

# Russia's Relations with China and India: Strategic Partnerships, Yes; Strategic Alliances, No

ANDREW C. KUCHINS

In the first post-cold war decade, the international system has experienced a period of relative peace among the great powers not seen since the Concert of Europe after the Napoleonic wars nearly two hundred years ago. The United States is enjoying a period of international dominance even greater than that after World War II, and there is no imaginable competitor on the horizon for at least a decade or two. The most economically and technologically advanced countries in Europe and Asia, which aligned with the United States during the cold war, continue to ride the bandwagon of U.S. power. Imminent decisions that the Bush administration will make on key security issues, including nuclear arms reductions, national missile defense, and further NATO expansion, will have considerable influence in shaping the policies of existing and emerging great powers with ambivalent attitudes toward the United States—notably Russia, China, and India. The system may look overwhelmingly unipolar today, but history suggests that such moments are ephemeral, and we should expect and prepare for a more complex and perhaps dangerous multipolarity to emerge in the first quarter of the new century.<sup>1</sup> Russia, China, and India all express support for a multipolar international system not dominated by the United States, and rhetorical support for multipolarity has been a staple of joint statements issued in recent years after Russian summits with China and India.

In 1997, I concluded that the emergence of some kind of Eurasian, anti-United States security alliance led by Russia and China was a highly unlikely scenario that could only come about as a result of “a series of major foreign and security policy blunders by the United States and its allies.”<sup>2</sup> Reasonable people may disagree about the wisdom of the U.S.–British bombing of Iraq in December 1998, the expansion of NATO’s membership and mission, and the 1999 Kosovo war,

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Andrew C. Kuchins is the director of the Russian and Eurasian Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in Washington, D.C. The author thanks Natalia Zwart, Thomas Graham, Anatol Lieven, Sumit Ganguly, and Lanxin Xiang for their help with this article.

but the net result is further alienation of Russia from the West—which has been codified in Russia's foreign and security policy doctrines enunciated in 2000.<sup>3</sup> In December 1998, just after the Anglo-American bombing of Iraq, then-Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov, in New Delhi, broached the vague notion of a "strategic triangle" composed of Russia, China, and India that would serve as a stabilizing force in international security.<sup>4</sup> The proposal was not received with great enthusiasm in either Beijing or New Delhi, and most Western commentators similarly did not take it very seriously for a number of reasons. A triangular strategic alliance is not imminent, but the coincidence of interests among China, Russia, and India has grown in the past three years. For Russia, the "strategic partnerships" it is developing bilaterally with China and India constitute increasingly important components of its overall foreign policy.

Before discussing the significance of Russia's strategic partnerships with China and India, I must point out the obvious yet crucial point that Russia today enjoys no alliance relationship with any state remotely resembling a great power. Not since the short-lived Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s has Moscow embraced another great power in an alliance relationship, and since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact Russia has been bereft of alliance partners except among failing or deeply troubled states. In the wake of the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the founding of the independent Russian Federation, Russian liberals, including many in the Yeltsin government, anticipated, if not an alliance, then a close partnership between the United States and Russia that would provide a stable foundation for a "new world order," to borrow the rhetoric of the first Bush administration. Those hopes foundered on the shoals of Russia's traumatic domestic economic plight and its opposition to numerous U.S. and NATO policies, most notably in the Kosovo war in 1999.<sup>6</sup>

To date, Moscow has not been successful in shaping the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) into an effective alliance or even quasi alliance.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, many of the states that are nominally members of the CIS have sought to balance against the perceived hegemonic aspirations of Russia by expanding ties with NATO's Partnership for Peace, and in the cases of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, by establishing an alternative regional organizational structure, GUUAM. For a country like the United States, with strong alliance relations with powerful states, it is easy to be dismissive of the more vague notion of "strategic partnerships." But for Russia, they are very significant relationships, and they merit careful attention. U.S. policymakers run considerable risk of damaging the national interests of the United States either by dismissing Russia's evolving strategic partnerships as insignificant or by overestimating the potential threat they pose to U.S. interests. The Russian leadership has elevated some bilateral relationships to the level of "strategic partnership" because of perceived long-term and important shared interests; they are not necessarily directed against a third party. The proliferation of strategic partnerships on the part of Russia and other powers (including the United States) also reflects an international system in transition. It is possible that some of these relationships could evolve into tighter alliances, but that is certainly not clear at this point.<sup>8</sup>

Like the United States and indeed much of the rest of the world, Russia has adjusted fitfully to the uncertain realities of the post-cold war international system. But unlike the United States, Russia has struggled with this adjustment from a position of great relative weakness. Not surprisingly, with the era of bipolar confrontation and condominium over, Russia has evinced more interest in multilateral security arrangements as a means to ensure that Moscow's voice is heard. The new Foreign Policy Concept acknowledges the economic constraints that for the foreseeable future restrict Russia to a more modest status as a multiregional power. With the exception of its strategic nuclear forces, Russia no longer has the means to compete with the United States as a global power. Russia has for the past decade behaved more as a status quo power that seeks to hold back the tide of U.S. power and maintain some leverage in Asia and Europe by reaching out to a multiplicity of partners in an omnidirectional fashion.<sup>9</sup> With his youth, vigor, and steely-eyed determination, Vladimir Putin has re-energized this policy with his peripatetic meeting schedule with foreign leaders. And although Moscow seeks to counter U.S. unilateralism, its overall policy orientation is not inherently anti-United States and certainly should not be construed as more broadly anti-Western. We should not conflate opposition to deployment of a national missile defense or to NATO expansion to a neo-cold war confrontational status. Russia's foreign policy is far more complex, and its views on the United States vary on different issues and in different regions. For example, in recent years Moscow has tended to view U.S.-led alliances in Asia far more favorably than it has viewed NATO, because most of the Russian foreign policy elite has tended to see the United States as a status quo power in Asia and U.S.-led alliances there as a good hedge on China and on possible Japanese militarization.<sup>10</sup>

### **Russia's Strategic Partnerships with China and India**

The Sino-Russian strategic partnership predates the Indo-Russian strategic partnership, which was finally realized with President Vladimir Putin's trip to India in October 2000. In the first half of the 1990s, the United States and the Russian Federation described their relationship as a strategic partnership, but by the end of the decade this term was discredited in both Washington and Moscow. Since coming to power in January 2000, President Putin and his administration have increasingly referred to the European Union and/or Europe as a strategic partner, but that relationship has not been endorsed in official documents in the same way as Russia's relationships with China and India.

The Sino-Russian and Indo-Russian relationships share a number of common features, but there are some important differences as well. In each case there is strong rhetorical support for a multipolar world order not dominated by the United States. As a declining power—experiencing, in fact, the most rapid and precipitous decline in peacetime in modern history—Russia is coming from a very different place in supporting multipolarity than are rising powers like China and India. Russia has witnessed its power and significance erode tremendously in the last decade, while the United States has enjoyed nearly a decade of unprecedented economic growth. Russia warily regards globalization as a fig leaf for the

extension of U.S. hegemony throughout the world. U.S. economic strength is outstripped only by its military advantages, and the Russians can find no comfort in comparing the performance of U.S. forces in Iraq and Kosovo with that of Russian forces in Chechnya in the 1990s. After the hopes of a U.S.–Russian partnership dissipated with a series of disappointments in the last decade, former foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov and the majority of the Russian foreign and security policy elite increasingly supported Russia's strengthening its relations with China, India, Iran, and major European powers to stem what Moscow views as the overbearing dominance of the United States in international affairs.

Russia, China, and India all support an enhanced role for the United Nations, and Russia has specifically endorsed India's candidacy to join the UN Security Council.<sup>11</sup> All three denounced the NATO action in Kosovo as a violation of international law since it did not receive a UN mandate.<sup>12</sup> All three are also very sensitive to violations of national sovereignty and are reluctant to support international mediation of civil conflicts because of challenges to their own territorial integrity in Taiwan, Kashmir, and Chechnya. Both Russia and China share a strong aversion to U.S.-led alliances' taking such action, because to a greater or lesser extent they fear the prospect of U.S. intervention in their own territory. During the Kosovo war, the sense grew among Russians that today NATO was taking action in Yugoslavia, but tomorrow it could be in Chechnya or elsewhere in Russia. Although that seems quite unrealistic, the growing relationships of former Soviet republics such as Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and others with NATO are viewed nearly unanimously by the Russian foreign and security policy elite as contradictory to Russian national interests.

For China, recovering Taiwan is about as high a policy priority as promoting economic development. The prospect of U.S. intervention to support Taiwan in the event of a conflict is the most likely scenario for great power conflict in the early twenty-first century. China has regarded the broadening of the geographical scope of the U.S.–Japanese security alliance at the end of the 1990s with the same trepidation with which Russia has viewed the expansion of the NATO mission to include out-of-area activities. The most recent Chinese white paper on national defense, issued in fall 2000, views the United States in very threatening terms, and Chinese defense thinkers now talk more openly about the increasing likelihood of conflict with the United States.<sup>13</sup> The Indian/Pakistani conflict over Kashmir may present the world's most imminent danger of nuclear conflict.

China, Russia, and India share sensitivities about Islamic threats, as each country has large Muslim populations and each shares borders with states containing Muslim majorities. India has cause for the greatest concern because the Kashmir problem has the potential to escalate into a nuclear conflict with archrival Pakistan. In a little over fifty years since independence, India and Pakistan have already fought three major wars against one another, and there has been continual fighting in Kashmir during at least the last decade. In the last two decades, Russia has fought only Muslim foes. In Afghanistan in the 1980s and Chechnya in the 1990s, Russian forces have performed poorly, and each war has sent shock

waves through Russian society. With large Muslim populations reaching into the heart of the Russian Federation in the Volga region, Russian sensitivities about Islamic threats focus more on the potential for state disintegration than interstate conflict. As China is the most ethnically homogeneous of the three states and its Muslim population is more isolated in the west of China in Xinjiang Province, China's concern about Islamic separatism is more muted than that of Russia and India, but it is real nonetheless. In particular, all three governments fear that the increasingly weak and failing states of Central Asia will serve as conduits for more radical Muslim groups, terrorist activities, and drug trafficking, which will erode their authority in peripheral territories. Each country also views Afghanistan under the Taliban as the dangerous hub of these activities.

India and China have increasingly relied on Russia as a source of conventional weapons and possibly other weapons technologies. They are the two biggest clients of the struggling Russian military-industrial complex—each now purchases about \$1 billion

worth of arms a year—and the relationships are growing. Since domestic Russian procurement virtually dried up in the 1990s, arms sales to China and India are a vital, if controversial, national security interest for Moscow. Three basic rationales explain much of the Russian enthusiasm for arms sales to China, India, and others—notably Iran, since Moscow's announcement in December 2000 of the decision to resume sales of conventional weapons to Tehran.

The first reason is simply economic. The Russian economy has floundered badly since the Soviet collapse (and before the collapse, for that matter), and aside from natural resources, weapons systems are one of the few areas in which Russia can compete with some success in the global marketplace. The Russian military-industrial complex also benefits from U.S. sanctions against sales to China after the massacres at Tiananmen, to Iran for more than two decades after the hostage crisis, and to India after its nuclear tests in 1998. In 2000, Russian arms sales amounted to about \$4 billion, which represents a modest increase over the previous five years, when arms deliveries averaged a bit over \$3 billion. Even at \$4 billion, Russian arms sales amount to only about 15 percent of U.S. arms transfers, and they run considerably behind France's and Great Britain's.<sup>14</sup> This is a far cry from the height of Soviet arms sales in the 1980s, but much of that income existed only on paper, as many Soviet clients were unable or unwilling to pay in hard currency or the equivalent. Still, the basic story for Russian arms sales after the collapse of the USSR is one of massive market loss. Powerful domestic industrial and institutional lobbies, including the Ministry of Atomic Energy, strongly promote Russian weapons systems and related technologies sales.

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The second reason is also economic, but with a national security slant. Because Russian procurement nearly came to a standstill in the last decade, without sales abroad the struggling Russian military-industrial complex would have collapsed entirely. In 1999 and 2000, Russian arms sales averaged about four times the level of domestic procurement.<sup>15</sup> For Russia, losing all of the human and industrial capital invested over many decades in the Soviet weapons complex would have catastrophic implications for future Russian national security. No doubt excessive allocations to the military during the Soviet period were a major factor in Soviet economic decline and consequently detrimental for long-term national security. But even the most liberally inclined Russians understand that Russia must maintain a military-industrial complex, albeit one that commands a far smaller portion of the national product than in Soviet days. Already the erosion of their military-industrial complex raises serious questions about Russia's ability to deliver on arms sales agreements, as increasingly Moscow is offering to sell new systems, such as the Su-30MKI superfighter, that have not gone into serial production before.<sup>16</sup> Most of the conventional arms transfers in the 1990s consisted of off-the-shelf systems that had been in production for years. Although Russian enterprises can still build impressive prototypes, the subcontracting networks of the Soviet military-industrial complex have deteriorated to the extent that serial production is very difficult.

The third rationale is directly tied to Russian perceptions of its medium- and long-term security interests, which must be defined to some extent by geography. Although international security may not fully subscribe to the first three rules of real estate, "location, location, location," Russians have historically and culturally attached great importance to the role of geography, and after the ideologically imposed hiatus of the cold war, the study of geopolitics has once again become quite popular in Russia.<sup>17</sup> Russia is surrounded by a belt of weak, and in many cases failing, states to the west and south (former Soviet republics), and just beyond the territory of the former Soviet Union are rising powers China and India and other states with regional aspirations such as Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq; these states have varying interests in international stability and the international system as currently construed. Russia has chosen to use its role as a supplier of weaponry as a means to maintain some leverage and influence on the rise to power of many of these states. In an ideal world Russia would probably prefer to be surrounded by countries that did not seek to develop weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and the official Russian position supporting the nonproliferation regime is not exactly disingenuous. But the reality is that Russia is not surrounded by, let's say, Canada, Mexico, and two huge oceans, but rather by a number of countries that have developed or likely will develop weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. By maintaining a shadowy role on the periphery of those weapons programs, Russia maintains some control over their development as well as knowledge about their status. Thinking hypothetically, if you are in Moscow and you have concluded that Iran will eventually, with or without your involvement, develop weapons of mass destruction, the rationale for some degree of involvement becomes more understandable. Determining precisely what

that role is without access to classified intelligence reports is virtually impossible, and even with such access, reaching clear conclusions must not be an easy task.<sup>18</sup>

The combination of the economic and national security factors driving Russian weapons and weapons technology sales to China, India, and other states suggests that this will be an enduring feature of Russian foreign policy, and there are a number of indications that the Putin administration has made a strategic decision to promote Russian arms sales more aggressively despite the objections of the United States and others. However, there is a competitive aspect to Chinese and Indian conventional purchases from Russia, since Beijing and New Delhi to some extent regard each other as security threats.

### **Cross-Cutting and Mitigating Factors in Triangular Relations**

On nuclear security, the triangular dynamics between Russia, China, and India become far more complicated. Both Russia and China denounced India's nuclear tests in 1998, although Russia's criticism was milder, and both have urged India to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. If the nuclear rivalry between China and India intensifies, Russia's nonpartisan stance as strategic partner to both may become less sustainable.

Possible U.S. deployment of national and/or theater missile defense systems also elicits different kinds of concerns from Moscow, Beijing, and New Delhi. Russians are concerned about the deployment of a national missile defense system that could eventually compromise the Russian strategic deterrent. Although it is difficult to imagine that happening in the next ten to fifteen years, even if Russia reduced the size of its arsenal to one thousand deployed warheads, Moscow would incur some unwanted additional costs in developing countermeasures to defenses. The Chinese strongly oppose U.S. deployment of theater systems in Asia and especially the potential sharing of such systems with Taiwan. But Beijing is also concerned about so-called "thin" national defenses designed to address small attacks and accidental launches, because those defenses would compromise existing Chinese deterrent capabilities. India is opposed to U.S. deployment of a national missile defense because it will likely hasten Chinese efforts to modernize and expand their nuclear forces, thus compelling India to deploy a more robust nuclear deterrent than it might otherwise do. All three states, however, share a dim view of the prospect that U.S. deployment of national and theater defense systems to defend the homeland and U.S. troops will possibly allow it to deploy U.S. troops more liberally with less fear of reprisal.

The missile defense issue presents Moscow with tremendous challenges and difficult choices that affect the management of its relationship with China. If Russia were to reach agreement with the United States about modification of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty to allow for the deployment of a limited national missile defense system, the Sino-Russian relationship would suffer.<sup>19</sup> The U.S.–Russian agreement at the June 2000 Clinton-Putin summit to explore cooperation on missile defense and to jointly monitor missile launches, followed by Putin's proposal to the Europeans in Rome the same month to cooperate on the development of a joint European theater missile defense system, elicited serious

concern from China.<sup>20</sup> Presumably Putin had some explaining to do when he met with Chinese leader Jiang Zemin twice the next month, once in Dushanbe for the Shanghai Forum summit and once in Beijing. He was at least somewhat successful, as the two sides concluded with a more unified stance, once again denouncing U.S. plans for missile defense and upholding the ABM Treaty as a bedrock of strategic stability in the world. In the past, the Chinese and the Russians have discussed cooperation in taking joint measures to oppose U.S. missile defense, although apart from joint denunciations of U.S. activities and plans it is not clear what form such cooperation would take.<sup>21</sup>

Moscow must beware of damage to the Sino-Russian relationship resulting from a potential U.S.–Russian agreement on ABM Treaty modification, but Russian strategic thinkers are also concerned about catalyzing a more rapid Chinese nuclear build-up. With deployed Russian nuclear forces on a downward trajectory, the emergence of a more robust Chinese nuclear deterrent in the future is unsettling. Russia's choices will not be made easier by the new Bush administration in Washington, which has made very explicit its desire to deploy a national missile defense system more robust than that planned by the Clinton administration.<sup>22</sup> As of February 2001, the Russian security establishment still appeared undecided about whether it would agree to accept modification of the ABM Treaty should the Bush administration seek to pursue one.<sup>23</sup> President Clinton's decision to postpone a decision on national missile defense deployment, followed by a review by the Bush administration of economic and technical feasibility, provides a welcome breathing space for diplomatic efforts on a number of fronts. Nevertheless, Moscow will eventually face a fundamental decision on missile defense that will lay down a very significant marker in the consolidation of its post-cold war strategic approach. Should it jump on the bandwagon with the dominant global power or align with its rising power neighbor to balance against the hegemon?

Although far less likely than national missile defense deployment—but hardly unimaginable—Sino-American conflict over Taiwan could also potentially put Moscow in an awkward position. Moscow has consistently upheld a one-China policy, and at the July summit in Beijing Putin stated that Russia firmly supports China's efforts to reunify with Taiwan. But what would Moscow do if actual fighting broke out over Taiwan? Rumors circulated in Asia that before his trip to Beijing last summer Putin offered the Chinese direct military assistance in the event of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Supposedly the Russians would send their Pacific Fleet to cut off U.S. naval access to the strait. The rumor seems hard to believe since Russia stands to benefit little by actual involvement in a Taiwan crisis involving the United States—which speaks to the larger phenomenon that China seems to benefit more from the Sino-Russian relationship than does Russia.<sup>24</sup> It would seem that Russia's interests are best served by continuing U.S.–Chinese tension over Taiwan because it increases Moscow's leverage with Washington and Beijing. It also seems slightly fantastic that the Chinese would take such an offer as credible given the decrepit condition of Russia's Pacific Fleet. Still, the story was not denied by Russian or Chinese officials, and there was no comment on the rumor either by top U.S. officials or by major media.<sup>25</sup>



Currently the Russians and Chinese are negotiating a new treaty that would define and further elevate the status of the bilateral relationship. Although it seems very unlikely that the new treaty would include security guarantees, it has been reported that it would broaden and deepen Russo-Chinese security cooperation in the fields of arms sales and weapons research and development. Reportedly, Moscow and Beijing are envisioning a fifteen-year cooperation plan that would include two stages. In the first stage (2000–05), China would be able to purchase up to \$15 billion in weapons from Russia while expanding joint exercises and military training. In the second stage (2005–15) China and Russia would engage in joint research and development of new generations of military technology.<sup>26</sup> Although the Russian military-industrial complex could certainly benefit from the infusion of Chinese capital, it is not clear what technological benefit for Russia there would be in such extensive cooperation. In addition, it seems unlikely that Russian industry could quickly ramp up by a factor of three its current arms deliveries to Beijing.

Economic cooperation and trade between China and Russia continue to be sluggish. The announced goal of reaching \$20 billion in bilateral trade by the year 2000 not surprisingly proved to be wildly unrealistic, as the overall figure failed to reach \$8 billion last year. There is long-term growth potential in the energy sector, but it will require years to develop any major multilateral investment.<sup>27</sup> Like much in the Sino-Russian relationship, the rhetoric of partnership outstrips the reality. The overall relationship is better than at any time since the 1950s, but the foundation remains rather shaky. A measured and balanced look at the relationship would suggest that the two countries continue and even increase strategic cooperation, to meet the security interests of both without compromising their primary focus on economic development, which also requires cooperative relations with the West for both Beijing and Moscow.<sup>28</sup>

Although Moscow has emphasized the long-term nature of its shared interests with China and India, the Sino-Russian relationship is controversial among Russian policymaking elites in a way that the Indo-Russian relationship is not. Russia shares a long border with China and a long history of often bitter and complex relations. There is an implicit Russian hedge position on China that is amplified by a growing sense of the economic and demographic vulnerability of the Russian Far East and, to a lesser extent, of Moscow's "sphere of influence" in Central Asia. Perhaps for the near future China will focus on its interests in Taiwan and the South China Sea, but there exists a barely veiled Russian fear that continued Russian weakness will invite Chinese infiltration and eventual control of some Russian territory. Russia shares no border with India, and despite the wild designs of nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and the like for Moscow's "drive to the South," it is nearly impossible to foresee circumstances that could lead to conflict between Russia and India. This is not to say that conflict with China is at all likely, but rather that Russia's sensibilities toward China and India are different.<sup>29</sup>

Initially giving longtime friendly partner India the cold shoulder after the collapse of the USSR, Russian diplomats fairly steadily sought to strengthen ties with

New Delhi through the 1990s.<sup>30</sup> This process culminated with Vladimir Putin's trip to India last October, when the "strategic partnership" between India and Russia was formally established. Despite this achievement and the signing of a number of arms sales agreements that amounted to more than \$3 billion in new deals, however, reports in both the Indian and Russian press indicated some difficult discussions that suggest underlying tensions in this relationship.<sup>31</sup> It was reported in the Russian press that India played hardball in the arms sales negotiations by demanding further price reductions, and that Russian defense officials were not fully satisfied with the deals, which consisted of agreements of intent rather than contracts.<sup>32</sup> But even with arms transfers to India amounting to about \$1 billion annually, the over-

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all Russo-Indian trade relationship over the past decade has fallen from \$5.5 billion a year to about \$1.5 billion. One Russian commentator, on the eve of the October summit in New Delhi, concluded that unless Russia and India can revitalize their trade relationship, the agreement about their strategic partnership "will be nothing but words on paper."<sup>33</sup>

It was also clear from the summit and events around it that Indian and Russian interests do not precisely coincide regarding Pakistan or the Taliban. Just a week before Putin traveled to India, Sergei Yastrzhembsky went to Pakistan as a presidential envoy. His letter from President Putin addressed Russian concerns in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Chechnya, including the role of camps on the Pakistani-Afghan border that are training soldiers to fight in Chechnya, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Acknowledging that Pakistan and Russia do not agree on everything, Yastrzhembsky explained that Moscow hoped that Pakistan could play more of a stabilizing role in the region.<sup>34</sup> Although Yastrzhembsky denied that the trip to Islamabad was designed to reach out directly to the Taliban, at a minimum Russia hoped that Pakistan could influence the Taliban to curb some of their activities. The trip also sent a message to the Indians that Russia intended to exercise all of its options, and it may help explain some of the chilliness of the meetings in New Delhi.<sup>35</sup> The Russian press also reported that Putin made a significant political concession to the Indians to seal the arms agreements by condemning terrorism and noting in his speech before the Indian parliament that the same people were instigating terrorist acts "from the Philippines to Kosovo, and from Kashmir to the Caucasus." Putin also supported India's position that the Kashmir conflict should be resolved only by Pakistan and India and should not involve international mediators.<sup>36</sup> Just after Putin made these very public statements effectively supporting India in its conflict with Pakistan, the arms agreements were finally signed. Much of the Russian press concluded that India got the best of Russia in their summit deliber-

ations, and that this reflected a shift in the balance of power of the Russo-Indian relationship in favor of New Delhi.<sup>37</sup>

The Russo-Indian summit provoked some discussion in the Russian press about the prospects of a Sino-Russian-Indian alliance and especially its role in addressing religious “extremism” and terrorism, a popular theme of the Putin administration. Vladimir Lukin, deputy speaker of the Russian Duma and a veteran Asia hand who accompanied President Putin on his trip to India, described the trip as promoting the “emergence of a new center of influence in Asia with the participation of Moscow, New Delhi, and Beijing.” But he also noted the significance that “this tripartite interest is not negative in any way, i.e., it is not directed against anyone and is not anti-European or anti-American.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, Lukin went on to say that “the threat of international terrorism could help establish a kind of regional alliance of Moscow, Delhi, and Washington, crucial for maintaining stability in Asia.”<sup>39</sup> In his interview with Indian journalists, President Putin made some interesting remarks that emphasized the importance of maintaining transparency:

But everybody will understand us if we are going to say that India, China, and Russia have some common interests as countries located in that region, interests that we want to pursue jointly. I do not see anything special in this, nothing dangerous. But what is necessary is that all our proposals in the sphere of cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, should be open for all our partners, understandable and transparent. I think this is something we can achieve.<sup>40</sup>

Russian support for multilateral security institutions in Asia has a long history, going back at least as far as Brezhnev’s proposal more than thirty years ago for a collective security pact in Asia. During the Gorbachev years these calls acquired more of a genuine positive-sum rather than zero-sum character when the Soviet Union improved relations with both China and the United States. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has continued to support multilateral frameworks for addressing key Asian security issues.<sup>41</sup> In that regard the Shanghai Forum, which grew out of the border and demilitarization agreement talks between China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, is emerging as an interesting Asian multilateral institution with some potential to address regional interests in dealing with terrorism, drug-trafficking, and other common problems.

### **Implications for U.S. Policy**

Conclusions that the Sino-Russian and Indo-Russian strategic partnerships have taken the place of the U.S.–Russian strategic partnership for Moscow, or that the leaderships in New Delhi and Beijing give relations with Russia a higher priority than ties with the United States, do not hold up to careful scrutiny. Particularly with Russia and China, but also with India, the United States holds a great deal of leverage—primarily by virtue of its position as global economic leader, but also as a global military leader and senior partner in the most powerful European and Asian alliances. When U.S. trade with China is more than ten times the level of Sino-Russian trade, for example, it is wrong to claim, as some do, that the United States is somehow “the odd man out.”<sup>42</sup>

It was very telling, for example, that last year President Clinton received a far warmer reception in India than did President Putin. And that should not be surprising since the United States can bring far more to the table that can influence India both positively and negatively than can Russia. If Sino-Russian and Indo-Russian relations became more threatening to the United States, this would represent failures of U.S. policy toward India and China at least as serious, if not more so, than those toward Russia. Currently Russia does not have alliance relationships with either China or India, and I contend that such relationships are not in the cards, absent some very ill-advised moves on the part of the United States.<sup>43</sup>

That is not to say, however, that Sino-Russian and Indo-Russian arms sales and technological cooperation do not present U.S. policymakers with real challenges in several respects. Clearly they do. Increased conventional capacity could embolden China to take more risks over Taiwan. The sales encourage Sino-Indian arms racing, which will have spillover effects in South, Southeast, and Northeast Asia. U.S. policymakers would view most dimly transfers of ballistic missile technologies and cooperation that could possibly contribute to the development of Chinese and Indian nuclear forces. So far, however, despite the near-desperate straits of its military-industrial complex, Russian arms sales to China and India have not fundamentally changed the balance of power in South Asia or East Asia.<sup>44</sup>

There is one near-term measure the United States could undertake that has the potential both to accelerate and deepen Sino-Russian and Indo-Russian strategic cooperation, as well as unleash a chain of potentially destabilizing events. If the Bush administration moves swiftly to unilaterally abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in order to begin deploying a robust national missile defense system, the relative harmony in great power relations that has so far marked the post-cold war period will come under considerable pressure. Simultaneously, the nuclear nonproliferation regime, weakened as it is, likely will not survive. For an administration in Washington that promises to bring more hard-boiled "realism" to U.S. security policy, the Bush team will need to conduct a very careful cost-benefit analysis of the potential impact of national missile defense both on our allies and on major powers in the international system, including, notably, Russia, China, and India.<sup>45</sup>

On the campaign trail, usually in reference to domestic issues like crime and gun control, George W. Bush often mentioned that actions "have consequences." Realism, still the dominant paradigm of international relations theory, also would predict that unpopular unilateral measures taken by the dominant power in the system, the United States in this case, will have consequences. For the last thirty years, a central tenet of realism in the context of U.S.-Russian-Chinese relations calls for the United States to maintain stronger ties with China and Russia than they have with each other. National missile defense deployment will pose additional challenges to Washington policymakers trying to maintain the relatively favorable position of the United States in that triangular context. In other words, we may not be able to have our cake and eat it too.

Other consequences are not entirely predictable, but we can imagine some possible repercussions. The Russians have promised to abrogate the Strategic Arms

Reduction Treaty (START) II agreement in response. Chances for deep cuts in nuclear arsenals will diminish and we risk scuttling a whole series of measures designed to bring greater safety and security to the Russian nuclear weapons and materials complex. It may still be unlikely that Russia, China, and India would respond by stepping up their strategic partnerships to the level of alliances directed against the United States, but their strategic cooperation to develop and share technologies to counter missile defenses would probably grow. National missile defense deployment will drive China to expand and modernize its nuclear forces more rapidly, and India will respond in kind, followed by predictable responses from Pakistan. If Sino-Indian relations were to sour and result in a greatly accelerated nuclear arms race, including more overt Chinese support for Pakistan's nuclear program—certainly one imaginable consequence—Russia's capacity to maintain strategic partnerships with China and India will come under much stress, as will peace in South and East Asia.<sup>46</sup> Another possible chain of consequences developing from U.S. abrogation of the ABM Treaty to deploy national missile defense is a more rapid Chinese nuclear build-up that could lead Japan increasingly to question the credibility of U.S. nuclear guarantees.

There is still much uncertainty as to how the United States will handle the missile defense issue and its subsequent impact on other nuclear and non-nuclear states. But most fundamentally, the move would unleash a dynamic whose final consequences are unclear. One thing does seem fairly certain: U.S. deployment of a national missile defense that is not accompanied by the most adroit diplomatic and political handling of the concerns of allies, friends, and rivals alike may upset the relative stability that exists among major powers in the international system today.

## NOTES

1. Kenneth Waltz has most clearly articulated the argument for the transitory nature of unipolar periods. See Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* (fall 1993): 44–79. For a powerful argument for the durability of the unipolarity of the post-cold war international system, see William Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* (summer 1999): 5–41.

2. Andrew C. Kuchins, "The Emerging Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership and Eurasian Security," Program on New Approaches to Russian Security, Policy Memo Series 11, September 1997. See PONARS Web site at [www.fas.harvard.edu/~ponars](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ponars).

3. See "Kontsepsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii" [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation] and "Voennaia doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii" [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation], which can both be found at the Web site of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, [www.scrf.gov.ru](http://www.scrf.gov.ru).

4. Primakov quickly tried to clarify his "strategic triangle" statement, noting that a "military bloc" was not the goal and "in no case would this strategic triangle be directed against a third country." See Radio Liberty Daily Report, 23 December 1998. Sergei Karaganov, the head of the influential Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, enthusiastically endorsed Primakov's proposal but suggested that "we [Russia] like to use our cooperation to counterbalance the excessive power of the United States." Radio Liberty Daily Report, 29 December 1998. In the same interview Karaganov proposed that a Russia-EU accord would also promote stability at a time when the international system "is very rapidly falling apart."

5. In February 1999, Pavel Felgenhauer, a leading Russian journalist who follows security issues, noted that the West had not taken Primakov's proposal very seriously. Felgenhauer argued, based on his reporting of speeches at the annual NATO security conference, that the Chinese and Indian governments hold similar positions with Russia on national missile defense, the supreme role of the United Nations—as opposed to NATO—on European security issues, and concern for growing religious extremism and terrorism in Central Asia. Felgenhauer concluded that “[a] growing convergence of basic interest is bringing the major Asian landmass countries together in opposing the Western sea nations. Maybe one day relentless pressure will force these countries to sign a formal alliance.” See Pavel Felgenhauer, “Defense Dossier: Asian Triangle Shapes Up,” *Moscow Times*, 25 February 1999.

6. For an excellent analysis of nearly one decade of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, see Allen C. Lynch, “The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 1 (2001): 7–31. Lynch effectively makes the argument that the shift in Russian foreign policy from a decidedly pro-Western slant to a more balanced approach giving more weight to relations with other post-Soviet states and regional neighbors to the south and east started to take place in 1992, was consolidated by 1993, and has been fairly consistent since. For earlier analyses of the shift in Russian foreign policy away from its initial, post-Soviet Western orientation, see Alexei Arbatov, “Russian Foreign Policy Alternatives,” *International Security* (fall 1993); and Sergei Goncharov and Andrew C. Kuchins, “The Domestic Sources of Russian Foreign Policy,” in *Russia and Japan: An Unresolved Dilemma between Distant Neighbors*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Jonathan Haslam, and Andrew C. Kuchins (Berkeley, CA: International and Area Studies, 1993), 343–63.

7. For a comprehensive overview of Russia's unsuccessful efforts in promoting the CIS, see Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund, and Sherman W. Garnett, *Getting It Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

8. For a useful discussion of the evolving role and proliferation of strategic partnerships in the international system after the cold war, see Sean Kay, “What is a Strategic Partnership?” *Problems of Post-Communism* 47, no. 3 (May/June 2000): 15–24.

9. Steven E. Miller first described this policy as “omni-directional friendliness” in “Russian National Interests,” in *Damage Limitation or Crisis? Russia and the Outside World*, ed. Robert D. Blackwill and Sergei Karaganov, CSIA Studies in International Security 5 (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1994), 77–107.

10. For a comparison of Russian views of U.S. alliances, see Andrew C. Kuchins and Alexei V. Zagorsky, “When Realism and Liberalism Coincide: Russian Views of U.S. Alliances in Asia,” Discussion Paper of the Asia/Pacific Research Center's Project on America's Alliances with Japan and Korea in a Changing Northeast Asia, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, 1999.

11. This support for India's candidacy, however, comes across as slightly qualified. For example, in a recent article, Anvar Azimov, deputy director of the Third Asian Department at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote, “In fact, we regard India as a strong and deserving contender for the seat of a permanent member in an expanded UN Security Council and intend to consistently uphold this position.” Anvar Azimov, “Moscow and Delhi in a Multi-Polar World,” *International Affairs* 46, no. 5 (2000): 90.

12. Chinese opposition to the NATO operation in Kosovo received much attention, especially after the United States mistakenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The Russian press reported that in a visit to Moscow in May 1999, Indian foreign minister Jasvant Singh expressed outrage about NATO's war in Kosovo. See Alexei Tamilin, “The Anger of the Indian Minister,” *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 26 May 1999 (translation from ISI Emerging Markets database).

13. See John Pomfret, “U.S. Now a ‘Threat’ in China's Eyes: Security and Taiwan Issues Lead to Talk of Showdown,” *Washington Post*, 15 November 2000. For a comprehensive analysis of Chinese military views, see David Shambaugh, “China's Military Views the

World," *International Security* 24, no. 3 (winter 1999/2000): 52–79.

14. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2000/2001* (London: Oxford University Press/International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2000), 118, 289.

15. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance*, 118.

16. Pavel Felgenhauer pointedly raised this question about recent agreements with India to sell the Su-30MKI as well as to equip the Soviet-made aircraft carrier *Admiral Gorskov* with MiG-29K jets. See his "Defense Dossier: Hot Air Brings Cold Cash," *Moscow Times*, 12 October 2000.

17. For an excellent study of the Soviet territorial approach to security during the cold war, see Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For a recent Russian study of geopolitics, see Alexander Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii* [The Basics of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia] (Moscow: Arktogeya, 1997). Different geopolitical perspectives inform the international perspectives of leading communist and nationalist politicians like Gennady Zyuganov, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and Alexei Mitrofanov.

18. This should not be understood as a defense of Russian transfers of missile and nuclear technologies that violate international agreements. However, for the United States and the international community to effectively promote the nonproliferation regime, it is important for them to understand the complexity of Russian motivations.

19. There was a perceptible cooling in the Sino-Russian relationship during the first half of 2000, and Beijing feared that the Russians would compromise with the United States on missile defense as part of a "grand bargain" in which the United States would agree to lower reductions of nuclear weapons in a START III agreement. For an insightful discussion of this period, see Yu Bin, "Strategic Distancing . . . or Else?" in *Comparative Connections: An E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* (2nd quarter, 2000). These informative quarterly analyses can be found at [www.csis.org/pacfor](http://www.csis.org/pacfor).

20. See "What About China?" *Russian Political Monitor*, 9 June 2000. This article raises the important question of whether the Russians informed their "strategic partner" about their proposals to Washington and Europe in advance. The question has not been answered publicly, but the Chinese response would suggest they were caught by surprise.

21. Official reports of such discussions date to March 1999, when Russian minister of defense Igor Sergeev met with his counterparts in Beijing. See *Jamestown Daily Report on Russia*, 28 March 1999. Precisely what such cooperation may entail is not entirely clear, although it is easy to imagine the Russians providing technical support for the Chinese in developing countermeasures to evade defenses.

22. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld emphasized the priority the Bush administration would put on deploying a national missile defense in his first major address abroad at the annual NATO security conference in Munich in February 2001. At the same conference, Sergei Ivanov, the head of the Russian Security Council and powerful Putin adviser, made one of the most scathing critiques of the United States and NATO since the end of the cold war. See Michael Gordon, "Allies Mood on 'Star Wars' Shifts," *New York Times*, 5 February 2001.

23. The Russian security establishment continues to appear undecided on a number of fundamental issues about the future of Russian military forces. A very public dispute between Chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin, who supports allocating more resources to rebuilding Russian conventional strength, and Minister of Defense Igor Sergeev, who advocates more emphasis on maintaining Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent, emerged in August 2000 just before the sinking of the *Kursk*. How this dispute is resolved, as well as the broader question of Russian military restructuring, is tied to the Russian position on response to U.S. national missile defense deployment. Reports out of Moscow indicate that military reform decisions are again on hold pending policy decisions by the Bush administration.

24. For an excellent overview of Russia's perspective on the relationship that makes this argument, see Dmitri Trenin, "The China Factor: Challenge and Chance for Russia," in

*Rapprochement or Rivalry: Russia-China Relations in a Changing Asia*, ed. Sherman Garnett (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000).

25. For more on this story, see Yu Bin, "Putin's Ostpolitik and Sino-Russian Relations," *Comparative Connections: E-Journal on East Asia* (3rd quarter, 2000).

26. For more on treaty discussions, see Bin, "Putin's Ostpolitik."

27. For a discussion of the Sino-Russian economic relationship, see Andrew C. Kuchins, "Russia and Great Power Security in Asia," in *Russia and Asia: The Emerging Security Agenda*, ed. Gennady Chufirin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 440–43.

28. In a recent article, Vasily Mikheev concluded that "restricted strategic cooperation" is the most realistic scenario of the Sino-Russian relationship. This measured conclusion seems about right. See Vasily V. Mikheev, "Russian-Chinese Strategic Cooperation: Scenarios, Perspectives, and Consequences for Global and Asian Security," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 9, no. 2 (winter 1997).

29. Anvar Azimuth made this point about the uniqueness of Russian-Indian relations when he wrote, "India is the only major Asian power with which Russia has never had serious disputes or differences, let alone clashes." Azimuth, "Moscow and Delhi," 88.

30. For a summary of the evolution of Russia's approach to South Asia in the last decade, see Vladimir Moskalkenko and Tatiana Shaumian, "Russia's Security and the Geopolitical Situation in South Asia," in *Russia and Asia: The Emerging Security Agenda*, 229–46.

31. Felgenhauer reported that India was interested in deals for advanced nuclear and ballistic missile technologies but that the Russians resisted. I cannot substantiate the veracity of these claims, but Felgenhauer goes on to suggest that the Chinese and the Indians are paying hard cash for systems the Russians likely cannot build in the hope of getting access to more advanced Russian nuclear and missile technologies. See Felgenhauer, "Defense Dossier."

32. See "Putin Visit to New Delhi: Not All That Moscow Hoped For?" in *Jamestown Monitor*, 7 October 2000.

33. Nikolai Kamensky, "Will Russia and India Remain Strategic Partners in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?" *Vremya MN*, 30 September 2000 (translation from ISI Emerging Markets database).

34. See "Russia: Further Details on Yastrzhembskii Visit to Pakistan," *Interfax*, 28 September 2000 (translated in FBIS-SOV-2000-0928).

35. One Indian journalist, Seema Mustafa, captured well the implications of Yastrzhembsky's trip to Pakistan by writing, "India is important to Russia. There is no denying this. But so is China. And if India, for some reason, is keen to join forces with the U.S. at the expense of relations with other countries Putin is not one to sit back and let the tears flow. There are always other friends on the horizon, and he has decided, for one, to deal directly with them." Seema Mustafa, "Of Champagne and Frayed Carpets," *Asian Age*, 30 September 2000. FBIS-CHI-2000-0930.

36. Yelena Tregubova, "Political Concessions in Return for Arms," *Kommersant*, 5 October 2000 (translation from ISI Emerging Markets).

37. See, for example, Boris Volkonsky, "A Triumph for Indian Diplomacy," *Kommersant*, 6 October 2000, and "India Gained More than Russia from Putin's Visit," *Russian Political Monitor*, 9 October 2000 (both translations from ISI Emerging Markets).

38. ITAR-TASS, 6 October 2000.

39. Oleg Shchedrov, "Russia, India Agree on Terrorist Threat," *St. Petersburg Times*, 6 October 2000.

40. "Interview granted by President Vladimir Putin to a group of Indian journalists" (excerpts from Zerkalo RTR Sunday Program 20:00, 1 October 2000), *Federal News Service*, 2 October 2000.

41. For a discussion of post-Soviet Russian views of multilateralism in Asia, see Kuchins and Zagorsky, "When Realism and Liberalism Coincide," 13–16.

42. This has become part of the Republican Party critique of the Clinton administra-



tion's management of relations with Russia and China. There is much to critique in Clinton administration policy toward Russia and China, but to conclude that the Sino-Russian relationship has become more important for Beijing and Moscow than their ties with the United States is not warranted. For the Republican Party critique, see the chapter on Sino-Russian relations in *Russia's Road to Corruption: How the Clinton Administration Exported Government Instead of Free Enterprise and Failed the Russian People* (Washington, DC: Speaker's Advisory Group on Russia, 2000), and for the "odd man out" line, see 157.

43. There is a tendency on the part of those who inflate the nature of the Sino-Russian relationship to use the term "alliance" far too loosely. For example, after the July 2000 Sino-Russian summit in Beijing, Paula Dobriansky wrote in an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* that "[a] real Beijing-Moscow strategic alliance has emerged, with major adverse consequences for international stability." See Paula Dobriansky, "Be Wary When a Bear Sides with a Dragon," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 September 2000.

44. In March of last year, the former commander-in-chief of U.S. Pacific Forces and current U.S. ambassador to China, Joseph Prueher, downplayed the danger in Russian arms sales when he said, "I don't think we need to be too wound up about Russian-Chinese relations. . . . The Russians want cash, the Chinese want military equipment. . . . The military equipment is not that wonderful." *Intercon Daily Report on Russia*, 2 March 2000.

45. For more detailed policy recommendations to the new U.S. administration, see *An Agenda for Renewal: U.S.-Russian Relations* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000).

46. For an excellent article reviewing the complex security challenges in Asia, see Therese Delpech, "Nuclear Weapons and the 'New World Order': Early Warning from Asia," *Survival* (winter 1998-99).