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Analysis

Putin's Political Legacy

By Robert Orrtung, Washington

Russian President Vladimir Putin has created a political system that is in many ways unique to Russian history as it combines some Soviet practices, achievements from the Gorbachev and Yeltsin period, and new features. Russia is much more open to foreign influence than it was during the Soviet period. Most Russian citizens are free to travel, and Russians have access to the Internet, which provides unfettered information, debate, and some ability to organize on line. With the end of official state planning for the economy and the occurrence of high oil and gas prices, Russian citizens are now better off economically than ever before. Consumer goods are widely available, giving the average person a sense of well being. In contrast to the upheavals of the 1990s, Putin has been able to create a feeling of stability in the political system that has made him enormously popular with his constituents. Yet, these accomplishments have been accompanied by a systematic assault on democracy and civil liberties. During his eight years in office, Putin has returned to some of the Soviet-style approaches to ruling Russia, particularly the centralization of power. In a new twist, however, he has carved out a strong autonomous role for the security services. While the system is apparently stable in the short term, it lacks the basis for long-term institutionalization.

Putin's System

Putin's system is distinguished by the power that it gives the Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor to the KGB. While the role of the security services somewhat diminished during the Yeltsin period, now the FSB is the most decisive player in Russian politics. Its agents make up a large share of the Kremlin staff and they are increasingly taking charge of key business posts in Russia's ever-expanding state-controlled business sector. The FSB has created a closed political system, with essentially no outside oversight, that thrives on defining external enemies and is pursuing an aggressive foreign policy.

Putin's political system has eliminated all uncertainty from elections. Russia's last real electoral battle pitted Putin and his allies against Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov and former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov in the 1999 State Duma elections. Putin won that battle and, upon coming to power, systematically turned elections into nothing more than a process in which the public is given a chance to validate decisions already made in the Kremlin. The March 2008 elevation of Dmitry Medvedev to succeed Putin is simply the latest milestone in this process. As it has in previous elections, the Kremlin used the state's resources to ensure that Medvedev was elected. The state-controlled television networks devoted extensive coverage to Medvedev and officials applied pressure in the workplace to ensure that a large number of voters turned out and voted appropriately. Since the Kremlin has extensive control over Russia's hierarchy of electoral commissions, there was little chance that the outcome and vote totals would not be the "correct" ones. Just to be sure, all authentic oppo-

sition candidates were removed from the ballot and Medvedev refused to debate the ones who remained.

Since the text of Russia's constitution forbids presidents from serving more than two consecutive terms, Putin decided to hand off formal power to a hand-picked ceremonial successor while staying on himself by serving as prime minister. Putin's informal power as prime minister will now be more important than the formal powers of the president, apparently in violation of Russia's constitution, which gives most powers to the president. How relations between Putin and Medvedev will develop in practice remain to be seen. However, all indications now point to Putin remaining at the top of the pyramid, with Medvedev playing a subsidiary role. The main winners will be the shadowy groups around Putin who will continue to control the assets that they amassed over the last eight years. Since political and economic power are increasingly connected under Putin's system, and property rights remain shaky, Putin and his cohorts cannot leave political office without putting their economic gains at risk.

While Putin came to power stressing the rule of law, he has presided over an essentially lawless system. Russian laws are applied selectively by politicians and bureaucrats who use them to pursue their own interests. Individuals, organizations, and businesses that cross the regime sooner or later find themselves investigated by the tax authorities or fire inspectors, who quickly make it impossible for them to continue their activities. In a prominent example, the Kremlin exerted pressure on Shell by accusing it of violating Russian environmental law. When the company finally sold a major part

of its assets to Gazprom, the environmental concerns disappeared.

Toothless Parliament

With their control of the electoral process, Putin and his colleagues turned the parliament into a body with little weight in the policy-making process. In this respect, Putin follows a Russian tradition for showcase legislatures dating back to the tsarist era. Only during the late Soviet period and Yeltsin era did the legislature have an impact on the direction of Russian politics. For the December 2007 State Duma elections, Putin once again tweaked the electoral law so that all seats would be elected on the basis of party lists, eliminating the half that previous were elected in single-member districts.

The impact of that change was to further increase central control over the political process. The three pro-Kremlin parties won 393 of the 450 seats. The only opposition party to make it into the parliament was the Communists with 57 seats. The party lists are decided in Moscow and there is little representation of authentic regional interests in the legislature. In the past, the governors often had close relations with the Duma members who represented their specific regions, but this regional lobby no longer functions the way it once did.

In the upper chamber, Putin changed the rules so that each region is now represented by appointees chosen by the governor and the regional legislatures. In practice, the Kremlin plays a big role in deciding who wins these appointments. When Putin came to office, the governors and chairs of regional parliaments sat in the upper chamber and used these positions to lobby for regional interests at the federal level.

Federalism

Putin has eroded many of the key features of the federal system that developed under Yeltsin. Imposing greater central control over the regions was one of the first reforms that Putin addressed on coming to power. During the 1990s, the regional leaders often ignored federal law and set themselves up as mini-dictators in their own regions. Putin's first reforms sought to reimpose control by establishing seven federal districts, each led by a presidential representative, who would supervise the regions under his control. This reform effectively brought regional laws into harmony with federal norms. Now the seven super-governors focus on identifying suitable personnel among the regional elite and monitoring actions in the region in order to report back to federal leaders.

Putin made a dramatic change in the federal system in the wake of the 2004 Beslan tragedy by can-

celing future gubernatorial elections and taking the power to appoint governors for himself, needing only the approval of the regional legislature, which in practice has never been a problem. Initially, Putin mainly left in place the governors who had long served in office. However, more recently, he has been replacing ineffective or somewhat autonomous governors with officials who are more likely to follow the Kremlin line. Now the governors are no longer beholden to their constituents, but to the president.

Local government is in a state of suspended animation. A reform of the entire system was adopted in 2003, but its implementation was postponed until 2009, well after the presidential elections. In any case, municipalities have little self-controlled revenue and therefore must look to the governors and Kremlin for financing.

Courts

Russia's courts lack independence since they remain subject to political pressure. When the Kremlin needs a political decision in its favor, there is no doubt that the courts will provide it. The most glaring example was in the prosecution of Yukos.

Clear evidence that the Russian people have little confidence in their justice system is the large number of cases that are appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. More Russian citizens file cases with the court than any other country in the Council of Europe. The court's documents show that as of 1 January 2007, of some 90,000 cases pending before the court, approximately 20,000 originated in Russia. More than 10,500 applications were logged in 2006 alone, double the 2003 figures and an increase of more than 400 percent over 2000.

There have been some improvements in the Russian legal system with the introduction of a new criminal procedure code and jury trials. However, implementation of these reforms has been slow. Although jury trials are more likely to return a not guilty verdict than judge-decided trials, higher courts frequently overturn these decisions and can send cases back for new trials as many times as it takes to obtain the desired decision.

Media

The media has been a prominent victim of Putin's program to reassert political control over Russia. The key to Russian mass politics is television since that is where most citizens get their news. During the 1990s, Channel One had come under the control of oligarch Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky had set up the country's first independent television network, NTV. The broadcasters then could hardly be described as objective since they supported Yeltsin's reelection in

1996, but they did provide a pluralism of views and had been critical of some state policies.

That is no longer true. The state has reasserted control over all major television networks, either directly or through state-friendly companies like Gazprom, and carefully manages their content. There are no more live political talk shows. Such discussions are now filmed in advance so that editors can remove unwanted comments. There are also blacklists preventing the most outspoken critics of the government from gaining air time. Additionally, working through friendly companies, the Kremlin has ensured that the owners of key newspapers like *Kommersant* and *Izvestiya* respect the state line. In papers like *Kommersant*, the new owner has not removed all criticism, but apparently makes sure that it does not go too far. The feisty radio station Ekho Moskvy, likewise, is owned by Gazprom, but continues to provide critical analysis.

The Internet remains largely unfettered, though again Kremlin-friendly companies have bought up important news sites such as *gazeta.ru*. Blogs are extremely popular among Russian activists and it is often possible to read the reports of brave citizens who are in conflict with their government. Rather than cracking down on the Internet in the Chinese style, the Russian state has instead funded a large number of young people to place pro-Kremlin comments in various forums, seeking in this way to influence the hearts and minds of the rising generation.

Journalists have particularly suffered under Putin and Russia is now one of the most dangerous countries for journalists to work. At least 14 journalists have been slain for their work since Putin came to power and the authorities have not identified the masterminds behind any of these crimes. The most prominent victim was Anna Politkovskaya who criticized Russian actions in Chechnya. Recent amendments to the law on extremism make it very difficult to voice criticism of the authorities without putting oneself in jeopardy of legal prosecution.

Civil Society

The law on non-governmental organizations adopted in 2006 made it very difficult for such groups to operate in Russia. Now they have to meet extensive registration and reporting requirements which make them vulnerable to bureaucratic manipulation. Groups that become involved in areas that the authorities want to monopolize, such as the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society of Nizhny Novgorod, find themselves under intense pressure.

A major problem for Russian organizations is their inability to raise money domestically. Yukos had started to provide funding for some organizations, but

its destruction sent a strong signal to other companies not to engage in this process. As a result, many human rights groups are dependent on foreign funds. Because the Kremlin fears that outside funders are seeking to overthrow the current regime, the authorities have been working to crack down on the external sources.

Following the destruction of Yukos, business no longer plays an active political role. Yukos President Mikhail Khodorkovsky had announced ambitions to seek the presidency, but his sentencing to eight years in a Siberian jail cooled the ardor of any other businesses to become involved in the political process. The state is reasserting control over the most important business sectors in Russia, with top officials in the Kremlin now combining their political work with leading positions in Russia's top companies. While he served as first deputy prime minister, for example, Dmitry Medvedev was also chairman of the board for Gazprom.

Corruption

One of the main features of the current regime is its extensive corruption. Corruption was a major problem for Russia in the 1990s, when many of the country's most lucrative assets were sold off for bargain prices in such rigged auctions as the loans-for-shares deals. Although Putin has frequently talked about this problem, he has accomplished little in reducing its prevalence and Medvedev has said that he will make fighting this scourge a priority.

Of course, it is impossible to fight corruption effectively when there is no free media, independent courts, or active watchdog groups in civil society. In these conditions, the only actor left is the state and the bureaucrats who control its levers have little interest in dealing with the problem. Business groups feel that it is futile to change the system, since bribes are an integral part of doing business. While there are frequent accusations of corruption in the press, these exposes are usually politically-motivated attacks reflecting the hidden political battles of powerful clans.

Conclusion

During his eight years in office, Putin systematically dismantled the key building blocks required for a functioning democracy. The governing system now in place has few possibilities to gain information about what is going on in society and even fewer opportunities for citizens to influence the decision-making process. Since most of the formal political institutions have been hollowed out, the system is largely designed to work around one man.

A significant portion of the country's income depends on the price of oil. As a result, Russia is vulnerable to changes in the international commodities market at the same time that its political system is extremely inflex-

ible. Putin's political system works well for extracting the super profits of the Russian energy sector and has benefitted from the recent high prices, but its rigid centralization is not suited for a country that hopes to

compete in an information-based, innovation-focused global world economy. Whether the system can long survive a potential drop in energy prices is a real question.

About the author

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Suggested reading

- Vladimir Ya. Gel'man and colleagues, *Tretii elektoral'nyi tsikl v Rossii, 2003-2004 gody* (St. Petersburg: European University in St. Petersburg, 2007).
- Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "The Myth of the Authoritarian Model: How Putin's Crackdown Holds Russia Back," *Foreign Affairs* 87, No. 1 (January-February 2008): 70–84.
- Global Integrity Scorecard: Russia 2007, <http://report.globalintegrity.org>.
- Freedom House, "Russia" in *Freedom in the World* (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15>) and *Nations in Transit* (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=17&year=2006>).

Analysis

Putin's Economic Legacy

By Anders Åslund, Washington

Abstract

Putin was lucky to become president when Russia's arduous economic reforms were close to completion and high growth had already taken off. Most deregulation and privatization were done in the early and mid-1990s. However, the opposition to financial stabilization led to huge budget deficits and the 1998 crash. Luckily, the financial crisis completed the market transformation and taught the elite the need for sound budgetary policies. Putin continued the reforms for two and a half years, pushing ahead with radical tax reform, improving conditions for small business, and allowing trade in agricultural land. Unfortunately, reforms came to a screeching halt with the confiscation of Yukos in 2003. A wave of renationalizations followed, driven by extensive corruption. Oil prices rose dramatically in 2004, allowing Putin to ignore all reforms. At the end of 2007, Russia returned to deficit spending although inflation was surging. Putin formulated the goal of joining the World Trade Organization by 2003, but Russia is still not a member because he allowed protectionist interests to override the national interest. At the end of his second presidential term, Putin leaves a large backlog of badly needed reforms.

Right Place, Right Time

Fate is not necessarily fair. Some are born with a silver-spoon in their mouth, and some just happen to be in the right place at the right time. Vladimir Putin should go down in history as one of the lucky ones who happened to be in the right place at the right time, as Talleyrand said about Lafayette, but hardly accomplished anything positive.

On New Year's Eve 1999, Boris Yeltsin announced his resignation. He felt he could leave, because at long last Russia's economic reforms had been successfully completed. His big mistake, however, was to pass on power to a mediocre lieutenant-colonel in the KGB,

who had been such a failure that he had ended up in the reserve in St. Petersburg.

The 1990s comprised Russia's heroic decade. Boris Yeltsin announced his market economic reforms in October 1991. Chief reformer Yegor Gaidar liberalized prices and trade, rendering Russia a normal market economy by 1994. Minister of Privatization Anatoly Chubais privatized so successfully that no less than 70 percent of GDP pertained to the private sector by 1997.

Resistance to Reform

In spite of extraordinary efforts by the reformers, the resistance against financial stabilization prevailed. State

enterprise managers insisted on large enterprise subsidies. So did oligarchs, who also favored a large budget deficit to boost treasury bill yields. The regional governors diverted federal revenues to themselves, and the communists favored large public expenditures and a big budget deficit.

Because of this political resistance, Russia had an average budget deficit of 9 percent of GDP from 1993 until 1998, which inevitably led to Russia's horrendous financial crash in August 1998, with both a default on treasury bills and a huge devaluation. Half of Russia's banks went out of business.

At the time, many foresaw that Russia's experiment with a market economy was over. In reality, however, Russia's financial crash completed its market economic transformation. It taught the Russian elite that it could no longer fool around with public finances. Since 2000, Russia has had a sound budget surplus.

Russia Avoids Budget Deficits

How did this happen? First, the default forced vital fiscal reforms upon the country. As no financing but tax revenues was available any longer, the budget deficit had to be eliminated. From 1997 until 2000, the government slashed public expenditures by 14 percent of GDP. Russia's political inability to balance its budget disappeared because the only alternative was hyperinflation, which nobody wanted. All arguments about the impossibility of reducing public expenditures fell by the wayside. Enterprise subsidies of little or no social benefit were eliminated, which also leveled the playing field for Russian business.

Second, the financial crash reinforced central state power. The federal government could eliminate barter by insisting on cash payments. A new aggressive bankruptcy law imposed hard budget constraints on enterprises. Arrears of pension and state wages dwindled. The monetization also leveled the playing field. As a result, many enterprises changed ownership, which revived them. Typically, old managers were forced to sell to hungry young entrepreneurs at rock-bottom prices.

Third, the Primakov government continued the tax war on the oligarchs that the reformers had launched in 1997–98, and the newly strengthened state could beat the weakened oligarchs. The government started applying the tax laws to big enterprises, especially the oil and gas companies, which had previously enjoyed individually-negotiated taxes.

Fourth, the regional governors were also weakened by the financial crash. As a result, the federal government could undertake a radical centralization of revenues to the federal government from the regions. Federal revenues almost doubled as a share of GDP from 1998 to 2002, while total state revenues were close to con-

stant. With the devaluation, foreign trade taxes, which were valued in foreign currency, increased sharply.

The financial stabilization, monetization, and devaluation were the main catalysts behind Russia's high and steady growth of nearly 7 percent a year from 1999. All the main requirements of economic growth that Gaidar had formulated were finally in place: "macroeconomic stability and low, predictable rates of inflation, an open economy plus access to promising markets, clear-cut guarantees of property rights and a respectable level of financial liability, high levels of individual savings and investments, and effective programs to aid the poor and to maintain political stability."

Putin Benefits from Existing Policies

At this moment in time, a previously unknown actor named Vladimir Putin entered the stage and received all the laurels for the excellent economic results that had already arrived. Cause and effect are rarely simultaneous, and in the case of a profound systemic change we would expect the time between cause and effect to be especially long. Putin is often praised for these achievements, but the financial stabilization was undertaken in 1998–99, before Putin became prime minister, and Russia was already growing fast. Putin was lucky to arrive at a laid table.

When Putin became president in 2000, he spoke of democracy, but his actions made clear that his endeavor was to build an authoritarian state. Yet, he continued the "second generation" market economic reforms that had been formulated in 1996–97, and thanks to his newly-won parliamentary majority he could legislate them as Yeltsin never could. The three years 2000–02 were characterized by substantial progressive economic reforms.

Most impressive was the comprehensive, radical tax reform. The progressive personal income tax peaking at 30 percent was replaced with a flat income tax of 13 percent as of 2001. The corporate profit tax was reduced in 2001 from 35 to 24 percent. Far more important was that most ordinary business costs became deductible, leveling the playing field. The social taxes were cut from a flat rate of 39.5 percent of the payroll to an average rate of 26 percent. Tax collection was unified in one agency. Small-scale tax violations were decriminalized. The tax reforms reduced the threat to businessmen posed by tax inspection.

Russia finally woke up to its need for small and medium-sized enterprises. They were subdued by a madness of red tape and bureaucratic harassment. Registration, licensing and standardization were simplified, and inspections were restricted. This broad effort at deregulation improved the situation, and the amelioration has proved sustainable. The number of officially

registered enterprises has steadily increased by more than 7 percent a year, and by 2006 the total number of registered enterprises in Russia had reached almost 5 million, quite a respectable number. Still, the patriarchic surveillance system remains in place, and more radical deregulation is needed.

The privatization of agricultural land was the last ideological barrier to break. On July 24, 2002, the Duma finally legalized the sale of agricultural land as well. It was a compromise, requiring each region to adopt a law to make the federal law effective. As a consequence, communist regions could withhold agricultural land from sale, while more liberal regions allowed land sales to proceed. In practice, the private ownership of agricultural land developed only gradually, and good connections with regional governors were vital for land purchases. Yet, this last communist taboo was broken.

Reforms Shut Down

By 2002, Putin had established himself as a credible authoritarian reformer in the line of General Pinochet and Lee Kuan Yew. In 2003, however, his economic policy changed track. His reforms, which were only half-way, came to a screeching halt. The signal event was the confiscation of the Yukos oil company.

In 2003, Yukos was Russia's largest and most successful company. Putin clamped down on it for primarily two reasons. He wanted to emasculate Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the most independent and outspoken of the big businessmen, and his collaborators wanted to seize Yukos' lucrative assets cheaply. Putin met repeatedly with foreign portfolio investors to reassure them that Yukos would not be confiscated, expropriated or nationalized, but that was exactly what happened.

The Yukos affair started a wave of re-nationalization. State enterprises have been buying big, good private companies either at a high price in a voluntary deal, which is accompanied with rumors about sizable kickbacks, or the sale is forced and the price is low. No economic rationale is evident in any single case. The most likely purpose of re-nationalization is corruption, while ideological motives are conspicuously absent. Two of the most aggressive predators, Rosneft and VTB, sold their shares to private foreign investors in large international initial public offerings (IPOs) in London in 2006 and 2007, respectively.

The Russian re-nationalization has had a limited, but negative impact on the economy, which is most evident in oil and gas production, banking, and machine building. Fortunately, two-thirds of the Russian economy is still in private hands, including the metals, retail trade, and construction sectors. The aggregate indicator that has suffered the most is investment, with Russia's

official investment ratio remaining rather low despite the economic boom

Liberal leader Boris Nemtsov commented upon the re-nationalization: "It is offensive that under Putin the state has taken on the role of plunderer and racketeer with an appetite that grows with each successive conquest.... But the greatest calamity is that nobody is allowed to utter a word in protest regarding all this. 'Keep quiet,' the authorities seem to say, 'or things will go worse for you. This is none of your business.'"

Oil Prices Leap

In 2004, international oil prices took off, filling the Russian state treasury and boosting its international reserves. Russian exports started skyrocketing, mainly because of the rising commodity prices. The consequence in Russia, however, was not a higher growth rate but aggravated repression, corruption, re-nationalization and all economic reforms stalled. During his last five years in office, President Putin has not undertaken any reform worth mentioning.

Putin has effectively condoned corruption among his friends, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that everything is for sale in Russia. People pay bribes to enter university, to escape military service, to stay out of prison, and to land a good job. Until the late 1990s, the selling of top offices was not an issue, but by 2004 it had become endemic.

Until October 2007, Putin maintained impressive fiscal discipline with budget surpluses every year from 2000. Then, all of a sudden, he seems to have lost his nerve. In the midst of rising inflation, he abandoned that achievement as well, allowing a budget surplus of 8 percent of GDP during the first ten months of 2007 to turn into a deficit of 10 percent of GDP in November. By January, inflation had surged to 12.6 percent. The Russian government needs to return to its prior excellent fiscal policies to cool the economy down.

When Putin became president in 2000, he promised that Russia would join the World Trade Organization by 2003, but it is not likely to join even this year because Putin has allowed various protectionist interests to override Russia's national interest. This stands out as one of his most spectacular failures.

Russia in Crisis

Even worse is that male life expectancy in Russia is stuck at the miserable level of 60 years of age. Russian men are drinking themselves to death, and the government is not lifting a finger. All state systems are in crisis: health care, education, law enforcement, and the military. Russia's public infrastructure has been so neglected that Moscow's traffic has repeatedly come to a complete halt for six hours.

In naming him man of the year, *Time* magazine praised Putin for the stability he had brought to the country, but what stability? Russia's murder rate has been higher under Putin than under Yeltsin and is currently four times higher than in the U.S. The change is not in reality but in its presentation thanks to the ubiquitous censorship that Putin has imposed.

In short, what remains of Putin's economic legacy is only that he was lucky to reap the benefits from the arduous, but productive reforms his predecessor instigated in the 1990s. This analysis comes to the same

conclusions as Vladimir Milov and Boris Nemtsov's report "Putin: Results."

In spite of its abundant oil revenues, Russia's growth record puts the country in 12th place among the 15 former Soviet republics since 1999, which is not very impressive. Putin's unproductive two-term presidency leaves a huge backlog of reforms that can no longer be ignored, and the greatest worry is that Putin will remain prime minister. Can Russia really afford to keep Putin in a senior position any longer?

About the author

Anders Åslund is a senior fellow of the Peterson Institute for International Economics and is the author of *Russia's Capitalist Revolution: Why Market Reform Succeeded and Democracy Failed*.

Suggested reading:

Vladimir Milov and Boris Nemtsov, "Putin: Itogi [Putin: Results]," <http://grani.ru/Politics/m.133236.html#9>

Opinion Poll

Putin's Russia: the Years 2000–2007 in the Eyes of the Population

Source: Opinion polls of the Levada Center conducted on 20–23 November 2007 <http://www.levada.ru/press/2007120703.html>

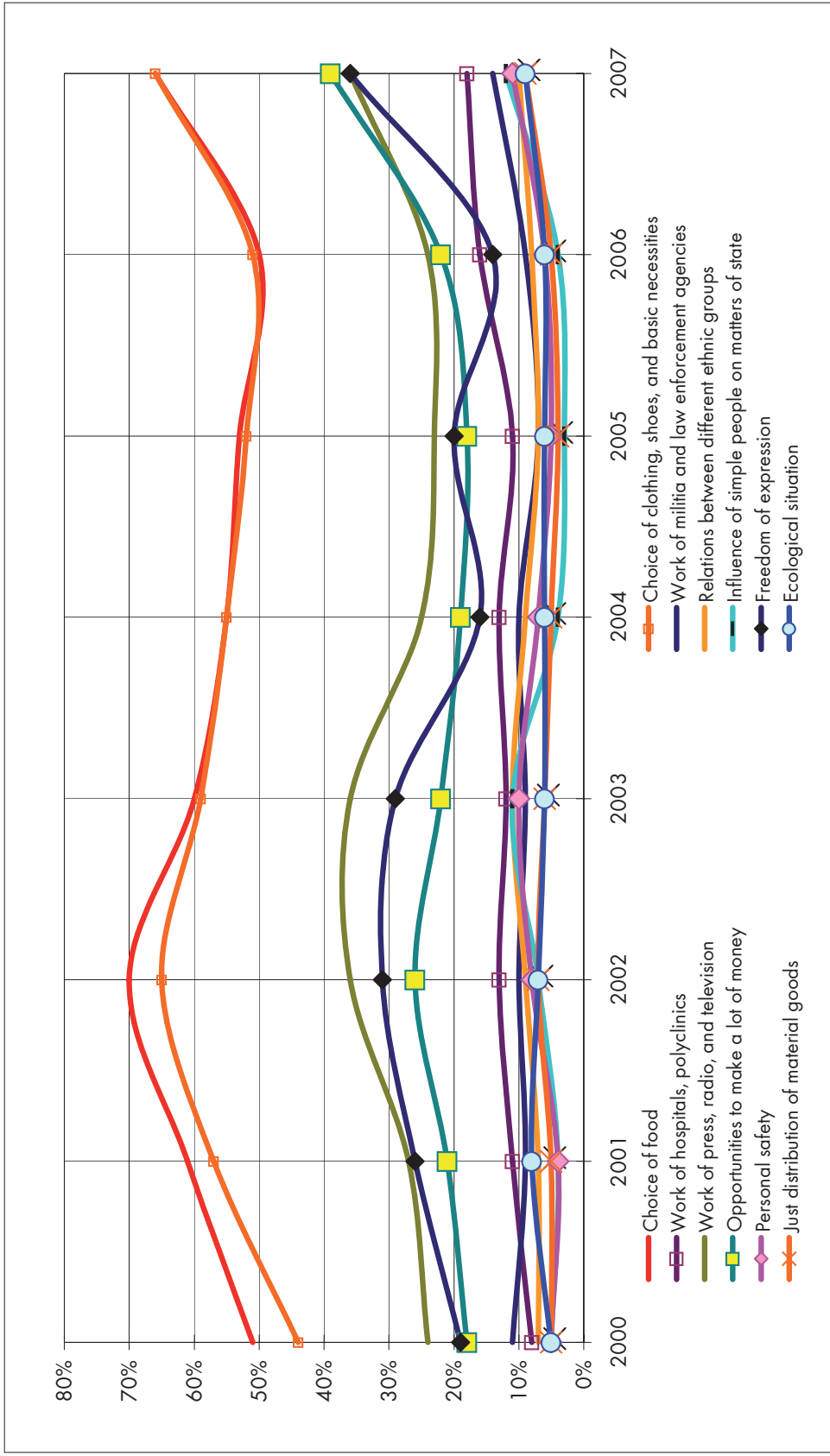
In Each Year, How Has the Situation Concerning ... Changed?

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
... the choice of food								
The situation has changed for the better	51%	61%	70%	60%	55%	53%	50%	66%
The situation has changed for the worse	6%	7%	8%	9%	7%	7%	9%	9%
The situation has not changed	40%	30%	22%	30%	37%	38%	38%	23%
No answer	3%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%
... the choice of clothing, shoes, and basic necessities								
The situation has changed for the better	44%	57%	65%	59%	55%	52%	51%	66%
The situation has changed for the worse	8%	8%	10%	9%	8%	7%	8%	8%
The situation has not changed	43%	31%	23%	29%	36%	38%	36%	23%
No answer	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%	4%	2%
... the work of hospitals, polyclinics								
The situation has changed for the better	8%	11%	13%	12%	13%	11%	16%	18%
The situation has changed for the worse	45%	52%	50%	45%	39%	41%	30%	47%
The situation has not changed	40%	32%	33%	37%	39%	40%	46%	29%
No answer	7%	6%	5%	6%	8%	8%	9%	6%
... the work of militia and law enforcement agencies								
The situation has changed for the better	11%	9%	10%	9%	10%	7%	9%	14%
The situation has changed for the worse	30%	40%	41%	36%	29%	35%	25%	39%
The situation has not changed	48%	40%	38%	40%	46%	45%	51%	36%
No answer	11%	11%	11%	14%	15%	13%	15%	11%

In Each Year, How Has the Situation Concerning ... Changed? (Continued)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
... the work of press, radio, and television								
The situation has changed for the better	24%	27%	36%	36%	25%	23%	24%	36%
The situation has changed for the worse	16%	21%	24%	15%	19%	19%	14%	18%
The situation has not changed	52%	42%	36%	39%	50%	51%	53%	37%
No answer	8%	10%	5%	10%	6%	7%	9%	9%
... the relations between different ethnic groups								
The situation has changed for the better	7%	7%	9%	11%	9%	7%	8%	10%
The situation has changed for the worse	37%	44%	53%	41%	41%	40%	39%	49%
The situation has not changed	48%	40%	34%	38%	43%	45%	44%	33%
No answer	8%	9%	5%	10%	7%	8%	9%	8%
... the opportunities to make a lot of money								
The situation has changed for the better	18%	21%	26%	22%	19%	18%	22%	39%
The situation has changed for the worse	25%	32%	36%	35%	37%	35%	26%	28%
The situation has not changed	46%	35%	31%	35%	37%	39%	45%	24%
No answer	11%	13%	8%	8%	7%	8%	8%	9%
... the influence of simple people on matters of state								
The situation has changed for the better	5%	4%	7%	11%	4%	3%	4%	12%
The situation has changed for the worse	27%	37%	36%	25%	33%	32%	23%	30%
The situation has not changed	60%	48%	49%	54%	55%	56%	61%	48%
No answer	9%	11%	9%	11%	9%	10%	12%	11%
... personal safety								
The situation has changed for the better	5%	4%	8%	10%	7%	5%	6%	11%
The situation has changed for the worse	41%	55%	57%	47%	50%	44%	33%	44%
The situation has not changed	49%	36%	31%	37%	37%	45%	53%	38%
No answer	5%	6%	4%	6%	6%	5%	7%	8%
... freedom of expression								
The situation has changed for the better	19%	26%	31%	29%	16%	20%	14%	36%
The situation has changed for the worse	18%	19%	20%	15%	18%	17%	13%	17%
The situation has not changed	56%	45%	42%	48%	58%	55%	62%	39%
No answer	8%	11%	7%	8%	8%	8%	11%	9%
... the just distribution of material goods								
The situation has changed for the better	5%	5%	7%	6%	5%	4%	5%	9%
The situation has changed for the worse	40%	51%	48%	42%	43%	44%	36%	46%
The situation has not changed	47%	32%	37%	43%	44%	42%	48%	32%
No answer	9%	12%	8%	9%	8%	10%	10%	13%
... the ecological situation								
The situation has changed for the better	5%	8%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	9%
The situation has changed for the worse	52%	56%	60%	61%	54%	59%	48%	63%
The situation has not changed	36%	27%	29%	28%	35%	31%	39%	22%
No answer	7%	10%	4%	5%	6%	4%	7%	6%

What Has Changed in the Following Areas?
(Proportion of Respondents Who Assume that the Situation Has Improved)



Analysis

Putin's Foreign Policy Legacy

By Edward Lucas, London

Abstract

Russian foreign policy is now focused on business rather than ideology, military power, or territorial expansion. However, Russia feels that the West has betrayed promises made by expanding NATO and Vladimir Putin decided to stop seeking friendly relations in 2006. Instead Moscow has tried to build up its relationship in the Muslim world, though these countries mainly see Russia as a counter to the USA and a possible source of weapons. Russia has also sought to work with China in building a "World Without the West." However, Russia and China are rivals in the battle for influence in Central Asia. In these conditions, the West would do best to confront Russia sooner rather than later.

Russians See NATO Betrayal

Russia has dropped three Soviet attributes from its foreign policy: a messianic ideology, raw military power and the imperative of territorial expansion. Instead comes the idea that, as Dmitri Trenin, a well-connected foreign-policy expert, puts it: "Russia's business is business." That has special weight, he argues, because the people who rule Russia also own it. Stitching up world energy markets with other big producers, or finding customers for Russian weapons and raw materials, are much more interesting than the nuances of the Middle East peace process or the endless woes of the Balkans. In short, bad politics is bad for business. Capitalism is integrating Russia ever more deeply into the outside world, and surely making political conflicts less likely, not more. So what is going on? The Kremlin's explanation goes like this. The West takes Russia for granted, swallows concessions and offers only snubs in return. Russia abandoned the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, on the strict understanding that NATO would not expand to the former Warsaw Pact countries.

Yet that is exactly what happened. Far from winding up, or staying as a backstop security organization, NATO started offensive operations for the first time in its history, intervening in ex-Yugoslavia to bomb Serbia, a traditional Russian ally. That cold shoulder during the 1990s demoralized the pro-Westerners in the Yeltsin Kremlin. Now, at least in some Russian eyes, the West has treated Mr. Putin equally shabbily. In 2006, a former top Kremlin aide, Aleksandr Voloshin, went on a semi-official mission to explain Russia's frustration to American decision-makers, outlining what Mr. Putin had done since September 11, 2001. This included offering unprecedented intelligence and security cooperation against militant Islamism, closing the two main overseas bases inherited from the Soviet Union and allowing America to use air bases in Central Asia to support

the attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan. All that, Mr. Voloshin argued, had exposed Mr. Putin to sharp criticism from hawks in the Kremlin. He had assured them that a bold gesture to America would pay dividends. But instead, America continued to interfere in Russia's backyard, stoking popular revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, bringing the Baltic states into NATO and talking about new bases in Eastern Europe.

The arguments got nowhere. Though the Kremlin insists that NATO expansion is encirclement, a better way of looking at it is that Russia has willfully cut itself off from the European mainstream. Switzerland and Austria are entirely surrounded by NATO members, but do not worry that they are encircled. NATO has in fact done rather little – too little in the view of some of its new members – to counter Russian muscle-flexing. Most of the new members are militarily weak, and struggle to meet their NATO commitments. The alliance's work in Eastern Europe is mainly based on strengthening its members' ability to work with each other in joint training and peacekeeping. The truth is that so long as the Kremlin insists on seeing NATO as an enemy, it strengthens the case for bringing vulnerable ex-communist countries into the alliance. In the early 1990s, that was off the agenda. Joining NATO was seen as too expensive by the potential applicants, and too destabilizing by the alliance's policymakers. But Russia never seemed to understand why its former satellite countries might be worried about their security. By protesting loudly that NATO enlargement was provocative and "impermissible" (a favorite word in the Russian diplomatic lexicon), the Kremlin ensured that the applicants' desire grew stronger and more urgent; it also became morally all but impossible for existing NATO members to turn them away. The Kremlin may dislike this development. But it has only itself to blame for it.

Russia Turns from West

Some Westerners may find it mildly offensive that their support for security, freedom and justice in ex-communist countries, and attempts to prevent genocide in Bosnia and Kosovo, are dismissed as nothing more than self-interested geopolitics. Such arguments seem to make no impact, however: in 2006 Mr. Putin apparently decided that it was pointless trying to maintain a warm friendship with the West. Instead, Russia would have to gain respect by talking, and acting, toughly. That has some risks. Russia is now increasingly seen in the rich industrialized world as an authoritarian state that hangs out with international pariahs. Secondly, fear of Russia may make the Euroatlantic glue stickier. For the first time since the end of the old Cold War, it is now possible to argue that America and Europe need each other in the face of a Russian threat. But Kremlin cheerleaders do not see it that way. They argue that the world is changing: America and Europe may have put Russia in the deep freeze, but much larger countries such as India, Brazil, Mexico and Indonesia, all respectably free and law-governed, have not. America may be rich now, but developing countries, where Russia is much more popular, have brighter prospects. American hegemony, in short, is history.

The tactics are increasingly clear and effective. But the goal is still puzzling. The short-term wish list is clear: recognition of Russia's primacy in the former Soviet empire; the energy "Finlandisation" of Europe; and international parity of esteem, a seat, *de facto* or *de jure*, at the Western top tables. But these wishes are incompatible: bullying the Balts pretty much precludes a friendly reception in Brussels or Washington, DC. If anything, it guarantees a series of embarrassing public snubs. The Kremlin may be assuming that the West will eventually abandon its new allies, or that they will become indefensible by their own efforts. But pending a split in the West, or its surrender, Russia's choice is a stark one. It can drop its pretensions to empire and its peculiar version of history, in which case it can move sharply closer to the EU and NATO. Or it can go down the route of independent foreign policy, either in alliance with the Muslim world or with China.

Seeking Ties in the Muslim World

The Kremlin is certainly making an effort to restore at least some of its Soviet-era clout in the Muslim world, to some extent on the basis of "my enemy's enemy is my friend." If America identifies Iran as part of the "axis of evil" then that kick-starts Russian goodwill. Russia joined the Islamic Conference Organization as an observer in 2005 and Mr. Putin attended its 2003 conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where, amid anti-Semitic tirades from some of the other participants,

he described Russia as Islam's "historical defender." Unlike almost all Western countries, Russia is prepared to talk to radical Islamist movements such as Hamas and Hezbollah. As Aleksei Malashenko of the Moscow Carnegie Center argues, the Kremlin approach seems to be to draw a rather arbitrary (indeed, probably fictional) line between "good" and "bad" Islamic militants: the "bad" are the Chechen separatists and their allies in the North Caucasus and Tatarstan. The "good" are the ones who tweak America's nose. That echoes faintly the Soviet Union's attitude from twenty-five years earlier: "good" Muslims attacked Israel and America. "Bad" ones attacked the Soviet boys in Afghanistan.

Perhaps aware of the contradiction, the Kremlin tries to keep a little distance from Hamas and the like: they are welcomed warmly in Moscow by pro-Kremlin ideologues and propagandists, but not by senior Kremlin figures themselves. Aleksandr Prokhanov, editor of the "red-brown" *Zavtra* (Tomorrow), congratulated the Hamas leader Khaled Mashal "with all his heart" on the movement's victory in the Palestinian territory elections. Yet the same newspaper is an ardent supporter of the most ruthless tactics against Chechen rebels. Russia's engagement, such as it is, does not seem to have nudged either Hamas or Iran into a more moderate position.

From a Muslim viewpoint, Russia's flirtation with the Islamic world is seen, rightly, as opportunist. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (plus support for the American attack on the Taliban in 2001), two wars in Chechnya and strong support for the Milosevic regime's harsh stance towards Muslim populations in Kosovo and Bosnia make it hard to regard Russia as a serious ally for the Islamic world. Muslims appreciate Russia as a counterweight to American influence, and as a possible source of useful weapons (officially or unofficially). But it goes no further.

Building a Partnership with China

The Chinese option, at least in comparison, looks more attractive. The "strategic partnership" between Russia and China is one of the big achievements of the Putin years in foreign policy. A long-standing squabble over the border has been settled. Worries about illegal migration (overblown in the Yeltsin years, but widely believed) have calmed down. Trade with China has more than tripled since Mr. Putin came into the Kremlin. China has invested \$500 million in Rosneft, the Kremlin's oil subsidiary, and Russia has agreed to build an ambitious gas pipeline to China. Both countries share a strong dislike of Western universalist values and a belief that economic growth and stability are preferable to imported notions of freedom. The Kremlin's home-grown ideology of "sovereign democracy" and China's nominal

“communism” have a lot in common: horror of instability, nationalism, and a belief that the proof of the authoritarian pudding is in the eating. The message, crudely, is “who needs your kind of democracy when we have our kind of growth.”

Based on such similarities in worldview, it is possible to see Russia and China as two pillars of what some have called the “World without the West,” or WWW. The WWW is strictly pragmatic, shuns idealistic political approaches (which it sees as hypocritical) and detests outside interference in other countries’ affairs. It is the antithesis of the American idea of liberal internationalism: that intervening to prevent genocide, say, is not just the right but the duty of a civilized country. The WWW favors state-dominated market economies, where the heights of political and economic power converge. Yet it is not the embodiment of a comprehensive rejection of the West, so to speak an “anti-West”: it wants economic cooperation with the advanced industrialized world, particularly in order to catch up in technology and education.

The most practical expression of the WWW is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an outfit that creates a potentially formidable new security axis between Russia, China and Central Asia. In 2007 this started to develop a strong military component in the organization: its summit in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek in August 2007 was marked by ten days of joint military exercises in Chelyabinsk in the Urals and Urumqi in Chinese Turkestan. These were the SCO’s biggest military exercises; the first time that Chinese airborne forces have taken part in such military drills abroad; and the first time that Russian forces have exercised in China. The end was observed by the six defense ministers of the SCO core members: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The SCO is linked to Russia’s answer to NATO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This has the same five ex-Soviet members, plus Armenia and Belarus, creating an embryonic security sphere that stretches from the Arctic to the South China Sea, and from the Bering Strait to the Polish border. Mr. Putin says any comparison between the SCO and the old Warsaw Pact is “idle talk” and “improper either in content or form.” But the fact remains that a big anti-Western alliance, however loose, is taking shape.

It is one thing to agree on anti-American positions, another to agree who is the top dog in a shared backyard. Russia may have invented the SCO, but China clearly thinks of itself as the natural leader, by virtue

of its size and economic weight. Russia and China may be partners in keeping America out of Central Asia, but they are also rivals there. Within the region, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan each want to be the leader. China has been strenuously trying to do its own bilateral gas deals with Turkmenistan (not an SCO member) and with Kazakhstan (which is). That threatens Russian interests. The biggest problem is that Russians’ old-fashioned zero-sum geopolitical thinking makes it hard to conceive of a deep strategic alliance with anyone. China’s huge population and shortage of natural resources (coal aside) are a painful contrast to Russia’s demographic collapse and mineral-rich eastern regions. As a result, the two countries may make common cause, but they are not natural allies. The sharp-witted Andrei Piontkovsky calls the notion “an alliance between a rabbit and a boa constrictor.”

Confrontation Inevitable

That leaves Russia stuck. It is too weak to have a truly effective independent foreign policy, but it is too disgruntled and neurotic to have a sensible and constructive one. It wants to be respected, trusted and liked, but will not act in a way that gains respect, nurtures trust or wins affection. It settles for being noticed – even when that comes as a result of behavior that alienates and intimidates other countries. It compensates for real weakness by showing pretend strength. Little of that – advanced weapons sales to rogue regimes aside – immediately threatens global peace and security. In that sense, the New Cold War is less scary than the old one. But Russia’s behavior is alarming, uncomfortable and damaging, both to its own interests and to those of other countries. And the trajectory is worrying.

If Russia becomes still richer and still more authoritarian, all the problems described above will be harder to deal with, not easier. Russia’s influence in the West will be stronger; the willingness to confront it less. The former satellite countries will be even more vulnerable; the economic levers even better positioned. In other words, if the West does not start winning the New Cold War while it can, it will find it much harder in the future. The price of a confrontation now may be economic pain and political uncertainty. But it still offers the chance of a new relationship with Russia based on realism rather than sentiment, and tough-mindedness rather than wishful thinking. The price later will be higher – perhaps so high that the West will no longer be able to pay it.

About the author:

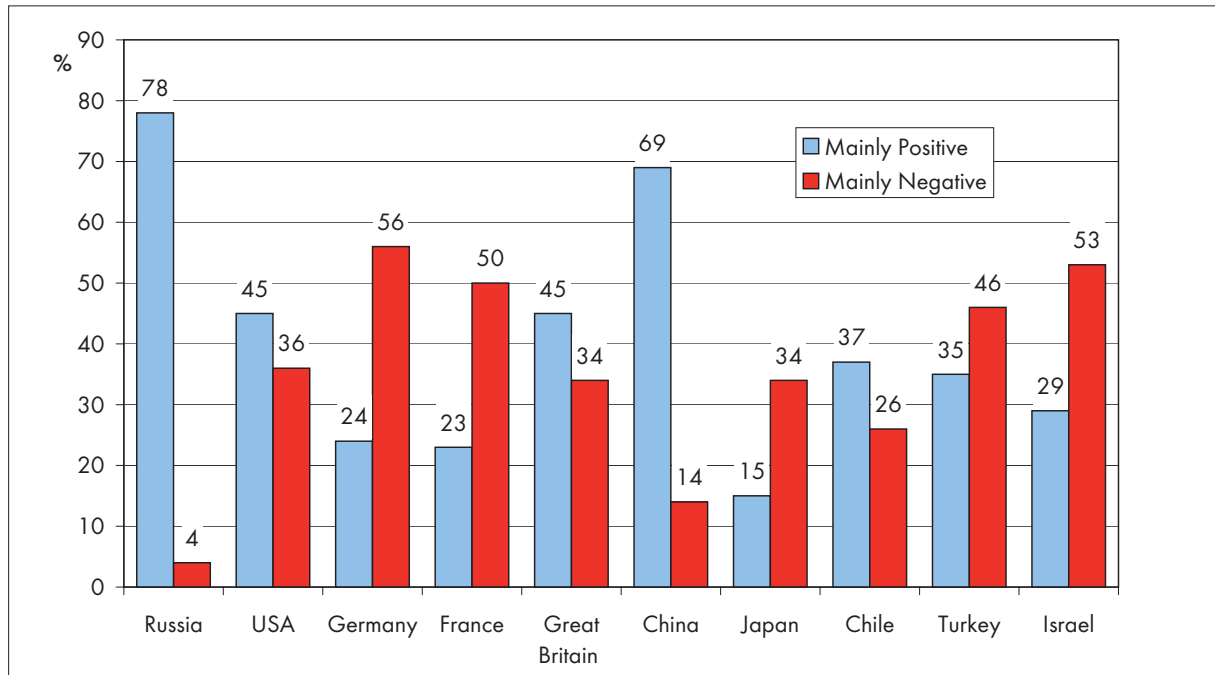
Edward Lucas is the Central and Eastern Europe correspondent for *The Economist*. This article is adapted from his new book, *The New Cold War*, published in America by Palgrave and in the UK by Bloomsbury, www.edwardlucas.com.

Opinion Poll

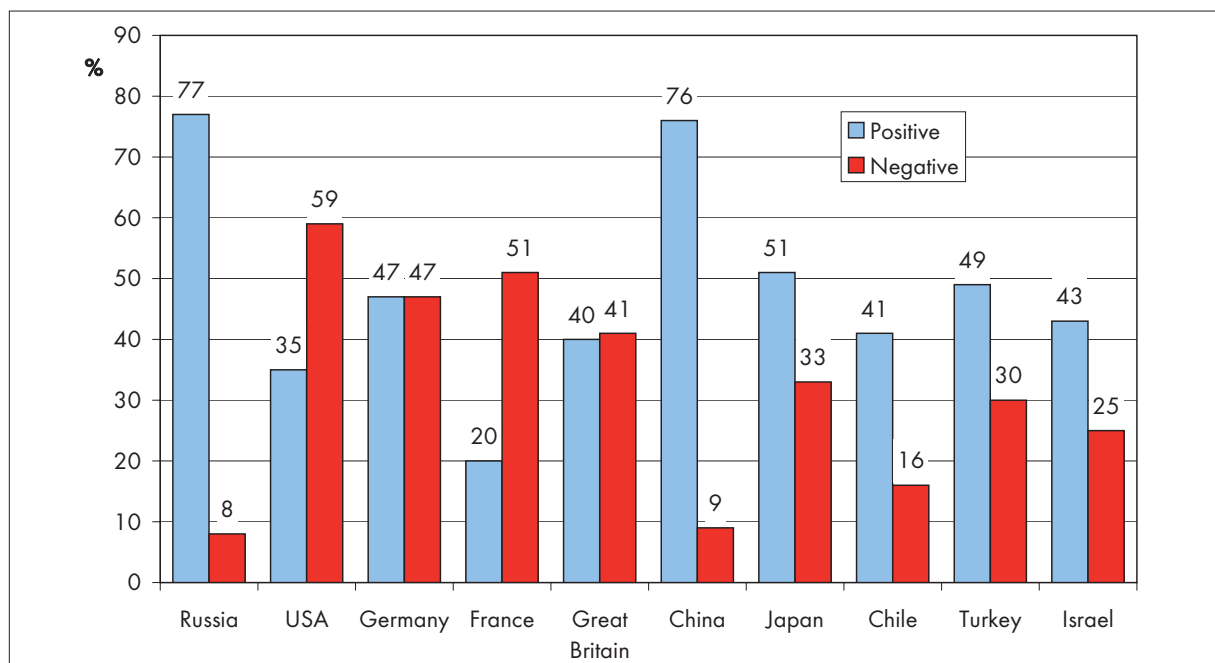
**The World's View on Putin's Russia.
Results of an International Opinion Poll**

Source: BBC World Service Poll (December 2007), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/feb08/BBCPutin_Feb08_rpt.pdf

Influence of Russia in the World

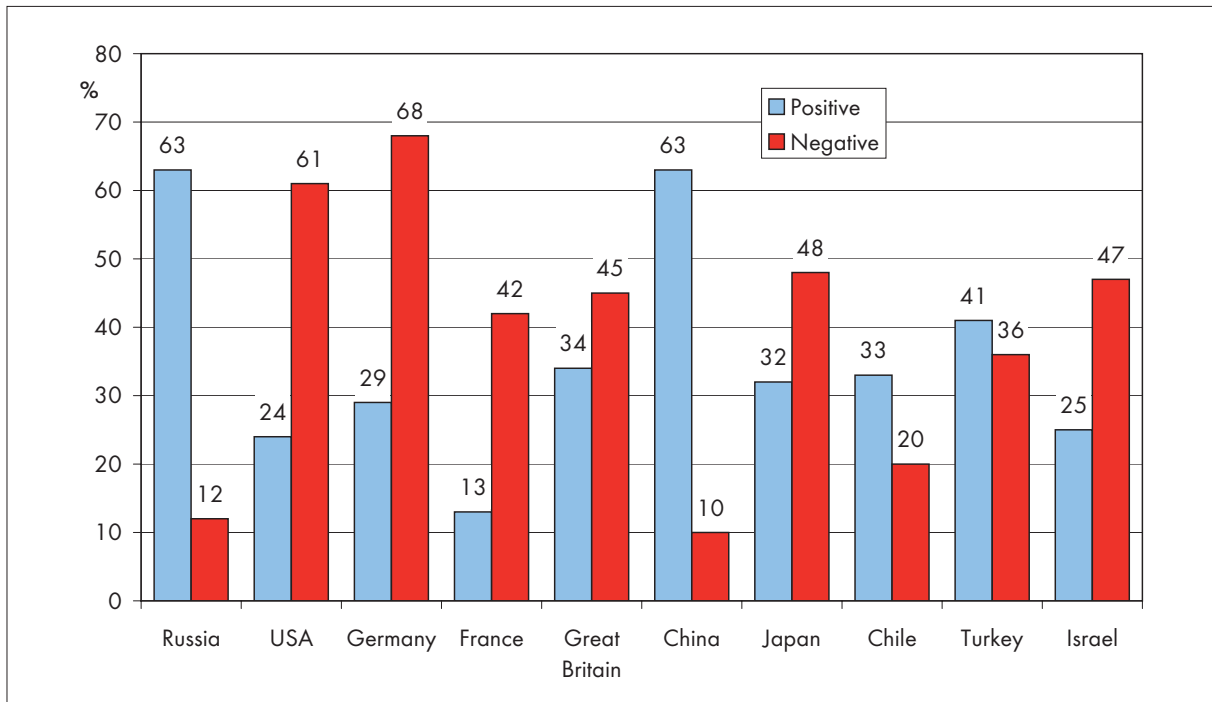


Influence of President Putin's Leadership on the Quality of Life in Russia



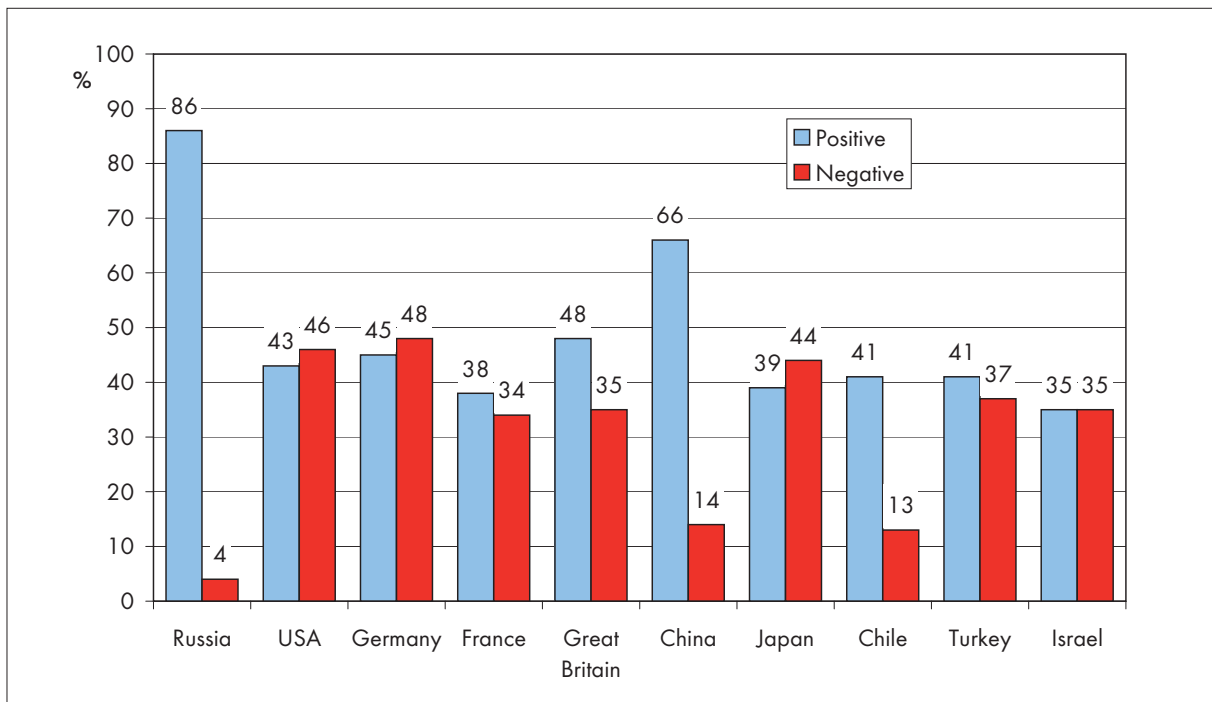
* Positive answers including "very positive" and "somewhat positive". Negative answers including "very negative" and "somewhat negative".

Influence of President Putin's Leadership on Democracy and Human Rights in Russia



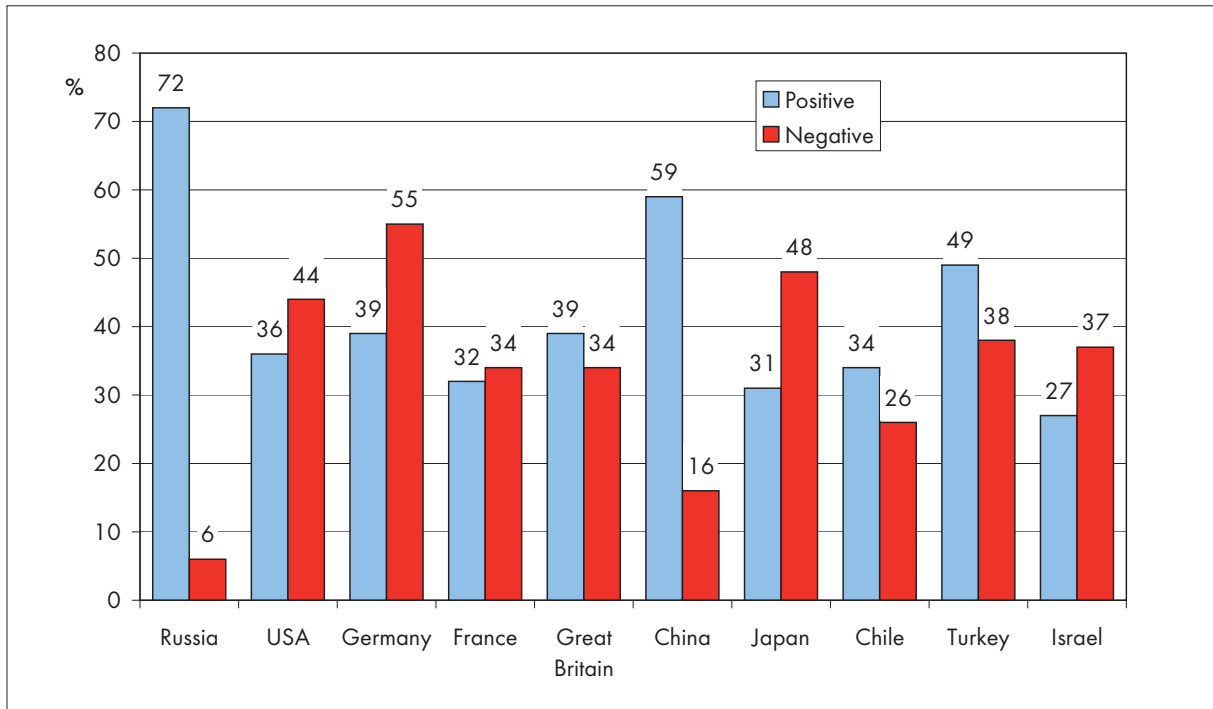
* Positive answers including "very positive" and "somewhat positive". Negative answers including "very negative" and "somewhat negative".

Influence of President Putin's Leadership on Russia's Overall Relations with Other Countries



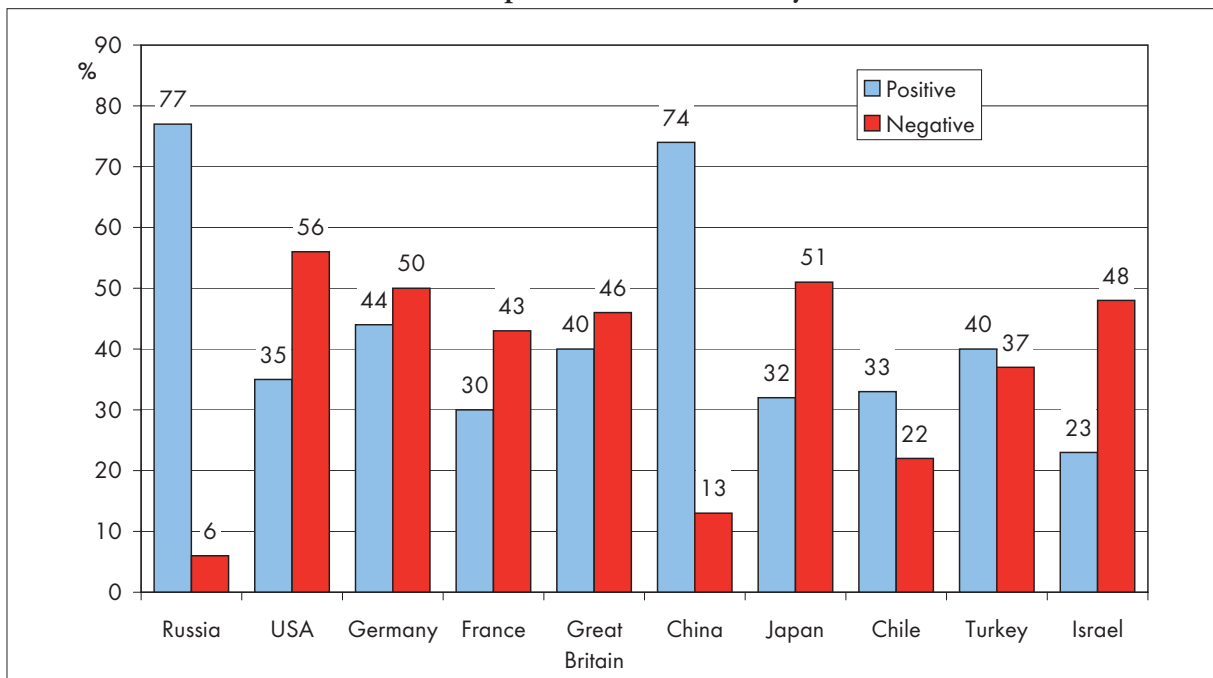
* Positive answers including "very positive" and "somewhat positive". Negative answers including "very negative" and "somewhat negative".

Influence of President Putin's Leadership on Russia's Reliability as a Supplier of Energy to Other Countries



* Positive answers including "very positive" and "somewhat positive". Negative answers including "very negative" and "somewhat negative".

Influence of President Putin's Leadership on Peace and Security in the World



* Positive answers including "very positive" and "somewhat positive". Negative answers including "very negative" and "somewhat negative".

Analysis

Vladimir Putin's Central Asian Policy 2000–08: In Search of Security and Influence

By Andrei A. Kazantsev, Moscow

Abstract

Russian policy towards Central Asia during Vladimir Putin's presidency (2000–2008) was largely driven by a desire to restore Russian influence and security concerns. The policy changed over time: In 1999–2001, Russia tried to integrate Central Asia by itself in order to guarantee regional security without the USA or EU. In 2001–2003, Russia grudgingly agreed to cooperate with the West in order to guarantee security. In the period from 2004–2008, Russia again decided to counterbalance US influence in Central Asia by pursuing a more active foreign policy and also through enhanced cooperation with non-Western players outside of the region.

Concerns about Security

Conceptually, Russian policy towards Central Asia (which includes the five post-Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) derives from a strategy formulated in Boris Yeltsin's Presidential Decree of 14 September 1995 proclaiming the reintegration of Russia's post-Soviet neighbors as a key foreign policy objective. If the underlying notion of this decree was to restore Russian influence, the documents adopted in the early Putin period, such as the National Security Concept of 10 January 2000, the Military Doctrine of 21 April 2000, and the Foreign Policy Concept of 28 June 2000 were driven more explicitly by security concerns.

The Foreign Policy Concept, for example, puts Russian relations with post-Soviet countries in the context of guaranteeing national security; in the case of Central Asia, this is especially relevant in the field of fighting international terrorism and extremism. Guaranteeing security in Central Asia was seen as the way to stabilize the situation in Russia itself, especially, in the context of the spread of international terrorism, Islamic extremism and drug trafficking to Russia's own territory. Against the background of the chaotic years under Yeltsin, bringing some order into the Russian foreign policy process and prioritizing Russian foreign policy goals was seen in all these documents as a key for guaranteeing security.

In 1999 security problems in Central Asia became acute due to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Until 2001, Russia's political class was convinced that increasing Russian influence in the region was the best way to counter this threat.

After the Taliban managed to capture most of Afghanistan's territory (some 90 percent in 1998), Central Asia became a front line region. Of the five Central Asian states, only Turkmenistan established

friendly relations with Taliban. Besides the danger of military action spreading into neighboring Central Asian states, the combination of Islamic extremism and crime in Afghanistan posed an additional threat. Afghanistan in the 1990s had become a major producer of opium poppies and one of the key trade routes of Afghan heroin was organized by contraband groups through Central Asia and Russia into Western Europe.

The Central Asians widely believed at the time that the Taliban was linked to and supported by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which had close ties to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), a connection that went back to the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The notion of alleged "US support for the Taliban" was widely used to substantiate cooperation between anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan and Russia and between Central Asian countries and Russia. In other words, the Central Asian countries perceived Russia as the only really effective ally against the Taliban and the threat that it posed to the security and stability of their countries.

After the bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the USA drastically changed its position towards the Taliban, adopting a very negative attitude toward this and other Islamist movements in the region. The Central Asian political elites, however, doubted at the time whether the USA, due to its emphasis on democracy and human rights, would be an effective ally in their own struggles against the Islamic oppositions in their own countries, which they claimed were allied with the Taliban. Russia, on the other hand, appeared to be a far better partner since the country was confronted with an Islamist problem on its own territory. The *de facto* independent Chechen republic in the Northern Caucasus harbored terrorists and religious extremists from all over Russia. During

this time, Chechnya and the Taliban even established official diplomatic relations and recognized each other's independence. Russia was the natural partner as well, because unlike the US, Russia did not make assistance dependent on democratic development and adherence to human right standards.

The Taliban's success in Afghanistan and its support and financial assistance to Al-Qaeda affected the Islamic extremist movements in Central Asia, which started to become much more active and aggressive. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), headed by Tahir Yuldashev and Juma Namangani, became the most powerful extremist force in the region. Its aim was to establish an Islamic emirate including all Central Asian states. In the autumn of 1999, IMU military forces invaded Kyrgyzstan from Tajik territory; in the autumn of 2000, an IMU force crossed over into Uzbekistan. These events alarmed the Central Asians and Russia alike. The raids showed that countries with weak state structures and where large parts of the population were alienated from politics (which was true at this time for all the Central Asian states as well as some of Russia's republics in the Islamic North Caucasus) could be threatened even by relatively small armed groups, which carry the potential to spread rapidly to all parts of the region. In both instances, Kyrgyzstan, other Central Asian countries, and Russia had to send armed forces and other resources to repel the military aggression.

Increasingly, Russia and the Central Asian states felt they were confronted with essentially the same threats. On 16 February 1999, for example, a series of terrorist acts occurred in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent presumably carried out by Islamist militants. Russia, at the same time, also experienced several brutal terrorist attacks in Moscow. Just as the IMU sought to invade Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, in August 1999, a group of several thousand Chechen fighters under the leadership of Shamil Basayev and Amir Hattab invaded Dagestan, a republic loyal to Moscow, from Chechen territory. Not only did Russia and the Central Asian states hold similar views about the threats presented by militant Islamist extremist groups, they also used similar methods of repression, and at times brutal military force, in order to suppress them – Russia's second invasion of Chechnya in September 1999 being the prime example.

Forming Alliances with Russia

The cooperation between Russia and Central Asian states against the IMU and the shared threat perception regarding the Taliban and Islamist extremist groups became the basis for the formation of a Russian-centered security system. In 1999–2002, Russia made efforts to strengthen cooperation with the Central Asian states

as well as other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The basis for this broadened cooperation in the sphere of security was the Collective Security Treaty. This treaty was signed on 15 May 1992 by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus signed the following year. Yet this treaty like other CIS treaties signed in the early 1990s was empty words on paper and Russia made vigorous attempts to strengthen and broaden the alliances by creating new international organizations including Russia and the CIS states.

On 10 October 2000 Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed "A Treaty on Establishing the Eurasian Economic Community." Now, after Uzbekistan's accession in 2005, the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) has a prevailing Central Asian character. After this new economic cooperation organization emerged, it became possible to build a new collective security organization on the basis of the old CIS Collective Security Treaty. On 7 October 2002 in Chisinau (Moldova) Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed "The Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)" and "Agreement on the Legal Status of the CSTO." Within the framework of the CSTO, Russia offered its partners arms and military training in Russia at subsidized prices. In addition, a 4,000-member Collective Rapid Response Force was created for Central Asia. The CSTO, as well as the EurAsEC, especially after Uzbekistan's return to Collective Security Treaty in 2006, have a specific Central Asian character: four out of its seven members are situated in this region.

The creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on 15 June 2001 meant the establishment of another Central Asian-focused organization. Simultaneously, members of the SCO also signed the Shanghai Convention on combating terrorism, separatism and extremism. At present, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of the SCO. However, the SCO is different from the EurAsEC and the CSCTO. The SCO is not an organization designed to reintegrate post-Soviet Central Asia around Russia. The SCO has two main sponsors that finance the lion's share of the organizations' activities: Russia and China. The Secretariat of the SCO is situated in Beijing, and the security arm – the Regional Antiterrorist Center – is in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). The two main powers within the SCO, Russia and China, frequently differ over the nature and future direction of the organization. While China would like to see the organization form a large common economic market, Russia fears increased Chinese competition in Central Asia and a reduction of the region to a supplier of raw material for China.

The Impact of 9/11

The terrorist attacks on 9/11 abruptly changed the strategic balances in Central Asia. After this event, the Russian leadership decided that sharing influence with the USA and its allies actually served the national security interests of Russia and Central Asia.

On 7 October 2001, the US launched operations against the Taliban. These attacks included extensive bombing accompanied by special operations and backing for the Northern Alliance, which Russia supported long before the US invasion. Russia's connections were established through its Central Asian allies' ethnic links to various Northern Alliance factions, especially the United Tajik Opposition and former mujahidin Ahmed Shah Masud, who was portrayed in the official Russian press as the most important ally. Russian assistance to the Northern Alliance was of great importance in enabling the USA to establish contacts with Tajik and Uzbek forces in Afghanistan opposed to the Taliban. In fact, Russia "shared" its Afghan allies with the USA. Russia's motivation to help the USA was very simple: it had a unique opportunity to destroy its worst enemies with American help.

At this time, however, Washington lacked sufficient military infrastructure in Central Asia to conduct operations in Afghanistan effectively. The American desire to establish military bases in Central Asia directly collided with Russian interests there. A substantial part of Russia's political elite feared that the stationing of American forces in the region would lead to the erosion of Russian influence. Moreover, Uzbekistan gave the US permission to use its territory for American military bases even before Russia agreed to this. This incident showed Moscow that it could not, even if it wanted, prevent an US military presence in Central Asia.

Since Russia's opposition to the stationing of US troops would only have led to tensions with its Central Asian allies, President Putin grudgingly decided to support the stationing of Western military forces. As a whole, however, Russia's political class viewed the arrival of US troops very negatively. Russia was afraid that the USA would try to "encircle" Russia with its military bases and to create a "cordon sanitaire" around Russian territory. Moreover, the majority of Russian experts believed that the Americans would stay in the region even after the end of the military operation.

Nevertheless, the US-led "anti-terrorist coalition" received permission from Russia (which was necessary according to the mechanism of the Collective Security Treaty of the CIS) and from Central Asian countries to establish bases on the territories of four Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan). Only Turkmenistan, which had good relations with the Taliban, but otherwise maintained

neutrality, did not take any part in assisting the US. Especially important for the US anti-terrorist operation were two countries: Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In Kyrgyzstan, Washington established a military airbase at Ganci near Bishkek's international airport Manas. In Uzbekistan, the Americans established their airbase at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) in the Kashkadarya region in the south of the country.

With the stationing of American forces in Central Asia, Moscow's worst fears materialized. In Moscow's view, Russia's readiness to share influence with the USA did not serve its national interests in any tangible way. In fact, Russia saw its political influence in the region quickly eroding. Parallel to the stationing of US troops and growing Western influence in the region, some of the Central Asian states also sought to shake off their dependency on Russia. Uzbekistan, for example, whose leadership aspired to a leading political role in Central Asia, came forward with an initiative to reform the Central Asian Economic Community and to turn it into a major regional political organization without Russian participation. A respective treaty on establishing a new international body, the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), was signed on 28 February 2002 in Almaty (Kazakhstan).

At the same time, Russia saw its interests also threatened in Turkmenistan. After an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Turkmen president Saparmurat Niyazov, all Russian-speakers were practically expelled from the country. Tajikistan, which was up to this point fully dependent on Russia for its security, also sought to lessen its dependency when it allowed the stationing of US military troops. In April 2003, Russia-Tajik talks started on the modalities of the withdrawal of Russian border guards from the Tajik-Afghan border. By 2005, Russian border guards transferred the responsibility for securing the Tajik-Afghan border to Tajik authorities and left the country. Only small groups of advisors from the Russian border guard service and FSB remain in the country (as well as a Russian military base situated far from the border). The absence of Russian border guards resulted in a rapid increase in drug trafficking along the Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Russia-Western Europe route.

Russia Reasserts its Influence

The hopes of Russian and Central Asian political elites for a new stability did not materialize. Already in 2003–04 the Taliban regrouped its forces and started a partisan war in the south of Afghanistan and the north-west section of Pakistan. Warlords actively involved in the drug trade controlled North Afghanistan. The aspirations of Central Asian countries to secure substantial Western assistance turned out to be unrealistic since the USA was preoccupied with Iraq. Moreover,

the United States government, through various NGOs and independent foundations, actively supported political opposition groups in the individual Central Asian countries. Moreover, they continued their criticism of Central Asian regimes' human rights policies. Central Asian political elites perceived these actions as "undermining stability" and once again shifted their sympathies towards Russia.

This shift was supported by the negative reaction of Central Asian and Russian leaders to the series of "color revolutions," which several CIS states experienced during 2003–2005. The Russian political class saw in these revolutions a "Western assault" on Russian interests. Moreover, all post-Soviet political elites, including Central Asian ones, feared that they would lose power as a result of possible "color revolutions" in their respective countries. In this situation, Central Asian leaders decided that good relations with Russia would be a guarantee for preventing "color revolutions" in their countries.

Thus, there was again a change of paradigm in Russia's approach towards the region. Russia decided that preserving its interests in the region and maintaining security and stability meant increasing Russian influence and containing US influence. In order to minimize Western influence, Russia favored the increase of China's or even Iran's influence in order to counterbalance the US.

"Color revolutions" indeed reached some of the Central Asian and Caspian states, yet the outcome of these revolutions was different than in Georgia or Ukraine. In March 2005 Kyrgyz president Askar Akaev, who had earned a reputation as the most pro-Western and liberal leader in the region, was ousted during the so-called "tulip revolution." The government which replaced Akaev turned out to be much less liberal and more pro-Russian than the previous one, however.

In May 2005 there was a mass rebellion under Islamic slogans in the Uzbek city of Andijan, situated in the Fergana valley. The Uzbek government used force against the demonstrators, which led to the killing of several hundred people. The Uzbek authorities accused US NGOs and, indirectly, the US government of organizing and supporting the rebellion. The Uzbek leadership immediately stopped its cooperation with the USA and closed down the US military base at Karshi-Khanabad. In order to put pressure on the US to withdraw their troops, Uzbekistan sought assistance from Russia and China. On 5 July 2005 during the SCO Summit in Astana a declaration calling on the USA to define the terms of their withdrawal from Uzbekistan was adopted. In response, the US House

of Representatives adopted a resolution expressing concern with the attempts of Russia and China to force the USA out of the region.

In order to underline its foreign policy change, Uzbekistan in May 2005 formally cancelled its membership in GUUAM, a pro-Western regional organization which up to this point included Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, and was meant to form a counter-balance to the Russia-dominated CIS. The reshuffling of regional balances of power also affected the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), which, as we have already mentioned, was created as an alternative to pro-Russian integration structures. During the CACO summit on 18 October 2004 in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Russia was officially included in the organization. Later, on 7 October 2005 during the CACO's Saint-Petersburg summit, the organization merged with EurAsEC. On 25 January 2006, Uzbekistan joined EurAsEC. Finally, on 16 August 2006 Uzbekistan became also a member of the CSTO.

By the middle of 2006, Russia had achieved its key objective in the region: namely to formally include the Central Asian countries (with the exception of Turkmenistan) in Russian-dominated organizations. At the same time, it also managed to contain Western influence and efforts to establish regionally independent or pro-Western organizations.

Prospects for the Future

It is unclear to what extent Russia will manage to preserve its interests in the region. The ties in the energy sphere are still strong, but there is relatively little economic cooperation outside energy. Also, frictions between Russia and Central Asian countries continue to persist, particularly because of the uncontrolled labor inflow of Central Asians into Russia. The overall strategic situation in the region is also still very fluid. The Central Asians maintain their partnership with Russia, but they have indicated that they want to leave their foreign policy options open and are not categorically against cooperation with the West. Ideas to form regional organizations have also reemerged. In order to underline its claim for regional leadership, it was Kazakhstan which recently came forward with the idea of forming such an organization – and Kyrgyzstan has already indicated it would be ready to join. Askar Akaev supported the idea before the "Tulip revolution" and the new Kyrgyz authorities continue to follow this policy since oil-rich Kazakhstan is now perceived as a major potential investor.

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Analysis

The North and South Caucasus and Russia under Putin: Problems and Challenges

By Sergei Markedonov, Moscow

Abstract

It is hard to exaggerate the significance of the Caucasus during Vladimir Putin's presidency. Both the South and North Caucasus during the last eight years have frequently been important symbols for Putin personally and for the ideology and political practice of the Russian state. The Caucasus has had a powerful impact on Russian politics, while Russia's role in both parts of the region has changed dramatically.

The Role of the Caucasus for Russia's Domestic and Foreign Policy

Putin's political star rose sharply in the Russian firmament as a result of events in the Caucasus. Before the fighters commanded by Shamil Basayev and Khattab invaded Dagestan under then Prime Minister Putin, he had a low rating and was seen as the "protégé of the Yeltsin family." However, the Islamic fundamentalists' August 1999 attack on the Botlikh and Tsumadin raions of Dagestan caused panic in Moscow. Some observers predicted the quick loss of Russia's Caspian republics to the then de facto independent Chechnya, whose field commanders supported the raid. Against this background, the readiness of the new prime minister to "drown the terrorists in an outhouse" [*mochit' terroristov v sortire*], as Putin proclaimed in crude Russian slang, drove the rapid rise of his popularity at the end of Boris Yeltsin's presidency. To a great extent, Putin's first term gained legitimacy thanks to his tough line in the North Caucasus. And although there were other causes legitimizing his second term besides the Caucasus, the fact that Chechnya stopped being a zone of active military combat helped strengthen the authority of the Russian president and facilitated (along with the use of administrative resources) his reelection in 2004. Of course, the significance of the North Caucasus for Putin was not limited to domestic policy. In 2001, viewing Chechnya within the context of the battle against international terrorism helped transform the approach of the US and several European governments toward evaluating Russian activities in the North Caucasus.

Events in the South Caucasus during the last eight years also had an influence on Russia's foreign and domestic policies. Georgia was the first country where a color revolution was successful. After that, a policy of opposing the "color threat" became the main foreign policy ideology of the Kremlin and its guiding principle in the post-Soviet space. Beginning in 2003, Georgia

led the way in the complete replacement of the post-Soviet generation of politicians. Mikheil Saakashvili's arrival in power was not simply the appearance of a new inconvenient partner for Moscow; it began a "revolution of generations," when people who had neither studied nor launched their career during the Soviet era entered their countries' highest political ranks. The Rose Revolution in Georgia (like the subsequent "Orange Revolution" in the Ukraine) significantly influenced the choice of domestic policy priorities for the Russian authorities. The danger of a "revolution from below" (especially with the support of the West) compelled the Kremlin to strengthen its isolationist and anti-Western rhetoric. In many areas after the events of 2003, the ideology of the "besieged fortress" became the dominant trend and the concept of "sovereign democracy" received official recognition (despite the personal criticism of this idea leveled by Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev).

One should note that not all of the negative tendencies in the South and North Caucasus and the new political challenges were the result of Putin's actions. Putin's Russia inherited many complicated problems from previous leaders. Among them, the "Americanization" of the Caucasus began in the middle 1990s, when "Soviet inertia" reached its limit. Many of the challenges grew out of objective factors. Georgia and Azerbaijan suffered from ethnic political conflicts (Georgian-Abkhaz, Georgian-Ossetian, and Nagorno-Karabakh), and in the absence of military or political support from Russia, sought the support of the US, European Union, and Turkey. In the North Caucasus, Putin inherited a clan-based ruling structure and a system of "soft apartheid," under which the so-called titular ethnic groups enjoyed preferences in "their republics," while representatives of "non-indigenous peoples" were subjected to discrimination. The change of discourse that took place, in which ethnic nationalism gave way to religious radicalism, also had little to do with Kremlin desires.

Nevertheless, many negative tendencies were considerably strengthened thanks to the policies of the last eight years. In the South Caucasus, such unfortunate decisions included the introduction of a visa regime and de facto blockade of Georgia (in 2001 and 2006 respectively); the closing of the Kazbegi-Lars Customs Checkpoint, the only checkpoint controlled by Georgians on the Georgian-Russian border, in June 2006, particularly damaging the interests of Armenian businesspeople, who were forced to find new Western customers; and the increase in natural gas prices for Armenia and Azerbaijan over the course of 2006.

In the North Caucasus, the strengthening of the “vertical of power” led to the conclusion of a new pact between the federal government and the regional elites. The regional leaders no longer engage in a nationalist discourse (at least publicly) and now demonstrate loyalty and devotion to the Kremlin. In exchange, the Kremlin closes its eyes to the political activities of the regional regimes. Accordingly, it provides absolute support to the presidents of Chechnya and Ingushetia, Ramzan Kadyrov and Murad Zyazikov. Effectively, the Kremlin’s policy now amounts to supporting the republican regimes at any price (even when these regimes openly discredit themselves, as when Karachayevo-Cherkessia President Mustafa Batdyev was implicated in a criminal scandal involving his son-in-law Ali Kaitov). Even North Ossetia leader Aleksandr Dzasokhov, who lost authority after the Beslan tragedy, was removed from his post long after he fell from favor, allowing the Kremlin to avoid giving the impression that the federal authorities had made a concession to the demands of society. In response, the leaders of the North Caucasus republics demonstrate the greatest loyalty to Moscow among all Russian regions. The results of the December 2, 2007 State Duma elections were a shining example of this. Ingushetia and Chechnya made a gift to the new president in the elections. In those regions, no party other than United Russia received more than 1 percent of the votes. In Karbardino-Balkaria, with a turnout of 96.7 percent, 96.12 percent voted for the ruling party (and only 1.72 percent for the Communists). In Chechnya, 99.2 percent came to the polls and 99 percent of them supported United Russia. Chechnya produced the highest turnout in Russia even though it had lived through two anti-separatist wars. The results in other parts of the North Caucasus were similar. Today the Russian authorities are continuing all of the worst features that the region inherited from the Yeltsin era. The difference is only that Yeltsin pursued a similar policy in much more difficult conditions – when he faced the “parade of sovereignties,” the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the threat of Russian disintegration.

South Caucasus in the 2000s: Changing Russian Role in the Region

Since 2000 Moscow has significantly changed the entire complex of bilateral relations with the independent states of the region. Russian-Armenian relations have remained the most stable. There has been a sharp decline in Russian-Georgian relations; in fact, their entire history during the Putin period is a sequence of constant degradations. During the first part of Putin’s eight year term, Russian-Azerbaijani relations significantly improved, however, there was a reversal at the end of 2006.

Russia’s declaration of a blockade against Georgia in the fall of 2006 deprived Russia of any other levers of influence on Georgia than mediating the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Accordingly, the goal of the blockade was not achieved. The Georgian market has diversified away from Russia. In the political sphere, the blockade helped cement the formation of a Euro-Atlantic consensus in Georgia, which was absent in the 1990s. Today Georgia is an active participant in projects aimed at minimizing Russian domination in the post-Soviet space (such as renewing GUAM, the Community of Democratic Choice, and others).

There have been positive signs in Russian-Azerbaijani relations during the Putin presidency. The achievement of mutually beneficial bilateral relations is one of the real successes of Putin’s foreign policy. Putin was the first Russian president to make an official visit to Azerbaijan and called upon the country’s main memorial, Martyr’s Alley, where the dead from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Soviet use of force on January 20, 1990, are buried. In 2001 Azerbaijan ended all support to representatives of the Chechen separatist movement, closing their offices in Baku. In 2003 and 2005 Moscow, in contrast to Washington and Brussels, recognized the legitimacy of the presidential and parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. CIS Executive Secretary Vladimir Rushailo announced that the parliamentary elections of 2005 were valid even before the Azerbaijani Central Electoral Commission had done so. However, at the end of 2006, thanks to Moscow’s attempt to draw Baku into an anti-Georgian gas alliance, bilateral relations fell apart. At the beginning of 2007, Azerbaijan became much more active in GUAM and at the group’s summit in June 2007 in Baku, there were many unfriendly speeches aimed at Russia. The attempt to extend the Russian-Georgian conflict to relations with other countries hurt Russia’s position in the region.

Although Russian-Armenian relations in the 2000s developed well, one cannot ignore growing problems. Russia still has not learned to work with all politically active groups in Armenia, concentrating exclusively on President Robert Kocharyan and his successor Serzh

Sargsyan. A second reason for unhappiness with Russia is its “energy imperialism.” The decision to raise the natural gas price to \$110 per cubic meter at the beginning of 2006, when Russia forgave Syria’s debts, aroused considerable unhappiness in Yerevan.

Over the course of this decade, Moscow has encountered numerous problems and challenges, which were left unresolved. First, Russia has to recognize that with each passing year, the South Caucasus are edging away from their status as Russian geo-political property. This region is becoming a territory of competition and cooperation for various projects (“The Greater Middle East,” “The Greater Black Sea”). Accordingly, Russia’s policy in the South Caucasus can no longer hark back to the Soviet past, but must be competitive and prepared for setbacks. The Russian historian Sergei Solov’ev described losing as “the test of genius.” A competent and adequate response to reversals could significantly help Russia in restoring its shaken, but not lost, positions. Second, Russia should conduct a diversified policy and carry out, above all, Russian tasks (not those of Armenia and Azerbaijan). Russian diplomacy should find all possible points of cooperation with all players in the Caucasus “great game” (recognized regions and non-recognized republics, the US, EU, and regional players like Turkey and Iran). Russia must stop pursuing maximalist goals in all directions. Obviously, the possibilities for improving relations with Georgia today are not great, but with Armenia it is possible to correct annoying mistakes and optimize relations. Where Russia has a chance to succeed, it should go full out. Finally (in this count, but not in importance), Russia needs to rationalize its Caucasus policy. One of the main lessons of the 2000s, was that in the South Caucasus Russia should not “balance the US,” fight the “expansion of NATO,” or prevent “further moves by Europe,” but establish greater conditions for stability in the North Caucasus. Russian actions should be aimed at achieving this goal on the other side of the Caucasus range.

The North Caucasus in the 2000s: New Threats to Security

The tragic events in Nalchik on October 13, 2005 demonstrated that now the main terrorist opponent of the Russian state is not the “defenders of a free Ichkeria [Chechnya],” but participants in the “Caucasus Islamic terrorist international.” At the beginning of the 1990s, ethno-nationalism and the idea of ethnic self-determination dominated in the North Caucasus. In the 2000s, the slogans of a “pure Islam” replaced those of ethno-nationalism. For the first time, the ethnic diversity of the Caucasus makes radical ethno-nationalism a political utopia in practice (especially in the regions where

there is no single dominant group). Second, the battle for the superiority of one ethnic group effectively leads to the victory of an ethnic elite, which is quickly corrupted and focuses on its own egoistic desires. The popular masses are relegated to the roles of foot soldiers on the streets.

“Pure Islam” is incredibly well suited to Caucasus conditions as a protest ideology. In contrast to “traditionalism,” this system of Islam is formed from supra-ethnic universal and egalitarian values – a “green communism.” For supporters of this brand of Islam, membership in a specific tribe, clan, or ethnic group is not important. Accordingly, it is possible to form horizontal ties between activists from various Caucasus republics. In the absence of an intelligible ideology and conception of Russian national construction, Salafism became the integrating factor in the Caucasus. Although the entire Islamic national project developed as anti-Russian Federation and anti-ethnic Russian, many leaders among the “renewalists” did not support “Russophobia” and were prepared to accept Russian dominion over the North Caucasus as long as it was totally Islamicized. At the same time, the Caucasus Wahhabis rejected the secular character of the Russian state and the institutions of the Russian authorities in the region. Gradually, the radicals shifted from sermons to terrorism, and toward the beginning of the new century, ethno-nationalism was replaced (including in Chechnya) with religious Islamic radicalism. In Nalchik in October 2005 and over the course of the recent year in Dagestan, no one has posted slogans calling for the separation of Ichkeria from Russia since most are thinking about the idea of forming a special social-political reality without Russia or outside of Russia.

The result is that in the most unstable and conflict-prone Russian region, the character of the threat has changed. Now the challenge to the Russian authorities is coming from Chechnya as well as other sources. In the near future, the entire North Caucasus will be turned into a field of intense battle. It is very important to understand the essence of this threat. It is a problem when the leaders of the state do not recognize the enemy that they are fighting against and what resources this enemy has. Both Putin (most recently in his speech to the expanded collegium of the FSB in January 2008) and Sergei Ivanov have repeatedly argued that Russia faces “underground bandits [*bandpodpol’e*]” in the North Caucasus. In fact, it is not underground bandits that threaten the Russian authorities and the entire liberal-modernization project, but politically and ideologically motivated people, who have a very clear understanding of their goals. This purposefulness stands in contrast to the corruption of the Russian elite, both among the authorities and the opposition.

Most important, the Russian authorities should reject imperialist methods of managing the North Caucasus, particularly those in which the main goal is not integrating the region into a general Russian legal, social-cultural space, but external control and the appearance of loyalty to Moscow. The ideal type of such imperial management is Kadyrov's Chechnya, which has effectively achieved independent management with stable financing from the federal government. Today the main task of the federal authorities in the North Caucasus is to develop among the residents a sense that they are part of one country, the Russian Federation. Most members of the population in the region define themselves first by ethnic, religious, or clan belongings, but not by a civil Russian Federation identity. In order to overcome this situation, it is necessary to dismantle the intra-regional apartheid and optimize internal migration. Toward this end, the Russian authorities need a completely different personnel policy in the region. The facilitators of the "Russian Federation Idea" in the Caucasus should not be personally faithful bureaucrats or corrupt timeservers, but politically motivated people, whether they are representatives of Moscow or the so-called "Eurocaucasians," people who are originally from the Caucasus and are interested in modernizing the region away from its tribal-traditional past. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian authorities have systematically strengthened informal ties in the North Caucasus region rather than instilling formal law. The result was a loss of control and influence over the situation and a new awakening in the Caucasus on the basis of radical Islam. If the Russian authorities today do not set about solving the

complex tangle of social, economic, and political problems in the Caucasus systematically, and not by rapidly changing government staff members and searching for scapegoats, then tomorrow the Caucasus will be rebuilt according to different plans.

If the new head of state continues the current Putinist strategy of "handing over everything in exchange for loyalty," the regional elite could completely privatize power in the republics. But the population, most of which has little sense of the traditions of American and European democracy, could begin to fight against the unjust privatization of power while supporting Islamic slogans. In these conditions, Putin's stability could be threatened. In any case, if Russia wants to preserve the North Caucasus within the country, there are no alternatives to a strengthened state. Or, more precisely, the only alternative is a loose federation of field commanders. Another question, of course, is what does a "strengthened state" mean to Russia? Clearly it should not be a strengthening of local ethno-nomenclatura regimes with their corrupt ties to Muscovite patrons. It is also not the handing over of regional resources and power for formal loyalty, and not the chaotic passport checks and cleansing of villages.

To realistically correct its Caucasus policy, Russia must change the entire "Putin system," which is based on bureaucratic priorities and the ideology of a "besieged fortress." In current conditions, such a correction does not seem possible and examining the "range of possibilities" for a "new perestroika" is a topic for further research.

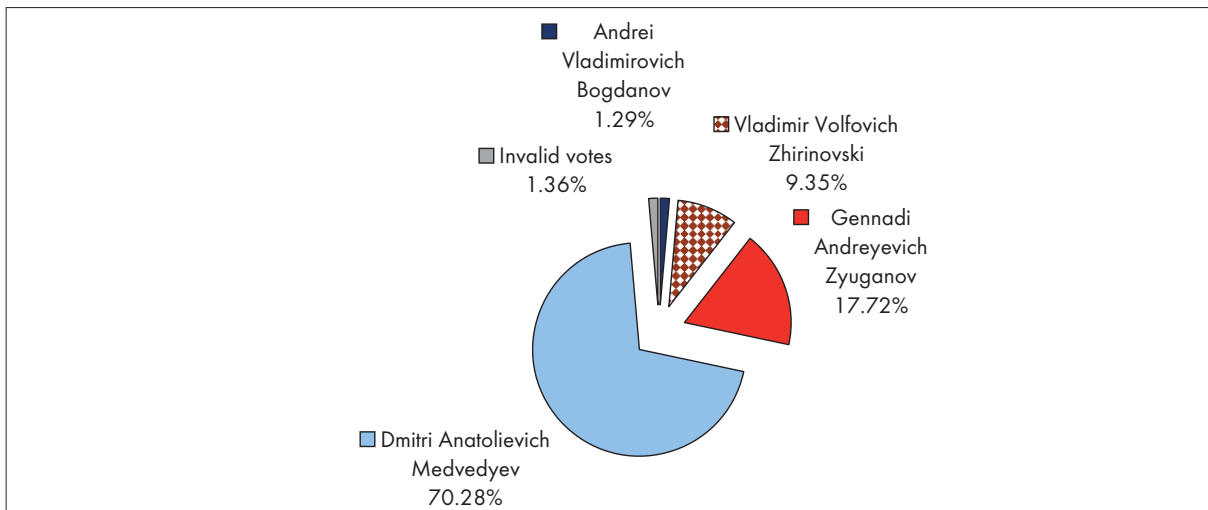
Translated from Russian by Robert Ortung

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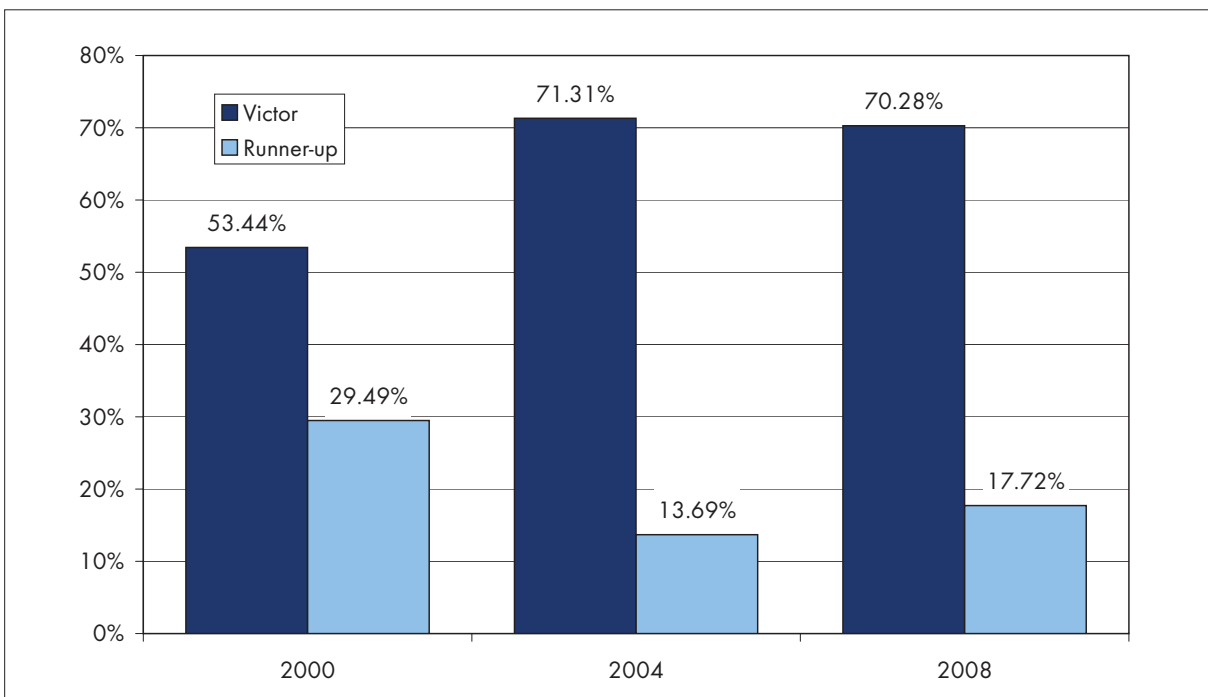
Documentation

The Preliminary Official Result of the 2008 Presidential Elections



Source: http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100022249920&vrn=100100022176412®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&&type=227

The Share of the Vote for the Victors of the 2000, 2004 and 2008 Presidential Elections and the Respective Closest Runners-Up



Note: The victor of the 2000 and 2004 elections was Vladimir Putin, in 2008 the victor was Dmitri Medvedyev; the runner-up of the 2000 and 2008 elections was Gennadi Zyuganov, the runner-up in 2004 was Nikolai Kharitonov.

Sources: http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/electer/rus_prelr.htm, http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=1001000882951&vrn=1001000882950®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vbid=1001000882951&type=226, http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100022249920&vrn=100100022176412®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&&type=227

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The Research Centre possesses a unique collection of alternative culture and independent writings from the former socialist countries in its archive. In addition to extensive individual research on dissidence and society in socialist societies, since January 2007 a group of international research institutes is participating in a collaborative project on the theme "The other Eastern Europe – the 1960s to the 1980s, dissidence in politics and society, alternatives in culture. Contributions to comparative contemporary history", which is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

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