

Background

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Putin's Legacy and United Russia's New Ideology

Ariel Cohen, Ph.D.

"The Party has been, and remains, the main organizing and coordinating force capable of leading the people along the path of profound Socialist renewal..."

—Mikhail Gorbachev

With the fall of the USSR, the Russian post-Soviet elite was demoralized by the collapse of Soviet power and sought a new direction. For a time, ideology took a back seat to market reforms, competition, and repudiation of government control. However, "men of the state" and "men of force"—known in Russian as "derzhavniki" and "siloviki"—have reversed this trend.

The resurgence of nationalist rhetoric has accelerated markedly since the 2000 election of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the rise of oil prices. With Putin's departure scheduled for 2008, his United Russia party will require more than fond memories of the popular president to maintain the support and trust of the people. It needs a coherent political doctrine. This effort has finally been accomplished.

In February 2006, Vladislav Surkov, Putin's deputy chief of staff and chief political strategist, delivered an extensive speech at a United Russia political seminar.¹ For the first time, he outlined the underlying ideology, goals, and aspirations of the Russian Federation's largest political party. Surkov's speech was subsequently published in two consecutive issues of *Moskovskie Novosti*, a formerly liberal weekly, under

Talking Points

- Vladislav Surkov's February 2006 speech defines the strategic direction that Vladimir Putin wants Russia to pursue, the goals to which she should aspire, and how the party can lead the country to achieve those goals.
- Surkov's speech combines democratic and market rhetoric with power centralization and ideological and economic nationalism bordering on protectionism.
- Recent steps undertaken by the Russian Federation and public statements by Russian officials indicate that Russia may be asserting its dominance abroad, especially in the former Soviet area.
- Surkov's speech provides reasons for the United States to reevaluate its policies toward Russia on the basis of what is realistic and possible. There may be relatively little that the U.S. can do to affect Russian domestic politics, but America can and should be prepared to support those who seek freedom.

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(202) 546-4400 • heritage.org

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the title “The General Line” in direct allusion to the term applied to Soviet Communist Party policy between the 1920s and 1980s. The speech was later widely reprinted elsewhere, and media leaks from the Kremlin indicate that such wide circulation amounts to publication of the new official Kremlin doctrine.²

Surkov’s speech defines the strategic direction that Putin wants Russia to pursue, the goals to which she should aspire, and how the party can lead the country to achieve those goals. Much of it was reflected in Putin’s State of the Federation speech to both houses of the Duma, Russia’s parliament, on May 10. It combines democratic and market rhetoric with deliberate actions of power centralization and ideological and economic nationalism bordering on protectionism.

This ideological treatise is a great insight into the Kremlin’s thinking and policy. Recent steps undertaken by the Russian Federation and public statements by Russian officials indicate that Russia may be asserting its dominance abroad, especially in the former Soviet area. The speech provides a number of reasons for the United States to reevaluate its policies toward Russia and act on the basis of what is realistic and possible.

Importance of Surkov’s Speech

Surkov’s speech is intended both to outline a social contract between the Russian leadership and the Russian people and to ensure that United Russia continues to enjoy its position as the dominant party in Russian politics. If this social contract is accepted, United Russia will have succeeded in creating an ideological framework for national unity and a road map to national greatness; at the very least, it will have ensured its position as a ruling party until the presidential elections of 2012 or even beyond. This is a greater accomplishment than previous attempts to create a ruling party in post-Communist Russia, such as Russia’s Choice (1993) and Our Home Russia (1996).

The text of the speech and the timing of its delivery reflect Russia’s social, political, and economic trajectory, including aspirations of single-party rule, energy superpower status, and geopolitical conflicts and alliances. All of this is contingent upon United Russia maintaining its status as the only political party in Russia with the means to implement its political agenda.

Democratic Rhetoric vs. Restrictive Reality

On the positive side, Surkov entreats Russians to become more active in politics, to familiarize themselves with all sides of current debates, and to be part of the solution to Russia’s myriad pressing problems. His refusal to condone expropriation of private property is also hopeful. The development of a propertied class that is encouraged to participate politically may be a decisive factor in the future growth and strengthening of democracy in Russia. The growth of such a class may increase calls for stronger protection of property rights and rule of law as well.

These would be welcome developments, as they not only help to improve the current situation in Russia, but also would enhance the security of foreign investments in Russia. Unfortunately, however, the current situation indicates that it is the bureaucracy, not the elected political leadership, that calls the shots in Putin’s and Surkov’s Russia.

Also promising are Surkov’s calls for picking up the pace of economic reform and integrating more fully into global markets. Increased openness to trade will likely foster improvements in economic efficiency, management, and transparency, all of which have suffered throughout the post-Communist transition.

These democratic and free-market ideals will benefit Russian society if they are put into practice. However, calls for strengthening democracy coincide with legislation restricting representation and participation. Assets continue to be concentrated in

1. For a detailed summary of Surkov’s speech, see the Appendix.

2. Vladislav Surkov, “General’naya Liniya,” *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 7 (1324), March 3–9, 2006, pp. 10–11; Vladislav Surkov, “General’naya Liniya,” *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 8 (1325), March 10–16, 2004, pp. 10–11.

the hands of a well-connected few. Simply put, in today's Russia, democratic rhetoric is contradicted by increasingly centralized political practice.

Single Party Rule: A Democratic Deficit

United Russia was created in December 2001 by combining the pro-Putin Unity and former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov's and Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov's Fatherland-All Russia parties. It was a political construct of the Kremlin: the party of power, meant to occupy the center of Russia's body politic.

United Russia is now the most powerful political party in the Russian Federation, with an estimated 100,000 members. Its showing in the March 12, 2006, regional and local elections, in which it won 197 out of 359 regional legislative seats, was a clear indicator of its strength.³ Surkov suggests that, as with Germany's Christian Democrats and Japan's Liberal Democratic Party after World War II, United Russia should remain the dominant force in Russian politics for the next 10–15 years, and recent changes in the electoral system may ensure that this will come to pass.

At this point, no opposition group in Russia appears capable of posing any real threat to United Russia's overwhelming share of popular support in the 2007 parliamentary or 2008 presidential elections. However, the Kremlin is taking steps to rein in potential political challengers, first by abolishing the election of Duma members in "single mandate" electoral districts, opting instead for national party

lists. Such a proportional electoral system seriously weakens the relationship between a voter and his elected representative. Deputy Director of the Center for Political Technologies Boris Makarenko has called this a "further stage in the consolidation of a monolithic system."⁴

Rodina (Motherland), a leftist nationalist party that many suspect was created by Kremlin officials to siphon off support from the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and the Communist Party, was barred from participation in the December 2005 Moscow City Duma elections for inciting racial hatred.⁵

The Duma is considering several amendments to electoral law. Ostensibly aimed at strengthening the party system by creating a small number of large parties, these laws, if passed, will rob the opposition of their only means of competing with United Russia: through coalitions.⁶ Another legislative proposal would authorize governors, who are Kremlin-appointed, to abrogate mayoral powers. Although so far ignored by the West, such extraordinarily broad powers will prove effective in consolidating the Kremlin's top-down authority.⁷

If all of the proposed electoral changes come to fruition, governors, mayors, and political parties will all be Kremlin-controlled, ensuring a predictable outcome in the future parliamentary and presidential elections. The Kremlin is consolidating its own power at the expense of opposition forces and raising the possibility that United Russia will dominate politics in the Russian Federation for at least

3. Marina Mokhovets, "The March 12 Triumph: United Russia Is Today's CPSU," WPS Media Monitoring Agency, March 17, 2006, at www.wps.ru/en/index.html (May 11, 2006).
4. Aleksei Titkov, "Proposals for Transition to a Proportional Electoral System and the Prospects for Multi-partisanship in Russia," Carnegie Moscow Center, May 24, 2004, at www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/media/70524.htm (May 1, 2006).
5. For example, Rodina leader Dmitry Rogozin has appeared in a television spot calling dark-skinned migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia "trash" and suggesting that the streets of Moscow should be swept of such "trash." Rodina was expected to make a strong showing in the elections, and analysts suggest that the real reason for its exclusion was to ensure electoral victory for United Russia. See Claire Bigg, "Russia: Nationalist Party Barred from Moscow Election," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 28, 2005, at www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/11/b058b58d-c196-4cb1-b0f8-6db948f452c7.html (May 11, 2006).
6. "Duma Set to Toughen Election Laws," *Kommersant*, April 11, 2006, at www.kommersant.com/page.asp?idr=1&id=665355 (May 11, 2006).
7. Francesca Mereu, "Mayors Could Lose Their Powers," *Moscow Times*, April 5, 2006, at www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2006/04/05/002.html.

the next two electoral cycles (2007–2008 and 2011–2012).

At present, the majority of United Russia's popular support is derived from the popularity and charisma of President Putin, whose approval ratings fluctuate between 65 percent and 75 percent.⁸ It is unlikely that the next president will share Mr. Putin's appeal and popular support. United Russia must therefore replace the personal legitimacy of its leader with a more long-lasting ideological foundation to provide legitimacy for future leaders. Creating a sense of unity, pride, and common purpose that is closely linked both to Putin and to United Russia may allow the party to stay in power even with a weak next president.

Strategic Resources

By maintaining control of the executive branch, the judiciary, security services, government-owned companies, and the parliament, United Russia officials will be able to secure control over their share of the profits from nationalized resources⁹ and, in many cases, expand the assets that they effectively control. At a recent conference in Moscow, Minister of Economic Development and Trade German Greff cited the acquisition of assets by large state-owned companies as a threat to Russia's economic health. Minister of Finance Alexei Kudrin echoed this sentiment, asserting that the state should play a smaller role in Russia's economy.¹⁰ Economists in Russia, Venezuela, and Bolivia agree that asset holding by the "state" or "people" in reality means beneficiary ownership by specific politicians and senior bureaucrats.

Government officials are reluctant to release their hold on strategic economic sectors because these same officials control and benefit from these assets. Gazprom, Russia's behemoth state-owned gas firm, is chaired by First Deputy Prime

Minister Dmitry Medvedev. Rosneft, the state-owned oil firm that forced a sale of Yugasnkneftegaz, the production arm of YUKOS, below market price, is chaired by Igor Sechin, the Kremlin deputy chief of staff. Alexei Kudrin, despite his calls for less government control over the economy, chairs the Russian state diamond monopoly, Alrosa.¹¹

The melding of business and politics has created a pressing need by government officials to maintain the status quo at all costs. As is true elsewhere in the world, men whose wealth relies on government control of strategic economic sectors are unlikely to loosen their grasp on those resources, or on the political machinery that controls those resources, for the sake of reform.

Surkov stresses in his speech that the nationalization of strategic resources is in the interest of distributing wealth among the Russian population. Russian GDP per capita has grown dramatically, from \$1,170 in 2000 to \$3,400 in 2004. However, income inequality in the Russian Federation remains remarkably high. Energy superpower status certainly benefits Russia as a whole, but it benefits members of the political-bureaucratic-security elite with access to government-controlled resources far more than it benefits others.

Aside from its domestic implications, Russia's energy superpower status is a means to protect sovereignty and exert influence abroad. Autonomy is desirable for any state; however, Russia is using zero-sum game analysis and tactics in the global energy markets to promote its economic interests.

Alexei Miller, CEO of Gazprom and Deputy Energy Minister of the Russian Federation, recently threatened that "attempts to limit Gazprom's activities in the European market and

8. Yuri Levada Analytical Center, "Putin Approval Stands at 72% in Russia," Angus Reid Global Scan: Polls and Research, April 14, 2006, at www.angus-reid.com/polls/index.cfm/fuseaction/viewItem/itemID/11551.

9. Natalya Olenich, "The Laws of Attractiveness," *Gazeta.ru*, March 13, 2006, at <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=222750611,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch> (May 11, 2006).

10. Gleb Bryanski, "Ministers Call State's Asset Grab a Threat," *The Moscow Times*, April 5, 2006, at www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2006/04/05/043.html.

11. *Ibid.*

politicize questions of gas supply” might induce Russia to shift its export focus to Asia,¹² and these sentiments were echoed by President Putin himself.¹³ Russian leaders were particularly upset about resistance in Europe to selling gas-distribution networks, such as Centrica in the United Kingdom.

Surkov asserts that in the global economy, Russia can either be a spider or a fly—an apt metaphor, as it reveals Russia’s attitude toward competition in global markets, which includes neither compromise nor cooperation.

“Enemies of the People”

Russia is to achieve full autonomy as a global geopolitical player by successfully manipulating energy markets. Energy superpower status under the guidance of United Russia is the key to Russia’s future, and anyone who would thwart Russia’s aspirations—oligarchs, opposition groups, terrorists, foreign powers—is an “enemy.” Surkov seeks to rally popular support by identifying those who seek their own ends and oppose United Russia’s grand strategy as being among these common enemies.

“Oligarchic revanchists” provide a perfect scapegoat for the troubles of the post-Communist period, an ideal backdrop for the emergence of the great leader who creates order out of chaos, and a convenient rationale for nationalization of the most lucrative sectors of the Russian Federation’s economy. Surkov and others often allege that in the 1990s, oligarchs stole all of Russia’s assets and profited from them, denying ordinary Russians their rightful share of national resources. According to Surkov’s narrative, President Putin (despite being a senior Yeltsin official and designated successor) saved both Russia and its valuable resources from the oligarchs. In this new age of order and democracy,

these greedy individuals are no longer permitted to use Russia’s resources to their own advantage, but must use them instead for the Fatherland and the people.

Despite their alleged heinous crimes, however, oligarchs are deserving of membership in Russia’s elite—provided that their transgressions do not contradict Kremlin policy. Roman Abramovich, former partner of Boris Berezovsky in ownership of Sibneft, the Siberian oil company, is responsible for the expatriation of billions of dollars. Putin however, recently reappointed him governor of Chukotka, a province in the far Northeast of Russia.

“Isolationists,” or nationalist extremists, are a threat to the leadership of the Russian Federation because they are bad for both domestic stability and international perceptions of Russia. Isolating ultranationalists is necessary to maintain an image of respectability abroad and the ability to keep order at home, despite alarmingly frequent instances of hate crimes.

However, Russian law enforcement has been remarkably lenient in punishing the crimes of these “enemies of the Russian Federation.” For example:

- In early 2006, a Russian nationalist wielding a knife stabbed nine people in a Moscow synagogue. He was sentenced to 13 years in prison, but despite his claims that the attacks were inspired by anti-Semitic Web sites, the charge of inciting interethnic hatred was dropped, much to the surprise and consternation of human rights activists.¹⁴
- In 2004, a nine-year-old Tajik girl was murdered in a brutal attack by a group of Russian nationalists whose ringleader was sentenced to five and a half years on a charge of “hooliganism.”¹⁵

12. Peggy Hollinger, “Gazprom Threat Adds to EU Fears on Supply,” *Financial Times*, April 20, 2006, at <https://registration.ft.com/registration/barrier?referer=http://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rsl=GGLG,GGLG:2005-40,GGLG:en&q=hollinger+threat&location=http%3A/news.ft.com/cms/s/1bfa611c-d09c-11da-b160-0000779e2340.html> (May 11, 2006).

13. Guy Chazan, “Putin Uses Asia in Power Play on EU,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 27, 2006, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB114607528829736665-search.html?KEYWORDS=Putin+Europe+gas&COLLECTION=wsjie/6month> (May 11, 2006).

14. “Moscow Synagogue Attacker Appeals Sentence on Mental Health Grounds,” *Israeli Insider.com*, April 4, 2006, at <http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Briefs/8190.htm> (May 11, 2006).

- In 2006, an Armenian teenager was stabbed to death in Moscow by skinheads, apparently on racist grounds.¹⁶ According to an Amnesty International report, in 2005, 31 people were murdered and 382 others were attacked in race-related incidents in Russia.¹⁷

In addition to racially motivated crime, Russian officials have exhibited an alarming degree of religious intolerance. Young Russian Orthodox Christians, who claimed that the exhibit had offended them, vandalized an exhibition of atheist art at the Sakharov museum. A Moscow court dismissed the case against them.¹⁸ In January 2005, a group of Duma representatives called for the banning of all Jewish organizations in Russia, claiming that these groups incite ethnic hatred and “provoke anti-Semitism.”¹⁹ There have been recent calls for official Russian Orthodox chaplains in the Russian military and the teaching of Russian Orthodoxy in state schools without any corresponding proposals with respect to other religions.

The Kremlin is doing very little to combat these “oligarchic revanchists” or “isolationist nationalists.” The reason is that these elements, in addition to being useful as political scarecrows and scapegoats, provide justification for new laws to restrict the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have little to do with political extremism.

As for enemies from outside the Russian Federation, the Kremlin seems similarly ambivalent about the West, which is an invaluable trade partner but which also embodies democratic values and the

rule of law. This foreign menace is all the more reason to support United Russia’s vision: a plan to ensure that Russia no longer has to bow to Western influence.

Why the West Should Be Concerned

Taken at face value, Surkov’s speech identifies Russia’s goals in both domestic and foreign policy and indicates whom Russia might consider enemies and friends. The doctrine also sheds light on a reality that many have been loath to admit: The period of the post-Communist honeymoon is over.

While the United States and the Russian Federation can have common interests and reasons to cooperate, the U.S. must evaluate Russian policies over the past five years. From the perspective of American national interests, these include (among others) developing ties with China and Iran, energy security, non-proliferation, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Russia is no longer weak and does not rely on Western funds and favor to maintain its place in the global order.

President Putin’s May 10, 2006, State of the Federation address indicates that the Russian leadership intends to refashion the state as a capable counterweight to the United States, not only economically, but demographically and militarily as well. Putin called for women to return to their traditional role of childbearing, and for government subsidies to mothers, in order to reverse the current population decline. He also emphasized the need

15. Claire Bigg, “Russia: Sentences in Tajik Girl’s Slaying Spark Public Outcry,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 31, 2006, at www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/03/474fe30c-5ee2-4543-9401-f8b29f08cddb.html (May 11, 2006).
16. “Moscow Police Arrest Teenager in Connection with Fatal Stabbing of Armenian Student,” PRAVDA.Ru, April 24, 2006, at <http://english.pravda.ru/news/hotspots/24-04-2006/79470-Armenian-0> (May 30, 2006); see also Nick Paton Walsh, “Armenian Student Killed in Moscow Race Attack,” *The Guardian*, April 24, 2006, at www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,1759814,00.html (May 26, 2006).
17. “Human Rights Group Raps Russia for Tide of Racial Violence,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 5, 2006, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB114678700255544348-search.html?KEYWORDS=amnesty+international+russia&COLLECTION=wsjie/6month> (May 11, 2006).
18. Lera Arsenina, “Secular Court Supports Religious Zealots,” *Gazeta.ru*, August 12, 2003, at www.gazeta.ru/2003/08/12/Secularcourt.shtml (May 11, 2006).
19. Steve Gutterman, “Russian Lawmakers Target Jewish Groups,” Associated Press, January 25, 2005, at www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2005/01/25/russian_lawmakers_target_jewish_groups?mode=PF (May 25, 2006).

for drastic improvements in all aspects of Russia's military, from manpower to better ballistic missile defense, as protection against those that would undermine Russia's sovereignty. In a not-so-veiled reference to U.S. foreign policy, he stated, "Comrade wolf knows whom to eat—he eats and does not listen to anyone."²⁰

The goal of United Russia and its president is to make Russia once again an autonomous international player by returning to the values that made it strong in the past. If United Russia is successful, the U.S. and other Western powers must engage Russia on an entirely new level: as a competitor, not as a junior partner.

Will the Doctrine Work?

The predictive value of the doctrine outlined in Surkov's speech is contingent on its fulfillment, which in turn relies on United Russia's performance for the next 10 to 15 years. United Russia must attempt to hold on to hundreds of thousands of its current members once President Putin is no longer at the helm.

Surkov's speech appeals to a broad range of the Russian population. Its nationalist undertones are tempered by denunciation of ultra-nationalists. Its excoriation of oligarchs is offset by its call for protecting Russian businessmen and creating a new Russian business elite.

As in China, economic growth may provide an antidote against a decline in the party's popularity. At the moment, Russia is flush with cash, benefiting from skyrocketing prices of oil and gas. But energy prices are volatile, and many oil and gas consumers are becoming convinced of the need to diversify supply sources, especially as Russia's mishandling of the Ukrainian and Georgian supply controversies contributed to Europe's mistrust of Moscow. It is possible that a synthetic ideology will not suffice to keep United Russia in power once the Kremlin's coffers are not so full.

Russia's economy has seen healthy growth—about 7 percent a year for the past five years—and there is little expectation that oil and gas prices will decline any time soon. However, the high costs of exploration and of oil and gas in Russia's inhospitable physical and investment climate, as well as stifling government control, make economic slowdown a real possibility. Although Surkov says quite clearly that reprivatization is not a desirable option, Russia has weak rule of law and a track record of arbitrary changes in and application of its tax codes. Lack of predictability and insufficient protection of investor rights is a strong deterrent to foreign investment, specifically in non-natural resources sectors of the economy. If these sectors do not grow, the Russian economy will be at the mercy of fluctuations in commodity prices.

Instead of privatizing Gazprom, however, Russia has transferred to it a significant part of the oil sector and is using the giant company as an instrument of foreign policy. As the government's appetite for spending grows, Russia will likely have to rely on its stabilization fund to finance the government budget.²¹ The Kremlin may be faced with mounting economic difficulties sooner than expected.

How the United States Should Respond

In order to protect not only U.S. interests, but also the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states of the former Soviet Union, the U.S. should adopt the following measures:

- **Recognize** that Russia is an autonomous actor no longer willing to play second fiddle to the United States. It is seeking to limit U.S. presence and influence in the areas in which it has the ability to project military and political power. These areas include Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. The U.S. should promote the principle of territorial integrity in Georgia and Moldova.

20. Anatoly Medetsky, "Comrade Wolf Eats Without Listening," *The Moscow Times*, May 11, 2006, at www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2006/05/11/003.html.

21. Rudiger Ahrend and William Tompson, "Russia's Economy: Keeping Up the Good Times," *OECD Observer*, October 2005, at www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1658/Russia's_economy_-_Keeping_up_the_good_times.html (May 11, 2006).

Overall, it should encourage negotiations and non-military solutions.

- **Continue** to support diversification of energy transit routes in Eurasia, specifically from Kazakhstan and/or Turkmenistan across the Caspian, to be linked with Europe through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku–Erzerum gas pipeline via Turkey.
- **Encourage** Russia to sign the Energy Charter, an international treaty on energy production and transportation, which promotes foreign investment in the energy sector through transparency and accountability.
- **Support** free media, the rule of law, and democratic political development in Russia through NGOs. These include both indigenous Russian NGOs and foreign NGOs working in Russia. The Department of State and the National Endowment for Democracy should identify, support, and expose to their peers abroad those young politicians, writers, and media personalities who disseminate the values of democracy,

tolerance, and human rights and support political and economic liberty.

Conclusion

Vladislav Surkov's ideological treatise is a great insight into the Kremlin's thinking and policy. Recent steps undertaken by the Russian Federation and public statements by Russian officials indicate that Russia is trying to assert its dominance abroad, especially in the former Soviet area.

Surkov's speech provides a number of reasons for the United States to reevaluate its policies toward Russia on the basis of what is realistic and possible. There may be relatively little that the U.S. can do to affect Russian domestic politics, but America can and should be prepared to support those who seek freedom.

—Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Fellow in the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, at The Heritage Foundation. The author wishes to thank Conway Irwin for contributing to this paper.

APPENDIX

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SURKOV

Russia's Historic Legacy

At present, there is no consensus in Russia as to the assessment of events in its past, nor is there any consensus as to which direction it should take in the future. Russia is a European country, but there are differences between the Russian Federation and countries with deep traditions of Western democratic values. “The fundamental values of democracy are ingrained in the citizens of the U.S.A., England, France. Wake them up in the middle of the night—they’ll start telling you about human rights and so forth.” These values should take on greater meaning in the daily lives of Russians, and Russians should develop their ability both to act according to these values in their interactions with one another and to triumph over opponents by means of an ideological offensive. “[T]he party, so that it may retain its dominant position in the political system (and that is our fundamental goal), must more actively master the skills of ideological warfare.”

Nikolay Berdyaev, an important early 20th century Russian philosopher, said, “It is necessary to strive for a free and fair society. Without freedom there can be no justice. Justice demands freedom for all people.” Berdyaev was a Russian thinker, and this was a Russian thought, unlike the works of Marx or Hegel. Russians should respect their ancestors and should not pass undue judgment on the Soviet Union, as it is associated with “all our close kin, it is in fact we ourselves.”

There were two great achievements of the Soviet Union. The first was its powerful ideological message, which spread worldwide and included an understanding of freedom and justice. Soviet power—ideological, military, and even moral—was hugely influential on a global scale. It was even popular among Western intellectuals and contributed to the liberation of colonies. It played a major role in world history, and that is something that Russians should remember.

The other astonishing achievement of the Soviet Union was industrialization. Russians today are

profiting from this inheritance, which includes railroads, pipelines, factories, and nuclear weapons.

The Soviet Union had its negative side as well. Its repressive, closed Soviet society, “in which results are evaluated by party-dogma rather than pragmatism, produced an ineffective elite.... Society was not only unjust, it also wasn’t free. It did not address the question of material needs” and “obviously fell behind the new quality of life of the Western countries in satisfying the demands of the people.”

A Time of Crisis

The Soviet Union’s downfall was inevitable. “The Russian people themselves chose this fate—they rejected the socialist model” as inconsistent with their search for freedom and justice. However, the USSR tried to reform, to embrace the democratic values embodied in the Soviet constitution. The constitution of the USSR and its language about democracy made “the Soviet Union, unconditionally, the greatest modernization project. It already carried with it the seeds of democracy.” The collapse was the result of the Soviet people’s finally holding their country accountable for its promises of democracy, and “the loss of territory, the loss of population, the loss of a huge part of our economy” was the price that Russia paid.

After the downfall, because of disillusionment with the Soviet government, there was widespread belief that “government is evil...and having reduced it to nothing, everything would turn out fine. Of course, this vacuum [of power] was filled, and it was exactly these ambitious and self-serving commercial leaders who placed themselves in the myriad opportunities for power.... [E]ntire ministries, regions, parties found themselves under the control of independent financial groups, moreover under direct and literal control.”

The framers of the Soviet constitution did not foresee leadership by commercial interests. The constitution was not written for the purpose of subjugating elected officials to people with money. Democracy in the oligarchic period of the 1990s was not rule by many, nor was it rule by a substan-

tial number. “You could count these people on your fingers.... [A]s a result, all the foundations of democracy were distorted.... If that was a democracy, then I don’t know what democracy is.”

Freedom of speech during this period took on its own special meaning. “[L]eading television networks became weapons in the hands of famous oligarchic groups” who used them to gain access to and divide among themselves even more government assets. Although privatization in and of itself is a good thing, it was carried out by means of awkward and confusing schemes, such as rigged oil-for-food auctions.

“In the federal system chaos ruled.” Centrifugal forces threatened Russia’s territorial integrity in the 1990s, especially rebellion in Chechnya and the inability of disparate regions to agree on a federal budget. In the midst of these centrifugal forces, Russia “was on the verge of losing its sovereignty.”

Russia’s Democratic Development

“If we want our society to be democratic, to possess sovereignty and be an actor in world politics, we must develop our democracy, and here fundamental human rights are part of the strengthening the structure of civil society. I see the [United Russia] party first of all as an instrument of civil society, as an instrument of societal participation in political life and in power... a self-regulating and non-commercial organization of a completely different kind... an institute of civil society, a self-organization of citizens.”

Regarding changes in the political system in Russia, such as the move to proportional representation in the parliament, a proportional system is more democratic, as it will require a greater number of votes for United Russia to have a majority in parliament: “more votes than all other electoral lists combined.” This is a means to strengthening the opposition and the party system in general.

As for presidential appointment of governors, and the oft-repeated question of how this helps to win the war on terrorism, it helps to avoid the chaos of the 1990s, in which there were too many parties, leading to the atomization of society. The goal of these changes is to “benefit society, strengthen its foundations.”

Among the political reforms of the past few years is the creation of the Public Chamber: “a new organ for the realization and development of opportunities for cooperation between government structures and societal organizations.” In effect, the Public Chamber is intended as an intermediary between the Kremlin and non-governmental organizations.

But democracy has one great enemy: corruption. It also has a downside: poverty. The government of the Russian Federation has yet to prove its effectiveness in providing a social safety net and seeing that wages are paid; for the “stable development of free society, free economics demands fairer distribution of GDP.”

The Path to Greatness: Obstacles and Opportunities

The fundamental threats to Russian sovereignty are international terrorism, military conflict, lack of economic competitiveness, and “soft” takeovers by “orange technologies [U.S.- and Western-supported opposition movements] in a time of decreased national immunity to foreign influence.”

Although military conflicts are not a current threat, anything can happen, and the army, navy, and nuclear weapons are the “foundations of [Russia’s] national sovereignty.” Russia’s economic growth, though impressive, started from a very low level. Structural reform has dragged out for far too long, and this will eventually take its toll on growth. Other problems include enormous government expenditures, budgetary problems, and lack of development.

The liberal idea that with full liberalization, all of these problems will right themselves is erroneous. Russian society must “work out a realistic model of further development. President Putin himself already outlined this model, although we find ourselves at the beginning of the road. We must use our competitive advantage and develop it.”

Energy Superpower

Russia should be an energy superpower. The energy industry is the state’s main enterprise and brings in the lion’s share of Russia’s GDP. Becoming an energy superpower requires technological improvements in the fuel-energy complex; other-

wise, Russia relegates itself to the role of exporter of raw materials, at which point “we become spetsnaz, guarding their [the West’s] pipelines.” Russia already has the resources—research organizations, people, and specialists—with which to achieve technological advances in its energy sector.

As regards Russia’s strategic industries, “national is not necessarily governmental. But the fuel-energy complex, strategic communications, the financial system, and defense must be chiefly Russian,” while other industries must open themselves to foreign investment.

It is necessary for Russia to control certain sectors in order to carve out a place in the global hierarchy. “Only the direct participation of Russian companies in the creation of global information links will be able to guarantee Russia a place in polite society. Our sovereignty and who we are in the world’s spider web [the Russian term for the Internet]—spiders or flies—depends on this.”

Another threat to Russia’s sovereignty is “soft invasions.... [T]hey blur values, declare the government ineffective, provoke internal conflicts. ‘Orange technology’ shows this very clearly.” There is only one way to prevent a “soft invasion” or “color revolution,” and that is by creating a “nationally-oriented leading layer of society.”

It is also vital that Russia not give up its sovereign interests for the interests of others. Russia must participate in the global economy’s multinational corporations: “multinational, not trans-, supra-, or just national. The economic future is not in the disappearance of great nations, but in their cooperation.”

There are problems with Russia’s business elite: namely, that many Russian businessmen take their families and assets offshore. “It is not important that he have offshore accounts, let him have them. But mentally he does not live here, in Russia, and such people will not help Russia, and they will also not take care of Russia.” Russia’s future relies on transformation of the Russian business elite into a national bourgeoisie.

Any talk of contradictions between business and government is a “delusion. Business is in contradiction with society, because a government official takes his cues from society.” Disavowing a populist

position calling for expropriation of the assets of the rich, Russia must protect its business class, who in return must “pay taxes and respect traditions and morals.” The other element of a leading class of society is an effective bureaucracy. “The bureaucracy must make a transition from quasi-Soviet, quasi-competent, accustomed to defeat, to a competitive, competent community of civil servants, because it is here that we lose in relation to the corporatism of other governments.”

Russia’s educational system is “not bad, but we must develop it, reorient it, and very important is that it produce a national elite.” Education is “the creation of a nation, the organization of life and the culture of the nation.”

Russia’s Enemies

Russia’s enemies are those who demand that Russia take a step back and those who demand that Russia take two steps back.

The first group are “oligarchic revanchists”—those who profited from the chaos of the Yeltsin era and are nostalgic for those times. “Whereas beforehand they influenced decisions, now, to be honest, they exercise no special influence. People have many motives for turning back the clock. There are potential leaders of this school of thought. And foreign sponsors. Unconditionally, we cannot have a restoration of the oligarchic regime because that is a road to nowhere...leading to a great loss of sovereignty and democracy.... But the potential danger of their return exists, we shouldn’t dismiss them.”

The second group—those who would take two steps back—are “isolationists.” They call themselves “patriots,” but one should not sully the word by using it to describe them. They are neo-Nazis. “The difficulty of establishing democracy in our country, the double standards of Western politicians stimulate disappointment in democratic values. Secret CIA prisons in Europe, illegal use of force in Iraq, ‘orange’ revolutions in neighboring countries—these hardly contribute to the popularity of democratic ideas.” Analysis of this new “enemy list” follows.

The Role of United Russia

“United Russia’s goal is not just to win in 2007, but to think about what everyone should be doing

to guarantee the domination of the party for the next 10–15 years” in order to prevent these enemy political forces from knocking Russia off its current political path.

People should engage in political debate; if you do not discuss among yourselves, how will you convince others? Forget about right and left. The party is for people of all stripes—left, right, sol-

diers, teachers, businessmen. “All who aren’t against us are for us,” and efforts should be made to form coalitions, even with opposition parties.

Political discussions can be used to develop new approaches for achieving the national project. In order to educate themselves, party supporters should “study the ideological documents of the president and the party.”