

The 'R' in BRICs:

is Russia an emerging power?

S. NEIL MACFARLANE*

The notion of emerging powers presupposes a number of characteristics shared by the states in question.¹ These include regional preponderance, aspiration to a global role, and the contesting of US hegemony. These characteristics arguably make the group as a whole a useful category in analysis and policy formulation. In particular, cooperation among these states, and possibly with more established powers seemingly equally unhappy with the unipolar configuration of international politics (e.g. France), may create a basis for a coalition having the potential to balance American power.² There is ample evidence from all of the emerging powers of unhappiness with the existing structure of international politics. There has also been substantial consideration of the potential for cooperation among them and with certain European states to constrain the hegemon—from the suggestion of entente between France, Germany and Russia to the repeated examination of prospects for a Sino-Russian-Indian triangle, and the growing Chinese and Russian interest in bilateral cooperation over shared security concerns.³

This article assesses the role of Russia as an 'emerging power'. How do Russians interpret the international system in which they operate? What kind of system would they prefer? What are they trying to do in the current system and why? How do these considerations affect their relations with the hegemon, with other centres of power such as the EU, and with other emerging powers?

The notion of 'emerging power' is partly informed by a theoretical assumption that the international behaviour of states is determined by their place in

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¹ A Goldman Sachs report of 2003 identified four states that, it asserted, over the coming half-century 'could become a much larger force in the world economy': 'Brazil, Russia, India and China—the BRICs economies'. See Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, *Dreaming with the BRICs: the path to 2050*, Global Economics Paper no. 99 (New York: Goldman Sachs, Oct. 2003).

² An official of the Council of the European Union noted in this vein in August 2005 that 'a second center of power would help "keep the United States honest"'. Robert Cooper, cited in Michael Vatikiotis, 'A troubled world seen from a Swedish idyll', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Aug. 2005, p. 7.

³ For example, the growing Chinese and Russian cooperation through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on the terrorist threat in Central Asia and on efforts to limit American presence in that region, as well as in the August 2005 Sino-Russian joint military exercise on and around the Shandong Peninsula.

the international system. They do what they do because, in the structure of power, they are where they are. Small states generally bandwagon with threats, great powers tend to balance against them, 'middle powers' float in a post-modern universe that is largely irrelevant, and hegemonic powers seek to control. Emergent powers are distinctive because their identity is dynamic; their position is changing as their power grows and, along with it, their capacity to shape outcomes. They carry some potential for systemic revisionism—a challenge to the hierarchy of the system in which they exist.⁴

The structural interpretation of state behaviour is widely contested, not least by liberal alternatives stressing the nature of the unit as the factor determining its external behaviour,⁵ and by mixed models that posit that the foreign policy behaviour of states is a product of both domestic and international considerations.⁶ Between the structural realist and the liberal perspectives lie regional interpretations that suggest that the external behaviour of states may be powerfully influenced by their immediate geographical contexts.

Moreover, systemic interpretations tend to emphasize hard power. However, many states, including some emerging powers, may seek to enhance their positions in the international system through the exercise of 'soft power'—the promotion of ideas and values that are attractive to others. In this approach, it is the attractiveness of a state's identity and values that provides wider influence in international relations.

I argue that—of these three possibilities—the structural/systemic approach implicit in the notion of 'emerging power' is the weakest as an explanation of Russian foreign policy behaviour. Russia's policy is strongly affected by its domestic economic and political context. It is highly responsive to trends in its neighbourhood (the former Soviet Union) and in regions contiguous to what it perceives to be its own space (e.g. EU and NATO Europe and north-east Asia). In the larger international system, Russia seeks not so much to make its mark as to limit the degree to which larger systemic (power-political and ideational) processes obstruct the pursuit of its more limited objectives. The result is a mixed approach of partnership or acquiescence on matters of vital interest to the hegemonic power, and more competitive behaviour on issues deemed central to Russia but peripheral to US interests.

With regard to 'soft power', Russia faces significant limitations in any effort to seek influence on the basis of the attractiveness of its identity or its ideational/normative agenda, partly because it has yet to develop a widely shared domestic consensus on values and identity and therefore has little to export, and partly because its internal difficulties and its vulnerability to criticism in terms of

⁴ For a discussion of revisionist powers, see Robert Gilpin, *War and change in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁵ The extensive literature on the democratic peace is illustrative.

⁶ A well-known example is Robert Putnam's elaboration of 'two-level games' in which leaders seek outcomes that are positive in both the international and domestic contexts. See Robert Putnam, 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of euro-level games', *International Organization* 42: 3, Summer 1988, pp. 427–60.

international human rights and governance norms push it towards a profoundly conservative definition of sovereignty and the rights of states within their domestic jurisdictions. Although this view of international order may resonate in the Third World, and also with certain of the other BRICs (e.g. China), it has little appeal in Europe.

Is Russia emerging?

These qualities of Russian foreign policy are in part a reflection of the fact that Russia is not obviously an emerging power in the sense discussed above. The notion of emergence suggests a state that is growing dynamically and undergoing a transformation; a state whose rising power causes it to question its established place in the system and to assert itself more ambitiously in international politics. This image is far from Russian reality. Russia is more properly seen as a state that has recently experienced substantial damage and is attempting to stop the bleeding.

The decline began in the 1980s, ironically at a time when some western scholars conceived the US to be in relative decline and the USSR to be a rising hegemonic challenger.⁷ In these years the Soviet decline was evident in faltering economic growth and in the consequent increase in the defence share of GNP as the USSR sought to keep pace with the United States. The Gorbachev leadership recognized the severity of the impending crisis; however, its reforms, designed to reverse the erosion of the Soviet economy, failed, producing the collapse of the USSR.

In the first five years after the collapse, the Russian economy contracted to approximately half its former size.⁸ Problems of economic transition were exacerbated by the disruption of trading links to neighbouring newly independent states. As unemployment and underemployment grew, the rouble's value collapsed, destroying people's savings. Social safety nets also suffered greatly as real public sector spending contracted dramatically. The economy bottomed out in 1994–5 and began to recover, but was set back again in 1997–8 by the knock-on effects of the Asian financial crisis, leading to a default on the Russian Federation's international financial obligations. The country returned to fairly steady economic growth in 1998–9,⁹ reflecting in part the import-substituting

⁷ Gilpin, *War and change*, pp. 235, 239–42. However, both Gilpin (p. 243) and Paul Kennedy (*The rise and fall of the great powers*, New York: Random House, 1987, pp. 430–1, 488–501) did raise doubts about the USSR's capacity to stay the course in the face of economic rigidity, the draining effect of military spending and the centrifugal pull of the non-Russian peoples.

⁸ Estimates of the contraction vary and are intrinsically problematic, since most statistics do not fully include activity in the informal and black economies, and estimation of the latter is difficult. There is no doubt, however, that the decline was substantial.

⁹ Russian GDP (in 2003 dollars) rose from \$195.9 billion in 1999 to \$432.9 billion in 2003, and to \$582.395 billion in 2004. See World Bank Group, 'Russian Federation data profile', available at <http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPPProfile.asp?SelectedCountry=RUS&CCODE=RUS&CNAME=Russian+Federation&PTYPE=CP>. See also 'Total GDP 2004', available at <http://www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/GDP.pdf>, accessed 11 Aug. 2005. In 2003–2004, the Russian Federation managed to restore the GDP level of 1993.

effect of the collapse of the rouble, but also, and more importantly, the beginning of a substantial rise in global energy prices. Putin's marketizing reforms during his first term helped sustain growth, but if one discounts the GDP effects of rising energy prices, the underlying growth rate has been modest.¹⁰ In any event, by 2004 and after five years of energy-based economic expansion, Russia had a GDP slightly higher than that of the Netherlands and just over a third that of China.¹¹

Economic difficulties were accompanied by political ones. The early years after the collapse of the USSR were marked by very unstable relations between the executive and the legislature, culminating in the shelling of the Russian parliament by Russia's own army on orders from President Yeltsin in late 1993. Law and order decayed substantially as individual oligarchs parcelled out state property and as police and military officials essentially hired themselves out to contending entrepreneurs. The capacity of the state to extract revenue to maintain its operations declined sharply, not only because of economic contraction, but also as a result of systematic tax evasion and substantial corruption in tax administration. The various jurisdictions of the Russian Federation sought to usurp the powers of the Russian state in a 'war of laws', resulting in a welter of contradictory regional and federal legislation, and the emergence of substantial internal barriers to trade. One member of the Federation (Chechnya) sought to secede, resulting in debilitating civil wars (1994–6 and 1999–2005) that amply demonstrated the increasing incapacity of Russia's armed forces to maintain internal sovereignty, let alone to act effectively outside Russia's borders.¹² As one Russian analyst put it in 2005: 'Russian forces' actions [in Chechnya] merely reflect the state of the armed services. There is a crying need for strict discipline, better quality personnel, properly functioning equipment, training, tactics and sorely needed specialisation. Chechnya represents a powerful case for fundamental military reform.'¹³

In short, Russia's experience during the 1990s was not so much one of emergence as one of confusion, retrenchment and decline. Nor was this only a domestic matter. In the mid-1980s, the USSR was seen as one of two global superpowers. In the late 1980s, it lost its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. In 1991, with the collapse of the USSR, Russia had 'retreated from Europe, living with borders that had hitherto never existed and surrounded by weak states'.¹⁴ In the late 1990s and the early years of the present century, NATO and the EU expanded into the East European space vacated by the USSR, and then, with the accession of the Baltic republics to these institutions, into the

¹⁰ The growth in energy revenue has a further negative effect, in that the flood of cash reduces incentives to continue with marketizing reform.

¹¹ Russia's 2004 GDP is also \$100 billion less than that of India and roughly \$20 billion less than that of Brazil. See World Bank, 'Total GDP 2004'.

¹² In the 1990s and early 2000s Russia's military shrank from around 2.5 million to approximately 1 million personnel.

¹³ Dmitri Trenin, 'Russia and anti-terrorism', in Dov Lynch, ed., *What Russia sees*, Chaillot Paper no. 74 (Paris: EUISS, 2005), p. 108.

¹⁴ Dov Lynch, *Russia faces Europe*, Chaillot Paper no. 80 (Paris: EUISS, 2003), p. 9.

territory of the former USSR itself. By 2002, despite Russia's claim that the former Soviet space was its *domaine réservé*, the United States had established military bases within the territory of the former USSR in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. When Russia's opinion on the international issues of the 1990s diverged from that of the United States, as in respect of Kosovo or on NATO enlargement, Russia's view was ignored. When Russia sought to block American-led action through the UN Security Council, as in Kosovo in 1999 or in cooperation with France and Germany over Iraq in 2003,¹⁵ the United States acted outside the UN framework. In short, if China is now exiting its period of humiliation, Russia in the 1990s appeared to be entering one.

The combination of chaos in domestic policy and international decline during the Yeltsin years produced a highly incoherent foreign policy. Dominant perspectives on world order ranged from the Gorbachevian liberalism that characterized the early days of Andrei Kozyrev's tenure as Russian foreign minister, through a long flirtation with 'Eurasianism' and multipolarity in the Primakov years, to a pragmatic and issue-specific regional power nationalism. Russia sought partnership with the United States and yet repeatedly advocated multipolar balancing with such candidates as China and India.

In 1993 President Yeltsin signalled in Poland that the Russian Federation would have no objection to the enlargement of NATO, only to reverse course a month later. The Russian Federation resisted the NATO campaign against the Bosnian Serbs in 1995, only to participate in the IFOR/SFOR peace operation that followed the Dayton Accords. Russia also resisted the NATO operation against Serbia over Kosovo in 1999, then provided mediation instrumental in getting the Yugoslav government to accept NATO demands, then unilaterally occupied Pristina airport in defiance of NATO, and then agreed once again to participate in a peace operation in Kosovo under NATO command. Elsewhere, Russia's definition of militant Islam as a key threat to international order in the post-Cold War period was accompanied by substantial Russian technical assistance in the Iranian nuclear programme.

There was little effective coordination among relevant ministries and agencies, which often pursued inconsistent policies on particular foreign matters. A classic example is the Russian position on western involvement in offshore oil drilling in the Caspian basin. In the mid-1990s, when the Azerbaijan International Operating Consortium's offshore Chirag-Guneshli project came on stream, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained that it was illegal, because ownership of Caspian seabed resources remained unresolved. The Russian minister of energy meanwhile attended the opening ceremony and congratulated Azerbaijan on its success in bringing the project to fruition. The mercurial quality of President Yeltsin, and his increasingly frequent incapacity exacerbated the mess.

¹⁵ In this case, however, Russia took advantage of French and German umbrage to remain in the background. See Sergei Karaganov, 'Russia and the international order', in Lynch, ed., *What Russia sees*, p. 31.

The ideational concomitant of internal deterioration and the collapse of the USSR's and Russia's international position was a moral crisis within the Russian Federation itself. Communist millenarianism largely disappeared as the fruits of 70 years of socialist construction evaporated and the world socialist system imploded. For many Russians, the state's purported commitment to the construction of socialism and to the 'world revolutionary process' had rung increasingly hollow as the revolution receded into history. The inability of the system to meet the material aspirations of the Soviet population was increasingly evident. Increasing access to the West and to westerners made clear that the USSR was slipping behind. The elitism of the leadership was manifest, as was the growing role of criminality and corruption in Soviet economic life. However, many took pride in the Soviet position as one of two superpowers in the international system. That pride disappeared with the USSR itself.

While the Soviet system had always provided a basically adequate standard of living for most of its citizens, the post-Soviet economic transition, currency collapse, mass unemployment and disintegration of the social safety net took away the population's economic security. The consequent hopelessness and frustration were evident in rapidly declining birth rates and life expectancy, particularly among males (see table 1). Overall, Russia's population declined from 148.3 million in 1990 to 142.3 million in 2003.

In short, Russia was not emerging during the 1990s. It was experiencing a profound crisis in its economy, politics, legal system, society, health, demographics, foreign policy and identity, creating an equally profound demoralization among its citizens.

Picking up the pieces: the domestic dimension of Russian foreign policy

When Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency in 1999, the agenda was reasonably clear: stabilizing and enhancing his own hold on power; regenerating the

Table 1: Recent population trends among the BRIC

	<i>Brazil</i>		<i>China</i>		<i>India</i>		<i>Russia</i>	
Year	1990	2003	1990	2003	1990	2003	1990	2003
GR	1.8	1.2	1.5	0.7	2	1.5	0.7	-0.6
CBR	26.3	19.7	22.1	14.5	32	23.8	16	8.6
LE	64.5	68.1	67.1	70.1	57.4	63.9	69.5	66.8
LE (M)	61.2	64	65.8	68.9	57.5	63.2	63.8	60.8

Abbreviations: GR—annual growth rate of population; CBR—crude birth rate per 000; LE—life expectancy at birth; LE (M)—male life expectancy at birth.

Source: These data are taken from the UNFPA database comparison tables, available at <http://www.unfpa.org/profile/compare.cfm>, accessed 11 Aug. 2005.

economy and balancing the books; consolidating executive control over the state and restoring its capacity to maintain order; restoring the role of the state in the economy and limiting the influence of oligarchical circles that had grown up under the Yeltsin administration; sorting out the relationship between the executive and the legislature at the centre; reasserting central control over Russia's regional authorities and, in particular, preventing the loss of further territory or the spread of insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus more broadly. As one prominent commentator observed: 'On 26 March 2000, Vladimir Putin inherited a weak, corrupt and paralysed country on the verge of disintegration ... Putin's strategic goal was to get Russia back on its feet.'¹⁶

As Putin himself put it early in his first presidential term, Russia's activity in foreign affairs must 'enable us to concentrate efforts and resources as far as possible on addressing the social and economic tasks of the state'.¹⁷ This urgency in addressing domestic weakness also featured prominently in Russia's National Security Doctrine, adopted in early 2000.¹⁸ The focus on domestic consolidation continued, indeed arguably accelerated, during Putin's second presidential term, one observer noting that: 'The goal of his second term has been to remove all centers of power but his own.'¹⁹

In this respect, Russia's contemporary priorities resemble not so much those of its purported peer group of emerging powers as those of previous Russian and Soviet governments at times of domestic weakness. Defeat in the Crimean War of the 1850s occasioned a similar emphasis on internal reform and on a holding action in foreign policy while necessary internal changes were made. The New Economic Policy after the Russian civil war (1918–21) was accompanied by the temporary abandonment of radicalism in foreign policy, and a quest for peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial political and economic relationships with the great powers. Mikhail Gorbachev's accommodating foreign policy was a logical concomitant of the effort, through perestroika and glasnost, to address the mounting crisis in the Soviet economy.

The process of consolidation translated into the concentration of the policy-making process within the presidency. The 1993 constitution of the Russian Federation emphasized the pre-eminence of the executive in the formulation of foreign policy. As discussed above, the Yeltsin era witnessed substantial conflict within the executive, and competition between the executive and the legislature, over foreign affairs, contributing to the marked incoherence in foreign policy characteristic of the period. As early as 2002 Putin had achieved an unprecedented

¹⁶ Alexey Pushkov, 'Putin at the helm', in Lynch, ed., *What Russia sees*, p. 46. Also Lynch, *Russia faces Europe*, pp. 9, 11.

¹⁷ Putin, Speech at the Foreign Ministry, 29 Jan. 2001.

¹⁸ 'The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation', 18 Jan. 2000, pp. 2–4, available at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/gazeta012400.htm>. Accessed 29 Nov. 2005.

¹⁹ Anders Aslund, *Putin's decline and America's response*, Policy Brief no. 41 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Aug. 2005), p. 1. Aslund goes on to stress the dysfunctionality of this 'overcentralization', noting that—in terms of Freedom House data—Russia has the distinction of being the only country 'that has become authoritarian during President George W. Bush's tenure'. Freedom House is a US-based NGO that monitors transition globally.

degree of autonomy in foreign policy, as a result of his success at the polls, his growing influence over Russian media, his effective subordination of the legislature,²⁰ and agreement among the economic elite on the fundamentals of his approach.²¹ That executive autonomy remains essentially unchallenged.

In other words, the starting-point of contemporary Russian foreign policy was a reasonably clear-headed recognition of Russia's weakness, both internally and in comparison with the other great powers, notably the United States. In this respect, the Russian case contrasts starkly with the situation of at least two of the other 'emerging powers' (China and India), both of which combine dynamic growth with increasing assertiveness in foreign affairs.

The contemporary Russian conception of international order

For much of the Yeltsin period, Russia tinkered with conceptions of multi-polar balancing mechanisms as means of dealing with its new position in international relations. This orientation persisted into the first years of the Putin presidency. The first major doctrinal statements of the Putin administration recognized the enhanced possibilities for interstate cooperation in the post-Cold War era, and at the same time evinced significant concern over the global distribution of power. The 2000 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation identified the systemic tendency towards unipolarity and American unilateralism as significant threats to Russia and declared that 'Russia shall seek to achieve a multi-polar system of international relations'.²² These sentiments were echoed in the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, adopted earlier the same year, which went on to define the eastward enlargement of NATO as a threat to the Russian Federation.²³

Both documents strongly emphasized the role of the United Nations, and particularly its Security Council, as the bedrock of a legally based multilateral structure, capable of constraining the unilateral exercise of preponderant power, and as an essential protector of the sovereign rights of states. This emphasis reflected the value that Russia placed, and continues to place, on its status as a permanent member of the Security Council, both for symbolic reasons and because membership provides a limited capacity to block initiatives by the United Nations that might complicate achievement of the Russian government's domestic objectives. In this respect one need only note the absence of any substantial Security Council discussion of the crisis in Chechnya since the beginning of the second war in 1999.

Linked to the continuing Russian focus on the United Nations is an emphasis on the legal status of the UN Charter and a very restrictive interpretation of

²⁰ In the December 2003 parliamentary elections, Putin's party secured two-thirds of the seats.

²¹ Dmitri Trenin, 'Putin's "new course" is now firmly set: what next?', *Moscow Carnegie Center Briefing Papers* 4: 6, June 2002, available at <http://www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/briefings/48464.htm>.

²² 'The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', 28 June 2000, p. 2, available at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>, accessed 20 Aug. 2005.

²³ 'The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation', pp. 1, 5.

those clauses pertaining to sovereignty. Russia has consistently rejected any dilution of what it sees as the Charter's defence of domestic jurisdiction. Like China, therefore, Russia has no time for the notion of humanitarian intervention or the linking of sovereign rights to global standards of human rights.

This highly restrictive interpretation of domestic jurisdiction and sovereign rights extends also into the Russian posture towards regional organizations. For much of the post-Cold War period, the OSCE was Russia's favoured candidate as an umbrella organization for European security. By 2000–2001, however, this enthusiasm had paled in the face of increasingly intrusive engagement within the CIS by offices and field missions of the OSCE. The principle of non-interference has been a centrepiece of the Russian campaign for reform of the organization since that time. In July 2004, for example, Russia, in a statement made jointly with eight other former Soviet states, castigated the OSCE for its failure to observe 'fundamental Helsinki principles, such as non-intervention in internal affairs and respect for the sovereignty of nations', and for its selectivity and double standards. The electoral monitoring and assessment activities of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights came in for particularly strong criticism on the grounds that its work had become politicized and that it was inattentive to the 'specifics of individual nations'. The OSCE's field missions were pilloried for unjustified criticism of the domestic policy of host states.²⁴ In discussing the statement, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Vladimir Chizhov, noted that if current trends of 'degeneration' in the OSCE continued, Russia and the other CIS states might 'lose all interest in it'.²⁵

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001 prompted significant adaptation in Russia's approach to its relations with the United States. The discourse of multipolarity and balancing largely disappeared, at least in official circles, to be replaced by a reasonably unambiguous recognition of US primacy and an acceptance that, for the time being, no really plausible balancing mechanisms existed. In the absence of such options, the obvious solution was to bandwagon. As one leading Russian foreign policy analyst put it recently: 'A paramount role in Russia's strategic orientation toward rapprochement with the West must be assigned to the establishment of the closest possible partnership with the United States as the leading country in the contemporary world.'²⁶

The embrace of the United States reflected not only acknowledgement of the unassailability of US preponderance, but also recognition that cooperation with the United States was necessary in addressing the most significant international (and transnational) threats facing the Russian Federation—terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—and desirable in addressing lingering Russian economic weakness.

²⁴ 'Statement by CIS member states on the state of affairs in the OSCE, Moscow, July 3, 2004', available at <http://www.mid.ru>, accessed 21 Aug. 2005.

²⁵ Cited in Liz Fuller, 'Russia coordinates broadside against OSCE', *RFE/RL*, July 2004.

²⁶ Karaganov, 'Russia and the international order', p. 41. That Mr Karaganov should take this view is particularly significant, given his previous support of multipolarity as a priority of Russian foreign policy.

Russia and the hegemon

On major issues where Russia felt compelled to come down on one side or the other in respect of US policy, it has sided with the United States. The obvious example was the Russian response to the attacks on September 11, 2001, when the Putin administration almost instantaneously declared its solidarity with the United States.²⁷ That this was not mere rhetoric became clear over subsequent weeks, when Russian intelligence forces cooperated closely with the Americans in strengthening the position of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Russia also accepted the creation of American military bases in Uzbekistan (Karshi-Khanabad) and Kyrgyzstan (Manas) in support of combat operations in Afghanistan. The latter decision was not an easy one. The Putin administration had inherited a policy of vociferous resistance to the West's military penetration of the former Soviet region,²⁸ and faced significant domestic opposition to this concession. It was, however, probable that the United States would deploy whether or not the Russian Federation opposed it, while Russia lacked sufficient influence over these Central Asian states to persuade them to refuse US requests. So there was little to be gained in attempting to prevent the deployment. Moreover, the effort to do so would have had damaging repercussions in Washington, with which Russia had a much broader agenda. Cooperation in America's 'war on terror', in contrast, carried some potential for gain on other issues on which the Russia-US relationship impinged strongly, such as Chechnya, integration into the world economy, and the maintenance of strategic deterrence and arms control regimes.

To some extent, gains were forthcoming. With regard to Chechnya, the key priority was defusing international criticism of Russia's conduct of the second war (from 1999), and deflecting international pressure for a negotiated political resolution of the conflict. Since 2001, the US government has not spoken out on Russian military operations in the breakaway republic and on Russia's treatment of civilians there, accepting Putin's conflation of the Chechen conflict with the war on terror.

Integration into the world economy has long been seen as an important goal for Russia.²⁹ In particular, Russia seeks enhanced access to international markets for its exporters, equal treatment on such issues as anti-dumping measures, an end to what is perceived to be discrimination against Russian exports,³⁰ and a greater role in the management of international economic relations. In this

²⁷ Putin was the first foreign leader to speak to President Bush after the attacks, and expressed his sympathy and solidarity in unambiguous terms.

²⁸ The 2000 National Security Concept had identified 'the possible appearance of foreign military bases and large military contingents in direct proximity to the Russian borders' as one of eight 'main threats in the international sphere' ('The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation', p. 5).

²⁹ The significance of Russian integration into the global trade and financial system was highlighted in 'The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', p. 6.

³⁰ On this point, see Maksim Medvedev, 'Vstuplenie Rossii v VTO', in Katinka Barysch, Robert Cottrell, Franco Frattini, Paul Hare, Pascal Lamy, Maxim Medvedev and Yevgeny Yasin, eds, *Russia v WTO* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2002), p. 39.

area, too, there was significant (and, from a Russian perspective, positive) change in Russian–American relations after 9/11. In early 2002 the United States recognized Russia's status as a market economy, and embarked on a dialogue about energy with the Russian leadership. In addition, in May 2002 President Bush acknowledged that Russian accession to the WTO was a matter of national interest for the United States. In the meantime, the Russian Federation completed its accession to full membership of the G8 at Kananaskis in 2002, and Moscow was spoken of as a favoured location for the 2006 G8 Summit. Here too, then, was evidence of significant pay off from the choice of partnership.

However, in the area of arms control Putin was quickly disappointed: in December 2001 the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty, a cornerstone of Soviet and Russian foreign and security policy for some 30 years. This move carried some potential for degrading the value of Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent. However, little would have been gained by opposition. Therefore, while the posture adopted was one of regret, Russian policy-makers took care to avoid any spillover from disagreement on this issue into the larger relationship.

This is not to say that partnership is the sole thrust of Russian policy towards the United States on major security issues. The opposition between balancing and bandwagoning ignores intermediate options, one of which is ducking. Russia was, incontrovertibly, opposed to the use of force in Iraq in 2003. Again, however, American resolve was reasonably clear. Russia did what it could to keep the decision-making process within the UN framework. However, when the point of decision actually came, in February–March 2003, Russia turned aside from taking the lead in opposing the American drive, not least because other Security Council members were willing to carry the burden. Thus the resistance in the Security Council to the US quest for a follow-on resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq was led by Germany and France. The judgement informing the Russian posture was that open opposition would be futile and might carry significant costs.

Furthermore, on issues relevant to the domestic and regional focus of the Russian Federation's foreign policy, the Putin administration has been more than willing to pursue policies at variance with American preferences. Where the position of the United States is inconsistent with the Russian view of what is necessary to address its domestic objectives, America is ignored. The Yukos affair provides a good example. Here, the Russian government used the courts to wrest control over a substantial portion of Russian energy production out of the hands of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. This effort provoked widely voiced criticism in the US and other western countries concerning the weakness of the rule of law in Russia; western investors and governments alike, moreover, warned that the arbitrary confiscation of private assets would constrict the flow of foreign capital into the Russian Federation. The Russian government proved willing to weather the criticism and to accept the investment risks, because it was committed to strengthening state control over this key sector of Russia's

economy, as well as to making clear to the remaining oligarchs the danger that they faced if they got 'off message' in Russian politics.³¹

In addition, and reflecting the priority attached to the state of affairs in contiguous regions, the Russian Federation has been more than willing to resist American policy towards several former Soviet republics. In 2004–2005 Russia forced the departure of the OSCE border-monitoring mission in Georgia, despite wide consensus within the OSCE in favour of its continuation. It has continued its policy of granting citizenship and passports to residents of secessionist regions in Georgia, despite Georgia's vehement rejection of this policy, and the opposition of the United States and the EU to it. And, finally, although it accepted the establishment of American bases in Central Asia, it is happy to take advantage of circumstances to reverse this intrusion. After the Uzbek government slaughter of protesters in Andijan in May 2005, for example, Russian policy-makers exploited the ambivalence of American perspectives on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan to call into question the status of US bases in the region. Russian spokesmen unequivocally supported Uzbekistan's rejection of accusations of human rights violations, while stressing that, whatever the case, what happened in Andijan was Uzbekistan's business.³² They continued by orchestrating a campaign against the US military presence in Central Asia. The approach was consistent with an evolving pattern of Russian behaviour in cases where its perceived interests diverge from those of the United States, but where it nonetheless seeks to avoid direct confrontation. The question of removing US bases was raised principally by regional multi-lateral organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,³³ and by the states of the region.³⁴ Ultimately, it was Uzbekistan that demanded US withdrawal from its principal base in Central Asia; and it was local specialists who spearheaded the broader campaign to reduce America's military presence in the region.³⁵ Again, the 'ducking' metaphor seems appropriate for the role taken by Russia.³⁶

³¹ The campaign against Khodorkovsky seems to have been inspired in considerable measure by Putin's concern that the oligarch was crossing the line from business into politics. See Aslund, *Putin's decline and America's response*, p. 2.

³² For background, see S. Neil MacFarlane, 'Uzbekistan: willing to act', *The World Today* 61: 8–9 (Aug.–Sept. 2005), p. 29. For Russian reaction to Andijan, see Sergey Lavrov, 'Interview with newspaper *Izvestia*' (17 May 2005), at <http://mid.ru>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2005.

³³ See Daniel Kimmage, 'Central Asia: the SCO—shoring up the post-Soviet status quo', *Central Asia Report*, 8 July 2005 (Prague: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research), available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/07/9a8d1c5f-b72b-4a40-aedc-08ed11aa34f.html>, accessed 22 Aug. 2005.

³⁴ For example, the newly elected President of Kyrgyzstan (host to one of two significant US military bases in the region), Kurmanbek Bakiyev, noted in summer 2005 that the situation in Afghanistan was stable enough for the United States to re-evaluate its military posture in Central Asia.

³⁵ See Vladimir Socor, 'Moscow's Central Asian friends campaign against US bases', *Eurasia Daily Monitor—The Jamestown Foundation* 2: 157, 11 Aug. 2005.

³⁶ As Alexei Makarkin pointed out: 'Russia is playing its own part in the Big Game. It does not want to publicly quarrel with the U.S. by forcing its bases out of the region, as this may provoke accusations of torpedoing the counter-terrorist coalition. Russia's goal is to ensure that the U.S. bases are pulled out after the Afghan operation.' 'What stands behind Uzbekistan's demand to withdraw US base?' *RIA-Novosti*, 2 Aug. 2005, available at <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20050802/41076262.html>.

Further afield, Russian weapons sales to China and its technology transfers to Iran have conflicted with US policy preferences. From the perspective of the Bush administration, the first contributes to unwelcome change in the East Asian balance of power, while the second arguably undermines the non-proliferation regime to which both Russia and the US are ostensibly committed. Both Russian actions are driven in considerable measure by economic considerations: they bring substantial hard currency revenue into a depressed sector of the Russian economy, and help to fund Russia's efforts to remain competitive in its areas of traditional comparative technological advantage.

In other words, where Russian preferences directly collide with what the United States perceives to be its vital strategic interests (e.g. NATO enlargement, the war in Iraq and US bases in Central Asia), Russia accepts what it must rather than engaging in a doomed resistance that might provoke significant erosion of the central relationship with the United States. Where the preferences of the two states diverge on issues that are vital from a Russian perspective but peripheral from the perspective of the United States, Russia goes its own way. In the middle ground (as with China and Iran), it tests the limits of its options. This pattern reflects a careful evaluation of America's threshold of tolerance, above which there is little flexibility and beneath which there is a fair amount of room for manoeuvre.

Russia and the 'European pole'

The Iraq episode raises the larger question of relations between the Russian Federation and the EU and its major states. Here it is appropriate to begin by noting President Putin's evident affinity for Europe (and in particular for Germany). This may derive in part from his earlier service as an intelligence officer in East Germany, but his association with St Petersburg, his place of origin and also the city where his political/bureaucratic career blossomed in the 1990s, is also likely to have influenced his outlook. Putin made clear very early on in his presidency his view that Russia's identity was not in contradistinction to Europe (as Eurasianists would have had it), but that, on the contrary, Russia was part of Europe. As Alexey Pushkov put it: 'According to the president, partnership with the EU and leading European countries were the *sine qua non* of a successful foreign policy.'³⁷

The question arising is what that means in the context of transatlantic (or Euro-Atlantic) relations. Specifically, where does this Europe of which Russia claims to be a part sit with respect to the United States? Here, Russian policy-makers have quite consistently stressed the need for Europe to emerge as a concentration of power and influence *within* a Euro-Atlantic community rather than in opposition to America. The emphasis, in other words, is, again, on partnership rather than on balancing.

³⁷ Pushkov, 'Putin at the helm', pp. 52–3.

This conclusion is a product of judgements regarding world order already discussed. It also reflects the disappointment of earlier Russian expectations regarding the Common Foreign and Security Policy and European Security and Defence Policy as harbingers of an effective and powerful EU identity in international affairs. The evident opposition to this outcome within the EU, the slowness of the bureaucratic and diplomatic process, and the current difficulties experienced by the EU in referenda on the European Constitution and in the effort to secure agreement on a budget have dampened Russian enthusiasm considerably. Russia's interest in Europe as a partner has also been affected by the fact that it has found the construction of cooperative relations with the EU and its member states to be tough going on a wide range of issues. For example, Russia has experienced serious difficulties in negotiating the regime covering access to the Kaliningrad exclave and the visa regime for Russians crossing EU territory between Kaliningrad and the rest of Russia. The EU rejected Russia's attempts to make renewal of their Partnership and Cooperation Agreement conditional on Europe's addressing a large number of concerns relating not only to Kaliningrad but also to trade access to new members of the EU.

In addition, the Russians have found the United States to be more accommodating than Europe on the issue of Chechnya. Individual European states, the EU and the Council of Europe have all to varying degrees refused to swallow the conflation of the Chechen conflict with the war on terror. Russia also ran into problems with the EU over the political transitions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004). Russia viewed these events as threatening both to its domestic arrangements and to its regional influence. In contrast, the EU embraced both as opportunities for democratic development in the former Soviet region. All of these issues reflect an underlying and fundamental dissonance between Russia and the EU: Russia focuses on pragmatically defined interests; the EU has an (annoying from the Russian perspective) preoccupation with liberal values.³⁸

Finally, EU enlargement to include the Baltic states, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary (with the probable inclusion of Romania in the next round) brings the Union much closer to Russia's regional zone of strategic interest. Despite its stress on cooperation with Russia, the EU's European Neighbourhood Initiative raises the prospect of increasing tension in Russia's relations with the Union over issues involving nearby states. Such tension has already emerged not only in divergent responses to political events in Ukraine and Georgia, but over the effort to mediate a settlement of the conflict in Moldova, and over responses to the Lukashenko government in Belarus.

In short, even if Russia were to seek to enlist the EU in an effort to construct a multipolar balance against American power—and it is not clear that it intends to—the EU is a distinctly problematic and unpromising candidate for the role.

³⁸ This tension is well portrayed in Lynch, 'Struggling with an indispensable partner', in Lynch, ed., *What Russia sees*, pp. 121–2.

Sino-Russian relations

The other principal regional centre of power attracting significant attention from Russia is China. On the face of it, there is substantial potential for the development of close cooperation between Russia and China on matters of international and regional order as well as in more prosaic economic matters. The two states share considerable unhappiness with the current configuration of power in the international system and, in their bilateral statements, have expressed a preference for a multipolar world order.³⁹ They both strongly support the United Nations as a means of constraining US unilateralism. They are both unequivocally opposed to the dilution of sovereignty and of the principle of non-intervention.⁴⁰ They also jointly opposed American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. Both are uncomfortable with the US global pursuit of democratization. Neither supported the US attack on Iraq.

They also share substantial concern over stability in Central Asia in the face of what both perceive to be a serious strategic threat from radical Islamism. This concern has been translated into joint regional institution-building (the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and the development of regional multi-lateral cooperation in that institutional context to counter terrorism. The two states also share concern about the broadening of American influence in Central Asia, both in terms of military deployments (see the discussion above of the SCO statement on US bases in Central Asia), and in terms of American promotion of democratic political change that threatens authoritarian governments.

Finally, they have a substantial economic agenda of cooperation. Russia sees China as a major customer for its military hardware; and Russia is a major energy exporter, while China is a rapidly growing energy market.

And yet, notwithstanding all this, the prospects for the evolution of the Sino-Russian relationship into anything resembling an alliance are very limited. There are clear limits on the extent to which Russia is willing to take risks in its relations with the United States through further development of its ties to China. Many in Russia see a dynamically growing China as a serious threat to Russian control over Siberia and the Russian Far East, and to Russia's strategic position in the north-western Pacific. This perception creates a certain ambivalence in Russian policy towards China: is China a friend to be supported and strengthened, or is it a threat to be contained?

Take Russia's economic interests. China is not the only major potential energy market in East Asia. Consideration of pipeline routes for the eastward export of Russian oil have been dominated by competition between China and Japan for access to Russian supplies. And economic gains produced by military sales must be balanced against the political risks of accelerating China's rise as a major military power in East Asia. Russia, too, faces the prospect that its

³⁹ For the latest example, see "'Full text' of China–Russia joint statement on 21st century world order", *BBC Media Monitor*, 2 July 2005.

⁴⁰ "'Full text' of China–Russia joint statement", para. 2.

influence in Central Asia could be displaced by a China that is very actively engaging with the region in both economic and politico-strategic terms, seeing it as a significant market for its consumer goods and as a promising source of energy.⁴¹

Conclusion

Russia is not an emerging power in the conventional sense of the phrase. Its foreign policy is dominated by the effort to reverse the substantial decline of the 1980s and 1990s and to lay the internal basis for a return to real (as opposed to symbolic) status as a great power. This entails fostering international conditions conducive to allowing this reconsolidation to proceed without external hindrance. Its second major priority in foreign policy is regional: to restore Russian influence over the former Soviet states—or at least to impede the intrusion of external powers into that space, to limit the growth of their influence, and to control tendencies in the region that may produce negative repercussions in Russia itself.

In the larger international system, Russian policy is pragmatic. Conscious of their own weakness and vulnerability, Russian leaders strongly support a traditional understanding of sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction, resisting the dilution of these concepts on human rights or governance grounds. They also seek to maintain or to restore the position of the United Nations as the principal global multilateral security institution, not least because, for historical reasons, Russia enjoys a level of influence and status in the organization that is disproportionate to its current capabilities.

Russia's relations with the hegemonic power are complex, and appear to be based on a realistic understanding of the preponderance of American power and also the hierarchy of American policy interests. The earlier embrace of multipolar balancing has largely disappeared from Russian policy practice, and is now rarely encountered in official discourse. This does not mean that Russians would not prefer a multipolar world. It is clear that Russia is in a profound sense wedded to the Westphalian model of a pluralist system based on sovereign equality. However, current Russian policy focuses not on what is desirable in the far long term, but on what is possible in the current configuration of power in the system. It also reflects numerous specific problems in relations with potential alternative partners such as Europe and China. In this context, Russian policy-makers either cooperate in, or at least avoid substantial confrontation over, matters of American vital interest. In so doing, they seek to draw what advantage they can from issue linkage.

Russia does engage in competitive behaviour over matters that are central to its own priorities while being less essential in American foreign policy and

⁴¹ For an early but useful account of Chinese strategic interest in one major Central Asian state, see Xing Guangcheng, 'China's foreign policy toward Kazakhstan', in Robert Legvold, ed., *Thinking strategically: the major powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian nexus* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 107–40.

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strategy. And—reflecting again the domestic imperative—Russian policy-makers brook little American interference in domestic policy-making, be it over economic reform, the neo-authoritarian consolidation of the Russian state or the conduct of the war in Chechnya.

In essence, Russian foreign policy is a holding game. It is designed to limit further losses and to sustain or promote conditions that—in the longer term—will permit Russia to re-emerge as a great power in a pluralist international system.