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LETTER FROM EURASIA: RUSSIA AND AMERICA: THE HONEYMOON'S OVER

by *Alexei K. Pushkov*

An important shift has been taking place in Russians' attitudes toward the United States, reflecting a dramatic change in Russia's newly born political mentality—from initial euphoria to a more sober and, among some, skeptical or even angry view.

This shift could eventually result in significant changes in Russia's foreign policy. The elimination of President Boris Yeltsin's extremist parliamentary opponents from mainstream politics virtually excludes any possibility of a new cold war between Russia and the United States. So Russia's choice is not whether to have a partnership with the United States, but what form that partnership might take and how close it might be. How that choice will be made largely depends on Western and particularly American policy toward Russia.

As the heir to the Soviet Union, the independent Russia inherited the whole spectrum of Soviet attitudes toward the United States. That spectrum included everyone from Western-oriented dissidents exalting the United States as champion of human rights and democracy to ideological brontosaurus denouncing America as the embodiment of universal evil and decay.

In general, though, from the late 1950s on a growing fascination with America's might and its way of life became the central feature of the Russian perception of the United States. The United States became the country to imitate, though for different reasons: If liberal intellectuals were attracted mainly by the American democratic model, party bureaucrats hoped to find ways to boost Soviet industries and agricul-

ALEXEI K. PUSHKOV is deputy editor-in-chief of the weekly *Moscow News*. From 1988 to 1991, he worked as a foreign policy analyst and speechwriter for President Mikhail Gorbachev.

ture. Nikita Khrushchev's famous boast that "We will bury you!" has to be read much more as a manifestation of the Soviet ruler's envy of American success than as a policy directive.

When it became plain, however, that the Khrushchev slogan of "overtaking America" could never be fulfilled, the leaders of *perestroika* found another solution—getting closer to the United States instead of opposing it. That move, which would have seemed paradoxical a dozen years earlier, in fact made sense when the Soviet Union was heading for the major crisis that Mikhail Gorbachev and his team recognized. It was also psychologically comforting. The Soviets found it much more pleasant to be courted by the United States than to be confronted by it, without losing the long-cherished feeling of "equality."

Yeltsin's Russia has kept the basics of the Soviet "Love-Hate" view of the United States. "Love" definitely took the upper hand, and "hate," though not completely extinguished, has had to hide for a while. But "love"—especially in Russia known for its extremes—has its own dangers. When not shared, or if perceived as rejected, it can turn into its opposite.

The current views of the Russian political elite toward the United States have developed against that background. Four main groups share the political environment. The first roughly corresponds to the radical democratic wing in Russian politics, and professes the idea of strategic alliance with America and major concessions to Western countries in return for financial assistance and a gradual integration of Russia into international economic and political institutions. Until recently, practically the whole democratic mass media backed it, as did a distinctively pro-Western school of thought, traditional for Russian liberal intellectuals, that defined the public mood at the height of *perestroika*. With Yeltsin in the Kremlin, that school of thought, which sees America as the model for the future of Russia, came to strongly influence the Russian government as well.

Politically based in the "Democratic Russia" movement, it is personified by Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev, first deputy prime minister Yegor Gaidar, and the rather shadowy Gennady Burbulis, former first deputy prime

minister and one of Yeltsin's closest advisers. That group's strength lies in the fact that as of today it still determines Russian foreign policy. Yeltsin's October 1993 victory in the dramatic struggle with the Russian parliament and its leaders removed the extreme opposition to the group's line from the Russian political scene. Still, it is gradually losing influence among the public, intellectuals, and the government, which more conservative officials have recently joined. The group also suffers from internal weakness that limits its freedom of maneuver. Its initial aims, which included, among other things, the return of the Kuril Islands to Japan, often contradicted Yeltsin's domestic policy concerns. Those internal political realities occasionally forced him or Kozyrev to take a stance toward the "near abroad" at odds with U.S. views—as, for example, in Russia's quarrel with the Baltic republics over the status of Russian-speaking minorities, which led Moscow to attempt to intimidate those states through veiled threats of economic and political pressure, even to the extent of reconsidering the terms of the withdrawal of Russian troops.

A precarious balance in favor of a Western-oriented strategy could tip the other way if Yeltsin's government and the West err.

The second group, the moderate or statist democrats, are sometimes also called *demokraty-derzhavniki*—a derivative of the term *derzhava*, Russian for "a strong state." They emphasize Russia's defense of its national interests, above all in the so-called "near-abroad" that encompasses the former Soviet republics.

Growing dissatisfaction in the Russian political community with Yeltsin's foreign policy, and especially with his dealings with the republics, has strengthened that group. Its members have increasingly criticized the Kozyrev line. Although they favor partnership with the United States, they think a full-fledged alliance is not now realistic and in any case reduces Russia to a younger and willingly dependent partner. They have particularly attacked Kozyrev for not clearly defining Russia's foreign policy doctrine,

misunderstanding Russia's priorities and aims in Central Asia and other regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), subordinating Russia's national interests to support the West virtually unconditionally in the United Nations, and disregarding the problem of Russian-speaking populations in the Baltic republics, the Crimea, and Moldova.

Statist democrats, considering themselves students of *realpolitik*, insist that partnership with the West should not sacrifice Russia's national interests and security. They consider the CIS states to be of top importance to Russian interests and support strengthening political, economic, and military ties with them.

That group includes almost all of Russia's leading foreign affairs experts, as well as a number of important political figures, such as Vladimir Lukin, former head of the parliamentary foreign policy committee and Russia's ambassador to the United States; Yeltsin adviser Sergei Stankevich; St. Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak; Yevgeny Ambartsumov, until September 1993 chairman of the parliamentary foreign policy committee; and some top foreign policy officials. That movement has already reversed the Russian mass media's initially uncritical support for the Kozyrev line and seems to dominate the Presidential Council, an important advisory body to Yeltsin. As one of its members, Vladimir Volkov, head of the Institute of Slavonic and Balkan studies in Moscow, puts it, "there appears to be virtually no other approach to foreign policy in the Council." Evidently, important and perhaps divergent nuances exist inside the group.

That school of thought clearly represents the future direction of Russian foreign policy. Its followers can be found among the think tanks of a number of political parties and electoral blocs, from centrist to radical-democratic like first deputy prime minister Gaidar's bloc, "Russia's Choice." The absence of an important political party or movement to unite the group, however, is its main weakness.

The third group—call its members the statist bureaucrats—includes the bulk of the state bureaucracy, the military-industrial complex, top army officers, high-level officials in the Ministry of Defense, the Security Ministry, the

former KGB, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Skeptical or hostile toward a number of Kozyrev's actions, it constitutes the "hidden opposition" inside the state machinery. Presumably, Vice-President Alexandr Rutskoi and parliament speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, who were both jailed for their participation in the October uprising in Moscow, enjoyed much support among this group's members. But limited in voicing its protest because of the threat of discipline, the group has not exerted any significant influence until now on official Russian foreign policy. The group's importance, however, lies in just "being there," near the levers of power, and it is largely in control of the army. Some analysts think that it played an instrumental role in Moscow's support of Abkhazia in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, as well as in the defense of the so-called Dniester Republic, a Russian-speaking enclave in Moldova. The group's influence on Yeltsin's foreign policy may grow after the military helped Yeltsin crush the October insurgency.

The standing ovation Yeltsin won in the U.S. Capitol marked the peak of Russia's enchantment with the United States.

The statist bureaucrats are evident in the Yeltsin administration, starting with such pragmatically minded leaders as Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and including less-outspoken but also crucial players like Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and Security Council Secretary Oleg Lobov, who is reputed to be particularly close to Yeltsin. Another potentially significant figure is former Security Council secretary Yuri Skokov, an unsuccessful contender for prime minister in December 1992 whom Yeltsin fired last spring for not supporting his attempt to introduce emergency rule on March 20, 1993. At the beginning of September, Skokov created his own electoral bloc with the potential to attract a number of important personalities from the political center and to enjoy considerable support in the state machinery.

Skokov's views on foreign policy were ex-

pressed only once: in Spring 1992, when the Security Council he headed worked out the first draft (never approved by Yeltsin) of Russia's foreign policy doctrine. Parts of the draft leaked out in the press, creating a shock, for it was formulated in tough, anti-Western terms. One of the passages spoke of "the necessity to confront the United States" on a number of world policy issues. However, it seemed to be more a sample of old confrontational thinking than a basis for practical policy. It is extremely doubtful that Skokov and his followers would keep such views if they were ever included in the government. Their approach to the United States would presumably be guided by a mixture of pragmatism and reserve.

Russia's foreign policy will probably represent a combination of those three trends. That will not necessarily mean an anti-Western tack, but rather a pro-Russian, non-Western stance on a number of issues along Russia's borders.

The fourth group, the so-called radical opposition to Yeltsin's rule, is at least temporarily out of Russian politics as an organized force. It is not, however, ideologically or even politically dead. That group dominated the former Russian parliament and was backed by a number of right-wing communist ultranationalist newspapers that Yeltsin has banned since the October insurgency. It also included a part of the military and military-industrial complex, right-wing think tanks, and—paradoxically—some new businessmen strongly motivated by the nationalist idea. Composed of neocommunists and ultranationalists, that coalition enjoyed the support of 10–15 per cent of the population—mainly those suffering badly from Yeltsin's reforms, as diverse opinion polls showed.

Nothing short of a complete reorientation of Russia's development and foreign policy would satisfy the followers of that trend. Its leaders have inherited the old communist "hate" toward the United States, but they bring to it much more passion and paranoia, along with strong anti-Semitic overtones. They depict the United States as the center of a Western anti-Russian, anti-Slavonic, and anti-Orthodox conspiracy that aims to destroy Russia as a state and reduce it to a Western colony. True, on a personal level the coalition's leaders share an

admiration for America with the bulk of the Russian population. But their political message has been outwardly anti-American: They denounce Yeltsin's government and especially the Foreign Ministry as serving the interests of the West and above all of the United States, and call for dropping its pro-Western orientation in favor of alliances with China, Iraq, Cuba, and Arab radicals.

While it remains a part of Russia's public and political opinion, that trend has virtually no chance of evolving into an important political force in Russia, at least in the near future. Of course, the danger of its resurgence should not be underestimated, especially in case Yeltsin's liberal economic reforms result in a sharp rise of unemployment and mass social protest. It will constantly feed anti-Western and isolationist feelings in Russia—sentiments that, presumably, will stay politically marginal.

The varying schools of thought among Russia's political factions were reflected in a survey of leading Russian politicians, experts, and journalists conducted by the independent All-Russia Center for Public Opinion in June 1993. The survey shows that Russia is widely seen as a great power with important geopolitical and international interests to defend, but not one that should again confront the West.

Of those polled, only 4 per cent favor a return to superpower status for Russia, against 55 per cent who say Russia must remain one of the world's five leading powers and 30 per cent who want to see their country among the world's top 10 or 15 states. The poll's results also reveal a predisposition toward partnership and cooperation with the West, but not at the expense of Russia's national interests. For instance, 76 per cent support the actions of the U.S.-led coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991, 80 per cent back Germany's unification, and 55 per cent approve of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact—but 62 per cent oppose U.N. sanctions against Serbia and only 14 per cent support eventually returning the Kuril Islands to Japan.

Most important, though, a majority (55 per cent) of those surveyed assess Russia's foreign policy as "basically correct," while 43 per cent disapprove of it. Those figures show a precari-

ous balance in favor of a Western-oriented strategy—a balance that could tip the other way if Yeltsin’s government and the West err.

Causes of Discord

The essence of the shift in Russia’s attitudes toward the United States is disillusionment. It has a number of sources:

- Unrealistic expectations of the magnitude of Western and American assistance, fueled by the oversell of that aid by the earlier Gaidar government and democratic media;
- Kozyrev’s outwardly pro-American line; and
- U.S. actions, seen in Moscow as attempts to pressure Russia, that were interpreted as neglect of Russia’s political and commercial interests.

The incredible pace of the Soviet-U.S. rapprochement orchestrated by Gorbachev and his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, created a largely pro-American euphoria in the democratic mass media that unquestionably dominated the aftermath of the aborted August 1991 coup. The outburst of hope gave birth to an unrealistic but beautiful image of the Soviet Union, later Russia, entering into the family of free nations, supported by its big American friend—both politically and financially.

To some extent, euphoria from Russia’s jump into the free world after more than 70 years of communist rule was inevitable. Still, Yeltsin and Kozyrev, an outspoken *zapadnik*—Russian for “Westernizer”—made the mistake of supporting the newborn myth instead of realistically appraising the options and limits of Russian-American cooperation. Although the new democratic Russia was just beginning to build its foreign policy and its relationship with the United States, some limits on possible Western assistance and potential contradictions between Moscow and Washington appeared as early as the beginning of 1992.

At that time, though, the important thing for Yeltsin, as for all Soviet rulers before him, was to win over the United States, to become accepted by it. The words he uttered at the White House during his June 1992 visit to Washington—“I think this is the greatest day in my life”—were not just political politeness. Yeltsin really meant it: The reception President George Bush offered him and his triumphant

appearance before the U.S. Congress were unprecedented in Moscow-Washington relations and made Yeltsin more than equal to Gorbachev, thus fulfilling his long-held wish.

The standing ovation Yeltsin won in the U.S. Capitol marked the peak of Russia's enchantment with the United States. It lasted until the April 1993 Vancouver summit, fading shortly thereafter as problems and contradictions, unseen or hidden before, began to pile up and come out into the daylight.

Western help was the first source of the change in the mood of both the political elite and the general population. Along with gratitude for humanitarian aid and food supplies, skepticism over the volume of that assistance and Western readiness to help Russia began to creep into even the pro-Yeltsin media. The Vancouver package announced by Clinton, followed by his joint initiative with French president François Mitterand, was intended, among other things, to boost Russian reforms psychologically. But it probably came too late; in any case, it was marred by the sour aftertaste of the Group of Seven's \$24 billion package, referred to as the "Bush package" in Russia.

The announcement of that \$24 billion package in spring 1992 was undoubtedly dictated by good will, but proved to be a mistake. The emphasis on that figure when it was quite unclear whether the West could deliver such a sum and Russia could use it was counterproductive. The ill-fated \$24 billion—much of the Bush package never made it to Russia—did much to discredit the very idea of Western aid. Russian experts now recall the package with a sardonic smile, and the figure arouses nothing but irritation in "average" Russians.

The new aid plan announced at the April 1993 Tokyo meeting of the G-7 finance and foreign ministers was planned to correct the situation. Unfortunately, it too has fallen into the trap. The magic of \$43.4 billion (including \$15 billion of rescheduled Russian debt) evaporated as Russians learned that they had to meet a number of conditions to get the money. Even more important, they never felt the practical, daily consequences of the announced aid program. Thus Western and U.S. assistance, though considered extremely important by

Yeltsin and his government for the fate of their reforms, amounted to little in people's minds.

But what weakened the concept of stable Russian-U.S. cooperation is, ironically, Andrei Kozyrev's pro-American stance. At least three factors make Kozyrev's stance a potential handicap for a long-term Russian-U.S. partnership.

First, the faction of the Russian foreign policy community favoring close ties between Moscow and Washington generally believes that Kozyrev endangers those ties by not paying due attention to the internal repercussions of his actions. For instance, nothing forced Kozyrev to come out in such strong support of the June 1993 U.S. strike against Baghdad. Russian public opinion, even liberal pro-Westerners within Moscow political circles who have no sympathy whatsoever for Saddam Hussein, took a rather critical view of the attack and an even more critical view of Kozyrev's reaction.

Second, important agreements with America connected with Kozyrev's name are sometimes seen as damaging Russia's national interests. That has been the case with the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II), which its opponents accuse of subverting Russian security and giving unilateral advantages to America.

Third, many leading politicians and foreign policy analysts warn that Kozyrev's stance has led the West to expect too much of Russia's foreign policy. "For too long we have kept the West under the impression that a positive foreign policy in the case of the Soviet Union, and then Russia, is when we go along with everything the West does," says Andranik Migranyan, political analyst and member of the Presidential Council. "That is why any sign of independence in Russia's foreign policy catches the West unawares and seems abnormal." One consequence is that Russia's attempts to play its own role, not necessarily coinciding with the U.S. approach, in such crises as Bosnia sometimes encounter irritation and suspicion in Washington. In fact, Moscow's different tactics do not represent anti-Americanism but an attempt to follow what Russians perceive as their national interests in the Balkans.

Kozyrev Reconsiders

Trying to ease the criticism of the Foreign

Ministry and to adjust his own stance to the evolving Russian foreign policy mentality, Kozyrev decided by the end of 1992 to introduce some corrections to his diplomacy. Under pressure from the Supreme Soviet, he began gradually to change Russia's position on the former Yugoslavia, trying at the same time not to endanger his special relationship with the Clinton administration. Those shifts managed to moderate somewhat the attacks on the Foreign Ministry—if not from the extreme opposition, at least from those who call for an independent but not anti-American role for Russia in the Balkans and think it would be wrong for Moscow to sever its historical ties with Serbia.

Kozyrev undertook yet another attempt to adjust his line to Russia's new needs. In an article entitled "Partnership with the West: a Test of Strength," published in *Moscow News* on October 25, 1992, he wrote that "the romantic period of the relationship between Russia and the West is through." In the article, Kozyrev argued that Western countries should do more to assist Russia's democratic and market reforms by helping it, among other things, to find new export markets for its armaments, space, and high-tech products.

But Kozyrev's attempts to find a new balance in relations with the West and the United States have not been considered very successful by the bulk of Russia's foreign policy community. "His hands are tied," emphasizes one leading analyst. Nothing illustrated that better than the July 1993 Tokyo summit episode between Kozyrev and U.S. secretary of state Warren Christopher reported by the American press. When Kozyrev tried to explain to Christopher the importance for Moscow of the cryogenic rocket sale to India and the embarrassing situation in which Moscow would find itself were the deal to be canceled, he received as a reply, "Andrei, you've got to do better."

The tough position of the U.S. administration on that sale was largely held in Moscow as proof of U.S. indifference toward Russia's needs and national interests. The Kremlin's cancellation of the transaction under evident American pressure was a watershed in Russian attitudes toward the United States, going far beyond the importance for Russia of the deal

itself. The reasons are obvious: Washington demanded that Russia reconsider a deal it had already concluded, one personally guaranteed by Yeltsin to Delhi. The sale was regarded as a first step in Russia's search for new markets for its space and military technology.

That episode has led to a distinctively harsher tone in the Russian press concerning the United States. The media accused it of trying to shut Russia out of foreign markets under the pretext of the Missile Technology Control Regime, and finally of promoting its own commercial interests at Russia's expense. Normally pro-Western analysts began to stress that it had been naive to count on U.S. sympathy and support, that Americans follow their own national interests and therefore would not consider those of Russia.

“Love” has its own dangers. When not shared, or if perceived as rejected, it can turn into its opposite.

The Clinton administration's attempts to break another Russian deal, a sale of three military submarines to Iran, have also aroused a certain irritation in Moscow. “The Americans are overplaying it,” said a top Russian diplomat. “Three old diesel submarines sold to Iran cannot possibly change the military balance in the Persian Gulf.”

The demonstrable lack of U.S. reaction to the problem of Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia came under emotional criticism as well. It helped to revive the old Soviet belief that Americans care about human rights only when it suits them. “If our Western partners are not engaged in double standard practices they should support Russia in this,” insisted Migranyan. “The Soviet Union and Russia have made such a number of fantastic unilateral concessions to the West that it should offer us absolute support at least in some matters.” And when the Clinton administration hastily took sides with Lithuania during the recent Moscow-Vilnius clash over possible Russian compensation and the final date of Russian troops' withdrawal from Lithuania, it only added to the growing disappointment with U.S. policies.

As a result, in the All-Russia Center for Public Opinion's poll, only 4 per cent of Russian policymakers and experts named the United States as Russia's number-one friend, whereas 22 per cent put Germany in that place, though personal sympathies of members of Russia's foreign-policy establishment are divided rather evenly between Germany and America. The poll results also show a strong desire to see Russia build relations with the United States as equal partners—61 per cent support that option, against only 28 per cent in favor of outright alliance with the United States.

Unfortunately, sometimes American behavior toward Russia on critical issues was perceived as a sign of arrogance, especially when U.S. officials criticized the Russian position on conflicts along its borders without proposing alternatives.

In fact, in today's Russian-American relationship, style is at least as important as substance. An attitude that does not take into account understandable sensitivity on the Russian side over its relations with the former Soviet republics would not be in America's national interest. Quiet diplomacy would be better in those cases.

Today, Russia and the United States are on the threshold of a new relationship. What kind of relationship it will be depends to a large extent on political developments in Russia. But it will also be determined by the approaches and policies America eventually chooses.

In that respect, the "new wave" based on old distrust toward Russia that seems to be gaining strength in the United States worries those in Moscow who favor democratic reforms and a stable partnership with the United States. If that trend in America feeds a backlash in Russia, the result could be a political collision fraught with new dangers for both countries. It does not mean that the United States should turn a deaf ear to dangers that may emanate from Russia or disregard its own national security. But two main mistakes must be avoided. The first would be to interpret the gradual economic and military reintegration of the former Soviet Union as a sign of Russia's imperial restoration and as a threat to the West. The second would be to isolate Russia.

Economically, the Soviet Union was a single body. After the country fell apart, it is not

surprising that, after a short period of local elites' assertiveness, trends toward economic union and a common ruble zone are winning out. It would be naive to expect another development path in a situation where none of the former Soviet republics can gain access to markets outside the former USSR and all of them depend on the same economic area. They can be neither included in any economic bloc that would drag them to modernity, nor assisted sufficiently to reconstruct their economies and reorient their exports and imports. The Baltic republics, with their small populations, a relatively high level of development, and special treatment from the West, only represent the exception that proves the rule. Finally, as Ukraine's experience has amply shown, almost all of the newly independent states rely on Russia's oil and gas, as well as other resources and machinery. It is only natural that in this setting Russia act as the economic nucleus of an emerging community.

At the same time, Russia's military presence in some of those states may raise legitimate concerns in the West, particularly in light of Moscow's unclear control over Russian troops deployed in former Soviet republics like Moldova or Georgia. But, it must be recognized that Georgia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan requested a military presence because of their lack of viable defense structures and the threat to their leaders from armed opposition. That is not to say that such a presence is not seen in the Russian government as reflecting the country's vital interests. For instance, the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan is widely viewed as the common border of the CIS countries and, as such, a *de facto* Russian border. One can argue, of course, that Russia is using the former republics' dependency to strengthen its role in post-Soviet space. But what state would not do the same?

The United States ought to acknowledge Russia's legitimate interest and its special role in the CIS. Unless Moscow resorts to military threats or direct blackmail, there is nothing wrong with Russia's being the nucleus of the CIS: The price the West must pay for the Soviet Union's disintegration is accepting Russia's leading role in the area of its historical influ-

ence. In any case, nothing seems to be able to prevent Russia from playing that role, and it is not by chance that even such an extremely cautious politician as Kozyrev has started to drift in that direction. For Russia, the CIS is not merely a region among others but a first-priority area—just as Latin America is for the United States. It does not imply that Russia deserves the freedom to do whatever it likes there. Nor should any great state have that freedom in any region of the world. But if the United States chose to resort to tough talk about Russia's legitimate role in its own neighborhood, it would seriously compound the strains in the partnership between the two countries.

The second mistake would be to attempt to marginalize Russia—for instance, by accepting the East European countries into NATO while leaving Russia outside. Such a step would deal a serious and possibly fatal blow to the Kozyrev line, irritate the military, stir up anti-Western feelings, and weaken pro-Western politicians.

An even bigger folly would be to try to use Ukraine to counterbalance Russia. Unlike U.S. support of the Baltic republics, which almost all Russians regard as a “cut-off piece of bread,” an America openly taking sides with Ukraine would set off a surge of anti-American feeling that even the most democratic and Western-minded Russian politicians would have difficulty in controlling. The purely geopolitical suggestion that Ukraine can act as a buffer between Russia and Europe ignores the 11 million Russians who live in Ukraine, as well as the risk that a serious collision between Kiev and Moscow could result in Ukraine's falling apart and the eruption of a Yugoslavia-type conflict—but hundreds of times worse.

The United States still enjoys a most-favored-nation status in the Russian political psyche. American assistance to Russian reforms still earns it Russians' gratitude. It would be a disaster if prejudice and distrust prevailed in both countries. It is one thing if Russia really reverts to old imperial policies. Then America would have cause for alarm. It is quite another if it pursues its natural goals and interests by political means. The West must understand that critical difference. Otherwise, America and its Western friends risk losing Russia for good.