. At the same time, however, Moscow is uncomfortable with the current situation in which the decision to use force to preempt or prevent

proliferation essentially rests with the U.S. administration. In other words, Russia would subscribe to a set of global norms on nonproliferation and how to maintain it, jointly arrived at, but will continue to have reservations about the United States calling the shots.

Arms Transfers

Russia has continuously prided itself as being one of the world's principal arms factories. The fact that it has always been able to provide itself with all arms without exception, from the lightest Kalashnikovs to the heaviest intercontinental ballistic missiles, lies at the core of its defense capability and thus strategic independence. Moscow has also used arms transfers as a foreign policy tool. Soviet weapon supplies, more than Marxist ideology, were the lifeline of the Soviet global empire of the 1950s–1980s. All this has changed dramatically since the downfall of the Soviet Union.

The desperate state of the Russian military-industrial complex, not any global strategic game plan, continues to dictate Russian policies on arms transfers. Selling weapons to China, India, and Iran—the three principal buyers—as well as other, smaller clients keeps some defense industry enterprises afloat at a time when orders from the Russian government remain small and spotty. Unlike the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation today does not transfer weapons in exchange for political influence or a strategic advantage, but for hard cash. Moscow does not even provide many new weapons to the member states of the CIS Collective Security Treaty (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), which on paper are guaranteed special treatment, even though these states' requests naturally cannot be put ahead of those of the Russian armed forces themselves, which are surviving largely on Soviet-era stocks of materiel and ammunition.

In the early 1990s, Russia introduced national export controls, which in theory should bar transfers of certain weapons to certain buyers. At the same time, Moscow also joined a number of international agreements and arrangements, including the United Nations Weapons Register, the Missile Technology Control Regime, and the Wassenaar Agreement on Conventional Arms, as well as the Chemical Weapons Convention. In the cutthroat world of international arms sales, however, Russian producers see Western governments and companies—mainly those in the United States—primarily as competitors who are trying to shut Russia out of the market. In principle, this is very similar to Minatom's perception of U.S. objections to Russian nuclear deals with Iran described earlier. In both

cases, the Russian defense industrialists see U.S. arms producers as powerful and ruthless competitors.

As the Russian state bureaucracy under Putin, led by the national security elite, restores its power inside the country, sending the freewheeling days of Yeltsin into history, there will be fewer opportunities for illicit arms transfers. Controls are being strengthened and centralized. Penalties for freelance entrepreneurship are rising. Yet, the sphere of arms transfers remains opaque, with even less information available to the general public. The "box" of arms transfers may be held by stronger Kremlin hands, but it is still black to all outsiders.

Moscow needs a comprehensive outreach and integration strategy in Northeast Asia.

Even as it has moved to centralize arms sales further, Russia has become more aggressive in promoting its arms abroad, with its annual deliveries in the last few years averaging $4.5 billion. These arms, however, are mostly residual products of the Soviet era, rather than the result of new research and development. Russia's defense industry remains in crisis, and much needs to be done just to keep it alive. Unable to keep up with the advanced defense industries of the West, Moscow feels the need for international cooperation in weapons development and production. Still, prospects for joint projects with the United States (in the area of missile defense, for example) do not look very promising. Political vagaries, different business cultures, lack of funds on the Russian side, among other things, prevent a meaningful mutual engagement. Moreover, Russia's collaboration with Europe's defense industries has yielded mixed results. Russian technology policy planners have few options other than becoming subcontractors to the West—an outcome that Russians resent—or entering into partnerships with such countries as India and China. CIS-wide collaboration, mainly with Ukraine and Belarus, never really stopped after the breakup of the USSR and thus hardly offers any hope for expansion into new markets or for a significant technological breakthrough into new products and systems.

In the fall of 2003, Putin and the military high command declared military reform over and started talking instead about the further "development" of the Russian armed forces. Moscow has yet to address, however, the major problems plaguing the Russian arms industry, which is too big on paper, too focused on outdated projects, severely underfunded, and generally serves the parochial interests of its managers rather than national security interests. This industry can hardly survive on foreign sales contracts. Hard decisions still lie ahead.

Retrenchment and Reintegration in Asia

Just as Russia's nonproliferation and arms transfer policies are driven by a more national, less geopolitical agenda of domestic economic modernization and transformation at the beginning of the twenty-first century, post-Soviet Russia is a regional rather than a global player, with Russia's immediate concerns devoted to the independent states that have emerged from the former Soviet Union. Beyond this area—whether in Europe (now more precisely defined by the parameters of the European Union), the Middle East (south of the former Soviet border), or East Asia—Russia's presence is slight and its influence negligible. Paradoxically, this new reality could serve as a strength for Russia, in that it both allows and encourages Moscow to concentrate its much more limited resources on achieving policy objectives considered truly important to the country. Signs are evident that, under Putin, Russia's activities have become increasingly focused on the CIS countries, which are seen as a reserve to be tapped for economic development and security management as well as gradually and eventually achieving a more significant, great-power role for Russia internationally.

In Asia, Russia's overriding security interests are tied to the fate of the vast portion of its territory in Siberia (especially land-locked eastern Siberia) and the Russian Far East, which lies between Lake Baikal and the Pacific coast and directly borders on China, Korea, Japan, and the United States (in the Bering Strait). If Russia is unable to come up with a working model of regional development suited to the new market environment at home and the international reality of globalization, it will inevitably lead to the progressive deindustrialization, depopulation, and overall degradation of Asiatic Russia. The lingering fear among Russia's elites and the general public is that, if the country does not prove itself capable of developing a few million square miles of this resource-rich area, someone else will—usually assumed to be China. A Russia that does not extend east of the Urals will then cease to be the Russia the world knows today and will become the Russia that was Muscovy.

Meeting this challenge will have little to do with traditional security arrangements. When and if the Chinese come, they are more likely to arrive as peaceful settlers and laborers, not as a military force. The Chinese are increasingly interested in Russian energy resources in particular, but they would prefer business deals to any form of occupation. The danger for Russia lies not so much in the loss of territory but in the failure to develop it properly. Rather than shut itself out, Russia should open itself up and proceed to integrate its regional (i.e., Siberian and Far Eastern) and national market with the powerful economies of Northeast Asia—China, Japan (a key potential partner for Asiatic Russia's modernization), and South Ko-

rea—as well as the wider Pacific rim, from Canada and Alaska to the western continental United States and beyond. At this point, Russia has realized that its energy resources make the country a desirable partner for its immediate neighbors, but Moscow is still uncertain as to how to deal with China and Japan, which are actually competing for Russian oil. To become part of the dynamic Northeast Asian region and to reverse the trend toward degradation of the Far Eastern/Siberian region, Moscow needs a comprehensive outreach and integration strategy, which it still lacks.

Currently, China remains Russia's principal partner in Asia in more narrow, traditional security terms. Having ended the 30-year cold war between the two countries at the time of Mikhail Gorbachev's groundbreaking visit with Deng Xiaoping in 1989, they have proceeded to build a relationship officially described as leading toward strategic partnership but best understood as mutual reassurance and productive collaboration. Bilateral contacts at various government levels are regular and even routine. The 2,700-mile border, once the site of armed clashes, has been virtually fixed in the 1991 and 1994 treaties, except for three islands on the Amur and Argun rivers that have been set aside for future resolution. Most importantly, Russia has become the principal outside source for China's drive to modernize its military, particularly as a supplier of advanced aircraft, submarines, cruise missiles, and defense technology. The Russian General Staff clearly believes that Beijing's long-term strategic interests are focused on Taiwan and the South China Sea rather than on the Russian Far East and that, if need be, China could be successfully deterred by means of nuclear weapons.

Russia's role in Asia will depend on the success of its domestic transformation.

Russia and China are also the two principal members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security alignment that links them with four Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Both countries' membership in the SCO signifies Moscow's de facto recognition that China has a major role in Central Asia and demonstrates Beijing's preference for working with Russia in the region rather than against it. Although the SCO is based on informal Sino-Russian coleadership of the group, in reality Beijing has gradually been leading this effort. China hosts the SCO secretariat, which is headed by a Chinese official. This is the first positive example of China assuming a major institutionalized role in a multilateral context.

In sum, Russia's amicable if somewhat thin relations with China have ended decades of Moscow's semi-isolation in Asia. A solid Sino-Russian relationship has helped the Russian Far Eastern and Siberian territories emerge from decades of garrison existence. Any serious strategy to assist the

Russian modernization effort, especially east of the Urals, would need to include intense economic links with China.

Yet, the new Sino-Russian relationship is inherently asymmetrical, with China rising and Russia in relative decline. Moscow has understood the long-term trend and has sought to adapt to it. Rather than directly challenging its increasingly powerful partner and neighbor, Moscow has become more active in Central Asia itself, using the CIS framework as well as bilateral relations with individual states to advance its economic and security interests. Kazakhstan, in particular, is involved in the Single Economic Space project with Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Moscow has reinvigorated the dormant 1992 Collective Security Treaty, which links Russia to all Central Asian states except Turkmenistan, and treats members of the treaty organization as allies, promising to help them combat terrorism and Islamic radicalism. In a symbolic but significant move in 2003, Russia opened a small air base in Kyrgyzstan, thus reversing the trend of seemingly unstoppable withdrawal.

Russia remains too big to be integrated, but too small to play a first-order role itself.

In 2001, Russia welcomed the U.S.-led military operation in Afghanistan, which removed the threat of the "Talibanization" of Central Asia, a possibility that Moscow believed was credible at the time. Since then, Russia has kept a low profile in the country it once occupied, essentially leaving the stabilization of Afghanistan to U.S. and NATO forces. Although wisely abstaining from direct involvement in peacekeeping missions, Moscow has allowed the Western allies to use Russian territory to transport military supplies and other operations. More significantly, Russia has desisted from sabotaging the pro-Western government of Hamid Karzai in Kabul through Moscow's links with Afghanistan's former Northern Alliance leaders.

Having thus consigned Afghanistan to the Western sphere of influence, Russia has been far more jealous of the U.S. military presence in Central Asia, which Moscow tolerates in the hope that the United States will leave sooner or later. Russian politicians and media see the U.S. presence in the region as temporary, whereas Russia is there "for good." In keeping with Russia's historical perspective, Moscow has been reluctant to engage the United States in any kind of regional security framework. Thus, in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Russian and U.S. forces coexist but do not cooperate.

In contrast, Russia is cooperating with the United States and others in North Korea. Initially, Putin attempted to serve as the principal intermediary between Pyongyang and Washington, but in this instance, he eventually recognized that Moscow was punching way above its weight. Consequently, Rus-

sia assumed a lower profile and basically deferred to Beijing to take the lead on bringing Pyongyang to the negotiating table. As the nuclear talks were starting to get under way, the United States, China, and North Korea expressed different degrees of skepticism about the usefulness of Russia's participation. Eventually, Russia was invited to join, mainly as a way to leave no opportunity for North Korea to divide the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Ever since, Russia has played along in a minor capacity, leaving the center stage to the United States and China. Looking beyond the nuclear issue to the reunification of North and South Korea, Russia expects to see the arrival of a united state on the Korean peninsula, modeled after the Republic of Korea, as a positive development in economic and security terms.

Russia's relations with Japan basically remain at a standstill as a result of the unresolved territorial dispute between the two countries over the South Kuril islands and the general lack of a proper economic impetus for Japan to conduct more business in Russia. Although no longer adversaries, the two countries have not really become friends yet. When and if Russian authorities develop a revitalization program for Siberia and the Far East, however, Japan would be a natural modernization partner that Russia would need to engage by offering economic and political incentives. For its part, Japan has yet to see the need for a strong relationship and involvement with Russia as a way to bolster its own position in Asia. As long as the relationship between Moscow and Tokyo remains a bilateral foreign policy exercise, it will advance only slightly. The time for change will come only when either or both countries see the other as a means to achieve fundamental national interests.

In contrast to Japan and China, Russia's relations with India are virtually free of problems. Moscow and New Delhi hold regular summits and issue solemn declarations on strategic partnership. Yet, the relationship has been rather shallow and limited thus far. Along with China, India is a major purchaser of Russian arms and military technologies, occasionally conducting a port call or naval exercise. Apart from these activities, there is precious little cooperation between the two governments. If India starts paying more attention to Central Asia, some useful interaction might ensue. Thus, Indo-Russian cooperation in the fight against terrorism and Islamic militancy could help foster a culture of joint threat assessment and coordinated action, which would give more substance to the strategic partnership. The current arms sales relationship also has the potential for evolving into joint research, development, and even production of weapons systems. In the longer term, India may emerge as Russia's key partner on the Asian continent. It would provide a healthy balance to China and allow Moscow more room for maneuvering among Asia's powers. A privileged relationship with India will serve Russia well as Moscow seeks to balance the growing might of China.

Beyond its relations with the major regional powers and its immediate neighbors, as well as Mongolia, which is resurfacing on the map of Russian interests, Russia's presence in Asia is limited. Moscow recently joined the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summits and has taken part in the regional security forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but Russian participation in these organizations is largely notional. Although Russia has been relatively successful in selling its weapons, mostly aircraft, to Southeast Asian nations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and former Soviet ally Vietnam, this part of Asia remains indeed a bridge too far for contemporary Russia.

In more than a decade since the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia has managed to rebuild its relations with its neighbors and the major powers in Asia. These relations are both peaceful and friendly. New ties with China are of particular significance, allowing Russia to concentrate on domestic development and providing some important external sources for that development. Japan has the potential to become Russia's major economic modernization partner, provided Russia offers appropriate incentives for Japanese businesspeople. India, over time, can turn into Russia's key partner in security management and military technology. Stable and positive relations with these key Asian neighbors, as well as South Korea, provide Russia with significant diplomatic resources as it tries to maintain its foreign policy autonomy in an era of U.S. world primacy.

At the multilateral level, Russia has joined APEC, helped create the SCO, participates in the North Korea nuclear talks, and stays closely involved with its allies in Central Asia. True, Russia's role everywhere is much more modest than it was in Soviet days (as Putin discovered in 2000 when he tried, unsuccessfully, to repeat the 1966 Kossygin feat of bringing India and Pakistan together for peace talks). Nevertheless, Russia's role in Asian affairs, albeit reduced, is essentially independent of the United States and the EU, as well as China for that matter. In the future, that role will depend on the success or failure of Russia's fundamental domestic transformation.

Conclusion

As Russia enters the twenty-first century, therefore, the country may be strategically independent—and even dominant in its own neighborhood—but will still need to make some very difficult choices. Russia wants to be a systemic player but is finding it difficult to adjust to the emerging system. In the days of the Cold War, Moscow challenged the status quo while Washington defended it. Now, the United States is the challenger, with its doctrine of preemption and a policy of spreading global democracy, while Russia has

become an advocate of state sovereignty, highly skeptical of military intervention for humanitarian or other causes. This position puts Moscow at loggerheads with Washington on a series of first-order security issues.

Whereas the Soviet Union mostly used the UN as a platform in the Cold War, Russia seeks to empower the UN Security Council, in which it is a major shareholder, and to transform it, in accordance with the UN Charter, into something it has never been before, that is, the supreme decisionmaking body on the issues of world peace and security. Again, this raises the possibility of sharp disagreements between Russia and the United States on the UN floor. The Russian leadership thus faces an uncomfortable prospect of confronting the United States when that is the last thing it needs in light of its interests in economic modernization and international integration. Managing the new asymmetrical relationship with Washington is turning into a fine art for the Kremlin.

Another difficult choice relates to China, an additional asymmetrical partner for Russia. Although relations are good, Russia is afraid of becoming economically and demographically dwarfed by its gigantic neighbor. Should China experience major domestic instability or seek outright hegemony in Asia, Russia would be adversely affected. Managing China in good times and protecting against its encroachments (or implosion) in bad ones will be even more difficult than striking the right balance in relations with Washington.

In the first quarter of the twenty-first century, Russia will concentrate primarily on its domestic agenda. Russia's international involvement will continue to be relatively modest, with the important exception of the countries of the post-Soviet CIS. In the CIS area, Russian politicians will need to balance their real economic and security interests with their historical geopolitical ambitions, which can distort and compromise their policies. Despite the Russian elite's growing confidence and some recent assertiveness, Russia remains a relatively weak player that should not overreach. The essential dilemma of Russia's international position will continue to be that the country is too big to be integrated into other clubs, but too small to play a first-order role itself. Russia's future international role will depend on how successfully its leaders manage this unsolvable dilemma.