
Russia's Historical Roots

Russia's thousand-year history is replete with colorful leaders, global and continental wars, and the dramatic juxtaposition of brilliant culture with extreme brutality and poverty. Some Westerners find these qualities attractive, others repelling—there is little middle ground in how foreigners respond to Russia.

This chapter outlines some of the enduring legacies of Russia's political and economic organization and conveys Russia's perspective on both its global and regional position and its identity. For the last 500 years, Russia has been one of the traditional European powers,¹ with an inheritance both rich and complicated: Many of the peculiarities of tsarist Russia—some pertaining to geography, others to tradition—persist today; similarly, the Soviet period of 1917–91 is over, but it too has left indelible marks.

Over the past two centuries, occasional tsarist and even Soviet leaders have struggled to free Russia from the “path dependencies” of its centralized and authoritarian economic and political systems and its deeply territorial sense of security, which has fueled expansion and the domination of its neighbors. In addition to these challenges, the Russian reformers who came to power in 1991 strived to join the West but succeeded only partially.

The Muscovite, Tsarist, and Soviet Legacies

Looking at a map of the world, one cannot help but be impressed by the sheer vastness of Russia. From the beginning of the 16th century through

1. This point has been made most strongly by Martin Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

the middle of the 17th, Russia on average annually added territory equivalent to the size of the Netherlands, and it continued expanding until World War I. No other state in world history has expanded so persistently.²

Russia grew as a multinational and multicultural empire along with the Western European empires, but there was an important difference between them: The colonies of the Western European empires—those of Great Britain, France, Holland, Portugal, and Spain—were overseas, physically separated from their capitals. Russia, however, was a continental empire without a clear differentiation between the ruling core and its colonies, more like the Ottoman Empire. Although the Western European states developed national identities separate from their colonial possessions, Russia did not. Many historians have argued that Russia never was a nation-state but developed as an empire from the beginning.

The Muscovite principality marked the geographic center of the territory settled by ethnic Russians in medieval times, and the Muscovite court formed an efficient capital with a monolithic militarized political organization. Neighboring political-military groupings were comparatively weak and vulnerable to invasion.

Russia's centralized and militarized state has distinguished the country for centuries, although whether its militarization was offensive or defensive has been a matter of considerable historical debate. The country's need for expansion was self-perpetuating: It continually conquered or acquired territory populated by non-Russian ethnic and nationalist groups that formed a belt of regions of dubious political loyalty, arousing permanent insecurity in the core state, which responded with repression and the expansion of boundaries to create buffer zones.³ As Russia grew, the demands of the administration and security of the vast territory resulted in an increasingly onerous tax and financial burden on the people, since the government extracted these resources chiefly from the agrarian population, which struggled for subsistence in climactically and geologically adverse conditions. As Russian historian Vasily Kliuchevsky famously remarked, "The state expands, the people grow sickly."⁴

Thus as one traveled east from Western Europe, regions became progressively poorer and the rule more autocratic. In their competition with Western adversaries, Russian governments resorted to the authority of the central sovereign—the tsar and later the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—who allocated relatively large resources to the mili-

2. Richard Pipes, "Détente: Moscow's Views," in *The Conduct of Soviet Foreign Policy*, ed. Erik P. Hoffman and Frederic Fleron Jr. (New York: Aldine Publishing Co., 1980).

3. See Alfred J. Rieber, "Struggle over the Borderlands," in *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, 61–90).

4. Quoted in Nicolas Berdyaev, "Religion and the Russian State," in *Readings in Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Robert A. Goldwin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, 25–33).

tary. Because the Russians' deeply ingrained sense of territorial security created the need for a large and expensive state bureaucracy and military, Russia's commerce, economic growth, and technological development consistently lagged behind those of its European neighbors.

Yet Russia's vast natural resources, large territory and population, and ability to mobilize a large army made the country a formidable player in European politics. After the defeat of Charles XII and Sweden at Poltava in 1709 and the relocation of the capital of the Russian empire to the newly built St. Petersburg, on the Baltic Sea, in 1713, Russia continued to expand in the Baltic region. Later in the century, under Catherine the Great, Russia expanded in the west through the partitioning of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795, and to the south at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. In the 19th century the expansion continued to the south into the Caucasus and to the southwest into Central Asia. By 1837, Pyotr Chaadaev wrote in his *The Vindication of a Madman*, "Russia, it is a geographical fact."

Historians have argued that the geography of Eurasia was conducive for the Russians, as it had been for the Golden Horde and Tamerlane, to create a huge continental empire. Harvard University history professor Edward Keenan has suggested that Moscow was a pragmatic opportunist not inherently bent on expansion but simply taking advantage of opportunities as they emerged—in other words, Russia expanded because it could. Historian George Vernadsky embraced the argument of geographical determinism—that the peculiar geography of Eurasia encouraged a dynamic national grouping (i.e., Russia) to extend its domination as far as possible for security reasons:

The fundamental urge which directed the Russian people eastward lies deep in history and is not easily summarized in a paragraph. It was not "imperialism," nor was it the consequence of the petty political ambitions of Russian statesmen. It was in geography which lies at the basis of all history.⁵

The two historians' views mesh well, suggesting that Russia's expansionism was normal behavior in an unusual geography. Richard Pipes suggests, however, that the Russians, and later the Soviets, adopted an ideology—be it "Moscow as the third Rome" or Marxism-Leninism—that promoted an extraordinary imperial appetite and that encouraged the government to be inherently aggressive and expansionist.⁶

Such views may not be all that contradictory. The geography of Eurasia presents a truly Darwinian dilemma given its susceptibility to invasion, and the imperative of security drove a peculiarly militarized economic development of both tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union.

5. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: The Blakiston Company, 1944), 6.

6. Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1974).

Russia's Early Identity Questions

A powerful national myth is required to dominate such extensive territories, and the Russians developed one, under first the tsars and then, with some adaptations, the Soviet Union. The 15th century saw the emergence of a messianic vision for the Russian state and the people of Moscow as the Third Rome, or the historical protector and purveyor of Orthodox Christianity. The first Rome was long gone, and the second Rome, Constantinople, fell in 1453. In 1472 Russian Prince Ivan III married Sofia Paleologue, the niece of Byzantium's last emperor, Constantine, and this marriage gave legitimacy to Russia's claim as Byzantium's historical successor. In 1520 the monk Filofey supposedly wrote in an oft-cited letter to the tsar,

And now, I say unto them: take care and take heed, pious tsar; all the empires of Christendom are united in thine, the two Romes have fallen and the third exists and there will not be a fourth.⁷

In 1547 the Muscovite prince Ivan IV officially adopted the title of tsar, which was derived from the Roman *caesar*, emphasizing that the succession of Christian capitals was matched by a succession of rulers. Iver Neumann has argued that the Third Rome doctrine anointed Russia as the divine successor, but its borders were never clearly identified, thus providing religious justification for expansion. Throughout Russian history, Holy Russia has been invoked as the suffering savior of the world, and its historical mission was the crux of the Russian Idea. Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev attributed the Russians' messianism to their unique combination of Western and Eastern qualities:

The Russian people is not purely European and it is not purely Asiatic. Russia is a complete section of the world—a colossal East-West. It unites two worlds, and within the Russian soul two principles are always engaged in strife—the Eastern and the Western.⁸

The eternal question of East or West was at the heart of the 19th century debate between Russian Slavophiles and Westernizers.⁹ The Slavophiles were aristocratic romantic intellectuals who believed in the superior nature and historical mission of Orthodox Christianity and in Russia as uniquely endowed with a culture transcending East and West. They touted traditional institutions such as the peasant commune as models of harmonious social organization and claimed that rationalism, legalism, and con-

7. Quoted in Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1996, 7).

8. Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1992, 20).

9. Much of the following discussion is derived from Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, 400–404).

stitutionalism would destroy Russia's natural harmonious development. The Slavophile movement was a reaction against the Westernizing efforts of Peter and Catherine the Great.

The Westernizers took the German idealism of Hegel as a starting point but argued that, while Russia possessed many unique and superior features, its historical mission required it to follow the path of Western civilization. They criticized Russian autocracy and took a more positive view of the rule of law and constitutionalism. While the Slavophiles' ideology was anchored in Orthodoxy, the Westernizers placed little value on religion; some became agnostic or even atheist, while the moderate Westernizers retained some religious faith and their political and social programs supported moderate liberalism with popular enlightenment.

Historians have pointed to a pendulum swing of Russian orientation between Europe and Asia. During the Kievan period from the 10th through the 13th centuries, Rus was closer to Europe both physically and culturally. Indeed, the Kievan Rus civilization may have been more advanced politically and commercially than Western Europe, which was then emerging from its dark age. But the Mongol invasion and the Tartar yoke interrupted this development, and the Russian civilization that subsequently emerged from Muscovy was more eastern both physically and culturally. This remained true until 1713, when Tsar Peter I moved the capital of the Russian empire from Moscow to St. Petersburg, which was to be Russia's window to the West, as Peter sought to modernize and Westernize Russia.

During the next century, Russian rebuffs or defeats in Europe were repeatedly followed by greater attention and expansions to the East. For example, the defeat of Russia in the 1853–56 Crimean War at the hands of a coalition of France, Sardinia, the United Kingdom, and the Ottoman Empire was followed by extensive Russian conquests in the East. In the Caucasus, Russia had been fighting for decades, but pacification was nearly complete when in 1859 the legendary Chechen leader Shamil was captured. In a series of successful military expeditions from 1865 to 1876 in Central Asia, Russia conquered the khanates of Kokand, Bokhara, and Khiva. The far eastern boundary of Russia had remained unchanged from the Treaty of Nerchinsk with China in 1689, but in 1858 China gave up the left bank of the Amur River to Russia through the Treaty of Aigun, and in the 1860 Treaty of Beijing, China ceded the Ussuri River region.

The Soviet Experience and the Emergence of a New Russia

World War I revealed that the Russian Empire was still economically and technologically lagging behind other European powers, geographically overextended, and burdened with an incompetent government headed by the weak and ineffective Tsar Nicholas II. While the defeats in the Crimean War and the Russo-Japanese war in 1904–05 had inspired some reforms of

tsarist rule, World War I brought the system and Russian society to its knees. Driven to abdication in February 1917, Nicholas was succeeded by the Provisional Government, which proved no more effective. Strikes and food shortages in Moscow and St. Petersburg led to chaos, and in October Lenin's Bolsheviks successfully engineered a coup d'état.

The ideology of Marxism-Leninism was consonant with many features of the Russian security identity. Tsarist Russia was a very religious society, and Russian Orthodoxy was employed to legitimize tsarist rule; despite its aggressive atheism, Marxism is as much a teleological philosophy as Christianity. Indeed, many observers argue that Marxism-Leninism was a religion for the Soviet Union: It had a messianic quality and, instead of promising an afterlife in heaven, the Soviets strived to create a workers' paradise on earth. And in keeping with the country's imperial history and security concerns, Soviet propaganda stressed the unique role of the Soviet Union to lead the world toward socialism and combat the evil designs of world capitalism, especially the United States. The Soviet Union did not aspire to be an ordinary nation-state, and the expansionist implications of a proselytizing Marxism-Leninism matched the old Russian imperial mentality. As Russian historians Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov commented,

The traditional imperial legacy was an insurmountable obstacle to Russia's becoming an "ordinary" nation-state. Despite their intentions to build a brave new world from scratch, Russian Communists simply could not break with the imperial mode of thinking.¹⁰

Although the USSR's new Marxist-Leninist identity was important, Soviet leaders' perceptions of security were dominated by the traditional Russian dilemmas of geography and power. After seven debilitating years of World War I and the Russian Civil War, the Soviet Union in the 1920s was economically devastated and physically smaller than its tsarist predecessor. Joseph Stalin was concerned about the impact of Soviet economic and technological backwardness on its military power as European relations grew increasingly strained, and in 1930 he warned that if the USSR did not rapidly industrialize it would be overrun once again:

To slow down the tempo [of industrialization] means to lag behind. And those who lag behind are beaten. The history of Old Russia shows . . . that because of her backwardness she was constantly being defeated. By the Mongol Khans, by the Polish-Lithuanian gentry, by the Anglo-French Capitalists. . . . Beaten because of backwardness—military, cultural, political, industrial, and agricultural backwardness. . . . We are behind the leading countries by fifty or a hundred years. We must make up this distance in ten years. Either we do it or we go under.¹¹

10. Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, 3).

11. Adam B. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, 305–45).

For Stalin the experience of the 1930s and World War II strengthened his obsessive territorial view of international security, which fueled his cruel synthesis of Soviet domestic and foreign policies. He justified an internal regime of unprecedented terror in the 1930s by citing the supposed prevalence of capitalist spies and saboteurs who conspired to destroy the Soviet regime just as the capitalist powers had tried to “choke the baby in its crib” with the allied intervention in 1918. Show trials condemned to death many leaders of the Bolshevik revolution who were falsely accused of espionage and sabotage. Vladimir Lenin had referred to tsarist Russia as “the prisonhouse of nations”¹² but Stalin’s purges and the gulag system were far more brutal than any oppression under the tsars. Stalin’s key theoretical contribution to Marxism-Leninism argued that as socialism became more developed, opposition from the capitalist camp would grow more fierce, which required heightened vigilance on the home front.

From Cold War to Collapse

With the defeat of the Nazis in May 1945 Stalin stood triumphant as no Russian leader had since Alexander I’s victory over Napoleon in 1812. During World War II the domestic reign of terror subsided and the leadership made ideological concessions to appeal to Russian nationalism. At a Kremlin banquet celebration in honor of his military commanders Stalin toasted the Russian people. Adam B. Ulam wrote of Stalin’s toast:

He acknowledged (uniquely) that the government, i.e., he himself had made many mistakes before and during the first phase of the war. Any other nation, he said, would have made short shrift of this government. Not the Russians! But he did not mention what rewards the grateful Leader was to bestow on his people.¹³

The dean of US Soviet specialists, George Kennan, captured Russia’s outlook when he wrote in May 1945 from the US embassy in Moscow:

By the time the war in the Far East is over Russia will find herself, for the first time in her history, without a single great power rival on the Eurasian landmass.¹⁴

Kennan intentionally referred to Russia rather than the Soviet Union because he believed that traditional Russian nationalist goals and concerns best guided US understanding of Soviet foreign policy under Stalin.

But Russia’s newly comfortable position in the world did not pre-empt improved international relations. Once again, like the war against

12. Lenin’s reference had more to do with the oppressive treatment of the non-Russian nationalities in the Russian Empire.

13. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era*, 614.

14. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925–1950* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967, 533).

Napoleonic France, Russia had made huge sacrifices to “save the West” from another continental hegemon, Adolf Hitler, and Stalin considered that the West should pay its debt by allowing the Soviet Union to expand its domination to East-Central Europe. Stalin felt that the Soviet victory over Germany cemented the legitimacy of the Soviet regime, which did its utmost to ensure that the Russian citizenry did not forget. Although the Soviet Union in 1945 was in a stronger international position than ever, Stalin perceived weakness. The Soviet and European economies were largely destroyed, while the US economy was relatively stronger than ever, and because the United States had the atomic bomb Stalin pushed the Soviet science community and economy very hard to develop nuclear weapons.¹⁵

Stalin’s clarion call in 1946 for the Soviet Union to catch up was similar to his admonition in 1930, as was his prescription for addressing the problem of perceived relative weakness. In 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first nuclear bomb. Yet Stalin continued to value territorial control and the development of heavy industry and military power. Throughout the Cold War, Soviet economic development focused on the requirements of the growing military-industrial complex.

The Soviet economic order was dubbed the command-administrative system. Its core features were complete state ownership, extreme centralization, and administrative control, minimizing the role of markets. It was effective in controlling society and mobilizing resources for the military sector but grossly inadequate at satisfying Soviet consumers, promoting efficient use of human and material resources, and encouraging technological innovation. Shortages and shoddy quality were pervasive features of the Soviet economy.

The dilemma of power and the Soviet position in the international system were in the forefront of Stalin’s thinking. His obsession with power, expressed in terms of the “correlation of forces” between capitalism and socialism, and later between primarily the United States and the Soviet Union, would bedevil his successors for decades. Despite Nikita Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin in 1956 and Leonid Brezhnev’s *détente* policy in the 1970s, the Stalinist political and economic system endured until Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms in the late 1980s, and the Cold War defined international relations until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Because of Stalin’s obsession and that of his successors, the Soviet identity was increasingly defined by the USSR’s superpower confrontation with the United States. Moscow and Washington maintained alliance relationships in Europe and Asia and balanced each other through nuclear

15. David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

terror. When Brezhnev assumed power in 1964, he shaped his foreign policy around improving relationships with the United States and Western Europe in a superpower détente. Détente, a “relaxation of tension,” resulted in important arms control agreements: the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 1972 and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT) I and II, concluded in 1972 and 1979, respectively. The Brezhnev administration’s achievement of nuclear parity with the United States was a seminal development that at last consolidated the Soviet international identity as a superpower equal to the United States.

But even at the peak of its powers the Soviet Union was, as Robert Legvold described it in 1977, like a “deformed giant . . . mighty in its military resources and exhilarated by its strength, but backward in other respects.” Paradoxically, the Soviet Union of the 1980s was simultaneously a global superpower and a third world country.¹⁶ In 1989 Aleksandr Bovin, a liberal deputy of the Soviet Congress of Peoples’ Deputies, described his country as “Upper Volta with nuclear missiles.”

The imbalance of Soviet power—a military superpower but an economic dwarf in comparison with the West—is essential to understanding the country’s various motivations for economic, social, and political reform during the perestroika years. The Soviet leadership embarked on reform because of grave concerns about its aggravated economic backwardness. The Soviet system required reform to ensure long-term economic growth and technological development—otherwise Moscow would not be able to compete militarily or ensure future military parity with the United States. Nonetheless, in the mid-1980s the US Sovietological community still viewed the USSR as a powerful adversary, although it faced some daunting social and economic challenges that would eventually require far-reaching change.

When Gorbachev assumed power in 1985, he inherited an economy that had reached a developmental dead end. Allocations to the defense sector of at least 20 percent (the exact figure is not known) of the national product placed an unmanageable burden on long-term economic growth.¹⁷ Gorbachev perceived that the Soviet Union was in a precrisis situation, so his major priority, and ironically his greatest failure, was domestic economic restructuring, or *perestroika*. His motivations were reminiscent of those of Peter the Great, of which Richard Pipes has written,

The impetus for Westernization came largely from the awareness that the West was richer and stronger, and that if Russia hoped to attain the rank of a first-rate European power it had to model itself on the West. The initial motive for

16. Seweryn Bialer, *The Soviet Paradox: External Expansion, Internal Decline* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986).

17. Anders Åslund, *Gorbachev’s Struggle for Economic Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989, 17).

Westernization was military—namely, the inability of Russian troops in the seventeenth century to stand up to better organized and equipped forces of Sweden and Turkey.¹⁸

Perestroika did not proceed smoothly. Economic reform was aborted by bureaucratic resistance. In order to discipline the bureaucracy, Gorbachev unleashed *glasnost*, or greater public openness. When that did not help, beginning in January 1987 he attempted democratization.

As the political system started transforming, Russians' views of foreign policy also changed. In attacks on the traditional Soviet approach to foreign policy, those who embraced the new way of thinking sought to reduce the military's influence on Soviet security and foreign policy as well as its lock on domestic economic resources. And the Gorbachev team used diplomatic success with the West to justify reductions in defense spending. By demilitarizing its foreign policy, the USSR largely abdicated its role as global superpower and gave up its military-political "successes" since World War II: its (1) hegemony in East-Central Europe, (2) military parity with the United States, and (3) military-diplomatic gains in the Third World.

The Soviet people were supposed to be compensated for the geostrategic losses with the bountiful fruits of economic reform and growing integration into the world economy. Unfortunately for Gorbachev, it proved far easier to retrench strategically than to jump-start the Soviet economy and become a leading international economic power. The failure of Gorbachev's economic reforms left him without the increases he had promised in domestic economic production and in Western trade and investment. In fact, the half-hearted economic reforms destroyed the previous inefficient but functioning system and reduced the Soviet economy to chaos and near bankruptcy.¹⁹

Without the benefits of economic reform, the new political thinking amounted to a strategic giveaway with no near-term quid pro quo besides an improved image and much gratitude from the West for the de facto acknowledgment of losing the Cold War. After the revolutions in East-Central Europe, the unification of Germany, and Russia's siding with the United States in the 1991 Gulf War, the new political thinkers came under increased attacks for selling out the Soviet national interest.

Gorbachev's leadership made a difference. He proved to be remarkably flexible as he developed a deeper appreciation of his country's domestic and foreign challenges. He inherited a country that had been economically mismanaged for decades, had taken on foreign commitments far

18. Richard Pipes, "The Communist System," in *The Soviet System in Crisis: A Reader on Western and Soviet Views*, ed. Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991, 18).

19. Åslund, *Gorbachev's Struggle for Economic Reform*; Yegor T. Gaidar, *The Collapse of the Empire: Lessons for Modern Russia* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2007).

outstripping its means, and had demoralized its citizenry. But he was very adept at playing a weak hand,²⁰ as he used the economic decline to catalyze reform. Yet Gorbachev could have played the hand differently. Ultimately he failed because he was too cautious on both domestic political and economic reform, and Boris Yeltsin capitalized on the forces of change unleashed by Gorbachev's policies to liberate the Russian Federation from its Soviet shackles.²¹

The New Russia

This brief survey of Russian history should leave the reader with a sense of the core continuities of domestic and foreign policy principles from Muscovite and tsarist to Soviet Russia. These deep grooves include highly centralized and unaccountable political authority, weak and often virtually nonexistent institutions of private property and rule of law, and a "great power" mentality that is deeply militarized as well as colored by messianism and xenophobia. Russia's experience of either being in or preparing for war for most of its history, coupled with its unique geography, engendered a very territorial sense of security that drove an impulse to dominate neighbors in order to expand a buffer zone against presumed and potential enemies. These crucial, long-standing realities did not change until very recently.

Boris Yeltsin was elected president of Russia on June 12, 1991, and by December he realized that the Soviet Union was finished after Ukraine voted with 90 percent majority for full independence. At two meetings that month (in Belovezhskaya Pushcha in Belarus and Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan), the remaining Soviet republics agreed to dissolve the Soviet Union, and on December 25 they did so peacefully, lowering the Soviet flag and replacing it with the Russian tricolor. Soviet President Gorbachev handed over the nuclear briefcase to Russian President Yeltsin.

Russia now had to create a new identity as a nation-state. It had been an empire since the 16th century. Now it was the last to decolonize, as the other empires had done after World Wars I and II. Yeltsin led Russia through a revolution that marked the most concentrated effort in the thousand-year history of Rus to break free of its traditional patrimonial and imperial paradigm. In retrospect, this effort has been remarkably success-

20. See Stephen Sestanovich, "Gorbachev's Foreign Policy: A Diplomacy of Decline," *Problems of Communism* (January/February 1988). This article was quite prescient, as Sestanovich wrote it before Gorbachev made his most notable concessions.

21. For excellent accounts of how Yeltsin seized the revolutionary moment while Gorbachev dithered, see Leon Aron, *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); and Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

ful given the disastrous starting conditions. The new Russia was bankrupt. With the demise of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union, state power and authority were gravely weakened. Probably most devastating, Russia's economic system and infrastructure had relied for 70 years on nonmarket principles that resulted in one of the greatest misallocations of resources in human history.²² The economist Gregory Grossman captured the magnitude of this legacy when in the 1980s he described the Soviet economy as “negative value added” and suggested Russia would make better use of its resources by simply shutting down its entire misdeveloped industrial structure.

Two months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, on October 28, 1991, Yeltsin had made a great speech to the Russian parliament and declared his intention to build a normal market economy. He had appointed a government of young reformers, led by Yegor Gaidar, and they had started drafting the necessary legislation. On January 2, 1992, Russia freed most prices and liberalized both domestic and foreign trade. But the reform efforts faded quickly as Russia received no Western financing for its reforms and the reformers' economic and foreign policy plans came under increasing political attacks. By April 1992 the Yeltsin-Gaidar radical market reform was in rapid retreat.

Yeltsin had been hopeful—too optimistic, as it turned out—about the future of Russian foreign policy and Russia's place in the world order. Immediately after his election, he went to the United States and formulated his vision of Russian-American relations based on shared interests—creating a “common political and economic system in the Northeastern hemisphere in which the United States and Russia would play a leading role.”²³ Former (and future) Finance Minister Boris Fedorov underscored this cooperative framework in a speech in London in September 1991 when he suggested that in the future Russia might become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or whatever broader international structure might replace it.²⁴ And in a landmark article in the prestigious US journal *Foreign Affairs* in 1992, Western-oriented

22. For accounts of the extraordinary degree of misallocation of the Soviet economy, see Clifford G. Gaddy, *The Price of the Past: Russia's Struggle with the Legacy of a Militarized Economy* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1996); and Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *The Siberian Curse: How Communist Planners Left Russia Out in the Cold* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

23. Sergei Goncharov and Andrew Kuchins, “Domestic Sources of Russian Foreign Policy,” in *Russia and Japan: An Unresolved Dilemma between Distant Neighbors*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Jonathan Haslam, and Andrew Kuchins (Berkeley: University of California, 1993). This chapter was one of the first accounts of how the principles of Russia's foreign policy emerged in 1991–92.

24. “Fedorov on the Russian Foreign Policy” and “Russia's Stand Toward NATO,” RFE/RL, no. 186 (September 30, 1991): 2.

foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev pointed out that the new Russia faced its most favorable security environment in centuries as the notion of a threat from the West had disappeared.²⁵

But the dreams of deep partnership evaporated all too quickly. The political fate of the market reforms was closely tied to Westernizers like Kozyrev who were criticized as too idealistic and naïve. Russia's ambassador to the United States at the time, Vladimir Lukin, expressed a very different vision of Russia's national interests in the fall 1992 edition of *Foreign Policy*. Where Kozyrev found a friendly external environment, Lukin saw a multiplicity of security threats for the gravely weakened Russia, "a new encirclement." Although Russia did not face a hostile alliance, Lukin saw serious problems with nearly every nation on the periphery. Castigating "idealized democratic internationalism"—his characterization of Kozyrev's views—as a passing fad, Lukin called for a redefinition of Russia's national interests in the form of an "enlightened patriotism."²⁶

Finally, the overly cautious approach of the George H.W. Bush administration to the reformist Yeltsin administration during the biggest window of opportunity (fall 1991 to spring 1992) for Russia's new mandate left an indelible stamp on relations between the two countries. Deputy Prime Minister Gaidar was deeply disappointed at the first meeting, in November 1991, with US Treasury officials, who showed no interest or concern in Russian reforms; their only goal was that the new Russia honor the Soviet foreign debt. It is impossible to know whether a more generous and activist US policy during those early days would have made a significant difference for the reformers. But it is clear that the November meeting was the first of many disappointments for the Russians, a perception that bedevils the bilateral relationship to this day, while the political demise of the reformers and consequent changes in Russian policy proved similarly disappointing to successive US administrations.

25. Andrei Kozyrev, "Russia: A Chance for Survival," *Foreign Affairs*, no. 71 (Spring 1992): 2.

26. Vladimir Lukin, "Our Security Predicament," *Foreign Policy*, no. 88 (Fall 1992).

