

**CANADA AND PUTIN'S RUSSIA**  
A Canadian View with a Commentary from Moscow

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## **Canada And Russia Today**

**Anne Leahy**

It is a great honour for me to address you today in memory of John W. Holmes at Glendon College. John Holmes was an eminent figure in foreign policy half a century ago when Canada was helping to shape new international institutions. He argued for the place of middle powers like Canada in the international order that emerged at the end of the Second World War. Ten years after the disappearance of the bi-polar order over which the Soviet Union co-presided, there is renewed emphasis on the establishment of international institutions suited to a dynamic world environment in which decision-making is no longer the preserve of national capitals nor even of governments.

This lecture is about Vladimir Putin's Russia and the policy of its Western partners, in particular of Canada. This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of official relations between our countries when the tsar's envoy Nicolas Struve arrived in Montreal in 1900 to set up the first Russian consulate in Canada.

Russia today remains a nuclear power, permanent member of the UN Security council, rich in human capital and natural resources. Canada and its Western partners have politically and financially supported Russia's transformation ever since Mikhail Gorbachov began the process in earnest. Since then, the challenge facing Boris Yeltsin's successor has been sharpened by the high social cost of initial reforms and the evolving international context. Vladimir Putin has publicly committed to stay the course of democratic development. Canada wishes to build on what has been achieved so far and play its part in helping Russia stay the course.

### **Era of Restoration**

Vladimir Putin has publicly committed himself to pursuing the course of democratic development. He is also dedicated to restoring the power of the state. Here are two major concepts, democracy and 'statism', that are compatible only in a system of governance where checks on power are in place and its balance is assured by an absolute respect for the rule of law. Success in achieving the two goals will depend on the place that liberal values may come to occupy in Russia. Liberal values are taken here only in the most general sense, the development of the individual in a society that allows for free choices. To my mind, this is the crucial question facing Russia and its partners today. The task presupposes that the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government will be allowed

to play their institutional role. It also depends on the emergence of independent political parties and the unfettered activity of free media.

The new President will have to deal with a fragmented economy in which large remnants of the Soviet system survive untouched by reforms. He must restore the mechanisms of governance in order for the economy to grow on a sustainable basis and allow Russia to maintain its credibility with the partners it wants and needs to have. It is a given that Russia's new President will have to mitigate the social damage caused by the flawed implementation of reforms. He can count on popular support when he sets out to reclaim power for the authority of the state - from the regions, some of which have become fiefdoms out of the reach of federal law, as well as from economic actors which have abused the state's largesse while escaping any political accountability.

Putin talks in terms of restoring governance of the 'vertical', a Soviet term in vogue again, that describes the political chain of command from the center down to the local level. Constitutional reform is as formidable a challenge in Russia as it is in Canada so in the immediate future, direct measures such as more intrusive use of the office of presidential representatives in the regions and greater recourse to the constitutional court seem more likely.

Putin has already endorsed greater state intervention in the economy for the time being. He talks of the necessity of state involvement beyond devising rules and controlling their observance, in "setting the scale and planning mechanisms for the system of state regulation." The scale of exploitation of the system to private ends has been such that any measure that effectively curbs losses to the state for the sake of social solidarity will be welcomed by the population.

While Putin justifies his 'statist' approach on the historical predilection of Russians for a strong state, he is very much aware of the other side of the relationship. Polling over the last two-three years has consistently shown that most Russians are not willing to subordinate their personal interests to public and state interests.

There is, moreover, another interesting phenomenon throughout the country that is rightly highlighted in the UNDP's *1999 Human Development Report for the Russian Federation*. It is local government and the growing involvement of citizens in local elections. Local government has historically played a role in Russia where it was encouraged by authorities in periods of social crisis. Today, it is fully provided for in the constitution and federal laws but faces immense obstacles where regional heads view it with hostility. The Kremlin could put to good use the pressures local

government exerts from below on regional administrations and concurrently bring those recalcitrant regional heads into line.

In the pursuit of his objective to restore the mechanisms of governance, the President's commitment to democratic reform will be gauged primarily by his ability to enforce the respect of rights and freedoms and for the rule of law.

Good arguments will be put forward for strengthening intervention by the security apparatus in such areas as financial supervision and tax collection. It will be tempting for some in the power ministries to test the strength of their mandate and the extent of their accountability under the law. There does exist however today in Russia a safeguard against the potential for abuse or misinterpretation by security authorities. It is the significant development of civil society over the past years. In many areas, the population has matured in its capacity and determination to defend its rights. Where previously none existed, there is now a grass roots civil society conscious of its ability to protect its hard won rights and freedoms. Nominally, the legal instruments are in place. New powerful tools of internet links and international networking are also available and used.

Centuries of history including several decades of communism show that the rule of law in Russia has been primarily an instrument in the hands of the authorities. Putin recently called for the 'dictatorship of the law'. This is not a new call. In fact, this expression goes back to the Gorbachov era. What was meant then was that officials should stop resisting the new liberalizing regulations being decreed. It is hoped that what is now meant is the equality of all before the law. Legal reform certainly, but above all non-interference by authorities in the process of the law will be sure signs that the 'dictatorship of the law' is taking hold.

There are prominent liberal Russians who have publicly wondered whether in the new President's view, the rights of the individual are at least as worthy of respect as those of the state. Decades of communist practice denying this precept have created a powerful mind-set. Recent events such as the intimidation and mistreatment of journalists and control measures such as the requirement that internet providers give the security services access to their accounts, at their own expense, do raise questions and concerns.

### **The Values of Vladimir Putin**

Putin's political genealogy nominally links him to Boris Yeltsin. His spiritual father however would more likely be Yuri Andropov, long-time head of the KGB and General Secretary of the CPSU in 1982-84. The political team in the Kremlin that successfully implemented the Yeltsin succession strategy saw that Putin embodied the two deliverables expected of the new President: secure the political inheritance of Boris Yeltsin and the advent of a new generation.

A year after his nomination at the head of the Federal Security Service in August 1998, Putin was picked by Yeltsin to be the successor on whom he could finally count to ensure his legacy and his welfare. The cover of Russia's lead newsmagazine, *Itogi*, featured the new prime minister against the background of Yuri Andropov. It read: "The Kremlin wants to acquire in Putin a new Andropov – Fond of Iron Discipline and Devious Measures." This juxtaposition was meant to resonate favourably; for instance, Andropov is associated with the beginnings of an anti-corruption campaign that Putin has also committed himself to. The stakes are high: restore credibility for reform and for the state's ability to govern, thus fulfilling popular expectations while creating some distance from the coalition of interests - intertwined business and political interests that brought him where he is.

### **Values of Russians and Russian Values**

Contrary to the perception that the man has said very little about himself, in fact on the eve of his 'surprise' nomination as Acting President, he had issued quite a lengthy statement, his 'Millennium Message'. What emerges is a reading of contemporary reality that dictates acceptance of reforms subordinated to a desire to restore all that once made Russia a great and respected power. Many of the thoughts expressed are reminiscent of earlier statesmen, Evguenii Primakov especially.

In this message and elsewhere, the first preoccupation of the President is that Russia must recover its moral values as a pre-condition for putting the economy back on its feet and winning respect. There is also a lot said about what would be patriotic values, and the distinction is not always clearly made between these different orders of values. Patriotic values seem to refer to those secular ones that could be shared by all citizens of a multi-ethnic state. Moral values, of the regrettable casualties of the Soviet era, are somehow identified more readily with Russians.

For this reason, it is not so surprising that so much importance is accorded to moral values in the political debate. The vacuum left in the wake of the disappearance of the communist ideology has not been filled and has even grown as the first beneficiaries of the reforms behaved in a morally

indefensible way. The institution that might have been expected to seize the torch, the Moscow Patriarchate, has not imposed its moral authority. Quite the contrary, it begged the protection of the state in the form of a special law on 'Freedom of Conscience' and it merited a paragraph in the latest 'Concept of National Security' to defend orthodoxy from foreign influence. Yeltsin had felt the need to react when he sought to enroll the population in the search for 'the Russian national idea' in 1997. In the context of prevailing cynicism towards political rulers, this initiative could not succeed. It had one real effect, probably unanticipated, of highlighting the multi-ethnic character of Russia, also a 'mosaic' whose intricacy is increasingly apparent. In the early days of the new republic, Yeltsin encouraged decentralization and allowed regional heads to be directly elected. This led to the strengthening of cultural and religious identities and greater assertiveness of the leaders of non-Russian peoples, whose manifestations Putin now has to contend with.

Putting aside the search of a single unifying idea in a multi-ethnic state, proclaiming his commitment to restore the values of Russians is politically rewarding for the President. In so doing, he addresses the concerns of the two main political streams. Anyone who has studied the Soviet discourse will recognize in values, one of its main keys. Putin therefore reassures a whole layer of the population who associate reforms with depravation, corruption, the so-called pernicious influence of American culture. He also comforts the first wave of reformers who appeared at the end of the Gorbachov era and who attribute the failure of the initial attempts at reform to their absence of moral grounding, a legacy of communism that had all but emasculated moral values.

His background in the State Security Committee has steeped the President in the values of this elite body, patriotism and belief in the greatness of Russia. Not too surprisingly, in his first policy statement Putin listed these two values as the most important 'traditional values of Russians' to be restored. These were followed by statism and social solidarity - in praise of the strong state as the "guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of change" ("Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," Vladimir Putin, December 31, 1999).

This last statement helps us better understand what is at stake for Putin in the conflict in Chechnya. There are assuredly several dimensions to the persisting troubles in this Caucasian republic. The restoration of a strong state being a *sine qua non* for Putin, the constitutional

dimension, which means here the preservation of state sovereignty over this constituent part of the Russian Republic, is primordial.

### **Russia's European Path**

Vladimir Putin is relatively young and from St-Petersburg where he was associated with the group of economic reformers. He therefore claims to represent the hopes of the class of entrepreneurs and of a middle class that does exist. During the presidential campaign, he released *Dialogues in the First Person*. He unequivocally declares that Russia's path is already found; it is no use to look for one. It is democratic development. Putin situates Russia in the field of Western European values. In so doing, he rejects attempts to seek a third way. I am, of course, not referring to Tony Blair's 'Third Way' but rather to the elusive attempt by intellectuals at the end of the Soviet era to reconcile what is not reconcilable.

In proclaiming his attachment to Western European values, Putin hails from the Tsars who found in Europe certain ideas and models for the functioning of society. It would be wise to remember the blunder of European intellectuals at the time of Catherine the Great and not to infer in this choice for Europe what is not there. The application of these models in Russia will certainly fit its own specificity, including that favored by Vladimir Putin, a strong state.

The challenge facing the new President is daunting. He must restore the credibility of power across the breadth of Russia, its twenty-two ethnic republics and sixty-seven other subjects of the Federation, all the while respecting Russia's commitments to its Western partners. It is obvious that this country whose population is shrinking (it lost two percent in eight years) and whose GDP is the equivalent of the Netherlands is not maximizing its opportunities. Russia has a huge external debt that involves delicate negotiations in the Paris Club of creditor nations.

In his resignation speech of December 31, Yeltsin behaved just as a Tsar of previous centuries. He asked forgiveness of the Russian people whose hopes in the reforms were deceived. In taking upon himself the blame for the mistakes made in the implementation of reforms, Yeltsin relieved his successor of a weighty political burden. Given a clean slate, Putin can now go ahead with the necessary corrective social measures while staying on course. To bring this about, he has a key asset that eluded Yeltsin throughout his presidency: a docile parliament, elected in December 1999.



In his first meeting with the Foreign Investment Advisory Committee in Moscow, Putin outlined a programme of further legal reform, rationalization of the tax legislation, the return of flight capital, the fight against corruption and the respect of investors' rights, in particular of foreign investors for whom the playing field is not always even. He touched on all the right keys that have been repeatedly put forward over the past years. Herein lies a challenge that eluded his predecessors. The cost of failure will be higher for Putin who has admitted that time plays against Russia and, therefore, that it cannot manage without foreign investment.

His spokesmen tell us that the days of the oligarchs are gone; meaning that big business no longer has a firm grip on the Kremlin. This is an affirmation that requires verification over the coming months, as good corporate behaviour has not been its hallmark.

### **Weltanschauung**

In addition to loyalty to the state and its presidential institution, will the President also show another professional trait of viewing the world as 'us and not us'? At the end of last year, he advised his former colleagues to be wary of enemies. This was hardly a momentous remark to make to a gathering of spies. Russia is racing to regain a sustainable economic footing and in a highly competitive technological environment, all major players promote their interests first. This statement does however reflect the cumulative impact of events in 1999 that eroded the trust built between Russia and the West.

These events are the entry of three Central European countries into NATO, NATO's adoption of a new Strategic Concept, its intervention in former Yugoslavia, and further testing for a National Missile Defense system being pursued by the United States. The USA knows that building such a system would require Russia's agreement to amend the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty signed with the USSR in 1972. This agreement is viewed by Russia, and indeed Canada and the international community, as the foundation of all successive arms control agreements with the USA and the cornerstone of arms control and disarmament.

Taken together, these events have increased the misgivings of Russians, particularly among the General Staff, towards the West. This is reflected in the revised National Security Concept adopted in January 2000. It has a more pessimistic threat assessment than in 1997. Whereas it then stated that the threat of major aggression against Russia was "practically absent," it states today that "the level and scope of the military threat are growing." It goes on: "A number of states are stepping

up efforts to weaken Russia politically, economically, militarily and in other ways.” The threshold for use of nuclear weapons is lowered, from a case when the very existence of the state is threatened to the “need to repulse armed aggression, if all other measures of revolving the crisis situation have been exhausted and proven ineffective.”

We do well to remember here that foreign policy is very much a presidential constitutional prerogative. Up to his becoming Secretary of the National Security Council in 1998, Putin would not have been directly involved in the complex balancing act of dealing with the exigencies of maintaining good relations with Russia's partners, above all the United States. Although Russia finds itself in a more difficult context externally and domestically today, one can surmise that the *raison d'état* that dictated Yeltsin's line of conduct will guide any incumbent in the Kremlin whose goal is the restoration of Russia's power and its integration in the international economy. A new element for the President is the expectation that he will bring into line the military leadership who have acted on their own in matters of what should be coordinated foreign policy.

The general souring of attitudes in Russia towards the United States has been a boon to those in the leadership of the General Staff who felt marginalised by Yeltsin's attempts at reform of the military. The race to reach Pristina airport last year and the continued troubles in Abkhazia, Georgia show that some commanders have no qualms in pursuing their own interests regardless of foreign policy considerations. In foreign policy just as in social and economic policy, the new President will be watched closely in terms of reassertion of control over various entities such as the large resource conglomerates and the military that have become real players.

Russia also has an enormous stake in reviving the credibility of the United Nations as the supreme body responsible for decisions of war and peace. The world order as Russia sees it revolves around the pre-eminence of one super-power. Its goal is to foster a 'multi-polar world'; it is actively seeking a 'strategic partnership' with China, stronger relations with the European Union and primarily to regain its ascendancy in Central Asia. At the same time, its internal weaknesses make it wary of other forms of internationalism particularly the evolution of international humanitarian law and the rising challenges to formerly incontestable tenets of international relations such as national sovereignty. Other features of our age will also impact increasingly on the conduct of Russia's internal business, including the use of the internet and the emergence of internationally networked grass-root groups outside the purview of government.

The 1990s could have been the decade of re-emerging internationalism. With the end of East-West confrontation, it was hoped that the supremacy of the decision-making capacity of the United Nations would prevail. This did not happen. Yet, the recent failings of the UN system and last year's intervention by regional powers have renewed impetus for the search for stronger instruments to defend our universal values. We are reminded, by Canada for example, that the Charter of the United Nations was issued in the name of 'the peoples', not the governments. The UN Secretary-General, for the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recalled that: "The principle of international concern for human rights took precedence over the claim of non-interference in internal affairs." The Charter protects the sovereignty of states but not at the expense of the sovereignty of peoples.

### **Chechnya**

The thrust of Russia's foreign policy in the last decade has been to seek a place in the company of Western nations. Integration into Western institutions is already underway, for example the G-8 and the Council of Europe. Such integration carries with it an expectation on the part of its partners that Russia will abide by the principles that they uphold. It also implies that we, Canada and other partners, will hold Russia to these principles. In dealing with the process of restoring peace in Chechnya, the President has had to realize that Chechnya is an issue that transcends the national borders. Russian reaction to concern expressed by Canada, the Council of Europe, and other partners has evolved from a refusal to discuss an internal security matter to the acknowledgment that serious violations of human rights are not acceptable and agreement that international observers join the Russian team that will look into the matter on the ground.

### **Canada and Russia**

Our bilateral relations acquired a certain importance in our respective capitals only once they were rid of their East-West framework. It is a fact that our pre-1991 relations were those of a middle power facing a super-power in a world context determined by its military strategic character.

The early 1990s was rich in high-level contacts and agreements and other instruments laying the foundation of our relations with the new Russia. The Prime Minister's visit in 1989 was a turning point. For the first time, an imposing group of business people was part of the visit. From that moment on, our relations recovered an economic and commercial dimension that complemented the geo-strategic dimension that had dominated our relations since the Second World War. It must be

recognized, however, that we have been rather timid about exploiting the advantages of sharing a northern neighbourhood and many physical attributes. The quality of our relationship is still today enhanced by the role we play with other partners and our multilateral activism. One can think of our role in facilitating Russia's integration in the G-8 at the Halifax Summit in 1995 and in APEC in Vancouver in 1997.

Our official relations with Russia go back to 1900. Prior to that date, St-Petersburg and Ottawa were only vaguely aware of each other and this, through the filter of British imperial relations with Russia that warmed only towards the end of the nineteenth century. The arrival in 1899 of a group of dissidents, the Doukhobors, and the seizure of Russian fishing boats off the coast of Vancouver are the few notable events of this period. This changed with a sharp increase in emigration to Canada..

According to the 1871 census, there were 607 Russians in Canada and this included Finns and Poles under imperial domination. In 1881, there are still only 1,227 Russians. In 1901, without the Finns and the Poles, the number had jumped to 19,825.

Wishing to keep tabs on his subjects who had left in search of work, the Tsar sent an envoy, Nicolas Berngartovitch Struve, to Montreal in 1900; consuls followed in the port cities of Halifax and Vancouver. In his correspondence, Struve reported that Sir Wilfrid Laurier noted the similarities between our countries “in particular its Asian part” and “the important influx of immigrants.” Struve also reports to his Foreign Affairs Ministry on the delicate political question of relations between francophones and anglophones.

Canada, for its part, was motivated to develop relations with Russia by commercial opportunities. The opening up of Siberia's resources and the possibility of selling military equipment prompted the Minister of Trade to send two trade commissioners to Russia in 1916, to Petrograd and Omsk. Further envoys to Odessa and Rostov-on-Don were also in the cards. Following the Bolshevik revolution and our participation in the military interventions in Siberia in 1918 and Vladivostok in 1919, our relations did not survive the birth of the Soviet Union. The inter-war period was characterized by suspicion, particularly in Quebec, fuelled by communist propaganda. Upheaval in international trade and the onset of depression led Canada to impose a commercial embargo on Soviet trade that lasted five years until it was lifted in 1936 under pressure from our companies afraid of losing their market share to Americans. It was only in 1942, following the Nazi invasion

of Russia and almost ten years after the United States, that Canada diplomatically recognized the country that had become its military ally in the war.

### **East-West Era**

Canada-Soviet relations, given our NATO membership, were necessarily conditioned by the politics of the super-powers. They also reflected the dynamics of our relations with the United States. It can be said that the warmth of our bilateral relations tracked the Kremlin leadership's policy towards the United States.

One of the Canadian scholars to have studied Canadian-Soviet relations, was also a former colleague in Moscow, Leigh Sarty. He noted how in the early days Soviet analysts of the Stalin era "dismissed Canada as the 'vassal' of American imperialism" and how this approach was "well-suited to the chilly climate of the early Cold War." Under Khrushchev, as the atmosphere warmed into one of peaceful co-existence and as Canada became the Soviet Union's major source of grain supplies, our relations improved. The Trudeau era with the new assertiveness of a Third Option in foreign policy, including the government's decision to halve our troop commitment to NATO in 1969, caught the Soviet Union's attention. As did to a very limited extent, the peace mission that Trudeau embarked on at the end of his mandate in 1983-84. Playing to the mood of worried Canadians, he sought to lower tensions following the chill-out in East-West relations going back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the deployment of its SS-20. By the fall of 1983, not only was Moscow not in a position to play up this initiative given that the Secretary-General was terminally ill, but Foreign Minister Gromyko put the Canadian emissaries' mission in its place, bluntly stating that for Moscow, everything was to be seen through the prism of US-Soviet relations.

The following reflection made by John Holmes on his return from a visit to Moscow in 1955 with Foreign Minister Lester Pearson, captured the sentiment that still prevailed among Canadian officials in 1983 as well as the reality of North American politics: "I was surprised ... to find some serious discussion of Mr. Pearson's having said we were a bridge between the USSR and the USA. This was really only a rather tired figure of speech knocked about in incessant toasting and not to be taken any more seriously than most metaphors of the kind. Although I had a feeling at times that Molotov was trying to convey to us the idea that we might be an interpreter of the Russians to the Americans, I don't think they realized how bored Canadian officials are with the suggestion that we should be bridges, or interpreters or lynch-pins." (*Russia Revisited*, typescript, February 28, 1956)

Prime Minister Trudeau surmised that he could have some influence on Soviet policy and this motivated his peace mission, his last initiative in foreign policy. I would surmise that such influence would rather be found in his close relationship with the Soviet ambassador in Ottawa. Alexander Yakovlev subsequently became an early and key architect of perestroika after Gorbachov who met him on his Canadian tour in 1983 invited him back to Moscow.

It has been said that Prime Minister Mulroney resumed the role of broker for Canada once he took up the cause of the reforming USSR through efforts such as promoting its accession to the GATT and membership in the G-7. These efforts also had a lot to do with Canada seeking to position itself vis-à-vis its own partners, particularly when the leadership of the USSR was directly involved in negotiations with the USA and the Big Four on the re-unification of Germany.

When the Canadian government, later than its allies, finally accepted that there was indeed a major transformation underway in the USSR, it set up mechanisms of cooperation designed to support market reforms and the development of civil society. Our projects reflect particular expertise in such areas as the management of federative structures. We participated in various multilateral economic programmes and debt rescheduling agreements of the Paris Club. This substantial economic involvement reflected an unequivocal political decision primarily on the part of G-7 countries to support the President of Russia as he fought for his policies at home and sought to bring his country closer to the West.

Whether specific policies, infusion of funds and projects were timely, appropriate, well designed, had sufficient oversight are valid questions - in the overall context, our leaders estimated that they were needed for political reasons. The instances of misuse of funds should not obscure the concrete benefits of foreign aid and debt relief for reforms at all levels.

Canada has a stake in keeping channels of communication open with Russia. This enables us to act together in areas of mutual interest and particularly, to ensure that our respective positions are well understood and respected when our approaches are different. The sending of peace-keepers in Haiti and the peace process in the Middle-East are an illustration of the first instance; NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia of the latter.

Areas of common interest include the main goals of Canadian foreign policy in terms of nuclear non-proliferation and control of weapons of mass destruction. Recent developments in American-Russian relations regarding arms control is of concern to all. This is particularly true of

the American proposal to deploy a national missile defense system, since it must impact on continental defense. Canada cannot but encourage the United States and Russia to pursue their negotiations with a view to find a solution that respects their disarmament commitments.

We have the necessary diplomatic instruments to pursue our political dialogue and economic interests. The main ones are annual bilateral meetings of foreign ministers who, like heads of government, also meet in the context of regular multilateral meetings, at the UN, in the G-8 or at the OSCE; semi-annual stability and security talks among senior officials; the Intergovernmental Economic Commission created in 1995; and the Northern Cooperation Agreement. Our dialogue also takes place in important multilateral fora. One of these should be the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Committee provided for in the Founding Act signed in 1997. In looking back to the spring of 1999, one of lessons to be drawn could be to enable this Committee to play the role it was designed for.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, it seems to me that its internal social, political and economic pressures and the international context mean that Russia's best interests lie in the continuation of its policy of cooperation with its Western partners. The President's short-term goal of establishing strong governance from the center can be achieved if he can keep at bay the various economic, regional and military interest groups that have entrenched themselves in the highest reaches of power since 1996. He has already spoken of intended reforms in the economic and financial sectors. Several human rights activists in Russia worry that these intentions may be limited to economic reform only; that a Pinochet model is upon them. There are reasons to hope that this cannot be the case. One is the experience of Russians who wish to preserve their basic freedoms; it is reflected in the growing number of citizens involved in local associations and the perseverance of politicians who uphold these values. Another is the tools now at their disposal, fruits of technology and of globalization. Still another is the international environment in which national borders are no longer an iron curtain. It has always been that respect for the rule of law is indivisible; it cannot be real in the market place if it also doesn't take place in civil society. In the current multilateral order, where time and space are compressed by technologies, it will become even less feasible to differentiate between economic and political rights.

In achieving his political objectives, the President cannot ignore the expectations of respect for individual rights inherent in Russia's presence in the councils of Western nations whose values he has subscribed to. The crisis in Chechnya is a test of his commitment. It is the responsibility of Russia's partners to keep her engaged on major international issues, and to maintain a policy of support to a leader as long as he is committed to reform at home where the appeal of a retreat into the Soviet past is a dangerously tempting proposition.



## **Russian-Canadian Relations, The Putin Presidency, and Implications For The West**

**Nadia Alexandrova Arbatova**

Russian-Canadian relations like any other bilateral relations between Russia and Western countries have their own 'reserve of durability' or safety margin resulting from past experience and special ties between the two countries. As Anne Leahy has described it in her lecture, "Under Khrushchev, as the atmosphere warmed into one of peaceful co-existence and as Canada became the Soviet Union's major source of grain supplies, our relations improved. The Trudeau era with the new assertiveness of a Third Option in foreign policy, including the government's decision to halve our troop commitment to NATO in 1969, caught the Soviet Union's attention. ... It has been said that Prime Minister Mulroney resumed the role of broker for Canada once he took up the cause of the reforming USSR through efforts such as promoting its accession to the GATT and membership in the G-7."

At the same time, since Canada is part of the Euro-Atlantic area and one of the major players in Western institutions, Canada-Russia relations cannot be regarded outside a broader context of Russian-Western dialogue which, in its turn, will be dependent on domestic and foreign policy evolution of the post-Yeltsin Russia. The lecture of Anne Leahy presented at York University is an example of a deep and grounded analysis of the major trends in Russia's domestic and foreign policy evolution.

### **The Putin Phenomenon**

One question seems to be essential for understanding the Putin phenomenon: who or what brought him to power? The answer to this question is rooted in the last years of the Yeltsin rule. Boris Yeltsin's shocking New Year's Eve announcement that he was resigning closed the first decade of the post-Soviet history of Russia. Gennadij Zuganov, the leader of the Russian Communists, said: "Yeltsin resigned as he worked. He could not just let people relax and enjoy the New Year's Eve." This is a rare case when everyone could fully agree with Mr. Zuganov. There may be different definitions of this period. Communists would say that it was a corrupted regime which was conspiring together with the West against Russian people. The so-called reformers or radical democrats would say that this regime was the most democratic one and it fulfilled its historic role as it destroyed the Soviet command-administrative system and started to implement market economy reforms. The democrats from the opposition would claim that having emerged as a democratic

regime, it very quickly transformed into a regime of elected monarchy with a peculiar combination of semi-authoritarian, semi-democratic features. But most of the representatives of these different views would agree on one definition: that the Yeltsin period in Russian history was that of lost illusions and a deep disappointment of Russian people with democracy, Russian democrats, and the West.

Vladimir Putin as 'a strong hand' was required by three social groups in Russia. By the end of 1999 the majority of Russians, impoverished by the shock-therapy model and failures of the economic reforms, assessed the Yeltsin leadership as a corrupted regime unable to change the situation in Russia for the better. Besides, Russia's foreign policy failure to become an equal partner of the West - embodied in NATO's enlargement and the devil-may-care attitude of the West towards Russia during the Kosovo crisis - resulted in an acute feeling of humiliated national pride. The second group was the state bureaucracy concerned about its very existence, since the Yeltsin leadership failed to find the right balance between the regions and the federal center. The regions were openly challenging the government and the center was losing control over the country; this created a direct threat to the state and high rank officials. The latter felt that Yeltsin was too weak to re-establish a strong state control. The third group which played the main role in Putin's political rise was the so-called family. The broad public opinion in Russia put the bulk of responsibility for the appalling domestic situation not only on Yeltsin but also on his immediate entourage, which included Yeltsin's daughter and adviser Tatyana, a few high rank officials from the presidential administration, and some of the oligarchs like A. Chubais, B. Berezovsky, and R. Abramovich. The power of the Kremlin coterie hinged on having the ear of President Boris Yeltsin whose physical state was far from being perfect and who was getting more and more suspicious and jealous vis-a-vis his political rivals, and consequently more dependent on 'the family'. The latter, having been involved in numerous scandals, became a vulnerable target for criticism and accusations of corruption in independent mass media. The members of the Kremlin inner circle, worried about their personal safety, had to look for a guarantor of their future since Yeltsin's presidential term was very close to its end.

Summing up, the failures and deficiencies of the Yeltsin regime created a fertile soil for nostalgic moods about 'a strong hand', and it was a peculiar coincidence of different, if not opposite, interests and aspirations in Russian society which brought Mr. Putin to power. But it was the

Kremlin family who took initiative in creating the Putin phenomenon, having presented him as a strong political leader. Undoubtedly, the second war in Chechnya played a decisive role in the rise of Putin's political star. The task of the Kremlin strategists who grasped the predominant moods in Russian public opinion was really enormous: they had to make of Vladimir Putin - an almost unknown functionary and Yeltsin's official successor - an anti-Yeltsin, a strong hand, and Russia's Savior. It created a certain dichotomy for the Putin Presidency - succession to and negation of the Yeltsin era - which was reconciled by the Kremlin strategists in a new formula. The succession element has got embodied in the recognition of Russia's pro-Western vocation (democratic values and market economy); the negation, in the concept of 'a strong state' in contrast to the amorphous Yeltsin regime. Hence all statements of Vladimir Putin oriented for export have been extremely positive (and are still being assessed as such by the leading countries of the West), while his statements (to say nothing about deeds) for domestic consumption are not so encouraging.

### **Era of Restoration: Goals and Values**

As Anne Leahy correctly points out, "Vladimir Putin has publicly committed himself to pursuing the course of democratic development. He is also dedicated to restoring the power of the state. Here are two major concepts, democracy and 'statism', that are compatible only in a system of governance where checks on power are in place and its balance is assured by an absolute respect for the rule of law." But in Russia a great deal depends on one's interpretation of 'democracy', 'a strong state' and 'rule of law'.

In contrast to Gorbachev and Yeltsin who resorted to the concept of 'enlightened authoritarianism' only when they were getting weaker and losing control over the country, Vladimir Putin as Russia's President has come to power with the concept of 'controlled democracy' which is a new rendition of enlightened authoritarianism. The concept of controlled democracy looks controversial by definition. What does the controlled division of state power branches denote? Besides, who is supposed to control this process? What is controlled or selective human rights protection all about? What one can say about controlled or piece-meal freedom of speech and independent mass media? And, finally, to what limits can one go while implementing the controlled democracy concept? The last question seems to be the most important one, since Russia is too big a country to stop processes which can acquire their own dynamics at the right point and at the right

moment. We know from our past experience that there was no shortage of control in the USSR, it was democracy which was always lacking.

The division of power has been the biggest achievement of democratic transformation of Russia after the collapse of the USSR, regardless of all the shortcomings of the Russian Constitution which provides Russian President with enormous power. Although very restricted in its control over presidential power, the pre-Putin State Duma, especially together with the Federation Council, potentially had some resources to perform this mission. The previous Duma together with the Federation Council several times succeeded in overcoming presidential vetos on its laws, and it didn't approve the President's candidate Victor Chernomydyn as Prime Minister after the August 1998 crisis. There were attempts in the old Duma to amend the Constitution and to strengthen the Cabinet and the Parliament. Having come to power Vladimir Putin declared that it would not be necessary: "We have a very good Constitution."

True, under the Yeltsin presidency relations between the executive and the legislature were strained. This on the one hand created a lot of friction between the two branches of power, but on the other provided for a system of checks and balances. The ballot fraud during the last parliamentary elections and the strategy of the pro-Putin party Unity to side with the Communists and independent deputies have deprived Duma of its main *raison d'être* - to counterbalance the Executive. The Parliament now is becoming a purely decorative body. The President's recent reform of the Federation Council, which has been enjoying broader rights than the State Duma and which cannot be dissolved by the President, is another clear evidence of the major trend in Russia's domestic transformation - consolidation of power in the hands of President for the sake of "controlled democracy and a strong state." Therefore, Putin's reform of the Federation Council is closely related to the relationship between the center and the regions.

Undoubtedly, there was a certain constitutional distortion embodied in a merger of executive and legislative posts of governors. This distortion has permitted them to openly challenge the center on many occasions. Initially the governors of the regions, who together with the heads of regional legislatures formed the Federation Council, were appointed by President Yeltsin, while local legislative bodies were elected. This situation created a lot of problems between local authorities. Therefore, it was agreed to elect governors in the regions which resulted in the consolidation of the regional executive and legislative branches of power which, in its turn, confronted the center with

a growing independence of the regions. The immunity of the governors as MPs has provided them with significant independence from Moscow.

One cannot but agree that the fact that a governor is both a regional executive and a member of the Federation Council, contradicts the principle of division of branches of power. So, a real democratic reform of the Federation Council would require direct elections of members of the upper chamber which would eliminate the present constitutional distortion but guarantee their full independence from the center.

According to the new reform, governors stop being members of the Federation Council, consequently losing their immunity, but they will appoint their representatives to the Federation Council. Regional legislative bodies can reject or withdraw governors' appointees by 2/3 of votes. This reform is an inconceivable hybrid which opens the door to corruption and under-carpet games between the center, local legislative bodies and members of the Federation Council. Thus, the Federation Council is risking to share the fate of the new Duma and become another 'pocket structure'. As for governors, they would lose their immunity and become completely dependent on the center, on the so-called power structures, pressures and blackmail of different interest groups. No doubt, this reform will provide for a certain domestic stability but this stability will be closer to that of the USSR. Anne Leahy is absolutely right when she writes that "Putin talks in terms of restoring governance of 'the vertical', a Soviet term in vogue again, that describes the political chain of command from the center to the local level."

According to the Kremlin design, the concept of controlled democracy together with that of rule of law (or dictatorship of law in the Russian version) are means to build 'a strong state'. There is nothing scary in the concept of a strong state per se, most of Western democracies have strong states. But what does 'a strong state' mean in Putin's interpretation? What will be done when the goal - to have governors, oligarchs and any opposition whatsoever stalled - is achieved? True, most of the governors and oligarchs have a very bad record in Russian society, and reducing their influence is the first priority for any truly reformist Russian leadership. But President's political squeeze on the governors won't resolve real problems between the regions and the center.

Striking the right balance in the relations between the center and the regions is a cornerstone of Russia's viability as a federation. One of the main problems in this relationship is the weakness of economic ties (including mutual economic commitments) resulting from Russia's economic and

financial crises. It is impossible on behalf of the center to call the regions to comply with the federal law, if the center itself does not comply with its commitments vis-a-vis the regions. The best way to manage the regions problem would be to introduce mutually beneficial economic relationships between them. But, undoubtedly, it would require a well-thought economic strategy from the center, a lot of effort and flexibility on both sides, and a lot of time.

Recent criminal proceedings against some oligarchs, which started with attacks on Vladimir Gusinsky (the owner of Media Most Holding, which includes the only independent TV channel NTV), were very selective and directed at intimidating certain groups of interest. Those who approve these measures claim that Putin, being a political creation of Yeltsin's inner circle, wants to assert himself as an independent politician, to reduce the control of oligarchs over Kremlin, including their mass media which reflects interests of this class. So, according to these voices, it is a right step in the right direction. But there are two questions of utmost importance. First, how will the goal to break free from informal influences be achieved? Through show-cases of selective criminal proceedings and intimidation acts, or by a well-thought and consistent legal policy? Second, who will replace them; more obedient new governors and more loyal new oligarchs, maybe? Or perhaps the so-called power structures?

The regional policy of the Yeltsin center has been guided not by constitutional principles but by considerations of political expediency. On many occasions the Kremlin has shown a propensity to support only loyal governors, closing eyes on corruption, and violations of law in their regions. If this practice is continued, it won't change the situation in Russia for the better. The same can be said about oligarchs: if members of the old family are replaced with new ones, the only difference will be that the new family will be committed to Putin, while the old one was created by Yeltsin. As for the so-called power structures, if they had the upper hand in Kremlin, it would mean the end of Russia's democratic evolution, however controversial and inconsistent it was - especially at the last stage of Yeltsin rule. Any politician who comes to the top level of power tries to create his own team, but the Yeltsin family experience has created a dangerous precedent for Russia's future.

In a democratic state the goal of reducing informal influences can be achieved by adopting laws which would exclude a merger between oligarchs and high rank state officials, and which would clearly define powers and functions of the so-called power structures. It would be extremely important to strengthen civil society in Russia, which is still very weak. Anne Leahy is too generous

when she observes a “significant development of civil society over the past years.” There is no shortage of brave individuals in Russia but civil society lacks real political parties, trade unions, strong NGOs. It is true that “in many areas, the population has matured in its capacity and determination to defend its rights,” but it is not clear yet whether the decade of Russia’s controversial transition from the Soviet past has created efficient internal mechanisms to contain authoritarian trends.

Coming back to Putin’s concept of a strong state, it would be important to understand what President Putin’s values are. Unlike Yeltsin who was searching for a ‘Russian National Idea’ which could replace the ideological vacuum resulting from the collapse of the USSR, Putin is focused only on the concept of a strong state, which is his major goal and value. The only strong state that he knows personally is the USSR. The USSR was a strong nuclear power, a military giant whose voice had to be heard and taken into account by the outside world (in contrast to Yeltsin’s Russia which was on many occasions humiliated by Western neglect of Russia’s interests and positions). Its domestic stability was based on the strong centralized system - the so-called command-administrative system, dictatorship of the Soviet law, which meant that people were doing what the state wanted, and a huge repressive apparatus, entitled to enforce the Soviet law by eliminating any opposition. The evident weakness of that model of ‘a strong state’ (which Putin cannot but recognize) was that in trying to remain a military giant the USSR turned into an economic dwarf. Consequently, for Putin it is imperative that the economic fabric of Russia is to be corrected or replaced with a new efficient economic foundation. Like the famous heroine of Gogol’s novel *Marriage* who was creating an ideal image of a bridegroom by composing features of various men proposing to her, President Putin is trying to hybridize in his model of ‘a strong state’ the USSR order with an efficient market economy. That is a model of ‘enlightened authoritarian regime’ or ‘controlled democracy’.

President Putin’s endeavors are being backed by some liberal economists of the Gref school, who claim that the most striking successful examples of capitalist economic growth (Chile, South Korea, Taiwan) have been conducted by authoritarian regimes with a strong element of state support and planning. But in terms of applying such a model to Russia, even if we take the authoritarianism component for granted, it is not clear whether the new Russian leadership has been able to articulate a viable strategy of economic reforms. According to various assessments of Russian economists, the

economic strategy of the Gref Center which is to be used (partly or in full ?) in the government's *Priority goals of the Russian Federation in the field of social policy and economic modernization for 2000-2001* and *The Action Plan*, is a new and more radical rendition of the Gaidar economic reforms that have already failed in Russia. It is not clear either, who will be personally responsible for the implementation of these programs. Besides, authoritarian trends can go far beyond expectations and create a problem for any market economy reform itself, which would result in a backlash and possible return to the USSR-type centralized economy. And finally, the most successful examples of capitalist economic growth by authoritarian regimes have been conducted in alliance with and subsidized by the USA, which is not the case for Russia. So, it remains a riddle what President Putin will do about the devastated economy, besides watching the world oil prices rise and collecting the resulting tax revenue. Anne Leahy is absolutely right, when she writes that the cost of failure will be higher for Putin than for his predecessors, and it will be much higher for Russia's future.

### **Chechnya**

As Anne Leahy correctly points out, the restoration of a strong state being a sine qua non for Putin, the constitutional dimension which means here the preservation of state sovereignty over Chechnya, is primordial. But there exist three factors which predetermined the second Chechen war: the NATO's military intervention in Yugoslavia, changes in Russian public opinion on the Chechen problem, and the precarious political situation in Russia by the end of 1999.

The NATO airstrikes against Yugoslavia dealt a heavy blow not only to the UN system of international security and the commonly accepted rules of behavior in international relations, but also to the 'New Political Thinking' and democracy in Russia. The use of military force against Yugoslavia discredited the very idea of cooperation between Russia and NATO and hit Russian democrats below the belt. It confirmed the worst forecasts of Russian nationalists about NATO and provided them with very strong arguments to resolve similar problems in the post-Soviet space (to say nothing about Russian territory) by use of force. The logic of the party of a military solution to the Chechen problem in Russia is very simple: if NATO could impose on a sovereign state the military solution of the Kosovo problem, why Russia who is being challenged by Chechen extremists cannot do the same on its own territory. So, in a way Russia's new military campaign against Chechen terrorists was encouraged by the NATO military intervention in Kosovo. To put



it simply, NATO's airstrikes against Yugoslavia released the Russian military of the Chechen syndrome. Use of force as one of the most radical means to do away with the Chechen challenge and take revenge on the modjaheds became acceptable for the Russian military.

The pre-war situation in 1999 differed from that of 1994. In 1994 the predominant public opinion in Russia was against the war from the very first day, because the military operation of the federal troops became incompatible with the emerging democracy in Russia. In the first Chechen war Russia was defeated on its own territory, and it had to recognize its defeat. The Chechen leadership, and particularly the Chechen field commanders, didn't understand that Russia had lost the war not because it was weak militarily, but because only a totalitarian regime could have resolved such a problem by use of force. They created a criminal regime which was openly challenging the federal center and their immediate neighborhood. They were taking people into slavery, torturing and killing prisoners. The financial and economic aid of the federal center directed at reconstruction of Chechnya, was disappearing in the pockets of the corrupted Chechen high rank officials. But even after the Chechen raid on Dagestan in August 1999, there existed a broad political consensus in Russian political elite that Russia should not intervene militarily in Chechnya, but rather create a sanitary belt around the rebellious republic. The shocking terrorist acts in Moscow changed the attitude of Russian public opinion on the Chechen problem and on the question of use of force against Chechen terrorists. The likely became inevitable.

The war against the Chechen terrorists was started by the Kremlin tacitly, without any constitutional procedures, as an anti-terrorist operation. Vladimir Putin emerged on Russian political scene as the most resolute and consistent fighter with the Chechen terrorists, which immediately brought about a rapid rise of his popularity. With the only exception of the Yabloko Party, there was no opposition to the second Chechen war amongst the Russian political elite. Even the liberal Union of Right Forces (B. Nemtsov, S. Kirienko, A. Chubais, I. Khakamada and others) supported Russia's anti-terrorist operation in Chechnya. At the same time, the Kremlin inner circle understood that on the roller coaster of the Chechen war Putin could lose his overwhelming popularity by June, but he would be unlikely to fall out of favour before March 26, the date of the early presidential elections. That was the main reason of Yeltsin's early resignation.

The Chechen war is still one of the most important factors in Russia's domestic evolution. Although it was declared that the large-scale military operation against terrorists is over, military

clashes between federal troops and modjaheds are still going on. Now Russia is being faced with a Hamlet-like dilemma. On the one hand, it cannot afford to lose this for the second time, which could result in disintegration of the North Caucasus and affect other crisis-prone areas in the Russian Federation. On the other hand, this war which has already entered a stage of partisan war, could not be won by a democratic or even semi-democratic regime. If Russia continues to suffer heavy losses every week, there may be two scenarios. Either, the public opinion will demand an end to the war and withdrawal from Chechnya, which may lead to Chechnya's complete and irreversible secession with dramatic consequences for the North Caucasus. Or, the public opinion will give a carte-blanche to the Kremlin to end the war by all means and at any cost. The second scenario seems to be the most dangerous one for the prospects of democratic transformation of Russia. The only way out is to find a political solution and to start negotiations with Aslan Mashadov, the only legitimate leader of Chechnya, however unpleasant he may seem to Moscow. As for Western criticism on Chechnya, while it is true that Russia's reaction has shifted from a refusal to discuss an internal security matter to the recognition that serious violations of human rights are not acceptable, one should not overestimate the importance of Western pressures on this issue. Firstly, because in the eyes of broad public opinion in Russia, Western position on violations of human rights in Chechnya has been seriously undermined by NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia. Secondly, for ordinary Russians it is very difficult to understand what Western position really is. On the one hand, the leading countries of Europe, the United States and Canada as well as the major Western institutions are very tough on the Chechen issue; on the other hand, the Prime Minister of UK comes to St. Petersburg in the middle of the presidential campaign, regardless of the Chechen war, to give his support to Vladimir Putin, candidate No.1 and one of the champions of an anti-terrorist campaign in Chechnya. That visit has shown to many Russians that Western position is mostly rhetoric, and considerations of political expediency matter more than matters of principle. So, it is merely the task of Russian democrats and human rights defenders to stop the war in Chechnya and find a political solution of this problem.

### **Implications for the West**

The Putin presidency has opened a new page in Russia's domestic and foreign policy evolution. However, the new leadership of Russia will be confronted with the same problems as the Yeltsin leadership in Russian-Western relations. These problems will be revolving around three areas of concern. First is a growing gap between security perceptions which emerged in Russia and in the

West after the end of the Cold War. Second is a complex interaction between the trends in Russia's domestic evolution and the tendencies within the international economic order, which can affect Russian-Western relations in a negative way. Third is a very complex interplay of Russian and Western interests in the former Soviet space which, if not reduced to a common denominator, threatens to aggravate Russian relations with the West. What will President Putin's foreign policy be? Will he be able to cope with the serious problems mentioned above?

President Putin has proclaimed himself a devoted partisan of Russian-Western cooperation; he has supported ratification of the START II Treaty, post-Kosovo dialogue between Russia and NATO, and strategic partnership with EU. Both Russian leaders and those of leading Western countries continue to negotiate with each other, voicing all kinds of good wishes and important initiatives. However, this process tends to conceal a movement toward a new bipolar world, which is becoming ever more pronounced within the framework of present-day international relations. Russia's relations with the West had quickly passed through a romantic period in the early 1990s, with the concerned parties expressing mutual disappointment and failing to understand each other in the late 1990s. Today, these relations have in no uncertain terms entered the pragmatic-minimalism phase, resembling to an ever greater extent the East-West peaceful co-existence of a former era.

Understanding the reasons of the shift towards new bipolarity seems to be of utmost importance for future developments in Russian-Western relations. When did all those post-bipolar relations begin to change? That process began in the fall of 1993 when Boris Yeltsin had dissolved the pro-Communist Russian parliament. That purely domestic event had far-reaching international political implications. In October 1993 the Yeltsin regime spilled the first blood in post-Communist Russia's history, exceeding permissible boundaries in its struggle against the opposition and breeding all subsequent problems (e.g., the victory of conservatives and nationalists in the course of the December 1993 parliamentary elections, an obviously authoritarian presidential constitution, the first Chechen war, and lots more, the notorious 'family' included). In fact, the Yeltsin regime had started degenerating precisely in October 1993. While we should not shift responsibility for Russia's own sins onto someone else, nonetheless we have to admit that the West didn't act as an idle onlooker. One can only guess how Russia would have developed if Bill Clinton and Helmut Kohl hadn't supported Boris Yeltsin, or if they hadn't turned a blind eye to Russian radical

democrats' unconstitutional actions in the name of 'market reforms' and democracy. The October 1993 events have confirmed the old wisdom that the end doesn't justify the means. The West, which had sided with those specific persons, who called themselves democrats, or who had the reputation of being democrats in the past, had thus fallen hostage to them and their mistakes. As distinct from the Russian public at large, the West had responded with understanding to the first Chechen war, evidently expecting a quick victory on the Kremlin's part. In fact, such a victory was perceived by Yeltsin as something vitally important in the context of strengthening his domestic position. However, the Chechen war which initially received the virtual approval of the leading Western countries, subsequently came to be regarded by the West as yet another evidence of Russian unpredictability and as one of the arguments supporting NATO's eastward expansion. In other words, the West continued to back Yeltsin's weakening regime (which was still considered to be democratic or the best possible option for Russia), while erecting a new European border for safety's sake, so as to counter any unforeseen developments. Official NATO circles used to justify their bloc's eastward expansion in every possible way, stressing that this process was not spearheaded against Russia. However, all those incoherent and contradictory explanations on the part of NATO's leadership only served to increase the suspicions expressed by the Russian political elite and strategic community concerning the genuine goals of the expansion.

As we look back in time, we can safely say that Russia's relations with NATO and the West had mostly evolved in line with the logic of self-fulfilling prophecies. Even Yeltsin had to heed the more substantial outbreaks of anti-NATO mood in Russia, attacking NATO and Washington rather furiously from time to time and saying things like "Russia won't permit this to happen." This served to convince the West that it had chosen the right road. The situation was complicated still further by NATO leaders' decision to openly ignore the Russian stand, thus making it possible to fuel mutual suspicions. The Kosovo crisis, which had entailed dramatic consequences for Russia's domestic development, was also viewed as a culmination and a logical conclusion of those over-ripe Russian-Western contradictions. Apart from that, the Kosovo crisis had virtually proven that the West didn't view Russia as a full-fledged partner. This was proved rather vividly by the fact that Russia was deprived of its own sector during the Kosovo peace-keeping operation.

After NATO's Yugoslav operation, there were hopes in Russia that the European Union would play the part of a locomotive that would take Russian-Western relations out of a blind alley.

However, the EU's Russian strategy in the aftermath of the developments in Kosovo showed only too clearly that the EU, burdened with its own domestic problems (more profound and large-scale European integration), was not prepared for strategic partnership with Russia. Russia's mid-term EU strategy, meanwhile, was little different than EU's. The relevant Russian strategy mostly emphasises the EU's importance as one of the power centers in a multi-polar world that would constitute an alternative to monopolarity. To cut a long story short, both strategies, which had contained numerous good wishes and intentions, nonetheless lacked any specific strategic goals. In essence, this symbolises the relations between Yeltsin's Russia and leading Western institutions.

Europe and the United States alike didn't harbor any old-time illusions in their response to Vladimir Putin's election as Russia's president. Putin was perceived as the long-awaited 'strong-man' not only in Russia, but paradoxically in the West as well. Most Russians expected Putin to save the country, do away with the corrupt Yeltsin regime's legacy, to establish law and order across the nation, and to reinstate Russia's international prestige. Meanwhile the West, sick and tired of all those unpredictable Russian democratic reforms, viewed Putin as a leader capable of ensuring Russia's domestic and external stability (even at the cost of limiting democracy to some extent). Having accepted a false dilemma, stability or democracy in Russia, the West has already chosen the former. Yet, stability and democracy cannot but go hand in hand in Russia, and there won't be security in Europe - and in the Euro-Atlantic space at large - without both of them. The USSR was one of the most stable states, nonetheless the world lived several decades under the threat of a global conflict.

A new unobtrusive model of relations between Putin's Russia and the West has emerged in virtually no time at all. In a nutshell, such a model envisions Russia's political stability and predictability in global affairs. For their own part, Western countries shall not interfere in the Kremlin's plans to assert 'controlled democracy' all over Russia. It is precisely this model which is fraught with the danger of a new Russia-West confrontation and which can also reinstate the old-time bipolar system of international relations.

Limited Russian-Western cooperation (e.g., a resumed dialogue with NATO, the ratification of the START II treaty and the comprehensive test-ban treaty) is not followed up by Russia's full-fledged involvement in the emergent European security system. The West's inclusive strategy for involving Russia still remains on paper; consequently, the development of international relations

will continue to be determined by balance of power. One may repeat a hundred times that balance of power is part of the old political thinking, but as long as the system of international relations operates on old principles, the balance of power remains an objective reality. Those who believe that Russia will still side with the West while remaining an independent power center, are succumbing to illusions. First of all, Russia, which is a far cry from the West, cannot but search for its own allies, China included. Second, the Kosovo crisis had entailed absolutely negative consequences for Russian-Western relations. This was eventually reflected in the Russian military doctrine and NATO's new strategy. This is also proved by the fact that Putin's extremely important initiative stipulating the deployment of a tactical ABM system together with NATO hasn't evoked any serious response in Europe, in Canada or the United States.

Prospects for yet another confrontation are embodied in the Kremlin's controlled-democracy concept, as well. Having come to power riding on the wave of the Chechen war and nostalgia about a strong hand, the new Russian President himself is risking to become a hostage to these moods, which could have a boomerang effect on Russia's relations with the West. Soviet experience shows only too clearly that restricted democracy is unthinkable without a foreign-enemy image, spy scares and less substantial contacts with the outside world. As distinct from previous bipolarity, which had been caused by ideological rivalry between the USSR and the West, a bipolar world that continues to emerge today has been caused by various mistakes, as well as by a lack of Russian, European and US readiness for drastic changes.

Anne Leahy is right when she says that Russia needs the West and the closest cooperation with Western countries. But the West needs Russia too. If Europe, Canada and the US really want Russia to be a part of Euro-Atlantic cooperation, it would be unforgivable for them to turn their backs on democracy in Russia at this crucial moment. It does not mean that they should take the primary responsibility for Russia's democratic transformation. The primary responsibility for Russia's future rests with Russians, and it is for Russia to decide which was an aberration in its history: the 70 years of Communist rule or one decade of independence (however controversial it may be). The West could support democracy in Russia not by financial aid or deep involvement in Russia's domestic affairs, but creating a benign international environment for its democratic evolution. A US president once remarked that nations, which prefer stability to democracy, fail to

get both, nor do they deserve any stability and democracy. Today, one can fully refer this is to both Russia and the West.