

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy – Tufts University

Russian Foreign Policy and Putin's Fear of Revolution

Speed Elliott Estebo
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Advised by Professor Ibrahim Warde
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Introduction

Since he took over the role of acting head of state in 1999, Vladimir Putin has consistently encouraged the view that Russian foreign policy is based exclusively on an objective conception of the national interest.¹ As Karen Dawisha has shown in her new book *Putin's Kleptocracy*, however, both Russia's foreign and domestic policies are largely based on the personal (often economic) interests of the President and his associates, which at times have little or no connection to any sensible conceptions of Russia's national interest. One consequence of this is the Russian leadership's increased hostility toward the West, which has become especially apparent following the annexation of Crimea and Russia's invasion of eastern Ukraine. A central cause of Russia's renewed antagonism toward the West, which has sometimes been neglected or downplayed by analysts, is President Putin's sense of weakness and his resultant desire to create conditions that demonstrate a continuing need for his leadership. This paper aims to tell part of the story of Russia's move from Western integration to antipathy towards the West, and in so doing to show that, while they purport to be restoring justice to the international order and genuine values to society, Russia's leaders are in fact taking advantage of historical animosities and suspicions in order to secure continuing power for the Putin regime.

A number of analysts reject the thesis that this paper will defend. They are not limited to Kremlin supporters, and include both Russian and Western commentators.

Their reasons for rejecting the thesis of this paper differ, but they share one point in

¹ In a November 14, 2014 interview with TASS news agency, for example, Putin was asked if he had noticed any strain in relations with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, to which he replied, "No, I have not. You know that we are guided by interests instead of sympathies and antipathies." Vladimir Putin, "Interview to TASS News Agency," November 24, 2014, <http://eng.accreditation.kremlin.ru/news/23274>.

common. They view international politics through an exclusively realist lens, which leads them to downplay the importance of the leadership's domestic political needs in the determination of Russia's foreign policy. Along with President Putin and his supporters, Russians and Americans such as John Mearsheimer, Stephen Kinzer, and Jack Matlock argue that Western policies ignoring Russia's interests and threatening Russia's national security, such as the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), are essential to explaining Russia's interventions in Ukraine as well as the Kremlin's hostility toward America and the West. This paper will argue that while reference to Western policies is necessary to explain Russia's foreign policy shift, it is not sufficient to explain the transformation we have seen in Russian foreign policy.

The most regular refrain of Kremlin supporters today is to blame Washington for every difficulty that the Russian government faces. They often argue that American actions since the end of the Cold War reveal a determined effort to keep the Russian state weak, and that President Obama has sought to replace Putin with a Russian leader more amenable to Washington's interests, just as George W. Bush sought to replace other post-Soviet leaders. Following the December 15, 2014 ruble crash, for example, Sergei Markov, a Kremlin-friendly political analyst, claimed that "the ruble decline is a result of the financial war that Washington called against Moscow" and accused President Obama of conspiring with the Saudis to lower the price of oil in an effort to wreck the Russian economy and overthrow Mr. Putin.² Likewise, immediately following the February 27, 2015 murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, President Putin's spokesman remarked that the killing "bears all the hallmarks of a provocation" staged by those who have an

² Neil MacFarquhar and Andrew E. Kramer, "As the Ruble Swoons, Russians Desperately Shop," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/europe/as-the-ruble-swoons-russians-desperately-shop.html?_r=0.

interest in destabilizing Russia's political situation. Markov claimed on his Facebook page that "Nemtsov was killed by Putin's enemies with the aim of framing Putin for the murder." On Instagram, Chechen President and Putin-ally Ramzan Kadyrov added, "There are no doubts whatsoever that Western special services organized Nemtsov's murder."³ But Putin supporters are not alone in their belief that the West is primarily responsible for the current tension.

Commentators such as John Mearsheimer and former U.S. Ambassador Jack Matlock, who are by no means Putin supporters, still tend to focus on misguided American policies when attempting to explain Putin's actions. Claiming that the U.S. and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the Ukraine crisis, Mearsheimer focuses on NATO enlargement. He offers several important and necessary criticisms, which nonetheless do not explain Russia's foreign policy. Surely he is right, for example, that NATO enlargement excluding Russia worsened relations between Russia and the West at critical moments and contributed to reviving Russians' hostility toward the West. As Mearsheimer put it, "a declining great power with an aging population and a one-dimensional economy did not in fact need to be contained. And... enlargement [only gave] Moscow an incentive to cause trouble in Eastern Europe."⁴ While Mearsheimer, George Kennan, and others justifiably opposed NATO enlargement in 1997, in reality, checking NATO expansion was not a primary reason for President Putin's decision to intervene in Ukraine. Reviewing the history of Russia's transformation from a new state seeking Western integration to a hostile nation opposing the U.S.-led international system

³ Simon Shuster, "Why the Kremlin Is Blaming Putin Critic's Murder on a 'Provocation,'" *Time*, February 28, 2015, <http://time.com/3727379/putin-boris-nemtsov-kremlin-provocation/>.

⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, October 2014.

will help us to better understand the true drivers of Russia's foreign policy today and their significance relative to each other.

Western Integration

The debate between Russian Westernizers and Slavophiles over Russia's orientation and place in the world goes back to at least Ivan the Terrible, and the thread of this debate can be traced throughout Russian history up to the present day. When Boris Yeltsin became the first president of the newly independent Russian Federation in December 1991, there was no question as to which side of that debate he was on. For Yeltsin, integration into the Western system could not come soon enough, and the great majority of his frustration with Western leaders resulted from their reluctance to bring Russia into their institutions quickly enough.⁵ By 1998 Russia had received about \$20 billion in loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and joined the Group of 7 (G7, which at that point became the G8),⁶ but at various times during his administration Yeltsin suggested that Russia should become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Union (EU), and NATO as well.⁷

Though Yeltsin remained convinced throughout his presidency that Russia's best hope for national security and prosperity was through integration with Western Europe and its institutions, obstacles to this project arose from within Russia as well as from abroad. After seven decades of Soviet ideology and identity, there was little agreement amongst the Russian people as to what the nation's new identity should be. This was

⁵ Martin Sixsmith, *Russia: A 1,000-Year Chronicle of the Wild East*, 1st American ed. (New York, NY: The Overlook Press, 2014), 507.

⁶ John Odling-Smee, *The IMF and Russia in the 1990s*, IMF Working Paper (International Monetary Fund, 2004), 19.

⁷ Sixsmith, *Russia*, 507.

reflected in a number of ways, perhaps most obviously in Yeltsin's establishment of a "national identity commission" in the summer of 1997. Dealing with a struggling economy and very low confidence in government among the people, the Yeltsin administration sought a concept or slogan that could help them gain support from the public to counter the Communist party who, though a minority, still maintained a clear ideology.⁸ In the end, the commission failed to provide a national idea; its chairman, Georgi Satarov concluded, "It is not just the national idea which is important, but also the process of finding it."⁹

Perceptions of clashing interests between Russia and the West emerged with significant consequences in the spring of 1999, Yeltsin's final year in office, when war broke out in Yugoslavia. For the majority of heads of state in the West, including U.S. President Bill Clinton, Slobodan Milosevic's assertion of Yugoslavia's rights as a sovereign state did not trump the responsibility of the international community to stop the bloodshed in Kosovo. As a result, NATO's intervention in Serbia led to the emergence of Kosovo as an independent state, against the wishes of both Belgrade and Moscow. The Kremlin upheld the principle of unconditional state sovereignty as a moral and legal justification for its position, but the problem with NATO intervention for Yeltsin and Russia was, in short, that there were parallels between Kosovo and Chechnya, and with the Russian state as weak as it was, many feared that the U.S. could impose its will on Russia as it had on Serbia.¹⁰ Despite the fact that Russia had signed onto the Founding

⁸ Michael R. Gordon, "Post-Communist Russia Plumbs Its Soul, In Vain, For New Vision," *The New York Times*, March 31, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/03/31/world/post-communist-russia-plumbs-its-soul-in-vain-for-new-vision.html>?

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, Random House Trade Paperback Edition (New York, NY: Random House, 2003), 300.

Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security with NATO in 1997, which declared that Russia and NATO no longer considered each other as adversaries, many in the Russian government never ceased considering NATO as a potential threat to Russia's security. The enlargement of NATO in 1997 did nothing to allay those fears, and NATO's willingness to intervene in Serbia even without UN Security Council authorization caused many in Russia to wonder what exactly would prevent NATO from "liberating" Russian territory at some point in the future as well.

Shortly after Vladimir Putin was appointed acting head of the Russian government on August 9, 1999, a series of violent attacks shook the country. There were gun battles in Dagestan on August 10, and two weeks later a bombing in Okhotny Ryad shopping center, very near the Moscow Kremlin, injured forty people.¹¹ Two weeks after that attack, a series of bombings leveled apartment buildings in Moscow, Buinansk, and Volgodonsk, killing about three hundred innocent victims.¹² In response to these attacks, Russia's military was sent back into Chechnya to reclaim the region from Chechen separatists who had taken de facto control. It was against this violent backdrop that Putin's approval ratings first shot above 80 percent. The Russian public was understandably shocked and afraid following the attacks, and people were therefore pleased with the future President's strong anti-terrorist rhetoric, tough attitude, and quick response.¹³

Once appointed, Putin began his term as acting President by announcing his intention to continue Yeltsin's project of reintegrating Russia into the West. He

¹¹ Andrei Malgin, "Power in the Kremlin Comes With a Price," *The Moscow Times*, August 14, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/505136.html>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

repeatedly affirmed Russia's "Europeanness" and European values, and assured Western leaders that freedom and democracy were essential for Russia's future, and that they had come to Russia to stay. In his first address to the public as acting President on December 31, 1999 he said, "The state will stand firm to protect freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of the mass media, ownership rights, these fundamental elements of a civilized society... Russia has opted for democracy and reform, and is moving toward these goals."¹⁴ Likewise, in a March 5 interview the following year with David Frost of the BBC, President Putin answered a question about his views on NATO. "Russia is part of the European culture," he said,

"and I cannot imagine my own country in isolation from Europe and what we often call the civilized world... I have no doubt that the road we have chosen is the right one. And our goal is to follow this road, and to make sure our policies are absolutely open and clear."¹⁵

At the same time as he proclaimed Russia's westward orientation, Putin determined to bring Yeltsin's oligarchs under his control or create a new Russian elite that was in line with the new Kremlin. While Yeltsin had often acted as a referee for the various factions in his court, Putin sought to rid the political arena of opposition.¹⁶ His first target was the oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky, owner of NTV, which in 2000 was one of Russia's most popular independent television channels. Ousting Gusinsky began what would become Putin's ongoing project of totally dismantling Russia's independent media. Though he appealed to the West as a partner by intimating that Moscow was aiming for eventual integration into NATO (both in his previously mentioned interview

¹⁴ Vladimir Putin, "New Year Address by Acting President Vladimir Putin," December 31, 1999, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/8575>.

¹⁵ Vladimir Putin, "Interview to 'BBC Breakfast with Frost'," March 5, 2000, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/8763>.

¹⁶ Liliia Shevtsova, *Russia Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, trans. Arch Tait (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 41.

with David Frost and in a February 2000 meeting with NATO Secretary General George Robertson),¹⁷ President Putin took advantage of his soaring popularity by bringing Russian media networks under state control.¹⁸

Next, the regime went after the upper and lower chambers of parliament, and returned control of the regional sections of the security ministries to Moscow (whereas they had previously reported to regional governors).¹⁹ The uncertainty of the Yeltsin years, along with the pervasive threat from Chechen terrorists and separatists, combined to produce immense public support for Putin's publicly stated aims, as well as a society that did not attempt to prevent the centralization of power and the creation of a more authoritarian state.²⁰ Despite his moves to increase the state's power and control domestic opposition, Putin continued to enjoy praise from Western leaders like George W. Bush, who failed to understand the nature of Russia's new leadership and predict the trajectory of the country.²¹

In the beginning, Putin and Bush enjoyed more than just good working relations; President Bush described Putin as his friend on several occasions, and Putin visited Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. President Putin was, famously, the first foreign leader to call Bush on September 11, 2001 to express his condolences and to assure his support, a fact that Bush mentioned several times to the media.²² In a public statement on September 11, Putin said, "Addressing the people of the United States on behalf of Russia, I would like to say that we are with you, we entirely and fully share and

¹⁷ Ibid., 163.

¹⁸ Malgin, "Power in the Kremlin Comes With a Price."

¹⁹ Shevtsova, *Russia Lost in Transition*, 42.

²⁰ Ibid., 43.

²¹ Ibid., 164.

²² Vladimir Putin, "Interview with the American Broadcasting Company ABC," November 7, 2001, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/9017>.

experience your pain. We support you.”²³ The great extent of shared values and interests between Russia and the West and the possibilities for security cooperation may have been more apparent in the fall of 2001 than at any other time in history.

Though contentious issues remained, such as opposing views on the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty and the further enlargement of NATO, obstacles to partnership and alliance between Russia and the United States (and between Russia and the West as a whole) seemed greatly outweighed by their shared values and interests. President Putin spoke frequently with George W. Bush, met with NATO Secretary General George Robertson, and addressed the U.S. media several times as well. These optimistic exchanges led some to conclude that the shared security concerns of the new century would fundamentally and permanently change Russia’s relationship with the West, and hasten Russia’s transformation into a Western-style democracy as well. During a joint press conference with Putin on October 2, 2001, Robertson declared, “The attack at the heart of the United States was not just an attack on the United States and members of NATO, it was an attack on the values that unite Russia with the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance.”²⁴ What actually happened after 9/11, however, was that Russia’s integration into the West (now as a strategic partner of the United States in the global war on terror) had become de-linked from Russia’s internal reforms.²⁵ For his part, Putin

²³ Vladimir Putin, "Statement on Terrorist Attacks in the USA," September 11, 2001, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/8897>.

²⁴ Vladimir Putin, "Press Conference after a Meeting with NATO Secretary General George Robertson," October 3, 2001, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/8848>.

²⁵ Sophia Clément-Noguier, “Russia, the European Union, and NATO after September 11: Challenges and Limits of a New Entanglement,” in *Russia’s Engagement with the West: Transformation and Integration in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Alexander J. Motyl, Blair A. Ruble, and Lilia Shevtsova (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, Inc., 2005), 239.

assured the West, as in his November 7 interview for ABC,²⁶ that it was in everyone's interest to integrate Russia into what he described as the present-day, civilized, democratic, international community.

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, which began March 19, 2003, damaged U.S.-Russian relations and increased Russian suspicions that the U.S. intended to dominate world affairs without consideration for Russia's interests. It did not, however, cause Russia to turn away from its apparent westward orientation. It was Germany, France, and Russia, after all, that joined together against the Iraq invasion in early 2003.²⁷ Furthermore, tensions between America and Europe's dissenting nations, including Russia, receded following the United States' swift victory over Saddam Hussein's forces (though resistance to U.S. unilateralism remained).²⁸ Following 9/11, and even during the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Russia focused its foreign policy on speedy integration into the WTO and on building the closest possible partnerships with the EU and NATO. Though Putin continued his attack on Yeltsin's oligarchs by jailing Mikhail Khodorkovsky and putting YUKOS' assets under state control, Russian policy still seemed directed at returning Russia to Western civilization.²⁹

Color Revolutions

On November 2, 2003, Russia's post-Soviet neighbor Georgia held parliamentary elections alongside a constitutional referendum to reduce the size of its parliament.

²⁶ Putin, "Interview with the American Broadcasting Company ABC."

²⁷ Alexander Rahr, "Russia-European Union-Germany After September 11 and Iraq," in *Russia's Engagement with the West: Transformation and Integration in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Alexander J. Motyl, Blair A. Ruble, and Lilia Shevtsova (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2005), 224.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

According to the Georgian Election Commission, parties supporting former Soviet Foreign Minister and Russia's favored incumbent President Eduard Shevardnadze were victorious in the elections. However, allegations of widespread electoral fraud, including ballot box stuffing, voter intimidation, and violence led the International Election Observation Mission (which included the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, as well as the European Parliament and the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) to conclude that the elections did not live up to international standards of fairness or to Georgia's OSCE commitments.³⁰

Following the elections, Georgian opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili claimed that his National Movement party had rightfully won the most seats, a claim that was supported by independent exit polls.³¹ When Saakashvili urged his supporters to demonstrate against Shevardnadze's government, tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in Tbilisi and elsewhere to demand Shevardnadze's resignation.³² After three weeks of massive antigovernment demonstrations, Shevardnadze attempted to open the new session of parliament but was interrupted by protesters as they burst into the chamber carrying roses. Shevardnadze fled the building with his bodyguards and declared

³⁰ "OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Visits Georgia," *Civil Georgia*, November 21, 2004, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=5576&search=>.

³¹ Global Strategy concluded that National Movement in fact came in first with 20% of the vote, while the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy likewise concluded that National Movement had received the most votes.

Dan Seršen, "Chaotic Election Day in Georgia Produces Contradictory Results" (Eurasianet.org, November 2, 2003), <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110303.shtml>.

³² Stephen Jones, "Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' of 2003: Enforcing Peaceful Change," in *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-Violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, ed. Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

a state of emergency.³³ After several military units refused to support the government, Shevardnadze met with Saakashvili and fellow opposition leader Zurab Zhvania in a meeting arranged by then-Foreign Minister of Russia Igor Ivanov.³⁴ When Shevardnadze announced his resignation following the meeting, more than one hundred thousand demonstrators celebrated on the streets of Tbilisi.

Less than a year later, a similar process was underway in nearby Ukraine. Just as Georgia's 2003 elections were marred by massive corruption, voter intimidation, and electoral fraud, so was the second round of Ukraine's 2004 presidential election.³⁵ Nonpartisan exit polls conducted during the runoff gave opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko a commanding lead with 52% of the votes compared to incumbent Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's 43%, yet when the official results were published, Yanukovich, the favorite of Russia and Ukraine's corrupt elite, claimed victory in the election by 2.5%.³⁶ On November 22, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians clad in orange (the color of Yushchenko's campaign) and chanting "Together, we are many! We cannot be defeated!" filled Maidan Nezozlezhnosti (Independence Square) in central Kiev. Meanwhile, Yushchenko, who faced major impediments throughout the campaign,³⁷ defiantly took a symbolic oath of office in an abbreviated session of parliament.³⁸ The

³³ "State of Emergency in Georgia," *CNN.com*, November 23, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/11/22/georgia.protests>.

³⁴ Jones, "Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' of 2003."

³⁵ Anders Åslund and Michael McFaul, eds., *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

³⁶ Adrian Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *Foreign Affairs*, April 2005, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/60620/adrian-karatnycky/ukraines-orange-revolution>.

³⁷ Including receiving negative press with no opportunity to respond, being denied landing privileges at airports before rallies, getting forced off the road by a truck, being followed by a state security operative, and even being poisoned by TCDD, which left him hospitalized for nearly a month and badly scarred his face.

³⁸ Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution."

following day, an estimated 500,000 demonstrators gathered at the square in Kiev, and protesters waving orange flags peacefully marched from there to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) to demand a free and fair election.³⁹ For two more weeks, through snow and freezing sleet, millions of Ukrainians peacefully protested the election nationwide.

An increasingly open national media covered Yushchenko's swearing-in ceremony, and the tactic succeeded, creating confusion within Ukraine's security services as to who would be president.⁴⁰ Fortunately for the demonstrators, incumbent President Leonid Kuchma did not respond with force as he had four years earlier during the "Ukraine without Kuchma" protest campaign. As the protests strengthened, Ukraine's military and security services splintered.⁴¹ Yanukovich demanded that force be used to break up the demonstrations, but with the military and Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) divided, authorities failed to intervene. When the Interior Ministry independently prepared troops to attack the protesters, leaders of the SBU signaled that they were willing to protect the demonstrators.⁴² Together, the Yushchenko camp and SBU leaders determined to preserve the peace. On November 27, the Ukrainian Parliament declared the election results invalid,⁴³ and on December 3, Ukraine's Supreme Court annulled the results of the runoff, calling for new elections.⁴⁴ Ukrainians went to the polls for a third time on December 26, 2004 and, with the largest contingent of international observers in

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ C.J. Chivers, "Protests Grow as Ukraine Vote Crisis Deepens," *The New York Times*, November 24, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/24/international/europe/24ukraine.html>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Steven Lee Myers, "Parliament Says Votes in Ukraine Were Not Valid," *The New York Times*, November 28, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/28/international/europe/28kiev.html>.

⁴⁴ C.J. Chivers, "It Was Dec. 3, but in Kiev, New Year Began Yesterday," *The New York Times*, December 4, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/04/international/europe/04kiev.html>.

history present, unsurprisingly voted to elect Viktor Yushchenko over Yanukovich, 52% to 44%.⁴⁵

Two months later, on February 27, 2005, Kyrgyzstan, another of Russia's democratically challenged post-Soviet neighbors, held its parliamentary elections. As in Georgia and Ukraine previously, international observers criticized the process, saying that it did not meet international standards for democratic elections. State-sponsored media had "slavishly supported the government," and the country's only independent printing press had its electricity cut in the week before the vote.⁴⁶ Kimmo Kiljunen, who oversaw the OSCE's monitors in Kyrgyzstan, said that the elections were "undermined by vote-buying, deregistration of candidates, [and] interference with media."⁴⁷

Demonstrations erupted across the country after the vote, especially in the West and South, and protesters demanded the early resignation of fifteen-year President Askar Akayev, as well as the cancellation of the fraudulent election results.

Unlike in Georgia and Ukraine, however, the protests in Kyrgyzstan turned violent. After a pro-government group carrying sticks and makeshift shields attacked a larger group of peaceful marchers in Bishkek, protesters stormed government buildings. When police guarding the Presidential Palace abandoned their posts, demonstrators seized the building.⁴⁸ Whereas opposition movements in Georgia and Ukraine had rallied behind individual national leaders who coordinated and (when necessary) calmed the

⁴⁵ Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution."

⁴⁶ "A Tulip Revolution," *The Economist*, March 24, 2005, <http://www.economist.com/node/3785139>.

⁴⁷ Peter Finn, "Elections in Kyrgyzstan Inconclusive," *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2005, sec. A10, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A60195-2005Feb28.html?nav=rss_world/asia/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/post.

⁴⁸ "A Tulip Revolution."

protests, mob fury ruled in Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁹ Initially, Akayev stood firm against the protesters, saying, “any efforts to bring Ukrainian-style revolution to Kyrgyzstan could lead to civil war.”⁵⁰ But when tens of thousands of people gathered in front of the main government building in Bishkek on March 24, 2005, Akayev fled to Russia. From there he called on the Kyrgyz people to restore constitutional order.⁵¹ The protests continued after Akayev left the country, and on April 2, he submitted his resignation from the Kyrgyz Embassy in Moscow. After a week of deliberation, the Kyrgyz Parliament accepted Akayev’s resignation and announced that acting President Kurmanbek Bakiyev would serve as interim President until new elections could take place in July 2005.⁵²

Many who supported the toppled regimes accused the U.S. of undermining national governments to increase its influence in the former Soviet Union. To be fair, the United States and Europe had long supported democratic development in the region. In 1992, the U.S. Congress passed the Freedom Support Act to assist former Soviet republics supposedly transitioning to democratic capitalism. Programs that received funding through the act focused on improving political processes and accountability of government institutions, strengthening civil society and public advocacy, and supporting independent media, consistent with the United States government’s stated values.⁵³

⁴⁹ Nick Paton Walsh, “Pink Revolution Rumbles on in Blood and Fury,” *The Guardian*, March 26, 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/mar/27/nickpatonwalsh.theobserver>.

⁵⁰ “A Tulip Revolution.”

⁵¹ Martha Brill Olcott, “Kyrgyzstan’s ‘Tulip Revolution’” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 28, 2005), <http://carnegieendowment.org/2005/03/28/kyrgyzstan-s-tulip-revolution>.

⁵² Bruce Pannier, “Rethinking Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August 25, 2009), http://www.rferl.org/content/Rethinking_Kyrgyzstans_Tulip_Revolution/1807335.html.

⁵³ Craig S. Smith, “U.S. Helped to Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan’s Uprising,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/30/international/asia/30kyrgyzstan.html?_r=0.

In the years preceding Georgia's Rose Revolution, Western advocates of democratic reform like former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles, and Open Society Institute (OSI) founder George Soros called for free and fair elections.⁵⁴ In addition, the IMF suspended aid to Georgia in 2000, at the same time as the U.S. reduced its aid to the country.⁵⁵ Western governments and organizations like OSI continued financing local NGOs and election monitoring organizations. U.S. and European funds, for example, allowed the OSCE to support foreign election observers in Georgia in 2003. Likewise, USAID spent about \$1.5 million to computerize Georgia's voter rolls.⁵⁶

Western institutions played a similar role in Ukraine prior to the Orange Revolution and in Kyrgyzstan prior to the Tulip Revolution. The U.S., U.K., Netherlands, and Norway all helped underwrite programs to develop democracy and civil society in each country. USAID worked to support free media, the rule of law, civil society, and election monitoring in Ukraine.⁵⁷ The U.S.-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) supported civil society centers throughout Kyrgyzstan where citizens and activists could meet, read independent newspapers, watch CNN, and browse the Internet. In 2004, the U.S. spent approximately \$12 million on democracy programs in Kyrgyzstan through institutions like NDI, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the American University in Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁸ American money had an impact in both countries. It gave

⁵⁴ Valerie Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*, Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 155.

⁵⁵ Cory Welt, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: From Regime Weakness to Regime Collapse" (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006).

⁵⁶ Charles Fairbanks, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (2004): 113.

⁵⁷ Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution."

⁵⁸ Smith, "U.S. Helped to Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan's Uprising."

coalescing opposition activists the infrastructure necessary to communicate their ideas for a free and open society to the people.

In Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Akayev's response was to accuse the West of engaging in a conspiracy to destabilize and undermine the nation. Shortly before the 2005 elections, a crudely forged document made to resemble an internal report written by Stephen Young, the U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, circulated among state-sponsored media there. The document was claimed to support the President's accusations. It said, "Our primary goal is to increase pressure upon Akaev to make him resign ahead of schedule after the parliamentary elections."⁵⁹ Such "evidence" is sometimes revived by conspiracy theorists, but as the project director for the pro-democracy foundation Freedom House said in March 2005, "[Our] intention was to assist media development. It wasn't to create a revolution."⁶⁰

Putin had maintained close relations with each of the region's beleaguered leaders, especially Yanukovich's corrupt patron, Leonid Kuchma. As Kuchma's handpicked successor, Yanukovich was openly supported by President Putin, who campaigned on his behalf and publicly congratulated him on his victory even while votes were still being counted.⁶¹ Yet when the United States and all twenty-five member states of the EU announced that they could not recognize the result of the first runoff as legitimate because of reported government intimidation and election fraud, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused European countries of "interfering in Ukraine's

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Richard Spencer, "Quiet American behind Tulip Revolution," *The Telegraph*, April 2, 2005, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/kyrgyzstan/1486983/Quiet-American-behind-tulip-revolution.html>.

⁶¹ C.J. Chivers, "Putin Says He Will Accept the Will of the Ukrainian People," *The New York Times*, December 7, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/07/international/europe/07putin.html?_r=0.

internal affairs.”⁶² In the first week of December 2004, while hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians were protesting the tainted runoff election, Russia’s State Duma (which by then was already largely under Putin’s control) adopted a declaration that harshly criticized the participation of European observers in the election. It accused the West of “encouraging a radical section of the population to commit dangerous actions, which threaten to bring about mass disturbances, chaos and division of the country.”⁶³

Along with Mr. Akayev and leaders of other post-Soviet nations, President Putin thought that the opposition movements in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan would not have taken off without the conspiring assistance of Western agents. In Putin’s view, the color revolutions were consequences of “a Western offensive to set up a *cordon sanitaire* around [Russia’s] borders.”⁶⁴ While Putin still sought to work with President Bush against terrorism and nuclear proliferation, his belief that the color revolutions were orchestrated by the U.S. in an attempt to bring pro-American leaders to power led him to pursue a more independent course for Russia. Declaring a stronger resolve to “uphold Russia’s interests” in the former Soviet Union and forge regional alliances to “resist U.S. domination,” Putin warned the U.S. against any further efforts to isolate Russia by stage-managing “velvet revolutions” in other post-Soviet states. As he put it during his visit to New Delhi in December 2004, “We see attempts to remodel the God-given diversity of modern civilization according to the barrack-like principles of a unipolar world as extremely dangerous.”⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Vladimir Radyuhin, “Moscow and Multipolarity,” *The Hindu*, December 30, 2004, <http://www.thehindu.com/2004/12/30/stories/2004123000391000.htm>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

While donor support from the United States and European governments had indeed gone to civil society development in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan since the collapse of the Soviet Union, such sponsorship was nonpartisan and aimed at reinforcing democratic values and improving electoral procedures, not weakening post-Soviet nations or overthrowing Russian-backed regimes in the former Soviet Union.⁶⁶ In reality, it was internal dissatisfaction with – and an overwhelming rejection of – corrupt, oligarchic, authoritarian regimes that had motivated the protests and inspired the color revolutions.

An Independent Course

In September 2004, in the aftermath of bombings in the Moscow metro, on a train, and on two airplanes,⁶⁷ and the horrific school seizure in Beslan that left 334 dead (including 186 children),⁶⁸ President Putin announced his plan to radically restructure Russia's political system by ending popular elections for governors and independent lawmakers. Without offering a specific explanation for how the change would defeat terrorism and unify the country,⁶⁹ Putin characterized the plan to appoint all governors and create a "single chain of command" as "enhancing national cohesion in the face of a terrorist threat... in order to strengthen the unity of the country and prevent further crises."⁷⁰ Critics of the new law, both in Russia and abroad, described it as another step toward dictatorship and the restoration of Soviet-style tyranny, but frightened and

⁶⁶ Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution."

⁶⁷ Sixsmith, *Russia*, 521.

⁶⁸ "Putin Meets Angry Beslan Mothers," *BBC News*, September 2, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4207112.stm>.

⁶⁹ Peter Baker, "Putin Moves to Centralize Authority," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2004, sec. A01, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17838-2004Sep13.html>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

devastated by the ongoing terrorist attacks, most Russians did not oppose the President's initiative.

Because the United States and Europe were engaged in the ongoing “war on terror” and sought greater cooperation with Russia in their efforts to prosecute that war, it was not very difficult for Putin to evade criticism of his new reforms. He responded to critics by accusing them of using democracy to meddle in Russian politics, saying, “Not everyone likes the stable, gradual rise of our country... There are some who are using the democratic ideology to interfere in our internal affairs.”⁷¹ In contrast to the rhetoric employed when Putin first became president in 2000, Kremlin theorists now began referring to Russia's changing form of government as “sovereign democracy.”⁷² Though Putin has always advocated the establishment of a strong Russian state, his emasculation of the Duma and the takeover of independent media outlets by Kremlin-friendly companies ensured that penetrating criticism or serious opposition to the regime would not actually challenge his power.⁷³ The idea, therefore, of the new “sovereign democracy” was to maintain the outward appearance of a democratic form of government while providing security, accommodating economic growth, and undercutting actual democratic institutions.

At the same time, the Kremlin began to link itself to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). President Putin and the Church hierarchy spent an increasing amount of time together in public. Frequently followed by Church hierarchs (in full religious garb)

⁷¹ “Russia in Defence Warning to US,” *BBC News*, April 26, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6594379.stm>.

⁷² Fred Weir, “Kremlin Lobs Another Shot at Marketplace of Ideas,” *The Christian Science Monitor – CSMonitor.com*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1001/p07s02-woeu.html>.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

at undeniably political events, Putin used the Church for the legitimacy it provided the regime, and in exchange granted the Church opportunities to change social mores through public institutions like the media, films, the military, and the educational curriculum.⁷⁴ In addition, Orthodox chapels were allowed at railroad stations and airports and incorporated into military units and police departments. Orthodox priests were invited to sanctify public offices, military vehicles like tanks, ships and airplanes, and even weapons, and an ROC-endorsed course on “Orthodox Culture” was introduced into public secondary schools.⁷⁵ The Kremlin’s use of the ROC was particularly effective because the Church had gained an increasingly influential role in Russian society following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

By 2006, a parallel change in Russia’s foreign policy orientation was evident. No longer expressing a willingness to integrate into the Western community, political leaders in Moscow began speaking about Russia as an independent center of power. Calling for a “geopolitical triangle” between Russia, the EU, and the United States, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, whose ideas clearly reflected Putin’s thinking, emphasized Russia’s potential role as an international mediator. In a December 2006 article for *Kommersant* he wrote, “Russia... cannot take anybody’s side in the conflict between civilizations. Russia is prepared to be a bridge.”⁷⁶ The pro-Kremlin analyst Vladimir Frolov took the idea further in February 2007, writing, “A consensus has formed in Russia... to the effect

⁷⁴ Nicolai N. Petro, “Russia’s Modernization: The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church” (International conference sponsored by the University of Bologna, the Garzanti Foundation, and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The New Presidential Elections in Russia and the Challenges of Modernization, Forli, Italy, October 21, 2011).

⁷⁵ David Satter, “Russia’s State Church” (Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, June 2012), www.fpri.org.

⁷⁶ С.В. Лавров, “Суммируя Российскую внешнюю политику,” *Коммерсант*, December 21, 2006.

that Russia cannot be integrated into Western structures... This means that Russia is destined to remain an independent center of power... It will have to rely on its own code of civilization.”⁷⁷ According to Lilia Shevtsova, subscribing to Western values had become “regarded by Russian politicians as ‘an ideological basis for defeatism’ and as a ‘rejection of Russia’s own identity and sovereignty.’”⁷⁸

So, what vision for the future replaced Western integration in the minds of Russia’s political elite? In a word, Eurasianism. Although Russia had formed economic treaties with former Soviet states Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan prior to 2000, President Putin began to focus Russia’s foreign policy on Eurasian integration in 2007, and continued to pursue this strategy following the global financial crisis in 2008. Drawing on the anti-Western ideas of “New Eurasianists” such as Alexander Dugin and Sergei Glazyev, Putin began to replace the rhetoric of Western integration with that of pursuing an independent course, spreading traditional family values, reorienting around the Russian Orthodox Church, and protecting the “Russian world.”⁷⁹ Justifying the project of Eurasian integration as central to Russia’s new economic strategy, Putin sought to extend Russia’s influence in the former Soviet Union.

Against the West

In 2007, Lilia Shevtsova wrote, “Russia’s behavior does not fit into any tidy scheme. The ruling elite is indeed eager to become integrated into the West on a personal

⁷⁷ В.Г. Фролов, “Что нам Запад после Мюнхена?,” *Известия*, February 28, 2007, <http://izvestia.ru/news/322093>.

⁷⁸ Shevtsova, *Russia Lost in Transition*, 175.

⁷⁹ Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, “Putin’s Brain: Alexander Dugin and the Philosophy Behind Putin’s Invasion of Crimea,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 31, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141080/anton-barbashin-and-hannah-thoburn/putins-brain>.

level, and to do a deal on the best possible terms it can obtain. At the same time, it publicly rejects the West and makes it an enemy in order to rally Russian society.”⁸⁰ A significant moment, then, when Russia’s political leadership hardened in its opposition to America, bringing Russian relations with the West much closer to today’s “New Cold War,” came following the State Duma elections in December 2011. Although the December 4 elections resulted in a loss of Duma seats for Putin’s United Russia party (United Russia took 49.32% of the vote, down from 64.30% in 2007),⁸¹ countless allegations of fraud led tens of thousands of protestors to unite in Moscow, calling for an end to the Putin/Medvedev regime.

On September 24, 2011, President Medvedev nominated Putin to again become United Russia’s candidate for President, announcing their intention to switch places as Prime Minister and President. Medvedev even admitted that he and Putin had “decided on this many years ago,”⁸² giving up any pretense that the Russian people would decide who ran the country. For democratically minded Russians, the announcement was tantamount to a declaration that Putin would return to the presidency for at least twelve more years (two consecutive six-year terms). Opponents of his leadership recognized that without a radical change, they could not expect any positive developments in their political standing in Russia for more than a decade.

The Duma elections were held about two months after Prime Minister Putin confirmed that he would indeed seek the presidency once again. In the days following the elections, government officials harassed activists and observers and cyber attacks cut off

⁸⁰ Shevtsova, *Russia Lost in Transition*, 182.

⁸¹ *Выборы и референдумы* (Центральная избирательная комиссия Российской Федерации, November 24, 2014), <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru>.

⁸² Maria Lipman, “Duma Elections: Expert Analysis” (Carnegie Moscow Center, December 13, 2011), <http://carnegie.ru/2011/12/13/duma-elections-expert-analysis>.

popular websites that attempted to expose the election fraud.⁸³ In reaction, tens of thousands of Russians put on white ribbons as symbols of their opposition and took to the streets. When diverse groups of protestors representing conservative nationalists, Western-leaning liberals, Communists and others joined together to protest Putin and United Russia, which Alexei Navalny famously branded “the party of crooks and thieves,” the true breadth and depth of popular contempt for Putin’s government was revealed.⁸⁴

Hearing constant chants of “Russia without Putin” and recognizing that the regime’s continued existence was at risk, Putin felt he needed to rally the larger segment of Russian society that would continue to support him after the March 2012 presidential election. As Dmitri Trenin wrote in his analysis for Carnegie Moscow Center on December 13, 2011, “authoritarianism with the consent of the governed... can only run as long as that consent is granted. This was the case in 2007 and in 2003. This was not the case in 2011.”⁸⁵ As he had following the color revolutions, President Putin claimed that foreign agents controlled the opposition movement. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton invited attack upon the United States when she criticized the election results and expressed solidarity with the opposition, and President Putin took the opening.⁸⁶ Clinton’s reaction, along with critical statements from the EU and the OSCE,⁸⁷ were

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Dmitri Trenin, “Duma Elections: Expert Analysis” (Carnegie Moscow Center, December 13, 2011), <http://carnegie.ru/2011/12/13/duma-elections-expert-analysis>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Election monitors from the OSCE said that they had observed blatant fraud, “including the brazen stuffing of ballot boxes.”

Michael Schwirtz and David M. Herszenhorn, “Voters Watch Polls in Russia, and Fraud Is What They See,” *The New York Times*, December 5, 2011,

portrayed by the Kremlin as evidence that Russia's opposition movement was, in fact, a tool of Western strategists. Though the actual groups protesting shared little in common with each other aside from their contempt for Putin and United Russia, they were depicted in state media as part of a Western-backed fifth column.⁸⁸

In Putin's eyes, the Russian protests of December 2011 and early 2012, like the Arab Spring that had begun a year earlier and the color revolutions of the preceding decade, were the result of a conspiracy – led by the United States – to subvert previously stable (though autocratic) regimes around the world.⁸⁹ Putin publicly suggested that the U.S. Department of State was responsible for the protest activity because, as he claimed, protesters were Russian recipients of State Department grant money.⁹⁰ The United States' primary goal, as he saw it, was to replace his regime and others like it with weak but loyal democracies – or even just managed chaos – in order to expand U.S. global influence. While it is certainly true that the United States promoted democratic development in Russia as in other former Soviet countries, it is a great stretch to link a one-hundred-thousand-strong grass roots movement in Moscow to the State Department's Fulbright grant program. Putin's conspiracy theorizing seems more likely related to his goal of portraying the opposition as a fifth column than to any facts about who participated in Russia's protests and what their goals actually were.

The events of December 2011 and early 2012 led Russia's political leadership to adopt an unequivocally anti-American position. Whereas President Medvedev, even

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/06/world/europe/russian-parliamentary-elections-criticized-by-west.html?_r=0.

⁸⁸ Trenin, "Duma Elections: Expert Analysis."

⁸⁹ Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Breakout from the Post-Cold War System: The Drivers of Putin's Course" (Carnegie Moscow Center, December 22, 2014),

http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_Trenin_Putin2014_web_Eng.pdf.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

restrained by Prime Minister Putin, pursued a reset in Russian relations with America following the 2008 war in Georgia, President Putin decided that for his regime to survive, the Russian people must again have an enemy (other than him) against which to unite. In his analysis following the Duma elections, Alexey Malashenko correctly predicted that the authorities would increase their propaganda efforts, get tougher in crushing displays of opposition, tighten control over the media, and crucially, “step up their efforts to inculcate in people the image of Russia as a besieged fortress facing external threats that can be defended only if everyone consolidates firmly and without question around the government.”⁹¹ Although that tendency emerged before the election and protests that followed, it increased in the years since, and is essential to understanding why Russia is now more antagonistic toward the West than at any point since the Cold War.

Throughout the 2000s, President and later Prime Minister Putin maintained a high level of popular support in Russia, primarily thanks to the country’s continually growing economy and the emergence of a new middle class. This meant that Putin’s international ambitions rather than domestic political considerations could remain the preeminent driver of Russia’s foreign policy during that time. Following the white ribbon protests of December 2011 and Putin’s return to the presidency in March 2012, however, President Putin felt he needed to manipulate Russia’s interactions with foreign nations in order to create a change in Russia’s domestic political circumstances. The existential threat he experienced during the protests led him to make foreign policy decisions that would bolster his popularity at home. This became a central cause of Russia’s foreign policy shift, which resulted in the annexation of Crimea, military intervention in eastern

⁹¹ Alexey Malashenko, “Duma Elections: Expert Analysis” (Carnegie Moscow Center, December 13, 2011), <http://carnegie.ru/2011/12/13/duma-elections-expert-analysis>.

Ukraine, and the continued anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric of Russia's leaders. Since 2012, Russia's foreign policy has been increasingly guided by shortsighted decisions and lacking in solid strategic planning; this is the result of a foreign policy largely driven by the domestic political needs of the president.

Euromaidan

Just as the 2011 Duma elections and subsequent protests led Russia's political leadership to condemn America, the EU's lack of consideration for Russia's government and the Euromaidan protests that followed President Yanukovich's decision to postpone signing an association agreement with the EU led Russia's leaders to condemn Europe as well. It is worth remembering key details of the agreement that the EU had proposed to Ukraine and why President Yanukovich ultimately decided to postpone it despite its popularity with a large number of Ukrainians. The agreement, which was to establish substantial political and economic association between Ukraine and the EU, was first proposed in 2008. Progress on the treaty was delayed for several years, primarily because EU member states objected to the politically motivated charges against former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. When negotiations resumed in February 2013, President Yanukovich was also in negotiations with Russia regarding Russia's new Eurasian customs union. The EU's proposed association agreement, however, would not permit Ukraine to be both a member of a customs union and part of a common free-trade area with the EU.

After receiving pressure from Russia (both incentives and threats) to delay signing the agreement, Yanukovich proposed three-way talks between Ukraine, the EU, and Russia, which the EU rejected. According to then-President of the European

Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, the EU would not tolerate “a veto of a third country” in the EU’s negotiations with Ukraine.⁹² The events that followed are well known. After deadly clashes between protesters and Berkut (Ukrainian special police) forces, the Euromaidan protests evolved into a revolutionary movement and Viktor Yanukovich fled Ukraine for Russia. After hundreds of civilian deaths in Kiev at the hands of Berkut policemen and the Russian annexation of Crimea and military intervention in the Donbas, Ukraine became home to a brutal war between state forces and the Russian-backed self-proclaimed People’s Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk.

As was noted earlier, President Putin and his associates maintained an existential fear of revolutionary democratic movements before the first activists arrived on Maidan Nezolezhnosti in 2013 to begin the Euromaidan protests. Putin had already seen “people-powered” movements succeed around the world and in neighboring countries, and believed that a truly successful Ukrainian revolution could have devastating, life-threatening consequences for himself and his associates. For President Putin, preventing the success of the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine became part of a battle for his own survival. For that reason, one of Putin’s main objectives following Yanukovich’s departure was to demonstrate to Russians that a similar revolution in Russia would only end in chaos and destruction. Although Russia’s intervention in Ukraine is largely to blame for the duration and scope of the war in Ukraine’s eastern regions, the Kremlin has not acknowledged its role in the fighting and has instead claimed that the chaotic “civil war” in Ukraine was an inevitable consequence of the coup, which divided the people of Ukraine and weakened the state. By its covert actions in Ukraine, the Russian

⁹² Andrew Marszal, “EU Will Not Accept Russian Veto, Says Barroso,” *The Telegraph*, November 29, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10482680/EU-will-not-accept-Russian-veto-says-Barroso.html>.

government has sought to show citizens in Russia that there would be horrible consequences for the state and for the people if a color revolution were to topple the President in Russia.

Since Viktor Yanukovich fled Ukraine, President Putin has repeatedly blamed the U.S. for inciting the protests that led to the Euromaidan revolution. In May 2014, the Russian Ministry of Defense sponsored a conference on international security, which focused on the role of color revolutions in that field. Top Russian military and diplomatic officials, such as Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, spoke at the event and argued that “color revolutions are in fact a new form of warfare invented by Western governments seeking to remove independently-minded national governments in favor of ones controlled by the West.”⁹³ According to their conspiracy theory, the tactic is part of a U.S.-led global strategy to impose foreign values on diverse nations around the world that refuse to accept U.S. hegemony. In their view, Russia has been a particular target of this strategy for many years.

In such explanations, Russian officials tie together color revolutions (including the Arab Spring and Euromaidan) with the United States’ “Freedom Agenda” in Afghanistan, Iraq, and most recently Libya, where Western military intervention led to the death of Muammar Gaddafi.⁹⁴ As Shoigu and Lavrov claim, Western governments first use non-military tactics to change opposing governments through color revolutions. But military force is an integral aspect of their strategy; if the protest potential is not

⁹³ Dmitry Gorenburg, “Countering Color Revolutions: Russia’s New Security Strategy and Its Implications for U.S. Policy” (PONARS Eurasia, September 2014), <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/countering-color-revolutions-russia’s-new-security-strategy-and-its-implications-us-policy>.

⁹⁴ Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, “The American Education of Vladimir Putin,” *The Atlantic*, February 16, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/global/archive/2015/02/the-american-education-of-vladimir-putin/385517/>.

sufficient to do the job, then military force is used to ensure successful regime change. Russian officials at the conference described color revolutions as “a new technique of aggression pioneered by the United States and geared toward destroying a state from within by dividing its population.”⁹⁵ The fact that several uprisings of the color revolutions and Arab Spring occurred in countries whose governments were working closely *with* the United States (as in Kyrgyzstan, Egypt and Bahrain) has not dissuaded the Russian government from embracing this anti-Western conspiracy theory.

In the wake of the Euromaidan revolution, Russia’s national security strategy has shifted, and its counter-strategy combines political and military elements. There are two essential components of the new political strategy. First, President Putin has increased his efforts to ally with other authoritarian regimes that feel threatened by the possibility of popular uprisings.⁹⁶ For that reason, Defense Minister Shoigu has recently engaged with the defense ministers of Iran, Egypt, Myanmar, Vietnam, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates.⁹⁷ The other component of the political strategy is to damage the unity of Western nations. This is why the Kremlin has pursued and developed political alliances with right-wing parties in Europe like France’s National Front, the UK’s Independence Party, and Hungary’s Jobbik.⁹⁸ Because many in the European right are sympathetic to the Russian government’s position on social issues like same-sex marriage and the role of religion in society, should right-wing parties gain influence in Western countries, they

⁹⁵ Gorenburg, “Countering Color Revolutions: Russia’s New Security Strategy and Its Implications for U.S. Policy.”

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Trenin, “Russia’s Breakout from the Post-Cold War System: The Drivers of Putin’s Course.”

may be more inclined to work with Russia.⁹⁹

To complement the political strategy of forming strong alliances with other authoritarian regimes, the Russian government is providing military and economic assistance to those governments, as well as public support for actions taken against protesters (who are often described by Russian officials as fascists, terrorists, or extremists).¹⁰⁰ In Crimea and eastern Ukraine, Russia has gone even further by sending covert agents to organize anti-Maidan protests, staging military exercises at the Ukrainian border, providing military support to anti-Western forces, engaging in covert military action, and threatening the direct use of military force to “protect Russians and other minority groups from violent Ukrainian fascists.”¹⁰¹ Russia’s strategy in its “near abroad” mirrors the strategy that Russian leaders believe the United States has adopted in order to remove unfriendly governments around the world.

President Putin and his staff are still thinking and frequently talking about color revolutions. Since Yanukovich fled Ukraine, Putin has several times stated his conviction that the United States is trying to subjugate Russia by facilitating a color revolution there. At a meeting of his advisory Security Council on November 20, 2014, Putin remarked,

“In the modern world extremism is being used as a geopolitical instrument and for remaking spheres of influence. We see what tragic consequences the wave of so-called color revolutions led to; for us this is a lesson and a warning. We should do everything necessary so that nothing similar ever happens in Russia.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Gorenburg, “Countering Color Revolutions: Russia’s New Security Strategy and Its Implications for U.S. Policy.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Darya Korsunskaya, “Putin Says Russia Must Prevent ‘Color Revolution,’” *Reuters*, November 20, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/20/us-russia-putin-security-idUSKCN0J41J620141120>.

In February 2015, Security Council Chief Nikolai Petrushev accused the U.S. of plotting to oust President Putin by financing the opposition, “just as in the ‘color revolutions’ in the former Soviet Union and the Arab world.”¹⁰³ Consequently, the Kremlin has supported domestic organizations like the new “Antimaidan” movement, which formed in January 2015. Journalist and human rights activist Alexander Porabinek describes Antimaidan as a “Russian Death Squad” – a militarized force that will physically fight the Russian opposition.¹⁰⁴ Though Putin claims that combatting extremism has “nothing to do with” cracking down on dissenters, he often uses the threat of “extremism” as an explanation for why restrictions affecting the opposition must be enhanced.

President Putin now seeks to retain popularity by renewing the Cold War atmosphere of constant external threats and by asserting Russia as the defender of traditional morality in an increasingly immoral and Westernized world. In 2012, the President established a special working group under his Chief of Staff, Sergei Ivanov, to develop a new “state cultural policy.”¹⁰⁵ The document they have produced, entitled “Foundations of the State Cultural Policy,” is currently awaiting the President’s signature. Several significant quotations from the draft have already been leaked; “Russia must be viewed as a unique and original civilization that cannot be reduced to ‘East’ or ‘West,’ it says; “Russia is not Europe, and that is confirmed by the entire history of the

¹⁰³ Evgenia Pismennaya and Henry Myer, “Russia Accuses U.S. of Plot to Oust Putin via Opposition Aid,” *Bloomberg Business*, March 4, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-04/russia-accuses-u-s-of-plot-to-oust-putin-by-funding-opposition>.

¹⁰⁴ Alexander Podrabinek, “Russian ‘Death Squads’” (Institute of Modern Russia, February 17, 2015), <http://imrussia.org/en/opinions/2177-russian-death-squads>.

¹⁰⁵ Leonid Bershidsky, “Putin’s Rejection of the West, in Writing,” *Bloomberg View*, April 4, 2014, <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-04-04/putin-s-rejection-of-the-west-in-writing>.

country and people.” This conclusion, according to the report, has important consequences for Russian policy, including “the rejection of such principles as multiculturalism and tolerance.”¹⁰⁶ If the document is adopted in its current form, it will represent the first official assertion that the Russian state’s ideology is based on the rejection of Western integration and Western values.

There are plenty of examples of this shift to be found in the President’s own words as well. In his October 24, 2014 speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club, for example, Putin said, “Russia has made its choice. Our priorities are... accelerated internal development... and consolidating society based on traditional values and patriotism.”¹⁰⁷ Likewise, in his November 20, 2014 speech at a ceremony unveiling a new monument to Alexander I just outside the Kremlin, Putin credited the Tsar for helping to found a system of European security “based not only on mutual respect for the interests of different countries, but also on moral values.”¹⁰⁸ Clearly, he was referring equally to modern Russia’s claim to moral leadership, as a counter to the decaying and immoral West.

In addition, prominent lawmakers such as Yelena Mizulina and Sergei Naryshkin, as well as politically connected CEOs such as head of Russian Railways Vladimir Yakunin and founder of Marshal Capital Partners Konstantin Malofeyev have begun offering Russia as the final hope for genuine morality in the modern world.¹⁰⁹ These four

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Vladimir Putin, “Speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club” (Valdai International Discussion Club, Sochi, Russia, October 24, 2014), <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/23137>.

¹⁰⁸ Georgy Bovt, “Putin Is Inspired by Russian Empire,” *The Moscow Times*, November 25, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/putin-is-inspired-by-russian-empire/511817.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Ivan Nechepurenko, “Russia Offered as Conservative Bulwark Against Repugnant West,” *The Moscow Times*, September 10, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/506801.html>.

leaders all participated in a recent event called “The Large Family and Future of Humanity Forum,” which was held over several days last September inside the Moscow Kremlin.¹¹⁰ Speakers at the event praised Russia for defending correct moral and spiritual values by banning propaganda of “nontraditional” sexual relations and American adoption of Russian orphans, and called for a Constitutional definition of Marriage as between a man and a woman. President Putin sent a greeting to the forum’s participants thanking them for combatting “the erosion of moral values” that has been allowed to spread throughout the West.

Misleading Analysis

In the view of some analysts, President Putin decided to annex Crimea because he justifiably feared it would become host to a NATO naval base. Then, according to these analysts, Putin intervened in eastern Ukraine because the West was moving into Russia’s backyard and he could not stand idly by while Russia’s neighbor was pulled out of its orbit, becoming a new threat to Russia’s core strategic interests.¹¹¹ Calling it “Geopolitics 101,” John Mearsheimer offered an analogy: “the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it.”¹¹² Jack Matlock echoed Mearsheimer, saying, “There are borders and then there are *borders*... Do you think Mexico would be independent to join a military alliance that threatened the United

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault.”

¹¹² Ibid.

States? Do you think we'd allow that?"¹¹³ Stephen Kinzer agreed; "Rather than wait to be encircled, [Russia] is acting to defend its security perimeter."¹¹⁴

Mearsheimer, Matlock, and Kinzer are correct that the United States government would not allow Mexico to join a military alliance that American leaders believed threatened the U.S. To be sure, if President Putin, who ordered Russian soldiers to take control of Crimea on March 18, 2014, believed that NATO was likely to expand to include Ukraine, and that the United States would seek to deploy its forces in Crimea, then we could expect Putin to take measures to prevent that from happening. But the analysts' comments do not explain what actually motivated Putin to annex Crimea and assist rebel fighters in eastern Ukraine. While President Putin may have determined that a post-Euromaidan Ukraine could eventually join NATO, such an assessment was not what motivated Putin's decision. Rather, he was seeking to strengthen his regime's position domestically by increasing patriotic (and pro-regime/anti-Western) attitudes among the Russian population.

If Putin was primarily motivated by honest concerns about Russia's national security, then why did he not order the annexation of Crimea in December 2004, when it became clear that Viktor Yushchenko, who advocated EU and NATO accession for Ukraine, would become President of the bitterly divided country? Putin knows that in reality neither NATO nor EU membership has ever been on the table for Ukraine. The Eastern Partnership program, which the EU first proposed to Ukraine in 2008, was designed as a substitute for EU membership, not a path to it. Likewise, when several

¹¹³ *30th Annual EPIIC Symposium at Tufts University* (Medford, MA, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-J0hZ9HpWo>.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Kinzer, "Putin's Push into Ukraine Is Rational," *The Boston Globe*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/02/25/putin-reaction-ukraine-about-russian-security/uM3Ipc7IWPgWbpiIWBJSxI/story.html>.

member states advocated extending a membership action plan to Ukraine at the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, the alliance rejected the idea.¹¹⁵ The position of the majority of NATO members did not change between 2008 and 2014, and President Putin knew there was zero likelihood that a NATO membership action plan would be extended to Ukraine even if Russia had not annexed Crimea and supported the rebels in Donbas.

Moreover, why is it that (according to former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul) in multiple meetings between President Obama, President Putin, and Prime Minister Medvedev over a five year period, the issue of NATO expansion never came up?¹¹⁶ It is a bit strange to suggest that Putin viewed NATO as the primary threat to Russia's national security when, throughout most of his rule, Russia has engaged in many different joint projects with NATO through the NATO-Russia Council (including joint military exercises and peacekeeping operations).¹¹⁷ Did President Putin spend the first thirteen years of his time as Russia's leader neglecting the threat his country was facing from NATO? True, Putin objected to NATO enlargement when it was decided at the Prague Summit in 2002; and when the Alliance decided to expand again in 2008, he said that further enlargement was a "huge strategic mistake."¹¹⁸ But considering his record of cooperation with NATO, it seems more likely that Putin was concerned about how

¹¹⁵ "NATO Denies Georgia and Ukraine," *BBC News*, April 3, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7328276.stm>.

¹¹⁶ Michael McFaul, Stephen Sestanovich, and John J. Mearsheimer, "Faulty Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, October 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142260/michael-mcfaul-stephen-sestanovich-john-j-mearsheimer/faulty-powers>.

¹¹⁷ Maria Snegovaya, "Think of Russia as an Ordinary Petrostate, Not an Extraordinary Superpower," *The Washington Post*, March 9, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/03/09/to-understand-russia-think-of-it-as-an-ordinary-petrostate-as-opposed-to-an-extraordinary-superpower/>.

¹¹⁸ "NATO Denies Georgia and Ukraine."

NATO enlargement would affect his domestic popularity than that he suddenly realized the Alliance posed a national security threat to Russia.

The decision to annex Crimea, like Putin's hostility toward the West, cannot be explained without reference to the domestic considerations that now serve as a primary driver of Russian foreign policy. When President Putin himself has sought to justify the seizure of Crimea, he has emphasized the need "to protect Ukraine's Russian and Russian-speaking population from the 'fascist junta' in Kiev and to bring historically Russian, 'sacred' territory back into the fold."¹¹⁹ While we have good reason to doubt Putin's claims, we should not ignore his emphasis on the domestic reasons for the land grab. The President knew that a majority of Russians would support the integration of Crimea into Russia and would blame negative consequences of the decision, such as Western sanctions, on America and the West.

Likewise, he recognized that stoking the flames of conflict in eastern Ukraine would cause Russians at home to rally around the flag and, in turn, his regime. Putin knew from his own experience that in times of crisis, there is a natural and extremely powerful tendency to fall in line behind the leadership of the current President. In such times, most people see it as wildly irresponsible and unpatriotic to question the leader. This phenomenon is of course not unique to Russia; Secretary of State Dean Acheson described the same mindset in 1951 when he told the U.S. Senate, "We are in a position

¹¹⁹ Alexander J. Motyl, "Five Fatal Flaws in Realist Analysis of Russia and Ukraine," *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/03/03/five-fatal-flaws-in-realist-analysis-of-russia-and-ukraine/>.

in the world today where the argument as to who has the power to do this, that, or the other thing, is not exactly what is called for from America in this very critical hour.”¹²⁰

Along with emotional evocations of Russian imperial glories, Soviet nostalgia and the idea of a unique “Russian world,” Putin is using Russian foreign policy to rally the population at home. We can recall that Putin similarly capitalized on the sentiments of Russians back in 1999 when he first became acting head of government. Upon seeing his popularity climb above 80% after initiating the Second Chechen War, he learned that uniting the country against a common enemy can be a successful way to secure a weakly held leadership position. A similar approach was unnecessary for Putin while he maintained a high level of popularity throughout the 2000s (mainly because he was credited with significantly improving Russia’s economy), but with his approval ratings reaching all-time lows after Russia’s unsuccessful color revolution of 2011-2012, Putin felt he needed to boost his popularity and prevent any possible replay of those weeks, and he knew that cultivating new Western enemies would facilitate this strategy better than anything else.

I am not suggesting that the nature of the Putin regime is the sole cause of Russia’s antagonism toward the West and the “New Cold War.” Both domestic and international factors are working together to shape Russia’s foreign policy direction. As Dmitry Gorenburg explains, “Russian foreign policy appears to be based on a combination of fears of popular protest and opposition to U.S. world hegemony, both of

¹²⁰ Thomas M. Franck et al., eds., *Foreign Relations and National Security Law: Cases, Materials, and Simulations*, 4th ed., American Casebook Series (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 2011), 560.

which are seen as threatening the Putin regime.”¹²¹ In order for us to fully understand Russia’s renewed antagonism toward the West, all drivers of Russia’s foreign policy must be taken into consideration and accounted for. Without diminishing other factors, recognizing the link between Russian foreign policy and Putin’s fear of revolution is essential to explaining the development of Russian anti-Americanism and anti-Western sentiment more generally. While Putin’s domestic needs are not by themselves sufficient to explain the transformation we have seen in Russian foreign policy, they are essential.

Since 2012, and especially since the decision to annex Crimea, Russia’s political leaders have increasingly directed their attention to recasting Russia as the home of traditional, conservative, Orthodox values. Because conservative social views are popular in Russian society, Russia’s political leaders are capitalizing on and encouraging (previously unimportant) cultural differences between Russia and the West by promoting the view that there is a civilizational conflict, and that Russia is on the side of genuine morality. The promotion of conservative values is best understood as another part of President Putin’s effort to retain popularity and legitimacy. In 2005, Putin’s German biographer, Alexander Rahr, wrote, “The question remains whether President Vladimir Putin is a genuine believer in European values or whether he is following a hidden agenda.”¹²² Nine years later, there can be no doubt that Putin is motivated above all simply to preserve his administration and the power it now enjoys. Just as blaming America for Russia’s economic troubles diverts criticism from the Kremlin, emphasizing external threats and asserting the Russian state as the defender of genuine morality builds popularity and increases the regime’s legitimacy.

¹²¹ Gorenburg, “Countering Color Revolutions: Russia’s New Security Strategy and Its Implications for U.S. Policy.”

¹²² Rahr, “Russia-European Union-Germany After September 11 and Iraq,” 223.

In recent years, the Kremlin has essentially co-opted the Russian Orthodox Church, which has grown in size and influence over the same period. The approval of the Church, which President Medvedev in February 2011 referred to as “the largest and most authoritative social institution in contemporary Russia”¹²³ provides the government with additional legitimacy, which it otherwise would have lost. Meanwhile, the Church has vocally supported President Putin and the Russian Duma while they have placed greater restrictions on the freedom of expression in Russia. Patriarch Kirill defended the 2013 laws banning blasphemy and the propaganda of “non-traditional” sexual relations and praised President Putin for signing them into law, saying, “we must do everything in our power to ensure that sin is never sanctioned in Russia by state law, because that would mean that the nation has embarked on a path of self-destruction.”¹²⁴ The Church has added a religious dimension to Putin’s foreign policy as well. In December 2014, a spokesman for the ROC announced that the country’s mission in the world is “to stop the ‘American project.’”¹²⁵

Though the Kremlin’s strategy has recently brought President Putin popularity, barring a significant and sustained upswing in global oil prices, the removal of sanctions, and the elimination of self-imposed produce embargos, the quality of life for Russia’s middle class will gradually deteriorate. As the value of the ruble declines, the price of goods will increase and the quality of goods will decline. Russians will remain split on whether to blame Western sanctions or the President’s decision to annex Crimea,

¹²³ Petro, “Russia’s Modernization: The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church.”

¹²⁴ “Recognizing Same-Sex Unions Brings Us Closer to Apocalypse’ – Head of Russian Orthodox Church,” *Russia Today*, July 23, 2013, <http://rt.com/news/church-same-sex-unions-404/>.

¹²⁵ “Church Spokesman: Russia Has Messianic Mission to Stop ‘American Project,’” *The Moscow Times*, December 25, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/church-spokesman-russia-has-messianic-mission-to-stop-american-project/513860.html>.

prolonging the status quo.¹²⁶ In spite of the government's popular social policies, if Russia's economic woes continue then support for President Putin will inevitably wane once again. The essential danger of Putin's Russia is that the President may decide to correct his declining popularity by encouraging anti-American and anti-Western sentiment, and if that does not work, he may initiate another military conflict with a democratizing neighbor. Considering that Putin determines Russia's national strategy based primarily on the objective of maintaining his current position, the U.S. must now approach its relationship with Russia differently than it has of late.

Policy Recommendations for the United States

In a certain sense, Putin's claim about American intentions is understandable. While it is absurd to claim that the United States has long been plotting to remove Vladimir Putin from his position of leadership in Russia, to the extent that Putin is an authoritarian dictator and an obstacle to democratic reform in Russia, the U.S. and Europe would clearly prefer that Putin not remain as Russia's leader. As this paper has discussed, Western nations have been funding programs that encourage and assist democratic development in the former Soviet Union for many years.

Considering that Putin's demands of the West are essentially the same as King Salman of Saudi Arabia's, that is, cooperation in trade and total non-interference in domestic affairs, the U.S. can approach its relationship to Putin's Russia in one of two ways. We can seek to work with Russia as we work with Saudi Arabia, basing all

¹²⁶ Peter Hobson, "Russians Divided on Whether to Blame Sanctions, Oil or Crimea for Economic Hardship," *The Moscow Times*, November 28, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russians-divided-on-whether-to-blame-sanctions-oil-or-crimea-for-economic-hardship/512015.html>.

cooperation on practical, mutual interests and never reprimanding Russia for its human rights abuses. Or, we can approach Russia more as we approached the Soviet Union, criticizing the leadership when it abuses its citizens and seeking to assist civil society organizations that want to build a democratic state in Russia. But we must be aware that Russian society is quite different from Arabian society, and when domestic opposition increases again in the future, President Putin will respond.

A large number of Russians would prefer to live in a society more like that of a Western country. If those citizens become more vocal and again demand changes, we can expect President Putin to seek to divide the opposition by creating conflict and uniting the majority against Western enemies. Also, if we try to work with Russia by promising non-interference in internal affairs, we will create enemies in that portion of the Russian population that desires democratic reform and is otherwise more like us (as we did in Hosni Mubarak's Egypt). In the future, that segment of society may very well gain political power through its own efforts. Furthermore, if we approach Russia more as we do Saudi Arabia, then we will have to consciously give up on our vision for a future democratic Russia, the development of which was throughout the post-Cold War period one of the West's top strategic priorities.

On November 16, 2014, *Foreign Affairs* published an article by Alexander J. Motyl titled "The Sources of Russian Conduct." Motyl argues, in short, that George F. Kennan's famous "X" article from the July 1947 issue of the same publication is every bit as relevant today as it was when it was first published. I disagree with Motyl on several points; after all, Russia today is very different from the Soviet Union in 1947. Considering that the primary goal of Russian aggression and expansion today is to unify

the nation against a common enemy, winning support for the regime and undermining domestic opposition, the nature of the Putin regime is more Bonapartist than Stalinist. Nonetheless, Motyl is correct that some of Kennan's ideas will apply to the "New Cold War" just as they applied to the earlier Cold War.

As Motyl argues, it is time for the United States to abandon any remaining illusions about Putin's Russia and institute a considered, long-term policy for dealing with the Putin regime. While we wait for a less Bonapartist leadership in Russia, that policy will necessarily be some form of containment.¹²⁷ Essential for making the new strategy work will be continuously convincing democratic allies, especially those in NATO, not to seek any close cooperation with President Putin. As long as Putin remains in power, he will need enemies against which to unite his country, meaning that if any NATO countries seek a new Ostpolitik, they will eventually leave the alliance vulnerable.

In order to limit democratic allies' vulnerability and susceptibility to unintentionally increasing the Putin regime's staying power, the United States must constrain Russia's ability to use its energy resources as weapons against the West. That means helping Europe reduce its dependence on Russian oil and gas by sharing energy technology, increasing U.S. exports, and supporting European countries, including Ukraine, in their efforts to reform their energy sectors will all be important.¹²⁸ Lithuania recently unveiled a sizable new LNG terminal that will enable it to diversify its

¹²⁷ Alexander J. Motyl, "The Sources of Russian Conduct: The New Case for Containment," *Foreign Affairs*, November 16, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142366/alexander-j-motyl/the-sources-of-russian-conduct>.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

suppliers;¹²⁹ such projects should be copied elsewhere in Europe as well. If the U.S. can achieve these objectives, then our European allies will be much better able to sustain and even intensify sanctions against Russia if additional punitive measures become necessary.

Improving America's image abroad will be essential for a new strategy of containment. Kennan recognized in 1947 that the United States should

“create among the peoples of the world generally the impression of a country which knows what it wants, which is coping successfully with the problems of its internal life and with the responsibilities of a world power, and which has a spiritual vitality capable of holding its own among the major ideological currents of the time.”¹³⁰

That is certainly no less true today. In the last year we have seen Russian state media take advantage of opportunities to portray the U.S. in a negative light, such as featuring endless coverage of unrest in Ferguson, Missouri and suggesting that recent events there are nothing strange in America – that racial strife and hypocrisy, along with military intervention, are all America has to offer the world.

There is no reason why prominent American officials should not speak publicly about events in Ferguson and the importance of our freedoms of speech and assembly, while encouraging local police forces to perform their duties with the awareness that they are representing America to the world. We in the West have a way of life that many people in Russia covet, so the U.S. must strive to maintain those values, which President Putin earlier claimed to embrace. We must not forget that freedom, democracy, and the rule of law are universal values, which Russians will pursue again as long as they remain denied democratic institutions and equality under the law. Protestors flooded onto Kiev's

¹²⁹ Michael Birnbaum, “Putin Cancels New Natural Gas Pipeline to Europe in a Surprise Move,” *The Washington Post*, December 1, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/putin-cancels-new-na...ove/2014/12/01/c1955c90-73ee-11e4-95a8-fe0b46e8751a_story.html.

¹³⁰ George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947.

central square in November 2013 not because they were organized and funded by the CIA, but because they wanted to live in a more democratic society where the rule of law replaced widespread corruption and abuse of power. We cannot seek to export values by force as the Russian government claims we do, but if we model a free society by living up to these values at home, we will eventually win many more sympathizers abroad, including in Russia.

U.S. strategy must focus on winning the hearts and minds of the Russian people while isolating the Putin regime. Thus, it is essential to distinguish between the corrupt, authoritarian government supporting Putin, and the Russian people, the majority of whom are in fact victims of his administration. When asked about Russia in an August 2, 2014 interview with *The Economist*, President Obama said,

“I... think it’s important to keep perspective. Russia doesn’t make anything. Immigrants aren’t rushing to Moscow in search of opportunity. The life expectancy of the Russian male is around 60 years old. The population is shrinking. And so we have to respond with resolve in what are effectively regional challenges that Russia presents... [H]istory is on our side.”¹³¹

Disregarding the fact that several of Obama’s comments are misleading at best, statements such as these by U.S. government officials do not help us gain sympathizers in Russia. Russian people are rightfully proud of their nation’s accomplishments, as are Americans. Instead of further alienating average citizens, the U.S. should affirm its friendship with the Russian people and call on President Putin to return Russia to the democratic path that Russians called for in 1991 and more recently in 2011-2012.

Following the same logic, any and all sanctions against the Putin regime should

¹³¹ “An Interview with the President,” *The Economist*, August 2, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2014/08/economist-interviews-barack-obama-2>.

be clearly targeted using the Sergei Magnitsky Act of 2012 and other legal authorities to specifically sanction human rights violators and those who played a role in the annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine. The U.S. must try to undermine Putin's popular image as the champion of Russia. This should be done by exposing Putin's kleptocratic network and shining light on the corruption in Russia that Putin and his associates facilitate. The U.S. should find opportunities to reveal the full extent of political and economic corruption among the senior leadership of the Russian government by publishing reports on the assets of President Putin and his associates, including the corrupt practices that Karen Dawisha has detailed in *Putin's Kleptocracy*.

The containment policy directed at Putin's Russia should respect Kennan's principle of power balancing so as to prevent direct conflict with Russia, but it should not grant Russia a sphere of influence outside of the "Russian world" that it already dominates (i.e. Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Crimea, Lugansk, and Donetsk). The new "lands in between" of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia will occupy a similar space in the new containment strategy as a divided Germany occupied during the latter half of the 20th century.¹³² All democratic governments in the new lands in between, however, including in Ukraine, should receive continued political and financial assistance. Putin wants Ukraine to serve as a lesson to Russians about the dangers of moving west; instead, we should seek to make it an example of the rewards.¹³³ The IMF deal for Ukraine announced on February 12, 2015 is only a start. In the coming years, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Georgia all may figure as

¹³² Motyl, "The Sources of Russian Conduct: The New Case for Containment."

¹³³ "Putin's War on the West," *The Economist*, February 14, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21643189-ukraine-suffers-it-time-recognise-gravity-russian-threatand-counter>.

counterforce points where financial, political, and military assistance might need to be applied.¹³⁴

Lastly, the U.S. must always provide President Putin with face-saving escape routes from further aggression. As Kennan put it, “[U.S.] demands on Russian policy should be put forward in such a manner as to leave the way open for a compliance not too detrimental to Russian prestige.”¹³⁵ President Putin’s belief that the U.S. has long been seeking regime change in Russia means that it is not worth trying to convince the Russian government to pursue more cooperative policies.¹³⁶ Still, by welcoming limited Russian cooperation on the conflicts in Iraq and Syria and treating Putin as an equal in forums such as the G20, the U.S. can allow Putin to feel that he has made progress toward achieving his objectives. The U.S. should maintain its commitment to the position that citizens in every country have the right to determine their own government without external influence – from Russia or America – while at the same time taking steps to show that it is not plotting to overthrow the Putin regime.¹³⁷ All of this would have to be done, however, in exchange for *verifiable* quid pro quos, and without ever forgetting that Putin and the West do not share common motivations.

Most importantly, if Russia’s current system of government fails, and Russia again seems on the path to democratic reform as it did in 1991, America and the West must make the greatest effort possible to finally bring Russia into the Euro-Atlantic community economically, politically, and militarily. When asked recently about public opinion polls that show tremendous public support for Putin’s foreign policy, Russian

¹³⁴ Motyl, “The Sources of Russian Conduct: The New Case for Containment.”

¹³⁵ Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.”

¹³⁶ Gorenburg, “Countering Color Revolutions: Russia’s New Security Strategy and Its Implications for U.S. Policy.”

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Member of Parliament and exiled opposition leader Ilya Ponamarev suggested that the polls show nothing. In his view, they are the consequence of a wartime mentality, like the great popular support for Tsar Nicholas II in 1914.¹³⁸ If we have indeed, as Brian Whitmore of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty claims, reached a phase best described as “Late Putinism,”¹³⁹ then the long-term strategy this paper has advocated towards Putin’s Russia may need to give way to a new strategy of engagement in a matter of years.

¹³⁸ Adam Taylor, “A Year Ago He Was the Only Russian Politician to Vote against Annexing Crimea. Now He’s an Exile.” *The Washington Post*, March 23, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/03/23/a-year-ago-he-was-the-only-russian-politician-to-vote-against-annexing-crimea-now-hes-an-exile/>.

¹³⁹ Brian Whitmore, *Late Putinism*, The Daily Vertical (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2015), <http://www.rferl.org/content/the-daily-vertical-late-putinism/26903332.html>.

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