

RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE EMERGING EURASIAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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2008

OVERVIEW

Russian foreign policy has taken an interesting turn during the administration of President Vladimir Putin. Following the proposed deployment of a strategic ballistic missile defense system in Central Europe, Mr. Putin threatened withdrawal from both the Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) and Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in addition to retargeting nuclear missiles to Poland and the United States.

Beyond rhetoric, concrete acts of Russian aggression include attempting to claim resource rich elements of the Arctic region, resuming bomber patrols, and invading Georgian airspace culminating in the invasion of Georgia itself. While these seemingly hostile acts are occurring, a great deal of cooperation exists between the United States and Russia in the US-led global war on terrorism. On other fronts, such as relations with the Chinese and Iranian nuclear ambitions, Russian policies seem much more ambivalent and even contradictory.

What might possibly explain this seemingly contradictory series of policies? Tip O'Neill says, —All politics is (are) local.” It is the thesis of this project that Russian foreign policy is best understood through an understanding of Russian domestic politics and the dominant interests that supports Mr. Putin's policies: the military, the oligarchs, the Russian popular nationalist imperative and Putin's political machine itself. This paper will begin with an overview of basic Russian strategic thinking, but will probe more into the construction of Russian ideas and how those ideas have been made manifest within the Russian political system.

INTRODUCTION

Russian foreign policy has taken a decidedly interesting turn during the administration of President Vladimir Putin. Following the proposed deployment of a strategic ballistic missile defense system in Central Europe, Mr. Putin threatened withdrawal from both the Conventional Forces Europe and Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty in addition to retargeting nuclear missiles to Poland and the United States. Beyond rhetoric, concrete acts of Russian aggression include attempting to claim resource rich elements of the Arctic region, resuming bomber patrols and invading Georgian airspace culminating in the invasion of Georgia itself. While these seemingly hostile acts are occurring, a great deal of cooperation exists between the United States and Russia in the US-led global war on terrorism. On other fronts, such as relations with the Chinese and Iranian nuclear ambitions, Russian policies seem much more ambivalent and even contradictory. For instance, both the Russians and Chinese have trumpeted the joint military exercises operated under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a means of

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multipolar counterbalance, but neither Russia and China or any other member of the SCO maintains any real military capability that is a threat to the US. In fact, the issues that have divided Russia and China for generations, racism, raw materials and land, are even more pressing in today's globalized environment. As far as Iran goes, Russian technology has aided some Iranian reactors but Russia realizes a nuclear-armed Islamic state close its borders are clearly not in its interests.

What might possibly explain this seemingly contradictory series of policies? Tip O'Neill says, —Alp[olitics is (are) local.”¹ It is the thesis of this project that Russian foreign policy is best understood through an understanding of Russian domestic politics and the dominant interests that supports Mr. Putin's policies: the military, the oligarchs, the Russian popular nationalist imperative and Putin's political machine itself. To be sure, there is a decided amount of *realpolitik* geo-strategy guiding Russian relations with the United States, the European Union, China, the Central Asian states as well as the Caucus States, and India. This paper will begin with an overview of basic Russian strategic thinking, but will probe more into the construction of Russian ideas and how those ideas have been made manifest within the Russian political system.

PROGNOSTICATIONS

In November 1995, the State Department Political Officer posted in Moscow released an article in the Moscow newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* claiming that liberal political reforms in Russian internal politics were finished.² This was just before the first modern parliamentary elections in December 1995 when the Russian people voted communist first and ultra-nationalist second; the liberal party took third and fourth place, having split. While there were still hopes among the Western liberal democracies that Russia was experiencing growing pains, Thomas Graham understood that there was a sea change in Russian politics that the Russian state would inextricably move away from liberal democracy toward authoritarianism. As the Russian government proceeded to fall into legislative log-jam, elites that had become empowered during the late Gorbachev and early Yeltsin period began to entwine themselves into the machinery of the state with the whole purpose of extracting rents, for themselves and their limited constituency. Rent seeking involves individuals extracting value from the state without them increasing productivity. Should they continue unabated, rentiers will wear down the efficacy and ultimately the economic stability of the state.³ Individuals gain and society loses.

As Ambassador Graham notes, the political system that was taking shape in 1995-96 was becoming impenetrable by conventional means, decision-making was increasingly not transparent, and control for property became a deadly endeavor, ultimately because of the powerlessness and irresponsibility of the crucially placed politicians to reign in what he refers to as —~~he~~ new elite.” By the November before the Duma elections, just one year before the 1996 presidential election that miraculously kept Yeltsin in power, the new elite had de facto control of the political and economic

institutions of the state and in addition, these elite felt it had the *right* to rule. The elite that entrenched itself in the mid-nineties rules Russia today. Vladimir Putin came from within this apparatus, consolidated it to a very definite degree but today cannot rule Russia without it. Observers of Russian political behavior cannot understand Russian foreign policy in its absence. Russia's current foreign policy, which reflects a kind of malevolent Don Quixote, makes a bit more sense after consideration of the priorities and understanding of these elites.

The latter years of the Yeltsin administration saw major economic dislocation within Russia, this economic tumult would create significant political spaces within Russia for what Graham describes as —*clans*” to fully emerge and consolidate power. Clans articulate a particular interest and advocate for the fulfillment of particular parochial goals, much like interest groups, only interest group behavior is constrained by the conventional political process. Clan behavior in Russia ranges from the full range of conventional options (campaigning, lobbying, informing) to actions that border on acting as an insurgency (intimidation, assassination, stealing). Clans centered on a powerful political personality, they generally all have a face. Clans have resources with ties to critical financial, media and industrial organizations. Finally, clans have coercive capability; they both connect with the security apparatus and control armed groups within the state or private sector.

Political clans emerged from within the center of the executive of the Russian government. By the time the Communist and Nationalist parties would take power in 1995, the executive branch had consolidated a great deal of power, so much so that the legislature was unable to check *any* executive misuse. To be sure, the personality and preferences of the Prime Minister still mattered; Yevgeny Primakov was a far different politician than Viktor Chernomyrdin, particularly in terms of foreign policy. Yeltsin, however, had effectively checked legislative oversight by dissolving parliament after their failure to increase presidential power on 21 September 1993 and then symbolically with Yeltsin's cannonading of the Russian White House.⁴ This ultimately refuted the reactionary elements within the legislature and kept the radical economic reforms intact. Unfortunately, it also greatly weakened the power of the legislature, the December 1993 Constitution would institutionally complete what happened in October of that year.

In December of 1993, the Yeltsin packed Duma approved the Russian Constitution, the Constitution that still stands today. This document fundamentally established the institutions of a strong presidency with a parliament (Duma) led by a Prime Minister, what political scientists refer to as a —*mixed system*”. In this configuration, the President can make law by decree as long as that decree does not violate existing law, and, that legislator can supersede that law with parliamentary law. The President can dissolve parliament under certain conditions.⁵ In many ways, the President has standard types of powers. For instance, the President appoints the Prime Minister and cabinet; however, the cabinet must

have the confidence of parliament to govern. The President can ignore votes of no confidence the first time but the second time he must dissolve his cabinet or call for new elections. The president can veto legislation but parliament can veto with a two-thirds vote in each chamber. One key difference is that the Russian government is not formed from a party majority in parliament (as with most Liberal democracies); rather the President appoints the government based on power and interest in bureaucratic and personal factions. *These personal factions drive the Presidency and thus the Russian government.* After 1993, these factions would find expression in the far-reaching formal and informal powers of the Russian Presidency.

With what does executive power consist? In rare cases, one individual can exclusively wield executive power, but even the most authoritarian of regimes require at the very least a cabal—a group of individuals that have the elements of state power. Max Weber says that politics is fundamentally about the *legitimation of domination*.⁶ Effective governance requires acceptance from the masses ruled based on traditional authority, charisma or legality. He goes on to say, —~~h~~arismatic centered” governance requires continuous administration from a core group of supporters who themselves are motivated by either honor or treasure.⁷ The question is, in Russian politics, who is this core group?

After the 1996 presidential election, it soon became clear that Yeltsin was not capable of disciplining his own executive coalition. From within this executive coalition, particular interests began to take shape that would dominate the Russian political landscape through the present time. Graham presciently saw these forces taking form and finally consolidating and emerging in 1996. Since his article, the personality driving these clans may have changed but the constituency remains. According to his accounting, there were five primary clans that were dominating the Russian political sphere in 1996, effectively acting as kingmakers.

Viktor Chernomyrdin headed the oil and gas clan (primarily Gasprom). Western Europe and the United States had long recognized Russia’s extensive oil and gas supplies. In 1996, the Russian economy was just beginning to realize their potential. Yuri Luzhkov directed the financial and industrial center of Moscow, the true center of gravity for the Russian economy. The most questionable clan with executive access dominated the Russian Military Industrial Complex and Russian Gem and strategic metals industry. Alexandr Korzhakov, head of Yeltsin’s presidential bodyguard, drove the still important Military Industrial sector. Russia’s military productive capability continued to dominate world weapon’s markets. This economic sector (along with agriculture) continued to be a comparatively advantaged element of the world economy. Mikhail Barsukov (head of the Federal Security Services [FSB]) and Oleg Soskovest (first deputy prime minister at the time) shared leadership. Agriculture is also a dominant sector in Russia, the collectivized agro-industrial complex of the Soviet Union is politically critical, even though Graham is unable to pin point a particular individual at the core of this clan. The last key clan in Presidential

politics during Yeltsin's administration was undoubtedly the "westernizers," who in 1996 were focused around Sergei Filatov (head of the presidential administration) and Anatolii Chubais (first deputy prime minister).

What motivates executive interest groups (Graham's clans)? Political ideology has no great bearing on clan strategy, whether communist, nationalist, centrist or liberal in origin, these are pragmatic groups primarily interested in attaining their goals. They are internal political warriors who, in Graham's view, would seek to utilize democratic institutions to induce order and stability for the primary purpose of attaining their selective interests. During the remainder of his presidency, Yeltsin attempted to ride above these five clans. In the face of the upcoming economic chaos, however, this system provided stability and a sense of the routine, or certainty; it limited the possibilities of political maneuvering and brought a certain normalcy to Russian politics. The inherent non-democratic nature of this mechanism influences Russian politics today.

Graham makes several predictions that are so prescient they are almost eerie. In late 1995, former members of the Warsaw Pact had not yet joined NATO and the West hoped that the Russia still could be democratic with a liberal economy. Graham predicted that, based on the overlapping rhetoric of the need for a return to order and induce stability, democratic freedoms would be increasingly limited in Russia. In terms of economic policy, he believed a strengthening of control over public property would occur, albeit within a market system. Foreign policy would no longer tolerate western expansion and he saw a sensitivity over the war in the former Yugoslavia (note, this was before NATO's action in Kosovo). Furthermore, he predicts certain constancy in the nature of the clans as he observes them in 1996. The primary threat to the clans is elections sweeping in overwhelming majorities of the fringes of the Russian polity (ultranationalists and Communists) into the Duma, as it almost did in 1995. Graham pins future success of the clans to maintain power on their ability to create and maintain a political party that would serve as a conduit to the masses, even though the Duma was weakened, the symbolic exercise of poor showings in elections would weaken their regime. Graham believes that no interest group will emerge to challenge any of the Clans. He purports that there is no middle class within sight given the lack of a new class of property owners. Finally, Graham believes that the elites will "contrive the election of a figure that suits their collective interests and can regulate competition between them." That, there will be crises between the elites resulting in some disappearing and others gaining entry but largely, the day of reform in Russia began by Mikhail Gorbachev is long since over.

Although he issued the standard disclaimer indicating these views were his own, Yeltsin's administration viewed this article as a qualified insult from the United States. Europe seemed to think that the US was wrongly dismissing Russian opinion and that the US was being impatient with Russian reforms.⁸ How well does Dr. Graham's analysis hold up and what relevance does it have for today?

RUSSIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS: YELTSIN TO PUTIN

The 1995 Duma election occurred in the midst of anxiety about the poor results in the Chechnya war. Forty-three groups competed for election but only four crossed the five percent threshold in the party-list vote and none had anything near a majority. The Communist Party (KPRF) (22.7%) had the strongest plurality followed by the Liberal Democratic Party⁹ (LDPR) (11.4%) and the 2 liberal parties; Our Home is Russia (NDR) (10.3%) and Yabloko (7.0%). When the single-mandate seats were added, KPRF emerged with 157 Duma Seats, LDPR with 51, NDR with 55 and Yabloko with 45. This was a total shock as no one had predicted this outcome. The main pre-election poll predicted a Pro-Yeltsin/Pro-Reform coalition would win, but the most oppositional Duma yet gained election.¹⁰ Given the political climate in early 1996, no one gave Boris Yeltsin any significant chance of retaining the Presidency in the December election. Through a stabilization of the situation in Chechnya and the incredible unpopularity of Gennady Zyuganov, Yeltsin won re-election on the premise of providing Russia with stability.

In the early stages of Yeltsin's second administration, the newly emerged oligarchs began to wield considerable political power. Russia privatized its public economy through the simple transfer of state assets via a voucher system and through public auction. When the program ended on June 30, 1994: Russians exchanged 140 million vouchers for stock, 40 million citizens became property owners and nearly 80% of all businesses were now under private ownership. Yeltsin's government quickly began to require hard currency. The so-called Oligarchs rose with from this process when individuals with the requisite ability attained the right to manage a company in return for granting a loan to the cash starved government. If the government did not repay, the firm fronting the loan could purchase the shares of the company outright. Oligarchs arranged the auction, arranged the financing and bought many state-owned companies for pennies on the dollar. Russia's economy needed investment but privatization had led to risk aversion and low capital investment. Uncertainty of privatization made transaction costs very high. Economics postulates that if the costs of economic transactions are sufficiently low, bargaining among owners will achieve a socially efficient distribution of ownership.¹¹ At this critical juncture in Russia's economy, Russia lacked both capital and equitable distribution.

Weak Capital Markets and the ensuing August 1998 Crash led to Yeltsin's ultimate demise and the rise of Vladimir Putin. In 1998, uncertainty was so great that 50% of economic transactions were by barter leading to profound inefficiencies. Reality dashed any hope that privatization would create property rights and capital markets. Since the Government needed capital it sold bonds, but it did so just as oil prices collapsed. The government needed to borrow more to meet expenditures so it raised interest rates until August 1998 when the Russian Ruble lost two-thirds of its value against the dollar. The ensuing economic Depression was deeper and more protracted than the 1929 Crash and half as bad as the Bolshevik inspired crash after World War I. In early 1999, Yeltsin and his political advisors searched for

a replacement for Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko—the likely contenders to replace him were the recent Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov or Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.¹² Yeltsin tapped Primakov, the former Communist, who instituted a program of financial austerity and an attempt to reconsolidate power in the Prime Minister. These programs failed miserably and Yeltsin was forced again to search for a new Prime Minister. The Russian people tied the question of presidential succession with the identity of this new post; therefore, when Yeltsin chose Vladimir Putin (after the ill fated short tenure of Sergie Stepashin) observers thought this individual was likely to be the new Russian president. Putin quickly developed a reputation for toughness in dealing with the Chechens and loyalty gaining the support of many economic elite within Russia.¹³

The 1999 Duma elections preceded the upcoming Presidential elections by three months. These elections would be nothing like the 1995 elections as new hope and confidence surged throughout Russia. The Kremlin put forward a political movement called Unity who had no ideology or even structure except for support of the status quo government. Politicians that represented this movement were confident and all pledged support for Vladimir Putin. Economic liberals represented by the Union of Right Forces (SPS) supported Unity at the last moment. As a direct result of the Kremlin's maneuvering, Unity received 23 percent of the vote and along with SPS' 9 percent generating a solid base in the Duma. Yeltsin's resigned soon after installing Putin as the acting president on December 31, 1999 even further solidifying Putin's eventual Presidential victory on March 26, 2000.

Putin's domestic goals were to set the economy firmly on the path to growth by creating an economic climate conducive to investment and entrepreneurship. Yegor Gaidar and his team of economic liberals advised Putin's early administration to lower marginal tax rates, protect property rights, reduce regulation, liberalize the labor market, shift the pension system to private savings, enter the World Trade Organization, and thus for all intent liberalize the economy on the model of Western Europe. In key areas, Putin made progress but the Russian economy only liberalized to a limited extent. Following re-election in 2004, Putin commitment to economic reform flagged. Liberalization stopped as far as the Kremlin's bureaucracy, the banking system and key monopolies were concerned.¹⁴ The government reabsorbed —strategic” industries and foreign investors became excluded as Putin attempted a dual track of inducing efficiency to attract investment and spur growth but recentralize political power by key economic decisions.

Since 1999, economic growth has been consistent, however largely driven by the energy sector. Objective social Conditions have not necessarily improved though: poverty has risen, pensions have been slow coming, unemployment has not improved and there is a lag of wages behind price all while social programs have decreased. Russia's Gini index of economic equality is around 40 (same as the US). Wealth has definitely risen. Consumer goods are now cheap and available. Even with the rise in overall

wealth and slow pace for wealth to find its way to the masses, the masses have clearly found their voice with United Russia. After the 1999 emergence of Unity, in 2003 Unity and Fatherland merged to form United Russia to garner a large 37.6 percent plurality. In the 2007 elections, United Russia attained a hegemonic 64.3 percent majority. Putin appointed Dmitry Medvedev first deputy prime minister on November 14, 2005. Following Boris Yeltsin's example of endorsing a political heir, in December 2007 Putin endorsed him as United Russia's presidential candidate. On March 2, 2008, the Russian people elected Medvedev Russia's third president with 70.28% of the vote.

RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY: YELTSIN TO PUTIN

Since the new Russian Constitution, Russia has seen NATO expand in 1999 to incorporate Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary and again in 2004 to include Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia, Romania, Slovenia and Bulgaria—all formerly elements of the Soviet Bloc, if not the Soviet Union itself. In exchange for Russian acquiescence to NATO expansion, the US promised Russia support for its bid to be a World Trade Organization member. Russia protested vehemently against the US led bombing campaign, Operation Allied Force, to displace Serb military forces from Kosovo. To US displeasure, Russia companies also had broken United Nations resolutions and conducted business with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Therefore, during the early Putin administration, relations with Russia were as tense as they had been since the Soviet Union's dissolution. President Bush and President Putin first met in Ljubljana, Slovenia. It was at this point that Mr. Bush uttered the famous quote, —looked the man in the eye. I was able to get a sense of his soul¹⁵.” While they disagreed over enlarging NATO or US Missile Defense initiatives, they found a personal affinity and a basis for mutual respect.

Mr. Putin was among the first foreign leaders to contact President Bush following the events of 9/11. In that conversation, he offered the US unparalleled support from Russia. For the next 18 months the US and Russia had the beginnings of a true strategic alliance. Al Qaeda's attacks provided the drive for a new round of rapprochement between the United States and Russia. After the deteriorating relations of the late 1990s and confrontational rhetoric, the Putin administration demonstrated a willingness to be an ally. At that juncture, Moscow began to reengage on the question of joining the WTO and strengthening ties with NATO. Obviously, such integration with Western institutions would not have given it great deal of political influence but membership in the WTO would be a boon to Russia's economy. Ultimately, NATO and Russia created stronger ties in the institutional form of the NATO-Russia Council. WTO membership for Russia still has not occurred, although it is a frequently mentioned subject.

After 9/11, there was true affinity with the Russian people. Polls conducted in September 2001 revealed that a majority of Russian citizens sympathized with the American people and considered the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to be attacks on themselves as well (unlike

the reaction in many cities). Putin pledged his support by the following Monday, September 24. He proposed to support American efforts and share intelligence, provide access to Russian airspace (and mediate for cooperation with Russia's Central Asian allies for similar airspace access), cooperation in search and rescue efforts, and increase direct assistance to American allied Afghani forces.¹⁶

Putin's plan indicated a noteworthy break in Russian foreign policy. Before 9/11, Russian foreign policy vacillated between a pro-Western and anti-Western foreign stance. Historically, Russia always considered Central Asia as its "sphere of influence." Putin broke with that tradition. Bush in turn provided a similar break in American foreign policy and declared that Russia's Chechen insurgent war was part of the same Global War on Terrorism. This was pure symbolism, Putin already had carte blanche to take any action in Chechnya so the US conceded no real point.

Putin support of the US came at no small cost. Immediately, it became clear his policy contradicted several key domestic constituencies' interests. While public criticism was muted, given Putin's incredible status, several critical elements of Putin's establishment were not happy with his support. NATO troops in Central Asia, perceived in a permanent base, threatened the military. Russian military officers have an institutional distrust and fear of US and NATO forces. The intelligence services, including the FSB disagreed with the utility of the new alliance. Putin's Minister of Defense and former KGB general, Sergei Ivanov, ultimately supported his President's position but only after initially recoiling to the proposition. Russia's substantial military industrial complex did not welcome the change in position. Russian defense contractors thrive on business with American strategic adversaries like Iran, Syria and as it turned out Iraq, and realize any future customer is likely to be at odds with US policy. These arms businesses have a strong presence in the Duma.

Finally, no contemporary Russian ideology shared solidarity with this idea. The Russian Communist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party, almost by definition, rejected Russia's new foreign policy orientation believing that Russia had returned to the Yeltsin era of selling out to the US interests. Today these groups have only a minor presence in the Duma. Still, their stance reflected what typical Russians thought and maybe did not say. In addition, the political elements favorable to western liberalism did not even forthrightly support this policy. The Union of Right Forces endorsed Putin's strategy, but only because they perceived a new alliance with Russian domestic liberals as well and a departure from the security apparatus. Yabloko also supported Putin's foreign policy moves. Many liberals, however, were concerned that Putin would use this as a pretext to curtail democratic practices and freedoms. While Russian society felt united with the American people after 9/11, the Russian masses did not necessarily see the connection with punishing Al Qaeda and occupying Afghanistan, which for them held very recent demons. While the majority in polls has expressed solidarity with the American

cause, this same society did not share a consensus for the wisdom of engaging in another war in Afghanistan.

In October of 2001, Michael McFaul stated, “Russia has the chance to join the list of our permanent friends, but only if we take seriously Russian integration into our Western institutions...The potential for breakthrough - for a fundamentally new and improved relationship between Russia and the West - has never been greater. If we fail this time around, however, the next window of opportunity might not open for decades to come.”¹⁷ A strategic casualty of the US decision to invade Iraq was undoubtedly this window. Putin unequivocally opposed Operation Iraqi Freedom. The invasion and subsequent US military presence in Iraq created a fissure in relations and a significant turn-back in relations we have not yet come back from, and as Professor McFaul fears, may not for some time.

The US and Russia would agree to form the NATO-Russia Council at the Reykjavik Ministerial in May 2002, a permanent institution in Brussels to facilitate communication at the level of foreign ministers, defense ministers and military staffs all the way down to basic functionaries. This represents the clearest step to facilitate enduringly US-Russia cooperation on a host of mutually advantageous policies. The Council has greatly facilitated coordination in the Global War on Terror, counter-narcotic operations, human trafficking and operations in Afghanistan.¹⁸ Unfortunately, this would represent the high water mark in US-Russia relations from the onset of hostilities in Afghanistan to the current time. A series of event would further exasperate US-Russia relations. Russia’s support for perceived anti-democratic forces in Ukraine and Belarus, along with their use of the “energy weapon” against these states in addition to the democratic roll-backs in Russia itself has given the US pause about Russia’s true world political ambitions. The US, on the other hand, has proven itself an imperial power in Russia’s eyes. In addition to the US presence in Iraq and threatened attack of Iran, the US meddled in Ukrainian politics to humiliate Russia and is deploying ballistic missile defense in Poland. A defense the Russians believe is aimed to counter their abilities, not the Iranians.

Russia regards the former Soviet sphere, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as its traditional sphere of influence and represents a primary foreign policy priority for Putin. The European Union and NATO now stretch across Central Europe, to Russia this is a threat. The key to the CIS strategy for Russia is maintaining a government friendly to Moscow in Kiev. To this end, Putin visited the Ukraine twice in 2004 in support of Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych. Putin saw the European Union and US support for the opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, the ultimate victor, as “efforts to bully democratic neighbors.”¹⁹ Russia launched a cyber-attack against Estonia for its decision to remove a statue celebrating the Soviet victory in World War II.²⁰ Military crises developed with both Moldova and Georgia, the last culminating in full scale conventional war in August 2008.

In early 2007, the United States announced a series of bilateral agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland to deploy —“third sight” for ballistic missile defense prompting Russian questions about the ultimate strategic aims of such a system and the system’s impact on its own security.²¹ The proposed deployment of U.S. missile defense sites on the territory of the Czech Republic and Poland has also become central to the security debate in the region. The US believes that the anti-missile defense shield offers an advanced security feature that stretches beyond the recipient countries and offers protection that the whole continent can benefit from. It is the US position that an installation comprised of a radar in the Czech Republic and missile interceptors in Poland does not have the geographic and technical capability to pose any threat to Russia. The ultimate goal of the project is to deter a potential nuclear threat emanating from the Middle East, and most particularly Iran. The US proposal was to build a ballistic missile tracking radar in the Czech Republic and to install a small number, perhaps 10, long-range interceptors in Poland. The US proposal to build radar and missile interceptor sites in Central Europe has sparked an unexpected degree of controversy both within Europe and with Russia in January 2007.

It has been the US position that Iran has been steadfastly working to develop long-range ballistic missiles to increase its strike capabilities. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad made threats against Israel and has displayed a belligerent stance toward the US. Some expect that Iran will possess (ICBM) capabilities by 2015 and that defensive measures are necessary, and that a functional BMD system may even deter such a deployment. Long-range interceptors deployed in Alaska and California counter potential North Korean threats. US State and Defense Department officials assert that the proposed Central European sites will simultaneously bolster both European and American security from a Middle Eastern threat.

Following the announcement that the US was in official negotiation with Poland and the Czech Republic for missile defense, President Putin used the February 11, 2007 occasion at an international security conference in Munich to state Russia’s counter position. He voiced extreme alarm at the US proposal and asserted that expansion of the US Missile Shield is a hostile act toward Russia. Mr. Putin accused the United States of provoking a new nuclear arms race. In addition to the proposed deployment, Mr. Putin used to claim the US was —“systematically undermining international institutions and making the Middle East more unstable through its clumsy handling of the Iraq war.” Mr. Putin used the opportunity to bring forth a long list of complaints about American domination of global affairs, including the expansion of NATO into the Baltics and the perception in Russia that the West has supported groups that have toppled other governments in Moscow's former sphere of influence.

Mr. Putin continued that —“the world is now unipolar: One single center of power. One single center of force. One single center of decision making. This is the world of one master, one sovereign.”²²

At the same time, however, Mr. Putin said President Bush "is a decent man, and one can do business with him," he said. From their meetings and discussions, Mr. Putin said, he has heard the American president say, "I assume Russia and the United States will never be enemies, and I agree."

In response, Washington attempted to illustrate that it is trying to build a partnership with Russia and not initiate another arms race by attempting to make the case that the two sites in Central Europe do not have the technical capacity to intercept Russian ballistic missiles. Furthermore, the U.S. side has invited Russian officials to numerous consultations in the hope that dialogue would result in constructive solutions. It is also important to note that Russia has already deployed four S-300 surface-to-air systems in Belarus along the Polish border, reportedly in retaliation for the recent delivery of U.S.-made F-16 fighters to Poland.

The 2008 South Ossetia War stands as the source of the greatest disagreement between Russia and the US since the 2003 Iraq War. Hostilities between Georgia and Russia soared during June and July 2008 over the disposition of the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On August 7th, Georgia launched an attack against South Ossetia's capital, Russia reacted by reinforcing South Ossetia and invading Georgia's western interior and eventually most of Georgia itself. EU chairman, French president Nicolas Sarkozy mediated a preliminary on 12 August which was signed by Georgia and Russia on 15 and 16 August in Tbilisi. The EU deployed international monitoring in Georgia on 1 October and Russia followed international agreements and withdrew its forces by 8 October 2008.

BACK TO GRAHAM

Thomas Graham's Analysis has proven to be remarkably prescient. In 1996, he perceived that factions (clans) would consolidate their political influence and steer Russia away from further liberal reforms to a more centralized style of rule. The year 1995 would remain as the high water mark for Russian liberalism. He stated that ideology would not be a factor in Russian politics. Neither liberalism, socialism nor even nationalism has emerged as a driving factor in Russian politics in the last ten years. Rather, as Graham predicted the clan interests of Energy, Military, Intelligence, Moscow, Industry and the Agriculture sector would dominate—five out of the six continues to drive policy in Moscow, all but the Agricultural sector remain entrenched in politics. Most fantastically, he believed in the rise of a non-ideological party to mitigate any reaction (to either extreme) from the Russian people. He states, "what threatens the clans is elections: an opportunity for those forces on the fringes of the clan system to re-order the existing division of property...nobody can predict how they can vote."²³ What would mitigate such a problem? A non-ideological populist party exactly in the mold of United Russia. His last prognostication called for a "steadily hardening line in pursuing Russian national interest...applies to European security and the extension of NATO, as well as the war in former Yugoslavia." NATO expansion, the Ballistic Missile Defense in Poland and the Czech Republic and all matters relating to the

final dissolution of Yugoslavia (defense of Kosovo, prosecution of Milosevic government, recognition of Kosova) presented the Russians with yet more grievances against the US.

What about the disposition of Graham's clans? Viktor Chernomyrdin did not remain head of Gazprom for much longer. He remained Yeltsin's Prime Minister until 1998 and then Vladimir Putin brought him back in the fold and named him Russia's Ambassador to Ukraine, where he resides today. Chernomyrdin was one of the original "Oligarchs" cashing in his state access for a net worth estimated at five billion dollars.²⁴ The board of directors replaced Chernomyrdin with Dmitri Medvedev, the current President of Russia. In 2005, the Russian government purchased a plurality of shares in Gazprom and has since maintained ownership. Twice the Russian government used Gazprom as a means of foreign policy, in the price dispute with Ukraine in 2006 and the next year with Belarus in early 2007.

Yuri Luzhkov dominates Moscow politics today as he has since 1992. He served as one of the founders for United Russia. His Fatherland party would merge with Putin's Unity in 1999 to create United Russia—the hegemonic Russian political party today. Luzhkov rules Moscow and influences Putin, his statements and preferences are potential precursors of policy. Ukraine banned him on May 12, 2008 for stating, "In 1954 the city of Sevastopol was not included into the Oblast, the territory, which was transferred to Ukraine by Nikita Khrushchev. We state that this issue remained unresolved."²⁵ Luzhkov attends Orthodox Christian services regularly and is friendly with Patriarch Alexius II. He keeps traditional conservative views on social policy such as gay rights.

Alexandr Kozhakov, Mikhail Barsukov and Oleg Soskovets have not fared as well. Yeltsin abruptly dismissed them on June 20, 1996. Mikhail Barsukov had served as FSB head for less than a year after taking over leadership of the FSB from Sergei Stepashin in July 1995 after the Budennovsk hostage crisis fiasco.²⁶ Barsukov was replaced by Nikolai Kovalev before being replaced by none other than Vladimir Putin. The FSB as an institution critically affected the evolution of Russian politics. Peter Finn of the *Washington Post* goes so far to say that the FSB makes all political decisions.²⁷ Others argue that the FSB uses extra-legal means to intimidate political rivals and generate income.²⁸ Given the opaqueness of Russian politics, this is all conjecture. What is clear is that Yeltsin ordered operations against labor unions and rightwing dissidents. Putin used his Presidential powers to reform the FSB for it to take on foreign counter-intelligence, organized crime and Chechen separatists. He instituted institutional reforms within the FSB to make it more accountable. Nikolai Patrushev succeeded him and led the FSB from August 1999 to just this year, May 12, 2008. Aleksandr Bortnikov is the new director—President Medvedev is a major supporter²⁹.

The Agrarian clan is no longer a political force in Russia. Had the United Russia gambit failed, they would be. United Russia's move to the center, however, effectively disempowered the extremist parties, the Communist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. Gennady Zyuganov and Vladimir

Zhirinovskiy represent these parties in the Duma but are currently not in the government coalition. Similarly, the liberal clan represented by Anatolii Chubais is still present although it is no longer has any political power. Chubais' influence waned with Yeltsin's decline as it was apparent that his economic prescriptions were failing. Russia's political liberal cause is now led by Yabloko (Russian United Democratic Party) and Sergey Mitrhokin. The Union of Right Forces is now dissolved leaving only Gary Kasparov and the United Civil Front. Kasparov also leads "The Other Russia," a coalition of all Russian political elements that oppose United Russia. Kasparov is a liberal but other coalition elements range from nationalist to communist.

Thomas Graham's insights provide a starting point to consider the role of particular clans or interest groups in Russian politics. Unfortunately, while Graham seems to have a high degree of precision, he may simply have just gotten lucky and his findings could be merely anecdotal. This paper turns to a modern classic in foreign policy analysis that provides a systematic mechanism to combine state interests, standard operating procedures and bureaucratic politics: Graham Allison's *Essence of Decision*³⁰.

THOMAS GRAHAM TO GRAHAM ALLISON

Graham Allison's landmark foreign policy analysis, *Essence of Decision*, clarified the actions of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. Allison brings to light previously neglected actors, rules or institutional forces as he presents an explicit analytic perspective of the fundamental properties of policymaking from three perspectives—the rational actor model, the organizational processes model, and governmental politics model, labeled models I, II and III respectively. *Essence of Decision*'s primary objectives was to try to solve nagging puzzles about the Cuban Missile Crisis but it also explored the influence of the analyst's unrecognized assumptions upon her or his thinking about events of that kind.

"Answers to questions like why the Soviet Union tried to sneak offensive strategic missiles into Cuba must be affected by basic assumptions we make, categories we use, our angle of vision... But what kind of assumptions do we tend to make? How do these assumptions channel our thinking? What alternative perspectives are available?"³¹

The dominant frame of reference most commonly employed is model I, the rational actor model. It conceives of states as unitary and purposive where states make consistent, value maximizing choices within specified constraints. This is the traditional method of analyzing foreign policy decision making. The foundation of this strategy is the assumption that "the conscious calculation of advantages based on an explicit and internally consistent value system"³² motivates state behavior. The basic unit of analysis is governmental action as choice. Events in foreign affairs are actions chosen by the nation. This is the dominant mode of analysis in diplomatic history, strategic studies, and most modes of foreign policy analysis where it is understood that states act to fulfill some goal. Governmental and foreign policy behavior, however, cannot always be understood as action chosen by a unitary, rational decision-maker.

Allison's Model II states that government consists of "a conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely allied organizations, each with a substantial life of its own."³³ These component "organizations" and their standard operating procedures are the dominant unit of analysis. Governments define alternatives, estimate consequences, as organizations process information, and enact routines. In order to perform complex routines, large numbers of groups must be coordinated. Coordination requires standard operating procedures. These are rules according to which things are done. At any given time, a government consists of existing organizations with fixed standard operating procedures. Existing routines constitute the range of effective choice open to government leaders confronted with any problem. Governmental behavior is effectively constrained by the routines of the organizations of which the government is composed.

There are several examples of "irrational" behavior by the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis that are explained by the organizational processes paradigm. For instance, the Soviet Union shipped very sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles to Cuba, Surface to Air Missiles (SAM) of the variety that had downed U-2 aircraft beforehand. The perimeter defense that the Soviets were installing could have effectively denied the U-2 free air space over Cuba. The SAM network, however, did not begin to operate until after the arrival and construction of the strategic offensive missiles. Similarly, the Strategic Rocket Forces did not install the Russian radar system until after they installed the Medium Range Ballistic Missiles. The Soviets did not even know the US Air Force was monitoring them. Also, construction of the missile sites in Cuba proceeded without any attempt at camouflage. They did not restrict construction time to nightfall and attempt to escape detection. This behavior is so puzzling that it leads those who abide strictly by model I to conclude that this action must have been intentional. However, such a hypothesis is inconsistent with earlier Soviet behavior. Furthermore, the missile site constructed in Cuba is identical to Soviet standard operating procedures for building a strategic rocket site, from the SAM sites to the football field. Khrushchev undoubtedly made the decision to put missile in Cuba, however, once he made the decision, the implementation was laid in Soviet standard operating procedures, which affected the outcome. Model II, therefore, explains deviations from ideal rationality at the moment of the decision by highlighting ways in which organizational routines constrain the formation of options, although the model says nothing about the decision itself.

The Bureaucratic politics model (Model III) integrates aspects of bounded rationality and constraint along with different perceptions of goal achievement.

"The name of the game is politics: bargaining along regularized circuits among players positioned hierarchically within the government. Government behavior can thus be understood... not as organizational outputs but as the results of these bargaining games. In contrast with the rational actor model, the Governmental (or Bureaucratic) Politics Model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players-players who focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well; players who act in terms of no consistent set of strategic

objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals... not by rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics."³⁴

State actions then are the end consequence of rational, if short sighted, bargaining between self interested intrastate actors. Players in position adopt goals and courses of action based on "parochial priorities and perceptions." Policy outcomes reflect these concerns, the player's power, the procedures for implementation and the rules of the game. Deviations from rationality are to be explained by political gamesmanship.

Therefore, if a nation performed an action, that action was the resultant of bargaining among individuals and groups within the government. If one can understand the game and the players in it then you can explain the outcome. Allison implies that state behavior can be predicted on the basis of the answers to four questions: Who plays? What are their interests? What is their relative strength? And what are the rules under which participants interact?

As far as who plays, the players are individuals. The governmental actor is neither a unitary agent nor a conglomerate of organizations but a number of individual players. Individuals become players in the national security policy game by occupying a position that is integrated into the major channels for producing action on national security issues. —Positions define what players may and must do.³⁵” The player's position is determined by the intersection of multiple relationships. For example, Allison refers to the secretary of state who has multiple roles, duties and interests. Not only is he the personal advisor to the president but a colleague to the president's senior advisers, the Ranking American diplomat and many others. Two individuals who occupy the same office do not occupy the same position if their positional relationship with other major players is different.

Player's interests are directly associated with the position occupied and the related —parochial priorities and perceptions,” this is the reflection of each player's conception of the national interest, the organization's interests, specific programs to which he or she is committed and personal interests. Relative influence is directly associated with the degree of power a particular position has. Finally, action channels determine the rules. Action channels are —regularized means of taking governmental action on a specific kind of issue³⁶.”

Allison illustrates Model III with the Kennedy Administration's decision to blockade Cuba rather than 1) doing nothing or 2) employing force. Initially the president and most of his advisors wanted a clean, surgical air strike. By the end of the week, opinions in Kennedy's advising corps had shifted. Secretary of Defense McNamara was convinced a strike would lead to nuclear war. He chose the blockade as a fallback. When the Secretary of Defense —whose department had the action, whose reputation in the cabinet was unequalled, in whom the president demonstrated full confidence—marshaled the arguments for the blockade and refused to be moved, the blockade became a formidable alternative.

Model III is Allison's unique contribution. Many analyses use bureaucratic politics to explain fruitfully a series of foreign policy events.³⁷ In summary, one can derive four propositions from Model III. First, player preferences will correlate highly with bureaucratic positions. Second, player perceptions correlate highly with bureaucratic position. Third, a player's influence in a decision-making process flows from his or her bureaucratic position and finally, a decision making process is a bargaining situation in which players promote their organizational interests, with the result being that governmental decisions do not reflect the intentions of any particular player. Allison's work is invaluable for highlighting the manner in which domestic political forces drive foreign policy.

AN ANALYSIS

A Model I analysis of Russia would consider the possible goals that the US and Russia are pursuing and attribute rational behavior to these goals. For instance, a typical reaction from the US is that Russia has been willfully interfering with US goals of security because it is now a revisionist power that seeks to once again contest US power in the international system. From this perspective, NATO expansion is primarily about increasing US power. Russia's demand that Ballistic Missile defense be halted, NATO expansion stopped are based in the rational calculation of power in terms of overall state interest. Russia's overtures to France and Germany following the 2003 Iraq War, in addition to Russia's Gazprom project with Germany to construct a natural gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea (around Poland), are a method of "soft balancing" against US power. In fact, the recent actions by Russia are ultimately coordinated moves to counterbalance the US and NATO. Russia's military action in Georgia is a showcase of their new foreign policy, the Medvedev Doctrine. The belief that there exists regions in which Russia has privileged interests. Regions composed of countries that share Russia's history, and thus are bound as friends and good neighbors.³⁸ That is, Russia reasserts itself into the domain of the former Soviet Union. This perspective holds that the August 7 South Ossetia War and September 10 deployment of Russian strategic bombers in Venezuela mark the culmination of the full revival of Russian power, a process that has been occurring since 2005. The result being that a new Cold War between Russia and the US is now in its nascent stages with intelligence agencies being the primary agents of conflict.³⁹ While this is relatively extreme, it is not unlike the perspective voiced recently by Secretary Rice after the Russian intransigence to withdraw from Georgia after the cessation of hostilities. After years of restraint, Ms. Rice seems to have finally taken the bait, decrying the unrepentant Russian hostility.⁴⁰ Mr. Medvedev himself stated, "we are not afraid of anything, including the prospect of a Cold War."⁴¹

Defense Secretary Robert Gates offered a slightly different tack from this analysis, also at the German Marshall Fund. Mr. Gates believes there is no real military threat from Russia. His prescription is that "NATO countries should seek a prudent 'middle ground' in responding to the war in Georgia, and

they should avoid sending provocative signals to Moscow.”⁴² If Russia is bent on balancing US power with Russian power, this perspective would be a mistake. Mr. Gates seems to assert that there are overriding factors that we should consider in dealing with Russia. Model II asserts the primacy of standard operating procedures. The idea here is that the Russian military establishment never stopped fighting the Cold War—that the programmed thinking of Russian military and eventually their intelligence services as they returned, was to resist the imperialist aggression from the west. The early rounds of NATO expansion would do nothing to disabuse them of this.

Allison’s Model III, Bureaucratic/Governmental Politics brings the best components of the above analysis and integrates the idea of domestic interest more thoroughly. It addresses who is competing for interest in Russia and how the interests have evolved. From Graham’s analysis, Gazprom, Moscow, the Military and the Intelligence Services clearly are dominant interests in Russia. Thomas Hobbes posits that states will not relent to international government because the state of nature in the international system is not sufficiently bad. Indeed, the only surrender of sovereignty we have seen is after cataclysmic world events like the World Wars. If our goal is to get the Russians to accept the basic precepts of international liberalism, what will drive such an embracing of international institutions? Russia is beginning a period where it will begin to cycle downward. The longer oil prices stay below \$70 a barrel (this morning it was \$64), the greater the damage to its capital reserves. The Russian Stock Market is off 60% from a year ago, most of this being from the capital flight following the military action in early August. Diplomatically, Russia is effectively isolated. Now, however, is the time to act. Russia’s foreign policy will consist primarily of cheap talk, the —military exercises” with Venezuela are not problematic in the long-term. Mr. Gates is correct, the Russian military establishment is still far off from challenging the US. The question we should be asking ourselves is, —what direction do we want to push Russia in?” One thing is for certain, an isolated Russia gives rise to the elements we do not want to see. There are two elements in the Duma that we would greatly prefer not to see over United Russia, the Communists, and the Ultra-nationalists. We should be careful that Russia is not weakened too much. Again, in grand strategic terms, what future do we want? I believe that a weak Russia would end up under Chinese influence. Rather a Russia integrated into Europe on its terms gives Europe a supply of energy and US security a bulwark against a Chinese revival and Islamic-Fascism from the Middle East and Central Asia.

The question then becomes then how could we persuade Russia? Russia will require western technology for gas and oil extraction after 2011. In addition, the economic elite are facing a disruption of finance, the free flow of finances necessary for economic stability. We need a new basis for US-Russian cooperation. One NATO potentially could provide. NATO can guarantee that Russia’s western border is stable and non-threatening. Until you get to Japan, Russia’s southern and eastern border has no such potential.

Russia is a riddle in an enigma. All countries usually are, but Churchill sounded particularly profound because when he said this Russia was threatening international stability. The incoming Obama administration will encourage democratic reforms but insist on the observation of territorial sovereignty for former states. Yet, there is not a plan that would guide the current confrontation with Russia over the future of Eurasia that makes the world more secure. The current approach to punish the aggressive Russia but work in vital areas of common interest probably is not sustainable. What is there to do then? The United States used to generate a great deal of sympathy from average Russians during the Cold War. During the Soviet era, millions of Russians heard broadcasts from the United States and free Europe. This represented a quiet dissidence with the ruling elite and a recognition that of the moral authority of the west.⁴³ After the lengthy experience with terror and repression with the resulting fear and exhaustion, there was an ingrown resentment to the aging Communist Party elite and their legacy of lines, shortages and deprivations of individual freedoms. For a large part of Russian society, there was an unspoken desire to defeat communism. There was a natural symbiosis between the Russian people and the US, albeit implicit and under a nuclear shadow. Today, the US no longer has a sympathetic constituency in Russia that perceives the United States as a force for good that could make the Russian people freer, more democratic or more prosperous. Even the liberal intelligentsia, once a bulwark of US sympathy, now is split regarding their view of the US. The long term solution is to recapture this moral authority, slowly but definitively, we must build relations with the Russian people and most particularly with the interests that dominate Russia.

INTERVIEWS

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