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Power and Purpose

For four decades after World War II, two superpowers leading antagonistic political and socioeconomic blocs dominated global affairs. Conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, capitalism and communism, defined the central drama within the international system. During this period, each superpower possessed armies and arsenals unmatched by others. The two superpowers were organized internally in radically different ways. The United States had a democratic polity and a market economy, while the Soviet Union had a totalitarian polity and a command economy. Because each country believed its system was superior, it actively promoted the replication of these political and socioeconomic systems in other countries while also resisting the expansion of the other's system. This ideological divide drove the competition between them. In other words, the Soviet Union and the United States were rivals not only because they were the two greatest powers in the international system, but because they were two powers with antithetical visions about how political, social, and economic life should be organized.

At the end of 1991, one pole in this bipolar, ideologically divided system collapsed. For the first time in the history of the modern world, the international balance of power changed without a major war. For leaders in Russia and the United States, these were heady times. Giddy talk abounded on both sides about the new task of transforming Russia into a market economy, a democratic polity, and a new partner with the West, erasing the cold war in an instant.

By the end of the 1990s, however, the mood in U.S.-Russian relations had more affinity with the old cold war era than with the more optimistic times in 1991. Journalists, academics, members of Congress, and the emerging George

W. Bush campaign for president derided the policies that President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore had pursued toward Boris Yeltsin's Russia. "Who lost Russia?" they asked. They charged the Clinton administration with failure on every conceivable issue: too much meddling into Russia's internal affairs, overpersonalizing the relationship with President Yeltsin, ignoring or even aiding corruption of leading Russian officials, turning a blind eye toward Russian atrocities in the breakaway Republic of Chechnya, and not stopping Russian assistance to the Iranian nuclear weapons program. To listen to the experts and to the Republicans, it would seem that everything that could go wrong did go wrong inside Russia and in U.S.-Russian relations.

What happened in the intervening years between the euphoria of Soviet collapse and the Who Lost Russia witch-hunt less than a decade later? Some argued that it was the first Bush administration's fault for not providing enough assistance to Yeltsin's fledgling regime in 1992, others that the Clinton administration after 1993 had provided all the wrong kinds of assistance or had pursued "anti-Russian" policies such as the enlargement of NATO or the war on Kosovo that increased Russian resentment of the West.

Less than a year after George W. Bush became president, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the United States, U.S.-Russian relations seemed to take a decisive turn for the better again. Russian president Putin moved quickly to show sympathy for the United States and pledged his support for a united front against worldwide terrorism. Optimism emerged that Russia had decided that it truly belonged in the West. On the domestic front, Russia's economy was no longer the object of pity, the state seemed to be consolidating after a decade of decline, and a majority of Russians gave positive job approval marks for President Putin. U.S.-Russian relations appeared better than they had in years, at least until the American-led war with Iraq.

In explaining the course of these events, we are primarily interested in what U.S. policymakers believed they were trying to accomplish and how they understood what was occurring and what was at stake. In 1991, did they recognize that a transition was occurring in the Soviet Union, and what did they believe they could do about it? Once the USSR had broken up, did they believe the old enemy was really gone and that the United States should provide massive assistance, or did they largely cheer on the revolution from the sidelines? Throughout, how did American decisionmakers calculate U.S. interests, in relation to Russia, in a post-cold war world?

A New World Order

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 were the most transformative events in world affairs since the period

immediately following World War II. Before 1989–91, containing the threat posed by the USSR had been the overarching purpose of U.S. foreign policy since the late 1940s. For American officials from the late 1940s to the late 1980s, every issue in the world—the defense of Europe, peace in the Middle East, civil war in Africa, or even the development of resources on the ocean floor—was seen through the prism of the cold war struggle with the Soviet Union.¹ Thus the collapse of the USSR was both exhilarating and disorienting for U.S. foreign policymakers. Now that the main American enemy had been defeated, what would replace containment as the new defining tenet of American foreign policy?² Henry Kissinger, America’s most famous diplomat, even felt compelled to write a book answering those who questioned whether the United States needed a foreign policy.³

The intellectual and organizational challenge of reorienting foreign policy away from forty years of cold war and toward a new relationship between the United States and Russia was enormous. As American leaders pieced together a new foreign policy, they confronted an age-old question: to what extent was the United States a traditional great power playing the global game of balance of power politics, and to what extent was the United States a special “city on the hill” pursuing a mission of helping others develop market and democratic institutions? As American foreign policymakers sought to balance power and purpose in the 1990s, they did so in a world in which American supremacy in global affairs only grew larger and Russia’s status as a major power dropped precipitously as the decade wore on. American leaders also had to define U.S. interests within Russia, where officials and the public were in the midst of one of the most profound revolutions in the modern era.

American leaders had not faced such challenges in conceptualizing foreign policy since 1945. That new world order had been full of uncertainties. Soviet intentions were unclear to many in 1945, and a Europe of two blocs only emerged after the communist coup in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade in 1948. Many of the institutional innovations proposed immediately after World War II—including Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Four Policemen” and even the U.N. Security Council—looked in retrospect naively inappropriate for addressing the real fundamental issues of the international system that only became clear with time.⁴ The transformation of the U.S.-Soviet standoff in Europe into a global struggle of titanic proportions only really began five years after World War II with the onset of the Korean War.

In important ways, however, the global environment of 1945 was less uncertain than that of 1991. Although it would take time for Americans to embrace Germans and Japanese as partners and integrate those two former adversaries into Western security structures, what was certain in 1945 was the total defeat of these authoritarian regimes. Not only had the United States and its allies defeated those two nations militarily, but Germany and Japan had

been occupied and their leaders put on trial. An American general, Douglas MacArthur, and his staff wrote the postwar Japanese constitution. Furthermore, the rise of the new threat from Moscow had helped to clarify the importance of a close relationship between the United States and its former enemies. By the early 1950s, the communist threat made it imperative that Japan and West Germany be transformed into democracies integrated into Western security and economic structures.

The world of 1991 and after was more ambiguous about America's former enemy. The USSR had lost the cold war since communist ideology as a force in the world had withered away, and the Soviet Union no longer existed as a country. Yet the defeat of the enemy was not as complete in 1991 as in 1945. Although the Soviet Union ceased to exist, post-Soviet Russia did not suffer defeat in war and still had tens of thousands of nuclear weapons that could destroy the United States. The United States did not occupy post-Soviet Russia, making the trajectory of political and economic change more of a Russian affair than it had been in Germany and Japan after World War II. The president of the newly independent Russia, Boris Yeltsin, seemed prodemocracy, promarket, and pro-Western, but others in his entourage seemed less inclined to transform Russia internally and integrate with the West. His enemies, some of whom seemed to have real popular support in the country, were categorically against these changes. In 1945, U.S. occupying forces suppressed anti-Western forces in Germany and Japan. In 1991, by contrast, Yeltsin could not call on his allies in the West to suppress his foes. Nor did he have the power to do so alone. In the first years of independence, Yeltsin's hold on power remained extremely tenuous, as communist and nationalist forces within and outside government structures challenged the Russian president and his policies. If Russia's ability to integrate seemed more tenuous after the cold war than the probability for effective integration of occupied West Germany, the imperative of integration in 1991 was diminished compared with the 1940s. Above all else, there was no threat to American security interests to the east of Russia. And consequently, there was also little domestic support in the United States for a large-scale transformation agenda at the end of the cold war.⁵

In searching for a new grand strategy for American foreign policy after the cold war, everyone seemed to agree on two propositions: the United States was now the dominant global military power, and a democratic and market-oriented Russia firmly ensconced in the Western camp would serve American national interests. But could U.S. power be channeled to foster the latter? Could or should the all-powerful United States become engaged in promoting regime change and market transformation inside Russia? If so, how proactive should the United States be, how much money should be spent on this endeavor, and who should spend it, and how? Should American foreign poli-

cymakers simply state their desire for Russia to join the community of Western democracies while focusing primarily on the reduction of the nuclear threat and the permanence of Russia's new borders? Or should the United States be more ambitious and create something akin to the Marshall Plan that had helped rebuild western Europe after World War II? In other words, what priority should be given to the promotion of Russian transformation and integration versus the preservation of the balance of power in the world that favored the United States?

“Regime Transformers” and “Power Balancers”

Policymakers and those seeking to influence them responded to the post-cold war era by advocating two different (and sometimes opposing) strategies for American foreign policy. In one camp were the *regime transformers*. These people believed that American leaders had to use the full arsenal of American nonmilitary power to help bring about the internal transformation of Russia. They believed that a democratic Russia would no longer threaten the United States, because history has shown that democracies do not go to war with one another. They argued that a market-oriented Russia would seek foreign investment, trade, and eventually membership in multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). If Russia could consolidate democratic and market institutions at home, then it would not matter how many nuclear weapons Russia still possessed.

A second school warned against missionary zeal. Instead, these *power balancers* argued that the nature of the regime inside Russia did not dictate Russian international behavior. And besides, even if regime type did matter, the United States did not have the capacity to influence Russia's internal affairs anyway. Instead, what mattered most was the balance of power between the United States and Russia. These power balancers argued that American leaders had to take advantage of Russian weakness to lock into place a balance of power in favor of the United States. This meant moving aggressively to help destroy Russia's nuclear arsenal as well as ensuring the independence of the new states on Russia's borders. These power balancers recognized that a Russia too weak to defend its borders or control its nuclear stockpile might eventually create new threats to the United States. However, most power balancers believed that the weaker this former foe, the better. Some even hoped for the breakup of Russia itself.

These two strategic responses to the end of the cold war were not novel ideas. Rather, they reflected two deep traditions in the making of American foreign policy. Regime transformers echoed a tradition as old as the United States itself. Since the creation of the United States, some American leaders have believed that the American democratic system of government made the

United States unique. Many American leaders championed the democratic United States, in contrast to the power-hungry European nations, as a new moral force in international politics. The more countries that embraced freedom and the democratic way of life domestically, the more peaceful relations among states would be internationally. In the nineteenth century, American foreign policymakers who embraced this tradition had limited means and limited horizons. The American missionary impulse rarely extended outside of the American hemisphere. Only after the United States entered World War I did President Woodrow Wilson attempt to introduce American moralism onto the global stage. As he explained to a joint session of Congress in January 1918 when he was outlining his fourteen points for a new world order, “What we demand in this war . . . is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation.”⁶ In Wilson’s view, the best way to achieve American security was not to defend the United States against the outside world but to change fundamentally the outside world. In policy circles, this tradition became known as Wilsonianism.⁷ Although Wilson was a Democrat, this philosophy about international affairs crossed partisan lines. During the cold war, one of the staunchest Wilsonians in foreign policy was Republican president Ronald Reagan, who also believed in regime change as a means of enhancing American national security. In academic circles, this approach to foreign policy and theory about international politics has been labeled “liberalism” (somewhat misleadingly given how the term is used in U.S. domestic politics).⁸

Wilson’s attempt to make the world safe for democracy failed. The Republican-controlled Senate blocked American membership in his League of Nations. The rise of Nazi Germany and communist Russia in Europe and the onset of World War II stimulated the emergence of yet another group in American foreign policy thinking—the power balancers or the realists.⁹ In response to Wilson’s “naive idealism,” realists countered that the United States had to pay greater attention to the power capabilities of states and the balance of power between them. How states were organized internally—that is, whether they were democratic or autocratic—mattered much less. This school rose to prominence during the cold war, when the chief imperative for American foreign policymakers became the containment of Soviet power.

During the cold war, the impulse to promote regime change abroad did not disappear. On the contrary, American politicians invented all sorts of new tools of foreign policy—including the Agency for International Development (AID), the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress, Radio Free Europe, and the National Endowment for Democracy—to facilitate regime change in other countries. Moreover, realist and liberal impulses (or regime transformers and power balancers) have been present in every American administration’s foreign policy since 1945; different administrations simply accentuated one

approach over the other.¹⁰ Swings between liberal and realist tendencies in American foreign policy did not follow neatly with changes in presidential party affiliations. For instance, Republican President Richard Nixon and his chief foreign policy adviser, Henry Kissinger, were classic realists or power balancers. They focused on the balance of power as the crucial ingredient of the international system and pursued policies that sought to preserve America's position in the world, for example, by reaching out to China to balance against a rising Soviet power.¹¹ While in office, Nixon and Kissinger cared little about the internal politics of the USSR or China. They were ready to reach out to dictatorships such as China if it helped to balance the power of the Soviet Union. As Nixon once told Chinese leader Mao Zedong, "What is important is not a nation's internal political philosophy. What is important is its policy toward the rest of the world and toward us."¹²

In contrast, fellow Republican Ronald Reagan devoted more attention to domestic regimes and crafted policies to undermine autocratic regimes, including most prominently (but not only) communist systems.¹³ Reagan was selective about where he promoted regime change, concerned more about communist dictatorships in eastern Europe than capitalist dictatorships in Africa or Latin America. Nonetheless, Reagan's approach to international politics had more in common with Democrats Wilson and Harry Truman than Republican Nixon.

The Centrality of Individuals and Ideas in America's Russia Policy

Few administrations promoted regime change with the vigor of Wilson or Reagan or championed power balancing with the energy of Nixon and Kissinger. Most presidents have pursued some combination of both. As Bill Clinton's national security adviser Anthony Lake wrote nearly a decade before assuming his high-level position, "In foreign policy, [Americans] have constantly been torn between a heritage of hardheaded realism and an idealistic belief in America's mission to promote democracy and individual freedoms. . . . The latter pushes Americans toward an expansive belief in their power; the former toward a recognition of the limits of that power."¹⁴ No matter what their stripe, presidents prone to power balancing will always be pressured by America's identity as the leader of the community of democracies to infuse power politics with a liberal purpose, and regime transformers will find that when America needs allies, a blind eye is easily turned to violations of liberal values. Throughout the first decade of the post-cold war era, both of these frameworks influenced American foreign policy toward Russia.

Yet at different periods in the post-cold war era, these two philosophical approaches influenced American policy in distinct, identifiable ways.¹⁵ It is a central claim of this book that ideas do matter in the making of foreign pol-

icy. Individual actors—not states, structures, or bureaucracies—make choices about what foreign policy to pursue. People with names and faces, not “the United States” or “Russia” or “globalization” or “the international balance of power,” make foreign policy. When making foreign policy, ideas about the nature of international politics shape the choices of these actors in profound, observable ways.¹⁶ Policy entrepreneurs armed with and passionate about a particular set of ideas can push the policy of the entire government in a particular direction. In our story, James Baker and his ideas about denuclearization, Anthony Lake and his ideas about NATO enlargement, William Perry and his ideas about Cooperative Threat Reduction, or Lawrence Summers and David Lipton and their ideas about macroeconomic stabilization are a few of the most salient examples in which the fusion of effective policy entrepreneurs and novel ideas had a major impact on the formation of U.S. policy toward Russia in the 1990s. The potential causal weight of ideas grows especially during times of rapid change like the end of the cold war, when old institutions, norms, and practices have been challenged or broken down but new rules of the game (domestically and internationally) shaping foreign policy have not consolidated.¹⁷

To be sure, the balance of power in the international system defined the parameters of the possible for American foreign policymakers. U.S. foreign policymakers were confronted with decisions about the promotion of regime change in Russia or the destruction of nuclear weapons inside Russia because the United States had the power to consider such policies.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the balance of power in the international system does not by itself *determine* the foreign policy of states.¹⁹ Structural or systemic factors—be they the balance of power or international institutions—are least constraining for the most powerful state in the system, the United States.²⁰ Nor in this case did a particular geostrategic concern such as oil or the security of a vital ally trump all other foreign policy concerns. Worries over nuclear proliferation came closest, but even this concern did not determine what American policy toward Russia would be. In the crafting of post-Soviet Russia policy, U.S. policymakers had choices to make, and these choices were influenced to a great extent by their ideas about international politics.

Nor, looking inside the United States, did domestic forces play a major constraining role on the executive branch in the making of American policy toward Russia after 1991. In other foreign policy areas, corporate lobbies, congressional actors, and ethnic interest groups played an important part in shaping American policy during this period (and others).²¹ But on Russia policy after 1991, these other kinds of actors were less consequential.²² Rather, it was the philosophical approach embraced by the president and his key advisers that had the greatest impact on defining American policy toward Russia after the cold war. Ideas about the nature of the international system, the nature of

Russia, and definition of the American national security interests changed across administrations in ways that had consequences for the formulation of American foreign policy toward post-Soviet Russia.

George H.W. Bush and Prudent Realism

President George H. W. Bush was a power balancer. He leaned toward Nixonian realism (not surprising given that he and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, served in high-level positions in the Nixon administration). As the Soviet Union waned, Bush was most concerned with maintaining global stability and less concerned with promoting freedom within the Soviet Union or Russia. Given Republican support for free markets and democracy, the first Bush administration also spoke about the importance of the Western zone of peace and prosperity and the possibility of a new Russia finding its place in that order. The last cold war president just was not prepared to spend significant resources on such an endeavor.

For George H.W. Bush, the fundamental challenge was how to manage a peaceful transition from the world we knew to the new world order. As the world transformed, the Bush administration's primary goal was to ensure that the transition was peaceful, and a fundamental security goal was to ensure that in a post-Soviet world, no rival power to American hegemony emerged. As articulated in a Pentagon paper overseen by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, "Simply put, it is the intent of the new Regional Defense Strategy to enable the U.S. to lead in shaping an uncertain future so as to preserve and enhance this strategic depth won at such great pains."²³

It was not just with respect to the Soviet Union and then Russia where realism rather than Wilsonianism generally prevailed in the first Bush administration. The Bush team might have spoken about a commitment to a Europe whole and free (thus evoking Wilsonian ideals), but in the Balkans, the administration made clear it would not get involved in preventing ethnic cleansing because the United States—in Secretary of State James A. Baker III's words—had "no dog in that fight."²⁴ Yugoslavia would be a problem only if the conflict spread and involved other major powers, and so the Bush administration put a small U.S. force in Macedonia to deter the conflict from spreading but not to put the fire out. Similarly, the United States led a coalition to expel Iraq from Kuwait but did not seek to overthrow Saddam Hussein or dismember Iraq because the primary concern was to preserve the balance of power in the region.²⁵

Bush did little to *promote* regime change in the Soviet Union. Although Bush and his foreign policy team welcomed the internal changes initiated by President Mikhail Gorbachev within the Soviet Union, they never pursued activist policies that might accelerate the process of internal change or push it in a particular direction. Reform, in Bush's view, was an internal matter for the

Soviet leadership to which the United States should only react and not try to shape or stimulate. Bush and his team were fundamentally nervous about radical regime change. Yugoslavia's breakup in 1991 became a stark reminder of how badly things could go in multiethnic countries when different constituent elements started to seek independence. In foreign policy, George H. W. Bush sought to obtain Soviet support for American foreign policy initiatives such as ensuring that a unified Germany remained in NATO and conducting the Persian Gulf War. For Soviet domestic policy, Bush wanted above all else to help avoid creating a Yugoslav scenario of civil war in a country that stretched eleven time zones and possessed thousands of nuclear weapons, and thus freedom of the constituent republics was not high on the list of foreign policy priorities for most of the team.²⁶

For most of their time in office, Bush and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft hoped that Gorbachev could stay in power. After all, Gorbachev had offered concession after concession to the United States, and Bush and Scowcroft feared what might follow. But the events of the fall of 1991 were not subject to outside influence, and a team trained to fight the cold war now had to retool to respond to the drama of fifteen new post-Soviet and postcommunist states as they began the new year of 1992.

After the Soviet breakup, the Bush team did seek to foster Russia's integration into the West, but the emphasis remained on Russia's foreign policy and not its internal transformation. In the nuclear realm, this meant working with Russia and the other newly independent republics to consolidate the Soviet nuclear arsenal and ensure singular command and control. In economics, the focus was on ensuring that Russia avoid defaulting on its debt rather than on generating massive assistance for building a market economy.

In the aftermath of Soviet dissolution, four countries had strategic nuclear weapons stationed on their territory (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan). Secretary of State James A. Baker III spent the winter and spring of 1992 cajoling the new countries of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine to commit to the withdrawal of the vast nuclear arsenals on their soil to Russia. The ultimate transfer of the warheads, which was completed at the end of the Clinton administration's first term, was one of the most important and least noticed successes of American policy toward the region in the 1990s.

But in 1991–92, the Bush administration's efforts to reduce this clear and present danger were pursued without active involvement in the internal transformation of Russia. Thus, on the economic side, the policy was far less ambitious. Candidate Bill Clinton and former president Richard Nixon (in a dramatic turnaround from his days in office when he ignored other countries' internal philosophies) exhorted the Bush team in the spring of 1992 to provide massive financial assistance to the new Russian reform team. But that assistance was not forthcoming. Instead, the Bush Treasury Department

under Secretary Nicholas Brady focused primarily on ensuring that Russia would assume the debt incurred by the previous regime.

The overarching message of the Bush team to Russia and the other republics emerging from the ashes of the Soviet Union was, “If you want acceptance into the West, you have to do X, Y, and Z.” Get the nuclear situation under control. Commit to paying your debt. Although many in the West called for the Bush administration to give more aid, devote more attention, and generally engage more comprehensively in helping to guide Russia’s transformation, Bush and his team put the onus of action on Russia. If Russia successfully transformed, then it would be welcomed into the Western club.

Bill Clinton and Democratic Enlargement

Bush’s successor, Bill Clinton, was a regime transformer—a Wilsonian liberal. In the aftermath of the cold war, he believed that active promotion of the enlargement of the community of market democracies was a fundamental national security objective of the United States. Clinton’s 1994 national security strategy stated, “Our national security strategy is based on enlarging the community of market democracies while deterring and containing a range of threats to our nation, our allies and our interests. The more that democracy and political and economic liberalization take hold in the world, particularly in countries of geo-strategic importance to us, the safer our nation is likely to be and the more our people are likely to prosper.”²⁷ Clinton believed that democratic regime change in Russia would lead to a new security relationship, thereby allowing for lower U.S. defense budgets, which would in turn free resources for Clinton’s cherished domestic programs. Only with Russia’s transformation would a true peace dividend be possible. Unlike the Bush administration, Clinton and his team were determined to pursue policies designed to assist democratic and market reform in Russia as the key means of integrating Russia into the Western community of democratic states.

But promoting economic assistance and championing democracy were not so straightforward. As one of its first foreign policy initiatives, the Clinton team did put together an enormous aid package for Russia, but this turned out to be a one-shot deal. American statesmen emphasized the importance of the democratic process, but in practice, Clinton made the decision to stand by Yeltsin no matter what his friend in Moscow did, most dramatically during the Russian president’s assault on his own parliament in October 1993 and Yeltsin’s military intervention into Chechnya a year later. For the Clinton team, Yeltsin the man *was* reform, while his enemies represented regression and the possible return of communism.

Clinton did not abandon power-balancing policies initiated by his predecessor. Clinton’s administration brought to successful conclusions the removal of strategic nuclear weapons from the non-Russian republics (which

required that Russia be a good neighbor) and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Even these policies of power balancing, however, had a new Wilsonian tinge in the Clinton era. Achieving these security goals was critical for Clinton's pursuit of Russia's acceptance into the Western club of democracies and market economies. To speed the process and encourage Russia to join, Clinton offered financial assistance, diplomatic support, and sometimes even a bending of the rules for admission. It was not the Bush message of "transform yourself and then you can join the club." Clinton offered assistance toward membership because he believed that if Russia were welcomed into the club, it would help promote internal transformation, which would foster even better relations with the West. The Clinton message emphasized the causal connection between transformation and integration and the U.S. role in promoting both objectives.

Clinton's team even deployed the language of engagement and integration to frame issues such as the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords that brought peace to Bosnia and the enlargement of NATO that appeared to the Russian elite to threaten its country's interests. In each case, the United States set the agenda, in the first by forcing an end to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina on U.S. terms and in the second by paving the way for the former Warsaw Pact nations of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join NATO. But these were not pure power plays for a Wilsonian administration; the United States actively sought to offer Russian counterparts something in return for their acceptance of the U.S. agenda. In the case of Bosnia, the Clinton administration helped Russia find a place in the Implementation Force sent to keep the peace so that it would not look as if Russian forces were directly under NATO command. In the case of NATO enlargement, Clinton offered a big ceremony in Paris in May 1997 so that Yeltsin could sign a new accord on NATO-Russian relations with all of the alliance's leaders. Not coincidentally, Clinton that summer granted Russia an equal place in what had been the G-7 (Group of Seven advanced industrialized democracies) and was now "the Eight." (The following summer at their annual meeting in Birmingham, the G-7 formally became the G-8.)

Despite this commitment to foster Russia's internal transformation, Clinton felt free to act in defense of U.S. national interests even when Russia objected strenuously. He and his administration enlarged NATO and led that organization's military campaign against Serbia because the new balance of power within the international system allowed them to do so. But he did come into office emphasizing the need actively to use American money and expertise to help Russia build capitalism and democracy, and it was that emphasis on traditional Wilsonianism that came under such fire as Russia's political and economic evolution seemed to sputter and fail by the late 1990s.

In Clinton and Yeltsin's second term, shocks in three major policy areas—democracy promotion, economic assistance, and security integration—led to

the collapse of the ambitious American agenda and the low point of post-cold war U.S.-Russian relations. First came the Russian financial crisis of August 1998, which led to disillusionment for the U.S. economic team and compelled them to disengage from the effort to help transform the Russian economy. The Who Lost Russia debate soon absorbed the Western community of Russia watchers.

Then in March 1999, NATO launched its air war over Kosovo. Although the Russians played a significant role in the endgame that led to Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic's surrender, the war essentially chilled NATO-Russian relations for the rest of the Clinton presidency. American and Russian officials perceived the war through opposite analytical frameworks. Clinton officials believed they were spreading liberty to an oppressed people. Yeltsin's team believed that the American military was spreading its power into Russia's traditional sphere of influence. Any notion that the United States and Russia could work together within NATO was dead (and only the events of September 11, 2001, could bring it back).

Months later, Russia renewed its war in Chechnya, which led to mass atrocities and human rights violations. A media clampdown followed, further eroding Russia's already fragile democratic institutions, and it now seemed that hopes for economic and democratic transformation and security integration were all lost.

By the fall of 1999, Clinton's Russia policy had stalled completely. Clinton's chief Russia expert, Strobe Talbott, called for strategic patience, but patience had run out. The security team grew frustrated that Russia was not halting sales of nuclear technology to Iran. Nor would the new Russian president, Vladimir Putin, conclude a major arms control deal to reduce strategic offensive warheads while allowing the United States to pursue the development of limited missile defense under a revised Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. With President Clinton trying to make peace in the Middle East and seeking a breakthrough on the Korean peninsula in his final months in office, Russia became a distant concern. It was a far cry from the serious focus on Russia at the beginning of the Clinton presidency in 1993.

George W. Bush: From Realism to Selective Liberalism

By the time of the 2000 American presidential campaign, therefore, the talk was not about how Russia had been transformed and integrated but rather how Russia had been lost. If Clinton complained that Bush Sr. had done too little, the new George Bush and his advisers derided Clinton and Vice President Al Gore for trying to do too much in Russia's domestic affairs, arguing instead that America's true interests lay not in Wilsonianism but in a return to realpolitik. And since power was all that mattered, the Bush team entered office not with a Russia focus, as had its two predecessors, but argu-

ing instead for a policy that reached out first to allies in North America, Asia, and Europe, and only then focused on dealing with Russia. Although it was a policy far different from where the Clinton team had started, it was in substance not that different from where the Clinton team had left things in January 2001. For U.S. foreign policy, Russia had clearly fallen from the core of U.S. interests to the periphery.

The new Bush team had derided Clinton and Gore during the 2000 campaign for believing that U.S. policy should be centered on a close personal relationship with President Boris Yeltsin and his prime ministers, in particular Viktor Chernomyrdin. Ironically, Bush Sr. had been accused of just such an obsession with President Mikhail Gorbachev. But try as they might to make policy about states and not individuals, the Bush team could not ignore internal politics and individuals in Russia. At his first meeting with Putin in Slovenia in June 2001, Bush made a special effort to establish a personal bond with his Russian counterpart.

After the attacks against the United States on September 11, President Bush suddenly and dramatically embraced a new set of ideas about foreign policy, which had more in common with the philosophies of Ronald Reagan and Woodrow Wilson than with those of his father or Richard Nixon. In several important speeches, Bush has made clear that he believes in the revision of the international system, not its preservation.²⁸ Bush's national security strategy, released in the fall of 2002, makes the promotion of individual liberty around the world an explicit U.S. national security interest. In many parts of the world, the president has explained, the promotion of individual liberty can only occur through regime change. At least rhetorically, Bush moved after September 11 closer to the regime transformers and away from the power balancers.²⁹

To date, however, Bush has decided to promote Wilsonian ideals selectively. If he and the regime transformers in his administration have seemed determined to promote democracy in the Middle East even if it means using force, they have not demonstrated a similar enthusiasm for the same strategy for Russia. After September 11, Bush moved even further to embrace Putin as an ally in the war against terrorism. The Bush team was more than happy to move from a policy of neglect to a new embrace as long as Russia was not undermining U.S. efforts such as the establishment of American military bases in Central Asia. The rapprochement, however, was not a complete return to the early years of the Clinton presidency in that Russia's domestic transformation was not a part of the bilateral agenda. Instead, after September 11, Russia's international role once again became the primary focus of attention. The Bush administration focused heavily on a new strategic nuclear agenda (including abolition of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) and on the war on terrorism, and devoted less attention to Russian domestic issues such

as the conduct of the Russian army in Chechnya or Putin's crackdown on media independence.

Shifting Parameters of Power and Threat

Ideas about the importance of regime transformation versus power balancing played a direct causal role in shaping American policy toward Russia after 1991. Over the decade, however, two other factors beyond American borders became increasingly important in U.S. policymaking. Most significantly, the asymmetry of power between the United States and Russia grew and became better understood. In the early part of the decade, Russia's power was difficult to gauge. Since Russia had not been defeated militarily, many Russian foreign policymakers still viewed their country as a major world power, and many Americans were slow to recognize how fast the world was changing.³⁰ This ambiguity about the real balance of power in the world initially constrained a cautious Clinton administration.³¹ Perceptions of this power asymmetry changed more slowly than the actual power balance, but over time, the true distribution of power became clearer. By the end of the 1990s, decisionmakers in Washington correctly believed that Russia had little capacity to influence American foreign policy, even in traditional spheres of Russian influence such as the Balkans. This updating emboldened Clinton officials. They pursued foreign policies such as NATO expansion and the war against Serbia that a decade earlier would have been perceived as sure to spark conflict between the two great powers.

Second, uncertainty about the course of Russia's revolution also changed over time. At the beginning of the decade, the endpoint of Russia's transition from communism was highly uncertain. Those who believed that regime type mattered—and that the United States was better off with a democratic Russia than with a communist or fascist Russia—had the daunting challenge of devising policies that promoted democracy and markets in the largest country in the world with an unbroken history of autocratic rule and a seventy-year experiment with a command economy. Trying to assist a transition from that system to a market economy and democratic polity that could trade with the West and join Western institutions was simply unprecedented.

By the end of the decade, worst-case scenarios for Russia's domestic transformation seemed unlikely.³² Imperfect capitalism and an even more imperfect democracy emerged in Russia in the 1990s, an outcome that left the regime transformers in the Clinton team frustrated. At the same time, the specter of fascism or the return to communism had disappeared, an outcome that allowed George W. Bush officials to worry less about the negative implications of domestic developments inside Russia for American national security interests. The emergence of these two factors over time would become

influential in the formulation of American foreign policy even if worldview continued to shape the general approach. Recognition of the growing asymmetry of power between the United States and Russia enabled American officials to pursue foreign policy initiatives unilaterally with less regard for Russian reactions. Recognition of the end of revolution inside Russia allowed U.S. officials to focus less on internal developments inside Russia. At the same time, the growing asymmetry of power between these former equals and a mixed record of transformation inside Russia influenced the bilateral relationship, mostly in a negative way. Russian leaders grew tired of American arrogance in international affairs and wary of American intentions inside Russia. Only the combination of a new ideological orientation inside the White House and a shock to the international system as momentous as September 11 could change the mood in U.S.-Russian relations.

The Focus of Analysis

This book is predominantly about how the president and his top advisers in the executive branch formulated and carried out America's Russia policy. Our intent is not to deny the role that Congress or other actors play in the conduct of American foreign policy, but our focus is the overall U.S. approach to Russia in this period, which was set by the executive branch. There are moments when Congress is quite important, for example, in the case of Russia policy in the 1990s when senators Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) pushed the first Bush administration to provide assistance for Russian denuclearization or when congressional Republicans constrained the Clinton administration's ability to allocate funds for assistance or balked at removing the cold war era—restrictions in trade with Russia. We discuss these actors and these issues, but the book is chiefly about how three administrations conceptualized and managed Russia policy, and about the relative intensity of their efforts to transform and integrate Russia.

In analyzing American foreign policy toward Russia, we also write about the ebb and flow of U.S.-Russian relations after the cold war. Major figures from the Russian side naturally appear in central roles, not only in the context of their internal policy but also in their effect on American decisionmakers. We try to describe the Russian context and incorporate Russian influence on the U.S. policy process. Nonetheless, the book's main focus is the making of American foreign policy toward Russia.

Our goal is not to provide a blow-by-blow account of the evolution of America's post-Soviet Russia policy. Instead, we paint a picture of the principal themes, trade-offs, challenges, and opportunities as American foreign policymakers grappled with the extraordinarily historic transition from a world in which Russia was America's main enemy to a world in which the United

States hoped Russia would stand with it as Americans dealt with new (or, in some cases, old but neglected) challenges. The United States developed many other foreign policy objectives during this period, but the evolution of policy toward Russia was one of the most frustrating, challenging, and controversial American foreign policies of all.

To tell our story, we rely heavily on the recollections of the top U.S. decisionmakers as well as others involved in the issues. Often, individuals interviewed were still serving in an official capacity or hoped to serve in office in the future. Sometimes, they were being asked to recall events that took place five or more years earlier. We have sought to verify information by interviewing as many individuals as we could, by combing the available public record, and by using the Freedom of Information Act to get government documents declassified. Most of our document requests were denied, but several important records were released and provide further information for the story. In the end, though, even if information from interviews needs to be taken with a grain of salt, the ways in which policymakers describe and justify what they were doing is a critical part of the narrative and of our assessment.

In analyzing each administration's Russia policy, we focus on the three general policy areas raised above: democracy promotion (broadly defined), economic assistance, and security cooperation. For the first Bush administration and first Clinton term, the chapters discuss how policy was developed in each area. For the second Clinton term, we discuss the major setbacks to policy in these areas: the August 1998 financial collapse, the 1999 war on Kosovo, the 1999 resumption of war in Chechnya along with the clampdown on media freedom, and the failure in 2000 to put an end to Russia's sales of sensitive technologies to Iran or to conclude an arms control deal. For the second Bush administration, we examine the new team's initial approach in these three areas and the effect of September 11 on earlier assumptions.

The final chapter of the book attempts a broad assessment of the successes and failures of American foreign policy toward Russia in the first decade after the Soviet collapse. Throughout, we consider how power and purpose shaped U.S. foreign policy, and how different understandings not only across but *within* administrations on power and purpose changed over time.