

**THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20319-6000**



**Russia and the World  
The Strategy of World Disorder**

**ELECTIVE COURSE 6080**

**SYLLABUS**

**ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21 (FALL)**

*This document contains educational material designed to promote discussion by students of the National War College. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the National Defense University or the Department of Defense. The contents of this document are the property of the U.S. Government and are intended for the exclusive use of the faculty and students of the National War College (NWC) or the National Defense University (NDU). No further dissemination is authorized without the express consent of the NWC Commandant*

---

Dr. Elena Kovalova  
Course Director  
Department of Security Studies

---

Dr. Colton Campbell  
Chair  
Department of Security Studies

Course Director:

Dr. Elena Kovalova  
Room 236, Roosevelt Hall  
(202) 685-3704

DSS Administrative Specialist:

Ms. Susan Schindler  
Room 112B, Roosevelt Hall  
(202) 685-4362

ASC Editorial Assistant:

Mr. Luke Lischin  
Room A-109, Roosevelt Hall  
(202) 685-4467

## COURSE SCHEDULE – Fall 2020

Date	Topic	Subject	Page
		Overview and Requirements	iv
September 15 1230-1425	1	The Russian Revolution and the Establishment of the Soviet System	1
September 22 1230-1425	2	Stalinism: Terror, World War II, and the Cold War	7
September 29 1230-1425	3	The End of the Soviet Union	11
October 6 1230-1425	4	Transition, Consolidation, and Resurgence	17
October 13 1230-1425	5	Russia’s Sphere of “Privileged Interests”	25
October 20 1230-1425	6	Russia and Ukraine	29
October 27 1230-1425	7	Europe, NATO, EU	34
November 3 1230-1425	8	Russia and China	38
November 10 1230-1425	9	Iran and the Middle East	41
November 17 1230-1425	10	Russia and Northeast Asia	44
November 24 1230-1425	11	Africa and Latin America	48
December 1 1230-1425	12	Russia and the United States	51

## Overview and Requirements

This is a survey course on contemporary Russia. The objective of the course is to provide students with a thorough understanding of security- and foreign-policy developments in today's Russia. After a brief introduction to the Russian and Soviet historical background, the course will focus on the post-Soviet period in the 20th and 21st centuries. Topics to be examined will include domestic political and economic developments in Russia since 1991; major themes and trends in Russian foreign and security policy; fluctuations in U.S.-Russian relations; energy as a Russian foreign-policy tool; and Russian policies and actions toward Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

The course consists of twelve weekly two-hour seminars designed for maximum student participation and interaction after preparation through targeted readings. We will also examine current Russian-related topics as they arise.

### Course Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the basic historical, geographical, ethnic, religious, and cultural background and context for Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.
2. Assess the role and importance of the basic political, economic, and social aspects of the Soviet experience on the nature and development of the post-Soviet Russian political, economic, and social systems.
3. Assess the political usage of history and the Cold War legacy in the development of Russian foreign and security policy since 1991.
4. Understand the basic political, economic, and security context and challenges for post-Soviet Russia.
5. Assess and evaluate the fundamental issues and debates in the development of post-Soviet security and foreign policy.

### Course texts:

*Six basic texts will be used in this course:*

Lawrence Freedman, *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (London: Chatham House, 2019).

Karrie Koesel (Editor), Valerie Bunce (Editor), Jessica Weiss (Editor) *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian Regimes: Comparing China and Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Michael McFaul, From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018).

Steven Lee Myers, The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin (New York: Vintage, 2016).

Angela Stent, Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019).

Selections from these works are indicated for appropriate weeks. Additional readings from various primary and secondary sources are also provided to students in pdf format. Some assigned readings can be downloaded through the NDU library, or are available via the internet.

### **Course Assignments**

Students will be responsible for writing a brief paper (no more than 1000 words) on issues that are important in contemporary U.S.-Russian relations, or a similarly important regional issue. The papers will be set in the format of a policy memorandum for a senior U.S. government official and will be presented at the seminar. Students will also participate in class exercises. The class is highly interactive and active participation by students is required.

### **Assessment Policy**

Students must demonstrate mastery of the stated course objectives to pass this course. The course director will use performance on the following assessments to determine each student's final grade: seminar performance (40%), seminar exercises (20%), and paper (40%).

Students receive a grade and written feedback on course assignments. Faculty will evaluate students using the below A to F grading scale. Final grades will indicate the degree to which students have demonstrated mastery of course objectives in course assessments and in contributions to seminar learning. Faculty members provide candid, constructive narrative comments to each of their students, addressing the student's strengths and weaknesses, and providing recommendations for improvement.

Individual assignment and final course grades follow the below grading scale.

### **Figure 1. NDU Grading Scale**

Score	Letter Grade
90-93	A
87-90	A-
83-87	B+
80-83	B
77-80	B-
73-77	C
69 or less	F

To pass a core or elective course, students must earn an overall course grade of at least a *B minus*. The final grades for all courses appear on the official student transcript. Below is the letter grade to quality point scale used for all NDU courses, along with the descriptor of each grade.

**Figure 2. NDU Quality Points**

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>Grade Points</b>
A	Exceptional Quality	4.00
A-	Superior Quality	3.70
B+	High Quality	3.30
B	Expected/Acceptable Quality	3.00
B-	Below Expected Quality	2.70
C	Unsatisfactory Quality	2.00
P	Pass	0.00
F	Fail/Unacceptable Quality	0.00
I	Incomplete	0.00

### **Grade Appeals**

Every NWC student has a right to appeal any graded event or final course grade. As a first step, the student should request an informal review of the grade by the FSL(s). This review should take place no later than 7 days after the release of the grade. Should the informal review not lead to a satisfactory resolution, the student may then initiate a formal review by submitting a written petition to the Associate Dean of Academics no later than 14 days after the release of the grade. The Associate Dean of Academics will adjudicate a graded event appeal. The Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs will convene a faculty panel to conduct the formal review and make a recommendation for resolution on a course grade appeal. The recommendation of the panel will be final.

NWC students enrolled in non-NWC electives courses may also appeal their grades. They must follow the appeals procedure in place at the College or component offering the course.

### **Essay and Research Paper Format**

Unless otherwise directed by their FSL or project supervisor, students will adhere to the format guidelines below for all papers submitted to meet NWC writing requirements.

- Prepare papers double-spaced with 12-point font, preferably in a standard font like Times New Roman or Arial.
- Prepare the paper to the directed word count target or page length; list word count when appropriate at the footer of the last page. Footnotes or endnotes are not included in the textual word count. In-text quotes and epigraphs are included in the word counts.
- Use one-inch margins, all around. Papers with special binding requirements may use a 1.25-inch margin on the left side.
- Use footnotes or endnotes in the Chicago “note-bibliography” Style, as detailed in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8<sup>th</sup>

edition, Chapters 15-17. Core course papers do not require a bibliography unless otherwise directed by the FSL or project supervisor.

- Prepare a cover sheet that shows the paper title, student's name, course and seminar, FSL, Faculty Advisor, and date. Students will not put their name on subsequent pages (e.g., in the footer or header). An example cover sheet is on the Google Drive, in the Writing Program folder, and on Blackboard, in My Organizations, National War College – Students, Writing Program.
- Include page numbers at the bottom, middle of the page.

## **Original Work**

Students are required, throughout their time at the National War College, to submit “Original Work” in their course assignments unless otherwise explicitly directed by their FSLs.

Because of the complexity of the options available within the writing program, and to avoid any ambiguity such options might produce, the College has carefully defined ‘original work.’ The term ‘original’ within the NWC research and writing program means both ‘produced by the author’ and ‘produced for the first time.’ Thus, papers written to satisfy NWC writing requirements must be produced during the student’s tenure at NWC, be submitted to satisfy only one writing requirement, and contain the student’s own ideas and analysis except as documented by appropriate citations. Complying with the original work definition will avoid potential issues of plagiarism. When in doubt about options or requirements, consult a Faculty Advisor or the Associate Dean of Outreach and Research.

The one exception to the “original work” requirement is the “expanded paper” option in which students – with the permission of their FSL and the Associate Dean of Outreach and Research in advance– may expand upon previously completed work in order to produce a study that blends existing and new research and writing.

## **Absence Policy**

Students attending National War College are here on official duty and are expected to work at least 40 hours per week unless they are on official Federal holiday or have been granted leave. Moreover, as a professional responsibility, students are expected to attend all required events unless they have been given explicit permission to be absent.

Regular leave normally will **not** be approved during the school year except during the December recess.

When a student feels he/she may need to miss a scheduled academic event, the following steps must be taken to request approval of the absence.

1. Student must first discuss with their Faculty Advisor and FSL.
2. Once discussed and still requesting time off, the student must use the Student Absence Request form template located on the Google drive (in the Admin folder) then email his/her Faculty Advisor, Service/Agency Chair, and the Dean of Students and request approval of the absence. Copy the FSL on the email.

3. The Dean of Students will evaluate the request and recommendations from the Faculty Advisor, FSL, and Service/Agency Chair and either approve or refer to the Commandant.
4. The Dean of students may approve one day off; the Commandant must approve anything longer.
5. The Dean of Students will notify the student and other members of the approval/disapproval via email.

Students who find themselves forced to take an unplanned absence for any reason (illness, family emergency, etc.) should contact one or all of the following individuals as soon as feasible: Faculty Advisor, Service/Agency Chair, FSL, and/or Dean of Students.

Regardless of absences, students must still meet all stated course objectives to pass courses in which they are enrolled. Thus, students who have missed one or more class sessions may be required to meet with faculty to review material or complete compensatory assignments at the course FSL's discretion. Additionally, any student who has missed one or more classes and questions his/her ability to meet the course objectives regardless of compensatory work completed should ask the FSL for further remedial assistance.

NOTE: I am grateful to Dr. William Hill, who established this course and in whose footsteps I am following. Much of this syllabus comes directly from Dr. Hill's work as course director of this elective. – Elena Kovalova

## Topic 1

### The Russian Revolution and the Establishment of the Soviet System

Tuesday, 15 September 2020



“[Russia] is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.”

*Winston Churchill, Fulton, March 5, 1946.*

Dealing with the Soviet government, Secretary of State Dean Acheson said in February 1950, is "like trying to deal with a force of nature. You can't argue with a river, it is going to flow. You can dam it up, you can put it to useful purposes, you can deflect it, but you can't argue with it."

*Citation from: The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy, Volume XVI, Cooper Square Publishers, New York, 1972. - P. 138.*

### Topic Introduction

Even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia is – in terms of territory – still the largest country in the world. Although no longer the world's second superpower and chief political and

ideological rival to the United States, Russia with its nuclear arsenal and missile systems remains the only country in the world able to pose an existential threat to the U.S. Post-Soviet Russia possesses only half the population and considerably less economic and military might than the USSR at the height of its power and influence. Today's Russia has abandoned its 74-year socio-economic experiment with Marxism-Leninism and has returned to many elements of its Imperial Russian past.

While the past 28 years have seen enormous changes in life in Russia, the past – including recent Soviet history – plays an enormous role in contemporary Russian society and politics. As their experiment in adopting western democratic political institutions, an open society, and classical market economic mechanisms appears to be failing, Russian politicians and intellectuals look to their own past for appropriate guidance and models. Yet many remain reluctant to examine and admit the worst abuses of the Soviet period and system, especially the role of Stalin in fashioning the Soviet system and modernizing the Russian economy. The retreat of democracy in modern Russia has lent new vigor to perennial debates over whether Russia is by nature an authoritarian society and polity, or whether the current political system is largely the product of recent historical experience.

This course will thus look at key episodes and elements of the Soviet experience as important for an understanding of Russian politics, society, economics, and foreign and security policy since 1991. In terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion, Russia is clearly a part of Europe, even if on the eastern periphery. However, over a millennium Russia developed a distinctive political culture with significant differences from those in central and western Europe. Like the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, the Soviet experiment in many respects isolated and differentiated Russia from many of its European neighbors.

Most histories of the territory that is now European Russia and other European states of the former Soviet Union begin in the ninth century A.D. Old chronicles recount the establishment of a state around the location of present day Kiev, on the Dnieper River, when in 862 A.D. the local Slavic population invited a Varangian leader, Rurik, to become their sovereign. The Varangians were probably Scandinavian traders, who conducted their business along the network of rivers between the Baltic and Black Seas.

Rurik was the first recorded ruler of Kievan Rus', which was comprised mainly of settlements in present day Ukraine. One of Rurik's descendants, Vladimir the Great, or Saint Vladimir, converted Rus' to Christianity in 988 A.D. The principalities of Rus' developed a flowering culture and trade with Western Europe, until they were shattered by successive Mongol invasions beginning in 1240 A.D.

Most narrations of Russian history then shift to the north and east, where during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Principality of Moscow gradually won a competition for political dominance among the northeastern remnants of the former Kievan Rus'. The emerging Muscovite state gradually extended its authority over the various Russian principalities in the region while simultaneously freeing the new Russian polity from the authority of the Golden Horde, and later the Tatar Khanates that emerged from the Mongol empire.

By the reigns of Ivan (III) the Great (1462-1505), and Ivan (IV) the Terrible (1533-1584), Muscovite Russia had emerged as a distinct state, a competitor to the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, and the after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the last independent bastion and protector of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Largely cut off from the rest of Europe by the Mongol domination from the mid-thirteenth to at least mid-fifteenth century, Russia was largely untouched by the European renaissance. Russia remained firmly rooted in the Byzantine tradition, rejected the fifteenth century Uniate attempt at reconciliation with Rome, and thus experienced neither the western reformation nor counter-reformation.

At the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries Russia experienced a dynastic crisis and political and national upheaval. With the death of Fyodor, the son of Ivan the Terrible, the line of Rurik ended, after ruling Russia since 862. After an interlude of several pretenders and conquest by the Poles, the Muscovite *boyars* (nobles) elected Mikhail Romanov to the Russian throne in 1613, establishing the dynasty that was to rule Russia until the 1917 revolution. This interlude in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the so-called Time of Troubles (*smutnoe vremia*), produced a political system even more absolutist than early Muscovy. In addition, in order to cement the authority of the new dynasty and the nobility, the Russian rural population was tied more explicitly to the land and the landowning, noble class. The process of *enserfment*, which began in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, reached its height during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in tsarist and imperial Russia.

At the same time, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Russia greatly expanded its contacts with the outside world. Russian explorers continued a process of conquest begun the century before which led them by 1682 to the shores of the Pacific Ocean and the border with China. During a series of wars with the Kingdom of Poland and the Ottoman Empire, Ukraine was added to Russia in 1654. Contacts and commerce with Western Europe increased greatly during the course of the century.

The reign of Peter (I) the Great (1689-1725) brought Russia forcefully into the general European state system. Peter instituted a comprehensive program of westernizing reforms from above, characterized by ruthless coercion against any manifestation of resistance by Muscovite traditionalists. Peter also embarked on the Great Northern War, a twenty-one year campaign (1700-1721) against Sweden and its allies to win Russia access to an ice-free port along the Baltic Sea. In 1703 Peter began construction of a new capital, St. Petersburg, at the eastern end of the Gulf of Finland. By his death in 1725, Peter's Russia was an empire and a major military power in Europe. So great was the effect of his reign that Russian history is still divided into the pre-Petrine and post-Petrine imperial periods.

Russian history from 1725 to 1917 has been a tale largely of Russia's ambivalent relationship with the West. Westernizing, modernizing reforms from above, under enlightened rulers such as Catherine (II) the Great (1762-1796), Alexander I (1801-1825), and Alexander II (1855-1881), alternated with periods of repression and reaction under rulers such as Nicholas I (1825-1855) and Alexander III (1881-1894). Intellectual and civil society, markets, a middle class, and other European institutions came to Russia later than much of the continent. However, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia seemed different from Western European industrial societies more in degree than in character.

Russia freed the serfs in 1861, as part of a set of far-reaching reforms after defeat in the Crimean War. By 1900 the processes of industrialization and urbanization were well underway in Russia. An urban-based revolution followed in 1905, which led to establishment of the State Duma, the first parliament in Russia and the first potential limitation on the power of the monarch since at least 1613. At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Russia's fledgling political institutions and urban middle class were in a process of rapid, noisy development. However, the war took Russia down another, unpredictable, fateful path.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 remains one of the most influential events in modern history. The upheaval in Russia produced a political-economic ideology – Marxism-Leninism – that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century became the chief rival to market capitalism and democratic pluralism. The revolution produced a state – the Soviet Union – that ruled over an apparent empire whose high-water mark spanned nearly half the globe.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was actually two revolutions, the first a spontaneous popular revolt in February 1917 against the crumbling imperial regime as the strains of World War I grew unbearable, both for the Russian soldiers in the field and the population at home. As riots and civil disobedience in St. Petersburg and other major cities dissolved the authority of the administration of Emperor Nicholas II, a provisional government was formed from leaders of various prominent centrist and center-left parties. When the Provisional Government, at the behest of the wartime Allies, unwisely continued Russia's participation in the war, the Russian Army "voted with its feet." As Russian soldiers left their units and returned home in ever increasing numbers, state authority throughout Russia continued to crumble through the middle of 1917.

Russia's slow descent into anarchy opened the field for a myriad of small but dedicated political groups and ideologues. The most determined and most ruthless of these political actors was the Bolshevik Party, under the leadership of Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov, or Lenin. The Bolsheviks were the left wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party, which split along moderate-radical lines almost immediately after its formal establishment in 1903. Lenin appropriated the name Bolshevik (from *bol'shinstvo* – majority) for his faction after winning a procedural vote, even though he and his followers were in a distinct minority.

The story of 1917 is the narrative of the simultaneous destruction by the parties of the left of the traditional institutions of state power while using alternate instruments of authority, the *Soviets* (Councils of Workers and Peasants Deputies), to take power for the parties of the left. First formed during the revolution of 1905, the Soviets were relatively spontaneous creations of the workers, guided by left-wing, largely socialist parties. The Soviets steadily gained power at the expense of the Provisional Government, which continued to honor Imperial Russia's commitment to the Allies to prosecute the war. The Bolsheviks were the most skillful in playing to the desire of the Russian people in 1917 for peace, land, and bread. By late October the Bolsheviks had gained a sufficient following in the Soviets in the major cities, in particular Petrograd and Moscow, to carry out a successful coup against the Provisional Government.

Taking power proved much quicker and easier for the Bolsheviks than holding it, which required a three-year civil war. Bolshevik militia dismissed the popularly elected Constituent Assembly, where the agrarian Socialist Revolutionary Party held a clear majority, in January 1918. Under the direction of Lev Davidovich Bronstein (Trotsky), the communist Red Army was formed and fashioned into a real fighting force. The Bolsheviks signed the controversial separate peace of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans, and set about subduing popular resistance and several remnants of the imperial army scattered about European Russia and Siberia. By mid-1921 the Bolsheviks' organization and ruthlessness secured their victory against internal foes.

During the Civil War, Bolshevik domestic economic policy consisted largely of requisition masquerading as socialism and ruthless suppression of dissent, all referred to as "war communism." Once hostilities ceased, Lenin introduced a "New Economic Policy" (NEP), which combined considerable concessions to elements of market economics, combined with state ownership and control of major industrial enterprises. The NEP was designed to give Russia a breathing space, while the Bolsheviks consolidated their authority, regained some territories lost during the war, and established a new successor state to the Russian Empire – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand the basic historical, geographical, ethnic, religious, and cultural context of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.
2. Assess the historical importance and significance for contemporary Russian politics of the Russian revolutions of 1917 and the attempts to apply Marxist-Leninist ideology in practice.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. Should Russia be considered a part of Europe or a part of Asia?
2. What elements distinguish the development and historical experience of Russia from Western Europe?
3. What factors and experience does Russia share with the rest of Europe?
4. Do you believe Russia has a distinctive national or popular character; if so, can you define it?
5. What were the main factors that produced the revolutionary upheaval in Russia?
6. What was the role of World War I in preparing or prompting the Russian revolutions of 1917? Would revolution have been inevitable without the war?
7. Why did a Marxist revolution succeed in Russia, rather than the more industrialized West?
8. What were the main features of and reasons behind the New Economic Policy?

## **Required Readings** (55 pages)

Keir Giles, *A World Apart*, Ch. 1, *Russia's Moral Framework*, Ch. 7, *History Matters*, Ch. 8, *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (London: Chatham House, 2019), pp. 3-12, 103-124 (21 pages).

Angela Stent, *The Weight of the Past*, Ch. 1, *The Russian Idea*, Ch.2 in: *Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest* (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 9-43 (34 pages).

## Topic 2

### Stalinism: Terror, World War II, and the Cold War

Tuesday, 22 September, 2020



"The strength of the Kremlin lies largely in the fact that it knows how to wait, but the strength of the Russian people lies in the fact that they know how to wait longer."

*George F. Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950 (Pantheon; 1983), p.209.*

"If you don't like us, don't accept our invitations and don't invite us to come to see you. Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you."

*Nikita Khrushchev, November 18, 1956.*

"Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free. When all are free, then we can look forward to that day when this city will be joined as one and this country and this great Continent of Europe in a peaceful and hopeful globe. When that day finally comes, as it will, the people of West Berlin can take sober satisfaction in the fact that they were in the front lines for almost two decades. All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words

***Ich bin ein Berliner.***"

*John F. Kennedy, June 26, 1963.*

## Topic Introduction

When Lenin died in January 1924, many observers (including Lev Trotsky himself) considered Trotsky, the founder of the Red Army and, after Lenin, the leading ideologist of the October Revolution, to be the logical successor. Contrary to expectations, during the rest of the 1920s, from his post as General Secretary of the Communist Party, Iosif Stalin outmaneuvered Trotsky and all other leading old Bolsheviks, such as Lev Kamenev and Grigoriy Zinoviev. By 1930 Stalin stood alone as the supreme leader of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and the country.

As he consolidated his political authority, Stalin abandoned the NEP in 1928-29 for two key policy initiatives. In 1928, with the introduction of the first Five Year Plan, Stalin launched the Soviet Union on a course of rapid mass industrialization under strict government planning and control. Popular resistance and private entrepreneurs were crushed. By the end of the second Five Year Plan the major features of the Soviet planned economy were in place.

In 1929 Stalin attacked the issue of private land ownership and agricultural production by introducing a policy of forced collectivization. Soviet authorities seized the lands of millions of peasants and forced them into large-scale collective farms. When the initial stages of collectivization were met with peasant resistance, Soviet militia increased the tempo and scale of the program. Millions of peasants were killed, often not before they destroyed their crops and livestock, resulting in famine in the cities in 1932-33. During the famine, Stalin's repressive measures and requisition of food from Ukraine intensified the hunger in what was alleged to be an intentional campaign to break Ukrainian national resistance to Soviet power. Authorities in today's independent Ukraine claim that Stalin's *holodomor* (murderous famine) killed at least three million Ukrainians.

Stalin's violent repression of any real or potential opposition eventually turned on the Communist Party itself. The late 1934 assassination of Leningrad party chief Sergey Kirov (a popular figure in the CPSU, and thus suspect with Stalin) provided the proximate cause for a purge of the party ranks by the secret police (at that time the NKVD, later the MVD, and finally KGB). In 1936-38 the purge swept through the ranks of the party, government, and army. Hundreds of thousands were killed and millions sent into exile. Many "old Bolsheviks" were arrested and tortured. They confessed to outlandish crimes in widely publicized show trials before being executed. In 1937 most of the military General Staff and leading officers of the Red Army were arrested and executed as traitors, a move that would have disastrous effect in the initial stages of World War II a few years later.

By 1939 the worst of the purges seemed to have run their course. The Georgian Lavrentiy Beria replaced the hated Nikolai Yezhov as the head of the NKVD, and remained head of the internal security forces until Stalin's death in 1953. While the scope of the purges subsided, the main features and methods of the Soviet coercive internal security apparatus remained in place. A system of penal labor camps – the so-called GULAG – received tens of thousands of new prisoners every year. Much of the vaunted Soviet infrastructure in remote locations was built with this slave labor. With a brief interlude for the war, the unpredictable mass purge continued to be one of Stalin's preferred means of popular intimidation and control.

To this day many people from the former Soviet Union, and especially Russians, refer to World War II as the “Great Patriotic War” (*velikaya otechestvennaya voina*). Along with the defeat of Napoleon in 1812, the fight against Hitler and the Nazis is still remembered as one of the great historical moments of the Russian (more than Soviet) people. Over decades and generations, the successful defense of the motherland against the Nazi invaders became the collective memory that gave legitimacy to the regimes of Stalin and his heirs.

The costs of the war were unimaginable. Stalin and his diplomats first tried to ally with European states against Hitler, and in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939 cut a deal with the Nazi leader that removed the last hope of avoiding a new European war. In that pact Stalin bought time, but not peace (although he did obtain the return of Bessarabia from Romania and territories in the then-independent Baltic States). Ignoring the signs of imminent German attack, the Soviets nearly lost the game in the final months of 1941. Monuments marking the furthest advance of German armed forces stand well within the inner city limits of present day Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The story of how the Allies defeated Hitler is fascinating in itself. Of more relevance for this course are the political and military decisions taken by the Allied powers – the U.S., USSR and Great Britain – during the war, and how these decisions shaped the political and security landscape in Europe after the war. The Soviet Union lost as many as twenty million people, soldiers and civilians, during the war – no one knows for sure just how many. This sacrifice brought Soviet troops and Soviet power to the center of Europe. Unlike 1815, when Emperor Alexander’s troops left France and returned to Russia relatively quickly, Soviet troops remained in the center of Europe for four and a half decades after 1945.

The transformation of the Soviets from Allies into antagonists was remarkably abrupt. By 1948 there was open military confrontation in the Berlin airlift. In 1949 the NATO Alliance was born, directed against the increasingly repressive Soviet hold on Eastern Europe and the Soviet threat to Western Europe. By 1950 Soviet proxies were engaged in combat in Korea against the armed forces of its main World War II ally. The resultant East-West standoff lasted 40 years.

How and why could all this happen? Were Soviet aims territorial, imperial, ideological, or preservational? Western debate over the sources of Soviet conduct in Europe began as early as 1946 in George Kennan’s famous long telegram from the US Embassy in Moscow. The debate continues unresolved to this day. One might argue that this debate continues also to be relevant to this day, since one’s assessment of the motives for Soviet behavior half a century ago to a considerable extent can color how one perceives and explains the contemporary behavior of the Russian Federation, other former Soviet republics (such as Ukraine and Moldova), and Russia’s former allies in Eastern Europe.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Assess the historical importance and significance for contemporary Russian politics of attempts during the Soviet period to apply Marxist-Leninist ideology in practice.

2. Examine the nature and effects of the Soviet experience in the Stalinist terror, World War II, and post-war reconstruction on Russia's historical development and post-Soviet Russian society and politics.

### **Questions for Consideration**

1. What were the main reasons for Stalin's successful consolidation of personal power?
2. Why did the Soviet leadership abandon the New Economic Policy for the five-year plan approach to management of the economy?
3. What were the economic and political aims of the policy of collectivization of agriculture?
4. Were the great purges of the 1930s and subsequent purges an aberration brought on by Stalin's excessive accumulation of power and personal paranoia, or were they an essential feature of the Soviet political system as established by Lenin and Stalin?
5. To what extent did Soviet policies and actions contribute to the start and severity of World War II?
6. How (if at all) did decisions taken among the Allies during the course of World War II contribute to the genesis and development of the Cold War?
7. What were Soviet security aims in the years following World War II? Were Soviet policies and actions reasonable steps in pursuit of these aims?

### **Required Readings** (68 pages)

Keir Giles, *Winning the Cold War*, Ch. 4 in: *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (London: Chatham House, 2019) pp. 59-68 (8 pages).

George Kennan, "The Long Telegram" at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm> (11 pages).

George Kennan ("X"), "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, 1947, pp. 566-582 (pdf) (17 pages).

## Topic 3

### The End of the Soviet Union

Tuesday, 29 September, 2020



“Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

*President Ronald Reagan, speech at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, June 12, 1987.*

“The threat of world war is no more.”

*Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev on the ending of the Cold War December 1991.*

“But the biggest thing that has happened in the world in my life, in our lives, is this: By the grace of God, America won the Cold War.”

*President George H.W. Bush, State of the Union address, January 28, 1992.*

“The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.”

*Vladimir Putin, The annual state of the nation address to parliament, April 25, 2005.*

## Topic Introduction

### The Khrushchev Period

Joseph Stalin’s death on March 5, 1953 left a grieving Soviet leadership and populace in uncharted waters. Despite the cruel repression that characterized Stalin’s almost thirty year rule, Soviets of all levels had come to identify the state with Stalin, and wondered what would become of them without him. After emerging on top after a two year struggle for power, CPSU General

Secretary Nikita Khrushchev launched a cautious campaign to eliminate some of the most capricious and deadly aspects of the Stalinist system. Millions of prisoners were freed from labor camps in the USSR and Eastern Europe, rudimentary institutional controls were introduced over the KGB (one of the first acts was to purge Stalin's last security chief, Lavrentiy Beria), and Moscow's policy toward its east European satellites was eased (for example, Khrushchev took steps to repair the 1948 break with Yugoslavia).

In a speech at a closed session of the February 1956 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress Khrushchev directly denounced some of the excesses and abuses of power during Stalin's rule. The text of the so-called "secret speech" was quickly disseminated in the West by Italian communists who attended the Moscow gathering. In his speech Khrushchev criticized a number of Stalin's specific policies and actions, but did not question the legitimacy or the correctness of the Soviet Communist Party and its exclusive rule. Khrushchev claimed the remedy for the abuses of the Stalin era was to return to the principles and practices established by Lenin upon which the Soviet Union was founded.

Domestically the most significant immediate effect of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign was an end to the recurrent, large scale police terror. Several east European satellite regimes attempted to use the Soviet thaw to obtain greater autonomy in domestic and foreign policy. Several repressive leaders were replaced by more moderate figures. However, in 1956 Poland narrowly averted clashes with Soviet troops over the reform policies of the new party chief Wladyslaw Gomulka. In Hungary Soviet armed forces invaded and crushed a popular revolt after new leader Imre Nagy attempted to remove Hungary from the Soviet orbit by declaring neutrality.

Under Khrushchev the Soviet Union's relationship with its chief rival, the United States, also underwent a stormy evolution. Buoyed by confidence (or bravado) from acquiring the atomic and then hydrogen bomb, Khrushchev conducted a noisy policy of economic, political, and military competition with the United States. While denouncing American imperialism and promising to bury the U.S., Khrushchev slowly moved Soviet ideology toward a policy of peaceful competition and coexistence. The Cuban Missile Crisis in retrospect appears to have been a turning point in that process, after which Soviet leaders seemed more disposed to finding common positions on some key global security issues, such as nuclear testing and proliferation, while keeping the ideological geopolitical competition with the West within less dangerous limits.

### The Brezhnev Period

Khrushchev proved to be one of the major beneficiaries of his de-Stalinization policies, when he was removed from power in an October 1964 coup engineered by his Politburo politics, but allowed to live out his days in a peaceful, but non-public retirement. The Kremlin's new leaders – General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and Prime Minister Aleksey Kosygin – emphasized the collective nature of the Soviet leadership. Recognizing that Stalin's policy of rapid development based primarily on massive investment in heavy industry had reached the point of diminishing returns, Kosygin and Brezhnev attempted cautiously to formulate and introduce economic and managerial reforms in the more mature Soviet economy. At the same time they elaborated

further the ideological bases for a policy of peaceful coexistence that would allow greater contact and trade with, and investment from, the outside world. Finally, they tried to keep a firm lid on a nascent Soviet dissident movement and possible national movements that criticized the lack of artistic, intellectual, and even political freedom in the USSR.

Brezhnev and his colleagues enjoyed a certain degree of success in these policies. While slowing in rates of growth, Soviet economic and concomitant military power continued to grow through the 1960s into the 1970s. Stung by the Soviet Union's inability to match the strategic military power of the United States during the Cuban crisis, the Soviet leadership embarked on an arms development and procurement program that brought the USSR much nearer to numerical and real parity with the U.S. by the mid-1970s. This same military buildup was also most likely one of the proximate causes of the USSR's deepening economic difficulties in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Despite increasing resort to domestic repression and military force abroad, the Soviet leaders were not able completely to stifle growth of the domestic dissident movement and manifestation of opposition in the East European satellites. Soviet protesters were arrested in Red Square in the late 1960s. In the tumultuous year 1968, against a back-ground of strikes and political protest of various sorts around the globe, the Soviet Army infamously crushed the Czechoslovak attempt to consolidate the so-called "Prague Spring" into an ongoing program of pluralist liberalization. This marked the emergence of the Brezhnev doctrine, the self-asserted right of the Soviet Union to intervene anywhere it deemed socialism to be threatened.

The Soviet position remained flexible, as under General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev the Soviet Union outwardly negotiated a rapprochement with the United States. Brezhnev and the Politburo received U.S. President Nixon in Moscow in May 1972, less than four years after the suppression of the "Prague Spring," and only weeks after U.S. planes bombed Soviet cargo ships in the North Vietnamese port of Haiphong. Brezhnev and Nixon signed the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), which ushered in the era of détente between the U.S. and the USSR. Bilateral U.S.-Soviet cooperation blossomed after the signing of the first SALT treaty in 1972. Strategic arms limitation talks continued through the Ford and Carter administrations, culminating in the signature of the SALT II treaty in Vienna in the spring of 1979.

However, Soviet behavior in the third world and the continuing Soviet buildup of strategic weaponry provoked concern in the U.S. and lent increasing fuel to critics of détente. Such criticisms were articulated in the famous 1976 Team B report, which claimed that U.S. intelligence estimates of Soviet military capabilities and intentions were grossly understated and unwarrantedly optimistic. At the same time, the Soviet Union continued its support for leftist and Marxist regimes around the third world. The fall of South Vietnam to the forces of Hanoi in 1975 was largely perceived in the U.S. as a Soviet proxy victory. The appearance of Soviet advisors in Africa, and specifically, Cuban proxies in Angola, also provoked concern in the U.S. A Soviet-supported coup in Afghanistan in 1978, the death of the American Ambassador in Kabul in a botched hostage rescue by Soviet forces, and the full-fledged Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 proved to be the final nails in the coffin of US-Soviet détente.

With the election of Ronald Reagan to the U.S. Presidency in 1980 and his appointment of Harvard Professor Richard Pipes as his NSC advisor on Russia, the Team B view became official U.S. policy.

### Stagnation

In retrospect, the signing in Helsinki on August 1, 1975 of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe might well be called the high water mark of the policy of détente. The Soviet Union received what it had long sought – a political settlement in Europe to the Second World War, recognizing the borders and states established at the end of hostilities in 1945. At the same time, the western signatories obtained the commitment of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies to a set of principles embodying basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Helsinki Final Act became the springboard for a host of internal dissident movements in the USSR and its allies, and the Helsinki process became the institutional vehicle for the U.S. and its western allies to keep the pressure on the Soviet Union in the area of human rights.

Meanwhile the Soviet economy experienced continued decline through the late 1970s and early 1980s. Central planning, which had proved sufficient for an economy in the early stages of heavy industrialization, proved incapable of adequately managing an increasingly sophisticated consumer economy. Soviet leaders continued to devote considerable resources and attention to the military sector, which kept growing steadily. However, the retail consumer sectors of the economy slid gradually from decay into crisis. Goods disappeared from stores, money became increasingly irrelevant, and barter and the black market more and more supplied disgruntled Soviet consumers.

The leaders themselves were largely old and tired. With growing openness Soviet citizens in private mocked the age and infirmity of their leaders, in particular the increasingly befuddled Brezhnev. Pushing a program of discipline and cautious reform, former KGB chief Yury Andropov followed Brezhnev as General Secretary for a short time from late 1982 to 1984, but soon succumbed to kidney failure. Andropov was followed briefly by Brezhnev crony and toady Konstantin Chernenko, who lasted only until February 1985. At that point enough of the older generation had died off from the Politburo to permit election of the young (54 years old), vigorous, and ambitious Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary.

### Gorbachev

After a brief period to settle in and consolidate his power as General Secretary, Gorbachev embarked on a program of steadily more radical domestic reform, combined with a drastic reorientation of Soviet foreign policy. The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Ukrainian SSR in April 1986 provided the pretext for the policy of *glasnost*, or openness. In the space of a few years Gorbachev permitted free expression, open criticism, and free elections in the USSR. In foreign policy, he reached agreement with the U.S. on fundamental arms control questions, including on-site inspections. In 1989 he allowed the Soviets' eastern European satellites to slip away and agreed to withdraw Soviet military forces without firing a shot.

Unfortunately for Gorbachev, the reforms that he hoped would strengthen the Soviet Union instead ultimately led to his own fall from power and the dissolution of the USSR.

Historians are only beginning to debate and explain how Gorbachev's ambitious program of reforms could go so far in directions he never intended. Openness and economic restructuring (*glasnost'* and *perestroika*) found both opponents and enthusiasts in Soviet society. By 1989 the enthusiasts were in the ascendance, as election of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies effectively ended the Communist Party's seven decade monopoly on political power. Supporters of *perestroika* in several republics of the USSR – particularly the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia – used the openness and freedom offered by Gorbachev's reforms to attempt to wrest greater autonomy or even independence.

These developments inevitably provoked a reaction. Demonstrations and violence in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Baltics prompted western criticism and opposition to Gorbachev from hardliners within the CPSU. Gorbachev tried to counter the growing unrest and opposition by fashioning and signing a new union treaty, which would become the basis for a reformed, revitalized Soviet Union. Instead, a group of opponents in the party and the security forces staged a coup on August 19, 1991, arresting Gorbachev while on vacation in the Crimea (similar to the 1964 Politburo coup that ousted Khrushchev). However, this time key elements in society and government resisted and defeated the coup.

### Yeltsin

Gorbachev brought Sverdlovsk party boss Boris Yeltsin from his home in the Urals in 1987 to shake up the Moscow city party organization. Yeltsin proved too enthusiastic and populist an advocate of reform, and Gorbachev fired him within a couple of years. However, Yeltsin took advantage of the newly installed free elections and got elected to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies and then as President of the RSFSR in June 1991. From that post Yeltsin led the popular resistance that defeated the August 1991 coup. In December 1991, together with President Kravchuk of Ukraine and President Shushkevich of Belarus, Yeltsin played an instrumental role in fashioning the Belovezh Agreement that marked the end of the Soviet Union. On January 1, 1992, there were fifteen independent states where there had previously been only one. President Boris Yeltsin was the first freely elected leader of Russia in many centuries.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Examine the nature and effects of the Soviet experience on Russia's historical development and post-Soviet Russian society and politics.
2. Understand the accomplishments and weaknesses of the Soviet Union, and the major reasons for the ultimate collapse and dissolution of the USSR.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. What motivated Gorbachev to propose his program of reforms, and what were the main reasons for their lack of success?
2. Do you think a different Soviet leader could have successfully pursued a strategy of encouraging economic improvement and domestic reform while insisting on the monopoly of the Communist Party on political power and actively repressing domestic critics of the Soviet regime?
3. What was the role of the war in Afghanistan in the decline of the Soviet state?
4. What were the reasons behind Gorbachev's almost complete turnabout of Soviet foreign policy, such as close cooperation with the United States and permitting the peaceful dissolution of the Soviets' East European empire?
5. Were there any additional or different measures that Gorbachev could have taken that might have led to success in his policy of reforming the Soviet Union?

**Required Readings** (52 pages)

Michael McFaul, From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), pp.1-21 (21 pages).

Steven Lee Myers, The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin (New York: Vintage, 2016), pp.37-68 (31 p.).

## Topic 4

# Transition, Consolidation, and Resurgence

Tuesday, 6 October, 2020



“We are stuck half-way, having left the old shore; we keep floundering in a stream of problems which engulf us and prevent us from reaching a new shore.”

*Boris Yeltsin, 1997 state of the nation address, about painful transition from a planned to a capitalist economy.*

“Flying in at night over Moscow you can see how the shape of the city is a series of concentric ring roads with the small ring of the Kremlin at the center. At the end of the 20th century the light from the rings glowed a dim, dirty yellow. Moscow was a sad satellite at the edge of Europe, emitting the dying embers of the Soviet empire. Then, in

the 21st century, something happened: money. Never had so much money flowed into so small a place in so short a time...”

*Peter Pomerantsev, Nothing is True, Everything is Possible (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), p.3.*

“The President of the United States believes the Cold War is over; fine — it’s over. But Putin doesn’t believe it’s over.”

*Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee annual conference, 2014, March 20.*

## **Topic Introduction**

Having emerged victorious in his political battle with Gorbachev, Yeltsin was hardly in a position to rest on his laurels. The dissolution of the Soviet Union plunged the Russian Federation and the other newly independent states even deeper into an already grave economic crisis. Serious questions demanded immediate attention with respect to the distribution and control of the nuclear assets and conventional military forces of the former Soviet Union.

While the world’s major powers quickly recognized Russia as the legal successor to the USSR, they provided relatively little in the way of material assistance to facilitate Russia’s abrupt transition to democracy and a market economy. Encouraged by western economic theorists, Yeltsin’s government, led by young experts from Petersburg such as Yegor Gaidar and Anatoliy Chubais, embarked on a program of so-called “shock therapy.” A decade later Chubais and Gaidar explained their policy of freeing prices and rapidly privatizing state assets as an attempt to ensure that restoration of the Soviet planned economy would be impossible should Yeltsin and his allies lose power in the near future to their critics.

Under increasing criticism from rivals in the legislature, Yeltsin held a controversial referendum on his policies of rapid reform in April 1993. Aiming to head off his rivals and critics, Yeltsin sought to concentrate political power and government authority in the office of the President. This eventually led to a confrontation and constitutional crisis, when Yeltsin dissolved the legislature in September 1993 and army units loyal to Yeltsin fired on the parliament building to remove resisting legislators in October 1993. In December 1993 a referendum on a new constitution proposed by Yeltsin and elections for a new legislature, the State Duma, were held. The popular vote narrowly approved the new constitution, which instituted a strong presidential system. The elections to the Duma produced a surprise victory for conservative nationalist parties, making democratic and market reform policies even more dependent upon presidential edicts rather than legislative acts.

Most important for the U.S. at that period, Yeltsin cooperated with the U.S. in effecting the transfer of all of the nuclear weapons and delivery systems of the former USSR to Russian territory and control. The landmark achievement in this effort was the 1994 Tripartite Agreement between Ukraine, Russia, and the U.S. providing for a denuclearized Ukraine with an American security assurance. Yeltsin’s government also readily embraced the U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction program (CTR – or the “Nunn-Lugar” program), which over time successfully eliminated large amounts of former Soviet strategic weaponry.

In other foreign policy and security areas Russian cooperation with the West was initially extensive, but was soon to come under strain. Russia generally supported and contributed to UN intervention in the war in Bosnia. Russian leaders also accepted participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, but relatively early on made clear the difficulties for Russia that would be caused by NATO expansion.

On the former Soviet periphery, instability and separatist tendencies also came to a head inside Russia in the North Caucasus with the outbreak of war in Chechnya. During his first years in office, Yeltsin ignored the pretensions of the Chechen leader, former Soviet General Dzhokar Dudaev, to achieve independence from Russia. However, Moscow's patience ran only so far, and when Minister of Defense Grachev assured him that suppression of the Chechen regime would be a two-week affair, Yeltsin authorized military action. Events soon demonstrated how much the capabilities of the Russian military had deteriorated. Undisciplined, poorly equipped, and badly trained Russian forces increasingly resorted to scorched-earth tactics, while Chechen forces waged a capable asymmetric campaign that included terrorist attacks far inside Russia. By the end of Yeltsin's first term the war in Chechnya was essentially lost, with serious repercussions for politics inside Russia.

The two waves of crash privatization of Soviet state enterprises during Yeltsin's first term resulted in domination of the Russian economy by a small group of well-connected, fabulously wealthy entrepreneurs. Individuals such as Boris Berezovsky took advantage of their acquaintance with the young reformers in the Yeltsin administration to purchase potentially valuable state assets at fire-sale prices. The government agreed to such disadvantageous sales in order to procure desperately needed revenue, with tax collection way down in Russia's depressed economy.

Russian politics grew more polarized, as the 1995 State Duma elections produced a deeply split, highly nationalist parliament. Yeltsin's popularity sank to single digits, and the prospect of a Communist Party victory loomed for the 1996 presidential elections. A small group of the wealthiest oligarchs financed Yeltsin's re-election campaign, also hiring a few well-known political consultants from the United States. Yeltsin co-opted his most formidable non-communist rival, General Aleksandr Lebed (the commander of Russian forces in Moldova from 1992-1995), by making Lebed his national security advisor. Despite suffering a massive heart attack near the end of the first round of the presidential elections of 1996, Yeltsin was returned to office for a second term. However, soon after his reelection he underwent a quadruple bypass heart operation (performed by Houston's famous Dr. Michael DeBakey), and never fully recovered his earlier power and authority.

During his brief tenure as National Security Adviser, General Lebed performed one vital service for Yeltsin – settling the conflict in Chechnya. Lebed's popular authority allowed him to accept a ceasefire that left Chechnya with something near *de facto* independence. Russian troops withdrew to lick their wounds, and to turn some of their attention to much-needed military rebuilding and reform.

The nationalist backlash inside Russia forced Yeltsin gradually to back away from his close foreign policy cooperation with the West. To strengthen his position for his reelection campaign,

he replaced pro-western Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in early 1996 with Foreign Intelligence Chief Yevgeny Primakov, also known as an old Soviet Middle East hand. Primakov continued cooperation with the U.S. in implementing the Dayton Agreement in Bosnia and successfully negotiated the NATO-Russia Founding Act in May 1997. Nonetheless Russian foreign policy adopted a cooler, more ambivalent posture toward the U.S. and the West under Primakov.

Under pressure from the Asian financial crisis, the Russian economy and currency crashed in August 1998. In the wake of this crisis, Yeltsin elevated Primakov to Prime Minister, and Russia's relations with the U.S. and Western Europe suffered an even more grievous blow with the NATO campaign against Serbia over Kosovo in early 1999. Yeltsin came under increasing criticism at home, as the State Duma on three separate occasions considered impeachment resolutions against him. Despite denouncing the NATO action in Kosovo, Primakov was fired by Yeltsin, who ran through four different Prime Ministers during the middle of 1999, seeking to forestall Duma action to impeach and remove him from office. (The Russian constitution calls for the Prime Minister to become President if the latter is incapacitated or removed from office.)

Finally, in late summer 1999 Yeltsin settled on the then obscure head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), Vladimir Putin, as Prime Minister. At the same time, Kremlin strategists established a pro-regime party, Unity (*Edinstvo*), to serve as Putin's and Yeltsin's political vehicle in the late 1999 Duma elections. The main rivals were the Communist Party and the Fatherland-All Russia (*Otechestvo-Vsya Rossiya*) bloc of former Premier Primakov and popular Moscow Mayor Luzhkov. Strong support for media outlets controlled by leading oligarchs Berezovsky and Gusinsky helped stave off the challenge from Primakov and Luzhkov.

Putin also made maximum use of nationalist sentiment aroused by the renewal of hostilities in Chechnya in September 1999. The terrorist bombing of several residential buildings in Moscow and central Russia, not fully explained to this day, also raised nationalist hysteria that worked to Putin's advantage, as the new Premier called for a calm but harsh response to this new threat from outside. On December 31, 1999, Boris Yeltsin announced his resignation as President to a stunned audience, transferring the office to an increasingly popular Putin.

The Second Chechen War dominated the beginning of Putin's first term as president and demonstrated the still woeful shape of the Russian military. The accidental sinking of the nuclear missile submarine Kursk during an exercise in August 2000 provided another dramatic illustration of the incompetence of Russian military authorities and provided Putin the first of a number of levers to force reform on the Russian defense establishment. The process of reform proved to be long and difficult, as did the struggle with the Chechens. Spectacular terrorist attacks inside Russia proper punctuated the conflict, such as the seizure of the Nord-Est Theater in Moscow in February 2002 and the school attack in Beslan in September 2004. Throughout this process, Putin managed to project an air of competence and authority, and used dramatic failures as pretexts for personnel or policy shakeups.

After their famous encounter in Ljubljana in mid-2001, Putin and President George W. Bush established a good personal dynamic. This relationship warmed further when Putin responded immediately with strong support after the September 11 attacks. Russian unhappiness with U.S.

withdrawal from the ABM Treaty was offset somewhat by negotiation of the Moscow Treaty on strategic arms. Despite Putin's continued good personal relations with President Bush, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 set U.S.-Russia relations on a gradual downward slope that was arguably temporarily halted with President Obama's 2009 "reset."

One of Putin's major concerns, if not his major problem when he assumed the presidency, was the state of the Russian economy. The crash of 1998 eliminated many of the painfully won gains of the mid-1990s that followed the period of extreme privation during the application of shock therapy. Putin set about slowly and systematically restoring predictability and confidence to the economy. Maintaining his professed dedication to market economic principles, Putin's most important step may have been to institute a universal flat tax rate of thirteen percent (a significant reduction in personal income taxes), along with the elimination of a host of other personal and business taxes. This stabilized and significantly increased the state's collection of revenues, permitting gradual stabilization of other segments of the Russian economy.

The significant rise in the price of oil and natural gas after 2000 unexpectedly but markedly improved Russia's macroeconomic standing. Instead of facing a crisis of debt repayment sometime in 2003-2004, as was expected when he took office, Putin was able to pay off Russia's foreign state debt accumulated in the Soviet period and through the 1990s, as well as to begin accumulation of significant reserves. The improvement in Russia's domestic and foreign economic position also enabled Putin to take steps to bring the powerful oligarchs under control. At one famous meeting at his dacha outside Moscow early in his first term, Putin is said to have told a gathering of Russia's richest individuals that their property rights would be respected by his administration, as long as they refrained from using their wealth to engage in politics. The arrest and trial of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and dismantling of his oil giant Yukos beginning in 2003 was widely attributed to Khodorkovsky's intention to finance democratic alternatives to the Kremlin administration in the 2003 Duma and possibly the 2004 presidential elections.

Putin also used a variety of political, administrative, and police means to attempt to restore power and authority to the Kremlin that had devolved to local authorities or civil society during the 1990s. Using anti-corruption cases in particular, Putin's administration sought to circumscribe the authority of local authorities. Most notably, Putin gradually began to restrict the freedom of the independent media, especially broadcast media critical of the Kremlin. The first major victim was oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky and his NTV (Independent Television) network. Gusinsky was forced into exile to escape prosecution on tax and corruption charges. The Kremlin forced the sale of his NTV holdings to Gazprom, a compliant friend of the Putin administration. Popular rumors alleged that Putin had been offended by the caricature of him on the immensely popular political satire show "Puppets" (*Kukli*), which was removed from the air not long after Gazprom took over.

Putin's second term as President was marked by rapid economic growth fueled by Russia's burgeoning oil wealth, consolidation and centralization of power in a narrow circle in the Kremlin of friends and colleagues of Putin from St. Petersburg, and ever more assertive, noisy behavior of Russia's representatives on the international scene. In the space of just a few years, the rise in the world price of oil turned Russia from a country with a potentially serious debt

problem into a nation with no debts, past or present, and a burgeoning budget surplus and strategic cash reserve.

During Putin's second term, Russia started military modernization and re-enforcement of security services, created the fundamentals for the information system of web operations, - including cyber-attacks, mass media influence, and social media penetration, - and established the net of systemic disinformation and propaganda as a tool of foreign and security policy.

Genuinely popular amidst Russia's rising prosperity, Putin was elected to a second term in March 2004 by an enormous margin. Earlier the December 2003 parliamentary elections returned an absolute majority to the Kremlin-sponsored United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*) Party, the product of the merger of the earlier pro-Kremlin Unity (*Edinstvo*) Party with the slightly less pro-Kremlin party Fatherland-All Russia (*Otechestvo-Vsya Rossiya*) in 2001. However, both campaigns were marred by restrictions on access to the media for opposition candidates and the use of administrative impediments to hamper or preclude opposition campaigns. The irony was that in all probability neither Putin nor United Russia had any need of such assistance in amassing genuine electoral victories. International criticism of Russian electoral practices was relatively mild, but Putin was reportedly highly offended.

The conflict in Chechnya dragged on into Putin's second term, with Moscow gradually winning what had become a war of attrition. There were occasional spectacular incidents, such as the assassination of the pro-Moscow Chechen leader Ahmad Kadyrov. However, leaders of the Chechen resistance such as Aslan Maskhadov or Shamil Basayev were captured or killed, and rebel forces driven out or dispersed. Chechnya has been relatively quiet since installation of Kadyrov's son Ramzan as the pro-Moscow leader of local Chechen forces. However, since 2005 other small republics with significant Muslim populations in the north Caucasus experienced increasing unrest, and there are real questions about the long-term stability of the region.

In foreign policy, Putin was more and more at odds with the United States and its European Allies, although he did not break with them completely. Putin cultivated new relationships in the Middle East and Asia, most notably with China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Cooling somewhat in his willingness to assist the U.S. in its post-9/11 efforts in Afghanistan, Putin sparked a 2005 SCO resolution calling for U.S. withdrawal from the bases it had been using in Central Asia since 2001. Putin nonetheless continued on-again, off-again cooperation with the U.S. on key issues such as walking back the nuclear programs of North Korea and Iran.

In domestic affairs, the picture grew more and more bleak. Independent broadcast media outlets were gradually eliminated, usually by the Kremlin using intimidation to force a sale to a friendly owner who could be relied on to maintain a pro-Kremlin editorial policy. Print and internet media remained relatively freer, but dissent and open criticism were discouraged. Key energy, strategic materials, transport, and arms firms were also re-nationalized step by step, with the new owners almost invariably coming from Putin's narrow circle of advisors and Petersburg friends in the Kremlin. Russia's electoral laws were re-written to abolish single mandate districts and to raise the threshold for entry into parliament to seven percent, thereby making more difficult the survival of opposition parties. Finally, the freedom to assemble and demonstrate was

discouraged for opposition groupings. Unauthorized rallies met with police violence, and were also attacked by nationalist and youth groups, some of which were organized and sponsored by Putin's Kremlin staff.

Putin's most bitter clashes with western colleagues came over the so-called "color revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in 2003-2005. Putin was deeply offended when western pressure was a key factor in prompting Moldova to reject a Moscow-brokered political settlement with its separatist Transnistrian region conditioned on accepting a long-term Russian troop presence. At the same time American educated Mikhail Saakashvili ousted President Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia's "Rose Revolution," after a stolen election. The bitterest pill for Moscow was the success of western-supported local forces in denying Moscow-backed Viktor Yanukovich victory in Ukraine's 2004 presidential elections, the so-called "Orange Revolution." When Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev fell from power after popular protests in Bishkek in early 2005 – the so-called "Tulip Revolution" – Russian leaders became convinced that Western states were using democracy promotion and NGOs in a concerted campaign against Russia and its foreign policy interests. This suspicion still pervades Russia's perception of western motives and actions, and contributed heavily to Putin's stunning diatribe at the February 2007 Munich annual security conference.

Putin's angry speech at the *Wehrkunde* in front of Chancellor Merkel and Secretary of Defense Gates was followed by the end of the year with a series of testy, sometimes even belligerent assertions of Russian positions and prerogatives. For example, Putin announced suspension of Russia's participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, while complaining of the failure of western partners to ratify the Adapted CFE accord. Russia's relations with the European Union and a number of individual EU states fared little better during this period. By the end of the year the EU was considering measures limiting foreign investment in key industries in EU states, an act directed squarely against Moscow and resulting from ham-handed Russian economic tactics and complaints during the course of the year. It seemed hard to see how Russia-U.S. and Russia-EU relations could get any worse.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand the basic political, economic, social, demographic, and security context and challenges for President Yeltsin and for President Putin.
2. Assess and evaluate the fundamental issues and debates in Russian politics, and domestic and foreign policies in Russia during Yeltsin's and Putin's administrations.
3. Assess the political usage of significance of the Cold War legacy in the development of foreign and security policy.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. What were the major political, economic, foreign policy, and security challenges facing Yeltsin at the beginning of his term? How they were different from 1999, when Putin was appointed by Yeltsin as an acting Prime Minister?
2. What were the effects of the rise of the so-called “oligarchs” on the Russian economy, society, and politics?
3. What were the effects of the settlement to the First and the Second Chechen Wars on Russian domestic policy, military reform, and security policy?
4. What were the major concerns and features of Russian security policies during Yeltsin’s time?
5. What was the role of NATO expansion and activism in the Balkans in the growing estrangement between Russia and the West?
6. What were the effects of Putin’s policies on democratic institutions, political pluralism, and individual liberties in Russia?
7. What were the chief reasons for Russia’s growing hostility to and estrangement from the West, in particular the United States, during Putin’s second term?
8. What were the reasons for military modernization? How was the whole security system re-established? How did Russia created the “alternative” reality of the world view?

### **Required Readings** (105 pages)

Keir Giles, *Ruling Russia*, Ch. 5, The Individual and the State, Ch. 6 in: *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (London: Chatham House, 2019) pp. 71-99 (28 pages).

Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Vintage, 2016), pp. 71-103 (32 pages), pp. 177-222 (77 pages).



“Whoever doesn’t miss the Soviet Union has no heart. Whoever wants it back has no brain.”  
*Vladimir Putin.*

## Topic Introduction

Kremlin divides the world into the spheres of influence. The Russia’s concept of sphere of “privileged interests” relates to the former Soviet space, including Baltic States, despite the fact that they have become the members of EU and NATO. In Russian rhetoric the countries of former Soviet Union are also called as “near abroad.” This emphasizes Russia’s perception of their belonging to Russia’s orbit, regardless of their geopolitical alignment and the preferred vector of development.

Russia’s near abroad approach, which was first expressed in the beginning of 1990s affirms the right to intervene in the former Soviet republics. The methods of interference include covert actions, economic and other pressures such as the lever of cheap energy supplies, the diverse techniques of information warfare, presence of Russian military bases, and the threat of limited military intervention. Since then, there have been limited military operations in Nagorny Karabakh, Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.

In Moldova, the military conflict of 1991 resulted in the establishment of non-UN recognized self-declared quasi-state of Transnistria (officially the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic). In Georgia, two non-UN recognized self-declared quasi-states – Abkhazia and South Ossetia - were established after the 1993 Georgian-Abkhazian war and the 2008 Russo-Georgian war respectively. The war between Azerbaijan and Armenia brought to existence Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), a quasi-state controlled by Armenia and backed-up by Russian Federation. These areas are also known as post-Soviet "frozen conflict" zones.

In Ukraine, the limited Russian military operations led to annexation of Crimea and the establishment of quasi-states in Eastern Ukraine: the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) or DNR (abbreviation from Russian: *Донецкая Народная Республика*); and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) or LNR (abbreviation from Russian: *Луганская Народная Республика*). Russia’s interference brought the limited military conflict to the full-fledged war (See Topic 6).

The former Soviet space provides rich ground for testing the methods and techniques of information warfare. As a multifaceted problem requesting the defense of state and the protection of societal institutions, to counter information operations is especially difficult for the newly established states. It includes cyberattacks, disinformation campaign through mass media outlets, propaganda, and manipulation with public opinion on social media. It combines state and non-state activities either backed or sponsored by the state. It uses sophisticated methods of orchestration and blackmail. Russia’s information warfare is anything but new. What is new, though, is rapid development of advanced information capabilities and sophisticated techniques exploiting new technologies and advantages of free web space, with the purpose of their weaponization.

The first suspected Russia-backed cyberattacks erupted in Estonia and Georgia. They signaled the skyrocketing growth of importance for the issue of information security in the national security agendas. It all started when Estonian authorities decided to move a memorial to the Soviet Red Army to a position of less prominence in the capital, Tallinn, in 2007. Unveiled by

the Soviet authorities in 1947, the Bronze Soldier was originally called "Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn". For Russian speakers in Estonia he represents the USSR's victory over Nazism. But for ethnic Estonians, the Red Army soldiers were not liberators. They are seen as occupiers, and the Bronze Soldier is a painful symbol of Soviet oppression. In 2007 the Estonian government decided to move the monument from the center of Tallinn to a military cemetery on the outskirts of the city.

The decision ignited outrage in Russian-language mass media. They actively instigated protests and Russian speakers took to the streets. Protests were aggravated by false Russian news reports claiming that the statue, and nearby Soviet war graves, were being destroyed. On 26 April 2007 Tallinn erupted into two nights of riots and looting. 156 people were injured, one person died and 1,000 people were detained.

From 27 April, Estonia was also hit by major cyber-attacks which in some cases lasted weeks. Online services of Estonian banks, media outlets and government bodies were taken down by unprecedented levels of internet traffic. Massive waves of spam were sent by botnets and huge amounts of automated online requests swamped servers. The result for Estonians citizens was that cash machines and online banking services were sporadically out of action; government employees were unable to communicate with each other on email; and newspapers and broadcasters suddenly found they couldn't deliver the news. A Distributed Denial of Service Attacks (DDoS) was the predominant technic used by hacker groups.

Similarly, on August 8th of 2008, Russian land, sea and air units invaded Georgia vowing to defend what they called "Russian compatriots" in South Ossetia. Russian hackers simultaneously attacked Georgia's internet. It was the first time when Russia coordinated military and cyber action. Georgia's internal communications were effectively shut down. The attack modalities included: the Defacing of Web Sites (Hacktivism), Web-based Psychological Operations (Psyc-Ops), fierce propaganda campaigns (PC), and DDoS. In both cases, there were no concrete evidences that the attacks were carried by the Russian government. There were, though, evidences that the attacks were orchestrated by the Kremlin, and malicious gangs were simply performers.

Since the time of attacks on Estonia and Georgia, Russia's information warfare advanced significantly. Direct political orchestration led to the development of intricate influence system, based on utilization of various informational tools and methods. The Russian information operations system, re-enforced by Russia's form of centralized government control, allows to launch operations with greater speed and brazenness than most analysts believe is possible in the West. Development of a counter strategy is the most urgent task now.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand the Russia's concepts of "privileged interests," "near abroad," and "frozen conflicts;" their real-world implementations; and repercussions.
2. Examine diverse methods of Russia's interference in the former Soviet space.
3. Understand the complexity of informational warfare as a multifaceted problem requiring total defense of state and societal institutions.

4. Assess Russia's usage of information tool as instrument of power.
5. Evaluate importance of the differentiated forms of Russia's informational warfare.
6. Assess vulnerabilities and understand opportunities in development of successful counter strategy.

### **Questions for Consideration**

1. What are the concepts of "near abroad" and the "sphere of privileged interests"?
2. Although information warfare is not new, why it is increasingly getting prominence as a tool of Russia's foreign and security policy?
3. Have Europe and the United States missed the beginning of Russia's information warfare? Why do you think so?
4. What are successful methods of countering information war? How would you describe winning in information warfare?
5. What are the most difficult areas to counter Russia's informational assault – mass media, social media, cyberattacks, manipulations, propaganda, disinformation or other forms?
6. Do you assess the prospective development of an international "informational law" may resolve the issue of information warfare?

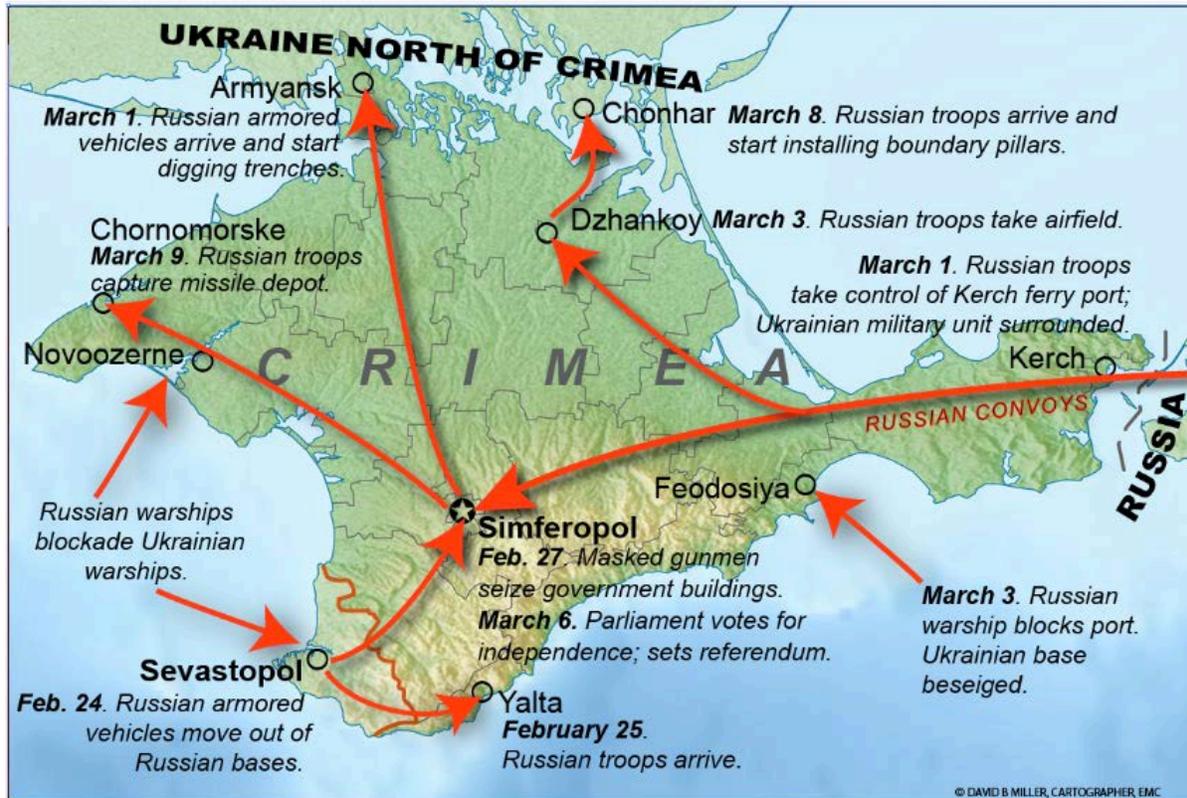
### **Required Readings (94 pages)**

1. Andrew Monaghan, *Dealing with Russians* (Cambridge, U.K., Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019), pp. 15-49 (34 pages).
2. Angela Stent, *Russia and its "Near Abroad,"* Ch. 6 in: *Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest* (New York: Twelve, 2019), 141-174 (33 pages).
3. Responding to Russia: Deterring Russian Cyber and Grey Zone Activities, [Featuring: John P. Carlin, Partner, Morrison Foerster; former Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division, U.S. Department of Justice Rick Ledgett, Former Deputy Director, National Security Agency James N. Miller Jr., Co-Chair, Defense Science Board Task Force on Cyber Deterrence; former Under Secretary for Policy, U.S. Department of Defense] Transcript, Washington, D.C.: CSIS Headquarters, Friday, March 16, 2018,
  - a. [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180316\\_Responding\\_Russia\\_Grey\\_zone.pdf?C6VA33CdIOqPKkCx7vykJ6NGHIW004ny](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180316_Responding_Russia_Grey_zone.pdf?C6VA33CdIOqPKkCx7vykJ6NGHIW004ny) (27 pages.)

## Topic 6

### Russia and Ukraine

Tuesday, 20 October, 2020



"I would be warning against using a chess analogy because in chess we have rules, and clearly Putin doesn't care about rules because what he's been doing now in Ukraine, it violates international law and international treaties Russia has signed before."

*Former Soviet chess master Garry Kasparov, March 2014.*

"Our cooperation has suffered serious damage due to criminal annexation of the Crimea and armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. This poses a threat to peace in Europe."

*Angela Merkel said at a joint press conference in Moscow, 2015, May 11.*

## Topic Introduction

Ukrainian President Yanukovich's unexpected decision in November 2013 to postpone signing of an Association Agreement with the EU, announced after a sudden visit to Moscow and consultation with Putin, touched off domestic political turmoil in Ukraine which ultimately brought regime change in Kiev, war with Russia, and the collapse of the post-Cold War European security order. Putin had been warning for months that Moscow saw the impending EU agreement with Ukraine as a serious threat to important Russian interests, but apparently few

outside Russia were listening. Putin offered Yanukovich some \$15 billion in loans and subsidies as an alternative to the closer relationship with Brussels. It was not clear what other terms of persuasion or coercion Putin used in private, but they were sufficient to sway the Ukrainian leader's decision.

Almost immediately after Yanukovich announced his decision, protesters began to gather in Kiev's main square, the *maidan nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square, or the "*Maidan*"), in a seeming replay of the Orange Revolution nine years earlier. In contrast to events in 2004-2005, relatively early in the course of the protests Ukrainian authorities attempted to use force to clear the Maidan of demonstrators. This action backfired, as the protests drew new adherents from inside the country and far greater international support. By January 2014 the peaceful protests were transformed into sporadic fighting between authorities and organized opponents of the regime. After an upsurge in violence in which almost one hundred persons on both sides were killed by unknown snipers, EU and Russian representatives reached a deal with the government and protest leaders for early presidential elections in December 2014.

However, when opposition negotiators brought the deal to the *Maidan* on the evening of February 21 they were shouted down by radical protestors. In a series of events during the night of February 21-22, the government collapsed, security forces abandoned the regime, and Yanukovich fled Kiev, eventually to Russia. On February 22 the Ukrainian parliament (the Rada) approved Yanukovich's removal, and replaced him and his government with a temporary administration drawn from the ranks of the parliamentary opposition and some Maidan leaders.

The revolution in Kiev occurred while Vladimir Putin and his colleagues were basking in warm reviews of the final competitions and closing ceremonies of the Sochi Olympics. However, in less than a week he responded to the upheaval in Ukraine by sending unmarked Special Forces into Crimea to assist Russian Black Sea Fleet naval forces and local authorities sympathetic to Russia in seizing control of the peninsula. Ukrainian troops in Crimea were surprised, disarmed, and allowed to leave Crimea or join the Russian army. A large percentage chose the latter option. Russian forces and Moscow loyalists organized a referendum on the status of Crimea on March 16, and on March 18 Putin asked the Russian parliament to approve a request, ostensibly stemming from the referendum, to annex Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia.

Putin's March 18 address also suggested that Moscow had further designs on large portions of Ukraine in which substantial numbers of ethnic Russians or Russian speakers resided. While Ukraine held early elections to choose a new parliament and a new President, Petro Poroshenko, Russia attempted to destabilize large portions of southern and eastern Ukraine. These efforts bore fruit only in the Donbas, Lugansk and Donetsk provinces, a heavily Russian and Russophone mining and metallurgical region bordering on Russia. By mid-summer 2014 Donetsk and Lugansk had declared themselves "independent republics," eerily reminiscent of Transnistria in Moldova, and local fighters assisted by Russian "volunteers" were at war with Ukrainian armed forces.

The EU, U.S., and much of the international community responded to the crisis in Ukraine, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the war in eastern Ukraine with shock and condemnation. Sanctions initially placed on Moscow in response to its seizure of Crimea were intensified after

the shoot-down of a Malaysian Airlines passenger 747 over Donetsk oblast, apparently by rebel fighters using a Russian anti-aircraft system and possibly with Russian assistance. Sanctions on Russia have been intensified and renewed several times since that time.

Despite the confusion following the February revolt and years of neglect and deterioration, the Ukrainian armed forces gradually improved their operations and by August 2014 were beginning to retake much of the territory held by the rebels in Donetsk and Lugansk. At that point Moscow stepped in, sending in significant numbers of regular Russian troops (without acknowledging the fact), turning back the Ukrainian forces, and stabilizing the rebels' military position.

International efforts to stop the conflict began at almost the same time as the fighting. An April meeting of U.S. Secretary of State Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov produced agreement on some general principles for resolving the conflict, but implementation proved elusive. Putin met newly-elected Ukrainian President Poroshenko in Normandy at the seventieth anniversary of D-Day, along with French President Hollande and German Chancellor Merkel. From this encounter, the so-called "Normandy format" for resolving the conflict evolved. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) established two missions in Ukraine to monitor the conflict, but these monitors were neither empowered nor able to stop the fighting.

A ceasefire was finally agreed in OSCE-brokered negotiations which included Ukraine, Russia, and the Ukrainian rebels in a meeting of the Normandy participants in Minsk, hosted by a newly cooperative and responsible Belarussian President Lukashenko. The Minsk accords also called for the rebel regions to be accorded some sort of special status within Ukraine, a bitter pill for Ukrainian leaders familiar with the long-unresolved Transnistria conflict in neighboring Moldova. The first Minsk accords collapsed in the course of intense fighting between Ukraine and the rebels, aided by Moscow, in the winter of 2014-2015. The same participants gathered in Minsk in February 2015, and reached a similar set of accords, known as Minsk II. These were to be implemented by the end of 2015. The agreement didn't work. Zero of the Minsk agreement provisions have been fully realized.

In 2016, then-German Foreign Minister Steinmeier proposed a simplified version of the Minsk agreements during talks with his colleagues from France, Ukraine and Russia. It included holding elections in the occupied territories under Ukrainian legislation and the supervision of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). If OSCE deems these elections free and fair, then the special status of these regions will kick in and Ukraine will receive its borders back. The formula wasn't written down and was swiftly forgotten.

After Ukraine's presidential elections, held on April 21, 2019, the situation changed. Newly elected President Zelensky made ending the war in Donbas one of his top priorities and promised fast results. The last Normandy Summit was held in Paris on December 9, 2019. The Steinmeier Formula was mentioned again as a possible part of the modified Minsk II agreements. The December 2019 Paris talks did not bring the mechanism for stopping the war, but it was the first attempt of Ukraine and Russia to renew talks after three years of break. The Russia's agreement to restore communication with Ukraine was dependent on two major sets of factors: the deepening aggravation results of Western sanctions on Russian economy and Russia's desire to

finish construction of Nord Stream-2 and TurkStream despite of the U.S. opposition. On the sidelines of Paris Talks the continuation of natural gas supply via territory of Ukraine and signing a new gas contract between Russia and Ukraine from January 1, 2020, was one of the most important questions for Russia seeking to not worsen its relationships with Germany, and other leading countries of the EU.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand Russia's attitude toward Ukraine's prospective closer association with the European Union and the reasons for Russian objections.
2. Assess the reasons for Russia's intervention in Ukraine, in particular the seizure and annexation of Crimea and support for the rebel provinces of Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine.
3. Assess the consequences for the European political and security order of Russia's actions in Ukraine and the West's responses.
4. Assess the prospects for future relations between Russia and the major Western powers, in particular the U.S., NATO, and the EU.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. Why did Moscow object to Ukraine's prospective Association Agreement with the EU?
2. What were the most important factors and events in the domestic Ukrainian political crisis of 2013-2014 which motivated Putin to intervene in Crimea and eastern Ukraine?
3. To what extent were Russia actions in Ukraine specific to conditions and events in that country, and to what extent do they constitute a broader threat?
4. What are the implications of Russia's actions in Ukraine and Putin's statements for the regional and global post-Cold War security orders and regional and global stability?
5. To what extent do domestic Russian conditions and politics help explain Putin's actions in Ukraine?

## **Required Readings** (47 pages plus a reading of your choice)

Michael McFaul, From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), pp. 393-408 (15 pages)

Angela Stent, "The Past is Always Changing," Ch. 7 in: Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), 175-207 (32 pages).

Address by President Vladimir Putin, March 18, 2014, 14 pages. (pdf).

Address by President Vladimir Putin to the United Nations General Assembly, September 28, 2015, 10 pages. (pdf).

Russian National Security Strategy, December 2015. (29 pages)

<http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>

Eugene Rumer, “Russia and the Security of Europe” (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016) (43 pages)

[http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP\\_276\\_Rumer\\_Russia\\_Final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_276_Rumer_Russia_Final.pdf)

**OR**

Kimberly Marten, “Reducing Tensions between Russia and NATO” (New York, Council on Foreign Relations) 2017 (38 pages)

[https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/03/CSR\\_79\\_Marten\\_RussiaNATO.pdf](https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/03/CSR_79_Marten_RussiaNATO.pdf)

**OR**

Eric Edelman and Whitney Morhan McNamara, “U.S. Strategy for Maintaining a Europe Whole and Free” (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2017) (51 pages)

[http://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/CSBA6235\\_%28EDS\\_Europe\\_Report%29v2\\_web.pdf](http://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/CSBA6235_%28EDS_Europe_Report%29v2_web.pdf)

## Topic 7

### Russia and Europe

Tuesday, 27 October, 2020



“Hackers are free people, just like artists who wake up in the morning in a good mood and start painting. The hackers are the same. They would wake up, read about something going on in interstate relations and if they feel patriotic, they may try to contribute to the fight against those who speak badly about Russia.”

*Putin, speaking to international media at an economic forum in St Petersburg, was answering a question about allegations Moscow might try to interfere in this year’s German elections, Reuters, June 1, 2017.*

“The eastward expansion of NATO is a mistake and a serious one at that. Nevertheless, in order to minimize the negative consequences for Russia, we decided to sign an agreement with NATO.”

*Boris Yeltsin, March 1997, at a news conference with U.S. President Bill Clinton after their summit.*

“I told NATO, the Americans, the Germans, don’t push us towards military action. Otherwise there will be a European war for sure and possibly world war.”

*Boris Yeltsin said in a meeting broadcast on Russian television, April 9, 1999, as reported by the Guardian.*

## Topic Introduction

From his return to power in 2012, Putin’s foreign and security policy has been marked by steady criticism of the post-Cold War international order created and still largely dominated by the major Western powers, in particular the United States. He accused NATO of exporting “missile and bomb democracy” and complained that “The Americans have become obsessed with the idea of becoming absolutely invulnerable. This utopian concept is unfeasible both technologically and geopolitically, but it is the root of the problem. By definition, absolute invulnerability for

one country would in theory require absolute vulnerability for all others. This is something that cannot be accepted.”

Putin professed readiness to cooperate with European and North American partners, but complained that they would not meet Russia halfway. In early 2012 Putin still explicitly referred to Russia as “an inalienable and organic part of Greater Europe and European civilization. Our citizens think of themselves as Europeans.” Putin was clearly frustrated by Europe’s failure to reciprocate his desire for a “common economic and human space from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.” Given the apparent unwillingness of Europe to integrate undemocratic Russia, Putin insisted on his own Eurasian integration project, the Eurasian Economic Union. He explained to a foreign audience in late 2012 that he was explicitly using the EU as a “reference model.” Putin particularly complained where he thought Russia was not being treated as an equal by Europe, such as the EU’s forcing of the third energy package on Russian firms and the failure to grant Russian citizens visa-free travel to EU countries. Putin particularly complained of actions and programs such as missile defense which harmed Russia’s interests and eroded Russian security.

Meanwhile Russian defense and security officials increasingly cast the United States and NATO as threats to Russia’s security. Russia’s military doctrine and foreign policy concept were adjusted to reflect the importance of the “near abroad” to Russian security, stability, and prosperity, and to interpret western presence and activities in this region as unfriendly and dangerous for Russia. Many non-official Russian experts and pundits increasingly claimed that Washington’s ultimate goal was regime change in Russia itself.

The crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea abruptly transformed Russia’s troubled relationship with the West into confrontation and conflict. The Russian Foreign Ministry’s 2016 Foreign Policy Concept (which reportedly closely reflected Putin’s thinking) asserted that:

“Systemic problems in the Euro-Atlantic region that have accumulated over the last quarter century are manifested in the geopolitical expansion pursued by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) along with their refusal to begin implementation of political statements regarding the creation of a common European security and cooperation framework, have resulted in a serious crisis in the relations between Russia and the Western States. The containment policy adopted by the United States and its allies against Russia, and political, economic, information and other pressure Russia is facing from them undermine regional and global stability, are detrimental to the long-term interests of all sides and run counter to the growing need for cooperation and addressing transnational challenges and threats in today’s world.”

Russia responded defiantly to international condemnation and sanctions. Moscow developed a narrative to the effect that what had occurred in Ukraine was a right-wing, neo-fascist coup, supported by western advocates of “color revolutions” as a means of reducing Russian influence and power. Putin adopted an economic policy of import substitution to respond to international sanctions, and retaliated with his own set of restrictions on food and other imports from the EU. The sanctions and an abrupt drop in world energy prices in late 2014 produced a brief economic crisis in Russia, as the ruble dropped sharply against the Euro and the dollar. However, deft

management of the currency and the budget seem to have brought Russia through the worst of these economic difficulties, although economic prospects still do not seem to be particularly bright.

In a lengthy diatribe against the post-Cold War order, annually delivered at meetings with the foreign experts of the so-called “Valdai Club”, Putin clearly rejected integration of Russia with the West, whether it be NATO, the EU, perhaps the OSCE, or any other Western-dominated structures. His references to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and BRICS suggested a separate but equal Russia-centric integration system as a counterpart to the political and security structures such as NATO and the EU which grew up in Europe after 1990. Putin seemed to dismiss the post-Cold War settlement, based upon documents such as the Charter of Paris, the Copenhagen Document, the CFE Treaty, and the 1992 Helsinki Document. His references to the post-World War II settlement, which produced a bipolar world, and to the Helsinki Final Act (but without mention of human rights), point to a view of a new world order in which Europe might well be divided into rival camps, but within which Russia would have a recognized, respected, influential place.

Moscow’s relationship with the West continues to be complicated, and apparently in flux. Meetings of the NATO-Russia Council resumed in 2016, but so far without serious substantive results. The EU-Russia relationship remains largely on hold, in particular given German-led solidarity on the Ukrainian question. Moscow overtly and covertly continues efforts to split the West, in particular through support for right-wing populist movements and parties in Europe, cyberattacks, manipulation with social media, and Russia’s use of energy as a political weapon.

Manipulation of supply and prices has enabled Russia to threaten and “blackmail” its neighbors both economically and politically. West Europeans, too, have come to realize that depending on Russia for the lion’s share (in some cases, nearly 100%) of their natural gas is a recipe for less-than-optimal outcomes. The United States has worked with European countries for the last two decades to ensure diversity of the suppliers of energy and diversity of the means of its delivery. That is, the United States is making progress with European countries and companies to generate sources of energy other than Russia and is working to incentivize other countries and companies to build, buy, and own the pipelines that transmit the oil and gas. Breaking the monopoly on the sources of energy and the monopoly on the means of transmission means that Europeans will have alternative providers to bargain with.

The diversification projects and the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by American firms was heavily contended by Russia. The Russia’s state-run oil and gas giant Gazprom initiated the construction of Nord Stream – 2. The pipeline has become the last attempt to advance the broad range of Russia’s interests in Europe and to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its European partners.

Russia is now seeking additional markets for its energy commodities and continues to push intensely for long-term supply contracts (and pipeline projects) to ensure its presence in European energy markets. As with the U.S. economy, global growth, and other important developments, much depends on the price of oil and gas. Russia continues to boast the largest

known gas reserves in the world and remains the second-largest producer of fossil fuels. It still supplies about a third of Europe's gas and oil, and it is the fastest-growing supplier to China.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand the priorities of Russian foreign and security policy in Europe.
2. Evaluate the fundamental issues and debates in contemporary Russian domestic politics and their significance and likely effects on Russian foreign and security policies.
3. Assess the sources and credibility of Moscow's claims that NATO enlargement to Russia's borders constitute threats to Russian security.
4. Examine Russia's methods of splitting the Western countries within the NATO and EU.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. What are the major foreign policy, defense, and security challenges facing the current Putin administration?
2. How have domestic political conditions and considerations affected Russia's foreign policy, defense, and security policies?
3. To what extent do the security threats identified by the current Russian administration correspond to threats perceived and identified by past administrations, and to the real threats to Russia as perceived from outside?
4. What are the prospects for NATO-Russia relations?
5. How Russian policy towards the EU is different from NATO-Russia policy?
6. What methods are used by Russia to influence European policies?

## **Required Readings** (96 pages)

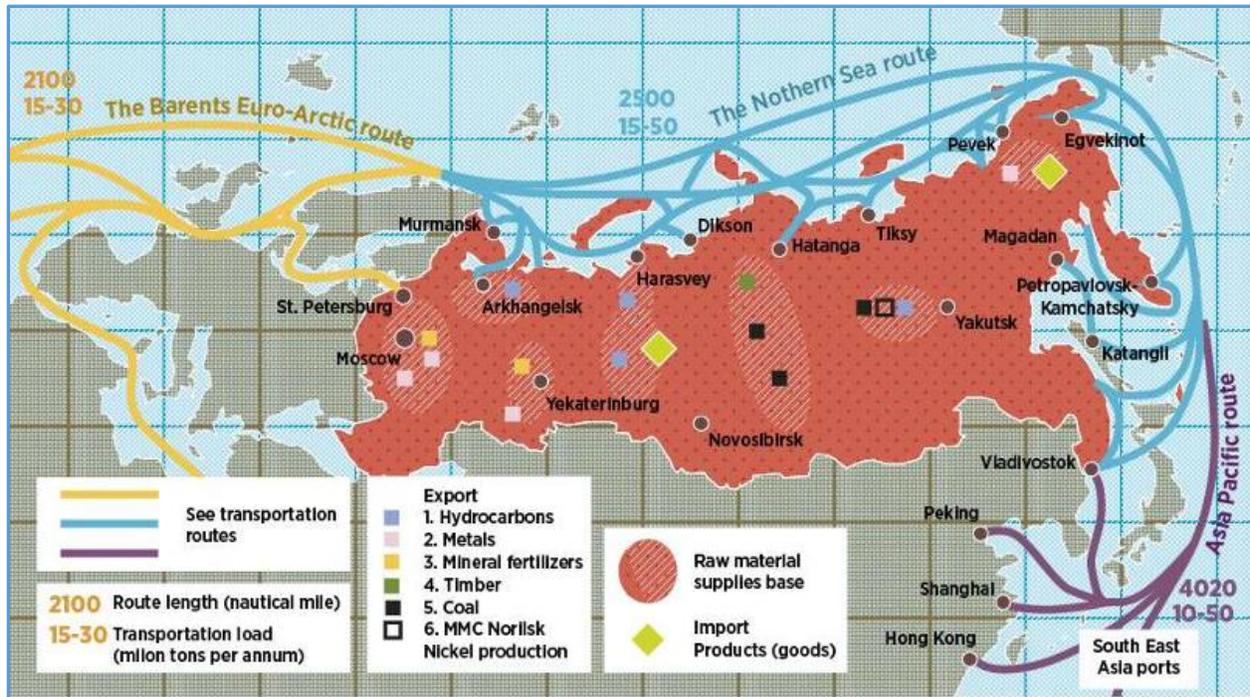
Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016), The Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Russian Federation, [https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248)

Angela Stent, Ambivalent Europeans, Ch. 3, Russia and Germany, Ch. 4, The "Main Opponent": Russia and NATO, Ch. 5 in: Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 44-140 (96 pages).

## Topic 8

### Russia and China

Tuesday, 3 November, 2020



“Russia is ready to host a meeting of the G7/G8 group of nations, and would welcome a wider format featuring Turkey, India and China.”

*Russian President Vladimir Putin, a plenary session of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia September 5, 2019.*

### Topic Introduction

The relations of Russia and the Soviet Union with China have undergone massive changes in the last hundred years. At the beginning of the Bolshevik era, the Soviet Union made a concerted effort to improve relations with China by nullifying Russian-Chinese treaties that had codified unequal privileges for Russia in China. The USSR in this period strongly supported the government of China in its war against the Japanese and – at the same time – provided significant support for the Chinese Communist party. After World War II, Moscow swung its support to the Chinese Communists, who took control of China in 1949.

Tensions between Mao Zedong and Nikita Khrushchev – as well as competing claims to the leadership of the international Communist movement and other disagreements – led to the famous “Sino-Soviet split” in 1960. Until the second half of the 1970s, China and the Soviet Union traded accusations of infidelity to Communist ideals, competed with one another for Third World clients, and even fought a seven-month border war in 1969. Mutual relations remained rocky and suspicious even through the Gorbachev era.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and after the perceived chaos of the Yeltsin years, Russia and China continued to work to define the nature of their relationship. Russia is an established power that is not satisfied with the current world order. China is a rising power that will seek to enrich itself in the current world order and may ultimately wish to undermine it. Both powers share an interest in limiting U.S. power and influence in their immediate neighborhood.

Russia-China relations will represent a very significant element of the global context in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After the Ukraine crisis, Russia and China enhanced their relationship, partly as a response to Western sanctions on Russia and partly as a result of massively increasing Chinese energy needs. The interplay of Russia and China (both are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council) on such issues as Iran and North Korea calls for intense attention from the United States and careful calculation of their interests and ours.

Military ties between Russia and China have increased significantly in recent years. There are all reasons to expect their deepening in key dimensions in coming years, including regional security cooperation, arms sales, military exercises, and defense dialogues. Sino-Russian security cooperation presents challenges to U.S. interests, including to the regional security balance, U.S.-led sanctions, and U.S. military freedom of action and access. These challenges would grow if China and Russia were to form a full-fledged defense alliance.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand Russia’s and China’s current national interests and objectives in their mutual relationship.
2. Identify U.S. interests in the Russia-China relationship.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. What are the prospect for Russia-China relations and how can the United States take advantage of the current situation to further its interests?
2. Are there areas where long-term U.S. interests converge with either Russia’s or China’s? Should we be thinking of re-orienting our national-security strategy in a particular direction?
3. Can Russia and China form a defense alliance? What are conditions for this?
4. What role does energy play in Sino-Russian cooperation?

5. How the “Polar Silk Road” shape a new security reality in Arctic region?

### **Required Readings (77 pages)**

Alexander Lukin, China and Russia: The New Rapprochement (Cambridge, U.K., Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018), pp. 67-95 (28 pages).

Angela Stent, Putin’s World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 208-234 (26 pages).

Fu Ying, “How China Sees Russia,” *Foreign Affairs*, (Jan-Feb 2016),  
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-12-14/how-china-sees-russia>  
(9 pages)

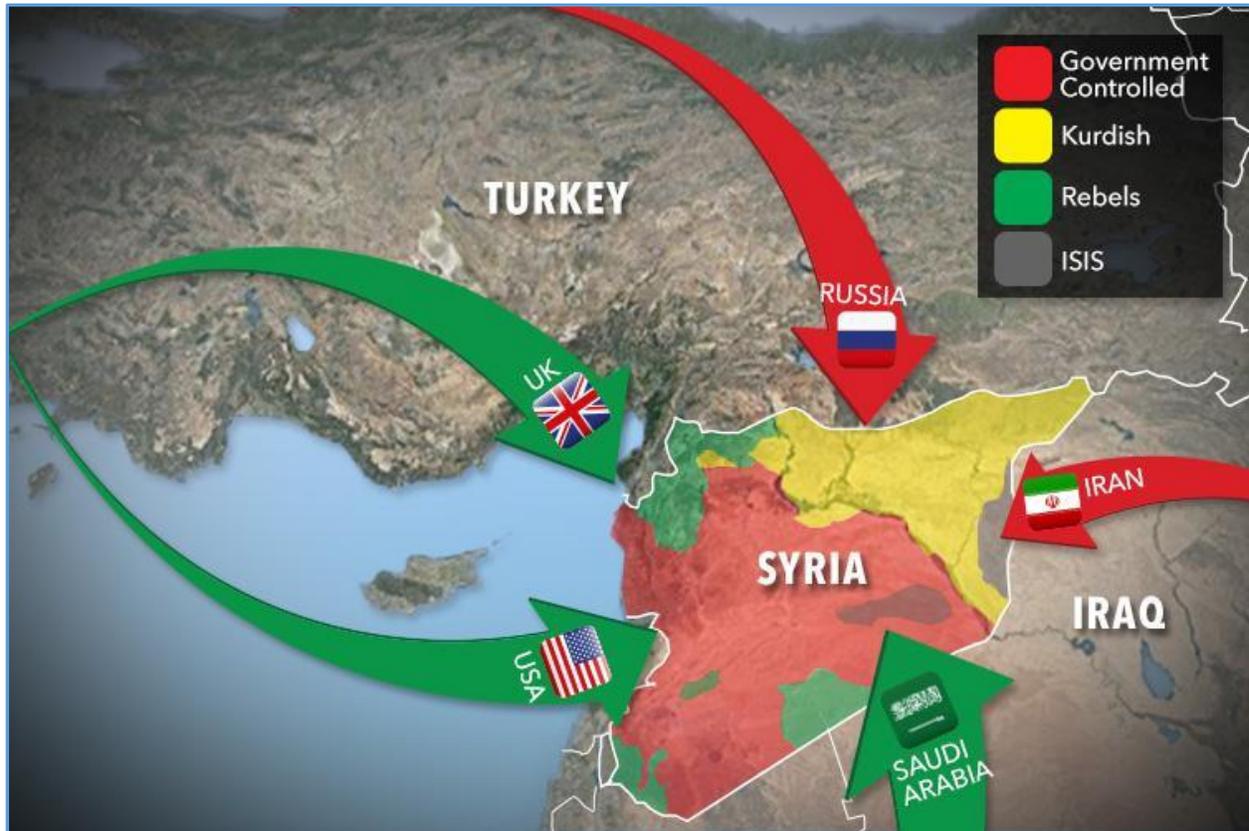
Geir Flikke, “Sino-Russian Relations: Status Exchange or Imbalanced Relationship?” *Problems of Post-Communism*, (May-Jun 2016), retrieved at  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10758216.2016.1163227>  
(11 pages)

Jamil Anderlini, China and Russia’s dangerous liaison, *Financial Times*, 8 August 2018,  
<https://www.ft.com/content/1b4e6d78-9973-11e8-9702-5946bae86e6d> (3 pages).

## Topic 9

### Russia, Iran and the Middle East

Tuesday, 10 November, 2020



"The escalating tension in the region we are witnessing today is the direct result of Washington and some of its allies raising the stakes in their anti-Iranian policy. The U.S. is flexing its muscles by seeking to discredit Tehran and blame all the sins on the Islamic Republic of Iran. This creates a dangerous situation: a single match can start a fire. The responsibility for the possible catastrophic consequences will rest with the United States."

*The Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov in interview to Moscow based newspaper Argumenty i Fakty, Newsweek, July 17, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-warns-us-iran-sanctions-war-middle-east-1449797>.*

### Topic Introduction

As it has been often emphasized, Russia's relations with Iran have been complicated in the past, are complicated now, and are likely to remain complicated long into the future. There are basically two main approaches to Russian-Iranian relations.

The first is based on the assumption that the historical past and unjustified expectations prevent rapprochement between countries. Historically, Russia was viewed as an aggressor. Iran lost

significant part of its territory to the Russian empire in the early nineteenth century; Russian initiated military intervention against the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in the early twentieth century; Soviet Union supported secession in northwestern Iran, at the end of both World War I and World War II; Soviet Union and Britain occupied Iran during World War II; Soviets supported the Tudeh – the Communist Party of Iran; Soviet Union invaded and occupied Afghanistan in 1979-89; and Soviet Union supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War in 1980-88.

The second approach claims that since Iranian-American relations have remained tense and Russian-American, as well as Russian-Western, relations have been problematic, the anti-American sentiments bolster Russian-Iranian cooperation, especially through Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) dominated by Russia and China. Moreover, in 2001, Iran, Russia, and Qatar co-founded the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF). GECF members – Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela – control over 70% of the world's natural gas reserves, 38% of the pipeline trade and 85% of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) production. The three largest reserve-holders in the GECF – Russia, Iran and Qatar – together hold about 57% of global gas reserves. The GECF has been almost dormant, but intensified relations between Russia, Libya, Egypt, and Iran along with close Russia-Venezuela ties have turned it in a potentially powerful instrument.

Russia and Iran cooperate on several current issues of importance to both. These include the Iranian nuclear issue, the Bushehr nuclear reactor, and arms sales. Iran and Russia have become the Syrian government's principal allies in the conflict, openly providing armed support. In 2015, following the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement, Kremlin lifted the ban on the delivery of the S-300 missile defense system to Iran. The delivery was completed in November 2016 and was to be followed by a \$10 billion deal that included helicopters, planes and artillery systems.

Similarly in the Middle East, the Soviet Union and Russia have engaged in a long, complicated, and occasionally painful story of highs and lows. Moscow has consistently sought a role in the region, to maintain its influence, to limit American power, and to bolster its image as a global player. Events in Syria in 2013 demonstrated Putin's ambivalent, opportunistic attitude toward relations with the West, in particular the United States.

Russia's unexpected military involvement in Syria in autumn 2015 surprised many observers, even Russia experts, as did Moscow's ability successfully to project military power well beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union. The Syria intervention lessened Moscow's isolation as a result of the Crimea annexation and war in Ukraine. In particular, some military contacts were restored with NATO and the U.S., especially in order to de-conflict operations in Syria, and Secretary of State Kerry embarked upon an extended, earnest, though ultimately futile effort at cooperation with Russia to achieve a political solution in Syria and a joint campaign against ISIL. Over several years, it has become clearer that a major motive was to seek stability by propping up the failing Assad government. Other Russian motives remain obscure, although they may include hoping to demonstrate that Russia is a more reliable ally than the U.S., testing new military capabilities, and enhancing foreign arms sales by demonstrating new equipment in the field.

## Topic Objectives

1. Understand the history of and current developments in Russian involvement in the Middle East, especially with respect to Syria, Iran, and the Israel-Palestine issue.
2. Examine Russia's approach to the Middle East and assess the prospects.

## Questions for Consideration

1. How does Russia view Iran? What are major approaches to Russia-Iran cooperation?
2. What are the prospect for Russia-Iranian relations and how can the United States take advantage of the current situation to further its interests?
3. Why did Russia intervene in Syria and what have been the major results of this intervention?
4. How has the role of Russia changed in the Middle East?

## Required Readings (83 pages)

Michael McFaul, From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), pp. 330-358 (28 pages)

Angela Stent, The New Power Broker: Russia and the Middle east, Ch. 10 in: Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 258-292 (36 pages).

Vitaly Naumkin, Nikolay Soukhov, Vasily Kuznetsov, and Irina Zvyagelskaya, "The Middle East in a Time of Troubles: Traumas of the Past and Challenges of the Future," Valdai Discussion Club, August 2016, pp. 6-8 and 23-31, <http://valdaiclub.com/files/11592/> (11 pages).

Dmitri Trenin, "Russia and Iran: Historic Mistrust and Contemporary Partnership," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 2016, <http://carnegie.ru/2016/08/18/russia-and-iran-historic-mistrust-and-contemporary-partnership-pub-64365> (8 pages).

# Topic 10

## Russia and Northeast Asia

Tuesday, 17 November, 2020



“Putin approaches the Asia-Pacific from a global perspective. The region matters principally to the Kremlin because it is central to world order — and disorder — in the twenty-first century. It is in the Asia-Pacific where geopolitical rivalries will be most intense, as exemplified by the growing strategic confrontation between the United States and China. The Asia-Pacific will be at the heart of global economic growth and competition. And it is there where the battle of ideas, norms, and institutions will rage at its fiercest. If Russia is to make good on its ambitions to be a resurgent global power, it has no choice but to be actively involved in the region.”

*Bobo Lo, Once More with Feelings: Russia and the Asia-Pacific, Lowy Institute, 2019, August, p. 4.*

## Topic Introduction

Russia is an essential player in Northeast Asia. The Kremlin’s “turn to East” policy, Putin’s vision of “great Eurasia,” and Russia’s Arctic aspirations raise relations with Japan, North Korea, and China at a new level, giving them high instrumental value for Kremlin plans to increase Russia’s profile in the Pacific region and challenge the U.S. interests there.

Russia has long-established relationships with Japan. Diplomatic and commercial relations between the two empires were established from 1855 onwards. Japan and Russia participated in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China. Relations were minimal before 1855, mostly friendly from 1855 to the early 1890s, then turned hostile over the status of Korea. The two nations contested control of Manchuria and Korea, leading to Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Relations were good again 1905-1917, as the two countries divided up Manchuria and Outer Mongolia.

After the World War II, the dispute over Kuril Islands, known as the Northern Territories dispute in Japan, has become the main obstacle for Russian-Japanese relations. The USSR entered into war with Japan on August 9, 1945. The Soviet army annexed the islands later that month. Russia argues that the President Roosevelt promised Josip Stalin he could take back the Kurils in exchange for joining the war against Japan when they met in Yalta in February 1945.

In 1956, the Soviet Union and Japan signed a joint declaration on ending the state of war, however no peace treaty has been signed to date. The main stumbling block to achieving this is the status of the southern Kuril Islands: Iturup (Etorofu in Japanese), Kunashir (Kunashiri), Shikotan, and the Habomai Islands. Their status has been challenged by Japan. Russia has stated on numerous occasions that Russia’s sovereignty over the islands is beyond any doubt.

The islands are strategically important for the Russia’s year-round access to the Pacific Ocean, and therefore, to the Russia’s Pacific Fleet of warships and submarines based in Vladivostok, as the strait between Kunashir and Iturup does not freeze over in winter. The strait between Kunashir and Iturup separate the Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, the Southern Kuril Islands lie at their closest point just a few kilometers off the north coast of Hokkaido in Japan that causes its superior reconnaissance value.

The U.S.-Japan military alliance established in 1956, represents a major problem for Russia when it comes to settling the Kurils dispute. Russia agrees to fully implement a joint declaration on ending the state of war with Japan only in the context of discontinued US military presence on Japan's territory.

In Russia-North Korea relations, Russia has developed policies, which fit two rules: maintain friendly ties with Pyongyang, while closely coordinate Kremlin's policy towards North Korea with China and generally follow Beijing's lead on Korean peninsula issues. The Moscow-Beijing-Pyongyang trio has clearly emerged, with China as its core, and it has effectively negated Washington's maximum pressure campaign on the North Korea. The recent intensification of Russia-South Korea economic cooperation within the South Korean program "nine bridges" is one of the most perspective directions to watch as it shows the signs of political diversification of partnerships in the area.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand the history of and current developments in Russian involvement in the Northeast Asia, especially with respect to Japan, North Korea, and China.
2. Examine Russia's approach to the Kuril Islands dispute and prospects for its resolution.
3. Assess Russia's approach to North Korea and Russia's potential role in the denuclearization process.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. How does Russia view Japan? What are major approaches to Russia-Japan cooperation?
2. What are the prospect for the settlement of Kuril dispute? How is Russia using the dispute for its advantage? How can the United States make the most of the current situation to further its interests?
3. What role does Russia want to play with regard to North Korea? How does Russia attempt to increase its visibility on Korean peninsula?
4. What are Russia's strategic calculus in the Northeast Asia?
5. Can Russia use Northeast Asia to extend its presence in Asia-Pacific? How Russia's aspirations would affect regional dynamics?
6. Could the U.S. craft different, more effective approaches toward Russia's policies in Northeast Asia that could defend and advance U.S. interests better than our current policies?

## **Required Readings** (51 pages)

Bobo Lo, *Once More with Feeling: Russia and the Asia-Pacific*, Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2019, pp. 1-19, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/once-more-feeling-russia-and-asia-pacific> (19 pages).

Angela Stent, Wary Neighbors: Russia and Japan in the Shadow of World War Two, Ch. 9, in: Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 235-257 (22 pages).

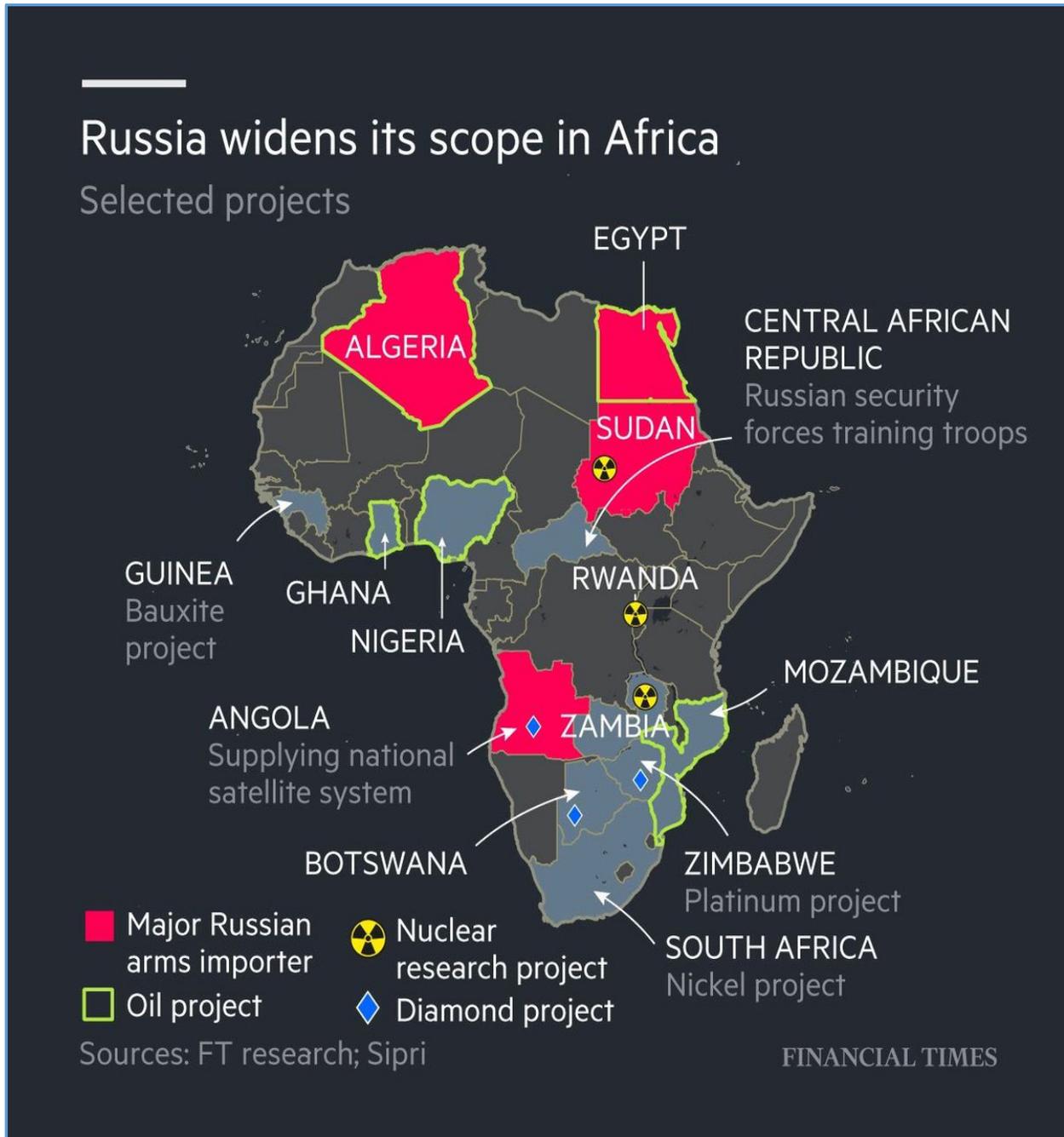
Artyom Lukin, Russia's Policy toward North Korea: Following China's Lead, 38 North: Informed analysis of events in and around North Korea, 2019, December 23, <https://www.38north.org/2019/12/alukin122319/> (6 pages).

Keith Jonson, Reid Standish, Putin and Xi Are Dreaming of a Polar Silk Road, Foreign Policy, 2018, March 8, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/08/putin-and-xi-are-dreaming-of-a-polar-silk-road-arctic-northern-sea-route-yamal/#> (4 pages).

## Topic 11

### Russia, Africa and Latin America

Tuesday, 24 November, 2020



“ (...) the cross-border and global nature of Chinese and Russian actions and influence in Africa necessitates collaboration between U.S. Africa Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, amplifying the global complexity of this issue.”

*Statement of General Thomas D. Waldhauser, United States Marine Corps, Commander, United States Africa Command before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, 7 February 2019, p. 9, [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Waldhauser\\_02-07-19.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Waldhauser_02-07-19.pdf)*

## **Topic Introduction**

Russia's return to Africa has become one of the latest trends in Kremlin's foreign and security policy. Unlike China, Russia is not capable to invest into the economies of African countries exponentially. Kremlin compensates its relatively modest trade links and limited cultural influence by robust military assistance to African nations through arms sales, security agreements, and military training programs in return for mining rights and energy partnerships. Today Russian private military companies are active in 15 African nations, according to AFRICOM. The most cited examples of Russia's increasing inroads include Central African Republic (CAR), Algeria, Libya, and Sudan, however Angola, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, and Tunisia are also involved with Russia or susceptible to its influence.

Russia's activities in the CAR evidently confirm the priority of military instrument in the Kremlin's Africa toolkit. They also reveal a pattern of Russia's involvement in Africa: Russia strengthens its influence through growing military cooperation, first of all through donations of arms. In return Russia gains access to markets and mineral extraction rights. Such behavioral algorithm allows Russia minimize investment, use private military contractors, such as the Wagner Group, to reduce cost, and to involve Russian civilians as National Security Advisors in decision making process. Under conditions of spreading this pattern on other African countries, Russia would gain military access to ports, bases, or airspace. Then prevention of full advantage of that access would be essential for the U.S. in order to keep freedom of maneuver in and around Africa.

Russia is not only becoming more and more active in Africa, it demonstrates a clear return to the Cold War tactics in Latin America. Intermittently since 2008, Russia has pursued an increased presence in Latin America through propaganda, multi-billion military arms and equipment sales, counterdrug agreements, and trade. As part of its global strategy, Russia is working to expand its presence in Latin America, largely at U.S. expense. From so-called "routine" visits to Cuba and support of Maduro's regime in Venezuela, to expansion of its activities to Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil, Russia skillfully exploits souring attitudes toward the United States throughout the region over trade and immigration issues. The deepening internal economic and social challenges facing many Latin American countries create promising conditions for Russia to advance its interests.

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand the current state of play in U.S.-Russian relations – and how we got here.
2. Understand the Russian point of view: Russia interests, Russia's perceptions of the threats and opportunities that it currently perceives.

3. Present policy options for the United States that are realistic and achievable.

## Questions for Consideration

1. What motivates Russian behavior in Africa?
2. What U.S. interests are challenged by Russian behavior in Africa?
3. What policies could the U.S. implement to address those challenges?
4. Could the U.S. craft different, more effective approaches toward Russia's policies in Africa that could defend and advance U.S. interests better than our current policies?
5. What role does Russia play in Latin America? How valid are Russia's BRICS aspirations?
6. Do Russia's interests in Venezuela intersect with the U.S. interests?

## Required Readings (64 pages)

John E. Herbst and Jason Marczak, Russia's Intervention in Venezuela: What's at stake? Policy Brief, Atlantic Council, 2019, September 12, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/russias-intervention-in-venezuela-whats-at-stake/> (14 pages).

Andrew S. Weiss, Eugene Rumer, Nuclear Enrichment: Russia's Ill-Fated Influence Campaign in South Africa, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019, December 16, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/12/16/nuclear-enrichment-russia-s-ill-fated-influence-campaign-in-south-africa-pub-80597> (9 pages).

Dionne Searcey, Gems, Warlords and Mercenaries: Russia's Playbook in Central African Republic, The New York Times, 2019, September 30, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/30/world/russia-diamonds-africa-prigozhin.html> (12 pages).

Paul Stronski, Late to the Party: Russia's Return to Africa, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019, pp. 5-27, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/16/late-to-party-russia-s-return-to-africa-pub-80056> (22 pages).

David D. Kirkpatrick, Russian Snipers, Missiles and Warplanes Try to Tilt Libyan War, 2019, November 7, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/world/middleeast/russia-libya-mercenaries.html> (3 pages).

Jideofor adibe, What does Russia really want from Africa? Africa in Focus, Brookings, 2019, November 14, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/11/14/what-does-russia-really-want-from-africa/> (4 pages)

## Topic 12

### Russia and the United States

Tuesday, 1 December, 2020



#### Topic Introduction

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Russians and Americans found much in common between their two countries. Both were continental powers, rich in natural resources, who thought they represented the highest ideals of humanity and excelled at the arts and sciences. Although Russia was officially neutral in the American Revolutionary War, it found many ways to undermine the British war effort and support the American colonies. Even in the American Civil War, Russia provided moral support for the Union.

Relations remained warm through 1917; Russia and the United States both fought against Germany, but the United States officially declared war and entered the fighting only after the Russian Tsar had been deposed in February 1917. The United States perceived a serious threat from the Bolshevik regime (not least because the Russians withdrew from the war effort), and the U.S. took part in a (relatively small and half-hearted) allied intervention in the Russian civil war (on the side of the anti-Bolshevik “whites”).

The United States withheld diplomatic recognition of the USSR until November 1933; it was the last major power to recognize the Soviet state. The early years of U.S.-Soviet diplomatic relations were tense and unsatisfying to both sides. The United States was unable to make progress on issues like the Soviet debt and the treatment of Americans in the Soviet Union.

World War II again found both countries fighting a belligerent Germany; the United States and the Soviet Union were allies from 1941 to 1945. Following the defeat of Hitler, the wartime

alliance quickly broke down as the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin sought to consolidate and expand its stranglehold on Eastern Europe. Tensions grew as the United States and Russia developed their nuclear arsenals and hardened the stand-off of the “Cold War.” Competition took place on the periphery of the two superpowers as both sides engaged in struggles to acquire additional allies and partners, and both sides fought proxy wars in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The basis of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union was “containment” – a patient strategy that foresaw the U.S. holding firm against Soviet advances while the contradictions in the Soviet system brought it down from within.

American President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary (and later President) Mikhail Gorbachev negotiated a new, less tense, more cooperative relationship as the Soviet Union restructured itself internally and took a new, less ideological approach to foreign policy. Gorbachev dismantled the Soviet empire and unleashed the forces that led to democracy in Russia and Eastern Europe and the end of state communism throughout Europe and Eurasia.

An independent, democratic Russia – under President Boris Yeltsin – sought entirely new relations with Europe, the United States, and Asia. The changes within Russia were taking place at a speed and scope that proved unmanageable, though, and the forces unleashed by Gorbachev and Yeltsin ultimately proved too harmful and too unsettling to many Russians. The rise of Vladimir Putin brought with it a new Russian prosperity and the development of a more stable Russian state and society – at the cost of democratic freedoms. Putin’s rise has also coincided with a more belligerent (some would say paranoid) relationship to neighbors and world powers.

Today, we face Russia that has violated the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Budapest Memorandum, and perhaps even the basic rules of the road of international conduct. Russia threatens our interests and those of our allies in Europe and elsewhere.

The question for policymakers today is: Faced with the new Russian threats to our interests, should the United States recraft a new strategy of “containment” toward Russia, or, alternatively, will it be by engaging Russia on the full panoply of our differences that we will find a way to reduce the Russian threat?

## **Topic Objectives**

1. Understand the current state of play in U.S.-Russian relations – and how we got here.
2. Understand the Russian point of view: Russia interests, Russia’s perceptions of the threats and opportunities that it currently perceives.
3. Present policy options for the United States that are realistic and achievable.

## **Questions for Consideration**

1. What motivates Russian behavior today?

2. What U.S. interests are threatened by Russian behavior? How effective was Russian policies worldwide? 3
3. What policies could the U.S. implement to address those threats?
4. Could the U.S. craft different, more effective approaches toward Russia that could defend and advance U.S. interests better than our current policies?

### **Required Readings** (86 pages)

Andrew Monaghan, *Dealing with Russians* (Cambridge, U.K., Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019), pp. 86-123 (37 pages).

Angela Stent, What Kind of Engagemet with Russia? Ch. 13 in: Putin’s World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019) pp. 344-363 (19 pages).

Michael McFaul, From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin’s Russia, pp. 409-428 (20 pages).

Daniel P. Vajdich, “Trump’s Russia Policy is Better than Obama’s was,” *Foreign Policy*, 14 August 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/13/trumps-russia-policy-is-better-than-obamas/> (3 pages)

Why the U.S. Will Keep Russian Sanctions on Simmer, Not Boil, Assessments, *Stratfor*, 27 August 2018, [https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-us-will-keep-russian-sanctions-simmer-not-boil#/entry/jsconnect?client\\_id=644347316&target=%2Fdiscussion%2Fembed%3Fp%3D%252Fdiscussion%252Fembed%252F%26title%3DWhy%2Bthe%2BU.S.%2BWill%2BKeep%2BRussian%2BSanctions%2Bon%2BSimmer%252C%2BNot%2BBoil%26vanilla\\_category\\_id%3D1%26vanilla\\_identifier%3D291199%26vanilla\\_url%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fworldview.stratfor.com%252Farticle%252Fwhy-us-will-keep-russian-sanctions-simmer-not-boil](https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-us-will-keep-russian-sanctions-simmer-not-boil#/entry/jsconnect?client_id=644347316&target=%2Fdiscussion%2Fembed%3Fp%3D%252Fdiscussion%252Fembed%252F%26title%3DWhy%2Bthe%2BU.S.%2BWill%2BKeep%2BRussian%2BSanctions%2Bon%2BSimmer%252C%2BNot%2BBoil%26vanilla_category_id%3D1%26vanilla_identifier%3D291199%26vanilla_url%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fworldview.stratfor.com%252Farticle%252Fwhy-us-will-keep-russian-sanctions-simmer-not-boil) (pdf) (7 pages)