

IN THIS ISSUE

- Who is Vladimir Putin? 1
- Post-9/11: What do the Russians think? 4
- A new springtime of the nations? 7
- Shifting loyalties? Ukrainian foreign policy in flux 8

NEXT ISSUE [Tuesday, November 19]

WHO IS VLADIMIR PUTIN?

By Dale R. Herspring

The hostage crisis in the Nord Ost Theater was the sternest challenge yet for President Vladimir Putin. Had he mishandled it, he might have faced the end of his presidency. Judging by the reactions of ordinary Russians in the week afterwards, however, he seems to have survived with his authority intact, possibly even strengthened. There were no great surprises.

Although it is barely two years since Putin assumed office, we have seen enough to allow us to begin to make some tentative judgments about him and his style of governance. And that governance does define him to some degree. First, as a patriot devoted to re-creating the Russian state while making it a force to be reckoned with both at home and abroad; second, as a bureaucrat primarily interested in solving problems; and third, as a man who is flexible in his approach to dealing with issues, a person who deals with problems in an incremental fashion but is prepared to seize opportunities. Putin is not ideological when it comes to solving problems. He believes, very simply, that Russian problems require Russian solutions.

A bureaucratic mindset

Putin's most characteristic feature, largely a result of his service in the KGB, is his devotion to the state and his bureaucratic approach to problems. This helps explain his somewhat ambivalent attitude towards democracy. Putin comes from an organization in which meritocracy, discipline and order were paramount.

There was some room for discussing options with a degree of creativity and initiative (depending on who the boss was), but one had to fall into line once a decision had been made. His career was similar to that of a military officer. If he was given an order, he was expected to carry it out. As a result, Putin has a tendency to expect the same kind of behavior from others.

When it comes to running Russia, Putin has not tried to reimpose a Soviet or Stalinist type of regime, though I suspect he could have had he been so inclined. Instead, he believes the leader should set the system's parameters and that those who work (or live in it) should operate within them. This helps explain his approach to the media.

His government has established certain parameters for what can and cannot be criticized in public. It is up to the media to abide by these limits. As long as it does, it is free to publish or

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say what it wants. One might call this “restriction without repression.” Russia must—and Putin believes this deeply—avoid the kind of political chaos that an unrestrained media helped create during the Yeltsin years.

Putin’s bureaucratic mindset also helps us understand his approach to issues such as legal reform, the military and even Chechnya. He believes (rightly or wrongly) that bureaucracy is the way to deal with such problems. When it came to legal reform, the solution was bureaucratic: increase the pay of judges, while trying to restructure the way the legal system is constructed. The same is true of the military. While he appointed one of his top assistants as defense minister, he has made it clear that he intends to eventually get rid of conscription in favor of a professional military. In typical bureaucratic fashion, he is pushing and prodding a rather reluctant general staff in that direction. And he expects obedience. As far as Chechnya is concerned, his first response was bureaucratic: create a unified command, and find a way to get rid of the rebels by gradually wearing them down. He has found it hard to be flexible or creative in seeking a solution to the Chechen problem.

Ideology vs problem-solving

Putin is also a dedicated supporter of the idea of political culture, though I am not certain that he has ever heard of the term. He believes deeply that Russia must find solutions that fit with its history and culture. Governance must fit the political beliefs and attitudes of the populace—and if they are to be changed, that can be accomplished only gradually. He does not believe that Russia should import a Western-style democracy. “It will not happen soon, if it ever happens at all, that Russia will become the second edition of, say, America or Britain in which liberal values have deep historic traditions. Our state and its institutions have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly that should be gotten

rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change.”¹

This is exactly what Putin has been doing since he took office: strengthening state authority, while permitting freedom to the degree that it doesn’t get in the way of the effective functioning of the country’s bureaucratic structures.

Equally important is Putin’s anti-ideological mindset. As he put it in his millennium speech, “I am against the restoration of an official state ideology in Russia in any form.”² He has described Marxism-Leninism as “nothing but a beautiful and harmful fairy tale.”³ What this means in practice is that, with the exception of his tendency to rely on the state to solve problems, he is open and pragmatic when it comes to dealing with issues. The key question for Putin is simply “does it work?” This too should come as no surprise given his background. When it comes to problem solving, the KGB was arguably one of the

... “nothing but a beautiful and harmful fairy tale” ...

least ideological organizations in the Soviet Union. The key task was to get the job done, to solve the problem at hand.

For example, Putin has shown no interest in North Korea from an ideological standpoint. But he is concerned about the economic viability of the Russian Far East, and with this in mind is trying to convince Pyongyang to agree to permit the construction of a rail connection through to South Korea.

What about democracy? What if Putin felt that reforms taken from Western democratic systems would help him solve some of his problems? As long as they did not go beyond the parameters that he believes are critical for maintaining central control, I suspect he would introduce them. If, on the other hand, he thought that further restrictions were necessary, he would not hesitate to reverse course. While this pragmatic approach may be unnerving to those who fear Russia could revert back to a more authoritarian state if the political and economic

situation were to deteriorate, it also leaves open the option for a movement in the opposite direction if things continue to improve.

This pragmatism means that Putin is not a long-term planner. Politically, his main worry has been on getting rid of obnoxious oligarchs, or forcing resistant generals to go along with the American request for help in fighting al-Qaida and the Taliban. He has neither the time nor the inclination to look at problems conceptually. In his mind, theories are irrelevant unless they help him solve the immediate problem facing him.

Finally, Putin's overall approach is one of caution, with policy developing through a series of incremental steps rather than radical shifts, again an approach characteristic of someone who spent his life in a carefully regulated bureaucracy—that is, the tortoise rather than that the hare. This was evident in his removal of the notoriously corrupt and inept Primorsky Krai Governor Yevgeny Nazdratenko. Rather than just firing him, he bided his time and eventually forced him out placing him in charge of the Russian fishing industry.

When it comes to foreign policy, it is worth noting that while Putin is patriotic, he is not jingoistic. He believes that Russia's only hope is to integrate itself into the world economy and to do that, if possible, without offending other states. This is the main reason why Putin seized on the events of September 11 to move Russia closer to the West. From a domestic standpoint, those attacks provided him with an opportunity to overcome opposition on the part of the Russian military and other conservatives to closer ties to the West. From his perspective, China is important to Russia, primarily because of its willingness to purchase Russian weapons, something that (together with arms sales to India) is keeping the country's military industrial complex alive while he tries to restructure and reform it. However, he does not see China as relevant when it comes to solving Russia's deep-seated problems. For this he needs the West, and especially the United States. September 11 provided the

opening he needed to move in that direction. This is also the main reason why he has played down Russian opposition to NATO and NATO expansion.

“Managed democracy”

So what should we call Putin's form of governance? No title—especially one taken from another political system—would fit the Russian system exactly. Soon after Putin became acting president Russian journalists coined the term “managed democracy,” and that still seems the best fit.

As Putin sees it, he was given the task of trying to lift Russia out of the mess Yeltsin left the country in. He accepted the responsibility of trying to solve the myriad problems as he “manages” the country. He fears that if he does not impose order through the power of the state, Russia will collapse. This is his paramount concern. Everything else is secondary.

How long will this period of managed democracy last?

Given his orientation, I suspect that it will remain in place for the indefinite future. After all, Putin's world is one of putting out one fire after another. And the crises will keep coming. I suspect that Putin never knows what kind of a disaster he will face when he walks into the Kremlin in the morning. In suggesting that managed democracy may be the future of Russia as long as Putin is in charge, I

am not suggesting that I agree with it from a moral standpoint.

It seems to me that the best one can hope for from Putin and Russia in coming months and years is that the economic situation will improve, that the country will remain stable, and that Putin will become increasingly convinced that movement toward greater democracy (as we in the West define it) will be in his and Russia's interest.

Notes

This essay is based on the author's essay in the forthcoming, *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncer-*

It is worth noting that while Putin is patriotic, he is not jingoistic.

tain, (Rowman and Littlefield) which he edited. Publication date: November 12.

1. Vladimir Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," *Pravitel'stvo rossiyskoy federatsii* at www.government.gov.ru/english/statVP_engl_1.html, 6.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "Putin wants powerful Russia its citizens can be proud of," RTR Russia TV, 7 October 2002 in Johnson's List, October 9, 2002, p. 15.

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POST-9/11: WHAT DO THE RUSSIANS THINK?

By Mikhail Kochkin

The radical changes in Russia's foreign policy that followed the events of September 11 last year are often interpreted as the personal achievement of Vladimir Putin, who had challenged Russian public opinion. His line on supporting the United States in the fight against international terrorism and Russia's active participation in the antiterrorist coalition, as well as the impressive warming of Russia's relations with America and NATO—all this looks outwardly like an act of extraordinary courage by our president. In Russia it is often said that, in pursuing this policy, he runs the risk of losing public support. Many political and social analysts observe that deep-rooted anti-Americanism (for many a legacy of the Cold War period), and the hostility towards the United States as world leader that has developed in the last decade, are stronger than any feelings of sympathy for the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, or any sense

that the Russian and American peoples are united in suffering from international terrorism, the common foe.

Of course, Putin really did achieve a huge and audacious turnaround in Russia's foreign policy in 2001. It is also true that this turnaround ran counter to the established positions of many members of the political elite and the inclinations of a significant part of society. Russians still, and consistently, take a dim view of the United States' role in the world, though, paradoxically, this does not stop half or more of them supporting, equally consistently, the development of partnerships or alliances with the United States and NATO. Perhaps it is because of the influence of Putin's pragmatism that ever more Russians now tend to regard Russian-American relations not from an emotional standpoint, with the wounded pride of a former superpower, but with an appreciation of the real pros and cons of cooperation. To understand the roots of this state of affairs, it is vital to look at the dynamics of the sympathy and antipathy felt for the United States in Russia over the last decade, and to try to identify just what provoked the various changes.

The honeymoon and afterwards

The beginning of the 1990s was a honeymoon period for Russian attitudes towards America. For the overwhelming majority (and this is especially true of the younger generation), America symbolized all the good things that Russia was striving for—civil liberties combined with material prosperity. This was a time of great hope, when many people thought that they needed only to rid themselves of Communist ideology for Russia to be able to take her rightful place among the world's powers. At that time, 70 percent of Russians were favorably disposed towards the United States and only 10 percent felt negatively. But when it turned out that freedom of speech and the multi-party system did not mean an automatic rise in living standards, and a huge number of people felt left out or cheated by the results of privatization and by hyperinflation, attitudes towards the West and to the United States in particular began to deteriorate rapidly. It was

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in this period too that the concept of democracy became discredited in the minds of Russians—the word ‘democrat’ became almost a swearword.

As a whole, from the second half of the 1990s onwards, Russian opinion on the United States was more rational and cautious. There were just two exceptions, when Russian sociologists identified sharp surges in anti-American feeling. These came in 1999 (with events in Yugoslavia and the NATO bombing of Serbia) and spring 2002 (with the American military presence in Georgia, scandals surrounding imports of Russian steel into the United States and of American chicken into Russia, and the Olympic scandals at Salt Lake City). These two ‘peaks’ of anti-Americanism were of a highly emotional nature. As a result, in the first case, of sympathy for the suffering Serbs—our ‘Slavic brothers’—and in the second, of resentment at the unjust ‘condemnation’ of the Russian athletes, goodwill towards America fell to an all-time low. Fortunately, the emotion factor does not last long and the mutual animosity soon faded away; by summer 2002 few in either country could recall the heated emotions of the Olympics.

Amongst the rational factors that affect the perception of the United States in Russia, two stand out as carrying the most weight.

The factors

The first, which dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, is the persistent perception of America as a powerful nation with a rapidly developing economy and cutting-edge technology, where people earn good money, where human rights are protected and so on. According to the Public Opinion Foundation, which asked Russians “Which society, in your opinion, is organized more justly, Russia or America?”, approximately half (48 percent) of the respondents named America and only 17 percent Russia. For the vast majority of Russians, “going to America” is still like winning a lucky ticket to the land of their dreams and away from the problems of everyday life—to the glitter of Hollywood and the warm beaches of Cali-

fornia or Florida. Interestingly, Western Europe has never inspired the same reverence.

These perceptions form the basis of the positive attitudes seen in Russia towards the United States and, significantly, not even the massive propaganda efforts of the Cold War period could stamp them out of Russia’s collective consciousness. Hollywood and rock and roll proved stronger than the Communist Party’s ideologues.

But then there is the second factor—the perception that the United States does not want to let Russia be a great power, and is endlessly striving to limit or undermine Russia’s influence in the world. This is the basis of the negative opinion of America that is still doggedly held by approximately 25 percent of all Russians. The fact is that belonging

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to a “great nation” or a “great power” is one of the main elements of the Russian people’s sense of national identity. Russian public opinion is therefore extremely sensitive to anything that affects Russia’s position as a great world power, as a country involved in the decisionmaking process on key international issues.

Post 9/11 sentiments

So what have the tragic events of fall 2001 done to change the perception of America? In Russia, the September 11 terrorist attacks prompted a wave of fellow-feeling and sympathy for the people of the United States. It could not be otherwise: As Putin put it, “the Russian people have firsthand experience of the threat of terrorism.” Less obviously, these events brought about a change in the image of America in Russia’s collective consciousness. It was apparent that many of those who, in the primitive mythological scheme of things, had seen the United States as some sort of global ‘evil force’, began to form a more sophisticated and rounded view, in which the foreign policy and internal political ideology of the American state were no longer identical with the country and its people. Russians began to see America simply as people, real men and women—not the bloated, insolent and self-satisfied individuals they had often seemed before, but innocent victims, dying

and suffering. Seen this way, the policies of the government were distinct from American society's "human dimension." The differences between the decidedly negative and the more rounded images of the United States were clearly distinguishable in the views expressed by the Public Opinion Foundation's respondents. "It's not America, but America's policies that need teaching a lesson," said one of them. "When a person is killed, you always feel sorry for him, whether he was good or bad—it's sad, whoever he was." Many see the sufferings of the Americans, who had 'never before experienced such a shock', as a spur towards a psychological rapprochement and improved mutual understanding with the Russians and their own endless shocks. ("After the tragedy they have been through, they have come to understand us better.")

In spite of all the sympathy for the victims of the terrorist attacks, however, many Russians think that the tragedy was to some extent America's fault. According to an Internet poll by the free mail service Mail.ru, 59 percent cited the "aggressive policies of the U.S. government everywhere" as the main cause. This view is shared by many Russians, regardless of age,

education or social status. In the words of businessman Valery K, "the Americans need to understand that they're not alone in the world. If they keep on using force to solve all their problems, things will only get worse." According to policeman Dmitry A, "of course, America has upset a lot of people around the world and they should have expected something like this to happen, though you couldn't have imagined such an atrocity." Though collectively critical of the American government's policies, Russians were generally sympathetic about the tragedy experienced by the American people, and expressions of *schadenfreude* were the exception. "Anti-Americanism is stronger in Europe than in Russia," maintains Andrei Piontkovsky, director of the independent Center for Strategic Studies in Moscow. "I do not believe that there is consistent anti-American feeling in Russia."

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The choice of allies

The legacy of the Cold War no longer plays a decisive role in relations between the United States and Russia, and has receded to a subconscious, emotional plane (not that this means that it has been totally eradicated). In the forefront now are economic and more mundane political issues, and they are being dealt with rationally. Meanwhile, the emotional confrontations that flare up periodically for various, often trivial reasons, do not prevent Russians from striving for cooperation with America. The clear preference for the strong, wealthy and developed West as a partner for Russia is graphically illustrated by Public Opinion Foundation data on who Russians consider to be their country's military and political allies. Twenty-seven percent of respondents named Western countries (including 14 percent for

America), 15 percent cited the CIS and 11 percent opted for communist states (China, Cuba and North Korea).

One way or another, President Putin is unlikely in the near future to meet much resistance from Russian public opinion to an alliance with the United States and the West. The chief obstacle here is the older generation of generals and

officials of the "old guard," who are genetically incapable of embracing such a course. However, further down the road, Russian society's support for an alliance with America will depend on the real economic and political dividends that it brings Russia. And the most important thing will be how the country's economy and the prosperity of its people develop. In the absence of any perceptible achievements in the socio-economic sphere, hopes for an alliance with the West may turn rapidly into disillusionment. Therefore, effective domestic policies (especially on economic and social issues) will remain the critical condition for the implementation of Russia's chosen foreign policy.

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A NEW SPRINGTIME OF THE NATIONS?

By Stephen Blank

A specter is haunting the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); the specter of popular unrest. In the last year we have seen political crisis strike country after country in the region:

- cabinet struggles in Kazakhstan,
- the government's electoral defeat in Ukraine as it confronts rising scandals,
- large-scale popular protests against the Moldovan government's Russification policies,
- the resignation of the entire Georgian cabinet amidst a scandal over governmental efforts to suppress the media,
- continuing large popular demonstrations against the false imprisonment of a popular Kyrgyz legislator,
- growing popular unrest in Azerbaijan, and
- a purge of the security apparatus and much of the cabinet in Turkmenistan.

It also is clear that former Turkmen cabinet ministers are forming an opposition movement against Saparmurat Niazov's erratic and sultanistic regime, seeking foreign help in Moscow and Washington, and that Niazov's security services cannot penetrate this movement due to its popularity.

All these signs of elite and popular disaffection are occurring amidst the war on terrorism in Afghanistan and the advent of American bases throughout the region. Greater international attention is thus being paid to internal developments in the CIS states. At the same time just about all these states face crushing economic inequalities and yawning democratic deficits.

Are these signs of a broader trend that might culminate in widespread revolutions or uprisings of the sort that convulsed Europe in 1848? Or are they all merely local events that can be easily suppressed and have no wider

resonance? If they were to lead to protests that toppled incumbent rulers, what would be the consequences of such outcomes?

Undoubtedly CIS governments have generally miserably failed their societies, politically, economically, ecologically and militarily. Certainly they do not grant enough opportunities for democratic self-governance. Many of them face ethnic wars that are presently frozen, but which could reignite at any moment. Georgia, for instance, is prone to inciting renewed fighting with its secessionist Abkhaz minority and then failing to achieve its objectives, thus triggering a greater crisis and external Russian intervention.

Likewise, these states are almost all in desperate economic straits, with inequalities having grown tremendously as national economies stagnated. And, due to the rupture of the Soviet social safety net, many of these societies and their overall ecology are in serious danger. Numerous reports attesting to these threats high-

light the degradation of both the social and natural environment throughout the CIS. All of these states are also threatened, albeit in varying degree, by the possibility of terrorism, external threats of military action, and/or insurgency. Thus, in one way or another, all of the CIS governments are under severe stresses that offer them little margin for error or scope for domestic maneuver.

As the recent and widespread signs of elite and popular disaffection in Georgia, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan are

occurring amidst the broader international and U.S.-led war on terrorism that has led to numerous American troop deployments, we must consider the possibility of broad, if uncoordinated, popular and elite uprisings against these failed governments.

Foreign observers often reproach U.S. policy for not placing a higher priority on democratization, especially in Central Asia. Whether such criticisms were or are unfounded, they apparently neglect the difficulties in-

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herent in persuading dictators to change their ways while they still have the time to do so. Moreover, the Bush administration has apparently taken those strictures to heart in its relations with Central Asian governments. The respective country's leaders now are at pains to defend themselves as democrats or point to the limited reforms they are now introducing.

Finally, few of these critiques take account of the fact that these states' most important foreign policy partner, Russia, has strongly supported antidemocratic forms of rule in these states since they gained independence. Moscow, not Washington, stands to lose more from unrest in the CIS. For if there indeed are these pervasive manifestations of discontent, then the possibility of widespread regional conflict—internal and/or interstate in nature—is real and potentially imminent. And Russia would be hard-pressed to refrain from intervening in those conflicts.

If indeed, instability and revolution are in the offing for one or more CIS regime they would take place even while foreign troops are present in those territories. While armed conflicts, whether ethnic, revolutionary or other, might be the only way to unseat undemocratic regimes; they cannot guarantee subsequent democratization or peace or preclude the possibility of a major power conflict in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. Nor does history suggest that widespread revolution, if it occurs, is necessarily a harbinger of stability and democratization. Many political scientists observe that perhaps the most dangerous period and one in which states are most prone to belligerent acts is in the middle of a stalled or deformed democratization process.

Although 1848 was the springtime of nations in Europe, most of those revolutions failed to bring democracy, instead unleashing a dynamic that brought a generation of war to Europe. While we may wish to transform and democratize ruling CIS regimes, U.S. policymakers and analysts have the responsibility of carefully monitoring those possible regime transformations, lest U.S. troops and interests be caught in the middle of revolutions and

internal or interstate conflicts there. But, beyond merely monitoring the situation, we should be thinking of ways to prevent conflicts from breaking out or of defusing existing ones, so as to join with other interested governments in steering development into more pacific and democratic channels.

The mere fact of rising public and elite opposition to CIS governments may not herald fundamental political change, but it certainly suggests the possibility for that outcome, especially as these states gain more prominence in world affairs and therefore undergo more scrutiny. However, if these governments should happen to fail we may be confronting long periods of civil strife, failed states and other well-known challenges to security with which the international system has not coped

well in the past decade. Those potential conflicts could then undermine not only the internal security of the afflicted states, but also the war on terrorism and regional, or even international security. The emerging regional situation therefore merits not only the most careful

scrutiny and attention by interested observers but also serious multilateral actions to anticipate crises, prevent conflicts and provide mechanisms by which these states can move forward in solving their enormous problems. Otherwise if we fail to do that, their problems will soon become our problems.

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SHIFTING LOYALTIES? UKRAINIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN FLUX

By Taras Kuzio

Since he was elected president of Russia in March 2000, Vladimir Putin has progressively downgraded relations with Belarus while upgrading

them with Ukraine. Five factors have led to this expanding strategic Moscow-Kyiv partnership.

First, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka is no longer useful as a buffer against an enlarged NATO and European Union. Putin is visibly less interested in a Russian-Belarusian union. (The idea, launched in 1996, has always been more virtual than real.) Russia has dropped the notion of a gas pipeline through Belarus to bypass Ukraine. Lukashenka, meanwhile, has rejected Putin's proposals for a joint referendum on unification (that is, Russia's absorption of Belarus). Lukashenka's position remains shaky: Russia is sounding out the possibility of replacing him with a less odious figure.

Second, Putin's more pragmatic approach towards Ukraine has allowed Kuchma to return to his 1994 elec-

tion program of domestic and international alignment with Russia on condition that Russia recognize Ukraine's independence and sovereignty and treat it as an "equal" partner. The Ukrainian-Russian border was no longer in dispute when Putin came to power, the May 1997 treaty with Kyiv having been ratified a year earlier.

Third, unlike his predecessor Boris Yeltsin, Putin has few illusions about Ukraine's permanence as an independent state, even has some grudging respect for it as such. Moscow is now concerned with securing Ukraine within the Russian sphere of influence. This is especially important now that NATO and the EU will embrace, respectively, seven and ten new former FSU states and two others by 2007.

Fourth, Putin was fortunate in that, in the same year he was elected, the Kuchmagate scandal led to Kuchma's semi-isolation in the West and a shift of Ukraine's multivector foreign policy from the West to the East. To reinforce this trend, Viktor Chernomyrdin was appointed ambassador to Ukraine in May 2001. In October 2000 and April 2001 the last remaining pro-Western government ministers in Ukraine were removed—Borys Tarasiuk (foreign minister) and Viktor Yushchenko

(prime minister). Then came NATO's refusal to extend an invitation to Kuchma to attend its November 21-22 summit in Prague, a foreign policy disaster for Ukraine.

Fifth, the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 fundamentally altered international politics. Russia and Uzbekistan became, for Washington, more important allies than Ukraine. Kyiv, quite simply, was no longer needed as an anti-Moscow buffer. This factor was reinforced by the simultaneous NATO and EU expansion. Russia increased its cooperation with

NATO, allowing Ukraine to do the same. In late May 2002, as U.S. President George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin met in Moscow and agreed to move jointly against terrorism in the Middle East, Ukraine announced its goal of eventual membership in NATO. But in September, after the Bush administra-

tion had made Iraq its priority, Kyiv found itself facing the biggest crisis in relations with Washington since the collapse of the Soviet Union: Washington accused Kuchma of sanctioning the sale of military equipment to Iraq in July 2000, not long after the last U.S.-Ukrainian summit with President Bill Clinton in Kyiv. Totally discredited in the West, Kuchma's regime is now perceived to be on a par with Lukashenka's Belarus.

Diplomatic support

Ukraine's return to a program of a close Kyiv-Moscow alignment is taking place at the same time as Kuchma's isolation in the West is forcing him to fall back on Putin. This realignment has taken place along three axes. President Putin said during his October visit to Ukraine that "[t]he pooling of efforts and resources of our states enables us to strengthen not only the economy, but also positions of the two countries in the international arena as a whole." The joint parrying of Russia and Ukraine in international affairs has always been a long-term Russian goal.

Putin visited Ukraine in February 2001, during the height of the Kuchmagate crisis, in a show of diplomatic support, visiting the Pivdenmash (Yugmash) factory in

Putin has few illusions about Ukraine's permanence as an independent state...

Dnipropetrovsk, the world's former largest manufacturer of nuclear weapons, which Kuchma headed in the Soviet era. Reversing the bitter competition on the international arms market they engaged in during the 1990s, both Moscow and Kyiv now speak of cooperative efforts.

In October 2002 Putin visited Zaporzizhya and again expressed his strong support for Kuchma, proposing that Kuchma be elected CIS chairman at the CIS summit in Chisinau that followed the visit. This was the sixth meeting between Putin and Kuchma this year. In 2001, the first year that Washington and Kyiv held no meetings, Moscow and Kyiv held eight. Even prior to the Iraqi arms scandal, Washington had ruled out any summit until the autumn 2000 murder of opposition journalist Georgy Gongadze was resolved.

Since the Iraqi arms scandal came to light, Washington has reduced its financial assistance and the U.S.-Helsinki Commission has demanded an investigation into Kuchma's financial dealings, including where the US\$100 million from the sale of radars to Iraq has gone. Tangible Russian support for Kuchma came in October, when U.S. and British experts began their investigation. According to Melnychenko, a still-unknown high-ranking Russian official attended the 2000 meeting during which Kuchma authorized the sale of Kolchuga radars to Iraq. Although the Ukrainian authorities reluctantly admitted that the meeting had taken place, and that Kuchma had authorized the sale, they argue that it did not go ahead. In November the trial of former Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko, accused of money laundering, got underway in California.

Moving toward Moscow

Ukraine, having established the now shaky regional anti-Russia GUAM group—Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Moldova—in 1998, has been drifting back toward Moscow since 2000. (Kuchma's visit to Armenia this October to sign an agreement on military-technical cooperation demonstrates the shift.) At the same time, it has

progressively increased its participation in the CIS. Already an associate member of the CIS Air-Defense Agreement, Ukraine joined the CIS Antiterrorist Center in 2000. Russia is now pushing for Ukraine to join the Eurasian Economic Community, in which it is at the moment only an observer. Although Ukraine is not a member of the CIS Collective Security Organization, it regularly attends Councils of CIS Defense Ministers and

Border Troops. In October, Kyiv and Moscow created a gas consortium, giving Russia leverage over Ukraine's pipelines.

Joint measures

Moscow has also stepped in to help Kyiv in trying to quell domestic opposition. One such instance is the attempt to strip Yulia Tymoshenko, former head of

Ukraine's United Energy Systems under former Prime Minister Lazarenko, of her deputy immunity and prosecute her. (Lazarenko and Tymoshenko were, in 1998-1999, the first oligarchs to oppose Kuchma, something he does not forgive.) Russia's prosecutors and Defense Ministry have also launched criminal proceedings against former military chief financier Lieutenant-General Georgy Oleinik, who is accused of working with Tymoshenko. Kuchma would like to destroy Tymoshenko before the October 2004 presidential elections so that Yushchenko is left without allies. But the chances of this are slim: Kuchma has no kompromat on either Yushchenko or radical Socialist leader Oleksandr Moroz, and parliament is unlikely to strip Tymoshenko of her immunity.

Russia openly interfered in Ukraine's parliamentary elections this past March against Yushchenko's Our Ukraine and in favor of the pro-executive For a United Ukraine and the Social Democrats United (SDPUo). The degree of how significant Russia's role in Ukraine's domestic politics is became evident in the joint October 1 letter from four opposition groups, requesting a meeting with Putin to explain their position during his visit to Ukraine. Russian Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, however, has criticized Putin's strategy towards Ukraine of supporting only Kuchma and oligarchs because the Com-

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munists, strong in eastern Ukraine, are now members of the opposition.

As Dmitry Furman pointed out in the October 15 issue of Moskowski Novosti, Russia—unlike Ukraine—does not have a large pro-Western reformist movement and has not experienced mass demonstrations since the early 1990s. Yushchenko has maintained a stable popularity of 25-30 percent over the last two years. Polls indicate that he would enter and win in a second round of presidential elections against Communist leader Pyotr Symonenko. Yushchenko has Ukrainophone western and central Ukraine sewn up. Only in the more populous Russophone eastern Ukraine will Russia be in a position to assist Kuchma in possibly thwarting Yushchenko. Thus Yushchenko's move to create a parliamentary majority with Dnipropetrovsk's Labor Ukraine and the Donbass' Regions of Ukraine clans, and his visit to Moscow in late October to establish ties with the Union of Right Forces.

Putin and Kuchma have similar views on the need to tame the independent media. A major irritation for both are Western radio stations which are not easy to control and impossible to co-opt. On October 4, Putin annulled a 1991 decree guaranteeing the legal and operational status of the U.S.-financed Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty (RFE-RL). "Despite the end of the Cold War, the editorial policy of Radio Liberty/Free Europe has," presidential aide Sergey Yastrzhembsky noted, "not only not lost its ideological thrust, but has recently become increasingly tendentious. This is clear in its broadcasting to Chechnya and Ukraine, in which information is often presented in a selective and one-sided way."

Kuchma's frustrations with RFE-RL over Kuchmagate began at the same time as Putin's in 2000 over Chechnya.

RFE-RL was a major source for the re-transmission of the tapes made illicitly in Kuchma's office by presidential guard Mykola Melnychenko, who fled in November 2000 to Prague, where RFE-RL is based. Then director of RFE-RL's Ukrainian service, Roman Kupchinsky, was made persona non grata in Ukraine, though subsequently allowed to return. The Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine, a Kyiv think tank with close links to the Foreign Ministry, claimed that Kupchinsky left his position in October 2001 because of pressure from the Ukrainian authorities. (Kupchinsky now edits the RFE-RL publication Crime and Corruption Watch, launched in October 2001). Ukraine returned to Soviet-era jamming of RFE-RL during the height of the Kuchmagate crisis and threatened to close its Kyiv office. Ukrainian radio stations that re-transmit Western radio stations are again threatened with not having their licenses renewed.

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Conclusion

Ukraine's realignment towards Russia fits the ideological preferences Kuchma originally expressed during the 1994 election campaign. It has also been forced upon him by his semi-isolation in the West after Kuchmagate began in November 2000, and will presumably be reinforced further by total isolation once the Iraqgate investigation begun in September issues its report. Ukraine's foreign policy, then, remains hostage to its president's fate at a time when NATO and EU enlargement plans for 2002-2007 are bringing revolutionary changes to Europe.

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