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Batman and Robin?

Exploring foreign policy
differences between Putin and
Medvedev during the Medvedev
presidency

Peter J.S. Duncan

p.duncan@ucl.ac.uk

UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies

ABSTRACT: Following the return of Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency, the specific features of Russian foreign policy under the 2008-12 presidency of Dmitrii Medvedev can now be analysed. This paper investigates how significant the foreign policy differences were between Medvedev and Putin; the importance of Medvedev's influence and the achievements of Russian foreign policy under his presidency. It argues that Medvedev's presidency did not lead to fundamental change in Russia foreign policy, but allowed an improvement in relations with the West and the maintenance of the strategic partnership with China. However, both Putin and Medvedev shared a belief in Russia as a great power and a pragmatic outlook. Both opposed NATO enlargement into the former Soviet Union although Medvedev leaned more towards collaboration with the West, and Putin towards integration based on the CIS. Relations with the West deteriorated at the end of the Medvedev presidency following the announcement of Putin's planned return to the Kremlin and the rigging of parliamentary elections. However, five major foreign-policy achievements can be identified: the postponement of NATO enlargement into post-Soviet space following war with Georgia; the defeat of the leaders of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine; the 'New START' treaty; entry to the WTO; and the implementation of the Common Economic Space with Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Introduction

With the return of Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency in May 2012, it is now possible to analyse the specific features of Russian foreign policy under the presidency of Dmitrii Medvedev over his four-year term from May 2008. The individuals with the most important influence over foreign policy in this period were the president, Medvedev, and the prime minister, Putin. This paper investigates how significant were the differences between Medvedev and Putin in foreign policy; how important was Medvedev's influence in Russian foreign policy; and what were the achievements of Russian foreign policy under his presidency.¹

In a liberal democracy, one would also expect the president and/or the prime minister to have the final say in foreign policy. With the weakness of formal institutions and the corresponding personalization of politics in Russia,² the focus on the top individuals is even more justified. According to the Russian Constitution of 1993, the president 'exercises leadership of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation'.³ Boris El'tsin and Putin, the first two presidents of the Russian

¹ This working paper forms the basis of a chapter in Peter J.S. Duncan *Russian Foreign Policy: From El'tsin to Putin*, to be published in the BASEES/Routledge series. I should like to thank the Leverhulme Trust for awarding me a Leverhulme Research Fellowship for 2009/2010, which included funding for a research visit to Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova and made the preparation of this paper possible. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a seminar of the Centre for European Politics, Security and Integration (CEPSI) at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies in December 2012, and at the joint British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies – International Committee for Central and East European Studies conference, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, in April 2013. I am grateful for the comments of those present, and of Seán Hanley, Sirke Mäkinen, Valerie Pacer, Olga Romanova, Jack Sharples, Ondrej Timco and an anonymous reviewer. All errors are my own.

² On the weakness of formal institutions and the importance of informal rules in Russia, see Alena Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*, Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2006.

³ *Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1993, Article 86.

Federation, had indeed been the principal decision-makers on foreign policy, as on domestic issues. But there was a broad perception in Russia and outside it from the time of Medvedev's nomination in December 2007 as the presidential candidate for Putin's United Russia, A Just Russia and two other parties and Medvedev's announcement the following day that Putin would be his prime minister that the latter would continue to be the strongest and most influential politician in Russia. The two might be leading in tandem, but it was Putin who was doing most of the steering. This perception was reinforced on 24 September 2011, when Medvedev announced that Putin, not himself, would be the United Russia presidential candidate in 2012. Moreover, he claimed that this had been agreed already in December 2007.

It was undoubtedly the case that as prime minister Putin was the most powerful figure in domestic, economic and social affairs. This extended into most matters of foreign economic relations, including economic integration projects within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), international trade, the arms trade, and energy, including the operations of Gazprom. In the USSR the prime minister traditionally focused on the economy, with little say on ideology, security and foreign policy, while the General Secretary of the Party had overall charge of all internal and external affairs. A similar situation continued under El'tsin and Putin's presidencies, with the prime minister focussing on economic and social issues. Foreign and security policy remained a presidential prerogative; indeed, Putin claimed in late 2011 that he had given Medvedev *carte blanche* in this area.⁴ Nevertheless before leaving the presidency in 2008, Putin ensured that an amendment to the Law on the Government was passed, so that the 'power ministers' (the ministers of defence, internal affairs, emergency situations, the heads of the security services and the foreign minister) reported to the prime minister, instead of directly to the president. Additionally, Putin created under the prime minister an office for foreign policy implementation, headed by Iurii Ushakov, hitherto Russian ambassador in Washington; and a new agency for CIS affairs, separate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵

Who, then, really was more important in foreign policy – Putin or Medvedev? Did they have the same opinions? Did they represent different interests, in any sense? Even if they were both primarily concerned with devising foreign policies which would be most conducive to the survival of the existing political regime in Russia, did they have any differences in what was the optimum strategy to achieve this? Experts on Russia have been divided over these questions. The International Institute of Strategic Studies commented that over the four years, 'it had been difficult to discern which of the Putin-Medvedev tandem was responsible for the country's mixed record of foreign-policy successes and failures.'⁶ Others have drawn a clear distinction between the two. U.S. President Barack Obama contrasted Putin and Medvedev in July 2009, saying that America was developing a 'very good relationship' with

⁴ Nikolai Zlobin, 'Putin doesn't need anyone – no team, no advisors, no successors', Nikolai Zlobin's Political Blog (first published in *Snob*, 15 October 2011), <http://n-zlobin-eng.livejournal.com/4239.html>, accessed 15 July 2013.

⁵ Mikhail Filippov, 'Diversionary Role of the Georgia-Russia Conflict: International Constraints and Domestic Appeal', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61, 10, December 2009, 1840.

⁶ 'Assessing Russian foreign policy under Medvedev', *IISS Strategic Comments*, email journal, 18, 18, May 2012.

Medvedev, while Putin had ‘one foot’ stuck in the Cold War past.⁷ The predominant view has been to see Medvedev essentially as Putin’s puppet (*marionetka*). In similar vein is the image conveyed in the well-known cable from the US deputy chief of mission in Moscow, Eric Rubin, to the State Department in November 2008, published by Wikileaks, referring to Medvedev as ‘Robin’ to Putin’s ‘Batman’. Another cable saw Medvedev as the No. 3, less powerful than the leading *silovik* and deputy prime minister Igor’ Sechin.⁸ Medvedev was keeping the presidency safe for Putin, following his instructions. By 2010 some were seeing Medvedev as ‘simply the exportable version of Putinism’.⁹ Marie Mendras writes that Putin ‘kept the upper hand on all important matters in domestic as well as foreign affairs.’¹⁰ Arkady Moshes argues that the style differences between the two ‘did not grow into a real policy difference – not least, perhaps because Putin ...informally was still in command of Russia’s political behaviour, both internally and externally’.¹¹ Liliia Shevtsova and David Kramer summed up his legacy: ‘He enabled Putin’s personalised rule to continue unabated.’¹²

I disagree with this trend of opinion. There were several occasions when Medvedev and Putin expressed differences of opinion with each other, in domestic and foreign affairs. It seems that in foreign policy Medvedev’s position prevailed. These differences were not numerous, however. Both were brought up in Leningrad, had law degrees, and both thought of themselves as European. More importantly, Medvedev was embedded in Putin’s team; he owed his political fortune to Putin, and they had worked together since 1990.¹³ Hence, not only did they have a vested interest in the survival of the tandem as the core of the political regime, but also they had very close views on many issues, with differences on some others. They both believed that Russia should be one of the world’s most influential powers; but while Putin tended to see the immediate means for that in building up influence in post-Soviet space, Medvedev tended to see it in cooperation with other great powers. The perception which took hold in some quarters that Medvedev was as hard-line, assertive and conservative as Putin came from the fact that the beginning of his presidency was marred by the occurrence of the war with Georgia.

For some years before his nomination for the presidency, Medvedev had been seen as part of the liberal wing of the regime. In July 2006 he had openly opposed the concept proposed by the Kremlin’s chief ideologist, Viacheslav Surkov, of ‘sovereign

⁷ Chris McGreal and Luke Harding, ‘Barack Obama: Putin has one foot in the past’, *Guardian*, 2 July 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/02/obama-putin-us-russia-relations>, accessed 15 July 2013..

⁸ Luke Harding, *Mafia State: How One Reporter became an Enemy of the Brutal New Russia*, London: Guardian Books, 2011, pp. 214-5. The term *silovik* refers to a member or ex-member of the Russian security services or the armed forces.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁰ Marie Mendras, *Russian Politics: The Paradox of a Weak State*, London: Hurst, 2012, p. 277.

¹¹ Arkady Moshes, ‘Russia’s European Policy under Medvedev: How Sustainable is a New Compromise?’, *International Affairs*, 88, 1, January 2012, p. 18.

¹² Lilia Shevtsova and David J. Kramer, ‘Medvedev the Phony’, 7 May 2012, *Foreign Policy* website, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/07/medvedev_the_phony, accessed 16 May 2012.

¹³ Andrew Monaghan, ‘The Russian *Vertikal*: The Tandem, Power and the Elections’, May 2011, Chatham House, Russia and Eurasia Programme Paper, REP 2011/01, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/175813>, accessed 17 April 2013.

democracy', seeing it as implying a limitation on democracy.¹⁴ He did not belong to either of the main *silovik* factions, and his selection represented a defeat for them. Medvedev's support base centred on the 'Petersburg lawyers', who included Anton Ivanov, head of the Supreme Arbitration Court, Dmitrii Kozak, minister for regional development and from October 2008 deputy prime minister, Procurator-General Iurii Chaika, 'and possibly [the oligarchs] Viktor Vekselberg and Alisher Usmanov'.¹⁵ According to Richard Sakwa, his candidacy was advocated by former members of El'tsin's 'Family', including Roman Abramovich and Aleksandr Voloshin, while his allies also included presidential economic advisers Igor Shuvalov and Arkadii Dvorkovich, Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin, 'Economic Development and Trade Minister Elvira Nabiullina, Agriculture Minister Aleksei Gordeev and Education and Science Minister Andrei Fursenko'.¹⁶ These people, either for reasons of state economic policy or for commercial and personal interest, would be expected to favour good relations with Western states.

It is important to emphasize that these figures who supported Medvedev's nomination were not, or at least not at that stage, supporting Medvedev as a long-term replacement for Putin. They favoured Medvedev as the candidate for 2008, rather than agreeing with those *siloviki* who supported the candidacy of First Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, or those like the deputy head of the presidential administration, the arch-hard-line *silovik* Igor Sechin, who favoured changing the constitution to allow Putin a third term. They broadly shared, in domestic policy, in the context of the existing regime, a desire for more respect to be given to the rule of law, and a reduction in the role of the state in the economy to give more independence to private business.¹⁷ Sechin can be seen as Medvedev's nemesis: as deputy head of the presidential administration and chairperson of the Rosneft board, from 2004 he acquired the assets of Yukos after the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovskii, and later defeated an attempt by Medvedev as head of the presidential administration and chairperson of the Gazprom board, initially with Putin's support, to implement a takeover by Gazprom of Rosneft.

Past work on opinion groups in relation to Moscow's foreign policy has sought to draw links between opinions held on domestic policy and foreign policy. Mikhail Gorbachev himself highlighted the connection between domestic *glasnost* and *perestroika* with the 'new political thinking' in his foreign policy.¹⁸ Margot Light in her seminal chapter identified three opinion groups in the early 1990s: 'Liberal Westernizers', who favoured market reform and pro-Western foreign policies, 'Fundamentalist Nationalists' who opposed economic reform and were extreme anti-Western nationalists in foreign policy, and 'Pragmatic Nationalists' who occupied an

¹⁴ Richard Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy: The Dual State, Factionalism and the Medvedev Succession*, Cambridge: CUP, 2011, pp. 126-7.

¹⁵ Alena V. Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernise? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance*, Cambridge: CUP, 2013, p. 59.

¹⁶ Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*, p. 271.

¹⁷ On the elections of 2007 and 2008 and the Medvedev accession, see Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*; and my 'Russia, the West and the 2007-2008 Electoral Cycle: Did the Kremlin Really Fear a 'Coloured Revolution'?', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65, 1, January 2013, 1-25.

¹⁸ Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, London: Collins, 1987.

intermediate position in both areas.¹⁹ This linkage between domestic and foreign policy worked quite well through the El'tsin era, but Putin broke the connection in his first term by combining a predominantly pro-Western policy in support of George W. Bush's 'War on Terror' with increasing authoritarianism at home. In Putin's second term the authoritarian trends accelerated, while foreign policy took on more and more an assertive, anti-Western tone. The coloured revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, plans for further NATO enlargement and Bush's plans for missile defence (MD) deployments in Poland and the Czech Republic provoked Putin's Munich speech of February 2007 which denounced the United States for its interventionism.²⁰ Parts of the top leadership seem to have feared that the West might try to overthrow the regime in Russia itself.

During Medvedev's presidency, as during Putin's second term, one can see a clearer link between domestic and foreign policy. Where differences did emerge between Medvedev and Putin, both in domestic and in foreign policy, Medvedev's position was practically always more liberal domestically and more in favour of better relations with Western states than Putin's stance. During his election campaign he attacked 'legal nihilism' in Russia, describing it as 'far from a true democracy', while calling for an active role in relation to CIS states and an openness to the world community.²¹ After his election, he was more outspoken. His internet article 'Go, Russia!' (*Rossii, vpered!*) spoke of '...humiliating dependence on raw materials...an inefficient economy, semi-Soviet social sphere, fragile democracy, negative demographic trends, and an unstable Caucasus'. The answers included introducing an 'extremely open' political system, in which 'the parties and the coalitions they will make will choose the federal and regional executive authorities (and not vice versa)'. The link with foreign policy was explicit: 'Nostalgia should not guide our foreign policy and our strategic goal is modernization.'²²

Mark Urnov has drawn out the links between domestic policy and foreign policy in his analysis of 'liberal modernization' and 'conservative modernization' doctrines. Liberal modernization, including political reforms, is exemplified by the Institute for Contemporary Development (INSOR). This institute is headed by Igor Iurgens and considered close to Medvedev. In 2010 it published its plan 'Russia in the XXI Century: Vision for the Future', which in foreign policy prioritizes relations with the West. Conservative modernization, which avoids political change, is exemplified by 'The Concept for the Long-term Socio-economic Development of the Russian

¹⁹ Margot Light, 'Foreign Policy Thinking', in Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison and Margot Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Oxford: OUP for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p. 34.

²⁰ V.V. Putin, 'Vystuplenie i diskussii na myunkhenskoj konferentsii po voprosam politiki bezopasnosti', 10 February 2007, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2007/02/118109.shtml>, accessed 23 February 2007.

²¹ D. Medvedev, 'Vystuplenie na II Obshcherossiiskom grazhdanskom forume', 22 January 2008, Dmitrii Medvedev. Official site of the candidate for the post of president of Russia, http://www.medvedev2008.ru/performance_2008_01_22.htm, accessed 10 March 2008.

²² 'Dmitry Medvedev's Article, Go Russia!', 10 September 2009, President of Russia website, http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/speeches/2009/09/10/1534_type104017_221527.shtml, accessed 15 September 2009.

Federation up to 2020' adopted by the Ministry for Economic Development in 2008. The associated foreign policy is oriented first to the CIS and China.²³

Medvedev's enthusiasm for reform led Putin to warn him publicly in January 2010 of the danger of the 'Ukrainianization' of Russian politics.²⁴ In December 2010, during Mikhail Khodorkovskii's second trial, Putin pronounced, 'A thief belongs in jail.' Medvedev responded that it was impermissible to interfere in the judicial process.²⁵ In practice, the president was unable to implement the democratic reforms he espoused, or prevent what was for him the humiliating farce of Khodorkovskii's further sentencing, because Putin kept the levers of internal affairs in his own hands. Nevertheless, as the US diplomat Thomas Graham has noted, Medvedev's presidency broadened the framework of political discussion in Russia, and facilitated the improvement of relations with Western countries with his 'more "modern" face'.²⁶ Gordon Hahn has referred to the domestic aspects of Medvedev's presidency as '*Perestroika 2.0*', recalling the changes in politics and society under Gorbachev,²⁷ although Medvedev did not introduce an ideological equivalent to Gorbachev's 'new political thinking' in foreign policy.

Among the key figures involved in foreign policy during Medvedev's presidency, including those supervising the key energy corporations, were:

MEDVEDEV Dmitrii Anatol'evich (born 1965). President
PUTIN Vladimir Vladimirovich b. 1953. Prime Minister
LAVROV Sergei Viktorovich b. 1950. Minister of Foreign Affairs
ZUBKOV Viktor Alekseevich b. 1941. First Deputy Prime Minister, Gazprom chair
IVANOV Sergei Borisovich b. 1953. Deputy PM responsible for defence industry
SECHIN Igor' Ivanovich b. 1960. Deputy PM responsible for energy + (until late 2011) Rosneft chair
SERDIUKOV Anatolii Eduardovich. b. 1962. Minister of Defence
PATRUSHEV Nikolai Pavlovich b. 1951. Secretary, Security Council
PRIKHOD'KO Sergei Eduardovich b. 1957. Foreign policy adviser to the president.

The extent to which Medvedev's hands were tied is suggested by the fact that all these nine men remained in the above positions throughout his presidency. Apart from Medvedev and Putin themselves, all were in those positions before Medvedev became president, except that Zubkov and Ivanov were demoted from prime minister and first deputy prime minister, respectively, making room for Putin's appointment; and Patrushev was moved from the directorship of the FSB to the Security Council four

²³ Mark Urnov, 'Russian Modernization Doctrines under Debate', in Lena Jonson and Stephen White (eds), *Waiting for Reform under Putin and Medvedev*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 38-58.

²⁴ Brian Whitmore, 'Putin Crashes Medvedev's Party', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 25 January 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Putin_Crashes_Medvedevs_Party/1939426.html, accessed 3 April 2013.

²⁵ 'Medvedev versus Putin on business, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the World Trade Organization, Libya, and a whole lot more', *Forbes*, 13 July 2011, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/markadomanis/2011/07/13/medvedev-versus-putin-on-business-mikhail-khodorkovsky-the-world-trade-organization-libya-and-a-whole-lot-more/>, accessed 3 April 2013.

²⁶ Thomas Graham, 'Russia and the World', in Maria Lipman and Nikolay Petrov (eds), *Russia in 2020: Scenarios for the Future*, Washington, DC: Carnegie, 2011, p. 20.

²⁷ Gordon M. Hahn, '*Perestroika 2.0: Toward Non-Revolutionary Regime Transformation in Russia?*', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 28, 4, 2012, 472-515.

days after Medvedev's inauguration. It should also be seen that they were all older than Medvedev.

I have divided Medvedev's presidency for the purpose of considering his foreign policy into three periods: from his inauguration in May 2008 to the proposal for a 'Reset' in February 2009; from then until 24 September 2011, when he announced that Putin would be the presidential candidate in the next election; and from then until Putin's inauguration in May 2012, a period in which as a lame-duck president Medvedev lost most of his capacity to initiate policy change.

May 2008 to February 2009. The war with Georgia

The ideas which dominated foreign policy under Medvedev were formulated in the first few months of his presidency. In June 2008 in Berlin he called for a new European security architecture to give Russia what he thought was its rightful level of influence. NATO and the EU, which did not include Russia, were taking the key decisions on European security.²⁸ The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which Russia had earlier argued should have the main security role, was now focussing on issues of 'soft security' such as the fairness of elections and human rights. It was devoting its time to criticising Russia and other CIS states, while neglecting hard security issues. What rankled with the Russian elite at this time was that it had not been able to transform its new-found wealth, the product of several years of high oil and gas prices, into international influence, even in Europe and its own neighbourhood.

In February 2008 Kosovo had declared independence, which had been recognized by the USA, the UK and most of the EU. The humiliation for Russia of being unable to prevent Kosovo from being separated from Serbia, its closest friend in Europe, recalled Russia's earlier humiliation in 1999 in being unable to protect Yugoslavia from NATO bombing. At that time Russia's economy was just beginning to recover from the 1998 rouble crash, but in 2008 Russia had repaid most of its state debt and felt its economy strong. In April 2008, at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Russia had successfully lobbied France and Germany to prevent Ukraine and Georgia from being offered membership action plans (MAPs) or a date for membership, but nevertheless Bush succeeded in persuading the NATO members to promise the applicants membership at an unspecified date in the future. The NATO-Russia Council, established in 2002 during Putin's enthusiastic participation in the War on Terror, was no longer affording Russia an effective voice. Instead NATO was openly threatening Russia's back garden. Although the European security proposals were always associated with Medvedev's name, there is no evidence that Putin disapproved of them. On the contrary, they were in line with his desire to reduce America's and NATO's influence in Europe. What was new was that they were launched by a new leader who showed a greater propensity to listen to Western opinions than his predecessor had in recent years.

In July 2008 Medvedev signed a new foreign policy concept. This built on the concept signed by Putin in 2000. The timing of its publication demonstrated that it

²⁸ Dmitrii Medvedev, 'Vystuplenie na vstreche s predstaviteliami politicheskikh, parlamentskikh i obshchestvennykh krugov v Germanii', Berlin, 5 June 2008, President of Russia website, <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/320>, accessed 14 October 2011.

must have been prepared during Putin's presidency, and it reflected views which Putin had articulated. The document welcomed the 'strengthening of Russia' and that it was playing an increased role in international affairs, contributing to a 'tendency to a polycentric world order' (in contrast to the danger of a 'unipolar world' described in the 2000 concept). It warned, however, that 'global competition' was acquiring a 'civilizational dimension', and the 'historical West' was continuing the policy of 'containment' (*sderzhivanie*) of Russia. Without naming the United States or NATO in this context (unlike the 2000 document), it opposed the 'strategy of unilateral actions' and the 'ignoring by particular states or groups of states of international law'. The document emphasized Russia's commitment to international cooperation. The highest regional priority was the CIS, and after that, Europe and Euro-Atlantic security.²⁹

On 31 August, after the war with Georgia, Medvedev announced that he would base foreign policy on five 'positions'. First was the supremacy of international law. Second was that the world must be multipolar. The domination of the USA was unacceptable. Third, that Russia did not want conflict, but friendly relations with all countries. Fourth was the defence of 'our citizens' (not the vague 'compatriots') wherever they were, and of 'our entrepreneurial community abroad'. Fifthly and controversially, Russia had regions including countries where it had 'privileged interests'. When asked whether these priority regions were Russia's border territories, Medvedev answered that it included the border regions, but not only them (*'ne tol'ko'*).³⁰ This claim to an ambiguously defined sphere of influence reflected the view, shared with Putin, that such a sphere was an attribute of Russia as a great power.

The five-day war in August 2008 was the first time in the post-Soviet period that Russian troops invaded and temporarily occupied another country.³¹ Was this war Medvedev's initiative? Why did the war break out? One can postulate several reasons why Russia, and Medvedev in particular, might have wanted a war with Georgia, assuming it was victorious. For Medvedev, it might show his strength to audiences at home and abroad; and gain him support at home as a real president, not a soft one or a puppet of Putin. Together with his tough stance towards Ukraine, it might prove his credentials as a defender of Russian interests to the *siloviki*. It might punish the West for creating and recognizing Kosovo, and punish Georgia's president Mikheil Saakashvili for his anti-Russian attitudes. It might stop NATO enlargement into Georgia and Ukraine. It might reinforce Russia's influence in post-Soviet space. It might show the vulnerability of the oil and gas pipelines passing from the Caspian through Georgia on their way to European markets.

²⁹ 'Kontseptsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii', 12 July 2008, Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, <http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/d48737161a0bc944c32574870048d8f7!OpenDocument>, accessed 8 November 2011.

³⁰ 'Interv'iu Dmitriia Medvedeva telekanalam "Rossiia", Pervomu, NTV', Sochi, 31 August 2008, President of Russia website, <http://president.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205991.shtml>, accessed 1 September 2008.

³¹ This leaves aside the activity of Russian peace-keepers in Moldova in 1992, in Tajikistan up to 1997 and in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In these cases the troops were present at the time of the Soviet collapse and their presence was regulated by international agreement.

But the origins of the war are much disputed. Was Russia or Georgia to blame? The initial, knee-jerk, reaction of much of the Western media and of most Western governments and NATO and the EU was to blame Russia.³² A year after the conflict, however, a commission appointed by the EU into the causes of the conflict, chaired by the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini, was even-handed in its distribution of the blame. It blamed Saakashvili for the attack on Tskhinvali, the capital of the unrecognized republic of South Ossetia, but criticised Russia for sending troops deep into Georgia and keeping them there longer than was justified after the cease-fire.³³ It seems quite clear that Georgian troops initiated hostilities when they attacked and then occupied Tskhinvali, on 7 August. Russia appeared to have been caught unprepared; Putin was in Beijing for the opening of the Olympics and Medvedev was on holiday. It took a day before the Russian Security Council could meet. Russian troops came into South Ossetia, freed Tskhinvali, and proceed to march from South Ossetia into the rest of Georgia, towards Tbilisi. Reinforced via Abkhazia and from the Black Sea, they destroyed as much as they could of Georgian military assets and airports before withdrawing to South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The alternative view has been put forward that it was the Russian side which initiated hostilities.³⁴ The problem with this view is that it does not explain why Russia allowed Georgia to capture Tskhinvali. On the other hand, the Georgian assault can be seen as a response to Russian provocations. There had been clashes on the cease-fire lines for years and tension had been increasing. Saakashvili probably walked into a trap, despite warnings from US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice not to do so.³⁵ Relations had been bad since before the Rose Revolution of 2003; they worsened after Saakashvili quadrupled defence spending and promised to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia. In 2006 the arrest of Russian ‘spies’ in Tbilisi had led to the Russian boycott of Georgian wine and the forced expulsions of ethnic Georgians from Russia. In 2008 Medvedev explicitly forbade any retaliation against the Georgian population of Russia – clearly differentiating himself from the earlier xenophobia.³⁶ Even if Russia was responsible for provoking Georgia, as Jeffrey Mankoff says here is little reason to see the war as ‘Medvedev’s brainchild’.³⁷ Rather, it seems that in the last months of his presidency Putin was trying to lock Medvedev into a tough policy towards Georgia.³⁸

³² Peter Shearman and Matthew Sussex, ‘The Roots of Russian Conduct’ in Paul B. Rich (ed.), *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 2.

³³ Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, *Report*, 2009, <http://www.ceiig.ch/Report.html>, accessed 14 October 2011.

³⁴ John B. Dunlop, ‘The August 2009 Russo-Georgia War: Which Side Went First?’, in Maria Raquel Freire and Roger E. Kanet (eds), *Russia and its Near Neighbours*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 89-105.

³⁵ Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

³⁶ For useful discussion of these issues, see John Berryman, ‘Russia, NATO Enlargement and “Regions of Privileged Interests”’, in Roger E. Kanet (ed.), *Russian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 228-45; Luke March, ‘Nationalist Grievance and Russian Foreign Policy: The Case of Georgia’, in Freire and Kanet, *Russia and its Near Neighbours*, pp. 63-88.

³⁷ Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, 2nd edn, Lanham, MD and Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012, p. 86.

³⁸ Filippov, ‘Diversionary Role’, p. 1841.

In November 2011 Medvedev said that if Russia had faltered three years earlier, a number of countries might have joined NATO. This has been interpreted as admitting that Russia acted in 2008 in order to prevent Georgia joining the alliance.³⁹ But it still does not follow from this that Russia attacked first. In August 2012, differences appeared between Putin and Medvedev over their respective roles four years earlier. A film made by retired military officers had criticised Medvedev's conduct of the war. It accused him of delaying the order to respond to the Georgian offensive, preferring to consult with foreign powers. Medvedev defended himself, claiming that he had led the war effort, while Putin had been in Beijing out of secure contact. Putin contradicted Medvedev, saying he had been in contact with military commanders while in Beijing. He added that he had approved a military plan for use against Georgia while still president,⁴⁰ which does not mean that the war itself had been initiated by the Russian side.⁴¹ Despite the lack of clarity, none of this suggests that the war was Medvedev's initiative. Once the war had started, however, it was Medvedev, not Putin, who was negotiating the cease-fire with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, on behalf of the EU, on terms favourable to Russia, although Putin was present too. Sakwa suggests the decision to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states allowed the president 'to assert his dominance of the policy agenda'. Putin had consistently refused to give full recognition to the two entities.⁴² On the other hand, from early in 2008 Russia under Putin's presidency had been treating them to a higher status.

As well as setting uncomfortable precedents in the Northern Caucasus, the decision to recognize the separatists led to Russia's isolation on the issue. No CIS state, nor China, followed the Russian move; most had their own concerns about separatism. Still blaming Russia for the war, NATO suspended the NATO-Russia Council while the EU suspended negotiations on the new Partnership and Co-operation Agreement. Economically, capital fled from Russia and the rouble fell. But Medvedev worked to rebuild relations with France and Germany. Already in November, the EU resumed work on the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, and Sarkozy came out in favour of discussing Medvedev's proposals on European security architecture.⁴³ NATO resumed contacts with Russia in December, despite Condoleezza Rice's opposition.⁴⁴

³⁹ Brian Whitmore, 'Medvedev gets Caught Telling the Truth', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 22 November 2011, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/24399004.html>, accessed 25 November 2011.

⁴⁰ 'Russian Generals Accuse Medvedev of Hesitation in Russia-Georgia War', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 8 August 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/24670673.html>, accessed 9 August 2012.

⁴¹ Richard Sakwa, 'Conspiracy Narratives as a Mode of Engagement in International Politics: The Case of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War', *Russian Review*, 71, October 2012, 594.

⁴² Richard Sakwa, 'Great Powers and Small Wars in the Caucasus', in Matthew Sussex (ed.), *Conflict in the Former USSR*, Cambridge: CUP, 2012, p. 87.

⁴³ Ahto Lobjakas, 'Business, As Usual, to be Focus of EU-Russia Summit', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 14 November 2008, http://www.rferl.org/content/Business_As_Usual_To_Be_Focus_Of_EURussia_Summit/1349153.html, accessed 4 July 2013; idem, 'EU-Russia Summit Hints At Geopolitical Rapprochement', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 14 November 2008, http://www.rferl.org/content/EURussia_Summit_Hints_At_Geopolitical_Rapprochement/1349273.html, accessed 4 July 2013.

⁴⁴ Ian Traynor, 'NATO snubs US by resuming Russia contacts', *Guardian*, 3 December 2008.

At the end of 2008 Russia moved to assert itself against the other would-be NATO member, Ukraine under President Iushchenko. Ukraine's failure to agree to new increased prices at the end of the contract led Putin to very publicly, in front of TV cameras, instruct Gazprom to reduce Ukraine's supply. As an economic issue, this was within Putin's remit; but it was clearly aimed at weakening Iushchenko and ensuring a more pro-Russian successor in the elections due in 2010. It appears that Ukraine responded by stealing gas intended for EU customers, and Gazprom then cut off supply to and through Ukraine completely.⁴⁵ As a result people froze and died in several EU countries, prompting the European Commission to intensify its search for alternative sources of supply.⁴⁶ The episode may have helped Gazprom's finances in the medium term, as far as revenue from Ukraine was concerned. Nevertheless the episode damaged the company's image, although (unlike the previous cut-off in 2006, when Russia had been seen as solely responsible) this time Russia and Ukraine were both blamed for their failure to agree. After two weeks Putin and Ukraine's PM Iuliia Tymoshenko signed a deal.⁴⁷ This incurred Iushchenko's wrath and irrevocably split the 'Orange' camp in Ukraine.

In this first period, it seems there was little difference between the policies of Putin and Medvedev. The president was locked in to Putin's policies and had not yet developed freedom to manoeuvre. At the same time Medvedev was already showing a style that was more acceptable to the West than that of Putin. As a result Russia was able not only to stop NATO enlargement into post-Soviet space, but also to restore relations with it and with the EU quickly.

February 2009 to September 2011. The 'Reset'

In this second period of his presidency, Medvedev was able to take control of much of Russian foreign policy, and pursue cooperation with Western states further than Putin wished. US President Barack Obama realized early on that in the face of America's priority foreign policy issues in Afghanistan, Iran, the Middle East and China it would be better to have Russia as a partner than an enemy. Hence in February 2009, one month after Obama's inauguration, Vice-President Joe Biden proposed a 'reset' in US-Russian relations. This gave Medvedev a chance to improve relations with the United States and the West as whole. It is difficult to see Putin, after the rhetoric of 2006-2007, and with his macho KGB image, being so open to improving relations with America, even under a new leader. Obama ended the pressure for

⁴⁵ Tom Parfitt, 'Ukraine accused of stealing Russian gas as fuel flow declines', *Guardian*, 3 January 2009; Simon Pirani, Jonathan Stern and Katja Yafimava, 'The Russo-Ukrainian Gas Dispute of January 2009: A Comprehensive Assessment', Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, NG 27, February 2009, <http://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/NG27-TheRussoUkrainianGasDisputeofJanuary2009AComprehensiveAssessment-JonathanSternSimonPiraniKatjaYafimava-2009.pdf>, pp. 19-22, 49-51, accessed 3 April 2013.

⁴⁶ Luke Harding, 'Deal to resume Russian gas eludes EU as 11 people die in big freeze-up', *Observer*, 11 January 2009.

⁴⁷ Pirani, Stern and Yafimava, 'Russo-Ukrainian Gas Dispute'. I do not have space here to address the question as to what extent Gazprom and other large corporations are tools of Russian foreign policy, as well as being influential makers of policy. On Gazprom, see my "'Oligarchs", Business and Russian Foreign Policy: From El'tsin to Putin', 2007 (Economics Working Papers 83). Centre for the Study of Economic and Social Change in Europe, SSEES, UCL, pp. 16-23, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/12932/>, accessed 3 April 2013.

NATO enlargement into the former Soviet Union; in September 2009 halted MD deployment plans in Poland and the Czech Republic; and in April 2010 with Medvedev in Moscow signed the 'New START' treaty (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty). As well as reducing the number of strategic nuclear weapons held by each side, it restored a verification regime.⁴⁸ These measures created the climate for Medvedev to include the West in his modernization agenda.

Unlike Putin, Medvedev spoke of the need for political changes to enable Russia's economic modernization and its diversification from dependence on hydrocarbons and minerals. Both leaders saw the need for Western technology for modernization. The most high-profile initiative associated with Medvedev, following his visit to Silicon Valley, is the attempt to create a Russian imitation at Skolkovo, combining American, European and Russian technologies. In May 2010 Russian *Newsweek* received a leaked copy of a document by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs showing, country by country, how foreign policy could aid Medvedev's modernization programme. (Britain was the only significant country excluded, in the continuing aftermath of the murder of Aleksandr Litvinenko.)⁴⁹ The following month Russia signed a 'Partnership for Modernization' with the EU.

Linked to this was Medvedev's push for membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This move would help some industries but hinder others. Undoubtedly it would help the Russian steel industry; energy companies, reliant on foreign exports, would benefit from the reputational gain of Russia being now a law-abiding member of the international trading system. Other manufacturing industries, notably the motor industry, feared exposure to foreign competition, and the oligarch Oleg Deripaska (who vied with Abramovich for the post of wealthiest man in Russia), owner of the Gorky Automobile Factory (GAZ), vocally opposed accession. In June 2009 Putin said that Russia would join the WTO as part of the Customs Union of the Eurasian Economic Community, together with Belarus and Kazakhstan, and would focus on the consolidation of this association first. Medvedev responded the following day that it would be 'simpler and more realistic' for Russia to enter on its own.⁵⁰ By 2010 Putin seemed to have lost enthusiasm for the WTO; after the harvest failure, when Russia imposed restrictions on grain export, Putin pointed out that such a move would have been impossible if Russia had already been a member. It was Medvedev, not Putin, who had his way, even on this economic issue; in December 2011 all conditions having been filled and other objections (including from Georgia) having been dropped, Russia on its own was invited to join the WTO, 18 years after applying.⁵¹ This was an essential difference between Putin and Medvedev; Putin prioritized integration within the CIS, while Medvedev prioritized Russia's WTO entry.

⁴⁸ Marcin Kaczmarek, 'The Fragile "Reset": The Balance and the Prospects for Changes in Russian-US Relations', April 2011, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw, Policy Briefs, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/policy-briefs/2011-04-11/fragile-reset-balance-sheet-and-prospects-changes-russianus-rela> accessed 12 October 2012.

⁴⁹ 'Programma effektivnogo ispol'zovaniia na sistemnoi osnove vneshnepoliticheskikh faktorov v tseliakh dolgosrochnogo razvitiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii', Russian *Newsweek*, 10 February 2010, from <http://www.runewsweek.ru/country/34184/>, accessed 12 May 2010 but no longer available due to the closure of Russian *Newsweek*.

⁵⁰ 'Medvedev versus Putin', *Forbes*.

⁵¹ On differences inside Russia on the WTO, see Anders Åslund, 'Why Doesn't Russia Join the WTO?', *Washington Quarterly*, 33, 2, April 2010, 49-63.

The Reset was not one-way traffic. In exchange, Medvedev helped the Americans and their allies in several ways. NATO returned to the NATO-Russia Council in December 2009. In November 2010 Medvedev attended a NATO-Russia Council summit in Lisbon, where Russia agreed to allow countries of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force to transport military goods by air or land across Russia and Central Asia to Afghanistan.⁵² In view of both security and political difficulties with the usual transit route across Pakistan, this was a major help to the NATO countries fighting the Taliban. Later it was agreed to allow NATO to establish a transit hub in Russia, at Ulyanovsk. In 2010 Russia voted at the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on Iran and North Korea over the two countries' nuclear programmes, and in the case of Iran, to cancel a contract for the supply of S-300 surface-to-air missiles.

But it was in relation to the Arab Spring that Medvedev took his support for the West furthest, leading to an open clash with Putin. In March 2011 Russia abstained at the UN Security Council over a US-UK resolution establishing a no-fly-zone over parts of Libya, ostensibly to protect the civilian population in revolt against Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi from the regime's bombing reprisals. Putin favoured a veto, expecting that the resolution would presage a NATO military intervention in Libya which would ultimately result in regime change. Putin was defending Russia's considerable investments in Libya's oil industry and its military links with Gaddafi. When Putin openly accused the West of launching a 'crusade' against Libya, Medvedev retorted that such language was 'unacceptable'. Putin then appeared to climb down, saying, 'it is the Russian president who is in charge of foreign policy and there can be no divergence.'⁵³

Problems nevertheless emerged in the Reset. It turned out that Obama had not abandoned MD, but was moving its deployment to Romania. There was no positive response to Russia's request to build a joint, sectorally-based, system with NATO against the missiles of 'rogue states'. Medvedev made some bellicose remarks about deploying Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad province if MD went ahead. The Obama administration did not push human rights issues with anything approaching the zeal of the Bush administration, but politically it could not ignore them. The focus shifted from Chechnia to Moscow, with Khodorkovskii's second trial and continued murders and repression of journalists and lawyers. After some time, the murder of the Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitskii in a Moscow prison in December 2009 came to dominate these concerns.

Problems also developed in Russia's relations with the EU, at least in comparison with the situation after the war with Georgia. But there were problems here too. An effect of the January 2009 gas cut-off was to damage the reputations of both Russia and Ukraine. Partly in reaction to this, but more to the war with Georgia, the EU in 2009 developed the European Neighbourhood Policy in a new framework, aimed at former Soviet republics. This 'Eastern Partnership' (EaP) included Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, but excluded Russia and

⁵² 'NATO-Russia Council Joint Statement', 20 November 2010, http://eng.new.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/39/print, accessed 15 August 2011.

⁵³ Brian Whitmore, 'Battle Lines Being Drawn?', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 22 March 2011, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/2346539.html>, accessed 29 March 2011,

Central Asia. For Russia, this was unacceptable meddling in its zone of privileged interests. In November 2009 Medvedev published a draft Treaty on European Security, building on his Berlin speech, but this found little enthusiasm.⁵⁴ By insisting that no state should increase its security at the expense of others, it was seen as interfering with the sovereign right of states to join NATO. It was shuffled off to be discussed within the OSCE.⁵⁵ In relation to energy, Gazprom's Nord Stream pipeline to Germany opened in 2011, having overcome objections from Poland and the Baltic States and achieved recognition as an EU project. The corporation's South Stream project, however, was in direct opposition to the EU's Nabucco project, and the European Commission's 'Third Energy Package' was openly aimed at breaking up Gazprom's monopolistic ownership of pipelines.⁵⁶ In bilateral relations within Europe, the most important 'reset' was with Poland. Following the defeat of the Kaczynski brothers' nationalistic 'Law and Justice' Party and the victory of Civic Platform under Donald Tusk in the 2007 parliamentary elections in Poland, the way was prepared for reconciliation. Since Lech Kaczynski remained president, however, for protocol reasons it was Putin as prime minister who went to Katyn to express remorse for the Soviet massacre of Polish officers in 1940..

One might perhaps expect that the improvement of relations with the West would be at the expense of relations with China. Could Medvedev with his liberal rhetoric follow Putin's path of increasing relations with its totalitarian Communist-ruled neighbour? In fact the rhetoric of strategic partnership begun under Putin continued. Indeed, whereas Putin's first foreign visit after his inauguration in 2000 had been to Britain, via Belarus, Medvedev's first trip abroad was to China, via Kazakhstan. At the UN Security Council, China and Russia regularly voted together; Russia's influence over China's voting on Middle East issues ensured that China did not veto the resolutions mentioned above on Iran and Libya. The level of Russian arms sales to China fell, but plans to develop oil and gas pipelines proceeded. With the financial crisis in the West, in 2010 China overtook Germany, according to Russian official figures, as Russia's largest trade partner state. Medvedev made the first visit by a Russian or Soviet leader to the disputed Southern Kurile islands, the Japanese 'Northern Territories', leading to criticism in Tokyo. The main defence documents of this period - the 'National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020', May 2009, and the Military Doctrine of February 2010, were silent about the implications for Russian security of China's rapid peaceful rise.⁵⁷

As Nikita Lomagin points out, China as a security concern cannot be ignored indefinitely.⁵⁸ The balance of Russia's internal military deployments has moved

⁵⁴ 'European Security Treaty', Draft, 29 November 2009, Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, <http://www.mid.ru/ns-dvbr.nsf/dveurope/065fc3182ca460d1c325767f003073cc>, accessed 3 April 2013.

⁵⁵ For discussion of the treaty, Nikita Lomagin, 'Medvedev's "Fourteen Points": Russia's Proposal for a New European Security Architecture', in Kanet, *Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 181-203.

⁵⁶ Rikard Jozwiak, 'Russia Bristles at Europe's New Energy Policy', 14 April 2011, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/3557283.html>, accessed 28 June 2011.

⁵⁷ 'Strategiia natsional'noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda', 12 May 2009, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/1/99.html>, accessed 15 November 2011; 'Voennaia doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii', 5 February 2010, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/18/33.html>, accessed 15 November 2011.

⁵⁸ Lomagin, 'Medvedev's "Fourteen Points"', p. 193. See also Martin Kaczmarek, 'The Bear Watches the Dragon: The Russian Debate on China', Point of View no. 31, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW),

towards the East. The apparent paradox of Medvedev's plans for substantial acceleration in military spending, unveiled in 2011 when the Reset was still operating, might be partly explained by the Chinese factor, even at a time when joint exercises with China through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) were regularly taking place. A symbol of Medvedev's success in improving relations on all sides was the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany on 9 May 2010. Troops from America, Britain, France and Poland joined the Russian parade in Red Square, and the leaders of Germany and China joined the Russian leaders on the podium next to the Lenin Mausoleum.

Turning to Russia's policies within the CIS, probably the most important gain during this period was the victory of Viktor Yanukovich in the Ukrainian presidential election in February 2010. This reversed the consequences of the Orange Revolution, which had been the biggest disaster for Russian foreign policy during Putin's presidency. Russia in 2009-10 had better tactics than the all-out support for Yanukovich shown in 2004. Medvedev exploited the disputes within the Orange camp. In August 2009 he published an open letter to President Iushchenko. He condemned the Ukrainian leader for supporting Georgia in 2008, seeking to move Ukraine towards NATO accusing the USSR of genocide against the Ukrainian people in the famine of 1932-3, and making the anti-Soviet rebel Stepan Bandera Hero of Ukraine.⁵⁹ From September Medvedev boycotted Iushchenko, even refusing to speak to him at CIS Heads of State summits. Iushchenko came fourth in the first round of the presidential election; Russia made clear it was willing to work with whoever won the second round, Tymoshenko or Yanukovich. Notwithstanding the role that Tymoshenko had played in the Orange Revolution, there were even suggestions that she was Putin's preferred candidate following their cooperation to end the 2009 gas crisis. Yanukovich, however, was elected on the basis of the votes of the Russia-facing Eastern and Southern Ukraine, in February 2010. He immediately withdrew Ukraine's application to join NATO; and two months later, following negotiations with Medvedev, signed the Kharkiv accords. These extended the lease on the basing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol from 2017 to 2042, in exchange for cheaper gas. Gazprom was compensated out of the Russian state budget. This agreement would have the effect of keeping Russia out of NATO for as long as it ran. Yanukovich also allowed the Russia-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), to open an office in Kyiv, and a discussion began in the parliament as to whether Ukraine should join. At the same time Yanukovich resisted Medvedev's attempts to bring Ukrainian economic assets, in particular pipelines, under Russian control, and refused to join the Common Economic Space or the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.⁶⁰

Warsaw, February 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PW_31_EN_net.pdf, accessed 3 April 2013.

⁵⁹ Dmitrii Medvedev, 'Obrashchenie k Prezidentu Ukrainy Viktoru Iushchenko', 11 August 2009, President of Russia website, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/08/220743.shtml>, accessed 5 July 2013.

⁶⁰ Simon Pirani, Jonathan Stern and Katja Yafimava, 'The April 2010 Russo-Ukrainian Gas Agreement and its Implications for Europe', Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, NG 42, June 2010, http://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/NG_42.pdf, accessed 3 April 2013; James Sherr, 'The Mortgaging of Ukraine's Independence', August 2010, Chatham House, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Briefing Paper, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/109440>, accessed 3 April 2013.

Not all was smooth with the Customs Union, established in July 2010. Seeking to reduce his dependence on Russia, Belarus president Aliaksandr Lukashenka made overtures to the EU prior to the December 2010 presidential election, promising a free election and the observance of human rights. After the election, however, most of the opposition candidates were arrested and protest demonstrations were bloodily dispersed. The EU was forced to condemn Lukashenka's actions and he had no option, in order to continue to receive subsidies from someone to prop up his stagnant regime, but to turn back to Russia. On schedule, the Customs Union became the Common Economic Space in January 2012. Lukashenka's toing and froing did not prevent the Russian foreign ministry from joining Western condemnation of Lukashenka's human rights policies. When Yanukovich followed Lukashenka's path and had Tymoshenko jailed in August 2011, Russia again joined the Western criticism (particularly as she was being formally accused over her gas deal with Putin).

On Moldova, Russia's position did not get worse during the Medvedev presidency, despite the election in 2009 of a government led by the 'Alliance for European Integration' and the fall of the Communist president Vladimir Voronin. In June 2010, provisionally accepting Medvedev's proposal for an EU-Russia Security Council, German Chancellor Angela Merkel insisted that he tackle the issue of Transdniestria in order to show good faith. The result was the establishment of what was called the Meseberg process.⁶¹ The defeat of Igor Smirnov in the Transdniestrian presidential elections in December 2011 undoubtedly removed an obstacle to progress, but it remains unclear what role Russia played in this.⁶² It seemed that Medvedev would not allow a solution unless it provided for the continuation of a Russian base in Moldova and a commitment from Chisinau not to join NATO. This was in line with his concept of a 'sphere of privileged interests'; one of the key interests here was that of the Russian military.

In Central Asia, Kazakhstan remained Russia's leading partner. Medvedev showed the importance he attached to President Nursultan Nazarbaev by making his country the first that he visited outside Russia after his inauguration, on the way to Beijing.⁶³ Kazakhstan remained a reliable member of the Eurasian Economic Community and then the Customs Union and Common Economic Space, and of the CSTO. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, given the low priority of human rights under Obama, moved closer to Washington and proved an increasingly restless member of the CSTO. The popular uprising against President Kurmanbek Bakiev of Kyrgyzstan in April 2010 represented an opportunity for Moscow to increase its influence and bring about the closure of the American base at Manas. Following the outbreak of ethnic violence in Osh, however, Medvedev rejected the appeal of the new temporary leader, Roza Otunbaeva, to send troops to restore order.

⁶¹ 'Memorandum po itogam vstrechi Prezidenta Rossii D. Medvedeva i Federal'nogo kantslera Germanii A. Merkel' 4-5 iyunia 2010 goda, g. Mezeberg', 5 June 2010, President of Russia website, http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/575, accessed 28 February 2013.

⁶² Nicu Popescu and Leonid Litra, 'Transnistria: A Bottom-up Solution', European Council on Foreign Relations, ECFR 63, September 2012, http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/transnistria_a_bottom_up_solution, accessed 3 April 2013.

⁶³ There is insufficient space here to discuss Russia's relations in Central Asia adequately. See my 'Russia, NATO and the "War on Terror": Competition and Co-operation in Central Asia after 11 September 2001', in Oktay F. Tanrisever (ed.), *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11*, NATO Science for Peace Series, Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2013, pp. 129-43.

This might be attributed to the fear of appearing in the West, less than two years after the Georgia war, as an aggressive military power; or it may have been the fear of being sucked into an ethnic conflict from which it would be hard to get out. The impression was given, however, that Russia was not living up to its responsibilities in its region of privileged interests. After America announced that it would withdraw its forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, Russian policy makers became increasingly concerned about what might follow, and the implications for the security of Central Asia and of Russia itself. It seemed unavoidable, however, that either the CSTO or the SCO, or possibly both, would have an increased role in stabilizing the region after the NATO retreat.

Finally, one must note Medvedev's strenuous efforts to find a settlement in Nagorny Karabakh. Russia's only CSTO ally in Transcaucasia remained Armenia, but in order to isolate Saakashvili's Georgia Medvedev needed better relations with Azerbaijan. Perhaps more importantly, Russia wanted to ensure that Azerbaijan's gas reached Europe via Russia rather than via Georgia and Turkey. At the Kazan summit in June 2011, hopes were raised of an agreed peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, brokered by Medvedev. But there was no breakthrough, as neither side was persuaded to make the necessary concessions. Medvedev's final attempt, in Sochi in January 2012, also failed to bring results. Perhaps the most that could be said for Medvedev's efforts was that the conflict did not unfreeze, unlike in Georgia in 2008; but that also reflected the caution of the Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders.

It seems clear that in this period, Medvedev was the key decision-maker in Russian foreign policy. While the differences between Medvedev and Putin were generally not huge, in some areas they were significant. Putin did not oppose the 'Reset' as such, but he did not want to take it as far as Medvedev did. For the president, the West was an essential part of his programme for Russia's modernization; hence he was not prepared to jeopardize Russia's relations with the West by vetoing the Anglo-American UN resolution on Libya. Putin was not prepared to go so far as to legitimize NATO action against one of Russia's friends. On the WTO, too, Medvedev's desire to join this international regulatory body for the benefits it would bring to Russia's modernization trumped Putin's desire to first pursue integration in post-Soviet space. The other major success of the period, the reversal of the results of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the extension of the lease of Sevastopol, was an issue on which Putin and Medvedev shared the same aim.

September 2011 to May 2012. The Rhetoric

After Medvedev announced in September 2011 that Putin would be the Kremlin's candidate for the presidency the following May, foreign leaders knew that henceforth they had to deal with Putin directly if they wished to make lasting deals. Medvedev's influence plummeted externally as much as internally. On 4 October Putin published an article in *Izvestiia* (formerly the newspaper of the government of the USSR) outlining his idea that the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan could become a 'Eurasian Economic Union' and then a 'Eurasian

Union'.⁶⁴ This was to be the main foreign policy plank of his electoral campaign, appealing to nostalgia for the Soviet Union. It appears indeed to be the case that economic integration in the Customs Union has been proceeding and is moving towards the establishment of an a Eurasian Economic Union by 2015.⁶⁵ The proposal for a political union, however, has much less attraction for Belarus and Kazakhstan.

At the same time relations with the United States, at least rhetorically, were deteriorating. On Russian television on 23 November, Medvedev threatened that if America did not give Russia legally binding guarantees that the Missile Defence system would never be used against the country, Moscow might withdraw from the New START treaty, deploy missiles in Kaliningrad oblast' and create the capacity to destroy the Missile Defence system.⁶⁶ This was eleven days before the State Duma elections, and it recalled Putin's harnessing of anti-Western rhetoric prior to the 2007 elections.⁶⁷

Following the State Duma elections of December 2011 came a wave of protests, unprecedented since Putin's rise to power, against electoral fraud. Taken by surprise, Putin contradictorily praised the civic awareness of the protestors and blamed the US embassy for paying them. The OSCE observers, and EU and American leaders criticised the conduct of the elections and the treatment of the protestors. This coincided with a growing awareness in the West of the significance of the Magnitskii case and what it revealed about the criminalized nature of parts of the Russian state and of some of the group around Putin. One week before his election, in February 2012, Putin published an article on foreign policy in *Moskovskie novosti*. He accused the USA and NATO of 'stereotypes of bloc thinking', with NATO expansion and MD infrastructure. 'The Americans', he wrote, 'have become obsessed with securing for themselves absolute invulnerability.' In contrast, with China there was 'an unprecedentedly high level of trust between the leaders of the two countries'. He rejected Western calls for a UN Security Council resolution to allow foreign intervention against Bashar al-Asad's regime. 'No one should be allowed to implement a 'Libyan scenario' in Syria.' In an undisguised reference to his spat with Medvedev the previous year, Putin wrote: 'Taught by bitter experience, we are against passing resolutions at the UN Security Council which could be taken as a signal for military intervention in the processes inside Syria.' Needless to say, on this Putin's voice now prevailed. Notably, there was virtually no mention of the CIS states in this article, perhaps because Putin no longer considered them as foreign.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ V.V. Putin, Stat'ia v gazete "Izvestiia", 'Novyi integratsionnyi proekt dlia Evrazii - budushchee, kotoroe rozhdetsia segodnia', 4 October 2011, website of Prime Minister, <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/16622/print/>, accessed 19 January 2012.

⁶⁵ Evgeny Vinokurov, Alexander Libman, 'Post-Soviet Integration Breakthrough: Why the Customs Union has more Chances than its Predecessors', 24 June 2012, *Russia in Global Affairs*, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/print/number/Post-Soviet-Integration-Breakthrough-15580>, accessed 3 July 2012; Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, 'Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?', Chatham House, Briefing Paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, August 2012, REF BP 2012/01, pp. 4-8.

⁶⁶ 'Russian President Threatens to Target U.S. Missile Shield', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 23 November 2011, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/24399845.html>, accessed 25 November 2011.

⁶⁷ See my 'Russia, the West and the 2007-2008 Electoral Cycle', pp. 5, 12-13.

⁶⁸ V.V. Putin, Iz stat'ii v gazete "Moskovskie novosti", 'Rossiia i meniaiushchiisia mir', 27 February 2012, website of Prime Minister, <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/18252/print/>, accessed 2 March 2012.

Following Putin's inauguration as president in May 2012, he immediately took some measures which together appeared to distance him somewhat from Medvedev's foreign policy. He signed a decree 'On measures to implement the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation'. The largest section of this concerned cooperation with the other former Soviet republics.⁶⁹ Putin took Ushakov, who had been his foreign policy adviser when he had been prime minister, with him into the Kremlin, while Sergei Prikhod'ko, who had been the foreign policy adviser to presidents from El'tsin onwards, went with Medvedev into the new prime minister's office.⁷⁰ The foreign ministry was ordered to draft a new foreign policy concept. Putin snubbed Obama by not attending the G8 summit in Washington that month. All these measures indicated real differences between Putin and Medvedev over foreign policy.

Conclusion

During Medvedev's presidency, two changes inside Russia had important effects on foreign policy. Medvedev's rise to the top position did not lead to a fundamental alteration in foreign policy, but he was more open to the ideas of political liberalization than Putin. This facilitated his relations with the West and allowed the Reset to happen, while his pragmatism allowed the strategic partnership with China to be maintained. The second change, the announcement that Putin was coming back, was followed by rigged elections and protests. Since these were blamed on the West, relations deteriorated. Putin and Medvedev shared a belief in Russia as a great power, and a pragmatic outlook. Both saw it as a priority to stop further NATO enlargement into the former Soviet Union. Within this, though, Medvedev leaned more towards collaboration with the West, and Putin leaned more towards Eurasian integration, based on the CIS states.

While in his first few months in power Medvedev was tied down by Putin's policies, by early 2009 he was in charge of foreign policy. Differences between the tandem emerged into the open over the World Trade Organization and Libya, and in both cases Medvedev's policy was implemented. Only after the announcement that Putin would return as president did Medvedev have to play second fiddle again.

The period demonstrates that Russian foreign policy is reactive rather than pro-active. The major change in foreign policy came in response to change in Washington, the idea of the 'Reset', which led to a substantial improvement in relations with the United States and with almost all other Western states. On a smaller scale, the improvement of relations with Poland came after the election of Civic Platform, willing to overcome the existing tensions.

Despite the deterioration of relations with the West at the end of the period, one can identify at least five major foreign-policy achievements of Medvedev's presidency. The war with Georgia at the very least postponed NATO enlargement into

⁶⁹ V. Putin, 'Ukaz prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii. O merakh po realizatsii vneshnepoliticheskogo kursa Rossiiskoi Federatsii', 7 May 2012, <http://graph.document.kremlin.ru/page.aspx?1610881>, accessed 4 December 2012.

⁷⁰ Dan Peleshchuk, 'New Presidential Administration Raises Questions over Ruling Tandem', RIA-Novosti, 22 May 2012, <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20120522/173612250.html>, accessed 4 December 2012.

post-Soviet space, as it was clear that the alliance could not give a credible guarantee to Russia's neighbours. Secondly, the defeat of the leaders of the Orange Revolution allowed Russia to extend the lease of Sevastopol, and keep Ukraine out of NATO until 2042. Thirdly, the 'New START' treaty restored dynamism to Russian-US relations and raised Russia's international prestige. Fourth, entry to the WTO, while unlikely to have a huge effect on the Russian economy, nevertheless enhanced Russia's international prestige and allowed it to play a role as a rule-maker in international trade negotiations. Fifth, at the same time the implementation of the Common Economic Space with Belarus and Kazakhstan appeared to be working to plan, and likely to attract Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as new members in the future, even though it was unlikely to develop into Putin's 'Eurasian Union'.

Peter J. S. Duncan is Senior Lecturer in Russian Politics and Society at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies.

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