

After The Revolution: Rethinking U.S.-Russia Relations

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*“For the mystery of man’s being is not only in living, but in what one lives for.”
– Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov**

I

Four years ago Boris Yeltsin mounted a tank outside the Russian White House and helped to seal the fate of an empire. His act of defiance consigned the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the dustbin of history and launched his country – and ours – into uncharted waters.

Today, America’s policy toward Russia has strayed off course. To manage this essential relationship requires a clear view of Russia. Lacking such a vision, we are like the proverbial blind man before the elephant.

II

From the end of World War II until the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, U.S. policy was largely based on the analysis of Soviet behavior first set out in George Kennan’s seminal 1947 Foreign Affairs article, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”. For 40 years, through periods of evil empire and détente, we sought to contain an adversary we viewed as inherently expansionist.

The marriage of ideology and circumstances that Kennan identified eventually eroded under the deadening weight of a stagnant party bureaucracy and a withering command economy. By the time Gorbachev took power, he inherited a spiritually and economically bankrupt empire. Over time, as glasnost exposed the soviet Union’s underlying weakness, and perestroika tried to bolster its waning strength, it became clear that we were seeing something new, a Soviet union that had to reform or die.

Having revealed the rot, Gorbachev tried to remove it. Needing a breathing space to concentrate on internal reforms, Gorbachev called a truce in the Cold War. The Reagan and, especially, Bush Administrations seized the opportunity that Gorbachev present by junking containment in favor of a new approach that I call “the Romantic impulse.”

The Romantic Movement in art and literature grew out of the French Revolution of 1789. The Romantics replaced hard analysis with what the English poet William Wordsworth termed “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”. My wife, a professor of German literature, argues that Germany never recovered from the Romantics, leaving it stuck in a swamp of irrational tendencies. But that’s another story.

The Romantic Movement in U.S.-Russian relations grew out of a remarkably peaceful revolution – the one that ended the communist party in the USSR and eventually ended the USSR itself. The long-entrenched conventional wisdom, containment, atrophied in an instant, like a 50-year old person who ages 30 years in a day. In its place, emotion triumphed over analysis, wishful thinking over hard reality.

But whereas literary Romantics created profoundly moving art, diplomatic Romantics spawned unrealistic expectations. The Romantic impulse led to the equation of Gorbachev, then Yeltsin, with reform. As a result, it blinded American policy to the complexity of events in Russia. Although Gorbachev and Yeltsin

were different, the U.S. treated them the same. In both cases, we became their cheerleaders, notwithstanding Gorbachev's use of force against Lithuania and Yeltsin's invasion of Chechnya.

Under President Bush, this subjective approach to the relationship climaxed in the June 1992 "Charter for American-Russian Partnership and Friendship", in which the two Presidents pledged U.S.-Russian cooperation "in the interest of advancing and defending common democratic values and human rights and fundamental freedoms".

The Romantic impulse survived George Bush's defeat to flourish under President Bill Clinton. President Clinton's first foreign trip was to Vancouver to meet Yeltsin, in April 1993. There, the U.S.-Russian "new democratic partnership" was sealed with promised of \$1.6 billion in U.S. assistance.

While the Romantics were right that Kennan's diagnosis did not apply to post-Communist Russia, they failed to formulate a compelling new analysis. Instead, they tried to support "reformers" against "opponents of reform", assuming that we could clearly and easily identify both and that the interests of the United States and Russian reformers coincided. We exuded the message that what was good for America – unfettered markets, a shrunken Russian military, imitations of the American two-party system, a reduced Russian role internationally – was good for Russia. Whoever opposed these U.S. interests was, by definition, anti-reform.

This simple formula created among many Russians the illusion of painless reform and the expectation of massive U.S. aid. Unable to truly grasp the people-empowering implications of decentralized power, they believed that what the Communist party had failed to provide – a better standard of living – could now be given by the U.S. – if it chose to do so. On the other hand, if massive assistance – a Marshall Plan, some argue – was not forthcoming, it must be, many Russians believed, because we did not wish them well.

In June 1992, sitting in a room of Senators, I listened to Yeltsin say all the right things – about democracy, the demise of communism, the need to reduce military expenditures, the end of aid to Cuba, the desire for U.S.-Russian cooperation, and the embrace of markets – and he said them with a passion that would tempt even the staunchest skeptics to dream of a better day. Later, in his address to a joint session of congress he invited my colleagues and me "to join us in partnership in the name of the worldwide triumph of democracy." Unfortunately, this Romantic "overflow of powerful feelings" crashed into reality.

Romantic illusions arose in U.S. policymaking because, for all our feeling of triumph in the Cold War and for all our considerable accomplishment in containing Soviet power, we had prepared nothing to move a country from failed communism to capitalism. We weren't ready for the success of our own policy, conducted over nearly half a century. Because we knew what we wanted but had not thought through how to guarantee it, we yielded to Romantic feelings.

But, Russian politics is not a struggle between reform and anti-reform, because people and politics favor mixes of both. Reform is divisible. Some Russians support markets at home while opposing sanctions against Serbia. Indeed, the Russian leadership realized that a more nationalist foreign policy was essential to securing domestic support. The loss of empire had lingering effects. To avoid the question of who lost it and why, Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, simply asked the bear to jump through familiar hoops.

Thus, citing Eurasia's new post-Communist geography, Russian has claimed the right to revise the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. Seeking billions in foreign exchange, Russia is agitating to lift UN sanctions against Saddam Hussein. Desperately seeking markets, and not oblivious to U.S. dealings with North Korea, Moscow wants to sell nuclear reactors and arms to Iran. In an ironic reversal of the Nixon/Kissinger policy, Moscow now flirts with playing the China card against the United States. When Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng visited Russia last June, he and Russian Prime Minister Viktor

Chernomyrdin stated that their two countries would not follow dictates from Washington.

Absent Romantic illusions, these kinds of rumblings could have been anticipated. That's what clear-headed contingency planning is all about. It just wasn't realistic that a continental nation would renounce an independent foreign policy simply because it had shed its empire.

Mirroring the U.S. Romantics who ignored Russia's geopolitical interests, Russian Romantics expected too much, too soon from economic reform. The path of political reform was quickly tarred with the hardships associated with economic restructuring. Life savings evaporated almost overnight. Lifetime professions disappeared, and families lost the ability to make economic choices. I'll never forget the women outside the Kremlin in 1990 shouting epithets, like a Greek chorus, at Russian legislators as they went from the hotel to the Kremlin to pass market reforms.

The reforms offended most people, not only because of the fall in living standards, but also because the rise of buccaneer capitalists resembled the worst stereotype of capitalism's excesses denounced for generations by Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist indoctrination. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's strong showing in the December 1993 Duma election resulted in large part from the reformers' failure to present an understanding of the human implications of economic restructuring or a compelling vision of prosperity and justice at the end of hardship.

I remember listening to Yegor Gaidar answer questions in a factory hall somewhere in the Urals. He talked to his constituents as if they were his students. He gave the textbook economic answer, without acknowledging the pain the reform had brought to people's lives. Because he acted more as an indifferent economist than a caring politician, he conveyed coldness, not hope, and the people rejected him.

Under the pressure of events, the Clinton Administration has largely jettisoned the Romantic view in favor of a "pragmatic" relationship. However, the rise of Prime Minister Chernomyrdin has provided a new focus for those American Romantics who are still susceptible to the conceit that policy can be vested in a single personal relationship. A much better guide than inter-personal rapport is a clear understanding of national interest, forthrightly stated. Yet American formulations of statecraft continue to place too much emphasis on the power of leadership personalities, as though the lessons of Woodrow Wilson at Versailles and FDR at Yalta have not yet been learned.

Still, this new pragmatism, as explained by Secretary of State Warren Christopher prior to the May 1995 Clinton-Yeltsin summit, sounds suspiciously like ad hockery. Rather than replacing the Romantic impulse with a more realistic understanding of the forces shaping Russia, the Administration has chosen to pursue policy writ small, divorced from a strategic framework.

This minimalist approach was evident at the May Summit. The meetings themselves sought refuge in Cold War-era security nostrums. The main issues on the agenda were security issues: NATO expansion, the sale of Russian nuclear reactors to Iran, and Chechnya. "Economic reform, trade and investment" was only the title of a minor joint statement.

By not stating clearly what it believes is going on in Russia, the Administration has opened the way for American advocates of an "Imperial" paradigm. Proponents of this view warn that Soviet-era expansionism was not a communist aberration, but an expression of historical Russian impulses. They assert that Russia will not democratize within its borders, but instead develop political, economic, social and military structures to reconstitute the Russian empire. Their prescription for this perpetually expansionist Russia is renewed political-military containment.

This Imperial optic, however, shares the same basic flaw as Romanticism and Pragmatism – it fails to pro-

ceed from an understanding of the deeper transformations shaping Russia. Just as the Romantic lens filtered out everything that was going wrong, the Imperial lens filters out everything that is going right.

III

The old analysis no longer holds because the old Soviet Union no longer exists. The peaceful Russian revolution of 1991 changed not only government, but society as well. But, if you look at leadership elites, that transformation is not so evident. Old players have just assumed new places. KGB operatives are now entrepreneurs. Communist party members claim to be democrats. Leaders of state industry search in vain for increased productivity without real reform that would challenge their control.

The real post-1991 ferment is not among the leaders, but the young and the so-called “Glasnost generation”, those under 35 who lose nothing by shedding the old ways and are enticed by new alternatives. I clearly remember Boris Nemtsov, the 30-something governor of Nizhny Novgorod, who told me that anyone over 30 is too old to see the full implications of the revolution of 1991. While historical events are rarely clearest when you are in the middle of them, what seems evident is that 1991 opened the door to a new era.

But the Russia which emerged from the Soviet wreckage remains a work in progress. We must therefore base our analysis of Russian behavior on the transformations which are shaping it. These are the same transformations that are molding the United States and the world – forces such as those that have been unleashed by the end of the Cold War, the explosion of global markets, the acceleration of the information revolution, rising ethnic consciousness, and the increasing debt burden.

Russia’s rise from the breakup of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War. As long as the Soviet Union existed, the U.S.-Soviet rivalry which defined the era in fundamentally ideological terms was a prominent feature of the international system.

Similarly, the post-Cold War period will continue as a transition stage until Russia’s revolution is complete. Until Russia defines itself and its role in the world, we will not achieve an enduring international equilibrium for the 21st Century.

Russia’s process of self-definition will continue until it fills the spiritual vacuum at its core. Even though communist ideology had been discredited long before August 1991, it still provided a way for rulers and ruled to relate to each other. “Communism” as practiced in the Soviet Union was a complete, if imperfect, cradle-to-grave welfare system. From birth to employment through pension, the Soviet citizen lived inside a total world view. The system provided stability, if only the stability of cynicism and inertia.

The demise of communism removed this ideological millstone and left Russians free to chart a new future. It allowed deep-seated Russian spirituality to flower, but also removed obstacles to Russian chauvinism. The end of communist ideology opened the way for Russians to choose democracy and markets as organizing principles of social and political life, but it also associated those choices with real economic pain and uncertainty. Indeed, the precipitous fall in living standards compounded the difficulties for people not used to choosing. The ironic result is that Russians, newly free to choose, feel they lack the power to do so. I have noticed that when Russian high school students come to the U.S., one of the most bewildering experiences is for them to cope with the choices they have to make every day – choices American kids grow up with.

Stripped of empire, Russia also faces the problem of how to relate to Slavic areas such as Ukraine, Belarus, and northern Kazakhstan, as well as to its non-Slavic former Soviet neighbors in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Moscow alternately views the frontiers of the Commonwealth of Independent States as its own, and then shies away from the costs of greater integration. CIS members, in turn, are developing their institutions in distinctive ways that are defeating the development of strong, Russian-dominated CIS institutions. For example, while Belarus toys with reunion with Russia, Ukraine misses no opportunity to reaffirm its independence.

The problem is made more complex by the presence of up to 25 million ethnic Russians outside the borders of what is now Russia, cut off by the breakup of the USSR. Like British businessmen in India after independence, they feel cut off from their roots, uncertain how they will fare in once-familiar places that have now taken on a strange aura.

The psychological vacuum is aggravated by an institutional vacuum. Although the Soviet state seemed pervasive, it relied on party and ideology for its connection to individual lives. Once the party and ideology were withdrawn, the state lost its relevance like a machine lacking a vital cog. Government bureaucracies spin, but the country does not move. And the undertow of statism in Russian history pulls at the Russian present. State-run enterprises are being cut, but there are more state ministries and related agencies today than in Soviet times.

While post-Cold War Russians work out their political arrangements, they are also grappling with the challenges of building a market economy. They have come a long way in less than four years. Russia has over 16,000 privatized medium and large enterprises, more than 100,000 privatized shops and small businesses plus countless more new start-ups, 2568 licensed commercial banks, and 40 million shareholders. In 1994, the private sector produced 62% of officially recorded GDP. Given the size and composition of the gray economy, the private sector share of Russia's total output must be considerably larger.

Of course, Russia is awash with "lies, damn lies, and statistics". Privatization too often means that the old elite has made off with the loot or that the newly privatized firm is still addicted to government subsidies. But these are rough markets in the making, in desperate need of legal and regulatory underpinning, but markets nevertheless.

These markets are starting to deliver economic benefits to some Russians. According to official Russian statistics, real personal income increased 11% in 1994, despite the decline in official GDP. Again, it is not the questionable statistics that matter, but the fact that it is not just the super-rich or organized crime kingpins who are benefiting. Up to 20% of Russia's population, over 30 million people, may now fall into a new middle class that is fueling a boom in imported consumer goods.

However, like other aspects of Russia's re-definition, economic reform remains incomplete. Privatization does not mean mature capitalism. Annual inflation is still over 200%. Production has fallen more than half since 1991 and continues its slide. Capital is fleeing at a rate of over a billion dollars per month. Russia lacks a transparent legal regime to govern economic activity and encourage investment. Almost a third of the population is struggling to survive on incomes below the official poverty level, a number that could rise as enterprises shed workers to survive. All of these events flowed from the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

The end of the Cold War, while an epochal event, is only one factor in Russia's quest for identity. A second transformation, the explosion of world markets over the past decade, has brought over three billion people into the market as consumers and competitors. Not since the end of the 19th century has the world economy been as open or the potential for worldwide human betterment through markets been as large. For Russia, the significance of entry into the global market is much greater than the wealth generated by trade

or the foreign investment potentially attracted by solid legal and tax regimes. Economic integration with the rest of the world above all offers access to new ideas.

These new ideas comprise the knowledge revolution, the most important and complex transformation shaping Russia. On the most obvious level, increasingly sophisticated communications have ended the ability of the Russian government to cloak its people in ignorance. Russians have access to a free press, fax machines, and the Internet. The government cannot insulate Russians from what is going on in their own country or in the rest of the world.

On a deeper level, the knowledge revolution has changed the way national wealth is created in an information-based economy. It has changed the production process and multiplied the types of services available. Combined with Russia's abundance of human talent, modern technology offers the prospect of prosperity in years, not generations.

I'll never forget a young Russian who, in the midst of the doom and gloom we hear in many circles about the Russian economy, told me that his small computer firm with offices in Moscow and California had a bright future. He went on to recount how Russian bureaucrats didn't even know what he was doing, while his technology was carving out business in the midst of economic turmoil.

Ultimately, the knowledge revolution is more than an opportunity for Russia. It is an existential necessity. Russia may be a nuclear superpower, but all its ICBMs cannot defend against looming environmental calamity. The Environmental and Health Atlas of Russia, edited by Georgetown University's Murray Feshbach, reports that the life expectancy of a Russian male has dropped from 64.9 years in 1987 to 58.3 years in 1994 – 45 in some areas. The Russian government reports a continued decline to 57 years today. That is on a par with countries like Egypt and Bangladesh. Unlike those countries, however, the trend in Russia is downward. Russia must tap into the technology of the knowledge revolution if it is to have any hope of ending this self-genocide.

Up to now, I have spoken of transformations in terms of opportunities. But other transformations challenge and constrain Russia. The rise of ethnic consciousness has challenged Russia's integrity and its development. While the dissolution of the Soviet Union undid Russia's outer empire, the Russian Federation remains a multi-ethnic state. Its over 100 non-Russian ethnic groups, while accounting for only a fifth of the population, control wide swathes of mineral-rich territory. The end of communist ideology and weakening of central government have opened the way to a resurgence of ethnic assertiveness that has challenged Moscow to develop a formula that will reconcile local autonomy with a unified Russian Federation.

The Chechnya war is only the most violent manifestation of this tension. Other ethnic-based republics, such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Karelia have engaged in a less virulent, but equally important, tug of war with the center. I once asked an official in Tatarstan how the collection of value added tax was going. He replied, "In inverse proportion to the distance from Moscow". The result of this process of confrontation and accommodation will have a direct bearing on Russia's ability to develop democratically.

It will also have an impact on Russia's ability to bring its central budget deficit under control. Without the tax revenues from resource-rich regions, the central government will not be able to finance its spending in a non-inflationary manner.

Finally, Moscow must manage Russia's \$130 billion foreign debt, a consequence of the fifth worldwide transformation, if the Russian economy is to get off the ground. Russia's arrears have excluded it from the international capital markets it must tap for non-inflationary financing of its budget deficit and for the hundreds of billions of dollars for capital to pay for the technology Russia needs to survive.

IV

The sources of Russian behavior, then, lie not in the nostrums of the Romantics, Pragmatists and Imperialists, but in contingencies. Russia's conduct every day provides self-definition. Russians themselves are deeply divided on all the fundamental questions. Our task is to define a mature relationship with Russia even as it struggles to complete its revolution. We need perspective to separate what is truly significant from the grist of everyday relations. We need methods of contact to avoid the natural tendency to escalate every blip into a crisis. Let me offer six principles to guide us.

1) First, we need clear objectives. Our policy is drifting because we lack compelling goals for U.S.-Russian interaction in the global arena consistent with both Russia's realities and a coherent vision of America's role in the world.

Since Russia remains a nuclear superpower, our most basic objective, whoever sits in the Kremlin, must be to prevent that capability from being used against us. We must build on the fact that our respective national interests do not conflict and that working together we can make the world a safer place.

Beyond the existential imperative, we should help Russia integrate into regional and international systems. The Russian government, although weak at home, is a significant actor outside its borders. Even while pursuing its own interests, it can play a constructive role. For example, peace in Bosnia is inconceivable without a Russian role in securing Serbian cooperation. China's emergence cannot be managed without a strong Russia in Asia. South Asia from Iran through Pakistan and north through Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan will only become a part of the world community with Russian participation.

But Russia's actions will not add up to a positive whole unless Russia is given a stake in the system. The Bush Administration made a good start in using European security institutions – such as CSCE, now called OSCE, and NATO's North Atlantic Cooperation Council, now superseded by the Clinton Administration's Partnership for Peace – to establish stabilizing linkages between Russia and Europe. We can build on these efforts and expand them in Asia with the goal of engaging Russia as a powerful force for stability in these times of turmoil.

2) My second principle is that we must offer Russians a picture of where their own society might develop. I am talking about the power of our own example as a peaceful, prosperous, and powerful multi-ethnic democracy.

In our enthusiasm for the changes at the top, we have neglected the enduring Russian grass roots. Talking with Gorbachev, or Yeltsin, or Chernomyrdin is not talking with the Russian people. Paradoxically, as cooperation replaced confrontation, and the cold War wound down, U.S. policy narrowed. During the Cold War, American governments reached out to the people of the Soviet Union with a vision of a better way; after the change the Bush and Clinton Administrations increasingly filtered the American vision through the Russian leadership. We began to lose contact with the Russian people, and they began to lose confidence in us.

Proponents of the Romantic approach to Russia misread the meaning of projecting our example. In what some have termed a "missionary" impulse, they tried to reshape Russia in our image. The result was misunderstanding, leading, among some Russians, to resentment and outright hostility. Taking a club to Russian pride feeds extreme nationalism.

Russia's development will not be a carbon copy of our own. Reform with Russian characteristics must have a place for Russia's spirituality, cultural traditions, and ethnic diversity. It must incorporate the legacy of

the mir as well as the example of Wall Street. But it will be richer and, I believe, more beneficial to Russians and Americans if it takes inspiration from the American example. There are commonalities across civilizations.

But for us to build closer bonds, we must never neglect communicating with the Russian people. When economic reform generated 7,000% inflation, we failed to tell the Russian people that we understood its destructive impact on Russian lives. When Yeltsin gave orders for the tanks to gut the parliament, we turned a blind eye. When the Russian military made a brutal assault on Chechnya, we too often with our silence conveyed complicity to the Russian people. When we were mute as Russian leaders proclaimed the date for a presidential election, but failed to write the election laws that could lead to an open race, we invited the Russian people to wonder what kind of democrats we truly are. When we simply told the leaders to tighten the nation's belt with economic reform, notwithstanding the human cost, we sounded uncaring at best and cruel at worst.

3) Third, our policies should work with the forces transforming Russia. These forces – the end of the Cold War, explosion of global markets, intensification of the knowledge revolution, rising ethnic consciousness, and increasing burden of debt – also cross civilizational lines, giving us a stake in learning from one another how to benefit from them.

For example, I earlier cited Russia's looming non-compliance with the CFE Treaty as a development that undermined the Romantic approach to U.S.-Russian relations. However, if we jettison the Cold War mindset, we see that the Russian position is not wholly unreasonable. Russia is now only one of 15 countries in the former-Soviet space. Its security problems in the west have been replaced by new strategic security concerns in the south and east. Russia should not be boxed into a defensive posture as if its and our main concern was to ease tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

At the same time, a repositioning of troops within Russia to meet the most likely external threats would position these units to enforce internal security in restless border republics such as Chechnya. We should negotiate guarantees in terms of troop configuration and equipment that would help ensure that these forces were in fact defensive, not coercive.

The Administration's approach to Russia's legitimate post-Cold War security concerns has been Euro-centric old-think – a combination of NATO expansion and arms control. By advancing NATO to the borders of the former Soviet Union at the same time we insist on continued disarmament, we are reviving in the minds of too many Russians the impression of a threat from the West. America's policy-makers, comfortable in a Cold War strategic setting, are trying to recreate a watered-down version of it. Immediate, expanded NATO is a colossal mistake.

Instead, we should launch an expanded strategic dialogue, including military-to-military talks to explore together Russia's security concerns together. Russia fears an Islamic resurgence in Central Asia. Is this warranted? Russia sees China growing richer and stronger, and expanding not only in to Central Asia but into Russia's own Far East. Only seven million Russians live east of the Urals, while a million Chinese now live in the area north of Manchuria, farming for the surging Chinese market. How can Russia defend itself without provoking or appeasing its giant neighbor? These are opportunities for common understandings that the Administration has thus far ignored in favor of a policy I call "Cold War Lite".

4) Fourth, we must build to last. The question about Russia on everyone's lips is whether reform is reversible. Romantics and their successors hope that it has gone too far to fail. Imperialists fear reversal is inevitable.

Both are wrong. Reform is neither inevitable nor doomed, for “reform” is divisible. Those reforms that are fixed in Russia’s culture and institutions will be the first to flower. Those that create new institutions that respond to the twin yearnings for freedom and order will be the most likely to survive. Reforms that serve Russia’s long-term interests will be the strongest. By contrast, those that depend on the whims of political personalities will not take root.

That means our policies and programs must touch individuals, particularly the new generations uncontaminated by Soviet-style thinking. We must offer Russians help to build institutions, such as legal systems, political parties, banking systems, trade unions, and schools, aware that our role can be meaningful only if Russians want such partnership. Dictating to Russians about their institutions is offensive, but supporting efforts by Russians themselves to build democratically oriented institutions strengthens the bond of friendship.

Russia has embarked on a democratic path, however imperfect. Moscow is home to an elected president and parliament functioning according to a written constitution. The campaigns for the December 1995 parliamentary and June 1996 presidential elections are already underway.

However, merely holding elections will not institutionalize Russia’s progress. As Russians have warned, elections in themselves mean little. The Soviet Union went through the motions of elections for nearly 75 years. It is the quality of the elections that counts.

The quality of the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections is in doubt. On the positive side, Russia adopted an electoral law after the executive and legislative branches worked out their differences. The contrast with October 1993, when fundamental disagreement was settled by force, is encouraging. The next step is to ensure all contenders a level playing field, including equitable financing, fair access to the press, and poll monitoring. The recent establishment of the watchdog organization “For Honest Elections” is an important effort by Russians to meet the need for poll monitors.

On the negative side, however, official ballot counting remains in the hands of the government’s communications security organization, recalling Stalin’s line that it is not who casts the ballots that is important, but who counts them. The Central Electoral Commission is also trying to restrict coverage of the upcoming campaign, including political advertising, to fully state-owned radio and television stations.

In addition, Russia has yet to develop the kind of political parties that can institutionalize a democratic system and increase political accountability. Instead, some parties are personal, such as those led by Yegor Gaidar, Grigory Yavlinsky, Boris Fedorov, or radical ideological vehicles, such as those of Alexander Barkashov, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. We may soon have to add General Alexander Lebed to the list.

Others are old-style parties, such as the Communists and the Agrarians, which benefit from institutional strength and residual loyalties, but draw support from an aging, backward-looking population.

The most ominous development is the creation of two new nomenklatura parties meant to offer the “center-left” and “center-right” components of a two-party system. Duma speaker Ivan Rybkin’s effort to put together the left-of-center alternative has born little fruit. But Prime Minister Chernomyrdin’s “Our Home is Russia” is becoming the “party of power”. It is bringing together most of Russia’s “mainstream” political players. This new top-down party smacks of a reconstituted Communist party in all but name. With the accumulating influence of Chernomyrdin’s grouping, electoral safeguards are even more important to ensure the institutionalization of fair choice by the people, not dictated by the self-appointed nomenklatura.

5) Fifth, we should buttress our other policies with assistance, not welfare. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton writes that God made Adam and Eve “free to fall, but sufficient to have stood”. By lifting communism from

Russia, God has done the same for Russia's citizens. Our support must help them stand, not burden them with a new dependency.

Our current assistance portfolio falls tragically short of the mark. American assistance to Russia is long on rhetoric and short on impact. Billions of dollars are promised to Russians; hundreds of millions go into the pockets of American consultants' and pennies reach Russians. Not only do we fail to influence the course of Russian reform, we actually create an anti-American backlash built on disappointed expectations. Russians read newspapers, listen to radio, and watch television. They know what has been promised, and they can see in their own lives how little has been delivered.

While there are many good programs in our portfolio of assistance to the countries of the former-Soviet Union, and even more well-intentioned ones, others soak up hundreds of millions of dollars without delivering results. Many are run by consultants who know the ways of the AID bureaucracy, but are ignorant of Russia. Most don't even speak the language. With the money we saved from axing bad programs – not merely scaling them back, but eliminating them altogether – we could fund a better aid program for less, but only if we're willing to challenge old clichés and think anew.

Our programs should be highly focused, have a noticeable effect on the lives of individuals, and establish self-sustaining institutional linkages. In other words, our assistance should support our strategic policy goals.

Russia's most pressing problem is environmental degradation. Thus, it only makes sense to target a large portion of our assistance toward making Russia healthier. One obvious way is to attack air pollution. According to Feshbach's Atlas, a genuine joint venture with 38 Russian scientists, 40.1 million people in 86 Russian cities breathe air with over ten times the Maximum Allowable Concentration of various pollutants. Official Russian statistics identify 15% of Russia's territory, home to over 30 million people, as "an environmental disaster zone". Descriptions of Magnitogorsk, perhaps the most heavily polluted city on Earth, come right out of a Hieronymus Bosch hellscape.

Thus far, America's response has consisted primarily of feasibility studies and action plans. The money has gone to consultants, planners, and other scientific tourists who go up the learning curve time and again. Russians read of ambitious plans to save them and continue to die of cancer. The money would be better spent buying and installing scrubbers and equipment to monitor their effectiveness – and make sure they are turned on and maintained. For anywhere from thousands of dollars to millions per plant, American aid could lead directly to Russian kids breathing cleaner air – and knowing why.

The first time I went to Russia in 1966, I camped. In the campgrounds, time and time again, even in the heyday of the Cold War, individual Russians came up to me, since I was the first American most had ever seen, and thanked me for the food and supplies under Lend Lease during World War II. They never forgot who helped them when they were in need. Today the environmental need is just as great.

Besides the environment, let me give another example. I have sponsored an exchange program that brings three thousand high school students from the former-Soviet countries to the United States every year to live with American families and to absorb democracy and markets, not merely study them. These kids are the future. A small investment now in exposing them to our values will pay big dividends in the coming years – not only with these future leaders, but also with their schools, families, friends, and others who come in contact with them. Listen to some of these students:

Irina V. Shimova from Ekaterinburg, who spent a year in Jackson, TN had this to say. "My magnificent year in the United States is coming to an end now, and looking back I can say that this experience has changed me more than I could have imagined. What I realize now is that in spite of any differences in national and

family background....human beings are able and ought to try to understand and learn to appreciate each other. I cannot say that I blindly fell in love with everything I met in America. Being here for a year helped me to get a better look at my own country, my native culture: 'True greatness can be seen only from far away' as Russian poet Alexander Blok said. I will take home the very best I learned and got to know here, and it's a lot. I hope not to lose my connections with America, the country I accepted in my heart forever. I hope to be back one day, when I can be of use or help. I want to do something big and beautiful in gratitude for everything I received from this country and its wonderful, wonderful people! Being in college, I will major in communication, and my goal – to let Russians and Americans know each other better – will be easier to achieve."

Maria Sankova from Nizhny Novgorod wrote, "It seems like a day ago, I walked out of the plane into a strange place where everything was so interesting and different from my life in Russia. And now, I call New Orleans 'my second home' and I really love this magic city. The word 'host family' doesn't exist any more; there is just 'my dear American family' and I am 'their Russian daughter'.... Those people are some of my closest friends in the world now. My two families write to each other, in different languages, but they have a 'little bridge' now, (that is what my Russian dad calls me). No more my family, friends or relatives in Russia think of the USA as the 'enemy' or 'the foreign country'. It is just another place where people live and love and work and have fun....we are all the children of the big Mother Earth, we all share it, and we all shall."

6) Sixth, and last, we cannot do it alone. No one country, not even the United States of America, can provide Russia the moral, political, and economic support it needs. We cannot integrate Russia into the West without the West's cooperation; we cannot bring Russia into Asia without Japan. We cannot by ourselves build all the scrubbers or buy all the exports that Russia needs.

That is why we must reorient the World Bank away from booming market economies and toward Russia, that giant nation that seeks to join the world market. We must also use the G-7 Summit process more creatively to coordinate our approaches to Russia, beginning with a common rethinking of the basis of Russian behavior. The follow-on meetings with the Russian president which have become a permanent feature of the G-7 Summits would then provide the opportunity to begin implementation of coordinated G-7 strategies.

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Alexis de Tocqueville, observing our own country during a time of self-definition, could have been describing the nature of Russia's challenge today:

"The object is not to retain the peculiar advantages which the [old order] bestows upon mankind, but to secure the new benefits which [the new situation] may supply. We have not to seek to make ourselves like our progenitors, but to strive to work out that species of greatness and happiness which is our own."

Anchoring our policy in the understanding that Russia's behavior is rooted both in the quest for identity, and unfolding contingencies, we can contribute to that process in a way that also benefits us. Just as standing on a tank that was not enough for Russia to know what it is, so applauding Yeltsin on the tank did not give us the basis for a sophisticated policy. Only by engaging intensively with Russia's people, can we understand or influence Russia's development. Indeed, by doing so we will in fact be continuing our own process of self-definition. Helping Russia choose, we will be choosing ourselves.