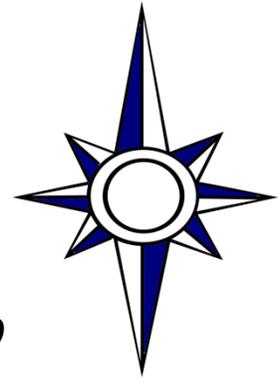


Comparative Connections

A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



China-Russia Relations:

Reset under Medvedev: *Zapad-Politik* and *Vostok 2010*

Yu Bin
Wittenberg University

Unlike the relatively uneventful first quarter in China-Russia relations, the second quarter was full of confusion, crises, and even conflicts along the peripheries of Russia and China and within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Following the sinking of the ROK Navy corvette *Cheonan* on March 26, the Korean Peninsula experienced significant tension. On April 6, riots and violence broke out in Kyrgyzstan, leading to the ousting of the Bakiyev government two days later. Both Russia and China joined the US-sponsored UNSC sanctions against Iran, although with differing degrees of reluctance. In the midst of this activity, Moscow cautiously and conspicuously orchestrated a “reset” of its foreign policy with a clear tilt toward Europe and the US. Russia’s new round of *Zapad-Politik* (Westpolitik), eliciting quite a few surprises, if not shocks, for its strategic partner in Beijing.

***Cheonan* sinking**

From the time the *Cheonan* sunk on March 26 to the release of the investigation report on May 20, tensions on the peninsula have gone from bad to worse. The two Koreas dismantled almost the entire inter-Korean diplomatic, humanitarian, and economic framework that had been put into place over the past two decades. The result is that in 2010, the 60th anniversary of start of the Korean War (June 25, 1950), the ROK and DPRK are back to the precarious relationship of June 1950. The biggest difference for today’s Korea is that Russia and China have not been willing to back North Korea’s militant policies. However, nor do they accept the verdict of the “international investigation,” performed by the ROK and its allies, plus Sweden.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula was at the center of Russian and Chinese diplomatic, political, and strategic interactions during the quarter. In almost all the numerous meetings – the April 15 BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) Summit in Brasilia; May 8-9 at the 65th anniversary of VE Day for WWII; the 10th annual SCO Summit in Tashkent; and June 26, 2010 on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Toronto, Canada – the situation in the Korean Peninsula topped the agenda. Diplomats worked overtime to coordinate policies and exchange information on the subject. On April 20-22, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexei Borodavkin had “a thorough exchange of views” in Beijing with Wu Dawei, China’s special representative for the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, and others in “a friendly and constructive atmosphere.” At the end of the consultation, Borodavkin was received by Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. On June 3-4, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also discussed Korea during his official visit to China.

Despite their frequent interactions and common concern for the stability of the Korean Peninsula, Beijing and Moscow have approached the Korean crisis differently. During the second quarter,

China had its own “best” and “worst” experience regarding North Korea. First, DPRK leader Kim Jong-il paid an unofficial visit to China on May 3-7, the first since January 2006 and the fifth since the turn of the century. In June, however, three Chinese nationals were shot to death while doing business at the China-North Korean border. Two days later, two Chinese nationals were reportedly “dead” in North Korea while being detained as “spies.” In both cases, China demanded explanations. China, however, tried to separate these bilateral incidents from the *Cheonan* sinking, because Kim's unofficial visit to China was arranged long before the incident. The goals of China's North Korean policy, including inviting Kim to visit China, are to reduce tension, restart the denuclearization process, and gradually open up and reform North Korea.

Unlike China's stake and leverage regarding Korea, Russia's influence is relatively weak and indirect in both the economic and diplomatic spheres. Russia's approach in the current crisis has been driven by a strategic calculation – it does not want to see instability and conflict in the peninsula. Unlike in 1950, when Stalin unleashed Kim Il-sung for the perceived “loss” of China due to the triumph of Mao's indigenous communist movement in China, the current crisis and its likely escalation may further diminish Russia's interests in Northeast Asia for at least two reasons. First, Russia's posture in the Asia-Pacific is both economically and militarily much weaker. Second, heightened tension or conflict on the peninsula would bring back a more assertive US and Japan. Therefore, a cautious approach and close collaboration with China is in Russia's best interests. No wonder then that various Russian sources have questioned the outcome of the international investigation. Nor do they see any motivation on the part of North Korea to create such a crisis.

Still, Russia took advantage of whatever opportunity arose from the crisis. On May 31, four submarine and torpedo experts from the Russian Navy arrived in South Korea to participate in the ongoing international investigation into the *Cheonan* sinking. After a week-long examination of the available “evidence,” the Russian experts reportedly remained doubtful. The real reason for Russia's caution is to avoid taking a firm stance on the findings of both South Korea and those of its own experts, as it has too much to lose by supporting either side.

Kyrgyzstan in turmoil

If the stakes in Korea are larger for China, Kyrgyzstan is more clearly in Russia's sphere of interests, largely because Kyrgyzstan is part of Russia's near-abroad, or post-Soviet, space. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan is at the intersection of the interests and spheres of gravitation for major powers in Central Asia – a crossroads of different civilizations and political systems.

Unlike the 60 years of enmity between the two Koreas, Kyrgyzstan seemed to degenerate into violent riots almost overnight in early April. In a matter of a few days and after several hundred deaths and thousands of wounded, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was ousted and fled to the south before exiling to Belarus on April 19. An interim coalition government was formed on April 8 with Roza Otunbayeva as prime minister, who is said to be well-known in Moscow, Washington, China, and Europe, and is characterized as “not pro-Russian, not pro-American, not pro-Chinese, but pro-Kyrgyz. She is moderate.” Throughout the quarter, violence and even ethnic cleansing continued in certain parts of the nation, causing hundreds of thousands to flee or be evacuated to other nations.

The making of the Kyrgyz “revolution,” however, was a long process. The nation never really recovered from its 2005 “Tulip Revolution.” In its aftermath, corruption, inefficiency, low economic growth, plus the traditional “north-south” division (Bakiyev represents the south while Otunbayeva the north) continued to divide its political elites and the population. In comparative terms, Kyrgyzstan is the poorest of all the former Soviet Central Asian republics (and almost without mineral resources, unlike its more fortunate neighbors) with a per capita GDP of \$1,000 and deeply in debt (\$2 billion with a \$5 billion GDP). The dire economic conditions, plus the price hikes for water and electricity by the Bakiyev government, turned the frequent anti-government rallies in late March to early June into large, angry demonstrations across the nation.

Kyrgyzstan had been a rather active player in, as well as playground, for major power politics among Russia, the US, and China. Indeed, Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the world that has both US and Russian bases on its soil. Both Russia and the US have been working to build their second base in Kyrgyzstan some 200 km from the Chinese border. Meanwhile, most of its foreign trade is with China – accounting for more than two-thirds of Kyrgyzstan's imports. Therefore, the interests of all three powers are at stake. China always fears that unrest on its periphery will cause a great stir in its Western provinces, including the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region. Russia, too, has long been bothered by the rise of Islamism on its southern flank. For the US, Afghanistan was its regional focus of attention and Washington was satisfied with the ability of ousted President Bakiyev to provide ready access for a steady flow of supplies for the US and NATO military operations in Afghanistan.

In the early stage of the violence, the immediate reaction in Moscow was that Russia would not intervene and that it would choose to support any leader who gains the upper hand. On April 7, the Russian Foreign Ministry released a statement denying Moscow's involvement in the events. President Medvedev said the events in Kyrgyzstan were an internal affair of that country.

Kyrgyzstan's “internal” upheaval, however, followed a few years of worsening relations with Moscow after Bakiyev failed to live up to his agreement with Moscow to close the US military base in Kyrgyzstan. In February 2009, Bakiyev announced the impending closure of the US base in Manas in exchange for a large package of Russian aid. Russia then allocated Bishkek a non-repayable grant of \$150 million and a soft loan of \$300 million, while writing off Kyrgyzstan's debt of \$180 million. By July 2009, it appeared that the base was simply renamed a “transit center” and even expanded. Moscow gave the appearance that it did not object, but it was shocked by Bishkek's behavior and stopped payments on the assistance packages. In the same year, Bakiyev also reneged on an agreement he signed with President Medvedev to establish a military training center in Kyrgyzstan for the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). According to the *Moscow Times* (online), a media outlet critical of Russian government policies, the Kremlin had been in close touch with opposition leaders long before the turbulent events in April and quietly supported their campaign to depose Bakiyev. The Kremlin's strategy was to gradually build internal pressure on Bakiyev and orchestrate a parliamentary protest to make him step down. A series of hasty and uncoordinated decisions by the opposition to initiate mass rallies in major cities, however, overtook the Kremlin's planning. How actively Moscow was undermining the Bakiyev government remains a question, but it was quite obvious that the Kremlin simply refused to prop up a regime that was clearly corrupt, bankrupt, and manipulative.

What happened in Kyrgyzstan seemed to be the last Russian effort to restore its past primacy, real or imagined. That is, Russia has been assiduously getting back much of what it lost in the color revolutions a few years ago. According to Russian analyst Tatyana Stanovaya, Ukraine is now leaning toward Moscow, which scored a major victory by securing a new 25-year lease for its Black Sea fleet. Georgia lost face and territory in the war of August 2009. And Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution has now been overthrown, a clear victory for Moscow.

Regardless, Moscow did act promptly this time. First, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin quickly backed Otunbayeva's interim government. On April 8, then opposition leader Otunbayeva held telephone conversations with Putin and met representatives of the US Embassy. Second, Putin affirmed support for the people of Kyrgyzstan and promised to allocate emergency assistance (a \$20 million grant and a \$30 million easy-term loan, plus 25,000 tons of oil products). Last, Russia immediately dispatched 150 paratroopers to the Russian airbase in Kant to safeguard Russia's facilities and provide security to Russian diplomatic mission and other institutions.

China's Kyrgyz blues?

Of the three major powers (Russia, US, and China), China adopted the most visible wait-and-see approach toward the Kyrgyz violence. One reason was that China had perhaps the least viable policy alternatives for the riots and power struggle in Kyrgyzstan. Another reason was a belief that almost all major opposition leaders, including interim Prime Minister Otunbayeva, were China's "friends." Nevertheless, Chinese businessmen suffered heavy losses and property damage. Beijing quickly decided to withdraw its nationals from the Central Asian state.

A pressing concern for China was whether Kyrgyzstan would be able to remain in the SCO if internal stability continued to deteriorate. On April 19, the Kyrgyz interim government promised that it planned to continue to be part of the regional security group. On the same day, the Chinese government allocated \$3 million in humanitarian relief and \$1 million as direct financing for the Kyrgyz interim government.

Throughout the second quarter, it looked like Moscow and Washington interacted frequently and smoothly to stabilize the situation, while China was waiting for the dust to settle. Only at the end of April did Russian and Chinese diplomats get together to coordinate policies toward Kyrgyzstan when Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin and Chinese Ambassador to Russia Li Hui met in Moscow to discuss the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia as a whole. "The parties have agreed to continue to exchange their views on the current situation in Kyrgyzstan and the forms of cooperation for the sake of stabilizing the republic," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. On June 15, Russian First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Denisov met Ambassador Li at the latter's request for information on the latest developments in Kyrgyzstan as well as peace and security issues in Central Asia.

China seemed to adopt a more active approach on Kyrgyzstan in mid-June, several days after the 10th annual SCO Summit in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. A day after Denisov and Li met in Moscow, a Chinese Foreign Ministry delegation was sent to Kyrgyzstan. The group was led by senior diplomat Gao Yusheng, a veteran in Central Asia affairs and former ambassador to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine as well as the former SCO deputy secretary. The Chinese diplomats

met with leaders, foreign minister, interior minister, chairman of the National Security Service and personalities from all walks of life, as well as diplomatic missions of Russia and the US in Kyrgyzstan. The group was more like a fact-finding mission, but seemed to anticipate a more substantive and proactive approach by Beijing. On June 26-29, Russian and Chinese Deputy Foreign Ministers Alexei Borodavkin and Cheng Guoping met in Moscow for an unusual four-day meeting to discuss the Kyrgyzstan situation. The Chinese Foreign Ministry released a statement after the talks saying that “At a time of complexity and instability of the international situation, when both countries are at an important phase of their development, the further intensification of Chinese-Russian relations, strategic partnership, and interaction are very important and timely.”

Meanwhile, according to Russian media outlet *Interfax*, China appeared to be more interested in the possible role of the CSTO to maintain and restore stability in the region. CSTO, however, is handicapped by its own charter, which only allows for collective military operations in response to an external threat or attack.

By the end of the quarter, China’s Central Asia policy seemed at a crossroad. On June 21, the influential *Global Times* [*Huanqiu Shibao* 环球时报], a subsidiary of the official Party organ *People’s Daily* [*Renmin Ribao*], ran an anonymous op-ed piece with a forceful title, “No More Withdrawal! China May Be Compelled to Get Involved in Central Asian Conflict,” [不能一味退让 中亚问题中国或被卷入冲突], with the following main points:

- China’s passivity during the Kyrgyz crisis is by no means a matter of choice, but because of China’s limited ability to influence the regional chemistry.
- China’s do-nothing approach cost China considerably in that its trade with Kyrgyzstan almost completely stopped at the height of the crisis. In the future, China should not just get out of the region, but may be forced to get involved in the conflict in Central Asia.
- The Kyrgyz crisis indicated that China’s presence in the region is rather fragile and without capacity to directly influence in times of crisis. This time, China’s only choice was to pull out, resulting in many Chinese nationals having to abandon their properties.
- As the gateway for China’s energy imports from Central Asia, chaos in Kyrgyzstan is a nightmare for Chinese energy importers. For the sake of its own interests, China should not evade problems, but will have to play a more active role for regional security.
- US and Russian power is indispensable for the stability of Kyrgyzstan. Unfortunately, it appears that both have cast China out of the resolution of the Kyrgyz crisis through political and economic means. China was correct to avoid involving itself in the “trouble waters” in Afghanistan. However, China cannot be at ease with neighboring states like Kyrgyzstan where China’s transit energy lifelines are in the hands of other powers. A free ride is by no means an easy ride.
- The political situations in some countries around China’s periphery are not stable. Many are in transition with complex social problems. With weakened governing capacity, the

situation could spin out of control once turbulence appears, having a destructive effect on the entire region. No major power seems willing to get involved in disturbances along its peripheries, however, most did get in, albeit reluctantly. Can China always be an exception?

- China may not continue to be aloof. The price of being a major power is to encounter those unpleasant problems from time to time. From now on, China should dare to take a few steps forward, and China's public opinion needs to support the government's experiments even if some of those first "steps" are not steady.
- Resolve is crucial. China should adopt a new posture in its interactions with the US and Russia along China's peripheries, particularly in Central Asia. China cannot search for its own space forever in the shadow of the US and Russia. Nor should China pull back for fear of upsetting one of them.
- The SCO experience shows that China has capabilities for a bigger role in Central Asia; China's economic clout is indispensable for the prosperity of the region. Although the US and Russia have a strong political presence in Kyrgyzstan and have been quite "intimate" with one another in dealing with the crisis there, the "cracks" between them are big enough for China to have a foothold in the area. So long as China has the courage, its current capability will be able to digest any consequences of its actions.

The authoritative tone of the anonymous piece was quite unusual in a mass-circulated daily with extensive coverage on international news and Chinese foreign policy. It looks like a trial balloon for more active involvement in Central Asian affairs, at least partially because of China's growing economic presence, particularly in energy exploration and transportation. The large number of ethnic Uyghurs in Kyrgyzstan (about a quarter of a million) is also a potentially destabilizing factor for China's sensitive Xinjiang area.

To what extent China's more proactive posture in the area will affect others remains to be seen. In the aftermath of the Kyrgyz crisis, China quickened its diplomatic and security engagement in the region. From May 23-29, Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie toured Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. The large fact-finding group of China's diplomats sent to Kyrgyzstan shortly after Tashkent's annual SCO Summit was another case in point. In late March, Afghan President Hamid Karzai paid an official visit to China and was accompanied by his defense minister who met his Chinese counterpart Liang Guanglie in Beijing. The latter promised more assistance to the Afghan military. Already in late 2009, China started training Afghan (and Iraqi) mine sweepers as part of the UN program.

SCO in the shadow of Kyrgyzstan unrest

In 10 years, the SCO has encountered two types of challenges. In 2001, the sources and nature of the challenge were largely external: 9/11 and Afghanistan. Toward the end of the first decade of its existence, chaos and violence in Kyrgyzstan reveal a growing, and perhaps long-term, challenge to the regional security group. There was no question that the SCO was able to absorb

the impact from Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip revolution" in 2005. The socio-economic condition created political turbulence five years before continued to worsen and deepen.

The current Kyrgyz crisis occurred when the SCO was in full swing in several of its functional areas. It was making final legal preparations for admitting new members, observers and partners (In 2009, Sri-Lanka and Belarus were granted the status of partners in SCO dialogue). In early April, both India and Pakistan started seeking full membership after several years of observer status. For years, Iran has not hidden its aspiration to become a full member. SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was actively planning to hold regular sessions for rapid information exchange to identify and fight terrorists. A day before the outbreak of large-scale demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan, the UN and the SCO signed a document in Tashkent to promote cooperation in various fields, including security. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told journalists that his visit to Uzbekistan was "very constructive." On April 6, when violence started to spread in Kyrgyzstan, SCO defense ministers were meeting in Moscow for the final round of consultations for the *Peace Mission 2010* anti-terrorist exercises to be held in Kazakhstan in September. These developments were followed by other routine activities leading to the annual summit in June: the 5th session of the SCO Security Councils' secretaries on April 22-23 and SCO foreign ministers meeting on May 22.

What happened in Kyrgyzstan demonstrates both the strength and weakness of the SCO. On the plus side, the fact that the SCO continues to function in spite of the Kyrgyz crisis demonstrates its organizational "normalcy" if not its resilience. The SCO, nonetheless, also failed as a group to provide immediate assistance to one of its members in turmoil, let alone prevent it from happening. In the early phase of the crisis, active coordination between member states was almost nonexistent. Member states pursued their own course of action according to their own interests and capabilities. Even the most capable major power (Russia) failed to respond to the request from the Kyrgyz interim government for direct intervention.

In the longer term, the SCO perhaps needs to address several imbalances regarding its structure, symbolism, and substance. While continuous growth is necessary and even desirable, consolidation of the existing structure is perhaps more important. Diversity in the members' political, cultural, and economic constructs, though unavoidable in the case of the SCO, can be an asset but also limits its ability to deal with emergencies. Ordinary people, not just the elites and dignitaries, of the SCO members need to receive more tangible benefits from the deepening and broadening of the SCO operations.

In the wake of the first wave of violent Kyrgyz demonstrations in late April, Uzbek President Karimov, who holds the 2010 presidency in the SCO, remarked that "[T]he main issue is to make the population of SCO member-states feel that the organization exists and contributes to the steady development of their economies and to raise the prosperity of the people." A more intrusive SCO, however, would mean less sovereignty for its member. It is unclear, in both conceptual and practical terms, if the SCO member states are ready for that.

The SCO, however, was forced to react to the Kyrgyz crisis. During the 5th session of the SCO Security Councils' secretaries on April 22-23 in Tashkent, participants discussed "counteracting the emerging challenges and threats" and "the mechanisms of interaction in fighting terrorism,

separatism, drug- and weapons-trafficking and other common threats.” In his remarks, Chinese representative Meng Jianju linked the global financial crisis to economic and social stability of SCO member states and urged further coordinating and cooperative mechanisms within the SCO framework.

Kyrgyzstan also topped the agenda of the SCO’s annual foreign ministers’ meeting in Tashkent on May 22. While being committed to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic, SCO foreign ministers were ready to give it the necessary support and assistance. The normal agenda for the meeting was preparations for the SCO summit due in June. Two additional items discussed were the status of efforts to hold an international conference on Afghanistan in Kabul in July and drafting rules for new members’ admission. Afghanistan remained the top concern for SCO foreign ministers. A notable pre-condition for SCO admission is that a country under UN sanctions cannot seek membership.

A new wave of violence broke out in southern Kyrgyzstan (Osh) while the SCO was holding its annual summit on June 10-11 in Tashkent. In the “Tashkent Declaration” issued at the close of the summit, the SCO agreed to assist Bishkek in faster legitimization of the new authorities there in the run-up to a national referendum scheduled for June 27.

There were “a record number of representatives” attended the Tashkent summit, including Afghan President Hamid Karzai as a guest of honor. The notable exception among the participants was Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who “received an invitation in due time” according to Chinese and Russian sources. Part of the reason was the much publicized SCO draft documents “regulation on procedure for future membership expansion,” which legalizes a process for future membership expansion and also prevents countries that are under UN sanctions from being admitted to the organization. President Medvedev called these rules “an important internal corporative document,” a suggestion that SCO states with different preferences finally reached consensus. At least for Russia and China, the SCO should not be viewed as being in opposition to the rest of the world.

Beyond Kyrgyzstan and Iran, the SCO Summit in Tashkent emphasized its traditional concerns such as fighting the “three evil forces” (terrorism, separatism, and extremism), safeguarding security and stability, and advancing pragmatic cooperation. For China, Kyrgyzstan’s unrest highlighted the vulnerability of its fast-growing energy pipeline infrastructure through this vast region known for both its abundant resources and socio-politico-strategic fluidity. President Hu Jintao seized the summit to propose that relevant parties should work out some legal documents for the safety of the cross-nation pipelines.

In Tashkent, the SCO members also seemed to take a more pessimistic view about the apparently deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. The joint declaration signed at the end of the summit points to the SCO’s proximity to Afghanistan and the vulnerability to Afghan-originated drug-trafficking. Alexander Rar, an expert from the Russia-Eurasia Center, noted that “the drug threat has been more dangerous than a threat from international terrorism. For Russia, coping with the international drug business has become the major objective now.” Russian President Dmitry Medvedev went so far as to propose adopting a SCO antidrug strategy for 2011-2016.

Russian and Chinese presidents held separate talks on political contacts, cooperation in solving pressing international problems and trade and economic relations. In Tashkent, President Hu made a six-point proposal on boosting SCO cooperation, including strengthening mutual trust, stepping up counterterrorism efforts, improving SCO institutional building and decision-making mechanisms, and promoting its transparency and inclusiveness.

Moscow “resets”

It was almost certainly coincidental that the Russia-US New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was signed in Prague on the very same day (April 8, 2010) that a coup occurred in the midst of violent demonstrations in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek. Despite the fact that the military base issue was at the heart of Moscow’s displeasure with the ousted Bakiyev government, Moscow never made it a condition for sending humanitarian aid to the interim Kyrgyz government. Nor did Washington try to maximize its own interests at the expense of Moscow’s. Instead, a curious yet tacit maneuvering was taking place – Washington seemed to be “respecting” Russia’s privileged status in Kyrgyzstan as part of Moscow’s zone of interests, while Moscow appeared to understand the utility of Manas airbase for the Afghan war. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly clear that the US and NATO’s ability to sustain – not necessarily win or lose – the war in Afghanistan is in Russia’s interest. The Kyrgyz crisis, therefore, was turning into a timely opportunity, in conjunction with the New START, for a series of reciprocal actions between Moscow and Washington, some of which were to the disbelief and discomfort of Beijing.

In a way, drafting and the final signing of the New START initiated a rapid warming process between Russia and the West: Vladimir Putin kneeling at the memorial to the Polish officers murdered by the Soviet forces at Katyn (April 7); Medvedev ending a 40-year sea-boundary dispute with Norway (April 28); NATO soldiers marching in Red Square on V-E Day (May 8), etc. During the preparations for the SCO Summit in June, Uzbekistan went as far as to suggest granting observer status to Washington. It was unclear how Moscow reacted; the initiative was said to have been actively opposed by China.

Signs of US-Russian intimacy were either picked up or predicted by the *Moscow Times*, a leading liberal media outlet. On April 13, an op-ed piece used the term “reset” as part of its title “Obama’s Nuclear Doctrine Could Boost Reset.” The rest of the world would have to wait for almost a month before Moscow dropped the “second shoe” on May 10 when the *Russkiy Newsweek* released a “secret” Russian government document titled “Program for Effective Utilization of Foreign Political Factors on a Systematic Basis for Purposes of Long-Term Development of the Russian Federation.” The document calls for significant tilt of Russian foreign policy toward the West (EU and the US) in exchange of Western political acceptance and economic/technology assistance to Russia’s modernization. The document was drafted by the Russian Foreign Ministry and was approved by President Medvedev in February. The document was intended for official use only. Then, just one day after Chinese President Hu Jintao left the V-E Day celebration in Moscow, the “secret” document was leaked to the public.

The leaked document defines the EU and the US as the main sources for Russia’s modernization, and clearly marginalizes China in Russia’s strategic matrix. The only reference to China in the

document is in its brief discussion of the BRIC group, which is not defined as the center of the world's political and economic order. Dmitry Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center and perhaps the most authoritative interpreter of Russian foreign policy, identified four main factors for the reset: the Georgia war of 2008, which drew the limits of how low the Russian-US relations could and should go; the global economic crisis, which revealed the fundamental flaws in Russia's energy-fueled growth; the Obama factor, which removed the principal irritants in Russian-Western relations; and finally, China's relentless rise and Russia's increasingly junior status in the strategic partnership relations with China.

To be sure, many "new" elements in the reset document were already articulated by top Russian leaders, including President Medvedev's talk to the Russian Federal Assembly (parliament) in 2009 when he stated that Russia might have to opt for borrowing European standards, if Russia did not have time to develop its own. He also spoke of the fact that modernization requires technologies and investments, and if Russia must get them somewhere, then this should be first and foremost from the Western world and the European Union. Russia's Westpolitik of the 21st century, therefore, was well on its way before the "leak."

To China's disappointment and even shock, the "leak" occurred on the same day that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told the Russian Federation Council (Upper House) that Russia was ready to help settle the dispute between China and the Dalai Lama and that Russia was interested in the "normalization in relations between Beijing and the Dalai Lama." China's official reaction to Lavrov's Tibet "reset" was rather measured when the Foreign Ministry spokesman reiterated China's long-held posture that Tibet is China's internal affair. China's media and commentators, however, were both bewildered and annoyed. Even before this Tibet episode, Russia's gradual but significant moves toward the US-sponsored sanctions in the UN Security Council against Iran had left China in the cold, something that many in China did not expect from their strategic partner.

Russia's reset move still depends on US reciprocity: the U.S. Congress is yet to ratify the New START, approve a "123 Agreement" on US-Russian cooperation in the civilian nuclear sphere, remove the Jackson-Vanik amendment, and support Russia's accession into the World Trade Organization. By the end of the quarter, however, few, if any, would dismiss the warming momentum in US-Russian relations as Medvedev's US tour (June 22-24) almost brought back Gorbachev's "good-old-days" excursion through the US (San Francisco, Stanford campus, Silicon Valley, to Washington). And then the familiar "spy bug" appeared as the US side publicized the roundup of an 11-person Russian spy ring.

To what extent Russia and the US will be able to continue the reset process remains to be seen. Perhaps both Medvedev and Obama need such a reset for their respective 2012 re-election efforts. It is a question, however, if others in Russia and the US share the same passion for a long-term and strategic reset of Russo-US relations. One thing that is quite certain is that there is little China can do to influence the reset. Nevertheless, events in the second quarter also demonstrated both the potential AND perhaps the limit to Russia's reset (with Obama's assistance).

The reason for caution is this: Medvedev's Westpolitik in the 21st century is preceded by similar attempts by Russia's political elites. Almost all of them were rebuffed by reality in Russia and Russia's relationship with the outside world. The list includes Putin's own Westpolitik, twice during his tenure (immediately after he took over from Yeltsin when he tried to correct his mentor's "China excessiveness" and his post-9/11 unrequited pledge of "allegiance" to Bush's war on terror). Yeltsin made his own circle in the 1990s; Gorbachev in the 1980s; Khrushchev in the 1960s; and even Vladimir Lenin's moment of "New Economics" in the 1920s, which was followed by decades of brutal Stalinism. Even those great Tsars/Tsarinas – turned modernizers/Westernizers such as Alexander II (1818-1881), Catherine II (1729-1796), and Peter the Great (1672 -1725) – could not escape Russia's duality between the West and non-West, and between modern and pre-modern. For Russia's political and intellectual elite, then and now, efforts to become totally Western by shedding Russia's "Asianess" proved to be painful and pitiful, as it means turning Russia's "structural" advantage in the civilized interactions into a disadvantage and self-denial.

The emerging US-Russian intimacy – or "honeymoon" in the words of Andrew C. Kuchins, senior fellow at the Washington-based CSIS – was in sharp contrast to the difficult relationship between Washington and Beijing following the Obama administration's decisions in early 2010 to sell Taiwan \$6.8-billion worth of weapons and to meet the Dalai Lama, plus the Google "hiccup." The combined effect of these developments almost prevented President Hu Jintao from traveling to Washington for the Nuclear Security Summit on April 12-13.

Rim of the Pacific 2010 vs. Vostok 2010?

By the end of the second quarter, two large-scale naval exercises were unfolding across the Pacific Ocean. The biennial *Rim of the Pacific 2010 (RIMPAC)* war games – the world's largest international maritime exercise involving 14 nations, 34 ships, five submarines, more than 100 aircraft, and 20,000 military personnel – were in high gear in the waters off Hawaii at the end of June. Ships converged on Pearl Harbor from countries around the Pacific including Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea, as well as from the West Coast of the US.

In the West Pacific, *Vostok 2010* strategic exercises (June 28-July 9) were picking up steam. The drill involved at least 20,000 troops, and up to 70 warplanes and 30 warships, the largest military exercise undertaken by Russia since the end of the Cold War. On July 4, President Medvedev boarded the *Peter the Great* missile cruiser to observe the drill.

The scale of these drills is reminiscent of the Cold War, when the US and Soviet navies routinely matched each other's maneuvers. This time, however, none of them had a specified target, which means anyone can be the target.

Chronology of China-Russia Relations April - June 2010

April 2, 2010: Gen. Ma Xiaotian, PLA deputy chief of staff and chairman of the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, meets Sergey Karaganov, president of the Foreign and

Defense Policy Council of Russia, Nikolay Bordyuzha, secretary general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) who were visiting China for the 2nd Symposium on “China and Russia in New International Environment” in Beijing.

April 6-8, 2010: Riots break out across Kyrgyzstan, leading to the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

April 8, 2010: An interim coalition government is formed in Kyrgyzstan with Roza Otunbayeva as prime minister.

April 14, 2010: President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin offer condolences to President Hu Jintao after a devastating earthquake of 7.1-magnitude hit China’s Qinghai province.

April 15, 2010: Presidents Medvedev and Hu meet at the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) Summit in Brasilia ahead of the original schedule because Hu cut his short after the earthquake in China’s Qinghai Province.

April 15-16, 2010: BRIC holds a two-day summit in Brasilia. Chinese President Hu Jintao attends only one day. Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo attends the second meeting of BRIC senior representatives on security issues.

April 20-22, 2010: Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexei Borodavki holds consultations in Beijing with Wu Dawei, China’s special representative on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, and Assistant Foreign Ministers Cheng Guoping, Hu Zhengyue and Liu Zhenmin. Borodavkin meets Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi on April 22.

April 22-23, 2010: The SCO Security Councils’ secretaries hold their fifth session in Tashkent.

April 23, 2010: Russia refuses to grant the Dalai Lama an entry visa requested by Russia’s Association of Kalmyk Buddhists.

April 26 & 30, 2010: The Russian Emergency Situations Ministry delivers two consignments of humanitarian cargo (weighing more than 65 tons, worth about 37 million rubles) to China’s Qinghai Province where a deadly earthquake caused severe damage.

April 29, 2010: Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin and Chinese Ambassador to Russia Li Hui discuss in Moscow the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.

April 29, 2010: Russian Minister of Economic Development Elvira Sakhpizadovna Nabiullina meets Chinese Ambassador to Russia Li Hui in Moscow. They exchange views on how to deepen economic and trade cooperation between China and Russia.

May 3-7, 2010: DPRK leader Kim Jong-il makes an unofficial visit to China.

May 8-9, 2010: President Hu Jintao visits Russia as the guest of President Medvedev for the ceremony marking the 65th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Hu meets Prime Minister Putin on May 8 and President Medvedev the following day.

May 10, 2010: *Russkiy Newsweek* releases a “secret” Russian government document “Program for Effective Utilization of Foreign Political Factors on a Systematic Basis for Purposes of Long-Term Development of the Russian Federation.”

May 13, 2010: Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov states that Russia is ready to help settle the dispute between China and exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, and that Russia is interested in the “normalization in relations between Beijing and the Dalai Lama.”

May 18-20, 2010: A Russian State Duma (Lower House) delegation, led by State Duma Chairman Boris Gryzlov, pays an official goodwill visit to China at the invitation of top Chinese legislator Wu Bangguo. Gryzlov meets President Hu and Vice President Xi Jinping.

May 19, 2010: Chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation Gennady Zyuganov starts his seventh visit to China. He meets Vice President Xi and travels to Nanjing and then tours the World Expo in Shanghai.

May 22, 2010: SCO foreign ministers meet in Tashkent to make preparations for the SCO Summit and discuss the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Foreign Minister Lavrov holds a brief working meeting with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi.

May 24-27, 2010: Viktor Ivanov, director of Russia’s Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) visits China. He meets Zhou Yongkang, member of the Permanent Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Meng Jianzhu, minister of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China. They discuss trafficking of narcotics from Afghanistan and its impact on the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region of the PRC.

May 31, 2010: Liao Xilong, director of the PLA General Logistics Department, meets visiting Deputy Minister of Defense Vera Chistova in Beijing.

June 3-4, 2010: Foreign Minister Lavrov visits China. He meets President Hu, State Councilor Dai Bingguo and Foreign Minister Yang.

June 4, 2010: DPRK border guards shoot dead three Chinese nationals and wound another suspected of illegally crossing the China-DPRK border for trade activities.

June 8, 2010: China complains by raising “a solemn representation” with the DPRK regarding the killing of Chinese nationals on June 4.

June 9-12, 2010: Gen. Ma Xiaotian, deputy chief of general staff of the Chinese PLA, and Lt. Gen. Lichiyak, deputy chief of general staff and director of Main Directorate for Operations of the General Staff Headquarters of the Russian armed forces, jointly preside over the 13th round of strategic consultation in Moscow.

June 10-11, 2010: The 10th annual SCO Summit is held in Tashkent.

June 22, 2010: Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology Yuri Trutnev and Minister of Environmental Protection Zhou Shengxian sign a protocol on cooperation in the environmental protection and trans-boundary water resources.

June 23-Aug. 2, 2010: *RIMPAC* 2010 is held in the waters off Hawaii.

June 26, 2010: Presidents Hu and Medvedev meet on the sidelines of a G20 Summit in Toronto.

June 28-July 9, 2010: Russian military conduct a series of drills in the Sea of Japan as part of the *Vostok 2010* strategic exercises in Russia's Far East.

June 26-29, 2010: Russian and Chinese Deputy Foreign Ministers Alexei Borodavkin and Cheng Guoping, meet in Moscow to discuss Kyrgyzstan issue.