

Russian Decision-making Regarding Bosnia: Indifferent Public and Feuding Elites

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“To be honest, when I was working on this problem the main thing I was trying to prevent was a national humiliation for Russia.”

Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaly Churkin on the Bosnia war
Literaturnaya gazeta, No. 11, March 16, 1994, 14

On a typical chilly October morning in 1991, one of the major Soviet daily newspapers, *Izvestia*, appeared in the news kiosks with an interview given by Andrei Kozyrev, the energetic young man who had been named Russia's Foreign Minister less than a year earlier (*Izvestia*, October 2, 1991, 3). In response to a question about Russia's future relationship with the West, and the United States in particular, Kozyrev predicted a strong, lasting alliance. He remarked that Russia would compete with the U.S. only if Russia's state interests were at stake, and discounted that struggle would re-emerge in arenas not vital to Russia's security. He said, for example, that since Russia had its own oil in Siberia, Moscow would not question U.S. actions in the Persian Gulf.

Of course, Kozyrev's confidence that the future would be characterized by stable, friendly relations between Russia and major Western powers—including the U.S.—was neither uncommon nor unreasonable in late 1991. The Cold War was rapidly drawing to a close and Russia's severe domestic problems made having peaceful relations with the West and the attendant opportunities to obtain aid, highly desirable. As it turned out, however, support for the Yeltsin administration's Western-oriented policies was not unequivocal among Russian political elites. Moreover, support for such policies waned during the 1990s, even at the government level. A key turning point was reached in December 1995, when elections to the State Duma resulted in a large majority of seats going to opponents to “soft” foreign policies, including Russia's course in Bosnia. Bowing to pressure from opposition legislators, Yeltsin finally removed Kozyrev and replaced him with Evgeny Primakov—a move cheered by the opposition. Kozyrev's fall signaled a new age in Russian foreign policy, which began to be shaped primarily by elite power struggles and the search for a new Russia's post-Cold War identity, which involved a turn away from a “euphoric” foreign-policy period of the early 1990s (Shiraev and Zubok, 2001).

It is important to note that, as the situation above evolved, public opinion failed to become an important factor shaping foreign policy, despite Russia's struggle to develop democracy. We will demonstrate this argument at length below in relation to Russia's policy in Bosnia by showing how Russians felt about the situation in Bosnia, and then contrasting that with how elite decisions were made regarding Russia's role in Bosnia. First, we will begin with a brief summary of the context for Russian policy-making regarding Bosnia in 1991-96.

Policy-Making Context

When the first reports of conflict started to flow from the former Yugoslavia in 1991, Russia was just breaking away from the U.S.S.R. and beginning to establish itself as an independent state. The period from 1991 to 1996, covering the time from the break-up of the U.S.S.R. to the first Presidential elections in independent Russia, marked a time of extreme social and political turbulence. Faced with formidable problems on the domestic front, it is no surprise that Russia's leaders were preoccupied during this time with settling affairs at home. The problems of dismantling the command economy and stabilizing its new market structure were daunting enough. In addition, Russia had to be remade politically in every sense: as a state, as a nation, as a federation, as a strong and legitimate government, as well as a democracy. A primary element of political restructuring was the search for a new ideology. Elites had to find a foundation on which to rebuild their relationship with an emergent civil society—one vocal and diverse in its interests, unpracticed at democracy, and contending with privation, lawlessness, and a general sense of insecurity. Political restructuring was further complicated by the fact that democratization entailed the strengthening of opposition groups as well as criminal elements: property and power were changing hands in Russia, thus encouraging various groups to compete for emerging political and economic opportunities (Glad and Shirayev, 1999).

The difficulty of Russia's domestic political problems in the post-Soviet age cannot be overstated. In the parlance of a famous long-term study of political development, Russian elites confronted the five 'crises' of political development all over again, and all at once.¹ The severity of Russia's domestic political turmoil was highlighted in several instances, including the constitutional crisis of 1992-93, Yeltsin's use of military force to disband the Supreme Soviet in September-October 1993, opposition victories in the legislative elections of 1993 and 1995, and the war in Chechnya—which officially began in December 1994 but had actually started months prior.

At the same time as Russia's leaders faced domestic problems of crisis proportions, however, they also faced gargantuan tasks in the international arena. In essence, Russia had to be remade as a world actor in a new, post-Cold War world, and forging consensus on a new foreign policy would be difficult. Not only was the domestic political context highly contentious, but also post-Soviet Russia was greatly weakened economically and militarily. Its leaders had to contend with the fact that their country was no longer one of the world's two superpowers. Also, while there were no immediate threats to Russia's security from the outside, and improved opportunities existed for obtaining Western aid, Russia's leaders were painfully anxious to avoid being treated as inferior. Specific international problems such as the conflict in Bosnia and NATO's expansion, provided arenas for working out Russia's new international identity and foreign policy.

A further aspect of Russia's international problems was that the workshop of foreign policy-making itself had to be rebuilt. In the U.S.S.R., policy-making had been the unquestioned purview of Communist Party elites—Politburo members in particular—who had exercised decisive sway, especially over policy related to security.² *Perestroika* marked the beginning of serious change in Soviet foreign-policy making (Dobrynin, 1996). But most of the restructuring came after Russia gained independence in 1991. Institutional reforms required that a new set of policy-makers be designated and their relative powers decided. Also, in accordance with Russia's democratic aspirations, new ground rules had to be set up on how public opinion on international issues would be taken into account in foreign policy.

While the new constitution of December 1993 institutionalized the reform of foreign policy-making institutions, the practical sorting out of new arrangements continued throughout the 1990s into the new century. As this process has evolved, the number of actors involved in foreign-policy making has proliferated, and relations among the various elements have been very contentious (Malcolm, 1995, 26-28). This can be seen, in part, as a natural result of Russia's initial steps toward democratization, which transferred power over policy from party elites to

representative government institutions. However, the expansion of the foreign-policy making arena and sharp struggles among politicians have also been due partially to *resistance* toward democratizing policy-making—specifically, to the President's efforts to keep decisive control over policy. In essence, Yeltsin deliberately enlarged the number of institutions involved in foreign-policy making in an effort to dilute the power of any one person or institution which might rival his own, and he played actors off each other for the same reason. Thus, while power over foreign policy decisions was more dispersed in 1991-96 than it had been earlier, it remained concentrated in the executive branch. The dominance of the President in foreign policy-making was also formalized in the 1993 constitution.³

However, while the President hung on to the most power to decide foreign policy in Russia through 1996, he found it increasingly difficult to do so without taking into account the wishes of critics, especially opposition legislators. While the public at large did not figure prominently in causing the President to modify his policies (as will be shown below), legislators did gain increasing influence in foreign policy-making in the period 1991-96 (Sherman, 1995). While legislators as a whole kept a low profile in international affairs in the early post-Soviet period, the legislature started to assert itself more in 1992-93, when members of the Supreme Soviet passed several resolutions challenging Yeltsin's foreign policy, including in countries such as Yugoslavia and some former Soviet republics. Yeltsin's obvious vexation with criticism from the legislature, culminating in his use of military force to disband the Supreme Soviet in the fall of 1993, did not daunt its successors. In fact, as opposition parties proved victorious in both the 1993 and 1995 legislative elections (which delivered the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation the most seats, respectively), the legislature's voice in foreign policy matters grew stronger. Thus, the legislature (renamed the Federal Assembly in December 1993), and especially its lower house, the State Duma, became an arena in which Yeltsin's foreign as well as domestic policies were sharply criticized. In response to rising criticism, and for deeper reasons to be discussed more fully below, Yeltsin and his executive foreign policy team began gradually to reshape certain aspects of policy in limited ways (including in Bosnia) and even to change foreign policy personnel along lines more agreeable to opposition legislators. But, even as the Duma came to have more influence, it still remained an institution with less influence over foreign policy than the executive.

Thus, within the executive branch, Yeltsin and a shifting array of key appointees kept reins over the main directions of foreign policy in the 1990s. Within this circle of decision-makers, Yeltsin appeared to have decisive say most of the time. As noted earlier, part of his strategy for keeping control involved proliferating the number of actors involved and causing them to compete for influence. Thus, for example, his first appointee as Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, was forced to compete initially for influence with Gennadi Burbulis, who was Yeltsin's hand-picked state secretary for the first year of his tenure. Burbulis, in fact, appeared to play the leading role in coordination of foreign policy matters up until the middle of 1992, not Kozyrev. Later on, two executive bodies were created to also help shape foreign policy: the Security Council and the Inter-Departmental Foreign Policy Commission. Both of these bodies clashed with the Foreign Ministry (which was, in fact, shrinking and weakening, with many experts leaving due to low salaries and declined professional opportunities) and failed to become effective coordinating institutions. In 1993, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Defense Minister Pavel Grachev began to play more important roles in international matters, especially in matters concerning other countries of the former U.S.S.R.—the so-called “near abroad.” Thus, Kozyrev and the Foreign Ministry were kept off-guard, increasingly challenged both from within the executive branch as well as from outside it, including from within the Duma. Kozyrev, however, managed to keep Yeltsin's favor, and thus his post as Foreign Minister, until January 5, 1996, when his resignation was tendered. The

fact that no lieutenant was allowed to amass strong sway helped Yeltsin maintain power over foreign-policy making. However, as evidenced by how Kozyrev was so strongly challenged and finally dismissed in the end, it also was true that Yeltsin's controls were whittled over time.

Russian policy in former Yugoslavia

Before undertaking an examination of the links between public opinion and Russian policy steps in Bosnia, we will provide a brief description of the policy itself.⁴ The Bosnian crisis raised one of the first serious challenges to Russia's mostly friendly relations with the West in the early 1990s. As noted previously, domestic goals of reconstruction and stabilization had pushed Moscow to end the Cold War, avoid tensions with the West, and seek extensive economic and other aid from Western sources. Domestic political considerations also dictated, however, that Moscow accept nothing less than equal status with major Western powers. Tensions obviously existed between these goals. It was difficult to demand treatment as an equal and to have a hand out for assistance at the same time. Yet, as long as no serious disagreements cropped up over how to handle international problems, and as long as Russia showed itself a stable and cooperative partner and received respect from its benefactors, it was believed that a balance between the goals could be precariously maintained. At a press conference in Paris on April 17, 1991, Yeltsin exuded early post-Cold War confidence that Russia could salvage its role as a great world power despite its relative weakness. Russia would "play a unique role as a bridge between Europe and Asia and ... contribute towards extending the area of European cooperation, particularly in the economic field, from the Atlantic to the Pacific," he predicted (Sakwa, 1996, 294).

The strength of Russia's desire to play a central role internationally was evidenced in the eagerness with which Kremlin leaders became active in U.N. efforts to broker peace in Bosnia (as well as elsewhere such as in Haiti and Cambodia). Despite acute problems at home, Russian officials got involved in the Bosnian crisis right at the start, initially adopting a moderately liberal policy in the region. Playing mainly a "good citizen" role, Russia joined the Coordinating Committee of the London Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (Goble, 1996; Churkin, 1992). The first battalion of Russian peacekeeping forces was sent to the former Yugoslavia in March 1992. In 1993, Russia became a member of the five-country contact group on the crisis.

Through the end of 1993, Russian elites generally cooperated with the Western powers, following the U.N. policy in Bosnia despite mounting criticisms in the Supreme Soviet and elsewhere that, in doing so, Moscow was "betraying" Russia's traditional ally, Serbia. Ignoring such criticisms, Yeltsin's government refused to use Russia's veto power to block Security Council resolutions aimed at putting increasing pressure on Serbian President Milosevic. While efforts were made to limit sanctions against Serbia and to come up with a peace plan acceptable to the Serbs, the government ultimately supported all key U.N. resolutions imposing sanctions, including the 1992 imposition of economic sanctions on Belgrade. As well, Russian officials voted for Resolution No. 770 in August 1992, which allowed UN countries to use force to provide humanitarian help to Sarajevo (*Izvestia*, August 14, 1992, 5). On June 4, 1993, Russia also voted for UN Security Council Resolution No. 836, which declared Gorazde a "safe area." This resolution, adopted unanimously by the Security Council, authorized "all necessary measures, through the use of air power, in and around the safe areas" in the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina to support UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia (*The Economist*, "Pax Russiana?," February 19, 1994, 57).

Russia's initial liberal policy regarding Bosnia did reap some rewards. At first, Russian officials were treated fairly equally in terms of them being included in top-level decision-making. Moscow also gleaned some international

prestige from playing a positive role in the crisis, most visibly in February 1994 when Vitaly Churkin, special Russian envoy to the Balkans, secured Serb agreement to a cease-fire in Sarajevo. But the approach of essentially following U.N. policy drew increasingly sharp opposition from the legislature, as earlier noted. Attacks in the legislature first became strong in the summer of 1992, when legislators accused Yeltsin and Kozyrev of maintaining an anti-Serb course. The Supreme Soviet passed a resolution on June 26, 1992 directing the government to work for at least an easing of sanctions against the Serbs if a moratorium in the region appeared out of reach.

As pressures for policy change mounted in the legislature, especially after the 1993 and 1995 elections, Russia began to move away from a policy that was closely aligned with the other Western powers to one that was more assertive in supporting Serbian interests, although still only in limited ways. Prominent examples include when Moscow sharply protested NATO air strikes against the Serbs in the spring of 1994. At the same time, Russian leaders still took pains to avoid endangering Russia's relations with the West, especially its friendly relationship with the Clinton administration, and continued to cooperate with other major powers to end the conflict (Pushkov, 1994). This will be further discussed below.

Overall, in 1994-96, under the pressure of the opposition, Russian official policy toward Bosnia was modified and was supposed to become more balanced between cooperating with the West and supporting the Serbs. Ultimately, Moscow's revised policy in Bosnia failed to pan out, however. Disappointment and embarrassment came to overshadow occasional successes. For example, Moscow was unable to control Serbia's leaders when the Serbs continued shelling Muslim positions after the February 1994 cease-fire brokered by the Russians. Most importantly, Russian government officials were faced with the fact that, despite cooperating with Western partners, they were not viewed as equal. This reality struck home especially hard in April 1994, when NATO airstrikes were launched against the Serbs near Gorazde without Russia's prior notification. The deliberate exclusion of Russia mortified the Yeltsin government (Bowker, 1995). Moscow's embarrassment grew after the Serbs suffered a fatal setback in Kraina. The Croats and Bosnian Muslims were accused of using weapons in the attack that were obtained illegally, in circumvention of the international veto, and Russian leaders at home were blamed for having done nothing to prevent or punish these anti-Serbian actions (Demurin, 1995).

Growing distrust of the West reached a new height in early September 1995 when NATO again conducted a bombing campaign without Russia's prior notification. The campaign lasted two weeks and included the use of Tomahawk-guided missiles in the vicinity of the town, Banja Luka. Then the U.N. Secretariat's approval of a secret memo relinquishing authority over the use of air power in Bosnia to NATO, which also occurred without consulting with all permanent members, further incensed Russia. This move was widely interpreted in Russia as a signal that NATO and the U.S.A. had taken over operations in Bosnia. Vladimir Lukin, chairman of the Duma's International Committee, later remarked on several occasions how the incident illustrated that some Security Council members were being treated as first-class and others as second-class.

The later years of Russia's involvement in Bosnia were not wholly without success, however. During the Russian Defense Minister's visit to the U.S.A. in the fall of 1995, it was announced that Moscow and Washington would each send several thousand servicemen to Bosnia to create a "special multinational operational contingent" that would not be part of NATO forces. The contingent was to be commanded by an American, General George Joulwan, the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, and his deputy would be Colonel General Leonty Shevtsov, deputy director of the General Staff's Chief Operations Administration (*Kommersant-Daily*, October 31, 1995). Moscow's frustration was mitigated to some degree by this late agreement, which was touted as a significant political victory for the government.

Russian peacekeeping forces

Russia began to form its first battalion of peacekeeping forces in early 1992, which consisted of nine hundred volunteer paratroopers serving on a contract basis. The dispatch of this contingent to the former Yugoslavia was approved by the Russian Supreme Soviet on March 6, 1992. In June 1992, the U.N. asked Russia to send a battalion of four hundred men. The Supreme Soviet approved Yeltsin's request on this score on July 17, 1992.

Through early 1994, however, the Russian government maintained a cautious profile in the region, confining its contingent to relatively safe areas of Croatia, and steadfastly refusing to put Russian soldiers at significant risk. Media reports suggested at one point that Russian officials had even refused to follow an order from U.N. troop commanders directing them to send four hundred men from the Russian battalion in eastern Croatia—stationed near Vukovar—to the Bosnian capital, a significantly more dangerous area (Felgenauer, 1994).

A shift in Russian policy toward larger commitments became evident in early 1994. In January, the detached Russian infantry battalion in Bosnia was strengthened to 1,200 men. In February, the Council of the Federation (the upper chamber of the Federal Assembly) agreed to Yeltsin's proposal to send an additional three hundred Russian servicemen to the former Yugoslavia to participate in U.N. peacekeeping forces (Volkov, 1994). By that time, Russian military contingents were performing missions with UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia, as well as with the Commonwealth of Independent States' collective peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan, the Dnestr region, and South Ossetia.

Russian Public Opinion about the Bosnia Conflict

Before looking at evidence about Russian public opinion regarding the conflict in Bosnia, it is important to emphasize that we found relatively little direct survey evidence on this topic. The scarcity of surveys was especially surprising because survey methods have been the favored research methodology used by social scientists in Russia in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Overwhelmingly, however, surveys have tended to focus on attitudes related to domestic affairs. Moreover, surveys, which explored Russian attitudes toward international affairs focused mainly on questions related to Russia's relations with neighboring states and the NATO expansion. As we will argue further below, we believe that the paucity of survey data is due to the fact that most Russians had low interest in the conflict, and researchers therefore decided not to waste time or effort conducting expensive surveys in this area.

Nevertheless, the survey data that exist on Russian public opinion about Bosnia is certainly valuable in helping us to see what average Russians thought (or did not think) about the situation at particular points in time. Furthermore, we can look to surveys that addressed other subjects, which shed light indirectly on attitudes about Bosnia. Before turning to this evidence, however, we will first try to address a question: what did ordinary Russians know about Bosnia? How much information was available to ordinary Russians about the situation in Bosnia, and what were its main sources?

It seems now that people in Russia who wanted to know about events in Bosnia had plenty of information available to them. All media outlets carried news about events in Bosnia at various points, with most of the news about the situation coming through newspaper accounts. Two of the major newspapers, *Izvestia* and *Pravda* (the latter one represented the views of Russian Communists) published reports on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia almost daily during particular periods. Other newspapers too addressed the situation regularly, offering continuing

news coverage and analyses from a variety of perspectives. Television coverage, in contrast, tended to be lighter and more slanted toward supporting government policy, as the government itself or pro-government magnates at that time owned most major television stations.

In light of these facts, the low level of public interest about the Bosnia conflict cannot be attributed to lack of information. However, it is true that the most prominent information sources quoted and referred to in the media were political elites. In effect, this meant that ordinary citizens were informed about events in Bosnia mainly by being told how various elites thought about it. Even though there were sharply divergent elite views presented, coverage was still limited and slanted in this respect, and perhaps helped to convey the impression that the situation in Bosnia was an affair mainly of concerns to elites. Moreover, many major newspapers, including *Argumenty i Fauty*, the most popular weekly analytical newspaper, carried only minimal coverage of the subject, presumably on judgment that the topic itself was not a highly popular one. *Argumenty i Fauty*, for example, according to our analysis, published only three analytical articles about the war during the five-year period from 1991 to 1996.

However, most Russians were not very interested in the information on Bosnia. In fact, it appears that Russians were generally not highly interested in most political affairs in the 1990s. While domestic politics held high public appeal in the late Soviet period when the first elections took place (1989-90), interest sharply declined thereafter.⁵ Many surveys conducted in 1986-96 demonstrate this apolitical trend in public opinion (Glad and Shiraev, 1999). Nuzgar Betaneli, director of the Institute of Sociology of Parliamentarism, estimated that only ten to twelve percent of the Russian population fell into the politically active category (*Ogonyok*, #12, March 1998, 6). Apparently, Russians continued to feel politically apathetic even after their first taste of political freedom in the post-Soviet age.⁶

Moreover, it appears that Russians ascribed even less importance to foreign policy issues. As Viktor Kremenyuk, deputy director of the Institute for the Study of the U.S.A. and Canada, commented, "The average Russian thinks about his salary and prices. He's not in position to think about foreign policy" (MacWilliam, *The Moscow Times*, February 8, 1997). A survey conducted by the All-Russia Center for the Study of Public Opinion found that seventy-two percent of respondents attached priority to domestic problems, while only eighteen percent said priority should be given to international problems. Further support comes from a New Russia Barometer III survey conducted in 1994, which asked respondents if they felt threatened by any of eight countries listed. The survey yielded a high percentage of "don't know" responses. Stephen White and other authors of the book *How Russia Votes* interpreted these results to indicate that "a large number of Russians take little or no interest in what other countries are doing" (White *et al.*, 1997, 56). Indicative of this general disinterest in foreign affairs, many surveys showed that even the issue of NATO expansion—that might be expected to have more emotional impact on Russians than the Balkan conflict due to its greater security implications—did not provoke strong reaction at the street level. In fact, despite the dire predictions put forth by public officials about the consequences of expansion, and their loud protests, most Russians did not voice much anger or frustration over the prospect of NATO's enlargement.⁷ In sum, this evidence showing that Russians had low interest in politics and in international affairs in particular, suggests that they probably also had little concern for events in Bosnia.

Turning now to direct survey evidence on attitudes in Russia about Bosnia, we will start with a survey that focused on Russian attitudes about Bosnia that was conducted in early 1994 by the Centre for International Sociological Research. The timing corresponded with when the first threats of NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serbs were made. At that time, seventy-seven percent of those surveyed said they opposed the threatened air strikes, and more than two thirds agreed with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's (leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia)

remarks that the strikes, if launched, would amount to an attack on Russia (*The Daily Telegraph*, February 18, 1994, 14).

In weighing the significance of this data, it is important to recognize that the survey was administered after threats were levied without Russia's agreement, and before the actual air strikes took place. This was obviously a crucial juncture in the conflict. It is not difficult to fathom why many Russians would react strongly against the threatened strikes, as did Zhirinovskiy, leader of the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. It is also worth considering, however, that those who said they shared Zhirinovskiy's desire to support the Serbs may have given a more moderate response if the attacks had already taken place and Russia was faced with an immediate need to take risks to support Serbia. Thus, the strong pro-Serb reaction may have been more an emotional than a rational response, one tied to the timing of the survey more than deeply held convictions with regard to the Serbs.

Moreover, the seventy-seven percent of respondents who said they opposed the air strikes probably included many Russians who simply desired to avoid war, and were not necessarily motivated by pro-Serb sentiments. The strong preference among average Russians to avoid war was indicated by another survey conducted immediately following the invasion of Chechnya by Russian troops. According to analysts, Russian citizens who opposed the invasion of Chechnya outnumbered those who supported it by ten to four (*The Washington Post*, December 17, 1994). While the situations in Chechnya and Bosnia were quite different, it can be surmised that most Russians wanted their government to avoid bloody conflict in both areas.

Another poll conducted in October 1992 by Romir (a Russian polling firm) suggests an important caveat to this generalization, however. According to this survey, forty-six percent of respondents said Russia should send troops to the "near abroad" if the security of Russians was at stake. Another forty percent said the Russian government should not take military action even in this case, and fourteen percent expressed no opinion on the subject (*The National Journal*; Section: Opinion Outlook; Views on National Security; Vol. 25, No. 11; p. 654; March 13, 1993). This survey may indicate that, while many Russians had a strong general desire to avoid war, they perhaps would have been more inclined to support military action if the lives of ethnic Russians were at stake. Of course, as no Russians were directly threatened in the Bosnia conflict, this evidence offers no support to the notion that Russians would be willing to take military risks for Serbs.

Yet another survey, one conducted by the All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research in mid-1995, offers perspective on Russian opinions on Bosnia (Interfax news agency, Moscow, in English, 1430 gmt, September 21, 1995). This survey canvassed opinions of 1,527 respondents, and included many direct questions about the Bosnia situation. One set of questions asked respondents about which side they supported in the conflict. Nearly one third of the group (twenty-eight percent) said they did not support any side. Twenty-one percent of the respondents indicated sympathy for the Serbs. Only two percent indicated sympathy for Croats and Muslims.

It is important to emphasize that twenty-eight percent (almost one third) of the respondents had no particular sympathies in the conflict at all. These respondents appear to have been completely uninterested in the conflict, for even the most casually interested person would presumably choose at least one party for which he or she held sympathy.⁸ Lack of sympathy may have been the product of being uninformed or it may have resulted from being informed about the conflict but not being engaged enough to care strongly about any party. The latter case seems most likely as information about Bosnia was widely available (as already shown), and the rate of illiteracy in Russia is very low. This generally supports our hypothesis that many Russians did not care strongly about the conflict.

It is also noteworthy that only roughly one fifth (twenty-one percent) of the respondents professed sympathy for the Serbs in 1995. This figure sharply conflicts with the 1994 survey, which showed pro-Serb feelings to be strong

in February 1994, and fits with our suggestion that the timing of the 1994 survey played into the strength of expressed pro-Serb sentiments at that point. The evidence also weakens claims by opposition elites (to be reviewed later) that the Russian populace shared their strong pro-Serb sympathies.

The 1995 survey also revealed preferences about the form the Russian government's involvement in the conflict should take. Thirty percent of respondents said they favored Russia's providing humanitarian and economic assistance. Eight percent said Russia should act jointly with the UN and NATO. Four percent indicated they supported the economic blockade imposed on the Bosnian Serbs. Only six percent said they wanted Russia to supply the Bosnian Serbs with armaments. These results are suggestive in several important ways. First, the number of respondents who felt most strongly allied with the Serbs—indicated in the six percent who wanted to give arms to Bosnian Serbs—was quite small. Recalling that twenty-one percent of those surveyed indicated general sympathy with the Bosnian Serbs in the conflict, we can assume that the remaining fifteen percent who did not support arming them favored giving only more moderate forms of practical support. On the other extreme, we see that almost an equal percentage of respondents (four percent) supported the economic embargo against the Serbs. This suggests that the number of Russians who felt most strongly about the conflict in either a pro- or anti-Serb fashion were in a small minority: under ten percent of the survey population combined. In addition, neither side was predominant: the roughly equal proportion of pro- and anti-Serbian attitudes suggests their effects canceled each other out. This evidence again supports our general hypotheses that few Russians cared deeply about the conflict, and that most Russians who harbored pro-Serb sentiments could not be considered hard-core Serb sympathizers.

Secondly, of those who supported Russia's involvement in the conflict, most (thirty percent of the total) favored only supplying humanitarian and economic aid. This figure is telling as well. These two types of assistance, which may include but do not necessarily imply peacekeeping missions, constitute relatively low-level, low-risk forms of involvement. Only the six percent who favored supplying arms to the Serbs seemed to want to make a deeper sort of commitment. The survey results failed to indicate, for example, that anyone supported putting Russian commanders in the region to give direct military advice, or committing Russian troops.⁹ Thus, again we see that, even among those who cared about Bosnia in one way or other, there were few who cared very strongly about the conflict.

Furthermore, the questions about forms of Russian involvement in Bosnia revealed that only eight percent of respondents felt Russia's involvement in the conflict should be in conjunction with U.N. and NATO forces. Another four percent supported the arms embargo against the Bosnian Serbs. This combined group (twelve percent of respondents) clearly manifested attitudes of interest in the conflict, support for Russia's involvement in the region, as well as pro-Western attitudes. Again, the small size of this group is meaningful. Only a small minority of people believed Russia should side with Western forces in the conflict. Presumably, most Russians who favored Russia's involvement in the conflict favored that Moscow offer assistance at least partly independently, not fully in conjunction with the UN or NATO. For example, of the respondents who favored giving humanitarian and economic assistance (thirty percent), only eight percent favored doing so in conjunction with the UN and NATO. Thus it would appear that most of the relatively few Russians who supported Russia's involvement in Bosnia were neither strongly pro-Serb nor strongly pro-Western, and a strong tendency existed to favor Russia's independence in determining its role in the conflict.

Finally, the majority of respondents (fifty-two percent) failed to indicate any preferred form for Russia's involvement in the conflict. This suggests they either did not care whether Russia got involved or they had no strong

opinion about the form of Russia's involvement. Both possibilities reinforce our hypothesis that most Russians were apathetic about the conflict

In sum, what profile of Russian attitudes about Bosnia can be gleaned from the survey data reviewed above? First, most Russians were disinterested in the situation in Bosnia, as evidenced in how most survey respondents did not express strong opinions about the conflict in Bosnia, and those who voiced strong opinions were in small minorities. This apathy fits with the apparent fact that most Russians were focused on domestic versus international concerns generally. Second, only a minority of Russians harbored either pro-Serb or anti-Serb, and the intensity of such sentiments was limited. Third, among those who supported Russia's involvement in the conflict, most favored Russia acting in ways independent of the Western powers. In other words, there was a feeling that Russia should avoid subordinating itself to the West in its activities in the region.

General Tendencies of Russian Public Opinion

We turn now to looking at certain features of Russian political culture and mass psychology which presumably influence public opinion generally in Russia, and which may help us to understand attitudes toward the Bosnia conflict in particular. We will start with the emotional nature of Russian mass psychology, a trait posited by many observers and analysts over centuries. In this view, many Russians generally tend to be guided in their behavior by spontaneous, volatile emotions rather than by rational, dispassionate decisions based on strongly held, stable convictions. An explanation for this phenomenon offered in cognitive theory is that Russians typically do not organize their perceptions in strong mental gestalts to begin with. Gavriil Popov, renowned economist and mayor of Moscow from 1990 until his resignation in 1992, drew a connection between this trait and the meaning of surveys in Russia: "Polls are created by psychologists and sociologists of Anglo-Saxon, mainly west-European mentality.... Here in Russia, a poll reflects not a decision of a person but his mood" (Popov, 1996). Andrei Kokoshin, deputy defense minister in the 1990s and prominent social scientist, likewise emphasized the precarious nature of Russian public opinion, suggesting that a Russian man does program his life rationally, like a German, Anglo-Saxon, or French man does. Instead, he argued, Russians are spontaneous and therefore may not even have opinions on particular issues (Kokoshin, 1996, 3). "Emotional" and "irrational" foundations of Russian voting behavior was also commonly touted as an explanation for the dramatic reversal of public opinion during the 1996 presidential elections, when support for incumbent candidate Boris Yeltsin climbed from single digits to almost fifty percent in the three-month period prior to the first round of elections in June.

What possible connections can be made between the generally emotional nature of Russian mass psychology and Russian opinion on the conflict in Bosnia? First, we can presume that the "caring" attitudes registered by some Russians (versus the disinterested attitudes) may have been only passing emotions, not strongly held convictions. This would fit with how the survey data revealed swings over time in people's "caring" sentiments about the situation in Bosnia, including attitudes about Serbia. A large shift in pro-Serbian sentiments, for example, was evident in comparing the 1994 survey, which showed many Russians had strong pro-Serb feelings at the point when NATO air strikes were first being threatened, to the 1995 survey, which showed that those emotions had substantially ebbed. Second, we can see that, generally, Russians were not strongly stirred emotionally by events in Bosnia, and were not even strongly attached emotionally to the plight of Serbs. As we saw, the 1995 survey found only small minorities of people had either very strong pro-Serb or anti-Serb feelings. The largest of the minority groups with sympathy toward any one party was pro-Serb, but this was a relatively small proportion—again, just

twenty-one percent—by the 1995 survey. Third, one idea that did seem to strike a chord with those who supported Russia's involvement in the conflict was the notion that Moscow should not tolerate being subordinated to U.N. or NATO partners. This sentiment accords with traditional Russian suspicions of the West and also corresponds to the national-chauvinistic belief that Russia is a great power deserving of equal treatment with other great world powers (Shiraev and Zubok, 2000).

A second characteristic of Russian mass psychology often noted by analysts is fatalism (Kokoshin, 1996). Fatalism entails beliefs that all events are inevitable, determined by destiny. Such attitudes have particular significance for political psychology, as fatalism tends to engender political passivity. Political psychologists have argued that Russian despotism grew stronger on people's fatalistic attitudes: many individuals accepted a subject or servant status and subordinated themselves to rulers at least partly out of the sense they could not do much to shape events anyway. General pessimism about the future may similarly stem from feelings of low confidence in the ability humans (both elites and commoners) have to control the future (Gozman and Edkind, 1992).

Many analysts argue that these traditional attitudes became even more pronounced in the 1990s. As one leading Russian political psychologist put it, Russians have felt like a dangerous and unpredictable "political darkness" descended upon them in the 1990s, and they see themselves acting like people who have suddenly become lost in underground caves (Yuriev, 1992, 31, 69). The prevalence of attitudes of fatalism, apathy and pessimism in the 1990s is strikingly confirmed in a number of surveys addressing general social attitudes. For example, a 1992 survey revealed that more than half of the respondents thought it would be irresponsible to have children with the future so uncertain (survey by Sluzhba VP, *Argumenty i Fauty*, #18, 1992). A survey taken in 1995 showed that respondents who were not satisfied with their lives outnumbered those who were satisfied by a ratio of eight to one (*Segodnia*, August 2, 1995). Another survey showed, remarkably, that only thirteen percent of respondents looked to the future with optimism (Shlapentokh, 1996).¹⁰

Russia's democratic changes might conceivably have fostered the rise of different political attitudes in the 1990s: greater interest in political affairs, and a growing sense of control and optimism about the future given increased capacity to have a say in political affairs. In fact, in the early years of democratization (1989-90), there seemed to be greater possibility that people's attitudes would change in the ways suggested. Why, then, has the trend been toward increased fatalism, apathy and pessimism in the 1990s? One possible explanation is that democratic advances have not ultimately changed the process of policy formation—which remained essentially an elite affair, not a process shaped strongly by public opinion. This seems true, for instance, in terms of how elites made decisions regarding conflict in Bosnia. If this is the case, it makes sense that people would revert back to traditional attitudes, and to even be more disgruntled for the lack of significant change. .

Another factor to consider is that distrust for elites appears to have risen in Russia in the 1990s. Thus, the number of Russians who took limited comfort before in believing elites would do their best to try to protect them in a world that was essentially uncontrollable appears to have shrunk. Mistrust in government institutions, apparently just slowly declining in 1989-90, accelerated in the mid-1990s (Wyman, 1997). In 1994, only four percent of Russians surveyed in one poll fully supported the actions of the government, and thirty-one percent said they believed it should resign ("Monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniya," 6, 1994, 63). In another poll, about sixty-five percent of respondents said their attitude toward the existing government was worse than it had been in the former U.S.S.R. Only six percent said their attitude was better (Grunt et al., 1996). A set of surveys conducted in 1995 and 1996 also seem to confirm popular feelings that the government was untrustworthy. According to those surveys, the number of people who believed the country was moving in the right direction fell eleven points during a two-year period,

reaching a low level of nineteen percent in 1996 (*Index to International Public Opinion 1995-96*, 567-85; *Index to International Public Opinion 1993-94*, 612-23). Another survey in 1995 found respondents put their greatest trust in the Church (which received only a thirty-three percent approval rating) and the military (which got a thirty-two percent approval rating). Least trusted were heads of banks (six percent), parties and movements (seven percent), and the upper chamber of the national legislature, the Council of the Federation (nine percent). President Yeltsin, the legislature as a whole, and the cabinet of ministers each received just a twelve percent approval rating (Williams, 1996). Lastly, a poll conducted in July 1995 revealed that sixty percent of those surveyed favored a change of leaders on the grounds that they had exhausted their potential (Boris Grushin's Vox Populi service, *Izvestia*, October 13, 1995, 6).

Further indication of people's disappointment with elites comes from data, which suggests that Russians in the phase of transition have suffered serious loss of political identity. In other words, since the end of Communist Party domination, most Russians have typically not strongly identified with any single political party or group. According to various surveys, no more than five to ten percent of Russians consider themselves to be members of any political association or even supporters of any specific politician, either in government or in the opposition (Shlapentokh, 1996). The rapid and broad proliferation of political parties and movements, exacerbated by the widespread sense of uncertainty attendant upon the loss of the Communist Party, has conceivably been highly discomfiting to many ordinary Russians, who apparently were at a loss to find trustworthy representatives in any single party.

Feelings of lowered trust for elites and lost political identity could contribute to a growing sense of fatalism. This can also help explain most Russians' apparent indifference toward the Bosnia situation. If Russians distrust their government, it makes sense they would be abject, disillusioned, and thus apathetic, about policy in a number of arenas. As well, it would make sense for distrustful citizens to be wary of their government cooperating too closely with former adversaries such as the U.S.A. Still, it is highly ironic that Russians during the first years of the post-communist transition had greater formal means to influence politics (such as through the vote) but were showing strong fatalistic ideas (Shlapentokh and Shiraev, 2002).

Probably the most important factor to consider when one is trying to understand why Russians have grown more fatalistic, apathetic and pessimistic in the 1990s comes back to the psychology of a people under duress. The severity of Russia's problems in the phase of transition cannot be overstated. The overall political and economic situation in the country in the first half of the 1990s has been highly unstable, accompanied by Yeltsin's progressing illnesses and as indicated in the rise of crime, violence, political assassinations, scandals involving public officials at the highest levels. Ethnic and regional conflicts such as in Chechnya, Moldova (the Dniestr region), Ossetia, Georgia and Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh, Tadjikistan, and Turkmenistan also contributed to instability. On a psychological level—in part, as a result of such objective factors—burnout, disappointment, and pessimism prevailed. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that isolationist tendencies and strong self-preoccupation among people could result. It is commonly observed that, as people feel increasingly helpless to control the world around them, they may turn “inward.” Many analysts have noted the rise of selfish survival instincts among Russians in the 1990s, along with an associated spurning of social good. In the darkest analysis, Russians have become largely indifferent to public issues and social values, and have become so focused on their own survival that they are reluctant to make even the slightest sacrifice for the public good (Shlapentokh, 1996).

The arguments mentioned earlier help us to understand better why the attention of Russians was not focused on problems in the former Yugoslavia. It is perhaps “normal” that people's everyday problems overshadowed foreign policy issues, including the distant Balkan conflict. In the summarizing words of one analyst,

external threats for Russians meant little compared to the “daily attack from around every corner” within the country (Kondrashov, 1996, 6).

Opinions of “Concerned Minority”

Despite the fact that most Russians were either completely detached from the conflict in Bosnia or only slightly concerned about it, however, a small minority of Russians were still engaged by the conflict and expressed strong opinions about it. This “concerned minority” included political elites—both those who supported the Russian government’s policy in Bosnia and those who opposed it from many different perspectives—as well as high-profile people outside the political elite: intellectuals (including foreign policy experts), newspaper editors and journalists, military elites, top-level Church officials, popular writers and movie directors. Opinion leaders from these groups were informed about events in Bosnia, interested in the situation, and made their attitudes about it known through various channels including parliamentary and other public debates, television and newspaper interviews, printed commentary, and scholarly journals.¹¹ The mix of expressed opinions created a certain “policy climate” or a predominant set of attitudes concerning how the government should act regarding the Bosnia conflict (Clinton, 1979). Below we will review the main viewpoints about Bosnia expressed by members of the “concerned minority,” as well as show how the Russian government came to be increasingly influenced by this policy climate even as it retained essential policy control. First, we will provide a brief overview of the evolution of public debates about Russian foreign policy in general.

Public debate in Russia about what should be the nature and direction of Russian foreign policy began in the late Soviet period, as noted earlier. In the post-Soviet period, this debate became even more highly charged emotionally and marked by struggle. A painful process of soul-searching, nostalgic yearning for the past, and extreme vexation over Russia’s weaknesses was evident. Apart from these shared emotions, acute struggles emerged over how to handle pressing problems such as military conflicts within Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the NATO expansion, and the conflict in Bosnia. Conflict over practical matters was colored by internal political struggles as well as real differences of opinion.

In the debates, many competing visions of future Russian foreign policy emerged. In essence, they boiled down to two broad scenarios. On one hand, there was the view that Russia should play a mainly cooperative role in Europe, helping to eliminate the vestiges of the Cold War in tandem with Western partners. In this scenario, Russia could perhaps even become integrated with Europe. On the other hand, there was the conception that Russia should take an independent stance vis-à-vis the rest of Europe, fostering its national over international identity. Those who supported this vision included people who saw Russia’s future as tied primarily to Asia, not Europe. Others who subscribed to this view were motivated more by national-chauvinist sentiments, imperial interests, and anti-Western and anti-American sentiments.

The wide split between these two competing visions of the future reflected the traditional split among Russian intellectuals between Slavophiles and Westernizers (Barner-Berry, 1999). Of the two groups, Westernizers were easiest to identify, as they clearly favored strong partnership between Russia and the West, and between Russia and the U.S.A. in particular. Kozyrev clearly fell into this camp, especially in his early years as Foreign Minister. He began his tenure by calling the West a “natural ally of Russia” (*Izvestia*, January 16, 1992). Such statements evoked anger from opposition leaders, who derided Kozyrev for his “pro-Americanism” (*Izvestia*, January

16, 1992). In the early 1990s, many major popular newspapers such as *Argumenty i Fakty*, also conveyed predominately pro-Western and pro-American attitudes.¹² It is noteworthy, however, that there was a general decline in this type of commentary later on.

Those with Slavophilic tendencies were a more varied lot. As a group, these people opposed strong ties with the West and were against coordination between Russian foreign policy and Western—especially American—foreign policies. But they were not necessarily united in their views of what Russia's main orientation should be in terms of foreign policy. Within the Slavophile category, two main sub-categories could be detected. First, there were those who could be termed essentially Eurasian in their orientation. They focused on Russia's unique geopolitical position straddling two continents, and saw Russia as destined to play a major role simultaneously in both Europe and Asia. People of this general persuasion were not clearly anti-Western in their orientation, but neither were they pro-Western. Instead, they saw Russia's destiny as unique, both oriental and occidental at once.¹³

A second brand of Slavophile-type thinking—which could be loosely termed “nationalist-chauvinist”—was more prominent to begin with and gained in strength over time. People who subscribed to this thinking were diverse ranging from cautious patriots to right-wing fascists, from isolationists to “hawks.” Despite differences among them, members of this group commonly exaggerated Russia's role in world history and international affairs, called for revision of the results of the Cold War, and claimed that the West and the U.S.A. in particular had mistreated Russia, even hatched many plots against it. National-chauvinist attitudes were evident in public discussions about the Bosnia conflict from the beginning in the summer of 1991 and became increasingly prominent over time. They grew especially strong in 1994-96, and became dominant during the 1999 war in Kosovo. The main proponents of such views included many prominent pro-government Russian politicians, together with opposition legislators. We turn now to highlighting the public statements and policy actions that reflected this brand of thinking.

Several themes evident in Russia's public discourse about foreign policy in the 1990s could be classified as national-chauvinist. First, a hallmark theme (already noted) was that of Russia's mistreatment at the hands of the West.¹⁴ The main example of this mistreatment touted with regard to the Bosnia conflict stressed that Russia was not seen as an equal partner in its dealings with Western partners in the region. The themes that Americans had concluded that Moscow was too weak to bother consulting with about affairs in Bosnia, and that Russia's interests were being repeatedly ignored, were evident as early as 1992-93.¹⁵ This theme acquired greater prominence in early 1994 when the NATO ultimatum against the Bosnian Serbs was announced. Even Mikhail Gorbachev, commonly seen in Russia as a Westernizer, said that in the Bosnian conflict Russia was “treated as a junior partner that is expected only to nod its head and support the choice made” by other countries (Gorbachev, 1994, 2).

It is important to note that government elites also began to take up this theme in early 1994, marking a significant hardening of government rhetoric. In separate statements in February, for example, Yeltsin and Kozyrev both sharply rejected the NATO ultimatum and emphasized the fact that it was made without any consultations with Russia (Shapiro, 1994). Yeltsin reportedly called Clinton to express his strong disapproval of the ultimatum, but Clinton allegedly did not even bother to justify and explain the American actions to Russian President (Felgengauer, 1994). Once the bombing started in April, government statements complaining that the West was not dealing fairly with Russia grew even shriller. Commenting on the bombings, Kozyrev said at a press conference: “Trying to make such decisions without Russia is a big mistake and a big risk. I would like these words of mine to be heard and taken seriously” (*Segodnya*, April 12, 1994, 1). In a statement read at the top of the national evening TV news, Yeltsin called for an immediate summit of Russian, American and European leaders to coordinate Bosnia policy, signaling his anger over not having been consulted before the bombings (*Chicago Tribune*, April 20, 1994). After this episode,

government elites continued to evince a sense of their having been treated unfairly by Western leaders at various points, as was especially evident in 1995 when the government balked at having Russian troops put under NATO command in Bosnia. The focused and increased attention given to this topic, coinciding with manifestly growing apprehension about Russia's diminished military and economic power, seemed to indicate the awakening of old fears of encirclement and exclusion from Europe.

A corollary theme related to the ones outlined above about Russia's mistreatment at the hands of the West criticized the government for—in effect—accepting Russia's subordination to the West and forgetting Russia's own best interests (Bolshakov, March 2, 1994). In the spring of 1994, *Izvestia* commentator Stanislav Kondrashov railed against the American government's illusions of "superiority over the new Russia," and the American false belief that Russia should disregard its "national interests" in Bosnia in order to serve those of the United States. In typically tasteless post-Soviet journalistic style, Kondrashov complained that the public sense of degradation in Russia stemmed from the fact that "Russia had been spreading its legs" for the Americans (*Izvestia*, March 5, 1994, 3). Another analyst complained that the Russian government was playing a servile role in its dealings with the West: "We no longer need look with servility over our shoulders out of fear that the West will give us a 'D' for democracy or an 'F' for foreign policy behavior. We need partners, not mentors," declared Mikhail Leontiev, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Segodnya* (Simes, 1994). Other media officials blamed the United States for underestimating Russian national interests, not supporting Russia when it had done so much for peace in Bosnia, even for trying to shut Russia out of foreign markets (Pushkov, 1994). *Krasnaya zvezda*, the daily publication of the Defense Ministry, emphasized that Russia should receive treatment as a great power and equal partner, not just in words but also in deeds. It was stressed that peace in Bosnia could be attained only on the basis of careful consideration of all sides including Russia (Sidorov, 1994, 1).

Not surprisingly, many commentators emphasized that Russia needed to adopt a more independent policy in the conflict, one less beholden to Western powers and supportive of Russia's own interests in the region. For example, in the spring of 1992, an article sharply critical of the Russian Foreign Ministry accused Russian foreign operations of being in "disarray," and blamed the ministry for not having a "new policy" (Survillo, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, May 20, 1992). As early as June 1992, *Pravda* complained about how Russia's foreign policy had become constrained, and was not guided by "carefully checked priorities" (Bogomolov, *Pravda*, June 2, 1992, 3). The same argument was raised by two social scientists writing in *Pravda* several months later, who suggested that the most important lesson of the Yugoslav crisis was the "need to be more independent in foreign policy" and the necessity to "pay more attention to the options and interests not only of our new partners, but also of our old and time-tested friends" (Volobuev and Tyagumenko, September 16, 1992, 3). The fiercest criticism was launched against Russia's agreement to support sanctions against Serbia, which was touted as more indication of Russia's lack of an independent foreign policy (Khimenko, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, June 9, 1992). The Russian government was accused of "one hundred per cent subordination" to the interests of the United States and the NATO bloc and of automatically following the West's decisions in the Yugoslav tragedy (Bolshakov, February 22, 1994, 3; Kondrashov, *Izvestia*, April 20, 1994, 3). The absence of independent foreign policy was emphasized by critics as late as in 1995 (Tsytko, *Ogonyok*, #25, 1995, 73).

Critical focus on the American role in Bosnia typically accompanied such statements, and was a particular highlight in Russian public debates in the fields of foreign policy. Our review of two hundred thirty analytical newspaper articles on the topic showed that one hundred ninety-six articles contained at least some information about U.S. diplomatic and military actions in the region. Many analysts openly questioned America's altruistic motivation in the conflict. Alexander Tsytko, a former Gorbachev top advisor, asserted that Washington's desire to

establish a "better relationship with the Muslim world, Turkey in particular" was at the heart of U.S. policy in the Balkans (*Ogonyok*, #25, 1995, 73). It was also often said that Washington was conducting a clearly anti-Serbian policy under the U.N. flag, thus minimizing cost in dollars and possible American casualties (Kondrashov, *Izvestia*, April 20, 1994, 3; Peresvet, 1995). In this vein, the U.N. was repeatedly accused of being a "tool of NATO" which was getting its inspiration directly from Washington (Fadeyev, 1994, 3). Yeltsin himself accused European countries of allowing themselves to be dictated to from beyond the ocean in their Bosnia policies (press-conference with Boris Yeltsin, Official Kremlin International News Broadcast, September 8, 1995).

Lastly, it is important to note that, throughout such commentaries, a strong nostalgia for Russia's great-power status was evident. Nostalgic references to the former Soviet Union's power were made in twenty-one publications (out of sixty examined) in pro-communist *Pravda* and *Sovetskaya Rossiya*. "How shameful for our country, how bitter for Russia, which hasn't uttered a single stern word [about Bosnia]—a word that, at one time, the world would have heard," complained Evgeny Fadeyev in *Pravda* (Fadeyev, *Pravda*, August 11, 1993). When the powerful Soviet Union and the socialist community existed, "Moscow never betrayed its comrades and allies," wrote another *Pravda* commentator (*Pravda*, March 2, 1994). The Bosnian crisis was commonly regarded as a demonstration of the arrogance of the Western community, which decided that after the breakup of the U.S.S.R. and the end of the Cold War, the West alone—without Russia's participation—would impose a new international order in which every country would carry out instructions prescribed by the West (Kuznechevsky, 1994). Even in the fall of 1995, after the agreement on troop deployment was reached, it was speculated that Russian military personnel would be given "unimportant" repair and construction assignments or other secondary tasks. "This painfully touches the remains of our great-statehood conscience," noted one analyst (Kondrashov, *Izvestia*, November 21, 1995, 3).

As shown earlier, these themes correspondent with national-chauvinistic attitudes became increasingly strong in the course of Russian debates about foreign policy and the conflict in Bosnia. Most critics of the government, especially communists, vocalized the themes. However, government elites themselves also expressed the ideas that were less critical of their own actions and focused instead on criticism of the West, the United States in particular. It is important to emphasize that this new stridency in government statements regarding the West and its role in Bosnia were accompanied by a real shift toward a more independent policy vis-à-vis the West as well. We will review these shifts in relationship to the conflict in Bosnia more closely below, but we must also note how the Russian intervention in Chechnya in December 1994 also fit this new policy trend. In deciding to intervene in Chechnya the Russian government showed willingness to take a step fully expected to be highly unpopular in the West. While the decision to intervene in Chechnya clearly had an internal logic, it also generally reflected the mounting desire for greater independence from the West. In this sense, the essence of the policy decision to intervene in was nationalist in character.

The Strengthening of Pro-Serb and Weakening of Pro-Western Sentiments

From the evidence reviewed earlier, it is apparent that members of the "concerned minority" varied in their opinions about what Russia's role should be in the world and in the conflict in Bosnia particularly. It is also the case, however, that while views tended to vary widely, especially initially, differences narrowed over time. Specifically, there were two related trends that were increasingly evident over time in statements by all categories of the "concerned minority." These were trends toward showing growing support for the new Yugoslav federation and the Bosnian Serbs, as well as toward showing less enthusiastic support for Western policies. Manifestations of pro-Serb attitudes ran the gamut

from muted, restrained expressions of sympathy for Serbs to very strong affirmations of support. While national-chauvinists were typically the most vociferous champions of pro-Serb sentiments, others who fell into the Eurasian and even Westernizer camps also voiced sympathy for Serbs, as well as declined interest in aligning fully with Western policies. A pro-Serb orientation was, in fact, the most visible common denominator uniting members of the "concerned minority," and thus represented a major component of the policy climate regarding the war in Bosnia. We will list several examples that support the existence of these trends, focusing on the rise of pro-Serb sentiments, as well as analyze their origin and impact.

Both opposition leaders and government elites in their words and deeds evidenced pro-Serb sentiments. First, in terms of deeds, scores of politicians and public officials on both sides visited Serbia and Bosnia in the 1990s. Opposition leaders who visited the region included Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and Gennadi Zyuganov, heads of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation respectively. Second, the Russian government became a prime source of humanitarian help to Yugoslavia and the most active diplomatic supporter of Serbia during the embargo period (Botyanovskiy, 1996). Third, Russian volunteers reportedly began fighting for the Serbs as early as 1992 (*Moskovskiyevye novosti*, December 6, 1992, 4). Meantime, there were no reports of Russians volunteering to fight on the opposite side.

Also, many prominent politicians and government officials indicated pro-Serb sentiments in public statements, especially after the beginning of 1994 onward. Striking examples included, first, Vladimir Lukin, chairman of the State Duma's International Affairs Committee, who said after a parliamentary session on a Russian foreign policy priorities in 1994 that Russia's interests would best be served by the strongest possible Serbia and Montenegro (Sidorov, 1994, 3). Following the Sarajevo marketplace tragedy in February 1994, the Russian Foreign Ministry failed to echo Western media accusations that the Serbs were responsible for the massacre. Russian press commentary mainly suggested that the Muslims were to blame instead (Yushin, 1994; 1, 3). Moreover, President Yeltsin defended employing a Russian military contingent near Sarajevo in 1994 on the basis of "persistent requests from the leaders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Bosnia Serbs" (Volkov, 1994, 1). Finally, it is noteworthy that there were few reported instances in which Russian public officials directly criticized Serbian leadership.¹⁶

What factors help to explain the growing adherence to pro-Serb attitudes in Russia in the 1990s? A simple explanation based on Russian national-chauvinism is not enough, as most people who subscribed to Westernizer and Eurasian views also exhibited pro-Serb sentiments. In attempting to discern the origins of Russian pro-Serb attitudes, then, we should turn to analyzing other factors that could be relevant.

First, we will address an explanation frequently touted by Western commentators: the so-called "cultural" factor emphasizing historic, religious, and ethnic links between Russians and Serbs (see, for example, Goble, 1997, 183-5). Support for this explanation can be found in various public comments. For example, in 1992, some experts and reporters strongly emphasized "Slavic identity" and "Orthodox ties" as reasons to support the Bosnian Serbs (Schipanov, 1992, 3). Symbolic of this early sentiment, Youry Bychkov wrote in *Pravda* in January 1992 that "the Serbs are wonderful and kind people, who are close to us" (*Pravda*, January 23, 1992, 5). However, comments of this type were not predominant in public opinions expressed on the subject of the Bosnia war, except in communist publications.¹⁷ In fact, most public commentators refrained from mentioning that ties of cultural and spiritual ties should be reasons for supporting Bosnian Serbs. Moreover, there were frequent admonitions that Russia should *not* support Serbs simply on such grounds, especially in the beginning of the conflict. For example, Kozyrev cautioned in early 1992 that Orthodoxy should not be a reason for supporting the Serbs. Others who spoke out, both from inside the government and outside it, echoed this general sentiment. Many popular journalists even ridiculed suggestions

that the Balkans war was religious-based, calling such arguments "myths" and downplaying notions that Russians should take the side of Serbs in the conflict as fellow Orthodox. In this vein, many commentators emphasized instead that the war was essentially materialistic in origin (Mlechin, 1994). Furthermore, even those who generally supported the Serbs in Bosnia refrained from citing cultural ties as a basis for their support. For example, Aleksy II, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church—who called the Serbs "suffering brothers"—was mostly neutral in his statements about the conflict, and emphasized mainly the need to end it (Shusharin, 1994, 1). Even Alexander Tsytko, who had complained at one point that Orthodox Christians were regarded as "aliens" in the West, refrained from referring to common membership in the Orthodox Church as a reason for Russian support of the Serbs (*Ogonyok*, #25, 1995, 73). Cultural factors, then, do not seem to have been strong motivating factors in bringing about increased expression of pro-Serb sentiments.

A second set of factors to consider is purely political motivations. Looking at the evidence, it is undeniable that political factors were an important source of pro-Serb expressions on the part of government critics. In other words, expressing support for the Serbs was a useful tool in bashing the government's policy in Bosnia, especially in the initial stages. Of course, criticism of the government by opposition is expected in a democracy, especially when the government is making mistakes.¹⁸ Russian missteps in handling events such as the Western ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs in 1994, the ensuing Russian decision to send troops, the agreement on military intervention in the fall of 1995, and the Dayton negotiations all provided easy fodder for critics.

Nevertheless, the domestic political setting in Russia in the 1990s was even more conducive to opposition attacks on the government's policies and personnel. Given the newness of democracy and particular Russian political and cultural traditions, practices such as compromise, balancing of interests, and seeking consensus were weak. Instead, decisions were made primarily on the basis of power politics, where compromises were not mutual and usually regarded as a sign of vulnerability. Thus, the tendency toward infighting between politicians was deeply ingrained in Russia's new democracy. As well, in the Russian domestic political context of the 1990s, relative powers between the different branches and levels of government were still being sorted out. At the central level, the main struggle was between the executive and legislative branches. Competition over institutional powers—which was clearly evident in the struggles over the constitution in 1992-93, the referendum of April 1993, Yeltsin's forceful disbanding of the Supreme Soviet in the fall of 1993, the legislative elections of December 1993 and December 1995, and the presidential elections of 1996—was exacerbated by the fact that, for most of 1991-96, the central legislature was dominated by parties and groups strongly opposed to the executive government. High tension between the executive and legislative branches and stalemate over policy were thus the norm in Russian politics in the 1990s. Lastly, it was the simple truth that as Russia grappled with its major domestic transformations in the 1990s, opposition politicians were prone to criticize the government's Bosnia policy, in part, as an extension of their policy struggles in other arenas.

We turn now to highlighting how political factors, especially deep struggle at the central level of government, promoted an increasing turn toward pro-Serb sentiments as well as a weakening of pro-Western—especially pro-American—sentiments both outside and inside the government. Growing political struggle over policy in Bosnia first became evident in late 1992.¹⁹ At the end of the year, the Bosnian Serbs leader Radovan Karadzic bragged about how his strong supporters in the Russian political opposition had said to him that "any day now Russian public opinion towards foreign policy will change in our favor, and official government policy will have to respect this" (Poggioli, 1992). In December 1992, the brewing struggle over policy in Bosnia between the executive and legislative branches became evident. The Supreme Soviet overwhelmingly approved a resolution calling for a pro-Belgrade

shift in policy as well as U.N. sanctions against all the combatants in the conflict, not just Serbia. Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaly Churkin's subsequent delivery of a clearly pro-Serbian speech at the Geneva Conference on the former Yugoslavia failed to assuage critics, as the government was accused thereafter of failing to match its words in deeds.

The struggle intensified in 1993. By then, opposition legislators in almost all areas were attacking Yeltsin's policies. Yeltsin sought to break the deepening legislative-executive stalemate by holding a referendum on April 25 asking the Russian people whether they supported Yeltsin's government, the reform process, early legislative elections and/or early presidential elections. As the referendum neared, it became clear that Yeltsin feared Russia's Bosnia policy would become hostage to the political stalemate, as he requested the postponement of any U.N. decision on sanctions against the conflicting sides in Bosnia until after the referendum.²⁰ Apparently, U.S. decision-makers were sympathetic to Yeltsin's request, as the vote was postponed.²¹ In the end, however, Yeltsin's victory-of-sorts in the referendum—which showed Russian voters supported Yeltsin and his policies more than they supported the legislature—was not enough to tame his rivals in the legislature, who continued to criticize and attack Yeltsin's policies. When the government finally decided to agree on sanctions against Yugoslavia, denunciations from opposition legislators were especially sharp.

Yeltsin ultimately disbanded the Supreme Soviet using military force in September-October 1993. Elections were held in the following December to form a new bi-cameral legislature named the Federal Assembly. The results were not favorable to Yeltsin or his government's policy in the former Yugoslavia. Opposition forces—in particular the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and communists—gained sway over a small minority of reformist and pro-government deputies, especially in the more powerful lower house, the State Duma. Soon after the Duma began its sessions, it took up the topic of Bosnia upon the initiative of the Communist faction.²² On January 21, 1994, three Duma factions (representing the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and the Agrarian Party of Russia) presented draft statements declaring unacceptable the use of any measures involving force in the former Yugoslavia and demanding that all foreign troops be withdrawn from its territory. Russia's representatives in the U.N. Security Council were requested by the Duma factions to take immediate steps to implement their recommendations (Rodin, 1994, 2). This constituted the harshest criticism yet leveled at the government on its Bosnia policy by legislators. Attacks on Russia's Bosnia policy in the Duma escalated at this point and even extended to harsh personal attacks on Kozyrev, including thinly veiled calls for his resignation.²³

As strong as internal political pressures for change became, however, it was not until outside developments intervened that Russian government rhetoric and policy in Bosnia began to shift. The two external events that put major strain on Russia's policy in Bosnia were the formal proposal to expand NATO, put forth in January 1994, and NATO's threats to bomb Serbian positions in Bosnia made the following month. These developments put the Russian government in an extremely vulnerable position, making its Western-oriented foreign policies, including its liberal policy in Bosnia, look like serious mistakes. Political opposition forces as well as Russian military officials were especially outraged. In terms of the conflict in Bosnia, pressure to modify Russian policy to show more support for the Serbs intensified following NATO's air strike threats in early February. Zhirinovskiy, leader of the LDPR, proclaimed that the Serbs were no longer alone, that his party would change Russia's foreign policy and send an

army to help the Serbs, and even give them a new secret weapon (Gryzunov and Baturin, February 4, 1994, 4). Even moderate Westernizers, such as former acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and future presidential candidate Grigory Yavlinski, joined in putting pressure on Yeltsin and Kozyrev to react to the NATO ultimatum. Finally, an overwhelming majority of Duma deputies condemned the NATO ultimatum and demanded that the Serbs be supported (Bolshakov, *Pravda*, February 22, 1994, 3).

These events were catalytic, as the government finally began to modify its stance in the Bosnia conflict in limited ways starting in February 1994. As noted earlier, government rhetoric began to shift, becoming less pro-Western and more pro-Serbian. The change in rhetorical tone was especially striking to one *Izvestia* commentator, who wrote: "For some time now, it has been difficult to determine the origin of various statements made in the field of foreign policy—Kozyrev or Zyuganov" (Yushin, *Izvestia*, March 1994, 3). Other prominent analysts also took note of the tougher line, including Viktor Kremenyuk (an interview in *Novaya yezhednevnyaya gazeta*, January 15, 1994, 2).²⁴

More importantly, however, the government also began to modify its policy, adopting a cautiously pro-Serb position while still working with the Western powers to end the conflict. Taking an independent stance for the first time, Yeltsin challenged the ultimatum and succeeded in thwarting NATO air strikes on Serbs in Bosnia temporarily. As NATO's deadline to the Bosnian Serbs approached, Yeltsin wrote to Slobodan Milosevic suggesting that the Serbs withdraw their heavy weapons from around Sarajevo—which would satisfy the conditions of NATO's ultimatum—while Russian troops were deployed to the city. He eventually reached an agreement with the Serbs that they completely withdraw from the designated sectors in exchange for Russian troop deployment in Bosnia. Moscow's first challenge to NATO in Bosnia seemed to please some of those who had criticized the government for being beholden to Western interests and American interests in particular. After the accord was announced, and for the only time during the course of the Bosnia conflict, the relationship between Yeltsin and the Duma regarding policy in Bosnia was somewhat positive. Some analysts even announced "the prospective emergence of a consensus" between the Duma and the Kremlin (Volkov, 1994, 1).

This political truce did not last long, however. Yeltsin's face-saving agreement collapsed when the Bosnian Serbs violated the settlement agreement later in the spring of 1994. Appearing displeased, Yeltsin made an official statement that condemned Serb atrocities. This drew renewed harsh attacks from pro-Serb critics in the legislature and elsewhere, who probably saw Yeltsin's statement as a step back toward spinelessness. Thus, another stalemate of sorts on policy emerged which lasted through 1994-95 (Yushin, April 4, 1994, 3).

During 1995, arguments emphasizing Russia's great-power status and the need for the protection of Russia's vital interests became even more loud as competition for the December elections to the State Duma heated up. NATO's proposed expansion and American dominance in Bosnia gave critics, especially the communists, great ammunition against the Yeltsin government (MacWilliam, 1997, 8). In interviews given to the leading foreign policy journal *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, several leaders of Russia's main political parties, including leading liberal parties, expressed deep dissatisfaction with Russia's policy in Bosnia (*Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, #4, 1995, 5-26).²⁵ Only Sergei Belyaev, First Deputy Chairman of the pro-government party Our Home Russia (*Nash Dom Rossiya*), offered a few general and cautious remarks about the importance of peace in Bosnia and the lifting the sanctions against Yugoslavia (*Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*, #4, 1995, 5-8).

In the fall of 1995, as internal political struggle mounted with the election campaigns and the last stage of the armed conflict in Bosnia was being played out, a further change occurred in Moscow's Bosnia policy in that main responsibility for determining Russia's conduct in Bosnia was shifted to the military. The Russian Foreign Ministry

was practically excluded from negotiations in Dayton after November 21, 1995. Kozyrev openly complained that Defense Minister Grachev was conducting negotiations in Brussels alone and without even informing him (*Izvestia*, December 5, 1995, 3). It was thus left up to generals to negotiate Russia's form of involvement, the mechanism underlying the political control of Russian troops, and the channels through which Russia would interact with the NATO council (Umbach, 1996). Yeltsin, meanwhile, was recuperating from his second heart attack since July in a sanitarium near Moscow. Despite his infirmity, it was widely considered that he engineered Kozyrev's downgrading as a last-ditch effort to blunt criticism of his policies and strengthen the position of his political allies before the December elections.

When the 1995 elections further strengthened opposition to the government, with the Communist Party of the Russian Federation taking most Duma seats this time, Yeltsin took another step toward accommodating his critics and dismissed Kozyrev from his post as Foreign Minister on January 5, 1996. Yeltsin's new appointee for Foreign Minister was Yevgeny Primakov, a former candidate member of the Politburo known to be more conservative and pragmatic than Kozyrev.²⁶ Yeltsin's decision to sandbag Kozyrev showed the extent to which policy was being shaped in consideration of opposition forces, as Yeltsin had long resisted pressures to remove Kozyrev, and stuck with his much-maligned Foreign Minister for four years. Still, Kozyrev's dismissal did not substantially change the fact that the executive branch maintained essential control over foreign policy, bowing to legislative critics only at its own behest and only in relatively limited ways. But the 1995 elections, which demonstrated the growing strength of Yeltsin's critics and Zyuganov—who would contest Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential election—pushed Yeltsin to make a compromise he had strongly resisted thereto.

Thus, as can be seen, the reshaping of Russia's policy toward the former Yugoslavia still occurred 'from above'—not under pressure from mass opinion, but related to domestic struggle among political elites in the executive and legislative branches. At first, in 1992-93, Yeltsin and his team more or less ignored mounting attacks by Supreme Soviet Deputies who disdained the balanced approach and saw the government as taking an anti-Serb position. Thus, sharp criticisms from opposition politicians had virtually no effect on the Russian government's policy toward Bosnia at first. But policy began to shift noticeably after external events in early 1994 made the government's policy look weak. This, combined with how the opposition forces had been strengthened in the December 1993 legislative elections, pushed the government to begin to modify its position in the conflict. Changes escalated further as the December 1995 Duma elections approached, and especially after they delivered a strong victory for the KPRF. In this way, Russia's role in resolving the Bosnian conflict became a weapon in the deepening political struggle waged between Yeltsin's government and opposition forces within the three legislatures that existed between 1992 and 1996.

It remains to consider more deeply, however, why pro-Serb sentiments acquired such potency in this internal political struggle over Russia's policy in Bosnia. We argued earlier that cultural, religious, and ethnic ties between Russians and Serbs did not seem to be prime motivating factors. Also, while bashing the government's policy on Bosnia was politically expedient for opposition legislators, and somewhat easy to do given mistakes and misfortunes Russia suffered in the region, it cannot be assumed that critics of Russia's policy, including opposition legislators, took up this cause simply for political, and no other, reasons. As well, this does not fully explain why the government itself adopted changes it so strongly opposed initially. What other factors, then, may have been underneath the pro-Serb orientation adopted by critics to Yeltsin's government and then, to a lesser degree, by the government itself?

In addition to its utility as a tool of internal political struggle, Russian pro-Serbian sentiments and corresponding anti-Western views, can be considered to have roots in ideological forces remnant from the past (Zubok and Pleshakov, 1996). Marxist ideology, for example, had imbued in Russians the notion that Western states were enemies not to be trusted. In the immediate post-Soviet context, it is not surprising that many people, especially elites, found it difficult to relinquish this idea, and thus felt insecure in partnership with the West, including in Bosnia. Some analysts even argue that the shift in Russian policy in the former Yugoslavia from an initially balanced, pro-Western stance toward a more independent, limitedly pro-Serb stance was a demonstration of the “complexes” of the post-Soviet elite, the military “four hundred” above all, who “could not exist without a foreign enemy” (Eggert, 1995, 3).

Another ideological influence from deeper in the past—Russian self-proclaimed messianic role—also may have helped shape the policy climate toward the former Yugoslavia. Russia's long-held aspirations for great power status were finally realized in the second half of the twentieth century, only to be dramatically lost in the late Soviet period. The loss of Russia's superpower status, and the sharp diminution of means necessary to restore it, struck deep blows at Russian pride. In this context, messianism took a clearly defensive form (Shiraev and Zubok, 2000). Many journalists and experts rued the loss of Russia's predominance, and decried what they viewed as instances of Russia's humiliation at the hands of the United States and other Western governments. Their statements evinced a growing and shameful sense of inferiority vis-à-vis Western countries. Some even claimed that virtually all treaties signed in the 1990s were disadvantageous to Russia, and that the end of the U.S.S.R. was a failure for Russia (Umbach, 1996, 478). In terms of Bosnia, it was clear that many felt that the loss of superpower status had rendered Russia unable even to be a regional power in its traditional backyard, the Balkans.²⁷

These beliefs rooted in past ideologies became increasingly evident in Russian public discourse about the Bosnia conflict, as already shown, and thus presumably came to modulate the policy climate toward Bosnia to a great extent. Critics of the Russian government's initially balanced policy toward the Bosnia conflict came to express more strongly views which reflected beliefs that the Western powers—and the U.S.A. especially—were suspect, that Russia had accepted for too long a subservient position vis-à-vis Western partners in Bosnia, that Russia deserved to play a larger role in Balkan and world affairs. Government officials themselves began to take up these themes in more muted form, and to modify policy accordingly in limited ways.

In summary, it is important to emphasize that these values likely took on added significance in the policy climate regarding Bosnia in part because of psychological factors associated with Russia's on-going domestic transformations. As noted, Russian society suffered greatly and had become badly split and fearful in the process of its transformation. How to ease the pain associated with deep domestic reforms had become the focal point of the country.²⁸ The theme of catastrophe had become prominent in the media. In this psychological context of mass pain and fear, Russia's problems in Bosnia were probably seen by many as another sign that Russia was headed toward an economic and political catastrophe, unable to assert its interests and strengths, and that the government was failing to support Russia's traditional spirit and values. Yeltsin's policies in Bosnia probably furthered the perception that Russians were victims, and that Washington in particular, which gave support to Yeltsin's policies in Bosnia and toward Russia's 'capitalization' in general—both of which caused most Russians great pain—was a major victimizer, still an enemy not to be trusted (Kremenyuk, 1994, 2).²⁹ These sentiments, anchored in past philosophical leanings, reinforced in the psychology associated with massive and painful transformations, fed into growing pro-Serb, anti-Western sentiments in Russia.

Conclusion

In early 1992, two Russian political scientists predicted that the country would soon experience a social upheaval caused by material adversity and weak government. Furthermore, they predicted that people would rebel against the national humiliation caused by Russia's failed Balkan policy (Volobuev and Tyagumenko, 1992). These predictions never materialized. Most people, it turned out, did not care to solve Russia's social and political problems on the barricades but preferred, instead, to dig their "own trench to hide" (Stroeve, 1996). Others had "no resources, no property, no knowledge or skills" in order to express their frustration in the first place (Yavlinsky, June 13, 1996). Most importantly for this study, the vast majority of Russians cared little about Russia's policy in Bosnia. At times, political elites themselves seemed to be only marginally interested in the situation in Bosnia. Strikingly, for instance, Presidential assistant Yuori Ryurikov failed to mention Bosnia altogether in an article he wrote entitled "Some Discourses about Russian Foreign Policy" (*Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*, Winter, 1994/95, 15-23). Also, during the 1996 presidential campaigns, the topic of Bosnia was neglected in most major candidates' speeches, press-conferences, and interviews.

At the same time, however, the critics of Russia's Bosnia policy tried to portray public opinion as very much interested in the situation in Bosnia, especially in the plight of Bosnian Serbs. Government officials also adopted this approach at times, mainly in efforts to get Western officials to confer more closely with the Russian government about policy in the region.³⁰ Emphasizing Russia's fragile domestic political situation, in fact, became a common tactic of the government, as officials took to warning the West about Russian "reds" and "browns"—such as Zhirinovskiy, Zyuganov, Makashov, and others—who were supposedly eagerly waiting in the wings to use any "incorrect" American and NATO policy to their advantage. Thus, despite public opinion being weak on the question of Bosnia, both sides portrayed it as strong and essentially pro-Serb for their own purposes.

In many ways, the weak role, which public opinion had in shaping Russia's Bosnia policy showcases that Russia in the 1990s was a developing democracy still struggling to part with old authoritarian ways. Contrary to what one would expect in an ideal democracy, the Russian public was not significantly engaged in the policy-making process, and Russian policy in Bosnia was not decided with public opinion in mind. In fact, hardly anyone outside the tiny "concerned minority," which was made up largely of political elites, tried to influence policy. The disconnect between elites and public over policy made sense as average Russians were not eager to play a policy-making role at any rate, as their everyday problems so consumed them that they did not have the energy to think about problems far away. In the end, the widespread apathy regarding Bosnia no doubt facilitated elites in being able to operate independently in policy-making.

Within the circle of elites who had a role in deciding policy, the same tendency existed as in the Soviet past for the inner circle of executive-level elites (the president in particular) to call shots mainly on their own. As a result, for the first years of the conflict, executive officials more or less unilaterally imposed policy decisions about Bosnia upon a legislature whose majority members vehemently opposed the policies. This tendency abated some after the 1993 and 1995 elections, and we saw policy reshaped in ways responsive to critics who dominated the legislature. Still, it must be recognized that the modifications in policy were belated, limited and pushed at least initially more by unfavorable external events than internal pressures. Ultimately, the executive made changes in policy and personnel only when it was determined it politically expedient to do so. Thus, decision-making about Bosnia remained essentially oligarchic even as the circle of elite players was widened and a few democratic channels for public influence over policy existed.

An oligarchic style of decision-making, of course, has long been favored by Russian elites. It seems that old patterns are hard to break. The political elite of the 1990s (whether just the executive branch or all political officials combined) appears to remain convinced that they, not voters, are the ones who should decide policy—especially foreign policy, given its concern with central issues of security. The public seemed largely content to let their political leaders handle Russia's foreign policy. The attitudes of both elites and non-elites are thus conducive to oligarchic modes of decision-making (especially in foreign policy), with the expected attendant policy consequences. Instead of policies reflecting the wishes of the citizenry carried out through their representatives and careful compromise among various members and branches of government, decisions were essentially controlled by the executive branch, modified to fit the wishes of critics (including within the legislature) only belatedly when the executive chose. Thus, past political traditions, more than democratization, played a strong role in shaping the formulation of Russia's policy concerning Bosnia and other foreign-policy issues including the conflict in Kosovo in 1999.

That said, it must also be recognized that the case of Russian decision-making about conduct in Bosnia also illustrated that important steps toward democratization had been taken, and that oligarchy had definite limits. The circle of political elites who helped decide policy was broader than in the Soviet era, and political elites were part of an elected government. There were numerous channels for unrestrained public criticism, and critics felt free to put pressure on their government to respond to their views. Furthermore, those who made up the “concerned minority”—although small in number—were a diverse crowd. The policy climate regarding the situation in Bosnia was therefore influenced not only by government elites, but also by opposition politicians and other people from many walks of life and representing practically all parts of Russia's political spectrum. As a result, a substantial body of public criticism about Russia's Bosnia policy grew between 1992 and 1996.

Finally, we did see Russian policy shift in regard to Bosnia in ways that responded to critical opinion with restraint. In particular, we saw small but significant steps taken toward convergence between Russian policy and two increasingly predominant strains of thought expressed on practically all levels of the Bosnia policy debates, even at times by government officials themselves: pro-Serb sentiments and anti-Western beliefs, of which anti-Americanism was the most strong element (Shirayev, 1999). In this respect, pressure had grown for Russia to show more support for the Serbs and to act with less subordination to the West, especially Washington, and government elites slowly, and within bounds, took these steps. The evolution of Russian government rhetoric as well policy in Bosnia, which became limitedly pro-Serbian while still sensitive to American actions, indicated that decision-makers were not above being influenced by the policy climate. There were also strong independent reasons why they were susceptible to these policy shifts—as we showed, past ideological influences also predisposed these sentiments, as well as the desire to help the government gain strength in domestic political struggle—but in the end the government did not ignore or shut down critics, but instead inched towards their positions.

Notes

¹ See the Studies on Political Development published by Princeton University Press in the 1960s and 1970s. Conducted by prominent researchers associated with the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science

Research Center at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Palo Alto, California, the studies were based on the premise that all states must go through five crises of political development: the crises of identity, legitimacy, penetration, participation, and distribution. See, for example, Leonard Binder *et al.*, *Crises and Sequences in Political Development*, 1971.)

² The extreme concentration of power over foreign policy decision-making before Gorbachev can be seen in the facts that there were only three General Secretaries heading the Politburo from the late 1920s until 1982, and one Politburo member--Andrei Gromyko--held the post of Foreign Minister for almost thirty years, from 1957 until 1985.

³ See article 86: "The president of the Russian Federation exercises leadership of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation"

⁴ For more detailed characterizations of this policy, see the many scholarly publications already published on Russian policy in the Balkans, such as Masker, 1998; Gow, 1997; and Goble, 1996. In addition, there are many sources available in Russian printed media.

⁵ The secular decline in voter turnouts over time helps to reveal this trend. While 89.8% of voters voted throughout the U.S.S.R. in the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies elections of March 1989, only 77% of Russian voters voted in the Russian Congress of People's Deputies elections in March 1990. Thereafter, 74.7% of Russian voters voted in the RSFSR presidential election of June 1991, 54.8% voted in the Federal Assembly elections of December 1993, 64.44% voted in the December 1995 Duma elections, and 69.81% and 68.89% voted in the June and July 1996 rounds of the presidential election respectively. See Sakwa, 1996, and White *et al.*, 1997.

⁶ Thus, most Russians today can be seen to act like people who lived under the Soviet system; i.e., they behave in the capacity of what Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba termed 'subjects'--those who are informed politically but do not actively participate in politics themselves--or 'parochials,' those who are uninformed and uninvolved politically--and not those of 'citizens,' who are both informed and active politically. See Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

⁷ In one nationwide poll of 1600 people conducted by the Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research in January 1997, forty-one percent of those questioned said they were against the prospective entry of former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO. But another forty-four percent said they were either unsure about what NATO's expansion would mean or said it would not matter. In another poll, seventy-three percent of Muscovites surveyed could not express an opinion on the subject or suggested that the NATO expansion would make no difference in their lives (MacWilliam, 1997).

⁸ This group of respondents fit the 'parochial' sub-type in Almond and Verba's schema of orientation toward political participation. 'Parochials' are generally uninterested in politics. See Almond and Verba, 1963.

⁹ The survey itself apparently did not query respondents about their support for the entire range of options discussed here. This may have reflected the feeling of survey designers that deeper commitments were not supported by many Russians.

¹⁰ A more specific piece of data is revealing as well: fifty-two percent of respondents in a 1995 survey abstained from predicting the future course of the Russian government in Bosnia (Interfax news agency, Moscow, in English, 1430 gmt, September 21, 1995. The British Broadcasting Corporation, September 23, 1995. Text of report by Interfax news agency). It would make sense for people to refrain from prediction if they generally felt fatalistic about the outcome, and powerless to control foreign policy outcomes in general.

¹¹ The 'concerned minority' behaved like 'citizens' in Almond and Verba's schema of people's orientation toward political participation noted earlier. See Almond and Verba, 1963.

¹² For example, between 1990 and 1993, *Argumenty i fakty* published fifty-four articles about the USA. Thirty-two articles (fifty-nine percent) contained sympathetic, positive commentary about policies, business, and the general domestic situation in the USA. Seventeen articles (thirty-two per cent) were essentially gossip stories or reports about American celebrities. Only five stories (nine per cent) contained critical commentary, which was focused on America's social problems (Shiraev, previously unpublished research).

¹³ Some prominent politicians, such as Supreme Soviet Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov in 1992, expressed what could be classified as 'Eurasian' leanings. (See *The Economist*, June 15-21, 1996, 19-21.) But this view was generally more popular in academic and intellectual circles than among political elites. (See Rubtsov, 1995; Kara-Murza *et al.*, 1995, 10; Gozman and Edkind, 1992, 58.) This was correspondent with the fact that the concept of multi-polarity generally became more prominent in Russian academic discourse in the 1990s. Many academic analysts embraced this paradigm, which emphasized that international relations had fundamentally changed from Cold War bipolarity, with many states sharing power and deserving Russia's attentions, including Asian states. (See, for example, Alexander Peresvet, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, July 14, 1992; Vladislav Pechkurov, *Ogonyok*, #27, 1995.)

¹⁴ A review of two hundred thirty newspaper articles on Bosnia published between 1991 and 1995 revealed that this theme emerged in one hundred ninety-one publications. (Another one hundred seventy articles were essentially non-partisan in nature, and sixty were pro-communist.) Remarkably, major Communist newspapers differed from other sources mainly only in the types of arguments raised to explain the mistreatment (Shiraev, previously unpublished research).

¹⁵ See for example, Rodionov, *Izvestia*, June 4, 1992, 4 and Babushenko, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, August 4, 1993. Yevgeny Ambartsumov, Chairman of the Joint Committee on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations of the Russian Supreme Soviet, complained that it was not obligatory for Russia to duplicate the US position in all respects (*Izvestia*, June 29, 1992, 3). Andrianik Migranyan, Director of the CIS Center of the Russian Academy of Science's Institute of International, Economic and Political Research, argued that one could not fail to see that

Russia's national and state interests "cannot constantly coincide with the interests of the West, let alone of the United States" (Migranyan, 1992, 7).

¹⁶ Vitaly Churkin, special envoy to the Balkans, broke from this norm, however, when he called the Bosnian Serb leaders "obsessed with the madness of war" in 1994. See Eggert, 1994, 3.

¹⁷ From the outset of the conflict, communist newspapers stressed that the Serbs were a "fraternal people" and that Russia policy in the former Yugoslavia was "anti-national" (Garifullina, 1992, 1). A 1992 publication placed blame for the war on Islam and the Catholic Church. The Vatican, for example, was blamed for the destruction of socialism in Europe and its attempts "to push out Orthodoxy" (Volobuev and Tyagumenko, 1992). In December 1992, a group of leading historians published an open letter in *Pravda* declaring Serbs and Montenegrins to be "our blood brothers" who bled with Russians in two world wars and were linked to Russians by "age-old bonds" (*Pravda*, December 2, 1992; 1, 3). A letter published in January 1993 in two leading communist papers and signed by fifty-two politicians, writers, and scholars emphasized Russia's "Orthodox" ties with the Serbs and called the Serbs "fellow Slavs" (*Pravda*, January 21, 1993, 5; *Sovetskaya rossiya*, January 21, 1993, 5). The strength of pro-Serb sentiments among communists is ironic in that proponents of Marxism-Leninism supposedly support other groups only for reasons of class, not for cultural, religious or ethnic reasons. But this tactic makes sense in purely political terms.

¹⁸ As was duly noted in an editorial of *The Christian Science Monitor* in 1995, "political opponents of President Clinton, Prime Minister Major, and Chancellor Kohl daily do the same." See *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 1995, "The Eagle and the Bear," 20.

¹⁹

One of the earliest signs of the politicization of Moscow's Balkan policy came in the late Soviet phase, when *Izvestia* speculated that if the August 1991 coup had been successful policy would have turned pro-Serbian and anti-Croatian (*Izvestia*, August 30, 1991, 6; and September 12, 1991, 5).

²⁰ As one prominent analyst put it, Yeltsin's government has become "extremely vulnerable to national pressures from below," and thus needed help from any, even unlikely, sources (Volski, 1993, 22).

²¹ Washington reportedly slowed its efforts to secure a UN Security Council vote authorizing enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia largely because it feared such an anti-Serb move would undermine Yeltsin's chances to win the crucial referendum. (See *U.S. News & World Report*, April 5, 1993). Later when the vote went forth anyway and Russia abstained from the Security Council resolution regarding the no-fly zones over Bosnia, Strobe Talbott, US Ambassador-at-large to the former U.S.S.R. and special adviser to the Secretary of State, suggested that this was a temporizing move taken in Moscow to accommodate a substantial body of pro-Serbian public opinion in Russia. "And this body of opinion in Russian politics has greatly limited the room for maneuver that the Russian government itself has, particularly during a time of a critical showdown between the Russian president and the parliament" (See *Federal News Service*, April 19, 1993). Note that Talbott's 'excuse' for Russia's abstention suggests that Russian public opinion played a large role in shaping Russia's Bosnia policy at this point. This conflicts with our arguments

that pro-Serb sentiments among Russians were not very strong, and that public opinion was not an important consideration in shaping the Russian government's decisions about Bosnia.

²² This marked the first time the Duma did not discuss its own internal matters but instead focused on an international problem.

²³ For example, in January 1994, the largest faction of the Duma (that of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) threatened that if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs failed to take a clearly "pro-Serbian" position in Bosnia within one week, the LDPR would demand the Foreign Minister's resignation (Rodin, 1994, 2). Vladimir Zhirinovskiy publicly recounted in February 1994 how he had told Prime Minister Chernomyrdin that he would not rest so long as Kozyrev remained a minister: "My mission is to remove him from the Russian government" (Baturin and Gryzunov, 1994, 4).

²⁴ The government's more 'hawkish' rhetorical posture seemed to fail to appease most legislators still, however, as a majority of them indicated in a survey that they still desired Kozyrev's resignation and called for immediate corrections in Russia's policy (survey by *Mnenie* [Opinion] Service).

²⁵ For example, Vladimir Lukin, Head of the Committee for International Affairs of the State Duma and Deputy Chair of the influential liberal Yabloko party, outright called Russian policy in Bosnia a "fiasco" (*Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*, #4, 1995, 24). Alexei Mitrofanov, Deputy Head of the Duma's International Affairs Committee and representative of the LDPR Duma faction, called NATO's involvement an "armed aggression" and called for a radical change in Russia's policy toward "the clear support of Serbia" (*Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*, #4, 1995, 14-16). Aleksandr Shabanov and Eduard Kovalev, deputy head and head of the CPRF press-center respectively, also launched sharp and emotional criticisms against Russia's foreign policy in the former Yugoslavia (*Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*, #4, 1995, 9-12). Yuri Skokov, an ally of General Lebed and Chair of the National Council of the Congress of Russia's Communities, blamed Kozyrev for what he called the "absence of foreign policy" and labeled the Balkan war and the NATO expansion "major threats" to Russia (*Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*, #4, 1995, 12-14).

²⁶ Primakov since has been named Prime Minister.

²⁷ See, for example, *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 1995, "The Eagle and the Bear," 20. The theme that Russia was following along with Western policies in Bosnia to the detriment of its own best interests emerged early in the conflict and intensified thereafter. For example, in 1992, the Russian press was already full of complaints that the economic sanctions against Yugoslavia did not take Russia's best interests into account. In June 1992, five major Russian moderate newspapers carried commentary in this vein. One of the newspapers, *Izvestia*, claimed that Kozyrev had been "slapped on his nose" by the Western powers which had pushed the sanctions (Rodionov, 1992, 4). *Sovetskaya rossiya* carried an article which argued that Russia's agreement to the sanctions marked a betrayal of the Serbs and a sacrifice of Russian-Serbian historic ties "for the sake of pro-American interests in Europe" (Garifullina, 1992).

²⁸ It was widely argued in numerous publications that Yeltsin's government that had pushed rapid economic reforms without sufficient modification or easing, was especially responsible for causing pain. Newspaper headlines screamed in pain blaming the reformers in the Kremlin for the "misery of millions of Russians," accusing them of committing "robbery against our national pride," describing the reforms as "national catastrophe" and "destruction, rape, deception, betrayal" (see, for example, *Literaturnaya rossiya*, December 12, 1992; *Izvestia*, July 15, 1994). Referring to the Babylon tower, some even suggested that Russia was being "punished" for its past misdeeds by receiving "freedom" in its present form (Rubtsov, 1995). The theme that a fatal confrontation was at hand within the country was trumpeted by many journalists, actors, even people on the streets. It seemed that a full-blown social explosion was being nervously anticipated. Even renowned scholars discussed the possibilities of a clash. If there are no substantial changes in these three months, "an explosion will be unavoidable," commented Georgy Shakhnazarov, a top ideologist under Gorbachev, in 1996 (Shakhnazarov, 1997). Boris Grushin, a Moscow sociologist who can be hardly accused of being preoccupied with fears, wrote pessimistically that, despite democratic changes, tensions within the society kept growing (Grushin, October 8, 1994).

²⁹ Russia's political elites themselves also began to be more leery of the effect US economic 'assistance' was having on their country. As early as 1992, Georgy Arbatov, perhaps the most renowned specialist on US-Russia relations, noted that Russia's massive economic failure had discredited the United States in Russia. Whereas Washington had previously opposed the poorly-functioning--but still working--Soviet economy, it now supported an economy that was not working at all. Arbatov further noted that many Russians believed that the West was consciously trying to turn Russia into a Third World country, to de-industrialize it, and once and for all bring into its knees (Arbatov, *Newsday*, October 25, 1992).

³⁰ For example, in an interview with Reuters and Cable News Network following NATO's threats of air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, Yeltsin's special envoy to the former Yugoslavia, Vitaly Churkin, warned the West that there could be dangerous "consequences" and "repercussions" in terms of Russian public opinion and the domestic political scene if American and NATO actions in Bosnia were not decided with Russia's approval ahead of time (*The Chicago Tribune*, February 11, 1994). Three months later, Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai asserted that NATO air strikes against the Serbs had endangered the current government's domestic situation: "It wasn't so much the Serbs' positions that were bombed as it was the domestic political situation in the Russian Federation" (*Rossiiskie vesti*, April 13, 1994, 1).