Neither War nor Warmth

Failures of Rapprochement in Post-Cold War U.S.-Russian Relations

by

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PEACE, n. In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting.

-Ambrose Bierce, *The Devils Dictionary*

Unless the peace that follows recognizes that the whole world is one neighborhood and does justice to the whole human race, the germs of another world war will remain as a constant threat to mankind.

-Franklin Delano Roosevelt

I refuse to accept the idea that the "isness" of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal "oughtness" that forever confronts him.

-Martin Luther King Jr.
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To the residents of 239 A Pine- thank you for being a second home whenever I need one.

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Introduction:

My generation is the last that can say they were children of the Cold War. By the time I was born the Soviet Union was falling apart at its seams, and in just over two months would cease to exist. I can only imagine this must have been a very optimistic moment for my parents. After being born into the intense nuclear stalemate of the early 1960’s, they were having a child at a time when the nuclear powers were beginning to disarm and the geopolitical landscape would no longer be defined by bipolarity and fear. And yet, despite the seemingly triumphant global moment taking place in the early 1990’s, U.S.-Russian relations have never developed to a point that fulfills this era’s optimism. Throughout the time it has taken me to develop into an adult, the U.S. and Russia have failed to develop the stable basis for long-term geopolitical cooperation. Rather than beginning the post-Cold War era with an inspiring rapprochement, the relationship between the two former enemies has maintained a quiet intensity and at times devolves into tensions comparable to the worst moments of U.S.-Soviet relations. After growing up and learning of a Cold War that was supposedly in the past I cannot confidently say that U.S.-Russian relations have significantly improved since the time I was born. It is this lifelong observation that serves as the basic inspiration of my thesis. After the U.S. and Russia have failed to live up to the promising expectations present at the time of my birth, I somewhat naively wish to understand why. What has it been that has prevented the U.S. and Russia from ever achieving true peace in the wake of the Cold War?
The importance of the relationship between the US and Russia can be considered rather obvious. Although Russia has taken on a somewhat diminished status since the end of the Cold War, it still remains highly significant to the balance of international order. Russia is geographically the largest country on earth and contains numerous natural resources such as oil and natural gas; Russia maintains the Soviet Union’s permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council and has also gained membership to the G8 as well as the World Trade Organization; Russia stills maintains various extents of influence over many democratically struggling post-Soviet states; and perhaps most significant from an international security perspective, Russia still holds a largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction on earth. Neither the U.S. nor Russia is a geopolitical force than can be ignored. When the two states are able to cooperate there is a potential for significant international order and good. However, when they are on more tense terms it is a dangerous with great potential to tie up security resources and stall geopolitical progress. Were the two states able to achieve a relationship of stable friendship it would be of great mutual benefit, and yet since the Cold War, any short-term periods of cooperation have never shown any real chance of permanence. This thesis examines the success and failures of U.S-Russian relations in an effort to explain why the two states have never achieved a sustainable rapprochement.

**An alternative approach**

It is a common truism that history is written by the victors. Is it also the case that victors get to shape the future of foreign policy? The question of
whether the U.S. can be said to have actually won the Cold War is a complicated one that will be examined further, but it is an undeniable fact that the U.S. emerged from the Cold War era far more geopolitically powerful and stable than the Soviet Union succeeding Russian Federation. Thus the U.S. is often thought of as the victor of the Cold War. Because the U.S. emerged from the Cold War as the most significant global power, it is seemingly a common view among scholars that the U.S. gained a right to define the direction of geopolitics in the post-Cold War era. Accordingly a great of portion literature on post-Cold War U.S.-Russian relations tends to blame Russia and its refusal to acquiesce to American interests as the primary source of the failure of the two states to achieving rapprochement. For example, in the 2009 edition of his book Russian Foreign Policy Jeffery Mankoff argues that relations with Russia are difficult because Russia pursues a foreign policy that ambitiously expects “the rest of the world to give Moscow the deference it feels it is due as one of the world’s leading powers.”  


2 Janusz Bugajski, Cold peace : Russia’s new imperialism (Westport, Conn. Washington, DC: Praeger ; Published in cooperation with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004).
that Russia actively wishes to differentiate itself from the West and therefore is an unreliable partner for cooperation.³

I aim to take an alternative approach to this common trend in analysis of U.S.-Russian relation, by instead focusing on the various ways American policy has prevented effective cooperation with Russia. As will be seen, there is compelling evidence that the U.S. is equally, if not more, responsible than Russia for the failure to achieve a lasting friendship. This is not to say I entirely disagree with the various arguments made about Russia’s contributions to U.S.-Russian tensions -- indeed there are many ways in which Russia could have made the process of rapprochement much easier. However, I strongly believe that just because the U.S. has traditionally been more powerful than Russia, does not mean it is without fault or above scrutiny. Great strength does not mean a state’s foreign policy is infallible.

**Power as a hindrance to cooperation**

To gain an understanding of why the U.S.-Russian relationship remains in conflict, I first had to gain an understanding of what it means to be at peace. This thesis is greatly based in the security literature on the achievement of stable peace. I explored various theories as to how states can develop out of the Hobbesian state of competition suggested by realists and instead develop a relationship of productive peace. After reading various liberal and constructivist works on international peace and community I concluded that long-term international cooperation is not fundamentally based on common institutions or

³ Charles King, ”The Five-Day War: Managing Moscow After the Georgia Crisis,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (2008).
cultural values such as suggested by democratic peace theory, but is instead the result of initially strategic considerations. The development of common values is important to the longevity of a stable peace, but these values come into play as a secondary bond in the relationship rather than its initial impetus. Recognizing this fact has allowed me to understand a significant deficiency in U.S. policy since the Cold War. Many American international actions have been based on ideological considerations rather than specific security needs. The pursuit of democratic values as a foreign policy has at times made it very difficult for the U.S. to coordinate with states such as Russia more concerned with individual strategic goals.

The belief that America’s unchallenged power after the Cold War allowed it the right to define the direction of geopolitics is not just one that exists in academics. It has seemingly been the understanding of many American leaders that America’s experiences in the Cold War not only affirmed the supremacy of American international power, but also the supremacy of liberal democracy as the ideal form of government. Since the end of the USSR there has been an American triumphalism based on a conception of democracy as a powerful force to bring global stability and counteract global evil. This triumphalism has been a part of the foreign policy of every post-Cold War President. Although each expressed their commitment to democracy slightly differently, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all based many of their international decisions on a belief that democracy can only bring about good. Although it is
true that democracy is a very equitable and effective form of government, this does not necessarily make its universal application an effective foreign policy.

Since the Cold War, there have been three legitimate opportunities for rapprochement with Russia: The Clinton Administration could have achieved a cooperative relationship with Yeltsin’s Russia immediately after the end of the Cold War; The Bush Administration could have sustained early cooperation with Russia achieved at the beginning of the War on Terror; or, the Obama administration could have used its 2009 “reset” with the Kremlin as the foundation for a true geopolitical friendship. Each of these periods of potential rapprochement was ultimately prevented by a slightly different expression of America’s uncompromising belief in the supremacy of its values and power. For Clinton, the spread of democracy was an automatic way to achieve stability in the former Soviet Union. His administration believed that the adoption of democratic governance was enough to suggest Russia was now ally. The Clinton White House accordingly took a passive advisory role with Russia when it could have had a more active role in shaping Russia’s future. Russia did not become more democratic, and instead American passivity allowed Russian leaders to develop a rather anti-American foreign policy and consolidate an autocratic style of rule. For Bush, democracy was a supreme reforming force that could be spread through military might. The Bush administration took on an active unilateral crusade to spread democracy globally. Although such a stance might have helped to reform Russia a decade earlier, the Clinton administration’s appeasement of Russian interests had led to a much stronger and assertive
Russia that did not respond well to America’s new expressions of democratic might. Russia’s dislike of America’s new policy direction would eventually lead to a breakdown in the cooperative relationship that had begun to develop in response to the strategic needs of the War on Terror. Finally, although the Obama Administration has backed away from the use of military force to spread democracy, it has not reduced its support for democracy as the ideal form of government. Instead of reestablishing relations with Russia so as to effectively tackle strategic concerns, the Obama Administration has tried once more to actively shape Russian politics, leading to yet another rapid decline in U.S.-Russian relations.

**Organization**

The body of this thesis is divided into four chapters. The first of these chapters offers a primer in the ideas of rapprochement and stable peace. The chapter illustrates the delicate role constructivist values play in the process of rapprochement and will provide a theoretical framework for the remainder of the thesis. The other three chapters individually analyze each of the missed U.S.-Russian opportunities for rapprochement and illustrate how American mistakes significantly contributed to the breakdown of relations. Chapter two examines the difficulties in the relationship between America and Boris Yeltsin’s Russia. The transition into the post-Cold War era offered the opportunity to redefine the U.S.-Russian relationship as a functional friendship. However, as will be seen, the Clinton Administration’s leniency towards Yeltsin based on a misjudgment of the ability of democracy to
shape Russia’s future lead to Russia developing national interests incongruous with those of the U.S. Chapter three delves into the U.S.-Russian relationship of the early 2000’s when the states were under the leadership of George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin. I argue that the shift in the global landscape that resulted from the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks provided a new opportunity for the U.S. and Russia to undertake an effective partnership, but that the Bush Administration’s decision to undertake unilateral pro-democratic y policy caused for a breakdown in the relationship after a rather short-lived period of cooperation. The fourth and final chapter studies the U.S.-Russian relationship since the beginning of the Obama administration up to the present. The 2000’s significantly changed the U.S.-Russian power dynamic such that there was the opportunity to engage in a more equitable and friendly relationship. I argue the breakdown of the “reset” in the relations between Obama and Russia’s Dmitry Medvedev resulted from an American unwillingness to comprise. This American decision to not truly pursue rapprochement suggests a dangerous misunderstanding of the breadth and sustainability of America’s contemporary power.

Despite numerous chances to learn from mistakes of the past and shift policy so as to facilitate a friendship with Russia, there has been a continuity of disruptive beliefs that risk eventually causing irreversible damage to the U.S.-Russian relationship.
Chapter I: A Primer in Rapprochement
How the United States and Russia Could Become Friends

A 2011 report by the Belfer Center for Science and Center for the National Interests distilled the United States’ relationship with Russia since the Cold War to a simple yet poignant statement. “While Russia is not our enemy, neither has it become a friend.”¹ The two states no longer fear that they will destroy one another through nuclear annihilation, but they also do not involve each other in successful cooperation. The relationship is not nearly as dangerous as it was during the heights of the Cold War, but it is still plagued by moments of great tension and threatening rhetoric. A peace does exist between the two states, but it should be considered rather tenuous. The relationship undoubtedly remains in a place where the two sides must at least consider the other a potential future threat. A tepid peace is better than no peace at all, but there are certainly more advantageous alternatives. Were the relationship to develop to develop to a point where the states truly considered each other partners and friends, it would be an improvement in two ways: First, each state would gain the benefits of mutual cooperation. Second, each would also free up security resources for reallocation, as they would no longer have to prepare for the possibility of a war with one another. Thus the question emerges: why have the

U.S. and Russia failed to become friends? Many former adversaries have managed to become close partners in the aftermath of a war; think of the American relationship with both Germany and Japan since World War II. What is it about the situation of the U.S. and Russia that has prevented such a friendship from occurring?

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for answering this question. I begin by defining the concept of stable peace, a term analogous with geopolitical friendship. I then describe two approaches used to explain the formation of stable peace, concluding that a constructivist approach is more useful for explaining U.S.-Russian relations than liberal democratic peace theory. Next I explain Karl Deutsch’s model of a security community as a more specific application of the constructivist rapprochement; I show how the work of Deutsch and those who have built upon his model introduces the helpful idea of thinking of the achievement of stable peace as a stepwise process. Finally, I introduce the term of rapprochement as alternative way to describe the earliest stage of stable peace formation and examine two of the most common geopolitical scenarios in which rapprochements occur. The remainder of my thesis will explore how the U.S. and Russia have had multiple missed opportunities to pursue rapprochement and how American policy has contributed to this fact.

**The Meaning of Stable Peace**

Before answering why an amicable relationship between the U.S. and Russia has yet to occur, it is first necessary to define exactly what a geopolitical
friendship is, or more specifically, what it means to achieve peace. Theorist Kenneth E. Boulding wrote extensively on the subject, but as he acknowledged, “Peace is a word of so many meanings that one hesitates to use it for fear of being misunderstood.”² Although peace is a word that most have an innate general understanding of, it is a more complicated concept than people tend to realize. Peace is a word with both positive and negative meanings, and this means it is a word with both positive and negative connotations. Positively, peace implies a presence of tranquility and order. On the negative side, it is the absence of turmoil and war.³ The bright-eyed pacifism of 1960’s American protest songs might lead one to think of both the positive and negative components of peace as a purely good thing, but one must remember that Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement of Adolf Hitler leading up to World War II, was a decision with the aim of avoiding military conflict, and thus an act of peace.⁴

The use of a general definition of peace is not deliberate enough to be useful when speaking of US-Russian relations. A general definition of peace is the absence of violent conflict, yet by this standard the U.S. and the USSR maintained a relationship of peace throughout most of the Cold War. Looking at contemporary relations between the two states, the fierce rhetorical exchanges over contentious issues such as NATO expansion and missile defense systems that have come to define the relationship are peaceful by way of non-violence,

³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., 2.
but certainly fall short of peace as defined by order and tranquility. It is fair to call the current state of U.S.-Russian peaceful, but few would say this is an ideal peace. A more desirable relationship would be one in which the two powers no longer consider war to be an option. This type of relationship is something that is realistically achievable in geopolitics and is commonly referred to with the term “stable peace.”

Boulding suggests that human history can be divided into four different patterns of peace and war. There are periods of nearly incessant war, there are periods of what Boulding calls “unstable war” when war is the norm but stretches of peace do break out, and there are periods of “unstable peace,” when peace is considered the desirable norm but war is known and expected to break out from time to time.⁵ Lastly, there is the possibility of stable peace. As Boulding defines it, “Stable peace is a situation in which the probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved.”⁶ Stable peace, is the negative definition of peace is taken to its extreme. Not only is war not present, it is no longer a significant consideration. This is not to say that states involved in a stable peace will not disagree with each other, nor even that they will encounter less situations of contention. It is however, to say that they have developed a reliable framework for conflict resolution without the use of force to a positive and sustainable effect.

Boulding’s conception of stable peace is a part of larger group literature on how to achieve friendly international relationships. While exact definitions of

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⁵ Ibid., 12.
⁶ Ibid., 13.
stable peace differ slightly, authors who write about stable peace are in agreement that unlike what is preached by international relations realists, the geopolitical landscape does not have to be primarily defined by the threat of war or actual violence. While one might be tempted to disregard such a concept as overly optimistic, one should remember that much human interaction outside the realm of international politics is in a state of stable peace. Despite a relationship entirely defined by competition, one would never expect two dueling car companies to consider acts of violence against one another.  
Likewise, viable examples of stable peace exist throughout the contemporary geopolitical landscape. Think about the entirely demilitarized border of the U.S. and Canada, or how unlikely it would be for a war to break out between member states of the European Union. All these relationships have developed out periods of unstable peace and war, as recently as just in the past century. Therefore, although the relationship has been plagued by conflict and remains highly tense, it is not unreasonable to think that a similar stable peace might be achievable between Russia and the United States.

**Models of Stable Peace**

There are various different ways theorists account for the possibility of stable peace each with different geopolitical implications. One of the most common explanations for the possibility of stable peace is liberal democratic peace theory. Liberal thinking is based on the simple yet meaningful premise

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7 Ibid., 15.
that democracies do not go to war with each other. From this belief liberal thinkers conclude that stable peace is achievable through the wide spread of democracy and liberal institutions. One of the earliest proponents of the basic concept of democratic peace theory was Emmanuel Kant in his 1795 essay “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch.” Kant argued that the “First definitive article for perpetual [or stable] peace,” is that, “The civil constitution of every state should be republican.” He believed that representative government reduces the chances of war because, “If the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared...nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war.” Contemporary liberal theorists argue along similar lines to Kant. Many suggest that democratic leaders are held to greater constraints in their international decisions because they must consider the desires of their constituency. They are less likely to pursue unpopular wars and will therefore be more peaceful in general. Liberal thinkers also argue that because liberal democracies have compatible cultures and values they are more likely to be able to engage in peaceful relations with one another.

Although there are an overwhelming number of recent historical examples that seemingly prove democratic peace theory, the theory is still

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subject to a great amount of criticism. Many realists argue that there is simply not enough data to fully prove democratic peace theory. In the long scheme of history, wars are rare and liberal democracies have only existed for a short time. Thus it can be said that that even though few democracies have gone to war with each other over the last century and a half since democracies truly came into being, this has not nearly been long enough for democratic peace theory to be consider axiomatic. Others argue that democratic peace theory is only proven through self-fulfilling logic. Many liberal theorists consider war-like behavior to be illiberal and thus often dismiss any states involved war as undemocratic by definition. The most compelling argument against democratic peace theory is the simple reality that correlation does not always equal causation. Many have argued that examples of the avoidance of war often cited by liberal thinkers might be better explained as the result of realist or deeper constructivist considerations.

Moving forward I will disregard liberal thinking in my analysis of U.S.-Russian relations for a couple of reasons. Foremost, accepting democratic peace theory would significantly reduce the meaningfulness of my project. It is fairly easy to argue that Russia does not meet the conditions to be considered a liberal democracy, and thus democratic peace theory could be used as a highly

simplistic explanation as to why the U.S. and Russia have failed to achieve stable peace. However, I also ascribe to the belief that examples of democratic peace can often be explained by more complex mechanism than simply the existence of democracy. By looking deeper into constructivist explanations for stable peace it is possible to gain a much richer understanding of the concept, as well as one that is not limited to a single style of government.

Constructivist explanations for stable peace take a far broader approach than democratic peace theory. As constructivists recognize the social and cultural forces at play in international relations they point to deeper connections than political structure to explain the formation of stable peace.\textsuperscript{14} The seminal work on constructivism based stable peace theory is Karl Deutsch’s \textit{Political Community and the North Atlantic Area} first published in 1959.\textsuperscript{15} Deutsch argued that a group of states could move beyond the need of war to settle differences through the gain of some sort of “we-feeling.”\textsuperscript{16} From a constructivist view, similar domestic institutions can contribute to a sense of “we”, but unlike in the case of democratic peace theory, they are not a causal or necessary component of stable peace. Myriad other factors of similarity also come into play such as history, religion, language, and social structure. No single type of connection is necessary to the formation of a “we-feeling”. This fact makes it very easy for

\textsuperscript{14} Kupchan, \textit{How enemies become friends : the sources of stable peace}: 19.
\textsuperscript{15} As constructivism did not really become a major school of thought in IR until the 1980’s it is more appropriate to think of Deutsch as a proto-constructivist. However, his book is still widely considered the basis for contemporary constructivist thinking on stable peace.
constructivist thinkers to explain why current situations of stable peace exist, but proves far less useful for explaining why and how future outbreaks of stable peace might occur. Constructivist thinking is also often criticized for greatly overlooking the some of the realist security concerns that are often at play in international decision-making. While realists perhaps place too large an emphasis on these types of concerns, a general sense of “we” does not sufficiently explain why a state would choose to subjugate balance of power concerns for sake of initially risky peaceful relations.

**Security Community**

From the basic constructivist framework there emerges a model for stable peace that Deutsch termed a “security community.” Security communities have since become the common starting point for theorists interested in stable peace. Deutsch introduced the concept of a security community as follows:

“A SECURITY COMMUNITY is a group of people which has become ‘integrated.’

By INTERGRATION we mean the attainment, within a territory, of a ‘sense of community’ and of intuitions and strong and enough and widespread enough to assure, for ‘long’ time, dependable expectations of ‘peaceful change’ among its population.

By SENSE OF COMMUNITY we mean a belief on the part of the individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on a least one point: that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of ‘peaceful change.’

By PEACEFUL CHANGE we mean the resolution of social problems, normally by institutionalized procedures, without resort to large-scale physical force.

A security-community, therefore, is one in which there is a real assurance that the members of the that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way.”

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This basic definition is in some ways little more than a restatement of what it means to be engaged in a relationship of stable peace, but most scholars have come to expand the definition of a security community so that it means a group of states who have formalized their commitment to integration and stable peace through some basic system of treaties or laws.\(^{19}\) As the practical effects of each are more or less the same, I will use the terms security community and stable peace rather interchangeably.\(^{20}\)

Since Deutsch’s original work many scholars have tried to expand the security community model so as to it better encompass realist concerns and better explain how a “we-feeling” can be reached. A useful development has been to look at security community formation as a stepwise process. The first political scientists to propose that security community can be achieved through a graduated process were Michael Barnett and Emanuel Adler in their 1998 anthology calling for further research into Deutsh’s work, *Security Communities*. Barnett and Adler divided security community formation into three stages: nascent, ascendant, and mature. The nascent stage begins not through an explicate desire to form a community but through a desire for mutual benefits through greater security and lower transaction costs.\(^{21}\) States at this stage at

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\(^{20}\) Because the U.S.-Russian relationship is made up of only two states, I will primarily only refer to stable peace and security community as bilateral relationships. Please be aware that both are terms that can also apply to a group of states engaged in long-term friendship; stable group relationships was something Deutsch was particularly interested in.

very least acknowledge that they potentially have something to gain from cooperation. They accordingly engage in what might be considered test transactions to see if the other state is useful and can be trusted. The ascendant phase is defined by tighter networks and the formation of new mutual institutions. The interactions are not just for immediate benefit as is the case at the nascent stage, but also because they are convenient and make immediate practical sense. At the mature stage, the expectations and trends of cooperation developed at the earlier stages become fully internalized and virtually irreversible. At the mature stage states can be considered to enjoy a true stable peace. The common values that help prevent them from going to war with one another have been significantly institutionalized and internalized to the point that mutual cooperation might be considered a way of life.

In his 2010 book How Enemies Become Friends, Charles Kupchan offers a slight alternative to the Burnett Adler model by proposing a four step model for stable peace formation focused on the types of geopolitical transactions between states that occur at each level of development, rather than the level of trust that is being achieved. In Kupchan’s model the first step towards achieving stable peace is unilateral accommodation: one state makes a deliberate concession to an adversary in order to begin a process towards peace. Next comes a stage of reciprocal restraint: the states forming the peace trade concessions so that they each can become comfortable with the fact that they are moving away from rivalry. Third, the states undergo a deepening of societal integration:

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22 Ibid., 53.
23 Ibid., 55.
interactions between the societies begin to occur more significantly and more often on non-diplomatic levels leading to greater intercultural understanding and helping to subvert popular perceptions of rivalry. Finally, the states generate new narratives and identities: there is a significant cultural shift giving forth to a communal identity such that each side views the other as a close friend rather than even a former adversary.24

Rather than choosing to use either the Kupchan model or the Adler Barnett model to define the development of stable peace, I believe the two approaches can be productively combined into a hybrid system in which the level of security community development is determined by both the types of transactions taking place and the level of trust being achieved. This hybridization is possible because it is very easy to see how each of Kupchan’s transactional developments contributes to the achievement of the different Adler Barnett stages. Unilateral accommodation and reciprocal restraint help lead to a nascent form of community, societal integration can be considered to correspond to the ascendant phase of stable peace, and the generation of new narratives and identities can be considered the basis for a mature community. Formalizing these connection, stable peace can be said to develop over three stage; the formational stage in which unilateral accommodation and reciprocal restraint allow for a basic level of trust in strategic interactions; the intermediate stage when social integration substantiates the relationship through the

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formation of value-based bonds; and, finally, the achievement stage when narratives shift and strategic needs are seamlessly defined by common values.

This stepwise conception of security community is based primarily in a constructivist way of thinking, but not to an extent that entirely disregards realist considerations. In essence, the achievement of stable peace might be described as the gradual transcendence of power-based behavior though the formation of value-based bonds. When the achievement of stable peace is considered as a developmental process, each step represents a greater level of integration beyond realist concerns until strategic need and identity-based motivations become inseparably one in the same. In other words, a stable peace is when a relationship that began out of basic realist security concerns develops to the point that the continuation of the relationship comes to be considered a strategic need in itself.

Theories such as democratic peace theory that ascribe stable peace to purely value-based considerations are over simplifying the process through which a security community relationship is achieved. In its most basic form stable peace is still about strategic concerns much like any other form of international cooperation. What makes stable peace special is that the basic bond of cooperation becomes strengthened through cultural integration thus leading to a communal we-feeling and a lasting relationship. Still it is important to realize that a bond of common values is not what forms the essential basis of a stable peace. The foundation of a security community is still strategic
compatibility. If the relationship makes sense from a strategic stance common values can come to develop with time.

**The Concept of Rapprochement**

In the case of Russia and the U.S. since the Cold War it is really only important to think about the first formative stage of stable peace development. Since the Cold War, the two states have yet to achieve a stable enough strategic foundation such that they could truly begin undergoing the societal integration necessary to develop a deeper security community relationship. Accordingly, the question of why the U.S. and Russia have failed to achieve friendship since the Cold War can be simplified to the question of why the two states have never reached the formative stage of stable peace development. The remainder of my thesis will look to explain how American actions contributed to this failure. Rather than repeatedly referencing back to the various stages of stable peace formation, I will instead often refer to the formative stage of stable peace development with the term “rapprochement.” The terms can be considered one in the same. During a rapprochement two former adversaries coordinate strategic needs to an extent that they can be substantiating cultural and value connections.

Looking at the concept more deeply, there are a few strategic scenarios that especially lend themselves towards the beginnings of a rapprochement. That is, there are specific geopolitical instances when it makes sense for countries to shift from a relationship of animosity and instead consider the benefits of mutual accommodation. These scenarios each lend themselves to
slight variations in the development of rapprochement. In the case of U.S.-Russian relations since the Cold War it makes sense to consider two types of rapprochement: transitional rapprochement and changing of the guard rapprochement.\(^\text{25}\)

In the anthology *Reversing Relations with Former Adversaries*, Burton M. Sapin suggests that adversarial international relationships can be turned friendly as, “the product of either a dramatic internal change in one of the adversaries or a serious military conflict between the two.”\(^\text{26}\) In other words, international enemies can put their differences behind them if one side undergoes an internal shift such that it is now takes a different stance on the major issues of contention, or if the issues are settled with finality through war. From this we get the concept of transitional rapprochement -- the development of compatible strategic needs among adversaries as the result of a significant geopolitical shift.

The most common type of transitional rapprochement occurs as the result of war. After a war the victor is given significant power over the vanquished. It thus has the power to shape the strategic needs and abilities of the weaker state such that they are more compatible with its own needs and values. This coerced strategic shift allows for a basic rapprochement that is then

\(^{25}\) For context, another rapprochement scenario that I will not fully explore is the bandwagon rapprochement. This is when former adversaries set aside differences in order to counter a mutual threat. Although it was not successful in the long-term, the U.S. and USSR underwent this type of rapprochement during WWII when they collectively fought the Axis Powers.

solidified through continued restraint and value exchanges. The strongest examples of this type of rapprochement are the marked shifts in relations that occurred between the United States and both Germany and Japan following World War II.\textsuperscript{27} Despite great enmity during the war, the U.S. has since come to count both of these states among its closest allies. The key to the United States’ successful rapprochement with these countries was that they were so thoroughly defeated following the war and thus both underwent significant domestic transitions away from the ideology that had driven Axis aggression. Following the war, both states cooperated during a period of allied occupation suggesting good will and an ability to act with strategic restraint. As a result the U.S. was able to maintain friendly relations with each country following their regain of independence.

Transitional rapprochement can also result from a purely internal political shift within a country. If there is a highly significant election, or more often a revolution or coup, it can lead to the rise of a new political regime more open to cooperation with an adversary. Given that there is typically a strong continuity in a state’s strategic goals and communal values, it is only a highly disruptive transition that will allow for rapprochement. Just electing a leader of a different party within a liberal democracy is not often going to lead to significant reevaluation of the state’s geopolitical adversaries. Strong examples of internal transition based rapprochements are the relationships the U.S. and USSR each built with the various leaders of proxy states during the Cold War. Indeed,

\textsuperscript{27} ibid.
rapprochement is most successful when a new regime rises to power with the deliberate intention of forming a closer bond with an adversary state rather than when the newly compatible strategic needs are coincidental.

In *How Enemies Become Friends*, Kupchan suggests a second scenario ideal for rapprochement in which one of two adversarial parties simply decides to give up in claim on issues of conflict in hope of achieving more peaceful relations. Kupchan simply refers to this process as rapprochement, but to distinguish it from the concept of transitional rapprochement, I will refer to it as changing of the guard rapprochement. A changing of the guard rapprochement occurs when one adversarial party deliberately decides that the current state of relations is not strategically beneficial. Accordingly, that party becomes willing to reduce its stake in issues of conflict. While transitional rapprochements are related to larger shifts in a state’s geopolitical circumstance, a changing of the guard rapprochement is specifically related to the individual relationship that is being changed, generally in response to many gradual developments. Most examples of this type of rapprochement involve a traditionally more powerful state choosing to no longer challenge the up and coming power of another state--hence the term changing of the guard. A classic example of a changing of the guard rapprochement was the decision of Great Britain to recognize the power of the United States and no longer pursue conflicting interests in the Western Hemisphere beginning in the late nineteenth century.

For most of the 1800’s the British and Americans were fierce rivals. Great animosity had remained between the two states following America’s victory for
independence, at points leading to further violence and aggression such as during the War of 1812. Although the U.S. proved to be a formidable opponent, the British Empire continued to meddle in American foreign affairs in attempt to maintain strong influence in the Western Hemisphere. During the America Civil War, for example, Britain had supported the confederacy in hopes of weakening the US and gaining the upper hand in territorial disputes in South America.²⁸

However, as the nineteenth century wore on, British leaders began to realize that even as possibly the most powerful state in the world, Britain’s global commitments were greater than it could easily meet with its resources. Although the British Military was still stronger than the American military, Britain had many other engagements globally considered more pressing than continued animosity with the U.S.²⁹ British leaders came to realize that the constant risk of war with the growing power was not worth benefits gained from continued adversarial engagement. Thus when U.S. threatened to militarily intervene in an 1895 dispute between Britain and Venezuela over the Venezuelan border with British Guiana, Britain begrudgingly acquiesced to American demands. Rather than engage in military action, as might have been expected of the two rivals all that past century, the British chose to unilaterally accommodate the US, agreeing to settle its dispute with Venezuela through arbitration and by also expressing a willingness to acknowledge American Monroe Doctrine.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., 75.
³⁰ Ibid., 77.
An act of unilateral accommodation such as this is the important first step in any changing of the guard rapprochement. One of the parties must deliberately elect to avoid confrontation and instead offer its adversary some act of good will. This opens the door for the other side to show reciprocal restraint, by graciously accepting the act of accommodation and not taking advantage of its adversary’s cooperation. In the case of Britain and the U.S., American leaders responded to British concessions by amiably reducing their demands and allowing some British territories to be exempt from arbitration. By going through these initial transaction of basic friendship, two adversaries are able to build a foundation for rapprochement continued cooperative action. If each continues to show a willingness to accommodate rather than fight the other side, enmity can gradually be transformed into stable friendship. As friendly interactions continue, the two sides can become more socially integrated and come to culturally view each other as allies rather than adversaries, further substantiating the relationship. In the case of the U.S. and Britain, continued cooperation through the turn of the century quickly made the animosity of the past no more than a memory. The two states are of course today engaged in a highly successful stable peace.

Conclusion

Both transitional and changing of the guard rapprochement were common throughout the twentieth century and various former enemies have become what can be considered effective friends. One significant exception to

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31 Ibid.
this has been the adversarial relationship between the United States and Russia. Since the end of the Cold War there have been three significant opportunities for the beginnings a stable peace to emerge but each time the relationship devolved back towards enmity. The first chance for rapprochement was during the 1990’s in the years immediately following the end of the Cold War. The conditions were potentially in place for a transitional rapprochement, but various conflicts of interest proved irresolvable and interactions between the two states at times nearly returned to a Cold War intensity. Second, in the years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks the U.S. and Russia underwent a period of highly successful cooperation suggesting that a transitional rapprochement was perhaps finally taking hold with a new generation of leaders less politically connected to the Cold War. Unfortunately this period also ended with a significant deterioration in relations. Finally, with the reemergence of Russian foreign power beginning in the mid 2000’s and the increasing strain on American international resources that resulted from the War on Terror there were the ideal conditions for a changing of the guard rapprochement. However, American-Russian relations up to this very moment continue to decline. In the following chapters I will look closely at each of these three periods of time and determine what factors helped to prevent rapprochement from occurring. This study will further substantiate the definition of each of these types of rapprochement and shed light on why America and Russia have never successfully fully moved beyond their adversarial past.
Chapter II: The End of the Cold War, but not the End of Animosity
President Clinton and Boris Yeltsin

In 1989 just as the world was beginning to understand the oncoming end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama published the essay “The End of History?” in The National Interest. In his piece Fukuyama suggested that the end of the Cold War was not just an end to the battle for global power between the United States and Soviet Union, but also the definitive ideological victory of liberal democracy over communism and authoritarianism. As Fukuyama argued, “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” Although Fukuyama acknowledged that geopolitics would still be defined by conflict in the immediate future and that not all states would be quick to adjust to liberal governance, he believed that democracy was, “the ideal that will govern the material world in the long run.”

Fukuyama’s argument was philosophical and not meant to inform policy, but in many ways it reflected an American triumphalism that would come to emerge in the wake of the Cold War. American leaders came to hold liberal democracy as the practical, and not just theoretical, ideal for international politics. Democracy became somewhat of a one-size fits all answer to the various

challenges of the geopolitical world. Rather than establishing a deliberate and security based foreign policy strategy to fill the void that now existed without an obvious geopolitical enemy, the Administration of President Bill Clinton instead focused on the spread of liberal values in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union. The American belief was seemingly that it had won the right to dictate foreign policy, and that the lesser states that had emerged from the USSR would recognize this fact and willingly embrace a democracy based rapprochement.

As was argued in the previous chapter, compatible values are not the basic foundation for rapprochement. They are only a secondary component used to build upon a basic strategic compatibility. By working to create ideological change rather than a practical strategic shift in post-Cold War Russia, the U.S. was misjudging how Russia would act in reaction to its weaker post-Cold War geopolitical status. Instead of becoming more liberal and bandwagoning with U.S. interests as might be expected of a lesser state, the Russian leadership of the 1990’s would take countless actions that were anti-democratic domestically, and anti-American internationally. Such behavior suggested an incompatibility with America’s democratic post-Cold War vision. However, despite difficulties, the Clinton administration did little to hold Russia accountable for its transgressions, idealistically hoping that the positive influences of democracy would take hold and curtail Russia’s insolent behavior. Seemingly caught up in a post-Cold War optimistic triumphalism about the power of democracy, the U.S. failed to realize the deeper implications of Russia’s contrarian behavior. Instead,
of taking actions to push Russia towards a more appropriate foreign policy, the U.S. appeased the Russian desire for influence such that Russia felt no need to make concessions to Western interests or to practice strategic restraint. Thus the two states developed a relationship based on incompatible international interests and unrealistic expectations. No foundation existed for any rue opportunity for rapprochement.

**Democracy as Policy**

From the moment the Cold War ended, the U.S. held rather unrealistic expectations as to the power of democracy to transform post-war relations. Henry Kissinger suggests there were three common views on the threat of the USSR during the last two decades of the Cold War. There was a group of people that believed the Soviet system could be transformed as a result of diplomatic the negotiations over nuclear arms control, “a group that viewed Communism as the principal if not the only, challenge to peace in the world and held that permanent peace could only be achieved to bring about the collapse of communism; and a third group that sought to contain the Soviet Union...until exhaustion eroded Communist ideological fervor and changed the Soviet Union from an ideological cause to a state pursuing traditional national interests.”

The theme pervasive through all three of these viewpoints is a belief that a primary source of America’s challenges with the USSR was its commitment to communism. Indeed, the first two of these viewpoints seem to suggest that Russian relations could be entirely reversed simply with the end of communism.

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Thus, when the Berlin Wall fell and communism had indeed collapsed many Americans were perhaps premature to declare victory, expecting Russia’s acquiesces to democracy and U.S. interests to come naturally.

In the American understanding of the Cold War, stark constructivist ideological distinctions had supplanted realist strategic considerations. Soviets had come to be considered the enemy more so because there were communists than the fact that they were a rival geopolitical power. From this perspective, an apparently democratic and anti-communist leader coming to power in Russia was enough to offer a feeling of security. In his inauguration speech as Russia’s first democratically elected president Boris Yeltsin proclaimed that it was Russia’s intention to “turn into a prosperous, democratic, peace-loving, law-abiding and sovereign state.”

The optimistic American reaction was to take statements such as this at face value. The result of this mindset was that American diplomacy lost the deliberativeness that had driven the Cold War. As Kissinger succinctly sums up, “The Western Democracies began to act as if Russia’s domestic reform was the major if not the sole, key to a stable relationship. Russia was treated not as a serious power but as the subject of occasionally condescending disquisitions of the state of its internal domestic reform.”

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3 Carey Goldberg, "Yeltsin Takes Oath as 1st Popularly Elected Russian President Soviet Union: The essence of his course is ‘radical reform,’ the populist says. Gorbachev vows cooperation," Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext) 1991.
4 Kissinger, Does America need a foreign policy?: toward a diplomacy for the 21st century: 74.
After the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 President George Bush did not get overly excited about the future of U.S.-Russian relations. As he described it to Mikhail Gorbachev a month later, when it came to the USSR, his administration was “in favor of reserved behavior.” However, with the transition to the Clinton Administration at the beginning of 1993, an aggressive American commitment to Russian democracy became a primary diplomatic stance. On the campaign trail, Clinton began to gain a lead over Bush after criticizing the incumbent President over his, “ambivalence about supporting democracy.” Alternatively, Clinton and his fellow Democrats wished to pursue a pro-democracy in foreign policy based on a belief that liberal democracy was positively an inevitable outgrowth of globalism. American politicians were not disingenuous in their belief that Russia’s democratization was as a legitimate path to geopolitical reform. It was widely believed that Russia was on a positive transitional track and could eventually prove a strong American partner. On a visit to the White House in March 1993, even former Cold Warrior President Richard Nixon emphasized the positive trend of Russian democratization urging Clinton to “pull out the stops” when backing the Yeltsin government in Russia.” Advances in U.S.-Relations such as the successful negotiation of the START II arms control treaty between Bush and Yeltsin during Bush’s final month in office.

5 Derek H. Chollet and James M. Goldgeier, America between the wars: from 11/9 to 9/11: the misunderstood years between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the start of the War on Terror, 1st ed. (New York: BBS PublicAffairs, 2008). 2.
6 Ibid., 42.
only helped to bolster the ever-popular pro-Russian democracy mindset as Clinton assumed leadership.\(^8\)

Had Yeltsin truly been a leader who acted with reverence to liberal values it might have indeed created the basis for a highly productive friendship with the United States. However, despite widespread American elation over perceived progress, the reality of democracy in Russia was that it was not nearly as liberally democratic as to warrant its celebration in the West. Although Yeltsin was a popularly elected leader who used lots of charismatic democratic rhetoric, he was in actuality much more a political pragmatist than a democratic idealist. Many of his actions from the moment he took office did more to entrench his power than to support a trend towards liberalism in Russia. Although Yeltsin owed much of his early political success to the support of Democratic Russia (DemRossiya), Russia’s primary block of legitimately pro-democracy politicians, Yeltsin moved himself further away from populist politics following his actual ascent to the Presidency. Instead of remaining loyal to the Democratic movement, Yeltsin appointed many pragmatist politicians who had once been a part of Gorbachev’s communist regime, seemingly gaining their support after assuring them that DemRossiya would be prevented from gaining any significant political power.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) Chollet and Goldgeier, *America between the wars: from 11/9 to 9/11: the misunderstood years between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the start of the War on Terror*: 306.

Similarly, although Yeltsin had begun his political career as a parliamentary leader in the Russian Duma, once he became President he worked to consolidate power in the executive branch rather than create a true cooperative parliamentary system. Formal Russian independence in October 1991 offered Yeltsin a legitimate chance to bring democratic reform to Russia through the pioneering of a new Russian constitution with a true liberal basis. Instead, Yeltsin chose to keep the pseudo-democratic 1978 Soviet-era Constitution and worked to affirm his power in a “presidential pyramid”. Russian political scientist Lila Shevtsova describes this pyramid model as defined by, “strong executive power supported by presidential appointments of loyal supports to leading positions at all levels and rule by presidential decree.” Despite the democratic rhetoric surrounding it, this system was in many ways closer to Soviet rule than American democracy. Shevtsova goes as far to call it, “A new version of the old Soviet transmission belt.”

While American leaders were no doubt aware of Yeltsin’s illiberal tendencies, it seems that policy was to overlook these democratic lapses, as Yeltsin was still progress compared to Soviet rule. As Clinton commented to Strobe Talbott, one of his lead advisors on Russia, “Yeltsin drunk [was] better than most of the alternatives sober.” As long as Russia at least pursed democracy, it no longer had to be considered an enemy. Any small anti-democratic issues Russia might have had could be written off to the fact that Russia was an insolent nascent democracy that simply had to be taught its

10 Ibid., 21.
manners. In his political memories Talbott suggests the Administration’s reaction to early signs of Russia’s democratic failings was that the Kremlin simply needed to be given “the spinach treatment,” compelled to take the democratic course that was good for it.\textsuperscript{12} The hope was that through constant American support and guidance, Yeltsin and Russia would come to live up to their good democratic intentions with time, eventually leading to stability and peace.

Throughout the 1990’s there Yeltsin’s Russia consistently failed to fulfill American conceptions of the post-Cold War, yet each time the Clinton administration chose to maintain its belief in Russian democracy and worked to accommodate Russia’s behavior. In October 1993 a standoff between Yeltsin and Russian parliament over Yeltsin’s centralized power escalated to the point of civil war in the streets of Moscow. The three days of fighting between armed civilian supporters of the Parliament and the Russian military climaxed with Yeltsin ordering army tanks to shell the Russian Parliament until the leaders inside eventually surrendered.\textsuperscript{13} Such an event was anything but liberal democratic but it also affirmed Yeltsin as the leader of Russia’s future. As a result of the fighting Yeltsin was able to throw his political rivals and jail further consolidate his power with the passing of a new constitution.\textsuperscript{14}

The Kremlin undertook similarly dishearteningly anti-liberal actions a little over a year later when it began the First Chechen War in December 1994.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{13} Shevtsova, \textit{Yeltsin's Russia : myths and reality}: 84.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 85.
The occurrence of the war itself did not have to be problematic. Chechnya was a rogue Russian province that refused to recognize Russian authority and had begun to undertake terrorism against Russian citizens in support of its independence. It was justifiable that Russia take some action to reassert its sovereignty and put down the terrorist threat. The problem was the extremity to which Russia was willing to go in order to exert its sovereignty. When small scale military raids proved to have no effect on Chechen resolve, Yeltsin authorized a full scale invasion by the Russian military into Chechnya resulting in the deaths of thousands of Chechen civilians, all technically Russian citizens.\textsuperscript{15}

With its actions Russia had formally broken two of its commitments to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: failing to notify the organization of a large-scale military mobilization and failing to respect civilian populations and instead seek a peaceful solution.\textsuperscript{16}

Russia’s actions in Chechnya constituted significant human rights violations and a significant disrespect of international law. Had Yeltsin’s government been more caring or deliberate, these transgressions could have been avoidable. These illiberal government actions were exactly what American foreign policy in other parts of the world was aimed at fixing, shown by the military missions in places such as Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti. However, the U.S. chose to be rather uncritical of Russia. According to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the administration’s official policy was that Russia had right to

defend its territory against succession and that Russia had to live up to its agreements to respect human rights.\textsuperscript{17} As to how to reconcile these two policy points, the administration offered no real insight. As Vice-President Al Gore expressed publically when visiting Moscow on December 14, 1994 just a few days after the war had started, America considered the war “an internal matter.”\textsuperscript{18} Instead of addressing human rights issues, the Clinton Administration considered it more beneficial to attempt to move forward in continuing to court Russian cooperation.

Although this stance showed Russia that the U.S. had respect for it and did not wish to meddle in its domestic affairs, this passivity was a counterproductive towards achieving rapprochement. Yeltsin’s decision to preference power over democratic values suggested a lack of restraint and little desire to concede to American interests. Rather than taking a hardline stance early on, so as to push Russia towards a more desirable line of policy, the U.S. chose to be restrained and allow Russia the opportunity to learn from its own mistakes. Unfortunately, Russia never really learned on its own, so the United States was simply appeasing the development of new somewhat authoritarian state.

\textbf{Russia’s Continued Geopolitical Aggression}

The Clinton administration could subvert their concerns for Russia’s domestic problems in hopes that things would work themselves out with time, but this type of wait and see attitude was something much more difficult to uphold, when Russia came to interfere with the American interests on the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Talbott, \textit{The Russia hand : a memoir of presidential diplomacy}: 150.
international level. Had Russia truly been liberalizing in the way Americans had hoped, it should have held closely similar international views to the U.S. and other Western powers and when in disagreement with Western interests simply deferred for sake of maintaining amicable relations as well as access greatly needed economic aide Yet throughout the 1990's Russia would prove far more difficult than other reforming post-Soviet states and take actions somewhat beyond the scope of its perceived lesser geopolitical status.

Difficulties with Russia were in part because of a Russian strong headedness. Yeltsin and other Russian leaders maintained a belief that despite momentary weakness Russia was still worthy of global significance. Thus the Kremlin attempted to remain actively involved in the geopolitics, especially with concern to the territory of the former Soviet Union, in hope that it might once again wield powerful influence. Had the U.S. initially taken a more aggressive stance against Russia's right to dictate Eurasian policy, the struggling state might have altered its behavior so as to be more appropriate to its lesser geopolitical status. Instead, the U.S. was rather accommodating to Russian interests in the region, and this allowed for Russia to maintain a disruptively contrary stance.

The first hints that Russia would preference regaining regional influence over becoming fully integrated into the liberal order came during the violent Bosnian war. The majority of Western liberal leaders were mortified by the acts of genocide believed to be taking place as part of the war and hoped to somehow intervene to in order to prevent them. Despite its professed commitment to democracy, Russia was far less concerned with the humanitarian side of the
conflict and instead wished to maintain geopolitical support for its ally, the Serbian Yugoslavian government. While much of the UN was willing to impose strong sanctions and threats against the Yugoslav government, Russia constantly lobbied for Western restraint on the issue. The general trend over the years of the conflict was that the West would consistently issue warning to Serbia while Russia would do all it could to prevent these threats from being followed through on.\textsuperscript{19} Although Russian leaders seemingly acknowledge the abhorrent carnage going on in the war, moralism was not enough to sway them from political interests. They likewise seemed to care minimally about Western pressures. As Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev tellingly comment in response Strobe Tallbot’s attempts to persuade Russia to support Western wishes in the region, “It is bad enough you people tell us what you’re going to do whether we like it or not. Don’t add insult to injury by also telling us that it’s in our interest to obey your orders.”\textsuperscript{20} This statement suggests Russian leadership had no real interest in pursuing a relationship of reciprocal restraint with United States. The Kremlin was saying it would rather get its way than engage in a productive friendship with the West. Failing to recognize this impasse in relations, the U.S. would continue to accommodate Russian interests in Bosnia. The Clinton Administration might have hoped that Russia would eventually come to recognize the benefits of cooperation but all these concessions were really doing was substantiating Russia’s ability to reject compromise.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 76.
Russia would once again create international difficulties when Western leaders debated the purpose of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the post-Cold War era. Although NATO had originally existed only to militarily counteract the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War, many Western leaders thought it could remain a highly useful alliance. For one thing, the continuation of the alliance would allow for an easy mobilization of large-scale international military action should it be required, but also, NATO could serve as a socializing institution, inspiring former Soviet countries to undertake military reform in order to possible gain the benefits of NATO membership. Yet Russia saw the continuation of NATO as a threat to Russian interest. On the surface Russia could argue against NATO expansion because it was a consolidation of Western power to the exclusion of Russia.\footnote{Ibid., 94.} More deeply, many Russians likely worried that NATO expansion into former Soviet territory meant that Russia would never again wield as much geopolitical influence as it once did.\footnote{Bugajski, \textit{Cold peace : Russia's new imperialism}: 2.}

Recognizing that for sake of relations with Russia as well as other strategic concerns, NATO expansion would be best as a gradual process, the leaders of the organization decided to create the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program as a very inclusive preliminary first step for NATO expansion.\footnote{Talbott, \textit{The Russia hand : a memoir of presidential diplomacy}: 98.} Any state could join the PfP and begin basic coordinated efforts with the alliance. When NATO announced this plan in October 1993 Yeltsin was initially very happy with the PfP as a sign the West was going to act gradually in continuation
of NATO, but a year later, after the PfP had actually got started and begun accepting members, Russia refused to join.\textsuperscript{24} Around the same time Yeltsin gave a speech, undoubtedly in reference to NATO expansion, at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe warning that the current state of global relations, was threatening to move Europe “into a cold peace.”\textsuperscript{25} Such heavy rhetoric suggests just how large an issue NATO would continue to be. The Clinton Administration would eventually get Russia to agree to conditions for NATO-Russian cooperation with the signing of the NATO-Russian Founding Act in 1997, but Russia’s cooperation would always remain more of a bargaining chip for leverage over the U.S. rather than a progressive step towards better relations with the West. The end of the Cold War would have seemingly suggested that Russia need not be a primary concern in the formation of the global security scheme and yet Russia was still acceding a significance so as to hold the entire NATO expansion project hostage.

\textbf{Undeserved Integration}

Despite clear signs that Russia had strategic interests greatly incompatible with those of the West, American leaders failed to recognize that this would prevent rapprochement. Even as Russia spurned the Western liberal community and expressed its disinterest in being a part of its institutions or cooperating with its humanitarian goals, America and the rest of the Western

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{25} Norman Kempster and Dean E. Murphy, "Broader NATO May Bring `Cold Peace,' Yeltsin Warns Europe: Russian president accuses U.S. of being power hungry. Speech comes as nations finalize nuclear treaty," \textit{Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext)} 1994.
Community never responded by suggesting that continued cooperation with Russia was perhaps not worth the effort. Despite all the difficulties and anti-democratic lapses, there was never any effort to further curtail Russia’s international standing, instead greater actions were undertaken to include Russia in the international community. It was somewhat naive, for example, that Western leaders worked to expand the Group of Seven to become the G8 and include Russia in 1997, despite the fact that Russia had shown irreverence to organizations such as NATO that shared the G7’s liberal values.

George Bush had been the first to suggest Russia should be included in the G7 beginning at the 1992 Munich Summit. Full Russian integration into the group of democratic economic powers was considered premature at the time, but Russia was given observer status.\(^\text{26}\) Given the economic origins of the organization, Russia’s inclusion into the G7 never made all that much sense. Throughout the 1990’s Russia’s economic stability and significance did not even come close to that of the G7 countries—nor would it until well into the 2000’s. The G7’s decision to expand therefore based on purely political reasons.\(^\text{27}\) However, even a political perspective Russia was not an ideal member. The 1976 founding documents of the then G6, state, “[The Founding members of the G6] are each responsible for the government of an open, democratic society, dedicated to individual liberty and social advancement. Our success will

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\(^\text{27}\) Ibid.
strengthen, indeed is essential to, democratic societies everywhere.” As of 1997, Russia did not embody any of this statement. Yeltsin’s various transgressions at home and in Chechnya posed the question of whether Russia was truly an open society, and likewise if Russia had been truly committed to the success of democratic societies everywhere, it would not have been such a strong opponent of NATO. It can only be assumed that the G7 leaders chose to integrate Russia into the organization recognizing that it did not yet meet expectations, but hoping that the act of inclusion would help to ensure that it eventually would. While these intentions were admirable, and indeed they allowed for more open communication between Russia and the west, Russia’s integration in the group would prove to have little effect on Russia undertaking significant political reform. The West was once again choosing to empower Russia when Russia had yet to prove its good intentions or restraint.

**The Result of Appeasement**

After almost a decade of appeasement, the last years of the 1990’s were unsurprisingly not the moment when Russia final amended its ways and truly became an ideal American ally, but instead a period that displayed exactly how far away from rapprochement the Russia and the U.S. really were. The main issue that showed just how divided the two two states remained was the international humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. The situation in Kosovo was similar to the one that had occurred in Bosnia a few years earlier. The Serbian government was once again a part of genocidal civil war, this time with a

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population of ethnic Albanians living in the formally autonomous Yugoslavian region of Kosovo. Just as during Bosnia, the U.S. was in strong support of a military intervention, while Russia fiercely fought to keep international condemnation of Serbia to a minimum.

After Serbia failed to respond to various sanctions and threats made through the UN Security Council Resolution, the U.S. wished to rally NATO to undertake a bombing campaign. European leaders suggested their willingness to take part in this action, but only if the bombings were authorized through the UN Security Council.29 The issue with this was that going through the Security Council would mean Russia would have the ability to veto NATO’s plan, something Russian leaders repeatedly threatened to do. This stalemate limited the international community to purely diplomatic actions for a short time, but as negotiations failed and Serbian ethnic cleansing escalated in the beginning of 1999, NATO decided to move forward with Military action despite a lack of greater UN or Russian consent.

This decision was unsurprising not look upon kindly by the Kremlin. Diplomatic exchanges between Clinton and Yeltsin took on a new level of threat and intensity that had not previously existed since the Cold War. Had rapprochement been achieved by this point, the two sides would have likely never disagreed on the issue of Kosovo and would at the very least have been able to resolve the situation without putting great stress on their relationship. Instead, Russian leaders continually lobbied America to end NATO’s campaign,

29 Talbott, The Russia hand: a memoir of presidential diplomacy: 301.
warning of the risk of an irreversible breakdown in U.S.-Russian relations. One telephone exchange between Clinton and Yeltsin in particular, occurring at the height of NATO’s bombing campaign in April 1999, highlights just how far from stable peace the two states were. After Clinton expressed an interest in increasing U.S.-Russian diplomatic negotiations over Kosovo but refused to suspend the military campaign Yeltsin angrily responded, “Don’t push Russia into this war! You know what Russia is! You know what it has at its disposal!”

The interests of two states were in such conflict that Yeltsin felt a need to resort to the force of nuclear threat. The goals of Clinton's Russian policy had been to help build Russia into a cooperative ally significantly different from its Soviet incarnation. The fact that a new democratic Russia not only did not automatically comply with Western interests, but was also still willing to make major threats to American security, suggested that enmity of the Cold War was not entirely in the past. Eventually disagreements over Kosovo between Russia and the U.S. would be resolved on peaceful, i.e. non-violent, terms, but this was not a result of cooperation, good will, or reciprocal restraint. The two states were too disparate in their international interests to allow for a consistent friendship. At the very least two states were able to practice enough restraint to prevent an escalation back into an ever present threat of nuclear war, but this did not mean they were not still threatening adversaries.

30 Quoted in ibid., 311.
Why Rapprochement failed

The Clinton administration’s confidence that democracy would win out and lead to stable relations with Russia seems to suggest that the administration mistakenly assumed that the end of the Cold War meant a transitional rapprochement would automatically occur. The U.S. pursued geopolitical policy based in a belief that Russia’s secondary power status would lead to Russia’s acquiesces by default. The spread of democracy in Russia was meant to further ensure a long-term cooperative relationship. While this line of thinking was not entirely illogical, it was putting the horse before the cart. The Clinton administration wished to solidify a relationship with Russia based on a commonality of values, when there was not yet a foundation of compatible strategic interests.

Had the Cold War been a true war, and had the U.S. won decisive victory through military dominance it could have overseen a strong rapprochement through coercive threats or even a direct cooptation of Russian policy mechanism through some sort of military occupation. This was not the case, and the U.S. did not have such a direct influence over Russia’s future. Likewise, in a more extreme case, Yeltsin might have arisen to power in Russia as a liberal democratic ruler. Much like the leaders of smaller proxy states during the Cold War, Yeltsin could have used specifically Western anti-communistic rhetoric to fuel his crusade for domestic reform in Russia. Had the situation in Russia resembled either of these scenarios the two states would likely have had more common strategic goals and the promotion of democracy could have indeed
helped to ensure a long-term relationship. However, although the end of the Cold War had significantly changed the geopolitical landscape, Russia did no significantly reorient its strategic goals from those of the USSR. A conversion to liberal values was never going to be enough to solidify rapprochement between Russia and the U.S. The Kremlin still maintained interests that conflicted with the American interests. By failing to address these issues and prematurely treating Russia as a friend through acts of unreciprocated appeasement, the U.S. was simply making the possibility of a true rapprochement less likely.

The U.S.’s incorrect belief that Russia was going to be automatically aligned with U.S. interests can be seen as directly related to the seemingly simple, yet ultimately irresolvable question of who won the Cold War. Having emerged from the period as the only remaining global power, it became common for American political leaders to speak of Cold War as a U.S. victory. Arguing over which political party was most responsible for the end of the Cold War was a major point of contention in the 1992 presidential election. On the campaign trail Clinton had derided George Bush’s notion that Republicans were single-handedly responsible for winning the Cold War as similar to “the rooster who [takes] credit for the dawn.”

Yet through all the American debate the only question in play was who had won, not the more pressing question of if the U.S. had actually won.

From a Russian perspective, all American leaders were acting like rooster in claiming an American victory in the Cold War. When Soviet Secretary General

31 Ibid., 33.
Mikhail Gorbachev instituted the many liberalizing policies that were ultimately responsible for the collapse of USSR, he did not see his actions as surrender to superior American values, but as a deliberate act of “liberation” to make up for the mistakes of authoritarian Soviet leaders of the past.\(^{32}\) As he commented on the American Presidential election to the *New Yorker* in November 1992, “Bush warned me privately not to pay any attention to what he says during the presidential campaign, I suppose these are necessary things in a campaign. But if the idea that [America won the Cold War] is serious, then it is a very big illusion.\(^{33}\) Alternatively, but similarly in contrast to American beliefs, Russian reformers felt that it was they who were responsible for the end of communism, that Perestroika and other reforms had been in greater response to internal rather than external pressure.\(^{34}\) As the leader of the Russian Federation in the final days of the USSR, Yeltsin likely thought of himself as an especially significant force in defeating Russian communism.

As the U.S. was entering into the new era of relations with the Russian Federation, there was still no firm closure with the old era of relations with the USSR. Depending on whom you asked, both sides were responsible for the end of the Cold War and this meant that there was no clear path Russia’s post-war policy could be expected to take. Had Russia and Russian ideology indeed been defeated in the Cold War, it would make sense for the state to pursue a new and likely less ambitious foreign policy. However, the fact that in most actuate terms

\(^{32}\) Bugajski, *Cold peace : Russia’s new imperialism.*  
\(^{34}\) Ibid., 33.
the Cold War had simply ended and Russia was technically a new state separate from the USSR meant that Russia had a justification for pursuing whatever type of foreign policy it liked, with no real reason to passively accept the desires of the U.S.

Russia’s foreign policy choices in the 1990’s were based in a strong and widespread Russian belief that the country remained a significant global force despite the setbacks of the post-Cold War era.\textsuperscript{35} The desire for Russia to return to former glory was, to most Russians, more significant than any commitment to democratic values. To a certain extent, this goal to return to a powerful status could only be fulfilled through anti-Americanism. Had Russia condoned the American led initiatives to expand NATO or to intervene in the Balkans it would have been ceding the West geopolitical control over Russia’s near neighbors. Were Russia to have done this, it might have meant surrendering the opportunity to regain its desired sphere of influence. By standing up against these U.S. interests Russia was affirming that it still had the ability to sway the geopolitical community. Rapprochement requires concessions, and Russians did not seem to think that their state was at a point where such sacrifices were necessary.

From a realist perspective, Russia’s decision to aggressively seek out geopolitical influence at a time of weakness was rather irrational. Russia had very little standing or geopolitical capital to justify strongly asserting itself against the interests of more powerful states. Had the U.S. and G7 chosen to

\textsuperscript{35} Bugajski, \textit{Cold peace: Russia’s new imperialism}: 15.
withhold aid to Russia in response to some of its transgressions, it would have significantly crippled the states stability and accordingly dangerously weakened Russian security. However, because the U.S. chose to accommodate Russian complaints in many of its international decisions Russia was empowered to continue its line of policy where it asked for more geopolitical consideration than it necessarily deserved.

As Russia had entered the post-Cold War era as the weaker state, the burden should have fallen on the Kremlin to make initial concessions so as to initiate a rapprochement with the U.S. In this regard Russia deserves a large portion of the blame for the failure of the two states to reach rapprochement immediately following the Cold War. Yet at the same time the U.S. in many ways can be said to have squandered this initial opportunity to begin building towards stable peace as it seemed to assume that the Russia was in the process of accommodating U.S. interests when this was in fact never the case. In truth, the 1990’s were a period of the U.S. constantly accommodating Russian interests, while Russia proved time and again that it saw no reason to practice reciprocal restraint. Although the Clinton administration attempted to stress the illusion that a value based bond existed between the two states, this belief was misguided and meaningless as the U.S. and Russia had no strong mutual security goals for the bond to help solidify. Thus, although the opportunity was initially present, a strong attempt at rapprochement never had the chance to occur.
Conclusion

At the beginning of 2000 when Boris Yeltsin announced he was stepping down from the Presidency to make way for his successor Vladimir Putin, Clinton wrote a piece for *Time* reflecting on his experience working with Russia’s first “democratic” president. Clinton’s writing was full of overly optimistic commentary on Yeltsin’s rule, going as far as to label Yeltsin as “Father of Russian Democracy,” but it was his final statement that showed just how greatly he had failed to learn the lesson of the first period of post-Cold War U.S.-Russian relations. “If Russia’s new leaders--the generation to whom Boris Yeltsin gave the stage...--endorse [democracy] as firmly as he did, they will find in America an eager and active partner,” the President proudly declared.36

Democratization had failed to make Russia a reliable American ally partially, because Yeltsin had failed to truly embrace liberalism, but mostly because the adoption of democratic values did not mean Russia had to shift away from the aggressive foreign policy of the USSR. The U.S. had chosen to appease Russian interests based in a belief that democratic forces would eventually keep Russian ambition in check, but as of the end of Yeltsin’s time in power U.S.-Russian relations were seemingly getting worse, not better. Clinton was correct that a new generation of leaders offered the chance for a better relationship between the two states. However, this fact had nothing to do with a commitment to democracy. What could produce a positive shift in U.S.-Russian relations was

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36 Bill Clinton, "Remembering Yeltsin: Yeltsin has been brave, visionary and forthright, and he has earned the right to be called the Father of Russian Democracy," *Time* 2000.
the emergence of international pragmatists who recognized that there was more to be gained from immediate strategic cooperation than from the promotion of democracy or posturing for geopolitical significance. Only through a deliberate break from the value-based idealism of the 1990's could a true rapprochement effectively form. A generation of leaders who wished to continue the post-Cold War status quo, would simply mean a further development back into cold animosity.
Chapter III: Must Unipolarity Mean Unilateralism?
George W. Bush during Putin’s first Presidency

In the winter of 1990 amidst the rapidly changing circumstances of the end of the Cold War, political columnist Charles Krauthammer wrote a famous piece for *Foreign Affairs* proclaiming that America was entering into a “unipolar moment.” Observing the ongoing collapse of the Soviet Union and the comparative weakness of other geopolitically significant states, Krauthammer proudly argued, “The center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its Western allies.” Krauthammer saw this unipolarity as a great moment of empowerment meaning the U.S. had the opportunity to define and address any threat it wished. Krauthammer also believed that the U.S. possessed a power so unmatched that it did not need the support of others in its international policy making. Krauthammer proposed that any American attempts at collective international action through the UN or other international alliance could only be considered “pseudo-multilateralism;” the U.S. would be best off simply accepting its greater geopolitical status without embarrassment and taking on the role of leadership it had earned for itself.\(^1\)

If the 1990’s were indeed a unipolar moment, the Clinton Administration seemingly shirked on its duties. Rather than actively and if necessary unilaterally pursuing the growing threat of weapons of mass destruction as Krauthammer called for, Clinton’s foreign policy was rather restrained, focused

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\(^2\) Ibid., 25.
on humanitarian missions in places like Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans backed by large amounts of international support. Ultimately, American would not look to take full control of its ostensive unipolarity until over ten years after Krauthammer essay during the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the policies enacted by President George W. Bush. Although Clinton’s attempt at inclusive liberal multilateralism had proved a rather weak policy for dealing Yeltsin’s Russia, the democratic unilateralism pursued by Bush showed a comparable misjudgment of how circumstances in Russia had changed in the decade since the Cold War.

This chapter details a second missed opportunity for U.S.-Russian rapprochement following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. A shift in Russian politics that had occurred with the assent to power of President Vladimir Putin combined with the changed global landscape that resulted from the 9/11 attacks offered the chance for the U.S. and Russia to make amends for their failed cooperation in the late 1990’s. For a brief period of time the two states finally cooperated on a strategic level in a way that made rapprochement a legitimate possibility. Unfortunately, just as U.S.-Russian cooperation was getting into a rhythm, the Bush administration began undertaking unilateral geopolitical actions that greatly called into question American restraint. As a result of power and standing Russia had gained over the course of the 1990’s it did not have any reason to simply acquiesce to America’s unilateral interests, and accordingly rapprochement once again failed and relations again deteriorated.
A Brief Sense of Direction

The United States may have entered the twenty first century primarily unchallenged geopolitically, but it was also rather directionless. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* as presidential candidate George W. Bush’s campaign foreign policy advisor at the beginning of 2000, Condoleezza Rice noted that, “The United States has found it exceedingly difficult to define its "national interest" in the absence of Soviet Power.” Although he spent much of the presidential campaign criticizing the aimlessness of Clinton’s international actions, Bush too would begin his presidency without offering a strong idea of what direction American foreign policy would take. Whatever priorities the Bush administration did or did not have going into the 21st century were radically changed as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. After lacking direction the U.S. now had a real (though very vague) geopolitical enemy in the form of al-Qaeda and other sources of international terrorism. As the US began its Global War on Terror, its high geopolitical significance proved to be incredibly helpful. Many nations from all across the globe rallied behind America and offered support to its initial military operations in Afghanistan. It looked as if the United States was beginning a new era of global leadership in which it would take the helm of an international security project to reduce the threat of terrorism.

At first, the War on Terror proved to highly advantageous to the state of U.S.-Russian relations. Russian President Vladimir Putin turned out to be one of the most sympathetic global leaders to America’s new cause. Putin was the first
world leader to call President Bush after the attacks offering his condolences and suggesting his support for a U.S. military response to the attacks.\textsuperscript{3} The new globally recognized threat of terrorism offered a chance for Bush and Putin to build on the promising personal relationship they had formed at their first summit meeting held June 2001 in Slovenia. After this first meeting Bush famously proclaimed of Putin, "I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straight forward and trustworthy and we had a very good dialogue...I was able to get a sense of his soul." Putin also had very positive things to say about Bush and went as far as to call the US Russia's partner.\textsuperscript{4} At that time it seemed as if the two leaders were perhaps naively ignoring the contentious issues they would soon have to resolve like Russia's distaste of NATO expansion and the U.S. desire to build a missile defense shield in Europe, yet with the rapid emergence of the threat of terror, the two leaders would prove they could subvert these lesser concerns for sake of a greater collective cause. In the weeks following 9/11, Putin stayed true to his word and Russia began behaving as if it were one of America's leading allies.

On October 3, Putin visited NATO headquarters in Brussels. Unlike his predecessor he expressed an understanding for continued NATO expansion into to former Soviet territory and even seemed to be interested in increasing Russia's own integration with the alliance.\textsuperscript{5} Also in early October, Putin

\begin{itemize}
\item Talbott, \textit{The Russia hand: a memoir of presidential diplomacy}: 415.
\end{itemize}
consented to the establishment of U.S. bases in Central Asia, bringing American
troops to former Soviet territory for the first time ever. Yeltsin had always been
one to histrionically protest any U.S. military action anywhere close to Russia,
but when Bush made Putin aware of American plans to begin air strikes in
Afghanistan, Putin was extremely and very publically supportive. All these
actions seemed to suggest that Russia and the U.S. really were entering into a
partnership.

This period cooperation made a lot of sense for both countries. Backing
the U.S. in the War on Terror was very directly within Russia’s own security
interests. Putin and other Russians saw an increased American commitment to
fighting global terrorism as a way to justify and gain support for Russia’s
continuing violent fight against Islamic and separatist extremism in Chechnya.
For once the two states were interacting on a purely strategic level creating a
ture foundation for rapprochement. Without the distraction of value
considerations and democratic rhetoric, relations could be based in reciprocal
behavior aimed at building true cooperative bonds.

Russia showed significant restraint and wiliness to make concessions to
U.S. in December 2001, when Bush announced that the U.S. would be unilaterally
pulling out of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) in order to move
forward with plans to build a National Missile Defense system in Europe. This
was not something Russia could easily expected to go along with. Pulling out of
the treaty could be considered the U.S. deliberately acting against Russian

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6 Cooley, Great games, local rules : the new great power contest in Central Asia: 53.
wishes and challenging Russia’s sense of security. Although Putin’s public response to the U.S.’s decision referred to it as “a mistake,” he also made a major departure from previous Russian statements on U.S. missile defense saying, “I can state with complete confidence that decision taken by the president of the U.S. presents no threat to the national security of the Russian Federation.”

During the entirety of Yeltsin’s time in office any act taken by the U.S. with peripherally negative effects to Russian interests was reacted to as an attack. Russia consistently refused to accept the fact that the U.S. was a more powerful state with more diverse foreign policy concerns than Russia and accordingly did not have to take every action with Russian interests in mind. With his statement on the end of ABM, Putin was explicitly departing from this mindset. While Yeltsin’s had never been compelled to quietly comply with U.S. interest, Putin saw the benefits that could be gained from reciprocity and restraint. Had the conditions that had led Putin to seek out a more productive relationship with the United States remained the same, there was great potential for a true rapprochement.

**Unilateralism and its Consequences**

Just as U.S.-Russian cooperation was hitting its stride, the Bush administration was undergoing a significant shift in its foreign policy stance. Unfortunately, this change would soon prove detrimental to the progress that was being made in the U.S.-Russian relationship. Looking to better define the direction of America in the War on Terror foreign policy, the administration

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8 Ibid., 419.
began pursuing a line of neoconservative policy often referred to as Bush Doctrine. Much like liberal foreign policy, neoconservatism asserts that global security is best ensured by the spread of democratic values and institutions. Neoconservatism’s large departure from liberal thinking is a willingness to pursue a more democratic order by force, believing that military action can help quicken the spread of global democratic stability. Bush’s transition towards this line of thinking can be seen in much of his foreign policy related rhetoric after the beginning of the War on Terror. Bush became significantly more explicit about his commitment to the spread of global democracy and desire to lead the fight against global authoritarian evil.\footnote{9}

These rhetorical goals became a formal part of American policy with the publishing of the White House’s formal National Security Strategy in September 2002. In the introduction of the document Bush asserted that America’s “unparalleled military strength” should not be used to gain hegemonic geopolitical power, but “instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.”\footnote{10}

Within the document it was explained the methods the US would undertake to reach this goal. As Francis Fukuyama has summarized the meaning of Bush Doctrine, “America would have to launch periodic preventive wars to defend itself against rogue states and terrorists with weapons of mass destruction; that


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it would do this alone, if necessary; and that it would work to democratize the
greater Middle East as a long-term solution to the terrorist problem.”

Neoconservatism was in many ways America finally taking ownership of
its unipolar moment. Krauthammer himself would prove to be a large proponent
of this new line of policy, although he prefers to call it “democratic globalism.”
Although Krauthammer acknowledges that democratic globalism is somewhat
lofty and idealistic, he also suggests that it provides a strong system of guidance
for how to properly use American values and power to address significant
threats. Writing about the new line of policy soon after its advent in 2004, he
argued that democratic globalism could be pressured in a rather realistic fashion
if driven by a simple axiom: “We will support democracy everywhere, but we
will commit blood and treasure only in places where there is a strategic
necessity—meaning, places central to the larger war against the existential
enemy, the enemy that poses a global mortal threat to freedom.”

It is interesting to note here, that the neoconservatism that began during
the Bush administration is a direct outgrowth of a school of neoconservative
thinking that became popular during the final years of the Cold War. Soviet
communism in the USSR was the original existential threat early
neoconservative thinkers opposed their selves to. Neoconservatives had been
some of the strongest supporters of Regan’s approach communism: a tough
attitude stressing the supremacy of liberal values. Indeed many believe that it

11 Francis Fukuyama, "After Neoconservatism," The New York Times Magazine,
2006/02/19/ 2006.
12 Charles Krauthammer, Democratic Realism, (Washington D.C.: The AEI Press,
was this aggressive push towards liberalism that had led to the Soviet Collapse. Interestingly, many neocons were seemingly satisfied with the end of the Cold War as the end of their mission and the movement went through a period of almost non-existence. Throughout the 1980’s The Committee of the Free World, was a leading neoconservative political organization, but by the end of 1990, before the USSR and the Cold War had even officially ended, the organization chose to dissolve itself. As Midge Dector one of the group’s leaders stated at the time, “It's time to say: We've won, goodbye.” After the 9/11 attacks neoconservatives suddenly decided their mission was not over. Although the existential threat neoconservatism now fought was Islamic extremism and not Soviet communism, this new American mindset offered many reasons to put Russians in a state of unease. A shift to unilateralism suggested the U.S. might decide to take actions with little restraint or consideration of its new growing partnership with Russia. Likewise, if the U.S. was truly interested in fighting authoritarianism it might mean an eventual interference with the many sub-perfect democracy that occupied Russia’s desired sphere of Eurasian influence.

The events leading up the invasion of Iraq showcased the effects of the U.S. shift in values and also allowed Russia its first chance to respond to them. In the name of fighting terror, the U.S. was eager to take military action again Iraq due to a belief that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and further justified as a response to the many years of Saddam Husain’s illiberal rule.

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13 Chollet and Goldgeier, America between the wars: from 11/9 to 9/11: the misunderstood years between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the start of the War on Terror: 20.
Bush Administration did not consider the UN's many diplomatic measures against Iraq to be enough. Putin and Russia were initially willing to support diplomatic action against Iraq, but became less cooperative as the U.S. kept pushing for its right to use military force. In the beginning of February 2003, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov made it abundantly clear that Russia would veto any UN resolution that might open the possibility of military action in Iraq.\textsuperscript{14} On February 10, Russia released a joint statement with France and Germany, stressing that they remained, “determined to give every chance to the peaceful disarmament of Iraq.”\textsuperscript{15} When the U.S. decided to move forward with an invasion without UN authorization in the beginning of March it suggested that it did not truly care about the concerns of Russia and other European states and also, in at least a small way, that it saw itself as above international law.

The beginning of the Iraq was an ideal time for Russia to challenge the U.S. and its new tact towards unilateral behavior. For one thing, 2003 was an important time for Russian domestic politics due to parliamentary elections at the end of the year and the presidential election in early 2004. Both American unilateralism and the Iraq War itself were very unpopular concepts among the Russian people. Taking a strong stance against these things offered Putin the chance to consolidate support for his United Russia party in parliament and to further ensure his own reelection.\textsuperscript{16} Likewise, Russia found itself in good company while criticizing the U.S. over Iraq. The fact that NATO members such

\textsuperscript{16} Saunders, "The U.S. and Russia after Iraq."
as France and Germany were actively speaking out against U.S. actions, meant that Russia was somewhat protected from America’s anger for arguing against the war and might instead be able to build up alternative diplomatic channels with these other significant states. ¹⁷

Looking at either of these explanations for Russia deciding not to back the U.S. in the War on Terror, there is no reason the rift had to be permanent. By 2004 the Russian election season would be over and Putin could have made the decision to return to a pro-American line of policy even if less widely popular. Similarly, the U.S. remained a more desirable ally than either France or Germany. Had the U.S. taken a step back from its neoconservative rhetoric or simply offered Russia some incentive, it should have been easy to win the Kremlin back to its side. Yet at the same time, America’s new unilateralism was a jarring change in had been a somewhat tenuous line of cooperation. Gone was the bond of personal diplomacy between Presidents Bush and Putin that had helped to drive the U.S.-Russian relationship. They no longer held the bond of partnership they once formed when they first looked into each other’s eyes. Suddenly, the mild trust that each state had for the other’s good intentions was no longer as present. The contentious issues such as NATO expansion and missile defense would never be quite as easy to ignore.

Growing strains between Russia and the U.S. in the wake of Iraq were further exacerbated by outbreaks of the Color Revolutions within Eurasia. The ousting of long-time president Eduard Shevardnadze for pro-Western Mikheil

¹⁷ Ibid.
Saakashvili during the Georgian Rose Revolution in late 2003 put Russia greatly on edge as it further emphasized the spread of Western values into Russian territory. Matters were made even worse during the Ukrainian Orange Revolution when the U.S. government announced its support of Pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko, and America foundations helped to ensure his victory by funding pro-democracy NGOs in the area. The fact that the U.S. was closely connected to these regime changes Russia perceived as undesirable and threatening served to confirm Russian suspicions of the danger of America’s new neoconservative policy. American disregard for Russia’s desired region of influence had now grown to include a willingness to interfere with Russia’s direct neighbors. In response to the Color Revolutions Russia found it necessary to actively pursue conservative policy in the region. Russia worked to counteracting American interests by becoming the primary supporter of the status quo and helping to uphold less democratic regimes in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Within a few years both Yushchenko and Saakashvili would prove to be less than ideal liberal democratic leaders. Yet by this point there would be very little the U.S. could do to back away from its strong pro-democracy stance in Eurasia. The U.S. would remain an extremely strong military and diplomatic supporter of Georgia despite its democratic failings. America’s commitment to democracy in Eurasia had had little positive effect on global security and served to prove to Russia that the U.S. was an unreliable strategic partner.

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18 Cooley, Great games, local rules: the new great power contest in Central Asia: 55.
19 Ibid.
Relations Decline Once More

From 2004 onward, the governments of Bush and Putin remained in conversation, but it was highly visible how a transformation in their relationship had occurred. For example, in July 2006 when two men were a part of a group press conference during the G8 summit in St. Petersburg they took it as an opportunity to criticize each other. In some ways contrasting Russia to the improving democratic situation in Iraq, Bush questioned the levels of democratic freedom within Russia. Putin immediately responded to Bush, “Well, we really would not want the kind of democracy they have in Iraq,” backed up in his statement as the room broke into applause.20 This exchange made it clear that Russia was now rather comfortable ideologically separating itself from the U.S. Russia was happy with where it was as a democracy and had no real desire to emulate the democratic liberalism the U.S. aimed to spread globally. Reaffirming a lesson that Clinton should have learned clearly during the 1990’s, Russia was not going to be drawn to the U.S. through constructivist ideological considerations. The relationship would have to be strategically motivated, and as long as the U.S. remained committed to some form of liberal democratic globalizing as a primary motivation foreign policy, such mutual strategic needs were going to be harder to come by.

When the two Presidents met together one-on-one for one of the last times at a June 2007 summit in Kennebunkport, Maine, the mood and outcome

of the summit showed a near complete reversal from when the two men had met for the first time six years earlier in Slovenia. The Russians came into the summit once again hoping to dissuade the U.S. from continuing plans to build its missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland. The two sides had once approached this issue with mutual respect and recognized that individual actions of defense by the other state did not have to be perceived as an offensive danger. This time, after the two sides failed to agree, Russian deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov reacted with language that harkened back to memories of the Cold War. “They are trying to push us into knocking heads with Europe ... in order to create a new dividing line, a New Berlin Wall,” he said. “It is obvious that continuing with the plans and carrying them out by placing rockets in Poland and radar in the Czech Republic will present an obvious threat to Russia.”21 Such statements prove definitively that Russia and the U.S. were no longer anywhere close to a state of rapprochement. Russia viewed the U.S. as an actively threatening and disruptive force to its interest. Such a relationship trends closer to a state of unstable war than even just unstable peace.

The grand climax of the early 2000’s breakdown in U.S.-Russian relations was the August 2008 Russia-Georgian War. Although the war itself was relatively short and low in casualties, the decision of Russia to militarily engage Georgia on behalf of the separatist regions of Abkhazi and South Ossetia had major implications for the international community. Foremost, it represented

Russia’s first large-scale use of military force abroad since the collapse of the
Soviet Union.\(^2^2\) Despite all it threatens to use force during the 1990’s and its strong
desire to regain influence over Eurasia, Russia had never actually used force to
gain its desires with the exception of within its own borders in Chechnya.
Suddenly it seemed as if Russia might indeed be ready to revert to old
imperialist ways, just as Western Leaders had always feared. Secondarily, the
war could in some ways be considered a Cold War style proxy war between
Russia and the U.S. as the Georgian military had been primarily supplied and
trained by the U.S.\(^2^3\) By entering into Georgia, Russia was showing that it did not
fear confrontation with America or with one of its close allies.

Unsurprisingly Russia’s actions in Georgia were vilified by many western
scholars and journalists. Many tried to draw comparisons to Leonid Brezhven’s
response to the Prague Spring, Hitler’s actions in the Sudetenland, or, as Charles
King did in a December 2008 article in *Foreign Affairs*, the isolationist
imperialism of the Tsarist Empire.\(^2^4\) For King, the Russian-Georgian war
represented a dangerous change as Russia was now seemingly willing to act
unilaterally to pursue its desire for renewed power in the former Soviet States.
As King waned, “For Future historians the South Ossetian crisis will mark a time

\(^2^2\) Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian foreign policy: the return of great power politics*, 2nd
\(^2^4\) King, "The Five-Day War: Managing Moscow After the Georgia Crisis," 3.
when Russia came to disregard existing international institutions and began, however haltingly to fashion its own.”

Although Russia did indeed undertake unilateral action in Georgia, King showed a common Western bias in speaking of the action so ominously. Russia’s behavior was really Putin’s first major unilateral action after years of the Bush Administration acting in a very similar way. When compared side by side, how different were Russia’s actions in Georgia from the U.S.’s in Iraq? Both states took unilateral action against a smaller state’s sovereign rights despite widespread dissent in the international community. If anything the U.S. took its actions a little further than Russia. The U.S. unilaterally toppled Iraq’s government and orchestrated the installation of a new system of friendly democracy. Russia was only defending the right to self-determination of two small parts of Georgia.

The main basis for Western bias against Russia’s unilateral aims seemingly stem from perceived differences in the rights of the U.S. and Russia to each use unilateral power. Russia’s aggression suggested a new power balance in geopolitics that the Iraq war had not. In Iraq the U.S. could be said to have only been expressing a near unipolar strength it had been widely known to poses since the end of the Cold War. Alternatively, Russia’s war with Georgia was an expression of a great increase in Russian power. Russia’s war with Georgia both showcased and further consolidated a level of power that had not possessed since the Cold War. Although this was a break with the status quo and something

25 Ibid., 4.
many Western leaders feared, there is no strong argument to be made that Russia did not have the right to seek out such power. In showing that it was no longer interested in practicing international restraint, Russia was simply following an American trend.

Why Failed Rapprochement

The ultimately short lived, but highly productive relationship between Russia and the U.S. in the year following the 9/11 attacks suggested that the transitional rapprochement that had failed in the 1990’s could perhaps still take hold. It seemed as if cooperation between the states could be aided not just from a transition away from the Cold War itself, but also from the generation of leaders most closely associated with ending the War. Unlike Yeltsin, Putin was not a leader as concerned with maintaining Russia’s standing as a winner of the Cold War, and this enabled him to act more pragmatically. His policy decisions at the beginning of the 2000’s suggest he was far more concerned with meeting Russia’s realist needs rather than the constructivist concerns of solidifying Cold War legacy. No matter who had won the Cold War, Russia was at the beginning of the 2000’s significantly weaker than the U.S. and could best move towards its goals increasing its power and geopolitical standing through cooperation with the superior state.

Putin seemingly understood that cooperation towards rapprochement is best aided by an initiating act of unilateral accommodation. Thus he was willing to be very provident to American needs in the months following 9/11. Putin’s cooperation opened the door for the U.S. to reciprocally accommodate Russian
interests taking actions such as dropping human rights criticisms of Russia’s actions in Chechnya. From this starting point, 2002 saw both states practicing productive reciprocal restraint. It obviously took Russian leaders great restraint to allow the U.S. to end ABM. However, this cooperation did not go unrecognized by the United States. The U.S. proved it could be equally accommodating, when Russia decided to formally withdraw its adherence to the START II treaty the day after ABM officially ended in June 2002. Just as Putin had expressed his trust in American intentions with ending ABM, President Bush showed a reciprocal level of understanding for Russia’s decision, deeming the end of the treaty as no threat to U.S. security.26

Had this trend of reciprocal restraint in U.S.-Russian relations continued, the two states might have achieved stable rapprochement and moved forward to steps of increased societal integration. However, the Bush Administration’s public acknowledgement of its intension to undertake unilateral democratization as part of its foreign policy significantly altered the ability of leaders of both states to continue to act with restraint. In close relationship to the necessity of reciprocal restraint in achieving rapprochement, Charles Kupchan suggests that a highly useful quality for states to possess if they wish to achieve stable peace is institutional restraint. A state is a far more desirable potential partner for stable peace if it has a basic level of restraint built into its

overarching policies and system of government. In many ways Bush doctrine was an expression of the fact that America no longer intended to practice restraint in its international affairs. Thus embracing neoconservatism not only suggested the U.S. might be less open to working with Russia as a less than perfectly democratic state, it also called into question the U.S.’s ability to be a consistent international partner in general.

Not only did a shift towards democratic unilateralism make the U.S. a less reliable partner for Russia, it was also an action that could be seen in direct opposition to Russia’s own foreign policy goals. On June 20, 2000, soon after Putin first took office, the Kremlin published its Foreign Policy Concept, a document expressing the motivations and goals of Russia’s international actions. The Concept listed many “main objectives,” but perhaps the most interesting and aggressive was the first objective, “To ensure reliable security of the country, to preserve and strengthen its sovereignty and territorial integrity, to achieve firm and prestigious positions in the world community, most fully consistent with the interests of the Russian Federation as a great power, as one of the most influential centers of the modern world.” Neoconservatism was the U.S. asserting itself as a near unipolar force; to do so was to reduce the significance of any other states as geopolitical powers. Thus we have even stronger evidence as to why America’s new unilateralism caused a breakdown in relations with Russia. Accommodating individual American desires through the sacrifice

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individual security concerns was a reasonable step for Putin to take towards achieving larger goals. To willingly accommodate America's new unilateral policy suggesting its continued unipolar status would have been to surrender Russia's primary interests in maintaining that status of a great power in a multipolar geopolitical landscape.

**Conclusion**

It is true that Russia did little to help the process towards rapprochement following the initial breakdown with the war in Iraq, but Russian leaders were always able to make a fairly reasonable argument that Russia's international actions were justified. During a press conference Putin held at the 2007 G8 summit in Germany, he was pressured by many Western journalists to account for the various ways Russia was contributing to its deteriorating relations with other members of the organization. Throughout the conference Putin responded to each question fairly calmly, simply highlighting ways Russia's actions were simply reactions to previous Western and specifically American behavior. For example when pushed to account for Russia's potential to fuel a new arms race in response to America's wish to build up its missile defense in Europe, Putin replied “Was it we who withdrew from the ABM Treaty? We must react to what our partners do.”

When U.S.-Russian relations went through its early 2000's phase of cooperation, Russia had been the initial unilaterally accommodating party. Why

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was it American expectation that the burden of unilateral sacrifice continue to fall upon Russia? If anything the 2000's had only served to make Russia stronger; High prices and need for Russian hydrocarbons lead to a great increase of money in the Russian economy and gave Russia greater geopolitical capital through its ability to manipulate oil distribution.\(^{30}\) Russia’s return to stability effectively ended the possibility of a transitional rapprochement. The new best option for rapprochement was now a changing of the guard. Either Russia or the U.S. would have to concede the other state the right dictate policy in Eurasia so as to reduce adversarial strain. As it had been the U.S. that first expressed it preference for unilaterism over cooperation with Russia during this period perhaps it was now time for American leaders to make the first concessions towards rapprochement.

Writing in mid-2003 in response the breakdown in relations over the war in Iraq, Russian political scientist Yevgeny Primakov suggested there were currently two possibilities for how the world could respond the new era of geopolitics set into effect by 9/11. “On the one hand, it is argued that the ongoing efforts to preserve the world order should be organized under the auspices of particular collective agencies, such as the United Nations. On the other hand, the U.S. is pushing forward with a singularly minded agenda of “unilateralism” where it wants to unilaterally address mankind’s vital problems on the basis of Washington’s biased views of the global situation.” Representative of a common Russian mindset, Primakov argued that “the world has been actively developing

a multipolar structure,” and thus the U.S. would be much better off embracing international institutions over a continued effort to have its own biased way.31

The U.S. did not back off from its unilateral way but this does not mean the world was not in fact becoming more multipolar. The Bush administration had failed to compel Russia to support unilateral democratic globalism and this was not a task that was going to get any easier with time. Writing in Foreign Affairs after the Georgian War Stephen Sestanovich acknowledged an important lesson to be learned in anticipation of the upcoming American Presidential election. "No matter how much the next U.S. president deplores Putin’s success he cannot ignore it. Making criticisms of Russian democracy a strong theme of U.S. Foreign policy no longer enhances respect for either democracy or the United States in Russia." Over the course of two presidential administrations an American commitment to democracy had little productive effect on America’s relationship with Russia. If the next president recognized this fact and approached Russia with a more strategic pragmatism a positive reversal in relations might prove possible. If not, there was little reason to expect anything other than more of the same.

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Chapter IV: The Limits of American Power?
President Obama in the Era of Russian Diarchy

Accepting the Edmund Burke Prize in April 2012, Henry Kissinger spoke to the limits of American foreign policy, especially policy inspired by neoconservatism. While he noted the good intentions of current American goals he greatly questioned whether continuous military interventions are the most reasonable way to achieve widespread democracy and peace. As he pointed out, “A world order of states embracing participatory governance and international cooperation, in accordance with agreed-upon rules, can be our hope and should be our inspiration. Progress toward it is possible, and desirable. But this progress will generally need to be sustained through a series of intermediary stages.” The trend of American foreign policy that began with the invasion of Iraq could not generally be described as gradual. America’s at times meddling impatience in the global landscape caused a significant break down in relations with Russia and often did not even help to achieve its democratic goals.

While the U.S. has been somewhat heroic in its willingness to take broad and aggressive international action, international relations at times requires a more refined approach. As Kissinger ominously concluded in his speech, “An attempt to operate on principles of power alone will prove unsustainable. But an attempt to promote values without an account for culture and nuance—as well as other intangibles of circumstance and chance—will end in disillusionment
and abdication.”¹ Democratizing interventions put great strain on American resources, while not always having greatly visible positive outcomes to American security or global stability. This was seemingly the lesson to be learned from the years of the Bush administration, especially in terms of the U.S.’s support for democracy in Eurasia and its disastrous effects on relations with Russia.

The transition in January 2009 to the administration of President Barack Obama offered a promising opportunity for America to take a step back from its aggressive democratic globalism and instead pursue a more strategy-based approach to foreign policy. However, despite Obama’s proclaimed intentions to change course from the policy of his predecessor, especially in terms of Russia, the actual actions of his administration suggest a similarly uncompromising commitment to democratic values. As American unilateralism had been a primary complicating factor in the U.S.-Russian relationship in the mid-2000’s, rapprochement was most likely to be achieved through and the U.S. initially accommodating Russian interests. The Obama administration did not recognize this fact, instead initiating a new line of “cooperation” in which the U.S. expected more of Russia than it planned to reciprocate. The anemic reality of Obama’s “reset” policy with Russia suggests a continued belief that America maintains the right to dictate its relationship with Russia. This has ultimately led to another, potentially even greater, deterioration in relations. This chapter details the

short-term success and eventual failure of the U.S.-Russian reset and how
American policy contributed to this breakdown.

**A Tenuous Reset**

Obama came into power during a unique time in Russia’s democracy. As
the Russian constitution placed a limit that a president could only hold two
consecutive terms, Vladimir Putin ended his time as Russian president and saw
to the election of his prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev. However, rather than
choosing to take a secondary role in Russian politics, Putin instead simply moved
down one rank and replaced Medvedev as prime minister. This move technically
now made Putin only the second most powerful man in Russian politics, but
many observers concluded that Russia was actually entering a stage of diarchy
with Putin still maintaining the primary say in Russian policy. The West believed
that Medvedev had the potential to be a more progressive and cooperative
Russian leader than Putin, but the possible diarchy gave diplomacy with Russia a
new level of difficulty and uncertainty. The Obama administration’s diplomacy
would to have primary involve engaging President Medvedev in discussion, but
it was unclear how effective this might be given unknown level of Medvedev’s
true say over Russian policy.

Despite the questions that remained to be answered about Russia’s new
direction, Obama entered into office with the intentions of rebuilding relations
with Russia from their precarious situation at the end of the Georgian War. From
the very beginning of his time in office he hoped to initiate a “reset” with Russia,

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reestablishing open lines of communication. After Obama’s first official meeting with Medvedev in April 2009, the two men released a statement formally acknowledging a shift back towards friendly relations. The statement acknowledged issues between the two countries like missile defense and Russia’s distaste for NATO, but promised to address these conflicts through peaceful and open dialogue. As the statement boldly concluded, “We, the leaders of Russia and the United States, are ready to move beyond Cold War mentalities and chart a fresh start in relations between our two countries. In just a few months we have worked hard to establish a new tone in our relations. Now it is time to get down to business and translate our warm words into actual achievements of benefit to Russia, the United States, and all those around the world interested in peace and prosperity.”3 The “reset” moved beyond rhetorical goals into institutionalized policy beginning after Obama’s first presidential visit to Moscow in July 2009. After this meeting it was announce that the two states would be forming the U.S.–Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission, or more commonly the Obama–Medvedev Commission to coordinate cooperative efforts.4

In 2009 the reset seemed to have great potential. In the months immediately following the new line of policy there were signs of improved relations such as the negotiating and ratification of the New START treaty and

steps taken by America to help move Russia towards finally gaining membership to the World Trade Organization. Yet on the whole, the reset would prove to be little more than a professed desire never fully achieved. By today, barely four years later the U.S.-Russian relationship once again devolves towards animosity.

The reasons for the failure of the “reset” are many. For one thing, reset was a policy that only ever had true support from upper level officials. A continuing effect of the Cold War’s cultural legacies, it seems the wider population of both states, and even prominent politicians, failed to ever trust the other side’s professed good intentions while entering into the reset. A common American mindset on Russia was espoused by Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation in article released soon after Obama and Medvedev first announced their attentions for better relations. As Cohen warned, “This is not your father’s Russia...Today’s Russian leadership is younger and tougher.” Among hawkish American politicians, Obama was criticized for capitulating to Russia and failing to see its evil potentials. Many Russians leaders expressed comparable feelings about Medvedev’s decision to engage the U.S. As Dmitri Rogozin, Russia’s envoy to NATO, commented to *Time*, “Medvedev sincerely believes that Obama can be trusted, but that doesn’t mean this opinion is shared at every level, especially the levels where the implementation of their agreements is borne out.” Sergei Markov, a conservative parliamentarian of Putin and Medvedev’s United Russia

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7 Cohen, "OBAMA'S RUSSIA 'RESET': ANOTHER LOST OPPORTUNITY?."
party went as far as to say, "There are people at the top who say this reset is all just a trick, that if we go along with it, they will begin pushing for maximum limitations on Russia’s influence."\(^8\) Although a lack of popular support certainly made an effective reset more difficult it by no means doomed the project. Had the foundations for compatible strategic relationship been in place, popular doubts might have come to be proven wrong through acts of reciprocal restraint, allowing for a successful rapprochement to still occur.

More destructive to the reset than cultural trust issues were the apparent American reservations to truly accommodating Russian interests. Even though the Obama administration embraced the reset rhetorically, it did not actually take many steps to make this new cooperation strategically advantageous for Russia. As current Ambassador to Russia, who was at the time the National Security Council adviser on Russia, Michael McFaul tellingly commented at the beginning of the reset, “We’re going to see if there are ways we can have Russia cooperate on those things that we define as our national interests, but we don’t want to trade with them.”\(^9\) Seemingly the Obama administration wanted to believe that relations with Russia could be magically reversed even while the U.S. maintained many of the political stances that had led to the tense circumstances in the first place. Medvedev may have believed that the reset and ratification of New START would mean the U.S. was backing away from its desire to build up missile defense in Eastern Europe, yet Obama promised the

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\(^9\) Quoted in Cohen, "OBAMA’S RUSSIA 'RESET': ANOTHER LOST OPPORTUNITY?."
American Senate before the treaty’s ratification that it would ”place no 
limitations on the development or deployment of [American] missile defense 
programs...regardless of Russia’s actions.”10 Likewise, the Obama administration 
has never expressed any desire to reduce NATO’s presence in Eastern Europe or 
formally backed away from intentions for Ukraine and Georgia to eventually join 
the alliance. These actions suggest the Obama administration failed to grasp the 
fact that a shift in relations requires mutual accommodation. If these topics of 
major Russian interest were not to be given any new consideration under the 
reset, what benefits was Russia gaining?

The reset did not even go as far as to create a change in America’s respect 
for Russia’s domestic policies. Instead the U.S. continued to criticize much of 
Russian politics. Following the reset Obama was very willing to speak highly of 
Medvedev and even referred to him as a friend, but he continued to actively 
criticize Prime Minister Putin, chiding him as someone with, ”one foot in the old 
ways of doing business.”11 In criticizing Putin, Obama was deriding a great 
portion of the Russian political structure. Putin remained extremely popular and 
maintained leadership of the highly powerful United Russia party. To speak ill of 
his political mindset was to speak poorly of a common Russian viewpoint.

Such criticism seems even more poorly thought out given Russia’s state of 
diarchy. At best the Obama administration may have believed that by painting 
Medvedev as a more liberal leader than Putin, they were creating the

10 Quoted in ibid.
opportunity for him truly fulfill this idealized expectation Yet if this were the case, it would mean that the U.S. was once again attempting to influence Russian politics in a way that had been continually unwelcome since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, when American Vice President Joe Biden went as far as to publically support Medvedev seeking reelection as President during a visit to Moscow in March 2011 it lead to widespread resentment among Russia’s political elite. All that such criticisms and unwelcomed advice did was to suggest that the U.S. lacked the restraint to become an effective ally for Russia. The U.S. seemed to be more concerned with creating long-term value changes in Russia than in achieving the more pressing strategic benefits of an immediate rapprochement.

**Things Fall Apart**

Despite the rhetoric, the Obama administration’s reset with Russia was not a rapprochement. The U.S. made minimal strategic concessions to Russia and maintained a critical stance that suggested a lack of restraint. There was simply no foundation for a less adversarial relationship to be based on. That the reset was only an illusion helps to explain its rapid decline over the past year and a half. In September 2011, Medvedev announced that he would not seek reelection as President, but that instead he supported Putin returning to power while he himself would once again aspire to be Prime Minister. Given the strong control of Putin’s United Russia party in politics, this transfer of power between the two

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12 Cohen, "OBAMA’S RUSSIA 'RESET': ANOTHER LOST OPPORTUNITY?."
leaders was recognized at the time to be all but guaranteed. By supporting Medvedev while continuing to criticize the ways of Putin the Obama Administration had ostensibly backed the wrong horse.

The fact that Putin was choosing to return to the Kremlin shattered any illusions Russian reformers had for Russia’s state of democracy. Anger at Putin and Medvedev’s decision exacerbated by a November parliamentary election that was widely believed to have been fixed led Russians to mobilized for the largest protests of the Putin era beginning in December 2011. Rather than responding to these protests, which have continued to various extents since, in a democratically acceptable way, the Kremlin has taken on a rather authoritarian stance towards protestors, supported by Russian parliament passing new harsher laws against many types of public demonstration soon after Putin’s formal return to the Presidency on May 7, 2012.

Rather than attempting to rebuild a relationship with Putin for sake of easier relations with Russia, the U.S. has not offered any real support to the Russian government since it has entered this recent time of political turmoil. Instead, the American media and many American politicians have been rather sympathetic to the cause of Russian protesters, choosing to highly criticize Russian disregard for human rights and thus putting an even greater strain on relations with the Kremlin. In September, out of fear of America coming to

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actively support Russian domestic discontent, the Russian government ordered the pro-democracy U.S. Agency for International Development (U.S.AID) to discontinue its operations in Russia. Not only did this action express the great diplomatic ill will that has grown between the two countries, but also, it only served to increase American criticism of Russian politics and human rights.

Perhaps most detrimental to U.S.-Russian relations was decision of American Congress to pass the Magnitsky Act, signed into law by Obama on December 14. This no doubt well-intentioned law was passed in response to the death of Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian whistleblower who had died after mistreatment during a long unjustified Moscow prison holding. The bill empowered the U.S. to put visa and banking restrictions on specific Russian officials thought to be responsible for human rights violations such as Magnitsky’s death. Thus the U.S. gave its self some small ability to intervene in Russian corruption and human rights abuses in attempt to coerce Russian officials towards more democratically acceptable behavior.

Unsurprisingly, the American decision to unilaterally interfere in Russian politics was not looked upon kindly by Russian leaders. The Russian response has been to attempt to somehow counteract the level of American influence in Russia. Since the Magnitsky act was passed, Russian parliament has gone on to pass a barrage of anti-Americans laws. The most prominent of these has been the ban of American adoption of Russian children and the banning of American

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16 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/sep/18/usaid-moscow-putin-protest
funded NGO’s in Russia. However, some politicians have even gone as far as to suggest Russia should ban the use of American influenced words. America’s attempts to sway Russian political practice seem to have had little positive effect. The Russian government is showing no wish to amend its ways. It looks only to tarnish Russian perceptions of America. At the same time, such actions do little but reaffirm American conceptions of Russia’s political shortcoming. Instead of rational cooperation, the relationship is devolving into petty attacks.

**Time for a Changing of the Guard?**

The current breakdown in U.S.-Russian relations comes at a time when some scholars are questioning whether the events of the last decade indicate that the United States is on the decline as a world power. More tempered critics question for how much longer the U.S. will be able to maintain its status as the world’s leading economic power. More vocal critics point to rising states that challenge American unipolarity suggesting that America’s global significance is slowly fading. Perhaps it is not necessary to drift into doomsaying about America’s future, but there is at least a reasonable argument to be made that America currently faces more geopolitical challenges than it did even at its post-

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WWII and Cold War heights. Thus, it may be pursuing some lines of policy that may ultimately not be sustainable.

Even if one entirely rejects the notion that the U.S. is on a decline, it is hard to deny that America is involved in an inordinate number of arenas of international affairs when compared to other comparably significant states. Such is the sort of situation that should lead a state to consider lessening its international commitments and prioritizing its adversarial engagements. When the British Empire was similarly highly extended internationally it chose to swallow its pride and seek a rapprochement with the United States so as to lessen its strain from affairs in the western hemisphere. In recent years the U.S. could have sought out a similar changing of the guard rapprochement with Russia, conceding Russia its desired influence in Central Asia and thereby reducing some American concerns with Eurasian affairs.

The current circumstances suggest that the U.S.-Russian relationship may be passed easily saving, but at the beginning of the Obama administration there existed a legitimate opportunity for a transition in American policy. The disruptive issues to U.S.-Russian cooperation around 2008 were not truly essential components of American security. Although NATO expansion can have some positive democratizing effects, it does little to increase the actual strength of the already unmatched military alliance. The U.S. could have taken a step back from its support of expansion without any major effects to alliance’s security. Likewise, although a missile defense system would directly improve the security of America and its allies, there remained possibilities for building a comparable
system in a manner viewed as less threatening by Russia. Either of these would have been legitimate sacrifices to make in order to increase cooperative relations and reduce diplomatic resource strains. Had this line of accommodating policy been pursued, a true reset if you will, the U.S. and Russia might actually have transitioned to a productive and mutually beneficial relationship. Instead the “reset” now seems like little more than a feigned rapprochement used as an attempt by the American government to get closer to Russia without making any significant concessions to Russia’s own growing power.

In an October 2012 article in *The American Conservative*, Martin Seiff points out that there has been an ironic shift in the politics of the American-Russian relationship since the Cold War. During the Cold War, the U.S.S.R was driven by a revolutionary politically left dogma aimed at changing global political structure, while the U.S. was a conservative force looking to maintain stability and the status quo. With the emergence of neoconservatism, these roles have been completely reversed. As Seiff puts it, albeit rather extremely, “The bipartisan policy of the United States has become Permanent Revolution until Total and Perfect Democracy is finally achieved.”21 America now pursues a somewhat revolutionary political dogma that looks to reform global democracy for all, while Russia simply wishes to preserve its status quo of its less than perfect democracy. This interpretation of American democracy as a revolutionary force helps to explain why American political leaders have chosen to promote human rights and democracy rather than attempt a more amicable

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21 Martin Sieff, "From Kennan to Trotsky: how the United States became a superpower of the left," *The American Conservative* 11, no. 10 (2012).
relationship with Russia. To uncritically cooperate with a sub-perfect democracy would be to `take a step back from the revolutionary mission and to degrade America’s dogmatic political identity. To be open to fully amicable relations with Russia despite its democratic shortcomings would be to break entirely with America’s current international identity.

This said, an emphatic commitment to democracy is not necessarily a full enough answer to explain American hesitation to move towards peace. The U.S. has had plenty of allies of questionable democratic standing when it was strategically advantageous. Of deeper significance are the would-be implications of ceding Russia its desired influence. It is easy to academically argue the benefits of lessening the United States’ international commitments, but from a political standpoint, steps towards rapprochement could be interpreted as an acknowledgment of American weakness. America has come to be very comfortable in its status as a near unitary global power. The main way the U.S. has bolstered this power status was by holding sway in less stable regions such as Eurasia. To now actively remove the U.S. from direct involvement in this region, even for sake of peace, would be to suggest the state could no longer handle the same level of responsibility it has had for the last two decades. Quite simply, acknowledging national shortcomings has never been an advantageous stance in American electoral politics.

While it would be too strong to say American politicians actively deny the possibility of American decline, they certainly do their best to affirm the U.S.’ continued global leadership and power despite any challenges or weakness.
Writing in *Foreign Affairs* as a presidential candidate in 2007, Barack Obama boldly proclaimed, “The American moment is not over, but it must be seized anew.” Although Obama acknowledged the fact that America faced a great number of challenges with limited international support, it would not be traditionally American to back away from difficult global circumstances. As he asserted, “To recognize the number and complexity of these threats is not to give way to pessimism. Rather, it is a call to action. These threats demand a new vision of leadership in the twenty-first century.”22 During his campaign Obama tried to point out the ways he would be different from his Neoconservative predecessor, but in many ways the Obama administration has continued the neoconservative policy of making America a beacon of democracy through might. America has taken on an identity as a highly active democratizing force, and any step back from this would be a major shift in America’s sense of self.

At many times in his presidency Obama has acknowledged that the global landscape has significantly changed in recent years. Yet despite this, many of his words and actions suggest that Obama does not believe a new landscape means America must take on a different or lesser role in geopolitics. Addressing a crowd of young Russian intellectuals in a Speech at the New Economic School in Moscow on July 7, 2009, Obama suggested to the young Russians that the future was bright and encouraged them to actively take part in shaping Russian Democracy. Beckoning to the possibility of expanding Russian glory Obama noted, “The pursuit of power is no longer a zero-sum game -- progress must be

shared." If Obama truly meant what he said, a changing of the guard rapprochement would have been the perfect policy to undertake. America could have shared progress by allowing Russia its desired uncontested influence in Eurasia. Instead, American policy has been to not only remain active in Eurasia, but also to meddle directly with Russian domestic politics. Such actions suggest a mild enmity and at least some sort of fear of Russian growth. Perhaps what Obama really meant was that the pursuit of power need not be zero-sum so long as the U.S. remains clearly on top.

**Pushing Russia Away**

At the end of the Cold War America had true power to compel Russia’s cooperation; as it was an unchallenged military and economic power and the clear leader of international institutions, there was much to be gained from close association with the United States. By now this has become much less the case. Russia is no longer in need of significant economic assistance from the Western Powers as it was in the 1990’s. Likewise, it has already gained admittance into most of the Western institutions it would want to. As there is no longer as great a power imbalance between Russia and the U.S., American no longer has coercive power over Russia’s future. All that could remain for the two states to base a relationship on would be truly reciprocal security motivated behavior. However, this is not something the U.S. appears to be interested in.

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If the U.S. has for so long proven to be an inconsistent strategic partner, there will likely be a point when Russia will come to realize that there is little more it can hope to gain from the West. It would seem that Russia is being pushed closer to seeking out alternative, non-western allies, and indeed possibly has been for some time. In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, Alexander Cooley suggested that there is a rising “League of Authoritarian Gentleman.” With the growing power and stability of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Russia, China, and other Eurasian states are becoming more cooperative and supportive of each other’s security, while also vindicating each other’s political and human rights violations.24

As China rapidly grows in geopolitical strength, the Kremlin might choose to more strongly align itself with the Asian power. Such a shift could offer comparable security benefits to cooperation with America, and unlike the U.S. China would not pressure Russia to change its domestic politics. Given Russian political scientist Igor Zevelev’s argument that Russian leaders tend to deal with China with a less culturally biased and more realist diplomacy than they do the U.S., and a recent poll that showed that “29% of Russians who thought that their country had enemies considered this enemy to be the United States” while “China was named a potential adversary by a mere 9% of respondents,” Russia might easily choose to disregard America and instead seek the support of only China. Recent events over just the past few weeks seem highly suggestive that

this sort of reorientation is already occurring. In March, new Chinese President Xi Jinping made Moscow the destination of his first trip abroad after assuming office. Since this visit, Russia and China have announced a number of significant political and economic agreements including an energy deal that will make China by far the largest purchaser of Russian oil. More ominous from a Western perspective, the two states have also taken action towards more involved military cooperation. Russia has recently agreed to build China 24 Su-35 fighters and four Lada-class submarines, the first large-scale military exchange between the two states in over a decade. As the U.S. is on imperfect terms with both China and Russia, there is little reason to believe there will somehow develop a happy three-way relationship of cooperation between the states. Indeed, Chinese state run newspapers have referred to the new relationship between China and Russia as, “[A] well-deserved riposte to Washington for America's military 'pivot' to Asia.”

Conclusion

This past January the U.S. removed itself from a joint working group on civil society that had been formed as a part of the Obama-Medvedev Commission. Although this action had few actual geopolitical effects, it

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27 Quoted in ibid.
28 Herszenhorn and Kramer, "Another Reset of Relations With Russia in Obama’s Second Term."
symbolizes that the Obama administration has officially given up on the optimism about Russia it once held. The new “reset” with Russia in Obama’s second term will not be taking steps closer to cooperation, but instead a geopolitical distancing. Comments from members of the Obama administration suggest that the difficulties in U.S.-Russian relations arise from irresolvable differences, but it is not incompatible values that are the problem so much as unrealistic expectations.29

Rapprochement does not occur simply because it is willed. It requires deliberate sacrifice and restraint. The Obama administration was seemingly in denial of this fact when it proposed the policy of reset in 2009, and thus it is no surprise that the primarily rhetorical shift in relations had few lasting effects. Rather than realizing its mistakes and making unilateral accommodations in order to create the foundation for an actual reset, the American government has instead clung to its values, preferring to promote democracy. This would be the valiant stance to take, were there any reason to believe Russia will respond to international pressure and further democratize. Yet if history is any indicator, Russia will continue to practice democracy in its own way and all that America is gaining from its critical stance is slight moral fulfillment. By taking a step away from engaging Russia, the United States is doing exactly what is has often accused Russian leadership of since the end of the Cold War: failing to pursue a compromise that would be to its benefit.

29 Ibid.
Rapprochement has once again failed. Russia may not be America’s enemy, but it is also certainly not its friend.
Conclusion: The End of Democratic Triumph?

It was my hope when starting this project that I would be able to end things on an optimistic note. Despite the fact that the U.S. and Russia have had many difficulties in the past, I wanted to believe that progress was being made, and that the two states might productively overcome their differences in the near future. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be the case. The multiple failures of post-Cold War U.S.-Russia rapprochement all stem from the same sorts of issues over the course of three different Presidential Administrations. American leaders have failed to show any progress towards understanding their mistakes and continue to maintain the democratic triumphalism that has continually misguided its decisions about Russia.

Democracy is not a one-size-fits-all solution to America’s problems, especially in regards to Russia. Bill Clinton missed his opportunity to actively shape Russia’s policy and now that Russia has greatly regained geopolitical standing under Vladimir Putin, it is too late for American leaders to try to change Russia’s way through coercive methods. Russia is not going to alter its politics because of outsider influences. Continued attempts to reform Russia may fulfill American moral desires, but it does nothing towards rebuilding productive relations. In failing to truly engage Russia on a strategic level America is preventing the possibility of a real rapprochement and pushing Russia to look for other allies such as China.

In the 2010 edition of Russia’s Foreign Policy Andrei P. Tsygankov offers three pieces of advice as to how the West can best achieve productive relations
with Russia. In order to best interact with Russia Western leaders must continue to engage Russia, be sure to engage on mutually acceptable terms, and temper their expectations.\textsuperscript{30} In contrast to my research, Tsygankov was focused almost exclusively on Russia’s foreign policy decisions since the Cold War. However, as can be seen, his advice is very similar to the conclusions that I came up with focusing primarily on American policy. Lofty ideals and unilateral desires have no productive role in U.S.-Russian relations. America and Russia will only find common ground if their leaders engage each other with restraint and with a willingness to make mutual concessions. In other words, Russia and the U.S. are not going to achieve rapprochement by accident; a positive shift in relations will only occur as the result of realistic and deliberate intentions.

By now Russia and the U.S. are seemingly past to point when it makes sense to engage in only partial cooperation. There have been too many past failures for either country to have much trust in anything less than a full rapprochement. Peaceful relations will only be achieved from a true commitment to cooperation for the sake of peace. Both sides must recognize the benefit of cooperative action and accordingly be legitimately willing to make concessions and practice true reciprocal restraint. Any premature peripheral concerns over democratic values can only serve to distract from the peace process and cause further to damage to an incredibly fragile relationship. At this point, each time rapprochement fails the damage becomes more irreversible.

Thus, America’s democratic triumphalism has reached its limit. America can either take on a less idealistic vision of the world or maintain the status quo of its current geopolitical relations. America has every right to maintain its strong ideological commitments, but this stance will continue to have diminishing marginal returns in terms of its effect on global political reform. Likewise, it can only come at the expense of peaceful relations with Russia.
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