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The honeymoon period in Russia's relationship with the West is over, and the Kremlin politicians have ceased evoking enthusiasm in the hearts of their Western counterparts. The actions of the Moscow leaders have been causing growing concern in the West and a return of relations to an era marked by suspicion and distrust.

Until recent years, Russia seemed to have become tamed and its association with the "big bear" looked inappropriate. After the new twists, and the unpredictability of Moscow's foreign policy and its unyielding stance on many sensitive issues, the picture of the "old Russian bear" has reentered the minds of Western policy makers more vividly.

It is difficult to determine how Russia's foreign policy is formed, and what exactly shapes certain trends, especially when the country is constantly torn by internal conflicts. Instability within Russia often shapes concepts of its national interests and their impact on the international arena. It is worth pointing out that Russia's international policy is held hostage to internal political conditions, and is sacrificed often for the sake of internal political goals. Therefore, changes in Russia's foreign policy could be viewed not only through the prism of geopolitical games and traditional balance of power politics, but also as a reflection of the alignment of Russia's domestic political forces.

The Yel'tsin-Kozyrev Western Line

In the beginning, the Russian leadership adopted a pro-Western course in its foreign policy. The reasons for that, however, were drawn entirely from domestic political goals:
The politicians in the Kremlin fought the proponents of the preservation of the Soviet Union. The new political generation in Moscow pleaded with voters to support radical reforms, and not only to change the Soviet establishment, but to abandon the past entirely. On this premise, Russian politicians worked to change the public's attitude toward the West, repainting the image of "the enemy" into that of "an ally." All foreign policy decisions in Moscow were touched by the new spirit of radical reforms, but some of these decisions often overlooked certain Russian interests.

For example, with the rapid withdrawal of the Russian/Soviet troops from the territories of the former Warsaw Pact states, thousands of officers' families were left without homes (and their disappointment was mirrored in their 1993 vote for the radical opposition). Russia did not insist on its presence in Eastern Europe and was not given any guarantees concerning the political future of this region. Russia did not seek to gain economic privileges nor to replace the Warsaw Pact with a new regional organization in which it would play a decisive role and would be able to assert its interests. Russia even placed its military parity with NATO at risk by agreeing to cut its military arsenal and forces to a substantial extent. Russia recognized the independence of the Baltic states and gave up most of the Soviet infrastructure in this region, including important ports. Moscow was also restrained at the time when dealing with the problems of the Russian diaspora.

Such a political platform was inconsonant with Gorbachev's program "on gradual changes." (1) Yeltsin himself said the new Russia would seek partnership with the West, including cordiality in its relationship with former adversaries. (2) At that time the camp of democratically oriented politicians even suggested that Russia should join NATO. The Moscow leaders were assuming that Russia would be accepted into regional structures such as the European Council, international economic organizations, and also the G-7. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev assumed that the developed Western countries would become Russia's natural allies. He called for a creation of "a new democratic rim in the northern hemisphere," in which Russia would gain its rightful place on the international scene. (3) It also was thought that Russia could count on the
West's financial assistance to move from a planned to a market economy. Not only was something similar to the Marshall Plan expected, but it also was believed that the Western countries would recognize the post-Soviet space as a zone of Russia's geopolitical interests and full domination. With the Soviet Union's dissolution Russia had insisted on "special relations" with the newly independent states and hoped that its claims would be recognized. The Yeltsin-Kozyrev foreign policy consisted of two main components: establishment of an allied relationship with the West and Russia's domination in the post-Soviet space.

A Change of Course
Most of the foreign policy goals, however, proved to be unrealistic. Russia remains outside most Western structures. Prime examples of the West's caution toward Russia were the difficulties associated with Russia's entry into the European Council and its exclusion from the G-7. Strenuous debates also surrounded Russia's foreign trade policy. Some of the most serious conflicts included the sales of Russian uranium on Western markets and the shipments of cryogenic engines to India.

Since Russia has received only meager financial assistance for carrying out its radical economic reforms, today not only the communist and the nationalist opposition but also the proponents of an open economy and free market such as Boris Fedorov, Russia's former representative in the World Bank, are calling for the discontinuation of credits to Russia from world financial institutions. When opinions on closer integration within the CIS were voiced in Russia and other newly independent states, the West did not wait to show a great degree of irritability. Zbigniew Brzezinski's definition of a new concept, "consolidation of geopolitical pluralism," amazed and disappointed many Russian democrats because they viewed it as somehow resembling statements made by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, only in the opposite direction. Regarded geopolitically, the collapse of the Soviet Union meant the capitulation of Russia and a victory over Russians in general, implying a new world order with Russia in a subordinate role. The West can (Zhirinovsky) and should (Brzezinski) take advantage of Russia's temporary
weakness. From this premise, NATO expansion would constitute legitimation of Russia's defeat in the Cold War.

The final echoes of Russia's honeymoon with the West faded away when Russia was practically eliminated from the decision-making process concerning Bosnia and when its stance on NATO expansion appeared to be disregarded. It became clear that foreign policy is Russia's weak spot. Its failures on the international scene resulted in a bitter criticism at home of the foreign policy course. The opposition sought to gain points at the expense of Kozyrev's actions. The attempts of political opponents to capitalize on the weaknesses in Russian foreign policy reflected on the inconsistent shifts in Yeltsin's and Kozyrev's statements. These declarations constituted a warning to the West about major changes in Russian public opinion, while also appealing to the Western leaders not to underestimate Russia and its intention to form a new military bloc within the CIS. In addition, the speculations around Kozyrev's prospective dismissal matched the general mood of discontent.

**NATO and Russian Public Opinion**

There are two major approaches assessing the developments in Russia during the last decade. They concern the question of whether the West's fight against the USSR constituted a stand against communism or a stand against expansionist Russia, which had temporarily painted its traditional imperialism in colors of the world communist revolution. One of these approaches could be described as "ideological," that is, the West was battling world communism. In this case, the end of the Cold War entails the need to prevent the reoccurrence of communist trends or other forms of dictatorship in Russia. Political inferences from such a premise suggest that Russia should be offered assistance in its transformation, so as to become a strong state and a natural ally of the West. The second approach is a "geopolitical," that is, East-West confrontation was a result of Russia's inherent authoritarianism and expansionism. In this case a defeated Russia should not be allowed to become a world power again. Such a stance suggests that, instead of helping Russia, assistance should be offered to the other newly independent states to discourage trends of reintegration. Any aid to Russia would defeat
its purpose since "a wolf in sheep's clothing is still a wolf." In other words, all efforts notwithstanding, Russia will become authoritarian anyway and will return to its expansionist and anti-Western policy.

Many consider the realization of Russia's partnership with the West a mirage. Millions of Russians feel that they made a tragic mistake by supporting the democrats in the last ten years. Therefore, the prospect of NATO expansion is viewed often as a tendency with serious political and perhaps military consequences. The democrats in Russia have their own perception of the issue. They fear that such expansion would undermine their influence within Russia. The nationalists and the communists, on the other hand, anticipate NATO expansion with a certain degree of smugness, assuming that it would guarantee their political victory.

**Searching for a New Foreign Policy**

After the negotiations on the Bosnian crisis and the discussions on NATO expansion, it became evident that Russia is no longer viewed as a superpower. Boris Yel'tsin's warnings emphasized that he would not allow Russia's interests to be disregarded. In his sensational 1992 presentation in Stockholm, Andrei Kozyrev was trying to describe what would happen should the opposition in Russia get its hands on foreign policy. However, such rhetoric did not inspire any corresponding actions,(9) and this was no accident: truly radical transformations of Russia's foreign policy could only be a consequence of radical changes in its domestic politics.

Today there are several existing views on foreign policy which depend entirely on political orientation. Liberal democrats (Russia's Democratic Choice, Yegor Gaidar, Anatoli Chubais) support the continuation of the previous course, i.e., closer relations with the West, a line which is considered to be one of the most serious guarantees for carrying out reforms. Politicians of a more centrist orientation, including those closer to the ideology of liberalism (Grigori Yavlinsky and Vladimir Lukin from "Yabloko," Svyatoslav Fedorov from the Party of People's Self-Government, Arkadi Volsky and Vladimir Shcherbakov from Russia's Trade Unions and Industrial Workers bloc), are
calling for the maintenance of reasonable relations with the West, but with a more pragmatic approach. The proponents of such a policy admit there are serious problems in Russia's relations with Western countries. Lukin, in particular, suggests that Russia is doomed to be in confrontation with the United States in order to maintain the strategic and geopolitical balance. These politicians also call for a gradual and democratic process of reintegration with the former Soviet republics. The radical opposition calls not only for a change in Russia's domestic policy but also for a major anti-Western lurch in its approach to the international scene.

In a recent report, published by the Institute for Defense Studies, the main points of a new Russian foreign policy doctrine were presented. The report attracted a great deal of public attention because it was believed to have been "prepared for the Russian Security Council" or "for the Defense Ministry." According to the report, the supposed interference of the United States and its allies in Russia's internal affairs poses the greatest threat to the country. The West is not only trying to push Russia in a direction that suits Western interests but is also attempting to isolate it from Europe. The report states that the only way to withstand this intrusion is to change the government economic policy and to oppose forcefully NATO's eastward expansion, including such measures as the dispatch of Russian troops to the Baltic states, the sale of "defense-related nuclear and missile technology to Iran, Iraq, and Algeria," and the "deployment of Russian troops and tactical nuclear missiles on the coast of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz."(11)

In summary, serious departures in Russian foreign policy appear inevitable because of the failure of the previous approach to reach its desired goals. The details of that policy are yet to be determined and would depend on the decisions of a (putative) new leadership in Moscow. At the same time, the West could influence the disposition of political forces within the country and could become a catalyst for Russia's taking one or another foreign policy course.
Notes:
5. Particularly Russia's transfer of nuclear reactors and technology to Iran -- Ed.
11. "A Think-Tank Urges Russia to Resist NATO and USA," *Segodnya*, 20 October 1995, p. 3. All quotations in this paragraph were added -- Ed.

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