EXPECTATIONS OF CHANGE: RUSSIAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1990S THROUGH THE EYES OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT

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Abstract

Maisterintutkielmassa tehdään katsaus Yhdistyneen Kuningaskunnan parlamentissa käytyihin keskusteluihin Venäjän kehityksestä Neuvostoliiton hajoamisesta 1992, Vladimir Putinin ensimmäisen presidenttivuoden loppuun vuonna 2000. Tarkastelun kohteena ovat parlamenttikeskusteluiden Hansard-tallenteista toistuvasti esiin nousevat aiheet Venäjän kehityskulussa Neuvostoliiton raunioilta kohti 2000-luvun alkua, sekä näihin aiheisiin liittyvät odotukset kehityskulusta. Analyysi tapahtuu pääasiassa meditatiivista diskurssianalyysiä käyttäen, kansainvälisen historian metodologisessa viitekehyksessä. Tutkimus kohdistuu toistaiseksi suhteellisen vähän historiantutkimuksen piirissä tutkittuun 1990-luvulla tapahtuneeseen yleiseurooppalaiseen turvallisuuspoliittisen kentän rajuun muutokseen.

Käytännössä ilmi nousevassa kehityksessä oli kaksi havaittavaa tematiikkaa, poliittisekonomistinen dimensio sekä turvallisuus- ja sotilaspolitiikan dimensio. Näistä ensimmäinen käsittää Venäjän katastrofaalisen taloustilanteen aiheuttamat poliittiset komplikaatiot 1990-luvulla sekä valtiohallinnon epäillyn haurauden sisäisten poliittisten vastavoimien edessä ja sen selviytymiseen vaatiman kansainvälisen tuen. Turvallisuus- ja sotilaspoliittinen dimensio puolestaan on pääasiassa 1990-luvun yleiseurooppalaiseen kehitykseen sitoutunut tematiikka. Tähän tärkeimpinä lukeutuvat aseistariisunnan jatkuminen kylmän sodan päätteeksi, puolustusliitto Naton itälaajeneminen entisen Varsovan liiton alueille 90-luvun kuluessa sekä Venäjän vastarinta tälle kehityskululle. Kolmannen tämän tematiikan osan muodostavat Venäjän sotilasoperaatiot Tšetšeniassa vuosina 1994-1996 sekä 1999 alkaen. Kumpikin tutkimukseen kuuluvista tematiikoista nivoutuu myös tutkimuksen loppupuolella käsiteltävään vallanvaihtoon Venäjällä 1999, kun presidentti Vladimir Putin astui virkaansa. Putinin ensimmäinen virkavuosi edusti sekä Boris Jeltsinin valtakautta varjostaneen taloudellisen ja poliittisen kaaoksen päättymistä, että Venäjän sotatoimien uusiutumista Tšetšeniassa.

Tutkimustuloksena saadaan Britannian parlamentin keskustelujen kautta sekä kuva Venäjän kehityksen pääkohdista että myös ymmärrys nyky-Venäjän länsivastaiselle asenteelle sekä toiminnalle 1990-luvun länsimaistamistoimien ja uudistusten aiheuttaman sisäisen kaaoksen jälkiseurauksena. Voidaan siis selkeästi havaita, miten 1990-luvun yhteiskunnallinen kurimus synnytti Venäjällä tuen 2010- ja 2020-lukujen Vladimir Putinin hallinnolle Georgian sodasta 2008 aina Ukrainan sodan alkuun vuonna 2022. Tutkimus myös havainnollistaa Venäjän kehityskulun lisäksi nyky-Venäjän piirteiden olleen mukana brittiläisessä parlamenttidiskurssissa mahdollisena vaihtoehtona länsiystävälliselle kehitykselle Venäjällä jo 1990-luvun alkupuolelta alkaen vaikkei sitä tuolloin vielä uskottu todennäköiseksi kehityssuunnaksi, havainnollistaen kehityskulun olleen tunnistettavissa ulkoakin päin.

Keywords Venäjä, Neuvostoliitto, Tšetšenia, Tšetšenian sota, Vladimir Putin, Boris Yeltsin, NATO, Iso-Britannia, Yhdistynyt Kuningaskunta, 1990-luku, Russia, the Soviet Union, post-Soviet Russia, the Chechen Wars, Chechnya, the Great Britain, the UK, 1990s, -90s

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1 INTRODUCTION -

1.1 About the Thesis

In this thesis the goal is to take a look at the British political perceptions about the development of Russia and the former Soviet Union in the wake of the dissolution of the USSR[1]. The main focus will be on the angles concerning foreign- and security policies, with the economic sector taking a backseat. The goal of the research is to identify whether or not British expectations and perceptions of Russian development changed during the 1990s and, if they did, how and when? The period outlined to be covered by this research stretches from the beginning of the year 1992[2] to the end of the year 2000. That includes the entirety of the presidency of Boris Yeltsin and the first year of the presidency of Vladimir Putin. As such it does include all major developmental points of the Russian political arena in the 1990s; the formation of the Russian Federation from the ashes of the USSR, the various elections in the mid-1990s and the change of president in 2000. The topic has greatly increased in relevance since the beginning of my research in the early 2021, as there has been both the 30th anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the more relevantly, Russia engaging the

[1] USSR is shorthand abbreviation of the official name for the Soviet Union. It comes from the name Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. I will be using it interchangeably with the term Soviet Union when referring to it.
[2] The USSR was officially dissolved on 26th of December 1991.

Western democracies in a diplomatic standoff about the possible expansion NATO and the European Union eastward, going as far as to invade Ukraine in the late February of 2022.

The inspiration behind this research was my bachelor's thesis where the focus was on the debates about the topic of NATO membership in Finland during the 1990s. During the course of that research, there was identified an interestingly wary perception of Russia, with opinions of its democracy being a failure being voiced around 1995. That has now led to wondering whether or not this "sceptic" image of Russia was a Finnish phenomenon? Or are there similar opinions present elsewhere in the Western World? The answer is that this obviously cannot be a uniquely Finnish phenomenon; in light of the Finlandization of the Cold War it is more likely that the Finnish parliament was late to waking to the possibility of such developments.

The choice of Britain as the source for the parliamentary debates to analyze was mostly due to the ease of access in the prevailing conditions imposed by the COVID-19 restrictions, and there being relatively little research about Britain in the 1990s from foreign or security policy perspectives. The language barrier did, of course, also play a role in the selection of the country of focus. The United Kingdom also presents a more European view than the American sources would; in addition, the island nation was at the time unquestionably among the globally relevant great powers. The European nations after all had to share the same continent with the USSR, so one would imagine that the perceptions about its collapse would differ from the US ones.

The 1990s are at the moment not that extensively researched a period, despite them representing the largest paradigm-shift in the world politics and the geopolitical landscape since the end of the Second World War. The decade marks the beginning of the prevailing monopolar world order, as opposed to the earlier paradigm of two competing superpowers. As such it is important to understand how this change was received in the political arena, as it is the place where the national policies were and are actually decided, as opposed to the more plebian newspapers and 'public opinion', although admittedly they too play an important role in directing policymakers'

actions. The voters after all need to be kept happy, if one is prone to take a more cynical view on politics.

1.2 Research Questions

The approach on the British expectations is two-fold; there are three primary research questions and a handful of secondary ones that connect to them. The secondary questions mostly help to structure the analysis into a more coherent outcome. The primary research questions are as follows:

- What were the main points of discussion when Russia was brought up in the British Parliament?
- What were the expectations of Russia's developmental direction in the imminent aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union?
- How did these expectations change as the 1990s went on and why?

The most likely suspected points of change in expectations are the Russian elections in 1995 and 1999 and the 1993 constitutional crisis, the latter elections especially, as they mark the end of the Yeltsin presidency and the beginning of that of Vladimir Putin. It will be interesting to see what the contemporary reactions were to a relatively unknown official rising to the top of Russian administration so quickly. That becomes only more interesting when accounting for the relatively stable popularity of Putin within Russia, or the increasing, if justified, wariness towards him from the West. But that is really truly relevant from the 2008 onwards, as prior to that Putin at the least masked any overt hostility towards the West.

The secondary questions outline the role of NATO in discussions about Russia, and the other countries formerly part of the USSR, such as the Baltic states, Ukraine or Belarus. So, in essence; how do the former Soviet territories feature in the debates? They are by no means the focus of this thesis, but rather a background element that needs to be kept in mind when considering the Russian attitude towards NATO, as we will see in the later chapters. From the research for my bachelor's thesis, I found out that there were extensive state-level debates throughout Europe about the future

of NATO and its membership during the 1990s. For example, the Finnish government did debate joining it alongside the Baltic States during the first Lipponen administration in the second half of the 1990s. Back then the Finnish government decided against it, content to rely on the European Union for security. There is also the more present-day aspect of Russia violently opposing any expansion of the military alliance towards its borders, by instigating armed conflict if needed, as seen in Georgia and Ukraine. This does pose the question about the Russian attitude towards NATO expansion during the period of weakness in the 1990s.

1.3 Previous Research

There seems to be relatively little research concerning British relations with the USSR during the Cold War and the early Russian Federation. Most of what could be found focuses on the early Cold War or even earlier periods. There is a lot of research about Anglo-Russian relations during the 19th and early 20th centuries during 'the Great Game', and Anglo-Soviet relations in the inter-war period and in the Second World War itself are of course an exhaustively researched topic. The Cold War era is more often researched from an American perspective, probably down to them being the "winners" of the Cold War and the largest political actor of the Western sphere. So overall it seems that from a political perspective, Russia in the 1990s and the actual aftermath of the Soviet Collapse is less researched than one would expect, or at least this is so outside of Russia. The 1990s seem to be an over-all less touched upon period in the academic field of history, despite it heralding the establishment of the current monopolar world-order.

Much of the Russia-focused research is centred on debating its economic troubles or the reasons for the USSR falling, rather than the perspectives about Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse. A handful of books do deal with the formation of the Russian oligarchy, such as David Satter's *The Darkness at Dawn: The Rise of the Russian Criminal State* from 2003. The other portion of applicable literature is not necessarily academic research, but there still is a number of books concerning Russian

leadership, be it from Romanovs to Putin or just Yeltsin to Putin periods.[3] So, there is not really that much literature on the specifics of Western impressions of the transitioning Russia of the 1990s, but there is scholarship about the leadership of the period. Also, almost all of the literature is from the early 2000s, prior to the 2008 Georgian war that most certainly changed the perspective on the Russian development. Essentially most of this literature looks for continuations or trends in the Russian leadership throughout its history, or is more biographical in nature, focusing largely on the personal histories rather than the larger political discourses and outlines. The only clear exceptions to this seem to be Graham Smith's The *Post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition* from 1999, an omnibus edited by Hanna Smith, *The Two-level Game: Russia's Relations with Great Britain, Finland and the European Union*, and Padma Desai's *Conversations on Russia: Reform from Yeltsin to Putin,* both published in 2006, so even they are from the pre-2008 period of Russia-research. The most recent example seems to be Heidi Berger's, *Venäjän Ulko- Ja Turvallisuuspolitiikka Boris Jeltsinistä Vladimir Putiniin 1992-2014: Presidenttien Uskomusjärjestelmät Poliittisten Olosuhteiden Kontekstissa,* which is a thesis from University of Helsinki published in 2020, and even it largely focuses on the presidential characters. Besides the Russian focused texts there are several relevant books about the changing role and scope of NATO that are relevant for this thesis. These include Gale Mattox and Arthur Rachwald's *Enlarging NATO: The National Debates* from 2001 and Daniel Hamilton and Kristina Spohr's compilation of texts in *Open Door, NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War* from 2019. Of the few truly relevant texts, Graham Smith's book does line quite well with my thesis, looking at roughly the same subjects, but his was a more contemporary view on the issues having been written before the turn of the Millennium, thus lacking contexts of the later Putin era, delving instead exclusively in the legacies of Gorbachev and Yeltsin. This contrasts with this research as the legacy of Putin is invariably added in the mix when researching the modern post-Soviet Russia in the present day.

There is a plethora of literature concerning Russia after the year 2000, focusing largely on the presidency of Vladimir Putin or the later presidency of Dmitri

[3] For example see Finna-database with search terms like Russia, Putin, Yeltsin etc.

Medvedev. This literature takes an upswing in number in the aftermath of the Georgian War of 2008 and more recent examples study the Russian actions or the international responses on the unlawful annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the War in Donbass in 2014, or more generally analyse the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Putin presidency in the 21st Century.[4]

Due to this "gap" in researched topics, this thesis does fill a niche of its own in looking at an outside actor's perspective on the changes in the Russian development in the 1990s in a more contemporary light. It does not focus on the personal politics played in the Kremlin by Yeltsin, or other biographical information on his actions but rather on the images transmitted about the Russian state in light of his policies. The focus of the thesis is primarily on the image of Russia portrayed through the debates of the UK parliament.

1.4 Sources and Methodology

1.4.1 Methods and The Methodological Outline

The primary method to be used in this thesis is the discourse analysis, as the primary source materials are transcripts of the parliamentary debates regarding Russia in the 1990s Britain. It is being used to discern expectations about the direction the new Russian state would be taking. So, in essence what this thesis aims to do is apply mediated discourse analysis to analyze the source materials to create a structured interpretation of the Russian development through the lens of political debates in the UK parliament. The mediated approach is mostly a recent development aiming to better connect the discourses being researched in the surrounding contexts, which in the research of history is essential.[5]

[4] For examples see Bykov et al 2020, Gessen & Rekiaro 2018, Politkovaskaja & Saikkonen 2009, Weiss-Wendt 2021 or Zygar et al. 2016. For more examples see Finna.fi.
[5] Gee & Handford 66-78.

Indeed, when writing about discourses it is taken as meaning a speech or writing that is being analyzed by means of discourse analysis, pondering the choices and motives behind that speech. Usually when speaking a person does give clues and outlines of his or her opinions, either directly or indirectly. This can range from specific word choices, sometimes unintentionally, to outright telling one's opinions. Such nuances can be instrumental when analyzing a transcript of a speech to discern motives and goals behind that specific speech. In parliamentary surroundings these discourses are directed to several audiences; first of all, to their colleagues, secondly to their voters and the supporters of their chosen party, and to the media as well. Then after all these groups comes the idea of legacy and image, the question: what will people think of me due to my actions and policies? This is more a factor for the major political figures, though not exclusive to them, such as presidents, prime ministers, party leaders and other such high-ranking offices, but it is still good to keep in mind. In this specific case the discourse analysis that will be done is almost entirely down to textual analysis, as there is no available video material from the British parliament in the 1990s. Outside of the actual text, it is important to also remember the historical context and various motives behind the actors involved. This brings importance to keeping in mind that things like elections most definitely influence politicians' rhetoric. [6]

In addition, to discourse analysis, this thesis also has elements of the grounded theory and some minor aspects of thematic analysis in it. In the case of thematic analysis, this thesis is divided in both the source materials and the actual analysis into thematic segments. The major segments are the rough division between the socio-economic-political and the international-security-political dimensions, which both are further split into smaller thematic segments, such as 'Economy', 'Nuclear security' or 'NATO'. The thematic analysis is very much a background element, as it is generally used in psychological research or in research based on interviews and focus groups rather than in historical research, but it has been an influence in the structuring of this

[6] Gee 2010 27-74, 99-126; Gee & Handford 2012 66-78, 525-540; Wiesner & Haapala & Palonen 2017 1-57.

thesis. In addition to the thematic division of the analysis, there still is an element of chronological continuity as well, as is natural in historical research.[7]

Grounded theory is not really a traditional theory or even a method, but a practice where the theory and the methodological outline shapes up alongside the analysis of the source materials rather than being established prior to it. While this thesis does align with discourse analysis and the larger methodological outline of international political history, it still bears a slight element of the grounded theory approach due to relegating the theoretical framework into the background rather than trying to continuously keep it visibly running within the text, as some researchers, especially in the social sciences, tend to do. Grounded theory also largely ignores any previous research on the topic of study, which is another element present in this thesis, as most of the previous research was largely useless for the actual analysis of the sources, serving more as a back-up for some interpretations and conclusions.[8]

As the research topic slots into the field of international political history, choice has been made to use as methodological sources a *History and International Relations* by Thomas W. Smith and *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* by Marc Trachtenberg. Both of them represent a more modern outlook in the field of international political history, arguing that the research of history is not really tied to theoretical models and outlines used by the other social sciences. Trachtenberg sees it as if the methodological base has already been created for almost all of the possible research, with no need to re-hash it over and over again, though he does still see them as useful for historians to know about, even if they are not a critical element for study of history compared to other social sciences. Smith on the other hand sees the theoretical models as quite fallible, liable to fail if not very precisely outlined. These failures include things like a selection bias (problems in choosing the source material), anectoditialisms (excessive generalizations and strawman arguments), ahistoricality (using modern values to judge historical events), theoretical filtering (trying to force source material to conform to chosen theoretical outline), and excessively tight

[7] Smith C. 1992 110-125
[8] Urquhart 2012 14-34.

research parameters, called "Cathedrals of Clay" by Smith (leaving no room for interpretation and objective nature of history).[9]

This almost outright abandonment of the theoretical models and outlines do in Trachtenberg's and Smith's opinion make the field of International History a more 'dynamic' field than many others in both the historical and the social science fields. It drops the need for finding an objective "truth" and focuses more on making educated conclusions and guesses by the researcher. There is no real objective understanding of history, and even the images created by assumptions of researchers become less conclusive and reliable further back one goes in history.[10] Both Trachtenberg and Smith do agree that one of the most versatile and quite commonly used approaches in international political history is the earlier discussed discourse analysis.

So, to sum it up, this thesis is constructed by applying a thematic element to mediated discourse analysis with elements of the grounded theory approach present. The topic of research itself places the thesis in the framework of international political history, which for this thesis was outlined by works of Thomas Smith and Marc Trachtenberg. This is incidentally also the main reason for the 'loose' methodic approach outlined for analysis.

1.4.2 Parliamentary Sources

As mentioned earlier, parliamentary transcripts are being used as the primary sources in this thesis. More precisely, I use the transcripts of the parliamentary debates concerning Russia from the British parliament between January 1992 and December 2000. In the United Kingdom, those materials are archived in an online database as full transcripts of the discussions undertaken. The British parliamentary archive is called the Hansard, though the name is shared with several of the Commonwealth of Nations[11] countries' parliamentary archives. In the modern world, these kinds of databases and archives are likely the most common way of making the parliamentary debates

[9] Smith T. 1999 1-32; Trachtenberg 2009 46-68.
[10] Trachtenberg 2009 46-68; Smith T. 1999 1-33; Ihalainen & Saarinen 2020 3-4, 26-27.
[11] The political association formed from the former British Empire and its dominions and colonies. Somewhat similar to the Organisation international de la Francophone, which is the French equalevant.

accessible to the public. At least most of the Western countries have the transcripts and often video recordings of parliamentary sessions available, although the video recordings are not yet that commonly used for history-oriented research as they seem to have become a regular occurrence only in late 2000s.

In terms of the Hansard, the source-documents used in this thesis have been identified by using the archive's own search-engine and applying various combinations of keywords --*Russia(n), NATO, Putin, Yeltsin, USSR, Soviet, Chechnya* --as the search terms. This yielded in total 63 debates applicable to be used in this thesis from both houses of the UK parliament during the previously defined period. The included debates do not represent the entirety of the debates where Russia was mentioned, but they include all of those debates that included 'Russia' in the debate title. The majority of the debates with substantial content were from the House of Lords, as the Commons debates were oftentimes just a few short statements or sentences in length. The reason for the Lords being more active in debating the topic of Russia is likely down to the structure of the UK parliament, where most of the legislative discussions happen in committees rather than in parliamentary meetings. That means much of the discussion happening in the Commons is transferred to those committees rather than on happening on the actual floor of the parliament.[12]

The nature of parliamentary sources in their traditional transcribed form means that there is inevitably some clean-up done compared to the actual speeches, such as removal of the speaker stuttering or other idiosyncrasies of speech. A major loss of information in transcripts compared to a video is the speaker's expressions and emotional state, only their word choices help to reflect on that in written texts. A less "visible" absence of information is the discussions connected to the debates that happen outside of the chambers of Parliament, including the chats in the hallways or cafeterias. Such discussions have an important role in establishing things like consensus amongst the representatives and otherwise sounding out policy and legislation proposals. Most of these talks are unfortunately lost from the historical record, though some survive in places like diaries or memoirs of the politicians. This also means that even if the

[12] Wiesner & Haapala & Palonen 2017 109-155

parliament is not talking about something in the transcripts, it does not mean that the matter was not discussed at all by the policymakers. To give an example: there was no discussion of any kind about NATO in the Finnish Parliament transcripts before the fall of the USSR, which seems unlikely as it still was one of the major geopolitical alliances in Europe. As such a researcher can never have a complete picture of the mindset of policymakers when analysing their debates from the parliamentary transcripts, but in a combination of contexts and a proper analysis one can still make educated interpretations of the material. [13]

Even if the parliamentary transcript offers only a part of the discourse regarding the topic at hand, it is still an excellent source, as it is often required by the laws concerning parliamentary openness to be an accurate, often word-for-word, transcript of the debate. This slightly varies between countries on whether or not it includes things like interruptions in full or just a note of them happening. In the case of the Hansard, it is not a word-for-word reproduction of the parliamentary debate in question, but rather a cleaned-up transcript with repetitions and grammatical mistakes largely cleaned up. For example, interruptions are often left out besides just remarking that there was an interruption, that is unless the interrupted speaker responds to it. Despite not being a straight-up verbatim copy of the debate, the Hansard transcript is still an accurate source on the debates, as it does not infringe upon the actual arguments put forth in the debates, but just cleans them up.[14]

1.4.3 The Parliament of the United Kingdom

The British parliament is a two chambered representative system, containing a lower and an upper house. These are known as the House of Commons and the House of Lords, respectively.[15] While historically the House of Lords has held a strong oversight over the House of Commons, this has gradually changed during the 20th century, as the Commons became the actual, almost sole, deciding chamber of the Parliament.

[13] Jenks 2011 13-36, 101-116 2011; Wiesner & Haapala & Palonen 2017 1-107.
[14] Church 2009 16; Wiesner & Haapala & Palonen 2017 59-107.
[15] The House of Commons might be referred to as either HoC or the Commons, the House of Lords in turn as HoL or the Lords.

After the reforms at the turn of the millennium, the House of Lords is comprised of several different sorts of representatives, including some hereditary positions (92 seats, spread amongst the Lords Temporal and the Crossbenchers) and the positions held by the Church of England (28 seats, the Lords Spiritual). The rest of the House of Lords (580 seats, called the Lords Temporal) are elected, like the House of Commons. There are also a varying number of so-called Crossbenchers, who are independent of the political parties; their number varies greatly (in early 2022: 187). In the 1990s there were many more hereditary seats, as the elected seats have been gradually increased with house-reforms in the last few decades, a major reform happening under Tony Blair in 1999. The House of Commons on the other hand is quite straight-forward, it is simply comprised of the elected members of the parliament chosen by the people by voting every 4 years (unless new elections are called prematurely by the Prime Minister)[16]. The parliament also has quite a lengthy summer recess, with it barely meeting for a several months a year. This condenses the majority of the debates and discussions to the months of autumn, winter and spring.

The House of Commons is the place where the political parties are most prominent. In the British Westminster system, there are a handful of major parties. Normally a Westminster parliamentary system favours a two-party system, but in Britain it has resulted in a slightly abnormal three-party system with a handful of more regional actors thrown in. In this case the major parties are the Conservatives (or colloquially the Tories), the Labour Party (usually known just as Labour) and the Liberal-Democrats. The other noteworthy parties include the Scottish National Party (SNP), the Northern Irish parties Sinn Fein[17] and the National Unionist Party (DUP) and the Welsh national party Plaid Cymru. The regional parties do not normally have a major role in the government, unless they are allied with a minority government, such as the DUP was most recently during the premiership of Theresa May in 2018. As is normal for democratic governance, the UK parliament is generally led either by a majority

[16] For example, see the Prime Minister Theresa May calling early elections in 2018.
[17] Sinn Fein never actually takes its seats in the Commons; this is in protest of North Ireland remaining part of the UK. Whole action is largely symbolic of Sinn Fein being the anti-union party of Northern Ireland to the DUP being the unionist party.

government or an alliance between parties. In conjunction with political parties exist the British Westminster system's parliamentary traditions, such as having the opposition form a Shadow Cabinet, where there is an opposition spokesperson for each government minister. The Shadow Cabinet also plays into traditional seating arrangements in the Commons, sitting in the front row of the opposition's side of the room, which has given the opposition leadership and spokesperson the title of front-benchers, similar to the Crossbenchers in the House of Lords. Because of this a Spokesperson-by-topic tradition it is, or at least was rare for the Prime Minister to take part in the parliamentary debates, or even really get mentioned at all as the ministers and their corresponding numbers in the opposition handle the parliamentary debates, depending on the topic at hand. Thus, the Prime Minister was not really needed to be present. The Shadow Cabinet is also technically a framework for a situation where the sitting government falls to a no-confidence vote and fails to reform a new government. In such a situation the Shadow Cabinet would essentially become the new government, in theory at least.[18]

In terms of procedure, the British parliament has many small traditions and quirks that do end up showing in the debates, such as addressing fellow members of the parliament by various honorific terms, including "Mr./Madame Speaker" or "the Honourable Member for (constituency)" or in the Lord's chamber "the noble Lord (or any other possible title, like baron or earl, for example)". There are various other forms of address, of course, but while they are recorded in the Hansard, it does not mean they were present in the actual debate, especially when concerning the House of Commons. In a similar way, there are rules for getting the right to speak during a debate, largely governed by the Speaker of the House in question. For the purposes of this research, the actual voting system of the UK parliament is not relevant, even if it too has some quirks based on traditions. This is largely due to the debates used as sources having been largely discussions and questions rather than actual policy-deciding

[18] Wiesner & Haapala & Palonen 2017 109-155; The UK Parliament website.

legislation needing voting on. So, it will not be elaborated on more than remarking that it exists.[19]

The thesis will from here on out move away from the methodological area to the actual research, beginning with outlining the surrounding historical and political contexts of the 1990s in both Russia and the United Kingdom and their political relationship. The historical context will be followed by analysis of the debates touching upon the political and the economic spheres of the Russian development, and then separately by analysis on the more security policy-oriented debates concerning the Russian WMD: s security, its attitude towards NATO, the outbreak of war in Chechnya and finally the rise of Vladimir Putin to the presidency of Russia in 1999. After these three primary chapters there remains only the conclusions done from the analysis.

[19] Church 2009 passim.; Wiesner & Haapala & Palonen 2017 109-155.

2 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT -*THE END OF AN ERA*

2.1 The End of the Cold War -*The Curtain Opens*

To understand the complex situation surrounding the state of the Russian Federation in the 1990s, it is important to remember the preceding events of the previous decade leading up to the collapse of the Soviet Union and its bloc of satellite states in Eastern Europe. The roots of the collapse lie in the decades preceding the year 1989, the year when the Eastern Bloc fell. During the 1970s and the early 1980s the USSR was led by staunchly conservative, in relative terms, Leonid Brezhnev, whose reign saw the Soviet Bloc fall decisively behind the Western Bloc due to stagnation in development and economy. That stagnation, when combined with the accelerating arms race, induced by the US president Ronald Reagan, resulted in the USSR increasingly taking loans and overextending and overtaxing the economy of the Union. In that respect the USSR played right along the US plans to damage the Soviet economy by forcing it to engage in an untenable arms race with the superior US economy. A major turning point in the fortunes of the USSR was the costly and unsuccessful war in Afghanistan that heavily damaged both the taxed and strained economy and the reputation of the Soviet Union. It could be likened to the Vietnam War in many ways; it was a conflict that humbled and humiliated the military of the invading superpower and damaged that countries reputation internationally. The Soviet-Afghan war was essentially the

Soviet Union's "Vietnam", it just happened to add to the already mounting pile of problems plaguing the state, on its own it would have been easily survivable defeat for the USSR. [20]

Brezhnev was followed as the leader of the USSR by a couple of short-lived men of the 'old guard', i.e., members of the Communist Party inner circle, before being ultimately succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev, a more reformist-oriented personality who did recognize that holding on to the existing Soviet Bloc by the old means of oppressive threat of military might was no longer tenable. This led to the USSR no longer forcibly enforcing the Soviet-friendly regimes in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria or East Germany. The policy of non-intervention first saw the socialist regime of Poland fold under internal pressures, showcasing that the Soviet Union indeed did not force its will on the Eastern Europe anymore. Poland was the proverbial opening of the flood-gates; the Eastern Bloc unravelled astonishingly fast, just in two years; 1988 and 1989. It culminated in the Fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989, a striking moment of symbolism of the Cold War coming to an end. Overall, the entire process of the Eastern Bloc coming apart was relatively bloodless, with only Romania experiencing actual armed conflict, as the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu tried to cling to power before being executed by the military after the armed forces defected to the protesters' side.[21]

With the Eastern Bloc gone, the Soviet Union, as it stood, was living on borrowed time, its economy could not sustain its bureaucracy or its military and all the while various territories wanted to break free of the USSR itself. The chief amongst them were the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, annexed by Stalin in the aftermath of the Second World War. The policy of non-intervention espoused by Gorbachev did as a result destabilize the very USSR itself, after all if Poland could choose its own way why could not the Baltics or Ukraine?[22]

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[20] Gaidar 2007 1-161; McFaul 78-135.
[21] Gaidar 2007 162-249; National Research Council, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education 1991 67-68.
[22] Ellison 2007 1-67.

A major point of contention between the West and the Russians immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union became the role and fate of NATO, the Western equivalent of the Warsaw Pact. Russia would have preferred it to be dissolved or otherwise limited, but Russia was not exactly in a position to argue against it while the Russian economy was dragging down the entire country. The encroachment of NATO towards the Russian borders was and remains a major grievance for the Russian government. Both the former Warsaw Pact and the Baltic states joined NATO by the mid-000s, Poland, Czechia and Hungary joining in the year 1999, the Baltics and the rest of the Warsaw Pact few years after in 2004. The idea of Russia joining NATO was also briefly entertained during the 1990s, with even some steps towards that goal being taken, including the Russian inclusion in the Partnership for Peace -program.[23]

2.2 A Brief Historical Overview of Anglo-Russian/Soviet relations - *The Old Foes*

The relationship between the United Kingdom and Russia has been complicated all the way from the 19th century when Britain and Russia competed for the control of Asia and the access to the Middle-East in the so-called "Great Game". For almost the entire duration of Britain's time as the leading Great Power, Russia was one of its major competitors and a primary threat to the imperial jewel of the British Raj (India). It was a major reason for Britain being a long-time friend of the Ottoman Empire, as they served as an excellent bulwark to keep the Russians out of the Middle-East and the Mediterranean, with control over the Eastern Anatolian highlands and, most importantly, the Straits of Bosporus.

This changed briefly for the duration of both world wars, when alliances and convenience resulted in both being on the same side against Germany. As the successor to the Russian Tsardom, the Soviet Union inherited most of the British mistrust towards them as well, combined with the fears about communist revolutionaries in the post-WWI period. This carried on to the Second World War as well, despite them

[23] Mattox & Rachwald 2001 passim.; Rifkind 2019 501-518; Tsygankov 2012 172-192; Rühle 2014.

(again) ending up on the same side. Early in the War the Churchill administration was even prepared to consider war with the Soviets over the Winter War in Finland. There even existed plans of shipping troops through Norway and Sweden to Finland and other plans for bombing the Soviet oil industry in the Caucasus, specifically Baku in Azerbaijan. Of course, none of these plans were ever put into effect, but they show that the British leadership did not trust nor want to align with the Soviet Union, but was forced to do so under the realpolitik of the war. Churchill was overall quite mistrusting towards the USSR, wanting very precise agreements rather than the more general promises that the Americans accepted from Stalin. Churchill went as far as to order drawing up plans for a war against the USSR immediately after the defeat of Germany, a plan that was known as the Operation Unthinkable. It involved, among other things, rearming the German Wehrmacht to fight the Soviets to liberate Eastern Europe. It is quite readily apparent why such a plan was not enacted; with Japan still in the war, fighting the USSR would have resulted in mass casualties for the Western Allies, not to mention the political problems of turning on an apparent ally of the last few years and the massive size of the Red Army. Churchill was also the one to allegedly coin the term 'Iron Curtain' for the post-war division of Europe, seeing it as an inevitability in 1946, even before the relations between the wartime allies collapsed.[24]

After the Second World War the British position in geopolitics quickly weakened; the two world wars had almost bankrupted it, and much of southern England had sustained heavy bomb-damage. It was forced to withdraw from India in 1946, signalling the beginning of the end for the British colonial empire. There was a brief attempt by the Eden administration to reverse course by acting independently of the American agenda in the 1956 Suez Crisis. The political backlash from that went on to show the American dominance over the old European powers. This also had a marked effect on British foreign policy; it started to follow the American lead rather than trying to pursue a fully independent policy. This gave birth to the so-called "Special Relationship" between the UK and the USA, sometimes used by the media to deride Britain for almost being like a dog on a lead. As such, the official British policy towards the Soviet

[24] Barnett 2018 passim.

Union during the Cold War from the Suez onwards largely followed the American one.[25] This relationship was brought to its peak during the 1980s when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the US President Ronald Reagan struck up a personal friendship, further tying the two Anglophone countries' policies together.[26]

All this goes to show that the Anglo-Soviet and Anglo-Russian political relationship has been largely antagonistic, or at the least frosty for a nearly two centuries. The antagonism and the friendlier periods are both largely down to the old British geopolitical agendas; prevent any one nation from becoming a hegemon over continental Europe. Russia, after all, was a natural ally when dealing with the rising threat of Germany.[27]

2.3 The Outline of Internal Political Developments in 1990s

It is important to roughly outline the political landscapes of the United Kingdom and Russia if one wants to understand what will be discussed further on in this thesis. Both countries experienced several elections and subsequent changes in leadership during this time; for the UK this meant a change of the Prime Minister in 1997 whereas for Russia it was the President changing in 1999. While the British political landscape does not play a major part in the debates analysed here, the Russian one very much does.

2.3.1 The United Kingdom

The UK in the 1990s saw the divisive Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher forced out from her position in 1990, when the Conservative Party chose to replace her with a less divisive personality. After a few rounds of leadership elections, the new

[25] In comparison France broke with the US for decades, even withdrawing largely from NATO.
[26] White 1992 182-187.
[27] White 1992 passim.

Conservative Party Leader chosen was John Major[28], the former Chancellor of the Exchequer under Thatcher. He did in many ways continue, or at least intend to continue, the policies of the Thatcher administration, only with a less critical outlook towards European integration and other co-operative pursuits. The collapse of the Soviet Union did change the situation somewhat, forcing a recalibration of the foreign policy.

Major was supportive of Russia reforming itself and retaining its position as a great power. He mentions in his memoirs "*to disregard Russia when she was weak might not be forgotten when she was strong again.*"[29]. Major had a considerable role in the inclusion of Russia in the G7[30], renamed the G8 countries, even if it became reality only after his term as a Prime Minister was over. Major was plagued by internal problems for most of his premiership, with the economic downturn eating the party's standing in electoral polls and the government's policies appearing indecisive to the public.[31]

John Major was ousted as the Prime Minister of the UK in 1997 after the Conservatives suffered a major electoral defeat to the resurgent Labour Party led by Tony Blair[32]. The Blair government came to power with the largest electoral victory in Britain since the early 1930s, gaining a parliamentary majority of over a hundred seats. Much like Major's administration, the Blair government was initially focused on internal issues, such as the Northern Ireland peace process and the formation of regional devolved parliaments for Scotland and Wales. So, for most of the 1990s Britain was led by a narrow Conservative majority, before being replaced by a large Labour

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[28] Sir John Major (b.1943), the Conservatives, the Leader of the Conservative party and the Prime Minister (1990-1997), previously held various ministerial positions. Resigned the party leadership after disastrous electoral defeat in 1997, leaving active politics in 2001.
[29] Major 2000 p 500.
[30] Means the USA, the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. Russia was included as the member number eight, and later ejected from the group after the Crimean annexation in 2014.
[31] BBC News. 5 April 2005.
[32] Sir Anthony (Tony) Blair (b. 1953), the Labour, the Leader of the Labour Party (1994-2007), the Prime Minister (1997-2007). Major influence behind the New Labour movement, which was an attempt to distance the party from socialism to a more moderate platform. Oversaw the negotiation of the Good Friday -Agreement for North Ireland peace process, establishment of the Scottish and Welsh devolved parliaments and various improvements in civil rights and work legislation. Major controversies include the 2003 War in Iraq and British involvement in it. Due to this Blair has been accused of being complicit in war crimes in joining the US in the invasion.

majority in 1997. The nation was also largely focused inward, as it had shown its teeth in the Falklands War in the prior decade, allowing for a slightly lax foreign focus.[33]

2.3.2 The Russian Federation

The Russian political situation, as one can infer from the collapse of the Soviet Union, was not exactly stable in the beginning of the 1990s. As the Russian political system was slanted towards the presidential model from the get-go, it is important to introduce the first president of Russian Federation: Boris Yeltsin[34]. He was a career politician from the days of the USSR, having risen to premiership of the Russian SFSR[35] by the time the Soviet Union came apart. He gained quite a lot of popularity for his role in defying the 1991 coup d´état attempt against Gorbachev[36], presenting himself as a figure for a "New Russia". A major result of this popularity was him cementing his authority over the nascent Russian state, usurping any remaining power from Gorbachev. There have been accusations over the years that Yeltsin did intentionally let the USSR fall by preventing Gorbachev from acting to try to save it, thus removing the largest political rival to his position as the leader of Russia. Gorbachev was eventually forced to accept the situation as a fait accompli; he just could no longer control the political landscape to try to keep even a semblance of the Soviet Union from dissolution. The main attempt to save some semblance of the Soviet Union was the initiative called Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that largely fell through in the early years of post-Soviet Russia, though it does still remain as a co-operative organization between most[37] of the former Soviet countries, but not as the intended successor to the Soviet Union.[38]

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[33] White 1992 182-187; BBC News. 15 April 2005.
[34] Boris Yeltsin, (b. 1931 – d. 2007), the first president of the Russian Federation, a very controversial figure in Russia. Resigned presidency in late 1999 due to ill health.
[35] Shorthand for Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.
[36] Mikhail Gorbachev, (b. 1931), the last leader of the Soviet Union prior to its fall in 1991. Primary instigator of the end of the Cold War. A divisive figure in Russia, much like his successor.
[37] Of the former USSR territories, the Baltic states were never members, Georgia and Ukraine left the organization after the Russian attacks against them.
[38] Desai 2006 77-186; Ellison 2007 1- 67; Felkay 2002 67-76; Gaidar 2007 220-249; Gorham 2014 75-165; McFaul 2015 18-135; Satter 2003 passim.; Satter 2016 passim.; Sergi 2009 14-27.

Another major controversy surrounding Yeltsin in Russia is his conflict with the Duma[39] that escalated into a constitutional crisis when Yeltsin dissolved the Russian parliament in 1993 and enforced, with military-backing, a new constitution with increased presidential powers that have since come to characterize the Russian political system. Though it should be kept in mind that the presidential model of governance is in line of the historical Russian political trend of having a singular strong leader, be it the Tsar or the Premier of the Soviet Union. The 1993 constitutional crisis was in effect an attempt by the Duma to impeach Yeltsin from office after an unconstitutional order to dissolve the sitting parliament. The crisis escalated to the point that the Russian military stormed the parliament building and enforced Yeltsin's order. The new constitution did, beside the presidential powers, include dissolution of any remaining Soviet-era administrative structures and forming of the institutions of the present-day Russia, such as the office of Prime Minister. As the transition from a command-economy to a market-economy happened during the 1990s, the Russian economy[40] took a massive nosedive. That also quickly reflected to Yeltsin's political image, as his approval ratings dropped low and remained so throughout the late 1990s. This culminated with his resignation due to health problems in 1999 and succession by the then prime minister, Vladimir Putin.[41]

Yeltsin continued the Gorbachevian idea of portraying an image of a new dynamic state trying to shed the spectre of the USSR. He campaigned on the idea of a "New Russia" as the end goal of his reforms, a stable Western democracy with access to the global markets and a functional market economy. Some models even envisioned the creation of a Nordic welfare state as the new goal for Russia to reach. Much of the 'New Russia' posturing was just empty political talk and point-scoring using ideas 'stolen' from Gorbachev, mainly for getting aid from the West to prevent an economic

[39] The Duma is the name for the Russian Parliament.
[40] Basically, a result of the forced dissolution of the old Soviet economic system while doing "shock-therapy" by adopting the capitalist market system without any transitory periods. Included massive deregulation of economic sectors, and privatization of virtually anything state-owned. The result in Russia was understandably short-term economic chaos and in the longer term the rise of an oligarchy. The Minister of Finance (1991-1992) and later a short-serving Prime Minister (1992) Yegor Gaidar was major architect of the policy.
[41] Desai 2006 77-186; Ellison 2007 68-190; Felkay 2002 77-226; Simai 1999 passim.; Smith G. 1999 1-40; McFaul 2015 136-323.

collapse or a worse humanitarian disaster. And even the genuine desire for Westernization came under fire as Yeltsin's reforms started to meet opposition, as they failed to deliver any meaningful improvements in people's daily lives. A major reason for the failures was the massive corruption eating up the funds or just outright stopping the reforms through bribery (oligarchs often had a hand in such actions) and the general death spiral of the Russian economy, combined with a badly divided political arena where Yeltsin had opponents in every corner.[42]

Another major change in the early Russian political landscape was the first "real" elections in 1995. They saw a major resurgence of the Communist Party of Russia and at least a partial repudiation of the earlier Yeltsin administration agenda in the form of newer nationalistic elements emerging. It also was the first election after Yeltsin consolidated his power in the aftermath of the 1993 crisis.[43]

Outside of the traditional politics and the hiccups of a nascent democracy there was one major event in the internal situation of Russia in the 1990s: the Chechen Wars. They were conflicts in the Russian North Caucasus where the local autonomous territories tried to secede from the Russian Federation, though only the Chechnyan unrest escalated to a war. The First Chechen War between late 1994 and August 1996 was inconclusive, ending in a cease-fire with Chechnya de facto independent but de jure still Russian. The Russian response to the armed revolt was internationally criticized as heavy-handed and giving an impression of the old Soviet Union. The Second Chechen War beginning in 1999 was the Russian military returning to restore its control over the region properly. It was considerably bloodier than the previous conflict, containing multiple acts of terrorism and various (both alleged and actual) human rights violations by both sides. Many also consider it the grand entrance of Vladimir Putin to the forefront of Russian politics, as he was presented as the mastermind behind the heavy-handed suppression of the Chechen rebels and the restoration of order in the Russian Caucasus. The second war was met with even heavier international condemnation.[44]

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[42] Simai 1999 passim.
[43] Smith G. 1999 56-61.
[44] Desai 2006 187-248; Felkay 2002 77-226; McFaul 2015 136-389; Savoila 2004 10-101.

Outside the traditional politics of the emergent Russian state, in the economic chaos of the post-Soviet era there also existed the rising Russian oligarchy that was amassing large percentages of the nation's resources to themselves as the Yeltsin administration privatized the formerly nationalized industries and resources. For the duration of the 1990s this newly empowered economic elite had a strong influence on the political landscape, using their wealth to essentially control Russia behind the scenes. The formation of the oligarchy also resulted in massive amounts of corruption at all levels of the Russian society, bribery being commonplace. That is not to say there was not corruption present prior to that, the rise of the oligarchy just worsened the situation. The oligarchy further had strong correlations with the Russian mafia, again exacerbating the problems further. This is connected in turn to the black market having its golden age in the 1990s in Russia; everything was for sale, up to and including military equipment. This black market also sparked quite a lot of international concern, but more on that later in the thesis.[45]

[45] Ellison 2007 148-192; Desai 2006 77-186; Kagarlitsky & Clarke 2002 11-222; Steen 2003 49-181.

3 THE FALLEN SUPERPOWER -*AT THE RUINS OF THE SOVIET UNION*

In the imminent aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union there was utter political chaos; it was in no way clear who or what controlled various aspects of the former Soviet state. There were concerns of the Russian military being outside the state-control, the Soviet nuclear weaponry falling in the wrong hands, the illegal arms trade skyrocketing, but also less military-oriented aspects of the utter economic chaos and fear of supervisory organizations failing or being unable to monitor things like the nuclear power plants.

This chapter focuses largely on the administrative and economic chaos of Russia discussed by the British parliament in the debates following the fall of the USSR, primarily during the first half of the 1990s. The major points of focus include the stability of the Russian state the government in the face of the political opposition and the possibility of a military takeover, Boris Yeltsin's programs of Western integration, including the Council of Europe membership, and the deep economic chaos ripping the Russian socio-political structures apart. The debates are "scattered" in their nature, the topics jump about, often even during the same person's turn of having the floor. This makes bringing out concise citations more difficult compared with chapter 5, which deals with more clearly confined matters.

3.1 The Fledgling Russian Federation -*The Power Struggle in the Ashes (1992 - 1993)*

It appears from the early debates on the state of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that the British parliament[46] was quite reserved about it. There was a lengthy debate about the implications of change in Russia on 5th of February 1992 in the House of Lords, initiated by the Opposition Leader for Labour, Lord Cledwyn of Penhros[47], shedding quite a comprehensive light on what the image of Russia was to policymakers then. This was only a little over a month after the final dissolution of the USSR in December 1991. At that point the Gorbachevian idea of the Commonwealth of Independent States as a rejuvenated USSR had not yet completely failed, so politicians used it quite a lot as a synonym for Russia or the entire former USSR. Most British politicians seemed to have doubts about its long-term prospects, but it also corresponded to many of those with more pessimistic views of Russia itself. While the pessimism was there, the overall view was still generally optimistic; it was believed that Russia and the former USSR could make the transition to a Western system even despite the various obstacles.[48]

> *But in time reason and tolerance prevailed in Russia and the Russian people got rid of communism. We must remember that: we, the West, did not get rid of Soviet communism; the Russians themselves did, led principally by the great peacemaker, Gorbachev. He fell, as peacemakers do, and, because we managed to force the pace at which the Soviet Union and the Russian state itself were dismantled, penury and chaos ensued and have continued.*[49] – Lord Kennet[50],

[46] All the UK parliament members are referred to in the transcript by their titles and/or surnames. While their common names will be included in the footnotes, along with their party alignment and dates of birth and death (if applicable) and major achievements or political positions, in the text they will be referred to by their title. This is due to the source materials using only the titles. Information listed in the footnotes is a combination of information listed on the UK parliament website and Wikipedia (mainly used for dates of birth and death). A footnote will be only included with the first mention of the MP in question. The footnotes are also kept separate form sources for convenience of the reader in finding the names in the footnotes easily.
[47] Cledwyn Hughes (b. 1916–d. 2001), the Labour, the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords and Leader of the Shadow Government (1982-1992), also previously held several different ministerial positions.
[48] Hansard: Vol. 534 13.1992.
[49] Vol. 534 23.6.97.
[50] Wayland Young, (b.1923–d.2009) the Labour and later the SDP. Left Labour in late 90s in protest of policies of Tony Blair. Strong advocate of disarmament and arms control.

We must show them that democracy does work and that it is the only system in which freedom, compassion and respect […] can flourish.[51] – Lord Cledwyn

For the most part the members of the House of Lords were quite aligned with each other, with little evidence of party conflicts or large political divisions between them. In the House of Commons both Her Majesty's Government and the Opposition and the Crossbenchers seemed to see a need to help the Russian economy. Almost all debaters reaffirmed the need for helping Russian integration into the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help stabilise the rouble before hyperinflation could collapse the fragile economy. This aid was to be bolstered by sending some form of humanitarian aid as well, the exact level of which was under debate, but ended up being quite significant.[52] Lord Cledwyn brought up a possibility of creating a "Marshall plan" for the former USSR, receiving some support from his fellow Lords as well. It was brought up as a part of a plan to promote democratic development and traditions to show that the Western system works and can help the downtrodden people of the former Soviet Union. There were some other proposals of solutions to help the economic crisis facing the former USSR; ranging from training former soldiers to do other necessary jobs to massive investments into key sectors of industry (oil and gas were mentioned). The major point in this was finding usage to the large number of the former garrison troops and their families withdrawn from various former Soviet bases in Eastern Europe.[53]

The reforming of the Soviet command economy into a Western market economy was acknowledged as a massive and lengthy undertaking, but the exact method of helping in it was again not readily agreed upon. The help being necessary was agreed upon, but the methods and scale proposed for it varied greatly, with more suggestions focusing the British efforts on helping smaller portions of the old USSR, such as the Baltic states that could relatively quickly adopt the necessary changes to function. Lord Kagan[54] even brought Lithuania up as an example where ties could have easily been strengthened. The scale of the help available to be given was also lessened by the

[51] Vol. 535 5.2.92.
[52] Vol. 536 6.3.92.
[53] Vol. 311 29.4.98.
[54] Joseph Kagan (b. 1915–d. 1995), the Labour, Lithuanian-British industrialist, with alleged ties to the KGB. Convicted of tax evasion in 1980, but returned to politics after his prison sentence.

then ongoing recession, which had hit the Western countries and gone as far as economic depression in the Nordic states, including Finland, worsening the economic state of the Eastern Europe further.[55]

Despite the uniform support for economic stabilization, there was a very realistic scepticism towards the stability and the sincerity of the new Russia. The first major point that Lord Cledwyn brought up was the fact that Russia had not really ever had any form of democratic government before, besides a brief window in the aftermath of the February Revolution of 1917, only varying degrees of despotism. To quote: "*Despotism of one kind or another is the old tradition of that vast sub-continent*[56]". There were several threats brought up concerning the fledgling democratic movements: the uncoordinated Soviet military, former upper echelons of Soviet bureaucracy or some unforeseen extremist elements. The government representative on the matter, Earl of Caithness[57], remarked quite pragmatically that "*We cannot solve the former Soviet Union's problems for them*" and "*Things may well get worse before they get better*".[58] This connected to a cautious attitude towards the stability of president Yeltsin; conservative Lord Greenhill[59] even brought up the possibility that Yeltsin was just pandering to the West to get aid. Several other Lords expressed similar sentiments, including Lords Kagan, Colnbrook[60] and Boyd-Carpenter[61] who all voiced similarly sceptical stances towards the future of Russia and the rest of the Eastern Europe. Lord Kagan even went so far as to say: "*If there is a change it will be towards nationalism, xenophobia and fascism.*". Lord Boyd-Carpenter on the other hand drew parallels between the fall of the Soviet Union and the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon. And in hindsight those, then sceptical, statements do sound quite accurate in the present day, especially if one takes the image of Putin presented by the media in Russia.[62]

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[55] Vol. 534 13.1992, Vol. 535 5.2.92, Vol. 356 6.3.92.
[56] Vol. 535 5.2.92.
[57] Malcolm Sinclair, (b.1948), the Conservatives, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1990-1992), the Minister of State for Railways and Roads (1992-1994), also held other ministerial positions in the 80s.
[58] Vol. 535 5.2.92.
[59] Malcolm Greenhill (b.1924–d.2020), Crossbencher.
[60] Humphrey Atkins (b. 1922–d. 1996), the Conservatives.
[61] John Boyd-Carpenter (b. 1908–d. 1998) the Conservatives.
[62] Vol. 535 5.2.92.

Still, the Lords acknowledged a large possibility that Russia in its deplorable economic state could spiral into unrest and see a military takeover happen. Lord Boyd-Carpenter suggested that Boris Yeltsin might not be as in control of the state as he would have liked to believe or portray to outsiders. Baroness Park[63], who due to her ties to SIS[64] had some expertise on more clandestine government craft, also commented on the possibility of military coup; "*[…] If you don't help there will be a coup and return to the Cold War mindset."*[65]. This possibility was used as the driving point to support Yeltsin. Although even he might have had ulterior motives as well; he was still willing to work with the West and try to reform the Russian economy and downsize its military. Baron Judd[66] raised a possibility of Yeltsin himself using his extensive "emergency powers" to hinder democratic development, which actually did happen later in the aftermath of the constitutional crisis of 1993. The crisis was discussed mostly in the lead up to it rather than when it actually came to a head in late 1993. From the British debates the power struggle between the Duma and Yeltsin can be inferred to have been an ongoing problem since spring of 1993. Yeltsin was nonetheless still seen as the person most likely to accept Western help to fix the Russian economy, and that would help with other issues by promoting stability in the entire state structure. So, there was very little condemnation of his actions. In general, the dissolution of the Duma by Yeltsin surprisingly did not merit much debate in the UK parliament besides passing remarks when discussing the overall stability of the Russian state. The topic did resurface a few times but it seems that the opposition to Yeltsin was seen more as a Soviet remnant and hindrance for any pro-Western policies going forward.[67]

This possibility of a military takeover was not very far-fetched, as it was not even a year before, in the earlier debate on the matter in 1992, that there was the

[63] Daphne Park (b.1921–d. 2010), Crossbencher, a former MI6 spy granted a life peerage, served as an unofficial spokesperson for the MI6 in the House of Lords.
[64] Also known as the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) or the MI6 (shorthand for Military Intelligence Section 6). MI6 is likely the more commonly known name for the organization.
[65] Vol. 535 5.2.92, Vol. 536 6.3.92.
[66] Frank Judd (b. 1935–d. 2021), the Labour, opposition spokesperson of Foreign Affairs and Defence in the 90s, Council of Europe rapporteur on Chechnya (1999-2004).
[67] Vol. 205 4.3.92, Vol 221 22.3.92, Vol. 222 2.4.93, Vol. 535 5.2.92; Felkay 2002 77-84

August Coup -attempt to depose Gorbachev, or, at the time, a military takeover in Georgia in the post-Soviet chaos (the reason cited for Britain not yet recognizing its independence in 1992). Russia had a massive problem with its oversized military in the early 1990s, with the troops being recalled from the Eastern Europe and the economy simultaneously collapsing from under the state. There was no pay nor a place to stay for the troops, leading to a lack of discipline and a massive black market where military hardware was being sold to make the ends meet by both the rank-and-file soldiers and even higher-ranking officers. The government solution to this had been to legalize the army selling its weapons, which was frowned upon by the British policymakers as it was quite irresponsible, considering potential buyers for the military hardware being various paramilitary organizations, militias and other less-than-reputable entities. Connected to these arms-sales were fears of exacerbating ethnic conflicts in nearby regions; of which Nagorno-Karabakh[68] was brought up in several debates after the large 5th of February debate in 1992. There were several Lords interested in bringing the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh into the forefront, including Lady Cox[69], who was cited as being present in the conflict zone and Lord Cledwyn, who questioned the government about it on 6th of March 1992.[70]

3.2 Direction of Russia? -*A Nation at the Crossroads (1993 – 1994)*

The Russian elections in 1993 brought a new aspect of Russian politics to the forefront of British lawmakers; the nationalists had gained publicity and coalesced around Vladimir Zhirinovsky[71], a radical nationalist known for jingoistic rhetoric about Russian expansionism. The man has been characterized as a fascist by many, with outrageous

[68] Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of Azerbaijan with a major Armenian population, and in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse the two nations ended up fighting over it, with the conflict still ongoing as a low-intensity conflict.
[69] Caroline Cox (b. 1937), the Conservatives (at the time), the Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords (1985-2005), noted to be deeply religious and Eurosceptic. Participates in several humanitarian organizations.
[70] Vol.536 6.3.92, Vol. 577 22.1.97.
[71] Vladimir Zhirinovsky, (b. 1946–d.2022), a Russian far-right nationalist with controversial views and opinions.

statements about what he considers, to paraphrase; "rightful Russian territory". These visions have included anything from the old Tsarist Russian borders to annexing Turkey, Iraq and Iran. When his Liberal-Democratic party gained, in the eyes of the Western observers, an unnerving amount of backing of 22% voters, the highest support achieved in the 1993 elections by a single party, there were debates about the Russian direction in both houses once again. There were, quite understandably, concerns voiced on whether or not Russia was becoming a threat in the military sphere once more. Baron Wyatt of Weeford[72] went as far as to compare Zhirinovsky to Adolf Hitler, saying;

> *My Lords, despite the noble Baroness's[73] complacency about the results of the Russian elections, does she not remember that Hitler began in much the same way as the leader of that important party which is now winning votes in Russia? Is it not time to tear up the foolish Options for Change which assumed a peace dividend requiring us to reduce our defence forces when, obviously, now is the time to do exactly the opposite*?[74]

Such concerns may be partly due to Baron Wyatt being a World War II veteran and having actually served in Normandy. As such, his comparison between early career Hitler and the rising figure of Zhirinovsky bears more proverbial weight than it would coming from someone who had not been there to see Hitlerite Germany rising and actually fought it. His comparison of Zhirinovsky to Hitler does even bear some uncomfortable parallels; the collapse of the USSR left a sense of national humiliation in Russia; they were left to pick up the pieces of a great power in increasingly worsening social conditions as the entire state apparatus essentially ceased to exist temporarily. This bears a resemblance to Germany in the aftermath of the First World War, economic and political chaos as the old order comes down. Then there were the Russian minorities now outside Russia's borders around the former USSR. Again, a parallel to the rise of Nazism was easy to draw, when Hitler got Germany itself to its feet, he began to gather surrounding German minorities to the Reich. It was quite understandable to be concerned about history repeating itself with Russia when the image

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[72] Woodrow Lyle Wyatt (b. 1918-d. 1997), the Labour, noted supporter of Margaret Thatcher and Rupert Murdoch despite his party affiliation, a WWII veteran.
[73] Addressing the government representative Baroness Chalker of Wallasey.
[74] Vol. 550. 16.12.93.

painted was so eerily similar. There were also issues with antisemitism brought up in 1999, when several members of the Russian Duma expressed such views publicly in the wake of attacks on Jewish communities in Russia. Member of the Parliament (MP) John Bercow[75] did make the eerie comparison to the German political stage in the 1930s, noting parallels in the economic backdrop.[76]

This upswell of nationalism seemed to galvanize the British politicians to support a speedy inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries like Poland and Hungary to NATO, hopefully shielding them from Russia in the future, should it become hostile again. Zhirinovsky's uncomfortably high support in elections seemed to be a wake-up call to the parliament as well; there were several debates about the election in the House of Commons around that time. Often these debates highlighted the stalling of the reform programs and increasingly reluctant Russia dragging its feet in withdrawing from the former Soviet Republics, such as the Baltic states. Beside the stalling reforms, there were also fears of Russia having designs to redraw the borders in areas where there were Russian minorities, brought up by Michael Fabricant[77]. Both the Baltic states (primarily Estonia and Latvia) and Ukraine were brought up in this context. This in turn fed the British mistrust towards the Russian goals, and the government actually did state a resolve to keep a closer eye on the Russian developments.[78]

These concerns were different from the fears of a military takeover in earlier years. Back then it would have been more an attempt to restore the Soviet Union than to change the leadership in Russia. Zhirinovsky was basically a figurehead and a "face" of the reactionary elements in Russia opposing the democratic and liberalisation reforms of President Yeltsin. The strong support given to the Communist Party and Zhirinovsky's nationalists essentially showed the Western decisionmakers that the domestic support for Yeltsin had waned and that the alternatives to his policies were

[75] John Bercow (b.1963), the Conservatives, while an ordinary member of the Commons in the late 90s, he later served as the Speaker of the House of Commons (2009-2019).
[76] Vol. 335 20.7.99, Vol. 550. 16.12.93; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 175-177; Smith G. 1999 215-223.
[77] Michael Fabricant (b. 1950), the Conservative party.
[78] Vol 222 2.4.93, Vol. 222 14.4.93, Vol. 224 12.5.93, Vol. 241 13.4.94, Vol. 235 11.1.94; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 175-177; Smith G. 64-70.

known to the Russian population. The possibility of the reactionary forces taking over the Russian Federation was seen as a repudiation of sorts of the alignment with the West and the joining of the Western market economy or becoming a Western democracy. The fears of British politicians about the end-state of Russia in such a scenario were actually somewhat in line with what the present-day Belarus is; an authoritarian state with a strong military element and a thin veneer of democracy that is antagonistic to any Western institutions, such as the EU or NATO. Lord Kennet did question the government on its policy regarding a resurgent Russia in March 1994. He brought up possibility of the return of the Cold War, quoting both the Georgian president and the diplomat George Kennan about Russia starting to seek to restore some control over the CIS members as Russia itself balanced on a political and economic knife's edge. He put forth the view that Russian Westernization and democratization had already largely failed and lost support due to traditional authoritarianism and mounting economic woes. Even then he stressed the need to co-operate with Russia, remarking: "*We have a rather sensible Russian government to deal with*". [79]

Even then there were far more pessimistic views, including Lord Belhaven & Stenton[80] in the same debate comparing the Russian minority question to the Sudeten-German problem on the eve of the Münich Agreement of 1938, and he was far from being alone in his pessimism. While the pessimistic views abounded in 1993 and 1994, it was still seen that Yeltsin was the man of the West, the only real choice to combat the threat of a resurgent and possibly revanchist Russia rising from the ashes of the USSR. Government representative Baroness Chalker of Wallasey[81] did actually somewhat acknowledge that the fears of the parliament were not entirely unfounded, but she did stress the point that Zhirinovsky's support of roughly 20% in the elections actually represented only around a tenth of Russians, as the voting activity of the elections had been only around 50%, and that the Yeltsin administration was still entirely functional in trying to reach the reform and disarmament goals.[82]

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[79] Vol. 533 21.3.1994
[80] Robert Hamilton (b. 1927–d. 2020), the Conservatives.
[81] Lynda Chalker (b.1942), the Conservatives, Minister of State for Overseas Development at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1989–1997).
[82] Vol. 235 11.1.94, Vol. 241 13.4.94, Vol. 553 21.3.94.

Overall, this created three "Russia's" that featured in debates: there was the hopeful image of the "New Russia", a democratic state built on the Western ideals and a functioning market economy, then there was what could be termed the "Old Russia", a scenario where Russia returns to the autocracy and totalitarianism of the Soviet Union and the Tsarist Russian Empire, and finally there was the anti-West nationalistic Russia that aligns with China or will otherwise disengage from European co-operation. The last one is most difficult to define to any real degree, but it would mostly correspond to the present-day Russia, retaining trappings of democracy in nominally free elections and a nominal parliamentary system but having heavy elements of autocratic governance in it. The Old Order of Russia was seen as the most undesirable outcome, as many members of the UK parliament remarked. For example, Lord Belhaven & Stenton characterized the Tsarist Russian empire and the USSR as essentially the same state in different clothes, the Eastern bloc as "*cruel and oppressive tyranny*"[83] and argued that "*Russia shrinking back to its heartland is most welcome, but […] we should be wary before we satisfy ourselves that the leopard has permanently changed its spots*"[84]. As the 1990s went on, these three images eventually became two as the Old Order of the Soviet Union finally died as a real possibility, leaving only the question of whether or not Russia would align with the Western powers. The pro-Western forces were largely personified in the character of Boris Yeltsin, which resulted in problems as his popularity started to crumble while the Russian economy continued to take a battering year after year. Yeltsin was increasingly forced to try to balance between the more nationalistic elements and keeping Western support, without which the already failing economy would have completely collapsed, causing increasing tensions and conflicts regarding Russia and its neighbourhood as the 1990s progress.[85]

[83] Vol. 553 21.3.94.
[84] Vol. 553 21.3.94.
[85] Vol. 533 21.3.1994; Smith G. 1999 47-64; Kovalev, Levine & Reddway 2017 passim.

3.3 The Economic Meltdown –*A Failing Nation (1993 – 1998)*

By the mid-1990s the biggest international concern was probably the Russian economy, which was undergoing a catastrophic meltdown. In 1989 the Soviet Union was ranked the second largest economy by GDP (not per capita) in the world, while in turn in latter half of the 1990s the Russian economy was ranked smaller than Switzerland and Italy in GDP rankings. The GDP had by the mid-1990s fallen continuously since the dissolution of the USSR, almost halving in size by its lowest point in 1998 at around 1,250 billion USD, when it had been around 2,200 billion USD in 1990. Economic growth dipped at its worst to double-digit negatives, shrinking almost 15% in 1992 alone, and the following three years were not much better. The UK Economic Secretary to the Treasury Patricia Hewitt[86] noted in 1998 that the Russian inflation had skyrocketed to a neighbourhood of 50%. She also warned that the Russian economy was close to defaulting on its loans, which could in the worst-case damage the Western economies and undo the progress of the East European economies as well, due to the already ongoing recession of the world economy. This defaulting on debt actually did happen, but thankfully not on the worst-case scale, as the Russian government devalued the rouble to compensate for the economic impact. Russia chose to default on its domestic debt to preserve some confidence in the international investors. The resulting chaos still resulted in changes in the Russian government, as the Prime Minister Kiriyenko was forced to resign by Yeltsin.[87]

This economic collapse had significant repercussions as the situation worsened. In the British debates there were several times when it was noted that the Russian government had trouble even paying wages to its workers, underscoring that there had been reports of even the military not receiving pay[88]. And it should be outlined

[86] Patricia Hewitt (b.1948), the Labour, The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (1998-1999).
[87] The World Bank, Russian Federation GDP. Vol. 318 27.10.98; Satter 2016 41-77.
[88] While somewhat superfluous to note, historically the trend of the military being the first institution of the state that receives its pay, as to avoid a threat of a military coup begins well from the antiquity, in the legions and the praetorian guard of the Roman Empire. There being the one who paid the troops could see one rise to the imperial office with the military support, and indeed many did so often in the late imperial period of 3rd to 5th centuries. Military units rebelling due to the lack of pay, or insufficient pay is a historical constant, especially in the example of the Roman Empire all the way to its end in 1453 with the Fall of Constantinople.

here that even in economically troubled states it is usually the military that does receive its wages regardless of other troubles, as an unpaid military is unlikely to remain loyal to a government that gives it nothing. Such a view was brought up during one debate in the Lords in 1997, where it was mentioned that those forces of the Russian military that supported president Yeltsin in 1993 were still getting paid, reinforcing the idea that the government did try to keep the units critical to its survival loyal. The non-payments were also speculated to be a major driving point in various illicit arms deals that had seen former Soviet military hardware sold on the black market. This arms trade was a noted concern to the British parliament, chiefly due to the most dangerous military technology of the Soviet Union: nuclear weaponry and chemical weaponry. Multiple times concern about the safety of such technology and the possibility of those with know-how to make it leaving Russia to spread that technology was brought up. It was very much a valid concern; if considering the problems with paying wages even to the military, were the former USSR nuclear and chemical weapons and technology still under guard and safe? Or could the technology, or even actual military devices, end up in the hands of some "undesirable" parties, such as Iran, Iraq, North Korea or even terrorists or other radical factions.[89]

Later, when Boris Yeltsin's failing health became apparent in late 1990s, MP Paul Keetch[90] likened the Russian economy to him: "*It is no exaggeration to say that the Russian economy today is as sick as the Russian president*"[91]. There were several ways discussed to aid the Russians in keeping their economy afloat, but in essence all the proposed solutions amount to either monetary aid through various channels. The various channels for the aid included the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Economic Community (EEC), later the EU or Britain itself. The other solution, beside the international organizations, was to give help through various foundations like the Know-How Fund[92], and by supporting retraining programs done in various methods

[89] Vol. 577 22.1.97, Vol. 596 2.2.99; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 180.
[90] Paul Keech (b. 1961-d. 2017), the Liberal Democrats.
[91] Vol. 318 27.10.1998.
[92] A Development Fund operated by the Foreign and Commonwealth office of the UK in conjunction with larger European Community programs like the Regeneration of the Economies (PHARE) and Technical Assistance to CIS Countries (TACIS) fund-programs.

(either sending people over to Russia to act as trainers or by bringing Russians to the UK). These training programs were also proposed (as mentioned earlier) as a solution for the large number of unemployed soldiers resulting from the down-sizing of the Russian military[93]. The major problem with the direct monetary aid was noted as being the high level of corruption in Russian society; much or even most of the money was likely to end up missing, possibly even in possession of the Russian mafia. To circumvent the corruption, most aid programs remained strongly monitored by the Western authorities (like the mentioned Know-How fund). Besides embezzlement of aid funds, there was the non-arms trade side of the black market. The Member of the Parliament Michael Colvin even claiming that roughly 40% of the Russian oil-money in 1997 went outside government-regulated channels. The veracity of these claims is in doubt, but considering the situation in Russia, the black-market oil trade is likely to have been high.[94]

Besides the problems with paying wages, the Russian economic downfall had a compounding effect on its people: the standard of living, life expectancy and even basic human necessities were affected. In terms of life expectancy, the Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short[95] commented in July 1998 that it had plummeted around ten years for the Russian male population[96], a situation that has been slow to improve even in the 21st century, still lagging noticeably behind the female one.[97] During a debate in House of Commons MP Paul Keetch commented about the Russian situation in October 1998:

> *"[…] However, it is not necessary to go far from city centres to come across vast Soviet-style tenement blocks where millions of people live. These are huge, cold and dark buildings, often with no electricity or water supply. These are the hovels which ordinary Russians call home*:"[98]

[93] Vol. 228 12.7.93, Vol. 311 29.4.98, Vol. 535 5.2.92.
[94] Vol. 221 22.3.93, Vol. 225 19.5.93, Vol. 237 7.2.94, Vol. 315 1.7.98, Vol. 318 27.10.98, Vol. 533 21.3.1994, Vol. 588 6.4.98.
[95] Clare Short (b.1946), the Labour, Secretary of State for International Development (1997-2003).
[96] the World Health Organization (WHO); data on life-expectancy by countries.
[97] Vol. 315 1.7.98.
[98] Vol. 318 27.10.98.

He went on to claim that St. Petersburg, or Leningrad as it was previously named, had lost over 600 000 people, which amounted to around 10 percent of modern St. Petersburg's population. Many other areas were claimed to be even worse off in relative terms. This was in large part due to the collapsing economy, which was forcing the Russian government to scrap most of the old Soviet-era social security networks, which previously guaranteed both a place to live and a job. This system was both horrendously inefficient and expensive for the government to maintain when it could not even pay its own employees.[99] By the year 1999 things had deteriorated to the point that there was a need for a European Union operated food aid program in Russia.[100]

3.4 The Council of Europe -*A Pathway to the West? (1994 – 1996)*

Besides the economy there was another topic that touched many similar themes in British debates: Russian membership in the Council of Europe[101]. The connection between the two topics lies in the issue of the human rights s along with the rule of law and issues concerning it, the overall living standard of Russians is connected to them as the Council of Europe would create a 'baseline' for the future development, hopefully shielding the standards of the Russian society from a total freefall.

In the case of the Council of Europe, there was a major debate about even letting Russia join, as it did not meet the criteria yet. On the flip-side there was also put forth the idea that getting the Council of Europe membership would likely boost and legitimize Yeltsin's pro-Western policies, as he would have something to show for it, besides a failing economy and the plummeting living standards. This created a dilemma about the Russian membership that the British parliament debated on several occasions; would they risk Russian reform efforts or the integrity of the Council of Europe? If things went wrong, at least one party was going to be damaged by the decision

[99] Vol. 318. 27.10.1998. Vol 535 5.2.92.
[100] Vol. 601 19.5.1999.
[101] Not to be confused with the European Union's European Council, made out of various ministers of member states, that is part of the Union legislature. The Council of Europe is a primarily human rights watch organization for Europe. Founded in 1949.

taken. Baron Finsberg[102] quoted the European Commission of Human Right's report on Russia showcasing why the membership was an issue:

> *"Experts have come to the conclusion that so-far the rule of law is not established in the Russian Federation […] […] in particular Moscow, seem to simply ignore the constitution […] […] [the Experts have] come to the conclusion that the legal order of the Russia Federation does not, at the present moment, meet the Council of Europe standards"*[103]

The arguments for supporting accelerated membership for Russia also considered the possibility that besides boosting Yeltsin it would hopefully have a longer-term stabilizing effect on Russia, improving the human rights situation in the country. In the eyes of the supporters, the refusal to get Russia membership in the Council more than likely could have fed the emerging extremist factions like Zhirinovsky. Opponents of the membership argued that it would risk the integrity of the Council of Europe to admit Russia without it meeting the requirements for membership. There were also no real guarantees of Russia actually meeting those conditions in the future, as it would have already gotten the membership without them. A major sticking point was also the outbreak of the War in Chechnya that had multiple reported violations of the human rights. Both sides of the argument used it to promote their viewpoint; supporters argued that the Council of Europe would be able to give outside actors some oversight on settling the Chechnyan issue peacefully, while the opponents argued that giving Russia membership was likely to look like an approval of the Chechnyan campaign. Both sides did still acknowledge that the military campaign would continue regardless of the Council of Europe membership. Of course, the issue of Russian membership in the Council of Europe was not determined by the UK parliament, but debates were more to give an official stance for British representatives to take to the Council of Europe when the decision on Russia would be made. In the end Russia, did end up receiving membership on loosened conditions.[104]

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[102] Geoffrey Finsberg (b.1926–d.1996), the Conservatives, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1991-1992) and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1983-1996).
[103] Vol. 559 16.12.94.
[104] Vol. 269 10.1.96, Vol 559 16.12.94; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 174-177.

> "*A central question we have to address relates to the rule of law. […]. While the Constitution […] guarantees a comprehensive set of fundamental rights and establishes that international conventions are part of the Russian legal order and prevail over ordinary laws, this seems to be more theory than practice. In many important fields – civil law and civil procedural law, criminal law and criminal procedural law in particular – the essential legal codifications have not yet been reformed as planned and the work might still take a considerable amount of time. The traditional authoritarian thinking still seems to be dominant in the field of public administration. This might be due to the fact that certain personal components are still the same as in the former USSR. The courts can now be considered structurally independent from the executive, but the concept that it should in the first place be for the judiciary to protect the individuals has not yet become a reality in Russia*".[105]
>
> -Lord Kirkhill[106] quoting the Council of Europe report about the Russian membership

The Council of Europe was not the only Western institution, the membership of which was discussed in regards to the future of Russia; the European union, NATO and the WEU[107] were all occasionally mentioned as well as possible paths for Russia as its reforms progress. All of them were also considered, at best, long-term goals in regard to Russia, with the likelihood of it joining them in reality, even in the long-term, almost nil. In regards to NATO this will be illustrated in the following chapter.[108]

So, to outline some findings in this chapter; it is clear that the Russian situation was chaotic in the early to the mid-1990s, with direction of the Russian political development up in the air. There were several competing visions or fears on that development's direction, be they revived USSR, a vibrant democracy or a Russian Weimar Republic. This developmental direction was seen as intricately connected with the Russian economy, fuelling the fears about the consequences should it actually fully collapse. This led to the Western powers giving the Russian economy essentially

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[105] Vol. 559 16.12.94.
[106] John Smith (b. 1930), the Labour.
[107] The Western European Union, a security organization created as a parallel to NATO, intended to form the basis for EU Defence co-operation, but the parallel with NATO eventually saw the organization dismantled in 2011 as its functions were largely absorbed by the EU. Attempt to re-invigorate it from the shadow of NATO was made in the aftermath of the Cold War, but the NATO eastward expansion ultimately sealed its failure as an alternative for NATO.
[108] Ellison 2007 148-192.

economic CPR, hoping for it to start functioning by itself rather than flatlining. The West was even successful in that, to a degree, unfortunately there were other concerns besides the economy to hamper the desired developmental path of Russia.

4 THE BEAR STILL HAS ITS CLAWS -*OF ARMAMENTS, ALLIANCES AND ATROCITIES*

In general, in the late 1990s the debates about Russia changed their focus from the humanitarian, the social and the economic spheres towards a more security policy-oriented focus. This was largely down to a relative stabilization of the Russian state, even if its economy was still in ruins. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was left as its internationally recognized successor state.[109] Throughout the 1990s Russia largely lacked the ability to truly utilize its strength as a great power. This was actually rather concerning to external observers, including the UK parliament, as Russia still had its massive nuclear arsenal, chemical weapons programs and many nuclear reactors, yet their security was at best questionable during the worst of the chaos of the 1990s. The late 1990s thus saw a slowly reawakening Russian military might, trying to reassert its place as a great power in the face of the 'victorious' West. This reawakening also sparked much debate and concern about the future of relations between the West and Russia

More relevantly to the present day, there was also the question of the eastward expansion of NATO, an action fervently opposed by Russia. Yet at the time Russia lacked the ability to do more than grumble about the expansion. This chapter thus tackles these topics of debate, which were largely external to Russia, but heavily concerned with it and its development. Both NATO and the European Union were

[109] Vol. 534 13.1.92.

brought up more during the late 1990s than earlier in the decade, largely in relation to either the possibility of Russian membership in them or Russia's neighbouring states joining them.

Another of the major topics of debate that came up in the British parliament concerning Russia in the late 1990s, beside the discussions about the Eastern Europe's security, was Chechnya, a region in the Russian Caucasus, that had tried to secede from Russia, where Russian military had engaged in military action to prevent it from separating from the Russian Federation. As already established in the chapter about the historical context, there were two distinct military operations in Chechnya, the First Chechen War between 1994 and 1996 and the Second one beginning in 1999 and lasting until 2009.

The end of the decade also saw a major change of leadership in Russia when President Boris Yeltsin stood down and was replaced by Vladimir Putin. The former KGB agent, turned Federal Security Service director, turned Prime Minister, turned President, marked the true beginning of today's Russia. Putin, especially in the post-1990s optics, represents the end of the chaos of the 1990s in Russia and a solidifying of the earlier anti-Western stances regarding NATO.[110]

4.1 Nuclear Security -*All Weapons of Mass-Destruction Accounted For? (1992 – 1994)*

A major talking point in the early to the mid-1990s was the nuclear capability and security of the former Soviet states. There was a consensus that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were very much a desirable outcome, but the scale and feasibility of it was under debate. The greatest fear was the possibility of former Soviet nuclear technicians or scientists leaving the country to help nuclear programs in "undesirable" countries like Libya, North Korea, Iraq or Iran. Especially Iraq was a worry, as there were acute fears of it building nuclear weaponry This sentiment of "weapons of mass-destruction" was one of the nominal causes given for the Gulf Wars and the

[110] Berger 2020 105-143.

toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003 in the aftermath of September 11th attacks and beginning of the War on Terror, and likewise it played a role in the later toppling of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011. Baroness Park of Monmouth also questioned the possibility of more environmental danger from Soviet nuclear facilities in regards to a repeat of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, as the chaotic situation in the Russian government might hamper supervisory authorities of its nuclear facilities. This fear was not really confined to Russia alone, as several other former Soviet territories contained nuclear facilities, and there too the ability to keep them safe and functioning was under question. There were even claims in 1992 by Lord Jenkins of Putney[111] of warnings from the Russian Atomic Agency (Rosatom) about a possible repeat of the Chernobyl disaster if things would not improve, though the government representative Earl Ferrers[112] mentioned that such warnings had not reached the government if they had been made.[113] Government representative Lord Cavendish[114] said in February 1992 that the possibility of Soviet nuclear technicians leaving the former USSR was *"a great source of anxiety"*[115].[116]

An interesting point brought up by Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos at the start of the 5th of February 1992 debate was the fact that in 1992 the Soviet nuclear arsenal was still spread out throughout the former republics of the USSR, with the majority residing in Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan. There it was pointed out that Kazakhstan could become an Islamist state with nuclear capacity, which is quite a present day-sounding fear. On the disarmament front, debates also briefly touched upon even Britain's own nuclear arsenal, with some arguing even for its dismantling or limitation, as there was no longer any clear enemy. In the Commons the MP of the Conservative party Robert Banks even remarked on the British Trident[117] program: "*It is a criminal waste of money as there is clearly no enemy against which it will be pitched. It seems to be a*

[111] Hugh Jenkins (b. 1908–d. 2004), the Labour, noted anti-nuclear campaigner.
[112] Robert Shirley (b. 1929–d. 2012), the Conservatives, the Deputy Leader of the House of Lords, the Minister of State for Home Affairs (1988-1994), the Minister of State for Consumer Affairs (1994-1995), the Minister of State for Environment and Countryside (1995-1997).
[113] Vol. 559 24.11.94.
[114] Hugh Cavendish (b. 1941), the Conservatives.
[115] Vol. 535 10.2.92.
[116] Vol. 212 27.10.92, Vol. 250 22.11.94, Vol. 535 5.2.92, Vol. 559 24.11.94.
[117] The name of the British nuclear weapons program.

case of political penis envy by the Government." This of course did not represent the government's stance at all, as the Minister of Defence Rifkind[118] very clearly established in the same debate. [119]

In essence, the fears about the state of the former Soviet nuclear facilities and arsenal largely seem to have stemmed from a fear of a repeat of the disaster at Chernobyl somewhere else, and nuclear secrets ending up in hands of anti-Western actors, including the aforementioned Libya, Iraq, Iran or North Korea. In case of nuclear plants, a major facility mentioned that could pose a threat to Europe was the Leningrad region's plant at Sosnovy Bor on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, where an accident could result in massive contamination in surrounding countries, including Estonia and Finland, not to mention the Saint Petersburg metropolitan area in Russia itself.

Disarmament in general was seen as a desirable goal, as the post-Cold War political atmosphere was seen as conductive to it. Besides nuclear weaponry there was also consideration given to advancing the Chemical Weapons Convention[120] by getting Russia to properly follow it. Some of the desire to disarm Russia of chemical weapons was certainly motivated by the dubious stability of the Russian state; the faster those weapons were gone the less chance of them ending up in the wrong hands. Chemical weapons are in this sense different from nuclear armament, as chemical weapons do not need launch codes or high-tech delivery devices. In the late 1990s even the disarmament talks ended up in a head-wind as the US and Russia could not agree on signing a new anti-ballistic missile treaty (ABM) or make any progress on START II or START III[121], which was in large part due to NATO forces bombing Serbia

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[118] Malcolm Rifkind (b. 1946), the Conservatives, the Minister of Defence (1992-1995), the Foreign Secretary (1995-1997).
[119] Vol. 534 13.1.92, Vol. 535 5.2.92, Vol. 212 27.10.92, Vol. 250 22.11.94, Vol. 216 12.1.93; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 75-90.
[120] *The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction*, or the Chemical Weapons Convention is major arms control treaty signed by almost all of the UN members in 1992, with exceptions of Egypt, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan. The treaty calls for destruction of any chemical weapons stockpiles in the signatory countries.
[121] Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, bilateral arms reduction treaties between the USA and the USSR/the Russian Federation. First two signed in 1991 and 1993, third one negotiated in 1997 never signed.

to stop the Kosovo War[122], the NATO expansion despite the Russian opposition, and the US plans to create a new missile defence system.[123]

It should also be noted on the fears of missing Weapons of Mass-Destruction in general that the Russian government has consistently denied having lost any devices in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, despite claims to the contrary by a General Alexander Lebed, a former Secretary of the Russian Security Council in 1997. He claimed that several nuclear devices were missing from the stockpiles that had been previously located in the other Soviet territories outside of Russia.[124] The government's denial of any such missing weapons can be seen as doubtful, considering that the United States is known to have lost several devices in accidents. So, to claim that during the 40 years of nuclear capability the USSR did not misplace weapons, or especially so in the utter chaos of the early 1990s, is somewhat suspicious. The only known lost Soviet nuclear devices are several missiles lost with the accidentally sunken nuclear submarines, K-8, K-219 and K-278 that sunk in April 1970, October 1986 and April 1989 respectively.

4.2 NATO -*The Great Enemy (1994 – 1998)*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization[125], or more colloquially NATO, rose to prominence in the late 1990s when discussing Russia. NATO was originally founded in 1949 as an organization to protect Western Europe from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but in the aftermath of the fall of the USSR it was left without a clear purpose, as the weakened Russia did not pose a threat like the Soviet Union had, what with its economy in a meltdown and its military barely able to keep the Russian Federation

[122] A part of the break-up of Yugoslavia, fought between 1998 and 1999. Serbian refusal to take part in peace talks combined with claims of ethnic cleansing similar to the Bosnian genocide seen in the Bosnian War of 1992-1995 resulted in NATO deciding to undertake aerial bombing campaign to force Serbian forces to withdraw from Kosovo. The Yugoslavian Wars represents the first time NATO undertook a military operation under its own purview.
[123] Vol. 250 22.11.94, Vol. 613 7.6.00.
[124] Arms Control Association. 09.1997.
[125] NATO, established in 1949, a collective security organization for safeguarding the western democracies from the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War. Did see large increase in membership in wake of the Soviet collapse as the former Warsaw Pact joined it.

from falling apart. This loss of the "original mission" or the raison d'être saw NATO start a transition to a more general European security organization during the 1990s. The new goal was to maintain peace on the continent, rather than protect it from something specific, which came apparent with the intervention in the Yugoslavian Wars to force an end to the conflicts. In early 1997 Lord Quinton[126] brought up the possibility of reorienting NATO into an anti-China alliance, as in his words China was "*the last one of the three[127] great mass-murdering despotisms of the 20th Century*".[128] Lord Moynihan[129] also remarked later in June 1997 that "*the peace in the post-Cold War Europe cannot be taken for granted*".[130] There were also calls for outright dissolution of NATO as well, as it was seen by some as a relic of the Cold War that had served its purpose, as shown by Lord Kennet commenting on the need for it in June 1997:[131]

> *Who threatened NATO then, and what with? Scrabbling through the waste-paper baskets of the implausible, various think-tanks and lobbies and military industries concluded that it could be argued that various Asian countries with strict Muslim regimes might, if goaded enough, threaten it. Certainly, some of those demonised states – not all – used provocative language towards us and certainly some – once, twice, even three times over many years – have committed acts of terrorism in NATO countries. Not big ones: it is notable that neither Oklahoma City nor Tokyo was foreign terrorism, and Lockerbie has yet to come to trial.*[132]

Russia prominently featured in discourses about the enlargement of NATO; Russia was very much opposed to this happening in 'its neighbourhood', in other words in the former Warsaw Pact countries and the former USSR itself. There were even some British politicians questioning the right of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to seek NATO membership if Russia outright opposed it. The enlargement of NATO is intrinsically linked with Russian security policy even today, as the alliance has been the enemy of the Moscow government since its founding and continues to be so in eyes of the Kremlin, going

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[126] Anthony Quinton (b. 1925–d. 2010), the Conservatives, a political and moral philosopher.
[127] Other two presumably being the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.
[128] Vol. 577 22.1.97.
[129] Sir Colin Moynihan (b. 1955), the Conservatives.
[130] Vol. 580 23.6.97.
[131] Hamilton 2019 3-57; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 75-90.
[132] Vol. 580 23.6.97.

by their justifications for the 2008 Georgian War and the 2014 conflict with Ukraine that has escalated into an outright invasion in 2022. It was made very clear already in the 1990s that Russia opposed any expansion of NATO eastward of the Oder-Neisse Line[133], into what Russians considered their sphere of influence. Russia's protests were, as seen in the debates of the UK parliament, considered and the effects of going through with the expansion of NATO regardless were also discussed. The government stance seemed largely to be ignoring the Russian protests, as Russia lacked any ability to actually try to stop the NATO membership processes. The Russian stance also greatly played into the reluctance to even really consider Russia itself joining NATO or the other major Western co-operative institutions, such as the EU. Some parliamentarians argued that the Russian protestations were an attempt to weaken Western unity and NATO by holding the Westernization reforms and various treaties hostage in exchange for possibly influencing the NATO decision-making. The situation was in some ways similar to the Council of Europe membership process, in that Russia tried to circumvent the formal channels and requirements to advance its own goals.[134]

Even then there were multiple politicians in both houses of parliament who argued that appeasing[135], though they avoided using the exact word 'appease', Russia should not be more important than NATO expansion and the right of Eastern Europe to join NATO, as was their right under national self-determination. The Earl of Carlisle even outright compared the attitude towards Russia with the 1930s appeasement policy;

> *[…] Perhaps I may deal with three points in the committee's report. The first, a constant theme running through the report, is the message, "We must be careful, what-*

[133] The finalized eastern border of Germany as agreed upon in *the Treaty of Final Settlement with Respect to Germany*, signed in 1990 between East and West Germany and the four occupying powers of the UK, the US, France and the Soviet Union. Treaty allowed the reunification of Germany and restored full sovereignty of Germany with withdrawal of any remaining occupational forces excluding NATO troops stationed there. Germany renounced any and all claims on its former territories east of the Oder-Neisse line, lost in the aftermath of the Second World War.
[134] Götz 2019 481-500; Rühle 2014; Zagorski 2019 459-480.
[135] The choice of term 'appease' is entirely deliberate on my part, as even with the connotations from the 1930s policies it does in my personal opinion illustrate the tone in debates on Russia quite well, even if concessions remained small in the end.

ever we do or do not do, not to irritate or antagonise the Russian Federation". I am reminded of the story about the Foreign Office and Eton College. In the late 1930s, the time known to us with shame as "the years of appeasement", […][136] *-Earl of Carlisle*[137]

The opponents of NATO expansion often cited the strengthening Russian opposition forces to Yeltsin as the major reason for reconsidering the expansion policy of NATO. To illustrate the concerns, Lord Mason of Barnsley[138] went as far as to assume Yeltsin was likely to face a change of government soon, as he had lost support while the opposition had strengthened. Lord Kennet, a noted advocate of arms control, presented the possibility of NATO expansion sparking a new arms race when Russia had recovered, resulting in a large-scale remilitarisation of Europe.[139]

[…] while we all accept and know that NATO is no threat to Russia, is it not a fact that the introduction of NATO near to the Russian border could be an encouragement to some ultra-politicians on one side or the other which could cause long-term damage to the West? [140] -Lord Gisborough[141]

We can bait the bear in his pit, but in the end, he will rise up and bite us, or it will cost us all the ambulances of the UN and OSCE 10 times over to restore him to health. Europe will suffer first. [142] -Lord Kennet

[…] Thus, they will try to prevent enlargement in several ways: first, by playing on our fears and by claiming that we shall, if we go ahead, destabilise Russia. Primakov told Chatham House recently that,

"if agreement could be reached to freeze all new admissions, then it will be possible to speed up democratic reforms in Russia".

Next, they are bargaining, arguing that enlargement requires revision of the CFE Treaty (already agreed in principle) and START 2 (still not ratified by Russia) and a new package for START 3. Next, in any treaty with NATO they will argue for a veto and make stipulations on the enlargement process. Primakov said on 7th March that any documents regulating Russian-NATO relations must provide the guarantee that NATO will not extend its military infrastructure (a very broad term) into the territory of new members. [143] -Baroness Park

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[136] Vol. 592 31.7.98.
[137] George Howard (b. 1949), the Liberal-Democrats, an academic on the Baltic states.
[138] Roy Mason (b. 1924–d. 2015), the Labour.
[139] Vol. 316 17.7.97, Vol. 550 16.12.93, Vol. 571 24.4.96, Vol. 577 22.1.97, Vol. 579 14.3.97, Vol. 580 23.6.97, Vol. 592 31.7.98, Vol. 613 7.6.00; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 169-186; Tsygankov 2012 172-192.
[140] Vol. 571 24.4.96.
[141] Richard Chaloner (b. 1927), the Conservatives.
[142] Vol. 579 14.3.97.
[143] Vol. 579 14.3.97.

It is not clever to give grave offence to a weakened Russian state. We are encouraging the slow candle of Russian nationalism. [144] -Mr Dalyell[145]

Russia is fearful of the expansion of NATO and remains strongly opposed to it. Some people have suggested that Russia is becoming reconciled to NATO expansion. This is untrue. What may look like acquiescence is, in reality, a retreat in the face of faits accomplis.

We seem to be embarking on a programme of expansion of NATO by successive stages in the face of Russian opposition. This serves no clear purpose; and the effect may well be to exclude Russia permanently from the architecture of European security and to alienate its politicians and its people from the rest of Europe. [146]

-Viscount Hanworth[147]

I have never been able to see an alternative to enlargement, because not to have allowed Poland and the others the right to choose what would make them feel safe after the long years of brutal Soviet occupation seemed unthinkable. However, I have to say that the Russians are already on the way to making it, through this apparently high-minded and peace-loving act, a hollow mockery. The Russian white ants will eat away at the whole edifice of NATO, which they are determined to turn into yet another political talking shop like the OSCE and the UN, while acquiring at the same time in the sacred name of transparency the greatest possible knowledge of our military strength, intentions and capacity and using their presence inside NATO to render it no more than an expensive collection of bureaucrats in uniform, busy servicing the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. […] *It's the Council of Europe story all over again, Russia was allowed to join and promptly reneged on its human rights commitments.* [148] -Baroness Park

"Russia's agenda is to turn NATO into an emasculated political entity, while using it to exert influence on any and every decision the NATO powers may wish to make, including the future of Milosevic's Yugoslavia, the future of the Baltic states and many other such issues. Its eventual objective is the dissolution of NATO and the advancement of that toothless creature the OSCE". [149] -Baroness Park

[144] Vol. 316 17.7.98.
[145] Sir Thomas Dalyell (b. 1932–d. 2017), the Labour, a vocal anti-war and anti-imperialist spokesperson in the House of Commons.
[146] Vol. 592 31.7.98.
[147] David Pollock (b. 1946), the Labour.
[148] Vol. 580. 23.6.97.
[149] Vol. 580. 23.6.97.

Even then there were attempts over the course of the 90s to mend the relationship between the two old enemies. The most important such undertaking was unquestionably the formation of the Permanent Joint Council,[150] formed by the Founding Act on Mutual Relations connected to it in 1997. The council was seen as the best way of reducing tensions between Russia and NATO, opening a channel of discourse directly between the two. It was also seen as a possible path to increasing co-operation against mutual threats, such as the Islamist terrorism. On the side lines there were also the effects and consequences of the Russian inclusion in the NATO Partnership for Peace program and other non-NATO military co-operation. Even then, any possibility of Russia joining NATO was considered at best a future development in a 10 to 15 years' time, if at all.[151]

> *[…] to many Russians the stretch of country from the Oder-Neisse line east and the Baltic states are as significant to them strategically as the Low Countries are to Britain?*[152]*-Earl of Lauderdale*[153]

> *[…] 7 years is a long time to negotiate a border treaty? Does he* [*the government representative] further agree that since the Baltic States regained their independence the Russian Federation has put every obstacle in path of recognising the borders that Lenin recognised in the 1920 in treaty of Riga and the treaty of Tartu respectively. Will the noble Lord ask the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to send Foreign Secretary Primakov a pen so that he can sign the treaties with Latvia and Estonia?*[154] -Earl of Carlisle

> *Does she [the government representative] not agree that the politically and economically bankrupt regime that governs the long-suffering Russian people could better spend its time and resources putting its own house in order rather than harassing and provoking the Baltic states. […]*[155] -Earl of Carlisle

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[150] The NATO-Russia Permanent Join Council was formed in 1997 as a forum for discourse between NATO and Russia, to enhance cooperation and better guarantee security in Europe. Replaced by the NATO–Russia Council in 2002 with same purpose. It has been largely used for coordinating fight against terrorism since then.
[151] Vol. 304 12.1.98, Vol. 553 21.3.94, Vol. 564 18.5.95, Vol. 577 22.1.97, Vol. 580 23.6.97, Vol. 583 17.11.97, Vol. 588 8.4.98, Vol. 603 8.7.99; Kieringer 2019 57-71.
[152] Vol. 571 24.4.96.
[153] Patrick Maitland (b. 1911–d. 2008), the Conservatives.
[154] Vol. 592 31.7.98.
[155] Vol. 592 31.7.98.

The Russian view of NATO enlargement is connected heavily to its neighbourhood, the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine. This is one of the most recurring points in regards to NATO; how should the Russian position be handled without alienating it from the West, while not letting the Russians dictate the NATO policy of their neighbours? Various solutions were thrown around, varying between simply not offering membership to those states, to outright dissolving the entire alliance or not enlarging it at all, and stretching to the idea of getting Russia itself to join NATO. A big part of this recurring topic was the security of the Baltic republics; both Estonia and Latvia have sizeable Russian minorities, and Lithuania shares a border with the Russian exclave of the Kaliningrad Oblast. Those three states returning to Russian control would have shored up the Russian position in the Baltic region and reconnected Kaliningrad with the rest of the Russian Federation. This gave rise to fears that Russia could try to, at the very least, control the Baltic states, which in turn was in opposition to the various Western ideals on national self-governance and freedom. During the 1990s, Russia was repeatedly noted as hindering the Western integration of the Baltics, mostly by holding various treaties on the confirmation of borders hostage, or stirring problems regarding the Russian minorities in the region. Most often noted was the Russian government not signing a border treaty with Estonia, despite it having been ready for years. This was, from the British perspective, seen as quite a deliberate effort to slow down both the EU and NATO aspirations in the region, as Russia had a vested interest to do so and, more importantly, the means, which it did not possess in regards to Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The Baltic states joining NATO would from the Russian perspective not only encircle Kaliningrad on land, but also give NATO a direct border with the Russian 'heartland' in the close proximity to Saint Petersburg, the second city of Russia. The USSR had actually gone to war ostensibly for the security of that very city in 1939, attacking Finland in the Winter War, and occupying the Baltic states for the first time. This sentiment was seen as the

driving force in the Russian opposition to the Baltic states joining NATO, much like the arguments concerning Ukraine.[156]

While the Baltics dominated the debate on the former Soviet Union member states' NATO membership, largely thanks to Lord Kagan and the Earl of Carlisle, both Ukraine and Belarus were also occasionally brought up. Belarus was, straight after the breakup of the USSR, seen to be aligning with Russia rather than pursuing any pro-Western policies on the matter of Ukraine there were few mentions of both a possible NATO and an EU membership as the relations developed. With Ukraine, however, there was also a clear acknowledgement of it being of the greatest interest for Russia in maintaining its influence. The Baltics had after all been occupied in the aftermath of WWII, but Ukraine was very much a part of the historical Russia and in the security-political aspect exposed the Russian 'heartland' in the Central and Southern Russia, if Ukraine was hostile to Russia. So, while Ukraine was considered a candidate for future NATO expansion, it was also largely deemed that this should not happen before Russian attitude towards NATO warmed. In the present-day context the following quote from Lord Ponsonby[157] in March 1997 on Ukraine has a sense of foreboding.[158]

> *However, I believe that we in the West cannot ignore this argument. I was struck by the quote from the President of the Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, on 20th February. He said:*
>
> *"Russia pretends that there is no independent Ukraine. The status of Ukraine … cannot be taken for granted".*
>
> *He went on to recall Polish-Russian history as a possible model for Ukraine – a history which began with a war in 1921 and ended with the annexation of a large part of the country in 1939.* [159] -Lord Ponsonby

Outside the Baltic question, there was a considerable debate about the exact path of former Warsaw Pact countries, including Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. Often Ukraine was also placed into the same group when the topic came up. The parliament did acknowledge that the former Soviet satellite states were all intent

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[156] Vol. 241 13.4.94, Vol. 316 17.7.98, Vol. 581 30.6.97, Vol. 592 14.7.98, Vol. 579 14.3.97, Vol. 593 12.10.98, Vol.596 2.2.99; Götz 2019 481-500; Jeszenszky 2019 117-150; Kozyrev 2019 449-458; Smith G. 64-87, 176-182; Zagorski 2019 459-480.
[157] Fredrick Ponsonby (b. 1958), the Labour.
[158] Vol. 241 13.4.94, Vol. 579 14.3.97, Vol 581 30.6.97, Vol. 592 14.7.98, Vol. 593 12.10.98, Vol.596 2.2.99; Götz 2019 481-500; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 179-181, 187-198; Smith G 167-172.
[159] Vol. 579 14.3.97.

on joining NATO as fast as possible, but there was still debate on whether-or not those countries should even be allowed to join the alliance. As noted earlier, the British government outright dismissed any possibility of giving the Russians a veto power on any expansion of NATO; similarly, the alleged Russian claims of geopolitical encirclement by NATO were dismissed as preposterous. Eastern Europe joining NATO was very much considered motivated by the threat of Russia and the legacy of the Soviet pressure. [160]

NATO and Russia tie together in the larger geopolitical arena as well. The 1990s represented the largest shift in the security-political situation in Europe since the end of the Second World War. This suddenly shifting situation also brought in the lone superpower of the United States of America, whose policies had a marked effect on both NATO and the UK.[161] The dismissing of Russian opposition to NATO expansion did raise concerns about the Russian reaction in general as well; the danger of an isolated Russia was seen as the worst-case scenario. This gave rise to a political knife's edge; Russia could not be given too much weight on the issues of the security of Eastern Europe, but needed to be accommodated enough to keep it from turning its back on the West and democracy. Despite this political tight-rope, by the 1990s there was also some sense of relief, when the fears of 1994-1997 about surging opposition forces failed to materialize. In the discussions on enlargement of NATO and the precarious political state of it, the already established parallels to Germany in the 1930s were again brought up by the Earl of Carlisle in the July 1998, by comparing the fears about Russian reactions to the Western Allies' appeasement policy towards Hitler.[162] Both the issue of NATO expansion and later the Chechnyan Wars illustrate this political quagmire The Baroness Scotland of Asthal[163] coined the term 'critical engagement' for

[160] Vol. 571 24.4.96, Vol. 579 14.3.97; Jeszenszky 2019 117-150.
[161] Vol. 335 19.7.99, Vol. 580. 23.6.97.
[162] Vol 592 31.7.98.
[163] Patricia Scotland (b. 1955), the Labour, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1999-2001), held further ministerial offices in the 2000s and is the current (as of March 2022) Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations.

keeping Russia engaged with the West while at the same time condemning its actions when necessary.[164]

In essence, the Russian opposition to NATO enlargement was down to the old ideology of spheres of influence and buffer states. Russia more or less considered Eastern Europe and especially the former states of the USSR its proverbial 'backyard', much like the US saw (and likely still does see) the rest of the American continent as theirs. This came out as a two-pronged Russian tactic to prevent the eastward encroachment of NATO: firstly, there was the direct, outright opposition with demands of expansion being stopped, and secondly there were the more underhanded tactics, such as holding various treaties hostage by not signing them and trying to use them as leverage to halt the expansion.

4.3 War in Chechnya -*The Cracked Image of a New Russia (1994 – 1999)*

As mentioned earlier, during the 1990s Russia faced a military conflict within its remaining territories in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. While states[165] of the USSR itself were allowed to gain independence, the same did not apply to constituent regions of Russia itself, which had multiple autonomous territories and republics. The major powder keg for conflicts was the ethnically and religiously divergent Russian Caucasus. Most important and militant of such conflicts was the Chechnyan region that seceded from the Russian Federation in 1991 under former Soviet general Dzhokhar Dudayev[166], sparking over decade of conflict in the area. The First Chechen War was the initial Russian attempt to return the wayward territory to

[164] Vol. 612 20.4.00; Berger 2020 105-143; Felkay 2002 159-172; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 169-186; Talbott 2019 405-424.
[165] Meaning: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia itself, though Russia is considered successor of the USSR rather than a breakaway state.
[166] Dzhokhar Dudayev (b 1944–d. 1996), a former Soviet Air Force General, the first president of the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, a secularist leader. Assassinated by the Russian military by a missile strike after detecting him using a satellite phone. His death may have fueled the Islamist factions in Chechnya.

fold in 1994, ending in a Russian withdrawal in 1996 after a nominal peace treaty that essentially just confirmed the status quo. Later in 1999 the Russian army returned under orders to end the separatist state, and thus the region saw outbreak of the Second Chechen War with sporadic fighting lasting till 2009. Both wars featured prominently in debates concerning Russia and its direction of development, often in a critical fashion, as the measures used by the Russian forces escalated, with little effort put in finding a diplomatic solution. That does not mean there was no understanding from the British direction towards the Russian response to the Chechen uprising:

> *[…]Russia then faced a direct confrontation by an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 terrorists, including veteran Islamist jihad warriors, who had moved into Chechnya with an agenda to take over not just Chechnya, but also Dagestan and other countries in the Caucasus such as Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh and, ultimately, the Caspian oil basin.*
>
> *[…], Congressman McCullom[167], speaking in the US House of Representatives, […] said that,*
>
> *"There looms an escalation in and beyond Chechnya. Spearheaded by Islamist forces, including terrorists from several Middle Eastern countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the new cycle of fighting is expected to spread into the entire region for geo-strategic reasons. The surge of Islamist terrorism is likely to serve as a catalyst for the eruption of the tension and acrimony building throughout the entire Caucasus.*
>
> *[…], German BND Chief August Hanning reported to the Bundestag that the situation in the Caucasus had 'escalated dangerously'…. the fighting in Chechnya will not only escalate, but also spread to the fringes of the Russian Federation and to the rest of the Caucasus. Hanning is most alarmed by these prospects because the Islamist forces in Chechnya are supported and guided by the Afghan Taliban and by the globally operating terrorist bin Laden as well as by groups of Islamist mercenaries. Through these channels, Hanning found out, the Chechen forces have been provided with large quantities of modern weapons including 'Stinger-type' anti-aircraft missiles. Hanning warned the Bundestag of the dire strategic and economic ramifications for the West if the Chechnya war spread to Georgia, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and the rest of the Caucasus". […]*

[167] Bill McCollum (b 1944), the Republican Party, served in various US House of Representatives Intelligence Committees.

"*The United States must support the Russian endeavour to control the Islamist upsurge in the Caucasus before terrorism gets out of control.*[168]-Baroness Cox

Chechnya COULD destabilize the North Caucasus but has not yet done so[169] -Mr. Hurd[170]

The Russians are decided and set upon the policy they are pursuing, the sooner they are successful, the better.[171] -John Maples[172]

These quotes present a quite understanding view of Russia's efforts to restore control over Chechnya; if it did not, there was risk of the entire Russian Federation unravelling. Important to note is also the mention of the Caspian Oil, which is one of the world's largest oil fields and thus plays a major economic role, especially for Europe, where most of the Russian oil and gas pipelines lead. It was seen as preferable to contain the fighting as soon as possible; there was much debate in the UK parliament about how to get the Russians and the Chechen separatist to the negotiating table. There were many proposed solutions to the conflict, mostly varying between full independence and increased autonomy from Moscow; the Tatarstan Autonomous Republic was used as an example of a peaceful solution. Multiple different avenues were also proposed, ranging from the OSCE[173] to the Council of Europe and even possible NATO assistance or military intervention to get negotiations started properly and to force an end to the conflict before it spread. Lords Richard[174] and Kennet likened the whole debate of Russia's outlying territories, such as the Northern Caucasus, to the decolonisation of the 1960s and 1970s, those territories could be considered colonies of the old Russian Empire and should thus be freed in a controlled fashion.[175]

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[168] Vol. 253 31.1.95, Vol. 613 7.6.00.
[169] Vol. 253 1.2.95.
[170] Douglas Hurd (b. 1930), the Conservatives, the Foreign Secretary (1989-1995), elevated into the House of Lords in 1997.
[171] BBC News 2.1.2000.
[172] John Maples (b.1943–d. 2012), the Conservatives, the Shadow Secretary of State for Defence (1998-1999), the Shadow Foreign Secretary (1999-2000).
[173] The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, a regional security organization established in 1975 by Helsinki Accords. A watchdog-organization for arms-control, human rights, freedom of press and fair and free elections. Essentially an observer for unstable regions and a forum for discourse between members.
[174] Ivor Richard (b. 1932–d. 2018), the Labour, the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords (1992-1997).
[175] Vol. 255 1.3.95, Vol. 560 19.1.95, Vol. 568 23.1.96, Vol. 569 20.2.96, Vol. 607 8.12.99.

Russia has no better right to rule the peoples of the North Caucasus, or indeed other non-Russian peoples, than we should have in this day and age to rule the Indians and Africans, rule over whom we gave up 30 and 40 years ago. The Russians acquired dominion over the North Caucasus between 1780 and 1820[…]. It is a big, outstanding historical anomaly that there should still be, even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a thumping great white European empire in Asia. Bits of it will rebel; bits of it are rebelling. The natural course in the long run is for the imperial power – Russia – to do what all 11 European imperial powers have done; namely, to retire as peacefully as possible and build up good relations with new, independent states. [176] -Lord Kennet

It is possible that in the end Russia's 19th century conquests will all have to be relinquished. […] Russia will have to give up its empire just as Britain, France and Holland did in the decolonisation years of the 1960s and 1970s. The fact that Russia annexed the lands belonging to its immediate neighbours while the maritime powers developed what were called "salt-sea" empires makes no difference to the relationship between master and subject. [177] -Lord Avebury[178]

Another aspect illustrated by Baroness Cox was the threat of Islamic terrorism; in June 2000 she called the Second Chechnyan War a "*Islamist terrorist-instigated war*". It seems to be often assumed that such a threat came to the forefront really only after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11th 2001. While it might have indeed not been a really publicly known threat, it is clear that politicians were aware of such forces marshalling against the West far earlier. Even Osama bin Laden was mentioned by name. Baroness Cox was not the only one to mention such things, nor the first in the material looked at in this study. Russia was portrayed as a sort of first line of defence or a first responder to the threat of Islamic terrorism, mostly due to such elements of Islamism existing within its own borders, including Chechnya, and its proximity to Middle-Eastern and Central Asian nations that had exhibited signs of rising Islamism. Besides this, the Soviet Union had recently fought a war in Afghanistan before its collapse, and as such the Russian army had recent experience in fighting islamists in their home territory, even if their success was questionable. In terms of Islamism there was not only Chechnya, as mentioned in

[176] Vol. 568 16.1.96.
[177] Vol. 568 16.1.96.
[178] Eric Lubbock (b. 1928–d. 2016), the Liberal-Democrats, a human rights campaigner.

debates, but earlier in the decade (as already discussed) the possibility of old Soviet nuclear technology ending up in terrorist hands was also feared, with Kazakhstan actually even mentioned as possible base for Islamists to rally in. The threat of Islam was speculated upon as a possible bridge to connect with the Russians, a common enemy of both the West and Russia.[179]

The Chechnyan conflicts were also the breaking point in the image of the "New Russia". The human rights violations and atrocities reported from there were seen as heavily contrasting with the Russian government desire to be seen as reforming into a Western democracy. Instead, the Chechnyan Wars brought back the brutal and blunt militant image of the Soviet Union's military interventions in face of dissent. Shelling their own citizens in a purely military operation did put a dent to any presentation of abandoning the old Soviet tactic in dealing with dissident elements. While in the First Chechen War there were some calls for even a recognition of the Chechen independence, but the UK government deemed the matter an internal affair of Russia for the time being,[180] the tone of discussion about Russia changed quite rapidly as the situation worsened with some of the representatives in both chambers giving quite strong statements on the nature of Russia:

> *Does the Defence Secretary feel ashamed that the West and the Government have continued to look the other way as the much-discredited Russian President has bombed a small nation into the dark ages?* [181] -Alice Mahon[182]

> *The Tsars and the Soviets may have departed but the Russian bear has not changed. That is the message that has gone out far and wide.* [183] -Lord Belhaven and Stenton[184]

> *We can now see that in dealing with Russia we are dealing with a semi-barbarous state and a society that only knew a measure of democracy for a few years before the First World War.* [185] -Baron Hylton[186]

[179] Vol. 583 17.11.97, Vol. 606 27.10.99, Vol. 607 8.12.99, Vol. 613 7.6.00.
[180] Vol. 560 19.1.95.
[181] Vol. 253 31.1.1995.
[182] Alice Mahon (b. 1937), the Labour, anti-Blairite.
[183] Vol. 563 18.4.95.
[184] Robert Hamilton (b. 1927–d. 2020), the Conservatives.
[185] Vol. 563 18.4.95.
[186] Raymond Jolliffe (b. 1932), Crossbencher.

There is no future in enabling the neo-fascist potential dictators of Russia to be pacified. Their appetites are insatiable. The cost is likely to be unbearable. [187] - Lord Clinton-Davis[188]

[…] what constitutes the legitimate use of force in order to retain the integrity of the Russian Empire? Does indiscriminate bombing of cities and villages form a part of that legitimate use of force? [189]- Jon Owen Jones[190]

[…] As the Yeltsin regime increasingly bears less resemblance to a democratic Government than it does to the bloodthirsty tyrannies of Stalin and some of the tsars, will Her Majesty's Government take all practicable measures to avert humanitarian tragedy? [191] -Malcolm Savidge[192] "

[Russia cannot be] a vibrant democracy if it is bombarding part of its country using first world war methods against people who have a different view of world from that held in Moscow.[193] -Jeremy Corbyn[194]

The escalation of violence in Chechnya brought up many comparisons to the Soviet Union, ranging from Soviet atrocities, such as the Holodomor and the Katyn Massacre to the Winter War or the crushing of Czechoslovakian and Hungarian uprisings during the Cold War. Lord Belhaven & Stenton linked the shelling of Grozny[195] to that list while Lord Rea[196] compared the shelling to the Vietnam War My Lai-massacre. There were also arguments put forth even in the initial phase of the conflict in 1995 of KGB or FSB involvement in its escalating violence, though there was no real source or evidence presented, nor was it specified which side those agents were on. The speculations included various theories of both current and former state intelligence apparatus elements being involved in Chechnya, be it by orders from Moscow or rogue agents. There were and still are several conspiracy theories about Russian government

[187] Vol. 563 18.4.95.
[188] Stanley Clinton-Davies (b. 1928), the Labour, served in the European Commission in the 80s and as the Minister of State for Trade (1997-1998).
[189] Vol. 271 7.2.96.
[190] Jon Owen Jones (b. 1954), the Labour.
[191] Vol. 340 12.7.99.
[192] Malcolm Savidge (b. 1946) the Labour.
[193] Vol. 346 14.3.2000.
[194] Jeremy Corbyn (b. 1949), the Labour, anti-Blairite, later the Leader of the Labour Party (2015-2019).
[195] Grozny is the capital of the Chechnyan region. Named after the famous Tsar Ivan the Terrible (Rus. Grozny).
[196] Nicolas Rea (b. 1928–d. 2020), the Labour.

involvement in the apartment bombings in September 1999 and the invasion of militants in Dagestan, which also took place August to September 1999. The apartment bombings of 1999 were a series of bombings blamed on Chechen Islamists done in several cities including Moscow, killing over 300 and injuring over a thousand people. The invasion of Dagestan was concurrent attack by the Chechen Islamists in Dagestan, a region neighbouring Chechnya. Both were used as a pretext to justify the Second Chechen War and sparked many conspiracy theories about connections between the Chechens leadership and the Russian military and security organizations. During the Chechnyan conflicts there were also the 'Filtration Camps' established by Russian forces to sort through prisoners. The camps were claimed to be in essence concentration camps, again bringing up the comparison to the Germany of the 1930s. Interestingly, no-one brought up the parallel to the gulags of the USSR This could be for several reasons; the actual state recorded data on the gulags was readily available only recently (though much of this was already known from other sources prior to opening of the Soviet archives, it was largely just a matter of confirmation of the older data), or the more likely reason being that the concentration camps are just more vividly ingrained in the Western European memory than the Gulags far in the East.[197]

It can be argued that the wars in Chechnya were at the very least the first nail in the coffin of any pro-Western democratic Russia, as it lost most of the goodwill it had from the Western nations by the end of the first war. That was followed by vocal protesting about NATO expansion from 1997 to 1999, which, along with Yeltsin's plummeting approval ratings, brought many of the reforms in Russia to a standstill. When the second war in Chechnya started, the West was no longer understanding, condemning Russia quite strongly. Of course, that does not mean that there were any sanctions imposed or military action taken, as there was still hope that the new president succeeding the ailing Yeltsin would be more effective than Yeltsin had been in solving the situation. The main reasons for this idleness of the West were claimed to be two-fold: firstly, the Chechen rebels had become largely a terrorist organization

[197] Vol. 563 18.4.95, Vol. 568 16.1.96, Vol. 571 16.4.96, Vol. 607 22.12.99; Fedor 2011 118-181; Mattox & Rachwald 2001 170; Satter 2016 1-40; Russel 2006 67-86.

with connections to groups like the Al Qaida and, secondly, the West had set a precedent for bombarding cities to end a conflict with the NATO-operation against Serbia[198], bombing the Serbian capital Belgrade to end the Kosovo war. Thus, Russians could easily turn any true condemnation against them by claiming hypocrisy. Of course, there was no consensus on the reaction to the Russian actions, as the British government had to defend its decision to partake in the NATO operation while condemning Russia for very similar actions, even if there were great differences in details. The government representative Foreign Secretary Robin Cook[199] was actually forced to do so in the very debate the 'hypocrisy' of condemnation was brought up. So, in essence the problem created by the Western nations' earlier actions paralyzed any strong responses to the Chechen Wars.[200] Still, there had been a loss of trust in a pro-Western direction of Russia in the West.[201]

4.4 President Putin -*A Reformer and a Genuine Democrat? (1999 – 2000)*

Today the Russian president Vladimir Putin is one of the most well-known and controversial figures of the 21st century, so far. However, his political career and his rise to the top of the Russian government began in the 1990s, culminating in him assuming the presidency when Boris Yeltsin resigned. He served in several high-ranking positions prior to his presidential position, such as the Director of FSB, successor to the Soviet intelligence agency KGB, the Head of several commissions in Yeltsin's Presidential Staff and, most importantly, as Prime Minister when Yeltsin resigned.[202]

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[198] While the state was still officially called Yugoslavia it was reduced in territorial extent to just Serbia and Montenegro.
[199] Robin Cook, (b.1946–d. 2005), the Labour, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1997-2001). Resigned from the government in opposition of the Iraq War in 2003 receiving a historic standing ovation from the Commons after his resignation speech.
[200] Vol. 340 12.7.99, Vol 607 22.12.99.
[201] Vol. 347 29.3.00, Vol. 606 27.10.99, Vol. 613 18.5.00; Felkay 2002 185-210; Satter 2016 1-40; Savoila 2004 21-101;
[202] Kagarlitsky & Clarke 2002 251-279; Paxton & Traynor & Wilmot 2004 143-145; BBC News 16.8.1999.

President Yeltsin had, prior to his resignation, been suffering from alcoholism, which had been noticed internationally. This is believed to have exacerbated his health problems leading up to his resignation. Still, his departure was unexpected even in the Russian government's highest echelons, even if it was clear that Yeltsin had been looking for a fitting successor for some time. That surprise probably has its roots in a trend present in Russian heads of state; historically, relatively few of them ever stepped down or left office without dying in it. The tsars were hereditary absolute monarchs; during the Soviet period only Georgy Malenkov, Nikita Khrushchev and Mikhail Gorbachev did not die in the office; and the first two were still forced to resign rather than leaving voluntarily, and Gorbachev saw the nation and the office dissolved under him.

This is not even necessarily just a Russian political trait, but also somewhat ties to the late Cold War leadership in general The US president Ronald Reagan was afflicted by health problems by the time his second term was finished, and the Finnish president Urho Kekkonen likewise was forced to resign due to health issues after having held the presidency far past his term-limits for the majority of the Cold War. So, there is a possibility of Yeltsin feeling the same feeling of irreplaceability, trudging on leading his nation despite his failing health. There is also some uncertainty about how surprising Yeltsin's resignation actually was to the Kremlin insiders, and whether or not it was just a chance that Putin was freshly appointed as the prime minister at the time. Such questions of course have a whiff of conspiracy theory to them, but it is not impossible for Putin to have been intentionally orchestrated to assume the presidency rather than it just figuratively falling into his lap, as it was sometimes portrayed in the early Putin presidency. It is, however, noteworthy that of Putin's predecessors only Viktor Chernomyrdin[203] served longer than one year in office; during Yeltsin presidency, Sergey Kiriyenko, Yevgeny Primakov and Sergei Stepashin all lasted less than a year in office.[204]

[203] The Prime Minister of Russia between 1992 and 1998, with a brief break in early 1998 (Kiriyenko was in office for a few months before an economic crisis forced his resignation).
[204] Fedor 2011 118-181; Felkay 2002 211-226; Kagarlitsky & Clarke 2002 223-250.

"There are potential Stalins, if not Hitlers, among the contenders for the succession to the ailing Yeltsin" [205] -Lord Kennet

"Does not the Government feel some discomfort about breaking bread and sharing salt with Mr. Putin? He is the man who directed the campaign in which Chechnya was turned into a wasteland and innocent men, women and children were subjected to indiscriminate bombing and shelling?" [206] -Menzies Campbell[207]

"Policy statements and his own actions give a strong impression that he is a genuine democrat" [208] – Lord Blaker[209]

"There will be trappings of democracy but they will not develop into a civil society" [210] -Viscount Waverly[211] about Russia's future under Putin

Putin appeared to be a contradictory figure right from the beginning of his presidential career. He elicits quite differing views from the British MP: s as seen in the earlier quotes about him. In a debate concerning the Russian presidential elections in June 2000 the overall image formed from impressions of various members of the House of Lords was a man bound by the rule of law, not idealism, who will not let Russia deteriorate any further regardless of the cost of stopping it. This was quoted as showing in his way of dealing with regional governors, by tying them more tightly to Moscow by appointing "super-governors" to oversee them. Another show of Putin's determination was of course the Chechnyan conflict, which Putin set out to end decisively. Chechnya in general cast the first stain in the image of Putin as a man aligning with the West. He still came across to the British parliament as a different man from his predecessor who, as already mentioned, had been in bad health and seen as something of an embarrassment even abroad. Putin was believed to be far better equipped to deal with Russia's economic state, as he had achieved the majority support in the Duma that Yeltsin lacked. Both the Duma elections and Putin winning the presidential elections were viewed, by Baroness Cox among others, as the point-of-no-return for

[205] Vol. 579 14.3.97.
[206] Vol. 346 14.3.00.
[207] Menzies Campbell (b. 1941), the Liberal-Democrats, the party spokesperson for foreign affairs (1992-2006). Later rose to the party leadership.
[208] Vol. 613 7.6.00.
[209] Peter Blaker (b. 1922–d. 2009), the Conservatives.
[210] Vol. 613 7.6.00.
[211] John Anderson (b. 1949), Crossbencher.

Russia, the old order of the Soviet Union had finally died with the success of the elections as well. The 1999 elections were remarkable in their unremarkability, there was not really anything controversial in them, except Zhirinovsky's party losing most of its seats and several new parties gaining seats in the Duma. He was also regarded as a fairly skilled diplomat, having secured some concessions in the debacle over the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty without anything to really to give weight to his words. The beginning of Putin's presidency was essentially the low-point of the Russian economy and as such Putin had no real resources to back up his position.[212]

The major trait of Putin that the British policymakers noted from the get-go as a president was his determination to preserve Russia and avoid any further breakup of the Russian state. This stemmed first of all from how he ordered the military to handle the renewed war in Chechnya; cities were issued ultimatums to surrender before the artillery opened fire to shell the city to submission, and any Chechen separatists were treated essentially as terrorists by default. The whole operation drew the international eye by its brutality and human suffering; allegations of war crimes came up multiple times in the British debates. As an earlier quote by Menzies Campbell a few paragraphs back mentioned, the Second Chechen campaign was largely orchestrated by Putin, first as the director of FSB, then as the prime minister and finally as the president. The entire goal, as far as outsiders could see, was to prevent Chechnya from leaving Russia, by any means necessary. The British policymakers drew conclusions from Putin's approach in Chechnya; while he appeared to continue the policies of Yeltsin, there was an uncompromising ruthlessness and authoritarian streak in him. Besides the rule of law, Putin appeared to hold one principle above others: the stability of the nation. Viscount Waverly speculated that Putin might well be willing to sacrifice the fledgling Russian democracy for stability. And while Putin's actions after New Year 2001 are outside scope of this thesis, the Viscount was very much correct in his

[212] Vol. 612 20.4.00, Vol. 613 7.6.00; Berger 2020 219-224; Kovalev & Levine & Reddway 2017 passim; Satter 2016 77-173.

assessment, as Putin cracked down on the oligarchy, Chechnya, and other destabilizing factors with even the political opposition eventually coming under fire.[213]

So, in the beginning of his presidency Putin appeared to the Western observers as both a hopeful figure, yet also as an unknown actor as well. There was the clear hope that Putin, with a more stable power base than Yeltsin, could re-energize the stalled reforms and continue the Westernization process. On the other hand, his solution to the Chechnyan question brought up clearly his more uncompromising nature compared to Yeltsin, bringing in the question of his willingness to co-operate with the West. On both sides of the coin, Putin came across a man bent on maintaining stability, a quality sorely needed by Russia in all aspects in 1999, be it the politics, the economy or just daily life.

To sum up the entire chapter on the late 1990s discussions on Russia; as the Russian state found its footing and president Yeltsin started to lose popularity the clashes between the Western and the Russian interests began to be more common. There were continuous protests about expansion of NATO, where the Russian opposition took at times even petty forms in refusing to sign essentially finished treaties. Then there was the outbreak of warfare in Chechnya, showcasing all the security threats of the present-day West in one neat package of arbitrary Russian artillery fire and Islamic terrorism. The decade of the 1990s did end in apparent positive note as ostensibly reformist president with actual popular support took over from Yeltsin when Putin ascended to the office. On the whole the late 1990s are like a slowly cracking glass when applied to the Gorbachevian and Yeltsinian image of New Russia, as disagreements and clashes with the Western powers increase the cracks slowly spread and deepen, eventually shattering in the 2000s. The end of the decade is characterized by Russia beginning to reawaken as a Great Power from concussion of the collapse of the USSR and the West trying to continue keep the westernization of Russia ongoing by playing a political balancing act in engaging Russia.

[213] Vol. 611 29.3.00, Vol. 613 7.6.00; Fedor 2011 118-181; Kovalev & Levine & Reddway 2017 passim.

5 CONCLUSIONS -*THE NEW RUSSIA; A RUSSIAN WEIMAR REPUBLIC?*

So, to answer the research questions posed in the beginning of the thesis; on one hand the main points of discussion in the parliament were the political and economic development and challenges in Russia and on the other hand were the security policy-oriented topics like NATO, Chechnyan wars, and nuclear security. In the imminent aftermath of the collapse of the USSR the expectation on these developments was a hopeful idea of continued Gorbachevian policies of westernization and further integration with the European security collective and Western values of democracy and human rights. As the decade progressed these hopes slowly withered as opposition to Yeltsin and his polices grew as the Russian economy continued to falter. Idea of a Western-aligned Russia more or less died in the fires of Chechnya in the aftermath of the Shelling of Grozny, with some hopes of a continued democratization resting in successor of Boris Yeltsin, the newly minted president of Russia in 1999; Vladimir Putin. Putin was both the representation of the horrors of Chechnya as its main architect and yet at the same time the last chance of a pro-Western democratic Russia.

It became quite clear from reading the source debates that the British policymakers had a certain scepticism towards Russia and knew that its democratic development, while welcome, was not likely to quite take root. Russia was seen early in the 1990s as a somewhat fragile and precarious state that was not really a threat to British interests. The tone of the parliamentary discussion seemed often more slanted towards trying to stabilize the situation and primarily to prevent an anti-Western Russia from rising

to endanger the peace in Europe. The biggest fears regarding Russia then seem to have been about its economy collapsing, which would likely have had a domino-effect on the Eastern and the Central European economies.

As the decade of the 1990s went on, the image of Russian problems showed changes. It seemed that as the actual state apparatus stabilized, the fears of a military takeover or a return of the 'Old Order' abated. Even then, there still was an undercurrent of doubt and realism about the developing political situation in Russia. It can be illustrated as the question of whether the Cold War had died down to ashes or embers, as an ember can still spark a fire. Basically, those who doubted Russian development feared, as it turned out rightfully so, that the Cold War had not really ended for good, but that they were simply experiencing a lull in the East-West standoff as Russia rebuilt itself from the failure of the Soviet Union.

In terms of British policies, it is important to remember two major points when reflecting on the debates of the 1990s in comparison to present-day Britain: firstly, the major reforms in the House of Lords changed the membership and role of the chamber quite comprehensively in 1999, stripping many peers of their hereditary seats, and secondly, the vast majority of the political figures from the 1990s have either retired from politics or in many cases are deceased. As a large number of the members, in the House of Lords at least, were quite elderly in the 1990s, this does not exactly come as a surprise 30 to 20 years later. In the 1990s politicians would still have very much had the Cold War mindset ingrained in their thinking about Russia, likely feeding the idea of Russia needing a careful handling as to support its Westernization programs. A slightly surprising notion was, as mentioned in the chapter on nature of the British parliament, the fact that during the 1990s the Prime Minister of the UK was hardly even mentioned in the discussions about Russia, nor did they take a part in the parliamentary debates at all. This was mostly due to the Westminster system's procedural nature, but it is still worthy of a mention.

The Soviet Union collapsing was seen almost universally as a good thing by the British policymakers, even if that had caused a humanitarian problem throughout its former territories. Surprisingly, the possibility of a military take-over was not

necessarily seen as an entirely bad thing, but as more of a very much undesirable possibility that was still tolerable. This was likely to be a hold-over from the Cold War, as a military takeover was believed to be likely to result in an approximate return to the Soviet-era or a Francoist Spain -like mindset in the (Russian) state leadership, and the British policymakers would know how to handle such a government. In essence, the military taking over was seen as a venue for the more militant part of the 'old guard' of the USSR to try seek to restore the union. The possibility of a coup was regarded by some with almost relief, as it would have *sort of* solved several of the impending problems of the Russian state, such as the military without anything to do, and it would have made the costly supporting of democratic development a moot point.

Of course, it was still preferred that the Yeltsin administration would continue its course of aligning with the West. The early sceptical views of Russia actually came as a surprise, as in the Finnish parliament it was mentioned for the first time *at all* in 1995 that the "Western-oriented" Russia might not be a long-term development. The Yeltsin administration was constantly acknowledged as playing a balancing act between trying to salvage the essentially collapsing Russian state and not showing any overt weakness to anyone despite that. This only increased as the decade went on and the Russian opposition to Yeltsin gained strength.

As it stands, any actual pro-Western reforms seem to have lived or died with the Yeltsin administration, as the succeeding Putin administration was quick to start slowly and stealthily rolling back the reforms already made and watering down any new ones. although interestingly, and probably just coincidentally, the major internationally visible rollback started only after Yeltsin had died in 2007. Indeed, the year 2008 saw Putin and his right hand-man Dmitri Medvedev making a mockery of the presidential elections to circumvent Putin's term-limits by appoint him as the Prime Minister; there were even increases made to power wielded by the Prime Minister at the time. The same year also saw Russia attacking Georgia ostensibly as a 'peace-keeping mission' for the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, after Georgia had expressed interest in seeking NATO membership.

The Russian opposition to NATO was another huge problem with regard to maintaining Russia's pro-Western stance; accepting a Russian veto on the issue of other countries' membership would both emasculate NATO and go against the self-determination of the applicant countries that had very good historical reasons to want protection from Russia. And yet, on the other hand, rejecting the Russian protests endangered fuelling the nationalistic forces or forcing the current government to adopt a more hard-line stance towards the West. Russia was essentially seen as being too strong to force to submit to the Western-backed reforms, but at the same time too weak to really go at it alone or merit listening to in its posturing. The Russian protests about NATO go all the way to alleged promises made to the Soviet Union by the UK and the US at the eve of the Reunification of Germany in 1990 about NATO not expanding to Eastern Europe, but there has never been any conclusive proof of such promises.[214]

One of the most important conclusions one can draw from this thesis concerns Vladimir Putin. With the benefit of hindsight, we can already see the spectre of modern Russia forming by the end of Yeltsin presidency from the fires of Chechnya. By the time of his resignation, Boris Yeltsin was deeply unpopular and was regarded as an international embarrassment to the already weak-appearing Russian state. This, combined with the botched-up handling of the Chechnyan issue in the First Chechen War, likely fuelled Putin's ideology of restoring Russia's status as an indisputable world-class Great Power from the slump in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union. The 1990s are almost certainly a major influence in shaping the actions of the Putin presidency in the 21st century, leading Russia back towards an anti-Western stance and a political conflict with it. From the Second War in Chechnya to the War in Georgia and, at the time of writing, the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, Putin's policy has constantly held an, at times almost obsessive, idea of a need to preserve Russia and its interests in spite of the international response, although Putin did refrain from appearing too aggressive until properly consolidating his power in Russia.

Connected to that is also the Russian policy of trying to divide their opponents, as in the case of the EU; Russia often tried to make bi-lateral deals with the respective

[214] Rifkind 2019 501-518; Rühle 2014.

countries to undermine the Union's authority. It mostly comes down to the fear of "encirclement" that has its roots both in the eastward expansion of NATO in the 1990s, which Russia tried to stop and oppose at every turn, and in the older Cold War-era American policies (which incidentally were behind the intervention in the Korean War, the Vietnam War and even arming of the Afghan resistance against the Soviets in the 1980s) aimed at containing the Soviet Communism from spreading globally. To avoid this perceived encirclement, Russia thus tries to divide or emasculate what it deems a threat to its interests. In the West the encirclement was deemed a preposterous fear, as even if NATO was hostile to Russia, there was still a massive amount of Russian border not connected with NATO or any Western-backed regime, including the Caucasus, the Central Asia, Mongolia and China, not to mention Russian sea access to the Pacific.

Putin did, of course, initially avoid appearing anti-Western, holding up the image of democratic reformer at the least until the War in Georgia and the musical chairs of the presidency with Dmitri Medvedev to subvert term-limits of presidency. The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has had a dramatic effect on the entire image and understanding of Russia and Vladimir Putin, as it brings into question the sincerity of the entirety of Putin's career and motivations behind Russian actions since 1999. Was the Putin of late 1990s and early 2000s only a mask for an aspiring dictator?

That is a very difficult topic, and thankfully not within the scope of this study. But even then, it is certainly possible to interpret from even the sources used in this study that there does exist a possibility that Putin of early 2000s was indeed a 'mask'. That does, of course bring its own teleological problems and for that reason is included as idle speculation in this concluding chapter. There has been a concentrated attempt to minimize the effect of the discourse surrounding the Ukrainian War in this thesis, but it also felt necessary to include it, as it is likely a watershed-moment in the Western understanding of the modern Russia. How successful this effort has been is left up to the reader.

The debates about Russia in general, in the early years of the 1990s, paint a picture of utter anarchy and chaos. It was presented almost as if the collapse of the Soviet

Union disconnected the existing government from the actual state. The picture painted was basically that of a powerless government without money to even pay its military or to exert control over most of its territory effectively, besides in name only, with the national economy utterly ruined and haemorrhaging money and with it any social security networks and government institutions being utterly defunct or corrupt as well. And even then, the wreck of a superpower, that is the 1990s Russia, was in addition locked in a power struggle between the president-backed pro-Western factions, nationalists and the old guard of the USSR. No-one seemed to be certain that the nuclear and chemical weapons arsenal or the Russian nuclear plants were still secure, as rumours abounded about even high-level military officers and government officials selling state property to either make the ends meet or just to enrich themselves. The entirety of the first few years in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse can very well be called the biggest fire-sale in history.

If the image transmitted through the UK parliamentary debates was even close to reality, it is quite understandable why president Vladimir Putin enjoys strong domestic support in Russia; the 1990s in Russia were not only a parallel to the aftermath of the first world war in Germany, but the central government seems to have essentially collapsed between 1992 and 1993, with functionality increasing marginally from thereon out as the state itself stabilized. That is more in line with an image of Germany in 1945 than in 1918. The collapse of the USSR might very well be considered a zero hour, or Stunde Null, moment in the Russian history; the old order was quite thoroughly being undone, the Soviet Union had most certainly lost the Cold War, falling to internal factors rather than external ones[215], unlike Germany from where the term originates.

Indeed, the fragility of the fledgling Russian democracy and of the overall Westernization efforts was more than apparent to the British Parliament, but the big question of how to support it was much harder to answer. Unlike post-WWII Germany, there was not really any democratic foundation to build upon or an ability to build

[215] While the Soviet economic collapse was influenced by the 1980s arms race expenses against the US, it still collapsed largely due to its own failures and inefficiency rather than some global or external eco-nomic factors as such.

one from scratch by external forces. The British parliamentarians acknowledged that the only way to try was to just support the Russian government's attempts to reform the state; there really wasn't much else that any Western state could do. This support was further problematized by the Russian actions in Chechnya, as choices such as the shelling of Grozny and the filtration camps violated human rights, not to mention the treaties and ideals of various organizations that Russia had joined or aspired to join, including the Council of Europe.

As already mentioned, with the benefit of hindsight, the discourse on Russia and its development actually paints an ironic picture of almost a Weimar Republic-esque Russia that, much like Weimar Germany, took a dark path out of its 'humiliation' in the hands of the Western powers. Russia of the 1990s was weighed down by its essentially collapsed economy, paralyzed by political chaos and thus unable to really assert itself against the Western powers picking clean the carcass of the Soviet Union (mostly by scooping up the Eastern Europe into the waiting arms of NATO and the EU). Much like Germany in the aftermath of the First World War, Russia was a great power of considerable strength used to using that very same status and power to influence the geopolitical landscape, which then suddenly found itself unable to do so. Both countries also saw a strongman leader emerge from the economic and political chaos to "restore the glory of the nation" from the shameful state of defeat. Of course, the situations are separated by roughly 70 years, but parallels are there none the less. Same parallels were even seen by Graham Smith in 1999 as a possible developmental path for Russia, but he considered "Weimar Russia" then a remote possibility, unlikely to manifest itself outside the fears of the political analysts.[216]

In the end all of the topics concerning Russia in the British parliamentary debates examined here came down to either the issue of international security or the economy; an unstable and unpredictable or hostile Russia promotes neither security or economic prosperity and in the worst case actively hampers them. Unfortunately, as already established, the tools to guide a foreign nation on a desired political path are quite limited to verbal talks and commitments and economic incentives. Any of the more

[216] Smith G. 1999 215-224.

military-oriented methods lose any useability when the other side is a nuclear power. The entire process of Westernization and democratization of Russia appears through the lens of the UK Parliament as an in many ways valiant but ultimately almost futile effort, as it required strong internal support within Russia, which in the conditions of the 1990s was just not available. The greatest loss in the entire situation is probably the fact that the horrible state of Russia in the 1990s was likely to have had a strong effect on the anti-Western tendencies of the present-day Russia and essentially, in combination with the increasing state-control of the media, poisoned the Russian population against the liberal democracies for the foreseeable future. To quote the Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's malapropism from 1996 as a fitting summarization of the Russian efforts in westernization;

> *We wanted the best, but it turned out like always*

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