Chapter 8
Russian Foreign Policy: Challenging the Western Liberal International Order?

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8.1 Introduction

As Russia reasserts itself in an international system still governed by a "Western" conception of order drawn from liberal models of capitalism and democracy, how are the European Union and the United States responding to this re-emerging power? This is the question that we attempt to tackle in the conclusion to this volume; its answer has important implications for the viability of the current international economic and political order.[1]

The fall of the Soviet Union, followed by the political and economic liberalization of Russia, prompted many observers to believe that Russia would gradually incorporate itself into Western economic and political systems. Unfortunately, the promise of a diplomatic realignment between Russia and the West now seems far more uncertain. The West's current relationship with Russia is marked by a sense of disappointment. Despite some promising initial steps, efforts to engage Russia through multilateral efforts have fallen flat. On a bilateral level, relations between Russia and the EU and between Russia and the US have deteriorated during the last decade, with all three actors bearing some measure of responsibility for the current state of affairs. Moreover, the EU and the US have not always been aligned in their approach to Russia, and even EU members have often been at odds with each other. Much of the problem stems from divergent interests, as well as the differing levels of importance that these actors ascribe to their relationships with one another. Although Russia has become less of a priority for the West – in light of the rise of China, India, and problems in Iraq and Afghanistan – the US and the EU still loom largest for Russian

[1] More generally, how the US responds to rising powers such as India, China, and Brazil poses a central challenge for analysts and policymakers.

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foreign policy; this disjuncture grates on the Russia's desire to reclaim its great power status in the world.

Yet, it is obvious that Russia will continue to be a crucial partner for both the EU and US, if important economic and security goals are to be accomplished. We proceed by discussing the tensions between Russia and the current system of international institutions before turning to an examination of Russian relations with the European Union and with the United States, respectively. We then turn to Russian options for international partnerships, including a discussion of its relations with other emerging market economies. In concluding, we identify major themes in Russian relations with the Western-led international order, focusing on the degree to which the EU and the US have pursued a coherent transatlantic policy toward Russia.

8.2 Russia and International Institutions

Russian foreign policy since the end of the Cold War has been motivated by a consistent desire to restore its great power status, and to be recognized as a major center of power by leading global actors.[2] This aspiration plays out in its approach to international and regional institutions, as well as in its bilateral relations. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was not invited to join the leading Western institutions, having no real prospect of membership in either NATO or the European Union. Given this reality, Russia's approach has been to promote and protect its position in those institutions where it can be seen to play a leading role, such as the UN Security Council. By contrast, Russia has often been ambivalent about its accession to the WTO, which would require it to deepen its integration with the global economy. Finally, when faced with the growth of potentially anti-Russian institutions, Russia has engaged in reactive and competitive multilateralism, as seen in its promotion of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The US decision in 1994 to enlarge NATO to include former members of the Warsaw Pact was a critical factor in the evolution of Russian foreign policy, helping to steer Russia's turn away from the West in the mid-1990s. As Dmitri Trenin puts it, Moscow "was only willing to consider joining the West if it was given something like co-chairmainship of the Western club – or at the very least membership in its Politburo."[3] With such an offer not forthcoming, hopes of Russian integration into Western institutions were problematic from the beginning. Though Russia was incorporated into groupings such as the G7, the NATO-Russia Council, and the Council of Europe, for example, none of these arrangements emerged as transformative or even as particularly effective means of socializing Russia into the a system still clearly dominated by the US and Europe.

[2] Larson and Shevchenko (2010); Oliker et al. (2009).

[3] Trenin (2006).

This is not to say that Russia has not embraced some international institutions. It has particularly favored those institutions wherein it and a small group of other leading states define international politics, acknowledging or ignoring smaller states as they might – a phenomenon Elana Rowe and Stina Torjesen term "great power multilateralism."[4] This can be seen, for example, in Russia's commitment to the UN Security Council, despite the fact that the UNSC does not advance Russian arms sales or expand its regional influence.[5] Russia has generally sought to maintain the Security Council as the most respected and central international multilateral body, although it has sometimes done this by trying to keep issues that might reveal the UNSC to be weak or inconsequential completely off the agenda.[6] The G8 holds a similar appeal for Russia as a "concert of great powers."[7]

With respect to other types of institutions, Russia has been more ambivalent. For example, Russia's desire to join the WTO has often been unclear over the 17 years that it has spent negotiating its entry into this grouping. Russia's accession to the WTO would constitute a major step in the integration of that state into the global economy. The World Bank estimates that WTO membership could give the Russian economy a 3% boost in the short term; it also could help the diversification and modernization of Russia's economy.[8] Yet while Putin seemed enthusiastic about the prospect of WTO accession during his first term as president, his attitude toward the grouping cooled noticeably during his second term. As power began to shift away from liberal reformers within Russia, concerns about the ways that accession might disadvantage Russian industry came to the forefront.

Russia's WTO prospects were further called into question by the Georgian Crisis in August 2008; in 2009, Russia complicated its negotiation process by proclaiming that it, Belarus, and Kazakhstan would join the WTO together as a single negotiating bloc and customs union, though it later backed down from this demand. As of early December 2010, Russia and the US had reached agreements in principle on intellectual property rights, government procurement, and transparency in trade-related decision-making processes, all of which should pave the way for Russia's WTO accession. The process of bilateral negotiations between Russia and WTO members is now largely complete. Still, various countries continue to raise objections to its membership bid, with several criticizing Russia's recent moves toward protectionism in forms such as government agricultural subsidies. Georgia, in particular, has threatened to veto Russia's WTO membership. There is also a lack of consensus among the Russian business elite on membership, and the global economic crisis has generally dampened Russia's enthusiasm for becoming a WTO member.[9]

[4] Rowe and Torjesen (2009).

[5] Ikenberry and Wright (2008); Rowe and Torjesen (2009).

[6] Pikayev (2009); Zagorski (2009).

[7] Baev (2009).

[8] Ikenberry and Wright (2008).

[9] Economist Intelligence Unit (2010).

An interesting aspect of Russia's approach has been the reactive and competitive nature of its multilateralism.[10] NATO expansion in particular has presented a continual thorn in Russia's side; when combined with the missile attacks of 1998 and the war over Kosovo, Russia saw plenty of reasons for concern about activities in what it sees as its "sphere of influence." NATO expansion served as a catalyst for the development of the CSTO, an alliance between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. Russia has consistently attempted to elevate the prestige of the CSTO, in which it is unquestionably the lead country. After the US deployed troops to Central Asia and the "color revolutions," Russia stepped up its efforts to strengthen both the CSTO and the SCO, which brings together China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia. The SCO has enabled its member states to craft collaborative policies for issues on which they agree, such as political stability, terrorism, and extremism. It has also allowed them to express joint concern about US involvement in the region. At the June 2009 SCO summit, for example, Dmitri Medvedev, President of Russia, claimed that the SCO was an opportunity to "build an increasingly multipolar world" and to undermine "an artificially unipolar system."[11]

In this way, Russia's approach to multilateralism can be seen as a reaction to policies and events pushed forward by the US and EU, and indeed, of the broader failure of the West to engage Russia in genuine multilateral institutions. This suggests that any changes in the NATO/EU configurations of Western multilateralism will probably prompt adjustments in Russian multilateral activities. Russia appears to embrace a more flexible, regional, and pragmatic (i.e., non-normative) form of multilateralism of the type seen in the SCO. It also prefers to underpin this type of flexible regional multilateralism with bilateral arrangements. In the next two sections, we turn to the analysis of its bilateral relations with the European Union and the United States, respectively.

8.3 Russia and Europe

As touched upon in the introduction, the EU-Russia relationship is undergirded by debates about Russia's identity and its perceived relationship to Europe. For its part, Russia has been engaged in what Thomas Gomart calls "a battle of memories," as it has struggled to redefine its identity in light of communism, the Cold War, the disastrous transition years of the 1990s, and its resurgence in the 2000s.[12] With respect to Europe, Mikhail Rykhtik points out in his chapter that Russia has a tradition of admiring Europe and prioritizing the region in its foreign policy; however, this

[10] Gomart (2008); Larin (2007); Rowe and Torjesen (2009); Rykhtik (2011); Tsygankov (2009).

[11] Hudson (2009).

[12] Gomart (2008).

inclination has not been equally reciprocated by Europe, and Russian discontent over this disjuncture provides the subtext for all of their formal interactions. At the elite level, little consensus exists about whether Russia should pursue greater integration with Europe. EU-Russia relations have tended to be dominated by two broad issues: the integration of Eastern European nations into Western European institutions and the politics of energy resources.

The first topic has been discussed above and throughout the chapters in this volume. From the Russian perspective, Western Europe has courted Eastern European countries, encouraging them to adopt democratic reforms and welcoming them into organizations such as NATO. For the EU, these moves have been part of a mission to ensure its security, by cultivating closer relationships with its neighbors to the east and to the south. Even if the EU's intentions have been benign, however, this expansion of influence has been interpreted as threatening and alarming by Russia.[13] In Chapter 2 of this volume, Rykhtik discusses how Russian security concerns stem from its geographical location and border issues. The European neighborhood policy, for example, has been seen as interfering with Russia's regional relations and its sovereign interests.[14] The encroachment of the EU into Russia's periphery, and potentially into its domestic affairs, has ideological, economic, and security elements. Time has shown that the normative convergence of the EU and Russia seems unlikely: Russia reacts poorly to what it perceives as the EU trying to dictate norms and values to it. Moreover, the use of EU norms in regional and international organizations can be seen as a way to discriminate against non-European countries and keep them marginalized. Economically, EU demands for liberalization have the potential of disadvantaging Russian companies. In terms of security, the common agenda of the EU and Russia has been significantly weakened, damaged by things such as the conflict in Kosovo, Russia's withdrawal from peacekeeping operations, and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.[15]

Second, conflicting perspectives regarding energy supplies have strained relations. Europe's need for fuel and Russia's need for a stable export market would seem to make them natural trading partners for one another. 60% of Russian crude oil and 90% of Russian gas go to the European Union.[16] However, this dependence has always generated concerns within Europe and in the US. Particularly in the 2000s, energy issues were politicized and securitized, used as pawns in political negotiations and viewed as critical components of national well-being. Russia's willingness to use its energy supplies as a political tool has further raised concerns about its reliability. Recently, Europe has sought to reduce its reliance on Russian energy sources, partially spurred by the interruption of natural gas during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in early 2006. For its part, Russia has resisted being integrated into relevant European legal frameworks, refusing to ratify the Energy Charter

[13] Averre (2005) discusses this disjuncture.

[14] Haukkala (2008).

[15] See Chapter 6 of this volume by Pavel Baev.

[16] Paillard (2010).

Treaty.[17] Given the stakes that these two parties have in future energy supplies, this issue is sure to be a continual challenge. Moreover, beyond the challenges that Russia faces with the EU, it must also cope with undertaking much needed reforms in its energy sector to ensure that it can continue to be a leading supplier.

A feature that has permeated both of the issues above, and indeed, most aspects of Russian relations with the EU, is the former's preference for bilateralism. As Rykhtik and Baev point out in this volume, Russia often chooses to eschew dealing with the EU in favor of bilateral contacts with Germany, France, and Italy. Russia sees these bilateral relationships as the main channel through which to promote its interests, viewing these countries as the "deciders" in the complicated consensus building process in Brussels. Thus, while EU attention is consumed by the complicated task of formulating a unified position, Russia is able to take advantage of the divergent views of its member states.[18] These internal divisions became even more chaotic with the addition of eight Eastern European states to the EU in 2004 and Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, making it extremely difficult for the EU to make important policy decisions and exacerbating problems in EU-Russia relations. The newcomers have taken many opportunities to criticize Russia for its human rights transgressions, for example, and have blocked various initiatives from going forward. As the biggest and most anti-Russian of the new member states, Poland in particular has been a hindrance to EU-Russia cooperation, especially after the victory of its far-right Law and Justice Party in 2005. There is also an organizational level to this complexity, with the EU bureaucracy being poorly matched on the Russian side, adding another element to what Baev aptly calls the "dialogue of the disoriented."[19]

The global economic crisis has taken an uncertain toll on EU-Russian relations. As with other countries around the world, both parties have been forced to deal with domestic challenges. Baev argues that the crisis has exposed the weakness and non-sustainability of Russian economic growth and EU enlargement and exacerbated the asymmetry in their bilateral relationship. Despite the EU's reliance on Russian energy supplies, Russia is in fact far more dependent on its broader ties with Europe. And as the EU is forced to focus on its internal problems, its partnerships in the Mediterranean and the East, and the rise of China, it will have less attention to devote to Russia. By contrast, Christopher Granville presents a more positive view in his chapter, arguing that Russian economic integration with the EU has made the relationship more important. Although energy plays a central role in the EU-Russian economic relationship, their commercial ties go beyond that; Russia is now the EU's third largest trade partner and the third largest importer of EU products. It is possible that these and other cross-border economic opportunities increase the stakes for both parties and serve to temper the impact of negative political events.

[17] Finon and Locatelli (2008).

[18] Averre (2005); Forsberg and Seppo (2009); Haukkala (2009); Kulhanek (2010); Leonard and Popescu (2007).

[19] See Chapter 6 of this volume. For a discussion of structural incompatibilities in the EU-Russia relationship, see Light (2009).

8.4 Russia and the United States

Russia's relationship with the US has been similarly disappointing, despite a few periods of apparent promise. As discussed in the introduction and in several chapters in this volume, hopes for improved US-Russian relations were high in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. But the difficult period of economic and political reform in the 1990s pulled both Russian elites and citizens away from the US, prompting them to try to regain a sense of national identity under Putin's strong leadership. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 seemed to bring an improvement in US-Russian relations, with Putin aligning with the US. Though the two countries were motivated by fundamentally concerns with regard to terrorism – with Russia focused domestically on Chechnya and the US far more concerned about global terrorist organizations – they managed to take steps toward forming a partnership. Yet this arrangement proved to be short-lived, as described in detail in Chapter 3 by Andrei Tsygankov. As the US began to take more unilateral action in response to terrorism and particularly after the advent of the war in Iraq, Russia became more critical of American policies.[20]

By the end of Putin's second term in 2008, it was interesting to note the dominance of Cold War-era factors in the US-Russian relationship. As Thomas Graham notes, "The focus was on the balance of forces in Europe: NATO expansion, US bases in Bulgaria and Romania, planned US missile defense systems in Eastern Europe; the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty; the Balkans (particularly Kosovo); and European energy dependence on Russia."[21] Rising energy prices in the 2000s and Russia's economic recovery increased its ability and desire to push back against US dominance, emboldened by its new wealth. Moreover, Russia's disappointment with US behavior in the post-Cold War period contributed greatly to the deterioration in relations. As Robert Legvold points out in Chapter 7, American policy has lacked a strong sense of why a solid, constructive relationship with Russia is crucial to the US; consequently, American policy has tended to fluctuate with the latest events instead of moving consistently toward a predefined goal. Many Russians look at NATO expansion, US withdrawal from the ABM treaty, plans for missile defense systems in Eastern Europe, and efforts to promote pipelines to bypass Russia as a strong signal that the US has failed to uphold its post-Cold War settlement with post-Soviet Russia.[22] As discussed by Andrei Tsygankov in Chapter 3, despite Russian expectations of being treated as an equal partner, the US took these and other actions that ignored Moscow's status concerns, believing that Russia had little choice but to accommodate to American policies. In addition to these American actions, the US invaded Iraq without UNSC or Russian approval, supported the color revolutions, and has continually criticized Russia's domestic policies.[23] From

[20] Lieven (2002).

[21] Graham (2008).

[22] Deudney and Ikenberry (2009).

[23] See also Brovkin (2003); Hanson (2004); Lo (2008); Spechler (2010).

an American perspective, however, the issue of Russia's democratic deficit has also helped to justify its actions toward Russia.

As in its relationship with Europe, Russia exhibits a persistent desire to be treated as an equal by the United States. The US-Russian relationship also had an additional dimension because of the status of the US as the world's sole superpower. Russia finds that cooperating with the US in some areas helps to build Russia's prestige; when Moscow and Washington cooperate as equals, it signals Russia's importance to the rest of the world. But criticizing and countering US policy can also bolster its reputation on the international stage.[24] For example, Russia's cooperation with the other "BRICS" countries and entities such as the SCO often serve as platforms for this dissent.

With the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, both sides seemed to embrace a "reset" of US-Russian relations. They chose to focus on nuclear nonproliferation as their first act of bilateral cooperation. The US established a set of ambitious tasks, including negotiating a new START agreement, securing Russia's logistical support for the war in Afghanistan, enhancing cooperation in energy, health, and the environment, and pursuing joint opposition to the Iranian nuclear program. The two sides made progress on many of these issues. By the time of the Medvedev-Obama summit in June 2010, the two countries had achieved a follow-on START agreement, extended cooperation on Afghanistan, created common ground on Iran and North Korea, taken on more counter-terrorism initiatives and military-to-military contacts, and launched joint projects in a wide range of areas. President Obama's September 2009 decision to abandon plans for missile defense systems in Eastern Europe also helped to pave the way for these steps.[25] These developments suggest a marked improvement in US-Russian relations; however, it remains to be seen whether this and future US administrations will be able to maintain a consistent vision of potential cooperation with Russia.

8.5 Alternatives to the West: BRICS, China, and Beyond

The preceding discussion of Russia's disappointing relations with both the EU and the US begs the question: Is Russia seriously trying to promote an alternative to the Western order? If the international scene is indeed increasingly "post-Western," as Tsygankov argues in his contribution to this volume, what form might the new order take?

One likely vehicle for such an effort would seem to be the "BRIC" grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. In 2001, Goldman Sachs coined this acronym to describe these major emerging markets, and the term has now become synonymous with discussions of the migration of power away from the developed G7 economies and toward the developing world. The foreign ministers of the four countries began meeting in 2006, established regular meetings in 2008, and held their first official summit in 2009. They also played a role in the G20's decision to reform the

[24] Oliker et al. (2009).

[25] Economist Intelligence Unit (2010).

International Monetary Fund, which had long been criticized for giving the traditional Western powers too much clout. In October 2009, the G20 agreed to a landmark reform of the International Monetary Fund that would transfer 6% of IMF voting shares from industrial economies to developing countries. The change made China the third most influential voice in the organization, behind the US and Japan, and vaulted Russia, India, and Brazil into the top ten. All of the BRICS countries now have seats on the organization's governing board, which has been expanded from five to ten members. Russia has played a key role in developing BRICS into a coalition of states that present a critique of the current Western-dominated order, using the grouping as a kind of "power multiplier" to increase its own influence and international profile.[26] In December 2010, South Africa was formally admitted to the grouping, which is now known as "BRICS." Although the BRICS have not formally attempted to counterbalance or overthrown the latter, they have complemented the diplomatic initiatives discussed above with more subtle withholding or moderation of their cooperation, as in providing assistance to American counter-insurgency and anti-drug-trafficking efforts, for example.[27]

In pursuing a BRICS strategy, however, Russia faces some major drawbacks. First, the BRICS are an incredibly diverse grouping, both economically and politically. It still remains for these countries to articulate a vision or a set of norms that would replace the existing order – beyond the mere advocacy of a multipolar world over a unipolar one. At the moment, the main point of agreement between Russia and China seems to be an embrace of traditional notions of sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic matters of states. Although it is true that many countries around the world find this approach appealing for various reasons, it remains to be seen what kind of international system can be built on top of this principle.

A second issue stems from Russia's relationship with China, an undeniably important actor within BRICS and in any viable alternative to the current status quo. If BRICS were to arise as an influential grouping, Russia would have to deal with China as a rival or run the risk of ending up in a subordinate position in a China-run international system.[28] Although Sino-Russian relations have grown much closer over the past two decades, much of this improvement can be attributed to Russia's troubled relations with the West, rather than to any specific desire to cultivate an alliance with China. China also conditions its relationship with Russia in the context of its dealings with the West.[29] Still, it is undeniable that Russia and China have increasingly worked as partners. Bilaterally, this has taken the form of not only diplomatic efforts but also joint military exercises and Russian sales of military equipment (primarily aircraft and naval vessels), arms, technology, energy, and raw materials to China.[30] In addition to BRICS, they have also partnered within forums such as the UN Security Council and the SCO. Because China represents the most likely candidate for balancing against the West, either via stronger Sino-Russian

[26] Roberts (2010b).

[27] Roberts (2010a).

[28] Hancock (2007); Roberts (2010b).

[29] Kuchins (2007).

[30] Ferdinand (2007); Pirchner (2008).

bilateral ties or through groupings such as BRICS or the SCO, Russia will eventually have to grapple with the issue of whether it genuinely wants to promote an anti- or post-Western order if it means having China at the helm.

8.6 Prospects

Bilateral interactions with the US and key European countries continue to play a key role in contemporary Russian foreign policy; however, they are not the only elements. Russian foreign policy is multifaceted and sometimes multilateral, with the country exploring possible avenues of cooperation with non-Western countries such as China and pursuing alternatives through groupings such as BRICS and the SCO. As seen throughout this volume, a consistent theme in Russia's post-Cold War foreign policy has been a persistent desire to restore its great power status. Indeed, much of Russia's pursuit of alternate partnerships and forums has been a result of its disappointment with the West and the feeling that it has not been accorded due respect as a result of US unilateralism and European neglect.

Given Russia's goals, it seems that any significant improvement or progress in relations between Russia and the West will have to involve both the EU and the US recognizing Russia as an equal and giving it the recognition it desires. For the US, it would mean setting aside unilateral policymaking and embracing a more consultative approach that incorporates Russia and other rising powers. Not only Russia but also countries such as China will be more likely to contribute to global governance when they believe that doing so will enhance their prestige. However, this may be difficult, especially in light of the recent financial crisis, which has prompted most countries to concentrate more on their domestic issues. As Baev points out in this volume, the global crisis has the potential to exacerbate the asymmetry in EU-Russian relations, and the same could be said for the US, which is increasingly mired in domestic political issues. Although Russia continues to expect attention from the West, it may find its American and European interlocutors even more distracted than usual.

So, how can Russia and the West move forward? In many ways, this will require both sides to take a more holistic look at their relationships with one another and to work on better internal policy consistency and external coordination with one another. Russia and the West still have many interests that converge and many goals that require collaboration with one another. As for the areas where they disagree, Robert Legvold draws a useful distinction between divergent and conflicting interests in his chapter, arguing that while the US and Russia are undoubtedly at odds with one another in some policy areas, they often simply have *different* (but not necessarily mutually exclusive) interests. Conceptualized from this angle, one way forward would be for the West to reach out and engage Russia, pushing ahead in areas where they have common interests and trying to make sure that "disparate interests do not deteriorate into colliding interests."[31]

[31] See pg. 104 of this volume.

Yet this proposition presents challenges for both the European Union and the United States. For the EU, this would mean being able to identify common goals among its disparate members and not letting individual countries' bilateral relationships with Russia cause further discord in EU-Russia relations as a whole, as alluded to in Baev's chapter. And as Legvold argues, in the case of the US, this would mean formulating a strategic vision such that American policy toward Russia remains more consistent and less vulnerable to current events. Both the EU and the US also need to make a greater effort to conceptualize their relationships with Russia as a whole, and not let deterioration in one issue area disable the entire relationship.

To what extent are the US and EU likely to be able to develop a common transtlantic response to Russia's resurgence? Since the end of the Cold War, the areas in which these two parties have achieved a common consensus have grown narrower, with their divergent interests becoming particularly evident during the presidency of George W. Bush.[32] Turning first to successes in achieving a common position, the EU and US have been able to forge a relatively coherent approach toward Iran on the question of sanctions to address its nuclear program. In June 2010, for example, they went beyond UN Security Council measures to unilaterally adopt stiffer sanctions to prevent companies from doing business with Iran's energy sector. Russia immediately criticized the EU and US, arguing that they were "putting themselves above the United Nations Security Council." The Russian Foreign Ministry went on to note that this action showed their "disregard to partnership with Russia."[33] Yet the Russians were hardly alone, with China, India, and Turkey moving forward with cooperation on energy with Iran. At the same time, the Russians have agreed to comply with the UNSC, and decided not to deliver S-300 air defense missiles to Iran, which it had agreed to under a 2007 contract. Another area in which the US and EU have cooperated is their policy on Kosovo. Both supported an independent Kosovo in 2007, against Russian (and Serbian wishes). However, there was internal dissent within the EU over its policy, with several states such Spain, Romania, and Greece worrying that this would embolden political demands from their own national and religious minorities. Russia responded to this action by justifying its own military actions in Georgia and recognition of its break-away provinces. As President Medvedev noted in August 2008, Russia "felt obliged to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as other countries had done with Kosovo."[34] Other areas of cooperation include the EU and US position on the treatment of Hamas and the PLA's lack of recognition of Israel, and dealing with Cuba, although some differences continue to exist on this score. By contrast, Russia was willing to host Hamas leaders.[35]

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[32] Kanet (2008). Many also point out that rifts in the relationship existed long before the Iraq War – see Peterson (2006), for example.

[33] *Associated Press*, 17 June 2010, available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/06/17/world/main6592403.shtml>. Accessed 29 September 2011.

[34] Leff (2008-9), 12.

[35] Trenin (2006), 92.

In terms of differences between the US and EU vis-à-vis Russia, several issues have proved to be leverage points for Russia. These include the Iraq war, where Russia sided with some EU members opposed to US action, and the Russian invasion of Georgia. In the latter case, the U.S. was quick to dispatch humanitarian aid to Georgia and blame the Russians for their invasion, but the EU was more circumspect. Eventually, a 2009 report commissioned by the EU did find that Georgia was at fault in starting the war, but it also faulted Russia for its aggressive response. More recently, in October 2010, the French and German leadership met with Russian leaders at the Deauville Summit and called for cooperation on foreign and security policy. Some saw this action as being a challenge to NATO and one Obama official noted: "Since when, I wonder, is European security no longer an issue of American concern, but something for Europe and Russia to resolve."[36] Such actions suggest that EU dependence on Russian energy and US concerns about Russia's view of its immediate neighbors as being part of its sphere of influence ("its near abroad") have created rifts, both within the EU and between the US and EU. Yet the EU has also tried with this recent summit to create a "reset" of its relations with Russia, just as the US has done under the Obama Administration. An important positive step took place at the NATO-Russia Council meeting in Lisbon in October 2010. In this forum, Russia, the US, the EU pledged to make a fresh start and seemed to assuage some of the tensions still lingering in the wake of the Russia-Georgia conflict. Whether the US and EU will see eye-to-eye on a growing number of issues as they focus on a reset of their policies remains to be seen; however, US-EU cooperation is essential if they are to deal with the difficult challenges facing the international community today.

In the context of a global financial crisis that has impacted all three entities and the challenges presented by their respective domestic political situations, the future remains uncertain for Russia's partnership with the West. Still, the West has important reasons to cultivate strong relations with Russia. The EU needs Russian cooperation to ensure its security and its energy supplies. And the US needs Russia as a partner in many of its global projects, such as curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, controlling terrorism, maintaining stable energy supplies and prices, stabilizing Eurasia, and dealing with problem countries such as Iran. In some areas, it needs Russia's cooperation because Russia is part of the problem, as in the case of greenhouse gas emissions, human trafficking, and drug trafficking. Although Russia cannot dominate the international arena as it once did, it is more than capable of playing the role of spoiler in venues such as the UN Security Council and through its relationships with other countries also ambivalent toward the West. Russia, the EU, and the US each have much to gain from strong partnerships with one another and much to lose from deterioration of relations.

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[36] Quoted in *The New York Times*, 26 October 2010.

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