



## RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN LIGHT OF THE UKRAINE CRISIS

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## Russia, the West and Ukraine: A View from Moscow

By Sergey Markedonov, Moscow

### Abstract:

Today Russia and the West face the most severe crisis in their relations since the end of the Cold War. The West accuses Russia of violating international law in Ukraine, while Russia claims that the West violated similar laws earlier in the Balkans and Middle East. Today's confrontation is not a new Cold War, but grows out of different accounts of what violates the world order and international law. Ultimately weakening Russia will not serve the interests of the US and the EU as they seek to address challenges from a rising China and growing Islamist terrorist threats. To exit the current stalemate, Russia and the West must no longer be held hostage by the Ukrainian situation, so that they can restore full diplomatic discussions.

### Russia and the West: New Challenges

The Ukrainian political crisis—defined by the change in status for Crimea and the armed confrontation in the Donbass—is the most serious and dangerous challenge for European security since the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the subsequent ethno-political conflicts in the Balkans. It has sparked the deepest confrontation between Russian and the West (USA and the European Union) since the end of the “Cold War,” marked by the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and, thus, also of one of the poles in the bipolar world of the Cold War era.

Differences between Moscow, on one side, and Washington and Brussels, on the other, existed prior to the current crisis over Ukraine. The sharpest example being the “five-day war” in the Trans-Caucasus in 2008, when the attempts by the Georgian authorities to smash the infrastructure of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia and minimize the role of Russia within the region led to the open intervention of Russia's armed forces. However, the current confrontation is different in that it is taking place against the background of the recognition of the failure of efforts by post-Soviet Russia to integrate into the Western world, while preserving its “special position” on a series of questions, especially the security of its “nearby neighborhood.” The sanctions adopted by the USA and EU, although not the only reason for the slowing rate of economic growth and financial crisis in Russia, have helped push the development of events in a negative direction.

Against this background, a “defensive mood” has developed inside Russia. Politicians and pundits, who only yesterday were considered marginal, have been transformed into essentially the chief articulators of public opinion and the spokesmen for the position of the authorities. Representatives of the authorities have begun to appeal much more frequently to both foreign policy realism with its pathos of national interests, which earlier profitably characterized the Russian diplomatic line, and an arsenal of romantic approaches,

such as appeals to the “Russian World,” the sacredness of Crimea, among others. The confrontation with the West has activated a search for foreign policy alternatives, which explains Moscow's new activeness toward China, India, Turkey and Iran across a wide range of issues, starting with military-technical cooperation and energy and finishing with humanitarian concerns.

Thanks to this deep confrontation, several topics on which Russia and the West had earlier found a *modus operandi* are no longer being given the necessary attention: Afghanistan, regulating the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and countering Islamist terrorism are chief among them. The appearance in the Middle East of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has seriously destabilized the situation in this region, which was already filled with conflicts. It is a challenge both for Russia and the West. Today, ISIL is battling against the U.S. coalition and its allies. But, at the same time, the leader of this terrorist organization Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi speaks of the need to destabilize the North Caucasus as an answer to Moscow's support for Syrian President Bashar Assad. But, even the appearance of this new common threat has not made Washington and Moscow more willing to talk.

From the point of view of the USA and its European allies, Moscow's actions have gone beyond the boundaries of international law. Announcing that Russia had violated the Budapest Memorandum (which was signed on December 5, 1994, and guaranteed Ukraine's security in connection with its joining of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) has become a common refrain in speeches by representatives of the American and European diplomatic and expert community. The Russian leadership claims that the results of the referenda in Crimea and Sevastopol make it possible to speak about the legitimacy of the “return” of the peninsula to Russia. Russia's violation of legal agreements is explained inside the country as simply doing what others (the West) have done and continue to do. The prime examples cited are the cases of the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East,

when external forces intervened in the civil war and ethno-political conflicts without the consent and participation of the United Nations.

### Confrontation without “Cold War”

Political scientists, politicians, and journalists are using the phrase “cold war” with increasingly frequency to characterize the current state of relations between the West and Russia. Can we speak of a return to a time of global confrontation or view Crimea and the Donbass as a turning point in the history of international relations? And, if so, what is the essence of today’s standoff, which, unfortunately, is getting worse with each passing day?

Today several attributes are missing from the situation for it to be legitimately characterized as a “cold war.” These include the absence of a second superpower or military bloc that can gather around itself an ideology to distinguish itself from the values of the Western world. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) cannot play the role of a Warsaw Pact for the twenty-first century, in terms of either its membership or financial-economic indicators. And, despite the authorities’ harsh rhetoric, Russia does not plan to build a “new type of society” or spread a revolutionary ideology around the world.

In comparison with the Soviet period, the geopolitical interests of Moscow are much more locally-orientated. The priority for post-Soviet Russia is the former Soviet space. And ensuring security in this part of the world is not a matter of restoring “empire,” evening the historical score, or addressing a trauma that originated from the Soviet collapse, but is rather a requirement to meet current needs. The land border between Russia and Kazakhstan is the second longest in the world (exceeding even the U.S.–Mexican border). If the security situation collapses in Afghanistan (which is more than likely with the exit of NATO from there), it will be a dangerous challenge for the Russian Federation. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimea hosted approximately 80% of the infrastructure for the Russian Black Sea fleet, one of the key elements in protecting the southern part of the country. Many ethno-political conflicts in the South Caucasus are directly connected to security problems in the North Caucasus (the Georgian–Ossetian conflict with the Ossetian–Ingush conflict, Abkhazia with situation in regions hosting a significant Adyghean population; the situation in Chechnya and Dagestan with the situation in Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge). And even where Russia is involved in resolving problems going beyond the borders of the former USSR, such as in the Middle East, Moscow is mainly focused on the security problems of the post-Soviet space (threats from radical Islamists to the Russian North Caucasus

and Volga regions, as well as neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan). These connections will exist no matter who is the Russian president.

Accordingly, the reason for today’s flare up in confrontation between Moscow and Washington / Brussels is not a “second cold war” or an ideological disagreement, but an asymmetrical perception of national priorities. Russia and the West have different accounts of what violates the world order and international law. The Americans and their allies see Russia’s actions in Crimea exclusively as a violation of post-WWII European borders. But for Moscow the violation of international law began much earlier and the Ukrainian–Crimean crisis is only part of a much larger process, beginning with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the USSR, Yugoslavia, and the expansion of NATO to the east.

The situation with Ukraine is not an argument about “who started it first.” It is a story about the absence of a real working international law and effective international arbitration for disagreements concerning the relations between the center and regions in crisis conditions. Again, as happened earlier in the Balkans or in the South Caucasus, in the current crisis there has been no consensus among leading world powers about the specific criteria for secession or preserving territorial integrity.

This duality has its roots in the years when the Cold War was ceremoniously announced over, and a single linear *de facto* project was announced for Europe and the post-Soviet space that was focused on NATO (in which, as is well known, the US is considered an important element of European security) and the European Union (a strategic partner of Washington). Interestingly, one of the main NATO “commandments”—keeping Russia out—was migrated from the Cold War era to the world that followed it. The linear project for expanding to, and incorporating, Eurasia has been implemented without including Russia as an equal partner. The West is *de facto* proposing to Moscow that Russia become one of the post-Soviet countries, with no special interests on the space of the former USSR.

But if the new Russia is not ready to bear the burden of global leadership (which it cannot do for many reasons, above all, economic and technological), the question of its “neighborhood policy” is to a significant degree a continuation of its domestic political agenda. This continuation is visible in the connections between the conflicts in the North and South Caucasus, the focus on guaranteeing security in Central Asia, and Eurasian integration as an opportunity to develop the Russian poly-ethnic project and advance its own industrial base. Of course, as the legal successor to the USSR in the UN, the Russian Federation seeks to continue to reap the benefits of its privileged position within this structure (such

as permanent membership in the Security Council) to prevent a single great power from dominating the world. And the issue here is not just anti-Americanism, but an understanding that a single power cannot achieve a real harmonization of the world.

However, Russia has not managed to achieve equal status with regard to NATO on the basis of any “special reasons” or “golden share.” Instead, the expansion in membership eastwards and all border changes made in line with the West’s linear, progressive project were welcomed; any expansion of NATO was seen as a success for democracy and a loss for the “totalitarian past,” as was the case with recognizing the independence of Kosovo, despite the conflicts, unregulated border disagreements and problems with the ethnic minorities that appeared as result. While, cases in which other players (particularly Russia) sought to impinge on existing borders were blocked. But, if in August 2008 the West was passive because Georgia did not represent a first-priority strategic interest, Ukraine became a quantitative and qualitative turning point given its wider dissatisfaction with Russian policy in the post-Soviet space. A country with the seventh largest population (even without Crimea) and second largest amount of territory in Europe is certainly a prize for Russia. Such a break in the trend of the West’s linear project for Europe was a challenge to the order which was created in Europe “after Yalta.” It is an irony that Crimea is again the focus of attention for problems of European security and international regime building.

As correctly pointed out the Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev: “The Russian elites are seeking to create a state on a durable basis which can integrate into the global economy, but at the same time defend its domestic policy from external interference. Russia will never accept the idea of NATO-centrism and a European order focused on the EU.” In this area, there is no distinction between the positions of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, in spite of what observers in Russia and the West are inclined to write to the contrary. To understand this point, it is sufficient to conduct a comparative analysis of two speeches: Yeltsin’s 1999 Istanbul speech and Putin’s 2007 Munich speech. These speeches suggest that the disagreements noted above will determine relations between Russia and the West for the short and medium term future.

### Searching for an Exit to the Dead End

Today it is not possible to speak about significant preconditions for a breakthrough in relations between Russia and the West. The USA and its allies see that the sanctions policy has played a role in weakening the social and economic position of Russia. As a result, there is a

great temptation, if not to continue the pressure, then not to actively seek out an exit from the current dead-end. In this light, at the rhetorical level “restoring Ukrainian territorial integrity” and “de-occupation” (not only of south-eastern Ukraine, but also Crimea) are priority goals. This approach minimizes Russia’s interest in the negotiation process, which look less like a diplomatic format and more an arena for making ultimatums. Through its actions during the second half of 2014, the Kremlin demonstrated that it will not allow a repeat in the Donbass of the Balkan scenarios analogous to the Croatian operations “Storm” and “Lightning” against the unrecognized Serbian Republic of Krajina, with a parallel official blocking of Belgrade from intervening to defend its co-ethnics. A repeat of this path in the current context for Russia is fraught with not only the prospect of a loss of its image on the international stage, but domestic political complications. However, the temptation to further weaken Russia could push the West toward harsher actions. Particularly when the Donbass home guard (which the US and EU see exclusively as Kremlin marionettes), in accomplishing military tasks (such as guarantees against shelling large cities) will create new political conflicts and challenges. Growing pressure from the West in both military and economic dimensions, along with Russia’s financial problems, could force Moscow to effectively admit defeat.

In this case, the US and its allies would need to practically deal with an activist East by themselves, as the focus of global politics today shifts from Europe to the Islamic world and China. But, in following such a course, the US and EU will not come up against the former members of the Warsaw Pact, which thanks to the shedding of the Soviet past, are prepared for significant costs in the expectation of future profits. In the East, the “linear project” will not work as the efforts to democratize Afghanistan and the Middle East have already demonstrated. It is possible to reduce Russia’s influence in Eurasia and soften Moscow’s voice. But how productive Russian weakness will be for the West in a changing world is a big question. Even more so, a weak Russia will not bring stability to either Europe or Asia; instead it will multiply the risks and threats for the countries of the EU and ultimately for the US, which is actively involved in guaranteeing European security.

Thus, it is possible that these background factors will force the US and its allies to correct their position in relation to Moscow. Such a trend could be strengthened by domestic Ukrainian problems, such as stagnating reforms and the growth of populist and nationalist moods and, as a result, the *de facto* and *de jure* fragmentation of the country. In any case, medium-term developments will depend on Russian reserves of strength.

To what extent is Moscow in a position to minimize the costs of the crisis and to solve the question of higher quality management both inside the country and in its foreign policy? The answers to this question depend significantly on the choice that the US and its allies make in terms of their Russia policy.

Today many experts and politicians speak about the need to reform the basis of European security in the realization of a future Helsinki-2 that would take into account the new realities after the collapse of the USSR,

the end of the Cold War, the expansion of NATO and the EU, and the appearance along the way of alternative forms of the future (including Russian approaches). However, without the end of the confrontation between Russia and the West, an exit toward some kind of compromise agreement in relation to the post-Soviet space does not seem possible. In order to overcome the existing obstacles, it is extremely important to exit the situation in which the two sides have become “hostages” of the Ukrainian crisis and restore full diplomatic discussions.

#### *About the Author*

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## ANALYSIS

### Understanding Russia

By Ulrich Kühn, Hamburg

#### Abstract

This article argues that Putin’s Russia has not become a revisionist, or anti-status quo, power with its actions in Ukraine, but is rather continuing to pursue the same status-quo-orientated approach that Russia has followed since the end of the Cold War: resisting changes to the relative distribution of power by a variety of means. It is suggested that a rethink in US policy towards Russia is needed, including by focusing more efforts on understanding the Russian position, while by no means having to share the Kremlin’s world view.

The latest “[Report on U.S.–Russia Relations](#)” by the International Security Advisory Board—, a Federal Advisory Committee established to provide the US Department of State with policy analysis and recommendations—comes to the conclusion that Russia’s actions in Ukraine “were, in part, a reaction to the fear that growing Ukrainian engagement with Western Europe could ultimately culminate in Ukraine joining NATO.” In order to address Russia’s concern, the Board suggests, amongst other minor measures, “increases to the evaluation visit quota under the Vienna Document”—a politically binding document which seeks to establish transparency for conventional forces. It is also an agreement which—when it was updated back in 2011—NATO allies described as “clearly less ambitious than we expected”.

The fact that this report can make such a recommendation points to two mutually dependent trends: (1) important segments of the U.S. foreign and security elite no longer understand contemporary Russia; (2) the United States has no sound strategy for dealing with Moscow.

#### Russia Has a Status Quo Orientation

Contemporary Russia is a status quo-oriented power. That might sound farfetched given Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and its continued incursions into South-Eastern Ukraine. But these actions are basically consistent with Moscow’s continuous orientation since the break-up of the Soviet Union. The Russian national interest, which drives that orientation, is to preserve Russian influence in the post-Soviet states and to prevent NATO from enlarging eastwards. While Moscow’s interest has remained the same over time, the strategy for achieving that end has changed. However, U.S. policy analysts have not followed the twists and turns in Russian strategy carefully enough.

Throughout much of the 1990s, the Russian strategy for dealing with enlargement was public disagreement, hopeless diplomatic initiatives to prevent the inevitable—such as references to Gorbachev’s vision of a *common European home*—, and tacit acquiescence in turn for accommodating side-payments offered by Washington. “The eastward expansion of NATO is a mistake and a

serious one at that”, stressed the then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin in 1997. However, the Russia of the 1990s was simply too weak to thwart such enlargement. When Washington offered Russia a package deal in exchange for Russian acquiescence in 1997, Moscow gave-in “in order to minimize the negative consequences for Russia.”

With the new millennium, the Russian strategy changed. Instead of spending so much time lamenting NATO’s expansion, the new leadership under Vladimir Putin concentrated on consolidating the Russian economy and Russia’s influence in its direct neighborhood—the so called *near abroad*. At the same time, Putin made clear that the *near abroad* was a sphere of vital Russian interest. Meanwhile, NATO enlargement accelerated with two further rounds.

In 2007, the Russian strategy changed again and a more assertive Russia came to the fore. The first move was the *de facto* Russian exit from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), an accord limiting the size and movements of forces in Europe. Russia’s exit came in response to NATO’s position that ratification of an updated version of the treaty was conditional on Russia withdrawing its remaining forces from three breakaway regions in Moldova and Georgia—two countries of the *near abroad*. In his notorious Munich speech in 2007, Putin accused the United States of overstepping “its national borders in every way.” When Washington pressed for NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine in 2008, the first inadvertent move by the U.S.-backed then-President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, sparked a 5-day war with Russia. The result was full Russian control over the two breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and a Georgian government which would have no chance of seeking NATO membership and faced with two formidable protracted conflicts on its official territory. Moscow had essentially closed NATO’s open door policy for Georgia.

A few months later, then-Russian President Medvedev brought forward a new diplomatic initiative: two treaty drafts for a legal overhaul of Europe’s security structures. The essential goal of the initiative was a legally binding Russian veto to further NATO enlargement. Not surprisingly, Washington and its allies rejected the initiative and moved the discussion into the weak forum of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). There, the initiative ended inconclusively in 2010.

When the protests in Ukraine resulted in the toppling of then-President Viktor Yanukovich and the prospect of Kyiv’s accession to the EU and NATO, Moscow basically reverted to the same strategy used in 2008 in Georgia. The only significant difference was that the strategic military importance of Crimea—the port of the

Russian Black Sea Fleet—led the Kremlin to annex the territory and to make it an official part of Russia. Today, Ukraine has an on-going conflict in its South-Eastern regions, which the Kremlin continues to manipulate to whatever degree Moscow feels necessary. In essence, Moscow has now closed NATO’s open-door policy for Ukraine as well.

The goal behind the shifts and changes in Russian strategy has always been to prevent further NATO enlargement to the east by employing a variety of means. Russia is concerned about preserving the status quo as it understands it. Washington sees the status quo differently and therefore views Russian moves as anti-status quo.

### It’s about Power, Stupid!

So yes, it is about old-fashioned 19<sup>th</sup> century geopolitical logic. The U.S. and Western political elites struggle to come to terms with that fact and to find an answer.

So far, the U.S. public debate on the issue “has been remarkably shallow”, as analysts Charap and Shapiro correctly assess in their latest articles.<sup>1</sup> Some commentators see no link at all between NATO enlargement and the Ukraine conflict and assume that the Putin clique is basically afraid of another “color revolution”—this time in Russia. While the latter assumption is probably correct, ignoring the impact of NATO enlargement is either naïve or a sign that important segments of the U.S. security elite no longer understand Moscow.

Others, such as John Mearsheimer, have linked Russian behavior to the old Waltzian motive of securing national survival. According to Mearsheimer, “Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia.” The logical consequence of that argumentation is that Russia would see the scenario of NATO operating from Ukrainian territory as an existential threat to its security and, thus, its survival. While Mearsheimer’s offensive-realist perspective is helpful in identifying the logic behind the Russian action by identifying the importance of NATO enlargement, it misses an important point: this is not about ultimate survival.

Since the United States and Russia enjoy nuclear parity under the New START treaty, in numerical terms of both strategic nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles, both state’s national survival against direct military attack is secure as long as both deem the other to be acting rationally, in the sense of sharing a fundamental concern for survival. Russia’s continued reference to

1 Charap, Samuel, and Jeremy Shapiro, “A New European Security Order: The Ukraine Crisis and the Missing Post-Cold War Bargain.” Paris: FRS (December 8, 2014), accessed December 28, 2014; Charap, Samuel, and Jeremy Shapiro, “How to Avoid a New Cold War”, *Current History* 113, no. 765 (2014): 265–271.

NATO enlargement as a threat to national security, as outlined in the latest Russian Military Doctrine of 2014, is thus a constant Russian re-construction of the survival motive. NATO enlargement is not a threat to Russian security, but rather to Russian power. It is a threat to the internal power of the Putin leadership because it fears that Ukraine is only a precursor to regime change in Russia. It is also a threat to external power, because it diminishes Russia's political and military influence in the *near abroad*, devalues the Russian model for the post-Soviet space in which Moscow serves as its cultural and economic center, it reduces Moscow's ability to act as the protector of the many Russians living abroad in the post-Soviet space, and it deprives Russia of its own image of its national identity as a respected major international power. While losing the Baltics to the West was hard, but acceptable in the end for Moscow; losing Ukraine, given its place in Russian historical and cultural heritage, is a no-go.

The Kremlin knows that this is not about survival, and conceals that fact behind proclaimed security concerns in order to make the West more attentive. The West, however, does not understand the Russian statements about its security-concerns—exactly because NATO *is not* a threat to Russian security—and is thus reluctant to give Russia's power-concerns serious consideration. German Chancellor Merkel's reference to the "other world" in which Putin lives, and President Obama's statement about Russia as a "regional power" epitomize the clash between these different perspectives and interests.

If Mearsheimer is right in assuming that Putin has "been thinking and acting according to realist dictates", then structural realism provides a good basis for understanding Russian concerns. Accordingly, every wave of NATO enlargement has led to a change in the relative distribution of power in Europe. The consequence would be that NATO's open-door policy is what neo-realists call an "offensively-oriented" concept that results in a change to the status quo. Since the end of the Soviet Union, Russia has continuously sought to thwart enlargement. Russian attempts to prop up the OSCE, to build a *common European home*, or the 2008 Medvedev initiative and the subsequent conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine are ultimately all geared towards cementing the status quo—that is preventing the further enlargement of NATO. Thus, it follows that Russian policy towards NATO is basically defensively-oriented because it seeks to keep the status quo.

Most contemporary American policy analysts would probably dismiss such an assessment because they neither view enlargement as an offensively-oriented concept nor as an existential threat to Russia. The problem

is that Moscow does not share this view. The consequence is that Angela Merkel is basically right. The political debates in Moscow and Western capitals do take place in different worlds. So far, Washington has ignored this fact.

### Why Cooperation Was Possible and Why It Isn't Anymore

According to some realists, such as Robert Jervis, the probability of cooperation between an offensively-oriented and a defensively-oriented power (according to the realist logic outlined above: US/West and Russia respectively) tends towards zero. This would explain why no direct Russian–American cooperation on enlargement has taken place. From the neo-realist perspective, it would be irrational for any state to accept a relative change in power to its detriment. Nevertheless, cooperation between Washington and Moscow has been possible in the recent past—repeatedly and over a long time. This seemingly contradictory fact adds another puzzling stratum to the already complicated relationship. Indeed, some U.S. policy analysts struggle to explain why cooperation was possible between the two states for such a long time. The answer is simple: because Washington paid compensation and because Russia was weak.

Throughout much of the 1990s, the Clinton administration pursued a genuine realist cooperation strategy of offsetting relative changes to the distribution of power by policies of compensation.<sup>2</sup> In other words, unofficially, but tacitly, Washington paid Moscow for acquiescence to NATO enlargement. Russian accession to the G7 and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the adaptation of the CFE Treaty and the signing of the NATO–Russia Founding Act all happened in conjunction with NATO's first round of enlargement and were all measures designed to ease Russian resentment.

By contrast, during the George W. Bush years, enlargement accelerated with two further rounds while Moscow was no longer compensated. Instead, ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty was stopped, the ABM Treaty, limiting missile defenses, was cancelled, and a new missile defense installation for European allies was

2 Realists have long argued that in order to moderate states' concerns about relative-gains, in reality, states that lose out in relative power terms to another state as a result of a change in the balance of power expect to receive approximately equal compensation from the beneficiary state. One can find this argument in foundational realist works: see Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Knopf, 1954: p. 179; and in Grieco, Joseph M., "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): pp. 501–2.

pursued. Coincidentally, the Russian economy regained strength during the 2000s.

When President Obama started his reset policy, the horse had already bolted. The only grand achievement of this policy in the security realm would be New START. On European security issues, the Obama administration failed. The reason is simple. Wherever the Obama administration pursued a policy which Moscow viewed as leading to a change in the relative distribution of power—be it a new approach on missile defense, persuading Moscow to downsize its arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons, or reviving the moribund CFE Treaty on U.S. terms—Russia resisted. Where it pursued a strategy of keeping the relative status quo, such as under New Start with its equal numerical limits, Moscow acquiesced.

The failed reset was the result of two critical long-term developments in U.S. foreign and security policy. On the one hand, during the two presidencies of George W. Bush, Washington gave-up the strategy of compensation because it saw no need to do so anymore. This was a failure of perception. On the other hand, the Obama administration seems to have forgotten the lessons from its Democratic predecessors of the 1990s. This was a failure of recollection. The reset also failed because Russia now felt it was in a relatively stronger position. Washington does not seem eager to return to the successful policies of the 1990s, and rather, as with the current conflict in Ukraine, continues to pursue a policy of punishment.

### Re-Engagement Would Mean Tough Decisions

Re-engagement with Russia—not immediately but over the mid-term—is inevitable, because Russia is too important for European and U.S. security and because the current strategy of punishment lacks the most important part to a successful strategy: a clear objective. Even though the economic sanctions are having a serious negative impact on the Russian economy, it is not clear what the objective of the sanctions is. Is it the unlikely scenario of Russia moving out of Ukraine (including Crimea)? Is it regime change? And what then? Who can say whether the next Russian leader will be more cooperative and not less rational? The U.S. security elites have failed to answer these questions. Devising a successful strategy,

which does not entail serious disruptive risks, will mean some tough decisions.

Charap and Shapiro have argued in a previous edition of the Russian Analytical Digest that the post-Cold War European security order failed to include Russia on equal terms. This is basically correct. While a clearer assessment would be that two strands of U.S. policy continued in parallel for a long time. On the one hand, Washington acted "offensively-oriented" by furthering NATO enlargement. On the other hand, Washington acted "defensively-oriented" by cushioning Russian unease with cooperative security measures, such as signing the NATO–Russia Founding Act or adapting the CFE Treaty. With the new millennium, this second strand of policy got lost. Today, neither the former nor the latter are functioning anymore. Europe needs a real restart.

If current policies continue, cooperation on a number of important security issues between the United States and Russia will be doomed to failure. Wherever the Kremlin sees an offensively-oriented approach which could (theoretically) lead to a change in the relative distribution of power, it will take counter measures. This applies, in particular, to every effort by the West to seek closer ties with post-Soviet states, but also—in a more general sense—to all issues of strategic Russian concern. Neither Washington nor Moscow wants a continued deadlock. But the inability to understand each other is already providing fertile ground for further disputes.

If Washington comes to the conclusion that re-engagement is critical for a variety of reasons, it will have to answer the question of how to deal with Russia's power concerns. On a less abstract level that would mean talking about NATO's open-door policy, addressing the status and security of non-aligned post-Soviet states such as Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, or Azerbaijan, debating additional security measures for U.S. allies, and figuring out stabilizing measures in the realm of arms control, which address an asymmetric NATO–Russian relationship. Engaging on these issues neither means that Washington will have to share Russia's worldview, nor that it should act accordingly. But for a start, it would be good to at least try to understand Russia.

*I would like to thank Samuel Charap for his comments on the article.*

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## ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular e-mail newsletters covering current developments in Central and Eastern Europe.

#### The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public. The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, area studies, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

In its teaching capacity, the CSS contributes to the ETH Zurich-based Bachelor of Arts (BA) in public policy degree course for prospective professional military officers in the Swiss army and the ETH and University of Zurich-based MA program in Comparative and International Studies (MACIS); offers and develops specialized courses and study programs to all ETH Zurich and University of Zurich students; and has the lead in the Executive Masters degree program in Security Policy and Crisis Management (MAS ETH SPCM), which is offered by ETH Zurich. The program is tailored to the needs of experienced senior executives and managers from the private and public sectors, the policy community, and the armed forces.

The CSS runs the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), and in cooperation with partner institutes manages the Crisis and Risk Network (CRN), the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), the Swiss Foreign and Security Policy Network (SSN), and the Russian and Eurasian Security (RES) Network.

#### The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, The Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University

The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies is home to a Master's program in European and Eurasian Studies, faculty members from political science, history, economics, sociology, anthropology, language and literature, and other fields, visiting scholars from around the world, research associates, graduate student fellows, and a rich assortment of brown bag lunches, seminars, public lectures, and conferences.

#### The Institute of History at the University of Zurich

The University of Zurich, founded in 1833, is one of the leading research universities in Europe and offers the widest range of study courses in Switzerland. With some 24,000 students and 1,900 graduates every year, Zurich is also Switzerland's largest university. Within the Faculty of Arts, the Institute of History consists of currently 17 professors and employs around a 100 researchers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Research and teaching relate to the period from late antiquity to contemporary history. The Institute offers its 2,600 students a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in general history and various specialized subjects, including a comprehensive Master's Program in Eastern European History. Since 2009, the Institute also offers a structured PhD-program. For further information, visit at <<http://www.hist.uzh.ch/>>

#### Resource Security Institute

The Resource Security Institute (RSI) is a non-profit organization devoted to improving understanding about global energy security, particularly as it relates to Eurasia. We do this through collaborating on the publication of electronic newsletters, articles, books and public presentations.

Any opinions expressed in Russian Analytical Digest are exclusively those of the authors.

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