



**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**CONVERGENCE ON COOPERATION: THE DRIVING
FACTORS IN U.S. AND RUSSIAN COOPERATION ON
BELARUS**

by

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September 2005

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE September 2005	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE: Convergence on Cooperation: The Driving Factors In U.S. and Russian Cooperation on Belarus.			5. FUNDING NUMBERS
6. AUTHOR(S) 2 nd Lt. Joseph W. Brown			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) As the last dictatorship in Europe, Belarus is a "problem state" for the United States. This thesis analyses U.S. interests in Belarus and assesses the extent of interdependence of these interests with Russian interests there. It first establishes a theoretical framework for U.S. and Russian national interests and the possibility for cooperation between the two countries. It then examines the mutuality of U.S and Russian interests in Belarus in the areas of democracy and human rights, drug and human trafficking, arms proliferation, oil and gas transit, and Russo-Belarusian trade and political integration and the policy options available to each country. Next, other elements of cooperation are applied to the situation in Belarus. Finally, the possibilities for cooperation are evaluated. This thesis demonstrates that the achievement of U.S. interests is significantly constrained by Russia's willingness to cooperate and that the United States can best achieve its objectives only through cooperation with Russia. This cooperation should center on neither country's first preference, but a compromise solution involving the ascendance of a moderate opponent to Lukashenka from within the Belarusian elite.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS Russia; Belarus; Oil Pipelines; Democratic Revolution			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 113
			16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL

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RUSSIAN COOPERATION ON BELARUS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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ABSTRACT

As the last dictatorship in Europe, Belarus is a “problem state” for the United States. This thesis analyses U.S. interests in Belarus and assesses the extent of interdependence of these interests with Russian interests there. It first establishes a theoretical framework for U.S. and Russian national interests and the possibility for cooperation between the two countries. It then examines the mutuality of U.S. and Russian interests in Belarus in the areas of democracy and human rights, drug and human trafficking, arms proliferation, oil and gas transit, and Russo-Belarusian trade and political integration and the policy options available to each country. Next, other elements of cooperation are applied to the situation in Belarus. Finally, the possibilities for cooperation are evaluated.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to my advisors, Donald Abenheim and, especially, Anne Clunan, for all their patience and assistance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As the dividing line between Western and Eastern Europe has crept steadily toward Moscow, one country represents a last bastion of dictatorial rule and illiberal thought. While much of the former Soviet world has plunged over the precipice of democratic governance and market economics, Belarus since 1996 has clung desperately to an ideal of socialist greatness which has long passed. In cementing his nation into nostalgia for the Soviet past, President Alexander Lukashenka has doomed Belarus to political stagnation and increasing indigence. His regime has reached the heights of infamy for its abuse of human rights, flagrant proliferation of weapons, and notoriously porous borders. This has, understandably, generated mounting concern within neighboring Europe and, by proxy, the United States. To the east, Lukashenka's unwillingness to reform the flagging Belarusian economy, his blatant dismissal of democratic, and even popular, governance, and the embarrassing nature of his personalist regime has created numerous problems for Belarus' patron-state and largest trading partner, Russia. It is to these problems, of both the United States and Russia, which this paper turns.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how U.S. and Russian interests regarding Belarus are interdependent in order to assess the value of cooperation to American foreign policy in Eurasia. U.S. policy toward Belarus can either create areas of mutual interest with Russia or, if handled poorly, become a source of further tension in the relationship. The major questions this paper seeks to address are: 1) What are the United States' and Russia's respective economic, political, human rights, and security interests in Belarus? What is their respective desired "end states" in Belarus? What are the policy options available to them to achieve their objectives? 2) To what extent are U.S. interests interdependent with Russia's? What other elements compel the United States and Russian to cooperate on Belarus? This thesis finds that the United States requires Russian cooperation to achieve its specific objectives in Belarus, while the Russians require U.S. cooperation to achieve their broader national objectives. Cooperation is therefore likely on Belarus, as this issue is linked to wider interests and issues. This interdependence in

objectives is enhanced by the intersection of these objectives with the U.S. and Russia's interests regarding the European Union.

The method of analysis used in this thesis is a comparative study of the United States and Russia based on interdependent interests in Belarus. The hypothesis, drawn from Axelrod's and Keohane's framework for cooperation¹, is that if there is a significant level of mutual interest between the countries, then the presence of the long shadow of the future and other actors, namely Europe, could enable the possibility for cooperation.

This analysis first establishes a theoretical framework for U.S. and Russian national interests and the possibility for cooperation between the countries. Then it establishes a mutuality of interest through a discussion of the major issues of concern in Belarus and the policy options available to each country. Next, other elements of cooperation are discussed as they apply to the situation in Belarus. Finally, the possibilities for cooperation are evaluated.

CHAPTER II

Chapter II lays out the theoretical framework and methodology based on the neoliberal institutional model of cooperation analysis originally proposed by Axelrod and Keohane. This chapter also examines other theoretical approaches to the subject and shows why the neoliberal institutional model is most apt. This chapter also discusses the theoretical foundation for the United States' and Russia's general national interest, in order to apply these interests to Belarus. Based on the neoliberal institutional framework for cooperation, this study examines what interests the United States and Russia have in common with regard to Belarus and whether each side is compelled to cooperate.

CHAPTER III

The third chapter explores the first part of the mutuality of the United States' and Russia's economic, political, human rights, and security interest in Belarus. For the United States, security and human rights are the highest priority. Specifically, this means that the United States has an interest in 1) preventing the proliferation of arms to potential threats, 2) stopping the illegal trafficking of drugs and humans, and 3) supporting the democratic freedom of the Belarusian people. A question arising from this framework

¹ Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," *World Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 1, October 1985, pp. 226-254.

addressed in this chapter is whether the United States can attain its interests in Belarus without the cooperation of Russia. Belarus has to this point ignored U.S. diplomatic and economic sanctions and appears content to remain isolated from the West. Finally, U.S. policy options toward Belarus and show how these compel the United States toward cooperation with Russia.

CHAPTER IV

The fourth chapter is an assessment of the most important interests for Russia in Belarus. For Russia, economic and political concerns are the most salient. This means: 1) retaining stability in the energy transit corridor through Belarus to Europe, 2) maximizing the potential of the Russo-Belarusian trade relationship through the reform and privatization of the backward Belarusian economy and the countering of trade diverting activity, and 3) continued integration through regional structures toward the end of unification. This thesis then evaluates Russia's policy options to Belarus in terms of achieving their greater national interest.

CHAPTER V

Having outlined each side's interests in the previous chapters, Chapter V examines what factors could compel Russia and the United States toward cooperation. These interests are linked together to show the commonality of interests between the United States and Russia when it comes to Belarus.

Chapter V also examines the second element of the Axlerod – Keohane model whether Russia is dependent on the United States for the attainment of its broader national interests. It is in this capacity that the long shadow of the future comes into play. In its ongoing negotiations to accede to the World Trade Organization, Russia is reliant on a cooperative United States. Russia's desire to regain "great power" status conditions the extent to which it is willing to be seen as uncooperative. Additionally, the United States and Russia have a strategic partnership in the war on terror which policymakers are unlikely to jeopardize by defecting on a relatively peripheral issue such as Belarus. Interdependence in the U.S.-Russian relationship means that the United States requires Russian cooperation to achieve its specific interests in Belarus and Russia requires

American cooperation to achieve its general interests and place in the world. By linking Belarusian issues to wider and more important agreements, cooperation can be made more likely.

Finally, the third dimension of cooperation cited by Keohane and Axelrod, the number of players in the game, is discussed. This is highly applicable to the situation in Belarus as there are a number of different actors involved. The United States and Russia, one the leading global power and the other a dominant regional power, are obviously relevant to the analysis. Less obvious but equally influential is Europe and specifically Poland. Placing Russian and American interests within this broader context of Europe increases the importance of events within Belarus and compels each side to come to a compromise.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

A. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The interaction between the United States and Russia over the former Soviet state of Belarus is a complex relationship and can be viewed through a number of lenses. A neorealist framework of analysis might perceive this relationship as one of certain conflict by emphasizing relative versus absolute gains. A constructivist perspective might look at the ideas which inform U.S. and Russian political outlooks and determinations of interests. Finally, the neoliberal institutional perspective is one which sees possibilities for cooperation based on a number of clear criteria.

1. Neorealism

A realist view of U.S. and Russian strategic interaction in Belarus would likely be a pessimistic one. The neorealist school of international relations views dealings between states as set within a self-help system in which states seek to maximize their security through power-balancing. According to Kenneth Waltz, “Among states the state of nature is a state of war.”² For Waltz, that does not mean that states are power-maximizers, but security-maximizers. Waltz notes that “power is a means not an end” and that “increased power may or may not serve that end.”³ Because neorealism is based on the concept of relative gains versus absolute gains, states are “compelled to ask not ‘Will both of us gain?’ but ‘Who will gain more?’”⁴ This concern with relative gains makes cooperation difficult and gives rise to the phenomenon of international relations known as the “security dilemma”. The security dilemma is the unfortunate reality of international relations wherein “many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others.”⁵ When states feel insecure and attempt to increase their

² Kenneth Waltz, “Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power,” chapter 5 in Keohane, *Neorealism and its Critics* {reprinted from Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, chapter 6}. pp. 98.

³ Waltz, 127.

⁴ Ibid, 101.

⁵ Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2, January 1978, pp. 169.

security through arming, this threatens other states who reciprocally increase their arms. This situation often leaves one or both of the states in less secure positions than when they began.

For a neorealist, this is loosely analogous to the situation the U.S. and Russia find themselves in over Belarus. Although not technically dealing with arms, the security dilemma could operate on the political level. Realists expect states to compete over spheres of influence. Under this scenario, attempts by one side to increase influence in Belarus could be seen as a direct threat to the other state. In Russia, Western involvement in its “near abroad” could be viewed as an attempt to detract from Russian power by undermining one of its closest allies. According to realists, U.S. support for regime change in Belarus should be seen as an affront to Russia’s regional predominance. In the same way, Western realists tend to perceive Russian attempts to tighten integration with its neighbors as part of a plot to resurrect the Soviet Union. The United States feels that the key to its long term security extends beyond balancing power to the spread of democracy and free markets, as this increases U.S. political and economic influence in the region. A direct implication of this strategic perspective is that an open Belarus would give the US more leverage over Belarusian foreign and economic policy. Therefore Western support for regime change against Lukashenka is justified. Though Russia would benefit as well from a more liberalized Belarus as a trading partner and ally, it is likely to resist “American” liberalization as realists would interpret this as attempt to expand the U.S.’s sphere of influence.

The difficulty of applying a neorealist theoretically framework to Russia’s relationship with the United States is that it does not always bear out in reality. History has shown that Russia has cooperated with the United States, or at least acquiesced, when the neorealist security dilemma would have predicted conflict. Russian acquiescence to NATO enlargement into Eastern Europe, American withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and the use of Central Asian bases by U.S. armed forces gives testament to this fact. These challenges to Russian regional authority should have, in neorealist thinking, placed the United States and Russia into an antagonistic stance toward one another. Yet, at a time when the United States is having difficulty cooperating even with

its closest allies, relations between the U.S. and Russia are more often characterized by cooperation than conflict. The U.S. and Russia are strategic allies in the war on terror and Presidents Bush and Putin continue to hold frequent cordial summits. There are, it seems, elements to Russian calculation of interest beyond the narrowly defined security interests of neorealism. The United States actions, as well, can not be accurately described as simply seeking to expand its sphere of influence, but rather seems to reflect a more Kantian understanding of peace and stability. A strictly neorealist framework of power-balancing does not do justice to the reality of the U.S. - Russian relationship and a more encompassing strategic framework is required.

2. Constructivism

Another possible theoretical school through which the Belarus dilemma can be analyzed is constructivism. Constructivism differs from both neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism in that it does not subscribe to the underlying assumption that states are rational actors with uniform preferences. Whereas the other two schools hold that the international structure is the causative agent for state behavior, constructivists look to interests and identities as the guiding forces in international affairs. According to Ruggie, “constructivism concerns the issue of human consciousness in international life,” and holds that the building blocks of international relations are ideational and normative as well as material and instrumental.⁶ Constructivists emphasize process versus structure and do not employ the “self-interested state as the starting point for theory.”⁷ Ruggie characterizes constructivism as operating before neorealism and liberalism kick in by providing answers to the derivation of state interest which the other schools simply assume as constant.⁸

Applied to an analysis of the U.S. – Russian relationship in Belarus, a constructivist approach might examine the theoretical ideas and ideological pre-conceptions toward foreign policy that inform the Bush and Putin administrations. In

⁶ John Gerard Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge,” *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Autumn 1998, pp. 879

⁷ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 391-392.

⁸ Ruggie, 863, 867.

constructivism, it is not the interests of the United States and Russia which are important, but the ideas, motives, and political outlooks behind those interests. Constructivists might argue that Russians are guided by a realist ideology in framing their national interests, while Americans are guided by Kantian liberalism. With realism guiding them, Russians would interpret any decrease in Belarusian dependence as a loss to their main competitor, the United States. Americans would see Russian illiberalism as producing irreconcilable foreign policy interests. Regarding Belarus, a constructivist would likely view any temporary convergence of interest arising from mutual dislike of Lukashenka as insufficient to bridge the ideological divide between Russian realism and American liberalism. The constructivist approach is beneficial for understanding the reasons behind the United States' and Russia's interests in Belarus, but fails by underestimating the potential for cooperation. As with neorealism, constructivist expectations of U.S.-Russian conflict based on differences in political outlook do not bear out fully in reality. The old adage, "politics makes strange bed-fellows" holds true with regard to the relationship between the United States and Russia. Regardless of the ideological bent of his counterpart, both Presidents Bush and Putin have followed where his country's interests have led. In order to understand the U.S.-Russian relationship in Belarus a theoretical framework is needed which takes the power of mutual interest into account.

3. Neoliberal Institutionalism

A better way of examining American and Russian interaction in Belarus can be found in the ideas of neoliberal institutionalism. Like neorealism, the neoliberal institutional school derives from a rationalist view of states, which holds egoistic states as the significant units of analysis in international relations. Neoliberal institutionalism diverges from neorealism in its focus on the possibilities for cooperation. Axelrod and Keohane assert that the anarchy of the international system does not necessarily doom states to conflict. They write that the "myopic pursuit of self-interest can be disastrous. Yet both sides can benefit from cooperation."⁹ In their article "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy," the authors outline three dimensions that condition the ability of states to cooperate. These dimensions, 1) mutuality of interest, 2) the long shadow of the future,

⁹Axelrod and Keohane, 226-254.

and 3) the number of actors involved, can also be applied to the U.S. - Russian relationship regarding Belarus. First, both states share a broad mutual interest in making Belarus a stable, productive member of the world economic and political community. The United States and Russia simply differ on how such a change should come about. The body of this paper will further explore what interests Russia and the United States hold in common.

The second dimension of cooperation is the long, shadow of the future. Unlike one-time iterations of laboratory games, real world state interaction happens with the expectation of future dealings in mind. States that are competing now can expect to interact again in the future. This expectation conditions behavior and increases states' willingness to accept short term loss in exchange for long term gain. This is no truer than in the U.S.-Russian relationship. As mentioned before Russia has on several occasions assented to U.S. intrusion on its interests. Neoliberal institutionalists would attribute this, at least in part, to Russia's expectation of future interaction with the United States. The United States is as important to Russia in its bid to join the WTO as Russia is the U.S. "war on terrorism".

The third dimension of cooperation, the number of actors and the structure of their interaction, also applies to the discussion of U.S. - Russian relations in Belarus. Although I have set up the problem as simply one state versus another, the reality is not nearly so parsimonious. European nations also have interests in Belarus, but are not uniform in their feelings toward Lukashenka. Belarus is important to the United States because it borders Europe; Europe is important to Russia as a large trading partner and international power broker. European expectations influence both the U.S. and Russia in their respective policies toward Belarus. Focusing on the three criteria of neoliberal institutional theory espoused by Axelrod and Keohane clearly outlines the path by which cooperation might be achieved. This provides sufficient reason to base the analytical framework of the U.S. - Russian dynamic in Belarus on the neoliberal institutional model.

B. INTEREST FORMULATION

1. General U.S. National Interest

In order to formulate a nation's foreign policy, it is necessary to determine what this nation's grand strategic interests are. In the United States, this determination is informed by two competing theoretical frameworks. Deriving from international relations theory, these two schools of thought are realism and liberalism. While classical realism diverges from structural or neo-realism in the reasons why states act the way they do, all realist thinkers view international relations through the framework of state sovereignty and power. Liberalism, on the other hand, derives from the same rational basis of state interaction but imbues this interaction with normative judgments based on Wilsonian principles of political freedom and economic liberalization. Liberalism focuses on the necessity of international law and the importance of spreading free markets and democratic political values.¹⁰

United States foreign policy is sometimes seen as hypocritical as it is pulled between these often opposing viewpoints. While American politicians loudly proclaim liberal values, U.S. actions can often be better explained through a realist framework. Thus, it seems that America earnestly desires the idealist goals espoused by liberalism, but is forced to revert to realist thinking on issues of national survival. It is because of this historical tendency that Robert Art's national interest paradigm is particularly useful.¹¹ As American policymakers and implementers are neither uniform nor static in thought nor always consistent in action, determining what they are likely to view as an American national interest is difficult. As an underpinning for the grand strategy of selective engagement, Art's bifurcated approach seems to lend itself the best to the United States' historical and current policy inclinations. This approach divides U.S. interests into two categories: those deriving from the international relations theory of neorealism and those based on liberal thought.

¹⁰ Donald M. Snow and Eugene Brown, International Relations: The Changing Contours of Power. (Boston: Addison-Wesley Longman, 2000), 15-16.

¹¹ Robert J. Art, "Geopolitics Updated," in America's Strategic Choices: Revised Edition, ed. Michael E. Brown, et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 145-149.

Drawing from Art's interest formulation, the United States' realist-based national interests can be divided into: 1) Defense of the American homeland, 2) Preservation of Eurasian great power peace and stability, and 3) Division of world energy reserves. Art defines homeland security as the "prevention of attack, invasion, conquest, or destruction of a state's territory."¹² The specific policy priorities of counterterrorism and arms counter-proliferation can be placed under the auspices of this broad label. Maintaining Eurasian peace and stability entails preventing war or instability between the great powers, as trans-Atlantic alliances would necessarily involve the United States in any such conflict. Additionally, Eurasian stability is critical to U.S. economic interests as many of the United States' largest trade partners reside in either Europe or Asia. Finally, the United States' third realist interest lies in ensuring access to a secure supply of energy resources at stable prices. Energy resources fuel the U.S. economy and allow Americans to enjoy such a high standard of living. While threats to this interest are most often manifested in Middle Eastern disputes over oil, it applies as well to Eurasia. Russia and Central Asia have become indispensable suppliers of both oil and natural gas to Europe and a severe disruption in this supply would have economic consequences for the United States as well. American territoriality security, Eurasian peace, and the global division of energy resources are inherently intertwined and mutually supporting as they ensure the continuance of the United States' role in the world. Arising from a neorealist philosophy these vital interests define what America must do. U.S. liberal interests inform policymakers what the United States should do. Failure to attain the former implies that the United States may cease to exist in the near term; failure to support the latter corrodes the nation's philosophical underpinning and endangers America's long term place in the world.

There are an untold number of issues which U.S. policymakers would like to address. Unfortunately, they are constrained by limited capital, both financial and political. Often realists would prefer to confine these policy choices to the realm of imminent security threats and power enhancement, but to do so would neglect the long-term interests of the United States. Because the spread of democracy and free-market

¹²Art, 147.

capitalism is inextricably bound up in American world supremacy, liberal objectives are as important as neorealist ones. Over the course of a century, tactical realist priorities often become irrelevant, but investing in the broader goals of 1) opening international markets and 2) spreading democracy and protecting human rights will continue to pay dividends to the United States in the future.¹³ International open markets are desirable for the United States not only because they enrich the U.S. through static and dynamic gains, but because they make other countries richer. Art theorizes that the United States desires for other countries to be wealthy because this makes them both more likely to consume America goods and less likely begin wars. A humorous illustration of this is found in what Thomas Friedman calls the Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention. In this theory “when a country reached the level of economic development where it had a middle class big enough to support a McDonald's network, it became a McDonald's country. And people in McDonald's countries didn't like to fight wars anymore; they preferred to wait in line for burgers.”¹⁴ Liberal theory posits that increasing affluence is correlated with the beginnings of democracy, as well. The spread of democracy and political freedom and the safeguarding of human rights are desirable to the United States for many reasons. One rationale is that democracy and freedom are the bedrock moral values upon which America claims to be founded. Another motivation for spreading democracy is that democratic institutions and popular participation tend to make other states more pacific, less likely to murder their citizens, and better trading partners. While liberal based national interests lack the immediacy and concreteness of neorealist goals, they are nonetheless vital to the moral and practical survival of the United States.

Pulled from opposite sides by different sets of values, it is often unclear what areas of interest are most vital to the United States. By continually subverting liberal, value-driven interests to power-based realist interests, U.S. policymakers risk undermining American moral legitimacy. Yet, sacrificing American security and status for pie-in-the-sky ideals could endanger the nation's survival. U.S. interests can be seen as a delicate balance between the “hard” security objectives of defending America's and

¹³Art, 145.

¹⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. (London: Harper Collins, 2000), 248-249.

its allies' territory and way of life and the "soft power" concerns of promoting free markets, democracy, and human rights.

2. General Russian National Interest

The aforementioned balance between neorealism and liberalism is not nearly so delicate in Russian politics. Realist thinking dominates in Moscow, while liberal thinkers are largely relegated to a peripheral role. Often associated with the Yeltsin period of instability and corruption, liberals in Russia find it difficult to generate mass appeal. Russian political expert Alexei Arbatov remarks that, "In the 1990's the rightwing liberals, who held ranking posts in the Russian power structure, if not directly ruled it, failed to carry through the reforms. This left people disillusioned."¹⁵ Additionally, there is a significant ideological split within Russian liberalism between the West-centric Modernizers and Radical Institutionalists and the more nationally minded Moderate Institutionalists and National Democrats.¹⁶ In general, liberal international relations theory is not taken as seriously as neorealism as a legitimate ideological basis for foreign policy. President Putin and his advisors are solidly realistic, although there certainly are differences in degree and practical implementation. Russian realists are united in the belief that "Russian identity should be associated with the historical tradition of great power status."¹⁷ Putin realizes the importance of international institutions and wants to be seen as a viable partner to the West. Russian cooperation with the West, though, is not an attempt to bring about Kant's perpetual peace; it is simply seen as helpful in rebuilding Russia as a great power. Thus, Russia's international relations stance can be seen as the occasional use of liberal means towards a strictly realist end.

Based on this framework of realist goals and liberal means, Russia is understood to have a number of broad national interests. Allen Lynch provides a succinct account of these vital interests which include:

- 1) preservation of the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation itself;

¹⁵ Alexei Arbatov, "Color Revolutions and Greater Europe," *RIA Novosti*. 31 May 2005. from Johnson's Russia List #24 - JRL 9164 <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9164-24.cfm> (21 July 2005).

¹⁶ Pavel A. Tsygankov and Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Dilemmas and Promises of Russian Liberalism," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. 37 (2004) 53-70

¹⁷ Tatyana A. Shakleyina and Aleksei D. Bogaturov, "The Russian Realist School of International Relations," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. 37 (2004) 49.

- 2) assuring the geopolitical primacy of Russia in the region described by the borders of the former USSR;
- 3) assuring the security and stability of Russian nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;
- 4) promoting Russian economic development;
- 5) maintaining Russia's status as a great international power;
- 6) asserting the maximum feasible peerage with the G-7 group of advanced industrial democracies.¹⁸

Andrew Kuchins, Viacheslav Nikonov, and Dmitri Trenin seem to agree with Lynch's assessment of Russian interests. In their analysis, they divide Russian interests into three categories of: 1) Global Order and Integration, 2) Global, Regional, and Territorial Security, and 3) Economic Growth and Development. Within these broader categories, Kuchins, et al. cite specific policy priorities that would also fall into Lynch's categories.¹⁹

The specific Russian interests they cite are as follows:

Global Order and Integration:

- To be viewed as a great power – economically viable, technologically advanced, socially attractive and politically influential;
- To secure Russia's position in the group of the industrial democracies (G-8) as well as to raise Moscow's influence in leading global and regional decision-making processes;
- To achieve maximal integration on acceptable terms in international multilateral institutions tasked with managing world affairs.

Global, Regional and Territorial Security:

- To maintain sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state;
- To defeat terrorist and separatist groups and shut off their sources of support;
- To promote peace and stability on its borders and prevent armed conflict in neighboring territories;

¹⁸ Allen C. Lynch, "The Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy in the 1990s," *Russia After Communism*. Ed. Rick Fawn and Stephen White, (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 162.

¹⁹ Andrew Kuchins, Vyacheslav Nikonov, and Dmitri Trenin. "U.S.-Russian Relations: The Case for an Upgrade," *Carnegie Center for International Peace*. Moscow 2005 www.carnegie.ru (13 Jan 2005), 4-5.

- To prevent the emergence of non-friendly regimes along its border as well as to strengthen military structures and coalitions friendly to Russian interests;
- To prevent illegal migration, drug trafficking and illegal trade in arms;
- To work cooperatively to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Economic Growth and Development:

- To facilitate an external environment that promotes economic growth and development at home;
- To quickly conclude negotiations for Russia's WTO entry;
- To advance its business and economic interests in foreign markets and to attract investment into the Russian economy;
- To create beneficial terms for extraction and export of natural resources, energy in particular but not at the cost of mortgaging the future of the Russian people;
- To strengthen economic integration among its CIS neighbors and create a regional free-trade zone;
- To diversify its economy away from the current high dependence on natural resource exports.

These vital interests break down along ideological lines. Lynch's vital interests of territorial integrity and WMD control, termed "Global, regional, and territorial security" by Kuchins, et al., though deriving from realism are more pragmatic than ideological as they are necessary for the survival of Russia as a state. Three of the remaining interests outlined by Lynch seem to be means to an end, "maintaining Russia's status as a great international power." This is paralleled in Kuchins et al's category of "Global Order and Integration." Of these interests, international peerage derives from more from a liberal mindset, "assuring the geopolitical primacy of Russia in the region described by the borders of the former USSR" is strictly realist, and the third, economic development, is important in both frameworks. Thus, Russia's pursuit of realist great power status is a bifurcated approach departing from both liberalism and neorealism. On the whole, though, Russian foreign policy can be characterized as largely realism-based, with

international minded liberal goals only pursued in order to secure the narrower ambition of Russian great power revival.

III. U.S. INTERESTS IN BELARUS

Although the United States has numerous peripheral interests in Belarus, many of which are shared to a greater or less extent with Russia, it is human rights and non-traditional security issues which dominate American political discourse concerning Belarus. This chapter suggests that U.S. interests in Belarus stem less from realist concerns regarding Belarus' place in the European distribution of power, and more from the United States' liberal values, indeed from a Kantian view of the relationship between democracy and peace and stability in Eurasia.

One human rights issues in which the United States takes an active interest is the lack of political freedom and democratic processes in the Belarusian government. This interest stems from the broader American Kantian interest of democracy promotion as a means to world peace. Another area of interest to the United States is the fluidity of the Belarusian border in allowing illegal cross-border flows. Smuggling and intellectual property rights violations, trafficking in humans, and the narcotics trade are endemic problems as Belarus acts as a corridor to Europe. The inability of Belarusian authorities to control their borders has profound implications across a spectrum of concerns. Smuggling and property rights violations undermine Belarus' struggling economy and the tax systems of surrounding nations. Human trafficking, which most often entails forced labor, sexual slavery, or exploitation of young women and children, is one of the great tragedies of the 21st Century. It runs to the core of American moral legitimacy to make the eradication of this modern evil a national priority. Finally, the flow of drugs from Asia to Europe has a wide impact. Drug addiction has a deleterious societal effect in Europe and post-Soviet states. The drug trade is closely tied with organized crime and other economically destructive activities. Finally, it has security implications as money from cultivation in Afghanistan and Central Asia could be tied to terrorist groups in the area.

Arms proliferation is another security threat to the United States which occurs through illegal cross-border flows. Illegal arms trade, though, differs from the previous

instances of trafficking in that it seems to be sanctioned by the Belarusian government. As will be further documented, sources indicate that Belarusian officials knowingly allow and often direct the sale of conventional armaments to rogue states and other internationally sanctioned groups.

While the specific issues of political freedom, porous borders, and arms proliferation may be more important to the United States than Russia, the Russians are not entirely opposed, and in some cases may even share an interest, in seeing the achievement of U.S. interests. As will be shown in Chapter V, this mutuality of interest forms the basis of U.S.-Russian cooperation concerning Belarus.

A. HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Democracy and Political Freedom

The United State' most visible and publicized complaint against Belarus is the lack of political freedom under the Lukashenka regime. In 2002, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Steven Pifer laid out a "step-by-step" approach by which Belarus could begin a rapprochement with the United States. While the United States obviously has other issues of concern with Belarus, the three most prominent ones Pifer chose to highlight were, "lifting the climate of repression, an end of the pressure on the independent media, and an end of the pressure on non-governmental organizations."²⁰ Other prominent Washington policymakers have spoken out against the Lukashenka regime. Senator John McCain, after being denied a visa along with a delegation of other senators to visit Belarus, condemned Lukashenka's totalitarian regime noting that his "government has routinely harassed, arrested, and attacked democracy advocates" and promised the Belarusian people that "such tyranny cannot forever endure."²¹ In March 2005, Senator McCain signaled his continued concern for democracy in Belarus by writing a letter to President Lukashenka requesting the release of jailed former

²⁰ Steven Pifer, fmr. Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, "Transcript of DVC with Ambassador Steven Pifer: Minsk, Belarus," 12 August 2002. <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives> (22 Mar., 2005).

²¹ Sen. John McCain, "STATEMENT BY SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN ON PRESIDENT LUKASHENKO'S DECISION TO BAR SENATORS FROM BELARUS," *News Center: Press Releases*. 10 Aug. 2004. http://mccain.senate.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=Newscenter.ViewPressRelease&Content_id=1304 (22 March 2005).

ambassador Mikhail Marinich.²² Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also recently condemned the Lukashenka government labeling it an “outpost of tyranny” and vowing that the U.S. “cannot rest until every person living in a ‘fear society’ has finally won their freedom.”²³ Perhaps most indicative of the United States’ commitment to democratic change in Belarus is the 2004 Belarus Democracy Act passed by the United States Congress on October 20, 2004. President Bush in his statement regarding the bill commented that “Aleksandr (sic) Lukashenka and his government are turning Belarus into a regime of repression in the heart of Europe, its government isolated from its neighbors and its people isolated from each other.”²⁴ President Bush makes it clear that democracy promotion is among the United State’s most important priorities in Belarus by his promise that the United States will “work with our allies and partners to assist those seeking to return Belarus to its rightful place among the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies. There is no place in a Europe whole and free for a regime of this kind.”²⁵

It is plain that democratic reform is an interest for the United States in Belarus. What is more ambiguous is the form by which such democratic reform could take place. Theoretically, President Lukashenka could have a change of heart and initiate democratic reforms of his own accord. This however is unlikely, as he has given no previous indication of reversing his present tyrannical course. A more plausible scenario is one in which an alternative candidate, either from the democratic opposition or from within the Belarusian government, rises to challenge Lukashenka. Because regime change would make the achievement of democratic reform more likely, the United States can be seen as preferring a change in Belarusian presidential administration.

²²Sen. John McCain, “LETTER TO PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS:Calling For the Release Of Ambassador Mikhail Marinich.” *News Center: Press Releases*. 11 Mar. 2005. http://mccain.senate.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsCenter.ViewPressRelease&Content_id=1540 (22 Mar. 2005).

²³ Condoleezza Rice, U.S. Secretary of State, “Opening Remarks: Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” 15 Jan. 2005. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/40991.htm> (22 Mar. 2005).

²⁴ George W. Bush, U.S. President, “Statement on Belarus Democracy Act 2004,” 20 Oct. 2004. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/10/20041020-14.html> (18 Sep. 2005).

²⁵ Ibid.

2. Cross-border Trafficking

As the corridor of Europe, Belarus is a problem for Russia, Europe, and even the United States in its inability to control the flow of goods, people, and drugs across its borders. As a consequence of its officially open border with Russia and its de facto porous border with the Baltic states, Belarus is a hot zone for the movement of everything illegal between the East and West. Dmitri Trenin states that Belarus' 350 km border with Latvia and Lithuania, known as the "Belarusian Gap", is "considered to be responsible for some 40 percent of all reported cases of smuggling, including non-ferrous metals, petroleum products and timber from Russia, and tobacco and alcoholic products from the Baltic states, as well as westward bound illegal migrants."²⁵ While smuggling as a trade diverting activity represents an economic loss in taxable income for Russia and Europe, it is the illegal movement of persons through Belarus which more greatly concerns the United States.

The illegal movement of persons, either through human trafficking or illegal migration, is a continued problem in Belarus. Belarus is repeatedly cited as "primarily a source country for women and children trafficked to Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Japan for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor."²⁶ The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) notes that in Europe, Belarus is among the major source countries for trafficking in women. The IFRC notes that Belarus' existing response to the problem does not sufficiently address the situation.²⁷ The 2005 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report labels Belarus a "Tier 2" country, a designation for those "countries whose governments do not fully comply with the Act's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards."²⁸ That the U.S. Congress passed a law mandating the

²⁵ Dmitri Trenin, "Moscow's Relations with Belarus: An Ally without a Handle," *Chaillot Paper* 78. (Moscow: Carnegie, 6 Aug 2005), 5.

²⁶ U.S. State Dept. *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000: Trafficking in Persons Report*. 2005 Accessed on-line at <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/> (19 July 2005).

²⁷ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Human Trafficking in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine- Appeal 2005." <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/annual05/logframes/Europe/05AA071backHumTraff.pdf> (19 July 2005).

²⁸ U.S. State Dept. "Country Narratives: Belarus Tier 2," *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000: Trafficking in Persons Report*. 2005 <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/> (19 July 2005).

State Department to compile this data is indicative of the United State's liberal conception of interest. This report suggests that such liberal interests are quite pronounced with regard to Belarus.

To the credit of the Belarusian government, the Lukashenka regime is rhetorically cooperative with outside agencies in making the prevention of human-trafficking a priority. Its efforts remain superficial though, as inadequate funding for victim protection and poor law enforcement of Belarus' borders with Russia and Ukraine continue to allow for the easy movement of people.²⁹ On the issue of illegal migration in Belarus, the "Internal Affairs Ministry estimates that as many as 200,000 undocumented migrants pass through the country every year on their way to Lithuania and Poland in the hope of eventually reaching Western Europe."³⁰ The IFRC reports that this number is increasing, and is expected to only rise further with the recent accession of several of Belarus' neighbors to the EU. This has profound implications for Belarus' relationship with Poland and the Baltic States. As evidenced by the specter of the "Polish Plumber" in French media³¹, these new EU ascendants are already largely maligned throughout Europe as exporting cheap laborers who take European jobs and feed off of the wealthy European social states. The illegal flow from Belarus and points further east only serves to aggravate this perception.

Drug trafficking in Belarus is also worrisome for the United States as widespread corruption, porous borders, and a good railway and road system make Belarus an increasingly important transit country for narcotics.³² The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency notes that, "Belarus is primarily a transit point for Afghan-produced heroin from Central Asia transiting Russia and Ukraine en route to Western Europe."³³ The transit of

²⁹ U.S. State Dept. "Country Narratives: Belarus Tier 2."

³⁰ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Population Movement in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine- Appeal 2005." http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA07101.pdf (19 July 2005).

³¹ Martin Arnold, "Polish plumber symbolic of all French fear about constitution" *Financial Times*, 28 May 2005, <http://news.ft.com/cms/s/9d5d703a-cf14-11d9-8cb5-00000e2511c8.html> (19 July 2005).

³² U.S. State Dept. *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2005*. March 2005. Accessed online at <http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2005> (March 22, 2005).

³³ U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, "Drug Intelligence Brief: Russian Organized Crime Groups," January 2002, <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/intel/02004/> (21 July 2005).

illegal drugs through Belarus is an area in which Russia shares concerns with the United States, but for different reasons. U.S. drug interdiction is motivated by liberal conceptions of interest. The Russian government has made drug interdiction a priority, though a peripheral one, as part of Putin's larger effort to establish law and order as a prerequisite to rebuilding Russian society. Towards this end Russia and Belarus have been cooperating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to implement a program to support the suppression of drug trafficking through capacity-building, training for law enforcement and technical assistance to law enforcement agencies fighting drug trafficking.³⁴

Porous borders are troubling for the United States because the same conditions that allow for drug trafficking in Belarus could also facilitate the movement of terrorists. As part of the larger war on terrorism, the United States desires to prevent the movement of extremist groups into Europe or Russia. Russian interests intersect here as well as concerns about the cross-border operations of Chechen fighters has made preventing terrorist movement a much greater priority for the Russian government. Toward this end Moscow has implemented several programs with Belarus under the auspices of the Russo-Belarus Union state and through regional security organizations to make it harder for Islamic radicals to cross the Belarusian border.

While the Lukashenka regime has not accomplished much in solving the problem of Belarus' porous border, it has at least recognized the importance of the problem as it impacts their relations with the West. Sergei Martynov, Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs, makes this recognition clear, "Belarus has been a serious guarantor of regional stability in the fields that are of concern for the whole Europe. These are illegal migration, drug trafficking, trans-boundary criminality, human trafficking. And here we offer a real cooperation to the North-Atlantic Alliance and the European Union."³⁵ Arms trafficking, on the other hand is an area of concern for Europe and particularly the United States where Lukashenka has yet to get the message.

³⁴ UN Office of Drugs and Crime, "Russian Federation and Belarus Programme," 2003 http://www.unodc.org/pdf/russian_federation_and_belarus_programme.pdf (21 July 2005).

³⁵ Sergei Martynov, "Geographical Security Map: Interview with Sergey Martynov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus," Published in *Sovetskaya Belorussia*, 10 July 2004 <http://www.mfa.gov.by/eng/index.php?d=publications/massmedia&id=3> (22 July 2005).

B. SECURITY

More troubling than the issue of border control, for which Belarus has the will, but not the capacity, is the deliberate sale of Belarusian arms to suspect regimes. On the issue of illegal arms transfers, former Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton called Belarus, “one of the least responsive OSCE member states” and remarked that they “should not be in the business of selling arms to countries with histories of supporting terrorism or fomenting regional conflict.”³⁶ Bolton also cited Belarus as one of the countries against which the United States imposed sanctions for “WMD related transfers to Iran.”³⁷ The Belarusian Foreign Ministry claims that, “when supplying arms Belarus acts in strict compliance with the UN embargo, which bans exports of weapons and equipment to countries with unfavorable military and political situations or to countries participating in regional conflicts.”³⁸ Yet, Andrei Sannikov, former Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus and now international coordinator of the Charter 97 human rights NGO, tells a different story. Sannikov contends that “Belarus has not only reportedly sold weapons to six of the seven countries on the State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism, but has also continued to defy Washington in doing so.”³⁹ According to *Jane’s Military Digest*, between 1996-2000 Belarus ranked 10th in the world in major arms exports and has subsequently carved out a market niche by selling arms to “rogue states”. It reports that Belarus has sold arms illegally to Peru during their border dispute with Ecuador and Tajikistan during their civil war, some of which were resold to warring clans in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Lukashenka’s regime reportedly also sold T-55 tanks and Mi-24 Hind helicopters to Sudan, as well as other arms to Angola and Algeria. *Jane’s* also notes that according to

³⁶ John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, “Arming Rogue Regimes: The Role of the OSCE Participating States.” *Hearing before the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe*. (June 05, 2003). <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives> (March 22, 2005).

³⁷ John Bolton, “Testimony before the House International Relations Committee,” 24 June 2004. <http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/archive/2004/Jun/> (March 22, 2005).

³⁸ Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “International Regimes Of Non-Prolife-Ration And The Export Control Policy Of The Republic Of Belarus,” <http://www.mfa.gov.by/eng/index.php?d=publications/massmedia&id=7> (22 July 2005).

³⁹ Andrei Sannikov and Mark Lenzi, “Belarus Terrorist Ties,” *Washington Post*. 12 June 2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35748-2004Jun11.html> (11 Aug. 2005)

U.S. and Israeli intelligence Belarus sold over \$500 million worth of arms to Arab, Palestinian, and Albanian extremist groups in early 2001.⁴⁰

Perhaps most damning for Belarus' relationship with the United States is the revelation of ties between Minsk and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Stephen Blank asserts that Belarusian-Iraqi trade turnover in 1999 was at least \$60 million, with Minsk steadily trying to expand military collaboration as a way station for the transfer of Russian dual-use technology and spare parts.⁴¹ In 2003, Ambassador Pifer reported that sufficient evidence existed to prove that Belarus had provided weapons and training to countries and groups that support terrorism including Iran and Iraq.⁴² This alleged cooperation with Baghdad seems to have entailed the sale of S-300 missiles and the training of up to 20 Iraqi air defense officers in the Belarusian Military Academy.⁴³ As late as 2004 Saddam's regime seems to have been collaborating with elements within Belarus, as one high-ranking aide to Saddam was reportedly captured with Belarusian passports for himself and other key figures, including Saddam's sons. Sannikov comments that "Washington's continuing concern about this matter is understandable, given that some of Hussein's top officials and others in his regime may have escaped via Syria to the European pariah state of Belarus during or after the war."⁴⁴ As a conduit and source of weapons and support to America's enemies, Belarus is a cause for concern among U.S. policymakers.

As is clearly demonstrated the issue of arms is a significant stumbling block in the U.S.-Belarusian relationship. While other areas of cross-border flows, such as people, drugs, and smuggled goods, are of concern to the United States, these problems are not acute and are largely outside the control of the Belarusian government. Transferring arms to rogue states, though, directly affects the American realist interests of maintaining Eurasian stability and protecting the American homeland. Providing weapons to

⁴⁰ Jane's Military Digest Online, "Belarus Defense Assessment," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 20 May 2004. www.janes.com

⁴¹ Stephen Blank, "Russia: Proliferation personified," *Asia Times*, 2003.

⁴² *Associated Press* wire dispatch, April 16, 2003 cited in Stephen Woehrel, Congressional Research Service "Belarus: Background and U.S. Policy Concerns," *CRS Report for Congress*. 5 April 2005.

⁴³ Jane's Military Digest Online, "Belarus Defense Assessment," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 20 May 2004. www.janes.com

⁴⁴ Sannikov and Lenzi.

embargoed regimes is in direct contravention to international mandates and could undermine American realist interest of maintaining and promoting a rule-of-law governed international system. By flagrantly violated international sanctions and arms embargoes Belarus is subverting the effectiveness of the international community and is directly contributing to the destabilization of and bloodshed in some of the world's worst conflicts. Belarusian complicity in arming extremist groups also directly endangers the American people and increases their vulnerability to terrorist attacks.

While events in Belarus impact both realist and liberal conceptions of interests, it is the liberal view which predominates in thinking on Belarus. Arms proliferation is certainly a realist concern, but the United States' driving interest in Belarus is the liberal goal of promoting democracy.

C. U.S. POLICY OPTIONS IN BELARUS

Due to its gross human rights violations, its inability to control its borders, and its flagrant disregard for international arms regulations, the Lukashenka government in Belarus is a threat for the United States. While a change in leadership would not immediately strengthen Belarusian border control, it could dramatically affect the political climate within Belarus and its external dealings with rogue states and terrorist groups. Operating from the previously established premise that the U. S. would prefer a change in the ruling regime of Belarus, there are basically four options open to the United States. First, America could maintain its realist/defensive liberal response through the current "step-by-step" policy approach using diplomatic carrots and sticks to shape Belarusian behavior. A second option at the offensive liberal extreme could be direct military intervention for the purpose of regime change. A more muscular defensive liberal option would be the indirect subversion of the Lukashenka regime through NGOs and democracy promotion in order to bring about a Ukrainian style "color revolution". A final option, which would fall under both the realist and soft liberal categories, would be to cooperate with Russia in choosing a compromise alternative to Lukashenka who is amenable to both sides.

1. Maintaining the Status Quo

Since 2002 the United States and Europe have employed a selective engagement strategy toward Belarus of rewarding positive steps toward democracy with incremental

rewards and punishing negative transgressions with sanctions and public condemnation. Unfortunately, this strategy has failed to bring about the desired change in Belarusian policy. According to the U.S. State Department, “Belarusian authorities have yet to take such steps to warrant a positive response.” This stagnation of relations led both the United States and the European Union to impose travel restrictions in 2004 on Belarusian officials implicated in politically motivated disappearances.⁴⁵ Condemnation by the international community has only pushed the Lukashenka regime closer to Russia as its sole ally. The continuation of the current “step-by-step” policy seems likely to only exacerbate Belarus’ isolation and continued decline into authoritarianism and poverty. Sherman Garnett warns about the danger of allowing Belarus to continue to drift toward isolation and authoritarian rule. He writes that President Lukashenka “seems deserving of the cold shoulder for his contempt for Euro-Atlantic political and economic practices, but the Belarusian people are not...There are potentially serious internal consequences for Belarusian stability if they come to see themselves as permanently left out.”⁴⁶ The recognition of this fact by U.S. policymakers is confirmed by the passage of the aforementioned Belarus Democracy Act of 2004. It seems to have become clear to the Bush administration that a more proactive approach is needed in pursuing American interests in Belarus.

2. Military Intervention/Regime Change

If the current U.S. policy toward Belarus is not aggressive enough, a second policy option is available to take the American approach in the opposite direction. This option of direct military intervention for the purpose of regime change has precedents in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Yet, this seems a highly unlikely and probably disastrous course of action. From a merely domestic viewpoint, the American public is unlikely to support another expeditionary war, especially since any connection to the Global War on Terror would be tenuous at best. Military operations in Belarus would also be unsupportable logistically and from a

⁴⁵ U.S. State Dept. Bureau of Eurasian and European Affairs, “Background Notes: Belarus,” October 2004, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5371.htm> (2 August 2005).

⁴⁶ Sherman Garnett, “An Incomplete Settlement in Eastern and Central Europe,” *Russia and the West: The 21st Century Security Environment*. Ed. Alexei G. Arbatov, et al. East West Institute. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 151.

manpower standpoint, as American forces are already stretched in Iraq and Afghanistan. The extension to another military front would likely necessitate the re-opening of conscription, the total mobilization of guard and reserve forces, or some other wildly unpopular personnel measure. Such a move would likely mean political suicide for the Bush administration and the Republican Party as a whole.

A military solution would be equally untenable internationally. If the United States' European allies were hesitant to follow the American lead into Iraq there seems little chance they would tolerate such a crusade on European soil. Even more frightening for the U.S. than a tirade by Jacques Chirac at the United Nations would be the possible response of Russia. The unauthorized invasion of Belarus by American forces would, at the least, sink relations with Russia to a low not seen since the Cold War. The Putin administration would likely come under great pressure to respond militarily as such an affront to Russian power and status would be viewed as unacceptable. Given the admitted disparity between U.S. military forces and Russian conventional military capability this could leave Putin in a situation where he may be forced to use nuclear weapons or suffer the political consequences. President Putin's statement that "the nuclear deterrence forces are and will remain for a long time the main pillar of Russia's national security," combined with the thinly veiled threat to pursue all nuclear possibilities allowed under international treaties⁴⁷ is a signal that the United States must take the Russian nuclear threat serious. As has been demonstrated, there is a preponderance of reasons, both domestic and international, which speak to the inconceivability of a military solution to the United States' problems in Belarus. As in most national policy problems, the solution lies somewhere between doing nothing and doing too much.

3. Indirect Subversion — "Color Revolution"

The rumors and speculation swirling around Belarusian politics center on the anticipation of another "colored" democratic revolution. Various named the "White Revolution"⁴⁸ or "Blue Revolution"⁴⁹ depending on one's source, this idea has filled the

⁴⁷ Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, "The Concluding Address by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation," *Priority Tasks of the Russian Federation*, 16-17.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey T. Kuhner. "White Revolution' Stirring in Belarus," *Washington Times*. 4 May 2005. <http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20050503-094236-9995r.htm> (4 Aug 2005)

collective imagination with visions of mass protests, grand speeches by democratic politicians, and the birth of a free, Western-oriented Belarus. Such a scenario may not be as likely as either Western democracy proponents or Lukashenka regime elements seem to think as there are a number of significant barriers to such a democratic revolution.

Several analyses of democratic revolution in post-communist countries cast doubt on the viability of a popular uprising in Belarus. Bruce Jackson offers one such analysis by looking at the Rose and Orange revolutions, in Georgia and Ukraine respectively. While the conditions he cites did not apply to the Eastern European countries of the early 1990's, they could offer some insights into the possibility for democratic revolution in the 21st Century. Many of the elements of the Rose and Orange revolutions seem to be missing from the situation in Belarus. Bruce Jackson, the president of the Project on Transitional Democracies, has outlined six preconditions for democratic change in the former Soviet republics. The conditions include:

- 1) An extensive civic society comprised of multiple NGO's where pluralism can develop;
- (2) Independent political parties which can contest elections;
- (3) An opposition bloc in Parliament which can offer alternative policies and serve as a training ground for future governance;
- (4) The beginnings of a business community which can financially support an opposition as a counterweight to the regime's use of government resources and corrupt business allies;
- (5) An independent media with the capability to distribute printed materials and with access to at least one independent television station; and
- (6) Civilian control of the military and security services adequate to ensure that armed force will not be used to suppress civil dissent.⁵⁰

While these criteria are neither entirely necessary nor sufficient for a democratic revolution, their presence or absence could be reflective of the likelihood of a popular revolution's success. This seems to bode ill for advocates of democratic revolution in Belarus; in many of the aforementioned areas, Belarus is lagging far behind Ukraine or

⁴⁹ Guy Dinmore, "U.S. Aids 'Blue' Belarus Opposition," *Financial Times Online*, 3 June 2005. www.ft.com (4 Aug 2005).

⁵⁰ Bruce P. Jackson, "Democracy in Russia: Based on testimony delivered before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.," *The Weekly Standard*. 18 Feb. 2005 <http://www.theweeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/005/254ctvvn.asp> (4 Aug. 2005).

Georgia during the period of their revolutions. Even if one does not accept Jackson's overly demanding criteria, other analysts suggest that revolution is not yet ripe in Belarus.

a. Civil Society

While there is an active and tenacious collection of NGOs within Belarus, this sector has been the focus of deliberate suppression by the Lukashenka regime. Freedom House's 2005 report charges that, "the independent civic sector has been continuously squeezed out of existence by the authorities, with the closure of 56 high-profile nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in 2003–2004 and the denial of registration to more than 90 percent of newly formed organizations during the same period."⁵¹ Those NGOs which are left are often forced to operate out of neighboring countries such as Poland and the Baltic States. This suppression and exile has limited the effectiveness of democratic groups in mobilizing the Belarusian populace and can, in part, be blamed for the general malaise among the body politic in Belarus.

b. Political Society-

Independent political parties do exist in Belarus, but they are largely fragmented and disorganized. The indecision over the hoped-for uprising's moniker is indicative of the general climate of disunity among the Belarusian opposition. The Belarusian opposition is split into two rival blocs, the Popular Coalition Five Plus and the European Coalition Free Belarus. The Five Plus coalition is made up of the United Civil Party (UCP), Party of the Belarusian Popular Front, the Hramada branch of the Social Democratic Party, the Party of Labor, and the Party of Communists, as well as scores of NGOs and smaller groups.⁵² This coalition, led by UCP chairman Anatoly Lebedko, is Western-leaning and has agreed on a general agenda of 1) fair wages, 2) economic growth and job creation, 3) rule of law, 4) government transparency, and 5) a sovereign

⁵¹ Freedom House, "Country Report – Belarus," *Nations in Transit 2005*. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nattransit.htm> (4 Aug 2005).

⁵² David Marples, "Belarus Prepares for Lukashenka's Third Term," *Eurasia Daily Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*. Vol. 1, Issue 59 (July 26, 2004).

Belarus.⁵³ The other coalition, the European Coalition Free Belarus, is led by Nikolai Statkevich, head of a wing of the Social Democratic Party. This group has trumpeted their desire to reform Belarus in the expectation of eventual EU accession.

The problem with the Belarusian opposition is that although all the different groups share common values, they have had difficulty uniting behind one candidate. As David Marples notes, already four different candidates, Lebedko, Statkevich, Communist Party leader Sergei Kalyakin, and the exiled Zyanon Paznyak, have been nominated by their parties to run against Lukashenka in the 2006 election.⁵⁴ Besides these traditional party candidates, a number of possible presidential candidates have emerged who currently or recently served within the Lukashenka government. These names include Alexander Voitovich, a physicist and former chairman of the upper chamber of parliament, Valery Frolov, a general and leader of the Respublika faction in parliament, Valeri Leonov, the former agricultural minister. Other possible candidates include Alexander Yaroshuk, the president of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions and Andrei Klimov, a prominent businessman, former parliament deputy, and long-time Lukashenka critic. With all of these contenders for president, the Belarusian opposition must unite if they are to have any hope of defeating Lukashenka in the 2006 elections. According to a survey conducted by the Minsk-based Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, all opposition candidates scored equally low with the general Belarusian public. Between 10% and 15% of respondents said they would vote for a given opposition candidate. By contrast, 37% of voters said they would vote for President Lukashenka.⁵⁵ As is evident from the numbers, no one, the incumbent included, has the overwhelming support of the electorate.

⁵³ Stephen B. Nix, "Testimony for 'Belarus and Its Future: Democracy or Soviet Style Dictatorship?'" Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on International Relations House of Representatives: 108th Congress 2nd Session. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2004).

⁵⁴ David Marples, "The Rise and Fall of Social Democracy in Belarus," *Eurasia Daily Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*, Vol. 2 Number 1, (31 Jan. 2005).

⁵⁵ Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies cited in David Marples, "Who are Lukashenka's Rivals for President," *Eurasia Daily Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*. Vol. 1, Issue 65 (August 03, 2004).

Even if the Belarusian opposition is able to unite it is not certain that they would be given a fair chance to compete in a election. Recent forced deregistration of political parties in Belarus' regions are undermining the opposition efforts to compete. Human Rights Center *Viasna* chair, Alies Bialiatki, comments that this liquidation of the political parties' structure is a direct effort to clear the political space for the 2006 election.⁵⁶

c. *Opposition Representation within the Legislature*

Things look equally grim for the Belarusian opposition if their presence within parliament is taken as an indication of success. The last freely elected parliament was the 13th Supreme Soviet assembled in 1996. This parliament was dismantled by Lukashenka and replaced with his own subservient replacements. Each subsequent parliamentary election has been marred by the suppression of opposition voices and outright fraud. Human Rights Watch notes that in the October 2004 election, condemned by the OSCE as “undermined by problems with the elections laws,” not a single representative from the opposition parties was elected to the 110 member House of Representatives.⁵⁷ This is relevant in that most of the political figures within the Belarusian opposition have been out of the government for close to ten years.

Additionally, by being forced to rely on Western support these politicians have become affiliated, at least in the Belarusian public's mind, with the West. Such an association is not necessarily an asset in nation where 69% of the population views good relations with Russia as “very important” and only 22% “strongly favor” joining the European Union.⁵⁸ Even if many in Belarus favor democracy and do not support Lukashenka, they also do not support completely realigning Belarusian society and foreign policy toward the West. According to Ira Strauss, “Democracy in Belarus can not

⁵⁶ Charter 97, “Belarusian Authorities Pave the Way for Next Presidential Elections: Clearing the Political Space,”

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Overview: Belarus,” *World Report 2005*. <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/01/13/belaru9878.htm> (4 Aug. 2005).

⁵⁸ Stephen White, “Belarus-Ukraine and the Dual Enlargement: The View from Below,” *European Security & Post-Soviet Space: Integration or Isolation?* (Conflict Studies Research Centre, December 2000), 98-99.

be built on an anti-Russian foundation.”⁵⁹ Any rival to Lukashenka who truly represents the popular will must have strong ties to Russia.

d. Independent Business Community

The burgeoning business community within Belarus is beginning to get involved in politics, but is still a long way from significantly threatening the statist Lukashenka regime. The Heritage Foundation’s 2005 *Index of Economic Freedom* classifies Belarus as “mostly unfree” and notes that “roughly 80 percent of all industry remains in state hands.”⁶⁰ The report also quotes the Economist Intelligence Unit in remarking that, “authorities discourage private enterprise through a combination of high taxes, excessive government regulations, and a deliberately anti-business climate.” There appears to be a marked lack of politically-minded oligarchs willing to spend their billions in opposing the regime. The majority of funding for opposition activities will likely need to come from foreign pockets. This too poses an obstacle. Contrary to statements from the Lukashenka regime, the West is not emptying its coffers to oust the current Belarusian government. Although the figure associated with the United States’ 2004 Belarus Democracy Act was \$40 million, that number was never firm and the only American money so far allocated to promote democracy in Belarus is the \$5 million earmarked under the 2005 Freedom Support Act.⁶¹ In fact, the USAID’s budget for Eurasian programs reveals that the actual funding does not seem to match the rhetoric for democracy promotion in Belarus. According to the USAID’s report funding for programs in Belarus is actually projected to drop during FY 2006.⁶²

Europe also is not putting forth as much cash as expected. According to RFE/RL, this is largely due to bureaucratic obstacles within the EU framework. Regulations on democracy promotion intended to promote aid transparency force donors

⁵⁹Ira Strauss, “Belarus: Russia as Liberator?” *Russian Observer.com* 27 June 2002. www.observer.strana.ru 23 June 2005

⁶⁰ The Heritage Foundation, “Belarus,” *Index of Economic Freedom 2005*. <http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/country.cfm?id=Belarus> (4 Aug 2005).

⁶¹ Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, “Western Sponsorship of Revolution Greatly Overstated,” Vol. 7 Num. 24. 29 June 2005 www.rferl.org/reports/pbureport/2005/06/24-290605.asp (4 Aug 2005).

⁶² Roberta Mahoney Acting Assistant Deputy Administrator USAID, “Eurasia Program Summary,” www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/ee/pdf/eurasia_progsum05.pdf (18 Sep 2005).

to work government-to-government and restrict what support can be given to individuals and private groups. All programs must be approved by the government in Minsk, which obviously hampers the likelihood of any aid reaching opposition groups. Until the European Union finds a solution to circumvent these regulations, the opposition in Belarus will continue to struggle to find funding.⁶³

e. Independent Media

The media community within Belarus is one of the least free in the former Soviet world. Human Rights Watch notes that, “All national television stations, and most radio stations, in Belarus are controlled by the state. Independent radio broadcasts are limited to non-political music and advertising. Citizens do not receive objective information from the state-controlled media.”⁶⁴ Freedom House (FH) justifies its ranking of Belarus near the lowest level of democratic development in media freedom because, “independent journalists continued to be harassed with lawsuits, whereas deportation and detainment of foreign journalists are already customary.” FH also reports on the severe beating and even murder of journalists and reporters. The FH report does note however that “although the condition of independent media worsened substantially in 2004, a small network of printed press uncontrolled by the government continues to provide alternative information for a limited segment of Belarusian society.”⁶⁵ The importance of media freedom to a democratic revolution can not be overstated. Eurasian scholar Charles Fairbanks in his examination of the Rose Revolution in Georgia notes that of the factors which catalyzed the uprising none was more important than a free media. The factors he cites include economic distress, an established Western orientation, direct U.S. influence, especially on the military, an aged authoritarian ruler with no obvious heir and a looming succession crisis, a divided ruling party, and an impressive array of independent businesses, NGOs, and media outlets. Fairbanks concludes, “Of all these, the nonstate

⁶³ Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, “Western Sponsorship of Revolution Greatly Overstated.”

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Overview: Belarus,” *World Report 2005*.
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/01/13/belaru9878.htm> (4 Aug. 2005).

⁶⁵ Freedom House, “Country Report – Belarus,” *Nations in Transit 2005*.
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nattransit.htm> (4 Aug 2005).

broadcast media may have held the key.”⁶⁶ Given Belarus’ relative economic stability since 1991, its virulent anti-Westernism, and its relatively youthful, ambitious leader with a firm grip over his party, independent media sources become all the more important. This also makes Russian media outlets with established inroads into Belarus all the more relevant.

f. Civilian Control of Military and Security Service

Although there is civilian control over the military and security services, this civilian happens to President Lukashenka. With unchecked authority over these “power” services, it seems highly probable that Lukashenka would release his forces onto a general public uprising. *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment* notes that the Belarusian KGB is believed to be the least reformed of all post-Soviet intelligence services. This assessment observes that the KGB’s remit has recently been expanded to enable President Lukashenka to strengthen his personal grip over society. The 2005 Law on State Security Agencies requires the KGB to provide the President with real time data on key developments in all segments of Belarus economy and society as it is tasked with “furthering the nation’s political and economic development”. *Jane’s SSA* notes that Lukashenka has also denounced the principle of public oversight over the security services, confirming that the intelligence community would only be accountable to the President. This lack of accountability has manifested itself in the willingness of Lukashenka’s staff to use the KGB to crack down on opposition parties and human rights organizations. Reminiscent of Stalin’s purges the KGB has been implicated in several high-profile forced disappearances.⁶⁷

Lukashenka has proven time and again that he is willing and able to crush dissent with force. International condemnation and sanctions have largely failed to cause Lukashenka to moderate his tactics. It may be that the Russians are the only external actor with any control over Lukashenka. Apart from the economic and political interdependence between Russia and Belarus, there is also considerable integration at the

⁶⁶ Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., “Georgia’s Rose Revolution,” *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 15, Issue 2, (Apr. 2004).

⁶⁷ *Jane’s Military Digest*, “Security and Foreign Forces,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment: Russia and the CIS*. 1 June 2005.

military and security service levels. The *Jane's* report reveals that Belarusian security services have close links to Russian domestic (FSB) and foreign (SVR) intelligence services and there is excellent "on the ground" co-operation between both analytical and operational sections of Belarusian and Russian intelligence agencies.⁶⁸ This makes Russia an even more critical player in any revolutionary scenario as President Putin alone may have the power to persuade Lukashenka to restrain from political violence.

4. Compromising with Russia

If the precedents of previous democratic revolutions are any indication of the prospects for a future popular uprising in the former Soviet space, then democrats in Belarus have an arduous task in front of them. The deck is stacked against them in many vital areas and even Western support seems insufficient to propel democratic revolution over the walls of the last bastion of authoritarianism in Europe. Western funding could make up for the lack of a politically ambitious business class and a cadre of revolutionary experts exporting democracy from the states surrounding Belarus could pick up the slack caused by a dearth of domestic civil society. Yet, the United States and Europe are largely helpless to stop the Lukashenka regime's internal machinery of repression and loosen its stranglehold over the media. Only Russia, with significant economic and political leverage, established media access, and connections within the security apparatus, holds the keys to regime change in Belarus.

Other scholars also seem to suggest that this conclusion holds true. Henry Hale writes that Belarus is an example of a "patronal presidential" system which is characterized by two components: a directly elected president invested with great formal powers relative to the other organs of government and a high degree of presidential power based on patron-client relationships at the intersection of the state and economy.⁶⁹ He writes that Belarus differs from other post-communist states that have experienced regime change in that the institutional arrangements within Belarus allowed Lukashenka to ignore and extend constitutionally defined term limits. This made the option of defection very costly for elites within the regime and few have dared to challenge

⁶⁸ *Jane's*, "Security and Foreign Forces,"

⁶⁹ Henry Hale, "Democracy and Revolution in the Postcommunist World: From Chasing Events to Building Theory," *PONARS Working Papers* (April 2005), 10.

Lukashenka. The implication this theory has for U.S. policy is that it seems to indicate that regime change in Belarus will not happen without a change to the elite incentive structure.

As long as popular support for Lukashenka is lukewarm and the Belarusian president can count on the backing of Moscow, regime elites are likely to wait patiently as he contends with quixotic opposition candidates. The aforementioned variables of mass media, opposition organization, etc., largely determine the movement of popular support. Given its distinct disadvantage in many of these areas, it seems unlikely that the Belarusian opposition can mobilize the masses by themselves. Russian officials seem to be aware of this reality. Chairman of the Russian Federation Council's Committee on International Affairs, Mikhail Margelov expressed doubts about the current environment for revolution in Belarus. Margelov stated to Interfax in April 2005 that, "[i]n order for a coup d'état to occur, there needs to be predisposition of internal affairs of this or that country, for example a struggle between elites or clans for power." Since in Belarus so far, "marches on the capital are not taking place, tents are not being put up in central streets, and security forces are not hiding in their barracks," Margelov concludes that there is not much predisposition for revolution.⁷⁰ If the conditions for revolution cannot be produced by the Belarusian opposition and Western ability to infiltrate Belarusian society is limited, the impetus for regime change would have to come from a foreign power with significant access to both the Belarusian public and elite structure.

Conclusion

This, then, leaves Russian support as the last possible avenue for turning the tide against Lukashenka. If the Kremlin made a definitive break with Lukashenka and supported another figure from within the Belarusian elite, this could signal to other elites that a genuine power struggle was at hand. Hale notes that "once elites form clear expectations as to who will win this struggle ... elites again have incentives to steadily fall into line behind the new 'patron'."⁷¹ Without the support of a substantial number of

⁷⁰ Interfax, "Russian Senator Criticizes US Secretary of State's Statement on Belarus 'Dictatorship'," 22 April 05, translated by Interfax (22 April 2005).

⁷¹ Hale, 13.

elites, especially in the security and media sectors, Lukashenka would no longer have the tools to manipulate popular opinion and maintain political supremacy. Additionally, a candidate with clear Russian support would likely gain large popular support as the majority of Belarusians, 69% according to Stephen White, favor close ties with their eastern neighbor.⁷² Russian political scientist Adranik Migranian emphasizes Russia's vital position in determining the course of events in Belarus. Migranian reportedly admitted to Interfax that, "everything will depend on the position of Russia. Lukashenko's dependence on Moscow is becoming maximal." Additionally, Migranian called for the Kremlin to take a stand on the situation in Belarus, "[i]t is time for Russia to define its position, because the West has done so, Lukashenko has done so, and the opposition has done so."⁷³ Theoretically, at least, Russia seems to have the ability to significantly influence both elites and masses in Belarusian politics. As such, the United States will need to go through Moscow if they want to be a kingmaker in Minsk. The United States' hope for regime change in Belarus lies in cooperation with Russia. The next two chapters will examine the factors driving Russia to meet the U.S. halfway.

⁷² White, 99.

⁷³ Interfax, "Russian political scientists comment on stricter U.S. policy on Belarus," 21 Oct 2004 obtained from *Johnson's Russia List*. www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8420-24.cfm (10 Mar 2005).

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IV. RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN BELARUS

Serving as both its gateway and drawbridge to the West, Belarus is vitally important to Russia. This is especially so where Russia has a significant economic and geopolitical vested interest. Belarus serves as Russia's conduit for energy transit to Europe and one of its most important trade partners. Belarus is also Russia's closest ally in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the lynchpin to its reintegration of the former Soviet states. These aspects of the Russo-Belarusian relationship are important because they speak directly to Putin's strategy for Russian great power status revival. In his 2004 state of the nation address Putin essentially develops two goals for Russia. He states that Russia's goals are clear: "high living standards in the country, secure, free and comfortable; mature democracy and a developed civil society; consolidation of Russia's positions in the world and the main thing - a considerable growth in citizens' welfare."⁷⁴ These goals translate into a two-part strategy: economic development and international peerage. Ted Hopf in a 2003 PONARS memo casts Russia's actions in everything from oil production expansion to selling nuclear technology as "part of its broader strategy of restoring great power status through economic development."⁷⁵ Pavel Baev likewise asserts that recognition of Russia's status as a "great power" is an important component of Putin's grand strategy for Russia. He writes that the pragmatist Putin "is aware that sustained efforts have to be invested in upholding Russia's 'greatness,' while pretending that it [Russian greatness] is a given may help to increase returns on these investments."⁷⁶ Thus, Russia is pursuing the realist-informed end state of great power status through the dual tracks of economic development and integration into the international order. While these tracks are recommended as well by liberal thought, for Russia they are motivated by realist philosophy.

⁷⁴ *Pravda.Ru* "Putin Formulates National Goals," *Online Pravda*. 26 June 2004, http://english.pravda.ru/main/2004/05/26/54141_.html (19 Sep. 2005)

⁷⁵ Ted Hopf, "Putin and Bush, Perfect Together Yet Russia's Alliance with Europe is Inevitable...Eventually," *PONARS Policy Memo 300*. (November 2003), 3.

⁷⁶ Pavel Baev, "Putin Reconstitutes Russia's Great Power Status," *PONARS Policy Memo 318*. (November 2003), 1.

The conflict between Russian realism and American liberalism does not necessarily imply conflict between Russia and the United States. While Russia's motives may diverge from the United States', their goals of economic development and global integration fall in-line with American liberalism. Additionally, Russia very much needs the United States to achieve these goals. For the Russia, the long shadow of future interaction with the U.S. informs all of their decisions. Alexei Arbatov comments that "good relations with the West are a priority for Putin because they are an economic necessity...good relations with the United States are important to Putin because they lead to improved trade relations with Western Europe and Japan."⁷⁷ As the world's hyperpower, the U.S. holds a key position in international diplomacy. Acceptance by the United States is necessary for Russia's complete integration into the global economic, political, and military system.

A. ECONOMIC

1. Gas and Oil

Russia and Belarus are intertwined economically in a number of areas including the military-industrial complex, general trade of commodities, and most importantly, the energy sector.

Russia's most vital interest regarding Belarus is in the area of natural gas and oil. First, energy exports are fundamentally important to the Russian economy. Russia is the world's largest exporter of natural gas and second largest oil exporter at 10.7% of world production, larger than either Africa or Latin America.⁷⁸ According to *The Economist*, mineral products make up over half of Russia's exports at \$57 billion, with a majority of that figure made up by oil and natural gas.⁷⁹ Belarus is a primary recipient of those energy exports. Despite possessing 190 million tons of oil reserves, Belarus only produces 3 million tons per year and is highly dependent on foreign oil from Russia and Kazakhstan. Although Belarus has three refineries with a total refining capacity of 40 million toe/year

⁷⁷ Alexei Arbatov, "Russian National Security at Home and Abroad," *Center for Non-Proliferation Studies: Briefing Series* 13 Aug 2001 <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/dc/briefs/081301.htm> (2 June 2005).

⁷⁸ Nodari Simonia, "The West's Energy Security and the Role of Russia," *Russia in Global Affairs*. 8 Nov. 2004. <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/8/586.html> (March 22, 2005).

⁷⁹ *The Economist*, "Country Profiles: Russia," *The Economist Pocket World in Figures: 2005 edition*. (London: Profile Books, 2004), 203.

(tonne oil equivalent/year), the country is still virtually enslaved to Russian energy exports. Even Belarus' most successful refinery, the Mozir refinery, is partially owned by the Russian Oil and Gas Company "Slavneft." In addition to Russian oil, Belarus is also heavily dependent on Russian gas, consuming 10.2 billion cubic meters per year. As the figure below shows, this makes up approximately a fifth of the 42.6 billion cubic meters the Russian gas monopoly Gazprom sold to all of the CIS and the Baltics. Although Belarus is important to Russia as a consumer of energy resources it is far more significant as a transit country. Europe is Russia's largest consumer of energy exports and in order to reach Prague or Berlin the oil and gas must often go through Belarus first.

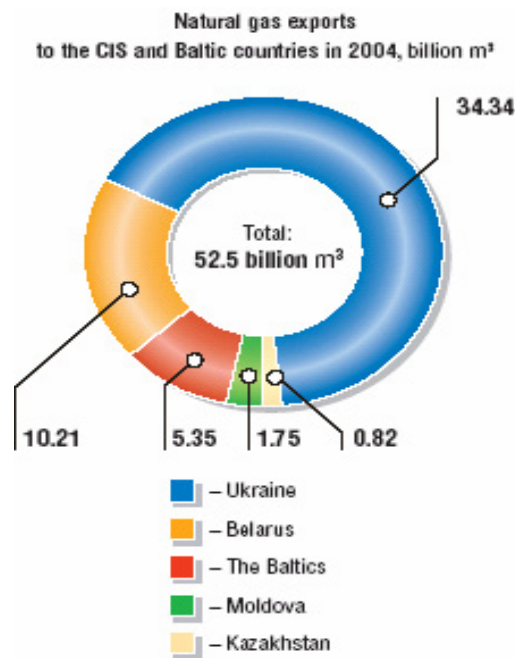


Figure 1. 2004 Natural Gas Exports to the CIS and Baltic Countries (From "Gazprom in Questions and Answers," www.gazprom.com/documents/Voprosi-i-otveti_ENG_FINAL-1.pdf , p. 32 (15 July 2005))

Russian-Belarusian mutual interdependence is nowhere more clearly manifested than in the area of oil pipelines. Russia's largest oil pipeline to Europe, the Druzhba pipeline, runs from oil fields in Russia and Kazakhstan to refineries in Belarus, as well as directly to Ukraine and Central Europe. The Druzhba pipeline is 1,470 km long with 10 pumping stations inside Belarus. It has a capacity of 1.2 mil billion barrels per day and on average transports 55,200,000 tons of oil per year, about 44% of the total volume of

Russian oil export.⁸⁰ The pipeline splits into two sections in Belarus with one branch running to Poland and Germany and the other section running to Ukraine, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.⁸¹ Future development plans are making Belarus increasingly more important to Russia's energy sector. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) reports that work has begun to expand the capacity of the Druzhba pipeline between Belarus and Poland, the area where it is most congested. The U.S. DOE also discloses that a couple of expansion projects in Russia's oil transportation network are in the offing. One project would extend the Druzhba pipeline into Germany. This would reduce tanker traffic in the Baltic Sea and allow for exports of Russian crude oil to the United States via Germany. The other proposal would connect the Adria pipeline with the Southern Druzhba (see Figure 2).⁸² These proposed changes are relevant to Belarus in that they would each increase Belarusian importance as the possessor of the northern portion of the pipeline. Russia's reliance on the Druzhba pipeline to transport oil to Europe ensures Belarus' significance in Moscow, because it directly impacts the vital Russian interest of regaining great power status.

⁸⁰ European Commission, INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe), "INOGATE Umbrella Agreement: Republic of Belarus," <http://www.inogate.org/html/countries/belarus.htm> (March 22, 2005).

⁸¹ Energy Information Agency, U.S. Dept. of Energy, "Major Russian Oil and Natural Gas Pipeline Projects," *Russian Country Analysis*, March 2005 http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/russia_pipelines.html (March 22, 2005).

⁸² EIA, U.S. DOE.



Figure 2. EIA, U.S. Dept. of Energy, “Major Russian Oil and Natural Gas Pipeline Projects,” Russian Country Analysis, March 2005
http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/russia_pipelines.html (22 March 2005)

The only thing more important to Russia’s economic well-being than oil is natural gas. This makes Belarus – with an extensive gas transmission system of 6,744 km of pipelines, 6 compressor stations, 2 underground storage facilities, and 632 cathodic protection stations⁸³ – a business partner whom Russia can not afford to lose. Russia’s most valued asset in Belarus is the Yamal-Europe gas pipeline (see Figure 3), owned by the Russian gas monopoly Gazprom. This pipeline has a capacity of 28 billion cubic meters which account for about 25% of Gazprom’s total gas exports to Western Europe. Gazprom on the whole provides about a 1/3 of the total natural gas import to Western Europe at 132.9 billion cubic meters.⁸⁴ Gazprom’s foreign earnings from gas exports total \$16.5 billion, making up nearly 16% of Russia’s export revenue and about 4.7% of the entire GDP of the Russian Federation. Needless to say, the oil and natural gas industry is vitally important to Russian interests. As a transit point for much of this export, Belarus is crucial to the maintenance of Russian energy revenues.

⁸³ European Commission, INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe), “INOGATE Umbrella Agreement: Republic of Belarus,” <http://www.inogate.org/html/countries/belarus.htm> (March 22, 2005)

⁸⁴ Gazprom, “Gazprom in Questions and Answers,” www.gazprom.ru/eng (March 22, 2005).

The Yamal-Europe Gas Pipeline



Figure 3. Yamal-Europe Gas Pipeline, "Gazprom in Questions and Answers," www.gazprom.com/documents/Voprosi-i-otveti_ENG_FINAL-1.pdf , p. 33 (15 July 2005)

Given the uncertainty of future Russian-Ukrainian cooperation, gas pipelines in Belarus can only become strategically more important. Currently, 90% of all exported Russian natural gas passes through Ukraine,⁸⁵ but that situation could change if relations between Moscow and Kiev turn sour. Rawi Abdelal notes that Ukrainian hesitance to allow greater Russian control of its gas pipelines has strengthened Belarus' attractiveness. Abdelal notes that in 2000, Russia signed an agreement with the EU to increase natural gas exports to Europe, as well as, to create a new gas pipeline through Belarus, Poland, and Slovakia, effectively bypassing Ukraine.⁸⁶

This new pipeline, the Yamal-Europe II, would equal its predecessor's capacity and reduce Ukraine's control over Russia's gas exports. U.S. DOE reports that as of March 2005, construction was pending as "Gazprom and Poland currently disagree on the exact route of the second branch as it travels through Poland. Gazprom is seeking a route

⁸⁵ Gazprom, "Gazprom in Questions and Answers."

⁸⁶ Rawi Abdelal, "Interpreting Interdependence: National Security and the Energy Trade of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus," *Swords and Sustenance: The Economics of Security in Belarus and Ukraine*. Ed. Robert Legvold and Celeste Wallander, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 122.

via southeastern Poland to Slovakia and on to Central Europe, while Poland wants the branch to travel through its own country and then on to Germany.” The figure below illustrates this proposed route.



Figure 4. Existing and Planned Natural Gas Pipelines to Europe. (From Energy Information Agency, U.S. Dept. of Energy, “Major Russian Oil and Natural Gas Pipeline Projects,” Russian Country Analysis, March 2005 http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/russia_pipelines.html (22 March 2005.)

However the details are worked out, the new pipeline will greatly increase Belarus’ importance to Russia and proportionately increase Lukashenka’s standing in Moscow. Both oil and gas pipelines in Belarus are of strategic significance to Russia because they are enabling Russia’s return to great power status. Pipelines not only generate the enormous amounts of cash keeping the Russian economy afloat while the country modernizes, but they also connect Russia to Europe, the heartland of world power. By meeting Europe’s energy needs, Russia is making itself indispensable to the Europeans and thereby increasing its standing in the world.

The interdependence of Russia and Belarus on energy transportation is a mixed blessing for Russia. While it makes Minsk reliant on Moscow, it also gives the Belarusians leverage in the relationship. On several occasions, Lukashenka has shown that he is willing to use that leverage to frustrate the Kremlin’s plans. He feuded with Gazprom over gas prices, claiming Belarus should be able to continue to buy gas at

domestic Russian prices. This was the condition – along with allowing Belarusians to drill for natural gas in Russian territory – that Lukashenka demanded and Putin granted in exchange for allowing Gazprom to buy Beltransgaz, which controls Belarus’s natural gas infrastructure, and create a joint-national enterprise.⁸⁷ The IMF reports that “Lukashenko has since put up hurdles to divestiture of Beltransgaz, and Gazprom, in turn, has threatened to raise gas delivery prices substantially in 2004 (in which case Beltransgaz would raise transit fees paid by Gazprom).”⁸⁸ As is becoming evident in Moscow, a more compliant regime in Minsk would certainly be in the interest of the Russian gas industry.

Belarusian demands for subsidized gas are bad enough for Russia, but more often than not, Belarus is unable to pay even the subsidized price. Historically, when Belarus has been unable to make its payments, Russia has offered generous repayment conditions accepting industrial barter and even forgiving Belarusian debt. This was generally conditioned on Belarus’ acquiescence to Russia’s foreign policy demands. More recently, though, Moscow has taken a harder line. In response to Belarusian intransigence on foreign and domestic issues, Russia cut the Belarusian gas supply in February of 2004, until Lukashenka agreed to higher gas prices.⁸⁹ In January 2005, Lukashenka vowed to “strengthen energy security and escape energy dependence on Russia.”⁹⁰ That preventing further gas cutoffs is a priority for Lukashenka reflects the effectiveness of this Russian “stick”. Even if Lukashenka is able to carry through his ambitious program, Belarus is and will continue to be vitally important to Russia as a consumer and conduit of energy resources.

⁸⁷ *Kommersant Daily*. “They’ll Help Lukashenka for a Ruble,” 25 Aug. 2004 www.kommersant.com (March 11, 2005).

⁸⁸ International Monetary Fund, “Republic of Belarus: 2004 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report” IMF Country Report No. 04/141 (May 2004), 15.

⁸⁹ Valerie Korchagina and Catherine Belton, “Belarus Agrees to Pay More after Gas Cutoff,” *The St. Petersburg Times*, 24 Feb. 2005. http://www.sptimes.ru/archive/times/945/top/t_11743.htm (March 22, 2005).

⁹⁰ “Lukashenko to Free Belarus from Russia’s Gas,” *Kommersant Daily*, 24 Jan. 2005, www.kommersant.com (March 11, 2005).

2. Trade Relationship

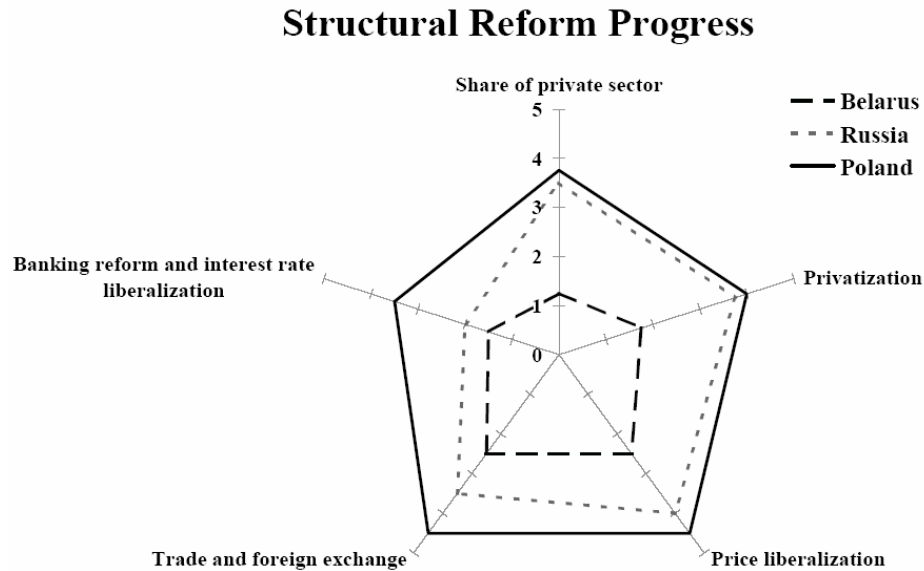
Another important factor in the dynamic between Russia and Belarus is their general trade relationship. Belarus was the second largest importer into Russia behind Germany at \$4.9 billion in 2003. This made up nearly 48% of Belarus' total export and accounted for about 13% of Belarus' total GDP at market cost. Russian imports into Belarus during the same time period totaled \$7.5 billion but only accounted for 7% of Russia's total exports.⁹¹ This Belarusian dependence is highlighted in an IMF stress-test scenario that examined the impact of a hypothetical 30% decline in exports to Russia relative to a 2006 baseline projection. This test revealed that after Belarus' foreign reserves were depleted, imports would adjust downward to absorb the remaining shortfall and thus stagnate in 2006, doubling the current account deficit to nearly 7 percent of GDP. Although lower output growth and real depreciation would help reduce the current account deficit in the medium term, the IMF report concludes that external financing would remain constrained, foreign reserves would remain low and the country could be left vulnerable to further shocks.⁹² From this it is evident that the Russo-Belarusian trade relationship is an unequal one with Belarus heavily reliant on its much larger neighbor.

Additionally, Belarus, while an important trade partner, is not always a profitable one for Russia. Since some Russian products are subsidized to sell to Belarus, namely gas, the trade relationship is in some ways costly to Russia. It is certainly not as profitable to Russia as it could be if Belarus were to reform and modernize its structurally inefficient economy. In an effort to minimize the economic shock of post-Soviet liberalization, reform in Belarus has proceeded gradually and sometimes not at all. This strategy preserved Belarusian wages and employment levels during the 1990's when most other post-Communist countries were experiencing hyperinflation and mass unemployment. Unfortunately, it has since left the Belarusian economy stalled in a Soviet-era stupor. Belarus' geographic proximity, linguistic similarity, and cultural affinity with Russia make the two Slavic states natural trading partners. Without

⁹¹ International Monetary Fund, "Republic of Belarus: Statistical Appendix," *IMF Country Report No. 04/140* (May 2004), 45

⁹² International Monetary Fund, "Republic of Belarus: 2005 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report; Staff Statement; Public Information Notice on the Executive Board Discussion; and Statement by the Executive Director for the Republic of Belarus" *IMF Country Report No. 05/214*, (June 2005), 18.

significant structural adjustment on Belarus' part, though, this trading relationship will make less and less sense as Russia proceeds in its modernization. The figure below illustrates the disparity in the respective paces of Russian and Belarusian economic reform.



Source: EBRD Transition Report 2003.
 Note: Minimum score (little progress) is 1 and maximum score is 4.5 ("4+") except for the share of private sector, which is re-normalized between 0 and 5. The privatization indicator is an average of the small-scale and large-scale privatization scores.

Figure 5. Figure 1- International Monetary Fund, "Republic of Belarus: 2004 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report" IMF Country Report No. 04/141 (May 2004) 10.

Belarus' economic status is important for Russia for two reasons. First, as a major trading partner Russia would benefit economically from increased Belarusian affluence. Rising incomes in Belarus would mean an expanded market for Russian goods there. Secondly, Russia is widely viewed as Belarus' patron state, a view that will only grow more prevalent as integration between the two countries deepen. As previously mentioned one of Russia's vital interest is peerage with the advanced industrial nations of the world. It is detrimental to Russia's image as a great power if its client states are backward and impoverished. Part of Russia's drive for great power status includes elevating its regional structures, the Eurasian Economic Union, the CSTO, etc., to parity with Western institutions. Russia can not achieve this goal if its closest partner is mired in economic retardation.

Russia has at its disposal a number of tools with which to influence Belarusian policy. One method by which Russia could induce Belarus to reform would be to threaten to reduce trade with Belarus or increase tariffs on Belarusian goods. A more subtle method of stimulating Belarusian reform would be by increasing economic and political integration between the two countries. If Russia is able to establish a common “ruble zone” with Belarus then it will have gained an additional instrument of leverage in coercing Lukashenka to make the economic reforms that Russia prefers. For several years now, Russian and Belarusian authorities have gone back and forth over the introduction of the ruble into Belarus in order to create a common currency zone with Russia. Such a currency union is widely seen as the first step toward greater integration between the two countries on the way to a comprehensive Union-State.

B. GEOSTRATEGIC- REGIONAL INTEGRATION

One of the ways in which Belarus is most important to Russia is as a reliable ally and partner in building regional organizations. This has occurred at different paces for different sectors. Economic reintegration efforts between Russia and Belarus have progressed in fits and starts. More concrete success has been achieved in the security and military arena. Finally, real political integration, in the form of the Russia-Belarus Union State, seems to be the next step for this partnership.

1. Economic: EURASEC & “Ruble Zone”

While Belarus has remained a strong trading partner with Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the level of economic integration between the two countries has wavered. Rawi Abdelal writes that the Belarusian government never reoriented their economy away from Russia and toward the West because they interpreted economic dependence on Russia as mutually beneficial. This led to policies of closer cooperation with Russia and a stake in the multilateral reintegration of the post-Soviet economic area.⁹³

Immediately after independence, the states of the former Soviet Union continued to trade using the ruble as a common currency. In December 1991, they formed the CIS

⁹³ Rawi Abdelal, “Purpose and Privation: Nation and Economy in Post-Habsburg Eastern Europe and Post-Soviet Eurasia” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2003), 923.

which was meant to foster economic integration as well as tighten political ties.⁹⁴ This led in 1993 to the “Ruble Zone of a New Type” when Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan agreed to unify their monetary systems with Russia’s. This common monetary zone failed, though, after Russian officials recognized the drain it imposed on their economy. Henry Hale writes that after the Soviet collapse, the ruble zone had become a hidden source of Russian subsidies to the other republics and that the “Ruble Zone of a New Type” was an effort to cut off these subsidies by forcing republics to put up collateral for cash supplies, which were treated as loans. Hale notes that even this “tightening of control could not guarantee that these republics would control their budget deficits, which would essentially amount to money created by Russia.” In the end, the 1993 ruble zone failed because of its danger to Russia as a source of subsidies and macroeconomic destabilization.⁹⁵

The failure of the “Ruble Zone of a New Type” was followed in 1995 by the tariff harmonization of Belarus and Kazakhstan with Russia in the CIS Customs Union. This economic integration occurred within the context of the CIS, but without the agreement of all the other CIS states, as many of these states had begun to take a divergent path from Moscow.⁹⁶ Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan later joined in 2001, with Ukraine and Moldova receiving observer status in 2002, when the Customs Union transformed into the Eurasian Economic Community, EurAsEc. This transformation was to entail a broadening of the scope of the organization’s work to include “the speedy forming of united economic space; the common market of goods, services, capital and labor; forming united transport, energy and information systems; co-ordination of external policy; the joint protection of external borders,” as well as a united position on entry into the World Trade Organization.⁹⁷ Despite many conferences and agreements, this multilateral arrangement has yet to produce much actual integration.

⁹⁴ Abdelal, “Purpose and Privation,” 898–933.

⁹⁵ Henry Hale, “Russia’s Fiscal Veto on CIS Integration” *PONARS Policy Memo 15*. October 1997.

⁹⁶ Abdelal, “Purpose and Privation,” 918.

⁹⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, “Cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Community,” <http://www.mfa.gov.by/eng/index.php?d=policy/multicoop&id=2> (5 Aug 2005).

The formation of a Single Economic Space (SES) between Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan is another avenue of multilateral integration. Originally signed in 2003 and entering into force in 2004, this agreement is meant to integrate the four most developed CIS states, who together account for about 90% of total CIS GDP.⁹⁸ Claiming to be a “purely economic organization” the SES incorporates the custom territories of the four member states in an effort to allow the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor as well as attempt to establish common foreign trade policy. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs envisions eventual harmonization on tax, monetary, and financial policies with an expected transition to a full economic union and the possibility of a common currency. The SES is to proceed in stages, requiring specific commitments to be met before integration can move to the next stage. Such a progression would start with a regime of free trade regarding the import of goods from other SES states along with the beginning of customs union prerequisites, the creation of a joint competitive environment, and the harmonization of national legislatures. This would be followed by a full free trade zone, then a customs union, and finally complete freedom of movement within the economic space.⁹⁹ The future of this organization is uncertain especially considering the recent westward reorientation of Ukraine.

Apart from multilateral integration, Russia and Belarus have attempted bilateral economic integration as well. This cooperation has come mostly in the form of a common currency zone and has often been tied to political agreements as well. The renewed effort to institute a common currency began with the Russian-Belarusian Union Treaty of 1997. This initiative was repeatedly delayed due largely to Russian concerns over unwanted expenditure and surrendering control over the marketization process.¹⁰⁰ Rawi Abdelal notes that the perpetually delayed monetary union was discussed and negotiated during the signing of political integration agreements between Belarus and Russia in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999. Subsequent agreements have been equally futile in producing real results.

⁹⁸ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Russia- Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States: 2004,” 13 Jan 2005. www.in.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/ (6 Feb 2005).

⁹⁹ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Henry Hale, “Russia's Fiscal Veto on CIS Integration” *PONARS Policy Memo 15*. October 1997.

In 2003 an agreement was reached on converting Belarus to the Russian ruble during the first half of 2005, under which two Belarusian representatives would be appointed to the Central Bank of Russia (CBR) Board of Directors, and a short-term CBR loan of up to Rub 20 billion (\$650 million) could be available to the National Bank of Belarus (NBB) to ensure stability in the payments system.¹⁰¹ Yet, even as they were concluding this agreement, officials in both countries were sending mixed signals about their intentions regarding the currency union which envisaged a peg of the Belarusian ruble to the Russian ruble in mid-2004 and “ruble-ization” from January 2005. The IMF notes that Lukashenko began repeatedly asserting that he would not give up the Belarusian ruble without additional Russian financial commitments and senior Russian officials began to suggest that the currency union be pushed back to 2006. It was during this time that the aforementioned 2004 gas dispute over the privatization of Beltransgaz began. Citing persistent payments arrears, Gazprom interrupted gas deliveries to Belarus during the harsh winter months of early 2004.¹⁰² Since this low-point in Russo-Belarusian dealings, economic relations have improved. An April 2005 presidential summit trumpeted the “dynamic development of economic cooperation” but failed to announce a timetable for the introduction of a single currency.¹⁰³

With the January 2005 deadline for “ruble-ization” long past and agreement not yet met on a number of key issues, the most recently agreed January 2006 implementation date is no longer feasible.¹⁰⁴ The currency union, which has always been as much about politics as economics, may continue to be delayed as long as the political future of Russia and Belarus remains unresolved. Kaare Martinsen notes that a financial union with a common currency would mean an end to Lukashenka’s position as president. Citing Putin’s 2002 statement that the only possible way ahead for the Union was a complete merger, Martinsen concludes that complete Russian control of the Belarusian economy would effectively mean the end of separate political institutions and

¹⁰¹ IMF Country Report 2004, 15.

¹⁰² IMF Country Report 2004, 15.

¹⁰³ Vladimir Putin, report from “Segognya” television program, Moscow NTV, 22 April 05 translated by FBIS. (22 April 05).

¹⁰⁴ IMF Country Report 2005, 12

the eventual abolishment of the Belarusian presidency.¹⁰⁵ This is obviously not in Lukashenka's interest and if Martinsen is right, it only stands to reason that Lukashenka would do whatever he could to stave off full integration while maintaining Russian gas and trade ties. Dmitri Trenin predicts that if Russia does not do something to change the political status quo in Russia, "the union state will remain unfinished, a political *dolgostroy* [long-term construction project] that is virtually impossible to either complete or abandon. Which is exactly Lukashenka's objective."¹⁰⁶

The idea of a common "ruble zone" with Belarus is controversial and its anticipated effect on the Russian economy is unclear. According to the European director of the IMF, John Odling-Smee, Russia has little to lose by pursuing the union and lots to gain. Odling-Smee writes that the union poses few significant risks to Russia as long as the union's institutional arrangements do not infringe on the independence of the Central Bank of Russia.¹⁰⁷ The positive side of such a union is that it could stimulate trade by reducing one more barrier to exchange. It would also induce the sluggish Belarusian government to implement needed structural reforms, improving the productivity of their trade relationship with Russia. Other economists have a less optimistic view for Russia. Höhmann and Meier assert that there are "high costs involved in any new integration of CIS states with Russia, especially economic and currency unions." It was just such a cost evaluation which Höhmann and Meier suggest terminated the 1993 currency agreements between Belarus and Russia.¹⁰⁸ The graph below illustrates the asymmetry between the Belarusian and Russian currencies and hints at the difficulties for Russia in absorbing Belarus' inflated ruble.

¹⁰⁵ Martinsen, 412.

¹⁰⁶ Dmitri Trenin, "Moscow's Relations with Belarus: An Ally without a Handle," *Chaillot Paper 78*. (Moscow: Carnegie, 6 Aug 2005), 5.

¹⁰⁷ John Odling-Smee, Director European II Dept. IMF, "Monetary Union between Belarus and Russia: An IMF Perspective," Speech in Minsk, Belarus Sept. 2, 2003 www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2003/090203 (March 23, 2005).

¹⁰⁸ Hans-Hermann Höhmann and Christian Meier, "Conceptual, Internal, and International Aspects of Russia's Economic Security," *Russia and the West: The 21st Century Security Environment*. Ed. Alexei G. Arbatov, et al. East West Institute. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 94.

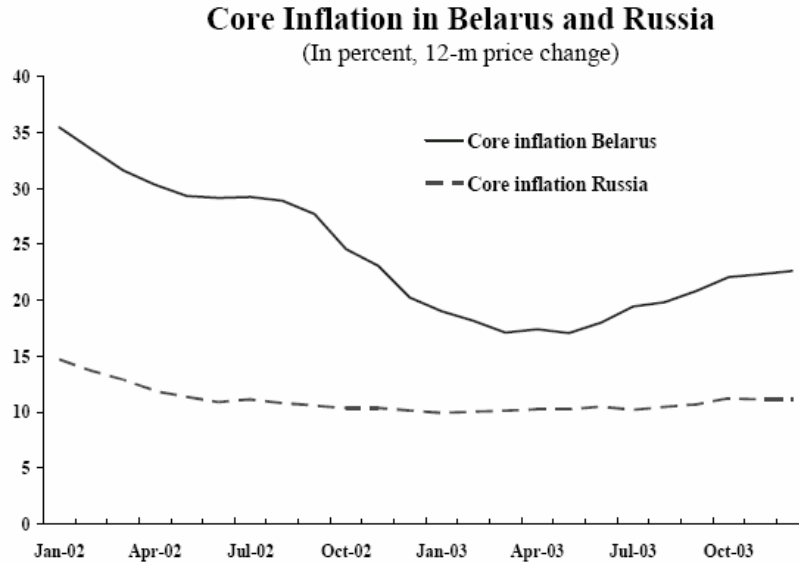


Figure 6. International Monetary Fund, “Republic of Belarus: 2004 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report” IMF Country Report No. 04/141 (May 2004), 13.

Odling-Smee also cites several potential pitfalls for Belarus, because of the relatively small size of its economy. He notes that because of asymmetry in the economies of the two countries, economic shocks, such as sudden changes in oil prices or severe drought, could affect each country differently. Under the currency union, monetary policy would be outside the control of the National Bank of Belarus, which otherwise could manipulate the cash supply to absorb an asymmetric shock. Odling-Smee also warns that the Russian ruble could appreciate in real terms against other major currencies, increasing competitive pressure on Belarusian industry in a problem often known as “Dutch Disease”. Odling-Smee predicts that if Belarus does not carry out major structural reforms and apply sound fiscal policy, then the Belarus National Bank will eventually begin to lose reserves and could reach a point where the currency union would have to be dissolved.¹⁰⁹ The IMF notes that in order for Belarus to derive net, long-term benefits from the union, officials must reach agreement with Russia on the appropriate level of the conversion exchange rate, the modalities of monetary policy decision making, the status of transfers prior to and following the adoption of the Russian ruble, and the

¹⁰⁹ Odling-Smee “Monetary Union between Belarus and Russia: An IMF Perspective.”

rules for fiscal prudence. Establishing these provisions, along with enduring structural reform in Belarus will be required for a lasting economically favorable currency union.¹¹⁰

It then appears that the common “ruble zone” could be beneficial for both Russia and Belarus, but only if it is implemented properly. If Belarus carries out the economic reforms necessary to make a currency union work, then Russia will have an established market for trade with a greatly improved trading partner. This would reduce Belarus’ need for subsidized energy while concurrently deepening integration with Russia. For both Russia and Belarus the stakes will be raised once a currency union is implemented and success will be largely contingent on the ability of the Belarusian government to implement major reform.

2. Security: CSTO & Bi-Lateral Integration

While economic integration between Belarus and Russia has produced a lot of smoke but little fire, cooperation in the area of defense and security has been more substantial. Defense integration has moved forward along two tracks: in multilateral institutions such as CIS/CSTO and through bilateral agreements exclusively between Russia and Belarus. Although multilateral integration has been generally less substantive than in bilateral agreements, Belarus still stands out as the most receptive of the former Soviet republics to Moscow’s pan-Eurasian initiatives. *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment* notes that while most of the former Soviet states have largely ignored the CIS in their national defense policies, Belarus has been the lone exception.¹¹¹ Hrihoriy Perepelitsa writes that “Belarus is the most active participant in implementing military-technical programs and agreements under the Treaty, signing 91 percent of all agreements and treaties reviewed by the CIS Council of Defense Ministers.”¹¹² One such agreement was on the Council on Collective Security (CCS), which later became the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This organization includes Kazakhstan,

¹¹⁰ International Monetary Fund, “Republic of Belarus: 2005 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report; Staff Statement; Public Information Notice on the Executive Board Discussion; and Statement by the Executive Director for the Republic of Belarus” IMF Country Report No. 05/214, (June 2005), 21.

¹¹¹ Jane’s Military Digest Online, “Russia and the CIS,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment*, 16 Jan 2003. www.janes.com

¹¹² Hrihoriy Perepelitsa, “Military-Industrial Cooperation between Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia: Possibilities, Priorities, Prospects,” *Swords and Sustenance: The Economics of Security in Belarus and Ukraine*, ed. Robert Legvold and Celeste Wallander, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 139.

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Belarus, and Armenia. Evolving out of the CIS framework in 1992, the CCS was a military coordination body, which was little used during the Yeltsin years, but gained new life with the ascension of Putin. In 2002, the CCS evolved into the CSTO in order “to ensure management of the Collective Quick-Deployment Forces in Central Asia and forces on other collective security theaters, and to combat international terrorism, drug trafficking, etc.”¹¹³ This Russian led initiative has so far provided for coordination on air-defense across the CIS, an Anti-Terrorism Center in Tashkent, and a CIS Rapid Reaction Force. Dmitri Trenin writes that “since Belarus joined the Joint Air Defence System of the CIS states in 1995, its air defences have been de facto integrated in Russia’s.”¹¹⁴ Belarus has supported the CSTO, but because of the organization’s focus on Central Asia, Lukashenka has been hesitant to involve Belarus too heavily in that region’s problems.¹¹⁵ Security cooperation within the CIS framework has been limited on the whole and has not yielded the same collaboration as bilateral agreements.

It is in bilateral relations with Russia that Belarus has seen the greatest military cooperation. *Jane’s* writes that Russia and Belarus have concluded a number of military agreements including a provision under the 1999 Russia-Belarus Union Treaty which “requires that the two states develop a joint defence policy and armed forces, and to cooperate in the use of military infrastructure,” as well as four other defense co-operation agreements calling for “technical co-operation between 2001 and 2005, the unification of military law, co-operation in utilizing arms and ammunition, and the creation of a single technical maintenance service programme for joint forces.”¹¹⁶ Trenin reveals that this paper integration has become concrete with the incorporation of Belarus’ armed forces and Russia’s western military district into “a 300,000 strong joint command, to be

¹¹³ “The Collective Security Organization includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.” *Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey* [FBIS Transcribed Text], 29 Apr 03 <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/russia/fbis/ciscollecsecycouncil.html> (5 Aug 2005)

¹¹⁴ Dmitri Trenin, “Moscow’s Relations with Belarus: An Ally without a Handle,” *Chaillot Paper* 78. (Moscow: Carnegie, 6 Aug 2005), 3.

¹¹⁵ Jane’s Military Digest Online, “Russia and the CIS: Armed Forces- Belarus,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment*, 16 Jan 2003. www.janes.com

¹¹⁶ Jane’s, “Russia and the CIS- Armed Forces Belarus.”

activated in case of crisis.”¹¹⁷ Despite this integrated command structure, Russia does not have combat troops stationed in Russia. What it does have is a pair of forward deployed communication facilities in Vileyka and Baranavichy, which were leased free of charge to Russia for 25 years in 1995.¹¹⁸ The installation in Vileyka is a low frequency submarine tracking station and communication center that allows Russia to communicate with its submarines and ships in the Atlantic. The second facility, in Baranavichy, is a Volga early-warning radar system under the command of Russian Space Troops which can track missiles and objects to the west and northwest of Russia in space 4,000 km away.¹¹⁹ The installation of this facility in 2002 gives testament to the fact that air defense is the fastest integrating sector of Russo-Belarusian military cooperation.

Russia and Belarus are intertwined not only with respect to their military forces, but in their military industrial complexes as well. Perepelitsa claims that military-industrial cooperation between Russia and Belarus is the deepest and most advanced of any sector of the Union integration.¹²⁰ In fact, this interdependence is a legacy of the Soviet defense production strategy which spread defense component manufactures across the various republics of the Soviet Union. As a result, Belarus became the major production center for military electronics, including the control systems for the S-300 missile system and the Su-27 fighter jet. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, this mutual dependence has deepened as Belarus, which accounted for only one to three percent of defense production in the Soviet Union, now makes up 15% of Russian defense procurement.¹²¹ Perepelitsa remarks that, “as a result of these roots of integrated Soviet defense production, Ukraine and Belarus find it virtually impossible to continue manufacturing defense equipment without close cooperation with the Russian military-industrial complex.”¹²² Russia, understandably, has a significant interest in the Belarusian

¹¹⁷ Trenin, 3.

¹¹⁸ Kaare Dahl Martinsen, “The Russian Takeover of Belarus,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (2002), 404.

¹¹⁹ Jane’s Military Digest Online, “Russia and the CIS: Armed Forces- Belarus,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment*, 16 Jan 2003. www.janes.com (22 July 2005)

¹²⁰ Perepelitsa, 139.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 152.

defense industry not only because of the two countries' close ties, but also because Minsk represents a competitor to Russia in the military production market. Martinsen remarks that production costs in Belarus are far lower than in Russia and this has "enabled Belarusian enterprises to export items identical to but cheaper than Russian products."¹²³

This competitive pressure and synergistic production system has motivated Russian arms producers to attempt to consolidate integration with Belarusian defense industries, a strategy which Lukashenka has stalwartly resisted. This resistance on Lukashenka's part does not seem to be in Belarus' interest. Based merely on economic reasons Belarus should want to integrate with Russia in the defense production sector. Perepelitsa asserts that the "the framework of the Union agreement significantly improves the Belarusian defense industry's access to Russian markets and additional financial resources." Because this integration provides the best conditions for competition with Russian defense enterprises, he claims that the military-industrial establishment has been a driving force for Russian-Belarusian integration processes.¹²⁴

Yet, Lukashenka has continued to block attempts to integrate Russian and Belarusian defense industries. This, Martinsen alleges, is because Lukashenka has a personal interest in keeping arms production nationalized. Martinsen claims that "armaments exports have generated a steady source of income, not so much for the (defense) enterprises or the state budget as for the president. The so-called Presidential fund at Lukashenko's disposal is, apparently, replenished with income from arms exports." Martinsen reveals that the existence of this slush fund was only made public in 2000 and there is still no visibility as to how much cash exists and how it is spent.¹²⁰ If this is true, it certainly helps to explain why integration between Russian and Belarusian defense industries has not progressed as much as would otherwise be expected. It also provides one more reason why Lukashenka's presence is a threat to Russian interests.

The implications of Russo-Belarusian defense cooperation and military-industrial interdependence are unclear. Perepelitsa sees military-industrial cooperation as a means

¹²³ Martinsen, 406.

¹²⁴ Perepelitsa, 138.

¹²⁰ Martinsen, 407.

for Russia to achieve its military-political interests and geopolitical ambitions. He asserts that the ultimate goal is to integrate Belarus and Ukraine into Russia's defense and economic spheres and potentially incorporate them into a single Russian state. Perepelitsa claims that in Russia, military cooperation is seen "as an engine for such reintegration and Russification."¹²⁵ John Erickson notes that in the rhetoric of Russian realists, Belarus plays a vital role in "extending Russia's 'defense space'". He writes that in this context, "Russian military and security priorities are a highly significant 'locomotive' driving a specific form of integration, carving out defined geostrategic and geopolitical 'space'".¹²² As in the economic sector, it seems only logical that increasing military integration would eventually bring political integration. Of all three sectors, it is in the political arena where integration between Russia and Belarus has been most contentious.

3. Political: Russia-Belarus Union State

The story of Belarus' political integration with Russia is in some ways a tale of a nation's search for identity. During Soviet times, Belarus was one of the most advanced and prosperous republics. It was also the most "Soviet," having been the most affected by Communist social experiments. The disintegration of the Soviet Union left many Belarusians uncertain of their new national identity, while hyperinflation undermined their confidence in the turbulent free market. Ethnically related, historically linked, economically dependent, and militarily subordinated to Russia, it seemed only natural for Belarusians to orient themselves in the turmoil of the early 1990's toward their Slavic brothers next door. By the 1993 presidential election, elites in Belarus had begun to see the value of an independent state and were moving politically away from reintegration with Russia. The Belarusian people, though, were not ready for such paradigm shift and surprisingly elected a previously unknown farm manager, Alexander Lukashenka, to the presidency. Campaigning on a platform of Soviet nostalgia and closer ties with Russia, Lukashenka played upon Belarusians' fear of the chaos in other post-communist states

¹²⁵ Martinsen, 407.

¹²² John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty to Defend Ourselves With...': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism?" *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Stephen J. Cimbala. (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 19.

and their desire for a return to the normalcy of Soviet life. Shortly after gaining office, Lukashenka reinstated Russian as an official language and resurrected Soviet era flags and state symbols.¹²⁶

In the succeeding years, Lukashenka pursued ever closer cooperation and integration with Russia toward the end of a joint Russia-Belarus Union State. By proposing a political union with Russia, Dmitri Trenin writes, “Lukashenka brilliantly exploited both the post-imperial nostalgia of the elites and the natural desire of many ordinary citizens to come together again, reducing the barrier function of the borders that had not existed for 200 years and establishing closer links across the board.”¹²⁷ Lukashenka’s ambitions were much grander than a simple political union. With Russian president Boris Yeltsin increasingly incapacitated by sickness and alcoholism, Lukashenka was positioning himself to make a leap at the Kremlin.

These ambitions precipitated his proposal of the Russia-Belarus Union State agreement in 1999. Martinsen notes that this agreement was the most popular and comprehensive integration agreement to date, receiving nearly unanimous approval in the Russian Duma and being the only one to specify institutional innovations to further the integration of the two countries.¹²⁸ The 1999 agreement provided for three governing bodies: the Parliamentary Assembly, a Supreme Council, and an Executive Committee, which Lukashenka undoubtedly hoped to lead. The appointment of Vladimir Putin, a dynamic former KGB agent, as Prime Minister, and then President, upset this plan and forced Lukashenka to change his policy stance away from comprehensive integration. Since then, Lukashenka has walked a thin line between maintaining close economic ties with Russia and preventing complete integration with Russia, which could doom him to political irrelevance. Trenin remarks that when Lukashenka’s imperial hopes faded, he began to “use the ‘union of two sovereign states’ phraseology as a cover for consolidating

¹²⁶ Martinsen, 403.

¹²⁷ Trenin, 2.

¹²⁸ Martinsen, 403.

his own rule in Belarus and as a pretext for receiving Russian subsidies for the upkeep of his regime.”¹²⁹ This dilemma helps to explain the often double-minded nature of Belarusian foreign policy.

For Russia’s part, integration with Belarus could be driven by several motivations. The Union-State can be viewed in light of Russia’s economic modernization campaign as an effort to improve the efficiency of one its main trade partners. It could also be an attempt to secure its energy transit route to Europe. Some in Russia and the West see the Russia-Belarus Union State as the beginning of a new “gathering” of the “traditional Russian lands”. One such voice is Janusz Bugajski whose *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism...* asserts that Russia is “still locked in its imperial ways, determined to restore its dominance over lost territory, penetrate and neutralize NATO's central European members, and regain by stealth some kind of competitive position with the United States.”¹³⁰ Another perspective equally informed by realism places Belarus as the last line of Russian defense against NATO encroachment. This is the view which Lukashenka has sought to perpetuate in order to increase his value to Moscow. Ira Strauss writes that “Lukashenko survived by playing NATO and Russia off against each other. He needed Russia-NATO competition for influence in Belarus.” Strauss claims ,though, that this adversarial competition is fading away reducing Lukashenka’s leverage with Russia.¹³¹ Whether integration with Belarus is a new form of imperialism or the birth of a cooperative organization more akin to the European Union, what seems likely is that Belarus is a model for Russia’s future designs on the CIS. Russian deputy foreign minister Sergei Razov admits that “what constitutes longer-term goals with other integration partners has been put into practice or is being worked on in the Union State.”¹³² Yet, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov rejects that such integration implies Russian revanchism or a renewed Cold War. He rebuts that “it is high time to get rid of

¹²⁹ Trenin, 2.

¹³⁰ Robert Legvold, “Review of *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism...*” *Foreign Affairs* March/April 2005. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050301fabook84250/janusz-bugajski/cold-peace-russia-s-new-imperialism.html> (19 Sep 2005).

¹³¹ Strauss, 1.

¹³² Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Razov, “On Russia’s Multilateral Cooperation with CIS Countries in 2004,” 13 Jan 2005. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs translated from Russian. www.in.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh (6 Feb 2005).

the annoying habit of seeing every step taken by Russia with regard to the CIS countries as a sign of ‘imperial ambitions’...the logic of multilateral cooperation is more powerful than the logic of confrontation and alienation. That is why the future belongs to it.”¹³³

If Russia is pursuing integration with Belarus as a first step for further CIS integration, this template seems to be taking a decidedly Russian flavor. Putin seems to desire integration with Belarus, but entirely on his own terms. Lukashenka’s proposed union of equals is not acceptable to Moscow. Dmitri Trenin comments that Russia has every reason to work toward closer integration with Belarus, but no reason to follow the idea codified in the 1999 treaty, of a union of equals. He notes that “Russia dwarfs its neighbor by a factor of 15 in terms of population, 25 in terms of GDP and budget revenues, and 11 in terms of trade volume.”¹³⁴ This dissatisfaction with Lukashenka’s terms could account for perturbations in Russian interest toward political integration with Belarus. Moscow will accept Belarusian overtures when Lukashenka meets Russian demands, but when the Belarusian president tries to maintain his personal power and force a union of equals, Putin pulls away.

The prospects for future political integration between Russia and Belarus are so far unclear. The current path of “paper integration” with little actual results clearly does not serve Russian interests. What Russia wants most from Belarus is a profitable trading partner, a stable corridor for energy transport, and a loyal military ally. If it becomes clear that a comprehensive union-state is required to achieve these interests, then Russia will push political integration, with or without Lukashenka.

C. RUSSIAN POLICY OPTIONS IN BELARUS:

Dmitri Trenin in an August 2005 article outlines a number of possible scenarios in Belarus and the outcomes he expects from each. The scenarios Trenin suggests include 1) Inertia, 2) Revolutionary Change, 3) Preventive Change, and 4) Union.¹³⁵ From these scenarios I have extrapolated a list of some of Russia’s policy options in the near future and their respective feasibility.

¹³³ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Press Department “Interview with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov Published in *Izvestia* Newspaper on 10 Feb 2005” www.mid.ru (18 Feb 2005).

¹³⁴ Trenin, 2.

¹³⁵ Trenin,, 5-6.

1. Inertia: Maintain Status Quo Support for Lukashenka

One policy option Russia has in Belarus is to continue its current stance of lukewarm support for Lukashenka. The 2006 presidential election would be held as expected with significant tampering by authorities, suppression of the media, and harassment of opposition groups. Even with Western support, the democratic opposition would be fighting an uphill battle as the government would have free reign to quash popular protest with police forces. With Lukashenka unchecked, Belarus would continue to spiral into authoritarianism. With his power secure, Lukashenka could continue to impede integration and the Union-State would likely remain incomplete. Trenin writes that in such a scenario, “as discontent inside and pressure from the outside will grow, Lukashenko will become a liability for Russia.”¹³⁶

Such a policy would also hamper Russia’s relations with United States. This relationship is already strained because of worries about the direction of democracy in Russia itself and doubts about Russia’s contribution to the American war on terrorism.¹³⁷ If Russia is again perceived by the West as reacting against democracy, as it was during the Orange Revolution, then Moscow’s strategic partnership with Washington could be severely eroded.

If Lukashenka is allowed to continue in his despotic direction unabated there could be dire consequences for peace and stability in the region. Revolution may eventually come to Belarus, though not one which Russia can control. Trenin writes that “the current Belarusian regime is moribund and is moving toward a crisis. The problem is not whether there will be a regime change, but what kind of regime change and when it will happen.”¹³⁸ The fear for Trenin and others is that, eventually, the regime change that could result in Belarus would be much more violent and disruptive than in a mere “color revolution”. To prevent such a catastrophe, Russia cannot afford to chase events in Belarus; its policy must be proactive and forward-looking.

¹³⁶ Trenin, 5

¹³⁷ Jane’s Foreign Report, “Russia’s Pest,” 05 May 2005. www.janes.com

¹³⁸ Trenin, 5.

2. Revolutionary Change: Opposition Candidate in “Color Revolution”:

If Russia decides not to support Lukashenka in 2006 a second policy option could be that the Kremlin publicly supports the opposition movement against Lukashenka. Pressure could be applied to Lukashenka to hold free and fair elections in 2006 and to submit to strict monitoring regimes. This option is risky for Russia as it is not clear who would emerge as the leading opposition candidate and what their platform would be.

As chapter 3 showed, under the umbrella of the Belarusian opposition movement there are numerous individual parties of varying stances and strengths. The most important Belarusian opposition parties are those in Five Plus coalition. Of these, three parties stand out as leading the way in challenging Lukashenka’s authoritarian rule. These parties are the Belarusian Popular Front, the United Civil Party, and the Social Democratic Party. In order to achieve a full understanding of the opposition movement, an examination of these leading parties is in order.

Party of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF)

As the first opposition party in Belarus, the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) began as a reaction to the Kurapaty Massacre in which 30,000 Belarusian citizens were executed by the Soviet NKVD from 1937 to 1941.¹³⁹ When the mass graves were discovered in 1989, and their existence subsequently denied by the conservative Belarusian authorities, the public’s specific anger at the Soviet past merged with their current frustrations with the Communist present. This popular feeling was manifested in the *Martyrlog*, an organization created by archeologist Zyanon Paznyak, the discoverer of the Kurapaty site,¹⁴⁰ and soon took on a political character in the formation of the Belarusian Popular Front or Adradzhenie (Renewal).¹⁴¹ Adradzhenie focused on fostering Belarusian national identity and political freedom and brought together varied parties, groups, and notable figures such as Paznyak and poet Vasil Bykau, in advocating

¹³⁹ David R. Marples, Belarus: A Denationalized Nation. (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), 56.

¹⁴⁰ Hedrick Smith. The New Russians. (New York: Avon Books, 1991),123.

¹⁴¹ Jan Zaprudnik. Belarus: At a Crossroads in History. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 132.

Belarusian independence and democracy. It played a significant role in pushing for Belarus's sovereignty and independence in 1990.¹⁴²

The BPF claims as its goals, "the development of Belarus as an independent, democratic, neutral state, which has good relations with all nations."¹⁴³ Of particular importance to Moscow is that the BPF opposes "special ties" with Russia and hopes to orient Belarus toward the Baltic States and Central Europe. The party promises cultural autonomy to ethnic minorities (Russians), but advocates the revival of the Belarusian language, which has long been denigrated to secondary status. Economically, the BPF advocates "fair privatization, liberalization of wages, anti-inflationary measures, and restructuring of industry and agriculture."¹⁴⁴ Regarding privatization, the BPF announced that it would not bar Russian oligarchs from participation, but would base its privatization program on the principles of 1) public transparency, 2) equal competition, and 3) complex solutions, meaning privatization who be conducted in conjunction with demonopolization, re-establishment of a healthy credit network, and reform of the tax system.¹⁴⁵

Although in the early days of Belarusian independence, the BPF was synonymous with democratic opposition, it has since been eclipsed by other parties. Before Lukashenka's rise to power, the BPF claimed the support of 1,000,000 people in the 1990 parliamentary and 1994 presidential elections. Today, they claim to have 10,000 members working in various capacities throughout Belarus.¹⁴⁶ Having been the first pro-democracy party in Belarus, the BPF has considerable name recognition. The combination of the BPF's weak political position and western-oriented nationalism make this party an unpalatable choice for Russia.

¹⁴² Zaprudnik, 151.

¹⁴³ Belarusian Popular Front, "BPF Goals and Policies" http://pages.prodigy.net/dr_fission/bpf/ (29 August 2005).

¹⁴⁴ Belarusian Popular Front, "BPF Goals and Policies".

¹⁴⁵ BPF, "On the Position towards the Privatisation of Belarusian Enterprises with the Participation of Russian Oligarchs." Resolution by the Congress of the Party of BPF, 15-16 December 2001. http://pages.prodigy.net/dr_fission/bpf/ (29 August 2005).

¹⁴⁶ BPF, "BPF Recent Political History".

United Civil Party

The United Civil Party was founded in 1995 as a result of a merger of two similar parties, the United Democratic Party and the Civil Party. This unified party front competed in the 1995 parliamentary elections, winning 22 out of 198 seats in the 13th Supreme Soviet.¹⁴⁷ Joining with its democratic allies to form the Civil Action bloc, UCP parliamentarians consistently opposed Lukashenka's anti-democratic policies and fought against his dissolution of the Supreme Soviet in 1996. When the President disbanded the parliament and created his own hand picked legislature, Civil Action members refused to join. Since then the UCP has worked in cooperation with other democratic groups during the 2004 elections to lead numerous protests and demonstrations against the government. In the wake of the OSCE condemned 2004 election, the UCP with the other parties of the Five Plus coalition have launched a campaign to inform the public of what they deem are the actual results of the falsified election and referendum.¹⁴⁸ This campaign targets the country's provinces and should help boost UCP support outside of its urban base.

The United Civil Party claims as its fundamental values "human rights and freedoms, democracy, supremacy of law, private property and free market economy."¹⁴⁹ It is a liberal party in the classic definition in that it values the individual above the state. The UCP claims to stand for self-government, municipal rather than Soviet administration, and reform of the military into a professional force. It holds as one of its chief reforms the need for freedom of expression and advocates competition against the state monopoly on the media.

Economically, the UCP promotes a systemic market reform program of stabilization, liberalization, and institutional change toward the goal of a "free unhampered market." It upholds the importance of all private property, including land, and the role of the entrepreneur as the engine of economic reform. The UCP avers the role of state as protector of the citizen as a consumer, producer, and taxpayer against

¹⁴⁷ United Civil Party, "What is UCP" www.ucpb.org/eng/ (29 August 2005).

¹⁴⁸ RFE/RL, "Belarusian Opposition to Report its Tally of the Referendum, Parliamentary Elections," Online, 29 October 2004.

¹⁴⁹ United Civil Party, "About Us" www.ucpb.org/eng/ (29 August 2005).

bureaucratic whims.¹⁵⁰ The UCP's advocacy of an unhampered market and strong Western orientation could make it a favorite of Washington and London, but does not necessarily sit well with Moscow.

Ideologically, the UCP is slightly right of centre, based on their emphasis of Belarusian sovereignty, balanced with a strong market orientation and liberal democratic values. The party cooperates with foreign right-of-center political organizations, most notably the European Democratic Union, the International Republican Institute, the British Conservative Party, and the Russian Union of Right Forces.¹⁵¹

The UCP claims a membership of only about 4,000 people and much of which comes from urban population and youth. Further reinforcing the notion that the UCP derives its support from the urban intelligentsia is the fact that 55% of the UCP's members are university graduates.¹⁵² This is likely because their rapid reform program appeals little to rural farmers, who are favored by the agriculturally minded Lukashenka.

The UCP is notable because it has attracted many former government officials and noteworthy political figures. Victor Gonchar, a former Lukashenka ally, was head of the Central Election Commission chairmen until 1995, when he joined the UCP.¹⁵³ Stanislav Bogdankevich, formerly the head of the National Bank of Belarus, is a leading UCP member.¹⁵⁴ Numerous other UCP members had served in the disbanded 13th Supreme Soviet. The fact that so many former government elites are participating in this opposition movement is important, because it increases the legitimacy of the movement and sets the UCP apart from more dissident parties, in that its members have proven experience in running a government.

An important point in the UCP's favor is the popularity of their chairman, Anatoly Lebedko. A lawyer and Francophone, Lebedko had been a prominent, young parliamentarian in both the 12th and 13th Soviets. Since their dissolution, Lebedko has

¹⁵⁰ United Civil Party, "About Us" www.ucpb.org/eng/ (29 August 2005).

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Marples, 94.

¹⁵⁴ United Civil Party, "Faces of the UCP" www.ucpb.org/eng/ (29 August 2005)..

risen as a leading figure in the opposition movement.¹⁵⁵ At 43, Lebedko has the youth and dynamism to mobilize an increasingly restive populace, as well as a reputation for competency and forward thinking from his time in the Soviet. If anyone is likely to become the “Belarusian Yushchenko”, it would be Lebedko.

Considering its centrist platform and stable of well known political figures, the United Civil Party is one of more popular democratic parties in Belarus. Its chairman Anatoly Lebedko is one of the best known politicians in Belarus, behind Lukashenka. Nevertheless, because of the fractured nature of the Belarusian opposition, the UCP has yet to swing a majority or even a significant plurality to its favor. Like the BPF, the UCP has neither the political prowess nor the proper policy outlook to justify Russian support, especially when one considers the failure of its Russian allies in the Union of Right Forces to gain any seats in the 2003 Russian parliamentary elections.

Belarus Social Democratic Union: (Hramada)

The Belarus Social Democratic Union (or Assembly) is one of the oldest democratic parties in the opposition bloc. It was founded in March of 1991 and has been a player, albeit a secondary one, in Belarusian politics since that time. It held a faction of 12 members in the 12th Supreme Soviet, elected in 1991. Its most notable member in that faction was Stanislav Shushkevich who, as Speaker of the Supreme Soviet, was “unquestionably the leading figure in Belarusian politics once he was appointed.”¹⁵⁶ Hramada supported Shushkevich’s bid for President in 1994, but, as mentioned early, was defeated unexpectedly by Lukashenka. In 1995, elections to the ill fated 13th Supreme Soviet were held, but the Social Democrats gained only a single seat, that being Shushkevich’s.¹⁵⁷ This position was short-lived, though, as Shushkevich refused to recognize the legitimacy of the November 1996 referendum and declined to work in

¹⁵⁵ United Civil Party, “About Us” www.ucpb.org/eng/ (29 August 2005).

¹⁵⁶ Marples, 61.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 75.

Lukashenka's new hand picked parliament.¹⁵⁸ Since then, the Social Democratic party has continued to oppose Lukashenka's authoritarianism and has cooperated with other democratic parties in this effort.

The Social Democratic Union is a centre left party which consider themselves part of the world social democratic movement. The Social Democrats differ from the BPF or the UCP on a number of key issues. While they all uphold democracy and want to remove Lukashenka from office, the Social Democrats do not advocate as much radical change as the other parties do. For instance, Hramada supports an independent Belarus, but is in favor of a continued role in the Commonwealth of Independent States. BPF and UCP, while not explicitly proclaiming it, seem more likely to want to direct Belarus westward, with a possible future in NATO. The Social Democrats want to keep intact Belarus' traditional ties with Russia. While this ingratiates the Social Democrats with Russia, this party lacks the popular support to be a real contender.

Another key difference is in economics. Having seen the havoc rapid privatization had on their former Soviet neighbors, the Social Democrats are in favor of more gradual privatization in order to lessen the inevitable shocks of capitalism. The Social Democrats advocate a market economy, but with a regulatory role for the state in education, health care, and the financial market.¹⁵⁹ This marks the Hramada's greatest divergence from the center-right parties. The Social Democrats see a robust and active state as essential to good governance. This platform is more similar to German or French concepts of governance and is more akin to the Russian statist model than the route proposed by other parties.

The Social Democrats have an important advantage over their rival democratic parties by advocating a less ambitious (and therefore more appealing to Russia) program of reform. This allows the Social Democratic Union to draw its support from workers, peasants, students, and military personnel, as well as urban and rural intelligentsia.¹⁶⁰ Thus the Social Democrats have a broader base, than the BPF or the UCP, whose support

¹⁵⁸ International League of Human Rights, "Report on the Delegates of the 13th Supreme Soviet of Belarus" League Reports, 2001. <http://www.ilhr.org/ilhr/reports/persecution/index.html> (29 August 2005).

¹⁵⁹ Zaprudnik, 157.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 157.

is concentrated primarily in the cities. As the most nostalgic former Soviet state, many Belarusians are still leery of capitalism and the West, a fact the Social Democrats exploit. Their centre-left platform is comforting to many older and rural constituents, as it advocates a continued strong state role in the economy and the preservation of ties to Russia.

Additionally, the Social Democrats have as their leader Stanislav Shushkevich, who as former Speaker of the parliament, was once the most powerful political figure in Belarus. For many older Belarusians he represents a link to the post-Soviet, pre-Lukashenka era when there were realistic hopes for democracy in Belarus. Unfortunately, Shushkevich's time may have passed. He is now in his 70's and is unable to generate the kind of following he did in the early 1990's. Additionally, some oppositionists blame Shushkevich for overlooking Lukashenka in the 1994 election, which created the mess Belarus is in today. The Social Democrats, as a whole, are having trouble convincing younger generations that their cautious approach is best. Belarus has been passed by in while the rest of Eastern Europe has westernized and profited. Belarusians seem to want to maintain their traditional ties with Russia while seeking the improved standard of living which the West offers.

The rise of pro-independence opposition parties has been a factor, albeit a less important one, in preventing a Belarusian union with Russia. The democratic opposition has been a consistent critic not only of Lukashenka, but re-integration with Russia, as well. Since his election in 1994, President Alexander Lukashenka has systematically and unwaveringly set about reverting Belarus from its initial market democracy course back to a Soviet style dictatorship. Democratic and market development in Belarus has stalled and it is sliding ever backward into the failed forms of the past. At the same time, Lukashenka has made sporadic attempts to reunite Belarus with its former Soviet master, Russia. It is for this reason that most of the formal opposition groups in Belarus who are pro-democracy and pro-capitalism are also decidedly anti-Russian. Those political actors who uphold the value of liberal democracy and market capitalism see that Belarus must be sovereign and independent of Russia. The danger is very real that any opposition candidate might attempt to separate Belarus from Russia.

Russia is unlikely to support an opposition candidate for practical as well as ideological reasons. The opposition parties' lack of standing with the electorate is certainly a deterrent for Russia. As mentioned previously, the opposition blocs are fragmented and no one party commands the support of the Belarusian populace. The anti-Russian flavor of many opposition platforms does not sit well with the majority in Belarus. While many Belarusians might not prefer Lukashenka, the opposition has yet to present a viable alternative. The lack of consensus within the opposition makes it particularly difficult for Russia to step out and support a rival to Lukashenka. This is especially true early on in the process when Russian support would make the most difference for a candidate. Russia is only likely to support an opposition candidate if it appears he has a realistic chance of victory; otherwise Russia risks isolating the leadership of an important ally on a desperate gamble. Given the fractured and out-of-touch nature of the Belarusian opposition parties, such a sweeping victory seems next to impossible. It seems unlikely that Russia would waste its time supporting an opposition candidate.

3. Preventive Change: Compromise Candidate from Ruling Elite

One alternative that is not as impossible as the election of one of the traditional Belarusian opposition politicians is the rise of a moderate reformer from within the government. This candidate could possibly arise from the pro-Lukashenka nomenklatura or from the moderate opposition within power. One such candidate is Aleksander Voitovich, a physicist who served as the President of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences and then chairman of the Council of the Republic, the upper chamber of parliament. As chairman of the Council of the Republic, Voitovich was designated as the legal "successor" to the president until 2003 when he was removed ostensibly on grounds of his age, 65. According to Belarusian political expert Vladimir Rovdo, "[t]he haste with which the speaker was removed shows that Lukashenka was concerned that he would become an independent political figure, as Voitovich had good relations with Moscow."¹⁶¹ Voitovich is also amenable to Russia as he is purported to have made

¹⁶¹Yury Potemkin Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Minsk, "Lukashenka Shuffle Met with Suspicion," BRS No. 27, 01-Aug-03 http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/brs/brs_27_1_eng.txt (March 25, 2005).

statements condemning NATO actions in the Balkans as “militarist barbarism contrary to all civilizational values.”¹⁶² Although the source of this quote is questionable it gives the indication that Voitovich would not be as radically pro-Western as other opposition alternatives to Lukashenka. Other moderate oppositionists include General Valery Frolov, leader of the Respublika faction in the Belarusian parliament, and Valeri Leonov, Lukashenka’s former agricultural minister.¹⁶³ The table below illustrates the expected acceptability of different opposition politicians among different political players. Of particular interest are the last two columns, which contain Russia and the West as political agents. Regarding the moderate oppositionists there seems to be a possibility for agreement between Russia and the West. According to Manaev, Voitovich is highly acceptable to both Russia and the West, with Frolov and Leonov presenting respectable options. These rankings seem to be justified, on the one hand, by the men’s previous positions in the Russian-oriented government and on the other hand, their current place as outspoken critics of the Lukashenka regime. Voitovich, Leonov, and Frolov also scored well among Belarus’ elite. Given the relative ambivalence of the electorate toward all the candidates, these might be the decisive opinions.

¹⁶² Tanjug National News, 27 March 2000, <http://agitprop.org.au/stopnato/20000328tanjunatio.php> (March 25, 2005).

Table 1- Prof. Oleg Manaev, ISEPS Director, “Matrix of acceptance” Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, Minsk. www.iiseps.by (March 24, 2005).

Potential presidential candidates	Political agents of influence					Rank of acceptance
	Electorate (I)*	Democratic forces (IV)	Nomenclature (III)	Russia (II)	West (V)	
A. Voitovich	+	++	+++	+++	+++	I
V. Frolov	+	+	++	++	++	II
V. Leonov	+	+	++	++	+	III-IV
A. Yaroshuk	+	+	++	++	+	III-IV
S. Kalyakin	+	++	+	-	++	V
A. Lebedko	+	++	-	-	+++	VI
A. Milinkevich	+	+	0	0	++	VII
V. Kolos	+	+	0	--	++	VIII
A. Klimov	++	+	---	--	+	IX
N. Statkevich	+	-	---	---	+	X

Relative weighting of agents of influence in Belarus are given in brackets; Signs +++, ++, +, 0, -, --, --- mean respectively: “to a great extent acceptable”, “rather acceptable”, “to a certain extent acceptable”, “fairly unacceptable” and “to a great extent unacceptable.”

Another consideration is the likelihood of the candidate to hamper Belarusian integration with Russia. A candidate who can credit Russia with his rise to power would

be significantly more cooperative in uniting Russia and Belarus into a Union State. An opposition candidate would also likely lack the ambition to oppose Russia's choice for the presidency of the Russian-Belarusian Union. If Russia is serious about real and lasting integration with Belarus, it may have to co-opt Lukashenka and promote an candidate from within his regime.

It is not unthinkable that Russia could support a moderate opposition candidate against Lukashenka. Trenin writes that “a preventative regime change is Moscow's best chance of defusing a western-oriented revolution in Belarus.”¹⁶⁴ While a “color revolution” may not be as imminent as Trenin implies, the possibility still exists that Russia could fall behind events, as it did in Ukraine. Selecting an alternative to Lukashenka beforehand could preempt such an embarrassment. Taking a stand against Lukashenka could also co-opt Russia's critics in the West who would otherwise accuse the Kremlin of promoting authoritarianism. A coup by the moderate elite could help appease Western fervor for democratic change without unsettlingly Belarus' relationship with Russia. A moderate candidate might be more likely to undertake the economic reform needed to make a currency union function. He might also be more willing to follow Russia's lead on integration and unification. If Lukashenka fails to bring Belarus in line with Putin's timetable for the Russian- Belarusian Union State, it would not be surprising if Moscow backed another candidate for president.

4. Union State Finalized

A final option for Russia is to rush through the political completion of the Union State. There is some indication that a politically expedient merger is a possibility. The 2004 “loss” of Ukraine by Moscow seems to have imbued the Union State project with a new sense of urgency. An April 2005 summit between Lukashenka and Putin, while failing to establish an official timetable for currency integration, produced an enlarged Union budget and significantly increased rhetoric on the importance of future integration. Pavel Borodin, the State Secretary of the Union State of Russia and Belarus claims that these meetings demonstrate the principals' “overwhelming support for interstate

¹⁶⁴ Trenin, 6.

integration into a united country.” Borodin predicts that, “such issues as a united currency, Union’ property and united customs services are likely to be resolved before the year is out.”¹⁶⁵

This new haste toward a project which has lingered neglected for over six years, could be indicative of a number of possible scenarios. Increased pressure by Western and domestic groups may have revealed to Lukashenka his dependency on Russia, putting a stop to his usual waffling on substantive political integration. Sergei Markov, Director of the Institute for Political Studies, remarks that this interest in regime change may have had equally frightened Russia. He says that “now there is a threat of an anti-Russian regime coming to power in Belarus to involve the country into an anti-Russian coalition and block Russia.” Markov believes that this gives new impetus to integration efforts and the two countries will definitely become a unified state, “if Mr. Lukashenka’s dealings with Mr. Putin result in securing a place for the Belarusian elite in a new state.”¹⁶⁶

A new draft of the Union State Constitution which is being considered could hold a solution. RIA Novosti reports that this arrangement would create a single federal state with defense, trade, monetary, currency, tax, and other major policies vested under supranational institutions. Most intriguing is the seven year presidential term provided for in the draft constitution. RIA Novosti claims that Union State Secretary Pavel Borodin is advocating a Putin and Lukashenka president-vice president tandem. Such an outcome would allow Putin, whose term as Russian president expires in 2008, to remain in power. Mark Urnov, Chairman of the Ekspertiza Foundation, claims that the Union-State “loosens the soil for a new state system extending the terms of office of incumbent leaders. This is a 2008-oriented project.” Urnov cautions that in order to implement such a deal, Putin will need to make arrangements for Lukashenka who will lose his high profile in a combined state.¹⁶⁷ Pavel Felgenhauer proposes a solution to this dilemma. Felgenhauer predicts that the Russian Constitution will be rewritten and the State Duma

¹⁶⁵Pavel Borodin, quoted in Walter Stankievich, “The Union State of Russia and Belarus: The Popular Will of Two Peoples, or a Creeping Annexation,” *Belarusian Review* Vol. 17 No. 2. www.belreview.cz/printable/articles/2912.html (21 July 2005).

¹⁶⁶ Politichesky Zhurnal. “Russian Experts Believe in Merger with Belarus,” 23 May 2005. (from RIA Novosti’s digest of the Russian Press) found on Johnson’s Russia List #21 (30 May 2005).

¹⁶⁷ Politichesky Zhurnal.

disbanded to create a new joint parliament, while the defense and foreign ministries are merged. He suggests that “Putin will be re-elected sometime in 2007 for seven years to be president of the new joint nation with Lukashenko as vice president...assured that the Kremlin will be his after Putin’s seven year term ends.”¹⁶⁸ Although speculation about this possible conspiracy is largely unsubstantiated by official sources, it is not entirely irrational. Thus far in his presidency, Putin has placed greater priority on modernizing Russia and strengthening the state than on observing democratic niceties. If he interprets such a circumvention of term limits as the only way to prevent Russia from slipping back into the chaos and disorder of the 1990’s, then Putin is unlikely to hesitate to use extralegal means.

Trenin discounts this option as a very bad scenario for both Belarus and Russia and “one that makes constitutional change of regime virtually impossible and various forms of political upheaval probable.” He comments that if Putin and Lukashenka became political bedfellows, despite their mutual dislike, they would become equally illegitimate in the eyes of many of their citizens and the world community. While Putin would receive the legal right to remain in office for another ten to twelve years his position would probably be fatally eroded. This would have a deleterious effect on Russia’s relations with the West and would undermine Putin’s efforts to be included in the club of civilized nations. Forcing the completion of the Union-State in order to preserve the political lives of its leaders would be a disaster for both Belarus and Russia.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion

Russia’s relationship with Belarus is a vital, if sometimes stormy, one. It seems that Russia views integration with Belarus to be of long term interest. Additionally, it seems clear that the United States and the West expect some democratic progress to occur in Belarus. If Lukashenka continues to impede both of these processes, Russia will not have sufficient cause to justify his continued presence. If Russia and Belarus make

¹⁶⁸ Pavel Felgenhauer, “Vice President Lukashenko?” *Moscow Times*, 12 April 2005.

¹⁶⁹ Trenin, 6.

significant progress in creating a Union State, then Russia could continue to support Lukashenka through the election. If Lukashenka clings to his aspirations and continues to impede integration, then Russia may very well support another candidate against Lukashenka. It is doubtful that this candidate would come from the radical democratic opposition, but would more likely be a moderate reformer from within the government. What is clear is that Russia needs to take a definitive stance on Belarus and its eccentric ruler. As Trenin writes, “Moscow’s continued policy paralysis with regard to Lukashenka’s repressive regime is not in Russia’s best interest. Rather it is likely to collapse suddenly, ushering in a major crisis with international overtones.”¹⁷⁰ The fact remains that Belarus’ future lies in Russia’s hands. If Russia’s future is to be among the great powers of the world, it must meet the expectations of the West.

¹⁷⁰ Trenin, 5.

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V. CONCLUSION: CONVERGENCE ON COOPERATION

As laid out in Chapter II, the theoretical basis for this paper is the neoliberal institutional framework for cooperation formulated by Axelrod and Keohane. The previous two chapters have shown what America's and Russia's interests are in Belarus. This chapter applies the elements of cooperation put forth in Axelrod and Keohane's model. This begins first with an analysis of the mutuality in the interests previously detailed. Then this chapter shows how the other two aspects of this cooperative framework, multiple players and the long shadow of the future, are moving Russia and the United States toward cooperation.

A. MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS

1. Russia

Russia does not oppose America's interests in Belarus. Russia may not support its aims to the degree that the U.S. might prefer, but there is no clear reason why Russia should contradict them. Despite Western criticism of the consolidation of the power vertical by the Kremlin, Putin realizes that Russia's future lies with democracy. The global integration track toward great power status dictates that Russia join the "civilized" nations of the world. A major qualification for this status is a consolidated democracy. In his second state of the nation speech since re-election in 2004, Putin clearly stated that he "consider(s) the development of Russia as a free and democratic state to be our main political and ideological goal."¹⁷¹ By the same logic, it would be detrimental to Russia's acceptance in the West if Russia's closest allies remain international pariahs. Robert Legvold writes that the current Russian administration has an interest in not only promoting economic reform in Belarus but also relaxing Lukashenka's iron fist, "not least, because the integration of the two countries sought by Moscow counts on it."¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Vladimir Putin, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly" 25 April 2005. http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/04/25/2031_type70029_87086.shtml (19 Sep. 2005).

¹⁷² Robert Legvold, "The Economics of Ukrainian and Belarusian Security" Swords and Sustenance: The Economics of Security in Belarus and Ukraine. Ed. Robert Legvold and Celeste Wallander, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 222.

Additionally, Lukashenka is no friend of Moscow, as has been shown. Rigid authoritarianism in Belarus is, at best, an annoyance Russia must endure and, at worst, a possible source of destabilization.

Russia and the United States very clearly share an interest in sealing the porous Belarusian border. The unregulated nature of this entrance way to the West causes both economic and societal harm for Russia. Smuggling diverts from revenue-generating trade and the sexual trafficking of Russian women is a source of hurt and embarrassment for the Russian people.

Finally, Russia does not have an interest in Belarusian arms dealing with rogue regimes. This is less ideological than practical. First of all, Belarus' illegal trade with sanctioned countries creates competition for Russia's own proliferation schemes. Additionally, by allowing Belarus to export these arms, many of which are Russian in the first place, Moscow loses a measure of control over their final destination. Part of Putin's centralization of authority involves consolidating a hold on what Russian weapons go where. Belarus' selling the fruits of Russo-Belarusian defense cooperation out the backdoor does not help this tightening of control. The prospect that these arms might eventually end up in the hands of Chechen fighters, as Russian weapons are apt to do, should be enough to motivate Russian support for America's nonproliferation goals.

2. United States

While the United States may not have the same priorities in Belarus as Russia, it is not directly opposed to Russian interests there. For example, Russian energy resources are a vital part of European stability and economic growth. The United States has an interest in seeing an economically prosperous and stable Europe. To the degree that the maintenance of Russian transit systems through Belarus advances this purpose, it is in the United States' interest.

The United States also shares an interest with Russia in advancing the reform and privatization of the inefficient, Soviet-era economy in Belarus. This concern derives from the liberal national interest to see global free markets advance. This is beneficial for the United States because liberal theory holds, as more markets become open and free, the dynamic efficiency of global trade should increase as well. This in turn would raise the

general economic well-being of all nations. The institutionalization of a capitalist market economy would also be in the United States' interest because it would help to spur political liberalization. Historically, as nations liberalized their economies and grew more affluent, they also tended toward democracy as well. While this is not always the case, the trend holds true often enough for economic liberalization in Belarus to remain in the United States' national interest.

Even in the area of integration and regional cooperation, the United States has no reason to directly oppose Russia's efforts. It is only reasonable that Russia should seek integration with Belarus; they share a cultural affinity, historical tradition, and geographic proximity. The United States can realistically concede Belarus as a part of Russia's sphere of influence. To the degree to which Russia progresses democratically and has a good relationship with the West, the United States can expect the same from Russia's allies. To hope to snatch another state from the Russian grasp and orient it toward the West could be both foolhardy and dangerous. It could be foolhardy in that the majority of Belarusians, who are still largely eastward looking in their own perspective, would not support such a complete change of orientation. Ira Strauss writes that, "[t]he real choice is between a pro-Russian democracy in Belarus, which would be pro-Western if Russia and the West are friends, and a dictatorship in Belarus which is formally pro-Russian but actually plays Russia and the West off against each other."¹⁷³ It is dangerous in that it risks reinforcing the growing perception within Russia itself that the West is maliciously seeking to alienate and marginalize Russia. The United States dare not risk its much broader relationship with Russia in order to foist upon the Belarusian people a policy stance they do not want..

B. LONG SHADOW OF THE FUTURE

Axelrod and Keohane theorize that the second element in cooperation is "the long shadow of the future". This term refers to the expectation each side has of future interaction with the other side. The long shadow of the future is especially potent in

¹⁷³ Ira Strauss, "Belarus: Russia as Liberator?" *Russian Observer.com* 27 June 2002. www.observer.strana.ru 23 June 2005.

conditioning the possibility for cooperation between the United States and Russia. These two powers have a long history of interaction and each side is highly cognizant of the other in planning for the future.

As the world's lone superpower, it may seem that this factor operates less strongly for the United States than Russia. While Russia is in a relative position of weakness regarding the United States, Washington can hardly disregard the importance of its relationship with Moscow. James Goldgeier warns that "just because Russia is weak does not mean that it cannot hurt the United States. And just because Russia is weak does not mean that Russia cannot help the United States." This, he says, is because many of the threats facing both the U.S. and Russia, including terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and illegal drug trafficking, are best faced together, while Russia can certainly make these threats for worse for the United States.¹⁷⁴ Andrew Kuchins, et al. lay out the issues driving the United States and Russia to cooperate. These authors assert that because of its geographical and strategic position America needs Russia to assure peace and security in its regions of concern: Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Middle East. Given the rising status of possible peer competitors such as China and the European Union and the threat from anti-systemic forces (Islamist radicals, WMD armed rogue states, and anarchy in failing states), "America needs to reach out to friends old and new, including the regional principals."¹⁷⁵ Goldgeier echoes this sentiment as he writes "as is even more apparent after September 11th, Bush can neither ignore Russia nor afford conflict with Russia if he wants to redirect resources to deal with a terrorist threat and a rising China."¹⁷⁶ In addition to Russia's geostrategic position, Kuchins and his colleagues outline three niche capacities in which Russia is valuable to the United States. They cite

¹⁷⁴ James M. Goldgeier, "Prospects for U.S.-Russian Cooperation," *Russia After the Fall*. Ed. Andrew C. Kuchins, (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 286.

¹⁷⁵ Andrew Kuchins, Vyacheslav Nikonov, and Dmitri Trenin. "U.S.-Russian Relations: The Case for an Upgrade," *Carnegie Center for International Peace*. Moscow 2005 www.carnegie.ru (13 Jan 2005), 5.

¹⁷⁶ Goldgeier, 286.

Russia's permanent seat on the UN Security Council, its unique status as a nuclear power comparable to the U.S., and its world-leading reserve of hydrocarbons as reasons why Russia still matters to the United States.¹⁷⁷

The United States is also highly important to Russia in its pursuit of its national interests. Kuchins, et al. write that as Russia is confronted with rising threats in China and India in the east and a border of weak states in the south, "the U.S. will continue to be the most important for either the advancement or frustration of its geostrategic interests. The U.S. is the only power capable of producing tangible reactions to an array of challenges in different parts of the globe."¹⁷⁸ They remark that the keys for Russian entry into the club of great powers are sustained economic growth and effective resource mobilization to achieve national interests. Access to U.S. technology and economic resources are central to this effort. Additionally, U.S. diplomatic support would be crucial for Russian entry into the international groupings it has expressed interest in joining the WTO and maybe the OECD.¹⁷⁹

It is clear that the United States- Russia relationship is an extremely valuable one. It certainly is not worth sacrificing in a confrontation over Belarus. The high stakes of their overall future interaction are a driving element in the possibility for cooperation between the United States and Russia in Belarus.

C. MULTIPLE ACTORS

The final aspect of cooperation in Axelrod and Keohane's theoretical framework is the number of actors involved and the structure of their interaction. In their analysis, additional players tended to complicate the process of achieving cooperation by exacerbating the "sanctioning problem", meaning the decreased ability to penalize a player for defection. As the number of players involved grows, the ability to achieve collective agreement to sanction a defector becomes more difficult. In regard to Belarus, though, the addition of another player, Europe, may facilitate cooperation by raising the stakes of defection by either side.

¹⁷⁷ Kuchins et al., 6.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Kuchins et al., 7.

1. Europe

Relations with Europe are crucial for both the United States and Russia. Maintaining economic and diplomatic connections with Europe is vital to American interests. Likewise, Russian trade relations and great power aspirations largely depend on Europe. To the extent that Europe makes Belarus a priority, this mutual interdependence could compel both the U.S. and Russia to reach a compromise solution in Belarus.

The extent to which Belarus is a priority in Europe is debatable. Some European states are adamant that Lukashenka needs to go, while others are less concerned. In particular, the newest EU entrants have taken the lead in promoting regime change in Belarus. Quite reasonably, the post-communist EU nations most closely located to Belarus, Poland and the Baltic States, have been more vocal in condemning the Belarusian dictator. The Polish foreign minister in November 2004 expressed his country's concern in the following fashion:

Poland will strive to maintain and develop contacts with representatives of civil society in Belarus, and to prevent its total isolation – which appears to be the goal of the authorities. At the same time, we shall avoid any gestures that could be interpreted as support for President Lukashenka and his attendants.¹⁸⁰

The tension between Poland and Belarus has come to a head recently as Lukashenka expelled a third Polish diplomat from the country and raided the offices of the Union of Poles in Belarus, a democracy-promoting NGO. This has led the Polish foreign ministry to appeal to the European Union to “take decisive and co-ordinated steps and urge the Belarusian regime to respect human and national minority rights, international law and bilateral treaties.” France has already expressed solidarity with Poland and vowed to urge the European Union to take decisive steps toward Belarus.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, “Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, on the occasion of assumption by Poland of the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.” Strasbourg, 10 November 2004
http://www.ms.gov.pl/start.php?page=1000000001&obj_display_cat=3&obj_display_full=896&obj_to_display_type=29 (11 July 2005)

¹⁸¹ BBC News World Edition, “Poland Seeks EU help on Belarus,” 30 July 2005
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4730095.stm> (2 August 2005).

Other European states, though, are less immediately threatened by events in the former Soviet space and are more ambivalent toward the Lukashenka regime. These states are likely to tolerate Lukashenka as long as he continues to keep the gas flowing. Arkady Moshes concludes that “the EU is not so uncomfortable with Lukashenka” because Belarus is stable, relatively peaceful, has few ethnic problems, does not request aid, and smoothly transits energy from Russia. He writes that “in Europe there is no sense of urgency on the Belarussian dossier.”¹⁸²

The divide within European opinion concerning Belarus extends across the Atlantic as well. While Europeans and Americans feel mutual dislike for Lukashenka, they disagree on what to do about him. A report by the Atlantic Council of the United States echoes this sentiment in its assessment of the divergence in EU and US policies toward Russia. This report, compiled by a number of policy experts and scholars, notes that while the West is in agreement on the objectives of enhancing stability and promoting openness in Russia’s neighborhood, “where the EU and the United States differ is in the immediacy of this issue and their perspective on how it will affect their own interests.” U.S. interests, according to the report, are more global and strategic than those of Europe, as U.S. involvement in Russia’s neighborhood includes not just the central European states, but also the Central Asian republics.¹⁸³ With this in mind, it seems that the United States has more at stake in this relationship than Europe. The U.S. has been more aggressive in condemning and pressuring the Lukashenka regime. This is due at least in part to ideology. Neoconservative elements in the Bush administration advocate the pursuit of democratic regime change through all available means. The European attitude toward democracy promotion tends to be more deliberate and patient. Andrei Zagorski writes that, unlike the United States, the EU is not seen by Moscow as having a desire to promote ‘regime change’ in their ‘shared neighborhood’ and appears

¹⁸² Arkady Moshes, “Is Russia’s New Belarus Policy Emerging?” *PONARS (Program on New Approaches to Russian Security) Policy Memo* 355. November 2004, 4.

¹⁸³ Atlantic Council of the United States, “Re-Engaging Russia: The Case for a Joint US-EU Effort,” *Atlantic Council of the United States Policy Paper*, Rapporteur Frances G. Burwell, February 2005, 12.

unlikely to act as a revisionist force at Russia's expense.¹⁸⁴ Overall the European attitude towards Belarus is less tinged with Wilson idealism than the United States'.

Russia and Europe, likewise, have differing views of the situation in Belarus. Andrei Zagorski writes about the divergent policies Moscow and Brussels have with regard to the countries in their 'shared neighborhood'. Speaking specifically of Belarus, Zagorski writes that, "while both European states and Moscow dislike President Lukashenko, Moscow will not boycott his regime. Should the EU and Russia wish to pick a political alternative to Lukashenko, they would definitely look in opposite political camps."¹⁸⁵ Dov Lynch also indicates the possibility that Europe and Russia could butt heads in the former Soviet fringe. This could occur out of the simultaneous rise of Russia and the European Union and the growing importance of their shared neighborhood as an arena for competing interest. Lynch states that this situation leaves Europe with the challenge of promoting EU interests and values in its immediate border region with Russia, as well as creating the conditions for the greatest possible cooperation with Russia in the shared neighborhood sphere.¹⁸⁶ Zagorski is ambivalent about the future of European-Russian interaction in Eastern Europe. He writes that "while the path of cooperation cannot be taken for granted the likelihood of conflict is strong in so far as the EU is beginning to consider seriously the European aspirations of some of these countries."¹⁸⁷

While Europe has a differing view on Belarus than Russia, and even the U.S., it will undoubtedly play an important role in the settlement of the political dilemma there. By sharing with the U.S. a desire for a political alternative to Lukashenka and sharing an interest with Russia in the stability of their eastern European corridor, Europe may be able to act as a moderating influence between the United States and Russia. It appears to be in both the United States' and Russia's interest to include the Europeans. The Atlantic

¹⁸⁴ Andrei Zagorski, "Russia and the Shared Neighbourhood," *What Russia Sees: Chaillot Paper No. 74*. Ed. Dov Lynch, (Paris, Institute for Security Studies: European Union, January 2005), 73.

¹⁸⁵ Zagorski, 75.

¹⁸⁶ Dov Lynch, "Struggling with an Indispensable Partner," *What Russia Sees: Chaillot Paper No. 74*. Ed. Dov Lynch, (Paris, Institute for Security Studies: European Union, January 2005)

¹⁸⁷ Zagorski, 68.

Council recommends that the US and EU “maintain a consistent common line in discussing the ‘shared neighborhoods’ with Russian officials”, as well as keeping the Russians informed of enhanced dialogues with neighborhood governments.¹⁸⁸ Dmitri Trenin similarly suggests that “Moscow should initiate discussions on Belarus with the United States and the EU countries, such as Germany, but also Poland.”¹⁸⁹ As an indispensable partner to both Russia and the U.S., European expectations will condition any cooperation between the two countries.

D. POSSIBILITIES FOR COOPERATION

While the United States and Russia have different priorities in Belarus, these priorities do not necessarily entail conflicting interests. It is in Russia’s interest that Belarus has government that is stable and democratically–elected (and therefore less subject to revolutionary overthrow), secure borders and no military ties to rogue states. Likewise, the United States is not directly opposed to Belarus acting as a transit country for Russian energy products, being a productive trading partner, or even deepening integration with Russia. Any conflict would be over a matter of degree. Russia would not support radical democratic change in Belarus, if that change also brought about strategic reorientation away from Russia and toward the West. Neither would the United States favor Russo-Belarusian integration if the process was coerced or the resulting union-state authoritarian. Kuchins, et al. write that “Russia and the United States must be satisfied that the CIS states freely accept the other country’s role without coercion. Failing that, Russia and America can only agree to limit the scale and intensity of their disagreement.”¹⁹⁰ Where there is a question of degrees, there is the possibility for compromise. Russia can concede that something must be done about Lukashenka and the United States can come to terms with the fact that whatever happens, Belarus will remain in Russia’s sphere of influence. Acknowledging these realities can create space for compromise.

¹⁸⁸ Atlantic Council, 12-13.

¹⁸⁹ Dmitri Trenin, “Moscow’s Relations with Belarus: An Ally without a Handle,” *Chaillot Paper* 78. (Moscow: Carnegie, 6 Aug 2005),

¹⁹⁰ Kuchins, et al., 11.

Where Russia and the United States most diverge is in their respective end-state preferences in Belarus. American and Russian end state preferences, implicit in the thesis thus far, are summarized in the following chart:

U.S. End State Preference in Belarus	Russian End State Preference in Belarus
1. Western, Liberal Market Democracy	1. Russo-Belarusian Union State
2. Reforming, Russian-oriented Regime	2. Reforming, Russian-oriented Regime
3. Russo-Belarusian Union State	3. Western, Liberal Market Democracy
4. Isolated, Rogue State	4. Isolated, Rogue State
5. Civil War- Failed State	5. Civil War- Failed State

It was demonstrated in Chapter III that America’s preferred policy in Belarus, a democratic revolution, is unlikely without Russian collusion. In Chapter IV, I tried to show how such an outcome would be clearly against Russia’s interests. This makes a color revolution improbable. Likewise, the hasty integration of Belarus into Russia as a solution to Putin’s political dilemma is similarly unfeasible. This would do grievous damage to Russia’s relations with the West and give credence to fears of Russian neo-imperialism. This leaves a reforming, but Russian-oriented Belarus as the most acceptable alternative to each side. Such an outcome could not be achieved with Lukashenka still in power. It seems then that the best policy for both the United States and Russia is a preventive, peaceful regime change which facilitates the rise of a moderate reformer from within the elite. Trenin writes that Russia “needs to make its preference known as to who is the best replacement of Lukashenka, from Russia’s perspective, and support and protect that person.”¹⁹¹ The United States should follow the Russian lead in this process as a contradictory choice by the Americans could cause counterproductive conflict.

Kuchins, et al. emphasizes the importance of the presidential relationship between Washington and Moscow. In achieving cooperation the dynamic between Bush and Putin will remain crucial. A recent summit between the two leaders reaffirmed the importance of this relationship to cooperation in Belarus. According to President Bush, the two

¹⁹¹ Trenin, 7.

leaders “discussed today the situation of the post-Soviet Union space. Our countries have joint interests in maintaining stability and economic prosperity of this vast territory. The position of Russia is well known. We come out for the consistent advancement of integrational process within the frameworks of this community of independent states, with respect to sovereignty of all our neighbors, their own right, without pressure from outside, to choose their mode of national development.”¹⁹²

Kuchins, et al. also recommend a meeting of other important policy figures from the foreign and defense ministries.¹⁹³ Through this working level summit, a moderate reformer could be agreed upon. Then the West could begin to generate international and Belarusian popular support for this figure, while Russia worked behind the scenes to engineer his ascendancy within the elite.

Belarus is a problem for both the United States and Russia. U.S. interests there include the promotion of democracy, better regulation of Belarus’ borders, and arms proliferation. Russia is interested in Belarus as a transit country for energy resources, as a trading partner, and as its closest political and military ally within the CIS. The continued rule of President Alexander Lukashenka presents a threat to the interests of both countries. The United States would prefer that he were removed in an organic democratic revolution that instituted liberal norms and a Western orientation in Belarus. This does not seem possible without Russian assistance. Since Russia does not prefer this option, it is highly unlikely to collude with the United States in pursuing this outcome. Russia would seem to prefer that Belarus retains its traditional ties with the CIS and Russia, while a more moderate and reform-minded figure runs the country. This would not run counter to the United States’ interest and seems to be the best possible solution. Both the United States and Russia are constrained in pursuing their maximally preferable outcomes by the importance of their future relationship with each other and with the other stakeholder in this game, Europe.

¹⁹²George Bush. “President Welcomes Russian President Putin to the White House,” 16 Sep 2005 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050916-10.html> (19 Sep 2005).

¹⁹³ Kuchins et al, 12.

1. Policy Recommendation

United States should seek Russia's assistance in promoting a moderate pro-Russian reformer from within the Belarusian elite. This can be done bilaterally or in conjunction with key European partners. Alexander Voitovich appears to be one of the strongest such candidates. If Russia, the U.S., and Europe were to stand as a united front against Lukashenka and support a moderate reform candidate, all sides' interests would be served. Identifying the right candidate will require further research on the Belarusian elite. Opposition figures in Belarus are generally well-known, but there is a dearth of open source, English language information on elite figures within the Lukashenka government. Better understanding of the elite structure is necessary for United States policy makers to cooperate with Russia in facilitating the ascendancy of an alternative to Lukashenka.

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