
**U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS:
A NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

A REPORT ON THE U.S.-RUSSIAN DIALOGUE

THE NIXON CENTER
JANUARY 2002

ABOUT THE NIXON CENTER

The Nixon Center is a non-partisan public policy institution established by former President Richard Nixon shortly before his death in 1994. Committed to the analysis of policy challenges to the United States through the prism of the American national interest, the Center is a substantively and programmatically independent division of the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace Foundation.

Major programs of The Nixon Center include the Chinese Studies Program, National Security Program, Regional Strategic Program, and U.S.-Russian Relations Program. The Center is supported by the Nixon Library and Birthplace Foundation endowment as well as by foundation, corporate, and individual donors.

Copyright 2002 The Nixon Center. All Rights Reserved.

U.S.-Russian Relations: A New Strategic Partnership
A Report on the U.S.-Russian Dialogue

The Nixon Center
1615 L Street, NW, Suite 1250
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: (202) 887-1000
Fax: (202) 887-5222
E-mail: mail@nixoncenter.org
Website: www.nixoncenter.org

Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace Foundation
18001 Yorba Linda Boulevard
Yorba Linda, CA 92886

Phone: (714) 993-5075
Fax: (714) 528-0544
Website: www.nixonlibrary.org

PREFACE

Though the U.S.-Russian relationship is moving in the direction of unprecedented partnership, the process remains fragile, faces many obstacles, and cannot be taken for granted. This was the principal conclusion of the U.S.-Russian Dialogue, a series of meetings between prominent American and Russian groups in Washington in October 2001. Jointly sponsored by The Nixon Center and Russia's Council on Foreign Policy, the Dialogue was generously supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, Chairman of The Nixon Center's Advisory Council, led the American delegation; his Russian counterpart was Dmitry Rogozin, Chairman of the Russian State Duma's Committee on International Affairs and Chairman of the Council on Foreign Policy.

Rather than preparing two rapporteur's reports, we asked two participants in the sessions to present their own perspectives of the meetings. Nixon Center Director Paul J. Saunders prepared the first paper; Alexei K. Pushkov, Anchor of the influential Russian news-analysis television program Post-Scriptum, wrote the second. Though their contributions were obviously based heavily on the course of the discussions, each also inevitably reflects the individual views of its author to some extent.

It is interesting to note that while the American and Russian papers do not differ substantially in their description of what occurred, Alexei Pushkov's report is clearly more skeptical about the prospects for the U.S.-Russian relationship. His skepticism seems driven primarily by his and other Russian participants' doubts that the United States is prepared to accept that lasting partnership cannot be one-sided and, accordingly, that Washington will have to display greater sensitivity to Russian positions than it has thus far. Still, both papers are positive in tone and reflect the event's useful discussion of what it will take to move the U.S.-Russian relationship to a new stage.

Dimitri K. Simes
President
The Nixon Center

U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11: A DIALOGUE

BY PAUL J. SAUNDERS

The Dialogue

Just over one month after the tragic events of September 11, The Nixon Center and Russia's Council on Foreign Policy¹ organized a U.S.-Russian Dialogue in Washington, DC to assess the rapidly evolving relationship between our two countries. The October 15-16 Dialogue consisted of four structured discussions between prominent American and Russian groups as well as two less formal sessions. The Russian group had parallel separate meetings with senior U.S. officials and key members of Congress on October 15, 16, and 17. Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger and former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft co-chaired the American group; Dmitry Rogozin, Chairman of the Russian State Duma's International Affairs Committee, led the visiting Russian delegation. Each of the two groups was composed of prominent individuals from a variety of political backgrounds. A complete list of participants in the Dialogue follows the text of the two reports.

The principal goals of the exercise were to understand the degree to which the U.S.-Russian relationship had been influenced by the September 11 terrorist attacks, to exchange views on the U.S. war on terrorism and other important international issues, to identify areas of potentially fruitful collaboration, and to seek means to manage our remaining differences. The topics addressed were grouped into broad categories including American and Russian perspectives on the relationship, the war on terrorism, strategic issues, and economic issues.

Overall, the tone of the two-day discussion was frank and constructive. There was almost no posturing, perhaps in part because many of the participants had already met during a visit by an American group to Moscow in April 2001. Similarly, though the American and Russian sides expressed significant differences on a variety of issues, such as missile defense or Iraq,

¹ The Council on Foreign Policy is a semi-official advisory body to the Russian State Duma's Committee on International Affairs. Its chairman is Dmitry Rogozin, who holds the position concurrently with his chairmanship of the Duma committee.

those differences were generally framed as challenges to be overcome within the context of an improving relationship rather than obstacles to such a relationship. In this context, members of each group typically responded thoughtfully to the concerns of the other side rather than simply restating known positions. Most participants—including even a senior Communist member of the Russian State Duma—stressed the importance of identifying and advancing our nations’ common interests. It was clear that the September 11 attacks had contributed to this sense of shared objectives.

The U.S.-Russian Dialogue was made possible with the generous assistance of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

America Reacts

The September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center had an immediate and enormous psychological impact in the United States. As one of the American participants explained, the “unprecedented success” of the attacks shocked Americans, who had not experienced a direct attack on their homeland in six decades. Having considered itself immune from such dangers, he continued, the American public had been terribly surprised. Nevertheless, Americans had quickly begun to recover and had developed a renewed sense of national unity, including overwhelming support for the government and the military as well as reduced partisanship and greater civility in American political life.

September 11 also profoundly reordered U.S. priorities at home and abroad, according to the U.S. side. International terrorism, long viewed as a problem faced only by others, became a principal focus of American foreign policy. And, as one American participant noted, foreign policy itself assumed considerable priority as Americans launched a new war on terrorism.

The shift in priorities had considerable implications for U.S. international conduct. First and foremost, another American said, the global nature of the terrorist threat necessitated intense cooperation with a wide array of nations. The successful execution of key U.S. tasks in the war against Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda organization—denying safe haven to his and other terrorist organizations, cutting off their financial support, and penetrating their networks—depends heavily on substantial assistance from key countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia as well as from Russia, he asserted. According to this member of the U.S. group, President Bush has staked his administration on the war on terrorism and he recognizes that he cannot win the war alone. In this context, several members of the U.S. group noted that the pressure to secure the essential cooperation of other nations

has also blunted—at least for the time being—Washington’s desire to draw attention to the human rights failings of potentially important partners.

Immediate Implications for the U.S.-Russian Relationship

Though the U.S. and Russia had been drawing steadily closer to one another in the months since the first meetings between Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin in Ljubljana and Genoa (in June and July, respectively), the events of September 11 markedly accelerated that process. Members of the U.S. side suggested that changes in American foreign policy priorities, as well as Russia’s reaction to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, have been particularly important in bringing about this new opportunity to strengthen and deepen the U.S.-Russian relationship.

On the American side, the requirements for waging an effective war in Afghanistan, as well as a broader war on terrorism, have significantly increased the importance of a cooperative relationship with Russia. As one American participant explained, geography alone makes Moscow a major player in the war on terrorism so long as the U.S. remains focused on Afghanistan and Central and South Asia. More broadly, Russia’s role as an important power makes Moscow an increasingly significant voice in key decisions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s immediate and constructive response to the September 11 attacks has also had significant implications for the evolution of the U.S.-Russian relationship. One member of the U.S. group pointed out that Mr. Putin was the first foreign leader to telephone President Bush after the attacks—the Russian President reportedly reached his counterpart on Air Force One—and that Putin immediately pledged Russian support for the U.S. This rapid, positive communication was said to have had a powerful impact upon President Bush and other American officials. Early Russian assistance to the U.S. war effort, including Moscow’s acquiescence in the provision of bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, intelligence sharing, and Russia’s role in arming Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance, has been as confirmation of Mr. Putin’s sincerity.

In the wake of September 11, the Bush Administration has significantly changed its attitude toward Russia, toward which it had originally taken a “hands-off approach” and demonstrated “a tendency toward unilateralism,” according to one U.S. participant. Now, the administration is working much more actively with Moscow. Another individual on the U.S. side noted that the administration has curtailed its criticism of the Russian intervention in Chechnya and repeated Russian statements that some Chechen rebels are linked to al Qaeda.

Prospects for the U.S.-Russian Relationship

The test for the U.S.-Russian relationship will be in the extent to which the two countries' approaches to one another in the context of the war on terrorism will influence their discussions of other issues. Though American and Russian participants in the Dialogue welcomed the warming of the U.S.-Russian relationship since September 11, they also acknowledged that contentious issues remain unresolved. If Washington and Moscow are able to approach those matters in the same cooperative spirit that has dominated consultations concerning al Qaeda and Afghanistan, their relationship could be transformed.

Put differently, it remains to be seen whether the U.S. and Russia have made new and different strategic decisions about their relationship or, on the contrary, whether each has made tactical changes in policy that serve its interests in the immediate aftermath of September 11. Some American participants in the Dialogue seemed prepared to accept that President Putin had in fact made a strategic decision to engage America fully. Russian participants seemed more cautious in their analysis of U.S. conduct.

The War on Terror

The discussion of some particular points of disagreement illustrated the concerns of each side. Even on the narrow topic of the war against terrorism, significant differences were evident. For example, some members of the Russian group expressed reservations about the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, which had begun just one week previously, and argued that the campaign was misdirected. "None of the September 11 hijackers were Afghans," one Russian participant commented, "they and their money came from other countries. But the U.S. does not see these countries as terrorists." By implication, in this individual's view, the Bush Administration should have been focusing its efforts on securing intelligence and law enforcement cooperation from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the other countries from which the hijackers originated. Several Russian participants sought to strongly dissuade the American side from the introduction of significant ground forces into Afghanistan; U.S. participants reassured their counterparts that a substantial deployment was unlikely.

The differences with respect to Iran, and particularly Iraq, were more pronounced. In both cases, members of the Russian group reacted to U.S. concerns about state-sponsored terrorism by challenging the American side to present solid evidence of such conduct. U.S. participants questioned Moscow's continuing military and technical assistance to Iran, including in the construction of the Bushehr nuclear reactor. The Russian side responded that its military assistance to Tehran took place on a commercial basis and

that it consisted solely of older weapons that were not viewed as a potential threat to Russia or its allies. Also, one Russian participant noted, supplying Iran with arms gives Moscow additional leverage over its government. Work on the Bushehr reactor was described as taking place within the boundaries of Russia's legal commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

American participants also expressed concern over Moscow's continuing diplomatic support of Iraq, such as Russian resistance to a stronger, more focused set of economic sanctions against the country. Some on the U.S. side noted circumstantial evidence suggestive of possible Iraqi involvement in the September 11 attacks or the subsequent dispersal of lethal anthrax spores through the U.S. postal system; others argued that Baghdad's persistent efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction and its history of hostile conduct were sufficient to make Iraq a legitimate target in the war on terror. While one member of the Russian group suggested that his country could accept a U.S. attack on Iraq if Washington presented compelling evidence of Baghdad's direct participation in terrorism aimed at America—especially if the U.S. made a commitment that the successor Iraqi regime would pay \$7 billion in debts to Moscow—another argued that military action against Iraq would serve only to create more enemies for the U.S. This individual also said that Iraq's nuclear and chemical weapons programs had been dealt with effectively by the United Nations and that its biological weapons effort could be similarly addressed by multilateral political means.

Missile Defense

Notable differences remained in the two groups' views of missile defense as well. U.S. participants explained that two perspectives predominate in American discussions of missile defense: that the September 11 attacks have made missile defense irrelevant and, alternatively, that the attacks have made missile defense even more important. While the Bush Administration initially allowed missile defense to become a "back burner" issue immediately after the attacks, it has subsequently adopted the position that deploying a defensive system has only increased in importance.

Russian participants outlined several flaws they saw in American missile defense plans and expressed concern about the possible consequences of deployment. First, one participant said, missile defense is unnecessary because no state would be willing to risk devastating retaliation by launching a nuclear attack on the United States or allowing such an attack to take place from its territory. Another member of the Russian group argued that none of the so-called "rogue states" identified as threats to the U.S. were sufficiently close to developing missiles that could reach American targets so as to necessitate a defensive system. Finally, the Russian side argued that even a

limited system would threaten the viability of China's nuclear deterrent and would therefore provoke Beijing to substantially enlarge its missile arsenal.

American participants refuted these arguments, suggesting that the fact that the September 11 attacks had taken place demonstrated that classical deterrence no longer applies to all situations; that is, it might not be possible to deter an attack if the attacker believes that his identity and location will not be discovered. While the U.S. side acknowledged that North Korea and other possible sources of a missile attack could not currently launch an effective attack on America, members of the group suggested that it would be foolish to wait until such a capability existed to develop a defense—especially as the development process could last for several years. The U.S. group also disputed the Russian interpretation of China's behavior and proposed that China's nuclear weapons development and acquisition was driven to a considerable extent by Russia's and now India's arsenals and not only America's strategic capabilities.

Interestingly, the Russian side—including a Communist parliamentarian taking part in the discussions—was generally prepared to accept U.S. arguments that the Bush Administration's plans for limited missile defense are not directed against Russia and to contemplate revisions to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to permit testing and deployment of a system in the context of significant reductions in offensive forces. However, Russian participants were quite resistant to the Bush Administration's suggestion that both nations withdraw from the ABM Treaty. Though they accepted the benign intentions of the present U.S. administration vis-à-vis Russia, members of the Russian group expressed concern that a future American president could have a different outlook and called for revision of the Treaty (rather than its elimination) to protect their interests against this possibility.

Despite their concerns, the Russian side did not seem to view missile defense as an issue that could endanger constructive ties between Washington and Moscow if the relationship were otherwise moving forward. President Putin's mild reaction to the Bush Administration's announcement of its intention to withdraw from the ABM Treaty seems to support this perspective. Nevertheless, if the relationship suffers other setbacks, the U.S. decision may take on greater significance. Russians are likely to observe American international conduct closely in the coming months.

NATO Enlargement

In contrast to missile defense, NATO enlargement has generally remained a secondary issue in the U.S.-Russian relationship since September 11. Nevertheless, differences of opinion still exist. The Bush Administration continues to view NATO enlargement as a means to increase stability and

security in Europe, while Russians remain skeptical about expanding a military alliance which they view as an undesirable remnant of the Cold War rather than a contribution to international security in the 21st century. One member of the Russian group asked rhetorically how Estonian membership in NATO would add to American security.

Significantly, Russian skepticism endured in the Dialogue notwithstanding the American side's suggestion that a serious discussion of Russian membership in the Alliance has begun in the wake of September 11. Members of the Russian group expressed frustration with U.S. talk of changing Russia's role in NATO and urged Americans to make a specific, official proposal if Moscow was in fact being offered something new. One Russian participant argued that the U.S. is not yet prepared for Russian membership in the Alliance and suggested that the current discussion of the issue was not fundamentally different from the Clinton Administration's failed attempt to interest Moscow in the Partnership for Peace program in 1994. In this individual's view, genuine Russian participation in the Alliance would fundamentally alter its character—and it is precisely this that Washington is not yet ready to accept. However, notwithstanding their doubts that Russia would in fact be offered a substantive role in NATO, Russian participants were clearly interested in obtaining such a role. A November proposal by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to create a new Russia-North Atlantic Council, in which Moscow would participate on equal terms with NATO members in discussions of certain issues, has raised this prospect sooner than participants in the Dialogue might have expected.

Economic Cooperation

On economic matters, the U.S. side suggested that American interest in investment in Russia had been increasing prior to September 11 and is likely to continue to expand as the political relationship between the two countries improves. Members of the American group expressed optimism that the U.S.-Russian Business Dialogue—a cooperative mechanism designed to conduct many of the functions of the Clinton Administration's Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission without establishing parallel government bureaucracies—would promote intensified interaction between business groups in the U.S. and Russia. The organizations participating in the Business Dialogue are to present recommendations on strengthening economic ties to Presidents Bush and Putin early next year.

One member of the U.S. group stressed several areas in which prompt action could be beneficial. First, he said, both nations must improve market access. On the U.S. side, this means eliminating Cold War legislation that limits U.S.-Russian trade; for its part, Russia must take a variety of steps to prepare for accession to the World Trade Organization. Second, Russian

steps to strengthen the rule of law, particularly in the area of corporate governance, could create more favorable conditions for U.S. investment. Third, both countries could reduce administrative barriers to trade and investment through measures such as streamlined visa regimes. Fourth, priority attention should be given to sectors of the Russian economy in which rapid progress is possible and benefits could be distributed broadly, such as software development, electronic commerce, and small and medium business. Finally, banking reform, currency reform, and other structural changes in Russia would create an environment more hospitable to foreign firms.

Members of the Russian group had similar concerns with respect to their country's access to U.S. markets and emphasized their interest in substantially increasing the flow of American investment to Russia. However, one Russian participant suggested that a lively debate is underway within his country regarding Russian accession to the WTO. He explained that many Russians are uninterested in American offers of assistance in expediting Moscow's entry into the global trade body because they believe that Russia's still-struggling economy is not yet prepared to compete in the absence of protective tariffs prohibited by the WTO. Several individuals on the Russian side urged the U.S. instead to help Moscow to reschedule or even win forgiveness of Soviet-era debts held by the Paris Club of creditor governments, though Americans pointed out that the Washington has little leverage as it holds a very small share of the debt. Payments on the debt will reach a peak in 2003.

Another Russian participant, a regional governor, encouraged Americans to become involved in developing Russia's agricultural sector. Ninety percent of Russia's agricultural equipment had aged beyond its expected service life, he said, and in some regions only half of the land available can be cultivated due to a lack of equipment. In his region, crops valued at some 7 billion rubles were lost this year because they could not be harvested before rotting in the fields.

According to this individual, the principal problem is that Russian agricultural enterprises do not have sufficient resources for capital equipment purchases without long-term financing. However, he said, investment in Russia's fertile *chernozem* ("black earth") regions could be more profitable even than investment in the country's energy sector. An American participant suggested that leasing rather than purchasing equipment could be the answer, as it might significantly reduce the payments required from Russian enterprises. The two sides agreed to further explore the idea of leasing agricultural equipment to Russian enterprises; the Russian side was to propose two to three regions in which leasing could be tried on an experimental basis.

Seize the Moment

Many American and Russian participants in the Dialogue called for greater effort in finding additional, specific issues of common interest (not limited to economic matters) that could play a role in consolidating recent gains in the relationship. This was viewed as a project of some urgency that should be undertaken now, while a “window of opportunity” exists due to steadily improving ties. Some participants expressed concern that failing to identify and act to advance shared interests promptly could risk allowing lingering disputes to undermine ties between Washington and Moscow as the need to work together against al Qaeda and the Taliban fades.

Russian participants gave special emphasis to this point and argued that because President Putin has taken bold steps to assist America without having substantial domestic support for such measures, the Russian leader may be politically vulnerable if he is unable to demonstrate tangible benefits resulting from his decision. Importantly, this view was expressed unanimously by a Russian group that represented the country’s full political spectrum, from the reform-oriented Yabloko party to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. One member of the Russian group went so far as to suggest that Russian democracy could be threatened by such a development; the U.S. image of President Putin as an autocrat considerably overstates the Kremlin’s power, he said, and masks the weaknesses of Russia’s political system.

Domestic political factors were also seen as a challenge to be overcome in the United States if America and Russia are to develop a sustainable partnership. For example, one individual on the U.S. side argued that few Americans recognize the nature of the opportunity available to the U.S. in its relations with Moscow and that as a result, many may not attach sufficient priority to working constructively with Russia. In his view, strong leadership from President Bush—and a clear explanation of the U.S. interests at stake—will be essential in developing close, long-term ties between our countries. Absent such leadership, a considerable opportunity may be lost.

RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES: BETWEEN COLD PEACE AND ALLIANCE

BY ALEXEI K. PUSHKOV

The U.S.-Russian Dialogue program took place at a symbolic time. It was just one month after the terrorist attacks on the United States and the memorable phone call from Vladimir Putin to George Bush that opened a new page in the personal relationship between the two presidents and— even more important—between Russia and America. During that month, both the United States and Russia had to overcome a number of prejudices and psychological obstacles to realize the nature and the scope of the new threat—and the need for a joint response to the challenge of terrorism.

Implications of the Attacks for U.S.-Russian Relations

American participants in the Dialogue paid special attention to the implications of the September 11 attacks for U.S. foreign policy, America's domestic environment, and their country's new relationship with Russia.

Having themselves suffered from terrorist attacks—by Chechen terrorists responding to the Russian military campaign in the separatist republic—Russians were understandably waiting for a change in America's official position towards Chechnya and Russian policy there. For the Russian public, as well as the political class and even President Putin, such a change was a necessary prerequisite of a new start in the relationship.

Russian participants therefore took special notice of James Schlesinger's remarks during the Dialogue program that after the initial shock and rage ("How dare they? We are the leading superpower!"), America started to reconsider its formerly accusatory stance towards Russian policy in Chechnya and showed increased understanding for those who had been targets of terrorist attacks long before the United States itself had come under attack.

A second important element of the new psychological rapprochement between Russia and the U.S. was that the attacks on both countries came from the same "southern" and "Islamist" quarters. As a result, Russia and America have a common enemy for the first time since World War II. Brent Scowcroft noted in this context that the situation after the attack reminded him of the international environment after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The

Soviet Union and the United States also became friends and allies then, which helped to overcome the Cold War, but their alliance was short-lived and did not last even until the end of the Gulf War.

A third element of the new environment stressed by the American side was that despite its initial infatuation with “unilateralism,” the Bush Administration had come to the conclusion that the U.S. could not win the war on terrorism unilaterally. Similarly, though the administration initially saw Russia as a country to be kept at a distance, the U.S. now recognized that Russia was very important to the war on terrorism both because of its strategic location and because of the assistance it could provide in eradicating the hot-bed of terrorism in Afghanistan and in combating terror on a global scale. U.S. participants stressed that America did not have sufficient resources to conduct an active war on terrorism without the cooperation of other key countries.

A fourth element of the new setting: even as the U.S. became less suspicious of Russia and was less inclined to lecture Moscow on its domestic policies and on Chechnya, President Putin demonstrated a desire to be fully engaged with the West. Russia’s vote in the United Nations Security Council to support a resolution that gave the U.S. a free hand in dealing with terrorism, and especially with Osama bin Laden, was solid proof of that desire.

For his part, President Bush also became a different person. For example, Brent Scowcroft noted that the U.S. administration would adopt “a new tone” on missile defense and NATO enlargement as well as other issues between Russia and America that, while not necessarily stemming from animosity, prevented the two countries from achieving closer cooperation.

Finally, the American side said that a real possibility exists for a true transformation of the relationship, both during separate meetings with Bush Administration officials and during the Dialogue program’s structured discussions. A joint goal of Russian and U.S. foreign policy could be to promote what America had hoped to establish after the Gulf War—a New World Order.

Will America Really Change? Russian Doubts and Questions

Though Russian participants agreed that the U.S.-Russian relationship could be transformed, they had a number of questions for their American colleagues. While reflecting their desire for a better understanding of the degree of continuity and change in U.S. foreign policy, the questions

displayed the hopes, doubts and fears of the Russian political elite and public vis-à-vis the United States.

First, was it true that the events of September 11 had finally buried the Cold War, which was buried officially long ago, but in fact had continued for some time, at least in some respects?

Second, what is the fundamental aim of U.S. policy toward Russia? There is a widespread perception in Russia—as a result of the last ten years of Russian-American relations—that the U.S. wanted Russia to become weaker, not stronger. The U.S. government supported those who ruled Russia under Yeltsin despite the catastrophic economic and social results of Yeltsin's policy, and American economic advisers played a part in bringing about the catastrophe. So does the U.S. want to see a weakened Russia or a strong and prosperous Russia?

Third, will the war against terrorism remain just a temporary joint exercise, or will it become a powerful political lever that could be used to transform the very basis of the US-Russian relationship? How can we ensure that the new U.S.-Russian relationship is not merely rhetorical, but real?

Fourth, while the U.S. often criticizes Russia for selling weapons to China, Iran, India and other southern states, can America help to find alternative markets for the Russian defense and technology sectors? Russia earns between \$2-3 billion per year from arms exports and is incapable of curtailing its sales to traditional customers without other markets, regardless of U.S. worries.

Fifth, since the main threat to the United States is coming from the South (i.e., the global South), why is the U.S. administration still planning to expand NATO eastward? And could the new political climate between Russia and America lead eventually to Russia's entry into NATO?

And finally, isn't President Bush's approach to Russia a remake of his father's approach, which *Newsweek* once described as courting Gorbachev while maneuvering to achieve German unification on purely Western terms? This deft handling of Gorbachev paid off: as a result, Germany was unified and remained firmly anchored in NATO. Isn't Russia witnessing the same U.S. tactics—which are actually designed to outplay President Putin rather than making him a true ally by taking into account Russian national interests and trying to find compromises that suit both U.S. and Russian goals?

The questions derived from the Russian experience with the United States in the 1990s. The dominant perception in Russia was that the first Bush Administration and then the Clinton Administration profited greatly from

Russia's internal weaknesses and effectively harnessed the transition process in order to strengthen America's strategic position at Russia's expense. Russia parted with Communist ideology and the Soviet political system, but was not accepted in the Western world. Russia withdrew its troops from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, and the West responded not by creating a new security structure in Europe but by expanding NATO, an essentially Cold War alliance, to include the countries from which Russia had removed its forces. Thus NATO moved closer to Russian borders. Russian perspectives were largely neglected during the Bosnian crisis. Later, in 1999 Western leaders dismissed Russian views when they decided to bomb Yugoslavia and started the first war in Europe since World War II. Finally, Russians reproached the United States for its unwillingness to recognize Russia as a great power with legitimate interests in the post-Soviet space, as well as in Europe and Asia.

Those perceptions were partially questioned by American participants. As Dimitri Simes put it, the first Bush administration wanted the Soviet Union to leave East Germany, but the decision that the USSR would do so unconditionally, without negotiating any arrangements to protect its interests, was taken in Moscow, not Washington, and even generated surprise among some in the U.S. The dissolution of the USSR was also driven by events in Moscow, where the pro-independence Russian Republic government, led by Boris Yeltsin, waged an intense struggle against Gorbachev. Russia ceased being a superpower due to internal developments and its own decisions, and Russians should not be surprised if their country is no longer considered as such.

Still, American participants stressed that Russia remains a very important power from the U.S. perspective, as has been shown by events since September 11. As a result, Russia is in the best bargaining position vis-à-vis America that it has enjoyed for some time. Since President Bush will be focused on the war on terror for a long time—and America will be threatened for a long time—Russia will remain important for a long time as well, which creates unique conditions for cooperation.

Though Russia participants agreed with this, they suggested that some of their key questions had not been answered or that the answers provided pointed to clear limits in the Russian-U.S. relationship. James Schlesinger recognized half-jokingly that while America was “a very willful country” itself, it sometimes does not recognize that people think differently in other parts of the world. The U.S. side essentially rejected the possibility of Russian membership in NATO; Americans offered the vague concept of “an alliance with the alliance” as a realistic alternative to Russian membership.

Russian participants suggested as well that the American image of U.S.-Russian strategic cooperation meant asking for Russian support of U.S. actions while playing down Russian requests for reciprocity, with the only major exception being the change in the American position on Putin's policy towards Chechnya. According to our hosts in Washington, Russia was expected:

- to support the US-led anti-terrorist coalition;
- to accept the second wave of NATO enlargement without regard to which countries were invited to join the Alliance, and with no realistic prospects for membership itself;
- to reconsider its relations with the so-called “states of concern”—an issue that had been put on the back burner but was likely to return to prominence after the initial stage of the anti-terrorist operation;
- to accept U.S. missile defenses, which were described as “something between theology and symbolism for the United States”; and,
- to support the U.S. stance towards Iraq—from tightened sanctions to air strikes—or risk new questions about Russian intentions.

While some of those requests could be taken as realistic in Moscow, their combination was interpreted to signify a U.S. strategy of obtaining a “free hand,” as Gleb Pavlovsky said, both in shaping the new world order and in dealing with Russia. Pavlovsky also pointed out the absurdity of the present situation, in which the U.S. was essentially proposing the creation of a new security system no sooner than ten years from now and the abolition of the existing system of treaties between Russia and the U.S. right now, so that America could deploy missile defenses.

Dmitri Rogozin was similarly skeptical; he made the strong point that missile defense could not protect America from threats like the September 11 attacks. Rogozin also underlined the explosive potential of this issue for the Russian-U.S. relationship, especially in combination with the second round of NATO expansion. According to Mr. Rogozin, “the closer NATO moves to Russia geographically, the farther Russia will be from NATO politically.”

Yuli Vorontsov added that his experience and knowledge as a former Russian Ambassador to the United States suggests that the U.S. has never really been ready—and is still not ready—to accept Russia into NATO and grant Moscow a role in the Alliance's decision-making. He concluded that Richard Holbrooke's formula for potential NATO membership—which he characterized as “anybody but Russia”—is still valid.

At the same time, both the Russian and the American participants agreed that the new spirit in the relationship was positive for business opportunities and helped to build economic bridges between the two countries. Eugene Lawson stressed that the U.S. business community had been impressed both by the fact that President Putin called President Bush immediately after the attack on New York and by Russia's impressive growth rates during the last three years.

Are Both Sides Ready for a New Relationship?

Two conclusions can be drawn from the discussions and meetings in Washington. First, the joint fight against terrorism has created a qualitatively new opportunity for Russia and the United States to establish a new relationship for the 21st century. As Richard Armitage recalled during his separate meeting with the Russian group, he used the word "ally" to define Russia (as far as the war on terrorism was concerned) during talks with his Russian counterpart, Vyacheslav Trubnikov, in Moscow. Second, this new opportunity does not guarantee success in this path-breaking endeavor. The obstacles to a fresh start are considerable. At present, the U.S.-Russian "alliance" has been confined to the war on terrorism and, as Angela Stent put it, a number of contentious issues that had been put on the back burner during the war were bound to complicate efforts to develop a new relationship.

The key issue is how to use the momentum imparted to the relationship by the summit in Ljubljana and especially by the September 11 tragedy to overcome existing differences and build a strong partnership with a view to establishing a strategic alliance between the two countries.

Developments since the Dialogue meetings at The Nixon Center have confirmed that the two Presidents share a strong desire to seize this historic opportunity. The November 2001 Bush-Putin summit showed that both sides have the political will to minimize disagreements, emphasize areas of cooperation, and—above all—establish a personal relationship that would be at the very heart of the new Russian-American partnership.

Several key areas were singled out as areas of common interests during the summit:

- the fight against terrorism;
- efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
- the struggle against militant nationalism and ethnic and religious intolerance;
- joint efforts to promote regional stability;

- restructuring of Russia's relations with NATO; and,
- cooperation on economic and human rights issues.

Both sides also pledged to make serious reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

Though it could become the framework for a cooperative U.S.- Russian relationship in the 21st century, this agenda seems threatened by formidable obstacles.

First, while President Bush seems to be committed primarily to the idea of a new personal relationship with President Putin, Putin has done much more by attempting to bring about substantial changes in the essence of traditional Russian approaches to America. He has been largely ahead of public opinion in this task, especially with respect to the views of the bulk of the Russian political elite. Thus President Putin's decision to embrace the West and his "new thinking" are clearly ahead of the average Russian's foreign policy views. In fact, while demonstrating general support for the war on terrorism, recent polls show that the Russian public remains sharply divided in its assessment of the United States. For example, a November poll of the Moscow-based Public Opinion Foundation found that 14 percent of respondents selected the U.S. from a list of countries as Russia's closest ally and 13 percent thought of America as their country's principal adversary.²

The 1990s also left Russians deeply suspicious of American goals and designs. A dominant part of the Russian political class and of the Russian military leadership fears that Putin might fall into the same trap that befell Gorbachev. They are concerned that smiles and back-slapping from the U.S. president may mask a desire to manipulate Putin deftly to advance U.S. interests without making reciprocal steps that serve Russian objectives. Call it the "Gorbachev-Yeltsin syndrome": the persistent inclination to make unilateral moves toward the West without any conditions and/or reciprocity. Vladimir Putin has already been strongly criticized—not only in nationalist circles—for giving the green light to a substantial U.S. military presence in Central Asia, closing the radar station at Lourdes in Cuba, and declaring that Russia did not want to bargain with the United States or ask for anything in return for its support and cooperation.

Still, a minority of the public and the political class supported Putin's embrace of America, seeing it as a unique chance for Russia eventually to make its historic choice between East and West. Liberal reformers in his government made a strong case for the potential gains Russia could reap as

² The poll, with 1500 respondents, was conducted on November 5, 2001. Afghanistan was selected by 19% of respondents as the greatest danger to Russia; it was the only country chosen more frequently than the U.S.

a result of rapprochement with the United States. They cited the possibility of winning normal trade relations status from the USA, obtaining better conditions for membership in the World Trade Organization, and boosting foreign investment in the Russian economy. By making the choice to join the West, they argued, Russia is also choosing to enter into the world economy and to join the richest and most democratic part of the world.

This point of view has been widely represented in the mass media, including on television. But such arguments have been only partially convincing in the context of very practical disagreements with the Bush Administration, especially with regard to missile defense and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Besides, after a short "Indian summer" for Russia in the American media in October and November 2001, the mood has started to change in the United States as well. Leading opinion makers have started to voice skeptical assessments of Putin's motives and policy and authors like William Safire, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Frank Gaffney have warned that the Russian president might be winning too many concessions from George W. Bush.

Here we come to the second unanswered issue in the Russian-American relationship: what kind of relationship do the two sides want? The key problem here is that the Russian image of a cooperative or allied relationship differs significantly from the American one. Being the leading and most powerful country on Earth, the United States seems to assume that American national interests have a natural superiority over the interests of other nations. Therefore, an American ally should in fact have only limited sovereignty over its foreign policy decisions. NATO members are the best example of this "limited sovereignty."

But Russia is not a NATO country and America has no responsibility for protecting Russia from foreign threats. And Russia has no voice in NATO's decision-making process. Since it is not a part of the Western alliance, Russia can not realistically be expected to agree to the "limited sovereignty" status of its members with respect to the U.S. On the contrary, Moscow envisions a more balanced relationship, in which America and Russia would consult more frequently on key modern issues and seek joint strategies or at least compromises that would accommodate both of their interests.

This difference of basic approaches seriously complicates the relationship between the two countries, as became clear after the Bush-Putin summit. Russian efforts to play a role in postwar Afghanistan, while natural for Russia, were portrayed in the American media as a conscious return to competition with the U.S. Despite being shared by close U.S. allies, Russia's reluctance to support a possible U.S. attack on another Islamic country (at least without strong proof of its connection with the September 11 terrorist attack) is

considered by some in the American political class to be support for Washington's enemies. Even the tentative step of considering the possibility of granting Russia a voice in NATO decision-making on some issues was assailed by authoritative American voices that cited the threat of NATO's eventual dissolution if Russia were admitted to the Alliance.

Although the United States is the only global power in the post-Cold War world, Russia remains a Eurasian superpower with interests in seven strategic regions (Northern and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, Transcaucasia, Central Asia, Southern Asia, and the Far East). For geopolitical, economic and historical reasons, its interests differ from American interests in a number of those areas. Russia has special relationships with China, India, and Iran. It has important interests in Iraq, Syria, and some other countries viewed as "rogue states" in Washington. Russia does not welcome NATO enlargement eastward, which it sees as drawing new dividing lines in Europe.

The Bush Administration's decision to pull out of the ABM Treaty unilaterally is a bad sign for the relationship in the long run, as it confirms the fact that it will be very difficult to marry the Russian and American security agendas. Nevertheless, the U.S. withdrawal is unlikely to have any immediate effect on Russian foreign policy. However, the move—which President Putin called "mistaken" has drawn the attention of the Russian public and has a considerable impact on the elite's view of the United States. Further unilateral steps by the U.S. in areas where important Russian interests are involved will be interpreted as confirmation of post-Afghanistan unilateralism by Washington and will generate stronger opposition to America.

President Putin cannot be immune to these pressures. In this context, the nature of the agreement between Russian and the U.S. on strategic arms reductions will be important to renewing trust shaken by the American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. The November 2002 decision on further NATO enlargement will have similar potential to rebuild—or further weaken—trust between Moscow and Washington.

The kind of relationship Russia would like to have with the United States differs significantly from the one the U.S. seems to have in mind. The Russian concept of a strong partnership is not parity—as there is no more parity in the balance of power between Russia and the United States—but rather mutuality or asymmetric reciprocity. If the United States wants to turn Russia into a real partner—and even into an ally in the future—it should abstain from unilateral moves that disengage rather than engage Russia.

More specifically, the U.S. could develop a scenario for NATO enlargement that instead of jeopardizing new ties with Russia would establish a timetable

that synchronized rapprochement between Russia and NATO and NATO membership for the Baltic States. The U.S. could consider, together with its allies, the possibility of writing off a part of Russia's foreign debt inherited from the Soviet Union, as has been done in the case of Poland and some other U.S. allies. Finally, the U.S. could show a greater willingness to take Russian security and economic interests into account, especially with respect to Russia's neighbors (Ukraine, the Caspian region, the Caucasian republics, and Central Asia), and cooperate with Russia rather than competing with Moscow for influence.

If the U.S. were to take such an approach, it would generate a powerful sense of reciprocity in Russia. Anti-American feelings, still potent in Russia today, would subside. It would appear irresponsible to jeopardize such a promising rapprochement with America and, as a result, Russia would have to reconsider its foreign policy according to its new pro-Western orientation. Ties with "states of concern" could be sacrificed in the name of joint approaches. A coordinated policy toward possible threats emanating from China could be worked out.

For this to happen, however, not only must Russia be willing to change (a willingness that President Putin has already shown); the United States should also be willing to adjust its foreign policy. Meanwhile, now that the war in Afghanistan is almost over, the Bush Administration might believe that it no longer needs Russia's support and therefore lose interest in the formidable task of slowly bringing the foreign policy agendas of the two countries closer together.

Should this take place, it will be seen as yet another proof of America's cynical approach towards Russia and will strengthen Putin's critics sufficiently to make him reconsider his policy of embracing America. Therefore the patient and steady rapprochement of the two countries' respective agendas and interests—rather than unilateral moves—appears to be the only way to use the opportunity offered to both nations by their joint fight against terrorism.

AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS

Chairman

James Schlesinger *Chairman, Nixon Center Advisory Council;
Senior Advisor, Lehman Brothers*

Participants

Charles Boyd *Senior Vice President and Washington
Director, Council on Foreign Relations*

Ariel Cohen *Research Fellow, Heritage Foundation*

Susan Eisenhower *President, The Eisenhower Institute*

Fritz Ermarth *Consultant, Science Applications International
Corporation*

John Evans *U.S. Department of State*

Thomas Graham *Policy Planning Staff, U.S. Department of State*

Nikolas Gvosdev *Executive Editor, The National Interest*

Larry Johnson *Managing Director, Berg Associates*

Eugene Lawson *President, U.S.-Russia Business Council*

Michael Mosettig *Senior Producer, The NewsHour with Jim
Lehrer*

Lionel Olmer *Partner, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton &
Garrison*

Peter Reddaway *Professor, George Washington University*

Eugene Rumer *Senior Fellow, Institute for National Strategic
Studies*

Paul Saunders *Director, The Nixon Center*

Brent Scowcroft *President, The Scowcroft Group*

Dimitri Simes

President, The Nixon Center

Helmut Sonnenfeldt

Guest Scholar, Brookings Institution

David Speedie

Program Chair, International Peace and Security, Carnegie Corporation of New York

Angela Stent

Professor, Georgetown University

RUSSIAN PARTICIPANTS

Chairman

Dmitry Rogozin *Chairman, State Duma Committee on International Affairs; Member, People's Deputy Faction*

Participants

Nikolai Barkov *Deputy Staff Director, Committee on International Affairs*

Vladimir Kulakov *Governor of Voronezh Region*

Gleb Pavlovsky *General Director of the Center for Effective Policy; key advisor to the Chief of the Presidential Administration*

Alexei Pushkov *TV-Center anchor and commentator*

Alexander Shabanov *Chairman, State Duma Commission on Geopolitics; Member, Communist Faction*

Yuli Vorontsov *President, Russian-American Business Council; former Russian Ambassador to the United States*

Mikhail Zadornov *Deputy Chairman, State Duma Committee on the Budget and Taxes; former Minister of Finance; Member, Yabloko Faction*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alexei K. Pushkov is anchor of the influential news-analysis program *Post Scriptum* on TV-Center and a member of the presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. He is a former staff member of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee and, during *perestroika*, was Deputy Editor and Columnist at the leading weekly, *Moscow News*. Later, he was Director of Public Affairs at ORT (Russian Public Television).

Paul J. Saunders is Director of The Nixon Center. He has served as a consultant to the Speaker's Advisory Group on Russia, chaired by Representative Christopher Cox. Earlier he coordinated Russian programs at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.