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Russian Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Priorities and Effectiveness

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RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
PRIORITIES AND EFFECTIVENESS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Josef Korbel School of International Studies

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Brett A. Schneider

June 2012

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Abstract

This paper analyzes contemporary Russian Foreign Policy toward the Middle East. Six factors are identified as most critical to Russian foreign policy in the region: Islamic terrorism, arms transfers, natural resources, influence over former Soviet Spaces, general trade, and great power status. With rare exceptions, these principles are shown to guide Russian foreign policy in the Middle East since 2000.

The paper continues by considering the effectiveness of Russia in achieving its desired policy outcomes in the Middle East. This includes assessing situations in which two or more priorities run counter to each other. Generally, Russia is shown to be effective at achieving its more pragmatic goals, and ineffective at achieving its abstract ones.

Finally, the paper considers whether or not Russian foreign policy has remained consistent through the Arab Spring. The conclusion is that Russia is presently unable to move beyond policies that represent clear mutual benefits with Middle Eastern states. As such, Russia is not a threat to undermine fundamental United States policy objectives in the region.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At the time of this writing, Russia is drawing a considerable amount of international ire for impeding efforts to sanction the Assad regime in Syria for its human rights violations. United States Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, who has been unable to work around the Russian Security Council veto, said, “it was outrageous in any instance for Russia and China to veto a resolution that was really a political expression of support [...] for the people of Syria and a condemnation of violence. But it was even more outrageous that they would do so at a time when Assad was stepping up the killing in such a horrific way.”¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, former Director of Policy Planning for the State Department, tweeted that, “If Russia does not agree to a UNSC resolution they should be held accountable for endorsing continuation of massacres lik [sic] that in Homs.”² Clearly Russia once again has the attention of United States policymakers due to its relations with the Middle East.

Russian foreign policy in the Middle East has been largely ignored since Russia ceased to be part of the Soviet Union. Many Russian foreign policy observers would point out that Russia itself has been forgotten by the West since the USSR collapsed. For many, it was not until the Russia-Georgia conflict of 2008 that Russia reemerged as a

¹ National Public Radio, “Syria Veto ‘Outrageous’ says U.N. Envoy Susan Rice,” wbur (February 4, 2012), <http://www.wbur.org/npr/146424981/un-ambassador-susan-rice-fumes-at-syria-veto> (accessed February 11, 2012).

² Slaughter, Anne-Marie (SlaughterAM), “If Russia does not agree to a UNSC resolution they should be held accountable for endorsing continuation of massacres lik that in Homs,” 4 February 2012, 8:54 a.m. Tweet.

state that demanded the United States' attention. Still, it was not until the Arab Spring of 2011 that concern over Russia's approach to the Middle East was again scrutinized, mainly because the West hoped to avoid objections to its intervention in Libya. Libya eventually became a North Atlantic Treaty Organization project following Russian and Chinese abstention on UN Security Council Resolution 1973, an occurrence that led Putin to openly criticize Medvedev for kowtowing to the West.³

At the time of the Libyan rebellion, Russia's desire for noninterference was partially attributed to a fear among the Russian elite that they could soon find themselves facing a popular uprising, and would not want deal with pesky Western interference in suppressing their population. This reasoning resurfaced following Russia's veto of the UN Security Council Resolution on Syria referenced above, including in the *New York Times*.⁴ Other sources, such as the *Christian Science Monitor*, pointed to Moscow's desire to grow rich from arms sales, despite the human toll paid by the people of Syria.⁵ These explanations sensationalize Russian policy toward the Middle East, ignoring more reasonable explanations for Russia's refusal of Western solutions to the ongoing conflict.

The United States and Russia have had many policy disagreements on the Middle East since 2000; February 2011 does not mark the beginning of a new trend. In 2003, Russia lobbied strongly against the US invasion of Iraq, threatening to veto the UN

³ Fyodor Lukyanov, "Uncertain World: Putin, Medvedev split over Libya," *RiaNovosti*, March 22, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/columnists/20110322/163148237.html> (accessed March 17, 2012).

⁴ Neil MacFarquhar and Michael Schwartz, "Russia Defends its Diplomacy in Syria Amid Accounts of Escalating Violence," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/09/world/middleeast/syrian-forces-said-to-renew-assault-on-homs.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all# (accessed February 8, 2012).

⁵ Fred Wier, "Why Russia is Willing to Sell Arms to Syria," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 19, 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2012/0119/Why-Russia-is-willing-to-sell-arms-to-Syria> (accessed February 9, 2012).

Security Council Resolution proposed by the United States calling for unilateral disarmament. In fact, former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov was one of the last diplomats to petition Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to resolve the confrontation peacefully.⁶ Russia's support for the Iranian nuclear program has also been a major point of contention, as Russia has been involved in building and operating the nuclear power plant at Bushehr since the mid-1990s. Finally, Russia has continued to diverge from the West on the Peace Process between Israel and Palestine. Russia tries to maintain positive relations with all sides, however its willingness to engage Palestinian groups like Hamas is troublesome for those in the United States and elsewhere who consider that party a terrorist organization.

Beyond the policies that conflict with the West, Russia has important relationships with states like Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and others over matters that do not concern the West. Russia and the Middle East represent a fault line in Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*. Historical animosity creates a level of distrust with Iran and Turkey, among others, that can be difficult to overcome. Russia is concerned that Muslims within its own population will take cues from the political currents of the Middle East. Concerned over Islamic radicalization surrounding the Chechnya issue, Russia went to Saudi Arabia to petition its Royal Family to discourage those who view Chechnya as part of the Global Jihad.⁷ Despite Turkey and Iran being key competitors for influence in the former Soviet Union and having occasionally supported Chechen

⁶ Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs: Behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to the Present*. Translated by Paul Gould. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 320.

⁷ Mark N. Katz, "Saudi-Russian Relations since the Abdullah-Putin Summit," *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 1 (2009): 113.

separatists, since 2000 Russia has tried to engage them both on security provision in the CIS rather than confront them and challenge their interests.

During the Soviet period the Middle East was treated as a chessboard, subject to great power politics in which Russia hoped to decrease US influence. While the messianic mission of communism waned throughout this period, Russia did have strategic footholds, especially in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, it became clear that Moscow had chosen unreliable friends; drains on resources that could not be trusted to obey Moscow's wishes at critical moments.

Today, Russia prefers to do business with more reliable partners, which in the case of the Middle East are almost all US allies. This complicates Russia's broader foreign policy objective of undermining the United States' "unipolar moment," in favor of a multipolar system; the states Moscow wants to grow closer to are already aligned with America. A reasonable analogy of Russia in the Middle East today is that of a builder who is given a new set of blueprints but has already laid a foundation using the old set. Russia wants to inspire a stable, economically productive Middle East, but its partners for doing so are Iran, Syria, and Palestinian groups—partners interested in challenging the current order of things.

Research Question, Thesis Statement, and Purpose of Thesis

There are several research questions guiding this paper: What are the goals of Russian foreign policy in the Middle East? How is Russian foreign policy constructed based on these goals? How have those policies been carried out? Has Russia been successful in achieving its aims in the Middle East through its foreign policy?

This paper identifies six goals that consistently arise as key issues for Russia in the Middle East. They are fighting terrorism, expanding arms trade, protecting energy resource interests, increasing trade, managing influence over former Soviet spaces, and enhancing Russia's status as a Great Power. I label the first four goals as pragmatic, because they are independent of Moscow's broad foreign policy goals of guarding Russia's Near Abroad and of being seen as an equal by the West. The latter two are abstract goals, meant to supplement Russia's overarching foreign policy strategy.

My thesis is that Russian foreign policy in the Middle East has been successful at accomplishing its pragmatic goals; however Russia has struggled to achieve its broader abstract ends. Logically, if Russia is deepening relations with Middle Eastern states on matters of trade, arms transfers, and security cooperation, it ought to also gain the leverage needed to command greater influence on political matters; but this has not happened yet.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a holistic view of Russian relations with the Middle East. The cloaked nature of Russian foreign policy has allowed misnomers and suspicions about the Russian presence in the region to be treated as fact. The events of the Arab Spring have made common treatment as Russia as a malevolent force propping up the region's strongmen. In actuality, Russia has only been improving its ties to the region in areas that are mutually beneficial for foreign governments.

Academic interest dropped off dramatically when it became clear that Russia was not going to be the security menace for the United States that the Soviet Union had been. As a result, only a handful of books and articles have been written on Russian relations

with the Middle East and American experts on the topic sparse, although Robert O. Freedman and Mark Katz stand out. Much of the analysis that has been done assesses bilateral relationships. Some scholarship only considers Arab states, leaving out Turkey, Iran, and Israel, the three most critical states to Russian interests in the region. By taking a regional view, this thesis should provide fresh insight into Russia's relations with the Middle East.

Thesis Research Design

This research will support the thesis statement by establishing that the six identified factors are central to Russian foreign policy in the Middle East, by providing credibility to the distinction between pragmatic and abstract goals, and by evaluating Russia's effectiveness at achieving its identified goals. The research will also consider how the upheaval of the Arab Spring has altered Russian relations with the region.

All six factors that this paper tracks appear in some form in Russia's 2008 Foreign Policy Concept. However, the genesis of their identification is largely a product of my own analysis; for example, each factor affects Russian relations with at least five major states in the Middle East. Building the case for their relevance will depend heavily on documentary analysis, drawing from official Russian government documents, newspaper articles, scholarly journal articles, and authoritative books. The murky nature of how Russian foreign policy is actually set and carried out necessitates reliance on past events to identify what drives Moscow's actions.

The paper will consider Soviet history in the Middle East to build the argument that Moscow learned to not rely on ideological motivations for dealing with the region.

Russian foreign policy outside the Middle East will be explained to provide a context of policies within the region. This too will rely on documentary analysis.

Evaluating the effectiveness of Russian foreign policies will be done quantitatively for the four goals identified as pragmatic. The Global Terrorism Database maintained by the University of Maryland will be used for assessing Russia's ability to address terrorism. The International Arms Transfers database, maintained by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, will be used to evaluate Russia's arms transfer practices. Bilateral trade data from the International Monetary Fund will allow for assessing Moscow's ability to increase trade with the Middle East. Data from OPEC will be used to assess how well Russia has improved its energy resource interests. The abstract goals, for which quantitative resources for determining success do not exist, will be evaluated using qualitative analysis from secondary sources.

Significance of the Topic

An underlying question that this paper considers is whether or not Russian foreign policy seeks to undercut United States policy in the Middle East. The region was once a central "theater" of the Cold War, a front line for the United States and Russia to challenge each other's interests. It is not impossible that it could become so again, especially given the region's vital energy resources. For United States policymakers, Russia and the Middle East are two traditionally puzzling areas. Even though Russia denounced the attacks of September 11th and demonstrated willingness to help the United States fight al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, by the end of the Bush

Administration relations had soured to the point that the incoming Obama Administration saw it necessary to “reset” relations with Russia.

The United States is the military hegemon in the Middle East, maintaining a large presence including Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, Naval Support Activity Bahrain, army bases in Kuwait, and a training presence throughout the region. The strength of the US position allows the importance of other international actors in the region to be often overlooked. For example, Japan receives approximately 70% of its oil through the Strait of Hormuz,⁸ yet discussion of possible closure of the Strait centers on US-Iran relations and that contingency’s effects on the United States.

The rise of China has strengthened the view that the international system is again multipolar. If the United States unipolar moment has passed, then analyses considering the roles of other strong states in regions like the Middle East grow in importance. The West is currently trying to guide movements within Arab states toward meaningful democratic reform. In a multipolar system, doing so requires multilateral support, yet in the past year Russia and China have been unhappy with West’s democratizing mission. Recognizing the interests and motivations driving Moscow’s policy is a more effective way of securing cooperation than criticism and name-calling at the United Nations. Finally, understanding Russian actions in the Middle East not only provides insight into less studied trends in the region, it allows for an improved understanding of Russia itself within the evolving international system.

⁸ AFP, “Japan Foreign Minister Holds Energy Talks in Saudi,” *Al Arabiya*, January 8, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/08/187140.html> (accessed January 8, 2012).

Organization of Thesis

This thesis will build a case that the six identified goals of Russian foreign policy in the Middle East dictate Russian action in the Middle East, it will explain Russian strategies for achieving those goals, and it will provide an assessment of the strategies effectiveness. Structurally, the first chapter gives an introduction to the research. The second chapter will provide context by reviewing contemporary Russian foreign policymaking, differentiate Russian treatment of the Middle East from two more important regions, the West and the CIS, and explain the pragmatic approach to the Middle East relations learned by Moscow during the Soviet period. Chapter three lays out each of the six policy goals, giving evidence for the importance of each. The fourth chapter will evaluate the overall effectiveness of Russia at achieving the six policy goals. The fifth chapter will discuss the very recent past by investigating if Russian actions throughout the Arab Spring conform to past behavior and laying out how recent developments might affect Russian interests in the future. The sixth chapter will conclude the paper and offer recommendations for policymakers and for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: PUTTING RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN CONTEXT

Russian Foreign Policy Formation

The legacy of Russia's long authoritarian past is relevant, as foreign policy is still a highly centralized endeavor, where the Russian elite form the interested public and the president's inner circle is the genesis of policy. From a legal perspective, Article 80 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that "the President of the Russian Federation shall determine the guidelines of the internal and foreign policies of the State."⁹ Further, Article 86 states that the Russian President shall "govern the foreign policy of the Russian Federation."¹⁰ Even while he is obliged to consult with the appropriate committees and commissions, the President alone can appoint and recall Russian diplomats and ambassadors.¹¹ Robert O. Freedman noted that, "Putin consolidated power by replacing everyone and letting his business partners in."¹² An example of the president's ultimate authority was Putin's decision, against the recommendations of his advisors, to cooperate with the United States in Afghanistan.¹³ From 2007 to 2011, during which time Putin served as Prime Minister, foreign policy

⁹ "Chapter 4, Article 80," *The Constitution of the Russian Federation*, available at <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-05.htm> (accessed February 22, 2012).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Article 86.

¹¹ *Ibid*, Article 84.

¹² Robert O Freedman, "Can Russia be a Partner for NATO in the Middle East?" in *NATO-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Aurel Braun, 123-160, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 123-124.

¹³ Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 79.

was formally shifted slightly to give greater authority to the Prime Minister, and will likely be shifted back as Putin resumes the presidency.

This system allows for deliberations over foreign policy to be discussed away from the public sphere. As Mike Bowker notes, “Putin has been accused of strengthening the power of the state at the expense of personal liberty and freedom of speech. Putin appears particularly intolerant of any form of public criticism.”¹⁴ Jeffrey Mankoff writes that public discourse is strong, online and in print, but “The public in Russia [only] acts as a constraint, limiting the range of policy options the government can adopt—at least in a range of high-visibility policy areas.”¹⁵ Politics within the Kremlin are the key level of decision-making. Since Vladimir Putin was reelected to the presidency, which now has longer term limits (six years instead of four), it is reasonable to assume that he and his inner circle will determine Russian foreign policy for the next twelve years. Thus Russian foreign policy should be formed in a consistent pattern with the previous twelve years. However that does not necessarily dictate similar substantive outcomes.

In placing theoretical framework around governmental decision-making, Graham Allison laid out three models: The Rational Actor Model, the Organizational Process Model, and the Government Politics Model.¹⁶ Of the three, the Russian process outwardly claims to fit the first model, in which alternative actions for dealing with a problem are dually evaluated and the action that delivers the best payoff is identified and followed. This is the method that Yevgeny Primakov endorsed as Foreign Minister in the

¹⁴ Mike Bowker, *Russia, America, and the Islamic World*, (Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2007), 3.

¹⁵ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 59.

¹⁶ Graham Allison with Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999).

mid-1990s, one in which geostrategic interests should be pursued instead of ideologically motivated ones. Primakov's course was a reaction to Moscow's early overtures toward the West following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which went unappreciated and unrewarded. However the problem then, as several scholars have noted, is assessing what the best pragmatic approach is on a given issue. Bobo Lo wrote in 2003 that "Ideology served to 'legitimize' self-interest, to cloak the venal in something like presentable garb by providing a moral veneer."¹⁷ In reality, the Government Politics Model is the best fit for describing current Russian foreign policy decision-making.

In 2009, in a chapter titled "Bulldogs Fighting under the Rug," Jeffrey Mankoff describes Russian foreign policymaking as a hotly contested process undertaken by actors away from the public arena. The proverbial battle lines are drawn on the basis of ideology, specifically on how the actors view Russia's place in the world. He compares Russia's Security Council to the United States' National Security Council as a policy coordinating body, and explains that centralizing power to the council "allowed Putin to impose a fairly coherent vision of the national interest in a way that was not consistently possible during the Yeltsin-Primakov years, when regional and sectorial interests often took predominance."¹⁸ Further, he says that under Putin, "large energy companies and security services have replaced the influence of the legislature and regional governors in foreign policy formation."¹⁹ Even Lo, writing during Putin's first presidential term, noted that economics interests now have as great of an impact on foreign policy making

¹⁷ Bobo Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era: Reality, illusion and mythmaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2002), 64.

¹⁸ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 55.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 56.

as the power ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense.²⁰ To complete his consolidation of power, Putin placed allies from Russian Intelligence into high military positions to rein in and control the military.²¹

The remaining competition within the Kremlin over foreign policy outcomes is based on differing views of Russia's place in the world. The central questions that these policymakers consider are is Russia a great power and is Russia a Western or a Eurasian state? How those questions are answered shape general Russian foreign policy outlook. Lo explains that in the early nineties, these differing viewpoints were fiercely contested, and it became President Boris Yeltsin's preference to build consensus or, short of that, allow deadlock.²² Under Putin the strand of thinking that sees Russia as a great power with a Western-centric outlook, although does not identify Russia as Western, has emerged as dominant. Other viewpoints still have their adherents, and as was mentioned earlier, these ideological battles are sometimes undercut by financially motivated actors.

In 2000 the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the "National Security Concept of the Russian Federation," and then in 2008 published the "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation." Lo describes the former document as window dressing, meant to create the illusion of a Realist Model of decision-making that offered commentary on current, hot political issues.²³ Mankoff describes the latter document as noteworthy for highlighting the slight differences between Putin's foreign policy and

²⁰ Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 34.

²¹ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 58.

²² Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 4-5.

²³ *Ibid*, 66-70.

President Dmitry Medvedev's.²⁴ The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept places a strong emphasis on multilateral cooperation on international challenges, advocating for “the emergence of a new world order” that centralizes the role of the United Nations and international law.²⁵ It also calls for states to cooperate in security provision, and for a reduction of the use of force between states. Most importantly, it elevates relations with CIS member states over those with the West, as part of what is called “multi-vector foreign policy.”²⁶

Given the difficulty of seeing behind the screen of Russian foreign policy formation, the next sections will investigate how Putin and his associates have been conducting foreign policy since 2000. Such an approach begins by considering the two regions most central on the Russian agenda.

Russian Relations with NATO and the CIS

The Middle East is not central to current Russian foreign policy concerns, which instead center on Russia's relationship with NATO and the CIS. At times, the Middle East becomes an instrument of those relationships, but in other instances Russian relations with the region stand out because of the charged approach that accompany relations with NATO and the CIS. This section will provide details of Russian relations with the West and the former Soviet states before concluding with a discussion that differentiates the Middle East in the Russian outlook.

²⁴ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 12-13.

²⁵ Russian Foreign Ministry, “2008 Foreign Policy Concept,” available at <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml> (accessed February 22, 2012).

²⁶ Ibid.

During the Cold War, NATO was established primarily to secure member states against the communist threat, embodied by the Soviet Union-led Warsaw Pact. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia watched helplessly as former allies streamed into the American-backed security alliance.²⁷ Worse still was Russian humiliation over the emptiness of Western overtures during then-Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev's attempts to integrate Russia into the Western community of states.²⁸ Moscow was shocked by NATO's continued existence in the absence of the Soviet threat, and discussed internally seeking to join NATO. Kozyrev's successor, and later Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov realigned Russian foreign policy into a pragmatic, realist approach that was more skeptical of the West.

Throughout the 1990s, Russian policymakers were torn trying to define Russia's direction, primarily between an aspiration to follow and achieve the success of Western countries and a still lingering distrust of the West.²⁹ Scholarly descriptions of Russian sentiment toward the United States at the time evoke imagery of a spurned romantic.³⁰ Having lost its economic power and military strength, Russia clung to its remaining vestiges of greatness—its veto power within the UN Security Council and its large nuclear arsenal. The latter has had its foreign policy usefulness discounted as an unsavory tool for statecraft, while the former has motivated an odd new Russian

²⁷ Oksana Antonenko and Bastian Guegerich, "Rebooting NATO-Russia Relations," *Survival* 51, no. 2 (2009): 13-4.

²⁸ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 31.

²⁹ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 71-4.

³⁰ Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 23-4.

emphasis on the sanctity of international law and procedure, so long as Russia's near abroad is not involved.³¹

The most egregious violation of Russian input on security matters was NATO's 1999 actions in Kosovo, a newly independent state that Russia still does not recognize.³² For Russia, this was a wakeup call that the West truly did not care for its input on security matters, but instead merely paid Russia lip service. Under Vladimir Putin's presidency, which began in 2000, Russia began to see new economic growth and completed its turn away from deference to the West. Although much of the growth was due to energy resource exports, which mostly filled the coffers of a few oligarchs, the average annual income in Russia rose from 2,000 USD to 9,000 USD from 1998 to 2009.³³ When Putin sided with the United States' war in Afghanistan, he expected Russia to be a key ally and dispenser of advice, given the Soviet experience there.³⁴ Instead, Russia was asked to do little more than allow NATO to transit supplies.

Nor did Russian support create new American respect for Russian foreign policy interests. The United States endorsed the Color Revolutions, which were viewed in Moscow as a major security concern and detrimental to Russian interests.³⁵ The United States invaded Iraq in 2003 despite Russia's UN Security Council veto, robbing Russia of a rare, albeit caustic, Middle Eastern ally. NATO continued to enlarge, adding states like Estonia and Latvia among others in 2004, thereby pushing NATO to the border of the

³¹ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 54-5.

³² In July 2008, the main focus of a summit of the NATO-Russia Council was still Kosovo. See NATO Document, "NATO Summit: Joint Statement on NATO-Russia Relations," *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* 3435 (2008).

³³ "Smoke and mirrors." *Economist* 386, no. 8569, March 2008, 27.

³⁴ "In search of détente, once again." *Economist* 392, no. 8638, July 4, 2009, 22.

³⁵ The color revolutions were Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004, Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003, and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution in 2005.

Russian mainland. A 2006 NATO initiative, pushed by the United States but resisted by Germany and others, declared that NATO membership would eventually be extended to Ukraine and Georgia.³⁶ Throughout this time period, the United States encouraged the construction of alternative natural gas lines from the Caspian Sea through Georgia and Turkey to Europe, which would challenge the Russian monopoly on the supply of natural gas.

This set the stage for the August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia, in which Russia finally sought to reassert itself through the application of hard power. Georgia, under the outspoken leadership of Mikhail Saakashvili, was seen by Moscow as the most direct incursion of US influence in Russia's perceived zone of privileged interest.³⁷ Framing the Georgian breakaway provinces Abkhazia and South Ossetia as analogous to Kosovo, Russian peacekeeping troops invaded Georgia, an attack that was more or less successful. The conflict sparked concern throughout Europe and in the United States that an imperialist, bellicose Russia had returned, and forced NATO members consider whether or not Georgia was a state worthy of extending Article Five protection to.³⁸ The attack also had the effect of challenging the reliability of pipelines in Georgia meant to bypass Russian control, pulling customers back into Gazprom's orbit.

Several months later Barack Obama was elected president and dispatched Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to "reset" relations with the new Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Obama's policy aims focused on combating terrorism, piracy, illegal

³⁶ "Redrawing the MAP in Europe." *Economist* 387, no. 8575, April 12, 2008, 57-58.

³⁷ "After Georgia." *Economist* 388, no. 8594, August 23, 2008, 42.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 41.

drugs, and nuclear proliferation, and jointly reducing nuclear arsenals.³⁹ Since the 2009 reset, Russia has not crossed any additional international borders. It recently completed a purchase of four French Mistral warships,⁴⁰ and reached a deal with Germany to build a new natural gas pipeline directly to Germany, bypassing troublesome Eastern European states that irk Russia into sporadically stopping the flow of gas as punishment.⁴¹ There is some hope that Russian behavior has, inexplicably, altered:

Russia's foreign policy has changed--and the change goes beyond rhetoric. After 40 years of tedious talks, Russia has signed a maritime border agreement with Norway. It is using soft power in Ukraine. Perhaps most significant is the improvement in relations with Poland, a centuries-old irritant. After years of exploiting differences between old and new members of the European Union, Vladimir Putin, Russia's prime minister, has realized that EU solidarity is more than mere rhetoric.⁴²

If the change is legitimate, then it is set to continue under Vladimir Putin, who will reassume the presidency in 2012.⁴³

In an era that emphasizes collective security, Russia lacks foreign allies. As Russia surveys its place in the world, it is "strategically boxed in" by American partners.⁴⁴ It is a member of the CIS, but those states often have contentious relations with Russia due to Moscow's bullying leadership. Impulses of imperialism still exist, as Russia treats these states with neglect and condescension but also guards them against the influence of other powers.⁴⁵ Several pariah states, such as Iran and Venezuela, are allies, but they do little to improve Russian standing. Even states beholden to Russian gas

³⁹ "Resetting the stage." *Economist* 398, no. 8730, April 23, 2011, 53.

⁴⁰ "The cruel sea." *Economist* 394, no. 8669, February 13, 2010, 54.

⁴¹ "Think pipes not rockets." *Economist*, no. 8575, April 12, 2008, 14.

⁴² "Marching through Red Square." *Economist* 395, no. 8683, May 22, 2010, 53.

⁴³ "The once and future president." *Economist*, October 2011, 15.

⁴⁴ Sean Kay, *Global Security in the Twenty-First Century: The Quest for Power and the Search for Peace* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 99.

⁴⁵ Paul B. Rich, "Russia as a Great Power," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 20, no. 2 (2009): 282-286.

subsidies are problematic partners for Russia, especially Belarus.⁴⁶ China shares Russian concerns on matters of state sovereignty at the United Nations, but simply keeping a neutral relationship represents progress from their tumultuous past. Despite the oft-invoked Russian emblem of a double-headed eagle that looks both East and West, Russia has never been seriously focused on Asia; even today it supplies less than 3% of oil exports to East Asia.⁴⁷

Economic shortcomings have limited Russia's ability to finance its military.

The decline in Moscow's conventional army since the Cold War has been dramatic: from an almost four million-strong Soviet army in the 1980s, with 10,000 strategic and 30,000 tactical nuclear missiles and the annual production of 3,000 tanks, 600 aircraft, and 20 warships, the current Russian army has shrunk to around one million soldiers with a severely curbed nuclear arsenal and a budgetary crisis seriously undermining its navy and its military industry.⁴⁸

Russia cannot keep up with NATO, even as many of its members spend next to nothing on defense, which creates for Moscow a reliance on the nuclear arsenal. But NATO is unlikely to attack Russia, despite Russian paranoia. The more pressing concern for the Russian military should be its ability to address instability along its southern borders, which it is currently not well-equipped to easily combat. In 2012, Putin announced a ten year program to increase spending and reequip the military.⁴⁹

Russia is capable of pursuing foreign policy aims in neighboring states that lack the protection of the NATO alliance. Russia's internal problems may make it more likely to assert itself outwardly, a not-uncommon occurrence for autocratic states. Arthur Rachwald speculates that

⁴⁶ "Russia's empty empire." *Economist* 395, no. 8688, June 26, 2010, 52.

⁴⁷ "Blind-sided in Asia." *Economist* 392, no. 8639, July 11, 2009, 44

⁴⁸ Aleksandar Fatić, "A Strategy Based on Doubt: Russia Courts Southeast Europe," *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 3 (2010): 422.

⁴⁹ Charles Clover, "Modern Warfare the Moscow way," *Financial Times*, 1 February 2012.

it is possible that contemporary Russian assertiveness is in essence defensive. Despite the financial strength derived from energy exports, Russia is an economic dwarf with nuclear weapons, and its political consensus is fabricated from above under the rubric of managed democracy. The contemporary assertiveness of Moscow may reflect a deep sense of political insecurity and international vulnerability that fuels the effort to extend its influence and construct favorable networks of coalitions before its relative influence and power are curtailed even further.⁵⁰

Russia still considers itself an important world power, and now views itself as a key node in the multipolar system. Thus, a sense of entitlement to be dominant over its region is again apparent. Jeffrey Mankoff explains,

Russian elites never stopped believing that the Near Abroad was for Moscow a zone of special interest and responsibility, a point Medvedev merely made explicit in the aftermath of the 2008 war. Russia's temporary cession on initiative to outside power in the region was always more a result of Russian weakness than any sort of more fundamental transformation in the nature of the Russian state or the way its leadership identified its interests.⁵¹

Russian history is filled with invasions that had to be fended off at great cost, from Napoleon's army to Hitler's, where victory laid in Russia's vastness. So against perceived encirclement by the United States, which Russians identify as the second biggest threat to their country after Georgia, the key strategy is again to create a buffer zone.⁵² "Russia may not be trying to recreate an empire—it has neither the energy, human resources or ideology for that—but it is trying to prevent the West from entering its sphere of influence[...] What Russia wants is a buffer zone, with no American military bases or NATO presence."⁵³ While diplomatic methods are given a chance, in the Georgia case military means won out—"The first targets in Georgia last August were military installations built to NATO standards."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Arthur R. Rachwald, "A 'reset' of NATO–Russia Relations: Real Or Imaginary?" *European Security* 20, no. 1 (2011): 125.

⁵¹ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 294.

⁵² "In search of détente, once again." *Economist* 392, no. 8638, July 4, 2009, 22.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Russia yearns to be acknowledged as a fellow great power by the dominant Western states. Rachwald explains, “The real anachronism in contemporary politics is Moscow's imperial nostalgia, with its promotion of authoritarianism and the continuation of cold war perceptions and objectives.”⁵⁵ Every sidestepped Security Council veto is a blow to this ambition. Russia’s position on the G8 is a point of pride, despite being originally awarded the spot as a diplomatic concession, yet still Medvedev is quoted as saying, “The G8 will be practically unable to function without Russia. That’s why we don’t fear being expelled.”⁵⁶ While Russia lacks the capacity to project power far beyond its border, it can pretend, and it can insist on having a say on key security topics, such as the Israel-Palestine peace process, nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea, and the upheaval in states like Libya and Syria. Between its leverage over Europe derived from natural gas and America struggling with efforts in Afghanistan and Iran, “Russia’s elite is convinced that the West is weak and will swallow Russia’s decision(s).”⁵⁷

Still, Russia continues to measure itself against the United States, despite having elected to pursue divergent economic and political systems.

In Russia's view, everything America does in the world is aimed against Russia and everything aimed against Russia is directed by America. Russia measures itself by its ability to stand up to America. But America is also a model of power that Russia wants to copy. Imitation and resentment go together. Russia's sense of resurgence is mixed with a deeply rooted inferiority complex.⁵⁸

The Russian elite are tied more closely to the West compared to average Russians, so their perspective reinforces the foreign policy emphasis. “The loudest anti-Americans in Russia are not the unreformed communists but the well-dressed, English-speaking

⁵⁵ Rachwald, “A ‘reset’ of NATO–Russia Relations,” 126.

⁵⁶ “Cold comfort.” *Economist* 388, no. 8596, September 6, 2008, 29.

⁵⁷ “Put out even more flags.” *Economist* 388, no. 8595, August 30, 2008, 50.

⁵⁸ “In search of détente, once again.” *Economist*, 23.

speech-writers from the perestroika era.”⁵⁹ The relationship is certainly odd, but is one in which the United States has leverage to influence Russian policy decisions. Further, Russia is coming to realize that a policies motivated primarily by anti-Americanism are at risk of backfiring.⁶⁰

Russia’s multifaceted identity allows it to shift its allegiances around pragmatically. In this way, Russia can act as a balancing power, typically against the United States, by siding conveniently with China or France and Germany, Iran or Venezuela. Conversely, should a rising China appear dominant, Russia will not hesitate to join the United States to ensure balance in East Asia.⁶¹ At a smaller level, Russia seeks to distinguish the politicians of bordering states into categories of pro-Russian or not pro-Russian. For actors in states like Uzbekistan or Ukraine, having Russian backing can reinforce domestic power, and conversely not having it can invite Russian interference and duplicity.

Statements from Putin and Medvedev indicate that Russia now views economic power as a key facet of a state’s hard power. Because of the union between the gas industry and the political leadership, the two are partners in improving each other’s fortune. Russia views manipulation of the supply of gas as a legitimate tool of foreign policy. It has been suggested that giving Russia WTO membership will force it to follow new rules so that it must compete fairly on economic matters.⁶² That may not be enough. If Russia believes that a weak neighbor is cheating on an economic matter, say to win a

⁵⁹ "Enigma variations." *Economist*, 5.

⁶⁰ Rachwald, "A 'reset' of NATO–Russia Relations," 123-4.

⁶¹ "Blind-sided in Asia." *Economist*, 44.

⁶² "Marching through Red Square." *Economist*, 53.

large foreign investment, that may soon become grounds for Russia to use hard power instruments to settle the score.

Finally, Russia's historical experience legitimizes concerns that Moscow will be not be hesitant in entering conflicts. Having lost 27 million people in World War II, if a nuclear strategy can better limit casualties, it will be seen as legitimate, especially since Russia lacks the capacity to conduct a major conventional war against NATO forces. Russia under Putin has renounced its pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict.⁶³ Its war games in 2009 included a simulated nuclear attack on Warsaw as part of the strategy.⁶⁴ During the Cold War NATO was cornered in Europe, overmatched in conventional forces, and chose a nuclear first use policy; now Russia has been driven back, is at a conventional force disadvantage, but draws Western scorn for electing a first use policy.⁶⁵ It is unclear where the line is that makes nuclear war acceptable for Russia, but it is important to be mindful that such a line does exist, likely based on Russia's territorial integrity, and can be crossed.

Russia's security concerns are largely motivated by perceived threats to internal stability that could derail its prospering economy. Sean Kay lays out what Russia views as threats to that stability:

Russian official doctrine defines major threats as including: territorial claims to the Russian Federation from other post-Soviet states; local wars and armed conflicts near Russia's borders; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery; the rights of Russians living in other former Soviet republics; and the enlargement of external military blocks such as NATO.⁶⁶

⁶³ Kay, *Global Security*, 102.

⁶⁴ "Trust, but make military plans." *Economist* 396, no. 8693, July 31, 2010, 39.

⁶⁵ Fatić, "A Strategy Based on Doubt," 443.

⁶⁶ Kay, *Global Security*, 98.

Russia's proclivity is to pursue its security interests through unilateral action. For dealing with local wars on its borders, Russia will attempt to find solutions through diplomatic mechanisms, but these can be abandoned in short order for military solutions, or some other hard power mechanism.

For example, Russia wants to stop NATO's enlargement. When Georgia was highlighted as a candidate for membership in 2006, Russia objected but was unable to have its reservations gain traction. Writing in 2007, Ponsard concluded that, "The Kremlin [has] finally accepted – although reluctantly – that it had neither the power nor influence to oppose NATO membership for aspirant countries."⁶⁷ This turned out to be untrue. After a series of small escalations, Russia invaded Georgia, effectively ending its chance at membership in NATO.

Other neighboring states rightly took notice. Ukraine has, like Georgia, a leader for whom Vladimir Putin has publicly expressed disdain. Russia bases its Baltic Sea fleet at a Ukrainian port in Crimea whose lease is set to expire in several years. Moscow will still first seek a diplomatic settlement for keeping the base, but will not hesitate to turn to alternative ways and means. Russia has tried to convince Kyrgyzstan to remove an American Air Force base, and it only now appears that Bishkek will cooperate.⁶⁸

Many of these actions are characteristic of a receding former empire trying to prevent decay and salvage possessions. There are areas where Russia is actively expanding its power; maintaining the gas monopoly is both lucrative and provides a non-military source of leverage over Europe in foreign policy disputes. But as for the

⁶⁷ Ponsard, *Russia, NATO and Cooperative Security*, 107.

⁶⁸ "Russia's empty empire." *Economist*, 53.

messianic goal of challenging the international system and America's privileged place within it, frustration abounds. Russia does not have the strength to enforce the new multipolar order it hopes for. Russia lacks friends. There is debate between scholars as to whether relations with the West or with the CIS are a higher priority for Russia.⁶⁹ The answer seems to indicate what scholars view as the Russian strategy to again become a great power, liberal cooperation or realist entrenchment respectively. Moscow's actions suggest maintaining exclusive domain in the CIS and having the West's respect are both priorities. In some ways, Russian policies in the Middle East contribute to those goals.

Differentiating the Middle East

The Middle East does not pose threats to Russian security in the way that the West or the CIS do. The biggest Middle East security concern is states' encouragement of Islamic radicals in Russia's south. Russia is also attentive to causes of instability in the region, such as the possibility of Iran gaining nuclear weapons. Nor does Russia have the same types of historical legacies in the Middle East that it does with the West and the CIS. While Turkey and Iran have had problematic relations with Russia since Russia's imperialist age, the Arab states' relations with Moscow began in earnest following World War II.⁷⁰

Immediately following World War II, the Soviet Union presented itself as an anti-imperialist ally to the region, seeking to expunge British and French influence. It was, with the United States, one of the first countries to recognize Israel. The USSR also

⁶⁹ Antonenko and Guegerich, "Rebooting NATO-Russia Relations," 14, and Fatić, "A Strategy Based on Doubt," 445.

⁷⁰ Andrej Krutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend or Foe?* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007), 2.

worked within the UN Security Council Resolution to resolve the Suez Canal Crisis, although the eventual draft resolution was ultimately vetoed by Britain and France.⁷¹ Under Khrushchev's leadership, the Soviet Union still believed that it could encourage local communist parties to overthrow their governments and create socialist states. Primakov notes that this mission was especially critical to the ComIntern.⁷² For this reason the Moscow gained a unique reputation for disturbing world order and stability while pursuing its interests, even though states like the Britain, France, and the United States engage in similar ways.⁷³ While the US and the USSR found common ground on issues in the Middle East in the 1950s, once British and French influence had waned in the mid-1960s, the two powers both scrambled to gain influence in the region vis-à-vis the other. Competition for allies in the region would last throughout the Cold War.

In the beginning, Primakov writes, the Soviet Union had only three allies—Egypt, Syria, and Iraq—a difficult circumstance because all three governments were anti-communist.⁷⁴ These relationships consisted of arms transfers and rhetorical support, but little else. Having to decide between supporting communism or countering the United States, Moscow elected to ally with governments it disagreed with ideologically. The USSR would, throughout this period, threaten to withdraw support in response to government excesses in imprisoning communists, but rarely acted upon these warnings.

This pragmatic decision, to ignore the mission of spreading communism internationally, was never reversed, becoming further consolidated under Brezhnev.

⁷¹ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 38.

⁷² *Ibid*, 58.

⁷³ Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a new Foreign Policy*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 12.

⁷⁴ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 33.

Primakov relates an incident in Sudan, where the communist party was prepared to orchestrate a coup against the government against the behest of the USSR. Moscow was alarmed, objecting that the Sudanese government was already friendly to Moscow; exchanging it for a communist government was not worth the risk of losing a known ally.⁷⁵ Mark Katz describes Soviet relations with Kuwait in that period as strong because the two governments created a relationship based on an understanding that the Soviets would not encourage communist factions in Kuwait.⁷⁶ There was a real fear among Middle Eastern governments that Moscow could *choose* to overthrow them; this fear was encouraged by the United States so that they could draw states the American orbit, as was the case with Lebanon.⁷⁷

This was true for both Turkey and Iran. The Shah justified his high spending on American arms by constantly citing the red threat. Part of the reason he could not grasp the challenge that the politicized Ayatollahs represented was his vision being clouded by the communist challenge. This is why Iran sent troops to Oman in the 1970s; to ensure that communism would not spread from Yemen to Oman, putting a Russian ally on the Strait of Hormuz choke point. When revolution finally came to Iran in 1979, the Tudeh party was involved, but had minimal impact on the revolution's success. Likewise in Turkey, Ataturk and his followers, who battled the Russians and Soviets in the early part of the twentieth century, were wary of communism. Having decided to pursue Western style governance, and aware of Soviet interest in gaining control of the Bosphorus Strait

⁷⁵ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 80.

⁷⁶ Mark Katz, *Russia & Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy toward the Arabian Peninsula*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 167.

⁷⁷ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 185.

and the Dardanelles, the Turkish government began imprisoning Turkish communists. In 1947 Stalin massed troops on the border, which was a bluff, and “the consequence of this venture was to push the previously neutral Turkey into the arms of the anti-Soviet camp.”⁷⁸ The United States successfully lobbied for Turkey’s entry into NATO in 1952. Throughout the Cold War Turkey would try to expunge domestic leftist groups.

Primakov writes that the Soviet Union was never responsible for bringing down any Arab monarchies; merely that it supported ripe moments. “The Soviet Union understood that it was impossible to bring about sociopolitical change in another country via an imported revolution; it had to happen from within, when the time was ripe.”⁷⁹ The major conflict in the 1960s and 1970s was that between Israel and its neighbors. Moscow’s relationship with Israel had soured because of concern for Israeli influence over Soviet Jews, as well as a possible brain drain.⁸⁰ Once the Cold War competition had begun, Moscow was sponsoring Israel’s two main enemies. During the 1967 and 1973 wars, as with the 1956 crisis, the USSR’s main concern was preventing the conflagration from spreading into a general war between itself and the United States. This would have happened if either side had been routed. For Russia, the more significant development of this period was Egypt’s decision to join the American camp, eventually reaching a peace agreement with Israel in 1979. Talal Nizameddin explains, “For Cairo, there was disappointment with Moscow at the limit of its economic capabilities in providing technological and financial assistance. Moreover, Moscow appeared to hold back in providing the most advanced attack weapons which would create military parity between

⁷⁸ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 18.

⁷⁹ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 92.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 255.

Egypt and Israel.”⁸¹ While Egypt became a regional pariah for peace agreement with Israel, the Soviets lost a key ally essentially without a fight. At the time Soviet standing was at a high point, given its increasingly amenable relations with Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria while the United States was bogged down in Vietnam.⁸² Egypt’s marked a major turning point for Moscow in the Middle East.

While the Arab-Israeli conflict was a key factor in the period, control over Gulf oil was another. Part of the US strategy was preventing USSR adventurism from disrupting the flow of oil.⁸³ During this period Moscow was receiving Iraqi oil in exchange for weapons and then reselling it, but lacked ties to the rest of the oil-producing Gulf.⁸⁴ Moscow had an opportunity to reach a breakthrough with the Saudis in the late 1970s as they bristled at US treatment, but the USSR invasion of Afghanistan cemented poor relations. By the 1980s, Moscow had few remaining allies region wide, all of whom were withdrawn enough from Soviet influence to ignore or disobey Moscow’s wishes. The USSR instructed Saddam Hussein not to go to war with Iran in 1980 after tolerating his 1978 anti-communist campaign, but Hussein attacked anyway. This ruined that alliance, so much so that Moscow offered to support Iran in the war, although Iran under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was disinterested in Soviet support.

For Moscow, there are three key lessons learned from the Cold War period in dealing with the Middle East. The first is that ideological motivations will fail because of cultural incongruities, so relations must be conducted pragmatically. The second is that

⁸¹ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 31.

⁸² *Ibid*, 30.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 36.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

Middle Eastern leaders are calculating, unreliable, and untrustworthy. The third is that the United States is incredibly dubious, capable of undercutting an alliance even when it seems most impossible to do so. By the end of the Cold War, a thoroughly outmaneuvered Moscow reached the conclusion that if control cannot be established in the Middle East, then stability is the next best thing.⁸⁵

That supposition was critical in Moscow's decision under Gorbachev to not pursue creating strategic parity between Syria and Israel; it was seen as too destabilizing.⁸⁶ By 1991 any traces of adventurism had vanished, as "Soviet interests in Israel and Iraq [...] were pursued carefully so as not to cause a rupture in relations with the United States."⁸⁷ Instead, relations were pursued with an ever-present caution against stirring instability.

Under Boris Yeltsin, foreign relations with the Middle East lapsed entirely. Throughout the 1990's, not one state visit was paid by Yeltsin to a Muslim majority country.⁸⁸ Israel was even concerned that a disinterested, economically struggling Russia might sell off some of its nuclear weapons to its Arab neighbors.⁸⁹ As Robert Gates lauded in his 1996 book, President George Bush was able to convince the Russians to endorse his coalition to throw the Iraqi army out of Kuwait.⁹⁰ Conversely, Bowker writes that the Soviets did have a deal in place to allow Saddam Hussein to save face, however

⁸⁵ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 41.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 52.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 67.

⁸⁸ Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 140.

⁸⁹ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 115.

⁹⁰ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: the Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How they Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

this option was rejected by the Bush Administration.⁹¹ It's worth noting that relations between Moscow and Tehran warmed in 1989 and continually improved throughout the 1990s. In 1996, developments in the now US-led Middle East Peace Process excluded Moscow entirely, and while Russia was irked by their non-inclusion, there was little to be done beyond offering pro-Arab rhetoric.⁹² Moscow was a longtime ally of Yasser Arafat, but they were unable to advance the Palestinian cause in the way that the United States doggedly guarded Israeli interests.

Two events significant for future Russian relations in the Middle East took place outside of the Middle East. First, the movement for Chechen independence from Russia began at this time. Bowker argues that Islam was not a key factor in the first war but would be in the second, as the killing of Muslims by a non-Muslim government would attract the attention and fervor of radical Islamic groups.⁹³ Second, conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo set a precedent for Russia that the West was willing to interfere in the affairs of smaller states, even when Russia had legitimate strategic objections.

The Middle East is far enough geographically from Russia to lie beyond its zone of privileged interest, so Russian actions there are more subject to the rules of international law that Russia claims to follow and advocate. Primakov points out that the Soviet Union bordered the region, but Russia does not.⁹⁴ The absence of any obvious regional power reinforces the view that the Middle East is a legitimate area for the United Nations to officiate developments, without any one country achieving dominance. That

⁹¹ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 45.

⁹² Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 173-178.

⁹³ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 79.

⁹⁴ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 272.

the United States is the country closest to obtaining hegemony in the Middle East is doubly irksome for Moscow. Russia was increasingly relegated, locked out of the Middle East Peace Process and having only the region's pariah states as allies. Russian strategy by this time had no ideological bend, and had shifted to an entirely pragmatic mode.

CHAPTER THREE: CURRENT RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

There are currently six key priorities that guide Russian decision making in the Middle East. They are Islamic terrorism, arms transfers, natural resources, influence within the Commonwealth of Independent States, general trade, and great power status. Other concerns, like the status of Russian émigrés in Israel, are important but not central to policymaking. Also, specific policy issues like the creation of a Palestinian state will be split among the priorities motivating Russia's stance on a particular issue. In this chapter, each of these priorities will be considered in turn.

It is Russia's preference to conduct foreign policy through state relations rather than work within international organizations. So while the 2008 Foreign policy concept mentions a desire to work with the Organization of Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States, more important is when it says "Russia intends to further develop its relations with Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya, Pakistan, and other leading regional States in bilateral and multilateral formats."⁹⁵ The states that concern Russia on the largest number of the six priorities that I have named are Turkey, Iran, and Israel.

⁹⁵ Russian Foreign Ministry, "2008 Foreign Policy Concept."

Terrorism

The Second Chechen War, which began in late 1999, featured foreign mujahedeen with ties to Al Qaeda, creating a new focus for Russian foreign policy in the Middle East. Islamic Radicalization was not a key factor in the First Chechen War, but was in the second, and the long insurgency that followed the conclusion of major combat operations had a distinct terrorism component.⁹⁶ Limiting foreign support to the Chechens, particularly from Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Iran, became a central concern. This includes both rhetorical support and material support. This section will detail Russian efforts to curtail Middle Eastern support for Chechen militants, discuss Russia's interaction with the United States' Global War on Terror, and inspect Russian policies on terrorism within the Middle East.

Demographic trends in Russia are startling, as the population is currently decreasing by 800,000 people annually. The Muslim population is already at 25 million and exhibits a higher fertility rate than ethnic Russians, who will make up an ever decreasing share of the population. Moscow's goal is to defend Russia's territorial integrity, and doing so means not demonizing the Chechens themselves as an other, but instead targeting vitriol toward subversive foreign influences. For Putin, the roots of rising terrorism "lay in the region's continuing mass unemployment, in the lack of an effective social policy, and in the low educational levels of the younger generation."⁹⁷ These factors make Russian Muslims susceptible to radicalization.

⁹⁶ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 79.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 77.

Based on data from the Global Terrorism Database at the University of Maryland, terrorism in Russia is generally on the rise, although major attacks, which are more consistently reported, have not followed any distinct pattern. The following chart depicts the number of terrorist attacks in Russia that caused more than ten casualties by year:

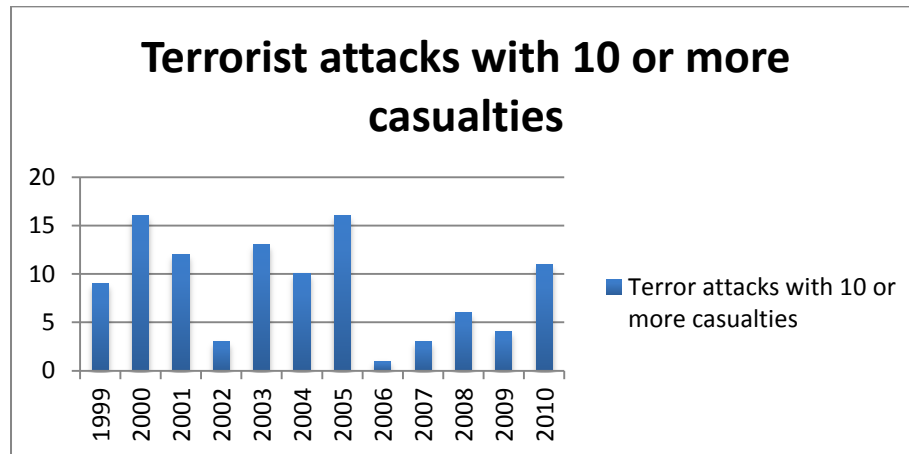


Figure 1: Terrorist attacks in Russia with ten or more casualties annually since 1999

The two most important events for Russia's fight against terrorism were the September 11th attacks in 2001 and the Beslan School attack in September 2004. The effects of the former will be discussed in more detail later. The latter, which led to 332 deaths including many children, is significant in that it prompted high level tours of the Middle East by President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to impress upon other leaders the importance of cutting support for Chechen separatists.⁹⁸ The problem often was not official government support for Chechnya, but states tacitly allowing support networks to exist within their states. For example, some estimates suggest that as much as \$100 million reached Chechens annually from Saudi Arabia.

⁹⁸ Robert O. Freedman, "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Putin Years," *Middle East Policy*, 17, no. 3 (2010): 54.

Turkey has a large Caucasian community that supports Chechnya's separatists.⁹⁹

In 2003, Russia expelled ten Turkish nationals for supposedly inciting instability.¹⁰⁰

President Putin's 2004 visit to Ankara drew protests from pro-Chechnya Turkish citizens.¹⁰¹ Bulent Aras writes

According to the official Turkish policy line, the Chechen question is a Russian internal problem. Turkish officials frequently declare that Russian security measures should not violate human rights in Chechnya. However, a large Chechen diaspora in Turkey follows a different line and tries its best to assist Chechen guerillas, creating significant tensions between the Turkish and Russian governments.¹⁰²

Shireen Hunter writes that while Turkey (and Iran to some degree) plays down Islam in their relations with former Soviet States, "it has also used the Islamic factor and its extensive Islamic infrastructure to penetrate Muslim parts of Russia and the CIS."¹⁰³ Further, "Private Turkish citizens have built mosques in the Russian Federation, from Makhachkala to Ufa. The Turkish government, while suppressing Islamic groups in Turkey itself, has supported these activities."¹⁰⁴ Despite disagreements over support for Chechnya, Since Putin's 2004 Russia and Turkey have maintained a limited strategic partnership that has mollified disputes. However for Russia, working closely with Turkey on terrorism is dubious for a less obvious reason: it invites American involvement.¹⁰⁵

In 2003, Russians began working with Saudi Arabia to earn that state's denunciation of the War in Chechnya as a legitimate Islamic cause.¹⁰⁶ Beyond lending

⁹⁹ Shireen Hunter, with Jeffrey Thomas and Alexander Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: the Politics of Identity and Security*, (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharp, 2004), 363.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 366.

¹⁰¹ James W. Warhola, and William A. Mitchell, "The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations: Motives and Implications," *Demokratizatsiya* 14, no 1 (2006): 136.

¹⁰² Ibid, 131.

¹⁰³ Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 365.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 351-2.

¹⁰⁶ Freedman, "Can Russia be a Partner for NATO in the Middle East?" 126.

their influence, the Saudis had the ability to cut off much of the zakat funds that went into financing the jihadist insurgency there. Hunter writes “assistance from official and private Saudi sources has clearly been channeled to the Chechens,” although much of the official help came as humanitarian aid and was funneled through Moscow.¹⁰⁷

Jordan is another state that has become involved with Russia on this issue; a result of its large Chechen community. In 2006, Russian security forces killed Abu Hafis al-Urdani, the Jordanian-born commander of foreign fighters in Chechnya.¹⁰⁸ Hunter singles out another Gulf State: “relations with the UAE suffered most because of UAE-based financial institutions’ support and official sympathy for the Chechen cause.”¹⁰⁹ Earlier, in 2003, Russia assassinated a Chechen leader in Qatar after Qatar refused to arrest and extradite him. Following the assassins’ trial in Doha, they were sent back to Russia to serve their sentences. Another result of Russia’s push was an Israeli offer for “sharing of information on safeguarding critical installations, the training of counterterrorism specialists, and the exchange of intelligence data.”¹¹⁰

Back in 1997, Russia succeeded in having Iran support its case at the OIC on the Chechnya issue, which was a forum of criticism. Iran’s official stance has long been that Chechnya was an internal Russian matter, although many within Iran have criticized their state’s stance. However, for pragmatic reasons, both governments elect to ignore those voices. Moreover, because Iran is Shi’ite and the majority of Muslim Russians are Sunni,

¹⁰⁷ Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 384.

¹⁰⁸ Preeti Bhattacharji, “Chechen Terrorism,” Council of Foreign Relations (April 8, 2010), <http://www.cfr.org/terrorism/chechen-terrorism-russia-chechnya-separatist/p9181#p5> (accessed March 29, 2012).

¹⁰⁹ Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 387.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

material support never accompanied rhetorical support, either from elements within Iran, including the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Despite their successes in combatting support for terrorism emanating from the Middle East, Moscow remains wary. In 2009 Mark Katz spoke to Russia's fears that as the United States draws down its presence in Iraq and Afghanistan focus will again return to Russia:

You remember al-Qaeda in Iraq? These were busy boys, fighting against the Americans, fighting against the Shiites, fighting against their fellow Sunnis. But what did al-Qaeda in Iraq do in June 2006? They kidnapped five employees of the Russian embassy in Baghdad, killed one out of hand and then announced that they would release the remaining four only if Russia withdrew all its troops from Chechnya within 48 hours. This did not happen. And al-Qaeda in Iraq, being true to their word, killed the remaining four employees. These people were fighting Americans, Sunnis, Shias in Iraq, yet al-Qaeda in Iraq found time to think about Russia. As America leaves Iraq, they may find more time to think about Russia, and the Russians know that. They are very worried. The North Caucasus is close by and they are fearful about their continued hold on this part of the world.¹¹¹

Today, there are newly erected skyscrapers in Grozny, and Chechnya appears a less likely source of conflict in comparison to Dagestan and Ingushetia. Nevertheless, Russia's sizeable Muslim minorities, who are majorities in their areas, may once again agitate to be free from Moscow's dominion.

Moscow was not wont to entertain Western concerns over the brutality of its campaigns in Chechnya, arguing that it had a right to sovereignty in dealing with the issue. "For Moscow, the West's criticisms of Russian behavior never seemed to take account of the threat the Chechen militants posed to the territorial integrity of the Russian state. [...] Moscow became frustrated over the West's emphasis on human rights in the light of the terrorists' own brutality in Beslan and elsewhere."¹¹² When the September

¹¹¹ Telhami et al, "Major World Powers and the Middle East," 12.

¹¹² Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 81.

11th terrorist attacks occurred, Putin was vindicated in his argument that Islamic terrorism was not just a Russian problem. He thus aligned Russia with America's Global War on Terror. Putin's speeches consistently sought to link Russia's problem in Chechnya with Islamic radicals to America's, implying that the US approach to dealing with the issue (war) should make the Russian approach in Chechnya be seen as appropriate internationally. Moreover, there was public support among Russian citizens for the US invasion of Afghanistan.¹¹³

For Russia, a major benefit of the new partnership with the United States was the US-led efforts to disrupt terror network financing. However by 2003, when the Iraq War began, relations between Moscow and Washington had again fallen apart. Sergei Lavrov, the Russian prime minister, remarked in 2003 that introducing democracy is both impossible and dangerous.¹¹⁴ Russia soured on the United States approach to dealing with Islamic radicalization, particularly those groups in the Middle East that Russia views the US and its allies as having stirred up through their actions. Bowker explains that from past Russian experiences in Tajikistan, Moscow learned that by making Islamic groups participate in government they will begin finding practical solutions to political problems and moderate.¹¹⁵ Thus, this is the approach Russia advocates in dealing with Palestinian groups and their desire to combat Israel using terrorism.

In his 2009 book, Primakov emphasizes that while Russia works with the Palestinian groups, they have always denounced terrorism as a method for achieving

¹¹³ Ibid, 93-94.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 161.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 146.

policy outcomes.¹¹⁶ He argues that while Yasser Arafat was never enamored by terrorism as a strategy, it was Russia that convinced him to publicly denounce terrorism.¹¹⁷ Nizameddin notes that as early as 1992 Russia had even abandoned its support for non-state militants in the region.¹¹⁸

Comparing Russia's terrorism list to that of the United States uncovers several interesting juxtapositions. Obviously the United States views Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism while Russia does not. However, the United States lists the Mujahedeen e Khalq (MeK) as a terrorist organization (despite working with the group in Iraq) while Russia does not. Further, Russia lists the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt as a terrorist organization, while the United States does not. The United States considers Hamas and Hezbollah terrorist organizations, and formerly considered Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization as such, while Russia has never labeled as terrorist any of these groups. While both states list al Qaeda as a terrorist organization, Russia lists the Taliban of Afghanistan as such as well while the United States does not. The United States does not label Hizb ut Tahrir a terrorist organization, which Russia does. The United States does call the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) terrorists, while Russia does not.

The differences in Russia's terrorism list and the United States' are interesting in that they seem to reveal a pattern in which an organization does not draw Russia's attention until it runs counter to Russia's geostrategic interests. While this is not necessarily untrue for the United States, it does seem to be less obvious. For example, Turkey and Russia have discussed the problem of Kurdish terrorism, yet Russia does not

¹¹⁶ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 222.

¹¹⁸ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 121.

designate the PKK a terrorist group because they provide useful leverage in holding Turkey to commitments to not aid Chechen separatists. The Global Post, reporting on Russia's list, noted the politicization of Russia's terrorist label:

Amidst the Abu Sayyafs and Al-Qaedas and various Somali groups etc, there are some interesting Russia-specific entries. Namely: a bunch of nationalist groups, some of which have been tolerated by the government, even as they are formally banned. That includes: the Slavic Union and DPNI. A new group, Russians, formed in May by former leaders of the Slavic Union and DPNI doesn't make the list. But also on it? The National Bolshevik Party, headed by opposition favorite Eduard Limonov¹¹⁹

The blatant domestic politicization reinforces the assertion the Moscow uses the terrorist label for groups abroad when it is advantageous.

Arms Transfers

Arms transfers have a legacy in the Middle East as making up the basis of an alliance with Russia. Throughout the Cold War, Moscow was the key supplier of weapons to Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Libya, North Yemen and South Yemen. The physical presence of Soviet military advisors signaled to the United States and others Moscow's commitment to its patrons as well. Since then, the murky business of weapons transfers has become the subject of conspiratorial explanations of Russian actions in the region, including with Syria today.¹²⁰ In this section's analysis data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute will be used extensively.¹²¹¹²²

¹¹⁹ Miriam Elder, "Russia Publishes 'Terrorist' List," Global Post (July 6, 2011), <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatches/globalpost-blogs/bric-yard/russia-publishes-terrorist-list> (accessed April 2, 2012).

¹²⁰ Wier, "Why Russia is Willing to Sell Arms to Syria."

¹²¹ The SIPRI Arms Transfers database is available at <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

¹²² I have three central reservations regarding the data that SIPRI produces. First is that all data is compiled through the use of open source intelligence, which can be problematic because many critical arms transfers take place at the clandestine level. Second is that transfers do not recommend sales figures; whether weapons are sent for free, sold at a discount, or sold at market value, SIPRI assigns a market value to the arms being transferred to compile their figures. Third, SIPRI's data is set in 1990 dollar figures, which,

The Russian arms industry went through the same period of contraction in the 1990s as most other Russian industries.¹²³ Russia took up a smaller share of worldwide arms transfers, and its production for domestic consumption dropped as Russia shrunk its military spending. Beginning in 1999 the volume of arms transfers rebounded, and since has remained high. From 1999 to 2011, Russia ranks second among worldwide arms exporters (valued by SIPRI's TIV at \$72 billion), trailing only the United States (\$95.8 billion), and far outpacing third place Germany (\$24.8 billion). The following is a chart of Russian arms transfers (using SIPRI's TIV) from 1992 to 2011:



Figure 2: Annual worldwide Russian arms transfers since 1992

Ascribing purpose to Russian arms transfers in the absence of the obvious Cold War context is difficult. There are certainly political considerations that are made in evaluating whether or not to make weapons deals. However, arms transfer partnerships

even when converted, make accurately assessing the value of the sales difficult (2.68% inflation makes a 1990 dollar worth \$1.79 today).

¹²³ Petra Opitz, "The Russian Defence Industry: No Phoenix Rising from the Ashes," *Economic Bulletin* 37, no. 10 (2000): 321-328.

do not necessarily create stronger allies; often, the strength of an alliance determines Russia's willingness to transfer arms. In other instances, Russia is the preferred exporter because the state has purchased Russian weapons in the past which could not share an interface with another state's weapons. States can assert influence leveraging weapons transfers either by offering additional weapons as an incentive or by threatening to reduce transfers. Or, as Freedman explains in the case of Russia, Syria, and Israel, potential unwanted arms sales to a rival state can serve as an inducement for a non-ally.¹²⁴

Another large motivator for Russian arms transfers that is difficult to measure is the desire of Russian arms dealers to make money. Russian arms smuggler Viktor Bout made a fortune selling mostly small arms, which SIPRI does not even measure. The oligarchs of Putin's inner circle, who make millions of dollars, are both aggressive and influential in pushing for increased weapons export agreements.¹²⁵ In late 2011, Russia reached an agreement to supply fighter planes to Syria for \$550 million, which while not affecting the health of the Russian economy, is critical to several men of Putin's inner circle who pocket the bulk of the profit from that transaction. Thus, the Russians speak of arms transfers to Syria as though it were just another business transaction. Domestically, both United Shipbuilding Corporation and United Aircraft Corporation have been denied requests to challenge Rosoboronexport's monopoly on negotiating transfers of weapons systems.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Freedman, "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Putin Years," 60.

¹²⁵ Bruno Sergi, *Misinterpreting Modern Russia*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), 105.

¹²⁶ Paul Holtom, Mark Bromley, Pieter D. Wezeman, and Siemon T. Wezeman, "International Arms Transfers," In *SIPRI Yearbook 2011: Armaments, disarmament and international security*, 271-318, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 278.

Considering the Russian arms industry from a business perspective, India and China are Russia’s two largest customers (after Russia itself), and South East Asia offers the most appealing growing market.¹²⁷ However, the technology of Russian weapons is lagging, such that Russia must be concerned that India and China could soon produce weapons of an equal quality domestically. Thus, it is Asia that will shape the future of the Russian arms industry, not the Middle East, which Russia assumes will remain a steady buyer regardless of its competitiveness.¹²⁸

The United States transfers more arms into the Middle East than Russia, as depicted in the following chart, which shows Russian arms transfers versus United States arms transfers to the 22 Arab League states, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Again, SIPRI’s Trend Indicator Value system is used, which produces figures in 1990 millions of dollars.

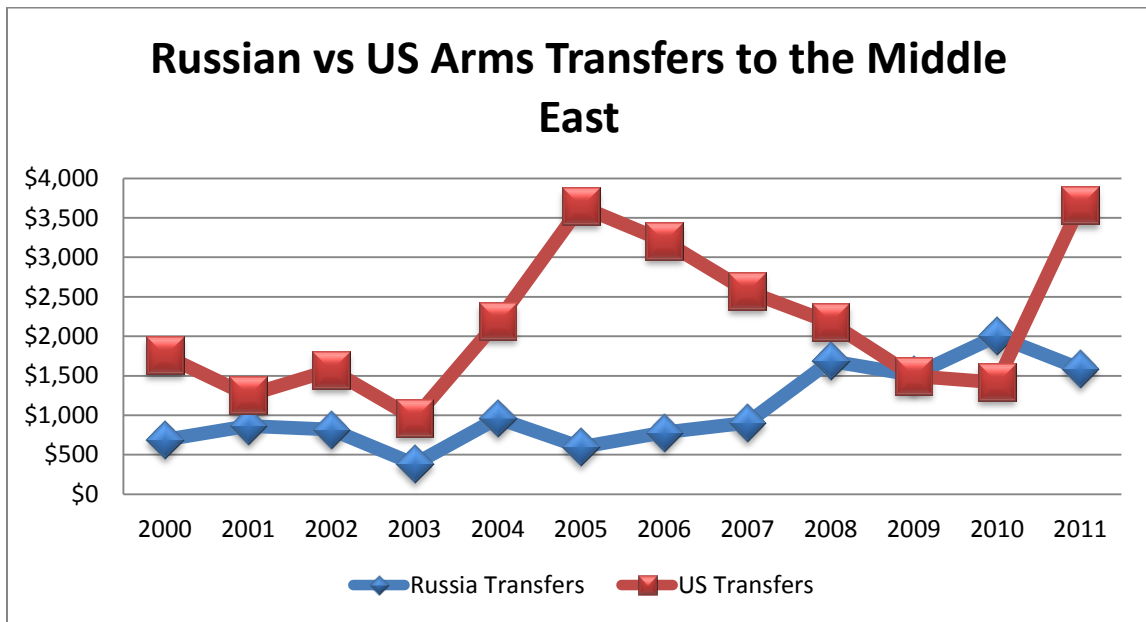


Figure 3: Annual US and Russian arms transfers to the Middle East since 2000

¹²⁷ A. R. Belousov, “Scenarios of Russia’s Economic Development: A Fifteen-Year Outlook,” *Studies on Russian Economic Development* 17, no. 1 (2006): 6,7.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

From 2000 to 2011, the United States total arms transfers to the Middle East (adjusting to 2011 dollars) are valued at \$46.09 billion, doubling Russia's total value of \$22.763 billion. As the chart shows, Russia was actually the larger exporter in 2010. Further, because Russia is associated with less democratic states for its overall arms exports, it might seem surprising that the United States actually increased its arms transfers amidst the 2011 Arab Spring. The states that dramatically increased their US weapons imports in 2011 are Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Turkey, and UAE. A chart of year by year, country by country figures of Russian and US arms transfers is included as Appendix A.

Arms transfers to the Middle East made up 18.8% of worldwide Russian arms transfers from 2000 onward, although toward the end of the decade that figure began increasing, going as high as 34.1% in 2010. Algeria is the largest recipient of Russian arms transfers in the region. It ranks third internationally behind China and India, importing \$1.187 billion in 2011 (adjusted to 2011 dollar value), its lowest total since 2007. Much of the weaponry that Algeria receives can be used for purposes of fighting internal enemies, especially armored vehicles. Algiers is also purchasing large quantities of Russian airplanes and missiles.

Syria and Iran are also subjects of controversy.¹²⁹ In actuality, Syria received minimal Russian arms transfers until 2007. As with Iraq, over the last few decades Syria simply could not afford to purchase new weapons and Russia, with a new found sense of pragmatism, saw there was no reason to loan Syria money to buy Russian weapons that they could not afford. In the Cold War the value of keeping a state in Moscow's camp

¹²⁹ Holtom, "International Arms Transfers," 276.

justified that action. Since then it does not. SIPRI's data from 2000-2011 puts Algerian arms transfers at \$5.66 billion dollars; over the same time frame Syria received \$0.863 billion dollars' worth of arms, with 84% of that coming in 2009-2011. Qualitatively, Russia has been careful not to sell Syria weapons that could alter the strategic balance between Syria and Israel, as related in an anecdote from Robert Freedman:

In an almost classic case of political opportunism, Bashar al-Asad seized upon the Russian invasion of Georgia - and the fact that Israel (along with Germany, France, the United States and Turkey) had provided military equipment and training to the Georgian military - to try to convince the reluctant Russians to sell Syria the weapons it had long coveted but so far failed to succeed in buying. These included the short-range, solid-fuel Iskander-E ground-to-ground missile that could reach virtually every target in Israel; MiG-31 combat aircraft; and the SAM-300 antiaircraft missile system, which, if installed near Damascus, could cover most of Israel's airspace.¹³⁰

Iran however is a major buyer, the second largest in the region. It has acquired \$1.636 billion dollars' worth of arms since 2000, about a seventh of the total transfers into the region from Russia, although Russia has demonstrated restraint from selling Iran everything that it wants. Kenneth Pollack wrote that as a CIA analyst, it was striking to realize that Iran's arms purchases following the Iran-Iraq war were not weapons that would be useful in a future war with Iraq, but those that would be useful in a future war with the United States.¹³¹ Today, Iran wants missiles capable of assaulting the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, stationed in the Persian Gulf. But in 2005 Russia refused to sell Iran submarine-launched missiles.¹³² In 2010 Russia cancelled its contract to sell Iran the S-300 air defense missiles at the behest of the United States.¹³³ This supports Freedman's assertion that Russia has a growing understanding that a decline in American standing in

¹³⁰ Freedman, "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Putin Years," 60.

¹³¹ Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle : the Conflict between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004).

¹³² Freedman, "Can Russia be a Partner for NATO in the Middle East?" 140.

¹³³ Holtom, "International Arms Transfers," 272.

the Middle East does not necessarily benefit Russia.¹³⁴ While Russia is selling large volumes of weapons to the Iran-Syria alliance, those weapons are not the ones that have ended up in the hands of those state's affiliates. Instead, it is Iranian manufactured missiles and explosively formed penetrators that have been causing problems for the United States and its allies in the region.

Possibly more important than the arms that it is selling is the assistance Russia is providing Iran in bringing the Bushehr nuclear reactor on line. This endeavor is not included in the SIPRI database; both parties maintain that the goal is to provide energy only. If an agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue can be reached where Russia supplies Iran enriched uranium and removes the spent plutonium waste, the arrangement would be lucrative for Moscow. At the same time, Russia has explained to the Arab Gulf states that if they would like Russian assistance in building peaceful nuclear power plants, Russia would be willing to help.

Interestingly, Dmitry Shlopentokh notes that the Saudi's have considered a strategy of buying up Russian weapons simply so that Iran cannot, although this prospective plan seems flawed in that Russia has the potential to increase its production and supply arms to both.¹³⁵ Russia would like to sell arms to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman, all wealthy states that would not carry the risk of defaulting on loans. Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Egypt have all become debtors of Russia at some point, and have had loans

¹³⁴ Shibley Telhami, Robert E. Hinter, Mark N. Katz, and Cas W. Freeman Jr, "Major World Powers and the Middle East," *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 4 (2009): 10.

¹³⁵ Dmitry Shlapentokh, "Gulf States/Saudi Arabia and Russia's Approach to Iran: Similarities and Differences," *Defense & Security Analysis* 26, no. 3 (2010): 312.

forgiven. Moscow hopes that by improving the quality of its weapons, it will find wealthier customers.

Iraq does not appear as a buyer of Russian weapons from 1990 until 2006. While this underscores a flaw of the SIPRI data (relying on open source intelligence), it does show that Russia generally honored United Nations Security Council sanctions prohibiting the sale of weapons to Iraq. Bowker writes that the United States suspected Russia of working around the Oil for Food program by providing contraband in exchange for kickbacks, but he does not offer any proof.¹³⁶

Finally, Israel is both a critical partner and competitor for the Russian arms industry. While Russia has the capabilities to build aircraft and other equipment second to only the United States, they are lagging behind in technological sophistication. So, Israel will install advanced computer systems on Russian weaponry to raise its desirability. Katz gives the specific example of fighter planes sold to India.¹³⁷

The one concrete agreement to come out of the [October 2006] Moscow talks was the formation of a working group to coordinate arms sales to third countries. While Russia and Israel have cooperated in the production of weapons systems such as the AWACS, the two countries competed for contracts to refurbish old Soviet equipment like the MIG-23 aircraft.¹³⁸

Further, Mark Katz has said that Russia buys Israeli Unmanned Aerial Vehicles that they lack the sophistication to produce.¹³⁹ Russia has announced that it will maintain high levels of military spending through 2020 with a focus research and development and acquisitions.¹⁴⁰ If domestic demand boosts the quality of Russian arms products, Russia

¹³⁶ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 97.

¹³⁷ Freedman, "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Putin Years," 57.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Telhami et al, "Major World Powers and the Middle East," 17.

¹⁴⁰ Clover, "Modern Warfare the Moscow way."

could become a preferred supplier in the Middle East, where currently buying top of the line means buying American.

Russia is not a callous state simply looking to turn profits by arming authoritarians in the Middle East. Nor is it interested in creating instability. If either of those goals were real, Moscow would sell Syria advanced air defense systems and Iran advanced coastal defense systems. There is a definite profit motivation, but it does not overwhelm strategic considerations. The United States dramatically increased its 2011 arms transfers to the region while Russia reduced theirs; a point ignored by many contemporary commentators. Russian arms transfers to the region are strong and growing, and should be viewed more as a straightforward business than as a shadowy illicit market.

Energy Resources

While Russian arms transfers do bring substantial profits to select oligarchs in Russia, they pale in comparison to the wealth brought in by oil and natural gas sales, which essentially buoy the economy. A major accomplishment of Putin's early years was that through energy resource exports he was able to build up the Reserve Fund and the National Wealth Fund, which combined to nearly \$98 billion at the end of 2008, and which became critical during the economic downturn of 2008.¹⁴¹ Currently the funds hold reserves of about \$55 billion.¹⁴² Much of the focus on Russia's energy resources is on what has been referred to as Pipeline Politics, where Russia uses its near-monopoly as

¹⁴¹ Data taken from the Russian Ministry of Finance, available at <http://www1.minfin.ru/en/nationalwealthfund/> and <http://www1.minfin.ru/en/reservefund/> (accessed April 10, 2012).

¹⁴² Ibid.

a natural gas supplier to Europe as a political tool. This section will discuss how the Middle East factors into Russia's Pipeline Politics, as well as Russian collaboration with the Middle East on oil exports.

Russia exported 223 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2010.¹⁴³ Canada, Norway, and Qatar all exported about 100 billion cubic meters in 2010, and no other country topped 60 billion cubic meters.¹⁴⁴ Natural gas is best transported through pipelines, with the exclusion of liquefied natural gas (LNG); shipping it, as is done with oil, is unfeasible. LNG tends to be three to five times more expensive than natural gas transported via pipeline. Thus, understanding Pipeline Politics must begin with observing the geography of where the transit lines lie.

¹⁴³ OPEC produces Annual Statistical Bulletins, which is the source of the datum that will be used in this section. The ASBs are available at http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/publications/202.htm (accessed April 2, 2012).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.



Figure 4: Map of Europe’s natural gas pipeline network¹⁴⁵

In January 2006, Russia cut off natural gas to Ukraine in order to gain political leverage. As can be seen from the map, every natural gas pipeline that runs into Europe runs through Ukraine first. So in January 2006 much of Europe came to realize that their supply of gas could be disrupted by disputes between Russia and its immediate neighbors.

For Western and Central Europe, there were and are essentially three ways to work around this problem. The first option is that Europe could ban together and make clear to Russia that withholding natural gas supplies is an unacceptable method for conducting statecraft. Few in Western Europe preferred this confrontational option. The second option is that new pipelines could be built to bypass Eastern Europe, allowing Russian gas to reach hubs in Italy and Germany without going through Eastern Europe. This option was Russia’s preference, as well as the general preference of Western and

¹⁴⁵ Map taken from “Pipeline Puzzle,” C.E. European Informant (November 28, 2009), <http://ceeuropeaninfo.blogspot.com/2009/11/pipeline-puzzle.html> (accessed February 15, 2012).

Central European countries. Thus, Russia and others have begun the construction of the Nord Stream Pipeline and the South Stream Pipeline, two routes that accomplish this goal. The third option is to build pipelines that bring natural gas from non-Russian fields to Europe without transiting Russian territory. This option is the preference of Eastern Europe and the United States, among others, and the result is the proposed Nabucco Pipeline, shown in better detail on the map below.



Figure 5: Map of the proposed Nabucco Pipeline¹⁴⁶

Russia detests this project for obvious reasons. If a reliable pipeline can be built that connects Europe to the gas fields of Iran, Qatar, Iraq, and Azerbaijan, then the Russian monopoly on natural gas would be broken. Turkey would stand to profit as the key transit state. Russia has taken actions against the possible Nabucco pipeline; Gazprom bought a majority share in the hub in Baumgarten, Austria that would act as the spigot at the end of the pipeline. Some have suggested that a cause of the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia was destroying the pipeline that could connect Azerbaijan’s gas fields to the

¹⁴⁶ Map taken from “Russia: If we can’t own the pipeline, we’ll control the faucet,” *Transatlantic Politics*, June 2, 2007, <http://www.transatlanticpolitics.com/2007/06/02/russia-if-we-cant-own-the-pipeline-well-control-the-faucet/> (accessed February 15, 2012).

Nabucco pipeline; they at least attempted to shell it (but the pipeline is underground and the Russians missed their target). Even so, Russia certainly demonstrated the instability of that transit route.

Thus Iran, Qatar, Iraq, and Turkey are critical states to Russia's Pipeline Politics. The combination of Russia, Iran, Qatar, Venezuela, and Algeria controls 73% of the world's natural gas reserves. Because of Qatar's geography and the sanctions that Iran faces, neither are able to take advantage of the large North Field reserve the two countries share. This point partially underscores why Russia is not motivated to bring about an end to sanctions against Iran; so long as Iran is a pariah, it will not be a source for the Nabucco pipeline project. Further, Hunter writes that Russia beat out Iran with its bid to become Turkey's main gas supplier.¹⁴⁷ When Iran and Qatar eventually become stable producers, they could form a sort of Gas OPEC with Russia and its allies Venezuela and Algeria, controlling prices worldwide. Qatar is the key state that could potentially remain independent of such a cartel. Katz notes, "While we in the West worry about Russia's becoming the dominant gas supplier to Europe as a whole, Russia worries about little Qatar, as well as others—Algeria, Libya—encroaching on markets in Eastern Europe that Russia has dominated until now."¹⁴⁸ That concern is merited, given Qatar's willingness to follow an independent course of foreign policy regarding Syria despite Russian pressure during the Arab Spring. In 2010, Qatar signed a deal to supply Poland with

¹⁴⁷ Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 376.

¹⁴⁸ Telhami et al, "Major World Powers and the Middle East," 13.

liquefied natural gas, covering about 10% of their gas consumption, encroaching on what had previously been a complete Russian monopoly.¹⁴⁹

Turkey has a different role. Currently Turkey is a customer of Russian natural gas, receiving “roughly three quarters of its fuel and energy resources from Russia.”¹⁵⁰ If it were to become a transit state for natural gas from the Caspian Sea region, as well as a consumer, it could significantly reduce the expense of natural gas. The incentive to undertake the Nabucco project is restrained by Russian pressure and the high investment cost of constructing the pipeline, which could be undertaken by private companies and other governments. Russia would rather see the Blue Stream Pipeline, which runs from Beregovaya, Russia to Durusu, Turkey under the Black Sea, added to in order to create a new route to transport Russian gas. Freedman describes interest between Russia and Israel in 1997 and 2006 to build a pipeline from Turkey on to Israel so that Russia can sell its natural gas to Israel.¹⁵¹ However recent discoveries of offshore LNG in Israel should end that possibility.¹⁵²

In 1999, Criss and Guner wrote an article that describes Russia as extremely concerned by the possible role of Turkey in reducing Moscow’s ability to control and profit from Caspian Sea energy resources. They also emphasize the United States role, writing “it could appear that the USA is setting a barrier against Iran and Russia to prevent them from gaining the biggest share of the Caspian resources. Turkey is a key part of this barrier and a trump card against Iran – why should the USA not encourage it

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Warhola, “The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations,” 130.

¹⁵¹ Freedman, “Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Putin Years,” 57.

¹⁵² Brenda Shaffer, “Israel—New Natural Gas Producer in the Mediterranean.” *Energy Policy* 39, no. 9 (2011): 5379-5387.

to penetrate into the region?”¹⁵³ The article views Turkey, Russia, and Iran as competitors to exploit the Caspian Sea resources, but argues that whichever state the United States allies with and supports will be the ultimate winner, especially if it chooses Iran.

However, thirteen years removed, that possibility looks farfetched, and at the same time the relationship between Ankara and Moscow has grown more cooperative. China has also become involved in efforts to unlock Caspian energy resources. Thus, while Russia was formerly competing with Iran and Turkey for supremacy in the Caspian, the arrival of the United States and China as players has made Russia more willing to work with Iran and Turkey. However in a literal sense energy resources in the Caspian have remained unexploited throughout the past decade, as the various sides continue to jockey for how large each state’s share of resources should be.

The other major natural resource enriching the Russian economy is oil. Russia has the 7th largest proven reserves, and is the traditionally the second largest exporter of crude oil, although in 2010 oil exports surpassed those of Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁴ While Russia and Saudi Arabia were exporting in excess of 7.5 million barrels per day in 2010, no other country topped 3 million barrels per day.¹⁵⁵ Russia’s behavior is exemplified by a 2003 article appearing in *Petroleum Economist* which explained that

Russia's declared policy is to boost oil exports, particularly to the US, where, until 2001, its Urals crude was hardly seen. US disenchantment with its main supplier, Saudi Arabia, since 11 September 2002 has played into Russian hands and the invasion of US oil markets has begun in earnest. Deliveries across the Atlantic reached a record 400,000 b/d

¹⁵³ Nur Bilge Criss and Serdar Güner, “Geopolitical Configurations: The Russia-Turkey-Iran Triangle,” *Security Dialogue* 30, no. 3 (1999): 373.

¹⁵⁴ “Annual Statistical Bulletin,” OPEC, available at http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/publications/202.htm (accessed April 2, 2012).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

in June [2003], thanks mainly to the disappearance of Iraqi oil. US refiners have adapted to Russian Urals, traders say, and the door is opening for larger supplies.¹⁵⁶

Russia has declined Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) membership, and further has not been a reliable partner to the organization in manipulating world prices. Often, when OPEC has slowed production in order to boost prices, Russia has shown no restraint in its own production, even boosting its production at times to capitalize on higher prices.

Hunter describes the situation as one in which Saudi Arabia is a swing producer, able to easily alter its production to effect global oil prices. Saudi Arabia is able to take on this role because it does not *need* the money. Russia does, and therefore continues to increase its exports in all circumstances. “Russia lacks flexibility, but it is capable of disrupting the oil markets and undermining OPEC’s influence on setting oil prices.”¹⁵⁷

The two states are improving their cooperation in one regard; in 2007 Lukoil won a contract to develop the Saudi gas field at Rub al-Khali, which Katz attributes to negotiations with Western countries failing to reach agreement.¹⁵⁸

Russia has been involved for bidding on Oil refinement contracts in Iraq. Before the 2003 US invasion, Russia signed an agreement with Iraq to develop West Qurna II petroleum.¹⁵⁹ Hussein canceled the contract in the lead up to the Iraq War when Russia sought assurances that the contract would be honored if he was overthrown.

Nevertheless, the Russians want that contract honored and have been actively bidding to

¹⁵⁶ “Russia/Saudi Arabia.” *Petroleum Economist* 1, no. 39 (2003).

¹⁵⁷ Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 385.

¹⁵⁸ Katz, “Saudi-Russian Relations since the Abdullah-Putin Summit,” 118.

¹⁵⁹ Kruetz, *Russia in the Middle East*.

take part in the reconstruction of the Iraqi oil industry.¹⁶⁰ Their concern is that the United States is using its position to lock Russia out. Currently Lukoil has a 56.25% stake in the West Qurna II oil field, and Gazprom has a 30% stake in the Badra gas field, for which annual Gross Revenue at Plateau production are valued at \$425 million and \$100 million respectively.¹⁶¹

One point of contention between Turkey and Russia has been shipping oil through the Bosphorus Straits. Turkey is concerned about the possible environmental and economic ramifications of a shipping accident of a Russian oil tanker. Russia wants to increase its volume of shipping beyond its current level. While the issue is still unresolved, it does not appear that the matter will derail relations in any meaningful way.

Under Putin Russia's energy interests have merged with its geostrategic interests, especially on issues regarding the transit of gas to Europe. For this reason, the energy sector is closely associated with the Russian leadership, and can be viewed as indicative of general state relations. The Arab Gulf States, with which Russia has struggled to create strong political relations, do not enjoy Russia's cooperation on manipulating the price of crude oil. However that disregard has benefited Russia, as it continues to enjoy higher prices for its oil exports. Russia, through Gazprom, successfully guarded its dominant position as a natural gas supplier over the past decade, and appears well positioned to defend that position into the next decade.

¹⁶⁰ Telhami et al, "Major World Powers and the Middle East," 12.

¹⁶¹ Thomas W. Donovan, "Iraq's Upstream Oil and Gas Industry: a Post-Election Analysis." *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010): 24-30.

General Trade

Increasing economic strength is a key goal of Russian foreign policy. As was discussed in chapter two, improving the economic well-being of citizens is necessary for Moscow to avoid domestic scrutiny over its leadership. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept identifies diversifying economic relations away from Europe as in the national interest, thus the Middle East is a region that should see increased trade.¹⁶² The two preceding sections showed that there has been some economization of foreign policy on arms dealings and oil and gas exports.¹⁶³

Whatever ‘opportunities’ that appeared to be at hand were seized, even when the consequences of such actions were likely to be negative... Just as the transfer of state-of-the-art military technology and weapons to China arose not out of careful calculations of its implications, but owed itself to short-term economic and geopolitical considerations – increasing export revenue, propping up the military-industrial complex, firing a shot across the West’s bows in the global multipolar game.¹⁶⁴

Russia prioritizes the continuation of expanding trade with Turkey, despite their disputes over issues ranging from support of Chechens to Bosphorus Strait shipping to the Kurdish question.¹⁶⁵ Bowker notes that as worried as Russia is by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s eccentric quotes and actions, a desire to maintain trade with Iran remains constant.¹⁶⁶

According to the CIA’s World Factbook, Russia’s GDP was about \$1.7 trillion as of 2011, although when GDP is measured by purchasing power parity the figure is \$2.3 trillion.¹⁶⁷ Total foreign exports in 2010 were \$400.4 billion, and 2011 that number

¹⁶² Russian Foreign Ministry, “2008 Foreign Policy Concept.”

¹⁶³ Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 147.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Warhola 128

¹⁶⁶ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 117.

¹⁶⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “Russia,” The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html> (accessed March 18, 2012).

reached \$498.6 billion.¹⁶⁸ By comparison, total foreign exports were around \$105.6 billion in 2000.¹⁶⁹ The explosion in foreign trade began in 2003. At the same time, Russia's imports in 2010 were \$191.8 billion, and increased to \$310.1 billion in 2011.¹⁷⁰ Trade differences of \$100 billion have become commonplace for Russia since 2003, going as high as \$150 billion in 2008 and bottoming out at only \$92 billion in 2009.¹⁷¹

The majority of Russian exports are to Europe, approaching half of all exports when using the IMF's definition of Euro Area, which includes the United States, Japan, and South Korea. About 6.62% of Russian exports are to the Middle East, which totaled \$26.5 billion in 2010. Turkey is by far Russia's largest trading partner in the region, having increased its Russian imports from 2003 to 2008 six fold, from \$4.75 billion to \$27.44 billion.¹⁷² Only the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy traded more with Russia that year. Even after the 2008 recession, Turkey's trade with Russia matches that of the rest of the Middle East combined.

For 2010 imports from Russia, Turkey is followed by Iran (\$3.36 billion), Israel (\$1.68 billion), Egypt (\$1.76 billion), Algeria (\$1.27 billion), and Syria (\$1.10 billion).¹⁷³ Morocco and Tunisia are also strong trading partners, given their size. What stands out is the lack of trade with the Gulf States. Exports to Bahrain and Qatar amount to only a few million dollars annually. While UAE and Saudi Arabia import more from Russia than

¹⁶⁸ The statistics were compiled using the IMF's Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbooks from 2002, 2007, 2010, and the 2011 quarterly editions, which provide bilateral trade data. The yearbooks are all published in Washington DC by the International Monetary Fund press. Each book contains a section listing data for the Russian Federation, covering about three pages, that lists current and five years historical figures.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

the other Gulf States (\$886 million and \$298 million respectively in 2010), they purchase less relative to their GDPs than others in the region.¹⁷⁴

For imports, Russia relies much less on the Middle East, and the gap between Turkey and the rest of the region is even larger. In 2010, Russia imported \$273.6 billion. The Middle East accounted for \$7 billion of that trade, or 2.56%.¹⁷⁵ Turkey accounted for \$4.88 billion of the Middle East's portion, a 70% share. Other major exporters to Russia were Israel (\$773 million), Morocco (\$374 million), Iran (\$272 million), and Egypt (\$271 million).¹⁷⁶ Combined, those five states account for about 94% of Russian imports from the Middle East. Much of what Russia is exporting is machinery, raw materials like rare metals and chemicals, and petroleum products.¹⁷⁷

Currently, Russia is seeking to increase trade with the Gulf States. In 2007 Putin said that the motivation for arms sales and other trade with Iran was mostly pragmatic, implying that Russia would welcome increased trade with the Arab Gulf despite possible ramifications with Iran.¹⁷⁸ Shlapentokh writes "this could well be the reason for the generally increasing trade between the Gulf States and Russia, and, in general, the good relations between Russia and some of the Gulf States, such as Qatar."¹⁷⁹ Increasing advanced manufacturing and production is a goal in the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ "Russia Country Commerce Report," Economist Intelligence Unit, November 2011, <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1628943347&Country=Russia&topic=Economy&subtopic=Charts+and+tables&subsubtopic=Data+and+charts%3a+Annual+data+and+forecast> (accessed March 22, 2012)

¹⁷⁸ Shlapentokh, "Gulf States/Saudi Arabia and Russia's Approach to Iran," 312.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

and the Gulf States have the financial capabilities to invest in Russia's high-tech industry.¹⁸⁰

Israel is already a crucial partner of Russia in the high-tech industry. The two countries have a checkered political history, but relations began improving in 1997 when Israel gave Russia a \$50 million agricultural loan.¹⁸¹ Freedman notes that by the early 2000s trade between the two had risen to \$1 billion annually, to \$2 billion by 2006, and the two countries have set a goal of increasing trade to \$5 billion.¹⁸² Israel represents the largest community of Russian speakers outside of the former Soviet Union as a result of mass immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, and the success of those Soviet Jews in Israeli business serves as the platform for strong cooperation.

Russian tourists flock to three Middle Eastern countries in droves: Egypt, Turkey, and Israel. In 2007, Turkey was the top destination for Russian tourists, and Egypt placed as the third most frequently visited international destination.¹⁸³ While the number of Russian vacationers to Turkey at 1.5 million in 2007, Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism claimed 3.2 million Russian visitors through the first nine months of 2011.¹⁸⁴ In Egypt, Russians are the second largest tourist group, approaching one million annually. The United Arab Emirates and Tunisia also placed among the top twenty tourist destinations for Russians in 2006. Morocco hopes to increase Russian visitors to 2

¹⁸⁰ Russian Foreign Ministry, "2008 Foreign Policy Concept."

¹⁸¹ Freedman, "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," 52

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁸³ Luke Harding, "The Tourists who Came in from the Cold," *The Guardian*, July 26, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/27/turkey.russia> (accessed April 5, 2012).

¹⁸⁴ "Over Three Million Russians Visited Turkey," RATA News, October 25, 2011, http://www.ratanews.ru/digest/news_25102011_3.stm (accessed April 5, 2012).

million annually by 2020.¹⁸⁵ Russians are the second most frequent visitors to Israel, trailing only the United States, as of 2011.¹⁸⁶

Influence over Former Soviet Spaces

The next two components of Russian foreign policy in the Middle East—Influence within the CIS and Russia’s great power status—differ substantively from the previous four. Both are difficult to quantify, reliant on perception and influence rather than measurable action. The previous components were referred to as pragmatic because they were less dependent on Russia’s overarching foreign policy goals. These two abstract components dovetail with Russia’s main international relations priorities of holding dominion over former Soviet states and earning the respect of the West.

Historically Iran and Turkey competed with Russia for influence in Central Asia. Even in Soviet times, Moscow was concerned that its Muslim states were susceptible to nefarious Turkish and Persian machinations. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the accompanying zeal for spreading revolution, was especially alarming. In some ways the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was meant to curtail the spread of Islamic fervor, but this ultimately backfired and Afghanistan became a rallying point for the radical Islamic movement, as well as a new fulcrum for Saudi influence.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Turkey sought to connect with the newly formed states on the basis of a shared Turkish ethnicity,¹⁸⁷ while Iran tried to leverage its Islamic credentials. At the same time, radicalized Sunni Arabs, backed by Gulf wealth,

¹⁸⁵ “Morocco Hopes to Render Russian Tour Flow to 2 Million People,” RATA News, March 20, 2012, http://www.ratanews.ru/digest/news_20032012_11.stm (accessed April, 5, 2012).

¹⁸⁶ “Russian Tourist Place Second in Israel,” RATA News, October 31, 2011, http://www.ratanews.ru/digest/news_31102011_1.stm (accessed April 5, 2012).

¹⁸⁷ Criss and Güner, “Geopolitical Configurations: The Russia-Turkey-Iran Triangle,” 370.

were floating about Central Asia. Moscow succeeded in creating regimes that kept the new states tied to Russia, namely the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, however Mankoff notes that Russia has long struggled to find non-military means to influence these states.¹⁸⁸

NATO also began involvement with former Soviet states through individual security cooperation programs in the early 1990s. Russia, having seen numerous former allies defecting to the West, was concerned that the Washington's strategy was to surround it by pro-Western states. This began a shift in Moscow from viewing Turkey and Iran as the primary rivals for influence over CIS states to viewing them as potential allies for keeping out Western influence. Moscow sought to rally against Western values like universal moralism.¹⁸⁹ "Even if a disparate Islam lacked the political unity and sense of purpose of, say, China, India, or the European Union, it might help Russia to mitigate the consequences of American power projection and Western moral universalism."¹⁹⁰ As evidence of changing geostrategic calculations, in 1999 Criss and Guner wrote, "The expected benefits from competition between Russia, Turkey, and Iran have clearly diminished, making conflict between them less likely."¹⁹¹

Iran and Russia, having begun rapprochement in 1989 following the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, began cooperating on security issues in the Caucasus in the early 1990s.¹⁹² But the major test of collaboration between Moscow and Tehran was addressing conflict in Tajikistan in the mid-1990s. Tajikistan became a center of Islamic

¹⁸⁸ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 243.

¹⁸⁹ Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 138-139.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Criss and Güner, "Geopolitical Configurations," 369.

¹⁹² Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 234.

radicalization, particularly in the form of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which spread to Central Asia from Jordan and Saudi Arabia.¹⁹³ Tetsuro Iji explains

Russia and Iran were at the centre of international efforts at mediating the Tajik conflict, having special ties with the government and opposition, respectively. Russia was the guarantor of the survival of the Rakhmonov regime in both economic and military terms, whereas Iran has cultural and linguistic affinities with Tajikistan and was the major foreign supporter of the Islamic opposition. Thus the two countries possessed a powerful source of leverage over their respective clients, and the corresponding interest and cooperation between them was the key to progress in the peace process.¹⁹⁴

While both sides came to desire a political resolution over several years' time, it was the Taliban's takeover of Kabul that was the catalyst for reaching a final solution.¹⁹⁵ These events helped precipitate the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, then known as the Shanghai five, to which Iran gained observer status in 2005.¹⁹⁶

The American invasion of Afghanistan furthered the trends that began to appear in the mid- to late-1990s. Putin decided to support the United States in their invasion of Afghanistan, pressuring CIS neighbors to allow US bases against the advice of his inner circle. Critics were not confined to Moscow: "A number of Turkish foreign policy experts suggest that Ankara's strategic perspective on Central Asia is much closer to the Russian position than to that of the United States. 'Neither Moscow nor Ankara is happy to see U.S. forces in the region,' wrote analyst Semih Idiz."¹⁹⁷ As the United States war in Afghanistan wore on and Russia was receiving no benefits for its hospitality in allowing bases in Central Asia, Moscow changed course. The Iraq War, launched against Russia's consent in 2003, deepened the transition. Nizameddin notes also that Moscow

¹⁹³ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 147.

¹⁹⁴ Tetsuro Iji, "Cooperation, Coordination and Complementarity in International Peacemaking: the Tajikistan Experience," *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 2 (2005): 192.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁹⁶ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 216-218.

¹⁹⁷ Warhola and Mitchell, "The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations," 139.

and Tehran were equally indignant at United States efforts to militarize and dominate the Gulf.¹⁹⁸ Thus by 2004 the shift toward better cooperation in Central Asia between Moscow, Tehran, and Ankara was solidified.

Despite the limitations on Iran's conduct of foreign policy placed upon it by the United States, the Russian view is that Iran is a strong state that can defend itself against American hostility. At the same time, Russia is concerned that the United States and Iran might one day find rapprochement, pulling Iran away from partnership with Russia. Mankoff notes that Russia knows Iran will be an unstable ally going forward.¹⁹⁹ Yet Iran's belligerence suits Russia in that it provides Russia with the upper hand in the relationship. Shlapentokh writes "the Russian elite would be [displeased] if Iran were to play an equal or, even worse, leading role in the Russian/Iranian geo-political arrangements."²⁰⁰ While Turkmenistan is in talks with Iran about exporting gas reserves, as the section on energy resources made clear, such an agreement will likely not come at the detriment of Russia.²⁰¹

Warholla and Mitchell pinpoint 2004 as the year in which relations between Russia and Turkey saw marked improvement.²⁰² This roughly coincides with the rise to Prime Minister by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who exchanged visits with Vladimir Putin. In fact Erdoğan has made eight visits to Russia since 2005. 2004 was also when new trade agreements were being reached between Ankara and Moscow. Turkey, because of its secular identity, does not rely on Islam for gaining influence in the Muslim areas of the

¹⁹⁸ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 240.

¹⁹⁹ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 302.

²⁰⁰ Shlapentokh, "Gulf States/Saudi Arabia and Russia's Approach to Iran," 318.

²⁰¹ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 278.

²⁰² Warholla and Mitchell, "The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations," 129.

former Soviet Union.²⁰³ Its NATO membership makes up much of its appeal to other states as a patron. Partly for this reason, while many of the Russian elite favor Turkey, the military views Turkey as a key rival.²⁰⁴ “Turkish and Russian officials increasingly refer to their respective countries as two great Eurasian powers, indicating that Turkish and Russia versions of Eurasianism need not be competitive. Rather, they can be complementary.”²⁰⁵

Turkey also has a significant population of Chechens, and as was explained in the terrorism section, halting any support for the Chechen separatists is a primary objective of Russian foreign policy. Moscow has shown restraint in its position regarding the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Russia could easily reciprocate against perceived hostile Turkish actions in Chechnya and elsewhere by supporting the Kurds. This is not unfeasible; Primakov describes throughout his book a longstanding connection with Iraqi Kurds, which Moscow supported against Saddam Hussein.²⁰⁶ Conversely, the inability of the United States to keep what Turkey calls “Kurdish Terrorists” from operating out of northern Iraq has dampened that relationship.²⁰⁷ This point of leverage helps Moscow assure Ankara’s cooperation.

China has also become a growing factor in Central Asia over the past several years. While Chinese and Russian policies on the Middle East and Central generally align, Russia is unhappy with Beijing’s growing influence.²⁰⁸ The only major instance of

²⁰³ Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 365.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 362.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

²⁰⁶ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 326.

²⁰⁷ Warhola and Mitchell, “The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations,” 136.

²⁰⁸ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 198.

Russian and Chinese policy positions colliding was Russia's decision to cooperate with the United States in allowing forward operating bases in Central Asia, to which China objected. Thus, Russia's concern with China's growing presence in Central Asia is predicated on the potential for future disagreements.

The paradox for Moscow has been that the more Russia seeks regional hegemony through military or other means, the more difficult it becomes for Russia to be seen as a responsible pillar of the international system. For this reason, Russian policy in the region has been at times an uncomfortable mixture of bluster and accommodation of outside interests, as the CIS has often served as a sidebar to Russia's relations with the United States, Europe, and China.²⁰⁹ While Russia holds sway over the governments of Central Asia, it is now more comfortable trusting that Ankara and Tehran will not use their influence in ways harmful to Moscow.

In the Caucasus political alignments are more definite. Turkey's security partners are Israel, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the United States. Despite its secular identity, Ankara has been building mosques in Azerbaijan,²¹⁰ overcoming the misalignment of Turkey's Sunni identity to Azerbaijan's Shi'ite identity. These alignments are reflected by Pipeline Politics in the region. Conversely, Russia aligns with Iran and Armenia.

The Russian invasion of Georgia should have stirred conflict along the lines laid out above, yet Turkey refrained from hostility toward Moscow. Some have written that Turkish-Russian relations came under extreme tension at this time, but no lasting

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 243.

²¹⁰ Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 365.

ramifications are apparent.²¹¹ Israel, as a partner of the United States, was involved in consolidating Georgia's alignment against Russia, a point Assad was quick to point out: "I think that in Russia and in the world, everyone is now aware of Israel's role and its military consultants in the Georgia crisis. And if before in Russia there were people who thought these [Israeli] forces can be friendly, now I think no one thinks that way."²¹² Freedman points out, to be clear, that Assad's pronouncement was an effort to convince Putin to allow Iskander missiles to be sold to Syria, which Putin has resisted because they of the threat that sale would pose to Israel."²¹³

Western incursions have dampened foreign policy disagreements between Russia, Iran, and Turkey over former Soviet spaces. The coordination that this prompted in the early 1990s was deepened by United States actions from 2001 to 2003. Since 2004, Russia's invasion of Georgia was the only significant trial to the improving coordination, and repercussions of Moscow's action have so far been nonexistent.

Great Power Status

Russian elites yearn to be recognized as a great power.²¹⁴ The embarrassment, relegation, and poverty that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union has implanted in Moscow a drive to regain the prestige and standing it once had. For Moscow, this will be judged by whether or not Russia can gain the West's recognition as an equal. In official terms, Russia advocates for a multilateral international system where all state's

²¹¹ Igor Torabakov, "The Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations," The Jamestown Foundation, November 26, 2008, <http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/GeorgiaCrisisTorabakov.pdf> (accessed April 16, 2012).

²¹² Freedman, "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," 60.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 22.

interests are considered. Reading between the lines, Russia is concerned that its own interests were ignored in the past. Chapter two gave discussion to more narrow points within the topic of Russian endeavors to gain equal footing to the West.

Lo writes that in the late-1990s, after nearly a decade of neglecting the Middle East, Russia strived to reestablish its credentials as an indispensable actor in the region.²¹⁵ However Moscow's tendency at this time was to only focus on, and then overreact to, attention-grabbing crises.²¹⁶ By weighing in on hot-button issues, Moscow sought to regain some semblance of being a Great Power. This strategy relies upon *truthiness*; if others believe Russia to be a Great Power than it becomes true, even if Russia is in reality a hollow power.

While Putin has made a concerted effort to strengthen Russia, the habit of clinging to headline-grabbing issues continues. Freedman writes that Putin's active role in the Middle East aimed to demonstrate Russia is still a great power. Since the United States has long been the state with which Russia wishes to maintain parity, issues involving the United States are especially likely to draw Moscow's attention. As expressed earlier, Russia has learned that countering American interests is often self-defeating. Instead, the problems that befuddle US policymakers in the Middle East are opportunities for prestige if Moscow can help solve them. Russia still pursues its own interests, rather than working as a subordinate partner to NATO,²¹⁷ but Mankoff is right

²¹⁵ Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 142.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 144.

²¹⁷ Freedman, "Can Russia be a Partner for NATO in the Middle East?" 148.

to say that it is actually the Washington that is stuck in a Cold War mindset for dealing with Russia.²¹⁸

The Middle East Peace Process has long been the issue that has drawn Moscow's attention in the sense of providing an opportunity for Russia to demonstrate its indispensability. In the 2000s, the Iraq War and the Iranian nuclear program are the dominant issues that have attracted Russian attention. The remainder of this section will show that in each of these cases Russia has proven itself unable to significantly alter the course of events in the region.

As the United States was building its case for war with Iraq, Russian intelligence was returning no evidence supporting Iraq was maintaining a WMD program.²¹⁹ Both Moscow and Washington held cynical beliefs regarding the other's position on Iraq: Washington believed Russia was sidestepping the oil-for-food program for kickbacks and was motivated to keep this arrangement going, while Moscow believed the primary goal of the United States was to secure Iraq's oil for itself.²²⁰

Unable to convince the United States to back down, Russia tried to get Iraq to reach an agreement peacefully. Primakov writes that in 2003 Putin sent Hussein a private message calling on him to step down.²²¹ The Russians continued to press Hussein to capitulate up until when the United States began the war. At the same time, Russia sat poised to veto any resolution the United States might put forward in the UN Security Council. When the United States withdrew the resolution calling for intervention,

²¹⁸ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 310.

²¹⁹ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 99.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 97, 105.

²²¹ Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 320.

sidestepping the Russian veto, it delegitimized Russia's main emblem of power.

However Freedman notes that Moscow's outcry over the Iraq War only picked up once the war had already begun.²²²

Ideologically, Russia represents an authoritarian state primarily interested in stability and economic growth whereas the United States is pushing an agenda of democracy and military interference in state sovereignty. The region's unhappiness with the United States Iraq invasion left Russia well positioned to pursue a new course.

Freedman writes that beginning in 2004

Putin decided to formulate a new strategy for Russia in the Middle East, where the U.S. position was rapidly weakening due to the growing insurgency in Iraq and the revival of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Seeking to exploit the weakened U.S. position, Putin, after a visit to Turkey, moved first to court the leading anti-American and anti-Israeli states and movements in the region - Syria, Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah. Subsequently, he was also to court the leading Sunni powers in the Middle East - Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates - while still trying to maintain good bilateral ties with Israel.²²³

As was previously mentioned, 2004 and 2005 marked the major Russian diplomatic push to win over Middle Eastern states' support for its handling of terrorism. As governments grew wary of the United States agenda, Russia represented a potential counterweight.

All the same, Russia, whenever possible, sought to create "win-win" situations by becoming involved but not taking firm positions on key issues. For example, Russia has declared that it will help Iran gain nuclear power but opposes Iran gaining a nuclear weapons capability. Thus, Russia is benefitting economically as the West tries to halt the Iranian nuclear program. If the West chooses military intervention, Russia is not responsible for the repercussions. If the Iranians gain nuclear weapons, Russia will not be held accountable.

²²² Freedman, "Can Russia be a Partner for NATO in the Middle East?" 131.

²²³ Freedman, "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," 56.

Similarly, Russia has remained aligned with the Palestinian cause. Russia continues to be a member of the Quartet, along with the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations. Nizameddin notes that the United States and Israel intentionally belittle Russian efforts at helping in the Middle East Peace Process, hoping to drive their involvement out.²²⁴ But for the Russian the Palestine issue remains paramount, as it was mentioned in both the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept.

Historically, Russia has had awful relations with Israel, and those relations only started improving in the early to mid-1990s. Moscow deeply resented the flow of Soviet Jews to Israel, and blatant anti-Semitism existed in USSR propaganda.²²⁵ Nizameddin also says that Russian sense of morality was genuinely offended by Israeli actions toward Palestinians.²²⁶ Polls suggest that less than 30% of Russians view Israel favorably.²²⁷ For years Russia was close to Yasser Arafat, Primakov considers him a personal friend (Primakov also calls Israel ‘plain stubborn’), and in later years Russia has hosted Palestinian groups like Fatah, the PLO, and Hamas in Moscow on official visits despite their statuses on the United States terror list. Finally, Israel’s neighbors would not be credible security threats in the absence of the Russian weapons that they buy.

Still, Russia views creating peace in the Middle East as a critical endeavor. Bowker mentions Russian concern that the United States approach will breed future generations of Islamic radicalism that could blow back into Russia’s south.²²⁸ Elevated above the reasons for Russian interest already laid out is that Russia wants its role in the

²²⁴ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 131.

²²⁵ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 112.

²²⁶ Ibid, 134.

²²⁷ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 132.

²²⁸ Ibid, 134.

Middle East Peace Process to affirm its status as a country that matters. Lo writes, “Few believed Russia could play more than a secondary role. What counted, however, was the *idea* of influence; image, if not everything, was certainly the most important thing.”²²⁹

Russia has not succeeded in bettering any of the longstanding problems facing the region. Lately, it seems as though tiny Qatar has made more progress as an arbitrator in the region’s disputes. Nor has Russia yet shown an ability to achieve a desired policy outcome in the face of strong US opposition.

²²⁹ Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 93.

CHAPTER FOUR: RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY EFFECTIVENESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Russian foreign policy in the Middle East has been mainly conducted by the top figures of government, who work to create agreements, and the Russian business interests who are closely associated with the government and work to carry out the agreements. This chapter will consider whether or not these agents have been successful in working toward their policy goals since 2000.

Terrorism

Data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) shows that incidents of terrorism have risen dramatically in Russia since 2007, from approximately 60 incidents that year to over 250 in 2010. During the second Chechen War, which is when transnational Islamist networks began playing a major role, there were never greater than 150 terrorist incidents per year. The scholarship presented in chapter two suggests that beginning in 2003 Russia began seeing breakthroughs in its effort to cut down on terrorist support from the Middle East, with the tours around the region in 2004 taken by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and President Vladimir Putin. However the data does not reflect this.

The GTD relies on publicly available information. So, the GTD lists the number of terrorist attacks in the Soviet Union in 1985, 1986, and 1987 as zero. If there were incidents of terrorism, they would not have been available via open source. Given

Russia's low scores for press freedom²³⁰ it would not be surprising if the rise in incidents of terrorism had to do with a declining ability of Russia to censor news of small incidents of terrorism. Next, the coding during the Chechen Wars would have been difficult because terrorism is defined by GTD as taking place against noncombatants, which disregards a number of incidents in Chechnya. Most significantly, GTD changed its data collectors in April of 2008, from the Center for Terrorism and Intelligence Studies in partnership with START to the Institute for the Study of Violent Groups at the University of New Haven. That switch coincides with the year that incidents of terrorism in Russia exploded. It was also at this time insurgents shifted from Chechnya to Dagestan and Ingushetia.²³¹

If problems of recording incidents of terrorism are responsible for the dramatic increase recently, it would seem that those problems would be overcome when considering incidents of terrorism involving 10 or more deaths. Using that threshold, any incident of terrorism should have been picked up by the GTD. From 2005 forward, there has been only one terrorist attack that killed more than thirty people.²³² In fact, through 2008 there were only a handful of attacks that killed more than ten people. Large attacks increased in 2009 to three, and again in 2010 to five.

A problematic assumption in this analysis is that incidents of terrorism directly reflect foreign support. Unfortunately quantitative information on foreign support for

²³⁰ Freedom Press lists the Russian Media as "Not Free"

²³¹ Preeti Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism," Council of Foreign Relations.

²³² In March 2010, two female suicide bombers detonated bombs in a Moscow metro station located near the headquarters of the security services, killing thirty-nine people. Islamist Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov claimed responsibility for the bombing; he had also claimed responsibility for the derailment of the Nevsky Express.

Chechnya is not publicly available. The main financier of terrorist groups in the Caucasus is the Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade. Not only has Russia succeeded at killing its leadership, but as the Council on Foreign Relations notes, since 2001 US-led efforts have curtailed terrorist finance networks. Sure enough, there was a large drop from 2001 to 2004 in the number of terrorist incidents in the GTD data. However, this time period also coincided with fallout from the Second Chechen War winding down.

Further, if it is a global terrorist network that is responsible for fueling the insurgency in Chechnya, it would also seem possible that that network shifted its focus to fighting the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. As Katz noted, Russia is concerned that as the Iraq war winds down Islamists will shift their focus back to Chechnya. This possibility cannot be assessed with the available data.

Russia's strategy in the Middle East assumes that foreign governments have the ability to curtail support for Chechen separatists. Russia believes that support is coming mostly from Sunnis, and that the Saudi Arabian government is able to check that support. Russia also believes that the Muslim Brotherhood is a crucial sponsor of the insurgency; one of Putin's stops during his post-Beslan tour was to Egypt, where he discussed confronting Islamic terrorism with President Hosni Mubarak. Further, Putin appointed Ramzon Kadyrov, a Muslim Chechen loyal to Moscow, as Chechnya's president and envoy to Muslim heads of state.

Putin has stated that he believes socioeconomic conditions in Chechnya allow for its population to become radicalized. By his logic, if adequate economic improvements are made, then foreign elements will be less able to convince Muslim Russians to take up

arms against Moscow. That approach does not rely on successful foreign relations, instead endorsing Russia's ability to diminish Islamic terrorism internally.

While cutting down on terrorist activity is the ultimate goal, diminishing criticism from Muslim leaders is also critical. In 2005, Putin sided against the Dutch cartoonists who drew defamatory images of the Prophet Muhammad, and shortly thereafter Russia was given observer status on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Ninth Islamic Summit in 2000 stated in its Communique

The Conference called on the Government of the Russian Federation to continue negotiations with the representatives of the Chechen people as soon as possible with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement of the situation in Chechnya, taking into consideration the appropriate international instruments on human rights. It also urged the Government of the Russian Federation and the international community to take action towards ensuring the protection of the Chechen refugees in the camps north of the Caucasus and to take part in the reconstruction and development of Chechnya. The Conference expressed its readiness to pursue contacts with the Government of the Russian Federation to facilitate the peaceful settlement of the crisis in Chechnya.²³³

However, the Tenth Islamic Summit in 2003, the Third Extraordinary Summit in 2005, and the Eleventh Islamic Summit in 2008 did not mention the Chechnya issue in their final Communiques. In fact, the 2005 Communique stated

The Conference renewed its support for and endorsement of the Secretary General's efforts, initiatives, and good offices in the search of just solutions to the causes of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC Member States...all within the framework of respect for the sovereignty of the States to which these Muslims belong.²³⁴

At least in the OIC, Russia has succeeded in removing the issue of its Muslim separatists as a noteworthy issue.

²³³ "Final Communique of the Ninth Session of the of Islamic Summit Conference," Organization of Islamic Conference, 13 November 2000, http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/9/9th-is-sum-final_communique.htm (accessed April 6, 2012).

²³⁴ "Final Communique of the Third Extraordinary Session of the of Islamic Summit Conference," Organization of Islamic Conference, December 8, 2005, <http://www.oic-oci.org/ex-summit/english/fc-exsumm-en.htm> (accessed April 6, 2012).

Finally, it appears that Middle Eastern leaders have stopped publicly addressing issues in southern Russia with religious terminology or context. A 2011 article appearing in Al Jazeera about the legal status of Chechens living in Turkey suggests that one of the two states most critical to supporting Chechens has changed its approach. It says, “While Turkey takes [Chechen refugees] in, and allows them to live in the country, the Chechens cannot legally work here or send their children to school. They are not legally defined as refugees.”²³⁵ The article points out that Turkey must straddle its desire to be a leader in the Muslim world with its commitments to Russia. For now it appears that Turkey has chosen to show its leadership by confronting other problems facing the Muslim world, leaving the Chechnya issue alone. As for King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah II of Jordan, or Ayatollah Khamenei of Iran, none of these leaders have provided critical statements on the treatment Russian Muslims over the last several years.

Arms Transfers

Russia has succeeded in increasing its arms transfers to the Middle East, from approximately \$1.226 billion (in current dollars) in 2000 to \$2,830 billion in 2011, with a high of \$3.565 billion in 2010.²³⁶ In 2000 Russia only transferred arms to five different states: Algeria, Iran, Yemen, UAE, and Syria. In 2010 Russia transferred arms to thirteen different states: the five from 2000 as well as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Libya, Sudan, and Turkey. Also, Russia sent arms to Morocco from 2005-2008. Increasingly, states are turning to Russia to purchase their arms.

²³⁵ Imran Garda, “Brothers, Bread, and Bosphorus,” *Al Jazeera*, May 13, 2010, <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2010/05/2010511145153425806.html> (accessed April 4, 2012).

²³⁶ SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

While Russia has taken criticism for supplying arms to autocracies from the United States and others, that criticism is hypocritical. The United States supplies arms to states listed as “Not Free” in Freedom House’s “Freedom in the World 2012” report as well, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, UAE, and Yemen.²³⁷ Russia has been careful not to supply states weapons that upset the strategic balance in the region, especially in regard to Syria and Iran.

This differs dramatically from the Cold War period in which Russia was arming states with the aim of having them match the capabilities of the states that the United States was arming. Israel seems willing to allow Russia to walk a tightrope of arming Israel’s enemies while pursuing good relations with Israel on other tracks. A possible explanation for this difference is that the United States has managed to establish itself as the military hegemon in the region, already having demonstrated an ability to easily defeat one of the region’s strongest armies. Rather than arm themselves, states are reliant on the United States for security provision.

Thus it is difficult to assess whether or not selling weapons musters influence in the way that it used to. The consensus belief is that Russia does not have that purpose in mind when it makes arms transfers; instead it wants only to make money. High volumes of arms transfers do seem to underscore friendly relations more generally, as is the case with Algeria, Iran, and Syria. Despite being competing suppliers of natural gas to Europe, Russia and Algeria have repeatedly held discussions in which they discuss coordinating their gas policies. Both are aware that if the other follows its self-interest

²³⁷ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2012,” http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/FIW%202012%20Booklet--Final.pdf (accessed April 10, 2010).

too aggressively, they could be hurt. Moscow's only significant political gain derived from its arms transfers has been successful use of the threat of selling advanced weapons to Syria to earn concessions from Israel.

Still Russia has succeeded in raising its arms transfers into the Middle East. If it can develop higher technology equipment, which would also be higher priced equipment, it might begin selling to the rest of the oil-rich Gulf States. Also, Russia is able to use its position on the Security Council to veto any sanctions on arms transfers to its client states. The only shortcoming of Moscow's strategy is that it has, over the past few decades, been willing to provide loans to states that are earmarked for purchasing Russian weapons. Repeatedly, Russia has had to forgive these loans. It has happened with Algeria, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen among others. Russia would prefer its customers be states that are flush with cash, rather than continue risking countries defaulting on their loans. Planned domestic efforts to improve the Russian arms industry may alter the customers of Russian arms transfers, but there is no indication that Moscow will exploit its position as a major arms supplier for political gains any better than it has in the past decade.

Energy Resources

The energy sector is another area in which the Russian goal is essentially to maximize profits. Russia's success is largely attributable to rising energy prices, but still Moscow deserves some credit for their management of energy politics. In 2000, the price of a barrel of oil was \$27.60.²³⁸ In 2010 the price of a barrel was \$77.45, a 181%

²³⁸ "Annual Statistical Bulletin," OPEC.

increase.²³⁹ Prices peaked in 2008 at \$94.45.²⁴⁰ From 2000 to 2010, the value of Russia Urals crude oil increased from \$26.58 to \$78.39, peaking in 2008 at \$94.87.²⁴¹ At the same time, Russia increased its oil exports from 3.06 million barrels per day in 2000 to 7.85 million barrels per day in 2010.²⁴² Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia only increased its exports from 6.25 million barrels per day to 7.59 million barrels per day.²⁴³ By not cooperating with OPEC, which often seeks to keep the price of oil steady, Russia was able to more than double its production while benefitting from quickly rising prices. Fortunately for Russia, this behavior does not appear to have worsened Russia's relations with the Middle East oil-producing states, perhaps largely because relations were not that strong to begin with.

Russian natural gas exports have risen from 131.5 billion cubic meters in 2000 to 223.4 billion cubic meters in 2010. Prices have risen from around \$110 per thousand cubic meters in 2000 to about \$440 per thousand cubic meters in 2012.²⁴⁴ The peak prices came in late 2008, reaching \$575 per thousand cubic meters.²⁴⁵ Some of the increased profit came from adding Turkey as a customer. More significant for assessing Russia's foreign relations with the Middle East is the complete lack of progress on the Nabucco pipeline. Going forward, Russia should be judged by its ability to better coordinate its natural gas strategies with Qatar, Algeria, and Libya, all of which are

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ <http://www.indexmundi.com/commodities/?commodity=russian-natural-gas&months=180> , compiled from IMF commodity prices

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

competing suppliers of gas to Europe. Qatar, for example, increased its natural gas exports threefold from 2006 to 2010.²⁴⁶

Russia, Iran, and Turkey have not been able to construct pipelines to export resources out of the Caspian region. Disputes among Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan over how resources should be distributed remain largely unresolved. Iran favors an equal division of resources among the five states, Russia prefers resources be allocated in proportion with coastline. Since 2005, the United States and China have become increasingly interested in the outcome of these disputes, as they hold significant geostrategic implications for influence in Central Asia. The continued stalemate cannot be deemed as good for Moscow, as it would benefit from unlocking Caspian energy resources. However, the muddled state of affairs that prevents the United States or China from achieving their desired outcomes keeps the stalemate from being deemed a failure for Russia as well.

General Trade

As was stated in chapter three, Russian exports worldwide exploded in 2003, and exports to the Middle East were no different. In 2001 Russian exports to the region were approximately \$6 billion, and in the peak year of 2008 exports were around \$42 billion, a seven fold increase.²⁴⁷ In 2010 exports to the region were still at \$26.5 billion, and through the first two quarters of 2011 exports were increasing, although only slightly, which is good given the Arab Spring (through the first two quarters of 2011, exports to Egypt were down 66% compared to 2010).

²⁴⁶ “Annual Statistical Bulletin,” OPEC.

²⁴⁷ International Monetary Fund, “Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook,” 2002, 2007, 2010.

Accounting for the increased trade between Russia and the Middle East over the past decade is difficult because there have not been major political events heralding in new trade agreements or new organizational memberships. Russia adding Turkey as a natural gas customer was significant. The price of oil increased in the early part of the decade, and while that increases the overall wealth of the region in some ways, the actual oil producing states were not the source of increased trade, except for Iran. Instead, states like Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Algeria were the difference makers. High estimates of how much the Iraq invasion would cost Russia in the form of lost trade (listed as multiple billions) relied on incredibly ambitious pre-war projections. Trade spiked in 2002, which might have indicated the start of the same meteoric rise seen elsewhere in the region. However, compared to pre-2002 exports, post-2003 exports are no more than \$100 million less annually than what would have been expected in a 2001 forecast.

Assigning directional causality between improved trade and improved political relations between Russia and Middle Eastern states is also difficult. Kruetz notes that only 20% of Russian business is small business, compared to 70% in the United States.²⁴⁸ This highlights that Russia's economy is heavily controlled by a few elite oligarchs who truly run the country. Increasing mutually beneficial trade relations does not suggest gained influence on the part of Russia in the Middle East, but as more Russian elites interact with elites in the Middle East, the prospects for coordination on other issues improve as well.

Still Russia has to be frustrated by its inability to grow trade relations with the Arab Gulf States beyond what they are now. Russia's cheaper consumer goods struggle

²⁴⁸ Kruetz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend or Foe?*3.

to break into markets where competition favors high end products from Europe and the United States. As fellow rentier states, the Arab Gulf economies are similar in their industrial diversification to Russia's economy, so Russia's competitive advantages match the Gulf States', and therefore less market space exists for Russian goods and services.

Influence over Former Soviet Spaces

Chapter three presented a view of Russia's interaction with the Middle East regarding influence over former Soviet spaces as one in which traditional rivals for influence, Turkey and Iran in particular, were steadily increasing their coordination with Moscow. This trend was attributed to the entry of the West and China as actors in these spaces, and a desire on the part of the traditional powers to keep them out. Ultimately Moscow's major concern is that instability and other transnational issues could spill across international borders into Russia's south.

Trying to quantitatively measure how well Russia has coalesced Tehran and Ankara is a fool's errand. Bill Emmott, writing for IISS, listed factors that are important for strategic influence, but concluded that they were ultimately not quantifiable. "Chief among those unmeasurables are the deployability of whatever assets a country may have, the attitude the policy-making elite of that country has to the deployment of its assets, and the perceptions held of that country's willingness or eagerness to use its assets to achieve its goals."²⁴⁹ This limitation means that assessing how well Russia has achieved its goal of shaping the Middle East's role in former Soviet spaces relies primarily on subjective evidence.

²⁴⁹ Bill Emmott, "Measuring Strategic Influence," The International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 25, 2012, <http://www.iiss.org/programmes/geo-economics-and-strategy/events/seminars/papers/measuring-strategic-influence/> (accessed on April 18, 2012): 6.

The most significant success for Russia in this area, working with Iran to find a peaceful resolution to conflict in Tajikistan, preceded Putin's presidency. The other surprising occurrence, Ankara's lack of an outcry over Russia's war in Georgia in 2008, is another indication that Moscow has somehow succeeded in reducing the competitive nature within the Iran-Turkey-Russia geostrategic triangle. Ankara and Moscow support opposite sides in the Naborno-Karabakh dispute, but neither has done so in significant overt ways during Putin's presidency. The three governments have discussed combatting drug smuggling in coordination with each other, although formally this has not yet occurred.

There are hazards to advancing a counterfactual argument, but the general lack of conflict and instability in former Soviet spaces matters. All three of these governments are capable of undercutting the others' interests in as they relate to states of the CIS. The absence of such actions is significant. Further, each state is in agreement that entries of Western influence are detrimental. Following the Russia-Georgia War, Turkey sought to create a new pact of security and cooperation in the Caucasus. That a central component of this effort was declaring foreign powers should stay out of the region, and that Ankara solicited Moscow's input on creating the pact, both bode well for Russia.

Great Power Status

Russia's foreign policy goal in the Middle East of enhancing its status as a Great Power is, like the prior goal, difficult to quantify. Other studies seeking to measure state status and strategic influence have considered variables like approval ratings and UN voting patterns. However, as Emmott points out, measurement is "often not sufficient

and can even be misleading; it leads you to focus only on those things that are measurable, and to overlook the many, perhaps equally important, things that are not.”²⁵⁰

Once again an abstract goal of Russian foreign policy will be assessed subjectively.

Among the major issues that Russia decided to actively weigh in on, it was not unable to achieve its desired outcomes in any instance. In 2003 the United States launched its Iraq war despite Russian objections. Russia has been unable to build a coalition supporting Iran’s right to nuclear power; instead the United States is building consensus around punishing Iran for its suspected interest in nuclear weapons. At least in this case Russia was able to veto Security Council resolutions placing sanctions on Iran. Russia sided with Syria in the mid-2000s in their disputes over withdrawal from Lebanon, which did not win Moscow any new friends in the region. Finally, advancing the Middle East Peace Process is an incredibly difficult task to pursue, but Moscow’s failure at its immediate goal of hosting peace talks can be labeled a failure.

Finally, Russia appears to have failed to capitalize on the space for influence in the Middle East opened up to it by the United States invasion of Iraq. Bowker writes that so long as it does not interfere with the national interest, Russia still seeks out a positive relationship with the United States.²⁵¹ Lo and Mankoff both describe Russia and the West having ideological differences centered on democracy versus authoritarianism.²⁵² However neither sees the ideological differences keeping Russia from cooperating with the West on the provision of security. Mankoff explains that Moscow has a tendency to listen when appeals are made for Russia to participate as a responsible great power; the

²⁵⁰ Bill Emmott, “Measuring Strategic Influence,” 2.

²⁵¹ Bowker, *Russia, America and the Islamic World*, 165.

²⁵² Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era*, 166, and Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 301.

flattery too much to resist.²⁵³ Overall, Moscow has not demonstrated an ability to achieve policy outcomes regarding the intractable disputes in the region, nor does Moscow appear to have had a coherent plan for establishing itself as a credible counterweight to the United States in the Middle East.

²⁵³ Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 297.

CHAPTER FIVE: RUSSIAN POLICY THROUGH THE ARAB SPRING

Russian foreign policy during the Arab Spring has been consistent with its policy since 2000. While Russia's approach to Libya and Syria was more measured than the United States', attributing that difference to Russian indifference toward democracy and human rights is short sighted. An examination of how Russia's interests have held up throughout the Arab Spring will reveal that Russia has weathered the storm well despite its general reactionary approach.

Terrorism

Hosni Mubarak never challenged Russia's discretion in dealing with Chechnya, viewing it as an internal problem all along. Even before the 2004 Beslan terrorist attack, Mubarak during state visits would affirm a mutual interest in fighting terrorism at joint press conferences with Putin. Further, Mubarak held in check the Muslim Brotherhood, a group that Russia has labeled a terrorist organization because of its alleged ties to Chechen fighters. Mubarak's ouster removes a constraint on what Russia fears could again become a global Islamic extremist movement.

In Yemen too Moscow is concerned that space has been created for terrorist groups to prosper, particularly Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP). While the states altered by the Arab Spring have had unsavory dictators, because those leaders did not base their mantle on religion, none allowed space for radical Islamic groups to prosper. Russia may be more fearful than is warranted—evidence for a new wave of turmoil in the

south does not match speculation—but Russia remains vigilant. The last major terror attack in Russia was carried out by a suicide bomber at a Moscow airport on January 24, 2011, the day before protests broke out in Egypt.

These concerns extend to Syria as well. Lavrov said in his major speech on the Arab Spring, “one should not ignore the fact that for a long time now [Syrian authorities have] been fighting not unarmed men, but combat units, such as the so-called Free Syrian Army and extremist groups including al-Qaeda which have lately committed a series of murderous terrorist acts.”²⁵⁴ Moscow is concerned that the situation in Syria as one in which Saudi Arabia is funding Sunni groups against Iranian-backed factions (the Assad government included). Moscow detects a pattern occurring in Syria that has happened elsewhere. Saudi Arabia uses its Islamic credentials to empower Islamist groups beyond its borders. For Russia, a Sunni Islamist Syria creates a new bridge for Sunni extremism to reach Russia and the CIS.

Arms Transfers

As mentioned earlier, it is actually the United States that saw a large bump in its arms sales to the region from 2010 to 2011, which is partially attributable to the Arab Spring. Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf States saw the largest increases in arms transfers from the United States. Meanwhile, the only states that increased their arms transfers from Russia were Iraq and Sudan, neither by significant amounts. The idea that autocrats on unsteady thrones can turn to Russia for weapons to suppress their

²⁵⁴ “Address by H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at the UN Security Council debate “Situation in the Middle East: Challenges and opportunities,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, March 12, 2012, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/47855151247C78E4442579C200410B36 (accessed March 18, 2012).

populations is not borne out by the data. Overall, Russian arms transfers to the Middle East decreased by 20.6%.

Top Russian arms purchasers have had a mixed record during the Arab Spring. Going through the top Russian arms customers in order, Algeria was incredibly efficient in undercutting protests in their infancy. Iran has not had sustained protests either. But President Saleh in Yemen is now out of power, as is Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and Assad in Syria is struggling to keep his hold on power. The other two large importers, Sudan and UAE, have not been subject to large Arab Spring protests. Despite news reports of Russian arms floating around Libya, that country was actually the twelfth largest importer of Russian arms from 2000 to 2011.

Russia has refused to cancel contracts for future arms transfers with Syria. These contracts are for expensive, advanced equipment like fighter planes. Syria and states like it already have all of the arms they need to suppress their own people. The arms that Russia is transferring now are significant in that they could aid these countries in defending against foreign intervention. As before, Russia will continue to not sell states weapons that could significantly alter the basic balance of power in the region, be it between Syria and Israel or Iran and its rivals. Stability is valued over profit.

Energy Resources

Among the states that have been majorly affected by the Arab Spring (Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, and Syria), only Libya concerns Russian interests regarding natural resources. While Bahrain has oil wealth, the outcome of upheaval there was never a threat to shock world oil markets much beyond OPEC's ability to adjust

production. Should Bahrain undergo further turmoil that upsets world oil prices, Russia will do little more than sow increased profits.

Libya is a natural gas supplier to Europe, so it is important to Russia in that it can undermine Russia's near monopoly to some degree. It is also a large enough oil producer to effect global prices, although if it Libya drives prices up, Russia benefits. Russia should be concerned that in the long term Libya's production under new government could mean a new competitor for its European customers. Qatar's eagerness to begin partnerships with the new Libyan government, which was underway even before Gadhafi was overthrown, should make Moscow even more wary.

General Trade

Russian exports worldwide continued to grow at an impressive rate through the first two quarters of 2011, while trade to the Middle East showed some growth as well. First quarter exports to the Middle East in 2011 were 7.2% higher than in 2010, although second quarter exports in 2011 were 1.06% lower than in 2010.²⁵⁵ This difference is largely explained by variance in exports to Turkey.

Specific states that imported significantly less from Russia are Israel, Egypt, and Algeria. Egypt specifically imported about \$350 million less per quarter in the first half of 2011 compared to 2010. Meanwhile, states like Iran, Tunisia, UAE, Morocco, and Syria have all increased their Russian imports by amounts approaching \$100 million per quarter. While there was never a large volume of trade with Yemen, Russia's exports to that country have fallen nearly to zero. Likewise Libya, which had not been a major

²⁵⁵ International Monetary Fund, "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook," 2010, 2011.

trading partner with Russia, imported from Russia about 15% of what it had the year before.²⁵⁶

The trade data reveals the importance of stability for Russia. While the region did not decrease its purchases of Russian products overall, the political quakes seem to have prevented a continuation of the high growth of Russian exports to the Middle East. Still, Tunisia and Syria increased their imports from Russia through the first half of 2011 despite domestic upheaval. If several states in the region can come out of the Arab Spring with political arrangements that allow for more dynamic economic growth, than Russia will be able to export more in the long term.

Influence over Former Soviet Spaces

In a recent article, Stephen Blank and Carol R. Saivetz write,

The fact that Islamist forces are poised to gain significantly across the region raises fears in Moscow that such revolutions could be repeated in the restive North Caucasus and Central Asia. At the very least, newly empowered Islamist forces could potentially provide aid to the Islamist forces fighting governments—both in the Caucasus and in Central Asia.²⁵⁷

This fear is not Russia's alone, but is shared by the governments of states like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. All of these governments are trying to pick out lessons from the Arab Spring to better ensure their own grasp on power.

Given Russia's power and relative stability, this has provided an opportunity for CIS states to be drawn further back into the Russian orbit. Member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization have discussed creating a rapid deployment force

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Stephen Blank and Carl R. Saivetz. "Playing to Lose? Russia and the 'Arab Spring.'" *Problems of Post-Communism* 59, no. 1 (2012): 4.

that could be used to counter challenges to the heads of state.²⁵⁸ The group is also discussing pooling their resources to create better controls on cyberspace. However Blank and Saivetz note, “If Russia is unable to prevent Assad’s removal from office, it is highly unlikely that either Central Asian or Middle Eastern leaders will listen to Russian advice for reform.”²⁵⁹

Turkey and Iran, the two states of the Middle East that contend with Russia for influence in the CIS, have been affected by the Arab Spring in opposing ways. The Iranian government appears to be on lockdown, evidenced by escalating tensions with the United States and others over both its nuclear program and its supposed continued support for terrorism. Meanwhile Turkey has emerged as a potential regional leader, often cited as the example of Islamic democracy that states like Tunisia and Egypt should seek to follow. Turkey has not yet “turned East” completely; relations with Europe are still more important in any measurable sense. So long as Turkey’s dynamism continues, it will be an appealing voice to the CIS, if not to its leadership than to the broader populations. Russia must note these shifts to better its strategies for providing stability to Central Asia.

Great Power Status

Libya and Syria both became proving grounds for the importance of Russia as a principal provider of global security. In the case of Libya, Russia ultimately abstained when provided the opportunity to veto a Security Council resolution that implemented a no-fly zone over Libya, perhaps because an impending humanitarian disaster seemed

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 9.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 11.

probable. When NATO began helping the Rebels push onward to Tripoli, Russia was dismayed but also powerless and ignored.

The fall back approach to dealing with conflict, harking back to their strategy throughout the Cold War, is for Russia to use their connections to both sides of the conflict to mediate. Blank and Saivetz explain, “A Russian-mediated end to the war [in Libya] would have enshrined Moscow’s return to the Middle East as a major player and proven to the West that the Kremlin was indispensable in settling regional conflicts.”²⁶⁰ However was not meant to be. All that was left for Russia to do was to again defend economic interests—money owed from previous arms sales and deals made for Russian development of Libyan energy resources.

Russia would not allow the West to gain the upper hand in Syria in the same way. Not only did Russia have the lesson of Libya, but Syria is a much more important ally. Many have suggested that Libya was a close partner to Moscow, but that appears to be a conclusion reached by simply noting Libya was an ally of Washington. Syria has been a major consumer of Russian arms and an importer of Russian products. It is also a key state in regional power balancing, which Moscow values as a source of stability in the realist perspective.

Russia has defended the Assad government in the United Nations Security Council. It has not allowed significant sanctions and will not allow outside interference in the internal affairs of the state. At the same time, Russia is seeking to mediate between the various parties to the conflict, again hoping to prove its invaluable role to security in the region. In this case, Russia has a better chance for success, mainly because of the

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 6.

lack of other possible arbiters. Further, the West appears weary of intervention in Syria, for a multiplicity of reasons. It is difficult to assess if Russia could defend its client so easily if faced with a gung-ho West.

Despite regional upheaval, Russia still has its eyes on the Middle East Peace Process prize. During a March 12, 2012 speech on the Arab Spring, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said,

The “Arab Spring” should in no way be used as a pretext to weaken attention to the Palestinian issue. We are convinced that the conflict potential in the Middle East and Northern Africa will remain high until a comprehensive settlement is achieved in the Middle East within the existing international legal framework. This is a truly historical duty of the international community and the UN Security Council.²⁶¹

Much of the Russian approach to the Arab Spring has been reactionary. This may be attributed to a desire to not interfere in other states’ sovereignty, but more common is the assessment that Moscow was “caught with their pants down.” The Israel-Palestine issue represents one area in which Moscow has been proactive, although Russia has still not won hosting duties for Israel and Palestine, which is a top priority, Moscow has remained focused on this historical source of conflict in the region. Solving it would bring much highly desired prestige.

²⁶¹“Address by H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at the UN Security Council debate “Situation in the Middle East: Challenges and opportunities,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, March 12, 2012, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/47855151247C78E4442579C200410B36 (accessed March 18, 2012).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Since Vladimir Putin's ascension to the presidency, Russia has accomplished its goals of reducing Middle Eastern support for terrorism, diversifying and increasing arms transfers to the region, ensuring that Middle Eastern states do not hamper the profitability of Russia's energy exports, and expanding and deepening trade between Russia and the Middle East. While it is not clear that Russia has effectively shaped relations between the Middle East and former Soviet spaces to its own benefit, the lack of evidence suggesting that Turkey and Iran are using their influence in opposition to Russia's interests indicates that Moscow is at least not failing in this regard. However, Moscow's goal of acting in the Middle East such that Russia demonstrates its status as a Great Power has not yielded any noteworthy results.

In the Soviet era, the factors that motivated abandoning ideological pursuits in the Middle East in favor of pragmatic ones were ideological incongruities, unreliable, calculating partners, and a manipulative United States. Why Russia has been successful in achieving several of its goals in the region over the past decade relates to those same factors. In areas of trade, arms transfers, and energy resource exploitation, ideological differences between Russia and the Middle East are unimportant. The apolitical nature of these goals makes calculating partners and manipulation by the United States non-issues. For reducing terrorism, the key for Moscow was eliminating ideological incongruities by

convincing leaders of Russia's right to solve its internal problems as it sees fit. In coordinating on former Soviet spaces, Russia was greatly aided by US incursions, a source of influence that Middle East actors saw as possibly upsetting the status quo. Traditional issues of unreliable partners and a calculating United States only dislodge Moscow's goal of reestablishing itself as a Great Power.

Russia has not attempted issue linkage as part of its conduct in the Middle East. For example, Moscow and Turkey disagree on several issues, namely support for Chechens, Bosphorus Strait shipping, and the Kurdish issue. Yet the two are cooperating on general trade, on energy resources, and on keeping foreign powers out of former Soviet spaces. Russia could, as it did with Ukraine, tie the flow of natural gas to policy changes it wants Turkey to make. It appears that if relations between Russia and a Middle Eastern government based on one of the four pragmatic factors work well, the positive experience encourages the possibility for bilateral relations to expand.

Russia's pragmatic achievements have not led to increasing political influence, which for Russia would lessen the challenge of achieving abstract goals. For example, Russia never attempted to translate its good trade relations, significant arms transfers, energy resource coordination, and cooperation on fighting Sunni Islamist terrorism with Iran into winning concessions from Iranian on the nuclear weapons issue. It is possible that in the future all of the connections Russia is now laying in the region will pay off in the form of political sway, but that has not yet happened. Until that occurs, Russia's successes on pragmatic matters will not create perceptions of Russia as a Great Power.

For United States policymakers, recognizing Russian interests in the Middle East, as well as which goals they are capable of achieving and which goals they are not, is important for pursuing US priorities in the region. Russia can be trusted to not transfer arms into the region so advanced that they will upset the persisting strategic balance.

Moscow can be co-opted on matters of security provision. Conversely, ignoring Russian input on hot-button issues will invite bluster and objections, even if the US is not acting against Russian interests. Moscow originally began souring on the US war in Afghanistan only when the Bush Administration appeared disinterested in Russian advice on best practices for fighting a war in Afghanistan.

The major challenges that Russia will face going forward is ensuring its strong partnerships with states like Iran and Syria are not disrupted, improving inroads to the Gulf, where Moscow has so far not been particularly successful in achieving its pragmatic goals, coordinating with an independent-minded Qatar, particularly on the issue of natural gas, and coordinating more closely with Turkey on broader political matters. Moscow views Western advocacy for liberal democracy as a front to expand its influence. When that advocacy leads to calls for military intervention, Russia sees the United States as stealing its allies via illegitimate application of force. Now that Russia has become more robust and assertive, it will not allow the West to trounce its interests as occurred in Serbia and Iraq. However Russia's attachment is to the benefits reaped by having allies, not to the allies themselves. Russia will not strongly detest changes to compliant governments so long as they occur in a way that left Russian interests within the target states intact, as was the case recently in Egypt.

Future research on this topic should seek to deepen understanding of the local agents for policy influence between Russia and the Middle East. Russian relations have been dominated by business-like relationships, only these business relationships happen to be state-owned. Comparing this to other extra-regional state's mechanisms would be useful. Several elements of soft power, such as educational exchanges, went unconsidered in this paper. Next, this thesis sought to evaluate Russia's influence on the Middle East, but it did not fully develop how the Middle East influences Russia. Last, development and application of a more disciplined approach to gauging influence would be helpful not just in assessing Russia-Middle East relations, but more generally in the field of international studies.

In comparison with its overarching policy goals vis-à-vis the West and former Soviet spaces, Moscow is fairly placid in its conduct in the Middle East. Currently Russia is obfuscating United States goals in the region; however memories of the Soviet Union are clouding understanding of Russian behavior. Moscow is pursuing a pragmatic policy line that prioritizes stability. While human rights violations horrify observers in the West, for Moscow the most terrifying prospect is contemplating how much more the region could unravel if stability is not prioritized.

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Appendix A1: Russian Arms Transfers to the Middle East

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Totals
Russia													
Algeria	245	380	99	145	237	92	162	485	1425	1030	698	663	5661
Bahrain													0
Comoros													0
Djibouti			3										3
Egypt			60	60	60	60	60			8	340	300	948
Eritrea		57			70	3							130
Iran	341	298	92	85	15	15	409	321	15	15	15	15	1636
Iraq							68	27	95		68	81	339
Israel													0
Jordan		8								60	80	40	188
Kuwait											36		36
Lebanon													0
Libya							13	13	13		15		54
Mauritania													0
Morocco		6				71	29	29	29				164
Oman													0
Palestine								2		14	6		22
Qatar													0
Saudi Arabia													0
Somalia													0
Sudan		95	32	86	284	114	27	27	27	61	41	63	857
Syria	7	7	7	7	7	7	16		81	187	294	246	866
Tunisia													0
Turkey										16	16		32
UAE	43									118	309	177	647
Yemen	53	14	524		289	235					85	5	1205
Totals	689	865	817	383	962	597	784	904	1685	1509	2003	1590	12788

Appendix A2: United States Arms Transfers to the Middle East

United States	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Totals
Algeria	26	71	44								11	11	163
Bahrain	299	6	58	2		63	3	26	2		68		527
Comoros													0
Djibouti													0
Egypt	787	815	480	348	459	535	539	464	186	106	249	200	5168
Eritrea													0
Iran													0
Iraq					7	45	47	137	283	315	363	555	1752
Israel	106	129	328	104	839	1114	1130	835	639	134	17	34	5409
Jordan	22	26	3	76	26	6	4	165	34	18	6	60	446
Kuwait				21		10		279		1	22	58	391
Lebanon		4					1				13	10	28
Libya													0
Mauritania													0
Morocco	4						20			3	35	589	651
Oman		1	6	4	13	139	271	4	62	2			502
Palestine													0
Qatar										280		140	420
Saudi Arabia	3	33	89	117	324	151	170	147	237	234	337	384	2226
Somalia													0
Sudan													0
Syria													0
Tunisia			83	1			2		3		7	7	103
Turkey	495	149	464	252	127	308	5	25	50	10	134	622	2641
UAE	15	19	18	36	396	1274	1011	487	672	394	151	973	5446
Yemen							3		5			12	20
Totals	1757	1253	1573	961	2191	3645	3206	2569	2173	1497	1413	3655	25893