OCCASIONAL
PAPER

Carnegie–RAND Workshop on the Future of the Greater Middle East and the Prospects for U.S.–Russian Partnership

OLGA OLIKER
with NATASHA YEFIMOVA

OP-118-CMEPP/CRE
July 2004

CENTER FOR RUSSIA AND EURASIA and
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PUBLIC POLICY

CARNEGIE MOSCOW CENTER
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The workshop summarized in this paper was conducted jointly under the auspices of the RAND Center for Russia and Eurasia (CRE), the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy (CMEPP), and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Moscow Center.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

RAND® is a registered trademark.

© Copyright 2004 RAND Corporation

All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from RAND.

Published 2004 by the RAND Corporation
1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050
201 North Craig Street, Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-1516
RAND URL: http://www.rand.org/
To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact
Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;
Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: order@rand.org

Preface

In September 2003, the RAND Corporation and the Carnegie Moscow Center convened a workshop in Moscow on the future of the "greater Middle East." The impetus for the meeting was a recognition that traditional "Middle Eastern" issues are becoming increasingly important for Russian, U.S., and, indeed, global security interests. U.S. and Russian specialists on a wide range of topics took part in informal small-group discussions of regional security issues, U.S. and Russian policy agendas for selected countries, and prospects for U.S.-Russian partnership in the area. Several key questions guided the discussions:

- What is each country's current security policy in the region?
- How effective are these policies?
- How does actual policy stack up against national interests?
- How might the United States and Russia move forward in the region, either independently or cooperatively?

This summary reflects the rapporteur's sense of the discussions. Discussions were not for attribution, and hence remarks and comments in this occasional paper are also not attributed. This workshop was conducted jointly under the auspices of the Center for Russia and Eurasia (CRE), the Center for Middle East Public Policy (CMEPP), and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Moscow Center.

CRE and CMEPP are regional centers in the RAND National Security Research Division (NSRD). NSRD conducts research and analysis for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Commands, the defense agencies, the Department of the Navy, the U.S. intelligence community, allied foreign governments, and foundations. For more information on the RAND Center for Russia and Eurasia, contact the director, Jeremy R. Azrael. He can be reached by e-mail at Jeremy_Azrael@rand.org; by phone at 310-393-0411, extension 6351; or by mail at RAND, 1700 Main Street, Santa Monica, California 90407-2138. More information about RAND is available at www.rand.org.

The Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace established the Carnegie Moscow Center in spring 1993. The Center accommodates foreign and Russian researchers collaborating with Washington staff on a variety of topical areas and policy-relevant projects. Carnegie Associates work independently on their own research in areas covering a broad range of contemporary policy issues—military, political, and economic. For more information on the Carnegie Moscow Center, contact it by telephone at

+7(095) 935-89-04 or by mail at Carnegie Moscow Center, 16/2, Tverskaya str., Moscow, 103009, Russia. More information is also available at info@carnegie.ru.

The RAND Corporation Quality Assurance Process

Peer review is an integral part of all RAND research projects. Prior to publication, this document, as with all documents in the RAND occasional paper series, was subject to a quality assurance process to ensure that the research meets several standards, including the following: The problem is well formulated; the research approach is well designed and well executed; the data and assumptions are sound; the findings are useful and advance knowledge; the implications and recommendations follow logically from the findings and are explained thoroughly; the documentation is accurate, understandable, cogent, and temperate in tone; the research demonstrates understanding of related previous studies; and the research is relevant, objective, independent, and balanced. Peer review is conducted by research professionals who were not members of the project team.

RAND routinely reviews and refines its quality assurance process and also conducts periodic external and internal reviews of the quality of its body of work. For additional details regarding the RAND quality assurance process, visit http://www.rand.org/standards/.

Carnegie-RAND Workshop on the Future of the Greater Middle East and the Prospects for U.S.-Russian Partnership

Introduction

On September 8 and 9, 2003, the RAND Corporation and the Carnegie Moscow Center convened a workshop in Moscow on the future of the "greater Middle East." The meeting's organizers defined the region in this way to reflect a growing realization that the issues that have traditionally been viewed as "Middle Eastern" actually encompass a much broader space—one that also includes Central and South Asia and the Caucasus. The impetus for the meeting was a recognition that such issues, and this part of the world, are becoming increasingly important for Russian, U.S., and, indeed, global security interests. U.S. and Russian specialists on a wide range of topics took part in informal small-group discussions of regional security issues, U.S. and Russian policy agendas for selected countries, and prospects for U.S.-Russian partnership in the area. Two presenters on each workshop theme—one American and one Russian—led off discussion with a short address, after which the floor was opened to all participants.

By bringing together experts of different nationalities and perspectives to look at areas of conflict, workshop organizers hoped to inform understanding not just of U.S. and Russian relations with the greater Middle East but also of relations between the United States and Russia—where the two countries agreed, where they disagreed, and where they might cooperate in the future. Several key questions guided the discussions:

- What is each country's current security policy in the region?
- How effective are these policies?
- How does actual policy stack up against national interests?
- How might the United States and Russia move forward in the region, either independently or cooperatively?

This summary reflects the rapporteur's sense of the discussions. Participants' remarks were not personally attributed.

Overview: The United States and Russia in the Greater Middle East

Outside observers may find it difficult to define the policy goals of either Russia or the United States toward the greater Middle East on the basis of the policy actions these countries take in the region. Indeed, both countries' policies may reflect uncertainties about what the policy priorities really ought to be. Policy goals can be volatile, changing in response to

unfolding events, policies and engagements elsewhere, and domestic policy goals and interests. Moreover, U.S. and Russian actions in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, revealed a tendency for the policies of both countries to be reactive rather than proactive. While the Bush administration appeared to have taken office with the intent of distancing itself from the Middle East and related issues, it took on a far more activist role after the terrorist attacks. Increasingly, the administration has realized that attempts to limit involvement present tremendous difficulties. The problems and concerns of the greater Middle East are interrelated and cannot be viewed or solved individually—a fact demonstrated, for example, by the impossibility of forming an international coalition on Iraq without also addressing the Israeli-Palestinian question.

Understanding U.S. Security Policy

The United States, rather than having grand strategic goals for the greater Middle East, tends to have short- and medium-term tactical interests that focus its attention on regime succession, democratization, development, and similar issues. The following are Washington's top seven priorities for the region, in no particular order:

1. the war on terrorism
2. peacemaking and state-building in Iraq
3. the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
4. stability in Afghanistan
5. energy security
6. the shifting notion of Gulf stability
7. alliances and friendships.

In addition, questions relating to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation remain critically important to the United States.

The emphasis of U.S. officials on unilateralism and the preventive use of force following September 11, 2001, has proven problematic as "implementable" policy. Recent events have demonstrated that the more the United States gets engaged in the Middle East, the more it will need the support and assistance of other states—both within and beyond the region—to implement its goals. In an ideal situation, this would mean effectively reaching out to Russia, China, and other states. Indeed, the United States is starting to engage, seeking to multilateralize its efforts in the region.

Participants debated whether current U.S. policy goals mark a significant departure from the Middle East policies of past U.S. administrations. From one standpoint, efforts today to counter al Qaeda and other extremist influences parallel the policy of preventing Communist takeovers—a focus of Washington's Middle East agenda during the Cold War. Moreover, some specific aspects of policy are clearly enduring. The U.S. commitment to the security of Israel has long been a hallmark of U.S. policy. Energy security, too, remains an important and consistent element of U.S. policy toward the greater Middle East. Even if the 2003 campaign against Iraq was not driven by oil interests, the liberation of Kuwait over a decade ago, to a large extent, was. Unquestionably, energy security is critical to the United States, and the Middle East is essential to attaining and maintaining that security.

Yet there are also some key differences between past and present policy, including government openness to the alignment of interests between Christian fundamentalists and

Zionists, as well as a rethinking of support for conservative authoritarian regimes in the region, which may have helped create support for extremists. Hostility among policy elites toward Saudi Arabia as a result of the September 11, 2001, attacks is another new factor. Other issue areas are still evolving. It seems quite likely that, as U.S. policy continues to evolve, nonproliferation will remain a centerpiece. But the application of nonproliferation policy may also remain uneven, affecting some states more than others in reflection of other policy interests and goals. The United States will also fight extremism, political violence, and terrorism to the best of its ability—and in line with other needs.

In the long term, the United States will have to address the problems highlighted by a recent United Nations Development Program report. Written by Arab specialists, this analysis describes the dire human conditions in much of the Arab world. This situation will have far-reaching implications as underdevelopment and security concerns must now be recognized as interdependent. The report identifies key concerns for the Middle East that the United States will also have to address if it is to attain its goals, however defined, in the region.

In the shorter term, the United States may face challenges as regimes in the Middle East undergo leadership transition. The successions of recent years have been both peaceful and successful, as in the cases of Assad, Aliyev, and Abdullah, but this pattern may not hold. In Egypt, for example, the military may not support Gamal Mubarak, now marked to succeed his father, Hosni. In other places—Qatar, for example—plans for succession are unclear. The succession question raises also the challenge of democratization, a stated U.S. goal.

The "succession" in the United States will also be an issue, because a new leadership could fundamentally change the nation's future policy agenda for the greater Middle East. Moreover, in light of the 2004 elections, a variety of domestic issues will affect policy decisions. While foreign policy does not motivate the U.S. electorate to the extent that it does U.S. elites, domestic considerations do affect U.S. policy choices.

Finally, as the United States seeks to balance an instinct toward unilateral action with the need for foreign help and support, the greater Middle East may well be the testing ground for some of the new institutions of the 21st century. It is possible that the NATO-Europe model may have run its course, and new models may be emerging to take its place. One example is a United States–plus–United Nations framework for action and cooperation. Such a structure would provide a leadership role for the United States but would also involve other states in that leadership. More examples are provided by the military and political coalitions being built in and in relation to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. Such coalitions may well be models for those of the 21st century.

Understanding Russian Security Policy

Because the greater Middle East has become a particular focus of U.S. interests over the past two years and because the United States is critical to Russian interests, the region has taken on a greater importance for Russia as well. However, Russia does not have a well-formulated, clear-cut policy toward either the greater or the lesser "traditional" Middle East, although economic and security interests give its policy agenda a rough shape.

Russia's economic interests are driven by the domestic requirements of reconstructing and modernizing the country. Because these requirements are so urgent and because eco-

nomic and security policies are interrelated, economic goals drive Russian foreign policy to a tremendous extent. But because there are long- and short-term trade-offs in economic policy, prioritizing economics fails to simplify the policymaking process sufficiently. The ways in which economic priorities have translated into policy include support for Russian energy companies abroad—one of the Putin administration's main policy focuses. Assistance to the Bushehr nuclear reactor project in Iran is another example. Russia's policy vis-à-vis Iraq up until Operation Iraqi Freedom also reflected economic interests: Russian firms had been buying oil from Saddam's Iraq and selling it to the United States and Europe for years. Similarly, the recent visit of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to Russia has economic underpinnings. According to some observers, the visit resulted from the influence of oil and gas interests on Russian policy. Specifically, there are those who hope eventually to see Russian companies active in Saudi Arabia and Saudi investment in Russia.[1]

In terms of security, Russia, like the United States, is uneasy about Islamic extremism and international terrorism. But unlike in the United States, the proximity of these problems to Russia's borders plays a crucial role in determining Russian policy. Russia borders on a number of states to its south that have majority Muslim populations but that lack definition as nation-states and are uncertain about the form and extent of their Islamic identity. In general, Russian policymakers focus on manifestations of Islamic extremism and terrorism in these closer-to-home locales. Chechnya is critically important, for example, and Central Asia is a real concern. Likewise, Russia's concerns about the future of Afghanistan, another key policy focus, are, in this context, broader than Afghanistan itself, touching equally on how events in that country influence the neighbors it shares with Russia. Other issues on the security agenda include the drug trade and illegal migration. In all these cases, the farther any given country of concern is from Russia, the lower that country ranks among Russia's foreign policy priorities.

But it is not just a question of proximate threats seeming more urgent. The other factor here is Russia's limited capacity to play a significant role far from its borders. The Soviet Union may have been able to conduct an activist policy in the Middle East, but Russia—with its significantly more limited political, economic, military, and diplomatic tools, and a range of more immediate concerns—has had much less interest in the Middle East as traditionally defined. As a result, Russian academic capacity in Middle Eastern studies has deteriorated over the past ten years. Today, Russia plays only a niche role in the region—for instance, in Iran. Given its limited capacity, it aims to attain its goals in the greater Middle East at as low a cost as possible.

The region holds little interest for the Russian population as a whole. If policymakers and the general public consider the area at all, it is possibly through the prism of Russia's former role as a superpower. However, Russia has its own Muslim and Jewish communities,[2] and as interest groups become a new phenomenon of the Russian political scene, these communities may play a larger part in shaping Russian policy toward the Middle East.

---

[1] Beyond the economic realm, the crown prince's visit was also a symbolic statement in two key ways. The Russian media have frequently discussed the Saudis as a source of support for Chechen radicals, and a warming of relations may be seen as an opportunity to influence this situation. Moreover, Saudi-Russian ties also send a message beyond both countries' borders that Saudi Arabia does not "belong" to the United States.

[2] Approximately 20 million Muslims live within the Russian Federation, roughly one-seventh of its population.

For the present, however, the Russian Muslim community is rather weak as a political force. For instance, this segment of the population strongly opposed the war in Iraq. But, then again, so did much of the non-Muslim population, so there is little reason to think that Muslim views particularly affected Russian government policy. If the government were able to develop the capacity to harness this group politically, the Muslim population could be viewed as a significant force. Indeed, the government recognizes its potential. Discussion of the possibility of joining the Organization of Islamic Conference (which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently disavowed) may be an example of the government trying to take advantage of Islamic issues within Russia.

Russian Views of U.S. Policy

A strong anti-American strain continues to appear among government, popular, and some elite circles within Russia, even as other elites are far more positive toward the United States. Accordingly, some of those now in power, including the *siloviki* (representatives of the security and military structures), who surround President Putin, use populist anti-Americanism to garner and retain public support. Yet while the Russians who do support cooperation are pleased with the current congruence of interests between the United States and Russia, even they are not entirely confident that they can rely on the Americans if Russia's interests are threatened.

In Russia, as elsewhere, the main concern about the United States is less that it will act in a particular region than that it will act and then go away, leaving locals to try to solve the broad range of problems alone. A number of participants asserted that there is little likelihood of U.S. withdrawal from the Middle East; the commitment is clearly a long-term one. Moreover, it seems likely that, over time, the United States will increasingly recognize the need to cooperate with others to attain its goals in this region. Yet Russian concerns about a pullout remain significant.

Prospects for U.S.-Russian Cooperation

During the Cold War, a central U.S. policy was preventing a Communist takeover in any given state or region; today, the United States and Russia share a number of goals in the Middle East and elsewhere. For example, both countries are concerned with pipeline security in the Caspian and elsewhere (both in the region and beyond). Chechnya has pushed Russia closer to Israel. And to the anger of the Saudi government, Putin made a public statement about the involvement of Saudi citizens in the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Yet, together or apart, the United States and Russia face limits on what they can accomplish. They cannot, for example, force Palestinians and Israelis to make peace, no matter how significantly peace would benefit both parties and the entire global community. However, they can seek to move the peace process forward, working both together and with others. The European Union, for instance, provides more development assistance in the Middle East than does the United States and should be engaged in the process as well. After all, interests in energy, economics, and stability are common to the United States, Russia, and the nations of Europe alike.

But identifying the right approach to cooperation may be difficult. For instance, should democratization be a cooperative policy goal, either in Iraq or elsewhere? Democratization does not guarantee that extremist forces will not come to power. Extremists can be

elected democratically. Democracy can, in fact, result in governments that are very hostile to U.S. and Russian interests.

Another open question is the extent to which shared U.S. and Russian interests stem from a perception—both among the general public and elites—of Muslims as a new enemy. Many in both the United States and Russia distrust such U.S. "friends" as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the new Iraq government, reflecting a view that today's (Muslim) friends can be tomorrow's foes. This view potentially leads observers to perceive Islam, and Muslims in general, antagonistically. This attitude did not emerge in response to the collapse of the Soviet Union, as it might have. However, it is increasingly evident today. While the U.S. and Russian governments may both argue that such an attitude is not government policy, aspects of both states' behavior, such as providing the media with graphic photographs of the dead bodies of Saddam Hussein's sons and their families, suggest to some a new crusade against Muslims.

Security Issues by Country and Region

Iraq

U.S. Policy. U.S. policy toward Iraq today is focused on two main areas of concern:

- reconstruction of the country
- timely withdrawal of U.S. and foreign forces.

Iraq is the sixth major nation-building operation in which the United States has been involved in the past decade. Despite stating initially that it would not engage in nation-building, the Bush administration has done so at a far higher rate than did the Clinton administration. In five of the six operations, the countries in question have been predominantly Muslim. For this and other reasons, the Iraq experience is not entirely unique. As with earlier efforts, it involves the abrupt collapse of a regime; a breakdown of law and order, along with widespread looting; the disintegration of old security institutions, such as the police and military, which has required outside forces to provide security; and a nexus between political extremists and criminal groups.

At the same time, Iraq does differ from other efforts, in part because the Bush administration felt that recent experience was bankrupt of useful lessons and wanted to take a categorically new approach. Instead, the administration looked to the reconstruction of Germany and Japan after World War II, which it believed constituted a better model. But because of changes both in the global environment and differences between Iraq and these two countries, this assessment proved wrong. Iraq, as a multiethnic society of mutually antagonistic groups carved out of the Ottoman Empire, looks far more like Yugoslavia than monoethnic Germany or Japan. Multiethnic societies have been successfully established—for example, Finland, Yugoslavia, and Lebanon. But as these very examples attest, the processes are difficult and the resulting societies may be more fragile than expected. The Bush administration's decision not to look at more relevant past experience helps explain many of its failures in planning the Iraq operation.

Indeed, the reconstruction of Iraq has proven far more difficult and challenging than the Bush administration expected it would be. The American leadership had believed that

the postconflict phase would be easier than the conflict phase and that the troop presence could be reduced quickly and easily. Those leaders had felt that the transition to a democratic Iraq would be relatively swift and inexpensive. They had also believed that the Iraqi people would welcome Saddam's departure, which would have enabled the new leadership to secure public support quickly.

It is now clear that the initial commitment of U.S. manpower and money will be inadequate to meet the challenge of rebuilding Iraq. Moreover, the United States has failed to engage in a constructive and coordinated effort to bring about agreement among interested outside parties in support of a single leadership. As the earlier case of Afghanistan proves, such engagement is an essential step in the process of reconstruction. In Afghanistan, the successful effort to persuade the country's neighbors, who were sponsors of various internal factions, that this was not a zero-sum game led to the success of the Karzai regime and to the fact that neighboring states have withheld support from those who might seek to overthrow it. The regime has been able to stay in power despite internal divisions. In Iraq, this has not happened.

This is not to say that the United States has had no advantages. Compared with Russia in Chechnya, for instance, where historical memory and the excesses of Russian troops exacerbate the situation, the United States is better positioned. But regional experts and nation-building specialists have repeatedly warned of the challenges and costs of success. In addition to being multiethnic, Iraq is 30 times larger than Chechnya. For reconstruction efforts to succeed, the United States and the new Iraqi government will need the support of major internal forces; the support of the Kurds is not sufficient. Iraqi society is neither traditional nor democratic; from the point of view of many Iraqis, Iraq under Saddam Hussein was an imperial secular state, and Saddam was a legitimate ruler. Finally, stability is the first casualty of any transformation. In this environment, in which instability will be unavoidable for a time, it is very possible that nostalgia will soon appear for the stability and predictability that is a hallmark of authoritarian regimes.

The Bush administration now recognizes that its initial assessment of how easily the reconstruction of Iraq would go was wrong.[3] The United States has reappraised the level of investment necessary and remains committed to building a modernizing, moderate, nonthreatening, and ultimately democratic Iraq. The appointment of Paul Bremer was an important step toward this end.[4] The Bush administration's new estimates of requirements, which are based on previous operations, are far more realistic than those made initially: The experiences of Bosnia and Kosovo suggest a need for some $10 billion to $16 billion (U.S.) in economic assistance and a security force of 500,000 personnel, not the 60,000 the United States intended to draw down to six weeks after combat ended.

However, maintaining a security force of this size will be beyond U.S. capabilities, given how stretched U.S. forces are already. One-third of the U.S. Army is currently in Iraq. Iraqi forces alone cannot make up for this shortfall. Although the United States is trying to accelerate the training of the country's internal forces, the old security institutions have disin-

---

[3] In fact, some participants felt that the United States should be commended for its willingness to admit that certain things have not been working and to change policy to correct them.

[4] Although it should be noted that, at the time Bremer was named, the United States was still pulling troops out of the country, and it took two months to reverse that process.

tegrated, and experience suggests that building new security forces takes about two years. To a large extent, this recognition is what has led the administration to more assiduously cultivate partners and friends by offering others a voice in decision- and policymaking in exchange for their troops and funds. Until Iraq's own forces are fully functional, the United States and its partners will have to provide security.

Some participants questioned whether the need for foreign involvement is truly a question of stabilization and reconstruction, or whether, in contrast, it is primarily something the United States can use to make its effort more legitimate. Others asked to what extent allies and friends would truly be willing to participate, given the many doubts about the feasibility of reconstruction. All broadly agreed, though, that good things can be attained, even if the initial hope that Iraq will be a beacon of democracy in the Middle East cannot be realized.

The central challenge of reestablishing order in Iraq is ensuring the unity and promoting the integrity of the state. It is a matter of accomplishing certain aspects of what Saddam Hussein achieved—creating stability and law and order—without his presence or the negative aspects of his regime. Other key policy goals include

- allaying the concerns of neighbors, such as Turkey, about the evolving Iraq
- apprehending Saddam Hussein; the death of the former Iraqi leader may actually be preferable to a detention and lengthy trial, in the course of which he might appeal to and win over supporters[5]
- reestablishing oil production; this is important not just for U.S. interests but also for those of Iraq and others—including, potentially, Russia.

Yet, the effort to democratize Iraq could backfire in a region where most other states—including U.S. friends—are not democratic. For example, holding free elections in Iraq now could lead to the election of Shiite extremists or Sunni radicals on the Muslim Brotherhood model.

The question of troop withdrawal also looms large on the future policy agenda of the United States. More Americans have been killed in Iraq in the "postwar" period than during military action. Some have asked whether these casualty figures could lead the United States to pull its forces out of Iraq. It is unlikely. Historically, there has only been a single occasion on which the United States has retreated from conflict as a result of (or at least soon after) a very public loss of American life. That was in Somalia. In Iraq, three factors will determine whether and how long the United States will stay: the value the administration places on the reconstruction effort, its capacity to convince the U.S. public of the importance of the effort, and its ability to manage reconstruction.

Most people in the United States seem to be convinced that the reconstruction is, in fact, worth it. Even critics of the Bush administration argue that it should be doing more, rather than less. The real risk is that the American people will lose confidence in the administration's competence in managing this effort. This was the real cause for the withdrawal from Somalia. Moreover, financial costs and the burden on U.S. military

[5] These discussions took place before the capture of Saddam Hussein.

personnel, both of which are increasing at unsustainable rates, will limit what the United States can do and for how long.

Although many in the Middle East and elsewhere find it difficult to believe that the United States truly will seek to withdraw its forces, the fact is that the United States has little to gain and much to lose from a lengthy occupation. Yet, realistically, withdrawal is not an immediate option. The situation in Iraq must be stable and sustainable before the United States can make this move, and this may take a very long time—well beyond the two to three years that some policymakers envision. Consequently, many believe that the United States will have to multilateralize and make concessions to other countries.

There are those, however, who question the need for multilateralization, asking what other countries could truly contribute, because their soldiers and funds would still not be enough to turn the tide. Moreover, even if the question is simply one of legitimacy, token multinationalization can backfire: If others are included but not given a real role, the end result could be worse than an entirely unilateral effort.

Prospects for U.S.-Russian Cooperation in Iraq. Many participants asserted that the fact that no evidence has emerged to prove the allegations the United States made to justify the war in Iraq—that the Iraqi regime supported international terrorism and possessed weapons of mass destruction—has damaged U.S. credibility in Russia.

Yet, in the eyes of some participants, including several Russians, the operation in Iraq was justified in terms of the good it can do for the Iraqi people. While the international implications were problematic and many feel the United States grossly miscalculated the costs of its accusations, the WMD question was not the main point. Moreover, in terms of WMD, some participants felt it to be plausible that Saddam would not only have made an effort to develop such weapons but would have given materials and technology to Islamist terrorists, guaranteeing himself a place in history as someone who dealt a mortal blow to Israel and the United States. Interestingly, these participants pointed out that al Qaeda statements parallel Saddam's on the subject of Israel and America.

With the United States governing Iraq as the occupying force, it becomes a de facto Middle Eastern country, changing the global dynamic. The United States is also learning quickly from its experiences in Iraq. It has recognized that it needs help with the reconstruction effort and will be grateful for the help it receives.

From Russia's perspective, while it has little national security interest in the future state and society of Iraq, it does have an interest in preventing Islamists from coming to power in that country. This is largely what drives the Russian willingness to cooperate. Russia is also vested in seeing the United States realize that it cannot succeed alone and acknowledge the need for a multinational coalition. It will be easier for Russia to join this coalition than for Germany or France to do so, because both of these nations went further in their criticism of the United States' decision to wage a military campaign. However, the United States needs partners like Germany and France, which are able to deploy and sustain large expeditionary forces from their own resources and which have large assistance budgets.

At a minimum, the United States wants Russia to contribute political support (and arguably, some in the U.S. administration want no more than that). Some participants believed that ensuring Russian participation in the reconstruction effort would be simple: It would amount to taking into account the interests of Russian companies, particularly Lukoil, and honoring the commitments these companies made to the Saddam-era Iraq. The Russian

government and people will see this as a good reason for involvement. Moreover, the companies themselves will take steps to sway public opinion in favor of involvement. In general, the Russian public will support involvement in reconstruction if it feels that Russia can benefit from it, particularly if it can help Russia regain international clout.

Yet, other participants argued that a tactic of "trading peacekeepers for oil contracts" is not a good one. What is more, the United States is not in a position to "reward" Russia by honoring old oil contracts. Iraqis will make those decisions, because that authority has already been ceded to them.

Yet while some Russians question U.S. motivation in wanting Russian help, Russia will lose the capacity to influence what happens if it does not participate and will find itself left out of what will likely be a major international action. What can Russia contribute? Russians have experience with constructing dams, bridges, and power stations; they could provide some medical assistance. Russia could also possibly send armed forces, as they did in Kosovo, to demonstrate power and capacity. Indeed, the defense minister has expressed a willingness to commit Russian troops to the operation.

But whether Russia sends troops, engineers, or both, it cannot help fund the operation, and Russians cannot be expected to die for a cause they did not support from the outset. Consequently, the United States and Great Britain will have to continue to pay the bills and bear the brunt of sustaining a military presence in Iraq. In addition, the question remains whether Russian armed forces have sufficient capability to take part in a multinational force in Iraq. While some participants contended that Russia currently has one regiment of sufficient quality to take part, others believed that the effectiveness of Russian soldiers is largely a question of decent pay and supplies. Other questions under debate included whether Russia would put its troops under U.S. rather than U.N. command and whether an American U.N. commander—the likely scenario—would be acceptable. In Kosovo, a U.S. commander was deemed preferable to a NATO commander, and, for some participants, this was a relevant precedent. But others warned that subordinating Russian troops to a U.S. commander today could cost a Russian president an election.

Finally, there remain those in Russia for whom helping Americans feels like a betrayal of ideals. These factions maintain a deeply ingrained reluctance to working with the United States. Consequently, here, as in the campaign against terror, some in Russia may try to sabotage U.S. reconstruction efforts in Iraq, squandering the opportunity for cooperation between the two countries.

Iran

In the view of many, Iran has "failed as a revolutionary state" because it has proven unable to export Islamic revolution. Both Russia and the United States find this development favorable: Moscow welcomes Teheran's "nonviolent" position on Chechnya, while Washington's concerns about Iranian involvement with fundamentalist terrorist groups—though still significant—have abated somewhat.

Now that radical Islam is no longer the slogan of the Iranian state, what has taken its place? While some Russian participants argued that the regime is a long way from democracy (lacking competitive parties, for one thing), others—both Russian and American—characterized it as more democratic than other governments in the region.

In short, Iran is going through something of an identity crisis. It feels encircled, isolated, and vulnerable—feelings compounded by such developments as the evolving relationship between Israel and Turkey. In the view of one Russian participant, Iran does not want reconciliation with the West, above all with the United States, but it does want a way out of the impasse that limits its capacity for trade and its potential to build relationships with a range of countries globally. Strengthening ties with the Sunni world may be one way of achieving this way out. Yet, Iran's domestic political structures make cooperation with other nations difficult to build and sustain. The existing system of rule is not open to innovation, and the country has too many intricate "circles of power."

Russian Policy. From a geopolitical standpoint, there is a direct link between Iran and Russia's vulnerable southern underbelly, especially the southern Caucasus. From Moscow's perspective, Iran has played a stabilizing role in the region: Not only has it not supported the Chechen rebels that Russia has been fighting since 1994, but it has participated in negotiations to settle ethnic and civil conflicts in volatile former Soviet republics (Azerbaijan and Tajikistan) and played an important role in reaching a settlement for postwar Afghanistan.

Russia also has robust economic interests in Iran, for three main reasons. First, the two nations' annual trade turnover is approaching $1 billion[6]—mostly accounted for by Russian exports of machinery and advanced technology. It could add as much as $300 million to $500 million to the Russian federal budget. Second, Iran is one of the world's leaders in oil and gas production and an influential OPEC member. Both states border the energy-rich Caspian Sea and have cooperated in efforts to delimit the seabed among the littoral states. Third, Iran is the central link in the North-South Corridor, the transit route from India to southern Russia, which has been much touted by all three countries as a promising new trade route.

President Putin has clearly indicated the importance of these economic ties. While he has often discussed the increasing similarity of the Russian and U.S. positions on Iran, he has on several occasions added the caveat that Russia will not accept the nonproliferation issue as a lever for unfair competition that hurts the interests of Russian companies.

U.S. Policy. Finding a *modus vivendi* with Iran is critical to future U.S. Gulf policy. Some U.S. officials believe that Washington should talk to Iran, but that it must first identify a reliable partner—moderate and friendly forces within that country's government—with whom to begin to build a dialogue. This search for allies must not be oversimplified. Even a moderate like Khatami cannot be perceived in black-and-white terms as "our boy" in Tehran. As one Russian participant pointed out, no one knows, for example, how enthusiastic Khatami himself is about the prospect of acquiring nuclear capability and what uses he might envision for it.

In addition to apprehension about Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapon program, the United States has long had serious concerns about Iran's involvement with terrorism. These issues remain a source of tension, especially in the wake of September 11, 2001. The United States has been greatly troubled, for example, by the "surprises" coming from Iran. Chief among these are what U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has called "intercepts"

---

[6] According to figures cited at the workshop.

between senior al Qaeda representatives in Iran, linking al Qaeda to the Riyadh attack. Other disturbing intelligence concerned news of radical groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad training outside Teheran. Yet another example was the *Karine-A*, a ship Israeli officers detained in January 2002 on suspicion of transporting illicit Iranian-supplied weapons to the Palestinian Authority.

From the viewpoint of the Bush administration, such "surprises" have been real obstacles to any move toward normalizing relations with Teheran. The current administration came into office with relatively benign intentions toward Iran, hoping to nudge reconciliation along. But such intelligence reports have prompted a change in the direction of U.S. policy toward the country.

Indeed, U.S.-Iranian relations can easily become aggravated. The United States is currently entering the 2004 presidential election season, and, as one American participant noted, prominent members of the Bush administration have staked their roles in history on the idea of the "axis of evil." Neither Iraq nor North Korea has fit the concept very well, so the pressure to find something incriminating in Iran is on the rise. Moreover, the U.S. intelligence community did not know about Iran's nuclear tests at the Natanz facility, which has raised troubling questions about reported Pakistani-Iranian cooperation.

Paradoxically, U.S.-Iranian relations have seen some improvements recently. Iran provided a lot of cooperation during the military operation in Iraq, and has improved its relations with Saudi Arabia and Great Britain. U.S. officials have also acknowledged Iran's helpfulness on some issues, such as the Balkans. Moreover, the United States and Iran were able to cooperate effectively at the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan, demonstrating that they share some interests in the war on terror.

Participants debated, however, how far U.S.-Iranian cooperation can go. While some argued that overcoming the challenges is not impossible, others felt that there are insufficient grounds for real rapprochement. There are signs that U.S. leaders, especially neoconservatives, are not ready to improve ties with Iran. While such views are not dominant in Washington, they are nevertheless not trivial.

The United States has probably squandered some opportunities to cooperate with Iran—for example, by capturing and turning over Mujeheddin e-Khalq personnel who are crossing the Iraqi border into Iran.[7] Iran, in turn, could earn a lot of goodwill from Washington if it were to turn over some al Qaeda personnel. Genuine fence-mending between Washington and Teheran is unlikely because of the many disincentives on both sides.

Prospects for U.S.-Russian Cooperation in Iran. During the Cold War, Washington collected substantial evidence that Iran was on the way to nuclear capability. This evidence suggested that the Soviet Union was vigorously assisting this effort. Moscow denied the accusations then and continued to deny similar allegations in the early post-Soviet period, insisting that its nuclear cooperation with Iran was limited to harmless civilian energy projects. While U.S. officials acknowledged at the time that Moscow was unable to control every actor in Russia, they remained skeptical and expressed concern that Russian officials "were talking out of both sides of their mouths."

---

[7] Some hard-liners in the U.S. administration even hoped that Mujeheddin e-Khalq would play a divisive role in Iran similar to that of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan or the Kurds in Iraq.

Over the past two years, however, the U.S.-Russian conversation on Iran has become much less contentious. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Russia has come to embrace mutual objectives of international security, fighting terrorism and nonproliferation of WMD in a way it had not before. Several factors spurred the shift in Moscow's position: the changed atmosphere of U.S.-Russian dialogue since September 11, revelations about the potential dangers of Iran's nuclear program, and changing European attitudes toward Iran. Moscow may have first acknowledged the potential nuclear threat emanating from Iran after seeing some of the latest International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) findings. But the turning point may also have come earlier, at a 2002 meeting of nuclear security experts, at which former Atomic Energy Minister Yevgeny Adamov and former Security Council Secretary Andrei Kokoshin clashed, with the latter firmly—and, more important, publicly—insisting that Iran presented a potential threat to Russia.

Yet, for decades before that, the positions of Russia and the United States on Iran differed dramatically. Today, they are only just beginning to edge closer to one another. In fact, the two nations continue to hold significantly different public views of Iran. From the U.S. point of view, the primary source of tension with Iran is that country's nuclear program and the potential proliferation of WMD.

In contrast, Russian government policy has been to view Iran as a "normal" rather than a "rogue" state and to continue cooperating with the country's nuclear-power sector. Even alongside the announcements that the U.S. and Russian presidents made in summer 2003 that their countries' positions on Iran "are closer than it may seem" and that the Islamic state must be kept from posing a threat, Moscow has reiterated that it will not cease nuclear cooperation with Iran. But Russia has modified its approach to Iran of late, calling for greater transparency in the latter's nuclear program and for greater IAEA regulation.

Another sticking point on the subject of Iran between the United States and Russia has been the issue of links between Iran and terrorism. Such ties have long been a concern in the West. While they have the potential to be another source of tension between the United States and Russia, all Iran-related issues on the U.S.-Russian agenda have been eclipsed until recently by concerns about the Bushehr reactor and proliferation. So, whether this will develop into an additional area of disagreement remains to be seen.

Today, even as the gap between Moscow and Washington slowly shrinks, the question remains: How closely and fruitfully will Russia and the United States be able to cooperate on Iran? If the two countries could agree on policy, it would be grounds for real progress, in terms of both bilateral relations and global security. But it is unclear how likely agreement is to happen.

Some potential does exist for bringing Moscow's and Washington's positions closer. The nascent alliance has already borne some results. Most notably, dual U.S.-Russian pressure has been effective in nudging Iran closer to agreeing to a new IAEA protocol and greater transparency. In the words of one U.S. participant, Russia has forced Iran to take notice of the bad press it has been getting and to "sit up straighter in its chair." Likewise, participants from both Russia and the United States strongly opposed any future use of force in Iran, saying that the stakes are too high and that the U.S. administration has no viable military options in the country.

Specific suggestions for furthering cooperation included the following:

- Creating ways for the United States to use Russia's knowledge of Iran and ties to it as a tool for advancing shared goals vis-à-vis that country
- Addressing Iran-related issues in a broader context of shared U.S.-Russian goals in the greater Middle East
- Conducting high-level, pragmatic discussions among U.S. leaders that are geared toward improving U.S.-Iranian ties while taking into account the complexities of Iran's domestic situation.

Yet, most participants considered it unrealistic to expect U.S.-Russian cooperation to result in such closeness and solidarity that, for example, Russia would support any sort of U.S. military effort against Iran.

Central Asia

The likelihood of violent conflict in Central Asia has long been the subject of considerable debate, even though the region itself has remained far more peaceful (with some notable exceptions, such as the Tajik civil war) than many predicted. In some views, Islamic revolution in the area is highly unlikely because of the structures of religious development and belief there, as well as the more "moderate" nature of even the more popular extremist groups.[8] Those who see revolution as improbable contend that local elites exaggerate the Islamist threat to generate foreign and domestic support.

But others point out that both the revolution in Iran and the rise of fundamentalism in Afghanistan came as a surprise, and a general tendency toward moderation is not a decisive factor. Advocates of this view argue that Saudi educational assistance to the region increases the likelihood that Islamicism will spread.

Some participants believed that the key to understanding Central Asia lies in the relationships between local elites, who are taking advantage of both the United States and Russia. For example, U.S. presence helps legitimate illegitimate regimes, and nongovernmental organizations often seize eagerly on various local structures, such as the Mahallo system, as examples of civil society, even though they are also tools of regime control.

Russian Policy. Unlike in the more traditional Middle East, Central Asia and the South Caucasus are regions where ensuring security is a higher priority for Russia than pursuing economic interests. For many years, Russia's concerns in the region had focused on the threat that radical Islamists sheltered in Afghanistan posed. This threat, at least for now, has been removed. But the region remains uncertain, and Russia has a great many other reasons for anxiety—including the increasingly autocratic regimes that run the countries in this area; the large numbers of ethnic Russians living in Kazakhstan; and, more recently, the implications of the U.S. presence in the region. Russia's activities in Georgia may further contribute to instability, even if that is not the intent. At the same time, Russia's capacity for action is much smaller than the Soviet Union's was. In short, the region south of Russia provides it with the fewest opportunities and the greatest dangers.

Despite these many concerns, though, Russia has no contingency plan and no clear policy for Central Asia. Russians have two contrasting viewpoints on the region: (1) that

[8] Some consider the Hizb ut-Tahrir, for example, with its radical political agenda, but avowedly nonviolent practices, to be moderate, although others vehemently disagree and consider it a very dangerous phenomenon.

Russia has left Central Asia and has been replaced by the United States, and (2) that Russia is returning to Central Asia and will keep the region stable, filling the old Soviet role. However, both views may be inaccurate, because each assumes that Russia has an overall strategy the region and has prioritized its goals, when it is not clear that this is the case. Russia recently increased its activity in the region but has yet to put it into a broader strategic context. At the same time, Russia now has an opportunity to act from a position of some strength; failure to take advantage of this opportunity will weaken Russia's position.

In general—and not surprisingly—Russia is ambivalent about other actors in the region, whether the United States or China. Russia wants stability but does not like knowing that it cannot itself provide stability. Some of those who hold the view that Russia has left Central Asia and has been replaced by the United States are concerned that the United States will find itself facing civil wars and conflict as a result of regime succession and will withdraw its forces, leaving Russia to deal with the aftereffects. Some other crisis in one or more of the countries of Central Asia might result in the same outcome. It is far from clear whether the United States will be willing to have its personnel die to defend these regimes.

Likewise, experts who are concerned that Russia has turned away from the region (or might do so) also fear that this will lead to closed and isolated societies in the Central Asian countries. Russia has traditionally been the point of access to Western culture, from which citizens of the nations of Central Asia can gain experience of the West through work or study and then return home. In contrast, those who go directly to the West to work or study tend to stay there and are lost to their home societies. Without Russia to play that intermediary role, more people will follow the second path. Turkey, Russia's most likely replacement, cannot match Russia's historical, linguistic, and cultural connections to the West.

Those who take the second view, believing that Russia is returning to Central Asia, argue that Russia has once again become a player in the region because the United States, which currently needs to focus elsewhere, has permitted Russia to do so. In this view, Russia did not expect this turn of events, which helps explain its failure to formulate clear policy. Yet, despite this lack of clarity, Russia has managed to use its authority to influence local politics, helping, for instance, to bolster the Akayev regime in Kyrgyzstan against a burgeoning opposition in November 2002 by making a high-level visit. And while the variety of multilateral agreements that are in place and have been attempted are largely nonfunctional, bilateral relations between Russia and the Central Asian states are developing well.

Yet while Russia is concerned about the interrelated political, social, religious, and economic contexts in the countries of Central Asia, its "return" to the region is not an imperial one. Russia is too weak—both economically and militarily—to be a regional hegemon. While local elites may fear Moscow, the fear is a vestige of the Soviet mentality. Moreover, Russian involvement does not necessarily mean Russian success, particularly if local leaders refuse Moscow's overtures.

In contrast with the two main Russian views on the region, some observers also contend that Russia is not "returning" to Central Asia because it had never really left. From this standpoint, Russia is integral to the region and cannot leave it—even if Russia would like to. Moreover, the point of this involvement is not simply to maintain the goodwill of the United States but, rather, to attend to Russia's own strong interests in the region, which will

remain regardless of U.S. interests or actions. For instance, some 80 percent of the heroin sold in Russia comes through the region.

The drug trade and other transnational threats have altered Russian strategic thinking about security. Russians are beginning to understand that security is not just about defense but often about things that defense forces have little capacity to address. For Russia, Central Asia has become an example of new vulnerabilities, for which traditional mechanisms have little value.

Yet despite the importance the region holds on the Russian agenda, Russia is not doing many of the things it could do to advance its interests. For example, it has not taken action to maintain Russian language and culture in the area. Moscow has failed to cultivate a Russian-oriented political elite in Central Asia. And Moscow has also failed to advance the interest of Russian minorities, even though this is critical to its domestic audience.

If security is a priority for Russia in Central Asia, gas and other economic issues are also critical. In this context, although Russian business interests do not fully determine Russian policies, they have an undue influence. They may, for example, contribute to government decisions to support existing regimes in Central Asia rather than fostering friendly opposition movements, which could be a wiser long-term strategy. In Turkmenistan, for example, gas and other business interests seem to be behind the recent resurgence in Russian support for Niyazov, including Moscow's acceptance of Turkmenistan's renunciation of dual citizenship for ethnic Russians. In Kazakhstan, where Russia could have significant influence over the succession, Moscow has put its support behind Nazarbayev rather than into identifying possible forward-thinking future leaders and building ties with them.

U.S. Policy. The reasons for U.S. involvement in Central Asia are debatable. Some participants asserted that the United States lacks real interests in the region. Others argued that U.S. interests are related to its goals vis-à-vis China: The United States is involved in Central Asia to ensure that it can reach China. It will therefore remain a presence in the area as long as China is a concern. The counterargument to this is that the United States does not need a presence in Central Asia to access China should the need arise.

Energy is also not a primary factor motivating the U.S. presence in Central Asia. Within a global market for oil, the contribution of Caspian fields is unlikely to be sufficiently large or to lower the price of oil soon enough to be useful to the United States in the near term. Gas is difficult to transport, which ensures that its market will remain local, with little possible gain for the United States. In other economic areas as well, the United States has few interests in Central Asia. U.S. trade balances with countries in this region are low and are unlikely to grow significantly without some major reforms in the countries. In fact, the trend lines are going in the opposite direction, with the investment climate deteriorating rather than improving.

From a military perspective, Central Asian bases are necessary now because of ongoing operations in Afghanistan. Yet, while these operations are likely to continue, they may not require maintaining the current levels of presence. Indeed, the existing force posture is not sustainable and may, in fact, be squandering resources. Operation Enduring Freedom similarly demonstrated that the United States does not need a permanent presence in this region: U.S. forces were able to get access to bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan fairly

quickly. There is every reason to think this could be done again, if it were necessary and in everyone's interests.[9]

Likewise, U.S. military bases have little to contribute in fighting the transnational threats Central Asia faces. While there are military roles to be played in helping countries in this region learn to patrol their borders and maintain security, the real keys to success lie in economic, social, and political development—not military tasks. Moreover, from one perspective, U.S. bases provide a deterrent against extremists; from another, they provide fodder for extremists, who can use them as an example of an intrusive foreign presence in a country and potentially even single them out as targets.

Participants noted that the United States should be concerned about the relationships it is building with local regimes in Central Asia. Uzbekistan is a case in point. Uzbekistan's government has its own interests in cooperation and has long sought U.S. support to accomplish its goals, which include maintaining power domestically, increasing capacity to ensure its security without Russian cooperation, and, possibly, bullying neighboring states. Uzbekistan was reportedly disappointed with the levels of assistance it got from the United States, politically and economically. Bolstering Uzbekistan's authoritarian, brutal, and potentially regionally destabilizing regime creates many dilemmas for the United States, not least in the effects this can have on relations with other countries in the region and beyond. That said, some participants stated that the United States places "foolish" emphasis on human rights issues in the region, because making headway on them is unlikely. In fact, the more the region's states develop economically, the worse the human rights situation seems to get.

The United States will remain involved in Central Asia. One reason for this is inertia. While drawdown will be possible now that the United States has a presence, some level of involvement is almost guaranteed. But, in addition, the United States has real security interests in the region. September 11, 2001, taught Washington a number of lessons. One of them is that stability and countering transnational threats are vital to U.S. security. In Central Asia, there are significant grounds for concern. Political instability in Uzbekistan seems likely in the future. Central control of Tajikistan remains uncertain. All the states of the region are transit routes for drugs and other smuggled materials and people. Yet, because the same threats exist in a plethora of other places around the world, Central Asia will remain a low priority for the United States until and unless a threat emerges to make the region a higher priority.

Prospects for U.S.-Russian Cooperation in Central Asia. Central Asia holds some promise for cooperation between the United States and Russia. Here, cooperation could be more than symbolic and has already gotten off to an excellent start with Operation Enduring Freedom. Russia and the United States share many core interests in the area. Since neither country can attain them on its own, the two may need to work together. It is unclear, however, what form cooperation might take in the future. And even as some participants lauded the steps taken to date, others contended that slogans and ideologies have formed the majority of the "cooperation" so far—with very few real steps taken.

In an ideal situation, the United States would reduce its military presence, focus attention on borders and border controls in the region, and cooperate with Russia to increase

[9] If it were not in everyone's interests, local regimes would probably not permit a U.S. force to do anything from their countries or to use their airspace, even if the forces were based in Central Asia.

stability and economic and political development in the region. Russia and the United States would comanage security in Central Asia. However, this best-case scenario is unlikely to be realized for several reasons.

One problem is that some in Russia and the United States (as well as within the regional states) continue to perceive Central Asia to be a zero-sum game. For both nations, zero-sum attitudes are particularly dangerous. First, such concepts have the potential to be divisive, leading to such notions as the belief that the United States can be Uzbekistan's bulwark against Russia. Second, they reinforce zero-sum attitudes among local elites, potentially bolstering regimes that cause harm at home and abroad. Third, they damage the bilateral relationship between the United States and Russia, on which both countries depend to achieve a range of goals beyond Central Asia, such as arms control and nonproliferation.

A second obstacle to continued cooperation is the unwillingness of both countries to devote the necessary resources to it. In addition, the Russian public is unlikely to support a long-term U.S. presence.

Finally, because of a combination of pride, paranoia, and inertia, both countries have failed to recognize the great benefits to be had from cooperation in this region. In short, moving forward will be difficult.

Yet, progress is possible in some areas. Even cooperation on ideology and propaganda is cooperation and can build mutual understanding and lay the groundwork for more substantive future cooperation. Reciprocal visits to each country's facilities in the region, while accomplishing little in the immediate sense, also contribute to transparency and understanding and may help mitigate mistrust.

Then, some things will have to be done for logistical and practical reasons. Rapid movement on these will work to the advantage of both countries. One example is the coordination of airspace over Kyrgyzstan, which is necessary because both coalition and Russian aircraft will be flying from and into locations near Bishkek in the near future. Cooperation of this sort can form the basis for later work: For example, ensuring border security and operational coordination can lay the groundwork for broader counterterrorism cooperation at a later point.

Currently, such countries as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan support U.S.-Russian cooperation, in part because they want to form good relations with both countries to protect their own interests. Even Uzbekistan, which has long desired a good relationship with the United States, has recently shown signs of recognizing that Russia will be critical too, for gas-sector development if for nothing else.

Eventually, the United States will probably reduce its presence in Central Asia. But U.S. involvement will not go away altogether. The United States must manage both its reduced presence and continued involvement without leaving the region worse off. Good relations and cooperation with Russia in ways that are visible to the states in the region are critical to this goal.

Related Regional Issues

Israel and Palestine

The Bush administration's policy on Israel and Palestine mirrors past U.S. government policy almost entirely. The road map to peace is, in many ways, simply a statement of goals, and these goals—stability, security for Israel, and an independent Palestinian state—differ little from the Clinton administration's Middle East policies. Likewise, opposition to the proliferation of terrorism and political violence is a critical component of U.S. policy, now as in previous administrations. Although some issues, such as the quartet process with Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations, present stylistic differences, they do not constitute a real break with the past.

The consistency of U.S. policy in this area and the goals of guaranteeing Israeli security and enabling a Palestinian state (that is not led by Yassir Arafat) are critical from a strategic standpoint. Yet, the needs and interests of constituencies within the United States also affect the policy agenda on these issues. These constituencies are broader than just Jewish and Arab citizens. They also include right-wing Christians, who strongly support the state of Israel for their own reasons. Indeed, the last group has perhaps had the most notable influence over the current administration's policy in the region.

Russia inherited its cosponsorship of the Middle East peace process from the Soviet Union. Its involvement remains a way of demonstrating to both domestic and foreign audiences that it is still an active great power with a role to play on critical global issues. Yet, its policy can be inconsistent. For example, because Russia lacks resources, it cannot afford to do much that would involve actual spending. In addition, the uprising in Chechnya has shifted Russian attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: While the Soviet Union and early Russian independent governments were critical of Israel, high-ranking Israelis today say they find more sympathy in Moscow than they do in Washington. Because many Russians see numerous parallels between their situation with Chechnya and Israel's with the Palestinians, they are now more likely to side with Israel in the conflict. Changes in Israel's demographic makeup, with the influx of large numbers of immigrants from Russia, have further contributed to the shift in dynamics. Consequently, it is difficult for Russia to support the road map fully because it conflicts with Russia's own policies on Chechnya. For instance, the Russian government has publicly spoken out against the use of international peacekeepers to regulate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, contending, like the Israelis, that the problem is terrorism rather than military confrontation.

The road map to peace is simply a plan—no better or worse than many others but having greater importance because both sides have officially accepted it. Unfortunately, changes in both Israeli and Palestinian society as a result of years of conflict have radicalized the public on both sides. This makes the effort to secure peace far more difficult than ever before and creates an imperative for some sort of international effort, possibly including peacekeepers. There is significant concern among observers that current Israeli policies will not be effective and that multinational efforts should be far more serious than they have been to this point.

The Gulf States

Saudi Arabia is a critical concern for the United States and for U.S. policy in the Middle East. While some in the U.S. government are very critical of the Saudi regime, there is a real strategic need for good relations. The challenge now is to repair the currently damaged relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia—which will be difficult, given not only recent events but also the political and cultural differences between the two countries. Meeting this challenge is in both states' interests, creating the opportunity to redefine the relationship in a way that improves on past policy.

U.S. relations with Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait are currently good. There may be a new Gulf security system in the making, and the distribution of power in the region has shifted. The ideal situation for both the Gulf states and the United States is a minimal U.S. military presence in these countries. Historically, the United States has, at different times, partnered with each of three actors in the region: Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. It remains unclear what sorts of relationships will emerge in the next few years.

Pakistan and India

Pakistan and India will be critical to the future development of U.S. policy in the greater Middle East. In Pakistan, the Musharaff regime's helpfulness to the Bush administration in Operation Enduring Freedom and other aspects of the war on terrorism cannot be underestimated. For its part, India currently has very strong ties with Israel (which may be intended to counterbalance Pakistan's stance on that nation), which provides for a congruence of views. But India has also signed a strategic understanding with Iran that excludes nuclear involvement, establishing a potential mechanism of access to and dialogue with that country. As the United States develops relations with Pakistan and India, it will very likely be forced to become involved in the situation with Kashmir. U.S. actions and statements on that front will certainly affect its capacity for building relations with both India and Pakistan.

Afghanistan[10]

The United States has stated its ambitious commitment to create free democratic polities in Afghanistan, as well as in Iraq and Palestine, given the lack of such regimes in the greater Middle East. Accordingly, one participant argued, what the United States seeks in Afghanistan is national unity. Broadly speaking, the goal is to see the Loya Jirga process—bringing together varied interests to attain common goals—replicated to build and sustain Afghanistan into the future. U.S. policy has focused on promoting national identification with the political center represented by the Karzai government. At the same time, the United States aspires to promote the economic development essential to Afghanistan's sustainability.

Despite these stated goals, other participants felt that U.S. policy in Afghanistan remains unclear. Given the uncertainty of the U.S. commitment over the long term, stability in Afghanistan may be sporadic, and the sustainability of the Karzai regime is questionable.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization will likely expand its current operations in Afghanistan beyond Kabul. While Russia could provide troops for a broader peacekeeping

[10] Discussion of Afghanistan was limited during the workshop. Some participants argued that the country was being unfairly ignored, in the same way that it had fallen off the agenda of the international community as a whole.

effort, its historical relations with Afghanistan render that plan shaky. European states, such as Germany, are probably better peacekeepers because people on the ground in Afghanistan will more easily perceive such states as being neutral.

Participants acknowledged that the success of the military campaign in Afghanistan was not a question of the United States creating a coalition but, rather, of it joining the existing Russian-Uzbek-Indian-Iranian coalition, which had supported the Northern Alliance for many years prior to the war. U.S. airpower helped make that coalition victorious but did not create it.

Since the war ended, one area of critical cooperation between the United States and Russia has been successfully facilitating an agreement supporting the Karzai government among outside players with interests in Afghanistan. Another key collaborative effort has been negotiating access arrangements in Central Asia. In yet a further example of cooperation, Russia played a critical role in convincing the Northern Alliance to accept the Bonn Agreement.

But despite these considerable collaborative accomplishments, participants as a whole were skeptical about the likelihood of substantial future Russian-U.S. cooperation in Afghanistan, in part because so little has been done in recent months and because dialogue on the issue has diminished.

The Caucasus[11]

Itself a part of Caucasia, Russia is an active participant in the ongoing conflicts in the area. It cannot be a stabilizing force there, because it is already a destabilizing force. One participant argued that there are more terrorists in the Russian Federation than in Pankisi and that Russia is using the situation in Georgia as an excuse to pursue other goals.

The United States and Russia share goals in Central Asia, but not in the Caucasus. Because Georgia currently maintains an antagonistic relationship with Russia, U.S. support for Georgia increases tension between the two countries.[12]

Chechnya

People in the greater Middle East, to some extent, view Chechnya as a cause similar to that of Palestine. This perception affects Russian policy and influence in the region. Parallels are also made—more or less accurately—between the situation in Chechnya and those in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, while Chechnya, Iraq, and Afghanistan share the situation of being occupied, only Chechnya officially remains the territory of the "occupier."

Participants differed on whether Chechnya is Russia's responsibility. While some believed it is, others contended that Russia is not a civilizing force there but, rather a radicalizing one, laying the groundwork for local and global terrorism. Indeed, Russia's one attempt to withdraw from Chechnya failed because that country increasingly became a base for anti-Russian terrorist activity. Participants also debated whether a peace plan or "road map" for Chechnya might stand more of a chance for success than the one for Israel and

---

[11] Discussion of Caucasian issues was limited during the workshop, and the participants agreed that future meetings should focus more specifically on Caucasus issues.

[12] The discussion took place while President Shevardnadze was still in office.

Palestine. Skeptics contended that it would not, because neither the Russian public nor the government would accept international involvement in Russian affairs.

Transregional Security Issues

International Terrorism

International terrorism was, of course, a major subtext of much of the discussion. Participants expressed contrasting views about present-day global terrorism. Some contended that the war on terrorism presents a sort of mythology, which provides an umbrella of general beliefs that allow different states to agree in theory yet differ considerably in their actions. For example, under the counterterrorism umbrella, Russia can continue its war in Chechnya while the United States continues to hunt for al Qaeda, and both can claim to be cooperating, even as they act independently. This reduces tension in relations between the two countries and lets them continue to focus on their own disparate problems.

Other participants argued, however, that the campaign against terrorism is very real and that Russia and the United States share very real objectives. This is the outcome, in part, of the rapidly changing nature of terrorism. In the past, terrorists generally concentrated on transforming governments in individual states—whether communist, Islamic, or something else. However, al Qaeda and bin Laden are new phenomena, whose goal is to destroy European civilizations. Even in Moscow, Muslims view bin Laden as a true Muslim—and this is a very real threat. In addition, there is the question of the purpose for which terrorist groups, such as al Qaeda, seek WMD. Such weapons were once viewed as instruments of deterrence or coercion aimed at state actors. However, al Qaeda has a genuine apocalyptic vision and may use WMD as a means of attaining it. This is very frightening for the United States, Russia, and, indeed, all the countries of the world. In this context, there is an urgent need to identify new approaches to fighting terrorism. International cooperation is one such novel approach—and holds significant promise.

Despite these differences of opinion, though, all participants agreed that, however real or not the war on terrorism is, it is only one aspect of the foreign policies of the United States and will no doubt be used to justify a wide range of things with different relationships to its goals.

U.S. Policy. U.S. goals in the campaign against global terrorism have gained focus over time. Today, the centerpiece of the U.S. antiterror agenda is the elimination of al Qaeda, specifically, and terrorism in the style of al Qaeda, more broadly. A related goal is to restore the confidence of the American people, which was severely shaken by the attacks of September 11, 2001. Also on the agenda are preventing the proliferation of WMD—especially nuclear weapons—to terrorist groups and protecting the governments and regimes cooperating in the war on terrorism, such as Russia and Israel.[13]

With regard to the campaign against al Qaeda, two issues must be considered. One is the cadre question, because the movement's upper and midlevel "management," for the most part, remains at large. The other issue is more difficult, because it concerns the networks that

[13] In the grand scheme of things, the attacks in Riyadh in May 2003 may have helped the United States, by pushing the Saudi government off the fence, forcing that country to join decisively in the counterterror fight.

make up the global movement. This problem goes beyond terrorist attacks, involving, rather, sermons in mosques and discussions in person and online, which, although not terrorism explicitly, may be what makes it possible.

Experts refer to this as a dichotomy between "practical," or applied, terrorism and "theoretical" terrorism, which provides an ideological basis for acceptance of terrorist tactics. Some participants noted that theoretical terrorism is used to legitimate terrorist acts, which are most commonly conceptualized as being part of a struggle against injustice or concrete enemies. These struggles (e.g., Chechnya, Palestine) are then used to raise moral support and funds for groups that finance and enable terrorist acts. In this context, the main task in the fight against global terror is to solve the local problems that make terrorist action seem legitimate. When a problem is solved, it can no longer be used as a symbol of struggle. Accomplishing this goal also serves to separate local problems from the global terrorist network, depriving it of power and rallying cries.

The United States understands that preventing terrorism in the long term has is largely dependent on economic and political development. Economic and political crises and pathologies help create a foundation for extremism and terrorism. While the failure of such countries as Pakistan to "modernize" may be viewed as the result of a purposeful decision on the part of the people of that country, it must be recognized that this is a potentially dangerous choice, which may cut off prospects for a brighter future in both the long and short terms. In this regard, the United States recognizes a need to reward countries that choose political and economic development—for instance, by establishing initiatives such as the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account.

Yet other participants argued that terrorism is a problem in and of itself, without regard to justifications for terror at the local level. From this vantage point, seeking to solve problems that have existed for decades, while certainly important, will not make terrorism go away. Such efforts will fall short because those who hate the United States (or Russia, for that matter) hate it for what it is, not for what it does.

Prospects for U.S.-Russian Cooperation on International Terrorism. Whether the campaign against terrorism is a useful myth or a real phenomenon, Russia and the United States have the potential to help each other significantly. To this point, however, the two countries are far from fully realizing this potential. Cooperation on Afghanistan provided a good starting point, but its promise has, to a large extent, not been attained—either in Afghanistan or elsewhere. While the United States and Russia maintain a very-high-level working group on counterterrorism, this group's statements have much more to say about intentions than real activities, even after two years of ostensible cooperation.

What are the reasons for the limited progress? While both sides may want to cooperate, some of the areas in which they need to do so—for example, intelligence exchange—make it particularly difficult. The bureaucratic imperatives of intelligence agencies present a major obstacle to information-sharing, not only between the United States and Russia but also with other partners. Differences in investigatory techniques between the two countries also pose difficulties. If the United States, for instance, receives a request from Russia or any other country to investigate a person or group, but with no qualifying information about the subject of the investigation, it can seek its own qualifying information. But U.S. rules and standards will make it difficult to launch an investigation on this basis.

Political commitment may be another reason that cooperation efforts have been limited thus far. While some believe that anti-Americanism in Russia is overstated and that other issues are far more critical, others recognize a strong current of anti-Americanism in the country. Initially, many Russians with this bias believed that the attacks of September 11, 2001, were a fraud. As more proof emerged, they gradually changed their minds—a shift whose significance should not be underestimated, as these are establishment people whose worldview depends on hatred of the United States. Yet today, even those who abhor the United States can recognize that countering terror is a common goal. While they may hate the United States (and Jews), their very racism drives them to want Russia to cooperate in the war on terrorism—because they hate the Chechens more.

The danger, however, is that, while those among this contingent may agree with the goals of cooperation, their underlying animosity toward the United States remains, and they could very possibly try to undermine U.S. efforts from within—through that very cooperation. This could be a dangerous development.

In sum, the scope of U.S.-Russian cooperation needs to be broadened, and initiatives need to be more effective. From the standpoint of shared goals and existing problems, the priorities of cooperation should be

- mutual efforts to keep WMD away from terrorists
- an effort to overcome the barrier to information-sharing
- support for each other's objectives in multilateral forums.

The Future of Cooperation—Prospects and Challenges

Participants in the Carnegie-RAND workshop had an easier time identifying goals, interests, and viewpoints that the United States and Russia share than identifying concrete areas in which the two nations can cooperate. Despite the countries' common interests and common need for cooperation, the difficulties of working together after many years of distrust remain tremendously challenging across the spectrum of issues in the greater Middle East.

That said, both past and ongoing cooperation, whether large or small, demonstrates that these problems can be overcome. In addition, common goals and needs create an imperative to overcome the problems. Even if each individual cooperative activity is modest, as long as cooperation is built across the wide span of the region, Russia and the United States may be able to advance their own goals while building a better mutual relationship.

Agenda

Monday, September 8

1000–1030 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Co-Chairs: Andrew Kuchins, Director, Carnegie Moscow Center
Jeremy Azrael, Director and Corporate Chair, RAND Center for Russia and Eurasia

1030–1230 **Session I: U.S. Policy Goals in the Greater Middle East**

Presenter: Jerrold Green, RAND Corporation
Commentator: Dmitri Trenin, Carnegie Moscow Center

1230–1400 ***Buffet Lunch***

1400–1600 **Session II: Russian Interests in the Greater Middle East**

Presenter: Vitaly Naumkin, Russian Academy of Science
Commentator: Jeremy Azrael, RAND Corporation

1600–1615 ***Coffee Break***

1615–1815 **Session III: U.S. Nation-Building Strategies and Potential for Russian Collaboration**

Presenter: Ambassador James Dobbins, RAND Corporation
Commentator: Alexandr Umnov, Institute of World Economy and International Relations

1830–2100 ***Cocktails***

Tuesday, September 9

1000–1200 **Session IV: The U.S. and Russia in Central Asia and the Caucasus**
Presenter: Alexey Malashenko, Carnegie Moscow Center
Commentator: Olga Oliker, RAND Corporation

1200–1400 **Session V: U.S.—Russian Cooperation in the War on Terrorism**
Presenter: Steve Simon, RAND Corporation
Commentator: Georgy Mirsky, Institute for World Economy and International Relations

1400–1500 ***Buffet Lunch***

1500–1700 **Session VI: U.S. and Russian Interests in Iran**
Presenter: Semyon Grigoryev, **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
Commentator: Jerrold Green, RAND Corporation

1700 ***Adjournment***

PARTICIPANTS*

Jeremy R. Azrael
Director and Corporate Chair
Center for Russia and Eurasia
RAND Corporation

Vyacheslav Belokrenitsky
Head
Near and Middle East Department
Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

James P. Dobbins
Director
International Security and Defense Policy Center
RAND Corporation

Vladimir Frolov
Head of the Foreign Policy Department
Foundation for Effective Policy

Jerrold R. Green
Director
International Programs and Development
Director
Center for Middle East Policy
RAND Corporation

Semyon Grigoryev
Deputy Director
4th Department for CIS Countries
Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Oleg Khodyrev
Advisor
Chief of Staff's Office
Russian Security Council

*All government officials who spoke at and otherwise participated in this meeting expressed their personal views as country/regional experts.

Andrew C. Kuchins
Director
Carnegie Moscow Center

Alexey Malashenko
Scholar-in-Residence
Carnegie Moscow Center

Georgy I. Mirsky
Senior Research Fellow
Institute for World Economy and International Relations

Vitaly V. Naumkin
Head
Arab Research Centre
Russian Academy of Science

Olga Oliker
International Policy Analyst
RAND Corporation

Emil Payin
Director
Center for Study of Regional and Ethno-Political Relations

Veniamin Popov
Ambassador at Large,
Ambassador to the Organization of the Islamic Conference
Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Steven N. Simon
Senior Research Analyst
RAND Corporation

Alexander Shumilin
Director
Center for the Analysis of Middle East Conflicts
Institute of U.S.A. and Canada Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

Dmitri Trenin
Deputy Director
Carnegie Moscow Center

Alexandr Y. Umnov
Senior Research Fellow
Institute for World Economy and International Relations

Alexander Yakovlev
Senior Fellow
Institute of Oriental Studies

Natalia Yefimova
Deputy Director for Communications
Carnegie Moscow Center

Irina Vyagelskaya
Department Head
Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences