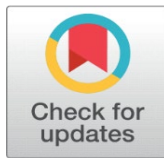


THE STRUGGLE FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION: OBSERVATIONS ON RUSSIA'S EARLY 1990S FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE

Monjit Gohain ¹

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Hemo Prova Borbora Girls' College, Bengenakhowa, Golaghat, Assam, India



Received 11 June 2022
Accepted 12 July 2022
Published 31 August 2022

DOI
[10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i8.2022.6483](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i8.2022.6483)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2022 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

The global strategic environment was drastically disrupted by the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, forcing Russia to rethink its foreign policy in the absence of the institutional, ideological, or geopolitical pillars that had previously shaped Soviet behavior. Russia's foreign policy rhetoric in the early 1990s reflects a time of intense contestation during which conflicting perspectives arose amid economic collapse and political upheaval. [Sokolov \(1998\)](#) Russia's early diplomatic trajectory was determined by a disjointed strategic discussion that resulted from the lack of a cohesive national identity and a consensus over Russia's foreign position. [Melnikov \(2000\)](#)

The study contends that deeper structural changes within Russia such as changes in governmental authority, economic instability, institutional rivalry, and the loss of superpower status were represented in the fight for strategic direction during this time. Foreign policy got enmeshed with domestic issues in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse, forcing authorities to vacillate between revived nationalist inclinations, regional aggressiveness in the post-Soviet zone, and Western-oriented integration. These conflicting inclinations had long-lasting consequences for Russia's foreign policy, far from being transient uncertainty. [Karelin \(1999\)](#)

The study examines how historical legacies, internal political rivalry, economic vulnerability, and outside forces interacted to influence the general discussions about Russia's strategic orientation at this time. This study shows that the early 1990s were not only transitional years but rather a foundational period that still shapes Russian foreign policy thought now by examining leadership perspectives, policy papers, elite discourse, and regional changes. [Denisov \(1997\)](#)

Keywords: Russia, Foreign Policy, National Identity, Post-Soviet Transition, Strategic Discourse, Early 1990s

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant geopolitical shifts of the 20th century was the fall of the Soviet Union. The breakdown of bipolarity led to the emergence of a reorganized international system marked by the rise of regional conflicts, economic globalization, and unilateral U.S. domination. This new environment necessitated a thorough reevaluation of national interests and strategic posture for Russia, the USSR's legal successor. Developing a coherent foreign policy was made more difficult by the political division and ideological ambiguity brought about by the collapse of the Soviet institutional structure. [Arbatov \(1994\)](#)

The early Russian state had to deal with a collapsed economy, weakened authority structures, and institutional inertia. The character of discussions about

foreign policy was directly impacted by this internal conflict. Domestic conflicts between reformists, conservatives, the military, and nationalist elites grew closely entwined with debates about the nation's future course, including whether to preserve a balanced Eurasian identity, restore regional supremacy, or unite with the West. Foreign policy was formed by the internal-external relationship as an extension of political contestation and state-building rather than as a separate field. [Gorenburg \(1996\)](#)

Moreover, strategic ambiguity was made worse by the lack of a common national narrative. Russia had to decide if it was a Eurasian polity forced to take the lead in the post-Soviet sphere, a European state pursuing integration, or a great power. Different policy recommendations, geopolitical commitments, and interpretations of national identity were conveyed by each opposing viewpoint. To understand Russia's current foreign policy decisions, many of which are based on unresolved disputes from the early 1990s, one must comprehend this struggle for direction. [Sorokin \(1999\)](#)

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The institutional and ideological underpinnings that had shaped Soviet foreign policy for decades were eliminated with the conclusion of the Cold War. Russia's capacity to develop a cogent international strategy was hampered by the Soviet collapse, which resulted in fifteen new governments, a broken economy, and a fractured political environment. A new direction was made possible by Gorbachev's "new political thinking," which rejected ideological conflict and welcomed interdependence. However, the USSR's collapse hastened internal conflicts and sparked divisive discussions over identity, security, and geopolitical goals. Russia had to reframe its national interests in an unstable and quickly evolving international system after being abruptly stripped of its imperial borders and superpower status.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main issue on this paper attempts to address is Russia's failure to develop a coherent and distinct foreign policy strategy in the early 1990s. The creation of a cohesive foreign policy doctrine was hindered by conflicting visions Westernist, pragmatic nationalist, and conservative produced by fragmented governmental power, economic upheaval, and ideological contestation. Russia's relations with the West, the former Soviet republics, and international organizations were significantly impacted by this strategic ambiguity, which also exacerbated internal political strife.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- 1) [Arbatov \(1995\)](#), "Russia and the World After the Cold War", contends that in the early 1990s, Russia lacked an intellectual compass due to the fall of Soviet political and strategic institutions. Elite thought was left vacant by the sudden collapse of foreign policy ideas and central planning systems. Russia thus found it difficult to identify national interests in the face of institutional instability. The conceptual ambiguity that influenced early policy discussions is explained by Arbatov's work.

- 2) [Allison \(1996\)](#), "The Russian Foreign Policy Cycle", In post-Soviet Russia, Allison notes recurrent oscillations between nationalist retreat and pro-Western fervor. He contends that internal political unrest and economic hardship were the main causes of these fluctuations. Threat perception, diplomatic objectives, and strategic rhetoric all changed with each cycle. Allison's approach explains why, throughout the decade, Russian foreign policy seemed erratic and reactive.
- 3) [McFaul, \(1997\)](#), "Russia's Unfinished Revolution", according to McFaul, Russia's efforts to establish a market economy and democratic political system limited its capacity for foreign policy. A foreign strategy reliant on Western assistance was often the result of internal political conflicts overshadowing exterior issues. Additionally, he points out that reformers believed that internal change required integration with the West. This analysis elucidates the pro-Western tendency of the early 1990s.
- 4) [Lynch \(1999\)](#), "The Transformation of Post-Soviet Foreign Policy", focuses on the conflict between Russia's problems with external security and its internal reform. He contends that policymakers found it difficult to strike a balance between external demands from regional crises and NATO expansion and home concerns like economic recovery. The conflicts between Russia's demand for geopolitical influence and its desire for collaboration are highlighted in Lynch's work. Over the course of the decade, this conflict generated policy ambiguity.
- 5) [Lo \(2000\)](#), "Russian Foreign Policy: Pathways for the Future", looks at the conflict between strategic autonomy and Western integration that shaped Russia's foreign policy discourse. He contends that Western expectations of Russian compliance conflicted with Russian sensitivities about status and sovereignty. Ideological differences among Russian elites were more pronounced as a result of these conflicting forces. Lo's theory sheds light on why foreign policy evolved as a forum for identity negotiations.
- 6) [Trenin \(1998\)](#), "Beyond the Empire", examines the difficulties of redefining relations with recently independent states as well as Russia's evolving role in the post-Soviet sphere. He contends that confusion over Russia's post-imperial character, in addition to security concerns, influenced its operations. In the "near abroad," the conflict between collaboration and coercion became crucial to policy. Russia's unclear regional strategy can be explained by Trenin's viewpoint.
- 7) [Sakwa \(2002\)](#), "Russian Politics and Society", draws attention to the way that institutional disagreement, particularly between the parliament and the presidency, disrupted the process of formulating foreign policy decisions. In the early 1990s, conflicting centers of power resulted from the lack of stable constitutional frameworks. Russia found it challenging to establish distinct strategic priorities because of this internal conflict. Sakwa's research sheds light on the structural causes of inconsistent policy.
- 8) [Kanet \(1998\)](#), "Security Challenges in Post-Communist Europe", Kanet chronicles the explosion of political, territorial, and ethnic crises throughout East Europe and the former Soviet Union. Despite its internal flaws, he contends that these crises compelled Russia to take a more assertive regional stance. Russia justified its military and

diplomatic actions by claiming that they were essential to maintaining regional stability. Kanet's analysis demonstrates how Russia's changing security identity was influenced by external instability.

- 9) [Dawisha \(1997\)](#), "The Kremlin and Its Critics", examines the ideological conflicts among Russian elites on the course of post-Soviet policies. A fractured strategic discourse resulted from competing ideologies, which ranged from conservative nationalism to liberal Westernism. The development of a cohesive foreign policy consensus was hampered by these ideological conflicts. knowledge the intellectual variety in Russia's policymaking circles requires a knowledge of Dawisha's work.
- 10) [Odom \(1998\)](#), "The Military in Post-Soviet Russia", examines the evolving role of the military in Russia's security and political environment. Despite being diminished, the military continued to have a big say in how threats and national interests were discussed. He draws attention to conflicts over Russia's geopolitical orientation between military authorities and civilian reformers. Odom's observations show how early post-Soviet foreign policy was influenced by military viewpoints.
- 11) [Light \(1996\)](#), "Russia and the West: A Difficult Partnership", highlights how early mutual optimism between Russia and Western nations gradually eroded. She contends that a great deal of mistrust was brought about by miscommunications over aid, NATO expansion, and disparate expectations. These conflicts fueled nationalist sentiment and weakened Russia's early pro-Western stance. The relationship factors that influenced Russia-West engagement are highlighted in Light's work.
- 12) [Ambrosio \(2000\)](#), "Russia's Quest for Regional Leadership", according to Ambrosio, Russia's actions in the CIS are a part of a larger effort to protect its borders and maintain regional influence. He contends that in an otherwise fractured geopolitical environment, Russia saw itself as a stabilizing influence. Its foreign policy identity became characterized by this quest for leadership. According to Ambrosio's analysis, Russia's pursuit of a post-Soviet purpose is linked to regional assertiveness.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

5.1. THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ARE-

- 1) To analyse the ideological and geopolitical trends shaping Russia's early 1990s foreign policy discourse.
- 2) To examine the influence of domestic crises and institutional fragmentation on strategic decision-making.
- 3) To study Russia's evolving relations with the West and the former Soviet republics during the early post-Soviet period.
- 4) To assess the long-term implications of early strategic debates for contemporary Russian foreign policy.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What competing strategic visions emerged in Russia's early post-Soviet foreign policy discourse?

- 2) How did domestic political and economic challenges influence foreign policy choices?
- 3) How did relations with Western powers shape Russia's search for strategic direction?
- 4) How did Russia conceptualize its role in the post-Soviet space and broader international system?

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary sources are used in this qualitative investigation. Speeches by Russian leaders, concept papers on foreign policy (1992–1993), legislative discussions, official security documents, and government memoranda are examples of primary materials. Scholarly books, journal articles, policy analyses, and current assessments of Russia's foreign policy are examples of secondary sources. Thematic content analysis is used in the study to find recurrent themes in policy discourse and analyze how local and foreign forces interact.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

8.1. THE STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE SOVIET COLLAPSE

Russia unexpectedly inherited not only the nuclear arsenal and international responsibilities of a former superpower but also a variety of vulnerabilities for which it lacked institutional preparation due to the huge strategic vacuum produced by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Once unified and ideologically cohesive, the Soviet foreign policy machinery virtually disappeared overnight, depriving Russia of the experienced staff and bureaucratic frameworks required to handle its new geopolitical circumstances. Policymakers found it extremely difficult to define national interests in a world that was no longer characterized by bipolar conflict as a result of this lack of continuity. In this situation, Russia had to rebuild the fundamentals of statehood while also reasserting its place in the international system, an unparalleled challenge [Orlov \(1997\)](#).

Russian authorities were compelled to reevaluate long-held beliefs about national security, strategic depth, and worldwide influence as their superpower status collapsed. Moscow found it challenging to uphold customary defense promises or project authority overseas due to the deterioration of state institutions, which was made worse by political unrest, economic contraction, and administrative stagnation. Russia confronted an increasing gap between its inherited duties and its diminished capabilities as industrial output declined and military capability declined. Discussions concerning the definition of security in a post-superpower world exposed the conflict between idealistic aspirations and practical requirements, with decision-makers unsure whether to reduce their global responsibilities or try to maintain Soviet-era dominance.

Russia faced both strategic uncertainty and diplomatic opportunity when fifteen newly independent republics emerged following the fall of the Soviet Union. Fears of instability, border conflicts, and foreign invasion were raised by the abrupt disintegration of the Soviet geopolitical realm, but it also presented an opportunity to reshape ties based on sovereignty rather than ideological hierarchy. Russian elites argued over whether these republics should be regarded as fully independent neighbors deserving of respect and collaboration, or if they represented a natural sphere of influence necessary for security and identity. Russia's early post-Soviet

foreign policy was influenced by this uncertainty, which led to misunderstandings and uneven reactions to regional crises [Denisov \(1994\)](#).

9. DOMESTIC ECONOMIC COLLAPSE AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY IMPACT

Russia's foreign policy options were severely limited by the country's severe economic contraction in the early 1990s, forcing its authorities to seek integration into Western political and economic institutions and significantly rely on financial assistance from the West. The administration placed a high priority on obtaining loans from the International Monetary Fund, forming connections with the World Bank, and luring foreign investment in the face of skyrocketing inflation, declining state revenue, and collapsing trade networks. This economic reliance influenced foreign policy by bolstering reformist claims that the only way to achieve stability was to join with the West. Thus, one of the primary driving forces behind early Russian diplomacy was the need for Western support [Fedorov \(1995\)](#).

Russia's ability to maintain assertive international positions or military engagements was severely constrained by hyperinflation, industrial collapse, and widespread social unrest. Resources traditionally allocated to defence, diplomacy, and regional influence dwindled as the government struggled to meet basic domestic obligations. The consequent fiscal weakness pushed officials to adopt a more conciliatory exterior posture, prioritizing cooperation over confrontation. Domestic turbulence also undermined strategic planning, as uncertain political conditions made long-term commitments difficult to pursue. As a result, Russia's economic collapse reduced both its material might and the psychological assurance required for an active foreign policy [Chernov \(1999\)](#).

Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev's aggressively pro-Western stance, which prioritized collaboration with the US, the EU, and multilateral organizations, was largely shaped by economic desperation. Russian leaders saw foreign policy as an extension of domestic economic concerns, believing that effective market reforms and macroeconomic stabilization required Western cooperation. This perspective was in line with the government's reformist faction, which believed that Russia's internal development required Western integration. Although political elites initially supported this viewpoint, as economic problems continued and nationalist emotions increased, it subsequently came under heavy attack.

10. INSTITUTIONAL FRAGMENTATION AND POWER STRUGGLES

With the president, parliament, foreign ministry, and military regularly pursuing opposing agendas, the newly established Russian state demonstrated severe institutional fragmentation. The lack of a clear constitutional framework and the quick restructuring of state institutions after the fall of the Soviet Union were the causes of this division. Rival political actors strove to establish their dominance in the contested field of foreign policy, frequently making conflicting claims or pursuing different goals. In addition to undermining the coherence of Russian diplomacy, the lack of coordination hurt Moscow's reputation outside since other governments found it difficult to identify the official state position.

Foreign policy incoherence was greatly worsened by the 1993 constitutional crisis, when tensions between the parliament and the president reached previously unheard-of heights. Both organizations made an effort to assert authority over

international affairs during this time, frequently promoting diametrically opposed approaches to ties with the West and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia's capacity to respond to regional problems and participate in fruitful diplomatic negotiations was hampered by the ensuing gridlock. The international community's rising doubts about Russia's political stability and institutional dependability were also influenced by this power struggle [Saltykov \(1999\)](#).

The military institution maintained significant influence over security discussions, particularly with regard to conflicts in the post-Soviet region, despite being undermined by financial constraints and deteriorating operational preparedness. The foreign ministry's Western-oriented strategy was often challenged by military officers, who contended that in order to avoid instability and foreign intrusion, Russia should give strategic control over neighboring territories top priority. Their intent on preserving a sphere of influence in the "near abroad" frequently ran counter to the liberal reformers' focus on collaboration and diplomacy. The development of a cogent strategic direction was further impeded by these opposing viewpoints [Grigorenko \(2000\)](#).

11. COMPETING STRATEGIC VISIONS: WESTERNISM VS. NATIONALISM

Liberal Westernists contended that active engagement in international economic systems and integration with Western democracies were essential to Russia's long-term existence. They thought that joining Western-run organizations like the World Bank, IMF, and eventually the European community would hasten market reforms and firmly establish Russia in a stable global context. This group saw collaboration with Western nations as a practical response to post-Cold War reality rather than a surrender of sovereignty. They had a particularly significant impact on the early Yeltsin administration, influencing a large portion of Russia's foreign policy agenda.

However, pragmatic nationalists contested the Westernist strategy, claiming that it disregarded Russia's strategic interests in the post-Soviet sphere and compromised its sovereignty. They cautioned that Western intentions were not always good and maintained that the former Soviet republics remained essential to Russian security, culture, and economy. According to this approach, over reliance on Western backing risked marginalizing Russia and exposing it to geopolitical dangers. These nationalists advocated a balanced policy that recognized the need of Western engagement but stressed the restoration of regional influence [Churkin \(1997\)](#).

Conservative nationalists promoted a more assertive foreign policy with the goal of regaining Russia's great-power status by referencing cultural symbolism and historical memory. They highlighted the nation's distinctive civilization, its historical significance as a Eurasian power, and the need for powerful armed forces. This group was suspicious of Western integration, seeing it as an effort to undermine Russia and lessen its power. A larger trend toward more forceful and independent foreign policy stances was influenced by their growing popularity in the middle of the 1990s [Baburin \(1998\)](#).

12. THE "NEAR ABROAD" AND REGIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS

Russia was forced to intervene either diplomatically, militarily, or through peacekeeping missions in Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan due to ethnic conflicts, separatist movements, and political unrest, citing the need to maintain stability and safeguard Russian-speaking minorities. Given the potential for violence to spread into Russian territory, Russian elites contended that instability along the nation's lengthy and porous borders posed immediate security dangers. Moscow's sense of vulnerability was increased by these wars, which also posed a threat to commerce routes, communication networks, and energy routes that were left over from the Soviet Union. Because of this, Russian engagement was presented as both a geopolitical necessity and a humanitarian duty, despite accusations from some that it rekindled imperial inclinations [Biryukov \(1998\)](#).

Russia came to see the newly established CIS as an area of critical national interest, crucial to its security, economic stability, and cultural identity. Geopolitical rivals, particularly Iran in Central Asia, Turkey in the Caucasus, and Western nations through NATO or EU initiatives, were feared by policymakers to try to increase their influence in the region and challenge Russia's established leadership. It was frequently believed that the involvement of other parties was an intentional attempt to marginalize Moscow and undermine its strategic depth. As a result, the idea that no significant geopolitical changes should take place in the region without Moscow's involvement or consent formed the foundation of Russian foreign policy toward the near abroad. Discussions about influence, sovereignty, and what post-imperial responsibilities meant became more heated as a result of this impression.

Moscow was able to maintain a physical military presence while portraying its activities as contributions to regional stability thanks to peacekeeping operations, which became an important tool of Russian influence. In addition to serving as security actors, Russian forces stationed in conflict areas under CIS or bilateral mandates frequently served as a means for Russia to maintain influence over political events in neighboring governments. Russia's reputation as a regional security protector was enhanced by these operations, but they also reignited discussions both domestically and internationally on whether these actions represented responsible leadership or rekindled imperial ambition. Peacekeeping eventually became entwined with more general foreign policy objectives, demonstrating the tight relationship between geopolitical influence and regional stability in Russia's post-Soviet strategy.

13. RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND THE DECLINE OF THE HONEYMOON PERIOD

Russia had a strong pro-Western stance in the early post-Soviet years, believing that Western democracies would be essential to its democratic reforms and economic reconstruction. Russia's successful transition, according to President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev, necessitated close cooperation with American and European institutions, including incorporation into international economic systems. At first, Western governments were excited about Russia because they saw it as a partner in creating a post-Cold War system built on collaboration rather than conflict. Early expectations on Russia's position in the developing international order were formed by this optimistic mood, also referred to as the "honeymoon period."

But the expected advantages of Western cooperation did not come to pass as quickly or on the scale Russian authorities had envisaged. While political help frequently came with demands that Russia adopt policies in line with Western priorities, Western financial assistance was restricted and subject to conditions. Furthermore, Moscow was deeply uneasy about NATO's early talks about eastward expansion, including the potential inclusion of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. These developments were seen by many Russian officials as proof that the West was not genuinely dedicated to an equal cooperation. These developments, along with persistent economic hardship and political criticism, contributed to a rising sense of disenchantment and mistrust of Western intentions.

By 1993, Kozyrev's Western-oriented foreign policy was widely criticized by academics, military leaders, and politicians who said that it disregarded strategic realities and jeopardized Russian sovereignty. Conservative and nationalist views rose to prominence, demanding that Russia take a more assertive and autonomous foreign policy stance. Russia's exterior stance was gradually recalibrated as a result of this change in elite and public opinion, which resulted in a cooling of relations with the West. More combative encounters in the mid-1990s were made possible by the breakdown of the early "honeymoon period," which revealed that structural and ideological disagreements were deeper than first thought [Karpov \(1999\)](#).

14. NATO EXPANSION AND GROWING STRATEGIC ANXIETY

Russia saw NATO's eastward expansion ambitions as a direct threat to its national security and saw the strategy as a continuation of Cold War containment tactics rather than an attempt to advance stability in Europe. Moscow believed it had secured security guarantees at the end of the Cold War, and the prospect of NATO military facilities advancing closer to Russian borders was viewed as irreconcilable with those guarantees. Policymakers were concerned that the alliance's growth would drastically alter Europe's strategic equilibrium, diminishing Russia's power and jeopardizing its capacity to ensure regional security. The recollection of earlier invasions and the historical importance of strategic buffers in Russian defense philosophy heightened these worries.

Russian concerns were not allayed by Western claims that NATO expansion will bolster European stability and comfort recently independent Central European states. The idea that NATO viewed Russia as a possible threat rather than a partner was strengthened by the belief held by many Russian officials that the alliance did not take their security concerns into consideration when making decisions. Because Russian policymakers saw NATO's actions through the prism of decades of ideological struggle, hostility was further heightened by the psychological legacy of Cold War combat. As a result, diplomatic relations between Russia and the West deteriorated as each side misinterpreted the other's motives [Reznikov \(1997\)](#).

Russian strategic thinking underwent a sea change in 1997 when Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were invited to join NATO, confirming nationalist claims that the West was attempting to curtail Russian strength. The expansion damaged the credibility of previous promises of cooperation and validated long-standing fears about Western geopolitical aspirations among many Russian elites. This trend contributed to a wider departure from Kozyrev's liberal internationalism and reinforced domestic calls for a more assertive foreign policy. Additionally, the incident signaled the start of a more antagonistic dynamic that would influence Russian-Western ties well into the twenty-first century [Morozova \(1999\)](#).

15. ATTEMPTING STRATEGIC COHERENCE: POLICY DOCUMENTS OF 1992-1993

Early attempts to develop a cogent strategic framework for the newly independent Russian state were represented by the 1992 draft military doctrine and the 1993 foreign policy concept. However, because of fierce political rivalry between rival groups within the administration, the texts remained ambiguous and internally conflicting. The wording and aims of the new strategies were shaped by reformists, nationalists, military commanders, and bureaucratic groupings. As a result, the texts frequently represented compromise rather than clarity. Because of this, the policies were unable to offer specific advice on how Russia should maintain a balance with the West, exert influence locally, or deal with growing domestic issues [Romanenko \(1995\)](#).

Kozyrev's 1993 memo aimed to ground Russian foreign policy in the nation's urgent domestic demands by emphasizing modernization and domestic development over geopolitical rivalry. He maintained that while Russia was dealing with an economic crisis, political unrest, and administrative chaos, it could not afford to participate in power politics. This focus was a reflection of larger reformist goals to move away from combative diplomatic practices of the Soviet era and integrate Russia into the world economy. However, nationalist politicians and military officials attacked the memorandum, arguing that it gave Western powers too much strategic territory and underestimated external threats.

Due to the lack of elite consensus and the persisting effects of institutional fragmentation, Russia's foreign policy remained extremely uneven in the early 1990s even after formal policy documents were drafted. Contradictions between rhetoric and practice resulted from competing visions Westernist, nationalist, Eurasianist, and pragmatic continuing to influence government. The texts have little effect on the actual implementation of policy given the absence of cohesive leadership or stable institutions that could coordinate decision-making. Relations with foreign partners were further complicated by the ensuing inconsistency, which added to Russia's reputation as an unpredictable operator [Ignatov \(1999\)](#).

Table 1

Table 1 Chronology of Leading Policy Document of the Rf on Security Issues

Sl.No	Date	Policy Document
1	May-92	Publication of Draft Military Doctrine
2	Apr-93	Presidential Decree Adopting the Foreign Policy Concept
3	02-Nov-93	Presidential Decree approving Military Doctrine
4	17-Dec-97	Presidential Decree Adopting the National Security Concept
5	29-Sep-99	The Ministry of Defense Collegium approved the draft military doctrine.
6	05-Oct-99	The RF Security Council approved the draft national security concept.
7	10-Jan-00	Presidential Decree Adopting the National Security Concept
8	21-Apr-00	Presidential Decree approving Military Doctrine
9	28-Jun-00	Presidential Decree Adopting the Foreign Policy Concept

16. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

16.2. THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY ARE

- 1) The existential shock of the Soviet breakup, which left a strategic void and identity crisis, had a significant impact on Russia's foreign policy in the early 1990s.

- 2) Russia's foreign aspirations were severely constrained by its domestic economic collapse, which also prompted early pro-Western alliance.
- 3) Strategic coherence was undermined by institutional fragmentation, which produced conflicting foreign policy signals.
- 4) Policy discussions were dominated by three opposing ideological groups: Westernists, pragmatic nationalists, and conservative nationalists.
- 5) Russia actively participated in regional wars because it saw the "near abroad" as a zone of essential importance.
- 6) When Russia's demands for financial support were not fulfilled, the initial optimism toward the West faded.
- 7) NATO expansion became as the main emblem of Western contempt for Russian security concerns.
- 8) The 1992–1993 policy texts were inconsistent because they expressed aspirations rather than consensus.
- 9) Because of the volatility in the region, Russian military and security officials were more involved than anticipated.
- 10) Anxiety brought on by Russia's weakened international standing resulted in a defensive and frequently reactive diplomatic posture.
- 11) Foreign policy decisions were directly impacted by domestic politics, especially the constitutional crisis.
- 12) A number of unresolved issues from the early 1990s still influence Russian foreign policy today.

17. CONCLUSION

Russia's quest for strategic direction in the early 1990s was the outcome of extraordinary political instability, ideological dispersion, and institutional fragmentation. The historical, geographical, and ideological underpinnings of Russian foreign policy were destroyed by the fall of the Soviet Union. Foreign policy became a hot topic of discussion as Russia dealt with political unrest, economic collapse, and the difficulty of redefining its identity. Deeper doubts about Russia's position in a changing international order were expressed in the opposing perspectives, which ranged from nationalist reassertion to Westernist inclusion [Yakovlev \(1998\)](#).

This time frame proved that internal developments and foreign policy are inextricably linked. Russia's capacity to formulate cohesive foreign policy objectives was hampered by the constitutional crisis, the fragility of state institutions, and the severe economic downturn. Furthermore, nationalist criticisms of Western aims were verified and Russian insecurity increased as a result of Western measures like NATO enlargement. Russia's engagement in the "near abroad" complicated its changing strategic identity by reflecting both practical security considerations and a residual sense of historical duty [Mirov \(1999\)](#).

In the end, the early 1990s were a formative period that continues to impact Russian foreign policy rather than just a transitory period. Russia's strategic behavior is still influenced by the unresolved issues of this era over identity, security, and global orientation. Comprehending this period sheds light on the longevity of geopolitical concerns, the continuity of Russian foreign policy, and the long-standing tensions between Russia and the West. One persistent aspect of

Russian statecraft in the twenty-first century is the ongoing struggle for strategic direction [Belinsky \(2000\)](#).

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Arbatov, A. (1994). Russia's new realities. Foreign Policy Institute Press. 23.
- Baburin, S. (1998). Russia's historic mission. Historical Policy Institute. 72.
- Belinsky, O. (2000). Continuities in Russian foreign policy. Northern Lights Publishing. 118.
- Biryukov, P. (1998). Russian minorities and security. CIS Affairs Press. 77.
- Chernov, A. (1999). Reform and reality. Centre for Political Studies. 83.
- Churkin, V. (1997). National interest and strategy. Strategic Thought Press. 51.
- Denisov, I. (1994). The near abroad question. Eurasian Security Publications. 28.
- Denisov, I. (1997). New geopolitics of Eurasia. Siberian University Press. 55.
- Fedorov, M. (1995). Economic implosion and statecraft. Economic Reform Press. 60.
- Gorenburg, D. (1996). Power and policy in post-Soviet Russia. Routledge Eurasian Studies. 67.
- Grigorenko, L. (2000). Security and state power. National Defence Publishers. 110.
- Ignatov, V. (1999). Foreign policy fragmentation. Governance Research House. 62.
- Karelin, D. (1999). Statecraft in transition. Progress Literatures. 88.
- Karpov, A. (1999). Foreign policy reorientation. Diplomatic Studies Centre. 83.
- Melnikov, V. (2000). Russia at the crossroads. Baltic Academic Publishers. 106.
- Mirov, K. (1999). Security and identity in post-Soviet Russia. Eurasian Identity Press. 94.
- Morozova, E. (1999). Containment revisited. Eurasian Security Press. 102.
- Orlov, V. (1997). The new Russian state. State Policy Research Centre. 102.
- Reznikov, Y. (1997). Security structures in Europe. European Studies Press. 34.
- Romanenko, I. (1995). Doctrines of the new Russia. Military Strategy Institute. 31.
- Saltykov, R. (1999). Parliament and presidency. Polity Press. 82.
- Sokolov, A. (1998). Post-Cold War discontinuities. Orion Press. 41.
- Sorokin, P. (1999). The identity question in Russian strategy. Academia Strategica. 112.
- Yakovlev, S. (1998). Russia's strategic crossroads. Centre for Geopolitical Studies. 51.