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The Domestic-Foreign Policy Linkage in Russian Politics: Nationalist Influences on Russian Foreign Policy

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One of the major characteristics of the foreign policy of the former Soviet Union was the degree to which policy-making was insulated from domestic political pressure of the sort wielded by interest groups in the West. Soviet leaders had considerable autonomy when devising and pursuing foreign policy initiatives. This is not to argue that Soviet foreign policy was conducted with little or no regard for domestic conditions, for that was indeed not the case. Foreign Policy typically reflected domestic political trends. Ambitious and costly foreign policies influenced domestic policies, and domestic conditions necessitated changes in foreign policy. Initially, in order to save the Soviet regime and his dictatorship in 1918, Lenin had to improve relations with some of the capitalist countries, especially Germany, to promote economic recovery. When the Soviet Union needed to avoid or postpone a war for which it was not prepared (as a result of the purging of the military and domestic dislocations), Stalin signed a pact with Nazi Germany. Despite these instances of clear linkage between domestic conditions and foreign policy objectives, it is important to stress that foreign policy decisions in the USSR were ultimately made at the discretion of the General Secretary, with perhaps some input from other members of the Politburo; public pressure was not a factor in foreign policy decisions, and interest groups of the sort which pressure Western governments did not exist.

Although the Soviet Union was a victor in World War II, the wartime alliance was replaced by the Cold War; Stalin closed the country to foreigners and lowered the iron curtain to conceal the country's weakness and extensive wartime losses and to ensure control over the Soviet people. When domestic conditions improved, the iron curtain was partly lifted in the mid-1950s. The détente of the 1970s was prompted, in part, by the need to import foreign technology and obtain financial credits. In the 1980s Gorbachev advocated a dialogue and reaffirmed the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems because of the deplorable state of the Soviet economy. The Soviet need for more butter rather than more guns required a degree of international stability and a reduction of tensions.

Despite this interrelationship between the domestic and foreign spheres of Soviet policy as illustrated in these few examples, communist-era leaders were not faced with organized efforts to influence foreign policy and were able, to a very substantial degree, to set and pursue their foreign policy goals and objectives without concern for opposition from groups outside the party and state leadership. However, even prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991

this situation had changed significantly. In fact, one of the major results of the domestic reforms implemented by Mikhail Gorbachev after 1986 was the opening up of the political debate and the growing challenge presented to the leadership on virtually all of its policies, both domestic and foreign.

When Gorbachev took over the reins of political leadership in Moscow in spring 1985 he found a Soviet Union whose internal and external policies were in disarray. The economy showed increasing signs of decline, as the USSR fell further behind the West and an increasing number of newly industrializing Asian states in the successful development and implementation of technological innovation (Gorbachev, 1987, p. 19; Aganbegyan, 1988, pp. 1–3). Increasing levels of environmental degradation, infant mortality, and alcoholism, along with declining life expectancy for males, were all indicators of serious problems facing the new Soviet leadership. In the foreign policy field the massive expenditure of scarce resources on new weapons systems had not succeeded in enhancing Soviet security. Although the Soviet Union had emerged as a global superpower with wide-ranging interests and capabilities, this position was based almost entirely on military power. The nuclear stalemate with the United States, the renewed activism of US policy, and the expanding role of other countries in global affairs, however, precluded turning this enhanced military position into effective political gains. The weaknesses of the Soviet economy raised questions about the possible overextension of international commitments and the limited relevance of the USSR for many of the most pressing of international problems—economic development, international trade, and hard currency debts.

Gorbachev committed himself to a major reform of the entire Soviet socio-economic-political system as a means of resolving those problems. The argument to support this reform can be summarized briefly as follows. The economic problems of the Soviet Union and the technology gap between the USSR and the West were expanding and implied a decreasing ability of the Soviet economy to support the legitimate needs of the population or to insure the military security and global standing of the Soviet state in the twenty-first century. Therefore, economic reform within the framework of socialism was essential, in order to overcome the economic problems and technological weaknesses that threatened to undermine the USSR's international status; required, as well, as a precondition for economic reform was a rejuvenation of the political process that would make officials more responsive to the needs of economic rationality (Izyumov and Kortunov, 1986, p. 29). Moreover, to overcome entrenched bureaucratic forces within the Soviet Union that would resist change, a more open but still controlled political system that encouraged criticism and rationality in support of reform was required. Finally, policies were needed that would permit the Soviets to benefit more fully from advances in the international economy and to accomplish, by means other than primarily military, major Soviet foreign policy objectives. In other words, soon after coming to power Gorbachev and his advisors laid out the justification for a major reform package that called for *perestroika* (restructuring), *glasnost* (openness), and democratization of the political process; they also noted the interdependence of domestic reform and changes in Soviet foreign policy.

The primary objectives of Gorbachev's campaign of *perestroika* and *glasnost* were based on the recognition that the position of the USSR in the world depended upon a dramatic improvement in the functioning of the Soviet economy and also of the political system. *Perestroika* became Gorbachev's call for major reform with the goal of revitalizing the economy, closing the technology gap, and turning the USSR into a fully competitive global superpower. In retrospect it is evident that Gorbachev underestimated the difficulty of reforming the Soviet Union and that he failed to reach his primary objective. In the foreign policy field, however, he introduced substantial changes that were to have a major impact on the future

security of East Asia.

The result of the new approach to world affairs was a reorientation of Soviet foreign policy between 1986 and 1989 that included major initiatives in relations with the West and path-breaking agreements on arms reductions, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe and the acceptance in 1989 of the anti-Communist revolutions throughout the region. The Soviet Union even supported the military operations of the United States and its Western allies in 1991 that drove the troops of its erstwhile ally Iraq from occupied Kuwait. These initiatives contributed substantially to the liberation of the Communist states of Eastern Europe from Soviet dominance and to ending the global confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States. They also resulted in the opening up of political and economic contacts between the Soviet Union and the West.

By the end of 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved into its constituent parts, the Cold War between the two superpowers had come to an end. Central to Gorbachev's new foreign policy had been the effort to normalize relations with the West and to reduce the tensions and the costs that had been inherent in US-Soviet relations for four decades. The arms reduction agreements that represented the first successes of this policy resulted in the withdrawal and dismantling of both US and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe. Moreover, the Soviets committed themselves, as part of the agreement, not to redeploy the weapons in Asia. In fact, Soviet relations with China, Japan and South Korea improved significantly. The Soviets reduced appreciably the number of the nuclear weapons deployed in Asia, while calling for the creation of an Asian-wide regional security system (Kanet, 1992, p. 18–19, and Chun, in press).

As the implications of Gorbachev's policies became increasingly evident, opposition emerged in the USSR. The reputed capitulation to the United States in the arms control negotiations, the abandonment of the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine under which the Soviet Union engaged in armed intervention in foreign countries to prevent the overthrow of communist rule, the pull-out of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and moves to settle outstanding differences with Japan—not to speak of the dismantling of the command economy, the beginnings of economic privatization, and the loss of monopoly status by the CPSU—were seen by many as evidence that the gains of the Russian Revolution were being abandoned. Already before the implosion of the Soviet Union in late 1991 the consensus on foreign policy collapsed, and Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze were under attack for the innovations that they had introduced into Soviet foreign policy. They were charged with encouraging the demise of Marxist-Leninist regimes in Eastern Europe, with abandoning long-term allies in the developing world, i.e. Vietnam, Cuba, Angola, and Mozambique, and with weakening the overall position of the Soviet Union in world affairs (Kanet and Katner, 1992).

The Rise of Nationalism and Russian Foreign Policy

The emergence of a sovereign Russian state, minus much of the territory acquired through conquest by Russian and Soviet rulers over the centuries, if anything accelerated the rise of Russian nationalism and its potential impact on foreign policy. Initially the foreign policy of President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev built on and extended that of Eduard Shevardnadze, the architect of Gorbachev's foreign policy in the late 1980s. For Kozyrev and the liberals who then staffed important positions in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia had to end its decades of isolation from the Western world. To do this required the establishment of effective institutions that would support and nurture the emerging democracy and market economy that they saw as an integral part of a new Russia. Relationships with the

outside world, whether with former enemies from the capitalist world or the newly-independent states that shared the experiences of the twentieth century with Russia as part of the USSR, were to be based on mutually-beneficial contacts, not on coercion or threats of coercion. Both Yeltsin and Kozyrev emphasized the desire for Russia to become a normal great power, not just a military power, while the latter noted his concern about the reemergence of the search for enemies and scapegoats which, he believed, would undercut Russia's integration into the democratic world (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1992).

The concrete expression of this foreign policy line meant initially a foreign policy of moderation in relations with other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)¹ and the Baltic states [although threats and even forms of intervention also occurred], a continued emphasis on strengthening the new economic and political ties with the West, and overall support for US and Western policy initiatives. However, already by 1993, in the second year of Russian independence, in part as a result of domestic pressures, Russian policy became more assertive and less accommodating.

Almost immediately after President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev proclaimed a policy that emphasized Russia's full integration into the Western-dominated international community, voices arose in Russia that condemned them for abandoning the interests of the Russian state and pursuing policies determined in Washington. The fact that Yeltsin and Kozyrev had seemingly assigned top priority to improving relations with the West, while virtually ignoring long-standing allies and the countries of the CIS, was also sharply criticized. In fact, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation toward both the countries of the CIS (or near abroad, as Russians call the region) and the world beyond, shifted appreciably after 1992 as a result of the widespread criticism (Lough, 1993, p. 57). For millions of Soviet people who proudly regarded the USSR as their own state and homeland, its disappearance was seen as a disaster. But for imperial minded Russians it was also a national catastrophe that caused a deep psychological trauma. Russian grievances over the collapse of the USSR were further intensified by the highly publicized stories (both true and false) of violations of human rights of those ethnic Russians who found themselves outside the boundaries of the Russian Federation after the Soviet disintegration. Various constraints on acquiring citizenship imposed by local authorities, language discrimination, the loss of former privileges, and other explosive issues concerning the rights of the 25 million Russians in the near abroad have substantially radicalized the political process within Russia itself, thus providing fertile soil for the growth of nationalist sentiments.²

The nationalist shift in Russian foreign policy manifested itself in more assertive statements about Russia's role in influencing political developments in neighboring states. This rhetorical toughness was also supplemented by the actual expansion of Russia's influence in the near abroad—through a variety of means that range from economic pressure to military support for opposition groups (Kozhemiakin and Kanet, 1997). Militarily, Russia supported the Rakhmanov government in Dushanbe after they ousted the decidedly anti-communist democratic-Islamist coalition that in Moscow was perceived to be anti-Russian. When fighting broke out, Russian troops were sent in, presumably to protect their compatriots from armed assaults on the Afghan

1. Original membership in the Commonwealth of Independent states included 11 new countries: Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The three Baltic states and Georgia never joined the CIS. Since its founding, however, CIS has lost two of the original members, Azerbaijan during 1992 and Moldova in summer 1993. Under Russian pressure Georgia later joined, while Azerbaijan and Moldova rejoined.

2. An estimated 3.5 million of the original 25 million Russians who found themselves in the near abroad in December 1991 returned to Russia by the end of 1995.

border, but in reality their mission was to fight on the side of the pro-Russian government in Dushanbe against its armed opposition (Goltz, 1993, p. 95). In Moldova the successor of the non-disbanded Russian 14th Army continues to be a factor in the continued existence of the self-proclaimed Transdnistr Republic which broke away from Moldova shortly after the latter gained independence. While the extent of Moscow's control over the 14th Army was never certain, it is clear that the Russian government did not condemn the actions of the 14th Army or its successor. There is even some evidence that the Transdnistr republic has the tacit, if not overt, support of the Russian government. The 14th was led by Alexander Lebed, who after his retirement from the military, became involved in Russian politics and who was for a short period in 1996 was Secretary of the Security Council. When he ran for a seat on the Transdnistr Supreme Soviet, he announced his candidacy in Moscow, while attending meetings with the Russian Defense Ministry. He supported the return of this piece of land to Russia. In 1994 Russia moved an additional 2000 troops into Transdnistr and blocked a CSCE fact finding mission from inspecting conditions in the Transdnistr Republic (Porter and Saivetz, 1994, p. 84). In Georgia Russia made its military and economic assistance contingent on CIS membership. When Eduard Shevardnadze finally agreed, Russian troops were sent in. The troops led by ousted former Georgian leader, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, were routed. In return for Russian assistance, Russia and Georgia signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation which enabled Russia to maintain military bases with Russian troops in Georgia (Porter and Saivetz, 1994, p. 85).

Economically, Russia is in a position to exert pressure on the countries of the near abroad. First, the Russian economy by virtue of its size vis-à-vis the former republics is in a far more advantageous position than those of the NIS. Russia continues to be the primary source of raw materials as well as the primary trading partner of the NIS. However, the case of the Baltic states illustrates well the economic vulnerability of the NIS in general. While they are in the most advantageous position of the NIS and have to some extent diversified sources of energy, raw materials, and export markets, they too are still vulnerable to economic pressure from Russia. Because of the small size of their economies, they are less able to absorb shocks associated with negative changes in imports, exports, or currency exchange rates. And Russia still accounts for roughly a quarter of imports and exports of the Baltic states (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1996, pp. 6, 29; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1997, pp. 22, 45, 65). As for the rest of the NIS, they are even more dependent on Russia both as a source of imports and exports.

Besides a more assertive stance concerning the near abroad, Russian foreign policy also shifted on a number of other issues. On the matter of the civil war in former Yugoslavia, for example, the Russians have consistently supported Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs against Western pressures. Although they initially voted for economic sanctions, they soon began calling for their reduction or elimination. In addition, as part of an effort to have Iraq and Libya pay large outstanding debts to Russia and to support long-term past allies, the Russians have improved relations with the two countries and have worked to have international sanctions modified or lifted. In fact, the issue of relations with states viewed by the United States as international outcasts—including especially the sale of both nuclear technology and military equipment to these states—has emerged as one of some concern. In East Asia the major evidence of a shift in Russian policy can be seen in the hardening of the Russian position on the future of the Northern Territories (the Southern Kuriles) (Kimura, in press; Buszynski, 1993, pp. 50–54; Meyer, 1993).

By fall 1996 the most critical issue-area in which the nationalist tilt of Russian foreign policy was most conspicuously felt—and the issue that divided it most clearly from the United States—

concerned prospective full membership of Central European states (i.e., Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic) and possibly the Baltic states in NATO. Although initially accepting the possibility of NATO's enlargement, Yeltsin's policy towards NATO changed dramatically by 1994 under the influence of conservative and nationalist political actors at home. Indeed, many Russians still see NATO through an historic lens of suspicion and consider the alliance's activities as directed against their country. As a result, Moscow's leaders made a strong effort to impede the process of NATO's expansion. Thus, for example, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev announced in November 1994 that Russia may give up [its participation in] NATO's Partnership for Peace Program if that bloc is enlarged, and that he might forego submitting Russia's presentation document [on its cooperation with NATO under the Partnership] if the next NATO council meeting adopted a bloc enlargement calendar.³ Kozyrev's successor, Evgenii Primakov, was even more forceful in denouncing NATO expansion and asserting the national interests of the Russian Federation.⁴ Yet, by spring 1997 the Russian government recognized that it was not going to succeed in thwarting NATO expansion and agreed collaboration with NATO in return for a NATO commitment not to introduce nuclear weapons into new NATO members in Central Europe (USIA, 1997).

Overall the progressive toughening of Yeltsin's foreign policy, in large part as a response to the growing strength of conservative and nationalist forces in Russia, indicates that the severity of Russia's problems at home, aggravated by the country's international misfortunes and the failure of the G-7 states to provide the amounts and types of financial support that Russians had expected, has been driving Russia to behave more assertively abroad. Nostalgia for the old empire has grown among many Russians disillusioned by the harsh reality of the reforms. Although Andrei Kozyrev, one of the most consistent advocates of a Western orientation in Russian policy, repeatedly denied any shift in Russian policy, it became increasingly clear—even prior to the appointment of Evgenii Primakov as his successor in early 1996—that Moscow was much more eager to respond to the nationalist mood of the Russian public than to the preferences of the international community (Zviglyanich, 1996). Statements by both communist leader Gennadii Ziuganov and current Foreign Minister Primakov about reestablishing the great power status of Russia, including the voluntary reintegration of the CIS states under Russian tutelage, raise serious concerns about the future orientation of Russian foreign policy. Similarly, the impasse that has emerged in Russian relations with Japan over the issue of the Southern Kurile Islands (Northern Territories) can be traced to the more nationalistic and assertive nature of Russian foreign policy.⁵

Internal political developments in Russia and growing differences between Moscow and the West have shifted the parameters of the political debate. The debate is no longer between the so-called Westernizers, who advocated the full integration of Russia into the political, economic and security structures of the West, and the Eurasianists, who emphasized the historical links of Russia with the East and pushed for a more independent and nuance policy. Rather, the debate

3. Russia's furious public opinion campaign against NATO enlargement and its threats to retaliate should NATO expansion go forward raised serious concerns in Central Europe. (RFE/RL Daily Report, 1994).

4. In an interview with the newspaper *Izvestia* August 1996, Primakov (1996) noted that Russian policy was designed to defend Russia's national interests and to prevent the emergence of a unipolar world under US command. Russia, he noted, would pursue as active policy in all parts of the world, as had the Soviet Union, it would no longer rely on the oral promises of the West, and could continue its vigorous opposition to NATO expansion.

5. On recent Russian policy toward Japan see Markov (1995), pp. 10–18; on the development of Russian-Japanese relations see Fritsche (1995). A Russian academic gives a very one-sided and hostile interpretation of Japanese policy (Tikhivinskii, 1995). His bias is evident in his summary of the 1955 negotiations: This kind of stand taken by the Japanese side was clearly unreasonable and aimed at foiling the talks. It was in marked contrast with the flexible and realistic approach of the Soviet Union. (p. 85).

is between those who argue for balanced, pragmatic relations based on Russia's interests with all countries of the world and those who advocate a new strategic alliance of the East against the West (Shlapentokh, 1995; Voskresenskii, 1996, p. 9; Fritsche, 1996). Yet even this new debate occurs within the context of a general consensus among the Russian political elite concerning Russia's proper role in the world. This consensus is based on changed perspectives about Russia's relations with the United States, whose objectives are now seriously questioned across the entire political spectrum in Moscow. Even erstwhile foreign policy liberal Vladimir Lukin, Russia's first ambassador in Washington and now chair of the foreign relations committee of the Russian State Duma, shares the view that US policy is based on naked power and the desire to ensure US dominance over Russia. The new foreign policy consensus in Moscow emphasizes the dominant role of Russia as a regional superpower (e.g., in relations with the other former Soviet republics), Russia's continued importance as a world nuclear superpower, and Russia as a great but not yet super power in world affairs. As we have seen, this reassessment of interests and policies has brought Russia into conflict with the United States and the West on a variety of issues, but also with Japan on the matter of the Northern Territories. The rhetoric associated with the presidential elections of late spring and summer 1996 and the potential hard-line impact of Security Council Chief Aleksandr Lebed on Russian policy provide ample evidence of a more assertive and unyielding Russian policy on issues deemed to be of national interest.⁶ In concluding an important analysis of the deep domestic political, economic and social roots of Russian policy, Leon Aron poses an important question: Is Russia engaged in a purposeful, sustained and coherent rebuilding of the empire—or is it merely fashioning a security belt, a 'sphere of influence' of the kind that for centuries has existed around most great land powers? (Aron, 1995, p. 34.) The answer is not clear, although it is important to recall the fact that assertions alone do not make policy; resource capacity and the willingness to use those resources are also essential.

Russian Policy in East Asia

Although the major focus of this paper concerns the impact of domestic factors on Russian foreign policy, in particular a heightened sense of nationalism, it is relevant to conclude with a brief discussion of their implications for Russian policy in Northeast Asia. A recent report prepared by the Institute of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences emphasizes that threats to Russian interests in Northeast Asia, the openly anti-Russian cooperation between the United States and Japan ... over Japan's territorial claims, and the unofficial collusion between the United States, Japan, China, and South Korea aimed at undermining Russia's sovereignty in its Siberian and Far Eastern areas, require Russia to rebuild its military strength, especially the Pacific fleet, in order to ensure a rational balance of interests with the NEA [Northeast Asian] countries (Institute of the Far East, 1995, pp. 11–12; Yakovlev, 1995).

For the most part the issues in East Asia that drive Russian foreign policy are related to both the security and the development of the Russian Far East. Although Japan, Taiwan and South Korea were central to Russian policy interests in 1992, the situation changed dramatically over the next 5 years. No longer are the economies of these capitalist countries seen as models for future Russian development. Rather, developments in China—which have matched strong

6. On 27 June 1996 Lebed made anti-Semitic remarks and called for banning foreign missionaries and restricting other foreign visitors from Russia. In a campaign speech on 30 June President Yeltsin rebuffed alleged calls by the Baltic states, Japan and others for redrawing borders involving the Kaliningrad Region and the southern Kurile Islands. (INTERFAX, 1996; Nichol, 1996).

central political control with economic liberalization—are seen as much more attractive a model for the future of the Russian Federation.⁷

In the explicitly security realm, the Russian–Chinese relationship has also emerged as a central component of long-term Russian objectives and policy. Both countries share the objective of resisting US domination in East Asia. The stability that good Russian–PRC relations creates for both countries permits them to concentrate their energies elsewhere. This does not mean that the new collaborative relationship between the two is without problems. The issue of Chinese migration north into the Russian Far East through the latter’s porous borders is one of great and increasing concern—especially to the local population and political leadership (Singleton, 1997; Boltuc, in press; Chun, in press). However, on the whole relations remain positive.

The most important current problem in Russian relations in East Asia concerns the bilateral relationship with Japan (Kimura, in press). Despite the significant movement during the Gorbachev years toward a political solution of the central outstanding issue of the Northern Territories (the Southern Kuriles), the problem has not been resolved. The cancellation of President Yeltsin’s planned trip to Tokyo in fall 1993 as a result of strong domestic opposition to returning the islands to Japan; heightened critical rhetoric on both sides; the initial refusal of President Yeltsin to accept disaster assistance from Japan, lest the Japanese try to use it to pressure Russia to return the islands—these and other developments soured Russian–Japanese relations appreciably in the period 1993–1995. Moreover, soon after taking over as foreign minister Evgenii Primakov exacerbated relations with Japan when he asserted that the solution of the issues that divide the two countries would probably be left for future generations (Agafonov, 1996, p. 2). What is clear is that the issue of the Northern Islands has become an important domestic political issue in Russia—as it is in Japan—and that the pressures on the Russian government from the military and from other nationalist forces prevents the kind of policy movement required to consider returning the territory to Japan.

The failure of Russia and Japan to resolve the issues surrounding the territorial question have also had a negative impact on the development of economic relations between the two countries. Japanese exports to Russia, for example, dropped by 70 per cent between 1989 to 1992—primarily as a result of Russia’s depression. However, as of 1995 they still had not returned to the level of exports in 1991. For Japanese traders and investors China has proven to be a far more attractive market in which to operate—in part because of the dynamism of the Chinese economy, in part because of the unclear situation in both Russian domestic and foreign policy (Titov, 1994, p. 55, Fritsche, 1995, pp. 25–29).

What is most ironic is the fact that political liberalization in Russia has played an important role in making Russian policy on the Northern Territories—and on a number of other issues, as well—less flexible. As the Soviet (and later Russian) political system moved away from its authoritarian base and the political leadership depended increasingly on public support, the ability of the government to set foreign policy goals and implement those goals was increasingly limited (Kozhemiakin and Kanet, in press). The rise of a vocal and assertive nationalism in Russia has meant that issues that previously were not influenced by political forces outside the Kremlin have now become intimately enmeshed in domestic politics. Nationalism has become an important factor in Russian politics, with the effect that the entire debate about Russian foreign policy has shifted dramatically away from its initial emphasize on joining the community of civilized nations—defined in practical terms as joining the community of major

7. On the reemergence of a strong collaborative relationship between Russia and China see Fritsche (1996).

industrial states—to ensuring the great power interests of the Russian state. Maintaining all the territory from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean inherited from the Soviet Union under any and all circumstances has become a central component of these interests, as interpreted by virtually all groups across the Russian political spectrum. Such a position, if maintained rigidly, will make it virtually impossible for Russia to resolve its most important differences and, therefore, to accomplish the objective of a stable security environment in East Asia based on a coincidence of interests of the major international actors in the region.

Conclusion

Political liberalization in the Soviet Union and Russia has had the effect of drawing interests outside the government into the foreign policy debate and has divided interests within the government itself, thereby creating a political opposition which did not officially exist and was certainly not acknowledged by the CPSU during the Soviet era. As a result, today's Russian leadership does not enjoy a *carte blanche* in the sphere of foreign policy in the way that Soviet leaders did. The Yeltsin/Kozyrev team began to face serious opposition to their foreign policy plank, both from the public and political opposition. Much of the criticism was nationalistic in tone and had the effect of hardening Russia's attitude toward the West, the near abroad, and East Asia. It is within this political environment that the issue of the Kurile Islands and its impact on Russian-Japanese relations must be understood.

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