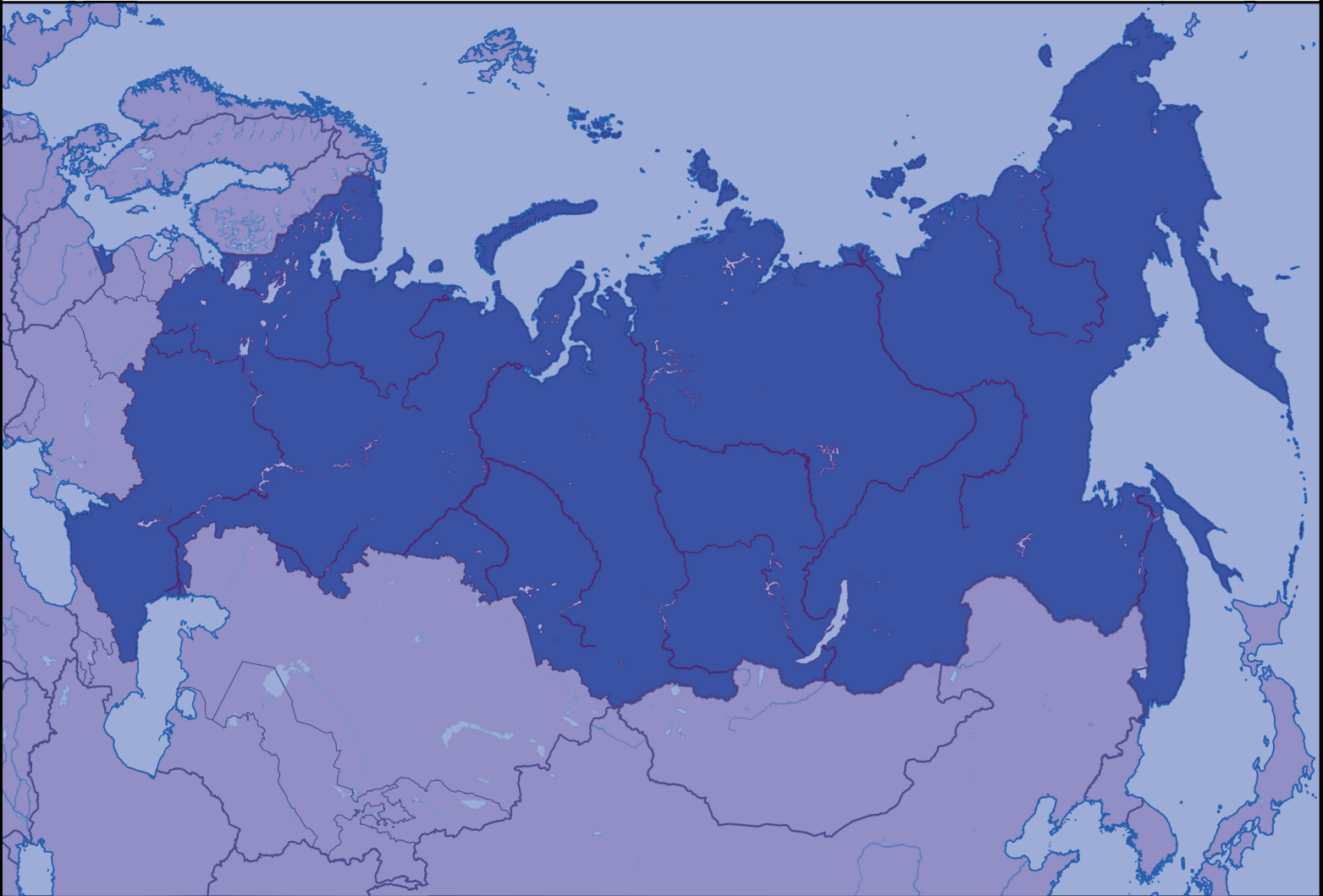


Russia's Strategic Puzzle: Past Lessons, Current Assessment, and Future Outlook



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Introduction

Professor Yonah Alexander

Director, Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies

Lord Palmerston, Britain's Prime Minister, famously declared at the House of Commons in 1848: "...we have no eternal allies, and we have no eternal enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow."¹ Indeed, history teaches us that foreign policies of states are motivated by what their leaders perceive as "national interests." Since nothing is static in evolving strategic trends, the relationships between Russia and the rest of the world have fluctuated between the status of "foe" and the status of "friend" in accordance with perceptions and considerations—on both sides—of "national interests."

It is not surprising, however, that Russia's policies and actions since the 1917 October Revolution have been interpreted by the Western nations as a rather complicated "puzzle." For example, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, during a BBC broadcast in October 1939, commented on Russia's conduct in the early stages of World War Two: "It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside of an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. The key is Russian national interest."²

Yet, the "fog" over the meaning of Russia's "national interest" persisted. President Franklin D. Roosevelt pondered, "I wish someone would tell me about the Russians. I don't know a good Russian from a bad Russian. I can tell good Frenchman from a bad Frenchman, I can tell a good Italian from a bad Italian. I know a good Greek when I see one. But I don't understand the Russians."³

Nevertheless, for the past seven decades many efforts by policy-makers, reporters, and academics have been made to untangle the Russian "puzzle" and recommend "best practices" statecraft vis-à-vis Moscow. For instance, George Kennan in his extraordinary "X article" contributed practical diplomatic advice: "It is a sine qua non of successful dealing with Russia that the foreign government in question should remain at all times cool and collected and that its demands on Russian policy should be put forward in such a manner as to leave the way open for compliance not too detrimental to Russian prestige."⁴

As the "Iron Curtain" descended over Europe, an evolving era of escalated confrontation between East and West triggered a proliferation of analysis from both governmental and non-governmental sources, seeking to lift the mist seemingly clouding the Soviet Union's unfathomable strategic challenge. Robert Conquest, a distinguished contemporary historian, offered his view, explaining that "The Politburo in Moscow wear Western style suits and speak a variant of one of the Western political dialects... But the Soviet leaders are, in fact—as much as any Sultan or Mahdi—the product of centuries of history very different from our own, and of a long-standing political psychology alien to ours in its motives, its judgments, its intensions."⁵

It is also useful to cite the insightful commentary by Walter Lippmann, another leading observer of international affairs, who asserted that "cold wars cannot be conducted by hotheads. Nor can ideological conflicts be won by crusaders or

concluded by unconditional surrender.”⁶ Regardless of such public discourse, governmental political dispositions have taken different directions. Thus, the United States and its allies have waged a continuous “battle of ideas” seeking to “expose” the dark face of the “evil empire.” President Ronald Reagan in a speech delivered to the National Association of Evangelists in Orlando, Florida, on March 8, 1983, stated, “...let us pray for the salvation of all those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world.”⁷

Predictably, the Soviet leadership rejected this and other “vilification” messages by Western “propaganda and psychological warfare.” For instance, President Mikhail Gorbachev asserted, “The idea that our country is an ‘evil empire,’ the October Revolution is a blunder of history, and the post revolution period a ‘zigzag in history,’ is coming apart at the seams. This kind of perestroika really does not suit some people.”⁸

As the Soviet Union was nearing its collapse, the West reassessed its policies vis-à-vis the “evil empire.” As President Bush declared in a speech at Texas A&M University on May 12, 1989,

The United States now has as its goal much more than simply containing Soviet expansionism. We seek the integration of the Soviet Union into the community of nations. And as the Soviet Union itself moves toward greater openness and democratization, as they meet the challenge of responsible international behavior, we will match their steps with steps of our own. Ultimately, our objective is to welcome the Soviet Union back into the world order.⁹

To be sure, even given the post-Cold War epoch that began in the 1990s and is still evolving nearly a quarter century later, the historical cloud over Russia’s intentions, capabilities and operations still lingers on. Selected examples of Moscow’s Middle East experience during this particular period provides at least a glimpse of seemingly conflicting Russian national interests.

More specifically, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia’s influence in the Middle East declined amid domestic reforms and internal instability. Yet in 1995, Moscow signed a contract with Iran for the construction of light water reactors at the Bushehr nuclear complex, and subsequently it also provided ICBM technology to Tehran.

When Vladimir Putin assumed power in Russia in 2000, he began increasing the Russian presence in the Middle East, collaborating more closely with both Iran and Syria. Reportedly, some Russian weapons were provided by Syria to Hizballah, the Lebanese-based terrorist movement. Meanwhile, Moscow has also expanded its relationships with pro-Western nations such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and Israel, and has concluded with them technological, military, energy, nuclear, and trade agreements. At the same time, Russia also provided political support to Hamas, the terrorist group currently controlling the Gaza Strip, and is presently backing the

Palestinian Authority's push for statehood via the United Nations but in violation of Moscow's obligations under the Quartet roadmap arrangements for an eventual Middle East peace.

Moreover, despite a dramatic expansion of the brutal civil war in Syria, Russia has continued its arms shipments to the Assad regime. By mid-2015, Moscow also suggested that the U.S. should cooperate with President Assad in combating the Islamic State (also known as ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh).

During that period and in subsequent months, Russian military personnel and extensive armament reached Syria in support of the regime. Additionally, Moscow has set up forward operating bases in the country.

In the face of this massive projection of power into the country, including Russia's launching continuous air strikes against regime opposition forces and "terrorists," President Barak Obama warned that Moscow's deepening Syrian military involvement would suck Russia into a "quagmire" or "protracted" conflict. The question arises whether the Geneva peace talks, the cease-fire arrangements in Syria, and Russia's "surprise" partial withdrawal of its forces from the country's five-year old battlefield ushers in a new phase of regional cooperation between East and West or only represents the Kremlin's ambiguous Plan B that would allow it to further redefine the post-Cold War era.

In sum, Moscow's more assertive foreign policy approach in the Middle East is only one dramatic feature of Russia's strategic objective to attain, preserve, and increase its great power status. Thus, other major diplomatic, military, and economic efforts have been undertaken by the Kremlin in the broader multipolar world, including the Eurasian region, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Baltics, and elsewhere. Additionally, President Putin, in seeking to end Russia's international isolation, has been willing to collaborate with his "adversaries" on other specific regional and global challenges such as the Ukraine crisis and terrorism at home and abroad.

The Current Report

For nearly a century, Russia has been traditionally characterized as an "enigma" on social, economic, and strategic levels. From the interwar period through World War II and the Cold War to the current evolving post-Soviet epoch, international affairs participant-observers have sought to decipher the Kremlin's "national interests" and resulting policies and actions.

This report on "Russia's Strategic Puzzle: Past Lessons, Current Assessment, and Future Outlook" provides a modest academic effort to focus on a "Historical and Contemporary Context" and on several case studies such as "Separatist Movements," "The Ukraine Crisis," "Russia's Middle East Strategy," and "The Sochi Olympics." The contributions to this publication are by a variety of authors, including former American and foreign government officials, a serving diplomat, academics, and professionals. The following speakers made presentations at a number of seminars held during the past three years: Hon. Yaroslav Brisiuck, Ian Brzezinski, Scott Edelman, Professor Paul Goble, Dr. Adrian Hänni, Professor Shireen Hunter, Professor John Lenczowski, Dr. Patrick Murphy, Professor Matthew Rojansky, Peter Roudik, and

Dr. Richard Weitz. They all deserve gratitude for their presentations and cooperation on this project.

Mention should also be made of our previous academic engagements in Soviet and Russian affairs over the past four decades, which consist of the production of a great number of works. These publications include *Terrorism: An International Journal*; *Political Communication and Persuasion*; *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*; *Partnership for Peace Review*; *Terrorism: An Electronic Journal and Knowledge Base*; *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection*¹⁰; *Europe's Red Terrorists: The Fighting Communist Organizations*¹¹; and *NATO: From Regional to Global Security Provider*¹², to name a few.

Finally, some acknowledgements are in order.

Deep appreciation is due to Michael S. Swetnam (CEO and Chairman, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies), General (Ret.) Alfred Gray (Twenty-Ninth Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, Senior Fellow and Chairman of the Board of Regents, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies), and Professor Don Wallace, Jr. (Chairman, International Law Institute) for their inspiration and continuing support of our academic work in the field of global security concerns. As always, Sharon Layani, Research Associate and Coordinator at the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies, deserves gratitude for her professional and publication efforts.

Yonah Alexander
March 15, 2016

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- ⁹ Bush, George H.W. "Transcript of Bush's Remarks on Transforming Soviet-American Relations." *The New York Times*, Remarks at the Texas A&M University Commencement Ceremony, May 12, 1989. <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/13/world/transcript-of-bush-s-remarks-on-transforming-soviet-american-relations.html?pagewanted=all>
- ¹⁰ Ray S. Cline and Yonah Alexander. *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection*. New York: Crane Russak, 1984.
- ¹¹ Yonah Alexander and Dennis Pluchinsky. *Europe's Red Terrorists: The Fighting Communist Organizations*. London: Frank Cass, 1992.
- ¹² Yonah Alexander and Richard Prosen, eds. *NATO: From Regional to Global Security Provider*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015.

Historical and Contemporary Context*

Professor Matthew Rojansky

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Let me try to introduce our discussion by offering the following statement: the West and Russia are currently engaged in a conflict. Now, when you first hear that statement, it might seem to you to be somewhat trivial or banal, right? Well, of course we are in a conflict. We are yelling at each other all the time, sanctioning, isolating one another. What I mean to suggest is that we are in an *actual* conflict, versus the state of disagreement that we may have been in for the majority of the last 25 years.

What is different at this moment is that we are engaged in a war of words, we are engaged in mutual isolation, we have leveled sanctions and counter-sanctions against one another, we have frozen almost all channels of practical cooperation and dialogue, with a few very limited exceptions. And, significantly, military deployments by both Russia and NATO are now following rhetoric and political isolation in a way they have not done previously in the past 25 years. So, while things were bad (and there were plenty of times they were bad) in the last 25 years, we did not have what we could described as a “conflict” until after (or in the aftermath of) the Ukraine crisis.

Now, why does the Ukraine crisis matter so much that it has transformed difficult relations into a conflict? Well, to begin to answer that question, let me quote some of the more knowledgeable people involved:

- “Russia’s actions in Ukraine challenge the post-World War II world order.” That is President Obama.
- “Russia’s annexation of Crimea is a blatant violation of international law.” That is Vice President Biden.
- “There is an attempt to perturb the existing world order with one uncontestable leader who wants to remain as such, thinking he is allowed everything while others are allowed only what he allows, and only in his interests.” And that is President Putin.

So, all three, leaders on both sides, are talking about international rules, norms, the world order. There are plenty of ideas about what those things are (I do not think there is a consensus about how you define them), but there is no doubt that what happens in and around Europe is central to defining what the international order, what the world order, and what, in fact, the state of international law is. As those of you involved with the International Law Institute will know very well, international law is far more than what is simply written in treaties and conventions. It is more than the customary international law definition of practice and *opinio juris*. In other words, what we do and what we think ought to be the rules.

* The presentations of Matthew Rojansky, Adrian Hänni, and Richard Weitz were delivered at a seminar on “Untangling Russia's Puzzle: Past Lessons and Future Outlook” held on January 20, 2016 at the Inter-University Center for Legal Studies (administered by the International Law Institute).

The reality is that global order comes from a collective, cumulative sense, gathered over time, of the realities that govern the conduct of states. And here I would like to cite, and I do not have the exact quotation, but I would like to cite an argument by Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, who said that it is more often the case that it is the conduct of European nations that defines the world order, rather than the opposite.

In other words, if you were to say that there is an abstraction called “world order,” with which the behavior of European states either complies or does not comply, that is getting it exactly backwards. The reality is that although the question, “what is the world order?” is very politically incorrect, it is absolutely accurate in at least describing the last several hundred years of human history: “What is the world order?” depends entirely on what European states do. And that, I posit, is why the Ukraine crisis is so critical in terms of turning the current dynamic between Russia and the West into a conflict. Because the implications of that crisis are also implications for how European states manage their disagreements, whether territorial, or political, or economic, or demographic, or social, or anything else; and if they are managed through violence, through war, then it is, in fact, given the current state of the world, the beginning of the end of the entire world order. You have to understand the premise that flows from the practice of European states more than the other way around. So, when President Obama says that, “Russia has upset the world order,” what he actually means is that the behavior of Russia in Ukraine, the conflict between Russian and Ukraine, and other ancillary conflicts that we are now seeing in and around Europe, represent a threat that could begin to unravel the world order as it is set by the conduct of the European states.

Now in the longer term, this might change, right? When the Chinas and Indias and Brazils and South Africas of the world are ready to step up and pay the costs of being order-setting states in the international system, what happens in Europe may not be so critical for defining world order, but it certainly is today.

So, given that this is a conflict that is at that level of seriousness, and that level of import, is there any hope for reversing the slide into apparent disorder and rejection of the rules? Here, I think it is important to ask the question, “What has happened before?” Let me say this: there are cases in the past where the West and Russia, at that time the Soviet Union, were in deep and severe enough confrontation and conflict, that it actually produced a settlement that strengthened the world order. And, in particular, I point to the period of détente and the 1972 to 1975 Helsinki Conference which led to the Helsinki Final Act, which actually, much more than anything in the 1990s, defined the post-Cold War world order by defining the order in Europe first. So, the way the Soviet Union (while it still existed), and the West agreed to interact around the core set of disagreement that they had in Central and Eastern Europe and other parts of the region including Eurasia, was what ultimately determined a relatively peaceful framework for the post-Cold War world order.

Let me just, in very basic terms, suggest that while the current period has some interesting, and I think somewhat compelling, similarities to the Cold War—for example the level of propagandism on both sides, the sense on both sides that there is nothing to gain from cooperation, frozen dialogue, imposed mutual sanctions and counter-sanctions, mutual isolation, and so forth—there are also many significant differences. For example, the Cold War came off of a period of 20 to 30 years of

unprecedented isolation of the Soviet Union from the rest of the world. This was intentional on the part of the Soviets, and on the part of the West, and in other countries that cut off relations.

We are coming instead off of 25 years of unprecedented integration between Russia and the rest of the world in almost every sense: economically, socially, politically. If you just look at the generation of young people, the millennials like many of you in this audience, you see the degree in which people's friendships, their Facebook accounts, their international travel (particularly folks who live in Washington or Moscow), really do not recognize borders any more. The degree to which business, social organizations, even politics are integrated between Russia and the West is unprecedented, and that, I think, is not simply going to go away because we are in a state of conflict.

But perhaps the more important difference, which is particularly evident when you look at the millennial generation, is that very few people take the prospect of conflict escalation to actual physical military confrontation at all seriously. Now, this is very very different from the Cold War. In the Cold War, the presumption was that that was entirely possible and in some cases was very likely. Right? Think about the Cuban Missile Crisis, think about the crisis around the Middle East, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, any number of crises, any number of third party-third country conflicts, that were proxy wars that could have led to a direct exchange, and perhaps a nuclear exchange, between the super powers. Those prospects were taken seriously and now they are not.

If we are honest with ourselves today, particularly those in the younger generation, we see that there is only one answer to that question, and that is that it is pretty much unthinkable. But see, there is a flip side to that. If it is unthinkable that we would end up in a direct military confrontation with the only other country in the world, that is Russia, that has the capability to obliterate the United States from the earth in under an hour, then it tends to reduce our incentive to take seriously the problem that we are in a conflict with Russia.

Going back to my original logic, this would tend to reduce one's incentive to seek a Helsinki-type settlement to our current problems with Russia, in and around Europe. And it would tend to reduce the likelihood that this current conflict is going to end in as salutatory a way as the last conflict did.

So now you see the problem, right? It is similar in many ways to a Cold War, it has some scary implications, and yet somehow, it is not quite scary enough.

So, what might need to happen or what might be possible, given the current circumstances? Well, as I said, the upside is, I think, that reengagement and normalcy are still on the table, particularly because of the degree to which Russia and the West have become engaged and mutually dependent. I think it would have to entail a face-saving exit for Russia from Ukraine, and that has to be within the Minsk framework. There simply is not another option. I think it is going to have to entail the gradual easing and possibly eventual elimination of all but a few symbolic sanctions that have been imposed by the U.S. and E.U., and of course conversely Russia's counter-sanctions.

And, there has got to be a symbolic kind of third-country issue, and I think Syria has presented itself as an issue upon which Russia and West can symbolically, visibly, publicly, significantly cooperate. Because if we do not have that, we do not have the political capital necessary to persuade people that there is even a reason to try and, I think, Syria could be that reason. That is the positive scenario.

The negative is also very compelling. I talked about how the stakes are not seen as high enough, but it is more than that. We have serious structural problems in the relationship today. In the Cold War, sworn enemies trusted each other enough to have what you call working levels of trust. They may not have trusted one another's incentive or long term goals, but they at least trusted that when other party said it was going to do something, it had the authority to do that. If you look at the level of mutual dislike and disrespect between Obama and Putin today, and it is very unlikely that that is going to be improved upon by any future American president, that is all you need to see. There is intense personal enmity and distrust, not only in intentions, but in competency. Putin distrusts the competency of the American leadership and vice versa. We talk constantly about how Putin lies, Putin is a liar. Well, if we cannot trust him, how can we do a deal with him?

Domestic politics on both sides hardly have to say more than to point out that in Russia, nationalism has become absolutely central, not only to Putin's success, but to his survival. He has unleashed forces in Russian politics that, were he to disappoint them, were he to appear to betray the goals of Russian nationalism, his very survival, that of his regime, and that of himself and his family and those close to him, would be threatened by some very dangerous people.

Then, of course, in the American political context, we are constantly reminded in this politically silly season, that President Obama campaigned for office, and came to office, promising progress through diplomacy, right? Engagement. That was his big word. He used that word freely in the 2008 campaign. Rightly or wrongly, the political collective judgment has been that he failed. The jury might still be out on the Iran nuclear agreement, but he has failed with Russia, he has failed with the Muslim world. Remember his big Cairo speech? He was going to win everyone over through engagement. Right? The political kind of collective zeitgeist says he has failed. And, the reason that is important is because everyone out there, with the possible exception of Bernie Sanders, is going to campaign to his right on foreign policy. So, any future president of the United States, with the possible exception of Bernie Sanders, is going to take a harder line and be tougher on foreign policy than Obama has been, and that promises a kind of structural confrontation between Russia and the United States.

So, I have given you more or less the optimistic upside, which is that we can aspire to something like a new Helsinki order, a new kind of framework that allows us to manage our differences peacefully through this sort of process. But, the downside is that it seems like we are not taking the current conflict seriously enough, it seems like structurally and personally we have really deep divisions between the leadership on both sides. And, it seems that ultimately it is going to be very, very difficult to come to the kind of resolution that we were able to reach during the *détente* of the 1970s.

Dr. Adrian Hänni

University of Zurich

The relationship between Russia and the NATO member states has swung between limited cooperation and confrontation ever since Vladimir Putin took the reins of power in 1999-2000. Over the past two years, the situation has deteriorated into a real conflict. The Ukraine crisis has frozen into a stalemate. The United States and the European Union apply sanctions against Russian individuals, officials, and businesses, and Russia counteracts by banning all food imports. In Syria, the two sides are engaged in a deadly proxy war, as Russia bombs rebel groups financed, armed, and trained by the United States and Saudi Arabia in a multi-billion dollar covert action aimed at bringing about the downfall of Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad.

If history was evoked to make sense of the current conflict between Russia and the West in the last years, the focus has almost exclusively been on the Cold War: the global rivalry that shaped the second half of the “short twentieth century,” setting Western democracies against Eastern totalitarianism, liberalism against communism, and the U.S.-led NATO alliance against the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. Numerous newspaper articles, nonfiction bestsellers, think tank reports and the covers of magazines like *Time* or the *American Review* invoke and warn of a New Cold War. Even an American punk band calls itself the New Cold War. Wikipedia has an entry for “Cold War II”: “Cold War II, also known as the New Cold War, Second Cold War and Cold War 2.0 refers to a state of political and military tension between Russia and the Western World akin to the Cold War that saw the global confrontation between the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc led by the USSR.” So it must be a real thing. But is it really?

I argue that the Cold War analogy is ill-suited to understanding the emerging conflict. Moreover, accepting at face value the narrative that Russia and the West are engaged in a new Cold War—meaning a conflict that resembles the geopolitical rivalry of the 20th Century—could lead policymakers to choose not only wrong but even dangerous strategies. Let me briefly outline four decisive factors that illustrate the quintessential difference: ideology, economy, influence, and innovation.

The Cold War was to a significant degree an ideological conflict. Particularly in its first two decades, communism constituted a serious alternative to capitalism and liberal democracies, an alternative that appealed to people around the world. Today, Russia has no relevant ideological base. The influence of much nurtured Russian nationalism is, for obvious reasons, strongly restricted to neighboring countries with a significant population of ethnical Russians. Slavophilia, while producing strange effects among pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine, is subject to similar limitations. Accordingly, Russia's potential to project soft power is strongly limited.

Besides ideological/cultural charisma, the other main foundation to project power abroad is the economy. Russia's economy resembles that of a developing country, in that it relies on energy revenues for economic growth, and exports mainly natural resources (oil, natural gas, minerals, and timber). The oil-and-gas sector, mainly under state control, accounts for more than half of federal budget revenues and over 70 percent of Russian exports (as of 2012). Oil and natural gas exports continue to be

the main source of hard currency, shaky ground on which to be challenging NATO, the most powerful alliance in world history.

Russian oil revenues and earnings have now plummeted, since oil prices began collapsing in the second half of 2014. Additionally, Russian oil production has flatlined on a plateau of 10 million-odd barrels a day. With the large conventional oil fields in Western Siberia growing old, production will start declining within a decade unless Russia is able to develop its unconventional oil resources—shale oil in Western Siberia and deep sea oil in the Arctic. Because the production of these resources is technologically challenging, Russia needs the help of Western technology and know-how, which would in turn require that sanctions against Russia be eased. Under the current regime, Western companies are banned from undertaking new unconventional oil projects with state-controlled Russian producers.

There are, in fact, strong parallels to a dynamic in the mid-1980s that contributed to the *end* of the Cold War: oil price collapse, plateauing oil production set to decline, and large dependence on oil revenues for hard currency. For the time being, Russia simply lacks the economic and financial base to rebuild an empire or a large sphere of influence.

That brings us to the third decisive difference: influence. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union could make use of a sphere of influence that was global in reach. Besides the satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe, its orbit encompassed clients in East Asia, Africa, the Middle East and even in Latin America. Today, Russia can only count on a small, disparate gang of allies: the former Soviet Republics of Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan; Venezuela; Nicaragua; Cuba; whatever remains of Assad's Syria; and maybe Iran (where, in any case, its influence would be only second to China's).

Besides of a lack of *ideology*, *income*, and *influence*, Russia is unable to generate *innovation* or major advancements in science and technology. Whether it is nuclear research, robotics, semiconductors, molecular biology, genetics or medical innovation, Russia has largely sunk into insignificance. Neither Apple, nor Google, Tesla, or Uber are Russian companies. Putin's state does not bear comparison to the Soviet Union in the early Cold War, which shocked the world with the Sputnik satellite in 1957, sent the first human into outer space in 1961, and achieved a higher life expectancy than the United State far into the 1960s. Without the ability to produce cutting-edge innovation, today's Russian society poses no real challenge to the West.

If we keep on relying on the Cold War analogy, we therefore risk falling into the *Maginot trap*¹. What I call the *Maginot trap* is the drawing of wrong or misleading lessons from the past because the fundamental structures and conditions have changed. Today's world is far removed from the bipolar stasis of the Cold War that juxtaposed the peer competitors USA and USSR in equilibrium. The United States is still the only superpower and by far the most powerful nation, but the margin over its potential competitors has been shrinking. A revanchist Russia and China are increasingly pushing against American supremacy, seeking to build a new international order. Our global state system resembles much more the decade before the outbreak of World War I, when the British Empire went into relative decline, other

powers such as Germany began challenging its hegemony, and the international system became unstable.

In contrast to the Soviet Union, the system of Putin's Russia shares more characteristics with the expansionist Czarist Russia of the 19th century—from the domestic symbiosis between the political leadership and the Orthodox Church, to the quest for a land-based empire in the “near abroad,” to the ideological centering of Eurasianism, promoted as an alternative to the secular materialistic West and as the basis to rebuild a resurgent Russian state. If we keep focusing on the Soviet Union and the assumed resurrection of the Cold War, trying tenaciously to understand the new conflict with Russia through the lens of that geopolitical rivalry, we will miss these much more insightful analogies and lessons from historical events that predate the Cold War.

History, writes Oxford historian Margaret Macmillan, helps us to understand those we have to deal with (as well as ourselves): “If you do not know the history of another people, you will not understand their values, their fears and their hopes or how they are likely to react to something you do.”² If nothing else, history has provided Russia with the experience of invasions. As Harold Mackinder observes, “the Russians were originally a people [...] who, for the sake of their own security, had to seek out and conquer—from the High Middle Ages into the early modern era—the incoming Asiatic nomads of the steppe to the south and east.”³ The protracted presence of the Mongols was succeeded by disastrous invasions of Napoleonic France and then Hitler Germany. In combination with its flatness and the lack of natural borders to the west and south, this historic vulnerability of being invaded explains Russia's often paranoid fear of invasion and why, perhaps, insecurity is the quintessential Russian national emotion. This historical lesson helps us better understand Russia's recurring desire to gain security through the creation of a land-based empire and a buffer zone in Eastern Europe, as well as its deep-seated militarization, both of which were revitalized under Putin. It also allowed us to anticipate Russia's anti-access/area denial strategy based on complex missile defense systems, and suggests that the way NATO expanded eastwards since the 1990s made the new conflict with Russia almost inevitable.

To avoid the *Maginot trap* while drawing lessons from the past, history should be treated like a rearview mirror (to expand on an image used by the eminent Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis). The appropriate sectional view of the road over which we have passed helps us understand where we came from and who else is on the road, enabling us to drive safely. However, if we angle the mirror incorrectly to focus on the wrong points, a crash becomes inevitable.

¹ During World War I, defensive weapons dominated due to a combination of trenches and greater and faster firepower, resulting in the infamous trench warfare. The long stalemate on the Western front that led to enormous losses convinced the French military leaders and politicians in the interwar period that the future of warfare lay in defense. France therefore paid too much attention to defense. The most visible symbol of that doctrine was the Maginot Line: a vast line of concrete fortifications and weapons installations constructed on the French border to Germany, Luxembourg and Switzerland. In the 1930s, the French invested their hopes and a major share of their defense budget in this defensive wall, while, at the same time, advances in mobile artillery, tanks and combat aircraft made it possible to bypass or attack fortifications. In spring 1940, the German *Wehrmacht* invaded France, bypassing the line to the north, and conquered its archenemy with a *Blitzkrieg* campaign.

² Margaret Macmillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, London: Profile Books, 2010, p. 144.

³ Cited in Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate*, New York: Random House, 2013, p. 159.

Dr. Richard Weitz

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The U.S.-Russia relationship remains one of the most important in world affairs. The ability of either country to achieve many of its priorities depends on securing a modicum of support from the other. The two states possess the most powerful militaries, exert substantial global diplomatic influence, and play major roles in the world economy. Yet both states find it difficult to manage a relationship in which they are neither adversaries nor allies.

The most enduring problem is that Russian leaders tend to attribute excessively hostile motives to the United States, while U.S. leaders typically think too little about Russia and its interests when making decisions that at times have severely harmed the relationship. For example, in recent years, Moscow has exaggerated the anti-Russian intent and impact of U.S. policies, framing them as plots to overthrow the current presidential administration and replace it with one more pliable to Washington. Rather than hostility, the main driver of U.S. policy is American indifference toward Russia, which also hurts ties. Nonetheless, both governments have shown that they can achieve unemotional pragmatic transactional bargains in pursuit of mutual interests—when they make an effort to identify them and take them into account in their decision making.

For several reasons, Russian-U.S. relations are unlikely to improve anytime soon:

- Although Russian and U.S. officials can envisage various short-term tactical deals, their long-term aims for Ukraine, Europe, and other global issues are very different and often incompatible.
- Russian and U.S. leaders also profess to believe that they can manage a prolonged period of cold ties. U.S. officials think they can achieve many of their global goals without Moscow's active support, while Russian leaders claim that they can minimize the impact of Western sanctions by expanding economic ties with other partners and boosting Russia's own domestic production to compensate for Western export controls.
- As a result, social and economic relations between Americans and Russians remain underdeveloped, given the size of their populations and national economies. Their diplomatic engagements remain focused on managing the Ukrainian conflict but have otherwise become episodic and shallow.

Russia and the United States share overlapping interests in many areas. At a minimum, these common interests will keep the relationship from becoming too adversarial. At best, they could provide a foundation for surmounting some of the impediments to deeper or broader cooperation described above. But the constituencies favoring strong bilateral ties in both countries are small, consisting mainly of arms controllers and foreign policy experts. These conditions have meant that the U.S.-Russia agenda is still dominated by the issues that policy makers grappled with during the Cold War—nuclear deterrence, arms control, claimed spheres of influence, and concerns about their international credibility. This situation positions the two parties in the kind of adversarial relationship that prevailed during the Cold War. An enduring improvement in bilateral relations will not occur until both governments see more of their interests aligned with those of the other country.

Case Studies

1. Separatist Movements*

Professor John Lenczowski

Founder and President of The Institute of World Politics

I want to give a few introductory thoughts to try to put separatist terrorism in a larger political and historical context.

As we know, terrorism is the frequent attendant to national or tribal separatism and many who engage in this type of action define it on grounds of national determination or that it is the only weapon that the weak can use against the strong.

Modern separatist terrorism began as part of the anti-imperial and anti-colonial movement in the early 20th century and one could argue that the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand kicked this all off. Since then we have seen separatist terrorism in all sort of regions of the world; Algeria, Kenya, Israel, Basque terrorism in Spain, Irish terrorism in Great Britain, Palestinian terrorism, Kurdish, Québécois, Puerto Rican, Muslim Brotherhood terrorism initially to free Egypt from British rule and then associated with more recent terrorist organizations, Chechen terrorism against Russian rule, and all sort of others.

Oftentimes, terrorist actions have been taken against more rather than less liberal regimes, which is a great irony. Some of these movements were genuine national independence movements, which, for the most part did not sanction terrorism, but which nevertheless had their extremist element. Others were national liberation movements, which were based on Marxist-Leninist ideology and were connected to the Soviet Union or its proxies. Many of these movements received terrorism training within the USSR, which included ideological, propaganda, intelligence, and communications training. Many modern terrorist activities in the latter part of the 20th century, which continue today, have roots within that terrorism training apparatus.

The Marxist-Leninist ideology associated with these movements inspired a rejection of absolute moral standards and the adoption of a contingent morality where the ends justify the means. One only need look at Lenin's speech to the Youth Leagues of 1920 (the Komsomol). The second half of that speech articulates the classic expression of Marxist-Leninist morality, which rejects absolute moral standards—objective standard of right and wrong—as a “bourgeois prejudice.” According to Lenin's logic, anything that is good is that which accelerates the revolution, and that which is evil harms the revolution. And so, is it good or evil to blow up a school bus full of innocent children? Well, if it helps the revolution—say, by creating more of a police state environment thus alienating a large part of the population, it is good. This is a complete rejection of

* The presentations of John Lenczowski and Paul Goble were delivered at a seminar on “Combating Separatist Terrorism: Assessment of Past Lessons, Future Outlook, and 'Best Practices' Response Strategies” held on August 27, 2015 at Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

moral standards. Conversely, if by blowing up that bus, you end up waking up the sleeping giant of the civil society so that it will resist and fight off the terrorist group or the revolutionary group, then that, according to this philosophy, is evil.

Lenin thus raises a fundamental philosophical question over whether there is an objective moral order in the world. For my part, if you reject the notion that there are objective moral standards that apply to all people at all times and in all places, and if you subscribe to the notion that all morals are matters of personal preferences and that the morals of society are therefore the accumulations of personal preferences, then basically the morals of society are established by power struggle, and that is what Yonah Alexander described as the doctrine of "Might makes Right." Here, moral standards are established either by majority vote, or, to take it to its logical extreme, by those with the biggest guns and the greatest will to use them. If we reject objective moral standards, then who are we to criticize Adolf Hitler and his confederates? After all, was that just another lifestyle choice?

Sometimes terrorist actions have been stimulated amongst separatist groups as part of a strategy of divide and rule. This is what the KGB did in order to create inter-ethnic conflicts within the Soviet Union. A classic example was when they diverted Azerbaijani and Armenian desires for independence into inter-ethnic hatred between those two groups. This effort culminated in the stimulation and perpetration of pogroms by radicals in one group against the other, most notably Azerbaijani pogroms against Armenians in Baku in January, 1990. The Kremlin's strategy was to create enough ostensibly spontaneous inter-ethnic violence to justify dispatching the Soviet armed forces to restore peace and protect the Armenian population. In fact, as Soviet General Dmitri Yazov later admitted, the troops were sent to dismantle the organizational structure of the independence-minded Azerbaijani Popular Front, thus keeping Azerbaijan within the Soviet orbit.

In some cases, terrorism contributed to the success of separatist or independence efforts. In more cases, however, terrorism has proved to be counter-productive. Terrorism adopted by elements of the Chechen separatist movement gave Moscow sufficient ammunition to commit its own false flag terrorism in order to discredit the Chechens and to arouse the Russian population against them. Please remember the bombings of apartment buildings in three Russian cities in 1999 which were attributed to Chechen terrorists. In the third of these, in Ryazan, local police caught members of the FSB (the KGB's successor), not Chechens, planting a bomb which then was defused. The FSB's covers story was that this was a "training exercise." The circumstances were murky enough, and official propaganda effective enough, that the Kremlin was able to persuade enough Russians that the Chechens were at fault. The result was that Vladimir Putin was able to stimulate popular support for the revival of the war against Chechen separatists.

Terrorism in many of these cases was designed to be propaganda of the deed. Its purpose was to radicalize and polarize both sides of the conflict in the interest of building up greater resistance to the rule of the ruling power or powers.

The principle of national self-determination has helped fuel separatist violence and terrorism in many instances where the case for genuine separation was not necessary merited. National self-determination was used quite idealistically to break up the

colonial empires after World War I and to restore independence to historic nations like Poland. But taken to its logical extreme, the national self-determination principle can lead to the utter balkanization of the world. It is a principle that can militate against the possibility of fraternal multi-ethnic and multi-confessional nations and societies.

It was this principle that underlay the breakup of Yugoslavia, an excellent example. But this principle came into conflict with the doctrine of *uti possidetis juris*, which basically means “as you possess under law.” This is a principle of territorial integrity that provides that new states should have the same borders that their preceding dependent or subsidiary area had before independence. So we saw the conflict between this principle and the principle of national self-determination particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina where the Bosnian Serbs resorted to war in order to prevent a Bosnian independence arrangement that would incorporate their population.

Here lies a significant problem: there is no agreement or law that specifies the definition of a people or a nation that should have its self-determination. The Bosnian Serbs did not agree that they were Bosnians. They were Serbs who wanted to be part of the majority population that had dominated Yugoslavia. They wanted to remain united with their Serbian brethren and did not believe that the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina should have been drawn in a way that would include them within that enclave. They warned everybody that if a referendum were held within those particular borders, according to that principle of *uti possidetis juris*, then there would be war; and so there was. They warned us, and when the referendum took place, they were so aggravated that they resorted to war which included terrorist violence.

Ultimately, all of these problems of separatism, separatist violence, and terrorism are not solvable by a single principle or ideological template. Some nations or peoples will have the will to maintain separate existence and they may never be repressed into submitting to rule by others. Such people will resort to violence to keep their separate identity as an issue, and you cannot wish this away. In every case, the only principle that really matters in solving these problems is prudence.

And here let us look to the American Declaration of Independence. Its signers essentially asserted the self-determination principle, but justified war only after recognizing the necessity of proving to the world the validity of their grievances against British rule. As the Declaration stated: “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impelled them to the separation.” Recognizing the need to demonstrate a decent respect for the opinions of mankind, they go on to invoke the principle of prudence:

“Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security.”

That is our Declaration of Independence. It refers to the decent opinions of mankind and to the principle of prudence.

What are other policy implications of all of this? Here are two brief thoughts: I am sure of my colleagues in the panel have some other ideas about this.

First, since terrorism is the propaganda of the deed, it requires counter-propaganda. It requires a response in the realm of ideological warfare. It is based on an immoral principle: the rejection of absolute moral standards. And so, it requires the assertion by those nations and peoples who disagree with this that there are absolute standards of right and wrong, and that killing innocent people, regardless of the putatively worthy end, is not going to send you to heaven. Those assertions have to be made by moral leadership in those countries that prize living in what might be called "decent civilization."

Finally, it is necessary to show how terrorism has been incredibly counter-productive in so many instances of separatism and that resorting to terrorist violence is not necessarily going to help at all in the cause of achieving independence.

Professor Paul Goble

Former official with the CIA and U.S. Department of State and vice dean for the social sciences and humanities at Audentes University in Tallinn

There are few people in this city who are more prescient in scheduling meetings about issues of importance than Yonah Alexander. But even he has exceeded himself in the current situation, at least with respect to the Russian Federation and the prospects for terrorist violence. On August 27, 2015, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the oligarch Putin put in jail and who now lives abroad, called on Russians to engage in mass civil disobedience by not obeying illegal actions and illegal orders from the Russian state.

Khodorkovsky's appeal has already been reposted by literally hundreds of websites, and I am quite prepared to argue that within days we will see terrorist actions of two kinds: possibly some small terrorist actions by those not connected with the Putin regime, and a major action by the regime itself designed to try to discredit anyone who stands against him. That may take the form of additional aggression in Ukraine or it may take the form of a terrorist incident in the city of Moscow that can then be plausibly blamed on someone else. But Putin will be responsible: He is not the smartest person on the face the earth but he has read the current West exactly right. We will go out of our way not to hold him responsible for anything.

Today, I would like to do address three issues. First, I would like to talk about the *kinds* of separatism in the Russian Federation. That is because we all too often lump together things which are very different. In reality, there are lots of different kinds of separatism, lots of different kinds of terrorist action, and lots of different kinds of motivation. Often if you do not like the motivation then you evaluate action in a particular way and if you do like the motivation, you evaluate it in another way.

Second, I would like to talk about the problem of state terrorism which is manifested by the Russian Federation both in small ways and large. One of the greatest intellectual failures of the West over the last two decades has been the self-confident and wrong assumption that we knew everything we needed to know about societies and could apply to Russia ideas and institutions developed elsewhere with little regard for its distinctive past.

And third, I would like to make three concluding remarks about the relationship between self-determination and imperial control. The relationship between those two concepts is not nearly as simple as many would like to think.

In the Russian Federation at present, there are categories of separatist movements: The first are the active ones as in the North Caucasus by those who actually expect to achieve independent statehood. The amount of violence that they engage in is relatively small compared to the amount of violence for which they are blamed. The Chechens have done almost none of the things for which they are blamed, be they the Moscow apartment buildings, the Beslan tragedy, or anything else. Like Yeltsin, Putin has made the mistake many do of acting like this is a grease fire that can be extinguished with water: But when you throw water at a grease fire, you spread it, you do not put it out.

What that kind of repression has done is to transform the nature of the efforts at national self-determination in the North Caucasus into an Islamist movement. The threat we and Moscow face in the North Caucasus today are a direct product of the Russian government's behavior, not what the North Caucasians were about. I happen to have been a supporter of Chechen independence in the 1990s and I knew Dzhokhar Dudayev quite well. Mr. Dudayev once told me on his satellite phone that he was a very good Muslim that he prayed three times a day. Of course, if you are really a good Muslim, you pray five times a day. But he didn't know that. He had been a major general in the Soviet Air Force and had been a member of the communist party since the age of 18. He didn't know about Islam and wasn't an Islamist in any meaningful way at all.

The second kind of national separatism that exists in the Russian Federation might be called anticipatory separatism. This is the nationalism of the peoples of the Middle Volga, the Tatars and Bashkirs primarily, as well as the Buryats and the Tuvans further east. These people would like to be independent but know their prospects for independence exist only if the Russian Federation comes apart. Many of them believe it is very real, and I share their view. I will give you only one good piece of advice today: don't buy any maps; buy stocks in companies which print maps because you will make money as borders are going to change.

All too often in the West, people whose lives were defined by having grown up in the longest period without border changes in the history of Europe (1945-1989) assume that is normal. It isn't. Even in Europe there was never any period as stable in terms of borders as that one; and elsewhere borders have been even more flexible and oft-changed.

The third kind of separatist challenge in the Russian Federation is the most serious, because it has the potential to trigger all the others. Most people in the West have accepted the idea that the Great Russians are a solidly unified nationality. In fact, they are anything but. There are significant regional challenges, including in the first instance Siberia and that is no laughing matter: If the entire North Caucasus were allowed to leave, Russia would lose 1.2 percent of its territory and just about 4 percent of its population. If Moscow loses Siberia to the Sibiriyaki movement, it loses something far more fundamental.

In conclusion, I would like to make several comments about how we view terrorism as such. We tend to decide that some violent action is terrorism if it carried out by a substate actor rather than a state and especially if we don't like those who are carrying it out as opposed to those we do. If we are going to do what John Lenczowski urges us to do, we need to maintain a common moral framework. And it is imperative that we make judgments about what people do regardless of what position they are in.

Moreover, we need to focus on terrorism as provocation. Most terrorist actions in the Russian Federation since 1985 have been organized by or with the assistance of the Soviet, then the Russian security agencies. That includes the killing of 300 people in the three apartment blocks in 1999, Beslan, and most things routinely blamed on the Chechens. Now, were some of the people who executed those things Chechens? Yes, that is true but they were controlled or led, sometimes by false flag techniques

and sometimes by more direct control of the KGB and FSB. We must find out who is really responsible and not blame those it is easy to blame. If you doubt what I just said, please read John Dunlop's book on the events of 1999; he provides the best outline.

And finally, we need to recognize that there are submerged peoples and that self-determination is not something that was appropriate only in the past. I live just down the street from where Woodrow Wilson was born, and so it is perhaps not perverse that I actually believe that peoples have the right of self-determination up to and including the formation of independent states. We live in a country that got its start by asserting this right, and I believe it remains critically important that when we talk about terrorism especially in relation to self-determination, we keep three things in mind:

First, as I have already said, we need to focus on who takes actions and why, not excluding some and assuming that only others are involved.

Second, we must stop taking the morally indefensible position that we have rights that others don't. That may be fine if you are among the winners, but there will be new winners. And we need to remember that some of these will use any means necessary to achieve their ends. There is a rather bitter joke about what you call a successful terrorist: "Your Excellency."

The current international system, of course, is not based on rights of peoples, it is based on rights of states. In some ways, the fact that the United States of America existed in 1945 meant that the successor to the League of Nations could not be called the United States! We call it the United Nations but we tilt in the direction of states rather than of nations.

And finally, we need to stop acting as if we can freeze history. We can't; we can at best manage it at the margins. And we cannot achieve what we would like in the short term, a world in which everyone would live in a liberal democratic, capitalist, polyethnic, poly-confessional and stable country. We do but we can't ensure that everyone will or even that everyone will want to. Many don't see that as a desirable goal, at least in part because they have had some experience with regimes that have treated them very badly. Do not confuse the right of self-determination with the question of the means that some people pursuing that make you use of. Do not allow them to discredit the idea because if you do, you go back to the question of being a supporter of Lord North and I do not think that is a good idea.

2. The Ukraine Crisis*

Hon. Yaroslav Brisiuck

Deputy Chief of Mission, Minister-Counselor, Embassy of Ukraine

Ukraine has been in the spotlight of global attention for quite a while, for the past twelve months. It is because, as we believe, the events in Ukraine have global significance and global consequences.

The present crisis in Ukraine: how did we arrive at this situation, and what are the causes and what can we do to resolve this crisis? In our view, the short answer is very clear. It is not a domestic Ukrainian crisis; this crisis is brought to us from the outside by an overt aggression and intervention of the Russian Federation, which does not want Ukraine to get out of its orbit, and potentially sees the events, the changes that are going on in Ukraine, as a threat to Russia itself, to the current regime in the Kremlin.

So how did it all start, and what is the reason behind all this? Ukraine, practically since its independence, declared its European aspirations. But, in reality, little was done over the years to realize them. We can compare Ukraine to Poland, where Poland was twenty years ago and where Ukraine was twenty years ago. Right now Polish GDP is three times as high as Ukraine's. Russia did not object to Ukraine's European aspirations at first. It objected, very strongly, our desire to join NATO. And in 2008 Russia practically blocked our attempts to get membership action plan from NATO. But at the same time they said that the European integration is okay and they did not have anything against it. At that point in time, it was not realistic. However, Ukraine was negotiating the association agreement since 2008, and closer to the middle of 2013, the prospects of signing the agreement and our getting closer to Europe and outside of Russia's orbit became more realistic. And we immediately saw the strong pressure from Russia in terms of economic measures, restrictions of market goods, and so on and so forth.

The dramatic events in the winter of last year (2013-2014) presented opportunities for Russia to intervene into the situation. As we all know, I do not think I need to recount the events, as a result of mass protests President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted. Russia declared that the events that are happening in Ukraine are a coup d'état; the junta and neo-Nazis seized power even though this is not true. Everything was done in accordance with legal procedures. The President fled the country, the Prime Minister Azarov at that time resigned, and Parliament was the only institution that continued to work. By 328 votes, the constitutional majority, which was sufficient for the impeachment of the President, the Parliament removed him from power and appointed Turchynov as acting President and Yatsenyuk as Prime Minister. Nevertheless, Russia did not accept the legitimacy of those changes and decided to intervene under the pretext of the need to protect its "compatriots" as the Russians call the Russian speakers who live in Ukraine. Then the events in Crimea ensued

* The presentations of Yaroslav Brisiuck, Ian Brzezinski, and Patrick Murphy were delivered at a seminar on "The Ukraine Crisis: Quo Vadis?" held on November 6, 2014 at Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

where the Russian Duma authorized Putin on March 1st to use troops in the territory of Ukraine.

It is interesting Professor Alexander raised the issue of self-determination and separatism in this context. In Crimea, the people who could have rights to self-determination are Crimean Tartars. However, the majority of Crimean Tartars were deported in 1944, and over the past twenty years Ukraine was making efforts for them to resettle in Ukraine. Crimean Tartars boycotted the referendum of March 16th, and the data that Russian organizations themselves show indicates that only about fifteen or twenty percent of the population actually supported the annexation of Crimea, even though the official statistics are over ninety percent—over eighty percent turnout in the elections and over ninety percent in favor of Russia. The Council on Development of Civil Society and Human Rights under Putin indicates that only thirty percent of voters took part in the referendum and slightly more than half of them actually voted for succession.

We all know the story where Russian troops crossed Ukraine's border inside the Crimea, took over the authorities and pulled off this referendum in about two weeks. The same scenario pretty much replicated itself, or is being replicated, in the East of Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk, so called People's Republics, with strong support of Russia militarily, which continues to deliver troops and armaments and special forces up to this date.

The consequences of these events are truly of a global scale, global magnitude. Events such as the annexation of Crimea did not happen since World War II. The entire international security architecture is being undermined by Russia's actions. By annexation of Crimea, Russia violated the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Statute of the Council of Europe, and bilateral agreements with Russia including a big treaty where Russia recognized Ukraine and our borders as of 1991. And most importantly, these actions violated the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 whereby Ukraine gave up the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world at that time, which was bigger than the UK, China, and France combined: 1000 strategic and 2500 tactical nuclear missiles.

It became apparent that the mechanisms envisioned in the Budapest Memorandum did not fulfill the purposes that they were designed for. Even though we had security assurances from Russia and from other countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, unfortunately at this point the situation remains that the territorial integrity of Ukraine is violated. This sends a clear message to everyone that unless you have weapons with which you can protect yourself, no guarantees can be enough to prevent a foreign aggression. The situation could have been different if we were part of the North Atlantic Alliance, but as I said, Russia effectively prevented Ukraine from proceeding down that path in 2008 where it pressured a number of European countries that depend on Russia for energy.

What could be done, and what have we tried to do to resolve this crisis? Since April 2014 there have been a number of attempts and negotiations in different formats to put an end to it and reach an agreement. On April 17th there was a meeting in Geneva and an agreement signed by Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the European Union where all the parties agreed that armed groups must disarm and

vacate the buildings that they violently seized. And I would like to make one small point on the buildings. The actions of the separatists in the East—the majority of those people are not Ukrainians; they are not Ukrainian citizens. All the leaders of the Donetsk Republic and the Luhansk Republic are Russian citizens like Strelkov, Girkin and Borodai. They have a track record of serving in the FSB, the Russian Security Service. And a telling example of the fact that this is not a local conflict by the people who protested the central authorities is that in one of the cities, in Kharkiv, the protestors tried to take over a government building. They took over a building of the theater by mistake. Apparently local people who know their town would not make such a mistake.

Vacating the taken-over buildings was one of the agreements that parties reached. Kyiv would stop the antiterrorist operation which we started at the beginning of actual conflict with the separatists, and the OSCE will monitor the implementation of the agreement. It became apparent at the end of April that the separatists had no intention to comply with those agreements, and in fact, eight OSCE observers were kidnapped—those who tried to monitor the implementation of this agreement. Then again, in the beginning of June, Foreign Ministers of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany met in Berlin and agreed on a sustainable ceasefire, on the resumption of talks within the contact group, and joint border control at checkpoints. That did not bring about tangible results in the armed conflict. On June 6th we had the meeting in Normandy with Poroshenko, Putin, Merkel, and Hollande. Also, talks continued but the crisis continued to develop. After his election, President Poroshenko introduced a fifteen-point peace plan, which became a basis for further agreements in this field.

And as a side note—as a result of the election campaign, the political forces in Ukraine that Russia was threatening everyone with—neo-Nazis or radicals and so on and so forth—they got something like one percent of the votes. The party of Rabinovich got twice as many votes as the radicals who Moscow wanted to present as a threat.

So, shortly after President Poroshenko came into office he proposed a fifteen-point peace plan as one thing, and the second thing that he did was to initiate the unilateral ceasefire as a good faith attempt on our side to stop the crisis. It was, indeed, unilateral. The separatists did not follow suit, and over that one week 27 people were killed, 69 wounded—so it did not work out. There were a number of contacts, including phone contacts, with President Putin, and contacts as part of the trilateral contact group with the participation of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE and the separatists and as a result on September 5th and 19th Minsk agreements were signed. We believe that these agreements are the basis how this conflict could be solved.

The key elements of this agreement is bilateral ceasefire with the OSCE monitoring, decentralization of power in Ukraine, monitoring of the border of Ukraine-Russia, release of all hostages, the amnesty law, early local elections in the East of Ukraine, and retreat of unlawful military units and Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine. Unfortunately, we continue to see violations of the Minsk agreements. On October 17th there was a meeting in Milan between President Poroshenko, Putin, Chancellor Merkel, President Hollande, and Italian Prime Minister Renzi as well as the European Commission President Barroso, trying to induce Russia to abide by those agreements. But after three rounds of talks, the Russian side continued its line that

basically Moscow has nothing to do with the conflict; it is an internal conflict of Ukraine.

On our side we are taking all possible steps to fulfill the Minsk agreements. We passed the Amnesty Law, which absolves all militants from criminal responsibility if they have not committed capital crimes. We passed the law on self-governance of the occupied areas of East Ukraine. We declared a unilateral ceasefire; however, at the same time, like the first ceasefire in June, it continues to be only unilateral, and over the past two months over 100 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and over 600 soldiers were wounded. We had early elections to the parliament of Ukraine, which was yet another opportunity to include all the participants in an all-inclusive dialogue.

Unfortunately, the other side is not complying. The most serious violation of this agreement, we believe, was the election that was held last Sunday on November 2, 2014, by the Donetsk and Luhansk "Republics." There is a difference between that and the elections that we envisioned for December 7th as part of the Minsk agreement, which were supposed to be elections for local powers in Ukraine—local administrations under Ukrainian law, which would then be a part of the Ukrainian system of governance. The elections that took part November 2 were quite different. They were elections for these new formations that they invented—the "DNR" and "LNR." They were at the gunpoint of the militants. Most unfortunate was the reaction of Moscow to these elections. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on Sunday which declared these elections valid and such as representing the will of the people.

There are a number of other instances where the other side does not fulfill the agreements and blocks the implementation of the peace process. The Russian side, unfortunately, blocks the decision, the OSCE decision to enhance the mandate of the observer mission on the border of Ukraine—to monitor the Ukraine-Russia border. This is an essential component of resolving this crisis, because we believe that if we seal the border and cut the supplies to the separatists on the Russian side the conflict will end fairly soon. That is because everything they get, they do not get from Ukraine. They are not peaceful protestors. And you can probably buy a Kalashnikov assault rifle on the black market, but you cannot buy multiple rocket launch systems or tanks of the kind that the Ukrainian army does not have in its ranks. So once we seal the border and we cut the supplies, this can end by itself because it is even the local people in the affected areas who do not support what the people who took over the power there are doing. The indication of that is the election of November 2nd where people were brought to the polling stations against their will. They were threatened that if they did not show up at polling stations they would be considered disloyal and so on and so forth.

Of course, another component is the Russian continued propaganda, which tries to shift the blame for the ongoing fighting to the Ukrainian side. We appreciate the assistance from the United States Department of State, which initiated this project of countering Russian lies. First it was the top twenty Russian lies, then it was top fifty, sixty, and now it is over top hundred, where video material from ten years ago is used as a shelling by Ukrainian troops of peaceful quarters of Donetsk and Luhansk, where in fact these videos could be from Iraq or some other places.

What could be the possible rationale for Moscow's actions in general, and for continuing to support this conflict in the East? One of the possible rationales is trying to repeat the Crimean scenario and annex the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that are occupied by the terrorists right now to create possible access from Russia to Transdnistria, which is a frozen conflict that has been going on for over twenty years, potentially to possibly place another South Stream-type pipeline from Russia to Europe, bypassing Ukrainian territory. It could also be an idea of federalizing Ukraine and preventing it from moving towards Europe by having this anti-Europe enclave in Ukraine. It could be a bargaining chip for legitimizing the annexation of Crimea. Or it could also be for boosting popularity of the Putin regime in the face of economic difficulties and preventing events like Maidan from happening in Russia.

What is the solution and what has been the international response? The international response has been truly overwhelming—an almost universal condemnation of Russia's actions. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution with over one hundred countries supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. Only eleven countries opposed that resolution including: Russia, Cuba, North Korea, Syria, and several others. The same reaction came from the European Union, from NATO, from the OSCE, and a number of countries. As a response, sanctions were imposed to force Russia to withdraw and stop fueling this conflict and intervening in our affairs. These sanctions are beginning to work gradually. We had several levels of sanctions, and our position is that these sanctions should not be rolled back—they should be further increased because we continue to see violations of the agreements to which Russia was a party. We welcome a statement that Federica Mogherini made today in Warsaw that the issue of sanctions is still on the table and Foreign Ministers of the European Union would review this issue on November 17, 2015, when they met.

We see a solution in the implementation of the Minsk agreement, which provides a clear path to peace, which is ceasefire, pulling away the troops from line of combat, release of all hostages and repeal of the November 2nd "elections." We count on continued support from our partners—the United States, the European Union—in forcing the other side to abide by those agreements.

And last but not least, the key—maybe not to the resolution of this conflict itself—but to overall improvement of the situation is Ukraine's continued reforms and movement towards Europe. We recently held elections on October 26, 2015, elections to the parliament of Ukraine, whereby the majority of MPs are from pro-European parties. We are waiting for the formation of the coalition, which should be done in the next few days. The official results will be certified on November 10th. Right now with over 99 percent of ballots counted it is clear that we have a pro-European Parliament with pro-European government and pro-European President.

So, despite the conflict, we will continue to implement all the necessary reforms and continue to count on assistance from the European Union and our partners as we move forward.

Ian Brzezinski

Formerly Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy and currently Resident Senior Fellow, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, Atlantic Council

I am going to start off with two quibbles that I have. One is with the title, and it follows from Yaroslav's comments. The phrase "Ukraine Crisis" is used often to describe what is happening to Ukraine, and it infers an inaccurate depiction of events there. As Yaroslav pointed out, it is not an internal crisis that is occurring; it is an external invasion. It is a mistake for NATO, for our European allies, and especially the U.S. Administration to avoid pointing out that factual reality. By intentionally avoiding this reality, we have ended up generating policies that are sadly inadequate. It is an invasion. The insurrection we see in Ukraine, generated by proxies, led by proxies, fought by proxies, has been backed by Russian military equipment; it has been supported by the Russian military and is supported by the Russian government. It has been directed by a foreign power. It is an invasion.

The second thing that kind of irks me in Washington is when people kind of go 'Well—you know, Ukraine has wasted 20 years through its corruption, weakness, lack of commitment, and determination to drive forward real reform. There is truth in this statement. I lived in Ukraine in '93 and '94 and I saw a lot of corruption there and I saw all the inadequacies. But I can tell you one thing is very different from Poland. Poland did not have Russia breathing down its back, in its knickers, pumping in money to corrupt politicians and to stymie business development. Poland was not subjected to a blitzkrieg of information and propaganda. Poland was not subject to trade embargoes. It was not permeated by intelligence operatives.

It is amazing how far Ukraine has come, being next to a great power which has devoted a huge amount of resources to breaking down the emergent Ukrainian sense of a national identity. And when one looks at Ukraine today compared to twenty years ago one cannot be but impressed as the strength of the national identity that has evolved under those circumstances. So, when you criticize Ukraine for its inadequacies, let us not forget that a lot of its problems were externally generated and externally sustained.

Now, why should we care about this, here in Washington, DC, or in some European capitals? What we have here is an unprovoked violation of territorial integrity of a European nation—by the way, Europe's second largest nation and one situated at an important crossroads between Europe and Eurasia. Yaroslav pointed out the dangerous precedent has been set by allowing a treaty, designed to reinforce efforts to counter the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to be grossly violated and largely ignored.

I think, even more important has been the reintroduction of a very dangerous principle into Europe, the principle of ethnic sovereignty. Putin is justifying his invasion of Ukraine on the grounds that he has the right to unilaterally redraw borders when he has a concern about the status of an ethnic minority beyond his borders. This is the same principle of ethnic sovereignty that wrought horrors to Europe twice during the last century and many times before.

Russia's invasion is certainly a threat to the vision of a Europe whole, free, and secure. Putin has invaded Ukraine in large part because the Ukrainian people want to join Europe. This also a real challenge to U.S. leadership, to NATO, and to the West as a whole. Putin is using this invasion to demonstrate that the United States, NATO, and the EU lack the diplomatic economic and military capacity to counter a Russian power.

What does this invasion tell us about Russia? Many tend to kind of look at this war as an isolated event, but the fact is, that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a continuum in Putin's foreign policy. It is part of a campaign plan or campaign history that includes energy embargos against Ukraine and the Baltics, a cyber-attack on Estonia, and the invasion of Georgia.

With seven years of precedents, Russia' invasion of Ukraine is clearly not an isolated event. It is part and parcel of a revanchist policy by Putin. He defines Russian greatness, not in terms of ideology but in terms of territory and nationalism, and, for that matter, an ugly form of nationalism.

The really dangerous thing is he is backing it up with military power. And I am struck by the difference between Russian military capability in 2008 and what we have seen demonstrated in Ukraine. Remember the pictures of the drunk Russian soldiers staggering on the backside of the battlefield, when Russia invaded Georgia? Russia actually had some difficulty invading Georgia. It won that conflict by mass, certainly not by skill. Georgians were knocking down aircraft and UAVs.

It is also important to remember what stopped Putin in Georgia in that summer of 2008. They would have kept on going had not the United States, demonstrated a little bit of muscle, that involved flying Georgian troops and humanitarian supplies into the country with USAF air lifters, basically signaling that they were ready directly to risk a fight with Russian forces. That stopped Putin.

Compare that Russian military to what we recently saw in Crimea. I was really struck by the 20,000 to 30,000 Special Forces that deployed and fanned across that peninsula. Slick equipment, crisp uniforms, unbelievable communications discipline. This is a very different entity that we are dealing with. It shows how determined Moscow has been in learning from the lessons from 2008. It is reaping the benefits of a significant modernization of its armed forces. That was a professional force that we saw in Crimea. It is a professional undertaking we see in Eastern Ukraine.

And Moscow is backing this modernization up with a \$750 billion acquisition budget that is yielding new deployments in the Arctic, new deployments in Belarus, fifth generation aircraft, a shift of forces over to the Western Frontier, and massive military exercises. I met with a senior European chief of defense, and I asked him, "What has struck you most about Russian military modernization plans?" And he said without a snap, "their ability to decide quickly and to quickly mobilize large amounts of forces." Indeed we have seen Putin initiate on short notice exercises in the scale of 100,000. Literally, Putin gets on a weekend, calls up a military district, and says I want an exercise, and they have got 19, 20 thousand people out there.

Our largest NATO exercise for collective defense was Steadfast Jazz that had five thousand, maybe not even that, of which two thousand were desk jockeys. This is an order of magnitude about which we should be concerned. And these exercises are being complemented by increasingly assertive shows of force by the Russian forces, not just in Ukraine, but in the Arctic and the Baltic. These demonstrations of military force are intended remind the West that Putin is a big deal, and they are intimidating, particularly to the Central European neighbors.

So what should our response be? I was a little bit surprised when some say that we should be impressed by the international response to Russia's aggression. I am the opposite. I have been underwhelmed. I see a lot of rhetoric and completely inadequate action.

Let's examine the West's economic sanctions against Russia. They have had no discernible effect Putin's calculus. He is beefing up the outskirts of Mariupol as we speak, with convoys going into Eastern Ukraine this last weekend, maybe even additional artillery pieces. What we have are targeted sanctions against specific and limited set of Russian entities. And the fact remains that even with these sanctions millions of dollars are sloshing back and forth over the Russian border, including in the energy sector.

We need to impose sectoral sanctions. Otherwise, what we have right now are red badges of courage for those who have been targeted—pins that demonstrate loyalty to Putin and little more. Some oligarchs have been actually boasting that they have been sanctioned. To date, our sanctions have had little to no impact on Russian decision-making.

Allow me an aside to share with you my view of economic balance of power between Russia and the EU. Russia is a \$2 trillion economy. As Senator McCain says, it is no more than a gas station with only one product, gas and oil, and one client: the EU. The EU is a \$12 trillion economy. It is globally integrated. It has an excess of LNG terminals that it does not know what to do with. It gets only one third of its gas from Russia. And the EU, by the way, is the biggest source for foreign investment into Russia. Moreover, it is backed by a \$16 trillion economy, the U.S. economy. How is it that a \$2 trillion gas station is able to intimidate a \$12 trillion economy six times its size that is backed by a \$16 trillion economy? The answer has to be a mix found in the West of strategic shortsightedness, moral fecklessness—allowing a neighbor to be invaded while one sit on one's hands—and pure corporate greed. It is really, really disappointing. We are not leveraging the economic capabilities that we have.

The West's military response has been even more limited. As I pointed out, Russia mobilizes and exercises on a given day 65 thousand. At one time during the invasion of Crimea and the heating up of the events in Eastern Ukraine, some estimates had 80 thousand Russian troops mobilized on Ukraine's border. What has the West done? What has been its response? A dozen or so aircraft in the Baltics and Iceland and into Romania backed by handful of companies, units of 200 or so soldiers. It is grossly inadequate. It is no surprise this has done nothing to change the Russian military calculus. It is a symbolic show of force. At best, it thickens the red line on NATO's Eastern frontier.

We should be doing a lot more in the military side. We need battalion-level deployments on NATO's eastern frontier. Moreover, look how slow we are in our reactions to Russia's aggression! The European Reassurance Initiative was rolled out by Obama in June, and a NATO readiness action plan was decided in September—months after Russia's blatant seizure of Ukrainian territory. And it is still today not clear what specific actions the ERI or RAP will entail.

This does not communicate resolve to Russia. This certainly does not bolster Ukrainian confidence. What should we be doing with Ukraine? We should be providing lethal assistance to the Ukrainians; anti-tank weapons, air defense weapons, and other capabilities that would enable them to impose real costs on the invading force.

Instead we have communicated to both Kyiv and Moscow that we see Ukraine on the far side of the red line.

How can we give anti-tank weapons to Syrian rebel organizations and not the Ukrainian armed forces which I think are probably more reliable than the former? It is even more disillusioning to the Ukrainian military when one recalls that they contributed to an Article 5 exercise November of last year, Steadfast Jazz in Poland. When the West fails to provide real military assistance to enable Ukraine to better defend itself, that alone sends a terrible message. It is a message of disillusionment for the Ukrainians, and one of encouragement to Putin and his cronies.

We ought to be doing NATO exercises in Ukraine. I am glad that EUCOM led an exercise there in June, but there should be more of them. It helps the Ukrainian military train, it is a demonstration of commitment, and it complicates Russian military planning. We ought to be putting, not OSCE surveillance capacities, but allied surveillance capacities and trainers into Ukraine. This is what we did for Georgia after the invasion. Why? Because it was the most effective way to help the Georgian build up their capability, and it brought into the mix a Western presence that little bit more dicey for Russian military planners, because they did not know what they were going to get involved with. If they were going to strike in, they might end up hitting an American, or European, and that complicated their plan. We should be doing things like that.

We need to do more on the information front. I am so glad the State Department is doing more on that, but it is limited in resources. One needs more than ten or twenty million dollars when going up against the kind of propaganda efforts that the Russians are imposing on Ukraine and others.

So where are we now? Is the worst yet to come? I do not know if the worst is yet to come but there is more to come. One should very concerned by the continued flow of Russian equipment and personnel into Eastern Ukraine—particularly this weekend—and the recent repositioning of 'separatist' forces.

I am worried that the Ukrainian military is getting chewed up. Its combat capability has been significantly degraded over the last eight months. So if there is another big showdown over Mariupol, it is not just going to be the loss of Mariupol but it could be a real crippling of the Ukrainian ability to exercise conventional resistance to Russian aggression. So I am pessimistic.

On a more positive note, one has to be impressed at how this invasion of Ukraine has reinforced the strength of the Ukrainian national identity. It is something that we should be fostering, and it is something that we should not take for granted.

For this reason real thought has to be given to how NATO responds to any Ukrainian expression of interest in membership. We are going to have the most pro-reform, the most pro-Western, the most Europe-oriented and the most pro-NATO government in Kyiv in Ukraine's history. Are Washington and Brussels thinking strategically about how we are going to embrace those aspirations? And it just cannot be, "no, we do not want to hear about it." We have to have a strategy to think about how we embrace it in a way that is constructive and gives them more confidence.

What we need is strategy that integrates stronger, sectoral economic sanctions, a more robust military response along NATO's frontiers, and real tangible efforts to help the Ukrainians defend themselves, all coupled with a broader vision that embraces Ukraine's European and transatlantic aspirations. That is going to be the most effective way to reverse Russia's course.

We have got to change course, we have got to have a firmer response, we have got to be more committed to Ukrainian sovereignty than we have. Otherwise we are going to end up with a far more complicated, perhaps more devastating problem.

Dr. Patrick Murphy

Former U.S. government official, including in the Office of the Secretary of State, and currently Visiting Fellow, Inter-University Center for Legal Studies

The present crisis started early in the spring of 2014, when the Ukrainian people forced their corrupt and pro-Russian President Yanukovich out of office. Within a few days and to everybody's surprise, the man I sometimes call "rasPutin" threw away \$50 billion worth of Olympic goodwill by seizing the Crimean Peninsula for Russia. And within a few weeks he started a minor-league civil war in Eastern Ukraine because, he claimed, Russian speakers were being oppressed. Recent Ukrainian Government elections in which Russian speakers took part seem to indicate that those Russian speakers much prefer to live in a democratic state which is pro-European but where Russian is a minority language, to living in Mother Russia with Putin as dictator.

By now his forces, Ukrainian-Russian or actual Russian citizens, have more or less secured their base in Donetsk and Luhansk, and may advance on Mariupol as well. This would give them a seaport and set the stage for further Russian advances to form a land bridge with Crimea and perhaps even eventually with Russian-held Transdnistria in Moldova. Of course, such developments would cut off Ukraine itself fully from its present Black Sea saltwater shores, and would add its great port city of Odessa to "Novorossiya." Pro-Russian forces also shot down a Malaysian Airways plane with a loss of nearly 300 lives, and all together are responsible for the loss of several thousand lives.

Mentioning Moldova brings up the question, "Why are we talking about Ukraine in a way we never spent much time on Moldova or Georgia, both of which have suffered partial Russian occupation for several years?" The reason is that Ukraine is the canary in the coal mine: Ukraine has a direct border with several NATO members, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. Thus, what happens in Ukraine has a direct effect on NATO itself, and particularly on the three Baltic Republic NATO members, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. As if to underline the point, Putin sent Russian air force planes over the seas bordering Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom, Germany, etc., all the way to Portugal before turning back. Putin did NATO and Ukraine itself a favor by doing so—some of the West European countries seem less than enthusiastic about such "old-fashioned" NATO ideas as Article 5's "an attack on one is an attack on all." Putin reminded these countries, plus neutral Sweden and Finland, that we are all in this together. A poll from late 2014 showed that for the first time more Swedes favored joining NATO than opposed it.

One of the curious things about the West's response to Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine is, in a way, the West's refusal to call it what it is and to meet it head on. Apparently, when Vice President Biden recently declared that Russia had "invaded" Ukraine, he had to retract that statement. The West's financial sanctions seem always to be "a day late and a dollar short," though to be fair, they are having an effect, perhaps a serious one (along with the drop in the price of oil!) on the Russian economy.

And when the European Union recently signed an association agreement with Ukraine, it also signed a "Deep and Comprehensive Free-Trade Agreement" or DCFTA with that country. It is the latter that really implements changes both in trade between

Ukraine and Europe, and within the battered Ukrainian economy itself. The Russians strongarmed the EU into postponing the entry into force of the Free-Trade Agreement from November 2014 to December 31, 2015, during which time they will presumably do all they can to stop its implementation from ever fully occurring. Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Danylo Lubkivsky resigned in disgust at these developments.

Strangest of all, the West so far has refused to provide Ukraine any lethal weapons. The U.S. is providing MREs or Meals Ready to Eat, as well as blankets, etc., but as Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko courageously told an enthusiastic U.S. Congress in the fall of 2014, “. . . one cannot win the war with blankets.” And when Senators Carl Levin and James Inhofe recently wrote a bi-partisan article in the *Washington Post* titled “Why Ukraine should have U.S. weapons,” even they limited such aid to “providing defensive weapons that would help Ukraine defend its territory. . . . [T]hese weapons are lethal but not provocative because they are defensive.” They would include anti-tank weapons, but apparently no tanks as such. But how can Ukraine win back its own territory if it does not have what the senators must think of as offensive weapons? Finally, how can one in many cases even so easily distinguish between defensive and offensive weapons?

The ironic thing is that the Ukrainians have had enough of being pushed around for centuries by their neighbors, especially Russia. Many people forget that when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in World War II, they met with ferocious partisan warfare, no matter what it cost the partisan (or guerrillas) if they were captured. And where did this partisan warfare largely take place? In Ukraine. I have already read that Ukrainian grandfathers are telling their grandchildren (of BOTH sexes), “Seventy years ago it was our turn; now it is yours.” The mothers of Russian soldiers have repeatedly told the press that they were amazed to get cell phone calls from their sons, saying that the sons were in Ukraine. When some of these sons return home in body bags, that would—and already has begun to—have an effect on the ordinary Russian citizens who gave Putin a pass on, for instance, Crimea. The Ukrainians will fight to the last man and woman to prevent a full Russian takeover of their country. It does appear that Putin is somewhat aware of that, as he has not really pushed very hard recently (though the latest reports are that more unmarked military vehicles have entered Ukraine).

Putin is in this game for the long haul. Are we?

3. Russia's Middle East Strategy*

Professor Shireen Hunter

Research Professor at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, with which she has been associated since 2005, as Visiting Fellow and then Visiting Professor

Yonah Alexander has asked me to talk about Russia and the Middle East and more specifically on Russian-Iranian relations. However, before saying anything on the subject, I must say that I am not an expert on Russia. However, when I wrote a book about Islam and Russia I had to study a fair amount about Russian history, politics, identity, etc. That is why it took me four, five years to write the book. I mean that took about four or five years to do that. So I learned a few things about Russia, although I will never ever claim to be an expert on Russia. Russia is a very complex country and you really have to have dedicated a whole lifetime to understanding it. But there a couple of things that I learned about Russia which also might help us to understand Putin's mentality. Some of the factors which shape Putin's mentality are rooted in Russia's history and Russia's relationship with the West. Others are related to the difference between the Russian understanding or the Russian narrative of the post-Soviet era, and the Russian perception of how the West treated Russia and the Western understanding of the post-Soviet era and the Russia-Western relations. I think if we do not understand these factors we will not understand Putin. Consequently, we might lapse into oversimplifications and we might even enter a period of unnecessary confrontation with Russia beyond what we have already seen.

One of the things that we have to understand about Russia is the feeling that most Russians have that they are a great power although their population has dwindled and their empire is gone. This belief in Russia as a great power is ingrained in Russian psychology. In fact, that is how they define themselves. They believe that Russia has been, and is going to remain, a great power. So I think that one of the things that Russians have done in the past and what maybe Putin is doing, sometimes clumsily and in the fashion that is not going to be useful to Russia itself, relates to this factor. For example, one of the things that Putin is doing in Syria is basically to show that Russia is here and that other powers should take into account. He saying to the U.S. and others that you cannot just ignore Russia and run the world the way you want. Now, he may fail in this objective because Russia now does not have the same sort of power that it did before. However, it still has a lot of power, especially military. I do not think that Russia is very much concerned about Assad. It sees Assad as someone who will allow Russia to retain its position in Syria, to retain its position in the eastern Mediterranean and so on and so forth. And it may be using Assad as a bargaining chip. Russia wants to be part of this so-called international community, but as an equal player, not just by courtesy. To be present in great power gatherings but remain quiet. This is one element in Russia's policy and Putin's behavior that we must understand.

* The presentations of Shireen Hunter, Andrew Bowen, and Scott Edelman were delivered at a seminar on "Russia's Middle East Strategy: Quo Vadis?" held on October 23, 2015 at Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

Another thing is Russia's historical ambivalence regarding the West, especially joining the West. This goes to the time of Peter the Great, all the debates that happened after Peter's reforms. Some Russians since that time have wanted to become part of the West. But others have believed that Russia is a sui generis civilization and is Eurasian in character. Some of this belief is really a romantic notion and not rooted in reality. But nevertheless it is there, they do sometimes feel that, and therefore they are ambivalent about wholeheartedly joining the West.

On the other hand, however, I have also to say that this Russian feeling has been fed by the fact that the West has really never seen Russia as part of itself. First of all, there is the division between the Eastern Christianity and the Western Christianity. This is a real distinction and you did not need the late Sam Huntington to point this out. The other thing is that the Europeans never really accepted Russia as part of Europe no matter the Russians tried to join Europe. The famous saying attributed sometimes to Napoleon that scratch a Russian and you will find a Tatar expresses this Western view of Russia. I do not mean this in any way disrespect to the Tartars whom I like very much. I went to Tatarstan, I like them incredibly. They are very, very nice people, hospitable and warm. But that is how the Westerners view the Russians, meaning that Russia is not European, that Russians are Asiatic. So, I think that there is always going to be this kind of pull-and-push between Russia and the West. I think that when we are analyzing Putin, we should pay attention to these factors. I do not think that we should interpret Putin's behavior solely in terms of the rise of another episode of Russian imperialism. I believe that this approach can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yes, Putin wants Russia to be treated as a great power, but that does not necessarily mean that he wants to recreate the empire or go back to the Soviet era views and the belief in an existential conflict with the West or similar notions. I think these are some of the things we need to understand.

The other thing that we need to understand about the current situation and about what has led to the Putin phenomenon is to have a more realistic view of the Yeltsin era. The perceptions of the Russians and Westerners of the Yeltsin era are diametrically opposed to each other. I saw this difference first hand. It is not just old communists or extreme nationalists who have a negative view of the Yeltsin era. Many young Russian and even Russian democrats feel the same way. Most people in Russia do not like Yeltsin, and the Yeltsin era is seen in Russia as a period of absolute national humiliation. And you do not have to be a communist or arch-imperialist to feel that what happened to Russia was very traumatizing and humiliating. The other thing is that what these Russians feel even goes for people like Andrei Kozyrev, Yeltsin's first foreign minister. People like Kozyrev were the most pro-Western Russians. They hoped that in the post-Soviet era, Russia and the West would have a partnership, and Russia would be an equal partner in managing the post-Soviet international system. At the least they hoped that the region of the Soviet empire was going to be given to Russia to manage. In fact, I remember reading one of Kozyrev statements in which he says that Russia is going to be the agent of civilization in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and will link them with the West and so on and so forth. So when this did not happen, it generated among many Russians a strong sense of betrayal by the West. Especially after 1994, they came to believe, the Western understanding of cooperation with Russia was that Russia had to agree with whatever the West was doing anywhere in the world, and the minute they disagree on something then they are going to be accused of imperialism or reverting to communism or becoming nondemocratic and so

on. In fact, no less a person than Gorbachev himself said that the Westerners understanding of cooperation is that Russia should nod its head in agreement with western decisions all the time, and in essence just be a silent partner.

Now, I am not trying to say that the Russians are right in this interpretation. I do not have a dog in this fight, to be honest. I do not know who is right. Basically great powers are all the same, be it China, Russia, Europe, or America, especially if you are a small power. Obviously you can like the values of one more than another, but essentially great powers all behave in the same way. I am a realist when it comes to international relations. I just wrote a book. For academics, books are like their children, they have to talk about them. One of the comments, although the reviewer was positive on it, said that the book reflects a realist bias. Well, I am not ashamed of that.

So, generally speaking we should interpret Putin in this light. Putin's goals are essentially the following: one, to secure Russia's interests. Russia has obviously its own interests. For example, we can look at the problem with Ukraine in different ways. But I am not going to get into that. For example, it is important to realize that Khrushchev gave Crimea to Ukraine to because he was himself a Ukrainian. So up to a point Russia's desire to have Crimea back is understandable. The same is true of history. Ukrainians deny any connection between the Kievan Rus' and the Principdom of Muscovy. I do not know who is right, but still it is jarring to the Russians. As I said, I do not have a dog in this fight, this is not my fight. But I think all of this dispute about to whom Crimea belongs is useless. If you want to give Crimea to the original inhabitants, then you should give them back to Tatars because Catherine threw out the Tatars from Crimea. So, the point is, that it depends on where you want to start history and when you want to say an action is aggression or another thing.

Now, I do believe that the way Putin has gone about the question of Crimea and Ukraine has been very wrong and has been very counterproductive, and I think ultimately it is going to work against Russia's own interests. But I am just trying to add a nuance or two to the discussion, because the discourse so far has been so much just about dumping on Russia, dumping, dumping, dumping, that I think it is important to ask, not accept, not accept obviously, but to have an understanding of what is the Russian narrative of all of these issues and events.

Therefore I look at the Middle East issue and Russia's policy towards it in this context. First, Russia has a serious security concern when it comes to Islamic militancy. Yonah Alexander earlier referred to just one terrorist incident perpetrated by Islamist extremists in Russia, namely the incident in the Moscow Theater. But there were many, many other incidents. The Moscow metro, you had the Beslan siege, every day still in Dagestan and Ingushetia terrorist incidents take place. The North Caucasus is a cauldron, it is not quiet yet. And you know it is important if you call it North Caucasus or if you are Russian and call it south Russia. Again, it all depends how you look at this thing, but the bottom line is that ISIS and other Islamist extremists are real threat to Russia. Russians are also concerned about the support these groups receive from Saudi Arabia. The fact is we do not tell the truth about certain things. Whoever says that the Saudis are frightened of al-Qa'ida and ISIS must be delusional. I mean have you ever seen anything happening in Riyadh, any terrorist act in Riyadh? No. If something happens, is against the Shi'ites in the eastern province

or something like that. The fact is Al Qaeda and ISIS are their people, as is the Jabhat al-Nusra and so on. They have had a role in their creation. The Saudis have used Islamist groups instrumentally since the Afghan War. They have used the Sunni militants as instruments of their foreign policy, and Russians know this. I used to teach a course on Islam and politics in post-Soviet sphere and you read some of the stuff written by Russians and this comes across very, very clearly. So, there is this security concern, I mean ISIS is recruiting in Chechnya, it could even go to Tatarstan and so on.

However, Russia also has a certain problem with dealing with this threat, especially by becoming militarily involved in the war in Syria. The bombing of Syria is very unpopular with Russian Muslims and not just in North Caucasus but also in places like Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, and Siberia, and other places, because they are majority Sunni. So Russia has to walk a fine line. So I think Russia has the same dilemma as the U.S. has, namely not to get caught in a sectarian conflict. Russia cannot afford to be seen as forming a Russian-Shi'ite alliance versus an American-Sunni alliance. I think this would just be a crazy thing for everybody to do.

So there is this security concern. But I do believe that Russia wants also to show that "hey, you know what? Do not forget us. We are here. We are going to show you how we are here." I think that is a big element of Russia's policy in the Middle East. Again, I personally believe that they might be going wrongly against it. But I think that when Putin is saying "let us please talk and try to cooperate," I think that this is in some ways a cry for help. They want to come out of some of the straitjackets they have put themselves in including vis-a-vis Ukraine. Now, I have said enough on these broader issues. I am sure others will know much more about them will talk about it. But these few comments might help to set the context.

Now, let us look a little bit at Russian-Iranian relations. I personally, in print and everywhere else, have said that Iran's relations with Russia since the Revolution, has been a fool's bargain from Iran's perspective. By this I mean that Iran has been fooled by the Russians. Russians have manipulated Iran left and right and in the middle to their own ends. And the Iranians have basically played the Russian game.

Russia, obviously, has an interest in Iran. They cannot ignore it. Even at the time of Yeltsin, when Russian's basically were extremely anti-Iran, they thought that Iran was a major threat to Russia and that they had to retain contacts with Iran. This is largely because Iran is their neighbor. That is what it is, through the North Caucasus, you know. Makhachkala in Dagestan shares the Caspian with Iran. For example the famous city of Derbent (Darband) was built by the Iranian Sassanid Empire to protect against nomads from the steppes. So whoever is in Russia and whoever is in Iran, y have to deal with one another.

However, I want to say that there are some basic conflict of interest between Russia and Iran. I have written this. So I have found puzzling why Iran has put up with Russia's manipulations. Clearly, Iran cannot afford to be hostile towards Russia no matter who is ruling the country, a democracy, Islamists, monarchy, whatever. Russia is a big neighbor and they have to deal with Russia. They cannot do otherwise. However, how far it should go to embrace them, that is the question.

To begin with there are economic conflicts of interest between Iran and Russia while Iran's and Europe's economic relations are complimentary. Iran can provide Europe with natural gas, and Europe can provide Iran with all kinds of technology and investment funds. Meanwhile Russia wants to sell energy to Europe and therefore does not want Iran's entry into the European markets. Now they want to control Iran's energy markets. Lukoil and other Russian energy firms are coming to Iran. I think that if the Iranians do not watch it, they are going to cut a deal that Iran would not allow Iran have independent dealings in the gas market.

The other thing is that, although currently Iran is a minor competitor for Russia in the Caucasus and to some extent in Central Asia, potentially it could become a more serious rival. You know, people talk about Turkey's influence in Central Asia and so on. Yes, Turkic languages are similar, I speak one of them. But the fact is that culturally, Central Asian culture is much more influenced by Persian culture although now with an overlay of modern culture. In Kazakhstan when I went to the Ethnographic Museum, they showed me that up until the middle of the twentieth century they used to teach Golestan's Saadi—the Persian poet—as a main text book. So are the region's music and other representative arts. A few days ago I read a tweet or something in a website by somebody who is very extreme Pan-Turkist or whatever. He said that "Why are you Uzbeks still loving Persian music and songs? You stupid Uzbeks." No really, this is true. Sometimes you should read various websites with music, etc., to understand the state of inter-ethnic relations. I listen to Persian, Afghan, and Tajik music. So I see the comments that are made. Sometimes the extent of ethnic animosity astounds me.

So, I think that Russians see Iran's potential as a rival. The same is true in the Caucasus. For example, Iran can be an alternative to Russia for Armenia. Armenia would prefer that. But Western policy has excluded Iran from the Caucasus and Central Asia, and now we are complaining that Russia is cutting gas to Georgia. The fact is that in the 1990s, we did not allow Georgians to establish relations with Iran. Shevardnadze wanted this relationship with Iran, but we said no. We said we are going to contain Iran and that is it. You cannot have anything to do with Iran. So, we left the field open to the Russians.

Now Putin might be changing his mind about Iran and might welcome a more prominent role for Iran, especially that Turkey has changed under Erdoğan. But I think for most of the '90s and the early 2000s, Putin was extremely suspicious of the religious government—you know, the Islamist government—in Iran. But then Iran, unlike Turkey and the Arabs, behaved very well during the Chechen crisis. Dmitri Trenin wrote about it, how Iran was seen as more responsible. I also think it was your boss, Andrew, Dimitri Simes who said that Iran was the good kid on the block in terms of Chechnya and extremism in the Caucasus.

The other thing I have to say is that the initiative in setting the pace in Iran-Russian relations has always been with Russia. Meanwhile, the regime, especially the hardliners, has always seen Russia as a more acceptable partner than the West, because of largely its obsession with America. Therefore, the regime has always wanted to have good relations with the Russians, and it has been the Russians that have hesitated in going beyond a certain point. Part of this attitude has been because that many of these guys, I mean the Iranian revolutionaries, were leftists including

some Islamists. In fact Iran's revolution was as a leftist revolution with an Islamic veneer. Because the people who made the revolution—the Mujahideen, the Fada'iyān and so on—they were essentially communist and they used Islam to popularize this and this is in clear in the writing. And again like Yonah Alexander, talking about books, if you read my last book entitled *Iran Divided*, I show how this was. So there is this feeling that the system, the regime, is much more receptive to Russia than it is to the West.

The other thing, frankly, is that the regime does not see the Russian culture as threatening to them, whereas they find the Western culture, American culture in particular, but also European culture, as being more attractive and hence more threatening. So I think that this is another thing. I think that Bernard Lewis was right when he talked of the seductive allure of the Western culture. That is true. Putin is worried about that too. I mean all the stuff that you hear from Russians about the West's decadence. I am not saying whether western culture is good or bad. Something being seductive does not necessarily mean it is good, but be that as it may, it is more appealing.

In short, the initiative has always been with Russia. And I think that basically Russia has used Iran instrumentally. For example, Russia has bargained with the Iran card with the West. For example, they said if you want us to go along with sanction on Iran, then don't pressure us and do not put missiles or whatever in Poland. The Russians have really used Iran.

Now, the question that I have, is whether the latest Russian-Iranian flirtation is anything different from the past? Or Russia again is showing Iran the garden path and at some point will betray it again? I think one can argue that up to a point things have been changing, and perhaps certain geopolitical shifts are taking place and that it could be conceivable that Russia might try to use Iran more as a partner rather than as an instrument in its plans for Eurasia and the Middle East. For example, we will see if Iran is accepted into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a full member, etc., and so on and so forth. Then of course is the Chinese element there. So this might be it. An important factor would be the state of Russian-Western relations, especially Western sanctions on Russia. The Ukraine problem I do not think is going to be resolved so easily. And also sanctions. Sanctions, as we know, once imposed are very hard to lift. So I think that it could be that the Russians might be calculating that Iran will be a more valuable partner economically. There are talks that they are going to invest in Iran. I saw an item that Russia is going to open a five billion dollar credit line for Iran for certain projects. They say that they are going to build railroads and do this and that. I will believe it when I see it. I was one of the few people that argued that the Bushehr plant is never going to be built. And if it is ever built, it is never going to be delivered. And even now that it is delivered, I am not sure whether it is functioning and producing anything or not.

I mean this also goes to the essence of great power behavior. Great powers do not like medium sized powers to prosper because they become rivals. And that is a fact of life. I mean Iran's predicament is that Iran is not as big as let us say China. Nobody can touch China, you get lost in that mass of humanity. And also, it is not small and inconsequential. I think that has been Iran's predicament for the past 200 years. And so, they have to be smart.

However, I also will have to say that as far as Iran is concerned, there are people in Iran that are fully aware of these facts. Many people are fully aware that Russia has manipulated Iran. They are aware that China has manipulated Iran. I mean, Iranians dislike Chinese products. And the Chinese are incredibly predatory. I mean, they even tried to learn how the Iranians cultivate saffron and then go and cultivate it in China and then compete with Iranian exports.

So, I think there are a good chunk of Iranians who would rather like to have closer economic relations particularly with Europe and even with America. But the problem is that one of the reasons Iran has gone to Russia or China has been because America has not given them any options. The policy of containing Iran has precluded that. When in '94 Rafsanjani gave a deal to Conoco the Congress imposed sanctions on them. So, frankly how the Russian-Iranian relations have evolved has had a lot to do with how the West has treated Iran. And even now the Americans are saying that despite the nuclear deal it is going to be so difficult to lift the sanctions etc. If this goes on Iran would not have much options beyond Russia and China.

And Syria has become not about real interests but mostly about not losing face. What are really our interests in Syria? Was really Bashar Assad so bad? I mean after all, the Assads had not fought a war since what, 1967? Is Jabhat al-Nusra better or ISIS? Why is it that we said Bashar has to go? So we have not really thought of what would be the consequences of Assad's departure. We have also become prisoners of our so-called allies. Saudis are saying that because they said Bashar must go so Bashar must go. Otherwise Iranians would get in. Saudis are paranoid. There is no way you can satisfy the Saudis. A paranoid person cannot be made to feel secure. If I think that all of you here are out to get me, no matter what you promise that no we are not out to get you, I am not going to believe you. Erdoğan has lost it completely, if he ever had it. He really has made himself the Sultan Khalif. And he says to people, I am your father. And he says Bashar Assad must go. And, of course, we do not seem to be able to rein in our so-called allies in the region. And so all has become about not losing face.

And now with the Russians coming in, this has acquired a global dimension as well. So if you agree to cooperate with Russia, people are going to say Putin wins and we cannot have Putin win. Because if Putin wins here, then he is going to win in Ukraine, then he is going to win next day, then he is going to win in Abkhazia, then in Ossetia, and so on and so forth.

My feeling is that Russia still has a weak hand, but I think that all depends on how we handle the other regional players. Why should not America now even cut a deal with Assad? For example to say, "OK you can stay two years and then we will see how things work out." Or even have a more decent relationship develop with Iran. Because all the statements after the nuclear deal have been negative, negative, negative.

And we also have to understand that other countries, too, have interests. It is not all about loving this country or hating the other country. Countries have interests. And their interests often do not coincide with ours. So the question becomes can one find the middle ground or compromise and kind of mediate our differences or not? Again, I am not suggesting what one should do because every option has pluses and

minuses. There is not a scenario that is all positive and no downsides. I wish I could say there is such a scenario and that if we implement it everything is going to be wonderful. But I think that we need to have a little bit more receptivity to perhaps some alternative arguments and perhaps some alternative ways of dealing with some of the crises that we so far have had.

Scott Edelman

Former State Department advisor to U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command

I am going to broaden the focus a bit and then try to bring it down to the events that have occurred recently, including, as Yonah Alexander said, the “surprise about the surprise,” which strikes me as odd because in fact I think there really should not be any reason for surprise over the recent Russian moves. In effect, we have a message: The 1980s called, and they want their foreign policy back.

At the end of the Cold War it was very comforting for the United States that we were the lone remaining superpower. This led some to suggest that history had ended—we all remember the discussions over that. But it turns out that it was really just a vacation from history. Unfortunately, many in our current leadership seem to believe that the vacation from history continues. We have now entered the era of 21st Century power politics—power politics as they have existed since the original Westphalian system was stood up in Europe and then later expanded elsewhere in the world. In fact, what we are finding is that in a very natural and normal way, as happened before throughout the last 400 years of history, you can only have a single, so-called “unipolar moment,” a period of only one major power, for a short period of time before it will be challenged. We saw this in challenges to Louis XIV of France, and you can go back through European history and later world history to find many examples. The international system has always resisted the idea of there being a single dominant power because, first of all, it is going to be challenged by rising regional powers which want to assert themselves in the region. Today, the unipolar system is being challenged by China in Asia, of course, very actively; and by Iran in the Gulf region and more broadly in the Middle East. And it is being challenged by a revanchist former superpower, Russia.

We mentioned Dimitri Simes earlier, and just to show that people sometimes remember what is said in one of these panels. I very well remember Dimitri in the early 1990's—I believe it was a Wilson Center program—saying that the one thing we could not allow was the creation of a Weimar Russia, that is, a former superpower that felt that it was unfairly treated, that it was unfairly restricted, and resentful both of the normal economic deterioration that happens with the loss of power but also the loss of the influence it had.

Another quote comes to mind in terms of what that kind of influence means and how the Russians have often looked at it. I think there is no better statement than the one that was made years ago by the former Soviet foreign minister Gromyko who, when asked once in a press interview to what it means to be a superpower, said a superpower is a nation without whose participation nothing in the world can be solved. And I believe that is what the Russians are now trying to recreate. Again, it is a very normal and predictable development.

Historically, again, going back to European history, whenever you had a single power that was overwhelming, it was eventually challenged by other, smaller powers—both rising and revanchist—regardless of their ideological compatibility, regardless even of their compatibility of interests. They would have areas where interests intersected but not necessarily overall similar interests. And I believe that is exactly what we are seeing in the world today.

Tightening our focus to why the Middle East and why Russia in the Middle East? Part of it, of course, is what we see on Yonah Alexander's map. The Middle East, especially the Eastern Mediterranean, simply is in the Russian backyard. It has always been there but the Russians have never really been able to project a great deal of power out there, partly because since the Second World War the Mediterranean, with the stationing of America's Sixth Fleet, has been an American lake. The other significant area on the map, of course, is the Gulf region, which—since the British withdrew in 1971-1972 from “east of Suez” —has been an American pond.

But despite their limitations, the Russians have asserted themselves in the region. As you know, we were fortunate that the Cold War was not fought directly between the two major superpowers, but was almost entirely fought on the margins. It was fought in the Third World, in Latin America, in Southeast Asia, and in the Middle East. Starting in the 1950s with the break we had with Nasser in Egypt, the Soviets found that there were large issues between the United States and the Arab countries that they could exploit—particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict—which enabled them to enhance their influence in the region. This actually created a perverse incentive for them to be as disruptive as possible in the region. Because the more the situation was disrupted, the more that the United States and its allies could not stabilize the regional situation, the more the Soviets could increase their political influence. Soviet arms sales to regional clients were a big part of this. In the 1970s (and there are some of us in this room who remember those days personally and well), one of the biggest achievements of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and the Middle East peace process he championed was to get the Soviets out of the Middle East; at least out of most of the Middle East, as they remained on the margins in their support for Syria and their relationship with Iraq, they had a sort of relationship with Kuwait, and so forth. One of the reasons Kissinger had for working as hard as he did to ameliorate Arab-Israeli tensions was to eliminate that wedge issue for the Soviets. When it became apparent that President Sadat in Egypt was anxious to get the Russians out, we were more than happy to step into their place. At that point, by the late 1970s, we were successful in pushing the Soviets far out of influence in the region and it remained that way for the rest of the Cold War, even with the Russian *pied-à-terre* in Syria. And when the Cold War ended, the Syrians found themselves exposed, more threatened by Turkey and by others in the region, precisely because the Russians could not support them to the extent that the former Soviet Union had been able to do.

Looking at the region today from the American point of view, one of the major reasons we care about the Middle East, and especially the Gulf region, is oil and gas, and the fact that the Gulf region remains to this day is a major source of world energy. Even as we move towards energy independence in North America, we are still affected by world energy prices and their effect on the wider world economy.

In the Gulf region, our original concept beginning in the 1970s was to create a kind of stable local balance of power, but one dominated by Iran under the Shah as a proxy for our interests. Some of us remember that during the 1970s, it was the Arab Gulf countries which were irritating us because of the oil embargo and the later dramatic increases in oil prices, and it was Secretary of State Kissinger in the early '70s who implicitly threatened to invade the Arab Gulf countries to seize their oil if they threatened too much harm. That concept worked reasonable well until the Shah fell in

1979. After that, we—especially during the Iran-Iraq War and then following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait—increasingly moved our force into the Gulf to the point where today, we are not just the dominant power there but the guarantor of free trade and free traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and throughout the Gulf region.

As for the Russians and Iran, they are looking for vacuums, looking for opportunities, wedges, which they can fill and in which they can insert themselves. In Syria, the ongoing collapse of the Syrian regime is a threat to an important client of both nations but also an opportunity for them to take a more active regional role. The ongoing challenges to the central government in Iraq following the American evacuation from that country also creates opportunities for Iran in particular to inject itself.

These actions are, again, traditional and predictable. Both Russia and Iran are looking to defend something called “national interest.” Some of our leaders seem to have forgotten that: it is normal for countries pursue their own national interests as they perceive them. People in the region have only limited trust of all outside powers, including the United States, because they understand them to be pursuing their own national interests.

In Syria, Russia is perfectly happy to support the Assad regime despite its despotic nature, to the extent that it enables them to maintain their small base in Tartus, to maintain some influence in the region and to be an essential part of whatever solution is reached. If at some point Assad personally no longer fulfills that purpose, Moscow's attitude will be “fine,” they will find somebody else, and Assad understands that.

The eastern Mediterranean is the area where the Russians are, at the moment, asserting themselves most directly. First of all, this is a matter of simple geography. Just look at the map; you can see that it is very much in their backyard. Beyond their immediate concerns in Syria, I believe there may also be a long term concern—I do not think this is the main concern driving them by any means, but a long time concern as we have noted before—that Russia, which is economically dependent on the export of natural gas and to a lesser extent oil, looks to have a presence where a new competitor may be developing. The Gulf, of course, remains its major competitor in natural gas and oil, and the Russians cannot be happy over decreasing world energy prices caused, in part, by the supply of oil and gas from multiple producers. But the Russians also have been reading the newspapers and they know that substantial natural gas discoveries have been made—not enormous, not Gulf-level, but nonetheless substantial—gas discoveries have been made in the eastern Mediterranean in recent years off the coast of Egypt, Israel, Lebanon and Cyprus; and this represents potential competition for Russia's European market. There are already negotiations underway with Turkey and some of the European states about this. Eastern Mediterranean gas may not be a complete substitute for Russian gas, but it can be a supplementary supply, a way of insulating the Europeans and the Turks from heavy-handed Russian influence because of their monopoly control of gas supplies and a possible check on prices.

So, again, all of this is perfectly natural, and it should be understood as such. Russia and Iran, by the way, are not the only powers taking a closer look at both necessities and opportunities in the wider Middle East region. Others, especially in

Asia, that are dependent on gas and oil coming from the Gulf region are increasingly active out there. During the time I was in Bahrain working as an advisor to the American Navy, we saw the Chinese, for example, occasionally sending some into the area. At the time when Somali piracy became a growing concern, the effort to combat it also provided an opportunity for increased deployments in and near the Arabian Sea by a variety of naval powers, including the Russians, the Japanese, the Chinese, and many of the Europeans, all of whom sent ships into the Arabian Sea to learn, *inter alia* how to operate there, sometimes in coalition with us and sometimes individually. The Russians have since followed up by sending ships occasionally into the Gulf. But at this time, no other naval power can seriously compete with us there. So far, the other powers that have looked at increasing their presence in the Gulf region because of their concerns over oil and gas supplies, the more successful ones, have done so in coalition or in cooperation with the United States. The Royal Navy is still out there, although they are very much a junior partner of the United States. The French have a small naval base of their own in Abu Dhabi. And in fact, there has been some reporting recently about a temporary removal of an American aircraft carrier from the Gulf region. For more than a decade we have always had at least one and often two aircraft carriers continuously operating in the Gulf region. During the time next year when we won't have that, the slack will be taken up by the French, who are sending the Charles de Gaulle which, while not a "super-carrier," can nonetheless operate well in the Gulf, but in cooperation with us and in coalition with us. The Chinese have also been out there, on their own, of course.

If you want to look at who is very concerned with future security in the Gulf, particularly in light of Iranian threats from time to time to mine the Strait of Hormuz, it is interesting to see who has most recently joined our efforts in the region. Regarding the Iranian posturing, even if they never actually did that mine or otherwise shut down traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, just the mere threat of their doing so could cause insurance rates to shoot up and have a drastic effect on oil and gas prices, and beyond that on the greater world economy. In response in recent years, we have held some very public coalition counter-mining exercises in and around the Strait of Hormuz. And it was interesting to see that the third largest participant after the United States and the Royal Navy in these exercises was Japan. The participation of the Japanese Naval Self-Defense Forces was, in fact, their largest outside of area deployment since the Second World War, this because they are also deeply concerned their energy supplies from the region.

To conclude, what is the future of all of this? I think the Russians very much continue to look opportunistically for occasions when they can insert themselves into the region. There is a limit to how much they can do. The eastern Mediterranean is still much easier for them because of Tartus and because of its proximity to the Black Sea. They do not really have the capability to project significant power in the wider Middle East region (including the Gulf), but they can sell arms to some of the players—including Iran—and they can try to exercise influence on regional developments. For the foreseeable future, however, it will still be either the United States or an American-led coalition of Western powers that guarantees overall security that area.

Finally, we should remember that the Russians are going to find operating militarily in the region just as problematic as we have in Iraq and elsewhere. They

may be pursuing their own national interests, but there are other national and sectional interests in play at the same time. And a final thought, something I just saw this morning in the “Daily Telegraph,” it was a wonderful quote from a Russian military trainer in Syria saying—practically tearing out his hair in exasperation—saying the forces they train and supply immediately turn around and sell their new weapons to the enemy; an experience with which we are also familiar. In the end, they are going to find that they cannot stabilize the situation by themselves either. But they will continue to assert themselves, they will be a vital player, and none of this should surprise us.

4. The Sochi Olympics*

Peter Roudik

Director, Global Legal Research Center, Law Library of Congress

I came here from the Law Library of Congress. Everybody knows that we are the largest law library. We have 3 million of books, but in addition to these 3 million of books, the fact that 60 percent of our books are in foreign languages is especially interesting. Even more, we have a staff of people, American attorneys, who had training in laws of foreign countries. They are admitted to practice law in foreign countries and can interpret foreign laws and can explain to American legislators and the American public how to resolve a problem according to the laws of a foreign country. You can hear from my accent that I am covering, in addition to my administrative duties, Russia and other former Soviet republics, and I'm a legal specialist for these jurisdictions. So being the only government employee at this panel I have to start my talk about legal framework, which was created by the Russian authorities in order to make these games secure, with a disclaimer that everything that I will say will be on my own. I will not make the Library responsible for what I am saying here.

Before we will start to talk about lessons learned from the Munich Olympics, I have to say that in order to be a good learner you have to define terms. You have to come to an agreement regarding the definitions. Recently, it was a kind of confusion how different terms, different definitions, were understood by the organizers of the games. For example, they promised to make the games most memorable and they made them most warm. They promised to have the most impressive games, and these games turned out to be the most expensive. They promised to have the most secure games and these games are probably the most regulated and the most monitored in regards to the behavior of athletes, spectators, and journalists.

Current laws, and I will talk mostly about three major regulations which were passed during the last half a year, control who is coming to the games, what people are doing there, how they behave, what they can say there. It's not enough to buy a ticket to go to the Olympic Games. In order to attend an event you have to get a special spectator's pass. In order to get a spectator's pass people should submit copies of their entry tickets together with a special application, and a lot of additional personal information in advance, and nobody can be sure that they will get this pass. Everyone who is older than two years of age is required have a special badge, which serves as a spectator's pass. There are reports that people who were somehow involved in different opposition related activities were denied access to the Olympics and they couldn't come to Sochi.

* The presentation was delivered at a seminar on "Olympics Security Lessons: From Munich to Sochi" held on February 20, 2014 at the Inter-University Center for Legal Studies (administered by the International Law Institute).

But even if somebody was able to get this spectator's pass and come to Sochi, there is the so called Regulation 1156 which was passed in December and entered into force in January of this year. This document is called Rules of Spectators Behavior at Official Sporting Events. It defines where people can stay at these events, what they can say, how they will express support to their team. For example, anything that is bigger than 16 inches in any dimension cannot be brought to the stadium. The regulation defines what kind of clothes spectators can wear or not wear in order to attend an event, what kind of food they can take, and what packaging is required. For example, plastic bottles are prohibited there. The Regulation specifically speaks to drums, loud speakers, noise, and music equipment. This stuff cannot be taken to the stands unless special permission was received.

In order to receive a permission, people need to submit an application two days in advance. Then within the next 24 hours permissions will be issued, and local police will be notified. Fans will get a special designated place on the stands, and a person whose name will be stated in the permit as a designated individual will be allowed to keep this equipment or a drum or whatever else that will be defined in the permit. The Regulation specifies that no wording in any language can be put on this equipment and there are special provisions regarding banners and flags. For example, nothing can be longer than two yards. All mottos, inscriptions, and messages on the banners should be in Russian language or translated into Russian. And it's not enough just to translate. It doesn't matter that your team doesn't understand Russian. You have to translate and bring an official notarized certificate that your translation is exactly the same as the message you want to state. In regards to the flags, there is a special requirement. All flags should be fireproof and the fireproof certificate needs to be present and shown to local police. Otherwise a person will be removed from the stands.

If because of all these restrictions somebody will decide not to go to the games and will send something to his friends who went to Sochi, that also cannot be done so easily. There is a special regulation under which all mail sent to Sochi should be unsealed. You probably read recently in the *New York Times* that Chobani yogurt was not allowed to be received by American athletes because some postal service regulations were violated. I would say that many of these regulations are in violation of original Russian laws, but they were passed and are enforced in Sochi today.

Recently, the *Guardian* published an article saying that there is a deafening silence in Sochi in regard to political protests and political statements. It is obvious why it happened so. Last August, Putin issued a special decree, which prohibited all non-Olympics-related gatherings in Sochi and neighboring territories through the end of March. Later, this decree was amended and a special area about ten miles away from Sochi was designated for conducting protest events. At the same time, a Russian law which allows people to conduct single man protest, pickets, and other events was not repealed. However, local police strongly prosecute such events and you can see media reports that people were detained for doing such type of activities. There is another regulation which I want to mention to you. It was passed last November and regulates

eavesdropping in Sochi. Eleven thousand cameras, drones, and pieces of eavesdropping equipment are probably another reason why you can hear this defining silence in the region.

Probably you read the report that all computers of our NBC team which covers Olympics were hacked immediately as they connected to public Wi-Fi in Sochi. That is because of this November regulation called On Specifics of Providing Communication Services in Sochi. This regulation authorizes Russian security services to collect all data and metadata gathered by operators and providers of communication services. This regulation specifies that all journalists, members of official delegations, athletes, judges, and spectators are subject to monitoring. According to regulation, all records of connections, sending messages, and even information on payments made to get these communications shall be recorded in a special database, and this data will be kept for the next three years allowing 24/7 remote access to the Russian Federal Security Service.

Two Russian investigative journalists reported about this system in the Western media, and what was the response of the Russian government? The official Russian government website, Voice of Russia, published on its website a statement saying, "Don't be scared of phone tapping during Sochi; it's for your own safety." Well, maybe it is for safety, but to what degree is it legal? Russia doesn't have its own federal intelligence court of review. So who will monitor use of this data? I want to add that Russia's own Supreme Court issued guidance, which says that all metadata collected in regard to electronic communications, telephone numbers, and information on electronic traffic should be considered personal, private information, and collecting of this information requires court orders. Of course in the case of Sochi it is not done.

So is the lesson learned? I don't know. Olympic Games are continuing, nothing happened yet, and hopefully nothing will happen until the end. But we should make sure that measures which were undertaken by the Russian government are within the existing legal framework, and that rights of those who are protected by implemented security measures will not be abused or misused for the sake of security.

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