
27. Russia and great-power security in Asia

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I. Introduction

The demise of the Soviet Union and the dramatic decline of Russia are the most significant developments in the international system since the end of World War II. These tumultuous and for the most part unexpected developments have transformed the cold war bipolar structure of international relations into a system marked by unipolarity, with the USA in the position of global hegemon by virtue of its unparalleled combination of economic and military strength. The end of the bipolar international system has also accelerated the trend for the global structure of power to have less influence over regional structures of power. 'Global unipolarity now coincides with regional multipolarity.'¹

East Asia is the region most accurately described as multipolar because it includes the greatest confluence of current and emerging major powers—China, Japan, Russia and the USA. Even during the cold war, East Asia was a regional subsystem identified by many observers as multipolar, most often in the context of the 'strategic triangle' of China, the Soviet Union and the USA.²

While the relative powers of the key states in East Asia have shifted, at a structural level the end of the cold war has had less impact there than in Europe. The USA maintains a forward deployment in the region and the core of its security framework—the bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea—remains intact.³ Japan continues to base its security on its relationship with the USA rather than pursue a more independent path. Conversely, China continues to shun alliance relationships with other regional powers, but enjoys better relations with them than at any time in this century. Russia also enjoys relatively positive relations with the other powers, but its influence in the region is at an all-time low.

¹ Betts, R., 'Wealth, power, and instability: East Asia and the United States after the cold war', eds M. Brown, S. Lynn-Jones and S. Miller, *East Asian Security* (MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1996), p. 39.

² The 'strategic triangle' in international relations is debatable. Even at the peak of triangular diplomacy in the late 1970s Kenneth Waltz argued that the triangle was not a helpful concept because China was too weak. Waltz, K., *Theory of International Relations* (Addison-Wesley: Reading, Mass., 1979), p. 180. Some scholars suggested that the triangle emerged with the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s. See, e.g., Segal, G., 'China and the great power triangle', *China Quarterly*, no. 83 (Sep. 1980). Others argued that it emerged in the 1970s with the growth of China's nuclear arsenal and the improvement of Sino-US relations. See, e.g., Dittmer, L., 'The strategic triangle: an elementary game theoretical analysis', *World Politics*, no. 33 (July 1981).

³ US Department of Defense, 'The United States security strategy for the East Asia-Pacific region 1998', Nov. 1998, URL <<http://www.defenselink.mil/easr98/>>. The USA has c. 100 000 troops in the region.

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Table 27.1. Gross national products of Russia and selected countries, 1997

Rank ^a	Country	GNP (current US \$b.)	GNP in PPP terms ^b (current US \$b.)	Rank in PPP terms ^b
1	United States	7 690.1	7 690.1	1
2	Japan	4 772.3	2 950.7	3
3	Germany	2 319.5	1 748.3	4
4	France	1 526.0	1 280.3	6
5	United Kingdom	1 220.2	1 208.9	7
6	Italy	1 155.4	1 152.1	8
7	China	1 055.4	4 382.5	2
8	Brazil	773.4	1 019.9	9
9	Canada	583.9	661.6	12
10	Spain	570.1	617.6	15
11	South Korea	485.2	621.1	13
12	Russian Federation	403.5	618.4	14
13	Netherlands	402.7	332.8	19
14	Australia	380.0	373.2	17
15	India	373.9	1 587.0	5
16	Mexico	348.6	770.3	10
17	Switzerland	313.5	186.2	28
18	Argentina	305.7	355.0	18
19	Belgium	268.4	227.3	25
20	Sweden	232.0	168.4	29

^a Countries listed in order of GNP, not adjusted for PPP.

^b PPP conversion factors used are derived from the International Comparison Programme, a joint project of the World Bank and the regional economic commissions of the United Nations.

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report 1998/99* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1998).

Despite the significant improvement in relations between the regional powers and the current period of peace, there are many compelling reasons for concern about the potential for conflict among major powers in East and South Asia in the first quarter of the next century.⁴ Scholars in the realist and neo-realist schools in international relations theory see Asia as potentially dangerous, in part because of the major transition now under way and likely to continue for years to come, with China becoming more powerful and challenging the USA for regional dominance.⁵ For those who subscribe to the argument that democratic states are less prone to conflict, Asia gives cause for concern. Likewise, analysts inclined to domestic policy explanations for foreign policy outcomes worry because China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Russia and Viet Nam are all undertaking or likely to undertake major economic and/or political transitions whose

⁴ Delpech, T., 'Nuclear weapons and the "new world order": early warning from Asia?', *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 4 (winter 1998/99), pp. 57–76.

⁵ The seminal work on this is Gilpin, R., *War and Change in International Politics* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1981). See also, e.g., Friedberg, A. L., 'Ripe for rivalry: prospects for peace in a multipolar Asia', *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1994), pp. 5–33.

outcomes are hardly predictable. Samuel Huntington's civilizational perspective raises concern about Asia because diverse civilizations, including the Islamic, Sinic, Japanese, Western, Hindu and Slavic, are all represented there.⁶

Scholars and analysts who are more optimistic about the prospects of regional security—primarily from the region itself—are more inclined to reject Western paradigms, especially the analogy with Europe, as unhelpful in explaining security interactions and behaviour in Asia.⁷ The Asian countries attach greater importance to economic matters than their European counterparts and have a broader, more comprehensive perspective on what comprises security. Despite a history of deep antagonism and conflicts in the region even in this century, the states now have a common interest in pursuing economic modernization and avoiding conflict. The sense of a regional international society will be enhanced by continued interactions in multilateral forums such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)⁸, in which states will seek to limit the use of force.

Whether the prognosis for Asia's future is optimistic or pessimistic is hardly clear at this point. It is clear, however, that regional developments will have a tremendous impact on the rest of the world. Despite the economic problems affecting many leading states in Asia in 1997–98, the region emerged from the cold war as a global powerhouse. On the basis of purchasing power parity (PPP), in 1997 Asia was home to three of the world's five largest economies—China, Japan and India (see table 27.1). In all probability, Asia's market, capital and technological power will continue to increase relatively fast in the first decades of the next century.

II. Russia: the 'sick man' of Eurasia

That Russia's influence in Asia has declined since the demise of the Soviet Union should not be surprising. Its human and natural resource base is considerably less as it has only about 60 per cent of the population and 75 per cent of the territory of the USSR. Russia also embarked on a transformation of its economic, political and social system—an effort that was bound to be difficult. In 1993 this author used the metaphor of Russia as the 'sick man of Asia':

The overall influence of the new Russian regime in Asia will experience a 'j-curve effect' because while Moscow's military role in the region should diminish somewhat, it will take a relatively longer time to achieve the kind of economic impact expected of a major power. Hence Moscow will experience a short-term drop in influence in the region, although longer-term prospects are considerably brighter. Seventy-plus years of

⁶ Huntington, S., *The Clash of Civilizations: The Remaking of World Order* (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1996).

⁷ Much of the argument in this paragraph is derived from Alagappa, M., *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, Calif., 1998), pp. 5–6.

⁸ For the memberships of APEC and the ARF, see appendix 1 in this volume.

Table 27. 2. Changes in Russian GDP, 1992–96

Year	% change
1992	– 14.5
1993	– 8.7
1994	– 2.6
1995	– 4.0
1996	– 6.0

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Russia, 1997/98*, p. 41.

Communist rule have debilitated Russia to the status of the ‘sick man of Asia,’ and it remains to be seen how effectively a new regime can nurse the patient back to health.⁹

Six years later that assessment looks remarkably optimistic. On top of 74 years of communist rule, Russia is beset with the legacy of seven years of failed reform efforts which have saddled the country with enormous debts that probably cannot be fully repaid and a deeply impoverished and disillusioned population. It is enduring an economic decline that is unprecedented for an industrialized nation during peacetime—a decline that makes the Great Depression in the USA in the 1930s look mild. Measuring Soviet and now Russian economic performance is a complicated task, but the figures in table 27.2 tracking the decline of Russian gross domestic product (GDP) seem reasonable.

The decline was temporarily arrested in 1997, but the figures for 1998 indicated a further drop of 4.6 per cent.¹⁰ These are staggering losses by any measure, but it is particularly sobering to look at Russia’s position relative to that of other leading economic powers. Its 1997 gross national product (GNP) of \$403.5 billion at market exchange rates ranked 12th in the world, just slightly ahead of the Netherlands and Australia. Its 1997 per capita GNP of \$2740 ranked 51st and placed it in the ‘low middle’ income bracket by World Bank standards. Russia’s GNP for 1997 was about 5.2 per cent of that of the USA at market exchange rates, or about 8 per cent in PPP terms. Russia in GNP adjusted for PPP by about 25 per cent. Mexico, a country with a population about two-thirds the size of Russia’s, exceeds Russia in GNP adjusted for PPP by about 25 per cent.

Looking at the Asia–Pacific region more broadly, Russian GNP has also fallen behind those of Canada, Mexico and South Korea. The Indian economy was nearly two and one-half times the size of the Russian economy in 1997. The story which these numbers tell is particularly stark when it is borne in mind

⁹ Kuchins, A., ‘The sick man of Asia: the sources and legacy of the new political thinking’, eds T. Hasegawa, J. Haslam and A. C. Kuchins, *Russia and Japan: An Unresolved Dilemma between Distant Neighbors* (University of California at Berkeley, International and Area Studies: Berkeley, Calif., 1993), p. 358.

¹⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *RFE/RL Newline*, vol. 3, no. 71, Part 1 (13 Apr. 1999), URL <<http://www.rferl.org/newline>>.

that 15 years ago the Soviet economy was the second or third largest in the world.¹¹ These figures suggest that Russia faces a grave challenge if it is to be realistically considered one of the great powers of the world—a goal near and dear to Russian political elites and enunciated on many occasions by former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

The Russian armed forces have not been unaffected by the economic and social deterioration during the 1990s. Funding for defence purposes has been drastically cut back since 1991. It is difficult to attach an exact figure to Russian military expenditure because of the lack of transparency and the exclusion of many defence-related expenditures, such as border troops, internal and security forces and other items, from the defence budget. Another problem in estimating Russian defence spending is that the actual amount spent has been considerably less than the amount allocated because of major revenue problems which are caused principally by ineffective tax collection. Nevertheless, Alexei Arbatov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Defence in the Russian Duma, recently estimated Russian defence spending to be no more than \$30 billion per year, or approximately 10–13 per cent of what the United States spends.¹² According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a comparison of defence spending by other regional powers in Asia in 1997, when adjusted for PPP, has Russia at \$64 billion, China at \$36.6 billion and India at \$12.2 billion per annum.¹³ Japan's military expenditure, not adjusted for PPP but at market exchange rates, was \$40.9 billion. Arbatov foresees a very dismal future for the Russian military in about 10 years when Russia could be facing new military threats without a modern military and without state-of-the-art weapon technologies. The current condition of the Russian armed forces is near-catastrophic because of shortages of food, housing and materials.¹⁴

Not only are these traditional economic and military sources of national power sharply diminished, but the state institutions responsible for making and conducting foreign and security policy are in various stages of disorder and disability. The entire federal government continues to endure a fiscal crisis that is only growing worse. The only vestige of the Soviet Union's superpower status is the ageing but still large arsenal of nuclear weapons and delivery systems¹⁵

¹¹ Estimating Soviet GNP in the 1980s with a high degree of certitude is a very difficult task. For example, the World Bank *World Development Report* did not provide figures on the Soviet economy in the 1980s.

¹² Arbatov, A. G., 'Military reform in Russia: dilemmas, obstacles, and prospects', *International Security*, vol. 22, no. 4 (spring 1998), p. 97.

¹³ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1998/99* (Oxford University Press: London, 1998), pp. 108, 178, 183.

¹⁴ In Nov. 1998, e.g., *The Economist* reported that in 1997 'Russian armed forces killed 1270 of their own young men', a rate of casualties nearly as high as Soviet losses during the war in Afghanistan. 'A cold, hungry, pointless Russian Army', *The Economist*, 21 Nov. 1998, p. 52. For an excellent discussion of the challenges facing the Russian military, see Bluth, C., 'Russian military forces: ambitions, capabilities, constraints', eds R. Allison and C. Bluth, *Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia* (Royal Institute of International Affairs: London, 1998).

¹⁵ For a comprehensive presentation of the imminent challenges for the Russian nuclear forces, see Wilkening, D. A., *The Evolution of Russia's Strategic Nuclear Force* (Center for International Security and Arms Control: Stanford, Calif., July 1998).

and even here the overriding fear is not so much that Russia will use these weapons as that it may not be able to look after them and fissile materials in general. The world today may fear Russia because of the possibility of state collapse or the implications of continued economic decline and social unrest leading to more political disorder. The analogy with Weimar Germany is the spectre haunting Eurasia today and Russia must, sadly, be regarded as the sick man of Eurasia, not just Asia.

Russia's position in Asia is paradigmatic of its profound loss of international influence and the daunting challenges it faces to restore its status in more than name amongst the world's great powers.

The problems of an over-militarized and under-economized foreign policy of the late Soviet period are 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, Japan, South Korea and the United States. In a period when its Asian neighbours' economies, with the exception of North Korea, took off on an unprecedented regional boom, the Russian far east epitomized the stagnation (*zastoy*) of the Soviet twilight. Today the region is the 'poster child' of the corrupt and chaotic Russian regime.¹⁶ 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.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s there was much discussion about the potential integration of the eastern regions of Russia into a broader North-East Asian regional economy.¹⁷ Some analysts believed that there was a natural complementarity, for example, between Japanese capital, Chinese labour and Russian natural resources which promised much potential investment, trade and growth. The disarray of the Russian economy and the ill-developed and badly enforced legal system, however, have dissuaded the Japanese and others from making many large investments. Then, beginning in the autumn of 1997, economic woes in Asia spilled over into other emerging markets and Russia's fragile economic achievements came crashing to the ground, toppling first the government of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and then its successor under Prime Minister Sergey Kiriyenko in August 1998. The devaluation of the rouble and moratorium on debt repayment were brutal body-blows to whatever confidence remained in Russia's ability to recover economically in the foreseeable future.

Russian military power in Asia, long the basis of the Soviet claim to regional influence, has drastically declined in recent years. While part of the decline was by design, that is, the border troop reduction agreement of April 1997 between China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, and can also be justified by reduced threat perception in the region, much of the reduction in Russian

¹⁶ Rozman, G., 'The crisis of the Russian far east', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Sep./Oct. 1997, pp. 3–12.

¹⁷ Robert Scalapino, e.g., identified the area as a natural economic territory (NET), a phenomenon which transcended state borders. Scalapino, R., 'Russia's role in Asia: trends and prospects', eds Hasegawa *et al.* (note 9), pp. 189–212.

military power has taken place in a haphazard manner and has been driven by the funding crisis.¹⁸ The numbers of ground troops have fallen from a peak in 1989 of 43 divisions and about 390 000 personnel to 15 divisions and 190 000 personnel in 1997; current plans for military reform would cut the number of fully equipped divisions in the region to 4 by 2000.¹⁹ This would reduce Russian troop levels below those permitted by the April 1997 agreement.

The Russian Pacific Fleet has shrunk from 100 major surface ships and 140 submarines in 1989 to 60 major ships and 60 submarines in 1997.²⁰ Both aircraft-carriers have been sold for scrap to South Korea and a new carrier, *Pyotr Velikiy*, which was scheduled for deployment in the Pacific, was commissioned in 1998 for the Northern Fleet. The role of the Pacific Fleet is now confined to protection of the coastline in the seas of Japan and Okhotsk, no longer that of countering the US Seventh Fleet in the Pacific and Indian oceans. Perhaps more importantly, with the decommissioning of older submarines, the Pacific is losing significance as Russia's strategic nuclear bastion. Given the current inability to replace the decommissioned submarines, it looks increasingly likely that Russia's last Asian nuclear base at Rybachiy on the Kamchatka Peninsula will not survive. It is more likely that the Russian strategic naval forces will be concentrated in the two bases of the Northern Fleet. The ongoing decline of Russian military forces in the Asian theatre is a big part of the transformation of the balance of forces in the region. This is also closely related to how Russia views desirable regional security arrangements in the future.

III. Russia and East Asian regional security

There is a considerable degree of consensus among Russian foreign policy elites about the desired role for Russia in Asian security arrangements. This view stems from the perception of Russia as a declining power in the region coupled with the desire to promote multilateral efforts which will include a role for Russia. There is a striking contrast between the way Russia views NATO and European security issues and the way it sees the US security alliances with Japan and South Korea.²¹ While NATO expansion triggered a major Russian diplomatic counter-offensive and a blast of criticism in the Russian press and

¹⁸ Treaty on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas, 24 Apr. 1997. Lachowski, Z., 'Conventional arms control', *SIPRI Yearbook 1998: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), pp. 526–27. For a succinct discussion of the negotiations on the treaty, see Anderson, J., International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Limits of Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership*, Adelphi Paper no. 315 (IISS: London, 1997), pp. 39–42. Anderson argues that because of the deterioration of the armed forces in the Russian far east Russia sought more radical cuts than those provided for in the agreement.

¹⁹ Urusov, M., 'Rossiysskiye generally peregonyat Ameriku' [Russian generals will leave America behind], *Moskovskiy Novosti*, no. 11 (22–29 Mar. 1998), p. 8.

²⁰ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 1989*; and *Defense of Japan 1997*.

²¹ This argument is distilled from Kuchins, A. and Zagorsky, A., 'The Russian Federation and Asian security: marginalization or integration', Paper prepared for the Conference on America's Alliances with Japan and Korea in a Changing Northeast Asia, 20–22 Aug. 1998 at the Asia/Pacific Research Center, Stanford University. A draft of this paper is published by the Program on New Approaches to Russian Security (PONARS) in its Working Paper Series at URL <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ponars>>.

academic publications, the two alliances are either ignored or treated rather sympathetically. Since President Boris Yeltsin visited Tokyo and Seoul in November 1993, Russia has formally praised them as positive guarantees of regional security. Whether regional security issues are viewed from a realist perspective, emphasizing the importance of the balance of power, or from a liberal paradigm, placing importance on interdependence and multilateralism, the policy conclusions are similar.²² In fact, the consensus view on Russia's foreign and security policy priorities is a *mélange* of realist and liberal thinking.

Russia's positive assessment of the US-led alliances in Asia derives from the assumption that, unlike Europe, East Asia is a multipolar region in which the USA helps to preserve the status quo. By contrast, in Europe the USA and NATO are viewed as expanding their influence at the direct expense of Russia. As Russia looks at Asia, the most significant concerns are the growing power of China and the possible accelerated militarization of Japan, both of which could further marginalize Russia's position in the region. It must be stressed that these developments are looked at as potential but not current threats.

Some Russian civilian and military analysts have also suggested that Russia would be a natural alliance partner with Western countries and Japan if conflict emerged with China in the next century. Russia realizes, however, that its leverage in regional security is increased if it can present itself as a legitimate partner to all the leading players in East Asia. This logic of Russia as a strategic balancer in East Asia was recently expressed as follows:

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.²³

Russia's former Defence Minister, Igor Rodionov, confirmed this view during his visit to Tokyo in May 1997 when he suggested trilateral cooperation between Russia, Japan and the USA to ensure Asia-Pacific security, even referring to the three countries as partners.²⁴

Balance-of-power analysis also leads Russians to support the continued military role and presence of the USA in the region because of the belief that withdrawal would probably spur faster and more comprehensive militarization in Japan. Japan's economic and technological prowess not only gives it tremendous status as a world power, but can also potentially be applied to the defence sector in a much more concentrated fashion. For example, General Valery Manilov, deputy head of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, argued

²² Kuchins, A. C., 'Russia and regional multilateral security', Policy brief published by PONARS in Nov. 1998, URL <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ponars>>.

²³ Klimenko, A. F., 'Mezhdunarodnaya bezopasnosti i kharakter voyennykh konfliktov budushchego' [International security and the nature of future military conflict], *Voyennaya Mysl*, no. 1 (1997), p. 9.

²⁴ 'Rodionov calls relations with Japan, US partnership', Kyodo, 16 May 1997, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report-East Asia (FBIS-EAS)*, FBIS-EAS-97-136, 19 May 1997.

in 1996 that 'Economic achievements enable Japan to build equal relations with the USA instead of subjugation, and increase its confidence in the ability to act independently in world affairs, first of all in Asia'.²⁵ While the containment of China is a more recent concern, Moscow probably tacitly approved the US–Japan security relationship even before the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁶

Russia also supports the development of a more comprehensive multilateral security system in Asia as a means to ensure that its voice is heard, particularly during this period of unprecedented weakness. In this regard, there is an almost symbiotic relationship between Russia's realist perspective and its liberal perspective and the two are easily combined as they argue to a considerable extent for similar policies. During the cold war Soviet officials repeatedly called for multilateral security arrangements in Asia, but the primary motive then was either to reduce the role of US power or to eliminate it altogether. This was particularly true, for example, in Soviet Secretary General Leonid Brezhnev's proposal for a collective security pact in Asia in 1969.

Again, it is instructive to compare Asia with Europe in terms of institutional mechanisms and Russian interests. In Europe, Russia naturally has promoted the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as the leading institution in a new European security architecture since Russia has played a leading role in it since the establishment of its predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The OSCE works on the principle of consensus so that no decision can be approved without Russia's consent. NATO, however, is the most powerful security institution in Europe. Russia is not a member. The May 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act allows it a consultative role,²⁷ but it remains at best on the periphery of the organization, if not its opponent.

In Asia–Pacific, which lacks any significant institutionalized multilateral security system, there are no obvious choices as there are in Europe. Moreover, since the 1990s Russia and the United States have generally recognized the need for broader multilateral security cooperation. The only organization to discuss regional security issues is the ARF, which was established in 1993 with Russia as a member from the beginning. However, it has so far served mainly as a forum for discussion and its operational role is even less significant than that of the OSCE. While Russia's proclaimed goal of a multipolar world often pushes it to closer cooperation with Asian partners than with the USA, the notion of a regional multilateral security system is extremely important for Russian strategy because it represents the only hope of maintaining its great-

²⁵ Manilov, V. L., 'Ugrozy natsionalnoy bezopasnosti Rossii' [Threats to Russia's national security], *Voyennaya Mysl*, no. 1 (1996), pp. 9–10.

²⁶ It is interesting to note that it was the Soviet military build-up in Asia in the 1960s and 1970s and the development of the Sea of Okhotsk as a bastion for Soviet sea-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) forces which caused Japan to embrace the USA more tightly in a security relationship. For a good overview of post-World War II Japanese security strategy vis-à-vis the USSR, see Mochizuki, M. M., 'The Soviet/Russian factor in Japanese security policy', in Hasegawa *et al.* (note 9), pp. 125–60.

²⁷ Rotfeld, A. D., 'Europe: the transition to inclusive security', *SIPRI Yearbook 1998* (note 18), pp. 143–45; and, for the text of the treaty, *SIPRI Yearbook 1998*, pp. 168–73.

power status. Given the lack of an institutional basis for multilateral security in Asia, Russia is more inclined to view the Japanese and South Korean security alliances with the USA as the kernel for the development of multilateral arrangements in the future.²⁸

Russia is concerned that, despite its positive assessment of the USA's security alliances with Japan and South Korea, the USA is seeking further to isolate Russia and eliminate it as a powerful regional actor. Leading Russian analysts have effectively argued that the USA has been more reluctant to treat Russia as a regional power in Asia despite the fact that Russia has geographically become more Asian and less European since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.²⁹

Official US policy, however, supports security cooperation with Russia. For example, a recently published US Department of Defense report states:

In the past, the Soviet Union's contributions to Asia-Pacific security [were] deemed either negative or negligible. Today, America welcomes the Russian Federation's active and constructive role in Asia-Pacific security as important to regional stability. Military exercises and cooperation, port visits, and both senior-level and staff-level exchanges with the region's armed forces have enhanced transparency and trust, and reduced suspicions left over from the Cold War. Russian engagement in such regional fora as the ARF may enhance habits of security cooperation.³⁰

US official policy aside, and despite the expressed desires in both the USA and Russia for multilateral security in Asia, Russia often feels that its interests are either ignored or slighted. Its exclusion from the four-party talks on Korea and its failure to win a contract for one of the light-water reactors to be built in North Korea by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO)³¹ are examples which illustrate the leverage problem for Russia. There is a general perception in Russia that its idealistic rapprochement with South Korea and loss of major leverage over North Korea have deprived it of any value for the major actors on the Korean Peninsula. Russia's response has subsequently been to distance itself somewhat from South Korea while intensifying cooperation with North Korea.

As yet Russia's assertiveness is limited to diplomatic activities and is not intended to undermine US security interests in the region. As James Clay Moltz recently pointed out, however, 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

²⁸ Russian officials have presented the Apr. 1996 agreement on confidence-building measures and the Apr. 1997 border force reduction agreement as models for a broader Asian multilateral security framework. Anderson (note 18), p. 41.

²⁹ See, e.g., Ivanov, V., 'Russia and the United States in Northeast Asia and the Russian far east: economics or defense?', ed. T. Akaha, *Politics and Economics in the Russian Far East: Changing Ties with Asia-Pacific* (Routledge: London, 1997), p. 139.

³⁰ See note 3.

³¹ Gill, B., 'The divided nations of China and Korea: discord and dialogue', *SIPRI Yearbook 1996: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1996), pp. 134-44.

set of goals within the region'.³² In its efforts to court potential US adversaries in the region (China, India and North Korea, for example), the logic of Russian behaviour is determined primarily by its feeling of alienation and neglect, requiring the consolidation of new leverage to bolster its presence in the region. Unfortunately Russia may come to view its best tactic to induce a more cooperative US response as a reversion to a 'bad guy' role. North Korea comes to mind here first in Asia, but Serbia and Iraq are other places where Russia could be a spoiler. In fact, such threats are continually heard despite the fact that it hardly seems in Russia's long-term interests to act on these threats.

One measure which Russia has taken to increase its leverage principally with the USA and Japan, however, is to engage China in a more cooperative relationship than at any time since the 1950s. This relationship deserves special attention.

IV. The Sino-Russian strategic partnership

It is impossible for Russian analysts to look at the challenges of Asian security without taking into account the emerging superpower on their south-eastern border, China. The evolution of Sino-Soviet/Russian relations from a hostile, militarized stand-off in the early 1980s to a nascent entente in the late 1990s is an important development in the changing North-East Asian security environment. Since the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese-US-Soviet/Russian relations have always had a triangular aspect with different balances at different times. The most striking developments in the triangle in the past decade have been the great deterioration of Russia's position and the extraordinarily rapid economic growth of China. Since China undertook reform in 1978, its GNP has grown dramatically³³ while Russian GNP has shrunk by more than half since 1991. The bipolar world of the cold war collapsed; in an unusual unipolar period, the USA is in the position of global hegemon. History tells us, however, that unipolar periods are ephemeral.³⁴ The kind of international system which emerges in the 21st century will depend 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 USA in international affairs is a partial explanation for the desire in both China and Russia to raise the status of their bilateral relationship. Both have feared that the 'new world order' articulated during the administration of US President George Bush and subsequently muted under President Bill Clinton is, in fact, a euphemism for a

³² Moltz, J. C., 'Russia and the two Koreas: the dilemmas of "dual engagement"', *Demokratizatsiya*, summer 1998, p. 381 (in English).

³³ Precise measurement of Chinese economic growth is extremely difficult because of the dubious accuracy of the official statistics. World Bank figures, which are based on the official statistics, would indicate growth by a factor of 9 since 1978, but are regarded as unreliable by Western economists.

³⁴ For a useful discussion of the current unipolar system, see Mastanduno, M., 'Preserving the unipolar moment: realist theories and US grand strategy after the cold war', *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 4 (spring 1997), pp. 49-88.

unipolar world dominated by, in their view, an often arrogant and overbearing USA. The calls for promotion of a multipolar world in recent joint statements from Sino-Russian summit meetings are obviously directed at the USA, despite the repeated caveat that improved relations between China and Russia are not directed towards any third party. Nevertheless, despite their various grievances against the USA, both China and Russia value their relationship with the USA more highly than their bilateral entente. For China, for example, trade with Russia is approximately one-tenth of its trade with the USA. For Russia the USA will be essential in its efforts to attract foreign investment and continued support from international financial institutions.

Both China and Russia derive some leverage in the triangle by developing closer ties but there are also some very important intrinsic benefits.

Their first shared interest is the stabilization of their long border, on which conflict 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 its far east, about the uncontrolled emigration of Chinese from China and the questionable quality of Chinese consumer products.³⁵ Relations with China have also inflamed regional politics in the Russian far east. Most notably and vociferously, Yevgeny Nazdratenko, the Governor of Primorskiy Krai (Maritime Province), has demonized China and tried to obstruct the Sino-Russian border agreement of November 1991.³⁶ Despite some contentious issues, however, China and Russia 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 they have still not reached agreement on the islands of Tarabarov and Bolshoy Ussuriyskiy in the Amur River near Khabarovsk.³⁷

With a peaceful border to its north, China will be better able to focus attention on the strategic objective of reunification with Taiwan. Russia, however, will not forget that in 1964, after the Sino-Soviet alliance had collapsed in venomous recriminations, Chairman Mao Zedong claimed 1.5 million km² of then Soviet territory which had been annexed in the 19th century through allegedly unfair treaties imposed on a weak China. Still, as long as Russia and China maintain their strategic nuclear forces it is very difficult to imagine serious hostilities breaking out on their joint border.

³⁵ See, e.g., Hyer, E., 'Dreams and nightmares: Chinese trade and immigration in the Russian far east', *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, summer/fall 1996, pp. 289–308; Moltz, J. C., 'From military adversaries to economic partners: Russia and China in the New Asia', *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, winter/spring 1995, pp. 157–82; and Won Bae Kim, 'Sino-Russian relations and Chinese workers in the Russian far east: a porous border', *Asian Survey*, vol. 34, no. 12 (Dec. 1994), pp. 1064–76.

³⁶ The agreement, which concerned the eastern part of the border, was ratified by the Russian Supreme Soviet on 13 Feb. 1992 ('Ne sluzhit interesam Rossii' [Not in the interests of Russia], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 24 Sep. 1993, p. 4) and reconfirmed by the Russian State Duma in June 1995.

³⁷ On the settlement of the border issues with China, see chapter 18, section II in this volume.

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 its Islamic nationalities in Xinjiang Province, of which the Uighurs are by far the largest, numbering about seven million, being infected by nationalist and secessionist fervour from the newly independent states of Central Asia.³⁸ So far the 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 considerable in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan,³⁹ 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 extremely hard pressed if large numbers of refugees streamed across the border because of discriminatory treatment or civic unrest. The civil war in Tajikistan has served as a cautionary tale for China and Russia and both have been reluctant to criticize 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 expectations of both sides, shows considerable potential for growth, although it is unlikely that it will come close to the target of \$20 billion in bilateral trade by the year 2000. In 1996 bilateral trade amounted to about \$6.85 billion.⁴⁰ Extensive Russian arms sales have captured 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 fuel major growth in economic relations. Since this chapter addresses primarily the Russian security challenges in Asia, the following discussion will focus only on the arms and energy exports of Russia to China as they have the greatest 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 China since the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, Russia has aggressively entered the market to support Chinese military modernization—the last of the ‘four modernizations’ strategy articulated by paramount leader Deng Xiaoping 20 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, equivalent to about 2 per cent of all its exports.⁴¹ In addition, China may account for one-third of the \$7 billion order

³⁸ Wacker, G., ‘China builds ties, trade across its western border’, *Transition*, 23 Aug. 1996, pp. 30–33.

³⁹ See chapter 6, table 6.1 in this volume.

⁴⁰ Anderson (note 18), p. 33, quoting IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*.

⁴¹ ‘Can a bear love a dragon?’, *The Economist*, 26 Apr. 1997, p. 20.

book reported by Rosvooruzheniye, the Russian arms export agency.⁴² The US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) reported that Russia supplied China with 97 per cent of its arms imports in the three-year period 1992–94.⁴³ Most significantly, China has bought 50 Sukhoi Su-27 fighter aircraft, roughly equivalent to F-15s, and in July 1996 signed a deal that would allow it to produce up to 200 more.⁴⁴ There have also been discussions about purchasing the Su-30MK long-range attack aircraft and the Il-78 air-refuelling tanker. Russia has sold China four Kilo Class conventional submarines, two of which are advanced versions that will rival the best US nuclear-powered attack submarines.⁴⁵ 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 Sergey Gorshkov, China aspires first to deny the USA easy dominance at sea and later to bid for naval control of the maritime theaters of vital strategic importance to them’.⁴⁶

The wisdom of such extensive arms sales to China has been questioned in Russia. As pointed out earlier, many Russian analysts view China as a potential long-term threat to Russia. In a December 1996 speech even Defence Minister Rodionov let slip that China was a ‘potential threat’ to Russia.⁴⁷ Russian commanders in the Transbaikal have complained that they face Russian-made aircraft in their theatre in better repair than their own. Likewise, Russian naval officers have expressed dissatisfaction that the destroyers sold to China would have been deployed in the Russian fleet if economic conditions had allowed.⁴⁸ Some analysts have argued that the Russian Government has lost a great deal of control over the systems and technologies that are ending up in Chinese hands. Pavel Felgengauer, a journalist for *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 weapon systems.⁴⁹ Numerous reports have also surfaced indicating that underemployed Russian defence scientists and engineers are finding work in China. US intelligence has indications of two ‘Russiatowns’ in China, one near

⁴² ‘Can a bear love a dragon?’ (note 41).

⁴³ US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1995* (ACDA: Washington, DC, 1996), p. 155.

⁴⁴ See appendix 3 in this volume.

⁴⁵ Holloway, N. and Bickers, C., ‘Brothers in arms’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 Mar. 1997.

⁴⁶ Blank, S. J., ‘Which way for Sino-Russian relations?’, *Orbis*, summer 1998, p. 358.

⁴⁷ Savenkov, Yu., [China decides not to take offence at Rodionov], *Izvestiya*, 28 Dec. 1996, in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, vol. 48, no. 52 (1996).

⁴⁸ ‘Can a bear love a dragon?’ (note 41), p. 20.

⁴⁹ Felgengauer, P., ‘Sino-Russian defense cooperation and arms sales’, eds A. J. Pierre and D. Trenin, *Russia and the World Arms Trade* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington, DC, 1997), pp. 87–103.

Shanghai which houses scientists and researchers specializing in cruise missiles and another in Chengdu which is staffed mostly by aeronautical engineers.⁵⁰

Russian defence manufacturers, however, argue that the technologies being sold to China are not on the cutting edge and that there is excessive paranoia, particularly on the part of the Ministry of Defence Export Control Committee (Komitet eksportnogo kontrolya—KEKMO), about the quality of arms going to China. Felgengauer points out that much of this cutting-edge technology exists ‘only on the drawing boards or in experimental samples’.⁵¹ On the other hand, it is true that the systems sold to China, such as Su-27s and Kilo Class submarines, have been in production for over a decade and China has expressed dissatisfaction with Russian reluctance to be more forthcoming with sales of the latest technologies and systems. However, while China may be to some extent disappointed that Russia is not even more forthcoming, Russian arms manufacturers have been very disillusioned by China’s preference for barter payment with cheap consumer goods.⁵²

Although the arms trade and border trade have dominated much of the Sino-Russian economic relationship during the 1990s, if bilateral trade is to even approach the goal of \$20 billion, much of the growth will have to come in the energy sector. Indeed, despite protests from Russian politicians about becoming a neo-colonial supplier of raw materials to Europe or Asia, much of Russia’s ability to recover economically in the coming 10–20 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 between five- and sevenfold by the year 2050.⁵³

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 North-East 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 Prime Minister Chernomyrdin signed an agreement in Beijing for gas exploration in the Kovyktinskoye field near Irkutsk and for a pipeline going from Irkutsk to China, supplying 20 billion m³ of gas annually for 25–30 years.⁵⁴ The Irkutsk pipeline would probably be the first of a new North-East Asian pipeline

⁵⁰ Forney, M. and Chanda, N., ‘Comrades in arms: Russian rapprochement could boost China’s clout’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 May 1996, p. 18.

⁵¹ Felgengauer (note 49), p. 98.

⁵² See, e.g., Sergounin, A. A. and Subbotin, S. V., ‘Sino-Russian military–technical cooperation: a Russian view’, ed. I. Anthony, SIPRI, *Russia and the Arms Trade* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), pp. 196–216.

⁵³ May, M., *Energy and Security in East Asia* (Asia/Pacific Research Center, Stanford University: Stanford, Calif., 1998), pp. 5–9.

⁵⁴ Christoffersen, G., ‘China’s intentions for Russian and Central Asian oil and gas’, National Bureau of Asian Research, *NBR Analysis*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Mar. 1998), pp. 21–23. Much of the following discussion is derived from Christoffersen’s analysis.

infrastructure. Another project under discussion is a gas pipeline from Tomsk in Western Siberia to Shanghai via Kazakhstan.

At a second important bilateral meeting, in November in Krasnoyarsk, then Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and Yeltsin discussed the possibility of Japanese financing of energy projects in Siberia and the Russian far east, including the Kovyktinskoye field. Hashimoto indicated that Japan would support the Russian bid to join APEC. This was the first time that Japan had expressed its support. Yeltsin reciprocated by promising to support Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Hashimoto viewed cooperation in energy development as a key item 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 concern that Japan felt somewhat isolated and concerned about the rapid improvement of Sino-Russian relations.⁵⁵

Shortly after the Krasnoyarsk meeting, Yeltsin went to Beijing, where promotion of energy projects was high on the agenda. Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov had arrived early and met 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 m³ would be for China while Japan and South Korea would share the other half.⁵⁶

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 USA, a forum for the four powers for coordination and cooperation in Asia-Pacific. 'These three bilateral meetings in the latter half of 1997 and Japan's announcement of its Eurasia policy helped to shape a North-East Asia multilateral regime whose foundation would be energy cooperation'.⁵⁷ The Vancouver APEC meeting in November followed, at which Russia, along with Peru and Viet Nam, was invited to join APEC.

This sequence of events in the second half of 1997 suggests that the development of Russian energy resources in Siberia and the far east may give Russia the means to overcome its weak position in Asia. Energy resources are the strongest card in its depleted deck, and playing it in Asia has also captured the attention of the USA. During Yeltsin's trip to Beijing, US 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 is quite fragile and dependent on multilateral cooperation from a number of key states in Asia which have little experience in relating on real issues in a multilateral format. Such cooperation would also make imperative a more substantive multilateral security system for the region and Russia would have to play a very significant role for it to succeed. Given its history in the

⁵⁵ See, e.g., the summary of an article from *Kommersant Daily*, 23 Sep. 1998 in *Jamestown Monitor*, 2 Oct. 1998, URL <<http://www.jamestown.org/pubs/>>.

⁵⁶ Christoffersen (note 54).

⁵⁷ Christoffersen (note 54), p. 23.

region and its existing bilateral security alliances, the USA is in a unique position to facilitate the strengthening of multilateral security relations among the great powers of Asia, and the evidence presented here suggests that Russia would support this as long it was 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 seriously lacking that Russia has acquired the unfortunately well-earned image of the 'wild wild East'. The overall weakness and vulnerability of the Russian economy have 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 1998 once again endured financial crisis. The devaluation of the rouble and moratorium on foreign debt payment in August 1998 and the ensuing collapse of the Kiriyenko Government gave further credence to the view that Russian economic recovery remains very elusive. If Russia remains mired in an even more prolonged economic decline, then the prospects for regional security in Asia become far more complicated and precarious. During the cold war it was a seemingly strong Soviet Union which threatened regional stability in Asia. Today, aside from the imminent danger of a North Korean implosion, 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—10–20 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 China in their relationship and an increasingly subordinate position vis-à-vis the USA and its allies in Asia. While the future is 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.⁵⁸ Recent research also suggests that democratizing states are more prone to conflict than established democracies or even stable authoritarian regimes.⁵⁹

V. Conclusions

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 most significant challenge in the coming years will be the integration of Russia and China into a

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Gilpin, R., *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1981).

⁵⁹ Mansfield, E. D. and Snyder, J., 'Democratization and the danger of war', *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 1 (summer 1995), pp. 5–38.

broader framework of Eurasian security.⁶⁰ The USA is currently enjoying a period of unprecedented relative strength which gives it an opportunity to shape the development of a truly multilateral security environment in Asia. 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. It does, however, recognize that the USA alone will not guarantee its security in the region, so it has embarked on building a set of strategic partnerships with other regional powers—Japan and China in East Asia and India in South Asia.⁶¹

This chapter argues that Russia's regional policies in Asia 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 policy making in the next century will depend to a considerable extent on the behaviour of other major powers. It will also depend on how domestic political struggles are resolved in Russia.⁶² While a successor to the Yeltsin regime will probably maintain a more Eurasian than Western orientation, it will be hard pressed to develop an effective reform programme to resurrect Russia as a truly great power within the near future.

⁶⁰ For an elaboration of this argument, see Kuchins, A. C., 'The emerging Sino-Russian strategic partnership and Eurasian security', Policy brief prepared for the PONARS meeting, Washington, DC, Oct. 1997. The full brief is available at URL <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ponars>>.

⁶¹ Steven E. Miller has described this multilateral aspect of Russia's foreign policy as 'omnidirectional friendliness'. Miller, S. E., 'Russian national interests', eds R. D. Blackwill and S. A. Karaganov, Center for Studies in International Security, *Damage Limitation or Crisis? Russia and the Outside World*, Studies in International Security no. 5 (Brassey's: Washington, DC, 1994), pp. 77–107. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa has adapted this framework to describe Russia's Asian policy including its key bilateral relationships with China, Japan and the USA. Hasegawa, T., 'Russo-Japanese relations and security of Northeast Asia in the 21st century', Sep. 1998. Unpublished. See also chapter 20 in this volume.

⁶² For a discussion of the linkage between domestic politics and foreign policy in Russia, see McFaul, M., 'The precarious peace: domestic politics in the making of Russian foreign policy', *International Security*, vol. 22, no. 3 (winter 1997/98), pp. 5–35.