

## **RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN POST 9/11 PERIOD: FROM DIPLOMATIC RETREAT TO RESURGENCE**

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### **Introduction**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 was a watershed event in the recent history. Not only did it end the Cold War conclusively, it also changed the bi-polar world order. The systemic changes unleashed by the implosion of the Soviet superpower are still being analysed. The Russian Federation emerged as successor state to the USSR. She had to struggle long and hard to withstand the birth pangs of its new socio-political identity. The Russian Federation is still adjusting to the dictates of its socio-political identity and geo-strategic structure - and so is the world at large. During the decade following her birth, the Russian Federation remained beset with huge political, economic and psycho-social problems. During this period, the Russian Federation had to drastically reduce the geographical scope of its international activities. A decade after end of the Soviet Union, the world witnessed yet another watershed event - the terrorist attacks on the American mainland on September 11, 2001. The strategic complexion of the globe changed yet again in less than a decade.

The international and national dynamics seem to have changed for better for the Russian Federation in the post 9/11 period. The relative political stability at home and astronomical price rise of oil and gas have provided a great boost to the Russian economy-- thus enabling Russia to reassert its great power role endowed to her by geography, strategic power and structure of the international system. At the same time, US overstretch in its Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has provided strategic space to Russia to pursue an assertive foreign policy, as is evident from the Russian intervention in Georgia in August 2008.

### **Problem Statement**

The post-9/11 interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have

shown that the United States has not been able to turn its military preponderance into strategic advantage. This has resulted in the weakening of unipolarity and loss of United States “strategic authority”. A politically stable and economically vibrant Russian Federation has moved into the space created by the “loss of United States’ traction” in the world affairs. In the post 9/11 period, therefore, Russia’s foreign policy is clearly assertive, and is focused on reclaiming her great-power role. For Pakistan, this situation provides an opportunity to diversify its strategic engagements.

### **Theoretical Basis of Russian Resurgence**

The scholars of international relations agree that the great powers have the largest impact on international politics. “The fortunes of all states – great powers and smaller powers alike – are determined by those with greatest capability”.<sup>1</sup> Great powers are determined largely on the basis of their relative geographic, economic and military capability; and their ability to shape the international environment. Russia is a great power on many accounts. It is the biggest country in the world, and is 1.8 times greater in size than the United States of America. Russia is a strategic superpower alongwith the United States and possesses a robust Triad of nuclear forces. It is the only Eurasian power in the world. In Europe, it is the biggest European power<sup>2</sup>. In Northeast Asia, it is one of the great powers alongwith China and Japan. In Central Asia, it is again a great power which influences the Central Asian Republics (CARs), Afghanistan, and South Asia including Iran, Pakistan and India. With huge hydrocarbon resources, especially the gas, Russia is an “energy superpower”<sup>3</sup>. Its geographic location gives it a natural advantage of being an oil-gas conduit to Central and Western Europe and Southeast Asia. Russia presently has the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest gold and foreign exchange reserves. It has a robust economy which is booming and is based on a firm resource base. It is the only country in the world which can challenge the United States of America militarily, and has the advantages of Eurasian landmass and physical location in the world’s heartland. The United States on the other hand, is an “offshore power”, and the “stopping power of water” is a big hindrance to its power projection in Europe, Asia and Africa.<sup>4</sup>

According to dictates of the structural realist theory, it is natural for the Russian Federation to enter into security competition with the United States of America. John J. Mearsheimer has argued that such a security competition among the great powers has been going on since 1792; and has continued even after the Cold War. Russia has the capability to thwart a US invasion of its homeland, has power projection capability comparable to the United States, especially in Europe and Asia, because of its geographic contiguity and expanse.

Kenneth N. Waltz in his scholarly article ‘Intimations of Multipolarity’ has analyzed the unipolar world order on the basis of structural theory. According to him, unipolarity is the “least durable of international configurations”. It is because the unipolar power takes on too many tasks and responsibilities beyond its own borders, thus weakening itself in the long-run. Based on this argument, Waltz had predicted erosion of American unipolarity in 2002 when he observed,

American aspiration to freeze historical development by working to keep the world unipolar is doomed. In the not very long run, the task will exceed America’s economic, military and political resources; and the very effort to maintain a hegemonic position is the surest way to undermine it. The effort to maintain dominance stimulates other countries to work to overcome it<sup>5</sup>.

The other reason for short lived unipolarity, according to Waltz is that even if the unipolar power behaved with restraint and moderation, weaker powers would still worry about its future behaviour. Faced by specter of “unbalanced power”, weaker powers hectically try to increase their own strength. In such a competitive situation, states with geographic, demographic and economic potentials of a great power cannot refrain from becoming a great power. “For a great capability country, not to become a great power is a structural anomaly”.<sup>6</sup> The theoretical frameworks of Mearsheimer and Waltz, best explain the reasons for erosion of American power, They also explain the development of the Russian power commensurate with her national capabilities and status in the international order. Russia has resurged due to erosion of American power, as indeed, due to the development of her own inherent power

potential

### **Russian Foreign Policy in Post-Soviet Period (1991-2001)**

The Soviet disintegration altered the structure of international system from bi-polarity to unipolarity. The United States became the sole superpower with ability to intervene in any part of the globe. Initially, the United States endeavored to establish herself as a responsible hegemon with emphasis on constitutionalism, legitimacy and efficacy.<sup>7</sup> She concluded international arms control and disarmament agreements with the Russian Federation. She also spearheaded the economic and technical assistance to Russia for safe and controlled dismantling of nuclear weapons stationed in the ex-Soviet republics. At the same time, the American abandoning of Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 had resulted in the Talibanization of Afghanistan in mid-90s, and this country became a haven for the militant non-state actors who had the global reach. Motivated by its history and ethno-religious grievances, Chechnya started to challenge the Russian domination in 1994. Simultaneously, Islamic resurgence in the CARs, especially Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan started to threaten Russian near abroad in the Central Asia.

In the years following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russian Federation remained compulsively focused on the domestic situation. Adjusting to new socio-political and strategic realities, and managing the issues shaped by an imploded empire, was a mammoth task for the Russian leadership. The political chaos, loss of identity and prestige, and disorientation caused by the abrupt break up must have been traumatic for the Russian masses. Repair of the political system, foundational adjustments in the economic system, retrieval of nuclear weapons and their dismantling was a Herculean task, that consumed the best efforts of the Russian leadership, and kept its foreign policy completely slaved to the internal situation. Consequently, the Russian Federation chose to curtail its global role in this turbulent period. Such a “diplomatic retreat” had been most conspicuous in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia<sup>8</sup>. The foreign policy goals set by

the first Russian Federation Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev in 1992 amply indicated that “all Russian foreign policy was indeed domestic”<sup>9</sup>. In the first post-Cold War decade, therefore, the Russian position in the international community was largely determined by its domestic compulsions.

Since the beginning of 1992, Russian political elite had always wanted to strengthen the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and use its multilateral forum to retain her influence in the erstwhile Soviet space. By mid-1993, all former Soviet republics, except the Baltics, had become CIS members, and a broad consensus had emerged among the Russian leaders to form a sort of ‘Russian Monroe Doctrine’<sup>10</sup>. This consensus was based on the intense domestic political pressure based on historical legacy of the Russian Empire and on the need to ensure safety and protection of over 27 million Russians left in the former republics. President Yeltsin repeatedly talked of Russia’s vital national interests in cessation of armed conflicts on the territories of the former empire, and Russia’s special responsibility as guarantor of peace and stability in this region. Earlier in 1992, Russia had entered into a Collective Security Treaty with six states including Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Its purpose was to be the protector of peace and security in its Central Asian near abroad. Russia demonstrated its resolve to protect its Western and Central Asian near abroad, by sending its troops to quell ethnic conflicts in Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia and in Tajikistan in 1993.

Russian opposition to NATO’s eastwards expansion reflects Russian anxiety to its security and the fear of being encircled. In response to the Russian opposition to its expansion, NATO announced a plan named ‘Partnership for Peace’ in January 1994. The plan was open to all the former Communist states in Europe, Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union. It offered various forms of military cooperation, including joint exercises, the discussion of military doctrine, and seeking standardization of military equipment. The opposition to this plan in Russia was intense. On 22 July 1994, the State Duma attempted to block Russia’s membership to the Partnership for Peace. Subsequently,

NATO worked out a formal 'Individual Partnership Program' (IPP) document specifying areas in which Russia could cooperate. After great hesitation, and persuasion by the West, Russia signed the IPP on 31 May 1995. There is little doubt that Russia was cajoled into signing the IPP, because at that time Russia was politically and economically weak, and was facing challenges in Chechnya and insecurity in the CARs.

Strobe Talbott has rightly commented that under Yeltsin, a reformist post-Soviet Russia accepted the inter-republic frontiers of the old USSR as international borders; it withdrew troops from the Baltic states; it cooperated with the West in ensuring the denuclearization of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine; it entered in a collaborative relationship with an expanding NATO; and it assisted in ending ethnic cleansing and slaughter in the Balkans.<sup>11</sup> In the first decade after the Soviet breakup, despite turbulence, turmoil and grave challenges, Russia avoided becoming internationally isolated and created a favourable international disposition by drastically reducing military spendings; became a member of the major global economic institutions like IMF and the World Bank; Russia also inculcated special politico-economic relationship with China in this decade. In the last years of Yeltsin era, Russian domestic plight was at its highest level, when Yeltsin brought in Vladimir Putin as the Prime Minister in June 1999. He became the acting president after Yeltsin's resignation in Dec 1999. In the subsequent elections held in March 2000, he was elected as the President of the Russian Federation by a majority vote. Since then, Putin has aimed at re-establishing Russia as a major international power.

### **International Order Post-9/11**

Effects of 9/11 on international order are still being analysed. Some consider 9/11 as an event which has profoundly affected the behaviour of the world's "only superpower". The event is actually a watershed in the American history. It has had deep imprints on the psyche of the American people. America has changed after 9/11 attacks - both in its internal dynamics and its external behaviour. The US National Security Strategy (NSS) of September 2002 clearly depicts this American mindset. Given its power and the mindset, the

effects of American behaviour on the international order have been dramatic as well as traumatic. The main impact of 9/11 on international system was to dislodge the American commitment to liberty, constitutional norms and practices. The Neocons, strongly influenced by their sympathy with Israel and the Middle East oil, argued that the Middle East region represented the core of international politics, and the United State must dominate it at any cost.<sup>12</sup>

When the United States launched operations against Afghanistan in Oct 2001, and attacked Iraq in 2003, it typified that militarism and not the diplomacy and political engagement had become the US grand strategy. By so doing, the United State gradually lost its moral high ground and legitimacy to shape a global order. It also paved the way for its “imperial overstretch” as was to be confirmed by the results of both the wars so far. In 2002, Joseph Nye had predicted the erosion of American pre-eminence due to arrogance and indifference to the American values<sup>13</sup>. The opening article “Perspectives” in the Strategic Survey 2007 makes a very revealing observation on the current global scenario:

The effects of the profound loss of authority suffered by the United States since its invasion of Iraq were felt throughout the world over the past year. The weak pillar in the world’s security architecture was plain to see...Meanwhile, Russia also sought to move into the vacuum left by the United States: President Vladimir Putin attempted to re-arrest his country’s identity as a global power through verbal onslaughts directed at Washington – while at the same time using Russia’s abundant gas and oil assets to the best diplomatic and financial advantage.<sup>14</sup>

The United State seems to have failed to shape the environment both in Iraq and in Afghanistan. In Iraq, the United States has suffered a colossal loss of moral high ground as well. There was no justification for this war. And, the recent acceptance of President Bush’ top aides about the faulty intelligence is even more dangerous to the image of a superpower, whose intelligence and security apparatus is unable to collate accurate intelligence, and the Government goes to war on the basis of faulty intelligence.. The

tragic episodes of Abu Ghuraib and Guantanamo Bay manifest the decay of American values. The United States has not won its war against terror- neither in Afghanistan nor elsewhere in the world. Many scholars agree that the United States is more in danger of terrorists attacks today than 2001; and the world is a more precarious place now than what it was eight years ago. The United States' imperial overstretch is showing itself quite clearly. In 2002-2003, the United States' defence budget was around \$230 billion. In 2009, it is more than \$611 billion<sup>15</sup>. The American economy has experienced the worst slow down in its recent history. The days of the American supremacy seem to be over<sup>16</sup>, as the United States is no more an economic superpower. The weakening of American authority has surely provided space to the Russian Federation as has been aptly observed by the strategic community<sup>17</sup>.

### **Russian Foreign Policy Post-9/11**

Moscow, in the meanwhile has capitalized on the strategic and economic space available to it after the 9/11 period. It has achieved internal political stability, established itself as a mature and dependable economic partner, and above all, provided an alternate model of socio-political behaviour<sup>18</sup>. Russia's changes in foreign policy since 11 September, therefore, are based on calculations of priority and interest, where risk is distinguished from threat and real needs are separated from unfounded ambitions. In the period prior to 9/11, Russia had strained relationship with the United States as she had intervened in Kosovo much to the dislike by Russia; had accused Russia of war crimes in Chechnya, and had undertaken the largest-ever expansion of NATO. Despite United States arrogant behaviour, Russia extended support to her after the terrorist attacks. President Putin made an immediate phone call to President Bush, showing Russian support for the United States. Putin also supported the US military action in Afghanistan. His offers of military assistance to the Afghan Northern Alliance, the use of Russian airspace for humanitarian aid, and his role in persuading Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to support the campaign were indicative of the Russian support. Irina Isakova argues that Russia increased its support to US after the 9/11 attacks, because it legitimized the Russian use of force against Chechens, which ultimately saved



Russia from an imminent threat to her integration.<sup>19</sup> This point of view has merit.

Since his election as the Russian President, Putin set out his goals of modernizing Russia and raising living standards while aiming for more stable democracy and ability to pursue strategic interests abroad. Putin visited USA, UK, China, India and many other countries to consolidate Russia's strategic and economic relations, and made substantial economic, defence and space technology contracts. Similarly, President Putin visited Saudi Arabia in February 2007- the first ever visit of any Russian leader to that country. A \$25 billion "Gas Initiative" and \$ 03 billion deal on energy projects spread over five years was signed. Russia also made the highest level contacts with Iran, EU and Latin American countries, and successfully concluded many multi-billion dollar arms and energy deals. In the post 9/11 period, Russia has successfully used its foreign policy to gain economic strength. This course is acknowledged by the Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stating that "Russian foreign policy today is such that for the first time in its history, Russia is beginning to protect its national interest by using its competitive advantages"<sup>20</sup>.

Strobe Talbott has also stated that Russia has adopted a more competitive posture in its dealings with the West and has tended to throw its weight around in its own neighborhood. "Russia is a resurgent nation-state with a chip on its shoulder, a bundle of petrodollars in its pockets, and the whip hand of being a major gas supplier. The Russians are trying to leverage their oil and gas wealth into both economic and political power"<sup>21</sup>.

Steven Pifer, an expert on Russian affairs at the Brookings Institute, who served as the US ambassador to Ukraine during the Clinton administration, observes that Moscow's foreign policy has, over the past several years adopted an increasingly assertive tone. "To put the Kremlin's message in a slogan: Russia is back"<sup>22</sup>. Georgia, in August 2008, experienced the real size of the Russian chip. The speed of the Russian military retaliation to the Georgian attack on South Ossetia's capital was breathtaking. These operations and Moscow's subsequent decision to recognize South Ossetia and

Abkhazia as independent states reflect the Russian resolve against Georgia's pro-Western foreign policy course. It was aimed to send a message not just to Georgia, but to other Russian neighbors, EU and the United states<sup>23</sup>.

Sergei. Lavrov in an interview at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in September, 2008, said that the Russian action to stop the aggression of Georgia against South Ossetia was firmly rooted in the right for self-defense as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. He observed that the military bases in Bulgaria and Romania, the outer space plans, putting new radars in the Baltic countries, and similar plans on the eastern borders of Russia and missile defense projects-are all being monitored and responded to by the Russian leaders<sup>24</sup>. Russia is certainly back in the international arena and its behaviour is that of a great power.

### **Russian Foreign Policy Concept – 2008**

The Russian Foreign Policy Concept was originally approved by President Putin on 28 June 2000. Importantly, it was followed and implemented by him in letter and spirit. President Medvedev has approved and signed an updated Concept in mid-2008, which actually supplements the Concept approved by Putin, who, even as Prime Minister of Russia, wields the ultimate power. The document is an excellent expose of the Russian foreign policy. Its expression and content is befitting the status of a great power; and it is very articulate in its aims and objectives<sup>25</sup>. As per the Concept, there are six chief objectives of the Russian foreign policy:-

- “To ensure national security, to preserve and strengthen its sovereignty and territorial integrity, to achieve strong positions of authority in the world community that best meet the interests of the Russian Federation as one of influential centers in the modern world”.
- “To create favorable external conditions for the modernization of Russia, transformation of its economy along innovation lines, enhancement of the

living standards, consolidation of society, strengthening of the foundations of the constitutional system, rule of law and democratic institutions, realization of human rights and freedoms and, as a consequence, ensuring competitiveness of the country in a globalizing world”.

- “To influence global processes to ensure formation of a just and democratic world order, based on collectiveness in finding solutions to international problems and supremacy of international law, first of all provisions of the UN Charter”.
- “To promote good neighborly relations with bordering States, to assist in eliminating the existing hotbeds of tension and conflicts in the regions adjacent to the Russian Federation and other areas of the world and to prevent emergence of the new ones”.
- “To provide comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad.”
- “To promote an objective image of the Russian Federation globally as a democratic state committed to a socially oriented market economy and an independent foreign policy”.

### **Sphere of Influence**

Of all the national interests, none has been articulated more frequently, clearly, and with greater consistency throughout the post-Soviet period as well as post-9/11 period than the consolidation of a Russian sphere of influence among the former countries of the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> Establishing Russian pre-eminence throughout the former Soviet Union is central to Russia’s political, security and economic interests. The Georgian episode provides a convincing proof of the same. Politically, securing Russia’s position as the of power and influence in its near abroad communicates prestige and confirms Russia as a great power and a pole of the multipolar world. The dictates of balance-of-power and the realist thinking in international relations call Russia to maintain a security belt around

its periphery, made up of states compliant with Russian policy preferences. Russia does not like the idea of these states being pulled into the orbits of other powers like NATO. Russia considers this to be detrimental to its national interest. This has been aptly put in its Foreign Policy Concept<sup>27</sup>.

“Development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS Member States constitutes a priority area of Russia’s foreign policy...To achieve these goals Russia will...promote in every possible way the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as a key instrument to maintain stability and ensure security in the CIS area focusing on adapting the CSTO as a multifunctional integration body to the changing environment, as well as on ensuring capability of the CSTO Member States to take prompt and effective joint actions...”

Active Russian opposition to the popular pro-democracy movements, or ‘color revolutions’, in neighboring Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004 and Kazakhstan in 2005, indicate that Russian policy-makers and analysts don’t believe in the democratic quality of these movements. They maintain that they were essentially chaotic, and dangerous; and movements like these could lead to instability in the Russia’s doorstep and spheres of influence.

### **EU and NATO’s Eastward Expansion**

The membership of all the former Warsaw Pact and Baltic states in NATO and the European Union has altered the political geography of Europe and the dynamics of Russia-EU relations. What was once Moscow’s extended security belt is now NATO’s ‘in area’, and the EU. Countries like Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia are eager participants in a wide variety of NATO-sponsored activities designed to expand the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Some have openly embraced the goal of joining the EU and NATO. The Russian Foreign Policy Concept is quite explicit on the issue. “...Russia maintains its negative attitude towards the expansion of NATO, notably to the plans of admitting Ukraine and Georgia to the membership in the alliance, as well as to bringing the NATO military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders”<sup>28</sup>.

The expansion of EU and NATO has created ample opportunities for tension. The Russian intervention in Georgia, however, is likely to have a sobering effect on the American and European enthusiasm; especially on NATO's eastward expansion.

### **Economic Interests and Energy Export**

The Russian transition to free market economic system and globalization has been surprisingly rapid.<sup>29</sup> Russian economy has experienced an average growth rate of 7% for last nine years (till 2008). Its federal budget has been in surplus since 2000; the surplus was nearly \$40 billion in 2007. Her foreign currency reserves have exceeded \$580 billion in mid -2008, and the foreign investments have been substantial. The economy has greatly benefited from a fairly stable political system since the last nine years, with young and dynamic leadership. This leadership is dedicated to establish Russia at its rightful place in the world and skillfully use its foreign policy tools to boost Russia's economic capacity. There has been substantial reduction in poverty; and Russia has paid back all its sovereign debts of the Soviet era to the Paris Club and the IMF. The astronomical rise in the oil and gas prices till the beginning of 2008 has been a great boon for its economy. Russia is the second largest oil producer after Saudi Arabia, and the largest exporter of natural gas in the world. Moscow has sought to develop new pipelines routes from Kazakhstan and the Caspian Basin through Russia to Europe and China, and has endeavored to block the Western pipeline projects, which are trying to circumvent Russia in the same area.

Energy exports to Europe are the cornerstone of Russia's economic wellbeing, as well its trump card in relation to the other major powers. Control over pipelines to key markets constitutes a critical Russian interest, and she has also been largely successful in negotiating new pipeline projects.<sup>30</sup> Friendly and compliant governments on its periphery are essential to boost Russia's economic security and energy exports. Oil and gas exports are at the heart of the country's economic revival, and the country's proud claim to the status of "energy superpower". Russian officials and energy companies view Central Asian gas reserves as the critical

asset to boost the domestic production. Russia's current near-monopoly on access to Central Asian exports also gives it strategic leverage with supplier nations in Central Asia, as well as the European consumers downstream. Russia's intensive diplomacy in Central Asia in May 2007 was a signal of Russia's interest in locking in its access to this energy source. Preventing the construction of pipelines to Europe outside its own territory constitutes an important Russian objective. Moscow's endeavors to form the "Gas Opec" along with Qatar and Iran reflect the Russian resolve to regulate the energy supplies<sup>31</sup>.

### **Middle East and the Islamic World**

Relations with the Islamic world are important to Russia, and represent a major challenge for its foreign policy too. Russia has its own sizeable Muslim minority, estimated at 15% of its total population. Russian Muslims are no longer isolated from their co-religionists abroad, as they were during the Soviet era, and, they have experienced Islamic revival much like the rest of the Muslim world<sup>32</sup>. Although Russia has important economic concerns in the Middle East (energy and defence equipment trade), its main concern there is likely to remain security. The region's further destabilization is something that most Russian analysts view as potentially posing a threat to Russian security. Russian policy has thus been aimed at minimizing volatility and avoiding destabilization. This policy has entailed opposition to the war in Iraq, as a cause of greater regional instability; obtaining membership in the Organization of Islamic Countries in order to project the image of Russia as a friend of Islam; maintaining close relationship with Iran; and other steps intended to position Russia in Middle Eastern minds as occupying a respected place in the international arena. Putin's visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan in February 2007 was with the same objectives<sup>33</sup>.

### **China, India and South Asia**

Currently, Russian-Chinese relations appear to be excellent and improving, with the two powers jointly presiding over the SCO and professing a commonality of interests in central Asia and

elsewhere. The two also share the multipolar perspective of the world order. China has purchased high-tech military equipment from Russia. Given the structural realist dictates, their interests may not remain as complementary in the long run. However, both powers have much more in common than the divergences; and the maturity is likely to prevail. Cultural affinities, too, are sure to play a positive role in determining the Russia-China relationship. India, on the other hand, has special place in Russia's foreign policy. The relation between the two countries have substantial historical and strategic context. Russia continues to be the major source of Indian defence and space related equipment. The Troika of Russia-India-China has been prominently mentioned in the Russian Foreign Policy Concept. Its promotion forms one of the cardinal objectives of the Russian foreign policy. It would be generally correct to say that Russia's South Asia policy is also defined in terms of Indo-Soviet relationship. Both have convergence of views on the situation in Afghanistan, and share intelligence on the terrorist activities on regular basis.

### **Opportunity for Pakistan**

Pakistan has been historically unenthusiastic in maintaining substantial relationship with Russia. In the current context, Pakistan-Russia relations have never recovered from the aftermath of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Although, Pakistani Presidents from Zia to Musharraf have paid visits to Moscow, the relationship has lacked trust, credibility and continuity. This trust and credibility deficit seems to have been precipitated by the lack of commitment from Pakistan's side. Pakistan's political elite seems to have less than adequate appreciation of the potential that exists in Russia. It seems to be too concerned with the possible negative reaction of the United State to the fraternal and closer relationship with Russia. May be, Pakistani larders and policy-makers need to appreciate that international politics is not an 'either/or' relationship. India is an excellent example of multi-vectorised relationships with all the great powers, and of accruing immense political and economic benefits from them. The intelligentsia in Pakistan too, seems to be convinced that USA is the only superpower in the world. Consequently, Pakistan has placed most of its eggs in the US basket. There is little

understanding of the Russian power and its resurgence, in Pakistan. On the other hand, Russian Foreign Policy Concept mentions Pakistan in a friendly manner by stating that “Russia intends to further develop its relations with Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya, Pakistan and other leading regional States in bilateral and multilateral formats”<sup>34</sup>.

In this context, it would be instructive to quote President Putin’s message of facilitation to Pakistan on the eve of its Independence Day on 14 August 2005, “I am confident that relations between our two countries represent a considerable factor in maintaining regional and international stability and security....It is with satisfaction that I note active development of political contacts between Russia and Pakistan”<sup>35</sup>. He also said that participation by Russia and Pakistan in activities of SCO and OIC provided opportunities for growth of the two nations. The recent meeting of 14 October, 2009 between Prime Ministers Gilani and Putin on the sidelines of the Annual Meeting of SCO at Beijing is another indication of Russia’s opening up for Pakistan. Prime Minister Putin offered to boost bilateral and economic ties and give new dimension to relationship between the two countries<sup>36</sup>. Pakistan should move forward and build good relationship with Russia.

## **Conclusion**

Nature has endowed Russia with the potentials of a global power. But in the post-Soviet period, the Russian Federation was faced with grave challenges to its nationhood, identity and politico-economic transformation. During that time its foreign policy was basically its domestic policy. The domestic compulsions inhibited Russia from fulfilling its foreign policy role, especially in Africa, Middle East and Latin America. Russia had mainly concentrated at its near abroad where it had vital security interests to look after. From 2000 onwards, Russian domestic politics and economy started to stabilize, and subsequently improved. At the same time, the Russian leadership began to assert Russia’s great power role. As the structural realist theorists say- it is anomalous for a great power not to develop the power and behaviour befitting a great power. Surely, Russia is not an anomaly as a great power. The erosion of American



unipolarity and hegemony, as a result of its imperial overstretch, has also provided Russia with space to assert its great power stature. Russian retaliation in Georgia, its economic robustness, its diplomatic and strategic engagements as far away as the Latin American countries and the great confidence of its leadership-all indicate that Russia has acquired a status commensurate with its size and history, and its foreign policy is assertive and proactive.

For a country like Pakistan, the research into the dynamics of post-9/11 international order is important. The policy makers in Pakistan also need to appreciate the reconciliatory Russian overtures; and analyze the current Russian status in the world and its foreign policy priorities, so that Pakistan could reorient its own options and take advantage of the immense potential that exists in the Russian resurgence.

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### **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "The Tragedy of Great Powers Politics" (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), p.3

<sup>2</sup> This is taken from "Russian Foreign Policy Concept", announced by President of The Russian Federation Dimitry Medvedev in July 2008. English version downloaded from Kremlin website [www.kremlin.org](http://www.kremlin.org) accessed 23 December, 2008

<sup>3</sup> The seminal work on oil and gas reserves and politics by Leonardo Maugeri, *The Age of Oil* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp.155-168, contains the latest data on the total hydrocarbon reserves including those of Russia.

<sup>4</sup> Mearsheimer, "Tragedy of Great Power Politics", p.380

<sup>5</sup> See the article 'Intimations of Multipolarity' by Kenneth N. Waltz in *The New World Order* Birthe Hansen and Bertel Heurlin edits. (London : Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> William Walker, *Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Adelphi Paper 340 ( London: IISS, 2004), pp.31-45

<sup>8</sup> Roger E. Kanet and Alexander V. Kuzhemiakin (eds), *The Foreign Policy of Russian Federation* (London : Macmillan Press, 1997). pp. x-xii

<sup>9</sup> Eugene B. Rumer, *Russian Foreign Policy Beyond Putin*, Adelphi Paper 390 ( London: IISS, 2007), p.15

<sup>10</sup> Rger K. Kanet and Kozhemiakin.(eds), ” The Foreign Policy Of Russian Federation”, pp.10-11

<sup>11</sup> Comment in the testimony by Mr. Strobe Talbott to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on 30 October 2007. Text released by Brookings under “Building a Constructive US-Russian Relationship”, available at [www.brookings.edu/testimony/2007/1030\\_russia\\_talbott](http://www.brookings.edu/testimony/2007/1030_russia_talbott), accessed 26 December, 2008

<sup>12</sup> William Walker, “Weapons of Mass Destruction and International Order” , P.44

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Nye, “The Paradox of American Power (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), P.XVI

<sup>14</sup> . Strategic Survey 2007, pp.19-24.

<sup>15</sup> US Defence Budget Data available at [www.opencrs.com/document/RL34473/2008-08-01/](http://www.opencrs.com/document/RL34473/2008-08-01/) , accessed on 7 November, 2009

<sup>16</sup> Anastasia Nesvetailova and Ronen Palan, “A Very North Atlantic Credit Crunch: Geopolitical Implications of the Global Liquidity Crises” in *Journal Of International Affairs*, Fall-Winter 2008, vol. 62, no. 1, pp.165-168 and 181-182.

<sup>17</sup> “Strategic Survey 2007”.

<sup>18</sup> Charles King, “The Five-Day War; Managing Moscow After the Georgian Crises” in *Foreign Affair*, November-December 2008, vol. 87, no. 6, pp. 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> . Irina Isakova, *Russian Governance in Twenty-First Century* (New York : Frank Cass, 2005), pp.1-8

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Maria Raquel Freire in “ The Making of Russian Foreign Policy: The lines of (dis)continuity in a process of affirmation”, Faculty of Economics, Coimbra University, Portugal, downloaded from [www.uc.edu](http://www.uc.edu) accessed on 10 December, 2008

<sup>21</sup> Testimony by Mr. Strobe Talbott to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on 30 October 2007, quoted earlier.

<sup>22</sup> Interview , “ Setting a Constructive Agenda” by Steven Pifer at CFR, downloaded from [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu) accessed on 7 November.2008

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> . Transcript of Interview of Russian Foreign Minister taken by David Remnick on 24 September, 2008, at Council on Foreign Affairs, available at [www.c8r.org/publications/17384/conversation-with-sergey-lavrov](http://www.c8r.org/publications/17384/conversation-with-sergey-lavrov), accessed on 17 October 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Office of the President of Russian Federation, “Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation” , downloaded from [www.kremlin.org](http://www.kremlin.org) on 16 December 2008.

<sup>26</sup> See “Interview With Russian Foreign Minister”.

<sup>27</sup> “Russian Foreign Policy Concept- 2008” , referred earlier.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> See Statesman Yearbook 2007, pp.1035-1037, and CIA Factbook on Russia for latest details on Russian economy; downloaded from [www.cia.org](http://www.cia.org), accessed on 13 November 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Rumer, 'Russian Foreign Policy Beyond Putin', p.26

<sup>31</sup> News item in the Khaleej Times on 11 February 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Kanet and Kozhemiakin (eds), "The Foreign Policy of Russia", pp. 139-150

<sup>33</sup> News item in the Khaleej Times as referred earlier.

<sup>34</sup> "The Russian Foreign Policy Concept-2008".

<sup>35</sup> Reported in *Daily Times*, Islamabad, on 26 August 2005

<sup>36</sup> Reported in *The News*, Islamabad, on 15 October 2009