Towards the Future: Emerging Trends in Russian Foreign Policy
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The authors of the essays in this volume have attempted to provide readers with a general outline of the ways in which Russian foreign policy has evolved since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet Union, have profoundly altered the environment in which states interact. The implacable hostilities of a bipolar world that framed so much scholarly analysis of international relations before 1992 have dissolved, thereby forcing scholars to view foreign policy-making through the lens of a multipolar world.

Along with the changes that have occurred at the international level, social, political, and economic transformations in the former Soviet Union have also prompted scholars to reassess domestic influences on foreign policy-making in the Soviet successor states. The contributors to this volume emphasize the dynamic influence of domestic factors on foreign policy initiatives. Towards this end, they have identified and assessed foreign policy trends that have emerged in this new environment.

One way by which to divide the topic of Russian foreign policy into manageable pieces derives from a regional approach. It allows the analyst to assess Russian priority changes region by region. Truly, Russian foreign policy is much more active and multilayered in some regions than in others. For example, in some areas, such as Africa and Latin America, policies seem to be based primarily on economic concerns, while in others (for example, Russian 'near abroad') economic concerns represent but one of many concerns that influence decisions.

Overall, the regional analysis conducted in this volume leads to three general conclusions concerning the direction of Russian foreign policy. First, domestic politics and other internal factors have limited the scope of policy options available to Russian policy-
makers. Efforts to restructure the Russian economy have reduced the resources available to the government to conduct foreign policy. This, in turn, has forced Russian policy-makers to reduce commitments and involvement in certain areas of the world where the Soviet Union was once very actively involved, such as the developing countries. The de-ideologization of Russian foreign policy has acted as an impetus for the ways in which these cutbacks have occurred. In other words, a convincing reason no longer exists for Russia to maintain a relatively active relationship with a substantial number of developing states. Many of these relationships were built and sustained merely for ideological reasons, such as to counter US interests in a particular geographic region.

Second, forced to limit the scope of its foreign policy activities, Russia has adopted a multi-level approach to policy-making. This multi-level approach can be categorized into broad policy domains, each characterized by degree of activity and particular priority structure. One policy domain includes the states that constitute the ‘near abroad’. As Peter Shearman, in Chapter 1, and Alexander Kozhemiakin and Roger Kanet, in Chapter 2, explain, the ‘near abroad’ has become Russia’s primary national interest for economic, security, and nationalist reasons. Yet another distinguishable policy domain includes Russian relations with East Central Europe and the West, as well as North-east Asia. This ‘moderately active’ policy domain includes highly visible hot spots around the world that provide Russia with an opportunity to try to maintain at least the façade that it is a ‘great power’. The third, and final, policy domain includes Asia, the Middle East and most of the Third World. Russian foreign policy in these areas is motivated almost entirely by economic concerns. As such, Moscow has effectively abandoned those states that offer Russia no material incentives. Russia has even gone so far as to shut down embassies and consulates in many developing states, leaving Moscow with little or no linkage to these states.

A third identifiable trend, one already alluded to above, is the shift from an ideologically to a pragmatically based foreign policy. Based on this trend, Russian policy is driven less by the desire to spread its ideas to the far corners of the earth than by desires to ensure territorial integrity and economic growth. In short, more decisions are now made according to a cost-benefit analysis that emphasizes concrete benefits to be gained by Russia in pursuing a particular line of policy.