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Introduction

It is clear that tensions between the United States and Russia have once again escalated to a level similar to where they were during the Cold War. Emerging hostilities within current relations give the appearance of poor conditions for cooperation in either implementing new policies or upholding existing ones in the region. Throughout just the last decade of foreign relations with Russia, the US has seen a serious deterioration in relations that it incorrectly attributes to the Kremlin's refusal to acknowledge the resilience of the ideology that drives liberal world order.¹ US beliefs about freedom and democracy have clouded their ability to see the world through another frame of reference. Russia's point of view, however, sees current US hegemony as a practical threat to the cultivation of their own power in a new multipolar world order. Because of this, US policy often operates with a limited understanding of Russian motivations. Responding to crises perpetuated by Russia will be ineffective if the US does not seek to understand the reasoning behind its actions, especially considering the Russian national discourse against Western foreign policy. In light of this, our Task Force proposes to address current issues in US-Russia relations by recognizing Russia's political, economic, and cultural legitimacy and ability to act as a sovereign state while upholding US moral standards and security interests. Historically, both confrontation and cooperation have not been effective in achieving US goals; therefore, the US must seek cooperation wherever possible. We acknowledge that certain priorities may increase tensions, but the policies we recommend are still in the best interest of US stability and security.

Our policy strives to find a strong middle ground between the policies attempted by the United States in the past decade of turbulent relations with Russia. Ultimately, this policy report advises that the US aim to decrease tensions with Russia in order to avoid escalating conflict, while not sacrificing US interests nor forcing or pushing an unacceptable agenda on Moscow. By accomplishing this, we can achieve important goals including, but not limited to, progress on nuclear nonproliferation, improved human rights in Russia, and effective climate change legislation. A policy that seeks solely to de-escalate tensions with Russia, however, could cause policymakers to overlook situations that require a stronger response from the US. For this reason,

¹ McCloskey, 2019. 130-40.

policymakers must exercise caution. For example, in the case of disinformation attacks from Russia, policy makers must be clear in drawing lines that discourage such activities in the future. This is an issue where the US cannot afford to tread lightly. Therefore, it must be noted that our policy recommendations are not meant to encourage a relaxed attitude toward unfolding events within Russia and its allied states.

Goals

Our goals are as follows:

1. Improve US policy makers' understanding of the Russian perspective and resulting motivations;
2. Create more effective policies that ensure the United States involvement in international organizations and global affairs remains relevant and necessary ;
3. Adjust the focus of NATO away from preventing Russian aggression toward a more general purpose of preventing conflict;
4. Mitigate the crisis in Ukraine by encouraging Russia to uphold its promises made in the Minsk II protocols, especially through use of the Organization for Security for Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);
5. Protect against further disinformation attacks by creating an international agreement with a clear definition of disinformation and its consequences;
6. Uphold and strengthen nuclear non-proliferation goals with the ultimate goal of disarmament;
7. Protect human rights and freedom of expression in Russia through third party organizations and the bolstering of the Magnitsky Act;
8. Rejoin the Paris Accords in order to set a positive example to combat climate change, and;
9. Support pre-existing Russian anti-carbon movements and incentivize further action in favor of global climate change goals.

Several goals are of greater priority for US policy makers, such as mitigating the crisis in Ukraine, protecting against further disinformation attacks, and combating climate change, all of which are immediate US security issues.

All policies must be carried out with a greater understanding of Russian political, economic, and cultural legitimacy, as well as the motivations behind its actions. For example, the US must go about mitigating the crisis in Ukraine with the understanding that maintaining a strong Russian influence there is important to the survival of the current Russian government. While the US can expect the crisis to be lessened by our proposed policies, it cannot be resolved because of the political influence at stake there. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the limitations as well as the possibilities of any US response.

Tradeoffs

We acknowledge that some policies recommended in this report and the means by which they are to be implemented may conflict at times. This begs the question of where US interests must first and foremost lie, as some areas of our policy stand in opposition to our ultimate goal of de-escalating tensions with Russia. Several of the tradeoffs that US policymakers must consider are expounded upon below.

Progress in the areas of protecting freedom of expression and international awareness of human rights within Russia would require funding of third-party human rights organizations within Russia and bolstering the Magnitsky Act, which places visa bans and sanctions on individuals accused of violating human rights. Acting through these engines would mean working around the Putin administration to achieve goals in conflict with its national interests. Policy makers must anticipate conflict here. Enacting such policy may put at risk our goals of mitigating the crisis in Ukraine, upholding nuclear non-proliferation, and seeing positive change from supporting pre-existing anti-carbon movements in Russia, all of which are immediate security issues.

A second issue that puts at risk our ultimate goal of de-escalating tensions with Russia is the US's response to Russian disinformation attacks. These attacks have been growing more prevalent and must not continue. However, stopping or reducing disinformation attacks requires

an international agreement on the definition of disinformation and how it should be punished. We expect Russia to decline from participating in any talks aimed at its disinformation campaigns and thus we realize that tensions will escalate in this area should our policy be enacted.

Finally, our policies are intended for a future US administration, and for this reason we appeal to US policymakers in general, as opposed to one administration in particular. We hope that our policies can assist in de-escalating tensions with Russia overall and shaping future US-Russia relations.

Chapter 1

The Putin Effect: How Russia is Pushing Back Against American Presence Worldwide

By Van Soderberg

For the United States to create realistic policy options and potentially improve bilateral cooperation with Russia it must understand how the Kremlin describes the United States' role in the world to its citizens and other members of the international community. Through this lens, US policy makers will gain insight into how their policies will be both received and interpreted by ordinary Russians and third countries, given that pro-government media services dominate all domestic and international news originating from the Russian Federation. To illustrate this point further, the ten most popular daily TV programs in Russia are hosted domestically on Kremlin owned or financially backed networks including Channel One, Rossiya 1, and various others, and internationally via RT, currently broadcasting worldwide in English, Spanish, French, German, Arabic, and Russian.² Of particular note, RT viewership in its Spanish, Arabic, and English broadcasts alone are accessible to 630 million people outside the Russian Federation according to a 2015 study, although its direct impact on these populations is subject to debate.³ Nevertheless, it is funded almost entirely by the Russian government and actively covers the Kremlin's activities, projecting their narratives and Putin's personal statements worldwide.⁴

The most recent public opinion polls show that 78% of respondents within Russia think the United States is the most hostile foreign nation to their interests, far exceeding feelings of animosity towards other American allies in Europe.⁵ Thus, US policy makers should provide nuanced policy options which are cognizant of how our actions will be perceived both within Russia via Kremlin-affiliated media apparatuses, and articulated to the international community at large by Moscow. Russia aims to be considered a resurgent great power who demands involvement in affairs across the globe and is capable of pushing back against American leadership in international organizations via the creation of alternative institutional structures independent from Western influence. Because future US policy will be portrayed within this

² Levada Analytical Center 2019, 102, 109.

³ RT Editorial 2015, Erickson 2017.

⁴ Sputnik 2005.

⁵ Levada Analytical Center 2019, 151.

scope to Russian and international audiences, the US Government should recognize Russia's geopolitical independence and legitimate place in global affairs to ensure Russia and other states like it perceive future US involvement in international relations as relevant, necessary, and integral to the function of the modern world.

1.1: The Making of Putin

President Vladimir Putin's personal experiences during the fall of the Soviet Union and ill-fated Western involvement with the Yeltsin administration aimed immediate post-2000 Kremlin rhetoric down a path of reconsolidation of central state power aided by initial economic prosperity and military modernization. These developments pitted public sentiment and government policy directly in opposition to the continuation of US global leadership in NATO and the UN, and to its support of the EU. The relative anonymity of Putin during his ascent to the presidency in 2000 caused journalists to publish articles introducing him on the political scene by asking "Who is Mr. Putin?" In this way, it was possible for the new president to create an autobiographical image emphasizing his humble beginnings and painting him as the embodiment of the Russian people separate from previous Soviet and Tsarist elites. Media publications immediately began to focus on his life in a middle class family as the son of a decorated war veteran.⁶ Putin's humble beginnings, familial sacrifice, and resilience immediately served to disassociate him from Yeltsin's failures, creating optimism among Russian voters that the views of the country's leadership now more closely reflected those of the common man and woman.

Putin immediately set out to merge state legitimacy with economic development, constructing a stable and loyal receptive political base and the elevation of the state as the central source of national power.⁷ The new president inherited crippling industrial inefficiencies and widespread corruption in former, now-privatized, Soviet enterprises where businesses were disincentivized to invest in new infrastructure and production abilities.⁸ Previous failed economic reform measures exacerbated these issues and Russia amassed \$158.7 billion in external debt by 1998, rendering social services virtually nonexistent.⁹ During the 1998 economic crisis the

⁶ Gevorkyan, Timakova, and Kolesnikov 2000.

⁷ The New Yorker 2017.

⁸ Miller 2018, 39.

⁹ Ibid., 60.

Russian government defaulted on its debt and floated the ruble from the US dollar, causing its market value to plummet, thereby allowing Russian energy firms to collect great relative profits from sales in stronger markets, accounting for 39.1% of total exports.¹⁰ Oil prices then rose to \$51 per barrel by 2005, increasing petroleum revenue by \$115 billion in only 7 years.^{11,12} Subsequent government surpluses exceeding half a trillion dollars were aggregated into the National Welfare Fund to subsidize the budget when oil prices would inevitably fall, creating a formerly nonexistent safety net for social services.^{13,14} Furthermore, pragmatic tax reform applicable to citizens across ideological lines, crackdowns on oligarchic exploitation, new employment opportunities, and increasing individual financial security also legitimized Putin in the eyes of many, suppressing political dissidence by giving citizens little reason to question the country's direction.^{15,16} By taking a fiscally conservative outlook to government finances, Russia emerged from the 1998 crisis with positive effects felt among individual citizens, solidifying Putin's reputation as a departure from previous elite interests and a prudent leader who successfully engineered a remarkable economic revival without American aid nor guidance.

This sense of American betrayal in abetting the 1998 ruble crash and the subsequent peripheral revival also affected how Russia articulated its foreign policy during this period. Despite Putin's comments in 2000 to then-US President Bill Clinton stating "Let's consider an option that Russia might join NATO," as well as Former Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen contention that Putin made many statements that were "favorable to the idea of Russia joining NATO,"¹⁷ the Kremlin abruptly changed course. NATO enlargement and the Color Revolutions of 2003-2008 were understood in Russia as an "orchestrated campaign by the West to spread democracy and pro-Western governments into the post-Soviet space."¹⁸ Given the recent Russian economic experience, the necessity to "stand up to the depredations of the US, the world's sole superpower," began to be seen as not only as a declaration of sovereignty, but

¹⁰ World Bank.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹² Miller 2018, 39.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷ Robinson et al. 2018.

¹⁸ Szostek et al. 2015, 140.

one which would bring greater prosperity to this area.¹⁹ “We showed weakness and the weak get beaten...” declared Putin in 2004, continuing that the Motherland was the “the object of predators,” foreign countries who wanted “to tear off a fatty piece” of Russia’s economic prosperity by installing governments sympathetic to Western interests.²⁰

The NATO and EU expansion into Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic,²¹ coupled with the EU ascension of the Baltic States in 2004 gave rise to growing Russian perceptions that despite its increasing economic relevancy, there was a “progressive disinclination to take its security concerns into account” but was unable to point to specific promises nor binding agreements.²² Shortly thereafter Putin called out this general uneasiness towards Russia’s resurgence, “not everyone likes the stable, gradual rise of our country, some are “using the democratic ideology to interfere in our internal affairs,” he concluded in 2007.²³ “It was naive to assume that the family of civilized nations would really integrate us,” remarked Vladimir Yakunin, an old friend of Putin from the KGB, later that same year.²⁴ Consequently, Russian foreign policy rhetoric began efforts to incite changes in these organizations, hoping to give Russia a voice in decision making processes without fully committing to any one path as a means for political maneuverability.²⁵ In this vein, the Kremlin progressively recognized that although economic partnerships were developing robustly, security arrangements with European and American led institutions would not be easily agreed upon, necessitating in the meantime not only independent development, but active resistance to pro-Western political currents and the influence of non-governmental organizations affiliated with foreign entities within Russia, as well as its “privileged interests” in “priority regions”²⁶ in former Warsaw Pact countries.²⁷

Following the completion of his two consecutive presidential terms, Putin served as Prime Minister under President Dimitry Medvedev from 2008-2012. Medvedev’s tenure put the aforementioned aggressiveness on hold as his team needed to portray the new leader as

¹⁹ Ibid., 138.

²⁰ Putin 2004.

²¹ Freedman 2019, 52.

²² Ibid., 54.

²³ British Broadcasting Corporation 2007.

²⁴ Shuster 2019.

²⁵ Gvosdev and Marsh 2014, 246-247.

²⁶ Gvosdev and Marsh 2014.

²⁷ Freedman 2019, 70.

independent from Putin to domestic audiences, while linking the violence of the 2008 invasion of Georgia to Putin.²⁸ Consequently, the Obama White House sought to reset relations with Moscow in 2009, promising that the “mutual resentment” from the Bush and Putin presidencies was over.²⁹ Putin then announced he would seek a third presidential term in the upcoming 2011 elections, and his reelection threw the future of this rhetorical rapprochement into question. Thousands of Russian citizens protested the December parliamentary elections and 2012 presidential elections, claiming both were fraudulent. These demonstrations were the manifestation of both uneasiness over the 2008 financial crisis, a statement of opposition to the aforementioned NATO and EU developments, and uncertainty over the 2009 reset with the US. Those who joined in these demonstrations held political attitudes that were not, as was commonly portrayed in Western media, supportive of a Western political transition and were unlikely to support the “the actual practice of democracy in Russia.”^{30,31} Instead, supporters of protest were more likely to support authoritarian solutions to Russia’s problems, and were likely to hold strong ethno-nationalist views on language and religion, foreshadowing a new narrative of Russia’s place in the global community.³²

In this vein, many attributed President Medvedev’s economic modernization program while global oil prices were high as caving to moderate pro-Western political attitudes in emphasizing the development of new types of fuel, nuclear energy, space and communications technology, medical and pharmaceutical advancements, and technological and software updates.³³ Many Russians “fell for the illusion that structural reforms could wait...we can delay no longer. We must begin the modernization and technological upgrading of our entire industrial sector,” declared Medvedev in his first national address as president in 2009.³⁴ The resulting failure to meaningfully diversify its economy due to government intervention in pricing and hiring practices resulted in the belief that this new political direction was ill-advised, with Putin’s previous association with economic stability an attractive alternative for many.³⁵ The next year,

²⁸ Zygar 2016.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Chaisty and Whitefield 2012, 187-208.

³¹ Wilson 2009, 295–316.

³² Szostek et al. 2015, 69.

³³ Smith 2010, 12.

³⁴ Medvedev 2009.

³⁵ Smith 2010, 15.

Putin commented, “We won’t allow anybody to interfere in our internal affairs because we have our own will,” implying protest leaders were funded by foreign entities, specifically then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. He continued, “Let nobody run abroad and betray their fatherland. We call on everyone to unite around our country, those who see Russia as their own motherland, who are ready to protect her.”³⁶ Given these developments and Putin’s popularity in comparison to Medvedev, Kremlin rhetoric increased in its hostility to the USA, the EU and NATO in explaining current developments with reference to both the 1998 and 2008 crises.

The narratives of Putin describe a departure from traditional exploitative Russian leadership figures, his prowess for economic and social policy, and the centrality of his leadership to the revival of a strong Russia with a resulting resentment toward the West. They specifically charge the United States with underappreciating his uniqueness and deliberately disrespecting Russian economic and security concerns, creating a popularly held belief that the US sought to exploit Russian weakness in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse and again in 2008. After all, before even assuming the presidency Putin exclaimed, “Russia can rise from its knees and fight back as it should.”³⁷ Thus, the initial Putin governments and Medvedev’s short tenure as president cultivated massive popular support for Putin, painting him as a strong and globally respected statesman capable of returning Russia to prominence. This sentiment attacks the credibility of Western involvement in Russia and abroad by explaining Russia’s post-Yeltsin successes as products of Putin’s unique leadership and resistance to outside influences, informing how government officials, Russian citizens, and even global audiences make sense of and explain the policies of US.³⁸ The Kremlin touts this recent Russian experience, striving to portray itself as a model other states should follow. Therefore, these narratives are relevant in a broader context to understand how US policy may be seen by not only Russia, but by other states who desire international recognition and are or hope to progress through similar stages of economic growth and state development.

1.2: From Crimea to the Present Day: Articulating Russia’s Place in Global Affairs

³⁶ Halpin 2012.

³⁷ Channel One Russia 1999.

³⁸ Sevenans 2018, 53–70.

International sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and the precipitous drop in global oil prices following Russian incursions into Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in 2013 and 2014 initially threatened the vitality of this stance, exacerbating the concerns of the 2011 protests that despite Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, the country still needed fresh leadership. The 2014 US and EU sanctions alone undermined Putin's initial economic successes, with Russian Finance Minister Siluanov announcing that the sanctions had cost Russia \$40 billion, with another \$100 billion in losses due to the decrease in the price of oil that same year. Quickly, Putin accused the United States of conspiring with Saudi Arabia to intentionally weaken the Russian economy by decreasing the price of oil.³⁹ By mid-2016, Russia had lost an estimated \$170 billion due to financial sanctions, with another \$400 billion in lost revenues from oil and gas.⁴⁰ Following the latest sanctions imposed in August 2018, economic losses incurred by Russia amounted to an estimated 0.5–1.5% of lost GDP growth.⁴¹ These developments directly undermined Putin's initial base of political legitimacy, especially in industrialized European Russia where 77% of the current voting population is situated, making this area of central importance.⁴² In order to stem the hemorrhaging of the basis for Putin's political leadership, the Kremlin had to react.

To reconsolidate the political unity necessary for what has proved to be a near decade long standoff with major international organizations, the Kremlin returned to emphasizing Putin's personal connection as a "man of the people." International television and radio broadcasts of the annual three-to four- hour question and answer session with voters and international media correspondents known as "Direct Line with Vladimir Putin" gained notability.⁴³ It should come as no surprise, then, that since 2012, supporters of the ruling party United Russia have emphasized the ways that Putin himself is identified with the nation. As two advisers commented in 2014 when Putin himself came under condemnation from world leaders over the annexation of Crimea, "there is no Russia today if there is no Putin"... "any attack on Putin is an attack on Russia."⁴⁴ This rhetoric has proven effective, where although 73% of Russian citizens have a

³⁹ Kotkin 2016.

⁴⁰ Pettersen 2016.

⁴¹ Havlik 2019.

⁴² Vishnevsky 2000.

⁴³ Schuler 2015, 136–160.

⁴⁴ Moscow Times 2014.

vague or no idea of the current goals of the leadership,⁴⁵ 66% have a positive view of Putin.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the Russian population at large presently worries more about state weakness than authoritarianism,⁴⁷ so as long as Putin is perceived as a strong leader, this passive sentiment among voters will likely continue. Unified plotlines of this type from authoritative sources directly influence how individuals make sense of and explain political developments.⁴⁸ Therefore, the projection of a specific public image of Putin and the Russian government also are internalized by officials and even Putin himself in delivering speeches, interviews, and other press releases, influencing policy.

Regarding issues of post-Crimea foreign policy, Putin has promulgated an open-ended conception of Russian identity as well as Russia's unique worldwide mission to link domestic diversity with the necessity of multiple centers of global power. This reflects his previously established regret not for the ideological defeat of Communism in 1991, but rather its loss of status on the world stage. Putin declared in 2005, "...The demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century," and then continued this rhetoric in a German television interview one month later, saying, "those who do not regret the collapse of the Soviet Union have no heart, and those that do regret it have no brain."⁴⁹ In an effort to garner support from Russian nationalist movements that participated heavily in the 2011 protests, the Kremlin adopted a new stance advocating for the "democratization of international relations" abroad. This view holds an accepted multiplicity of recognized national and international interests, as well as an active defense of the Russian diaspora living outside the Russian Federation. In this way, not only are Putin's humble roots re-elevated as a symbol of unity and struggle, the entire Russian state is described as a unifying force in leading other nations in the fight for true democracy against a hypocritical US hegemon perpetually threatening to subjugate opposing interests.

Since the beginning of his third term, Putin has emphasized the existence of not only a Russian state unique from other European powers in its history and broadly defined diversity, but also the need for similarly unique states whose histories and politics have left them outside various international organizations to create alternate institutional structures respective to these

⁴⁵ Levada Analytical Center 2018, 24.

⁴⁶ Ragozin 2019.

⁴⁷ Gorenburg 2009, 5.

⁴⁸ Sevenans 2018, 153-170.

⁴⁹ Radio Free Europe 2018.

idiosyncratic qualities. On an official level, “attempts to preach the idea of a ‘national’ or monoethnic Russian state contradict our thousand-year history... this is a shortcut to destroying the Russian people and Russian statehood,” people “should identify themselves primarily as citizens of Russia and take pride in that...we must build a model of state and a civilized society that would be equally attractive and balanced for everyone who views Russia as their motherland.”⁵⁰ Here, Putin enumerates the concept of the *Russkiy mir* or “Russian world” in a nuanced conception of Russia as a fluid entity which can accommodate the diversity of other lands and peoples should they desire closer ties, unlike the rigid unipolar requirements for ascension to the EU or membership in NATO. “Russia’s strength lies in the free development of all its peoples, its diversity, the harmony of cultures, languages and traditions, mutual respect for and dialogue between faiths...we will be immediately destroyed if we are divided,”⁵¹ he preached in the 2015 national address from Moscow. “Unlike other foreign colleagues...we are not looking for and never looked for enemies,”⁵² he continued at the same event in 2016. It is here that the theme of *Russkiy mir* reoccurs. His statements serve not to demarcate peoples as adversarial via only cultural, religious, or even ideological differences, but instead assume conflicts are rooted in economics and politics in a reference to sanctions and geopolitical adversaries, mainly the US. The official nature of these declarations charges the government with responsibility toward not only current Russian citizens, but foreign compatriots who have been separated from the “Motherland,” “feel” sympathy for the Russian cause, or who desire a closer economic, social, cultural, or security relationship with the country.

Since the Ukraine situation stabilized, Putin has demonstrated that Russia can be independent, relatively successful, and stand toe-to-toe in opposition to Western interests. To this end, the Kremlin has sought to portray itself as the world leader in “traditional, conservative values,” forging links with far-right sympathizers throughout Europe and the US.⁵³ The 2013 anti-LGBTQ propaganda law underlines Russia’s endorsement of the nuclear family and the Orthodox Christianity, its aversion to non-standard sexualities, and its scorn for “politically correct” liberal tolerance.”⁵⁴ Thus, *Russkiy mir* has paradoxically developed into a conservative

⁵⁰ Putin 2012.

⁵¹ Putin 2015.

⁵² Putin 2016.

⁵³ Szostek et al. 2015, 192.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

project based on the idea of tolerance for a diverse set of ideologies, religious considerations, and social movements, so long as they differ from those central to American and Atlantic-leaning organizations. The Russian Orthodox Church has also carried out unofficial foreign policy maneuvers in courting religious persons across the globe as well as advocating for socio-economic political consolidation of Eurasia in a “dialogue of civilizations,” as an alternative to Western ideological preeminence.⁵⁵ In this manner, not only economic and geopolitical differences are grounds for seeking to diversify prevailing Western ideological tenants in international politics, but social and religious concerns also. Thus, Russia now seeks to strengthen foreign contacts in cultivating an alternative international community centered around states who find themselves on the fringes of American economic, security, social, and even religious precedents.

Outside of Europe, Russia has sought to involve itself in as many parts of the world as possible. Russia and China were founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 to address security, economic, social, and cultural cooperation, in addition to settling regional disputes. However, the SCO has been practically utilized to limit Western influence in the Asia-Pacific region, and now also includes six other members with 14 additional states observing or participating in dialogues.⁵⁶ Additionally, both China and Russia worry that the precedent set by US interest in Georgia, Ukraine, and throughout Eastern Europe could be applied to their own precarious territories including Chechnya, Taiwan, and Tibet, among others.⁵⁷ Consequently, both countries frequently veto UN initiatives that threaten the Kremlin’s desire to be seen as a resurgent world power and China’s desire to expand its influence in Asia.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Russia formally established the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in 2014, including Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁹ The EEU represents an additional institutional break from US dominated organizations in the post-Cold War world. It philosophically and politically rejects the notion of a Western-centric unilateral order in Europe, whether it be the EU on social and economic issues, or NATO on security concerns. In this way, it has been hailed by the Kremlin as a formal institutional answer to domestic pro-European

⁵⁵ Gvosdev and Marsh 2014, 49.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 242.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 130.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁹ Haukkala 2015, 32.

integration groups as well as the one-sided transfer of deviant norms and values tied to EU ascension for any prospective member state, referencing Putin's aforementioned conservative rhetoric as well as the role of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Outside of the EEU and SCO, in the previous 18 months alone Russia made major arms deliveries to at least 23 nations and gained the rights to build logistics hubs on the Red Sea and Suez Canal.⁶⁰ Russia has inked energy deals with India, Turkey, and Iraqi Kurdistan, and even brought the Taliban to Moscow last autumn to hold talks on a peace settlement in Afghanistan.⁶¹ Interestingly, attitudes towards Central and Western European countries have recently improved, as Foreign Minister Lavrov commented that international attempts to "restrict Russia's possibilities" were led primarily by the USA, not the European powers" explaining on state TV that the Americans were "trying to prevent Russia and the EU from uniting their potentials" due to their goal of "retaining global leadership."⁶² Consequently, recent polls demonstrate a strong public aversion to Eastern European states whose governments have sought closer ties with the US (representing 7 of the top 9 most disliked), but not towards nations such as Germany, France, and Italy.⁶³ In this manner, Russia's openness has included efforts to woo EU and NATO member states via economic packages in an attempt to augment cracks in these alliances. Indeed, NATO member Turkey recently signed a deal for the Russian made S-400 missile defense system against the Trump administration's guidance, China has received its first deliveries of the system, and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iraq have begun negotiations to acquire their own.⁶⁴ These maneuvers under the guise of democratic foreign relations delegitimize any recognized global authority as an undemocratic thrust which seeks to meddle in the affairs of sovereign states, removing rhetorical mechanisms to constrain assertive foreign and domestic policies to the point of direct opposition to NATO, the EU, and US interests, integrating the multipolar agenda with the aforementioned uniqueness of the Russian state.⁶⁵

Finally, it is important to understand that Putin does not oppose the American democratic model and its domestic operation in the US, or even support of it through NATO, the EU, or the

⁶⁰ Shuster 2019.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Lavrov 2014.

⁶³ Levada Analytical Center 2019, 151.

⁶⁴ Foy 2018.

⁶⁵ Lubina 2017, 73.

UN. Instead, he worries principally whether Russia's security is threatened as a result.⁶⁶ "The US is a very democratic state. There's no doubt about that. And it originally developed as a democratic state."⁶⁷ However, he is critical of the perceived imposition and export of these values onto states who roundly reject them. In a well-known example of this dynamic, Putin was highly critical of the US-led intervention in Iraq saying at the time, "Where is Saddam Hussein? Where are those weapons of mass destruction, if they were ever in existence? Is Saddam Hussein in a bunker sitting on cases containing weapons of mass destruction, preparing to blow the whole place up?"⁶⁸ To his credit, no WMDs were ever recovered.⁶⁹ He was similarly critical of the US military's killing of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya. "All the world saw him being killed, all bloodied. Is that democracy? And who did it? Drones, including American ones...[they] killed him without trial."⁷⁰ Thus, the current anti-American narrative mostly targets US foreign policy practices and its relationship with other states. "Americans do not want Russia's rapprochement with Europe...let's suppose that the United States would like to maintain its leadership in the Atlantic community. It needs an external threat,"⁷¹ he commented in 2015 in response to then-Senator John McCain's statements prognosticating political instability in Russia. As such, the Kremlin alleges that Washington's overseas involvement deprives other sovereign states the political autonomy they merit under international law, much in the same way the US has criticized Russian foreign policy.

1.3: Conclusion

Given this highly publicized running narrative of how Russia articulates itself domestically, how it relates to its other states, and how it frames American foreign policy, it is important that the following policy recommendations avoid the pitfalls of conducting bilateral relations in confidence with Russia. Given the Kremlin's media resources, the bilateral element will exist in name only and will be, for all intents and purposes, broadcasted internationally and therefore may affect how other nations view and respond to future US policy towards themselves

⁶⁶ Freedman 2019, 52.

⁶⁷ RT 2013.

⁶⁸ Daily Times 2003.

⁶⁹ CBS News 2006.

⁷⁰ Spillius 2011.

⁷¹ Vladimir Putin, Interview to the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* 2015.

respectively. The most recent public opinion polls conducted by the independent Levada Center may be of immediate interest in informing a new US direction in relations, finding that while President Putin remains popular inside Russia, a majority of the same respondents concluded that the Russian government at large either does not address the interests of the common citizen, or actively pursues elite interests via public government mechanisms.⁷² As a result, political inertia and disinterest are on the rise, where 74% stated they were either “rather not or definitely not” likely to become more politically active in the future.⁷³ In fact, 49% said they supported Putin because he was an experienced politician, more than the combined total of respondents who said he was “capable of leading the people” and “defending” the interests of the State.⁷⁴ While Putin’s popularity may be hampered by public distrust of the Russian government, both are presently united in their disdain for the US, making it increasingly likely that Putin and/or the current majority party United Russia will remain in power beyond 2024 either holding the Office of President or another official position. These empirical conclusions must point American policy towards reconciliation with both Russia’s government and citizenry given the current theme of aversion to the US despite ongoing internal discontent within Russia.

Due to these observed trends in political participation, US policy should take into account Putin-era elements of Russian exceptionalism and unique mission to the world, their demands for the democratization of international relations where Russia chiefly aims to create alternative centers of global power, and how our policies will ultimately be articulated worldwide by the Kremlin within these talking points. Russia’s recent successes in creating and sustaining alternate multinational organizations including the SCO and EEU mean the United States must recognize these entities’ role as some states’ best current option for membership in the international community. As such, our policy towards Russia will not only engage Moscow, but, as a consequence of the Kremlin’s media apparatus, may also have repercussions in how other nations closely aligned with Russia view future US involvement, which may result in additional consequences for US foreign policy around the world. Consequently, the United States must not push its agenda on Russia or other states like it, but instead put its faith in the eventual softening of their perspective as a result of its good will and the gradual transition of prevailing political

⁷² Levada Analytical Center 2019, 43.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

thought. If the US is ever to bridge the gap separating the United States, the EU, and NATO from Russia and the states sympathetic to the Kremlin, our policies must look towards what these nations can become in time, confident in the long term virtue of our values and ideas while being presently content with modest progress.

Chapter 2

Russia as an Independent Actor: A Restructured Approach

By Anna Sexton

Since 2014, US-Russian relations have for the most part been stagnant. At present, American foreign policy makers tend to operate with American narratives to explain Russian activity; they interpret Russia's actions to be made consistently in relation to the United States, but this is not always the case. Russia is an independent actor, driven by a variety of interests. Its ideologies, narratives, and identity all contribute to how Russia acts in the world. This is not currently understood by US policy makers, but must be recognized if progress is to be made in improving relations and working toward cooperation on issues of concern in US foreign policy. For the most part, American policy makers know why Russia is motivated to act as it does, yet their responses to Russian actions are frequently ineffective. If the ultimate goal of the US was to change the Kremlin's foreign policy on the annexation of Crimea, for example, its institution of economic sanctions largely failed in this regard.⁷⁵ It is evident that something is missing in American foreign policy towards Russia, because most interactions end up with neither country satisfied. The United States' failure to understand that Russia has its own identity and ideologies independent of the US is the central component to why US-Russia relations cannot seem to move forward. Thus, assuming that the ultimate goal is towards cooperation on relevant issues, recognizing the differences between American and Russian policy perspectives is essential to create effective policy choices. In an effort to underscore how these different aspects contribute to Russian activity, its actions will be analyzed in four regions important to both the US and Russia: Central and Eastern Europe, the European Union, the Middle East, and China.

Focusing on Russian relations with other countries and American interpretations to these relationships can underscore the more ideological and inherent structural differences between the United States and Russia. These must be acknowledged if any progress is to be made in bringing the two countries closer to mutual cooperation. Once these fundamental differences can be understood, addressed, and resolved, the future of US-Russia relations will be much less turbulent and much more equipped to engender productive communication and understanding.

⁷⁵Kortunov 2019.

Although many factors come into play and many of these issues are interconnected, for the sake of brevity the motivations carrying the most significance will be applied to these selected issues.

In these case studies, a few major factors which drive Russia's behavior come to light:

1. Resisting Western liberalism and embracing conservatism
2. Sharing a history, government structure, and/or value system with a region
3. Managing a unique Eurasian identity
4. Pushing toward a multipolar world order.

These issues are closely linked with one another and are essential in understanding the underlying motivations for Russian activity. In this way, the complexities of Russian behavior in the world will be made evident and will assist in the development of nuanced and adaptable policies that can advance US interests in these regions.

2.1: Russia in Central and Eastern Europe

Historically and geopolitically, this area is one of the most important for Russian foreign policy.⁷⁶ The intermediate position of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) between Russia and Western Europe makes the region an arena for either cooperation or rivalry between Russia and the West. As of late, it is evident that CEE, particularly Ukraine, has become a hotbed of contradicting ideologies and a source of major conflict. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it seemed that integration into the liberal world order for the former Soviet states was the natural process, with the exception of Russia, which was still perceived as a threat.⁷⁷ However, many of these countries still relied heavily on Russia economically and politically, and it soon became clear that for many of them, fitting into the framework of a united Europe would not be easy. For the most part, these countries share more of a culture and history with Russia than they do with Western Europe. CEE and Russian history are intertwined and stem back to over one thousand years, the majority of their populations are ethnically Slavic, and their cultures are all shaped by Christian Orthodoxy. Russians see Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, as the birthplace of Slavic civilization, and therefore feel as though they are the guardians of the entire region. Because of this, as well as the fact that many CEE states used to be under the jurisdiction of Moscow, Russia sees the CEE countries as still being under its "sphere of influence," and therefore strongly

⁷⁶ Tsygankov 2018, 282.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 283.

resents Western efforts to integrate these countries into their own liberal system.⁷⁸ Russia's conservative ideology is the driving cause for its resentment of these attempts. Its response to this perceived threat is then made manifest through its security model of aggressive defense. The situation that most notably exemplifies this is the crisis in Ukraine.

2.1a: 2014: Euromaidan, The Crisis in Ukraine, and Crimea

When it comes to the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution, subsequent ousting of president Viktor Yanukovich, and the annexation of Crimea, the Russian narrative differs greatly from America's. For the US, Russia's response of annexing Crimea was a flagrant violation of international law and blatant disregard for the sovereignty of an independent nation attempting to integrate into a more liberal world. For Russia, the revolution was a symbol of Ukraine leaving its sphere of influence and joining the enemy. When outsider states began showing their support for the pro-EU protests, Russia perceived this as a threat against its own interests; the Kremlin feared that Ukraine would join NATO and push the Russian fleet out of Crimea.⁷⁹ Thus, the act of annexing Crimea was, to Russia, an act of self-defense against the Western demonstrations as well as a means to reassert its power over its near-abroad countries. Furthermore, the large population of ethnic Russians living in Crimea and the Donbass regions provided Russia with justification for its actions. Because of Russia's perception that it shares an identity with Ukraine, and furthermore because one of Russia's primary foreign policy goals is to protect ethnic Russians abroad, it acted out aggressively in order to defend its identity and culture from becoming pushed out and degraded by the West.

2.1b: Conclusion

The Kremlin effectively demonstrated its "aggressive defense" security model through its invasion of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea: although perceived to the rest of the world as an act of aggression, Russia believed it was not just protecting the ethnic minority population of Russians living in the near abroad, but also a shared culture, history, and identity. Their shared identity is grounded in traditional Orthodox values which also come under attack with the growing influence of secular Western liberalism. The Russian connection to Ukraine and the rest of

⁷⁸ Aleprete 2017, 59.

⁷⁹ Tsygankov 2018, 287.

Central and Eastern Europe is constantly undermined by the states' integration with the West. Furthermore, it is not just security practices which come into play but Russia's conservatism that drives its actions in the region. In an effort to protect its values, Russia is compelled to act against democratization movements which signify a turn toward what it sees as amoral practices. Therefore, Russia is motivated to act in Central and Eastern Europe not simply to antagonize Western powers, but also because it shares a history, identity, and values with much of the region.

2.2: Russia and the European Union

Since the time of Peter the Great in the eighteenth century, Europe has been at “the core of Russian foreign policy formulation.”⁸⁰ Due to its historical emulation of Europe in efforts to modernize and become a great power, Russia to this day equates greatness and modernity with European standards. However, there is now a complicated and delicate balance between this notion of Europe and the more recent wave of anti-West conservatism supported by Putin. Russia has never truly been a part of Europe, nor has it been fully Asian. What further complicates this dilemma of Russian identity is that the European Union sees Russia as an “other,” which is an alienating perspective of a nation whose actions are made consistently in response to how it is perceived by Europe.⁸¹

In essence, a “new confrontational normalcy has set in” for Russia-EU relations since the 2014 Euromaidan events.⁸² Currently, relations between Russia and the European Union have been analyzed in terms of who they support in the Ukraine crisis. The repercussions for Russian intervention in Ukraine in terms of relations with the European Union demonstrate the extensive differences between their ideologies and perceived motivations. Despite this, Russia does rely on Europe to validate its position as a great global power, but at the same time feels threatened and reacts in kind when Europe attempts to undermine its regional hegemony.⁸³ The threat of Western liberalism spreading into its spheres of influence and combatting Putin's agenda of conservatism has compelled Russia to create divisions within the EU. This is best exemplified

⁸⁰ Ibid, 272.

⁸¹ Siddi 2019, 2.

⁸² Tsygankov 2018, 273.

⁸³ Aleprete 2017, 59.

through the controversial construction of the Nord Stream pipelines as well as Russian support of far-right political parties in Europe.

2.2a: The Nord Stream Pipelines

Since the Cold War, Ukraine has been an essential component in the transportation of Russian gas to Western Europe, but this all changed after 2014. The construction of the Nord Stream pipelines through the Baltic Sea and into Germany circumvents Ukraine and other Central and Eastern European countries which originally benefited from transit fees from the transportation of Russian natural gas through their territories. The US and certain EU member states, particularly those in Eastern Europe, fear that the Nord Stream pipelines will make the European Union too dependent on Russian gas, which will then create a conflict of interest between its member states. Many critics point out that Nord Stream 2 consolidates Europe's energy dependence on Russia while at the same time Europe is putting sanctions on Moscow in support of Ukraine.⁸⁴ Even if Russia's motivations behind the construction of Nord Stream 2 are purely economic, there is no denying that it would nonetheless benefit from deepening divisions in the European Union as well as the damage to Ukraine's economy which result from this. Through bypassing Ukraine and causing its economy to suffer from revenue lost, Russia exercises its influence over a region seeking to retreat from Russian authority. With the EU seen as both its rival and role model, Russia also is able to deepen divisions through its influence on the EU's energy industry; thus undermining the notion of a united and liberal Europe. In addition to this, Russia has also benefited from the rise of far-right political parties in Europe who tend to support Russian foreign policy.

2.2b: Russian Support of European Far-Right Political Parties

Russian involvement in Eastern European far-right parties has been going on for years, but more recently similar parties have emerged in older, more Western, member states, including Rassemblement National (formerly Front National) in France and Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) in Austria. One of the more famous shows of support by a far-right party for Russia was in 2015 when Marine Le Pen of Rassemblement National praised Russia's actions in Ukraine

⁸⁴ Siddi 2019, 6.

and endorsed its annexation of Crimea as legitimate.⁸⁵ Endorsing Russia's actions in the Ukraine crisis was primarily a political move that allowed Le Pen's party to express their defiance of the European Union and criticize its growing influence over domestic affairs within member states. For these typically anti-EU political parties, public support of Russian actions can be seen as a protest against the invasive European Union. Therefore, when it comes to rejecting conservatism in the West, ironically Russia's most useful ally is within the West itself.

The reason these far-right political parties tend to support Russia and, more specifically, Putin, is due to his firm stance when it comes to protecting conservative and traditional values as well as the example he sets in promoting a nationalist agenda. The somewhat strange alliance between these parties and the Kremlin results from certain shared values: nationalism, anti-US sentiment, and conservative Christian traditionalism. Le Pen has even gone so far as to name Putin a defender of "the Christian heritage of European civilization."⁸⁶ Furthermore, parties like Rassemblement National admire Putin for his commitment to challenging liberalism while Putin sees that establishing close ties with these political parties will help him gain leverage against NATO.⁸⁷ On the Russian side, the Kremlin naturally supports these parties due to their friendliness and realizing of similar goals, but also because in doing so, Russia receives a sense of legitimacy through recognition of its actions as being the work of a great power entity.

2.2c: Conclusion

The promotion of conservative and traditional values is especially underscored in Russia's dealings with the European Union. Thanks to complicated identity politics in which Russia is seen to be both a part of and also an outsider of Europe, the Kremlin targets Western-dominated liberal values as the root of many issues with the region. Because it feels as though its values and authority are being threatened by Western encroachment into its near-abroads, Russia seeks to undermine these values by creating divisions within the Union. Its efforts to create such divisions have made their way into both the energy sector and domestic politics, where Russia flexes its strength and influence over Eastern European states and encourages anti-EU sentiments within the borders of the Union. Although the United States is seen by Russia as

⁸⁵ Polyakova 2014, 36.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

the primary antagonist in propagating liberal values, the European Union is historically and physically closer to Russia and therefore has a more immediate effect on Russian sentiments towards Western liberalism.

2.3: Russia in the Middle East

Russia sees itself most capable of achieving “great power status” in a multipolar world. The Kremlin consistently advocates for the “democratization of international relations,” which involves the presence of more than just one center of global power and resists US-led multilateral organizations policing Russian internal affairs.⁸⁸ This is why Russia now flexes its strength in other parts of the world, which is best presented through Russian interaction with the Middle East as it begins to take a larger role in its regional politics. Russia has been relatively successful thanks in part to its history of fairly good relations with the Middle East in the Soviet era, as well as to what it has in common: authoritarian regimes, dislike for the West, and strong anti-capitalist sentiments. The Kremlin is currently intervening in places where the United States is pulling back, as evidenced by Russian intervention in the Syrian Civil War. However, this new wave of Russian involvement in the Middle East is complicated by the presence of Muslim extremist groups; both Russia and the United States have made it their goal to eradicate these terrorist organizations but go about it in very different ways. This difference in methods can be reflected by differing end goals: Russia hopes to support the governments they had previously supported during the Cold War era in order to promote the cause of multipolarism, while the United States is interested in establishing democratic governments and eventually integrating them into the liberal world order.

2.3a: The Syrian Civil War

Russian military intervention in support of Syrian president Assad’s regime in 2015 marked a new era in Russian foreign policy in the Middle East.⁸⁹ This was the first time since the fall of the USSR that Russia led a military campaign outside of a former Soviet state. Where it had previously been hesitant to involve itself, Russia implemented a new policy of working toward a multipolar global order by demonstrating that the United States was no longer the only

⁸⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2011.

⁸⁹ Tsygankov 2018, 295.

“interventionist” state in the international community. The Middle East makes for an excellent region for Russia to spread its influence in the hopes of resisting a liberal unipolar world and establishing a new multipolar order.

Although Russia supports the Assad regime and the United States supports the Syrian rebels, neither want to see the government fall into the hands of a jihadist militant group. However, the United States does not support Assad’s government and believes that the brutality of his regime will give rise to jihadist organizations, while Russia is convinced that the collapse of Assad’s regime would lead to the institution of a jihadist government rather than the new, non-terrorist one that the US hopes for.⁹⁰ This difference in outcome predictions underscores the difference in narratives that the United States and Russia view when it comes to the Syrian Civil War. The Arab Spring brought to Moscow memories of the pro-democratic Color Revolutions - these acts of resistance signified turning away from the Kremlin. Because of this, Russia tends to support governments facing rebellions (with the exception of Ukraine) due to its own experience and its fears of losing influence in regions where it typically exercises much control. This, coupled with historical ties to Syria and its dedication to combat terrorism, brings to light why Russia intervened in support of Assad in the Syrian Civil War, and how this demonstrates a symbolic show of Russia’s push to create a multipolar world.

2.3b: Combating Terrorism

With Moscow’s re-entry into the regional politics of the Middle East comes the added complication of combating terrorist groups. The Kremlin has had to manage the difficult balance between maintaining their historically good relations with Middle Eastern states while at the same time participating in the War on Terror. Again, this form of intervention in the region is another example of how Russia hopes that it can eradicate unipolarism in favor of a multipolar world. Although both the United States and Russia are committed to ending this violence, many voices in Russia blame the West for its rise.⁹¹ According to Section II, Article 14 of the *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, the spread of extremist ideology is due in large part to “external interference”; “The ideological values and prescriptions imposed from outside these countries have exacerbated the negative response of their [the regions facing terrorism] societies

⁹⁰ Ibid, 308.

⁹¹ Ibid, 298.

to current challenges.” This subtly implies that the influence of Western culture and media was the catalyst for the rise and spread of extremist groups in rebellion of this outsider culture. From the American perspective, Russia has not proved to be a good partner in this battle because of “how punitive measures, rather than a focus on socioeconomic improvement to address root causes of radicalization, have long been a preferred method of Russia’s military and security services for addressing terrorism.”⁹² This illustrates the goal of the US to restructure Middle Eastern governments after democratic models, while Russia is focused on forcefully eradicating the presence of terrorist groups. Therefore, along with attempts to establish itself as a rival great power alongside the US in this region, Russia strengthens its relations with pre-established Middle Eastern governments by underscoring their shared criticisms of Western culture and interference.

2.3c: Conclusion

Russia’s growing involvement in the world, and particularly in areas outside its post-Soviet sphere of influence, demonstrate a new effort in creating multiple centers of power in the global community. Due to its history with the countries in the Middle East, Russia has experienced relative success in its interventions thus demonstrating its capability to become a more influential player in contrast to an American-dominated presence. This can be seen through the Kremlin’s support of Assad’s government in Syria as well as its focus in counterterrorism policies to gain support from pre-existing governments and swiftly remove the terrorist threats. The United States and Russia have very different goals for the Middle East, and this is rooted in their underlying ideologies: while the US believes the region will be most successful in the world through establishing democratic governments and integrating into the liberal world order, Russia instead sees the region as an opportunity to further its goals for a multipolar world and assert itself as a great power.

2.4: Russia and China

There is no doubt that much of the global economic power is currently coming from the Asia-Pacific region. China has established itself as a burgeoning economy within world markets

⁹² Dr. Mariya Y. Omelicheva, qtd. in “Russia’s Counterproductive Counterterrorism,” 2019.

and an important player in international affairs. With China as one of its southern neighbors, Russia is in a unique position in which it carries both economic and geopolitical stakes when it comes to interacting with China. As relations with Europe fluctuate, Moscow has carefully turned its focus to Asia, but with many reservations. Questions of identity come into play along with the unpredictability of what China will become on a global scale. Furthermore, both Russia and China share similarities in governing styles: both countries are in charge of vast territories which required a strong centralized government to maintain control, and also entails agreement over anti-Western rhetoric. Additionally, the fast-moving rise of China has made its way to the center of foreign policy for Western and Russian leaders alike.⁹³ Neither the West nor Russia knows where it will stand in relation to China as it continues to gain power, and therefore is an important aspect to consider when it comes to foreign policy.

In the United States, China's rise within the international community and global markets is seen with great trepidation. Russia is also cautious, but in the short term can see the benefits of having a leading world power with similar interests on its side. Both Russia and China share the ideology of conservatism and resent policing by liberal states and organizations, such as the United Nations, of their domestic activities. For different reasons, both view the United States as the primary opponent to their respective ideological goals and traditions. Therefore, a more powerful China could mean for Russia less accountability in the international sphere and more freedom of action.

2.4a: The Eurasian Economic Union vs. One Belt, One Road Initiative

With the establishment in 2014 of the Eurasian Economic Union, Russia's goals to bring the world closer to multipolarism were made evident. Eastern Asia is not multilaterally institutionalized like Europe, and in the quest to pivot the center of power from the Western Atlantic to the East, both Russia and China see opportunities for developing their own institutions.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, this organization has not been able to gain much headway due to China's more successful One Belt, One Road Initiative. These two organizations have difficulties existing as equals because each is headed by a country who hopes to take the lead in navigating the future dynamic of the region. On a broader scale, China has reaped benefits from

⁹³ Solomentseva 2014, 3.

⁹⁴ Art 2010, 389.

the existing international order through its close ties to important trade partners such as the United States, and therefore does not necessarily envision a “radical dismantling of the current international system” as Russia does.⁹⁵ To Moscow, the Eurasian Economic Union has the potential to play a major role in combating the unipolar liberal world, and furthermore would unite Russia’s two identities which are often at odds: Russia as European and Russia as Asian. However, Russia cannot ever be fully European, nor can it be fully Asian. This has left the country with a crisis of belonging: there is both an admiration towards and aversion against the two continents of which it is pulled between.

2.4b: Conclusion

It is safe to say that neither the United States nor Russia wish to see the development of a unipolar world with China at the helm. Despite the fact that the US and Russia have very different ideologies dictating what the trajectory of the future world order should be, both visions benefit from a China that remains asleep.⁹⁶ Since the beginning of the 2014 Ukraine crisis, Russia has intensified cooperation with China in what seems to be an “apparent ‘pivot’ to Asia.”⁹⁷ The crisis made Russia seem to be out of options: economic sanctions from the United States and European Union coupled with falling oil prices meant that Moscow needed to turn to China for support.⁹⁸ In addition to this, the EU’s perspective of Russia branded it as truly “other” after the events in Ukraine unfolded, and compelled Russia to reexamine its relationship with its Asian identity. This, however, is quite complicated because there is a strong prejudice against Asian peoples and civilizations despite many Russians in the East identifying themselves as Asian.⁹⁹ Therefore, many carry a strong ambivalence of being seen as Asian, especially since Russia historically has sought recognition of its great power status from the West rather than from Asia. Furthermore, Russia is aware that an over-reliance on Chinese support could undermine its ultimate goal of achieving multipolarism and is therefore seeking out a “strategic

⁹⁵ Stronski and Ng 2018.

⁹⁶ In reference to quote by Napoleon Bonaparte: “China is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will move the world.”

⁹⁷ Tsygankov 2018, 255.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 256.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

partnership” rather than an alliance with China. Moscow does not want to fall under China’s wing, but rather develop relations as equals.

2.5: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

In essence, the four case studies of Russian activity abroad demonstrate how Russia is an independent actor with complex motivations. Identity, ideology, narratives, power dynamics, geopolitics, and economics must all come into play when analyzing Russian behavior. The country is too complicated to be regarded merely as an enemy power with antagonistic goals. In Central and Eastern Europe, Russia is driven by its shared history and culture as well as its influence over its neighboring countries. This manifests in its security model of aggressive defense when it comes to perceived encroachments by the West into its “sphere of influence.” Therefore, a different approach is needed that will recognize Russia’s legitimacy, particularly in its sphere of influence. Currently ostracizing Russia for its admittedly invasive actions, particularly in Ukraine, has proven to be ultimately unsuccessful. It is within the best interest of both US and Russian diplomatic relations that US policy makers find a delicate balance between upholding the state sovereignty of Central and Eastern European states while at the same time not infringing upon Russia’s historical, cultural, and economic influence over the region.

Russia’s complicated relationship with Europe is rooted in a crisis of identity: Russia is not fully European, yet it looks to Europe for validation of its status as a great and modern power. Due to its currently strained relations with the European Union, Russia is feeling more like an “other” than ever and therefore responds by sowing seeds of division into its politics and economy. Furthermore, Russia resists the doctrine of Western liberalism as embodied by the EU because it cannot see itself succeeding in such an international structure. It responds to European liberalism through embracing conservative values and encouraging the development of a multipolar world. Therefore, it is especially important for the EU to acknowledge Russia’s legitimacy because Russia still looks to Europe for validation of its position within the world order. If this occurs, Russia will no longer feel like as much of an outsider and will have less motivation to react in such a way as it does.

In the Middle East, Russian intervention signifies its latest attempt to establish itself as a major world power, and to show that the US is not the only country with significant global influence. Russia stepped into this region in particular because the United States seemed to be

backing away, and also because Russia's relations with Middle Eastern governments benefit from historical ties established during the Soviet era as well as sharing similar government structures and value systems. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge these historic ties to the region which give Russia credibility and also recognize the similarities between Middle Eastern and Russian sentiments in regards to Western liberalism.

With the rise of China and impending unpredictability of what will become of the current world order, Russia is again faced with its crisis of identity and attempts at realizing a multipolar world. Where Putin envisions a "Greater Europe" stretching from "Lisbon to Vladivostok," China hopes to see a Greater Eurasia stretching from "Shanghai to St. Petersburg."¹⁰⁰ Multipolarism is a vision shared with China, but both countries have very different end goals for this international system. Russia has to be cautious in its relations towards the country, because China has the potential to help Russia accomplish many of its goals; but Russia does not want to become a subordinate power in China's new world.

In sum, it is important for US policy makers to realize that Russia is driven by a variety of interests, and not just those that are in relation to or go against US actions. This knowledge should not be cause for pitying Russia; rather, policy makers can employ this to formulate strategic and effective policies which will first and foremost advance US interests. Looking at Russia through a US lens is no longer the best course of action for developing new policies, nor does it help them fully grasp Russia's deeper, more fundamental motivations. US policy makers must accept Russia for what it is. They must recognize its legitimacy as a world power which operates on independent terms and its uniqueness in its complex identity. This does not necessarily mean that the United States will have to sacrifice its own interests and values, and in the long run the US' recognition of Russia as an independent actor can help to further its own goals.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 264.

Chapter 3

Мир і Свобода: Peace in Ukraine

by Jacob Sanderson

The Ukrainian crisis remains at the heart of US-Russia relations. The 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine violated fundamental principles of the post-Cold War international order that prohibit wars for territory and promote states sovereignty. The subsequent Russia-backed war in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine not only remains a major source of violence, but represents a Russian violation of the sovereignty of an independent state and a source of tension with the US. The United States has a vested interest in protecting the international order made up of sovereign states and preventing the escalation of tensions with Russia.

The United States must undertake a policy that moves Russia towards a military exit in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine, though not a permanent exit from Crimea, and ensures the long-term stability of the region. This involves encouraging Russia to abide by its promises under the Minsk II protocols, and expanding regional cooperation under the OSCE. In order to encourage Russia to abide by these policies, the United States must undertake a transactional policy that gives Russia the US policy decisions it desires, including the reduction of sanctions, the end of post-2014 military aid to Ukraine, and, most drastically, an implicit or explicit agreement not to expand NATO.

3.1: Background

After the end of the Cold War, US-Russian relations were heightened by the simultaneous enlargement of NATO and the European Union eastwards into what had once been Russia's sphere of influence.¹⁰¹ These trends came to a head in Euromaidan and the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution, in which Ukraine forced out pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovych over a decision to seek closer ties with Russia rather than the West. In March 2014, the Russian government, worried about the possibility of a western-aligned Ukraine¹⁰², took advantage of the revolution to send Russian soldiers without insignia into Crimea, annexing it to the Russian Federation. This was the first annexation of one country's territory by another since the end of

¹⁰¹ Bebler 2010, page 136

¹⁰² Masters

the Cold War.¹⁰³ Crimea is largely composed of ethnic Russians, making it the only majority ethnic Russian region in Ukraine. Its history as a part of the Russian Empire and Russian SSR until the 1950s helped to justify this annexation with the claim that ethnic Russians in the peninsula were being oppressed.¹⁰⁴ ¹⁰⁵ Crimea also maintained one of the largest warm-water ports in the former USSR and remained the home of the Russian Black Sea Fleet after the dissolution of the USSR.¹⁰⁶

These events revealed deep divisions in Ukraine. Euromaidan, while broadly supported in the western regions of Ukraine, was more controversial in the east, which maintained a large Russian-speaking population.¹⁰⁷ By April of 2014, protests by pro-Russia groups in the Donbass region of Ukraine had escalated into war between the central Ukrainian government and the Russian-backed forces of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.¹⁰⁸ In August, these forces were joined by unmarked Russian military forces from across the border.¹⁰⁹ Since 2014, Russian soldiers have not only maintained their presence in the Donbass, but have been the main source of military and economic aid for the separatists.¹¹⁰ Crucially, Ukraine has also lost effective control of much of its Russian border since the beginning of the crisis, which has instead fallen under the control of the Russian-backed separatists.¹¹¹ The Russian government continues to officially deny its full involvement in the War in the Donbass, while simultaneously justifying any action it admits to as the protection of ethnic Russians against an oppressive Ukrainian government. Most experts agree, however, that the primary purpose of this invasion was to prevent further movement of Ukraine westwards towards NATO and the EU.¹¹²

These events marked the greatest deterioration in Russian-American relations since the end of the Cold War. Following the annexation of Crimea, Russia was expelled from the G8, and sanctions were imposed by the US and other governments on major Russian figures and

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Kalb 2015, page 160

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, Page 164

¹⁰⁹ Tsvetkova 2014

¹¹⁰ Rybak 2019

¹¹¹ Interfax-Ukraine 2016

¹¹² Kramer 2015.

institutions, leading to a Russian financial crisis from 2014 until 2017.¹¹³ The United States also began a policy of arming the Ukrainian government with powerful weaponry to aid in its fight against Russia and the separatists. Relations only worsened after conflict over Syria, in which the US was generally supportive of the rebel Free Syrian Army and Russia was generally supportive of the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and after Russian interference in the 2016 US Presidential elections, which led to the establishment of new anti-Russia sanctions. Some have gone so far as to call this period a “New Cold War.”¹¹⁴ While not the worldwide ideological conflict of mid-century, the post-2014 period of US-Russia relations is a period of heightened tensions and reduced communications, and maintains all dangers thereof.

3.2: Interests

To create a new United States policy toward Ukraine, the US must start by understanding and recognizing what US and Russian interests in Ukraine are. For the United States, the current crisis in Ukraine is not a question of the physical security of the United States homeland. Rather, the US maintains two major interests regarding the Ukraine crisis- an interest in preserving the international order, and a generally-held interest in preventing the escalation of violent conflict.

The US’s primary interest regarding Ukraine is to protect the broader international order it has worked toward since the end of the Cold War: an international system nominally based on the sovereignty of independent states and the functioning of international institutions. Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 violated the norm that wars for the purpose of gaining territory are illegitimate. Russia’s continuing support of separatist forces in eastern Ukraine and the presence of Russian troops there further denigrated respect for state sovereignty. Any resolution to the Ukrainian crisis must somehow advance the cause of that order.

Supplementing the desire to support the liberal international order is a general will to decrease the amount of violent conflicts internationally. The US maintains a legitimate security interest in the region: the prevention of conflict escalation with Russia, especially as it is a nuclear power, and of repetition of tensions resembling that of the Cold War. Though an actual, physical conflict with Russia remains unlikely, the experience of the Cold War makes it clear

¹¹³Eberhardt and Menkiszak 2015, page 5

¹¹⁴ Charap and Shapiro 2015

that a period of sustained high tensions with Russia is not in the interest of the United States, nor the interests of the Russian Federation. Peace is in the interests of all.

On the other hand, Russia has very different interests in Ukraine. To Russia, Ukraine is not a marginal issue, but central. Ukraine is Russia's nearest neighbor, a major trading partner, and an essential part of its history. Ukraine was a part of Russia in some form for over three centuries. Ukraine and Russia continue to share much culture, history, and media. The Russian government sees the 2014 invasion of Ukraine as essential to maintaining the last strands of its "privileged sphere of influence" in Eastern Europe.¹¹⁵ It is seen as essential to keeping Vladimir Putin in power, as he claims to be saving Russia from the humiliation of the 90's.^{116 117} This underlines a very basic point: Russia is willing to fight harder for its interests in Ukraine than the United States is.

These two US interests, being respect for the liberal international order and a de-escalation of conflict, contain within them inherent contradictions. A policy that maximizes the protection of the liberal international order would mean an aggressive pushback against Russian occupation in both eastern Ukraine and Crimea, which would likely increase tensions with Russia. A policy that emphasizes de-escalation of conflict between the US and Russia could allow Russia permanent control over both territories while neither punishing Russia for its past violations of the international order nor protecting that order in the future. Any US policy must strike a balance between these two interests.

Within Ukraine, the Russian occupation of eastern Ukraine is the greatest threat to the goals mentioned above. The Russian occupation denies Ukraine its right to act as an independent state in the international order, has violated the most essential rule of the liberal international order, that war should not be waged for territory, and severely escalates tensions between both the US and Russia and the EU and Russia. Additionally, Russia appears much less interested in permanent control in eastern Ukraine than it does in Crimea, not having taken the step towards official annexation.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the end of the Russian occupation of eastern Ukraine is a policy that serves both broader US interests while also maintaining balance between respect for the

¹¹⁵ Cooley

¹¹⁶ Cooley

¹¹⁷ Goscilo 2012, page 182

¹¹⁸ Mitrokhin 2015, page 247

international order and escalation with Russia. Furthermore, it must be a goal of the US to assure, to a reasonable degree, Ukrainian autonomy in the international sphere.

Three policies are needed to act upon these goals. First is the support of the Minsk II agreement as a roadmap for an end to Russian occupation and the restoration of Ukrainian autonomy. The second is the use of a transactional policy to encourage Russia to abide by Minsk II, and to garner action in support of other US goals. The third is the expansion of the role of the OSCE in order to create a framework in which regional peace and cooperation may continue in the long term.

3.3: Policy Recommendations

3.3a: Minsk II

The primary goal of the United States regarding Ukraine is to encourage a Russian withdrawal from eastern Ukraine and an end to the conflict in that region. Currently, the best way to encourage such action is through support of the February 2015 Minsk II agreement.

The Minsk II agreement was negotiated in February 2015 between the Ukrainian government and the separatists in the Donbass region after the failure of the first Minsk agreement to end fighting in the region.¹¹⁹ The agreement was negotiated with the aid of the French, German, and Russian governments under the auspices of the OSCE. The major components of the Minsk II agreement were the establishment of an immediate ceasefire along with the retreat of Ukrainian and separatist forces to delineated lines of conflict.¹²⁰ This would be followed by OSCE monitoring and the establishment of special elections in the Donbass region. Following this would be the resumption of Ukrainian control over its international border, the withdrawal of all foreign militaries, and constitutional reform to provide for Ukrainian decentralization and a level of self-rule in the Donbass region.¹²¹

Support of the Minsk II agreement remains crucial to any peaceful solution of the Ukraine crisis because it remains the only internationally agreed-upon method for ending the war in eastern Ukraine. Recently-elected Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who took office

¹¹⁹ TASS

¹²⁰ United Nations Security Council 2015

¹²¹ Ibid

with over 70% of the popular vote¹²², has remained supportive of the broader agreement.¹²³ While opponents of the agreement argue that the agreement would give Russia a check on Ukrainian foreign policy,¹²⁴ the US's primary interest in Ukraine is currently the de-escalation of tensions through the end of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the restoration of its rights as a sovereign state, not the prevention of any Russian influence over Ukraine in the long term. Furthermore, decentralization of Ukraine remains a popular issue in the country, having been demanded by the Maidan protesters in 2014.¹²⁵ The US must remain supportive of those agreements negotiated by its allies, particularly when they remain the only road to peace and continue to enjoy the support of that state's government.

However, despite the signing of Minsk II, Russia has continued its occupation of eastern Ukraine and fighting has continued, albeit at a reduced rate. Thus far, not a single element of the protocols has been firmly established. In addition, in recent negotiations with the government of Ukraine the Russian government has insisted on the holding of new elections in the Donbass region before Ukraine regains control of its international border.¹²⁶ Observers have pointed to a Russian desire to "freeze" the conflict as a permanent attempt to destabilize Ukraine, similar to its policies in other post-Soviet states.¹²⁷ Though Russia is not an official signatory to Minsk II, the ability to act upon its measures depends entirely on Russia's willingness to support them, as Russia currently provides much of the support necessary to sustain the conflict in eastern Ukraine.¹²⁸

The primary challenge of the US in supporting Minsk II is to ensure that Russia takes action to support its protocols and that it is successful in restoring Ukrainian sovereignty. This includes ensuring that the Ukrainian government regains control of its international border before the holding of new elections and the decentralization of the country, meaning that constitutional reforms occur in an environment in which Ukraine has maintained its international sovereignty. In order to achieve this, the US must make these events more beneficial to Russia than the

¹²² BBC 2019

¹²³ Unian

¹²⁴ Niland 2019

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Nilsson 2016, page 20

¹²⁷ Tsygankov 2018, page 288

¹²⁸ Rybak

maintenance of a frozen war in Ukraine. This may be done by the establishment of a transactional policy that exchanges long-term Russian goals in US policy for significant changes in Russian behavior.

3.3b: Transactional Policy

The US must establish a transactional policy to achieve their immediate interests in Ukraine. This policy involves recognizing the tools of leverage the United States holds over Russia and vice-versa. There are three fundamental pieces of leverage the US can use to encourage Russia to follow the Minsk II-based policies underlined above. These concessions must be given to Russia only with proof of good behavior. The act of using a transactional foreign policy to gain Russian concessions is not meant to reward Russia in exchange for poor behavior, but to reward the United States and Russia simultaneously with an improved international environment. However, this must be made clear to Russia. Therefore, it is sensible to include in any agreement with Russia regarding these issues an understanding, explicit or implicit, that should Russia once again seek to annex another country's territory by military force, sanctions, military aid, the enlargement of NATO are not only back on the table but will be swiftly enacted.

The most important piece of leverage is an understanding with Russia that NATO will no longer seek to enlarge itself eastwards. This would mean a freeze on the intensified dialogues with Ukraine and Georgia, as well as an end to enlargement as a base policy of NATO. The acknowledgment of this policy should be implicit, although all options, including an explicit policy change, should be on the table during negotiations. NATO enlargement has been a major source of conflict between the US and Russia since the end of the Cold War,¹²⁹ and the current war in eastern Ukraine is viewed by many experts as a Russian attempt to prevent the further shift of its former sphere of influence towards the West, best represented by NATO.¹³⁰ An end to this shift is a major interest of the Russian government and therefore leverage the US can take advantage of.

This change in policy does not represent significant harm to the institution of NATO or to broader international security. For the past thirty years, the US has held the view that an

¹²⁹ Tsygankov, page 70

¹³⁰ Ibid, page 71

enlargement of NATO is fundamentally useful and helps protect the spread of democracy, the rule of law, and international institutions. However, while one may argue that the enlargement of NATO has successfully protected the democracies established after the Revolutions of 1989, many international scholars argue that it has also provoked a weakened Russia that now views the United States as encroaching on its former sphere of influence.¹³¹ This is compounded by a long-standing Russian idea of itself as a singularly vulnerable country that must keep some hold on eastern Europe in order to prevent an invasion from the West, a view that was proven somewhat true throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.¹³² Now, as NATO enlargement moves not just into Russia's former satellite states, but into former states of the Soviet Union, Russian action has become even more aggressive in trying to preserve its sphere of influence. Further enlargement of NATO into the former states of the USSR does not aid the US in accomplishing its larger goals of preserving the liberal international order or preventing a period of extreme tension with Russia. An end to the official policy of enlargement, likely an implicit one, causes minimal harm to the US and the NATO alliance while decreasing tensions with Russia and serving as a point of leverage that can bring Russia in line with US interests regarding the Minsk II policy and withdrawal from eastern Ukraine.

In addition, there are many US policies regarding the Ukrainian crisis that the US may use as leverage to achieve its policy priorities outlined above. These are the US military aid to Ukraine and the anti-Russia sanctions, both established after 2014. The use of sanctions as leverage can be either preventative or restorative, with the threat of sanctions being used to prevent future action or the removal of sanctions being used to encourage current action. Most policy experts view any additional post-2014 sanctions as not useful in encouraging Russia to follow US policy priorities.¹³³ The only major use of post-2014 sanctions that remains is in the encouragement of Russia to undertake current policy changes. On the issue of military aid, the post-2014 military aid to Ukraine is specifically tied into the Ukrainian crisis and Russian occupation.¹³⁴ To tie this aid into the end of the crisis and occupation does not significantly harm either future Ukrainian interests or future US interests. Fundamentally, utilizing sanctions and

¹³¹ Ibid, page 70

¹³² Ibid, page 62

¹³³ Harrell 2015, page 6

¹³⁴ Department of Defense 2019

military aid as leverage offers Russia a return to the pre-2014 status quo in exchange for actually returning to the pre-2014 status quo.

The last transactional policy the US must use to gain policy action from Russia is the recognition, most likely implicit, of Russian control of Crimea. This policy follows a basic understanding of Russian interest regarding Crimea. Unlike with the eastern regions of Ukraine, Russia has undertaken an official annexation of Crimea. Likewise, Vladimir Putin views this annexation and the successful holding of Crimea as essential to the survival and popularity of his regime.¹³⁵ There remains no realistic diplomatic opportunity to regain Crimea for Ukraine and any military option would mean a war against Russia, which would be disastrous for both Ukraine and the US, and in contrast with US interests regarding Crimea. If Crimea is going to remain a part of Russia, it is in the interests of the US to advance its policy priorities through an implicit recognition of that fact.

It must be noted that the policies outlined above, particularly an end to the policy of NATO enlargement, are significant changes in US policy and essential desires of Russian foreign policy. To undergo these policy changes solely for withdrawal from eastern Ukraine would be inequitable. Therefore, this transaction must be used not only for a Russian withdrawal from eastern Ukraine, but also to achieve other goals. Chief among these are the expansion of human rights within Russia, particularly through action against the persecution of LGBTQ individuals in the Chechnya region, an agreement on internet freedoms and cybersecurity, and Russian action on climate change, all of which follow in this report. Together, these policies greatly improve both US-Russia relations and international relations generally, making the end of NATO enlargement a worthy policy choice.

It may be argued that the establishment of this policy proves to Russia that it is able to gain major concessions from the US by acting aggressively in the international sphere. But among those concessions noted above, none significantly harm the basic goals of the US internally or internationally. An end to the enlargement of NATO in the east means little when most enlargement eastward has already occurred and has not proven as useful in fostering international peace as was expected. A NATO that is less focused on expanding is furthermore able to focus on more pressing matters to the organization, including internal cohesion in the face

¹³⁵ Hale 2018, page 2

of recent criticisms to NATO. An end to the post-2014 Russian sanctions and military aid to Ukraine means less when that end is given in exchange for an end to the conditions that brought them about in the first place. An implicit recognition of Russian control of Crimea in exchange for concessions means little when the alternative is likely an implicit recognition of Crimea in exchange for no concessions.

3.3c: OSCE

However, purely engaging in a transactional policy in Ukraine in order to achieve a Russian withdrawal on the grounds of the Minsk II agreement does not ensure long-term peace in Eastern Europe. To ensure this, the US must embrace cooperation instead of confrontation in the form of an expansion of the role of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE. The best US policy towards Ukraine and Russia seeks not only to create the immediate conditions necessary for peace, but also works toward long-lasting peace and cooperation in the region. Many of the tools the US can use to broaden trust with Russia in Ukraine already exist and can be expanded. Foremost among these tools is the OSCE, created in 1973 to ensure cooperation and communication between East and West.

On this subject, the OSCE has an encouraging record. During the Soviet Period, the OSCE, then the CSCE, was given credit by many major institutions for strengthening East-West connections and helping ease Europe towards the end of the Cold War.¹³⁶ This success has continued into the Post-Soviet Era. Unlike NATO, whose use of power in the region Russia has often opposed, Russia has generally appeared willing to respect the legitimacy of the OSCE. This included action within Russia itself under Yeltsin, as the creation of a small OSCE “assistance group” was permitted within Chechnya during the Chechen War.¹³⁷ The willingness of Russia to rely on the OSCE has continued into the Putin era. During the current Ukraine conflict, a consensus of all OSCE member states, initiated by the Russian government, allowed OSCE observers to be placed at strategic checkpoints on either side of the border between Russia and

¹³⁶ Sperling, James, Kay, Sean, and Papacosma, S. Victor, eds. 2003, page 144

¹³⁷ Ibid, page 158

the Ukrainian Donbass¹³⁸. Most notably, Russia allowed the OSCE to monitor the negotiations with Ukraine that led to the Minsk II Protocols in 2015.¹³⁹

Recently, the US's relationship with Russia vis-à-vis Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe has not been organized primarily by the OSCE, but by institutions the Russian administration has little trust in. Most prominently, this includes NATO, through the Partnership for Peace program founded in 1994. The Partnership for Peace, which includes both Ukraine and Russia, has proven a poor replacement for the OSCE within the context of building regional trust and cooperation, particularly because of its stated goal of providing a path towards eventual NATO membership. The relative US focus on NATO as its primary organizational structure in Eastern Europe is long-standing. In 2002, the US spent only \$20 million on all OSCE operations, equivalent to merely two days of the NATO mission in the former Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁰

The OSCE has proven itself to be an organization whose efforts at regional coordination are acceptable to both the US and Russia. A renewed focus on this organization would help build trust and create peace between these two countries in the long-term. A number of actions could be taken to strengthen the OSCE in this regard. Currently, the OSCE has no broader, permanent working group specifically tailored towards cooperation in Eastern Europe. A working group towards these problems could easily be created and used to encourage US, Russian, and Ukrainian cooperation both in this current conflict and in the years ahead.

3.4: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

Ultimately, working toward US goals of a strengthened international order of sovereign states and a de-escalation of conflict with Russia requires a Russian withdrawal from eastern Ukraine in line with the Minsk II protocols. The Minsk II protocols remain the only internationally supported roadmap to a de-escalation of this sort in eastern Ukraine and they deserve US support. This may be achieved through the utilization of a transactional policy toward Russia, trading changes in US policy (including the implicit end to the enlargement of NATO in the east, the end of post-2014 Russian sanctions and Ukrainian military aid, and an implicit recognition of Russian control over Crimea) for a Russian withdrawal from eastern

¹³⁸ OSCE

¹³⁹ OSCE 2014

¹⁴⁰ Sperling, James, Kay, Sean, and Papacosma, pg. 145

Ukraine and other policy priorities. These policies fundamentally cost the US little to enact compared to their importance to Russia and the policies Russia would be willing to enact in exchange. Finally, long-term cooperation in the region may be ensured through expansion of the OSCE. The history of US-Russian relations in Eastern Europe has shown that the OSCE is an effective organization for decreasing tensions and increasing cooperation in the region.

Chapter 4

Pivoting NATO Toward the 21st Century and Renewing the US-Russian Relationship

Connor Urcuyo

The US has enjoyed a period of hegemony in which the paradigm of using NATO as a vehicle of Russian deterrence has only served to antagonize a waning world power and escalate conflict to this day. As it enters a new world order with itself and China at the forefront of global influence, the US must re-evaluate the role that NATO plays in international security and how it contributes to US-Russian relations. In recent years, those relations have deteriorated due to NATO expansion in Eastern Europe occurring while Russia's dominance and presence as a global threat minimize as a result of the end of Cold War tensions. Thus, we recommend the US pivot the deterrence strategy of NATO away from Russia and toward China and create better guidelines for future sanctions. The ultimate goal of this strategy is a *détente* in current relations, which will then be used as leverage to achieve US policy priorities such as a Russian withdrawal from Ukraine, elections without foreign interference, nuclear nonproliferation, human rights, and tangible progress in the climate battle. The United States must take a transactional approach with Russia in exchange for progress on important US policies, a strategy that has the added benefit of preparing the US for a shift in the world order to accommodate the increasing rise of China. In order to accomplish this, NATO must refocus on relations with China instead of with Russia.

4.1: Historical Context of Russia-NATO Relations

For the last fifty years, the US has maintained an ideological interest in its relationship with NATO. From NATO's founding in 1949 until the period of US hegemony following the end of the Cold War, most of NATO's relations with Russia were built on the need to deter Russian aggression and prevent the spread of communism through its expansion.¹⁴¹ ¹⁴² However, NATO's expansion has resulted in hostile relations with Russia since the early 2000s in the form of, but not limited to, the Russo-Georgian War and the Ukraine crisis.

In order to understand Russia-NATO relations, it is important to know the history of NATO's creation as well as its most recent policy statements. In 2004, NATO expanded into

¹⁴¹ Beyer 2010, 221-223

¹⁴² A Short History of NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2020

seven Eastern European countries that were once a part of Russia's sphere of influence. Russia viewed this expansion as antagonistic and threatening to their security.¹⁴³ Over the course of the next six years, the Russian border states of Estonia, Latvia, and neighboring Lithuania joined NATO, and Georgia and Ukraine were discussed as the likely next candidates for ascendency.¹⁴⁴ Member states argued that this period would bring a new era of renewed strength to the NATO alliance, while Russia made it known that they viewed such actions as a provocation and a threat to their security. During these NATO negotiations, Russian policymakers made statements attempting to deter Germany and France from voting in favor of Georgian ascension. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko stated during the summit that, "Georgia's and Ukraine's membership in the alliance is a huge strategic mistake that would have most serious consequences for pan-European security."¹⁴⁵ As long as Germany and France feared drastic consequences, this Russian strategy essentially allowed for a "Russian veto" over NATO expansion along their borders.

Russian actors and realist political observers have declared that this NATO expansion was the reason for the annexation of Crimea. According to Mearsheimer, "Putin maintained that admitting those two countries to NATO would represent a 'direct threat' to Russia. One Russian newspaper reported that Putin, while speaking with Bush, 'very transparently hinted that if Ukraine was accepted into NATO, it would cease to exist.'"¹⁴⁶ This was the beginning of major hostilities between NATO and Russia that conflict with the original policy intention. An organization that was meant to deter Russia was quite successfully aggravating the country instead.

There are essentially two major frames of argument regarding the cause of the annexation of Crimea. The first is that Putin was exhibiting imperialist behavior and annexed Crimea to take advantage of ongoing protests and the fact that NATO would not be willing to go to war to defend a non-member state.¹⁴⁷ The second is that Russia was responding to the three-pronged

¹⁴³ Enlargement, North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2020

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ BBC News 2008

¹⁴⁶ Mearsheimer 2014, 77-89

¹⁴⁷ Treisman 2016, 47-54

threat of NATO expansion, EU expansion, and democracy promotion.¹⁴⁸ In support of the latter argument, Vladimir Putin specifically blamed NATO expansion and the failure to cooperate for their actions in Crimea:

Russia strived to engage in dialogue with our colleagues in the West. We are constantly proposing cooperation on all key issues; we want to strengthen our level of trust and for our relations to be equal, open and fair. But we saw no reciprocal steps.

On the contrary, they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed us before an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO's expansion to the East, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders. They kept telling us the same thing: "Well, this does not concern you." That's easy to say. It happened with the deployment of a missile defense system. In spite of all our apprehensions, the project is working and moving forward. It happened with the endless foot-dragging in the talks on visa issues, promises of fair competition and free access to global markets.

Putin Address on March 18, 2014¹⁴⁹

However insincere Putin's claims to cooperation might be, the argument that the West fostered an environment which antagonized Russia is reasonable but should not necessarily be trusted. As discussed in Chapter One of this report, Russia often employs a strategy of misrepresenting the truth of their narrative on cooperation. Therefore, Russia's claims of relations in good faith must be viewed with appropriate skepticism. While Putin may often make noble claims of the need for negotiation in good faith, they are often not followed up with strong action.

4.2: Policy Recommendations

This policy is based upon the belief that NATO's current structure is outdated and has caused more harm in recent relations with Russia than it has resolved. It is written with a nod to offensive realist theory, declaring that the anarchy of the international system is responsible for

¹⁴⁸ Mearsheimer 2014 ,77-89

¹⁴⁹ Putin 2014

Russia's aggressive state behavior.¹⁵⁰ In order to avoid another Russian campaign in Eastern Europe, we recommend structuring NATO away from a fundamentally anti-Russian position¹⁵¹ without the appearance of rewarding Moscow for its belligerent behavior in the last decade.

4.2a: Renewing the Integrity of the Sanction

Sanctions on Russia in recent years have been applied without defined reasoning or a realistic road map for removal. From the beginning of the Trump Administration through February 2020, the US made a total of fifty-two policy actions toward Russia for a variety of reasons, ranging from diplomatic rebukes to sanctions on both individuals and the state.¹⁵² More than anything, this exposes lack of clarity on what constitutes an act heinous enough to warrant sanctions. The US sanctioned Russia for election interference, sanction evasion, human rights abuses, offensive military operations, disregard of international norms, malicious cyber activities, and more.¹⁵³ While these specific sanctions are fairly new, they echo a pattern begun by the Bush administration of utilizing sanctions as the first plan of action against unfavorable Russian behavior.¹⁵⁴

In conjunction with the findings of Chapter Five, it is agreed that US sanctions have been horribly misused and lack decision making consistent with the perceived punishment of an action. US sanctioning has ruined the integrity of the sanction as a tool because of its inconsistent application and removal.¹⁵⁵ Just as Chapter Five of this report states, "With this in mind, it is clear that the sanctions currently placed on Russia are unlikely to produce any change in the disinformation attacks from Russia. They serve only to worsen relations." This proposal relies on the recommendations of Chapter Five to create a system of properly levied sanctions with clear boundaries and a set road for their removal. Proper sanctioning is necessary to achieve the policy goals recommended here.

4.2b: NATO's New Purpose

¹⁵⁰ Mearsheimer 2014

¹⁵¹ Brennan, 2019

¹⁵² Letsa and Polyakova 2020

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Rice 2018; Holland and Mason 2014

¹⁵⁵ Blanc and Weiss 2019

The focal point of the changing international order is quickly becoming the polarity between the US, China, and those countries that will have to choose sides despite their own national sovereignty. In the midst of this worldwide shift, the ultimate thesis behind NATO has become obsolete. Because Russia is no longer a threat at quite the magnitude of WWII, NATO's original purpose of keeping the Russians out of Europe no longer has a foothold in current international relations and must be adapted. Emmanuel Macron captured the current situation in a speech on the state of NATO in which he said, "Europe will disappear with the obliteration of this Western period, and the world will be centered around two main focal points: the United States and China. And we will have to choose between the two powers."¹⁵⁶ As this landscape becomes more apparent, every world power will have to adapt to an emerging order based on economic supremacy.^{157 158} This chapter proposes pivoting NATO toward a pan-European security alliance that revitalizes US commitment to Europe while promoting international norms for trade and investment, maintaining US interest in preferential access to world markets, and de-emphasizing Russian deterrence.

While Russia remains the topic of this policy proposal, the US would benefit from pivoting the purpose of NATO toward China to achieve its intended goals. China's rising economic supremacy¹⁵⁹ and their propensity to use it as a means for a darkening political climate¹⁶⁰ that emboldens repression and human rights violations presents a great threat to the US.^{161 162} The threat from China promotes the repression of human rights at the cost of economic prosperity. Fallows describes this rapid change as, "much more controlled and repressive than the China of five years ago, or even 10."¹⁶³ These developments within China are not a massive threat to US security on their own, but they become one in a global context. The United States has repeatedly affirmed that the violation of human rights is in direct conflict with US economic and security interests because, "Free nations are more economically successful, stable, reliable partners, and democratic societies are less likely to produce terrorists, proliferate weapons of

¹⁵⁶ Macron 2019

¹⁵⁷ Maher 2018, 501-504

¹⁵⁸ Xuetong 2019, 40-46

¹⁵⁹ Shaw and Glenn 2016, 53

¹⁶⁰ Fallows 2016

¹⁶¹ Bodeen 2019

¹⁶² Qin and Hernández 2018

¹⁶³ Fallows 2016

mass destruction, or engage in aggression and war. This means that the advance of democracy benefits not just the US, but order and peace around the globe.”¹⁶⁴ China stands as the greatest opponent to this paradigm and threatens the proliferation of human rights abuses across the globe as it systematically attempts to silence overseas dissidents with, “brazen tactics of surveillance, blackmail, and intimidation.”¹⁶⁵ While Russia remains notorious for its authoritarian human rights violations, as discussed in Chapter Seven, China is the greater violator, especially because of its propensity to expand its repression outside its borders and into its East Asian sphere of influence. Such expansion of social repression, combined with China’s assistance to North Korean nuclear proliferation, highlight China as a greater threat to the international system than Russia. These facts, combined with the rising economic supremacy of China, make it a country whose peak has not yet arrived – a peak the US must be prepared for.

As such, US policymakers have identified China—not Russia or terrorism—as the largest long-term threat to the United States.¹⁶⁶ This assessment is consistent with the findings of the *Russia and China* section in Chapter Two of this policy report. NATO has become stale without substantive updates to its mission or purpose, so it must refocus on Chinese deterrence.

The most drastic aspect of this predicted polarity with China is its implication on NATO in Eastern Europe. With China serving as the object of deterrence, Eastern Europe and other countries along Russia’s borders no longer represent meaningful geographic real estate for NATO to pursue. Thus, we propose a declarative posture by which the United States will make statements that NATO will not expand further into Eastern Europe. This works in coordination with the new NATO pivot by engaging in a *détente* with Russia over the punishments for the 2014 annexation of Crimea in order to focus on the new threat of China. The details of this specific policy proposal are further explained in the *Transactional Policy* section of the following chapter.

Toward this end, we recommend an amendment to the NATO charter which prohibits non-NATO states from investing in key security apparatuses within NATO member states, a step that would prevent Chinese foreign control over important ports, resource extraction sites, and majority ownership of energy companies and major pipelines. In addition to this amendment, we

¹⁶⁴ The Democracy and Human Rights Working Group 2016

¹⁶⁵ Halliday 2019

¹⁶⁶ Cronk 2019; Choi 2019; Kotsonis, Chakabarti et al. 2019, Britzkey 2019

support greater US investment to solidify a renewed commitment in Europe as well as lowering barriers for intra-NATO private investment into these security apparatuses in order to compensate for lost Chinese investment. This would address current security concerns over Chinese foreign investments offering to purchase strategic defensive assets in Europe such as Portugal's largest energy grid company,¹⁶⁷ ports in Greece and Italy,¹⁶⁸ and an airport in Greenland.¹⁶⁹

4.2c: The Ends to Our Means

A pivot of NATO's focus toward China may be viewed as seceding ground to Russia and weakening our national security without making many gains in return. However, this policy is in no way meant to serve as appeasement for Russia's actions in Eastern Europe over the past decade. Instead, we propose using the concessions mentioned in this chapter as a bargaining chip in our transactional policy in order to achieve the desired ends of following chapters. The focus of NATO must only shift in return for ground being made in domestic election sovereignty,¹⁷⁰ nuclear nonproliferation, human rights,¹⁷¹ environmental protection.¹⁷² In addition, such goals will only be made more achievable with a change in sanctioning methods.

4.3: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

The policies proposed on NATO can be understood as the following. We recommend the US strengthen the integrity of sanctions on Russia by creating thorough guidelines for what constitutes a sanctionable action and a process for how to have those sanctions removed (as expounded upon in Chapter Five), implicitly agree not to expand NATO into Eastern Europe, and pivot NATO's purpose toward combating Chinese supremacy. In exchange, the US must initiate a transactional policy that attempts to achieve Russian action on climate issues, progress in the area of human rights in Russia, progress in nuclear non-proliferation, and a Russian military exit from Eastern Ukraine. Ultimately, these policies will result in a de-escalation of

¹⁶⁷ Le Corre 2018

¹⁶⁸ Ringsmose and Rynning 2020

¹⁶⁹ Mehta 2018

¹⁷⁰ Elving 2019

¹⁷¹ Trump 2017; Trump Administration 2017, 42

¹⁷² Rinde 2017

tensions in US-Russia relations, removing the scars of past behaviors. They will also update NATO to account for increasing US-Chinese polarity while giving the US a leg up on the rising supremacy of China. Ultimately, the policies proposed in this chapter do not have a high marginal cost for the United States, but take steps to affirm the current disgruntled status quo as, in fact, legitimate. Such a move is highly coveted by Russia and can be used to achieve currently stagnant yet longstanding goals.

Chapter 5

Creating a Foundation for Addressing Russian Disinformation

By Grace Reinicke

In the past decade, most notably during the 2016 US presidential election, democracies across the world have experienced a startling increase in disinformation campaigns.¹⁷³ The origin of these attacks has been overwhelmingly from the Russian Federation as part of a larger plan by the Russian government to disrupt liberal democratic governments and norms within these countries.¹⁷⁴ To this day, there are no concrete international laws prohibiting disinformation attacks, nor any consensus to validate retaliation against Russia. The result has been an accusatory foreign policy that has resulted in higher tensions and deteriorating relations with Russia.

Although the effects of disinformation attacks can be hard to quantify, the continued and increased attacks from Russia indicate that the Russian government deems them a means useful enough to continue funding.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, the United States must adequately respond to the threat posed by Russian disinformation campaigns in order to preserve a stable democracy in the face of foreign interference. The purpose of this report is to provide a practical policy for stemming the attack of disinformation from Russia without further entrenching the US in disagreements with and accusations against Russia. This report recommends the formation of an international consensus on the definition of a disinformation attack and the punitive measures that must be taken against them, with a specific focus on Russia. This policy utilizes the shared interests of the United States' allies and the failed attempts to stop Russian interference in the past to form a policy that forms a consensus on norms and punitive measures through a combined power instead of dealing with Russia head-on.

5.1: Background

5.1a: Disinformation in the Past

¹⁷³ Taylor 2019

¹⁷⁴ Taylor 2019

¹⁷⁵ Selected Committee on Intelligence, United States Senate

Although Russian disinformation campaigns have been operating since the early 2000s, they became far more visible in the 2016 election. Through what is now acknowledged as a sophisticated system of “impersonation and misdirection,” Russian nationals and government actors created millions of online profiles, posted fabricated stories, staged events, and even paid people to attend US rallies with specific instructions on how to act.¹⁷⁶ Initially, Vladimir Putin’s spokesman rejected the charge that these fabricated profiles and false information were directed by him.¹⁷⁷ It could only be proven that the attacks were from Russia, not that the attacks were orchestrated by the government.¹⁷⁸ However, after extensive investigation, it was found that the Russian government had paid significant sums of money to so-called “troll factories” to produce these disinformation attacks, the largest and most widely known being the Internet Research Agency, which is owned by Russian nationalist Prigozhon.¹⁷⁹ Russia misdirected the US by funding these factories through corrupted bids for government contracts. In effect, the companies were not owned by the government, but by Putin’s close and powerful associates.¹⁸⁰ Although Putin has never taken responsibility for the acts, there is sufficient evidence within the Mueller Report to prove that they originated from the Russian government.¹⁸¹

These attacks took many forms and, in order to discuss their effects, it is important to summarize their content and their distribution. The first step was creating enough profiles connected to radical political movements that any story they peddled would spread rapidly. The massive amount of internet profiles created by Russians replicated a society in itself, with hundreds, if not thousands, posting the same politically charged news articles, prompting other fake profiles to repost and/or comment with radical statements.¹⁸² The result was that fake news spread quickly through these postings and was legitimized by the sheer number of comments. In addition, Russians would stage events to stir up radicalism. An American citizen was even compensated by Russian actors to attend a Trump rally in the swing state of Florida dressed in a Hillary Clinton mask and an orange prison jumpsuit, prompting further radical comments and

¹⁷⁶ Jamieson 2018, pg 38

¹⁷⁷ MacFarquhar 2018, “Yevgeny Prigozhin”

¹⁷⁸ Rosenberg, 2020

¹⁷⁹ Selected Committee on Intelligence, United States Senate

¹⁸⁰ MacFarquhar 2018, “Yevgeny Prigozhin”

¹⁸¹ Selected Committee on Intelligence, United States Senate

¹⁸² MacFarquhar 2018, “Inside the Russian Troll Factory”

actions by individuals who believed that Hillary Clinton should be in jail.¹⁸³ It is clear that the Russian government utilized existing social media platforms to push propagandized information to the US public in order to sow radicalism and polarize the US population, playing on the lack of norms regarding information warfare.

As many have theorized and as can be backed up by previous Russian actions, these disinformation attacks are pieces to a larger Russian objective of damaging US democracy in order to elevate Russia's relative standing.¹⁸⁴ Relying on mob mentality and their thousands of fake profiles, these Russian agents were able to fan the flames of divisive political topics and confuse the US public about what was fact, what was fiction, and what was bias. With the increase in information mobility, the world is entering an age where unfounded stories move rapidly; the Russians have proven themselves able to capitalize on this societal weakness and, to some extent, control how the population perceives divisive political topics. Understanding these attacks allows one to see the loophole of legality in social media that Russia utilized for its campaign. This legality must be addressed.

5.1b: Historical Problems with Addressing Russian Disinformation

Despite the clear problems posed by Russian meddling in the democratic institutions of the United States, little has been done to seriously address this problem. This is mostly due to uncoordinated sanctions and a lack of international consensus on the issue.

Although the effect of sanctions is difficult to quantify, in the case of Russia, they have created, "lasting negative damage to Russia's attractiveness to foreign investors and significantly constrained access to foreign capital for Russian firms."¹⁸⁵ That being said, the sanctions placed on Russia in the past have struggled to be as effective as they could have been because they lack a clear path for reduction and, in most cases, pressure from multiple countries. It is difficult to promote a desirable change in a government's actions through sanctions when it has not been clearly stated what the government must do to relieve the sanctions.¹⁸⁶ Although a clear path existed for the sanctions placed alongside the EU in relation to Russian aggression in Ukraine,

¹⁸³ Abrams 2019

¹⁸⁴ Topol 2019

¹⁸⁵ Weiss 2019

¹⁸⁶ Weiss 2019

other US-imposed sanctions have been executed with little guidance provided on how Russia can achieve a removal of sanctions and has been more focused on, “punishing Russia for its actions...than on any concrete policy goals.”¹⁸⁷ Moreover, these sanctions are often overlapping, resulting in confusion over how the US might remove some sanctions while maintaining others.¹⁸⁸ A final problem posed by sanctions on Russia is the reality that the US is already avoided by large Russian agents, such as Prigozhon.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, increasing just US sanctions on Russia is unlikely to produce serious change. The sanctions currently placed on Russia are unlikely to produce any change in the disinformation attacks from Russia and serve only to worsen relations.

While there have been international acknowledgements of the disinformation threat posed by Russia, no international agreements have come to fruition. The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe has facilitated talks determining that a grave threat is posed by Russian disinformation attacks, while the EU has put together a task force to mitigate the anticipated attacks from Russia during EU parliamentary elections.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, countries within Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia have also experienced destabilizing disinformation attacks from Russia.¹⁹¹ All of these actions indicate potential for an international agreement; however, no concrete step toward creating an international agreement has been taken. Meanwhile, Russia and China have been attempting to push the International Code of Conduct for Information Security (ICCIS) through the UN since 2011.¹⁹² This code is at odds with US goals because it addresses Russian and Chinese concern for US-funded pro-democracy information being spread to their countries while allowing them to feign contribution to a larger cybersecurity concern.¹⁹³ The US refused to sign the code and there have been no significant moves to address information security on an international scale since then.¹⁹⁴ The failure to form an international consensus on disinformation, coupled with ineffective sanctions, indicate a gap of lost potential for stopping Russian disinformation.

¹⁸⁷ Ashford 2017

¹⁸⁸ Weiss 2019

¹⁸⁹ Weiss 2019

¹⁹⁰ The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Council on Foreign Relations

¹⁹¹ Borshchevskaya and Cleveland. p8-9; Miles, 2018

¹⁹² Rõigas

¹⁹³ Bodine-Baron et. al 2018. pg 28

¹⁹⁴ Ibid

5.2: The Future of Russian Disinformation Attacks

Because of the exposure of the Internet Research Agency and widespread public knowledge about Russian disinformation, it is easy to believe that this tactic of Russian meddling will simply retire. However, the Senate has issued a report since the election stating that Russian meddling is far from over.¹⁹⁵ In fact, disinformation attacks have actually increased since the election.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, as a reporter for the New York Times states, “interviews with dozens of officials and experts make clear that many of the vulnerabilities exploited by Moscow in 2016 remain.”¹⁹⁷ During the 2016 election, Russia was able to use blunt tactics to disseminate information with minimal regard for covering their tracks. However, with increasing technologies worldwide, it is theorized that future Russian tactics will utilize more sophisticated technology such as Artificial Intelligence, deep fake videos, and machine learning.¹⁹⁸ These advancements will make it infinitely more difficult for humans to detect disinformation through algorithms, destroying the US’s technological edge of detection.¹⁹⁹ If Putin had achieved his goals in 2016, the US would have experienced a decrease in attacks. The evidence shows that there is reason to be more concerned now than ever; the Russian government is just getting started on their new-age propaganda machine and, as it currently stands, it is unlikely to stop until Putin reaches his goal, “to ensure his survival at the helm of his kleptocratic mafia state by dissuading ordinary Russians from aspiring to Western-style democracy.”²⁰⁰

In order to properly address the issue of blatant and rising Russian disinformation attacks, the US must formulate a policy that utilizes their partnerships with other countries and creates validity for the US to claim Russian interference. To ensure a reduction in disinformation attacks from Russia, the US must not infringe on Russia’s real or imagined sovereignty. This policy must account for the hopeless repetitiveness of the current situation and seek to change the course fundamentally in a non-aggressive way. These guidelines form the following policy recommendation.

¹⁹⁵Selected Committee on Intelligence, United States Senate

¹⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁷ Rosenberg 2020

¹⁹⁸Polyakova, Boyer; pg: 12

¹⁹⁹Polyakova, Boyer; pg: 12-13

²⁰⁰ Taylor 2019

5.3: Defining International Laws and Expectations

As mentioned above, the United States is not alone in worrying for their democratic system due to Russian disinformation attacks. Many countries in Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East are also experiencing Russian disinformation attacks. However, there is still no clear consensus on what constitutes a disinformation attack, making it difficult and seemingly arbitrary for any country to directly persecute Russia. This gap in norm establishment has the potential to be a huge advantage to the United States. This following policy suggests utilizing the fear of disinformation in other countries for the formation of an international agreement against disinformation attacks.

5.4: Policy Recommendations

The methods for creating a consensus on action against Russian disinformation attacks are as follows: the US, in conjunction with other interested countries, will create an open forum for addressing the concerns of each nation. The countries will then meet to establish a clear definition of what constitutes an information attack, what demands retaliation, and what that retaliation should look like. While the ability to participate in the forum will be open to any country, the international agreement passed will not require a total consensus of the participating countries. Instead, it will consider only the broader concerns of the majority of countries and focus on coming to a general agreement through a majority vote.

The retaliation mechanism used to respond to information attacks will specify what corrective actions will be undertaken by countries both within the agreement or outside of it. For example, corrective action for a country within the agreement may be a warning and monitoring by member states. However, corrective action for a country outside of the agreement will likely be more a punitive form of collective admonishment and, possibly, sanctions. Once expectations are agreed upon and the agreement is signed, the member countries will publish their conclusions clearly for all nations to be aware of.

The US must not build an international consensus on information warfare through international bodies, as they are unlikely to produce the desired results. Given that Russia and China have already submitted their version of information warfare standards to the UN, it would be a waste of time for the US to submit its own version of the same document, as each country

would only veto the opposing proposal. Attempting a push through NATO will only aggravate Russia further.²⁰¹ Trying to work directly with the EU or another western body will not only aggravate existing tensions but will also limit the scope of potential sanctions. The current sanctions in place are limited in effect partially because Putin and his powerful allies have already routed their economic actions away from the US in an attempt to mitigate the effect of sanctions.²⁰² Through this proposed policy, the US could more effective sanctions that include countries in Latin America and elsewhere that have not historically placed sanctions on Russia and are not included in most Western multilateral bodies. Therefore, it is pivotal to the agreement's effectiveness that it be formed on a voluntary basis independent of multilateral bodies.

This policy specifies an ideal agreement that the US must strive for. The US will focus on creating a collective definition of disinformation that is as inclusive of Russia's actions as possible without pointing fingers. The first formal meeting will define disinformation attacks as organized operations that include more than one individual, are intended to confuse their audience instead of educate, and spread their information through false accounts and deception. This definition excludes the US's democracy promotion, which seeks to educate within the specific bounds of their website and publishing materials. By guiding the talks in this direction, the US will ensure that the international agreement addresses their concerns to the fullest extent while avoiding an argument with Russia over US democracy promotions, as experienced in the ICCIS.

Although there will be no exclusion of Russia or any member of the ICCIS, the meetings will be focused on forming a majority consensus instead of a total consensus. In order to guide them in the direction of US interests and to show a strong unity on the issue, the US will discuss the shared fear of Russian disinformation with partners and allied countries prior to meeting. This strong preconceived unity among countries affected by Russian disinformation will make it possible to avoid a takeover by Russia and its partners. It is important that the US approach the meeting with as many allies as possible in order to secure the strongest backing. However, participation will not be mandatory for any outside treaties or agreements nor will it change the

²⁰¹ See *Peace in Ukraine* chapter

²⁰² Foy 2018

standing of any individual country. In this way, the US will not be seen as forcing other nations to comply with their goals; instead, every country will be collaborating.

The following punitive measures are suggested to optimize the results of the policy. All punitive measures will come only after a clear warning. It is likely that Russia will test the waters of what is and what is not allowed. In order to avoid souring relations further, it must be clear to all involved, especially Russia, that it has violated the international expectations and, if the actions are continued, it will experience the harsher punitive measures of sanctions. Through the agreement, each member country will be required to denounce the actions of Russia while placing retaliatory sanctions in unison. These sanctions will be strategically formulated to include the interest of the governments in question. In the case of Russia, the sanctions might be energy focused but must account for the economic needs of member countries. When the attack originates from an independent entity, the member countries will inform the domestic government of the agency from which the attack originated and allow the government a specified timeframe in which it will be expected to stop the attacks and punish the private agency as it sees fit. If the domestic government refuses to penalize the agency appropriately, member countries will produce sanctions against the agency. Following these guidelines for the execution of the agreement will maximize the benefits while minimizing the potential shortcomings.

There are several key facets to this policy approach that mitigate potential problems and address the historical issues that have emerged when attempting to alter Russian actions. First, by forming a strong coalition of countries within and without Europe and North America, the US will be able to claim legitimacy for retaliations and, with a united front denouncing him, Putin will be hard pressed to propagandize retaliatory sanctions as an attack from the West. Moreover, the economic severity of sanctions will be stronger if they come from non-European countries that are not currently placing sanctions on Russia. The sanctions themselves will come with clear demands in exchange for their removal in order to avoid the issues caused by vague expectations of current sanctions. Because the overall goal of the agreement is to create a transparent policy to validate US accusations and retaliation to Russian disinformation attacks, discussions must take place in the open. This policy allows for Russia's voice to be heard without giving them total control and veto power over any resolution agreed upon. Through an open invitation to participate in the agreement, this policy recognizes Russia as on par with the rest of the world and avoids appearing underhanded and malicious while still targeting Russian disinformation.

Although the approach of an international consensus on disinformation is a safe and effective way to renounce Russian disinformation attacks without going head to head with Putin, there are many things to consider and avoid when executing this policy.

Sanctions, while remaining an important tool for diplomatic punishment, have been widely criticized for being ineffective.²⁰³ Creating strong and damaging sanctions becomes even more difficult when a group of nations must enact them together. Each member country will inevitably advocate for sanctions that pose the smallest threat to their economy. It is likely that the sanctions resulting from the agreement will be minimized to avoid domestic damage and, in this way, the pressure on Russia will be lessened.

The biggest concern about conducting regulations on information flow is the potential for infringement on free speech. If the US were to stop the flow of information from Russia to the US, one could argue that it is repressing Russian views that may be held by US nationals. Moreover, creating the aforementioned stipulations on information flow could open the door to future administrations restricting any information that is not within their party line. In summary, any restriction on information has the potential to be used negatively and the US must exercise extreme caution and explicit wording when formulating this agreement so as to allow for only targeted attacks.

This policy creates a level of legitimacy for the US to use when retaliating against Russian disinformation attacks but has a limited scope when doing so. By not using multilateral institutions, there is a strong likelihood that the agreement will be criticized by many different countries for not being inclusive of their concerns and may even prompt them to make their own consensus contradicting the US's agreement. This has the potential for polarization. If Russia and its allied countries feel they are being unfairly represented, they may form their own international agreement on information security that targets the US's promotion of democracy. If this were to happen, countries will become increasingly concerned about the transactional flow of information. It is likely that they will then increase the restrictions on information in a defensive manner, resulting in further domestic entrenchment and decreased prospects for democracy promotion, an important policy of the US.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Jakes 2016

²⁰⁴ Lawson 2019

5.5: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

The Russian disinformation attacks that occurred during the 2016 election were not an anomaly and have continued up until this day. Due to the ineffectiveness of past sanctions, the inability to form a coherent policy addressing disinformation and the blurred lines of accusations made by the US against Russia, it has been difficult in the past to form a strategic plan for overcoming the disinformation warfare from Russia. With the stability of US democracy on the line, this report offers a policy recommendation for handling the tense situation of disinformation attacks in Russia. The US will utilize the relations and similar experiences of nations across the world to their advantage and seek to form an agreement on information security. This method will give validity to US accusations of Russian meddling, provide a framework for and give more weight to punitive measures. This report maintains that the best way to address the issues of Russian disinformation attacks is through an international coalition against Russian disinformation, without which US accusations will not be validated by Putin and will only serve to worsen diplomatic relations with Russia. This approach is unacceptable at a time when negotiations with Russia hold the key to solving some of the most important issues facing the US.

This approach works to clearly define what is right and wrong in information warfare, reducing the tension of US-Russia relations caused by unfounded accusations and denials. By involving potential allies, the US will leverage its power for an international consensus, making it more difficult for Russia to deny allegations and making punitive measures more powerful. Moreover, this approach accounts for the shortcomings of previous approaches. In the past, sanctions were arbitrary and difficult to repeal. By publicly denouncing Russian actions as a group and providing the opportunity for a reversal, the member countries will have clear grounds for sanctions against Russia and will provide instructions on how sanctions can be removed. Regarding the International Code of Conduct for Information Security, this approach will take into account the conflicts of that agreement by focusing its scope on just disinformation attacks and by targeting specific allies with similar concerns to participate in the talks. By creating an international agreement on disinformation, the US will be able to leverage the shared concerns of other states into a basis for retaliatory diplomatic measures against Russia.

Chapter 6

The Future of Nuclear Cooperation Between the United States and Russia

By Mackenzie Wamble

The current nonproliferation regime is very effective at advancing the use of peaceful nuclear technology in states around the world, but there are still threats of trafficking nuclear material from actors outside the normal post-Cold War framework, such as North Korea and non-state actors like terrorists. This puts the entire nonproliferation system in peril, since it can shake the confidence in the Nonproliferation Treaty that states like the US and Russia have built up over many years since the nonproliferation regime was created. Over the years, the International Atomic Energy Agency has strengthened safeguards for distributing peaceful nuclear technology without allowing states to develop nuclear material into weapons-grade material. However, disturbing information has come to light on the dangers posed by non-state actors such as terrorists and traffickers. The US must be a global leader in nonproliferation and disarmament to force the international community to recognize it as a priority for future security.

In recent history, important events have occurred regarding weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear testing in North Korea, the creation and subsequent crumbling of the Iran deal, and the India-Pakistan standoff.²⁰⁵ The issue of nuclear weapons is not new, but as the distribution of global power shifts, the status of international nuclear agreements has important ramifications for United States foreign policy. Today, the United States must focus its attention on Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, India, Pakistan, and any nation interested in posing a nuclear threat to the security of the United States, while also balancing other kinds of security threats.

The history of nuclear weapons complicates the issue for current foreign policymakers because the United States has traditionally played the role of the “umbrella” state.²⁰⁶ Other countries have avoided developing nuclear weapons because they had the United States as an ally willing to retaliate in case of a nuclear threat from an enemy. Today, it is debatable whether this is still a necessary precaution given the effectiveness of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

²⁰⁵ *BBC News*. 2017.

²⁰⁶ Graham Jr., Thomas. 2004.

Since 1970, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has served as the most effective dissuasion to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, assuring the relative safety of non-nuclear weapons states and the stability of the international power balance between countries like the United States and Russia. While considering the importance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty's role in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons over the last 50 years, the other side of the treaty's coin should be brought to attention. In exchange for engaging in strict nonproliferation safeguards and non-nuclear weapons states forgoing weapons development, the nuclear weapons states agreed to promote the use of peaceful nuclear technology and work toward disarmament.²⁰⁷ While the nonproliferation movement has been relatively successful and there has been an increase in peaceful nuclear technology implementation around the world, the goal of disarmament has been left behind. Although this is a difficult goal because "giving up nuclear weapons, or any other means of strength and security, is not a natural action for states... [and] it is far easier to forswear them than to eliminate them once an arsenal is in place," the United States and Russia must work toward disarmament in the spirit of someday attaining this goal.²⁰⁸

The United States must be willing to compromise on some aspects of its historical method of deterrence in order to take the first step toward disarmament. Timothy Thomas describes how, for Russia, "nuclear deterrence remains at the top of the list of ways to counter threats from the US and will be used... until nuclear weapons 'lose their deterring force as a result of technological progress or changes in the nature of international relations.'"²⁰⁹ Nuclear deterrence has been the norm since the Cold War, but it may not be as effective today and may in fact pose more risks than benefits as a framework. This policy argues that nuclear disarmament is not only possible, but in US and Russian interests. The focus of the United States must be nonproliferation and disarmament for the future of nuclear security.

The United States should focus on bolstering the Nonproliferation Treaty and work toward disarmament. The international community and the United States must limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons, technology, and highly enriched nuclear material to third countries through treaties, negotiation, implied use of force, and the mechanisms of the international order. To ensure that extremely dangerous technology does not fall into the hands

²⁰⁷ "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)". July 1, 1968.

²⁰⁸ Graham Jr., Thomas. 2004.

²⁰⁹ Thomas, Timothy L. 2015.

of non-state actors or non-nuclear weapons states, the US must take stronger action to follow the spirit of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In order to ensure the transparent distribution of peaceful nuclear technology, prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and decrease the risk of an accidental military escalation, the United States must work in cooperation with Russia toward stronger global nuclear security through a bilateral treaty.

6.1: Background

Nuclear weapons treaties: NPT, INF and New START

The United States and Russia have the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons in the world, accounting for 92 percent of all nuclear weapons²¹⁰. While nuclear stockpiles have decreased since the 1980s, estimates of the number of nuclear weapons in the world remain over 10,000.²¹¹ The United States has focused its energy on developing defensive missile systems, which might seem like a step toward peace compared to building more nuclear weapons, but this can lead to larger reactions from nuclear competitors. According to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, as the US has enhanced its missile defense systems, “this dynamic is currently on display with Russia and China, both of which are developing missiles that are specifically designed to counter US missile defense”.²¹² The movement toward escalation needs to end, as these actions only lead to further tensions and a higher risk of conflict with states like Russia and China.

Since the rise of nuclear weapons, there have been movements toward international cooperation in order to reduce the threat of nuclear war. Several multilateral and bilateral treaties have emerged from periods of cooperation, especially between the United States and Russia. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), the New START Treaty, and the Open Skies Treaty have played different roles in preventing the use and spread of nuclear weapons. The future of preventing an extreme nuclear scenario could depend on updating one of these treaties, or on a new, comprehensive treaty. This chapter specifically examines the policy options available regarding the NPT, INF, and the New START Treaties.

²¹⁰ “World Nuclear Weapon Stockpile.” 2015.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Korda, Matt, and Hans M. Kristensen. 2019.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a United Nations treaty that created the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and entered into force in 1970. The treaty designates state parties as either nuclear weapons states (NWS), including the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and China, or non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS). The NPT is based on a central “bargain” between the NWS and the NNWS: the non-nuclear-weapon states agree never to acquire nuclear weapons and the nuclear-weapon states in exchange agree to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals.²¹³ While many states have adopted peaceful nuclear technology through contracts with the IAEA, the third part of the commitment of the NPT has been slow to be pursued by the NWS. The US remains a global leader in the international nonproliferation regime, but it is criticized for not upholding the disarmament part of the NPT.²¹⁴ IAEA safeguards and additional protocol play a key role in the success of the NPT to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. A double-edged sword, the IAEA supports both the technical cooperation programme, the primary mechanism for transferring nuclear technology to member states, and monitors that technology through safeguards to prevent the development of non-peaceful nuclear material use.²¹⁵

One treaty relevant to the continuing discussions of disarmament is the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) and the US withdrawal from it in 2019. The treaty was ratified on June 1st, 1988, and is an agreement between the United States and Russia to end the development and creation of short- and intermediate-range missiles. In February 2019, the Trump administration warned that the United States would leave the INF Treaty based on the belief that “Russia has violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with impunity, covertly developing and fielding a prohibited missile system that poses a direct threat to our allies and troops abroad” and that the US could not be beholden to a one-sided treaty.²¹⁶ Russia developed, produced, tested and deployed a new intermediate-range missile known as the 9M729, or SSC-8, after it denying their existence, violating the INF treaty agreements, and causing the US ending the INF.²¹⁷ The United States formally withdrew from the treaty on

²¹³ “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: NPT 2010.” 2010.

²¹⁴ Karp, Regina. 2012.

²¹⁵ “Technical Cooperation Programme.” 2016.

²¹⁶ “United States Initiates Withdrawal from Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.” 2019.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

August 2nd, 2019.²¹⁸ The United States' destruction of the INF was also largely based on a fear of China, as the US mentality is shifting from a Cold War bilateral deterrence framework with Russia to a multilateral framework including China and other states.²¹⁹

The INF Treaty represented an opportunity for bilateral cooperation between nations that are key for future negotiations, particularly the New START Treaty. As of now, the INF Treaty is most likely not going to be revived, since both the United States and Russia have declared the other untrustworthy and likely to violate the fragile trust that is necessary for a nuclear treaty. Each country highlighted a desire for “symmetrical” responses, so therefore an escalation can be avoided if the US takes measures to limit its response.²²⁰ Any US response to suspected Russian missile development must be checked against the known facts and if there is a confirmed direct threat, the United States must respond as narrowly as possible to limit escalation and prevent unnecessary setbacks in future treaty negotiations.

China's nuclear capabilities and relative freedom from treaty restrictions cause Russian and the US reluctance to walk away from negotiations completely. Statements from both the US and Russia indicated a willingness to move toward an agreement similar to the INF Treaty that includes China and other nuclear powers. However, China has never indicated an interest in joining such a treaty.

The New START Treaty is one of the boldest moves toward disarmament by the US and Russia compared to past treaties. It shows the progress toward arms reduction that can be made when international relations between Russia and the US are aimed at diplomacy. The treaty, which entered into force on February 5, 2011, entails limiting the deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, and deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers in the US and Russia.²²¹ The treaty is scheduled to expire in 2021 unless it is extended for another five years. Extending the New START treaty would send a signal to the rest of the world indicating the US and Russia's intentions to honor the goal of future disarmament as other countries consider their responsibilities to help halt the spread of nuclear weapons. It could also lay the foundation for increased international cooperation in the

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ “New START Treaty.” 2020.

pursuit of arms reduction among other states. Russia has indicated its willingness to extend the treaty along with the US.²²²

These treaties represent several ways in which the nuclear nonproliferation regime has weathered turbulent and unpredictable international relations. As tensions rose between the US and Russia in recent years, especially in the last decade, it was difficult to see how diplomacy would hold up in the face of a complicated topic such as nuclear security. However, perhaps counterintuitively, nuclear treaties are an area where the US can possibly make progress with Russia because of their shared interests in nonproliferation since the Cold War and their incentives to pursue disarmament.

6.2: Policy Options from Maintaining the NPT to Disarmament

6.2a: Upholding the Current Nonproliferation Regime

The current international nonproliferation regime, tied together by the impressive collection of commitments from 191 countries to the NPT, along with the IAEA's strengthening of the core safeguards with the Additional Protocol, has worked remarkably well to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.²²³ The NPT is strong because it provides numerous incentives to member states that outweigh restrictions. The IAEA has been able to build up strong safeguards through continuously developing technology for monitoring nuclear material, reactors, and waste, while simultaneously offering an incentive through the bank system which member states can take advantage of to start their own nuclear energy programs. Because there are so many member states, any violation of the treaty means there is a strong backlash from the international community against the offending state. These factors make the NPT one of the most comprehensive international treaties today.

However, there are drawbacks to the current nonproliferation regime. It does not address threats from actors outside of the normal framework that the US has operated within since the Cold War, such as North Korea and non-state actors. While the IAEA has strengthened safeguards for the peaceful distribution of nuclear technology without allowing states to develop weapons-grade material, there is less information on the dangers posed by non-state actors. According to the IAEA's Incident and Trafficking Database (ITDB), last year the IAEA

²²² Ivanov, Igor. 2020.

²²³ "Technical Cooperation Programme." 2016.

“received notifications of nearly 190 incidents of nuclear and other radioactive material being out of regulatory control, including some cases of trafficking and other criminal activities”.²²⁴ Although the IAEA sets requirements for how low-enriched reactor-grade nuclear material should be securely transported and stored, the security of this material is ultimately in the hands of each state. This factor is out of the control of both the US and Russia, and the threat posed by even low-enriched nuclear material falling into the hands of terrorists is too high.

Two challenges emerge when considering how to uphold the nuclear nonproliferation regime. The US has been criticized for failing to advance the NPT’s goal of disarmament and now must consider the benefits of taking leadership in pursuing this goal, and the consequences of not doing so. US action in this area could paint it in a good light and convince Russia to follow suit. However, one might argue that becoming a leader in this area would deepen Russia’s distrust, as it is reminiscent of the US’s Cold War ideology. In addition, there is an ongoing fear that the IAEA and the NPT might allow crucial information to slip through the cracks, creating the possibility for terrorists or enemy states to obtain nuclear weapons.²²⁵ This is an area where the US and Russia are aligned: neither want nuclear weapons to fall into the hands of terrorists.

6.2b: Strengthening the Existing Regime

The US must consider strengthening the current nonproliferation regime in order to address the fears around potential flaws, such as nuclear terrorism or proliferation of weapons to enemy states. As explained above, the NPT has been very successful in helping member states invest in nuclear energy and facilitating the spread of peaceful nuclear technology. However, there are some flaws with the NPT system, such as reports of trafficked nuclear material.

The NPT would be difficult to amend in substantive ways, but it would be possible if the US gained the support of other security council members such as Russia. However, as a very well-established regime, support for amendments would be difficult to garner. The US has always supported the NPT’s goals and the IAEA’s mission of spreading peaceful nuclear energy capabilities through avenues such as technology, implementation and engineering, and material banks. The international community also supports the NPT in a large majority, and while the US

²²⁴ “IAEA Database Shows Continued Incidents of Trafficking and Loss of Control of Nuclear and Other Radioactive Material.” 2020.

²²⁵ “World Nuclear Weapon Stockpile.” 2015.

holds some sway as a member of the security council, it would have to follow strict procedures to amend the treaty. Creating a new treaty is not advised because of the entrenched status of the current regime and all that the IAEA and the NPT have accomplished since they entered into force. It would prove to be much more inefficient than simply amending the NPT.

6.2c: Disarmament

Deterrence using nuclear weapons is no longer worth the risk. Instead, terrorist threats and the possibility that the United States will “enter a new nuclear era that will be more precarious, psychologically disorienting, and economically costly than Cold War deterrence” hold more weight among concerns over nuclear security.²²⁶ The risk of states developing nuclear weapons could start a costly new Cold War in which the old theory of Mutually-Assured Destruction (MAD) may not hold water. Many question whether MAD is still a viable ideology. In a time of changing nuclear capabilities, it is not just the United States and Russia upholding the balance of MAD theory. China, North Korea, Israel, India, and Pakistan are complications in what was once a carefully balanced dichotomy of power. This theory does not hold water within the context of North Korean or a non-state actor’s potential to gain access to nuclear weapons. In such a situation, traditional deterrence would be ineffective.

Disarmament would greatly reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use by the US, Russia, or other actors such as terrorists. The US and Russia are, unsurprisingly, against the world ending in nuclear war, but that thinking does not necessarily unite other actors with them. The US and Russia must use this uniting stance in order to pursue the goal of disarmament. In the future, this means pressuring states such as China and Israel, among others, to do the same. The US must be a global leader in disarmament for the international order to recognize it as a priority for security.²²⁷ Bilateral nuclear disarmament with Russia alone fails to address both the nuclear threat from China, and the potential for a state actor such as North Korea to develop long range IBMs capable of reaching the US. The US has been functioning in an outdated framework and the “post-Cold War assumptions helped make the United States and its Western allies complacent, encouraging us to ignore or optimistically downplay strategic competition.”²²⁸

²²⁶ George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn. 2007.

²²⁷ Karp, Regina. 2012.

²²⁸ Ford, Christopher. 2020.

Some argue that the focus on disarmament has led to a failure to consider the true consequences of giving up deployed nuclear weapons. This would mean a loss of the deterrence that the US has wielded since the creation of nuclear weapons. No one really knows what “a world without nuclear deterrence” would look like or how to ensure US security in such a situation.²²⁹

However, the world is no longer controlled only by tensions between the US and Russia. It is influenced by international politics across many borders and the complicated dynamics of the US, Western powers, Russia, China, the Middle East, and rising economic powers in many regions. At the same time, there is a greater risk of terrorist groups that operate with a worldview outside of an international order ideology acquiring nuclear weapons. In addition, without progress toward arms reduction, escalation of tensions with Russia and China would only continue and have an even greater economic and political strain on the US and its relations with these countries. The US strategy to maintain order during the Cold War was based on the unique position it occupied with Russia to control the risk of nuclear war. This strategy must be reconsidered as other actors now wield nuclear weapons as well.²³⁰

6.3: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

6.3a: Nonproliferation

The NPT has only grown stronger since it entered into force 50 years ago, but there are still flaws in the regime that threaten US security, such as nuclear material trafficking and the potential for technology to be obtained by terrorists or enemy states. These issues must be addressed quickly, within the next few years, in order to ensure US and global nuclear security. While a new treaty is an option, this would be very costly and inefficient and would yield similar, or possibly worse, results. Amending the NPT is possible with international support and is an option we suggest the US pursue in order to tighten controls on nuclear material. An amendment to the NPT must be made that updates the IAEA additional protocol to include contracts that force member states to be completely transparent about the location of nuclear material in their custody, whether in use, storage, or transport. An option here is to engineer and fund a way for the IAEA to directly handle the storage and transport of nuclear material within

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Karp, Regina. 2012.

states in order to minimize instances when material is exposed to potential trafficking. Amending the NPT would almost certainly require support from the UN security council, creating an opportunity for the US and Russia to begin to cooperate based on their shared interests.

6.3b: Disarmament

Firstly, multilateral discussions between nuclear powers should commence, specifically with Russia and eventually China, and the US must lead the way toward international disarmament. A bilateral agreement must be made with Russia in which both countries reach an agreement that they would be safer if deployed nuclear weapons are reduced. The New START Treaty must serve as a starting point in such an agreement. Secondly, the warning time between the decision to launch a nuclear weapon and its actual launch must be increased in order to reduce the danger of accidental deployment of a nuclear weapon. This will be accomplished by reducing the number of and eventually completely forgoing deployed nuclear weapons. Thirdly, the US and NPT member states must continue to substantially reduce the size of nuclear arsenals, eliminating short-range nuclear weapons designed to be forward-deployed, and ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.²³¹ Fourthly, the international community must adopt the New START treaty, which limits the number of deployed weapons in order to delay any effects of an accidental launch and prevent irreversible damage. While multilateral treaties toward disarmament involving China seem far off at this point, US policymakers must work toward a bilateral treaty with China or a multilateral treaty with Russia and China in the next five to 10 years.

²³¹ George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn. 2007.

Chapter 7

The US Policy for Improved Human Rights in Russia

By Tanya Stockdale

Human rights in Russia can only be upheld if there is globally accessible knowledge about repression, violations, and injustices. Pressure must be placed on the Russian government, both from within the Russian Federation and from external bodies, to respect and uphold international human rights policies and treaties in order to assure human rights are protected universally. President Putin's Russian state fails to uphold many basic human rights, particularly those regarding the right to information and freedom of expression, and the United States has the ability to influence change here.

The Russian Federation must be held accountable for the ongoing human rights violations occurring throughout their nation. Their constitution guarantees those rights will be upheld, and many Russian citizens have begun to vocalize concern that this is not the case. However, thus far their efforts to speak out against injustices have often resulted in imprisonment and torture, which is why the United States must support change by contributing to the global cries for the protection of human rights in the Russian Federation. In order to champion all human rights, the fundamental rights of access to information and freedom of speech must be defended. This fundamental concept will be explored in the following report and is the foundation from which the resulting policy recommendations were constructed.

7.1: Background

7.1a: The Right to Information and Freedom of Expression

The right to information is not only included in the Constitution of the Russian Federation but also reinforced in various international treaties and agreements. The European Convention on Human Rights of 1998 rallied the support and cooperation of forty-seven states, including the Russian Federation, who then signed the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Article 10 of the Convention states that the freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, which includes the freedom to hold opinions and to

receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority.²³² While the right to information is a fundamental one, it has very little application in the judicial practice of the Russian courts and, therefore, the extent to which Russia has truly demonstrated abiding by the Convention provisions is limited.²³³ Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) outlines this right in a similar manner and builds on it in Section 32 with over a dozen recommendations to protect the rights of those whose work relies on internet access, saying, “The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet [must be protected].”²³⁴ This defines the access and use of the internet as a human right, as it is interconnected with the concept of access to information and the freedom of expression.

Another one of the greatest challenges to human rights in the Russian Federation is the repression of expression, most notably experienced by any media produced by and accessible to the public. Article 29 in the Constitution of the Russian Federation guarantees the right to freedom of ideas and speech, including the ban of censorship. Nonetheless, this right is certainly not observed throughout the state.²³⁵ The state continues to hold a strong grasp on what information is made available to the public and punishes those seeking to disrupt the controlled media. This report will cover how this violation is manifested in topics of environmental activism, LGBT and gender rights, journalism, civil actors, and non-governmental organizations.

7.1b: Right to Information, Control of Media, and Restricting Expression

Specifically, the Mass Media Law limits the expression of the Russian people, furthering the interests of the Russian state to restrict public access to information that is unfavorable towards it. Within Russian Federal Law No. 149 is an article frequently used to criminalize individuals referred to as “bloggers” for the content they release online, giving authorities the ability to classify almost any material as “extremist” or “publicly justifying terrorism.”²³⁶ This is quite concerning as it further limits the ability of private citizens to publish freely online and access potentially important information aimed at notifying the Russian public and the international community about human rights violations and injustices within the Russian

²³² “European Convention on Human Rights.” 1953

²³³ Beschastna 2013

²³⁴ West 2016

²³⁵ “Chapter 2. Rights and Freedoms of Man and Citizen | The Constitution of the Russian Federation.”

²³⁶ Ibid.

Federation. This has been observed on multiple occasions, one instance being the imprisonment of Crimean Tatar freelance journalist Nariman Memedeminov in 2018. He was charged for making public calls for terrorism in online videos from 2013 before the annexation of Crimea in 2014.²³⁷ He was raising awareness of human rights violations by Russian authorities towards the Tatar population in Crimea, but the 2013 videos associated with an Islamist group were used to convict him. Memedeminov has been in a detention center in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, since his arrest. As the Committee to Protect Journalism notes, this clearly demonstrates Russia's track record of using terrorism and extremism laws to silence critics and muzzle independent news coverage. This report will include recommendations for improving the human rights situation impacted by state abuse of this nature.

7.1c: NCO/NGOs: Foreign Agents and Undesirable Organizations

Non-governmental organizations have been extensively suppressed by the Putin regime through the limitations placed on the freedom of expression and right to information, an issue that must be addressed by the international community. The controlling of media and expression in the name of combating "extremism" has been done in three primary ways. The Russian government has focused on discrediting foreign-funded and/or foreign supported groups by portraying them as harming the collective good. They use bureaucratic and legal tools to weaken independent civic actors, combined with selective prosecutions aimed at intimidating civil society as a whole, and promoting pro-government organizations as socially useful to maintain tight state control over the entire sector.²³⁸ There is much evidence proving the government does this in order to maintain its strong image and control the threat of major political movements seeking to disrupt the status quo. One piece of evidence is the 2011-2012 Bolotnaya Square protests against the reelection of Putin, during which over three dozen people were arrested and jailed. This prompted a crackdown on the country's opposition leaders and all organizations holding agendas incongruent with state interests.

Numerous organizations dedicated to supporting free media in Russia already exist, but as amendments to existing laws that further restrict speech continue to appear, their work becomes increasingly risky. Amendments made by the State Duma in 2019 to the Law on

²³⁷ Committee to Protect Journalists 2018

²³⁸ Brechenmacker 2017

“Information Technologies and Protection of Information” as well as to the Code of Administrative Offenses further enable state authorities to criminalize certain kinds of free speech which may display anti-government sentiments.²³⁹ This directly endangers much of the work done by small media journalists, non-commercial organizations (NCOs) and/or non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), as well as any media outlets receiving funding from foreign services, especially those with a political focus.²⁴⁰ Many NCO/ NGOs are now required to register with the Ministry of Justice as “foreign agents” if they receive any external funding and if they intend to conduct political activities.²⁴¹ The Ministry of Justice may also label organizations as “foreign agents” without their consent. In addition, advocacy activities are often considered equal to political activities, which can lead to their inclusion on the list.²⁴² When an organization is labeled as a “foreign agent,” it loses its credibility and potential for impact.

Federal Law No. 129 FZ, also known as the Law on Undesirable Organizations, places major restrictions on NGOs that may receive foreign support. The Law allows the Prosecutor General or their deputies to declare certain NGOs as “undesirable,” subjecting their participants to administrative and criminal penalties.²⁴³ Additionally, citizens with US-Russian dual citizenship are prohibited from membership or participation in the management of Russian NGOs or registered offices of foreign NGOs that participate in political activities in Russia.²⁴⁴ Such laws are designed in the effort to discredit any and all organizations which may be affiliated with foreign groups and to position them as undermining Russian sovereignty and harming collective good.²⁴⁵

To date, there have been dozens of organizations either forced to register as “foreign agents” or registered involuntarily. These organizations have been and may be subject to extensive fines and therefore suffer due to lack of funding, as their lifeline is the financial support of sponsors and donors contributing to their cause. The labels of “foreign agent” and “undesirable” carry political implications including a threat to their financial stability, damage to

²³⁹ State Duma of the Russian Federation. 2017.

²⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch 2019.

²⁴¹ Liu 2019.

²⁴² Nowakowski 2006

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Brechenmacher 2017

their credibility, and a lessened scope of impact.²⁴⁶ This results in fewer organizations and less effective work being done in the name of civil society, environmental justice, anti-corruption initiatives, the fight for rights for the LGBT community, and the numerous focuses of the organizations put at risk since the installation of laws inhibiting their impact efforts. All of this is done in the interest of the Russian State.

7.2: Policy Recommendations

7.2a: Documentation for Human Rights Violations

There must be readily available information internationally about human rights violations. Annual reports from a range of international organizations documenting the human rights situation in Russia demonstrate that, under Putin's rule, the protection of rights has greatly deteriorated and the state has stepped further away from the most basic protections promised in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Rachel Denber, the Deputy Director of the Europe and Central Asia division of Human Rights Watch has noted that, "Russia today is more repressive than it ever has been in the post-Soviet era."²⁴⁷ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is one institution working to collect such documentation and relies heavily on human rights organizations and civil society to record injustices imposed by the state.²⁴⁸ Although taken into consideration, state reports are not always reliable and may exclude incriminating information. If vital contacts, including anyone from victims or witnesses of human rights violations to lawyers and journalists, cannot securely share their knowledge due to restrictive legislation, it becomes incredibly difficult for an organization to gather the information necessary to hold a state accountable for its repression of human rights.²⁴⁹

Great efforts must be taken to document all human rights violations in Russia in order to keep the international community informed and put pressure on the Kremlin to behave in accordance with the standards outlined in international human rights treaties and the national constitution of the Russian Federation. Turning a blind eye to blatant violations perpetuates the

²⁴⁶ Machalek 2012

²⁴⁷ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 2017.

²⁴⁸ OHCHR 2011

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

cycle of abuse and impunity. Currently, there is no singular, complete source of data documenting all major human rights violations in the Russian Federation because of the many laws described above. Therefore, the US must set an example in the protection of human rights, demonstrating that national organizations may publish any and all documentation related to rights violations and by tolerating and accepting the publication of such material. This will allow the US to push other countries to follow suit and create a more globalized mechanism to fight against perpetrators of exploitation and corruption.

Assuring the protection of rights of access to information and the freedom of expression likely means more effective advancements in pro-democracy or anti-Putin efforts, which are commonly targeted by the Russian government as they hold explicit anti-Kremlin sentiments. While this is not the primary focus of US policy towards Russia, the current situation in Russia reveals that this is a prime moment in which major change can be realized from within civil society. It is crucial that international attention focuses on the inherent injustices associated with resistance to the current administration and the resulting hindering of political activity. There is increasing resistance to Putin's administration which keeps a vast amount of the population unrepresented and unvalued. The intention here is not to push for furthering anti-Kremlin sentiments, but to support those voices of civil society that have been repressed out of the fear of consequences established by the Russian government. The ability to voice and document human rights abuses within the Russian Federation and beyond is necessary for achieving safe political resistance and assuring access to media outside the state's control.

Environmental Justice and Cooperation Is More Achievable

Environmental activists and organizations have been heavily targeted by the Russian government. The deteriorating environmental situation in Russia is not only damaging to the planet but also to the economy, with real implications in the lives of thousands of Russian citizens. Access to data about the environment and the detrimental impacts of climate change within the Russian Federation is vital for citizens in order to contribute to the change necessary to prevent irreversible damage. Environmental activists in the Russian Federation have faced brutal abuse and have even been tried in court for their efforts to create greater awareness of the worsening climate situation. Andrei Rudomakha, the head of a major activist group called Environmental Watch, was violently attacked in 2018 after investigating and exposing illegal

logging and construction practices by a private company affiliated with high-ranking government officials.²⁵⁰ He is among many others who the government has tried to silence, along with the organizations they work with. In fact, the 2012 “foreign agents” law has caused over a dozen environmental NGOs to shut down. This begs for greater international attention and support of individuals and organizations seeking to make a positive change in Russia in order to protect the environment.

Access to information and the freedom of expression are the basis for all activism, whether it be blogging by an organization or individuals tweeting or posting on Facebook, and the US must use its voice and abilities to establish greater popularity for combating climate change on an international scale and seek collaboration with all countries on this topic, including Russia. This may mean promoting the development of renewable energies as a new global status quo, or simply showing greater support for organizations working to improve the health of our shared planet, now is a crucial moment for the US to show the world its seriousness in the realm of environmental justice.

Protecting LGBT and Gender Rights

LGBT rights is a highly controversial topic in the Russian Federation. Historically, Russia has upheld a strong conservative standard against the LGBT community. A 2013 law censoring “gay propaganda,” in which portraying same-sex relationships as socially acceptable is illegal, has largely impacted the work of organizations seeking to support and improve the rights of all LGBT people.²⁵¹ In addition to numerous organizations and websites being shut down, the law is being used to target peaceful public protests, social media posts from individual profiles, teachers, and to justify criminal investigations of social workers who allow gay couple to adopt children.²⁵² The Kremlin justifies the law by stating that it is necessary in order to protect children. However, in 2014 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child agreed the law “encourages the stigmatization of and discrimination” against LGBT people.²⁵³ The impact of the anti-gay propaganda law has also appeared in issues of access to health care for those in

²⁵⁰ Lobanov 2018.

²⁵¹ Knight 2019.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

the gay community. The danger of spreading information about LGBT health has made access to necessary care increasingly difficult for individuals living with AIDs.²⁵⁴ The law is intended to protect Russian values and prevent children from being exposed to any information which may be “harmful to their well-being”, but it has life-or-death consequences for those who are not protected by their government on the basis of gender identity or sexuality.²⁵⁵ It endangers any individual or organization that seeks to call out human rights violations or even associates itself with this cause, making the subject of LGBT rights particularly difficult to address. Access to information about topics associated with the LGBT community within Russia is a complex matter, especially as it pertains to the right of protected freedom of expression, which is practically nonexistent here.

Among the many notable examples of anti-gay human rights violations that have occurred in the Russian Federation is the anti-gay purges in Chechnya. Initially beginning in 2017, dozens of men suspected of being gay were rounded up by police and tortured, some even being killed. Government officials involved walked free with full impunity and, as a result, similar events continue to occur.²⁵⁶ There has been no formal investigations initiated or any justice granted. At best, the federal government has ignored state terror in Chechnya; at worst, it has encouraged it by turning a blind eye to Chechen authorities attacking victims, witnesses, and their families.²⁵⁷ This shows how important the protection of the rights of access to information and freedom of expression are and why the international community must put pressure on governments that are directly and violently infringing upon those rights.

7.2b: Bolstering the Global Magnitsky Act

The Magnitsky Act, passed by US Congress in 2010 and expanded to a global policy in 2016, has been one of the US’s most valuable tools used to demand greater respect and protection for human rights. It has thus far been adopted by the US, the EU, the UK, Canada, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Kosovo. While the list of countries who have adopted the Act or a similar form of legislation is short, the message behind it is strong.

²⁵⁴ Pinkham 2017.

²⁵⁵ Knight 2019.

²⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch 2019.

²⁵⁷ Gessen 2018.

This Magnitsky Act was named after Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian accountant who was tortured and killed in a Moscow prison. His death initiated a global outcry demanding consequences for the perpetrators of this tragedy and other tragedies like it, which allowed for the executive branch to impose visa bans and targeted sanctions on any individuals responsible for human rights violations or acts of significant corruption.²⁵⁸ Sanctions include freezing assets, seizure of property, preventing transactions with most banks and companies, and denying entry into the US.²⁵⁹ The US is not alone in imposing such actions, as the E.U. has followed suit by creating a blacklist essentially establishing the same possible sanctions for human rights abusers as of 2019.²⁶⁰ The Act is used as an accountability mechanism, giving it powerful potential. It serves as a warning aimed at curbing the behavior of individuals involved with and responsible for terrible actions that cannot go unacknowledged.

Only a few dozen individuals from around the world have been formally sanctioned, and not all are from the Russian Federation. This indicates that the Act is not reaching its full potential in bringing greater awareness of major human rights violators, and in changing the behavior of those violators. To date, enforcement appears to be highly selective and insufficient. Within the US, the Act is scheduled to expire in December 2022 if Congress does not reauthorize it.²⁶¹ This must not happen, as its enforcement would demonstrate any administration's dedication to confronting human rights abuses globally. It is in the best interest of Congress to assure the Act is upheld and put it into practice, not only for the purpose of sending a message to human rights violators, but also of targeting, strategically and intentionally, those violators. A major focus of the Act must be politically motivated imprisonment, one of the greatest threats to protecting the right to information and the freedom of expression. If journalists, or even general civil society, are unable to call their government out for gross human rights violations, it is unlikely the greater world community will ever know about them.

The Global Magnitsky Act offers strong opportunity for multilateral cooperation in the face of rampant human rights abuses and corruption in the Russian Federation. Greater results would be observed if the US and all other countries operating with the same or similar legislation

²⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch 2016.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Rettman 2019.

²⁶¹ Mirza 2016.

collaborated in sanctioning the same players on all fronts. This is to say, for example, if an individual is sanctioned by the Canadian government, then all other countries under legislation similar to and inspired by the Global Magnitsky Act should sanction the same individual. The sanction would be much stronger and more productive in changing the behavior of violators, deterring further human rights violations and corruption. This would, of course, require effective diplomacy between all sanctioning countries. This is possible because many of these countries have the ultimate goal of improving the global human rights situation.

7.2c: Supporting Civil Society and Activists Through Multilateral Organizations

In order to see effective implementation of the human rights of access to information and the freedom of expression, the US must support civil society and activists through multilateral organizations. The Free Russia Foundation is an example of an organization working towards improving human rights in Russia. Its mission is to provide a voice to the repressed in Russia and to develop a strategic vision of Russia “After Putin.”²⁶² They have a variety of programs that focus on bolstering civil society in Russia, consulting nonprofits, establishing a global dialogue, advocating for the rights of minority groups in Russia, and improving cyber security. The Free Russia Foundation has existed for over a decade but was categorized as an “undesirable organization” in June 2019.²⁶³ This was done to restrict the operation of a US-based and supported program from operating within Russia and limit the voices of Russian defenders of freedom. There must be a strategic change to continue supporting civil society in Russia. A multilateral approach would be the most effective, as the US acting alone could present a greater threat to Russia. It is essential that it does not view the rest of the world as seeking to impose in its sovereignty, particularly western countries. To avoid confrontational issues and misunderstandings, the US must work through third parties. We recommend this be achieved by encouraging the private sector to support and fund organizations within Russia. The US will therefore not be directly involved in engaging with organizations, which would deem them as “foreign agents” or “undesirable.”

7.3: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

²⁶² Free Russia Foundation 2018.

²⁶³ Freedom House 2019.

Human rights across the world can only be protected if the proper work is done to secure them and consequences are established for those who violate them. International policy may already exist and continue to evolve over time, but it has a limited impact, meaning that civil society must be able to use free speech to demand action from global leaders against violators. Strong, effective, and consistently enforced legislation is necessary to assure civil actors have the ability to speak up against those who suppress their rights with impunity. It is in the best interest of both the United States, as a leader in promoting just human rights, and the Russian Federation, which is constantly battling to increase its position on the global stage as a major world power, to demonstrate their willingness to collaborate, abide by, and properly apply international agreements in order to ensure access of human rights to all.

That being said, a strong understanding for why Russia behaves as it does is vital, even while pushing for changes to be made in the realm of human rights. The US must not impose on the sovereignty of the Russian state, as history has proven this to be an effective strategy. Through collaboration through multilateral platforms and constructive use of existing legislation, there is an opportunity for the US to champion human rights not only at home but also universally.

Toward this end, we recommend that US policymakers promote and protect the right to information and freedom of expression as fundamental rights, begin to thoroughly document past and present human rights abuses to raise awareness of the ongoing issues in this sphere, utilize the Magnitsky Act to its fullest extent to deter human rights violators, and find more effective funding and support for human rights organizations through multilateral organizations and the private sector.

Chapter 8

United States-Russia Climate Agreement

By William Kelly

As both the United States and Russia hold a major role in the future of global environmental politics due to the extent of their geography and economy, their cooperation on climate change policy is necessary in order to achieve global sustainability. They must come to an agreement to ensure that their citizens possess the means for self-sustainment without compromising the environment. The steady economic growth of both nations is responsible for the conditions that lead to environmental degradation, global temperature rise, and resource depletion. In order to combat the consequences of climate change, capital flow must be redirected towards development of green industries, neutralization of environmental hazards, and realization of sustainable means of societal self-preservation. Both countries must reassess their relations with the environment and enforce the necessary regulations.

Greater cooperation on climate change between the United States and Russia requires these major stakeholder nations to move past tensions towards a political economy that assures the future well-being of society in the context of environmental measures.

8.1: Current Status of the United States and Russia

Both the United States and Russia are amongst the biggest polluters in the world.^{264 265} Their current means of consumption and production are reliant on carbon emissions, deforestation, pesticide use, water pollution, and other environmentally hazardous methods. Because these methods do not work within ecological constraints, they are not environmentally sustainable, a fact made evident through the current agricultural industry.²⁶⁶ Because of its high use of pesticides and monocultures, large-scale industrial agriculture causes the soil to erode and pollutes water supplies. Because of its inefficiency, world hunger is on the rise.²⁶⁷ In addition, the melting of permafrost in Russia emits high amounts of methane that will only increase as

²⁶⁴“Active Sustainability”

²⁶⁵ Silver 2020

²⁶⁶ Hansen 2015

²⁶⁷ Wise 2019

global warming progresses.²⁶⁸ Along with its large reserves of fossil fuels, greenhouse emissions from these Russian sources will increase the risk of more infectious diseases and extreme weather.²⁶⁹

The US, Russia, and other countries continue to allow environmentally hazardous industries to conduct business.²⁷⁰ Allowing this pattern to continue will lead to irreversible consequences. Globally, socioeconomic stress is expected to increase as environmental problems become more severe. If left unchecked, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and global warming could lead to future political instability.

8.1a: Russia's Incentive for Cooperation

Russia is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change with a warming rate that is two and a half times the global.²⁷¹ Although Russia has claimed that it may benefit from climate change, its geography tells a different story. It is causing melting of the permafrost that covers 55% of the country. This could destabilize any infrastructure built physically on permafrost, negatively affect public health, and cause a rise in temperature due to increased greenhouse gases emissions. Droughts and irregular weather patterns caused by climate change are negatively effecting Russia's agricultural production.²⁷² Russia recently legislated a national action plan to adapt to climate change.²⁷³ Although the plan includes constructing dams, using drought-resistant crops, and temporarily resettling at-risk populations, it lacks proactive measures on reducing and neutralizing the carbon emissions that truly create the problem. The US enacted the Clean Air Act policy to offset the increasing prevalence of air pollution. The Clean Air Act regulated carbon emitters by setting emission standards and enforcing routine check-ups in order to prevent the emission of 'overly-hazardous' greenhouse gases.²⁷⁴ The shortcomings of this environmental policy is that it does not dismantle environmentally hazardous industries that are in fact 'overly-hazardous.'

²⁶⁸ Climate Change Post 2020

²⁶⁹ Fox-Skelly 2017

²⁷⁰ Metcalf 2015

²⁷¹ France-Presse 2020

²⁷² "Severe Drought in Southern Russia" 2010

²⁷³ France-Presse 2020

²⁷⁴ US EPA 2013

In addition, living standards in Russia are declining, an issue linked to its dependency on environmentally hazardous industries such as domestic energy, agricultural production, and fossil fuel exports. As a result, it has been experiencing air pollution, water pollution, and topsoil fertility loss projected to increase in severity as the reliance on these industries continue.²⁷⁵ A lack of economic diversification due to dependence on fossil fuel exports has caused a rise in unemployment and a fall in income for a majority of the population. Shifting toward more sustainable means of wealth creation would decrease unemployment and build safeguards for the future. These issues forecast future political instability in Russia, a problem that will worsen unless the state makes substantial changes in the economy and its relation to the environment.²⁷⁶

It is time for the government to act in response to these environmentally hazardous industries in order to safeguard the future. If Russia took a strong stance on climate change and environmental degradation remediation, it would experience substantial socioeconomic and national security benefits and gain high appraisal from the international community. It is imperative that Russia realize these potential benefits.

8.1b: Future Role of the State

As global environmental issues progress for the worst, geopolitics will become more prone to violence as conflict over essential resources become reality. This will manifest itself in international and national conflict as people feel forced to ensure their own means of self-security. Despite this, both the US and Russia have shown support for the further development of the fossil fuel industry.²⁷⁷ Although there has thus far been some recognition of the issue and attempts to alleviate it, proactive measures have not yet been put in place to resolve the problem entirely.

The role of the state is to be the granter of security, enforcer of justice, the law, and the safeguard for society. Limiting the state to intervene in the economy deprives society of its safeguard from harmful commercial interests. The state must reaffirm its leadership role and its authority over the one-sided interests that threaten its society. As a tool of the state, the law must exert dominance over the forces that undermine societal stability, demonstrating itself as the

²⁷⁵ Moscow Times 2020

²⁷⁶ Times 2019

²⁷⁷ Krauss 2019

safeguard and the granter of security that is geared towards the betterment and common good for society.

8.1c: Background of the Advancement of Societal Relations

Industrialization created the capital to advance the individual's potential for wealth creation. Economic growth due to more abundance of capital allowed for investment in advancing technology, production, and the standard of living. The economy grew with international trade, through which people have more access outside their vicinity for means of wealth and self-sustainment. Instead of allocating investment in their own vicinity to provide sustainable means of security and well-being, environmentally hazardous industries have taken primacy and citizens are invested in an unstable market to ensure their self-preservation. The concentration of wealth harbors the dangerous disconnect that people have with their means of provision which results in environmental degradation, impoverishment, and economic crises.

The cause of the problems is not global capitalism, but the direction of capital towards coercive outside dependency on environmentally hazardous industries. Collaboration and cooperation with people outside one's vicinity can be beneficial for all parties. Policymakers must specify the destructive nature of the trade relations that predominate today's global political economy. Dependency on these trade relations creates global insecurity by disincentivizing people to establish their own safeguards.

Nevertheless, the advancements made in this process created humanity's greatest asset: access to knowledge. The means of communication, technologies, and knowledge accumulation hold the potential to enhance living systems. Knowledge application can make these living systems more efficient, more self-sustaining, and more rewarding.

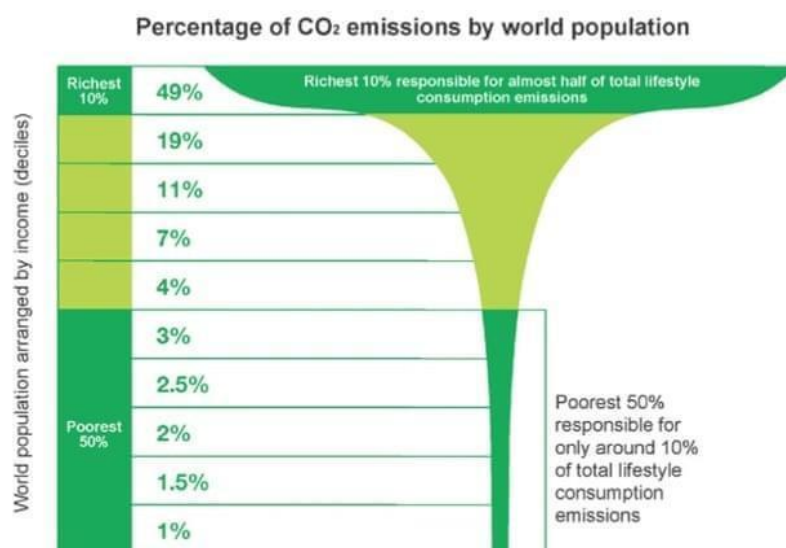
8.2: Policy Recommendations

Mitigating the environmental consequences produced by environmentally hazardous industries and deterring continuation of their harmful effects is ideal. In order to prevent a drastic increase in global warming, resource depletion, and environmental degradation, both the US and Russia must take proactive remediation measures to:

1. Redirect capital flow away from environmentally hazardous industries and toward remediation of climate change and environmental degradation
2. Allocate investments into the development of green industries and societal sustainability projects
3. Realize alternative economic systems that allow independence from environmentally hazardous industries
4. Safeguard society with sustainable means of self-preservation

8.2a: Redirect Capital Flow

The wealth concentrated within environmentally hazardous industries is capital that can be used for the transition toward sustainability. The US and Russia must see to it that environmentally hazardous industries take financial responsibility for the negative externalities and resulting social damage they are causing. Currently, wealth and carbon emissions correlate positively. This especially holds true regarding the wealth divide in Russia and the US in which excessive consumers hold disproportionately higher amounts of wealth and power over predominant industries, as the following table illustrates.²⁷⁸



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²⁷⁸ Brown 2018

²⁷⁹ AFP 2015

Dismantling environmentally hazardous industries would create a vacuum that must be filled with sustainable means of self-preservation and wealth creation. In order to maintain stability, the US and Russia must initiate a buffer period for the transition toward sustainability. Once the transition has been made, harmful practices must be legislated in the form of penalties placed on those who exert these negative externalities. Capital concentrated in today's environmentally hazardous industries must be redirected and diversified into investments in offset industries and societal sustainability of wealth creation.

8.2b: Investment in Innovation

Research and development in ecology application and its empowering effects on economic and physical self-sustainment would bridge the disconnect that caused environmental degradation in the first place, benefiting everyone. Technological advancements and access to environmental information would provide the US and Russia with tools to interact with the environment on a more effective level. By learning about and cultivating the properties and boundaries of the environment, societies will realize the rights and responsibilities they have to optimize their living space as stewards of their territory. It is said that the “best of rulers are close to the scholar”.

8.2c: Neutralizing and Phasing Out the Carbon-Based Economy

The energy sources of both the US and Russia are largely based on fossil fuels.²⁸⁰ Over half of Russia's exports come from fossil fuels and most consumer goods and even day-to-day life in the US are fueled by these energy units.²⁸¹ Because of the affordability, abundance, and market power both states have over this energy source, it is overused. Their citizens consume petroleum-based products often and with convenience. Many consumers do not even consider that the products they are buying are compromising the well-being of the future.

For this reason, it is necessary to phase out and neutralize the carbon-based economy. Diversifying wealth into carbon offset industries creates carbon sinks that will neutralize carbon emissions and provide energy alternatives. These offsets would come in a variety of forms, such

²⁸⁰ Stebbins 2019

²⁸¹ Workman 2020

as renewable energy (solar, wind and/or hydro), reforestation, afforestation, soil management, cogeneration plants, and emission trading schemes. Carbon offset industries are not confined to this list, however. Many affordable and efficient innovations have been realized in this field that can be utilized to phase out the carbon-based economy.²⁸² Carbon dioxide is a long lived molecule that remains in the atmosphere for over 20 years and has been accumulating, there is only one way we can remediate this: create the means for sequestration.

8.2d: Transition Toward Sustainable Agriculture

Over the last several decades, farmers have become poorer because their labor is dangerously devalued. This has resulted in a majority of the people becoming disconnected with means of self-preservation traditionally practiced through agriculture. Large-scale agriculture that perpetuates soil erosion, water pollution, and impoverishment of the rural still is the predominant source of nourishment for citizens of both the US and Russia. Deforestation and chemical-heavy intensive farming techniques disrupt the biodiversity and nutrient balance necessary for sustaining soil fertility. A United Nations' spokesperson warned that at the current rate of degradation, the world's topsoil could be gone within 60 years.²⁸³

Climate change will negatively impact agricultural production as irregular weather patterns will continue to disrupt growing seasons with droughts and unusual temperatures. These occurrences will become increasingly more common and severe if climate change remains unchecked and continues to progress. Environmental degradation threatens our means for survival. Continuation of this degradation puts the United States and Russia at risk for future conflicts as food and water shortages domestically and abroad would set the conditions for a volatile political climate. Because of this, development of sustainable agricultural systems is necessary. Agricultural practices that recycle nutrients within them are self-sustaining. Examples of these agricultural practices include small-scale gardens, polycultures, agroforestry, integration of livestock with crops, and aquaponics systems.

Humanity has a vast knowledge base regarding this field as it was the one that guaranteed the livelihood of societies for generations until the advent of large-scale conventional agriculture. Conventional large-scale agricultural systems are not sustainable because ecology does not

²⁸² Koen 2020

²⁸³ Arsenault 2014

permit the longevity of these non-circular living systems.²⁸⁴ Agricultural systems need to be in more accordance with this cycle.

Redirecting capital flow and investment towards sustainability will bring in long-lasting benefits for the United States and Russia. It would yield more wealth, offset greenhouse gas emissions, and halt further environmental degradation. Green industries shift economic dependency and wealth creation away from environmentally hazardous means of production. Agricultural systems that recycle valuable nutrients ensure the self-preservation of the populace and its ability to continue without compromising the environment. Ecological knowledge allows people to realize better interactions with the environment by revealing its properties and boundaries. The successes from the implementation of this policy will make countries worldwide realize that wealth creation does not have to compromise the environment. Instead, people will realize that enhancing our relationship with the environment creates wealth and provides more assuring means of self-sustainment.

8.2e: Actualization of the Circular Economy and the Green Manifesto

Today's environmental disconnect has resulted in environmental degradation, impoverishment, and economic crises. A circular economy has the ability to eliminate waste and regenerate resources to ensure its continuity. The Green Manifesto produced in Post-World War I Germany proposed that small-scale gardening and other circular means of production will allow people to connect with and understand the environment that provides for them.²⁸⁵ Sustaining the longevity of a garden is similar to other living systems where energy and production are transferred and recycled and diversity means more nutrients and building up resistance to pests. The Green Manifesto's concept of inner colonization asserts that people must take dominion of the land and bodies of waters within their vicinity. It insists that the accumulation of knowledge and advances in technology should be used at full advantage to make these living systems more sustainable and efficient.²⁸⁶

It states that:

²⁸⁴ Arsenault 2014

²⁸⁵ Haney 2007

²⁸⁶ Haney 2007

The city may not only take from the land,
The city must also give to the land. . . .
All city waste to the land. Unify city and land.
We should create our own "earth".

8.3: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

Therefore, we recommend that the US do the following: take steps to redirect capital flow in both the US and Russia where environmentally hazardous industries take advantage of poor circulation of wealth, invest in ecological innovation, neutralize and phase out the carbon-based economy, transition toward sustainable agriculture, and increase dependence on local and individual farming. Adopting these policies will allow the US to be a valuable example for the future of Russian climate change policy.

Chapter 9

Russia, the US, and the Climate Battle

By Kiana Wilson

Early international legislation tackling anthropogenic climate change required little from the Russian Federation; now, as countries reconcile with the urgent need to slow greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the next five years, they are finding Russia's contribution to decarbonization efforts unsatisfactory.²⁸⁷ Belatedly, international organizations have come to realize the critical role that Russia, the world's fourth largest GHG emitter, plays in shaping global carbon emissions trends.²⁸⁸ As G20 members, both Russia and the United States' effect on global emissions trends will determine whether or not the world can halt atmospheric warming in time.²⁸⁹ Future policy must aim to provide solutions at this intersection: whereas current Russian climate change legislation ineffectively addresses carbon emission reduction and the US cannot directly interfere in Russian domestic policy, how can the US encourage Russia to strengthen climate policies against their political and economic interests?

The goal of the US should be to increase Russian participation in international climate discussions and encourage Russia to implement effective decarbonizing legislation. This can be accomplished should the US push to restructure the political and economic incentives available to Russia. The US must initially recognize that there is little hope of inspiring sincere Russian commitment without first making equal if not greater commitments to rapidly implementing aggressive climate policy. To provide political incentives, the US must genuinely appeal to Russia's sense of duty in actively joining the worldwide fight. To shift economic incentives, the US must collectively encourage allies to implement environmental tariffs, or eco-tariffs, to deter noncompliance with international climate standards.

9.1: Background

²⁸⁷ Luhn 2019

²⁸⁸ "Russia 2014 - Energy Policies Beyond IEA Countries" 2014

²⁸⁹ U.N. Environment 2019b

Although the need to collectively decrease carbon emissions is more pressing than ever before, Russia, as one of the world's principal oil-exporting states²⁹⁰, will have undue difficulty shifting their reliance on carbon energy sources. Previously, the international community minimally incorporated Russia in international climate agreements; it was first included in a non-binding, symbolic fashion followed by displays of international shaming to force Russia's hand. This tactic so far has resulted in ineffective policies and has alienating the Kremlin further.

9.1a: The Disproportionate Effect of Climate Change

Any degree of atmospheric warming past 1.5 degrees Celsius will result in extreme resource scarcity, geopolitical insecurity and severe economic recession; in the long term, up to 75% of arable land will become uninhabitable territory, causing mass migration, extreme natural disaster, and widespread extinction.²⁹¹ Energy dominates total GHG emissions at 60%.²⁹² Carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, present in all modern energy sectors, are the principal contributors to carbon emissions.²⁹³ The gap between current and target emissions is large, about 32 GtCO_{2e}, requiring a dramatic strengthening of all the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) submitted by participating countries in the 2015 international Paris climate agreement. To close the gap, emissions overall must be reduced 32% by 2030.²⁹⁴

The solution must be twofold: global and energy intensive. As National Science Advisor John P. Holdren puts it, "Without energy there is no economy. Without climate there is no environment. Without economy and environment there is no material wealth, no civil society, no personal or national security."²⁹⁵ The US, having worked for nearly a century to establish and protect the current world order, has a vested interest in strengthening the worldwide effort to close the emissions gap. Such a comprehensive plan must include Russia, for no discussion of climate change can be complete without it.

The uneven changes caused by rising temperatures will disproportionately affect Russia. The country is warming almost 2.5 times faster than the rest of the world, and the government

²⁹⁰ "World Energy Consumption Statistics | Enerdata" 2018

²⁹¹ U.N. Environment 2019

²⁹² U.N. Environment 2017

²⁹³ "The Determinants of Renewables Investment" 2017

²⁹⁴ U.N. Environment 2019a

²⁹⁵ Ladislav et al. 2009

predicts drought, epidemics and mass hunger should the current trajectory continue.²⁹⁶ Both Russia's national forests and permafrost layers (which cover 60% of Russian territory) store over half the Northern Hemisphere's carbon.²⁹⁷ The high risk of wildfire and melting that rising temperatures pose to these environments would release destructive levels of carbon into the atmosphere. This past year the population has endured severe Serbian wildfires, flash flooding in the East, and below-average snow levels in Moscow.²⁹⁸ The weather service reported that 56 million Russian across 143 major cities are experiencing "high" and "very high" levels of air pollution.²⁹⁹ These environmental issues have dramatically increased public concern. A recent poll found that 48% of Russians see climate change as the greatest threat facing humanity, outranking terrorism.³⁰⁰ Given all these factors, official Russian disinterest and apathy towards international climate policy is often puzzling until a deeper analysis is conducted.

9.1b: Russian Energy Politics

The intertwined political and economic relationship between Russia and carbon fuel sources cannot be overstated. Russia is the world's largest exporter of gas and oil combined, surpassing Saudi Arabia. High levels of inefficiency and waste make Russia one of the most energy and carbon intensive economies of the G20 nations. Russian oil and gas exports have increased annually, currently accounting for 13% and 26% of the global total respectively. Last year, gas production grew by 5.4%, second only to the US.³⁰¹

As one of the world's leading oil, gas, and coal exporters, Russian foreign policy relies heavily on "energy politics as a foreign policy instrument."³⁰² Supporting national development of oil and gas reserves has allowed Russia to develop a program of international commercial outreach dominated by energy politics. Its mission furthers national interests in regions such as the EU, the Middle East, China and India. Many of these regions are heavily dependent on Russian oil, and US Vice President Mike Pence has recently been an outspoken critic of the EU

²⁹⁶ Luhn 2019

²⁹⁷ King 2012

²⁹⁸ Times 2020

²⁹⁹ Times 2019

³⁰⁰ Times 2020

³⁰¹ BP 2019

³⁰² Pierini 2019

in particular, the top consumer of Russian natural gas.³⁰³ As Dr. Igor Sutyagin at the Royal United Services Institute puts it, “limiting Russian energy politics will severely limit the Kremlin’s vested interest in asserting its ‘ability to influence, coerce and cajole’ in the international arena.”³⁰⁴

The Russian economy is almost entirely dependent on its energy sector, making up one-third of the Russian federal budget.³⁰⁵ A recent study on Russia’s GDP and international oil prices concludes, “The depth of Russia’s oil dependence is much greater than what casual observers... would suggest.”³⁰⁶ In 2018, oil and gas represented 59% of total exports by value.³⁰⁷ Giant oil and gas corporations, like Gazprom and Rosneft, hold the political system captive.³⁰⁸ The power of fossil fuel companies’ interests over the Russian government was most recently demonstrated by the fate of Order #2344, “On State Regulation of Greenhouse Gases,” a draft of the first piece of climate legislation proposed to the Russian parliament. Initially containing provisions for target GHG levels and a carbon cap and trade system, the revised version excluded these provisions after considerable backlash from the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP).³⁰⁹ Although the natural effects of climate change will soon cause irreversible damage for the Russian nation, political and economic interests hold the country captive on its fast-approaching collision course.

9.1c: US Abstention and Russia’s False Leadership

The Russian petrostate is in many ways sowing the seeds of its own discord, but the international community and specifically the US have had its hand in shaping Russian apathy. Russian politicians and international diplomats highlight Russian excellency and praise Russia as a leader in international climate legislation. Russians often point to the fact that since 1997, Russian GHG emissions have been reduced by 40 billion tons, nearly equal to the worldwide

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ King 2012

³⁰⁵ BP 2019

³⁰⁶ “Russia and Oil -- Out of Control” 2016

³⁰⁷ “Exports of Goods and Services (Current US\$) - United States, China, Russian Federation, India, European Union Data” 2019

³⁰⁸ Pierini 2019

³⁰⁹ “Russian Draft Climate Law Gutted after Industry Intervention” 2019

output.³¹⁰ As one article puts it, “Russia usually throws its weight around in the multilateral arena, but appears to turn mute at the annual UNFCCC COP.³¹¹” Just as American withdrawal from the international scene has allowed Russia to selectively fill the resulting power vacuum, so US abstention from the international climate discussion has allowed Russia to pursue symbolic, ineffective policies under the guise of being a leader in climate change policy.

The Kyoto Protocol was the first international consensus on climate policy, establishing target emissions reductions of GHGs from industrialized nations.³¹² American withdrawal from the agreement sparked controversy in the Russian ratification debate, which dragged on until 2004. Although the protocol’s ratification was at first discussed under a sense of national duty to contribute to the international mission, politicians began to frame the issue of commitment under the idea of national interest. The potential economic and political benefits, including EU sponsorship of Russian admission to the WTO, affected national discourse on whether the protocol should be ratified.³¹³

Following ratification in 2004, US withdrawal allowed Russia the power to pledge insufficient commitments. With the US out of the agreement, “Russia was the only state with sufficient emissions to bring the protocol into effect. The decisive role of Russia in the enforcement of global climate policy gave it political leverage.³¹⁴” Within the Paris agreement, from which the US withdrew under the Trump administration in 2019, Russia’s INDC submission pledged to limit GHG emissions to 70-75% of their 1990 levels by the year 2030.³¹⁵ By using the base year of 1990 in both agreements, the year the Soviet Union collapsed and economic output dramatically dropped, Russian climate commitments exploit the difference between current and historic emissions trends. The UN Climate Action Tracker rates Russian efforts “Critically Insufficient,³¹⁶” asserting Russia “can actually pollute more and still meet its current Paris agreement goals.³¹⁷”

³¹⁰ Times 2015

³¹¹ King 2012

³¹² Korppoo and Vatansever 2012

³¹³ Tynkkynen 2010

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ UNFCCC 2015

³¹⁶ Climate Action Tracker 2019

³¹⁷ Luhn 2019

Without a strong power to assume responsibility and enforce the implementation of climate change policy, Russian claims of superiority have gone unchecked. Instead, “The major shortcoming of the Russian initiative is that it is substantively hollow.³¹⁸” The political and economic incentives available to Russia, as well as a strong international commitment to fight climate change, will be the ultimate determinants in whether or not Russia will undertake effective policy against climate change. Simply put, “The Kremlin’s climate change path boils down to political will - and whether climate change is considered important enough.³¹⁹”

9.2: Policy Recommendations

9.2a: Strong US Commitment to the Climate Change Fight

The US must first explicitly demonstrate its commitment to lowering carbon emissions. The first step is to publicly commit to the Paris agreement and submit an INDC that proposes an aggressive, expeditious decarbonizing plan, which must include a comprehensive future target emissions plan, mechanisms for oversight and tracking progress, and a domestic carbon tax implemented across all sectors of the economy. The specific outline for this policy should closely follow the roadmap laid out by the Center for Statistical and International Studies (CSIS) Energy Roadmap.³²⁰

This strategy incorporates the historical and contemporary power the US has in shaping the current world order and the powerful role the US plays in shaping Russian participation in the climate conversation. The US cannot expect to influence the global fight against climate change without first stepping into the ring. As of 2018, the US is still the world's largest producer of gas and oil. Oil production has increased by 16.6%, and the country contains 21.5% of the global gas supply. Carbon intensity remains high, at a constant rate of 1.3% over the past decade.³²¹ As one Russian newspaper asks, “...if the US does not ratify, why should Russia, with less emissions, do so?³²²” Addressing the pressing issue of climate change falls under the US’s duty as a world leader.

³¹⁸ Korppoo and Vatansever 2012

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ladislaw et al. 2009

³²¹ BP 2019b

³²² Tynkkynen 2010

Beyond a strong commitment to the Paris agreement, current and future executive leaders of the US should verbally signify their commitment to the US INDC and call upon all nations to strengthen their own. This strategy does not directly single out Russia to avoid explicit conflict or acceleration of tensions and has the added benefit of encouraging all nations to improve their commitments to the climate mission. A public call to action further solidifies US commitment despite the high up-front costs of this energy transition, a promise that can be referenced during future moments of crisis and conflict. Citizens of the nation and the world can fully understand each step the US government takes as part of a long-term vision of sustainability for the future.

Within the current domestic context of the US, a commitment such as this may seem impossible or unappealing to the current administration. Climate change in both Russia and the US is a highly politicized issue.³²³ Understanding this, the US must take steps domestically to inform the public of the immediate threat that climate change poses across party lines. While informing the general public of the dangers of climate change is beyond the scope of this briefing, its benefits as a whole contribute to the success of this policy. Although US withdrawal and abstinence has been habitual in the past, the current urgency of climate change can be coupled with a public information campaign to solidify American commitment.

9.2b: Encouraging an Active Response from Russia

When approaching Russia in international climate discussions, the US should have a firm understanding of the reality of Russian dependence on carbon fuel sources. This allows the US the ability to praise those nascent steps being taken within Russia while also encouraging that further progress be made. The upcoming 2020 UN climate summit in Glasgow presents the perfect opportunity for American diplomats to recognize the work that Russia has done and appeal to Russia's sense of duty.³²⁴ In this strategy, American diplomats must understand that international solutions to climate change will look different within the local context of Russia. While it may be feasible to ask some countries to completely switch from petroleum to solar energy, there are natural environmental limitations on Russia, especially given the nation's dependence on carbon fuel sources.

³²³The Economist 2019

³²⁴Hub 2019

Instead of allowing Russia to passively continue within the international climate conversation, the US should take an active stance in both multilateral institutions and bilateral talks to draw Russia into active participation. The US must directly appeal to Russian excellency. Historically, Russian nationalism drives the country's campaign to seek an influential position as a world leader.³²⁵ In this instance, challenging Russia to a 'Climate Battle' so to speak, poses no great threat to the US or the world; rather, respectfully encouraging Russia to strengthen their climate policy (as the US strengthens its own) only furthers the international mission to decarbonization. There can be no losers in this antagonistic yet climate-friendly battle. As one study concludes, "The sustainability of the 'ecological greatness' of Russia is best secured by encouraging Russian participation on the basis of 'duty' not by giving it a free ride."³²⁶

Given the current US-Russian relationship, care must be taken to ensure recognition does not come off as either patronizing or unrealistic. Russia can and should be making domestic changes to improve the strength of their climate policy and recognizing the efforts already in place does not refute that. However, using Russia as an international example for the ways in which climate policy must be adapted to fit within the local context of what is reasonable for a country could communicate to Russia and the world that the blanket objective of reducing carbon emissions suggests innovative implementation that will look different everywhere. Executed in this manner, recognizing organic Russian movements will strengthen its confidence in the international climate conversation.

9.2c: Eco-Tariffs and Border Carbon Admissions

A dramatic restructuring of incentives must occur to inspire fundamental structural change. The US must pioneer an international restructuring of market incentives in the energy economy. Through environmental tariffs (eco-tariffs) and border carbon admissions (BCAs), American leadership can push for the development of renewable energy by making these options more profitable; at the same time, this will gradually eliminate the profitability of carbon energy, de-incentivizing Russian investment in the fossil fuel sector.

³²⁵ Tynkkynen 2010

³²⁶ Ibid.

In the past, technological revolutions have willingly inspired fundamental economic and political conversion worldwide, and the US has historically been at the forefront of that.³²⁷ To truly inspire Russian participation, “Past experience and Russia’s current economic model suggests it will need a major incentive or huge pressure to get Putin’s negotiating team to make any real concessions.³²⁸” Restructuring international trade incentives has previously proven to be effective with Russia. Ratification of the Paris agreement in 2019 and Russia’s first domestic climate proposal came only after Germany, within its Climate Action Law, proposed legislation to sanction those trading partners that did not comply with international standards.³²⁹ While the resulting effect on Russia was largely symbolic, it signifies just how far Russia will go in preserving trade relations and international influence.

Both eco-tariffs and BCAs work to restructure economic incentives to deprioritize carbon-based fuel. An eco-tariff will tax all those products imported to or exported from countries that fail to reach international climate standards.³³⁰ BCAs can counteract both exported and imported products from noncooperative nations; an import BCA applies a charge to imported emissions-intensive goods, while an export BCA charges domestic producers the carbon tax-related costs.³³¹ While many nations have considered these measures in national legislation, they have yet to fully implement these measures in a way that effectively shifts Russian behavior.

The US should lead the effort to address this by nationally implementing eco-tariffs and BCAs, encouraging other countries to follow suit. The terms of this agreement should be very clear: countries will be warned should their practices not meet up to environmental standards. Those countries that cannot prove that the burdens asked of them are unreasonable, as determined by the international consensus, will face trade restrictions from the international community. Once those standards are met, trade restrictions will be lifted and relations will assume as before.

This policy allows the US to indirectly shape Russian climate policy when voluntary participation lacks the desired effect and has the benefit of encouraging other non-compliant

³²⁷ Ladislaw et al. 2009

³²⁸ King 2012

³²⁹ Luhn 2019

³³⁰ Kraus 2000

³³¹ Allan 2019

countries to follow suit. Key to the success of this policy will be the joint implementation of trade restrictions by all countries. For this reason, the US should develop this policy within a multilateral organization, such as the UN. In this way, Russia will not feel directly attacked by the US or explicitly shamed by the world. Instead, trade restrictions can be proposed as a temporary solution to inspire meaningful change that can be removed once improper behavior has been corrected.

9.3: Conclusion and Final Recommendations

The issue of climate change is not a bilateral dilemma. The threat of climate change is all-encompassing. The US must acknowledge Russia's oil dependency alongside the ability of Russia, a nation with a historically strong central state, to change course and get behind the international mission fighting climate change, should this be in Russia's interest. It is within our grasp to restructure Russian incentives by joining the fight ourselves and diplomatically reaching out to our allies. In this indirect, non-confrontational manner, the US can encourage Russia to strengthen international climate commitments and implement more effective policies.

In order to bring Russia into this conversation, the US should signal to Russia and the international community its commitment to lowering carbon emissions, recognize publicly the efforts that Russia has already made in reforming its energy sector, and encourage Russia to introduce effective decarbonization legislation by restructuring international market incentives via environmental tariffs on countries deemed non-compliant with climate standards.

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