When Realism and Liberalism Coincide: Russian Views of U.S. Alliances in Asia

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Contemporary discussions of virtually any aspect of Russian foreign and security policy must take as their point of departure the extraordinarily weakened condition of the Russian Federation. There is no comparable case of such a rapid and dramatic decline in the status of a great power during peacetime in modern history. The Russian economy has been in a virtual free fall for most of the 1990s. The World Bank estimated the Russian GNP in 1997, using fixed exchange rates not adjusted for purchasing power parity, at $403.5 billion, making Russia the twelfth-largest economy in the world, just ahead of the Netherlands and just behind South Korea. Russian per capita GNP of $2,740 ranked fifty-first in the world and was in the category of “low middle” income countries. In 1997 the Russian GNP was about 5 percent of that of the United States, 8 percent adjusted for purchasing power parity. The figures for 1998 will be even starker given the devaluation of the ruble to approximately 30 percent of its 1997 value and continuing overall economic decline. A back-of-the-envelope calculation would have Russian GNP at the end of 1998 at no more than $120 billion and per capita GNP at less than $1,000.

The Russian military forces have suffered tremendously in this decline. In December 1998 the Duma was debating whether the defense budget should make up from 2.5 to 3.5 percent of overall GNP in 1999, and it was resolved that 3.1 percent of GNP would be allocated. This means that the Russian military will not receive more than $4 billion in 1999. In 1998 the Russian armed forces did not receive any new nuclear submarines, tanks, combat aircraft, or helicopters. Russian defense minister Igor Sergeev estimated that 30 percent of Russia’s weapons are no longer fit for combat, and 70 percent of its aircraft are in need of repairs. Given these facts it hardly seems an exaggeration for Alexei Arbatov, deputy chairman of the Committee on Defense in the Russian Duma, to conclude that “Not since June 1941 has the Russian military stood as perilously close to ruin as it does now.” An informed Russian military assessment from 1996 argued that “after 2000 Russian general military forces will
be unable to undertake serious resistance to an aggressor from any direction in case of emergence of a military conflict."^6

Not only are these traditional sources of national power remarkably diminished, but the state institutions responsible for making and conducting foreign and security policy are in various stages of disorder and disability. Both endemic corruption and increasingly decentralized authority make Russian decisionmaking chaotic and unpredictable. Perhaps the debacle in Chechnya epitomizes both the deterioration of the Russian conventional armed forces and the disorder in decisionmaking in the Kremlin. And the entire federal government continues to endure a fiscal crisis that has only grown worse in the wake of the financial crisis of August 1998 and huge problems with tax collection. It is mind-boggling to realize that only a decade ago when Gorbachev embarked on his reform efforts the Soviet Union was regarded as a global superpower, albeit seriously flawed. Today the only vestige of its superpower status is the aging but still large arsenal of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. But even here the overriding fear is not so much that Russia would use these weapons but rather that Moscow may not be able to control them and fissile materials at large. In July 1998, for example, Alexander Lebed, newly elected governor of Krasnoyarsk Krai in Siberia, offered to take over a Siberian missile unit if Moscow did not pay the troops. Today we are more likely to be fearful of Russia because of the possibility of state collapse or the implications of continued economic decline and social unrest leading to more political disorder. This is a wholly different kind of threat than that posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Gorbachev had diagnosed accurately some aspects of the Soviet malady, namely the excessive militarization of the economy, society, and foreign policy. The Soviet Union was a misdeveloped superpower wielding a fearsome big stick coupled with an increasingly inefficient economy incapable of making the transition to the post-industrial era, not to speak of the information age. His prescription entailed strategic retrenchment to reduce the military demands on the economy and efforts to integrate the Soviet Union into the global economy including core international economic and financial institutions. Strategic retrenchment has proven over the last decade to be far easier than economic reform. As a result, the Russian Federation, the chief successor state of the Soviet Union, finds itself with less influence in both Europe and Asia than at any time in at least three hundred years, perhaps even going back to the Time of Troubles at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. Indeed, Russia is in the midst of another Time of Troubles. While in 1991 one of the authors of this paper referred to the Soviet Union as the "sick man of Asia," it is hard not to regard Russia currently as the "sick man of Eurasia."^10

The capacity to function as a global superpower was an early casualty of the Soviet demise. Messianic aspirations which had formed an ideological backbone for the Russian empire as "the Third Rome" dating back to the sixteenth century as well as the Soviet Union as the leader of the world socialist movement were muted. The foreign policy "concept" for the Russian Federation that emerged after lengthy deliberations in 1993 gave priority to domestic economic, political, and social issues over foreign policy and security. Core components of the concept include maintenance of Russia's strategic nuclear forces, which exemplify Russia's status as an international great power, and promotion of Russia as a great regional power militarily, economically, and politically in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Europe, and Asia.

Under these conditions Russia simply cannot afford to challenge the existing system of American military alliances worldwide, nor may it continue to project power to support the bid for superpower status in the Asia-Pacific region. Military confrontation has become an
unaffordable luxury for Russian grand strategy, and this entails changing the whole paradigm of Russian security thinking. The guidelines of the new Russian national security doctrine adopted in January 1998 declared for the first time in its history that “considering profound changes in the nature of relations between the Russian Federation and other leading countries, one can draw the following conclusion—Russia is virtually not threatened with all-out aggression in the foreseeable future.” Current Russia evaluates near-term security threats in a way close to the American vision, that is in hotbeds of local wars and armed conflicts, proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and international terrorism. But given its weakened condition and tenuous status as a great power, Russia also perceives states or alliances that seek to upset the existing status quo in Europe and Asia as threatening to its interests.

While much was made of the pro-Western leanings of Yeltsin’s first foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, and the supposed differences with his successor, Evgenii Primakov, who took over in January of 1996, the brief “honeymoon” period for Russia in the West was already coming to a close in 1992. The reality that the West would not provide massive aid to Russia and then the decision in 1993–94 to expand NATO struck serious blows to the initial Yeltsin pro-reform and pro-West policies. Whether Russia had unrealistic hopes about assistance from the West or whether the West was too self-absorbed and miserly in its support for the transition in Russia, a growing consensus emerged in the Russian foreign-policy community that Moscow needed to strengthen its ties with a broader set of foreign partners including key regional powers such as China, India, Iran, and others both for intrinsic reasons of mutual benefit as well as to gain some leverage in its dealings with the West. This foreign-policy program should not be interpreted as anti-Western. It is better understood as a diversification of foreign-policy interests in which Russia pursues improved relations with all major powers as well as strengthens its ties with traditional Soviet allies. Steven Miller has termed this “omnidirectional friendliness,” and as a result Russia today enjoys better relations with all major powers than at any time in history. But improved relations overall with major powers should not be confused with influence. While such a term as “influence” does not lend itself easily to definition or measurement, Russia’s international influence is now at a historical nadir.

Russia’s position in Asia is paradigmatic of its steep decline in international influence and the daunting challenges Moscow faces to restore its status in more than name amongst the world’s great powers. The problems of an overly militarized and under-economized foreign policy of the late Soviet period were nowhere more evident than in Asia. The Russian Far East, a region as rich in resources as it is poor in infrastructure, served primarily as a militarized bastion of confrontation with China, the United States, Japan, and South Korea. While its Asian neighbors’ economies, with the exception of North Korea, took off in an unprecedented regional boom, the Russian Far East epitomized the stagnation (zastoi) of the Soviet twilight. Today the region is the poster child for the corrupt and chaotic Russian regime. While Russia’s military power in Asia has become less relevant, and indeed has declined partially by choice and partially by neglect, Russia remains marginalized as an economic force.

Declining military power in the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia is also an important factor contributing to diminished regional influence and a changing Russian security posture in Northeast Asia. Ground troops in the Far Eastern and Transbaikal military districts have decreased from forty-three divisions with about 390,000 personnel in 1989 (peak deployment) and thirty-eight divisions (340,000 personnel) in 1991 at the time of the demise of the
Soviet Union to fifteen divisions with about 190,000 personnel in 1997. In 1997 the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces planned further 15 percent cuts of troops in the Far Eastern and Transbaikal military districts. The current vision of military reform goes even beyond these figures. Under the planned reduction of ground forces the number of fully equipped divisions in the region is supposed to be cut to four by 2000. This would mean that Russia will be able to preserve manpower at an even lower level than that permitted by the 1997 CIS-Chinese agreement on reduction of armed forces and armaments along the border, which sets the ceiling of Russian troops in the 100 km security zone at the level of about 130,000 personnel. The Ministry of Defense recognizes that current conditions in Russia do not allow for maintaining a full-fledged military presence along the entire border. The Russian Pacific Fleet has shrunk from 100 major surface ships and 140 submarines in 1989 to 60 major ships and 60 submarines in 1997. It has lost its two aircraft carriers, which were sold for scrap to South Korea; a new carrier, Pyotr Velikii, that was initially planned to fill the gap is now commissioned for the Northern Fleet. The role of the Russian Pacific Fleet is currently confined to the protection of the coastline in the seas of Japan and Okhotsk, losing its former role of countering the U.S. Seventh Fleet in the Pacific and Indian oceans. According to Russian naval experts the gap in naval forces between the United States and Russia will increase from 3:1 in 1990 to 20:1 or even more by 2000.

The Pacific Ocean is also losing its importance as Russia's strategic nuclear bastion, with ongoing decommissioning of older types of submarines. No types prior to the Typhoon series will be operational after 2006 (there are neither Typhoons nor Deltas IV in the Pacific), and only three of the six Typhoons in the Northern fleet are operational now. By 2006 Russia plans to keep only seventeen strategic submarines: six Typhoons, seven Deltas IV (all of them in the Northern Fleet), and four of the new Delta V (or Boreia) type yet to be built. Given that the first submarine was launched only in 1996, it is very unlikely that Russia will meet this target by 2006, thus undermining the chances of survival of the last nuclear base at Rybachye on the Kamchatka Peninsula. It appears increasingly likely that Russian naval strategic forces will be concentrated in the two bases of the Northern Fleet (Nerichya with Typhoons to eventually be replaced by Deltas V and Yagel'nya with Deltas IV), which would mean further reduction of the importance of the Pacific Fleet and the possibility of its subordination to the command in Murmansk. The ongoing decline of Russian military forces in the Asian theater is a big part of the transformation of the balance of forces in the region, and this clearly has had a large impact on how Russia views desirable security arrangements in the future.

**Russian Views of the U.S. Alliances in the Pacific**

There is a sharp contrast between how the Russian government has viewed NATO and issues of European security and how it has perceived the U.S.-led security system in Asia. While NATO expansion has triggered a large Russian diplomatic counteroffensive and a gust of criticism in the press and academic publications, the response to the maintenance and revitalization of U.S. alliances in Asia with Japan and South Korea has been generally more supportive. Opposition to NATO expansion is one issue on which most major Russian political figures, with the exception of the most ardent Westernizers, agree. Those figures identified as supporters of the West, such as former prime minister Yegor Gaidar and former member of
the Presidential Council and chairman of Channel 1 of All-Russian TV (ORT) Sergei Blagovolin, have argued that China is an emerging threat against which Russia should cooperate not only with the United States and Japan in Asia but also with NATO in Europe. When Russia's most pro-Western government under then acting prime minister Gaidar was in power in 1992–93, the hopes for partnership with the West “from Vancouver to Vladivostok” were at their peak. The combination of eroding domestic support for a radical economic reform program and an imminently expanding NATO, however, made the Russian political elite far more skeptical about the possibility of a real and balanced partnership with the West. Many leading figures in the Russian Communist Party, which scored a major victory in the December 1995 parliamentary elections, advocated strengthening ties with China, even establishing an alliance. In their view this made strategic sense because of the perception of the West as the enemy and ideological sense because the communists believed that Russia's future would again be socialist. Some in the anti-Western camp, including both communists and some nationalists, also called for “an invincible alliance of the three greatest Eastern civilizations—Russia, China, and India” to counter the threats posed by the West and also Islam. Yeltsin himself, in a trip to New Delhi in January 1993, alluded to a new “strategic triangle” emerging between Russia, India, and China. In a trip to India in December 1998, Prime Minister Primakov in a discussion with journalists called for creating a “strategic triangle” between the three.

The position of the Russian government on the Asian alliances has been generally positive, as they are viewed as helping to maintain the status quo in Asia. Since Boris Yeltsin’s visits to Tokyo and Seoul in November 1993, Russia has formally praised U.S. alliances with Japan and Korea as a positive guarantee of regional security. The Russians refused to accept Chinese negotiators’ strong insistence on including Moscow’s support of Beijing’s criticism of U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific in the joint declaration by Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin at their summit in April 1997 in exchange for Chinese criticism of NATO expansion. In fact, the then Russian defense minister Igor Rodionov during his visit to Japan in May 1997 stressed that:

- Russia does not see Japan as a potential enemy;
- Russia does not consider the U.S.-Japan security treaty as directed against it and in general evaluates the treaty as a factor of stability in the Asia Pacific;
- Russia does not object to the revised 1997 Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation.

Unlike his predecessor Pavel Grachev, who had proposed in Beijing in 1995 a regional security system centered around Russian-Chinese cooperation, Rodionov expressed Russian desire to expand trilateral security cooperation with the United States and Japan. Despite Rodionov’s approval of the U.S.-Japan defense guidelines, however, the issue is being followed very closely in Moscow. In April 1998, Vladimir Rakhmanin, Russian Foreign Ministry chief press spokesman, noted that Moscow has consulted with Tokyo and Washington on the issue, and that the Russian Federation insists “that any changes in military cooperation between [Japan and the United States] be transparent and have a strictly defensive character.” The Russians are particularly concerned about the expanded geographical purview of the new guidelines which is conveyed by the deliberately ambiguously phrased clause “areas surrounding Japan.” Their concern is that this may allow the U.S.-Japan security alliance (JASA) to carry out some kind of military intervention on Russian territory—likely the disputed Kurile Islands, but also the Russian Far East. U.S.-Japanese cooperation in the field
of theater missile defense has also raised Russian objections, and this issue has the potential to alter Moscow’s view of the U.S.-Japanese security relationship and possibly drive the Russians to cooperate more closely with China. The Chinese and the Russians have consulted on the issue of theater missile defense in Asia and have reportedly considered a joint response. Nevertheless, despite concern about possible U.S.-Japanese cooperation on theater missile defense and the potentially broader geographical purview of JASSM, official Russian policy remains moderately supportive.

The contrasting Russian responses to the expansion of NATO in the west and the strengthening of U.S. alliances with Japan and ROK in the east can be explained by two key factors: Russia's status as a declining power seeking to maintain the status quo and its vision of desirable multinational security systems in the two regions. The first reason fits neatly into a realist framework which emphasizes attention to the balance of power as the primary means to guarantee national security, and the second reason accords with a liberal perspective which argues that national security is best guaranteed through multinational institutions and interdependence. Russia's support for the development of a multipolar world can be explained by either framework, and both frameworks lead to a similar conclusion that Moscow supports the U.S.-led alliances in the region with the caveats on potential U.S. cooperation on theater missile defense and the expanding geographical purview of the new U.S.-Japanese guidelines and potential U.S.-Japanese cooperation.

The Russian Realist Perspective

The development of Moscow’s relations with the West in the security field has failed to meet initial Russian expectations. A report by the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) in early 1992, which was representative of Russian expectations for a growing role in European and Asian security, stressed:

Among important tasks to be dealt with are joint efforts with Europeans, Japanese, and a number of other nations to share responsibilities with the United States while maintaining American military presence in various regions of the world, though on a significantly lower level. Meanwhile a search for a kind of ‘collective’ replacement of American forces becomes inevitable, as their pullout will occur much more quickly than had been anticipated. This is one of the basic goals of military cooperation with the West.

The ensuing reality has developed very differently from this vision. Russia broadly perceives an expansion of U.S. and West European influence in European security affairs at its expense coupled with a growing Chinese challenge in the Asia Pacific while the U.S. role in the region remains stable. Instead of developing its role to replace anticipated decreasing U.S. presence with collective international efforts, Russia faces a very different situation. In the current reality, the cornerstone of Russia’s strategic and political orientations, as a declining superpower searching for ways to maintain international influence, has shifted to the notion of preserving the status quo and stability. Interpreting President Boris Yeltsin’s 1996 National Security Message to the Federal Assembly, Vladimir Petrovsky, a leading figure in the Russian Foreign Ministry since the 1980s, stressed:

The main tasks of Russia’s national security policy in 1996–2000 are thought to be strengthening the current geopolitical boundaries and territories and ensuring that Russia has a fitting place and a role in world politics. The regional level priorities of
Russia's foreign policy interests are a stable and safe international environment, and also its military, political, and economic positions in the world arena promoted and secured by employing regional cooperation mechanisms. Under these conditions, the challenges to the status quo and stability, and the Russian roles in Europe and the Asia Pacific, are perceived in very different ways. Significant military and political challenges are viewed as infringing on Russian interests. In basic military terms, comparison of the number of troops and weapons in neighbor nations not members of Russian-led security alliances is still used to determine sources of threat, irrespective of the fact that much more attention is now paid to the political environment. A method of assessing strategic stability proposed by General V.N. Tsygichko includes two criteria, the probability of military threats (largely a function of the political environment) and the level of threat defined by the potential impact of adverse developments in a conflict. Tsygichko clearly states that

... a quantitative evaluation of the level of the threat is proportional to the balance of forces which every side may use in military activities in the given sector, including operative and strategic reserves. The balance of forces is defined by the ratio of combat potential of armed groups of the sides, for example of the number of standard divisions.

It is not surprising that, irrespective of the higher value formally attached in the 1997 guidelines for defense doctrine to what can be called political factors in the international environment, direct calculations of the combat potential of foreign troops deployed in the vicinity of Russian or CIS borders still play a key role in the evaluation of security-related threats by Russian military experts. Military establishments in general are inclined to plan on the basis of capabilities rather than intention. Thus, although General Tsygichko evaluates political risks in the Far East as being much higher than in Europe, his final estimation of threat, particularly taking into consideration NATO expansion, is much higher for Europe due to the quantitative assessment of troops and materials in the region. The same notion is clearly visible in the 1997 guidelines, which declare:

The world's major powers and their coalitions still continue to maintain powerful armed forces in the regions located close to Russia. This constitutes a defense-related threat to Russia's national security. Even if they don't display any aggressive intentions with regard to Russia, such armed forces still present a potential military danger.

Within this paradigm NATO's expansion presents a direct threat by altering the military balance in the region in favor of the West, which is only partially mitigated by a "long-term treaty with NATO encompassing measures to ensure guarantees of Russia's security (limits on the number of alliance troops, agreement not to deploy troops and nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, lack of NATO military infrastructure in this zone, permanent mutual control over military activities, etc.)." And while calculations of forthcoming balances of power are largely shared by military analysts in Russia as well as communist and nationalist politicians, a larger concern over the breakdown of the status quo in geopolitical terms is shared even among so-called liberal policymakers. It is feared that further NATO expansion will reduce the area of political dominance claimed by Russia. The leading security expert of the liberal Yabloko party, Alexei Arbatov, has stressed:

The key event to bring about the return of Russian armed forces to the West should not be an admission to NATO of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Hungary,
but membership of the Baltic states, the deployment of NATO’s foreign troops in Central and Eastern Europe, and the deployment of nuclear weapons there. A possible admission to NATO of Georgia, Azerbaijan (or unification of the latter with Turkey), and, even more, of Ukraine will be evaluated by Russia as a direct threat to its vital interests and security that justifies any realistic countermeasures.38

Although initial expectations for more diversified international security cooperation have not been realized in either case, the Asia-Pacific region, unlike Europe, has presented a more clear case of stability and preservation of the status quo. Many Russian military experts and foreign-policy elites are concerned, however, that the growing power of China could someday significantly alter the balance of power in Asia and even present a direct threat to Russia. The following quote from Arbatov is representative of this view:

In the mid-term perspective (five to ten years) China may present a more serious threat to Russian allies (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) and to neutral nations important for Russia (Mongolia), as well as a long-term threat (fifteen to twenty years) to the Russian territory (Transbaikal region, Maritime Province). This is the only scenario which presents direct military threat to the Russian territory and demands preparations for a large transregional operation.39

Because Russian strategic planners view the Asia Pacific as a genuinely multipolar region differing fundamentally from the enduring bipolar structure of European security, their response to U.S. responsibilities for maintaining the status quo vis-à-vis an emerging Chinese superpower differs considerably. General A.F. Klimenko presents the argument in this way:

It is logical to assume that should there be a confrontation between China and Russia the Western countries and Japan would side with the latter. One should believe that China is aware of this. It is therefore very doubtful that it is going to support an aggression on the part of the Western countries and Japan against Russia. It is for this reason that both Russia and China should prefer neutrality and mutually beneficial cooperation under any worsened situation.40

In other words, in the more complicated multipolar balance of power in the Pacific, Russia does not see the United States as an offender of the existing status quo as it does in Europe, but rather as its proponent. And for many foreign and military analysts, this position argues that the United States and Japan could be potential allies for Russia if China emerges sometime in the next century with malign intentions toward Russia. The analytical framework in this context is classical realism, and the key players are the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. Russian analysts and political leaders who call for closer ties with China almost always do so to counter the adverse developments in the European theater caused by NATO expansion and Russian weakness, not to counter the potential expansion of U.S. power in Asia.

Balance-of-power analysis would also incline Russians to support the continuation of JASA, because this would ensure that Japan would not embark on more independent security policies which would likely entail more rapid militarization including possibly development of nuclear weapons. This development could have a significant impact on security arrangements in Asia. General Valery Manilov, deputy head of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, wrote:

At present in Japan, which has become one of the largest industrial nations of the world, there are developments that may lead to changing perceptions of the Japanese
role in the world and corresponding correction of its foreign policy goals and national security policy. Economic achievements enable Japan to build an equal relationship with the United States instead of subjugation, and increase its confidence in its ability to act independently in world affairs, first of all in Asia.41

As Manilov intimates, Japanese economic and technological prowess not only gives Tokyo tremendous status as a world power, but this prowess can potentially be applied to the defense sector in a much more concentrated manner which would likely further erode the Russian position in Asia. For this reason, at least tacit approval in Moscow of the U.S.-Japan security alliance predates the Soviet collapse. To oppose it would mean to confront a new, unpredictable, and potentially destabilizing challenge in the near vicinity of the Russian territory itself. It is interesting to note that it was the Soviet military buildup in Asia in the 1960s and 1970s and the development of the Sea of Okhotsk as a bastion for Soviet SLBM forces that caused the Japanese to more tightly embrace the United States in a security alliance.42

The Russian Multilateralist Perspective

For Russians more inclined to a liberal institutionalist framework, analysis of security interests in Europe and Asia will lead to similarly different conclusions about U.S.-led alliances in each region which coincide with Russian realist conclusions. In Europe there exist more developed and competing institutional structures while Asia lacks any significant institutionalization of multilateral security relations. In the case of Europe since 1992 the issue is formulated as follows:

Which organization is to form the core of European security—NATO or the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe]? Russia expressly advocates that the OSCE, as an all-embracing and universal organization, should become that core, a coordinating center for other international organizations.43

The basic difference is in the prospective Russian role for ensuring regional security. With the OSCE Russia may claim a historic leading role supported by the principle of consensus, in which no decision may be approved without Moscow’s consent. In the case of NATO, Russia is, of course, not a member and does not have any formal decisionmaking role. The May 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act allows more of a consultative role for Russia, but Moscow remains at best on the periphery of the organization, if not its opponent. NATO’s expansion is widely assessed as a factor undermining the significance of the OSCE and as a major diplomatic defeat for Russia in the region traditionally considered most important for its security. Sergei Rogov, director of the Institute of USA and Canada Studies, argued:

There is an emerging threat that Russia will have to pay the price for the Soviet Union’s defeat in the “Cold War” and for the gross errors of Russian diplomacy. In the first years after the demise of the USSR, when our troops still remained in Germany and East European nations, a new system of European security on the basis of the OSCE rather than NATO failed to become established, though there were adequate possibilities.44

There are not obvious choices in the Asia-Pacific region to promote a multilateral security system as there are in Europe, and consequently more restrained competing ambitions exist. The only organization in which regional security issues are discussed is the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1992, with Russia a member from the beginning. The contro-
versy within the organization is not spurred by Russian-American competition, but rather by different visions presented by Asian and non-Asian members. The latter, including both the United States and Russia, advocate developing a more versatile and binding institution instead of the organization's current status as a forum or "talk shop" used primarily for presentation of grievances. Understanding, however, that the Asia-Pacific multilateral security system is embryonic only, in the form of ARF, and that the nature of the organization prevents any rapid evolution into a binding and effective system, the only option available for Russia is an attempt to combine the nascent multilateral dialogue with the existing and effective bilateral alliances, all of them American. Vladimir Petrovsky, for example, suggested such a tack when he wrote:

. . . the structural basis of an international security regime (or rather a system of such regimes) in NEA [Northeast Asia] and the APR [Asia Pacific Region] may be an optimum combination of all the bilateral defense alliances and multilateral consultation mechanisms at different levels.45

The basic Russian goal can be described as a desire for closer integration into existing multilateral institutions promoting regional security as well as greater bilateral cooperation with the region's other major powers: China, Japan, and the United States. The ARF debates are too vague and inconsistent to adequately serve Moscow's aspirations. Yet membership in such forums is perceived as a step to closer integration into more effective structures in the future. Note the rapid Russian support in 1996 for the revitalized South Korean proposal to establish a Northeast Asian security dialogue as an alternative to ARF (initially the idea was forwarded by then president Roh Tae Woo at the United Nations General Assembly in 1992). The idea looked so attractive for Moscow that Foreign Minister Primakov easily dismissed Moscow's initial strong objections to the Korean Four-Party Talks as discriminatory toward Russia.

The concerted bilateralism amongst the four major powers of Northeast Asia (Japan, China, Russia, and the United States) that has developed over the past several years is also regarded by some as the potential basis for a multilateral security order in the region. Nineteen ninety-eight marked the first year in which top-level summit meetings were held in all six dyads amongst the four powers. Although significant issues of difference exist in the bilateral relationships, such as the territorial issue in Russo-Japanese relations, overall relations have never been so positive as today. This is a stark contrast to the regional system of the Cold War, which was marked by U.S.-Soviet confrontation and other difficult bilateral relations. In an interview published in December 1997, Russian deputy foreign minister Grigorii Karasin made note of these important developments:

At one time, ten to twenty years ago, we ourselves observed jealously the development of Chinese-U.S. contacts. What about now? Russia sincerely welcomes the strengthening of these ties, as it is convinced that they are a stabilizing factor in the region. The same goes for the Americans: They express their satisfaction with the Russian-Chinese rapprochement. And for the same reason. Beijing regards the revival of Russian-Japanese ties in exactly the same manner as we, for our part, regard the improvement of Japanese-Chinese relations. In other words, Russia, China, the United States, and Japan are forging ever closer bilateral ties with each others' approval and by so doing they are creating a kind of strategic security network in the Asia Pacific region for the future. This, incidentally, is the beginning of the new, incipient, multipolar world.46
This is an exciting vision of emerging multilateralism which could be appropriate for the unique historical conditions in Northeast Asia. During his visit to China in October 1998, Russian minister of defense Marshal Sergeev restated Moscow’s support for regular four-party consultations between Russia, Japan, China, and the United States on Asian security matters. How one gets from a set of improving bilateral relationships among the four major powers to a multilateral security institution is not clear at this juncture, but it is a long-term goal expressed not only by Russians. For example, Nobuo Miyamoto, director of the Nomura Research Institute in Tokyo, has proposed establishing a “security forum-like organization to improve bilateral relations and to discuss common issues of East Asia.” The Russians have also touted the border demilitarization and demarcation agreements with China as a model for regional cooperative security. In fact, the Sino-Indian border agreement was modeled on the treaty signed between Moscow and Beijing. Prime Minister Primakov’s proposal for a “strategic triangle,” as vague as it was, would appear to be motivated by both balance-of-power considerations as a counter to U.S. power as well as by the desire for more coordinated multilateral efforts to address regional problems.

Though the proclamation of the goal of a multipolar world often pushes Russia to closer cooperation with Asian partners rather than the United States, Canada, or Australia, the notion of a multilateral security system is exceedingly important for Russian strategy because it represents the only hope to claim major-power status. After absorbing the shock of NATO expansion, Russia simply does not need and cannot afford a new area of hopeless confrontation in Asia. After accepting a defeat in European security policy in the West, Russia badly needs a positive example of cooperation in the East. Closer cooperation with the United States on Asian security is assessed in Moscow as a potential reward. While Russia currently does not see any advantage in opposing the U.S. security alliances in the Asia Pacific, there are a number of important reasons to support them, at least at a time when Moscow evaluates its own potential in the Asia Pacific as weak. The first basic factor, as noted earlier, is the need to preserve stability and the status quo in the region. The United States is viewed as the only remaining guarantor of a desired order. For example, an early 1992 report by IMEMO stated:

American withdrawal would imply a rapid multi-fold burst of military activities of several nations. Among them are Japan, ASEAN nations, many nations in the Middle East, India, and Pakistan. Given the geopolitical realities that kind of prospect is most devastating for us, more than for any other nations involved.

Unable to preserve the status quo by its own efforts, either military and political, and fearing that China could emerge as a new regional superpower to fill the vacuum if the United States withdraws, in the 1990s Russia has viewed its priorities in the Asia-Pacific region as ensuring the preservation of the status quo through the maintenance of the American system of regional alliances, the only real force able to fulfill the task. As the U.S.-Japan alliance is perceived as providing the core of an American-led security system through both the Pacific and Indian oceans, the Russian government has viewed the alliance as generally in the interests of Russia. Russia has developed growing military-to-military cooperation with the United States and Japan on a bilateral basis, as it has with China. Russian military cooperation with Japan is a new development, and was noteworthy in the 1998 visits of the chairman of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, Admiral Natsukawa, to Russia and Russian General Staff chief Anatoly Kvasnin to Japan, along with joint rescue exercises in the Sea of Japan. While the status of Russia’s participation in the Partnership for Peace under the aus-
ices of NATO has garnered much attention, the U.S. and Russian militaries have increased their contacts in the Asia Pacific region through port visits and other activities.\textsuperscript{51}

The generally positive position on the alliances, however, does not negate Moscow's concern that U.S. policy seeks further isolation of Russia and its elimination as a powerful regional actor. Despite the fact that Russia is a more Asian and less European country since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Ivanov has pointed out that the United States has been more reluctant to treat Russia as a regional power in Asia since the dissolution.\textsuperscript{52} Nonetheless, Russian criticism never goes beyond the political and diplomatic fields. When trying to court potential U.S. adversaries in the region (China, India, North Korea) Russian is motivated primarily by its feeling of alienation and neglect, therefore requiring consolidation of new leverage to bolster its presence in the region. Unfortunately, Russia may come to view the challenge of its possible reversion to a “bad guy” role as its best tactic to induce a more cooperative U.S. response.\textsuperscript{53} North Korea is the first place which comes to mind where such a role might be played. For now, however, the challenge is limited to political declarations and diplomatic activities, primarily with China and India.

Any Russian debate on the American alliances in the Pacific is concentrated on the U.S.-Japan security treaty, which is viewed as the key element in the regional military situation. The U.S.-ROK alliance is basically ignored since Moscow under Gorbachev dropped criticism of the so-called “Washington-Tokyo-Seoul axis.” The major reason for the neglect of the U.S.-ROK treaty is the perceived local nature of American obligations in Korea. At the same time the complicated nature of Russian policy on the Korean peninsula presses Moscow to refrain from any comments on a U.S. security role there. In reality Moscow ceased to view the U.S.-ROK alliance as a real threat to its interests more than a decade ago. Soviet obligations to support North Korea in case of an incident, as well as Pyongyang's revealed nuclear and missile ambitions and insistent demands for Soviet assistance to these programs, made Moscow fear a possible undesired involvement in hostilities provoked by North Korea.\textsuperscript{54} Since the establishment of Soviet-South Korean diplomatic relations and the further deterioration of Moscow-Pyongyang relations after August 1991, the Russian vision of the U.S.-ROK alliance has been based on recognition of Seoul's security concerns and silent support for the U.S. role. Korean agreement on the denuclearization of the peninsula assisted by the American pledge not to keep nuclear arms there have contributed to closer understanding; Moscow, unlike Pyongyang, never dropped the idea of establishing the Korean peninsula as a nuclear-free zone. Concerns over North Korea's challenge to the NPT regime added further rationale for common U.S. and Russian responses.

Not only has Russia withdrawn any criticism of the Washington-Seoul security relationship, it has been Moscow that has met with criticism in recent years. The U.S. commitment to South Korean security never emerged as an issue at any Russian-South Korean talks, but Seoul continuously pressured Moscow to abrogate a clause in the 1960 Soviet-North Korean treaty stipulating Moscow's assistance to Pyongyang in case of an incident. The Russian response up to 1995, when the treaty expired, proved to be rather cooperative. Though unable to revise the treaty unilaterally and unwilling to further damage uneasy relations with North Korea, Russia clearly stated that the clause under discussion could be invoked only in the event of an undoubtedly unprovoked aggression against North Korean territory, a scenario assessed as unrealistic. Yet Moscow has understandably never openly stated its support for the U.S.-ROK security treaty. Since as early as 1993 uneasy feelings toward Seoul have significantly increased in Russia. Failure to meet the inflated expectations of South Korean engagement with the Russian economy was paralleled by frustration over the lack of re-
sponse to Kozyrev’s proposal of a six-plus-two format for negotiating Korean nuclear issues, the failure to be chosen as a provider of light-water reactors by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO)—primarily due to pressure from Seoul—and later by a growing feeling of alienation provoked by the Four-Party Talks initiative. A widely shared perception in Russia assumed that idealistic rapprochement with South Korea and loss of major leverage over Pyongyang have deprived Russia of any value for the major actors on the Korean peninsula. The Russian response has been to distance itself somewhat from Seoul while intensifying cooperation with Pyongyang. This development certainly leads Russian diplomacy in Northeast Asia to a more assertive and complicated paradigm bound to challenge a range of American political goals. As yet, however, Moscow’s assertiveness is limited to diplomatic activities and is not intended to undermine American security interests in the region. But as James Clay Moltz has recently pointed out, this policy of “parallel engagement” is inherently unstable because it is promoted by “two competing interest groups, rendering impossible the development of a consensual foreign policy that pursues a single set of goals within the region.”

The above discussion of current Russian views of the U.S. alliances in Asia suggests that both a realist, balance-of-power framework and a liberal institutionalist framework lead Moscow to similar policy conclusions, i.e. that the alliances serve Russia’s interests and should be supported. But the support is conditioned by concern about theater missile defense and the new guidelines for JASA. Russia views the region as multipolar, and this assumption coupled with its weakened economic and military condition drive Moscow policymakers to push for the establishment of an empowered multilateral security regime in Asia which for now is a combination of existing bilateral relationships and agreements as well as multilateral institutions like A R F. Russia’s foreign-policy elites are also concerned about the growing power of China, as well as the possibility of Japan assuming a more independent posture on security issues and investing more in military modernization. The security presence of the United States provides some assurance for Russia that these other regional powers will be held in check. In concluding this discussion of Russian views of the U.S. alliances in Asia and the prospects for multilateral security, there would appear to be major tension, if not contradiction, between the Russian view that the United States similarly seeks to promote a multilateral security system while it simultaneously does not take seriously or even excludes Russia from its calculations for the region. While it is true that Moscow is highly sensitive to perceived slights, as described above, it is also true that Moscow’s interests have been ignored on a number of important issues. But with Russia in such disarray and enduring a period in which its international influence is at a nadir, Moscow is not in a position to bring much positive to the table. The United States needs to understand, however, that history would argue that Russia will at some point recover, as it has from a number of domestic and international setbacks over the last several centuries. Now is the time to be more generous in sowing the seeds of international partnership.
The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership

It is impossible for Russian analysts to look at the U.S.-Japanese and U.S.-ROK security alliances without taking into account the emerging superpower on its southeastern border, China. In fact, as the above analysis suggests, growing Chinese power is an important factor driving Moscow’s assessments of the U.S. security alliances and U.S. presence in Asia more broadly. The evolution of Sino-Soviet/Russian relations from a hostile, militarized standoff in the early 1980s to a nascent entente today is an important development in the changing Northeast Asian security environment. Since the formation of the PRC in 1949, Chinese-U.S.-Soviet/Russian relations have always had a triangular aspect, with different balances at different times. The most striking developments in the triangle in the last decade have been the tremendous deterioration of the Russian position and the extraordinarily rapid economic growth of China. The bipolar world of the Cold War collapsed, and we are now experiencing an unusual unipolar period with the United States in the position of global hegemon. History tells us, however, that unipolar periods are ephemeral transitional moments. The kind of international system that will emerge in the twenty-first century depends on a number of factors, including notably the trajectories of Russia and China and the kind of relationship that develops between them.

Dissatisfaction with the dominance of the United States in international affairs is a partial explanation for the desire in Moscow and Beijing to raise the status of their bilateral relationship. China and Russia have feared that the “new world order” — articulated during the Bush administration and subsequently muted in the Clinton administrations — is, in fact, a euphemism for a unipolar world dominated by, in their view, an often arrogant and overbearing United States. The calls for promotion of a multipolar world that have emerged in recent joint statements from Sino-Russian summit meetings are obviously directed toward the United States, despite the repeated caveat that improved Sino-Russian relations are not directed toward any third party. Nevertheless, despite their various grievances against the United States, both Russia and China value their relationship with the United States more highly than their own Sino-Russian entente. For China, for example, bilateral trade with Russia in 1997 was approximately one-tenth its trade with the United States. And for Russia, the United States will be essential in its efforts to attract foreign investment and continuing support from international financial institutions. Both Beijing and Moscow derive some leverage in the triangle, however, from the development of closer ties. But beyond the leverage their relationship gives Moscow and Beijing with the West (including Japan), there are also very important intrinsic benefits to the relationship.

Their first mutual interest lies in stabilization of the long shared border on which hostilities flared up during the Sino-Soviet conflict, most notably in 1969. Both China and Russia seek to concentrate on internal reform and economic development in the foreseeable future, and this heightens the importance of a peaceful relationship between them. With the opening of the border and the ensuing boom in trade in the early 1990s, much concern was raised in Russia, particularly in the Far East, about the uncontrolled migration of Chinese and the questionable quality of Chinese consumer products. Relations with China have also been used to inflame regional politics in the Russian Far East, most notably and vociferously by Evgenii Nazdratenko, the head of administration of Primorskii Krai, who has demagogically demonized China and tried to obstruct the border agreement reached by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in 1996. Despite some contentious issues, Beijing and Moscow have worked effectively together to make the border more peaceful than at any
time since the heyday of the Sino-Soviet alliance in the 1950s, although even with the demarcation agreement they have not resolved their differences over the islands of Tarabarov and Bolshoi Ussuriskii in the Amur River near Khabarovsk. With a peaceful border to its north, China will be able to focus attention on the strategic objective of reunification with Taiwan. The Russians, however, will not forget that in 1964, after the Sino-Soviet alliance collapsed in venomous recriminations, Mao claimed 1.5 million square kilometers of Soviet territory which had been annexed in the nineteenth century through alleged unfair treaties imposed on a weak China. Still, as long as Moscow and Beijing maintain their strategic nuclear forces, it is very difficult to imagine serious hostilities breaking out on the Sino-Russian border.

Russian and Chinese strategic interests have also converged to a considerable degree in their mutual desire for secular stability in Central Asia. China is particularly sensitive to Islamic nationalities in Xinjiang Province, of which Uighurs are by far the largest, numbering about seven million, being infected by nationalist and secessionist fervor from the newly independent states of Central Asia. So far Central Asian governments, especially those of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have been responsive to Chinese concerns, and have taken measures to quell cross-border Uighur nationalism. The Russian interest in stability in Central Asia stems from concerns about ethnic Russian populations, which are quite considerable in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the possible emergence of Islamic rather than secular governments in the region which might influence the Muslim populations in the Russian Federation. Given its current economic problems, Russia would be hard-pressed if large numbers of Russian refugees streamed across the border either because of discriminatory treatment or civic unrest. The civil war in Tajikistan has served as a cautionary tale for Beijing and Moscow. Both states have been reluctant to criticize other Central Asian governments for human-rights violations and political repression because these governments have ensured internal stability.

The economic relationship between China and Russia, which to date has failed to meet the mutual expectations of both sides, shows considerable potential for growth, although they will not come close to meeting the target of $20 billion in total trade by 2000. In 1996 trade reached a level of about $7 billion, but fell back to about $6 billion in 1997. Extensive Russian arms sales have captured the most attention in recent years, but border trade has been an important issue in the bilateral relationship, and in the longer term the development of Russian energy exports will stimulate major growth in economic relations. Since this paper addresses primarily the Russian perspective on U.S. security alliances in the region, the following discussion will focus only on the arms and energy exports of Russia to China, which have the most relevance for regional security.

China seeks in the near term to bolster its ability to project power in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. With the reluctance of the West to sell arms to Beijing since the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, Russia has aggressively entered the market to support Chinese military modernization, the last priority in Deng’s “four modernizations” strategy articulated twenty years ago. With the precipitous drop in procurement by the Russian military, many Russian military-industrial enterprises find themselves dependent on the export market to survive. In 1997, estimates indicated that China had spent about $5 billion on Russian arms in the previous five years, a very considerable sum for Russia, amounting to about 2 percent of all its exports. The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency reports that Russia supplied China with 97 percent of its $1.75 billion worth of arms imports from 1992 to 1994. Most significantly, China has bought seventy-two Sukhoi Su-27 fighters, roughly equivalent to F-15s, and in July 1996 signed a deal that would allow Beijing to produce up to
two hundred more. There have also been discussions about purchasing the Su-30MK long-range attack aircraft and the Ilyushin II-78 air-refueling tanker. Russia has also sold four Kilo-class conventional submarines, two of which are advanced versions that will rival the best U.S. nuclear-powered attack subs. China has also purchased Sovremenny-class destroyers equipped with Sunburn ship-to-ship missiles and SA-N-17 surface-to-air missiles. Stephen Blank has argued recently that these imports and other developments constitute a long-term strategy based on a combined arms sea denial capability in the Western Pacific. Drawing, in fact, on the theory and goals of the late Soviet admiral Sergei Gorshkov, the Chinese aspire first to deny American easy dominance at sea and later to bid for naval control of the maritime theaters of vital strategic importance to them.

The wisdom of such extensive arms sales to China has been questioned in Moscow. As pointed out earlier in this paper, some Russian analysts view China as a potential long-term threat to Russia, and in a December 1996 speech then defense minister Rodionov let slip that China was a “potential threat” to Russia. Sergei Trush, an analyst at the Institute of USA and Canada Studies, has cautioned Russia to beware of upsetting a regional balance of power and fueling a regional arms race that could boomerang on Russia, which is not in an economic position to augment its regional military presence. He contrasts Russia's sales to China, which could someday threaten Russian interests, with U.S. sales to Taiwan, which will, of course, not militarily threaten the United States in the same way. Trush also warns of the impact of arms sales on Russia's CIS partners, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Perhaps most interestingly, Trush also points out that China is at a critical stage in its reform process which could be very destabilizing. In this scenario, China could disintegrate into different regional entities, and some of the arms could be deployed in ways threatening to Russia in Siberia and the Russian Far East, regions which appear quite vulnerable because of their sparse populations and especially difficult economic conditions. Russian commanders in the Transbaikal have complained that they face Russian-made aircraft in their theater in better repair than their own. Likewise, Russian naval officers have expressed dissatisfaction that the destroyers sold to China would otherwise have been deployed in the Russian Fleet had economic conditions allowed.

Some analysts have argued that the Russian government has lost a great deal of control over what systems and technologies are ending up in Chinese hands. Pavel Felgengauer, a journalist for the newspaper Segodnya, has written that some Russian arms manufacturers have confirmed reports of Chinese intelligence successes in obtaining classified information and documentation on some of Russia's latest weapons systems. Numerous reports have also surfaced indicating that underemployed Russian defense scientists and engineers are already finding work in China. U.S. intelligence has indications of two “Russia towns” in China: one near Shanghai which houses scientists and researchers specializing in cruise missiles and another in Chengdu which is staffed mostly by aeronautical engineers. Russian defense manufacturers, however, argue that the technologies being sold to the Chinese are not on the cutting edge, and that there is excessive paranoia, particularly on the part of the Ministry of Defense Commission on Export Control, about the quality of arms going to China. As Felgengauer points out, however, much of this cutting-edge technology exists “only on the drawing boards or in experimental samples.” On the other hand, it is true that the systems sold to the Chinese such as Su-27s and Kilo-class submarines have been in production for over a decade, and Beijing has expressed dissatisfaction with Russian reluctance to be more forthcoming with sales of the latest technologies and systems. But while the Chinese
may be to some extent disappointed that the Russians are not more forthcoming, Russian arms manufacturers have been disillusioned by the preferred Chinese manner of barter payment, cheap consumer goods.

In an interesting analysis of arms sales to China, Konstantin Makienko notes the difficulty in studying the issue: many of the details of the transfers, even those that are publicized, are kept secret, primarily at China’s behest. Although there is probably more that we do not know about the transfer of weapons systems, knowledge, and human capital, Makienko argues that the arms transfers are in Russia’s interests for a number of reasons. The economic rationale is powerful because the Russian armed forces are buying so little now, and the military-industrial sector still makes up a large portion of the Russian economy. In fact, Makienko would disagree with Trush, believing a regional arms race in Asia to be in Russia’s interests since Russia would be able to sell more product. Since he sees actual military conflict between major powers as exceedingly unlikely, Russia need not be so concerned about the balance of power moving in favor of others. Russia is selling systems that will strengthen Chinese air and sea power, not their ground forces, which would be more threatening to Russia’s ability to defend Siberia and the Far East. The weapons Russia is selling China, the Su-27, for example, are 1980s technology. The Chinese will have ramped up the capacity to build the planes themselves no earlier than 2005, so Russia should be able to maintain a technological edge. Besides, if China were to threaten Russia, its expansionism would likely take place not through military conflict but rather through a slower and more peaceful process of economic penetration and immigration.

Although the arms trade and border trade have dominated much of the Sino-Russian economic relationship in this decade, if bilateral trade is even to approach the goal of $20 billion much of the growth will have to come in the energy sector. Indeed, despite protestations from Russian politicians about becoming a neocolonial supplier of raw materials to Europe or Asia, much of Russia’s ability to recover economically in the coming ten to twenty years will depend on how effectively it develops its vast oil and gas and other natural resources for export. China will be an increasingly important customer for Russian, as well as Central Asian, energy. Barring any cataclysmic events that could significantly disrupt its economic growth, some projections have Chinese energy consumption growing five- to sevenfold by 2050.

Sino-Russian cooperation in the development of oil and gas resources in Siberia and the Russian Far East will most likely be part of broader multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia including particularly Japan and South Korea but also Kazakhstan, North Korea, and others. Several meetings and agreements in 1997 provided momentum for large-scale cooperation. In June 1997 then Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signed an agreement in Beijing for gas exploration in the Kovytinskoe field near Irkutsk and for a pipeline going from Irkutsk to China, supplying 20 billion cubic meters of gas annually for twenty-five to thirty years. The Irkutsk pipeline would likely be the first of a new Northeast Asian pipeline infrastructure. Another project under discussion is a gas pipeline from Tomsk in Western Siberia to Shanghai via Kazakhstan.

The second important bilateral meeting took place in November in Krasnoyarsk between then Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and Boris Yeltsin. They discussed the possibility of Japanese financing of energy projects in Siberia and the Russian Far East, including the Kovytinskoye field. Hashimoto also indicated that Japan would support the Russian bid to join APEC, the first time Japan had expressed their support. Yeltsin reciprocated by promising to support Japan’s bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Coun-
H. Hashimoto viewed cooperation in energy development as a key piece of his Eurasia policy announced in July 1997. Much of the Russian analysis of the new Japanese Eurasia policy suggested that it was prompted by Japan’s feelings of isolation and concern over the rapid improvement of Sino-Russian relations.\(^7\)

Shortly after the Krasnoyarsk meeting, Yeltsin went to Beijing, where promotion of energy projects was high on the agenda. Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemerov had arrived early and met with Chinese oil executives and officials, and he signed with Vice Premier Li Lanqing a framework accord for the Irkutsk project. For the first time Japan was mentioned as a source of financing as well as an export destination. The accord proposes that half of the 20 billion cubic meters would be for China while Japan and South Korea would share the other half. The day after Yeltsin’s trip, Li Peng left for Tokyo, where he proposed that China and Japan advocate convening along with Russia and the United States a forum for the four great powers for coordination and cooperation in the Asia Pacific. In an analysis of these meetings, Gaye Christoffersen concluded, “These three bilateral meetings in the latter half of 1997 and Japan’s announcement of its Eurasia policy helped to shape a Northeast Asia multilateral regime whose foundation would be energy cooperation.”\(^7\)

The succession of events in the second half of 1997 briefly described above suggests that the development of Russian energy resources in Siberia and the Far East may provide the means for Russia to overcome its isolation in Asia, which had worsened after the demise of the Soviet Union. Energy resources are the strongest card in Russia’s depleted deck, and playing it in Asia has also captured the attention of the United States. During Yeltsin’s trip to Beijing, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott also went to China in part to assess the developing Sino-Russian relationship. The infrastructure to support energy development and export in Russia is quite fragile and dependent on multilateral cooperation from a number of key states in Asia. Such cooperation would also benefit from a more substantive multilateral security system for the region than now exists, and Russia would have to play a significant role for it to succeed. The combination of improving bilateral ties among major powers described earlier could serve as the initial framework for a multilateral security and economic development regime based on energy, which could grow in a more formal institutional way some time in the future. Given its history in the region and its existing bilateral security alliances, the United States is in a unique position to facilitate strengthening multilateral security relations among the great powers of Asia. Moscow would likely welcome this event as long as Russia were included as a key player.

To date foreign interest in Russian energy resource development has been restrained by the perception of chaos and disorder in the Russian government and society at large. The Russian legal system remains underdeveloped, and more importantly the ability and commitment to enforce compliance has been so lacking that Russia has acquired the unfortunately well-earned image of the “wild wild East.” The overall weakness and vulnerability of the Russian economy has also kept foreign investors on the sidelines to a great extent. After performing better than any emerging market in the world in the first three quarters of 1997, the Russian economy in the summer of 1998 once again plunged into a financial crisis, which triggered in July an IMF-led bailout package of more than $22 billion. But transfer of funds was suspended in the fall because of Russia’s inability to meet conditionality requirements. The devaluation of the ruble and moratorium on foreign debt payment in August and the ensuing collapse of the Kiriyenko government gave further credence to the view that Russian
economic recovery remains elusive. If Russia remains mired in an even more prolonged economic slump—and to call losing half of one's GDP in six years a “slump” is a semantic stretch—the prospects for regional security in Asia become far more complicated and dangerous. During the Cold War it was a seemingly strong Soviet Union that threatened regional stability in Asia. The potential implications of a gravely weakened Russia have to be viewed with much trepidation by the other major powers of the region.

The most serious concern for Sino-Russian relations over the longer term, ten to twenty years, is the possibility of continuing deterioration of the Russian state and its position in the international system in the face of growing Chinese economic, political, and military power. If these power trajectories are sustained, Russia may be forced into the position of “junior partner” to Beijing in their bilateral relationship and an increasingly subordinate position vis-à-vis the United States and its allies in Asia. While the future is extremely contingent and unpredictable, we do know that periods of major shifts in the international balance of power, as well as in regional subsystems, are more prone to instability and conflict. Recent work also suggests that democratizing states, such as Russia, are also more prone to conflict than established democracies or even stable authoritarian regimes.

**Conclusion**

Not only is Russia undergoing a wrenching transition, a virtual revolution, but the international system is also in transition from the bipolar Cold War structure to something still inchoate but definitely different. The U.S. alliances in Asia coupled with NATO in Europe constitute a global alliance system to enhance the security of the United States. The alliances are currently undergoing redefinition and/or expansion in order to adapt to changing international conditions. The most significant challenge for these alliances in the coming years will be the integration of Russia and China into a broader framework of Eurasian security. The United States is currently enjoying a period of unprecedented relative strength in Asia which gives it an opportunity to shape the development of a truly multilateral security environment in the region. While it is the view of the authors that this would be in the long-term interests of the United States, current U.S. policies in the region suggest that Washington is at best equivocal on the issue. Although Russia continues to struggle in an unprecedented period of weakness, it would support a genuine multilateral security system in which it is a significant player. But Moscow recognizes that the United States alone will not guarantee its security in the region, so it has embarked on building a set of “creative” and “strategic” partnerships with other Asian powers including Japan, China, and India. This paper argues that Russia's regional policies are informed by both realist balance-of-power considerations and liberal idealist or multilateral interdependence considerations. Which of these two frameworks comes to dominate in Russian policymaking in the next century will depend to a considerable extent on Russian domestic political factors. But the external environment, notably the policies of China, Japan, and most significantly the United States, will have a great influence on what strategies Moscow views as most important to secure its interests in Asia, a region which will be increasingly important for Russia's successful development in the coming century.
Notes

1 Because of the unreliability of Soviet economic statistics and the continuing difficulties in estimating the size of the Russian economy, it is difficult to say with any degree of certitude how much the Russian economy has declined. It is also difficult to compare the size of the Soviet and Russian economies because the Russian Federation has less than 60 percent of the population of the Soviet Union and about 75 percent of its territory.


3 Vladimir Mukhin, “Na chastichnoe uvelichenie voennykh raskhodov: odnako dazhe eti dengi ne pozvoliat razreshit’ samye trudnye problemy vooruzhennykh sil [For an incremental increase in military expenditures: However, even these funds will not allow the solving of the most difficult problems of the military forces], Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie, no. 47 (11–17 December 1998).


7 Dean Wilkening, The Evolution of Russia’s Strategic Nuclear Force (Stanford, Calif.: Center for International Security and Cooperation, 1998).

8 Chrystia Freeland, “Lebed Raises Spectre of Russia Split into Nuclear-Armed Provinces,” Financial Times, July 25–26, 1998. Lebed went on in his open letter to Prime Minister Kiriyenko to say, “We, the people of Krasnoyarsk, are not yet a rich people. But in exchange for the status of a nuclear territory, we will, if you like, feed the unit, becoming with India and Pakistan a headache for the world community.”


12 For analysis of the early period of shifts in Russian foreign policy, see Alexei Arbatov, “Russian Foreign Policy Alternatives,” International Security 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993); and Sergei Goncharov and Andrew Kuchins, “The Domestic Sources of Russian Foreign Policy,” in Russia and Japan, op. cit.


17 Mikhail Urusov, “Rossiiskie generaly peregoniat Ameriku” [Russian generals will leave America behind], Moskovskie novosti, no. 11 (March 22–29, 1998), 8.


19 Ibid.


21 V. Aleksin, “Flot kak instrument gosudarstvennoi politiki” [The fleet as an instrument of national policy], Morskoi sbornik, no. 8 (1997), 8.


24 For a good discussion of how Westerners and anti-Westerners view China, see Evgenii Bazhanov, “Russian Perspectives on China’s Foreign Policy and Military Development,” in Jonathan D. Pollack and Richard H. Yang, eds., In China’s Shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1998): 70–90.

25 Ibid., 72–73. Bazhanov provides an interesting discussion of the “anti-Western” camp.


27 Jamestown Monitor, December 21, 1998. The statement attracted much attention, and the following day Primakov clarified himself by saying the triangle “was not a formal proposal,” but he thought it was “a good idea.” See Jamestown Monitor, 22 December 1998.

29 Jamestown Monitor, April 30, 1998. Rakhmanin’s comments were in response to an agreement on proposed legislative changes signed on April 28 between U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright and Japanese foreign minister Keizo Obuchi.

30 While this may sound far-fetched and paranoid, the concern is analogous to the fear that NATO’s expanding mission to “out-of-area” activities could allow NATO forces to intervene on Russian territory—Chechnya, for example. This is the crux of Russia’s strong objections to NATO forces being used to address the conflict in Kosovo.

31 Jamestown Monitor, March 12, 1999. Chinese prime minister Zhu Rongji responded to reports from unnamed Russian government sources concerning a joint response to TMD by saying that Russia and China have not yet planned any joint measures. While the Chinese foreign ministry first revealed that such discussions were held, the Russians went a step further by raising the possibility of joint action, and this prompted Zhu Rongji to pour some cold water on the issue.

32 “Rossiia i vyzovy sovremennosti” [Russia and contemporary challenges], Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, no. 4 (1992): 103.


35 In his different publications V.N. Tsygichko gives different figures, but the tendency remains the same. Cf. Tsygichko, op. cit., 23–24; and Tsygichko and Huber, op. cit., 25–26.


37 Tsygichko and Hubner, op. cit., 25.


39 Ibid.


41 V.L. Manilov, “Ugrozy natsional’noi bezopasnosti Rossii” [Threats to Russia’s national security], Voennaia mysl’, no. 1 (1996): 9–10. Manilov’s comment is also suggestive in its implication that while Japan can relate to the United States as an equal, Russia, as the effective loser in the Cold War and a country seemingly making a transition in the direction of Indonesia or Nigeria rather than Germany, must virtually beg for even symbolic acceptance as a great power.


45 Petrovsky, op. cit., 22–23.
48 For a good discussion of these agreements, see Jennifer Anderson, “The Limits of Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership,” Adelphi Paper #315 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997), 38–45. Anderson notes that the Chinese have been more restrained in their evaluation of the agreements, as they view them as simply codifying existing realities on the ground.
50 “Rossiia i vyzovy sovremennosti,” 103.
53 The NATO attack on Kosovo has unleashed the most visceral anti-U.S. response since the Cold War, and it has raised the likelihood that Moscow will more aggressively seek to subvert U.S. and Western objectives, particularly in the area of proliferation of weapons technologies.
56 As noted earlier, an accurate comparative estimate is difficult to derive. Chinese economic statistics tend to overstate growth (as did Soviet statistics), while Russian statistics will overstate the drop in production since the fall of the Soviet Union because of the difficulty of measuring the growing service sector and the tendency for much activity to go undeclared to avoid high taxes. The most often cited statistics have Russian economic production at about half the level before the Soviet collapse while China’s economy has grown by a factor of four since economic reforms got under way in 1978. For a discussion comparing the size of the Russian and Chinese economies, see Dmitri Trenin, “Russia’s China Problem” (Carnegie Moscow Center, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).
57 The Chinese describe the current international system as “one superpower and multipoles.”
60 Moscow’s financial dependency was most acutely displayed in the first days of NATO bombing in Yugoslavia. Prime Minister Primakov was on his way to Washington D.C. to meet with IMF officials when after receiving warning of imminent attack he returned to Moscow in protest. Still, only two days later IMF head Michel Camdessus came to Moscow to discuss funding.
62 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
69 Sergei Trush, “Prodazha rossiiskogo oruzhiia pekinu: rezony i opasenii,” [The sale of Russian arms to Peking: Reasons and dangers] Nezavisimoie Voennooe Obzrenie, April 4, 1996. This is a very balanced and thoughtful analysis from which I have only cited the reasons why Russia should be cautious in its sales.
70 “Can a Bear Love a Dragon?” 20.
75 See Michael May, Energy and Security in East Asia (Stanford, Calif.: Asia/Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, 1998), 5–9.
76 See Gaye Christoffersen, “China’s Intentions for Russian and Central Asian Oil and Gas,” NBR Analysis 9, no. 2 (March 1998), 21-23. Much of the following discussion is derived from Christoffersen’s analysis.

77 See for example the summary in the 2 October Jamestown Monitor of an article which appeared in the 23 September 1997 Kommersant.

78 Christoffersen, op. cit., 23.

79 For example, see Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).


81 For an elaboration of this argument, see Andrew C. Kuchins, “The Emerging Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership and Eurasian Security,” a policy brief prepared for the Program on New Approaches to Russian Security (PONARS) meeting held in Washington D.C. in October 1997. The full brief is available at www.fas.harvard.edu/~ponars.

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