TITLE: Russian Interests and Russian-German Relations

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Executive Summary

My project is a study of security relations between Germany and the former-Soviet Union. The central question is whether the end of the Cold War will bring a return to classic European competitive power-balancing as the main instrument that German and post-Soviet leaderships use for security, or whether the existence of international and European institutions plays a role in national security strategies. This report is based on interviews with officials and experts in Moscow, and focuses on basic issues of Russian national interests and Russian views of Germany.

To a greater degree than was true of Soviet leaderships and of the foreign policies of most advanced countries, Russian foreign policy in 1992 was a function of the personnel and priorities of the Yeltsin leadership. This leadership held the establishment of internal economic reform as its priority in 1992, and this largely determined its foreign policy orientation. The task of this government is to gain access to Western financial and technical resources for economic reform, to gain access to the international economic system, and to reduce the level of foreign threat and hostility to Russia through integration in the "civilized" international system.

This foreign policy priority and orientation was very controversial, not only among the radical right and unreconstructed Communists, but also among the moderate center of the political spectrum and among foreign policy professionals. As early as February 1992, I found great disappointment with
Kozyrev's foreign policy orientation among otherwise progressive and "democratic" experts and officials. Criticism of the Yeltsin government's subordination of Russian foreign policy to economic reform is not merely a political attack from the right or a tactic in the power struggle, but a deeply and widely held view that Russian interests are not identical with those of the West and must be pursued actively, if cooperatively, in Russian foreign relations.

Critics are particularly unhappy with the Yeltsin government's slow start on establishing foreign relations with the former republics of the Soviet Union, and with its overwhelming emphasis on the United States, rather than Europe or Asia (depending on my interview subjects' interest and expertise).

On Russian relations with Germany, the first thing to note about the view of the foreign policy community in Moscow is that Germany does not play a central role. This was either criticized (largely by Germany and Europe specialists) or explained to me as logical, but it was acknowledged by all.

The second important finding is that Germany is simply not seen as a threat to Russia. My interview subjects offered many different reasons for this view: Germany as a democracy was not interested in use of military force and expansion, German aggression in the past was due to its totalitarian government, German leaders have learned that they cannot gain through aggression, Russian-German relations are historically and objectively quite good, Germany has stronger interests in economic relations that rule out military force, and the fact that Germany
is bound by its international and bilateral commitments to limit its military and engage in cooperative security.

That does not mean Russians do not see Germany as a powerful country with a potential military capability. Overall, I found Russian officials and experts more confident than Americans that German power is great and will certainly grow in the medium to long term. For some, that means it will be necessary to keep a close eye on Germany and be certain it abides by its international commitments. For others, the nature of German power is such that it will have no interest in military threats. In all cases, German power was seen as a potential resource for Russia: to balance against reliance on the United States, for help in Russian economic reform and growth, and for help in development and stability in Eastern Europe.

If anything, those whom I asked expressed disappointment that Germany was not more involved in economic terms in Russia and eastern Europe. While the German government and German businesses are seen as much more forthcoming and active in the Russian economy than those of other countries, disappointment at the limited involvement is nevertheless quite sharp.

Traditional views and intuitive reactions are not difficult to find when one scratches the surface, however. I asked about the possibility of German peacekeeping missions, and usually the response was that as a normal country, Germany has a right to participate in such measures. However, this was always followed by the observation that Germany would have to participate only through internationally sanctioned multilateral forces. And
Furthermore, only one person with whom I spoke was willing to entertain the notion that German military forces could play a peacekeeping role on the territory of the former Soviet Union. In fact, I usually received quite negative and emotional reactions to the notion that German forces, even under the UN, might be deployed in places like Georgia to separate Georgian and Russian soldiers.

1 The interviews reported in this paper were conducted between February and October, 1992. See pages 29-31
I. Introduction

My project is a study of security relations between Germany and the former-Soviet Union. The central question of my research is whether the end of the Cold War will bring a return to classic European competitive power-balancing as the main instrument that German and post-Soviet leaderships use for security, or whether the existence of international and European institutions alters the strategies of these leaderships in such a way as to make more cooperative relations a more efficient instrument for national security.

Soviet-German relations are key to this question, I argue, because of the historic relationship between Germany and Russia and its role in power balances and conflict in Europe. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the potential for a return to classic (and unstable) power-balancing would appear to have increased because of the larger number of states in Europe (namely, the former Soviet republics), and because of their competitive relations. Thus, while the passing of the Soviet Union has changed my focus from Soviet-German relations to those of Russia and Ukraine with Germany, the analytical issues have not changed and seem to have become even more important.

For the purposes of efficiency and easier access to my findings, I have divided the reporting of my research findings into reports
on Russian-German relations, Ukrainian-German relations, security institutions, economic institutions, and Russian-Ukrainian relations. The findings in these reports are based solely on my interviews with officials and academics. I will report on the results of the project's research into published Russian and Ukrainian sources when my research assistant has completed that portion of the research this summer. I will also at that time provide a more comprehensive evaluative and analytical assessment of my research.

II. Russian interests

Definitions and priorities of Russian national and security interests can be thought of as falling in three broad categories: economic reform, "regional" conflicts, and Russian power. These are quite easy to document in published sources and speeches and statements of the leadership and will come as little surprise to informed observers, but I will provide some background and confirmation that I learned of in my interviews.

The Yeltsin leadership held the establishment of internal economic reform as its priority through most of 1992, and this largely determined its foreign policy orientation. The task was threefold: gain access to Western financial and technical resources for economic reform, seek access to the international economic system insofar as Russian participation in the system of export and import trade could contribute to economic growth, and through integration in the "civilized" international system, reduce the level of foreign threat and hostility to Russia. All
three of these had important internal political dimensions in terms of supporting the new leadership's legitimacy and making its policies strong alternatives to policies of the past.

This reasoning was evident in Foreign Minister Kozyrev's speech to a special foreign policy conference at Moscow State University's Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) 26-27 February 1992. I was in Moscow as the conference was being prepared, and spoke with some officials and academics who had attended. My interview subjects expressed hope that the conference would provide an opportunity to establish a clearer basis for the Foreign Ministry's work. The situation in January and February was very chaotic, as the Russian Foreign Ministry (RFM -- left over from the republic-level foreign ministry) simply absorbed the Soviet Foreign Ministry, and very few of the officials in the latter institution lost their jobs. It was a period of bureaucratic power struggle, with officials of the new leadership in the RFM seeking to assert control of both policy and day-to-day working. On two occasions in February, I showed up for appointments at one of the three buildings of the RFM, only to be sent somewhere else in the building, as offices were moved around in an attempt to take control of the premises. The situation was not made any easier by the fact that foreign policy circles at the time were filled with rumors that Yeltsin would soon replace Kozyrev as Foreign Minister.

Kozyrev's speech and the conference, my interview subjects told me, were to change things by seizing the initiative and establishing a clear and professional basis for Russian foreign
policy. Apparently, his speech failed miserably. I was given the text at the time (and it has also been published in Russian sources), and the message was that Russian foreign policy would serve the priority of Russian internal economic reform, as I outlined it above. Unfortunately, there were two important problems with the speech as written. First, it was presented in extremely idealistic and naive language, and seemed to make the case for a "civilized" and western-oriented foreign policy for its own sake or as a desire to be more like the civilized (non-Slavic?) West. Rather than present a hard-headed and pragmatic argument that a dynamic and activist Russian foreign policy playing a role as an equal partner with the West could create a new basis for Russian power (or something of the kind), the speech implied Russian weakness and subordination to the West. Second, given the Yeltsin leadership's overwhelming focus on the priority of internal reform, it may have been obvious to them that Russia's most important areas of concern meshed extremely well with Western interests. That is, given their focus, they did not take seriously the possibility that in important respects Western and Russian interests could conflict. However, this was by no means clear to other Russian officials and academics. Even if one accepted the need for Western terms of cooperation for real economic reform (a point which is of course actually highly contested), one could legitimately believe that in issues of "regional" conflicts, Western and Russians interests diverged in important respects. Liberal and moderate officials and academics expressed skepticism that economic priorities could or would
subsume Russian concerns in conflicts in the former Soviet Union and near its borders.

I can illustrate these differences. A head of a department in the area of international security in the RFM told me that the priority of Russian security policy was to guarantee internal reform. According to him, crises in Nagorno-Karabakh and Moldova were only secondary to economic priorities and Russian policy was very careful to not appear to interfere in the affairs of now-independent former Soviet republics. In contrast, another very high level official in European security matters in the RFM said of conflicts in the former Soviet republics "it is difficult for Russia to recognize these republics as sovereign", especially given that sentiment in the Supreme Soviet favored a more hardline view of the other republics and it is "closer to reflecting the views of the people." He also pointed to the US as an example: it is a true democracy, but uses military force when its interests are threatened. "Our difficulty is to decide what our national interests are and how we may defend them." Two officials in the same ministry, both newly appointed under the Yeltsin leadership and supporting reform, had different views because of the degree to which they are willing to let the goal of internal economic reform weigh more heavily than difficulties in relations with Russia's new neighbors.

According to the people with whom I spoke, Kozyrev was immediately and severely criticized on both these counts at the conference. Critics not only included conservatives or opponents of reform, according to the people with whom I spoke, but many
liberal professional international relations scholars and officials as well. I discuss this at some length, because it is important to understand that the criticism of the Yeltsin leadership's neglect (if not abandonment) of Russian national interests which became so visible and part of the political battles during 1992 and 1993 are not only tactical weapons in a purely power struggle, but were expressed very early in a closed forum by international relations professionals who were not otherwise opposed to the leadership.

Western analysts have underestimated the degree to which Russia's entirely new geopolitical situation is a concern and a potential source of national interests divergent from Western expectations. On one level, officials told me that the former Soviet republics are clearly sovereign states, and Russia must reorient its thinking. At the same time, such officials when pressed argued that the leaders of these now independent countries were going to have to limit their nationalism if they expect to have good relations with Russia. One academic, asked about the most important security problems facing Russia after the Cold War, answered reflectively that "in Europe we are faced with the question of whether borders or self-determination are more important." An advisor to the Supreme Soviet committee on defense affairs similarly told me that in the "euphoria of sovereignization" we have forgotten that we have to base new security on old -- on military forces as well as on a very limited set of international arms control treaties. To a certain extent these are a good basis, he said, because the new states on
Russia's borders have agreed to abide by their terms. However, he pointed out, the agreements will mean needing to defend bigger spaces with smaller numbers of forces, which means the former republics will be seeking a higher quality of forces, which are also those most useful for surprise attack. He was confident that the way to deal with these problems was to work more closely within international agreements on confidence-building and open-skies type arrangements, but when I pressed him on whether his confidence in cooperative military security would be a view shared by professional military planners in the Ministry of Defense, he conceded that they were likely to see the problem but not the solution as he did.

Relations with former Soviet republics became a point of dispute between the Yeltsin leadership and Supreme Soviet very early. An aide on foreign policy affairs to Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khasbulatov told me that the main failure of Kozyrev and the RFM was its refusal or inability to focus immediately on relations with the former Soviet republics as a major task of foreign policy. "The foreign policy of Russia is like a matrioshka doll" with multiple layers of relations, and relations with the CIS at the center. The Kozyrev and Burbulis team (Burbulis is the person on the President's staff primarily responsible for foreign policy) were too preoccupied with relations with the West, he claimed, and did not turn their professional attention to establishing and regulating foreign affairs with Russia's newest and most important neighbors.
I found little interest among officials in the possibility of getting involved in conflict in the Balkans (although I should note this was not a main topic of my research, but rather one I would raise in the context of European security and Germany). If anything, most officials saw the conflict as an example of how Russia should not deal with former Soviet republics. One said that Yugoslavia "is a good lesson for us -- the President and his aides now work harder to find compromises on disputes with Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia." The bottom line is that Russia has little reason to get involved in the conflict. One specialist said "there are reasons of realpolitik -- there are some things you can afford, and some things you cannot. And policy in the Balkans is not affordable." This same scholar, however offered that he would not rule out a "Kuriles-type" situation where some within the government would seek to use the issue for political advantage. A European security authority also saw Yugoslavia as lacking in foreign policy importance but added that it was nevertheless important in Moscow politics because "support for Serbia is an internal matter." I interviewed an expert on Europe who is now a political activist in Slavicist organizations, who declared that the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia was a mistake and was the real source of conflict in Yugoslavia.

It is important to note that in addition to those critical of the Yeltsin leadership for its Western-oriented foreign policy, some analysts, officials, and politicians are critical of the government for its U.S. focus over a proper European focus. That is, not all who criticize the government on foreign policy seek an
isolationist or Eastern focus. Many referred to a long history of pro-American and pro-European groups in Soviet foreign policy, and the basic distinction still seems to stand. At the moment, all agreed, the pro-American elements of the foreign policy elite are dominant. When asked why, some attributed this to the leadership's "Great Power mentality", others to belief that the West will pay large amounts of aid in gratitude for perestroika with the U.S. leading the way, some to the continuing centrality of NATO in Russian security calculations (and belief that the U.S. in reality runs NATO), and concern in maintaining Russia as the exclusive nuclear successor-state to the Soviet Union (with U.S. influence in this matter seen as crucial). The priority, all whom I asked agreed, is first the U.S., perhaps second Britain and France, "and third, not Germany."

Most interesting in this regard, I discovered, is that the categories of "pro-Europe" officials and scholars and advocates of a "Eurasian" Russian foreign policy comfortably overlap. A conservative advocate of Russia as a Eurasian power (who complained that Yeltsin's policies were being made by Americans and "zapadniki" -- western-sympathizers) argued that since Russia participates in two geopolitical spheres, its focus must be on the Asiatic former republics of the Soviet Union, on Ukraine, and on Germany. Russia's short-term interests are internal and relations with the former Soviet republics, and its medium term interests are in the territories bordering the former Soviet Union. Therefore, Germany is much more important for Russian foreign policy, and the U.S. is important only for the long-term Russian
interests in developments in the Asian-Pacific in the 21st century. This, combined with the historical ties and cooperation between Russia and Germany in the 19th and 20th century, make Germany the obvious focus of Russia's Western policy. More generally, it became clear that this Eurasian element in foreign policy debate was claiming the high ground in hard-headed and realpolitik-oriented foreign policy. This activist told me that "Russia is not friendly with anyone and has no 'friends' -- it is too big."18

III. German-Russian relations

The first thing to note about the view of the foreign policy community in Moscow (officials and academics) is that Germany does not play a central role. This was either criticized (largely by Germany and Europe specialists) or explained to me as logical, but it was acknowledged by all. One reason offered by an authority on Soviet-German relations was that after the putsch all the German specialist were discredited -- especially Kvitsinskiy and Falin -- for not having come out against the attempt. The Yeltsin foreign policy people were for the most part not Europeanists, and their areas lie in international organizations, the USA, and Far East. This specialist also expressed the scorn I heard from many quarters for Yeltsin's main foreign policy appointment to the RFM, Shelov-Kvidayev, who had been a professor of antiquities, with no foreign policy expertise at all.19 Several people early in the year told me Russia's European policy (insofar as it might develop independence from Russia's American policy) awaited the
appointment of Deputy Foreign Minister Adamishin, who was at the
time ambassador to Italy.

I interviewed the head of a department with expertise on Germany
in RFM, and the results are a nice summary of the basic view of
the government. First, he offered that even for Russia in 1992,
the treaties of 1990 relating to German unification and the "2 +
4" talks were the basis for relations and were the reason that
Russian-German relations were off to such a good start. Given
these treaties on economic relations, German payments to the
Soviet Union, withdrawal of Soviet forces and the political
settlement of the legacy of WWII, "we could continue now with
practical work -- with abstract questions settled." He argued
that unlike the other Western countries, Germany therefore had a
cooperative and friendly basis of relations with Russia even
before the "general East-West opening of relations." On top of
this bilateral basis, with the invitation of the former Soviet
states to NATO meetings in Brussels "the issues that had in
history held back German-Soviet relations were all gone."
Finally, Germany demonstrated its intentions and support of Russia
by being the first country to recognize Russia as the legal
successor state to the Soviet Union, unlike some other countries
which allowed their policy of support for Gorbachev to cloud their
support for Russia.\textsuperscript{20}

He also raised himself the importance of Germany for Russia in
terms of its economic potential, its power within the European
Community, its historically better understand of Russia than other
European countries, and the fact that "Germany was always right in
the middle of Europe." I asked, does this not mean that Germany is also a threat to Russia? No, he answered, for three reasons. First, Germany is bound by its 1990 treaties to limit the Bundeswehr to 370,000 men. Second, Germany is "bound in NATO." Third, Germans through their history have learned that with military means they cannot win. He was confident of German awareness of all these factors, and pointed to German interest and activity in economic relations in eastern and central Europe as evidence of German awareness that it cannot be a military threat to other countries, but must seek its interests through mutually beneficial economic relations. He also noted that Germany will be occupied for some 10 to 15 years by the task of developing the former-DDR, which will take a lot of money. Therefore, Germany will just not have resources for expanding the military, even if it wanted to do so. He offered a distinction to me: Germany is a powerful country, but it does not advance a "power policy" nor attempt domination. As a result, rather than being a threat in central and eastern Europe, it is a factor for stability. He also pointed out that the Germans are themselves very sensitive to the danger of being seen as dominating, and of inspiring anti-German sentiment in Europe. As a result, the Germans seek to always negotiate. So in the EC, he said, "the Germans talk, and talk, and talk -- and then come to an agreement."21

German commitment to multilateral institutions and to its international obligations on limiting military capacity were cited by numerous officials and experts as a reason why potential German military power is not seen as a threat. I pressed one expert on
whether such legal obligations were really seen in Russian security community circles as serious -- he was surprised that I was doubtful and assured me that they were taken quite seriously within the government. The German pledge of non-aggression against the Soviet Union in 1990 was key, he said, because "the German question meant for the Germans unification. For the Soviet Union it mean the build-down of the threat from German territory," which these commitments and reductions in force levels accomplish. Similarly, an official responsible for international law in the RFM argued that the reason Germany was a threat to Soviet security was because of its unique status as a divided and occupied country in the middle of Europe -- it was not a normal country and therefore a continuous source of conflict. Now, as a sovereign state, with peace treaties and networks of agreements, it is just a normal European country. In the context of our discussion of NATO, he disagreed with the view (that I did hear in Moscow) that NATO was necessary to constrain German military power. He said "Germany does not need to be constrained by NATO. Germany is like France and Italy. Five years ago it was a country to be checked or controlled, to be worried about. Now it is just like any other country in Europe." The one serious problem he saw in terms of a German threat would be German assertion of territorial claims in central and eastern Europe. These basic views were expressed in many other interviews. The conservative Slavicist political activist with whom I spoke admitted that while it is good that the Germans are involved in eastern Europe "Russians do worry -- it is an intuitive feeling."
But Russia has in common with Germany an interest in stability in eastern Europe, so as long as Russia does not face a Western bloc moving into the region, German activity is in Russian interests. This remains sensitive, however: German leadership in pressing for recognition of Slovenia and Croatia and therefore the breakup of Yugoslavia is seen as traditional German policy in the Balkans, and was a mistake. However, "I understand that the Germans cannot stay within their borders in political and economic terms. They are in the Baltics, in the Ukraine. In this is a traditional expression of interests." But this does not translate into an active threat for Russia -- at worst Germany is neutral, and at best it can help Russia. I pressed once again as to why. "The government in Bonn -- or Berlin -- is not German, but European." The next generation may be different, as it will grow up under the period of German power.24

A former military officer and expert on Germany offered another reason that I commonly heard on why Germany is not a threat to Russia: the government is not totalitarian. I pointed out that it had not been totalitarian for some 45 years, why was it seen as a threat before? That was due to our dogmatic Leninist thinking, he replied, up until the time of Chernenko. We built socialism in the DDR, and thought it was the progressive model which West Germany threatened. Gorbachev did not buy this old view, and that is why Soviet policy began to change. OK, I said, then if Germany was not a threat and dogma no longer a problem under Gorbachev, why was there so much resistance and delay on German unification? That, he said, was a very complicated process for Gorbachev, and
compared it to Khrushchev's task in 1956. There was considerable opposition in the government to accepting that a united Germany did not pose a threat to Russia. Gorbachev needed to gain assurances on troop limits and economic assistance not so much because he and his advisors believed them necessary, but because he needed to undercut the complaints of conservative opposition. There was also even fear of an attempted putsch should Gorbachev agree to a united Germany without stringent commitments and international agreements. He admitted that there was some concern over German policy and activism in the conflict in Yugoslavia, but concluded that Germany does have real interests in that region so its involvement is understandable. Germany, he argued, will be restrained because the Germans understand the historical problems bound up with their action in the Balkans. In the end, Russia has no choice but to deal constructively with Germany, because Germany is the central point in Europe -- "the Germans are always in the middle." 25

Another retired military officer with whom I spoke was somewhat more concerned about the potential for German military power, but told me that it was more important that German actions to reduce its military forces are clear and German intentions to work through multilateral security institutions (CSCE and NATO) means he does not see Germany as a threat now or even in the next 10 years. But, he qualified this view, "Germany is a country with immense potential. And a national sense, a nationalism that brought Germany twice into world wars and thus to Russia -- it must be examined all the time." 26
I spoke with three high-ranking officials in the RFM's Office of Assessment and Planning, all three Germany experts, one a former diplomat in Germany, and one with extensive experience in arms control negotiations with Germany. Not surprisingly, they tend to view contemporary Russian-German relations in terms of some two hundred years of historical ties, and to claim that this history - with its economic, cultural, artistic, political, and military relations -- provides a more substantial basis for relations than with other Western countries. World War II and its historical meaning are acknowledged to be a part of this relationship as much as its positive aspects, especially Germany's negative history in the Balkans and its current policy on Croatia and Slovenia. But the new Germany has a stronger interest in economic relations and cooperation, and that is more significant in its contemporary foreign policy. The modern Germany also has a different leadership than those which threatened Russia and the Soviet Union in the past. I asked again, Germany has not had such a leadership for over 45 years, so why the threat during the Cold War? Yes, he acknowledged, Germany was a main hindrance in Soviet relations in Europe and the World, worsening US-Soviet relations and causing repeated conflicts in Berlin. But he saw the German threat as the result of the Cold War -- "we could not have solved the German question without the bettering of US-Soviet relations and the new situation in Eastern Europe", that is, the change from the "so-called Brezhnev Doctrine." 27

So, I asked again, Germany poses no threat to Russia? "Germany is a participant in international life," so Russia must deal with
Germany, and Germany with Russia. For this we have a system of treaties and a practical step by step approach. I should note, he said "Russia has no borders with Germany! For others I can see there may be concern, but it is no solution to meet the problems of World War II with military measures."28

I found it interesting that among more senior officials whose expertise and service was in relations with Germany, there was simultaneous belief in a fundamental, natural, and historical affinity of Russia and Germany, yet also a traditional orientation toward German power and policy. The second senior official in this office with whom I spoke about any threat from Germany pointed to the present generation of German leaders, who understand the dangers of the German past and German power. This generation, he said, sees the old German policy in the East -- Lebensraum -- as a disaster, and has no desire to repeat it. But, he said, these leaders also see the independent states in the East (eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) and understand their value, and the fact that "suddenly there is now a real possibility for German influence in the east, without war." He saw German support and interest in these countries as having nothing to do with principled support for sovereignty, but rather with an awareness of the opportunity for German influence. "I am old-fashioned -- there is nothing new in politics. They come back to old thinking, not only the good or only the bad."29

The third official argued that Russia and Germany have a common interest in the development of a multipolar world, an interest that distinguishes the two countries from the US (he pointed to
the US Defense Department draft document reported in the press as evidence of the USA's unusual viewpoint in this regard). I asked whether strong German support for NATO did not argue against his view, as NATO would seem to be a force for "unipolarity", at least in Europe. He disagreed, and argued that Germany is actually a force for transforming NATO into a more multi-power security institution, for example, by pushing for the development of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council.  

One expert on Europe argued that since Germany is a democracy, therefore it is not a threat to Russia because "you know, no democracy has fought another democracy in the 20th century." He was very displeased with me when I pointed out that I would not exactly consider Russia a democracy, and that democracies fight non-democracies at a pretty high rate. (At a subsequent occasion when we met he took me aside and said "You know, I think we might not be a democracy after all." This was during the Congress of People's Deputies' first attack on Yeltsin in April 1992).

So many aspects of international relations and Soviet-Russian security changed from 1989 to 1992 that it is very difficult to pin down the reason why Germany is not seen as a threat to Russia any longer. While I did find some sense of a latent threat from Germany due to its economic power and potential military power, for the most part what is key to Russian officials and experts is whether certain other factors activate the German threat and power: Germany's form of government, its interests in the east, the sociology and psychology of its leadership, and its international alliances. A deputy department head in the
USA/Canada Institute said "After World War II, Germany was a threat to Russia primarily because it was a member of the Western alliance." The Soviets feared Germany would be used by the US as the spearhead against the Soviet Union. "So after the Cold War, why should and in what regard would Germany be seen as a threat?" Russian analysis of Germany makes it clear that Germany has undergone serious internal change from Nazi times, and historically there were more good relations than bad between Germany and Russia. It is a misperception in the West that somehow Russians fear Germans: "In history, whenever Germany made war on Russia, Russia beat them in the end. So the public has no inferiority complex; in fact, it may be a superiority complex." 32

While Germany is thus for the most part not seen as a threat, it is seen as playing a potentially greater and more constructive role in aiding economic reform because of (1) its historical ties to Russia and the East, (2) its concrete interests in stability in Eastern Europe as well as the potentially enormous economic gains in trade with the east, especially Russia and (3) Germans tend to have a less-dogmatic view of the needs and forms of proper reform in Russia than do Americans. I lost count of the number of times my interview subjects referred scornfully to the American tendency to impose certain policy requirements, while the Germans "do not do things like send and send and send Harvard professors." 33 (I gave up insisting that I was not in Moscow to tell anyone how to do anything, but only to learn what Russians felt, thought, and believed. I would just smile, nod, and try to get on to the next question.)
Russians also point to the large degree of common economic interests between Russia and Germany, and the two countries' basic economic complementarity. In the course of the year, the degree to which German economic priorities were in the former-DDR was acknowledged by most officials and academics, but most still saw a greater immediate interest by Germany in Russia, and all were confident that for the long term, German economic interests in Russia were so great that Germany's objective interests would keep it active in trade and investment in Russia. I asked one expert if German aid was at its end. "No. Germany is in the middle of Europe; it is in the middle of the EC; it is in the middle of European integration. The European market is small for the Germans. So what is Russia? The biggest market in the world in five to eight years."  

I interviewed a member of the Supreme Soviet who was involved in foreign affairs, especially foreign economic relations, and who had briefly held a ministerial position in the Yeltsin government. He offered a very interesting perspective on Germany's role in Russian foreign policy. He told me that he deals with a lot of German businessmen, that they are much more active in Russia than any other foreign interests, offering that this was because "they are right next door." He admitted that until these times, Russians may have held some prejudice against Germans, but now we understand the reality of a unified Germany and seek to solve questions in relations in a different manner. I asked whether it was not the case that economic cooperation with Germany could not help that country grow more powerful, and whether that would not
be a matter of concern to the Russian government. "If Russia were yesterday's Russia -- a powerful Russia -- then there would be no doubts, there would be no concerns. Russia would see a united Germany, and see that it was no concern." "But as a deputy of the Supreme Soviet and as a former minister", I tell you that "for the US it would be very important to sustain Russia -- then there would be a counterbalance to Germany." "And I am speaking not only for Russian interests -- it would be better for all if there were a balance in Europe." He argued that it would be better for Germany if Russia were to disintegrate into many states, which would then turn to Germany for support because it is closer than the US and which would be easy to dominate. I asked whether the EC was not a constraint on German dominance in eastern Europe. He conceded that for now the EC holds Germany back. "But Germany has always been Germany. If Germany wants to use the Community, it will use it." But again he turned to the US in this equation, arguing that the breakup of the Soviet Union was a defeat for the US as well as a victory "because everyone felt fear of the Soviet Union, and was then needing to be subordinated to the US." Now that the Soviet Union is gone, this need is also ended, and there are many centers of power, not under US control. This, he concluded, was good reason for the US to aid Russia. I asked, given his skeptical view of Western interests in Russia, whether he saw Western investment and trade as a bad thing for Russia. He replied that in fact he saw economic relations as positive -- Russia should trade with Western countries and deal with foreign investors. But in fact, he said, most Western countries are not
investing in Russia. Only Germany is willing to take risks, and its activity is so small, with the Bonn government spending ten times in eastern Germany what is spent in Russia. Talk of western investment for Russian reform and trade, he concluded, was really a propaganda phenomenon, with only Germany coming even close to doing what it could.  

This view was rather unusual among the people I interviewed. More common was the view that Germany could play a useful role for Russia by virtue of Germany's close links with the US and the rest of the West. One official said that the US, Russia, and Germany make up a three-corner triangle -- all three links have to hold together for progress in security cooperation and aid for Russian economic reform. Relations between Russia and the US could be positive only if relations between Russia and Germany are also good. German interest in involving the EC in eastern European economic reform and trade is seen largely as positive, as it can contribute to stability. At least in the early part of 1992, most officials believed that the Germans (and Japanese) had greater financial resources for investment and aid in Russia.

I asked about views on German-French military cooperation, and on the possibility of German peacekeeping missions. Most had little concern for the French-German "Eurokorps", largely because it was seen as harmless. The agreement was seen as a "political decision: rather than one with a concrete military capacity or meaning. One expert said it would keep the French and German military establishments busy without really accomplishing anything in terms of real capability. Only two officials I spoke with
expressed concern about such a military development. One was concerned that it could mean the rise of a French-German military role in Europe over that of the US and NATO, while another feared that French-German cooperation would strengthen the security functioning of the EC, which would be a problem from the Russian point-of-view because Russia cannot become a member of the EC.

German participation in peace-keeping was not seen as a problem. First, most officials and experts pointed out that Germany is a sovereign and independent state, and can do what it likes within the limits of international law. Second, all of the interview subjects pointed out that any German peacekeeping would take place under United Nations auspices (or through the CSCE and/or NATO). That is, unilateral German action would be unacceptable, but multilateral participation was not a problem. One official said "the process is more an issue than who does what." A European security expert said that German peacekeeping could be acceptable to Russia only if it was under the United Nations, while others allowed for CSCE, and no one explicitly favored a NATO peacekeeping mission with German participation. Another also said as far as Russia was concerned (it is not against the treaty with us -- their problem is the Basic Law (i.e. the provision in the German Constitution that prohibits combat deployment of German military forces outside the NATO area)."

However, precisely where such peacekeeping forces could operate was another matter. One scholar told me he thought German peacekeeping in the CIS would be acceptable because of aversion to using Russian forces and seeing them die in the other republics of
the former Soviet Union. He did remark that the form would have
to be such that it did not appear as if NATO were imposing a
military solution in the former Soviet Union.48 However, nearly
all of my interview subjects ruled out western peacekeeping "on
Russian soil."49 When I asked if that included Moldova, Nagorno-
Karabakh, Azerbaijan, etc., they said yes. (In retrospect, I am
not sure if they thought I was asking if Russian soil included
these places, or if the unacceptability of UN or CSCE forces
included them. To me there is a difference, but I am not sure
that was the case for all of the people I interviewed.)

Finally, I should note that a subject in Russian-German
relations that I was prepared to discuss at great length with
officials and experts was not important after all. Although there
was a lot of activity in negotiating an autonomous region for the
Volga-Germans (ethnic Germans who had lived in Russia since the
time of Catherine the Great, and who had been dispersed mostly
through Central Asia by Stalin, numbering at the beginning 2
million officially, but more likely 3-4 million), it was not a
very important issue. Yeltsin had promised an autonomous
republic, but when the issue of finding such a territory in
European Russia arose, he met with very strong domestic political
opposition and backed down. This did not endear him to the
Germans, but the German government in the end did not make a very
big deal of the matter. There are proposals to make Kaliningrad
(Königsberg -- East Prussia) either a Russian-German region or a
special economic zone with ties to Germany, but these are
problematic because of eastern European fears of German claims to
pre-1945 German territory. In the end, the German government has privately acknowledged that there will be no such region or republic, and most of the Russian-Germans will emigrate to Germany. They recognize that Yeltsin cannot afford to press the issue for domestic reasons, and do not wish to weaken him further (this information is from my interviews in Bonn).

IV. Some conclusions

Russian national interests in the broadest sense are a function of "objective" factors in terms of the need for economic reform as well as Russia's geopolitical position. Russia needs aid and investment, and as a (indeed, the) Eurasian country it is threatened by instability in Eastern Europe and elsewhere along its borders. In particular, Russia has an enduring interest in good relations with Germany, without question. However, what is more important is the interpretation and priorities of those broader interests, which is purely a function of the domestic political leadership. In the period that I conducted my interviews, the interpretation and priorities of the Russian leadership favored speedy and radical reform that made its economic program dependent on Western assistance. Consequently, the priority of Russian foreign policy was to cooperate with the West, almost for the sake of cooperation itself. In addition, the form that the Yeltsin's leadership reform policy took made the US a far more important partner in Russian foreign policy than the European powers -- even more important than Germany. The focus on the US was reinforced by Russian concerns for the nuclear
capabilities of the former Soviet republics, an issue that only the US has the power and status to help solve.

Germany plays a role in all this, but as a member of "the West." This is not to say that Russian officials or experts see German policy subordinate to or derivative of American policy. It is rather that they have a good (and in my view, correct) awareness that German interests and approaches toward Russia are in the short and medium term substantially common with those of the US. To the extent that they see greater German interest in the East, it is a difference in degree, not kind.

Germany is basically not seen as posing a military threat to Russia. There is some variation on the degree to which latent German power is seen as a problem. Some officials with a more traditional view are aware of the potential for a future threat, but see such potential comfortably dealt with by the network of agreements, alliances, and commitments of which Germany is an integral part. Others are even more sanguine about a German threat, and these tend to be individuals who believe that German democracy eliminates the possibility of an aggressive or expansionist foreign policy. I will go into more specifics on each of these points in subsequent reports.

It is important to note some observations of the foreign policy of a non-Yeltsin Russian government. The specific form would of course depend on the specific form of such a leadership, but I would venture two observations. First, other than a very nationalistic or right-wing government, any Russian government more conservative than Yeltsin's should be expected to work quite
comfortably with Germany as it exists today. The depth of security cooperation might be more limited, but those of a more conservative political view with whom I spoke tend to see Russian-German relations as traditionally productive and close. In particular, economic and political relations between Germany and Russia are seen as more naturally positive than relations with any other Western state. Second, the area of most substantial change in foreign relations would be in the willingness of such a Russian government to work through international institutions. This is not to say that efforts for arms control, development of the CSCE, and even some economic institutions such as the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) would be abandoned. But the approach of a more conservative government to such institutions would be more instrumental, and would be valued less for demonstrations to the West of Russian good will. A conservative-to-moderate Russian government would face the same problems as the present government, but would be less willing to accept the high costs of cooperation that the Yeltsin government has been eager to embrace.

1 The Russian Foreign Ministry was not formally re-organized until June 1992, at which time one of my interview subjects let me see a copy of the new organizational plan. He would not let me photocopy the plan, as it was technically secret, but I copied down some notes by hand. There are 27 departments (otdel') and bureaus (upravleniye). Although in the former system, bureaus were usually subordinate to departments, now some bureaus are not under departments and have equal administrative status, for reasons that were not clear to my interview subject. I will not list all the offices, but note that my interviews were conducted in the Department of Europe, Department of International Organizations and Global Issues, Department on disarmament and control over military technologies, Department of Regional Cooperation and Economic Problems, and Department of International
Law. There is also a Department of the CIS. Source: Interview 32.

2 Interview 12.
3 Interview 33.
4 Interview 35.
5 Interview 37.
6 Interview 19.
7 Interview 5.
8 Interview 33.
9 Interview 9.
10 Interview 36.
11 Interview 21.
12 Interview 33.
13 Interview 14.
14 Interview 28.
15 Interview 18.
16 Interview 13.
17 Interview 21.
18 Interview 21.
19 Interview 31.
20 Interview 24.
21 Interview 24.
22 Interview 31.
23 Interview 26.
24 Interview 21.
25 Interview 29.
26 Interview 17.
27 Interview 35.
28 Interview 35.
29 Interview 11.
30 Interview 10.
31 Interview 14.
32 Interview 9.
33 Interview 11.
34 Interview 9.
35 Interview 31.
36 Interview 7.
37 Interview 35.
38 Interview 15.
39 Interview 11.
40 Interview 37.
41 Interview 17.
42 Interview 12.
43 Interview 27.
44 Interview 12.
45 Interview 36.
46 Interview 17.
47 Interview 35.
48 Interview 37.
49 Interview 10.
Interviews

(Note: I include references only to interviews I quoted or used as background for this report. Therefore, the Interview numbers are not in sequence, as I use the numbers in my file system.)


20. Professor and Researcher, Moscow State University Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). Moscow, 21 February 1992.


37. Head of Department, Institute of Europe. Moscow, 29 April 1992.