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## FORGING RUSSIAN FEDERATION FOREIGN POLICY

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### INTRODUCTION: FIRST STEPS

Russia's foreign policy institutions are still in their formative stage. Russia is a new nation, a new player on the international stage. Consequently there are more questions than answers regarding the sort of foreign policy institutions and policies that will arise as Russia seeks to find its way in the world. Important clues, however, can be found in the brief and incomplete history of Russia's emergent foreign policy mechanisms.

The new history of Russian Federation foreign policy began unfolding after the 1990 Russian parliamentary elections, the first opportunity for reformers to test their strength against entrenched old-line politicians after modest gains in the 1989 All-Union Parliament elections.

Before and during the 1990 campaign, few reformers believed that their loose coalition could gain a leading position in the Russian Parliament; in fact it did. Boris Yeltsin was elected Chairman of the Parliament despite the resistance of hard-line Communists and the last-minute intervention of Mikhail Gorbachev. With Yeltsin taking charge, many of his reform allies moved into important positions inside the Russian Parliament and began to replace the old Communist *nomenklatura* in the Russian Federation's government agencies.

**New Influence for Reformers.** As the emotions raised by the electoral clashes calmed, it was clear that something profound had taken place. Reformers were taking over the core of the old Soviet Union—the Russian Republic. So closely tied were the fate of Russia and the Soviet Union that for decades Western politicians and experts often equated the two, with “Soviet empire” and “Russian empire” used interchangeably. Now, access to the potentially powerful governmental agencies of the Russian

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Federation—for so long simply mirror-images of their Soviet counterparts—opened new doors of influence for reformers.

The system of government institutions inherited by the new Russian Federation leadership initially was an empty vessel. Though there existed inter-linked government bodies with attributes resembling those of a sovereign country, in fact they had little real power to carry out their ostensible governmental mandates. Rather, they could pass for instruments of a colonial administration, simply carrying out the orders passed down from a higher authority, in this case the institutions of the Soviet state.

Before it could act effectively, the new leadership first had to breath life into these long-dormant institutions. After the parliamentary elections of 1990, Yeltsin and his allies pursued two related goals: consolidating their power within the Republic, and strengthening the Russian Federation's position *vis à vis* the institutions of the Soviet Union.

At first, relations with the outside world were not high on the agenda of the new Russian leaders. In this sense, the content of the "Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic," adopted by the Russian Federation Parliament on June 12, 1990, is quite revealing. The issue of the Republic's external relations is dealt with only in vague terms:

For ensuring political, economic and legal guarantees for the sovereignty of the RSFSR... plenipotentiary representation of the RSFSR in other Union republics and foreign countries is established.... The RSFSR declares its adherence to the universally recognized principles of international law and its readiness to coexist with all countries and peoples in peace and accord, to take all measures to avoid confrontation in international, inter-republican and inter-ethnic relations while defending the interests of the peoples of Russia.

The vacant chair of the Russian Foreign Minister was filled much later than other executive positions. A young department head in the All-Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, was nominated to this position. There were whispers at the time that Boris Yeltsin placed two conditions on the choice of a new foreign minister: he was to be sufficiently young, and not to come from established "clans" of the Soviet foreign policy elite. Kozyrev's candidacy was proposed by Ivan Silaev, Russian Federation Prime Minister at the time, and easily accepted by the head of the Russian Federation Parliament and its Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations.

**New Leadership.** The agency Kozyrev inherited, the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry, was created in 1944 and since had performed a mainly decorative and ceremonial function, with all real decisions made at the highest Communist Party and All-Union levels of power. Protestations to the contrary by Kozyrev's predecessor were met with polite smiles by the informed public and government officials. Until Kozyrev's appointment, assignment to the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry was regarded either as an honorable exile for former high-level All-Union Foreign Ministry officials, or as a polite way of putting incompetent employees out to pasture. The Russian Foreign Ministry team inherited by Kozyrev thus was inadequate for its anticipated enhanced role. Even the Russian Foreign Ministry building illustrated the point: though beautiful and imposing, in fact it had adequate space only for the top few ministerial figures.

Initially, Kozyrev chose a cautious line and, unlike many of his colleagues in the Russian Government, avoided open challenges to All-Union state structures. Though rumors circulated in Moscow about his continuing loyalty to the Soviet diplomatic world he had left, more likely he chose a low profile as a tactical measure given the inherent weakness of his position and the institution he had inherited. Furthermore, his actions and plans depended entirely on the outcome of the “war of independence” between Yeltsin’s Russian leadership and Gorbachev’s All-Union Center for control over the Russian Federation.

At the time, the Russian Federation lacked a developed foreign policy strategy. Defining Russian, as opposed to Soviet, foreign policy goals was and remains a serious problem for the Russian Federation. The absence of a clear set of guidelines and priorities hindered the activities of the Russian Foreign Ministry from the outset of Kozyrev’s tenure. It also became a serious obstacle to effective dialogue with foreign countries, which quite naturally were wondering whether the new Russian diplomacy was anything more than a temporary and exotic twist in Soviet political life.

**Down to Earth.** The lack of coherent Russian foreign policy strategy, however, was something of a healthy sign. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Bolsheviks presumed to offer the world a ready set of ostensibly “universal” foreign policy prescriptions, without even having a clear vision of what to do within their own country. Claims to the role of world mentor remained for decades a characteristic, and often crippling, feature of the Soviet leadership. This aspect of Soviet policy did not disappear even in the second part of the 1980s when the U.S.S.R. began its profound domestic reforms: just measure the grandiose title of Gorbachev’s book, *Perestroika and New Political Thinking for Our Country and the Rest of the World*, against his clumsy domestic record. Evolving Russian Federation foreign policy proved much more down to earth.

During this initial period, the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations of the Russian Federation Parliament became another important source of foreign policy ideas and decisions. Professor Vladimir Lukin—today ambassador to the United States and then an expert on the Far East from the Soviet Academy of Sciences—was elected its first Chairman. A number of other representatives of the Soviet academic community also joined the Committee.

Among all the bodies of the Russian Federation Parliament, the Committee on Foreign Affairs was one of the most reform-oriented. At least initially, international relations was not an important battlefield in the struggle for control between Russian Federation reformers and communist hard-liners, thus giving the Committee a bit more autonomy and leeway. Hardliners focused more on parliamentary committees dealing with economic matters and institutional reforms. Interestingly, in this respect Russian Federation hard-liners differed radically from their counterparts in the All-Union Parliament, who clung tenaciously to their control over foreign affairs, stacking the relevant All-Union committees with leading communist *apparatchiks*.

The Russian Federation Foreign Affairs Committee initially experienced visible difficulties even in defining the field and scope of its activities. Its members proceeded from the assumption that the Russian Federation, as a sovereign republic, should be involved in formulating Soviet foreign policy and also might have external interests that differed somewhat from those of the Soviet Union or other republics. How to translate

this general idea into practical steps, however, remained an open question. The committee encouraged the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry as well academic experts to join the enterprise. Nevertheless, moving beyond generalities proved to be a difficult task.

In fact, the main accomplishment of the Committee during this period was to establish a dialogue with legislators, businessmen, academic experts, and others from foreign countries. This dialogue opened important channels of communication between historically insular Russia and the outside world.

**From Theory to Practice.** At the same time, even this limited exposure of the deputies to practical international politics had a significant impact on their frame of mind. For the first time for many, they were dealing not with the theory, but the practice of international politics. For decades, the Soviet foreign policy decision-making process had relied on academic theorists mainly to gain “scientific” blessing for plans prepared inside the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

Both the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Committee on Foreign Affairs recognized that their influence on All-Union foreign policy structures depended wholly on the general success of the Republic in freeing itself from the dominance of the Soviet leadership. Until progress was made at this higher level, their only option was to stress cooperation, rather than insisting on the right to implement policies of their own. The activities of the Russian Foreign Ministry and Foreign Affairs Committee got a boost on this account when negotiations got underway among the Soviet republics themselves on such issues as economic autonomy and political rights. Since these negotiations fell under the heading of “international relations,” Russian Federation foreign policy institutions acquired additional important responsibilities.

As a consequence, the club of Russian Federation foreign policy players enlarged. The Sub-Committee on Inter-Republican Relations of the Russian Federation Parliament began to play a more active role. Its head, Fyodor Shelov-Kovedyaev, later joined the Russian Foreign Ministry as a First Deputy Minister in charge of relations with “closest foreign countries,” that is, other former Soviet republics.

This shift of attention to other republics signalled the beginning of a new phase of operations for the emerging Russian Federation foreign policy leadership: top Russian government officials became more directly involved in their everyday activities. Relations with the other republics were then a key issue for Yeltsin and his close advisors, since the fortunes of the newly autonomous governments of the former Soviet republics were closely tied. Once these crucial relations, which could be termed “domestic diplomacy” were put under the rubric of foreign policy, the stature of the Russian Foreign Ministry and Committee on Foreign Affairs was boosted accordingly.

Mixed teams of Russian Foreign Ministry and parliamentary negotiators represented Russia in key inter-republican negotiations. While initially a reflection of the inability of either the Foreign Ministry or Parliament to staff the negotiations independently, cooperation laid the foundation for a future partnership between the legislative and executive branches in the foreign policy sphere.

## BEFORE THE STORM

During the winter of 1990 to 1991, foreign policy issues acquired a new meaning for the Russian Federation leadership. Their treatment as secondary matters was over. Two factors played a role.

**First**, by the end of 1990 it became evident that the Russian Federation had advanced its authority over its own internal politics and resources. With this came new responsibilities. Conscious of the importance of Western assistance for planned economic reforms to succeed, as well as the potential scope of direct interactions between Russia and foreign countries, Russian Federation reformers set firmly about the task of breaking the Center's monopoly over foreign relations. Increasingly the interests of Russia and the Soviet Center were diverging. The Center could hardly be regarded as an ally in implementing reforms inside the republic; goals and reform schedules of the two governments differed.

**Second**, the conflict between the Center and the republic was entering its decisive phase. The Yeltsin team thought that the Republic's ties with the outside world might serve as a shield against attempts of the Center to suppress reformers in the Russian Federation.

Events in 1990 made it clear: All hopes by the Center that Yeltsin and his allies would fail to consolidate power in the republic were proved false. Though initially Yeltsin lacked reliable support inside the Russian Federation Parliament, he gradually strengthened his position there, displaying the talents of a parliamentary leader. By December of 1990, the irritation of the Soviet leadership caused by the victory of reformers in the Russian Federation electoral campaign of 1990, began to turn into fear that the Federation really might become a tough competitor of the central authorities. Confronted with signs of a new offensive by the Center against Russian Federation reformers, Yeltsin tried to "internationalize" the conflict, that is, to neutralize the Center by developing direct ties between the republic and the West. Here one of Gorbachev's most powerful assets—his reputation in the West as a reformer and anti-totalitarian—was turned against him by Yeltsin, who knew that Gorbachev could not move decisively against him without giving lie to his alleged commitment to pluralism and toleration.

This period witnessed a rapid increase in the Russian Federation's overtures to Western political figures. Even exotic plans were given consideration. For example, an American expert on the Soviet Union, Professor Alexander Yanov, secured Yeltsin's approval to create an international committee of non-governmental experts to provide intellectual assistance to Soviet reformers. The initiative was short-lived, once it became clear that the committee intended to usurp some of the Russian government's own foreign policy decision-making powers.

**America Reluctant.** With the conflict between Russian Federation reformers and the leadership of the crippled Soviet empire entering its decisive phase, the Yeltsin team urgently needed recognition and support from the outside world, especially the United States. America and its allies, however, were reluctant to side with Russian reformers. Russian-American contact was mainly through different non-governmental channels, for instance, through the scientific and business communities. At the official level, the White House kept the new Russian leadership at a distance. A discernible

shift in the U.S. position came only after Yeltsin had defeated a desperate offensive by hard-line communists inside the Russian Parliament in early 1991.

The cautious American attitude to the Russian Federation had its logic. The United States had a stake in a continuing dialogue with the Soviet Union. Gorbachev demonstrated on many occasions the sincerity of his attempts to end the Cold War and he embarked on a program of far-reaching reforms in the Soviet Union, which promised to diminish substantially its previous aggressiveness towards other members of the world community.

Even as they were confronted with a progressing decentralization of power in the Soviet Union and growing autonomy of republican authorities, the United States remained resolute in its determination to not circumvent the Soviet President. The only exception to this might have been relations with the three Baltic republics. Though, even in this clearcut case, restraint was displayed.

The American preference for the Gorbachev team also was motivated by what then appeared to be a dearth of alternatives. For a prolonged period of time, Western policy makers and political observers had serious doubts about the ability of new republican leaders to take on the additional responsibilities to which they laid claim. Their efforts instead were viewed as feeble at best, and at worst destabilizing for the relatively moderate Gorbachev regime.

**Badmouthing Yeltsin.** Moreover, Gorbachev made it clear that Western support for the “rebellions” against his rule would risk antagonizing him. A powerful anti-Yeltsin propaganda campaign, supported and directed from the top of the Soviet Olympus, also was a factor that negatively affected Western attitudes toward new Russian Federation authorities. Stories multiplied about Yeltsin’s “populism,” “ambitions,” and, of course, “bad personal habits.” The result was a mismatch. Yeltsin faced the sophisticated power of the Soviet communist propaganda machine at a time when he was almost unknown in the West, and he lacked the foreign policy and image-making capabilities needed to promote his more positive attributes.

The White House’s protracted bout of “Gorbymania” created headaches for many Russian Federation political figures. Bush seemed to ignore the rapid redistribution of political roles and power within the Soviet Union. Some claimed the American President naturally sought to avoid critical strategic decisions, and thus followed a reactive, incremental policy. Others accused him of being captive to his personal ties with the “founder of Perestroika.” For Russian reform-minded politicians fighting for the liberation of their republic from the all-pervasive control of the Soviet Center, America’s prolonged weak response to their plight was discouraging.

The abortive August 1991 coup in Moscow released Washington from its painful dilemma. The escape of the Soviet President from the hands of high-level communist plotters with the help of Russian Federation “rescue rangers” allowed Bush to stretch out his hand to Russian reformers, in the name of defending the legitimate Soviet leader. The irony is that Bush needed a reactionary coup in order to reach this comfortable moral ground. Nonetheless, he managed to take an important step towards establishing workable relations with the Russian Federation, while all the time remaining well protected against accusations of double-dealing or betraying Gorbachev.

## BETWEEN THE ACTS

During 1991, up until the August coup attempt, Soviet central authorities steadily were losing control over the country. The power of Soviet republics kept growing, and the top-heavy Soviet pyramid teetered. This tendency was clear to Russian Federation reformers, and they were busy preparing themselves for new responsibilities. Nevertheless, when the seemingly omnipotent Soviet Center finally began to collapse in the wake of the August coup, republican governments were left far from ready for the independence they had sought.

Empires never die easily, and the transition would have been painful in any case. But the tasks of Russian Federation leaders were additionally complicated by the prior stubborn resistance of the Gorbachev team to genuinely independent actions by the republics. While somewhat prolonging the agony of the Center, their reticence to accept change also slowed down the development of Russian Federation institutions. This particularly was true in the foreign policy and defense fields, power over which was jealously guarded by central authorities right up to the end. The Russian Federation hence could not immediately offer a real alternative to the All-Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Slightly more than one hundred people worked in the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry, and they were in no position to compete with the complex Soviet foreign policy organism with its decades of experience. Prior to August 1991, the Russian Federation sought hardly more than recognition as a subordinate partner in the Soviet foreign policy decision-making process, and restricted its attention to issues directly involving the interests of the republic. At the time, Russian Federation foreign policy players considered even minor tactical victories as major accomplishments: access to All-Union networks of information, inclusion of Russian Federation representatives in Soviet official delegations, and similar advances.

Another limitation on the Russian Federation was that there were fourteen other republics clamoring for influence over Soviet foreign policy. This was a new dimension in inter-republican relations and negotiations promised to be difficult and time-consuming.

**Incremental Change.** Having all this in mind, the Russian Federation leadership chose tactically a policy of incremental change. While recognizing the need to eliminate the All-Union monopoly in the foreign policy field, the Yeltsin team agreed to retain the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a kind of coordinating structure to serve the interests of all Soviet republics. In an October 2, 1991, interview in *Izvestiya*, Kozyrev said:

Today we have the Soviet President, the Soviet State Council, and they determine the strategic guidelines for our foreign policy. The All-Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs must service this structure, representing the President and the State Council. The All-Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also coordinating functions to perform, especially, in such areas as nuclear weapons, ecology, and economics...finally, the Ministry will help to coordinate the policies of republics to avoid anarchy. The development of bilateral relations with foreign countries will go to republics, first of all with their closest neighbors.

The All-Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs jumped on this last opportunity for survival. The Ministry tried to take the lead in promoting cooperation with its republican counterparts. The status of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, consisting of all the republics' foreign ministers, was upgraded. Proposals were under consideration for the establishment of a unified diplomatic service to provide personnel to both All-Union and republican ministries. There was talk of giving republican representatives slots inside the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in Soviet diplomatic missions around the world.

This exercise in "constructive parallelism," or co-existence of union and republican structures, was short lived. After the August coup, the disintegration of All-Union structures accelerated despite the best efforts of the Center's bureaucracy to slow the process. By the end of the year, Gorbachev was merely a nominal head of state, with no real functions and responsibilities. The Ukrainian referendum of December 1, 1991, sounded the death knell for the Union. The Commonwealth of Independent Republics emerged, erasing the Soviet Union from the political map of the world.

All-Union and republican institutions never did hammer out their differences during their short period of coexistence. But the last five months of 1991 were significant nonetheless, because they gave the new republican foreign policy institutions an incubation period in which to evolve, reorganize, and expand their contacts with each other and the rest of the world. This period was critical in enabling them to take over, in rudimentary form initially, Soviet relations with the outside world.

## AFTER THE FALL

Shortly before the end of 1991, top officials from both the Russian Federation and Soviet Foreign Ministry gathered to meet with Kozyrev. The only item on the agenda was the elimination of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, by then known as the Ministry of External Relations, and its absorption by the Russian Federation.

Kozyrev announced that by Yeltsin's decree, all the property and functions of the Soviet Foreign Ministry had passed to the Russian Foreign Ministry. Deputy foreign ministers and heads of department of the All-Union Ministry temporarily were to retain their positions, but their activities would be directed by high-level Russian Federation diplomats. The Russian Foreign Minister then underlined the importance of continuity between the All-Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his expanded Russian Federation Foreign Ministry. He said that his personal preference was to avoid conflicts during the integration of the two staffs. Kozyrev stressed that the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry would try to keep the best and the brightest from the former All-Union Ministry and would respect their professionalism. Kozyrev set the size of the Ministry at no more than 2,700, meaning that some 800 All-Union employees could lose their jobs.

As it turned out, victorious Russian Federation leaders refrained from a witch-hunt, believing that the loss of professionals could seriously undermine their ability to develop relations with foreign countries. Apparently they drew appropriate conclusions from Soviet history: After the October revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks got rid of the previous regime's professional diplomats and started from scratch in the field of



foreign policy. It took them years to restore the expertise and knowledge they had eliminated in a matter of weeks.

Inside the "integrated" Russian Federation Foreign Ministry, the most radical personnel changes have been at the level of deputy foreign minister and heads of department. A number of important positions have been filled with young professionals associated with Kozyrev through his work in the All-Union Foreign Ministry. These changes took place relatively smoothly. At the same time, many representatives of the "old guard," even those who made their careers during the Brezhnev era, remain afloat. High- and middle-level newcomers have been keeping a low profile, preferring to accumulate experience.

**Compromised Reputations.** Thus far, the magnanimous treatment of former Soviet diplomats by their new employers has helped to avoid disruptions in the functioning of the Ministry during its transformation into the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry. Still, continuity has its drawbacks. Representatives of the Soviet school of diplomacy can lay claim to knowledge and experience, but always will carry with them the baggage of their servility to the former Soviet regime. With so many diplomats whose reputations are permanently compromised, the Ministry is less credible in the eyes of foreigners and Russian citizens.

For the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry the "personnel issue" will solve itself over time. Much more serious challenges come from the disorder in communication lines linking the Ministry to other government bodies of the Russian Federation. Previously, the Soviet Foreign Ministry was part of a system of agencies run by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. From an organizational point of view, this system had serious deficiencies and was very cumbersome. Nevertheless, it had established procedures, an indispensable prerequisite for bureaucratic organizations.

When the Soviet Center started to fall apart, the Yeltsin team took over various key elements of the Soviet decision-making hierarchy. Among others, it "republicanized" Soviet staffs responsible for the dissemination of intelligence and diplomatic information, and control over the implementation of decisions. In many cases, these departments and sections simply were attached intact to the Federation's executive Department of Administration, headed by Yuri Petrov. This bureaucratic reshuffle hardly can be called successful. Stories abound about the inefficiency of Petrov's office. Some cases are so outrageous that they provoke rumors about "communist plotters," and raise questions about Petrov, given his previous Party career.

**Overlapping Responsibilities.** For the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry, the chaotic state of bureaucratic communication lines is closely connected with an even more serious problem: that of organizational responsibility. Within the Foreign Ministry, it remains unclear precisely who is responsible for coordinating even basic foreign policy activities.

Gennadii Burbulis, Yeltsin's Chief of Staff, supervises the external relations of the Republic. Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov, Russian Federation representative to the United Nations, recently took on the title of State Counselor in charge of international affairs. Both are influential individuals and on paper their credentials are impressive. But their responsibilities overlap and each lacks adequate staff for the task they are en-

titled to perform. Moreover, Vorontsov is far from Moscow, and Burbulis has other important responsibilities.

Increasingly, Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, principally responsible for economic reforms, also is actively negotiating with foreign governments and international institutions. The Gaidar team relies mainly on ministries and committees dealing mainly with economic matters. What this economic team does, however, often has far-reaching foreign policy implications. The effect is that the economics realm now constantly encroaches into the domain traditionally considered by Soviet professional diplomats as their's alone. Gaidar's involvement in foreign affairs makes sense, since as never before the future of the Russian Federation's economic reforms are largely dependent on its economic relations with foreign countries. At the same time, Gaidar's independent role in foreign policy points out the lack of a coordinating body for foreign affairs.

Another area of confusion is relations with other former Soviet republics (or "closest foreign countries" to use Kozyrev's term). While these relations in theory rest with the Foreign Ministry, in practice an enormous part of the business of dealing with these republics passes through other governmental agencies. It is not difficult to understand why this is so. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, its former republics remain highly interdependent, and in many respects still represent a whole. Bypassing the Russian Foreign Ministry in these "close" international relations simply continues previous practices. This not only creates bureaucratic tensions, but also slows down the evolution of mechanisms within the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry for dealing with these countries.

Confusion over lines of responsibility is a defining feature of Russian Federation foreign policy. The confusion extends to relations between the executive branch and the Parliament. Prior to 1992, the main battlefield for Russian Federation institutions—legislative and executive alike—was their conflict with the All-Union Center. All Federation institutions then were mobilized for the "war of independence," with representatives of the legislative and executive branches working side by side as mixed teams. With the All-Union center finally defeated, it became necessary to delineate more precisely the separation of legislative and executive powers. This proved a difficult task. Parliamentary deputies already had developed a taste for functions traditionally carried out by executive bodies, and remain reluctant to relinquish these.

**Dearth of Academic Experts.** One more source of trouble for Russian Federation foreign policy organs should be mentioned. In the Soviet period, there existed a well developed infrastructure of recognized institutes, such as the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and academic think tanks that provided the government with new professionals. Now, the inflow of expertise may become a trickle. The foreign policy community has lost much of its previous attractiveness. Salaries cannot compete with what is becoming available in the business sector and government funding is drying up. Experts from official academic think tanks are becoming an "endangered species."

The Russian Federation government hardly can be expected to pour its scarce financial resources into the foreign policy community. Caught in the middle of a deep economic crisis, the government has other, more immediate concerns. Unless these urgent domestic issues are dealt with, there will be little need for a foreign policy at all.

In this respect, independent non-profit institutions such as foundations and research centers might be very helpful. The research they complete can be of interest to the general Russian Federation foreign policy community as well as to their benefactors. They also can serve as a new source of experts with professional experience. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation has not done much legislatively to assist these new non-profit groups. Much of the money allocated to them thus far has disappeared into the pockets of government officials. The Russian Federation Parliament recently has shown some interest in passing tax and other legislation designed to stimulate the creation of non-profit foundations, and at the same time to make life less comfortable for government-supported foundations created by and for the Communist Party *nomenklatura* under the previous regime.

**Success Story.** Despite difficulties, the development of Russian Federation foreign policy institutions by and large is a success story. In a very short time, the Russian Federation has created what could well have taken years. The foreign policy mechanisms of the republic remain fragile, but they already are solid enough to be used for their intended purpose of developing and carrying out policy.

The main achievement of course was the remarkably smooth transition of powers from the All-Union to the republican level. Only a year ago, many in the West were skeptical of the ability of republics to take over the functions of the center and refused to see beyond Gorbachev, the first and the last Soviet leader with a human face. Only a year ago, many predicted that Gorbachev's ouster would signal either a return to communist dictatorship or anarchy, either way resulting in a disruption of the East-West dialogue. The post-Gorbachev reality looks, in fact, far more promising.

Considerable progress also has been made in delineating the Russian Federation's share of the Soviet foreign policy heritage. This task was especially difficult given its immensity, a high degree of interdependence between the constituent parts of the late U.S.S.R., and the existence of many points of contention among the former republics. The past few months have seen the recognition of the Russian Federation and other former Soviet republics as independent states by the majority of the world's nations. Soviet embassies exchanged their Soviet flags for those of the Russian Federation. The Republic replaced the Soviet Union in the United Nations and took over the Soviet chair in the Security Council. Soviet delegations to different international organizations and negotiations were transformed into Russian Federation delegations. In this sense, the circumspect approach of the Russian Federation leadership echoes the prevailing opinion in the West that continuity is crucial in the international field.

## WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

The initial stage in the forging of new Russian Federation foreign policy mechanisms has reached its completion. The vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet Union has been filled in a more or less satisfactory way. Now, Russian Federation foreign policy players are at a crossroads. They have to decide what should be their further steps now that the situation has stabilized.

The worst scenario would be to simply try to work with, and institutionalize, what has been created. Rather, the search for solutions to current deficiencies of the Russian

Federation foreign policy mechanism should be subordinated to, and guided by, a new understanding of the foreign policy goals and needs of the republic.

Gorbachev's Soviet Union and Yeltsin's Russian Federation differ radically. The former was directed at presenting to the world a more enlightened version of Communism that eliminated the system's more macabre features. The last Soviet President, as it seems, seriously believed that the system in his country was viable and needed only liberalization to display its virtues. On the contrary, the first Russian Federation President is presiding over a fundamental transformation of the country, attempting to revive the market forces and civil society stamped out by the October Revolution of 1917. In other words, Gorbachev wanted to preserve for his country as much as possible from its "glorious socialist heritage"; Yeltsin wants to put this heritage behind. Accordingly, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation have different driving forces and philosophies behind their foreign policies.

Many traditions and established attitudes of Soviet foreign policy actors have outlived their usefulness. Numerous new opportunities and tasks emerge, requiring new approaches.

**Innovative Spirit.** Russian foreign policy mechanisms can become a useful tool for helping Russia through this critical period in its development, much as the foreign policy communities of Germany and Japan, for example, played important roles in defining and promoting the interests of their countries in the post-war decades. They were active, and displayed extraordinary energy, flexibility, and a taste for unconventional choices. It remains to be seen to what extent Russian Federation foreign policy players will find their own innovative spirit. For the moment, it probably is too early to draw conclusions. But given the pace of changes in the Russian Federation, it will not take long to find out.

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