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THE MEDVEDEV DOCTRINE AND AMERICAN STRATEGY

By George Friedman

The United States has been fighting a war in the Islamic world since 2001. Its main theaters of military focus spreads throughout the Islamic world, from Mindanao to Morocco. The situation c

The war in Iraq was moving toward an acceptable but not optimal solution. The government in E Iranian puppet, and that was the best that could be hoped for. The United States anticipated pu The war in Afghanistan was deteriorating for the United States and NATO forces. The Taliban v country were falling to its control. Force in Afghanistan was insufficient, and any troops withdraw Afghanistan to stabilize the situation. Political conditions in neighboring Pakistan were deteriora Afghanistan.

The United States had been locked in a confrontation with Iran over its nuclear program, demar U.S. action. The United States had assembled a group of six countries (the permanent membe agreed with the U.S. goal, was engaged in negotiations with Iran, and had agreed at some poin comply. The United States was also leaking stories about impending air attacks on Iran by Israe enrichment program. The United States had the implicit agreement of the group of six not to se in Iran.

In short, the United States remained heavily committed to a region stretching from Iraq to Pakis Afghanistan, and the possibility of commitments to Pakistan (and above all to Iran) on the table. U.S. airpower, naval and land-based forces had to stand by for the possibility of an air campaig attack, since the credibility of a bluff depended on the availability of force.

The situation in this region actually was improving, but the United States had to remain committ Russians invaded Georgia on Aug. 8 following a Georgian attack on South Ossetia. Forgetting States had created a massive window of opportunity for the Russians: For the foreseeable futu spare to deploy elsewhere in the world, nor the ability to sustain them in extended combat. Mor cooperation both against Iran and potentially in Afghanistan, where Moscow's influence with soi needed the Russians and couldn't block the Russians. Therefore, the Russians inevitably chos

On Sunday, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev in effect ran up the Jolly Roger. Whateve Russia, Medvedev made the Russian position very clear. He stated Russian foreign policy in fi Medvedev Doctrine (and which we see fit to quote here):

First, Russia recognizes the primacy of the fundamental principles of international law, which de build our relations with other countries within the framework of these principles and this concep Second, the world should be multipolar. A single-pole world is unacceptable. Domination is sor order in which one country makes all the decisions, even as serious and influential a country as unstable and threatened by conflict.

Third, Russia does not want confrontation with any other country. Russia has no intention of iso Europe, the United States, and other countries, as much as is possible.

Fourth, protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens, wherever they may be, is an unquestiona decisions will be based on this need. We will also protect the interests of our business commu respond to any aggressive acts committed against us.

Finally, fifth, as is the case of other countries, there are regions in which Russia has privileged i which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbc these regions and build friendly ties with these countries, our close neighbors.

Medvedev concluded, "These are the principles I will follow in carrying out our foreign policy. A our friends and partners in the international community. They have a choice."

The second point in this doctrine states that Russia does not accept the primacy of the United : third point, while Russia wants good relations with the United States and Europe, this depends : Russia's behavior. The fourth point states that Russia will protect the interests of Russians whe or in Georgia, for example. This provides a doctrinal basis for intervention in such countries if R

The fifth point is the critical one: "As is the case of other countries, there are regions in which Russians have special interests in the former Soviet Union and in friendly relations with these states. Regimes which undermine pro-Russian regimes will be regarded as a threat to Russia's "special interests."

Thus, the Georgian conflict was not an isolated event -- rather, Medvedev is saying that Russia is trying to resurrect the Soviet system. Locally, it would not be correct to say that Russia is trying to resurrect the Soviet system. Globally, the Russians want to use this new regional power -- and substantial Russian power which the United States loses its primacy.

These are ambitious goals, to say the least. But the Russians believe that the United States is creating an opportunity here, if they move quickly, to create a new reality before the United States is ready to resist -- nor the will to actively resist Russia. Moreover, the Europeans are heavily dependent on Russia. Russia can survive without selling it to them far better than the Europeans can survive without buying it. The equation, nor are they likely to become substantial.

This leaves the United States in an extremely difficult strategic position. The United States opposes Russia for ideological reasons but also for geopolitical ones. If the Soviet Union had broken out of its economic power at its disposal, coupled with its population, would have allowed the Soviets to challenge U.S. hegemony and put the continental United States in jeopardy. It was U.S. policy during World War II to prevent any power from dominating the Eurasian landmass. For the United States, this was the

The U.S.-jihadist war was waged in a strategic framework that assumed that the question of hegemony in World War II and the Soviet Union's defeat in the Cold War meant that there was no claimant on what appeared to be the current priority -- the defeat of radical Islamism. It appeared that the American public, not an attempt to resurrect a major Eurasian power.

The United States now faces a massive strategic dilemma, and it has limited military options against Russia which it would block the four Russian maritime outlets, the Sea of Japan and the Black, Baltic and Mediterranean. The military force with which to do this and could potentially do so without allied cooperation, which the UN Security Council would unanimously support a blockade of Russia, which would be an act of war.

But while a blockade like this would certainly hurt the Russians, Russia is ultimately a land power. The blockade option is thus more attractive on first glance than on deeper analysis.

More important, any overt U.S. action against Russia would result in counteractions. During the Cold War, the U.S. interest not by sending Soviet troops, but by supporting regimes and factions with weapons and money. The Russians tied down 500,000 U.S. troops without placing major Russian forces at risk. Through various programs of subversion and aid to friendly regimes, forcing the United States either to accept a disproportionate cost.

In the present situation, the Russian response would strike at the heart of American strategy in the Islamic world -- but for the moment, they have substantial interest in strengthening the Islamic world. The Russians have a long history of supporting Middle Eastern regimes with weapons and money. The world leader they met with after invading Georgia was Syrian President Bashar al Assad. This was an aggressive response to Russia's actions in Georgia, Moscow would ship a range of weapons to Syria -- conceivably send weapons to factions in Iraq that do not support the current regime, as well as encourage the Iranians to withdraw their support for the Iraqi government and plunge Iraq back into chaos. Russia could ship weapons to the Taliban and work to further destabilize Pakistan.

At the moment, the United States faces the strategic problem that the Russians have options with their U.S. commitment of ground forces in the Islamic world leave the United States without strategic options. These troops operate make them highly vulnerable to Russian manipulation -- with few satisfactory alternatives.

The U.S. government is trying to think through how it can maintain its commitment in the Islamic world. The United States could very rapidly win its wars in the Islamic world, but it is in a position to prolong these wars, and even without such agitation, the American ability to close the Islamic world. The United States could massively increase the size of its army and make deployments into the Baltics, Ukraine and the Middle East. The United States would take years to build up these forces and the active cooperation of Europe to deploy them. The United States could not do this without the active cooperation of Europe to deploy them, but the Europeans in general, and the Germans in particular, have no appetite for this war. Expectations that the United States could do this would affect the current strategic reality.

This logistical issue might be manageable, but the real heart of this problem is not merely the d the Russians' ability to use weapons sales and covert means to deteriorate conditions dramatic current reality, the strategic situation in the Islamic world could rapidly spin out of control.

The United States is therefore trapped by its commitment to the Islamic world. It does not have former Soviet Union, and if it tries to block the Russians with naval or air forces, it faces a dangr If it does nothing, it creates a strategic threat that potentially towers over the threat in the Islamic

The United States now has to make a fundamental strategic decision. If it remains committed to Russians. If it does not respond to the Russians for five or 10 years, the world will look very mu another Cold War at the very least, with a peer power much poorer than the United States but p national defense.

There are four broad U.S. options:

Attempt to make a settlement with Iran that would guarantee the neutral stability of Iraq and peri the key here. The Iranians might also mistrust a re-emergent Russia, and while Tehran might be Americans, Iran might consider an arrangement with the United States -- particularly if the Unite upside, this would free the U.S. from Iraq. On the downside, the Iranians might not want --or ho Enter into negotiations with the Russians, granting them the sphere of influence they want in the project Russian power into Europe proper. The Russians will be busy consolidating their positio NATO. On the upside, this would free the United States to continue its war in the Islamic world. the re-emergence of a powerful Russian empire that would be as difficult to contain as the Sov Refuse to engage the Russians and leave the problem to the Europeans. On the upside, this v Islamic world and force the Europeans to act. On the downside, the Europeans are too divided Russians. This strategy could speed up Russia's re-emergence.

Rapidly disengage from Iraq, leaving a residual force there and in Afghanistan. The upside is th Baltics and Ukraine that might restrain Russia in the former Soviet Union. The downside is that i threatening regimes that have sided with the United States and potentially reviving effective inte hegemonic threat from Eurasia and instability and a terror threat from the Islamic world.

We are pointing to very stark strategic choices. Continuing the war in the Islamic world has a m Russia potentially poses a far greater threat to the United States than the Islamic world does. V 2003 has now turned into a very dangerous enterprise, because a hostile major power now has East enormously more difficult.

If a U.S. settlement with Iran is impossible, and a diplomatic solution with the Russians that wou the former Soviet Union cannot be reached, then the United States must consider rapidly aband redeploying its forces to block Russian expansion. The threat posed by the Soviet Union during now by the fragmented Islamic world. In the end, the nations there will cancel each other out, ar States simply has to deal with. This is not an ideal solution by any means, but the clock appears world.

We do not expect the United States to take this option. It is difficult to abandon a conflict that h that the Russians will actually be a threat later. (It is far easier for an analyst to make such sugg Instead, the United States will attempt to bridge the Russian situation with gestures and half me

Nevertheless, American national strategy is in crisis. The United States has insufficient power to the two. Continuing the current strategy means choosing to deal with the Islamic threat rather th Islamic threat represents a greater danger to American interests than the Russian threat does. world will cohere to form a global threat. But it is not difficult to imagine a Russia guided by the and a direct danger to American interests.

We expect no immediate change in American strategic deployments -- and we expect this to b President Dick Cheney's trip to the Caucasus region, now would be the time to see some movi be talking to the Russians, he needs to be talking to the Iranians. Otherwise, he will be writing c cash.

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