

**FROM THE BEAR'S MOUTH:
ANALYZING VLADIMIR PUTIN'S RHETORIC AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR RUSSIAN GRAND STRATEGY**

**BY
JOHN BERGER**

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major John W. Berger grew up in Sioux City, Iowa and graduated Heelan High School in 1999. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Management in 2003 from the United States Air Force Academy. In 2009, he earned a Masters Degree in International Relations from Webster University. In 2015, he earned a second Masters Degree from the Air Command and Staff College in Military Art and Science.

Major Berger was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force in May 2003. Following graduation from the Air Force Academy, Berger went to pilot training at Laughlin AFB in Del Rio, Texas where he flew the T-37B and T1A. Following pilot training, Berger joined the 16th Airlift Squadron at Charleston Air Force Base in 2005 where he flew the C-17A Globemaster supporting operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the world. From 2009 to 2012, Berger continued to fly the C-17A in support operations around the globe as a member of the 21st Airlift Squadron at Travis Air Force. Since earning his pilot wings, Berger has flown over 2,700 hours in the T-37B, T1A, and C-17A gaining experience in airlift, air refueling, and aeromedical evacuation.

In 2012, following two operational assignments, Berger transitioned to a staff assignment at Scott Air Force Base where he served as the Command Speechwriter to two Commanders of Air Mobility Command. One year later, in 2013, Berger was reassigned to the Pentagon where he served as the Chief Speechwriter to General Mark Welsh, the Air Force Chief of Staff. Since 2014, Berger has been stationed at Maxwell Air Force Base, where he attended Air Command and Staff College and the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Since Vladimir Putin was elected president in 2000, Russia has experienced a dramatic resurgence on the international stage. Concurrent with Russia's rise, animosity between Russia and the West has risen. When Russian troops seized Crimea in 2014, the West expressed surprise, outrage, and concern at Putin's blatant disregard for Ukrainian sovereignty and international law. Former Sovietologists were thrust back into the mainstream and everyone wanted to know what Vladimir Putin wanted. A google search of "What does Putin Want?" yields articles from *Foreign Policy*, *CNN*, *Time Magazine*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and more. National security analysts fielded questions about whether the crisis in Ukraine was the start of a new Cold War.

The American public's surprise and confusion about Russia is understandable as most national security discussions since 9/11 largely revolved around terrorism. The nation's heavy focus on Iraq and Afghanistan made many unaware of or apathetic about the growing threat from Moscow. The West's security apparatus is now playing catch-up after years of neglecting Russia. However, for those who have followed Putin's presidency from the start, the question of what Putin wants is not overly complex. In fact, Putin told the world what he wants many times during his speeches. This essay examines three major speeches from Russian President Vladimir Putin and analyzes their implications for Russian grand strategy.

The essay argues that rhetoric both reflects and shapes grand strategy. It contends that at his core, Putin is a nationalist, a statist, a realist, and a pragmatist. This worldview influences his rhetoric. Through his speeches, it is clear that Putin places a significant importance on Russia's great power status, or *derzhavnost*. Along with its position as a great power, he believes Russia is entitled to unique privileges in the international system such as a regional sphere of influence. Through his rhetoric, it is also apparent that Putin believes the West aims to encircle his country and undermine Russian power. Moreover, Putin believes that the West, through its non-governmental organizations, wants to orchestrate a popular uprising in Russia similar to the uprisings in former Soviet states like Ukraine and Georgia.

Putin uses many tools to address these threats, but he has become particularly adept at using information warfare to spread disinformation and counter Western narratives. Moreover, Putin seeks to exploit political differences between Western countries in order to weaken and eventually dissolve their alliances and associations. Finally, Putin uses claims of Russian exceptionalism and a sense of national victimization to mobilize publics in support of his aims.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Sky is high and the Tsar is far.

Russian Proverb

Since Vladimir Putin was elected president in 2000, Russia has experienced a dramatic resurgence on the international stage following the economically disastrous 1990s. Concurrent with Russia's rise, animosity between Russia and the West has grown as well. This enmity reached a fever pitch when Russian troops seized the Ukrainian territory of Crimea in 2014. The West expressed surprise, outrage, and concern at Putin's blatant disregard for international law and Ukrainian sovereignty. Former Sovietologists were thrust back into the mainstream and everyone wanted to know "What does Vladimir Putin want?" A simple *google* search of "What does Putin Want?" yields articles from *Foreign Policy*, *CNN*, *Time Magazine*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and more. National security analysts fielded questions about whether this was the start of a new Cold War. The American public's surprise and confusion about Russia is understandable as most national security discussions since 9/11 largely revolved around terrorism. The nation's heavy focus on Iraq and Afghanistan made many unaware of or apathetic about the growing threat from Moscow. The West's security apparatus is now playing catch-up after years of neglecting Russia. However, for those who have followed Putin's presidency from the start, the question of what Putin wants is not overly complex. In fact, Putin told the world what he wants many times during his speeches. This essay analyzes three major speeches from Russian President Vladimir Putin and analyzes their implications for Russian grand strategy.

The essay argues that rhetoric both reflects and shapes grand strategy. It contends that at his core, Putin is a nationalist, a statist, a realist, and a pragmatist. This worldview influences his rhetoric. Through his speeches, it is clear that Putin places a significant importance on Russia's great power status, or *derzhavnost*. Along with its position as a great power, he believes Russia is entitled to unique privileges in the international system such as a regional sphere of influence. Through his rhetoric, it is also apparent that Putin

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Central Assertion and Methodology

This paper's central assertion is that Putin's rhetoric offers important insights about Russia's grand strategy. Beneath this central assertion, the paper explores how Putin's rhetoric telegraphs his actions. It also explores how Putin uses rhetoric in the four constituent elements of grand strategy: defining national interests, identifying threats, offering policy options, and mobilizing audiences.

The paper is organized into six chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 explores the question of whether rhetoric matters. Some international relations scholars deem rhetoric as mere posturing, unworthy of deep analysis.¹ For Russia specifically, some believe that Putin's rhetoric is pure propaganda. Chapter 2 contends that rhetoric does matter. State leaders use rhetoric for the legitimation of policies and their rhetoric has causal effects that both reflect and shape grand strategy.

Chapter 3 analyzes Putin's past, his worldview, and his interests. Just as a good speaker learns about his or her audience before stepping on the stage, a good listener must learn about the speaker before analyzing the speaker's rhetoric. Assessing rhetoric apart from context has little value. Chapter 3 contends that Putin's past shaped his

¹ Ronald R Krebs. *Narrative and the Making of US National Security*. Vol. 138. Cambridge University Press, 2015, 4. For clarification, Krebs is not one of the scholars who dismisses the importance of rhetoric. In his opening chapter he positions himself in opposition of these scholars.

worldview as a realist, a nationalist, and a statist. This worldview then informs his three primary interests: to consolidate political power domestically, revive and sustain Russia's great power status, and weaken Western institutions like NATO and the EU.

Chapter 4 uses the findings from the previous chapter to frame and analyze three major speeches Putin delivered from 1999 to 2014. These speeches were chosen because they represent three distinct time periods during Putin's presidency and cover a broad range of issues important to Russia's grand strategy. The chapter discusses the context surrounding each speech as well as the content of the speech to identify important themes that influence Russia's grand strategy. During Putin's 1999 Millennium Address, for example, he began with the premise that Russia is destined to be a great power. Putin invoked a unique form of Russian exceptionalism commonly called *derzhavnost*. Moreover, Putin introduced his "Russian Idea" which framed how he believed Russia should be governed—as a quasi-authoritarian state with a wide-reaching state apparatus. Putin's Russian Idea also provided the justification for his future actions in Georgia and Ukraine, moves that Moscow claimed it undertook to protect Russian's living abroad.

In his 2007, Munich Speech, Putin both reflected upon and foreshadowed his growing discontent with the West and its rules-based international order. At the time of the speech, many in America were preoccupied with the Iraq "surge" and failed to notice that Russia was becoming more belligerent and unhappy with the existing world order. Furthermore, in Munich, Putin outlined his firmly held belief that the West uses NGOs to foment and orchestrate popular uprisings in former Soviet states. Russia's actions in Crimea were a result of this belief. At Putin's 2014 Valdai speech, he outlined, in the bluntest terms, his displeasure with the West and foreshadowed a long-term competition between the two sides. Moreover, at Valdai, Putin sought to drive wedges between North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) countries, perhaps revealing his next grand strategic aim—to weaken and eventually dissolve Western institutions like NATO and the EU.

Chapter 5 discusses Putin's grand strategy in terms of its four constituent elements. This chapter explores how, in practice, Putin's rhetoric reflects and shapes Russian grand strategy. It analyzes how Putin uses rhetoric to define national interests, identify threats, offer feasible ways to address these threats, and mobilize publics.

Putin's central interests are maintaining power domestically, reinvigorating Russia's great power status internationally, and weakening Western institutions like NATO and the EU. In Putin's eyes, the primary threats to these aims are popular revolutions in Russia and the former Soviet states. Putin believes the West orchestrates these uprisings. Putin uses many tools to connect means with ends, but he has become particularly skilled at using information warfare to mitigate these threats. Finally, Putin uses the Russian elites sense of post-1991 victimization and the Russian Idea he outlined in his Millennium Address to mobilize public support of his aims.



Chapter 2

Rhetoric and Strategy

Nature does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust.

Aristotle

The study of rhetoric rests on one key assumption...that rhetoric matters. This assumption is especially important because many Westerners dismiss Russian rhetoric as mere propaganda. While there are elements of deception and propaganda in Russian President Vladimir Putin's speeches, Westerners who dismiss his rhetoric as mere propaganda do so to their own detriment. For example, many scoff when Putin says that Russia invaded Ukraine to protect ethnic Russians. However, Putin foreshadowed actions such as these as far back as 1999. For those listening, since he assumed the office of President of the Russian Federation, Putin has staunchly spoken against North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion in Eastern Europe. In 2008, he acted militarily to stop NATO expansion in Georgia. In 2014, Russia's military actions in Ukraine were not a surprise to those people who paid attention to Putin's speeches. Through their narrative, Russian leaders convey important insights about themselves, their country, and their strategy. In today's increasingly interconnected world, rhetoric often shapes, legitimates, and signals changes to one's strategy. Therefore, to counter Russia's strategy, one must first understand its narrative. Mark Twain wrote that history does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes. The Cold War was less a war of quantifiable things like territory, money, and weapons. Rather, it was a war between ideologies competing for narrative dominance. For this reason, then as now, Russian rhetoric matters.

Why Rhetoric Matters

Rhetoric matters because human activity does not occur in a vacuum.¹ Every action, counteraction, and global phenomena requires an interpretive medium through

¹ This essay defines rhetoric as the art of persuasive speaking and writing.

which humans can glean meaning and significance. At the grand strategic level, politicians use rhetoric to explain, describe, or persuade people that their policy or interpretation of events is correct. In other words, politicians use rhetoric to gain legitimation, or the public acceptance of policy. Moreover, the process of gaining legitimation is not only a response to external events and internal policy desires, but it has “significant and independent effects” on the formulation and execution of grand strategy.² Rhetoric influences fundamental elements of grand strategy such as defining national interests, identifying threats, proposing policy options, and mobilizing audiences.³ In democracies, mobilizing audiences is important because leaders must gain public support for their policies or else they lose votes. However, authoritarian regimes care about popular mobilization as well. One need only look at the recent popular uprisings against authoritarian regimes during the Arab Spring to see the effects of leaders who alienate their constituencies. Leaders attempt to gain the support of their audiences by shaping the strategic narrative.⁴ They use rhetoric to persuade others of their narrative’s accuracy and relevance. In his book, *War From the Ground Up*, Emile Simpson writes that “the construction of the strategic narrative resembles the art of persuasion, or rhetoric, as classically defined.”⁵ Simpson continues, “Strategic narrative is simply strategy expressed in narrative form.”⁶ Thus, one can begin to understand a state’s strategy by understanding its leaders’ rhetoric. Hence, rhetoric matters.

It is important to acknowledge the debate among scholars about the importance of rhetoric in international relations. Some scholars, particularly realists, do not believe that rhetoric is important. They deem rhetoric as mere posturing.⁷ Realist scholars who deemphasize rhetoric’s importance instead assert that the structure of the international system, national interests, or power are the essence of politics and the key drivers of

² Stacy Goddard and Ronald Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy." *Security Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 5.

³ Stacy Goddard and Ronald Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," 5.

⁴ This essay defines strategic narrative as the story an entity uses to explain past events and predict future events.

⁵ Emile Simpson. *War from the ground up: Twenty-first century combat as politics*. Oxford University Press, 2012, 14.

⁶ Emile Simpson. *War from the ground up: Twenty-first century combat as politics*, 181.

⁷ Ronald R Krebs. *Narrative and the Making of US National Security*. Vol. 138. Cambridge University Press, 2015, 4.

grand strategy. According to Ronald Krebs, these scholars contend that “states have little choice but to adapt to the dictates of an unforgiving international system, that narratives are the product of events whose meaning is clear to all, or that a narrative’s dominance simply reflects the interests of power groups and leaders.”⁸ While there is merit to analyzing power, interests, and structure of the international system, rhetoric should not be dismissed as mere posturing. After all, Krebs argues, “In politics, language is a crucial medium, means, locus, and object of contest. It neither competes with nor complements power politics: it is power politics.”⁹

Other international relations scholars, especially liberals and constructivists, acknowledge the importance of structure, power, and interests, but contend that other factors have significant and independent effects on states’ behavior. Ronald Krebs, Stacie Goddard, and Jack Snyder are three prominent international relations scholars who emphasize rhetoric’s “significant and independent” effects on states’ behavior.¹⁰ Through rhetoric, they argue, states compete for internal and external legitimation for their desired policies. The process of legitimation “has significant and autonomous causal effects on grand strategy.”¹¹ Specifically, legitimation is crucial to how states define their national interests, identify potential threats, offer certain policy options, and mobilize audiences. These four factors are integral steps in forming grand strategy.

Rhetoric matters because politics do not exist in a sphere of mutually agreed upon facts and values. Instead, world leaders operate in a subjective, fluid environment, heavily influenced by history and context, where one’s ability to shape the narrative often determines the victor. Simpson notes that hard calculations of power and interests lack the nuance and context needed to make sense of modern day conflicts.¹² Instead, Simpson, who served three tours in Afghanistan as a British infantry officer, asserts, “The outcome of [military] action [in Afghanistan] is usually better gauged by the chat at the bazaar the next day, and its equivalent higher up in the political food chain, than body

⁸ Ronald R Krebs. *Narrative and the Making of US National Security*, 2.

⁹ Ronald R Krebs. *Narrative and the Making of US National Security*, 2.

¹⁰ Stacy Goddard and Ronald Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," 5.

¹¹ Stacy Goddard and Ronald Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," 7.

¹² Howard’s quote is from the back cover of Simpson’s book.

counts.”¹³ Simpson’s observations harken back to Sun Tzu’s maxim that “battles are won by choosing the terrain on which [they] are fought.”¹⁴ In politics, as in war, Simpson recognizes that narratives often decide modern battles. Thus, politicians use narratives to define, test, and update their grand strategy.

Rhetoric and Grand Strategy

Strategy has many definitions. One common definition of strategy is how one connects ends with means. In theory, strategy begins with a desired end state and a limited set of means. The strategist then forms a strategy to employ the means toward the desired end. In practice, however, there is rarely a formalized description of the desired end state. As Lawrence Freedman notes, “the process evolves through a series of states, each one not quite what was anticipated or hoped for, requiring a reappraisal and modification of the original strategy, including ultimate objectives.”¹⁵ Thus, strategy does not end. It is an iterative process whereby strategists seek a continual advantage.

Grand strategy is an iterative process as well. Barry Posen describes grand strategy as, “a state’s theory about how it can best cause security for itself.”¹⁶ Focusing on the highest level of strategy, grand strategy utilizes a nation’s diplomatic, informational, military, and economic resources to pursue its ends abroad. To do so, Krebs notes that grand strategy has four constituent elements. First, grand strategy identifies national interests. Second, grand strategy identifies threats to those interests and prioritizes among them. Third, grand strategy outlines feasible ways to address those threats. Fourth, execution of grand strategy requires mobilization of resources at home and maneuvering abroad to attract allies and neutralize opponents.¹⁷ Rhetoric plays a key role in each of the four elements of grand strategy.

Winston Churchill’s leadership at the dawn of World War II is an excellent example of the important role rhetoric plays in the four constituent elements of grand

¹³ Simpson, Emile. *War from the ground up: Twenty-first century combat as politics*, 6.

¹⁴ Ronald R Krebs. *Narrative and the Making of US National Security*, 4.

¹⁵ Lawrence Freedman. *Strategy: a history*. Oxford University Press, 2013, xi.

¹⁶ Barry Posen. *The sources of military doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the world wars*. Cornell University Press, 1986, 1.

¹⁷ Stacy Goddard and Ronald Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy, 8.

strategy. In 1940, following the devastating military defeat at Dunkirk, there was a heated debate in the British Parliament about how to respond to the successful German military campaign in Western Europe. During this time, Churchill's rhetoric framed the war very differently than some of his contemporaries. Churchill cast the Nazis as the embodiment of an insatiable evil force that must be defeated. Meanwhile, his primary political opponent, Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary who was one of the architects of the policy of appeasement, led a large contingent of politicians who argued that Britain had been defeated and had nothing to gain from a long, hopeless struggle against a continental power with which she had no fundamental conflict of interest.¹⁸ Halifax and many other British politicians contended that Britain should make peace with Germany. At the time, Halifax had many supporters. Following the horrors of WWI, many Britons, including nationalists, communists, and pacifists, had no desire to get involved in another world war with a powerful adversary whose intent, they believed, was benign. In fact, Stephen Bungay, in his book *The Most Dangerous Enemy*, notes that after Churchill's predecessor, Neville Chamberlain, signed the Munich agreement in 1938, "the whole country sighed with relief."¹⁹ Despite the broad aversion to war in Britain, Winston Churchill employed his powerful rhetorical skills in each of the four constituent elements of grand strategy to mobilize a nation. Churchill used rhetoric to identify national interests, identify and prioritize threats, offer solutions, and mobilize support at home and abroad.

At home, Churchill used his rhetorical skills to win over both the British Parliament and the British people. Contrary to those who wanted to negotiate with Hitler, Churchill framed the conflict as battle for survival. In Churchill's narrative, it was a choice between fascism and liberal democracy.²⁰ Any negotiations with fascists, Churchill argued, were "immoral" because Hitler would turn Britain into a "slave state."²¹ He urged the British people to fight the Nazis "on the beaches, landing grounds,

¹⁸ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*. Aurum Press Limited, 2010, 9.

¹⁹ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 10.

²⁰ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 14.

²¹ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 11.

fields, and streets.”²² The aim of this fight was simple...victory. “Victory at all costs,” he declared. “Victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.”²³ To mobilize and harden the public for a long war, Churchill said, “If this long island history of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each one of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground.”²⁴ A few months later, now with Britons united behind Churchill’s grand vision, the Battle of Britain began. Through his narrative dominance, Churchill, gave the battle its name—before it had even begun—and convinced the world that it was inevitable, necessary, and winnable.²⁵

Churchill used rhetoric to formulate and execute an alternative grand strategy to that favored by Lord Halifax and his supporters. Reflecting what would later become Posen’s four constituent elements of grand strategy, Churchill defined the national interest as survival: survival in not only the physical sense, but survival of liberal democracy in the face of tyranny. In terms of identifying threats, Churchill squarely identified Adolf Hitler’s regime as the single greatest threat to British survival. In doing so, he framed Nazi Germany as the embodiment of pure evil. Because the Nazis were evil, the policy options became clear. According to Churchill, the British had no choice except to fight. Any negotiations with Hitler meant the end of the British Empire and the transformation of Britain into a slave state. To mobilize the public, Churchill called on Britons’ sense of national pride, encouraged them to fight to the end, and thus psychologically prepared them for a long war. Despite the fact that the Germans just defeated an allied army of 132 divisions on the continent with their own army of 130 divisions, the British people believed in Churchill’s grand strategy. Bungay notes, “It is probably no exaggeration to say that had any other man held that office in the ensuing months, history would have been very different.”²⁶ Thus, through his rhetoric, Churchill formulated and put into execution Britain’s successful grand strategy in World War II.²⁷

²² Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 11.

²³ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 18.

²⁴ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 12.

²⁵ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 9.

²⁶ Stephen Bungay. *The most dangerous enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain*, 9.

²⁷ This section limits analysis of Churchill’s rhetoric to British audiences only. Although, initially, Churchill’s primary audience was Britons as evidenced by his patriotic overtones, his

Whether it is Churchill's Britain, Putin's Russia, or any state leader seeking to formulate and execute grand strategy, rhetoric matters. Strategic ends, ways, and means are fluid and do not exist in a vacuum because the world is not a sphere of mutually agreed upon facts and values. Instead, the world exists as a subjective environment with humans heavily influenced by history and context. Political acts require an interpretive medium through which humans can glean meaning and significance. While power, interests, and the international structure still have great relevance in international relations, a politician's ability to shape the narrative has autonomous and causal impacts as well. The legitimation process of grand strategy is an excellent example of rhetoric's importance to international relations. By seeking legitimacy for their proposed strategy, politicians define and redefine national interests, threats, policy options, and mobilization goals. Through this iterative process, leaders form and execute grand strategy. Thus, the study of rhetoric and its implications for grand strategy is an important endeavor.



rhetoric influenced other audiences as well. In America, where much of the public was isolationist, Churchill began to stir debate about whether America should enter to war. In Germany, the Nazi leadership initially thought the British would join their side or at least remain neutral. Churchill's rhetoric signaled that the British would resist for the long haul.

Chapter 3

Who is Vladimir Putin

In fact, I have had a very simple life. Everything is an open book. I finished school and went to university. I graduated from university and went to the KGB. I finished the KGB and went back to university. After university, I went to work for Sobchak. From Sobchak, to Moscow and to the General Department. Then to the Presidential Administration. From there, to the FSB. Then I was appointed Prime Minister. Now I'm Acting President. That's it!

But surely there are more details?

Yes, there are...

Vladimir Putin to his biographer in 2000.

Before analyzing Russian President Vladimir Putin's speeches, it is useful to outline the formative experiences from his past that shaped his worldview and framed his interests. As a former *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (Committee for State Security or KGB) agent who rose from political obscurity, Putin's past can be difficult to research. However, there are commonalities between the many biographies that shed some light on his past.

Putin's Past—Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti

Putin was born in 1952 and grew up in a typical communal apartment in Leningrad.¹ At age 18, Putin began to study law at Leningrad State University. In 1975, at age 22, he joined the KGB.² While Putin's family was not part of the Soviet elite, both his father and grandfather were in the NKVD (the predecessor to the KGB). In fact, Putin's grandfather was a cook for both Lenin and Stalin.³ Putin's father served in an NKVD unit in World War II behind German lines. He was one of only four to survive after a group of ethnic Estonians revealed his unit's position to the Germans.⁴ While

¹ Masha Gessen. *The man without a face: the unlikely rise of Vladimir Putin*. Penguin, 2012, 43.

² Masha Gessen, *The man without a face: the unlikely rise of Vladimir Putin*, 61.

³ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*. Potomac Books, Inc., 2011, 6.

⁴ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 11. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. *First person: an astonishingly frank self-portrait by Russia's president*. Public Affairs, 2000, 6.

Putin traces his inspiration to join the KGB back to books and spy movies, his family history likely played a role in his decision as well.⁵

Putin's first assignment was in his hometown of Leningrad.⁶ Not much is known for certain of Putin's time in the KGB. By most accounts, he was an industrious, but ordinary officer. Oleg Kalugin, a KGB defector and Putin's boss in Leningrad, revealed that a majority of the agency's activity in the region consisted of monitoring foreign travelers and investigating rumors of anti-Soviet activity. During that time, he said, the Leningrad KGB "captured not one spy."⁷

From Leningrad, Putin moved to Dresden in East Germany in 1985. Once again, it appears as though he found his work unfulfilling. In her book *The Man Without a Face*, Russian-American journalist Masha Gessen, notes that Dresden was "another backwater assignment...a job for which he (Putin) had worked and waited for twenty years, and he would not even be undercover."⁸ There, Putin was "mainly reduced to collecting press clippings, thus contributing to the growing mountains of useless information produced by the KGB."⁹ While the job may not have been thrilling, Karen Dawisha, a Russia scholar, noted that in Dresden Putin became one of the few Russians who understood how Western businesses worked. This knowledge would prove valuable in his next job as deputy mayor of post-Soviet St. Petersburg.¹⁰

Putin was still an agent in East Germany when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. Soon afterward, an angry mob surrounded his KGB office in Dresden.¹¹ Allen Lynch, in his book *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, contends that this had a "traumatic effect on his subsequent political-psychological development."¹² Putin, as the senior ranking agent on location at the time, pleaded with the local Russian military headquarters for troops to protect the building that housed many KGB secrets. The

⁵ Masha Gessen, *The man without a face: the unlikely rise of Vladimir Putin*, 53. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. *First person: an astonishingly frank self-portrait by Russia's president*, 22.

⁶ Karen Dawisha. *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*. Simon and Schuster, 2015, 39

⁷ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 18.

⁸ Masha Gessen, *The man without a face: the unlikely rise of Vladimir Putin*, 63.

⁹ Masha Gessen, *The man without a face: the unlikely rise of Vladimir Putin*, 63.

¹⁰ Karen Dawisha. *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*, 58.

¹¹ Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Brookings Institution Press, 2015, 200.

¹² Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 25.

Soviet general refused, citing a lack of orders from Moscow.¹³ Putin later wrote that the events in Dresden that day made him realize, “that the Soviet Union was in a diseased condition, that of a fatal and incurable paralysis: the paralysis of power.”¹⁴ He was eventually able to dissuade the mob from storming the building through negotiations and threats, but the experience seems to have left its mark on him.

From 1990 to 1996, Putin worked in St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) as Mayor Anatoly Sobchak’s deputy.¹⁵ Here, Putin learned to balance the interests of multiple groups during a tumultuous and dangerous time. Such groups included Russian oligarchs, crime bosses, loyalists of then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin, free-market economists, communists, his former KGB colleagues and democrats. Stephen Kotkin, a Princeton historian who specializes on Russia, notes that “Putin discovered that Leningrad’s self-styled democrats could get almost nothing done and that he could embezzle money both to help address the city’s challenges and to enrich himself and his cronies.”¹⁶ Gessen cites one such dealing in 1992 where Putin signed a dozen contracts worth \$92 million to trade natural resources for food. The oil, timber, and metals were sent, but a majority of the food never arrived. Gessen called it “a kick-back scheme” where handpicked companies receive lucrative contracts but do not have to hold up their end of the bargain.¹⁷

With his connections and cash, Putin proved to be a highly effective, albeit corrupt, city official. He was able to secure numerous foreign investors, privatize land and real estate, and strengthen the banking system.¹⁸ Following Sobchak’s electoral loss in 1996, Putin’s growing reputation as an indispensable deputy secured him a low-level job in the Presidential administration.¹⁹ One year later, when Yeltsin brought Sobchak up on corruption charges, Putin secretly evacuated Sobchak to France.²⁰ This act of

¹³ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 23.

¹⁴ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 23.

¹⁵ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 30.

¹⁶ Stephen Kotkin. "Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin: Russia's Nightmare Dressed like a Daydream, The." *Foreign Aff.* 94 (2015): 141.

¹⁷ Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face*, 122.

¹⁸ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 32.

¹⁹ Allen Lynch. *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 47.

²⁰ Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face*, 140.

loyalty may have advanced Putin's political career more than anything else.²¹ Yeltsin later wrote in his memoirs, "When I learned that it was Putin who had transported Sobchak out of the country, I had a complex reaction for he was risking not just himself, but his position in my administration...knowing as I did the need to remove (then Prime Minister) Primakov, I was constantly agonizing, who will support me? Who will really stand behind me? And finally I realized that it was Putin who would."²² With his ailing health and his second term almost up, Yeltsin was very concerned about his successor. His greatest fear was that he and his family would be stripped of their wealth, held accountable for the chaotic 1990s, and he would spend his final days in jail.²³ On August 9, 1999 Yeltsin made Putin, a virtual unknown in Russian politics, his Prime Minister.²⁴

As essentially second-in-command, Putin took charge of what came to be called the Second Chechen War. Yeltsin granted him full war powers, and Putin publicly tied his reputation to the war. Shortly after the war began, bombs exploded in Russian apartment buildings, killing 305 civilians.²⁵ Chechen terrorists took responsibility, but there are some like Masha Gessen, Boris Berezovsky, a former Russian oligarch, and Marcel Van Herpen, the director of a Dutch think tank called The Cicero Foundation, who believe Putin and the FSB (the successor to the KGB) were behind the bombings.²⁶ In response to the alleged Chechen attacks, Putin increased the war effort, sent 150,000 Russian troops into Chechnya, banned journalists from the region, and mercilessly crushed the Chechen independence movement.²⁷ While it is unlikely that the public will ever truly find out who planted the bombs, three things are clear—the bombs boosted public support for the war, the Chechens were soundly defeated, and Putin's popularity skyrocketed.

In the meantime, on December 31, 1999, in a surprise decision, Boris Yeltsin resigned as Russian President and appointed Prime Minister Putin as acting President.

²¹ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 35.

²² Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 36.

²³ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 46.

²⁴ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 46.

²⁵ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 55.

²⁶ Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face*, 41; Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's wars: the rise of Russia's new imperialism*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 177.

²⁷ Robert Seely, *Russo-Chechen conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace*. No. 6. Psychology Press, 2001, 311.

Three months later after soundly winning the presidential election, with his first Presidential decree, Putin granted Yeltsin and his family complete immunity from future prosecution.²⁸ More than any other characteristic, it appears that Yeltsin selected Putin based on his loyalty to his superiors.

From Putin's past one can infer many things about the man that would lead Russia. Beginning at an early age, influenced by his father and grandfather's service to the country, Putin gained a deep sense of patriotism. His patriotism likely played a role in his decision to join the KGB. While in the KGB, Putin witnessed the breakdown of Soviet leadership because of what he believed to be a lack of a strong central figure and a "paralysis of power." Putin appears to have taken that lesson to heart and began consolidating power very early in his presidency. Beyond patriotism and power, Putin also appears to be very pragmatic. His ability to shift between multiple jobs and multiple administrations, yet always find a way to be successful, indicates a pragmatic individual that is willing to use whatever means necessary to get the job done. Finally, Putin's past indicates that he places a great deal of importance on loyalty. In fact, it was the trait that Yeltsin respected most about Putin and the trait that gained Putin the Presidency. One can deduce from Putin's tight circle of advisors that loyalty remains very important to him.

President Putin—Stability and Growth

One can gain insight about Putin's view of the Russian presidency by analyzing his role models. During many of his speeches, Putin refers to Petyr Stolypin as a Russian leader after whom he models his own Presidency. Stolypin was the Russian Prime Minister from 1906 to 1911 and implemented difficult economic reforms while simultaneously battling leftist revolutionaries. Stolypin's persecution of dissenters was ruthless. In fact, he had so many executed that the hangman's noose became known in Russia as 'Stolypin's necktie.'²⁹ Following Stolypin's model, Putin's primary domestic goals were social stability and economic growth. To accomplish these goals and avoid

²⁸ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 61.

²⁹ Angus Roxburgh. *The strongman: Vladimir Putin and the struggle for Russia*. IB Tauris, 2013, 309.

the Soviet paralysis that he observed in Dresden, Putin began to centralize power into what has become known as his ‘power vertical.’

Like Stolypin, Putin inherited a failing economy. Russia has collapsed three times—1610, 1917, and 1991.³⁰ Following the 1991 collapse, Russia suffered an economic depression twice as severe as the US Great Depression.³¹ Inflation reached 2,600%, credit virtually disappeared, and Russia’s GDP halved between 1989 and 1998.³² Moreover, the economy reverted to bartering as money ceased to be the primary medium of exchange, birth rates plummeted, and crime skyrocketed.³³ It was so bad that the United Nations labor office declared that “The Russian population suffered the worst peacetime setbacks of any industrialized nation in history.”³⁴ By 1999, a Russian male teenager had less of a chance to reach sixty years of age than his great-grandfather did in 1900.³⁵

Upon taking office, Putin was able to engineer an incredible economic turnaround.³⁶ From 1999 to 2013, Russia’s GDP grew from \$196 billion to \$2.1 trillion.³⁷ Thirty million Russians joined the middle class and could, for the first time, afford to travel abroad. Cellphone penetration went from zero to nearly 100 percent, unemployment dropped from 12.9 to 6.3 percent, and the poverty rate fell from 29 to 13 percent.³⁸ Wages rose, pensions were paid, and Russia’s stock market increased 20-fold.³⁹ In addition, Putin paid off all of Russia’s massive foreign debt.⁴⁰ While these accomplishments were significantly aided by rising oil and gas prices, Putin drove real economic advancement as well. He revitalized old Soviet industries, cut taxes, boosted domestic consumer demand, simplified business licensing, privatized land, and guarded

³⁰ Stefan Hedlund. *Russian path dependence: a people with a troubled history*. Routledge, 2005, 6.

³¹ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 40.

³² Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 40.

³³ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 42.

³⁴ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 40.

³⁵ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 42.

³⁶ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 46.

³⁷ Stephen Kotkin, “The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin,” 143.

³⁸ Stephen Kotkin, “The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin,” 143.

³⁹ Stephen Kotkin, “The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin,” 143.

⁴⁰ Stephen Kotkin, “The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin,” 143.

against inflation.⁴¹ Coupled with the success of the Chechen military campaign, Russia's economic growth drove Putin's popularity ratings through the roof, and his approval ratings remained between 68 and 87 from 2000 to 2008.⁴² Although Putin's approval ratings since 2008 have occasionally dropped, as they did during tough economic times in 2008 and 2009, Putin has generally remained popular. In fact, after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, his approval ratings jumped back up to 85%.⁴³

Supported by high oil and gas prices, Putin's high approval ratings allowed him to centralize control of Russia's major power hubs, specifically the media, state governments, the energy industry, and the Federal Assembly. For example, Putin put the Russian oil and gas industry under heavy state domination and had Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, head of Yukos oil at the time and Russia's richest man, arrested for fraud. He also rolled back democratic reforms across Russia. Prior to his presidency, Russia's 83 governors were directly elected. Now Putin nominates three candidates among whom the people can choose.⁴⁴ Kotkin notes that, as he did in St. Petersburg, Putin used authoritarian measures to become indispensable to all factions and interests.⁴⁵ By controlling the media, Putin has been able to craft his image as a corruption fighter, a defender of conservative Russian values, a patriot, and a strong leader who would not be pushed around by the West. With a growing economy and social stability, Putin's authoritarian measures did not trouble most Russians. Lynch notes that "Russians were not demanding liberal democracy, and Putin was not supplying it."⁴⁶

Putin's foreign policy has been shaped by a number of significant events. Although Putin was not in national politics during the 1990s, many Russians viewed NATO's enlargement into Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as an affront to their national security concerns. NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999 was even more alarming. Russia could only watch as NATO bypassed the UN Security Council to

⁴¹ Stephen Kotkin, "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 140.

⁴² Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 88.

⁴³ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*. Simon and Schuster, 2015, 479.

⁴⁴ "Putin signs law to allow him to pick Russian governors." Reuters, 2 April 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/02/us-russia-elections-idUSBRE9310GR20130402>

⁴⁵ Stephen Kotkin, "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 140.

⁴⁶ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 93.

conduct military operations against an ally. Yeltsin noted, “This is the first sign of what could happen when NATO comes right up to the Russian Federation’s borders...the flame of war could burst out across the whole of Europe.”⁴⁷ Lynch contends that because of Russia’s experiences in the 1990s, “Russia’s foreign policy elites began to embrace the premises of political realism: Russia was alone in the world, no one would help it, and no one would pity it if it failed.”⁴⁸

Soon after becoming President, Putin was chastised by the West for human rights violations in Chechnya. Putin argued that Russia’s internal affairs were none of the West’s business.⁴⁹ However, when the terrorist attacks of 9/11 occurred, Putin was the first foreign leader to offer assistance to the United States in what would come to be called “the war on terror” and supported US basing in Central Asia. Putin saw terrorism as a common threat that would gain him leeway in Chechnya and a greater say on future world issues. In November 2001, however, he felt his goodwill was betrayed when the US repudiated the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM).⁵⁰

Following the ABM repudiation, Putin became angry again when NATO announced plans to offer membership to the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.⁵¹ Moreover, although Ukraine, and Georgia were never on the same membership path as the Baltic states, the Bush administration publicly stated that the road to membership for Ukraine and Georgia remained open.⁵² Then on May 9, 2002, the United States representative to NATO, Nicholas Burns, said that the Caucasus and Central Asia were areas of official interest to NATO.⁵³ From Putin’s perspective, NATO was attempting to encircle Russia.

In 2008, relations between Russia and Georgia boiled over into military conflict. After years of political posturing between Putin and Georgian President Mikheil

⁴⁷ John Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin”, *Foreign Affairs*. 93 (2014): 77.

⁴⁸ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 45.

⁴⁹ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 95.

⁵⁰ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 104

⁵¹ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 104.

⁵² Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 104. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were admitted to NATO in 2004. Ukraine and Georgia were never on the same path as the Baltic States.

⁵³ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 104.

Saakashvili, Putin sent the Russian military into the breakaway Georgian enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In Putin's view, Saakashvili's embrace of NATO and the United States was unacceptable. Furthermore, Putin believed Saakashvili was a US puppet and talk of admitting Georgia into NATO was yet another American attempt to encircle Russia.⁵⁴ Similar to Georgia, Putin viewed Ukraine as off limits for NATO. During a NATO summit meeting in 2008, Putin told President Bush that, "The Ukraine is not a real country."⁵⁵ In Putin's view, Ukraine may technically be independent, but its foreign policy and a fair amount of its domestic policy must be coordinated with Moscow.⁵⁶

Putin's Worldview—Realist, Nationalist, and Statist

Putin's past shapes his worldview. Most broadly, Putin is a nationalist and a realist who emphasizes state sovereignty, national interests, and power. However, he does not see Russia as just an ordinary state. He places extraordinary emphasis on *derzhavnost*—the belief that Russia is destined always to be a great power.⁵⁷ *Derzhavnost* is the idea that due to its size, culture, history, and geopolitical position, Russia will always be a great power. E. Wayne Merry, a former American diplomat to Russia, describes the idea as, "The cult of the great state. In *derzhavnost*, the state and its greatness command all loyalties and resources, including the people, who are not truly citizens but servants of the state." From this viewpoint Putin tends to conduct relations with the world community on the basis of Realpolitik, where Russia is a great power, and self-interests are most important.⁵⁸

Like his broader worldview, Putin's domestic policies place great emphasis on the state. In their book *Mr. Putin*, Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy offer a unique framework for understanding Putin. They argue that he has six overlapping personas—statist, history man, survivalist, outsider, free marketeer, and case officer.⁵⁹ Dominant among

⁵⁴ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's wars: the rise of Russia's new imperialism*, 211.

⁵⁵ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 111.

⁵⁶ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 111.

⁵⁷ Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, 36.

⁵⁸ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 96.

⁵⁹ Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, 36.

these, they contend, is Putin the statist who believes that individual rights are secondary to what he describes as the ‘Russian Idea’ consisting of patriotism, collectivism, and solidarity.⁶⁰ From this perspective, Putin believes he is justified in cracking down on dissidents, controlling the media, nationalizing vital industries, and centralizing power because those measures support the Russian idea, which enhances the greatness of the state.

Putin’s Interests—A Strong State with a Strong Leader

By understanding Putin’s past and worldview, one can identify his key interests. Putin’s, central interest is consolidating political power in Russia. He understands that without power, his other interests become irrelevant. While this sounds cynical, it is a reality for most politicians. Only by consolidating power can they achieve their political objectives.

In Russia, however, unlike the US where a strong constitution, strong civic institutions, and democratic norms check Presidential power, Russia historically has had far fewer checks on executive power. Due to many factors, including borders with few natural defenses, Kotkin notes that Russian leaders perpetually seeks a strong state.⁶¹ Russians, he contends, feel that a strong state is the only guarantor of security.⁶² Paradoxically, the desire for a strong state inevitably leads to subverted institutions and personalized rule.⁶³ For example, Peter the Great, the original strong-state builder, suppressed individual initiative, fomented distrust among officials, and incentivized patron-client relationships.⁶⁴ Kotkin contends that this system also “characterized the reigns of successive Romanov autocrats and those of Lenin and, especially Stalin, and it has persisted to this day.”⁶⁵ Within this framework, Putin’s efforts to arbitrate among multiple interests, demand the loyalty of key figures, generate distrust among elites, nationalize key industries, control the media, and suppress popular dissent are rational

⁶⁰ Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, 36.

⁶¹ Stephen Kotkin. "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics." *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 3 (2016): 1," 4.

⁶² Stephen Kotkin, "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics," 4.

⁶³ Stephen Kotkin, "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics," 4.

⁶⁴ Stephen Kotkin, "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics," 4.

⁶⁵ Stephen Kotkin, "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics," 4.

and logical given Russia's historical tendencies. Putin, like past Russian leaders, believes that a strong leader atop a strong state is the only guarantor of stability at home and security abroad. Thus, consolidating power is Putin's primary interest.

Putin's second major interest is securing Russia's great power status in the world. As a great power, Putin believes that Russia is due a level of respect commensurate with its power and Russia should have influence in the former Soviet states. Given that many of the former Soviet states have traditional Russian linkages, both in heritage and ethnicity, Putin believes that they should remain within Russia's sphere of influence. Similarly, Putin believes that Russia's national security does not begin at its borders. Lynch notes that Putin has long wanted to "consolidate Russia's position as the center of its own geopolitical universe. That universe is centered on the lands of the former Soviet Union in central Eurasia, where he repeatedly deployed Russia's considerable array of assets—above all the energy card to underwrite a *Monrovsckaya Doktrina*, or Russian-style Monroe Doctrine."⁶⁶ Thus, Putin's desire to maintain influence in the former Soviet states is in line with his realist worldview that national security is of supreme importance. While it is unlikely that Putin thinks that the West will preemptively roll into Russia with tanks, he clearly thinks that the West seeks to encircle Russia and then overthrow his regime by instigating a revolution. By Putin's logic, if the Ukraine can succumb to Western influence, so can Russia.

Putin's final major interest is in weakening Western institutions, specifically NATO and the European Union. For Putin, US money represents the means, NATO and the EU represent the ways, and encirclement of Russia with eventual regime change represents the ends of American and Western grand strategy. *The Economist* notes, "The EU and NATO are Mr. Putin's ultimate targets. To him, Western institutions and values are more threatening than armies. He wants to halt their spread, corrode them from within and, at least on the West's fragile periphery, supplant them with his own model of governance. In that model, nation-states trump alliances, states are dominated by elites, and those elites can be bought."⁶⁷ Thus, Putin wants to remodel the global world order

⁶⁶ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 96.

⁶⁷ "Putin's War on the West." *The Economist*, 14 February 2015, 9-10.

based on powerful states' interests rather than an institutionalized, rules-based world order. After all, NATO and EU enlargement along with their rules-based culture present a direct threat to Putin's regime and his governance system. In Putin's system, power, money, and interests are inseparable and rules are flexible. For this reason, a rules-based world order presents a direct threat to his desired sphere of influence and his regime.



Chapter 4

Vladimir Putin's Rhetoric

Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic, and cultural existence. They determined the mentality of Russians and the policy of the government throughout the history of Russia and they cannot but do so at the present.

Vladimir Putin

This chapter analyzes three of Putin's major speeches in order to identify key elements of his grand strategy. Generally, Putin is a realist, a nationalist, and a statist. Putin's speeches indicate that his primary interests are consolidating power domestically, restoring Russian greatness, and weakening Western institutions like NATO and the EU. Putin's strategy to achieve these aims is multifaceted but relies heavily on information warfare and narrative dominance.¹ To consolidate power at home, Putin has for years been shifting Russia towards authoritarianism. To rekindle feelings of Russian greatness, Putin uses a unique mix of Russian nationalism, Slavic ethnicity, Orthodox Christianity, Soviet nostalgia, and Russian history to build a shared identity best described as Russian exceptionalism or *derzhavnost*. To maintain influence in the former Soviet states, Putin employs an array of asymmetric means including bribery, threats, and force under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians and ensuring regional stability. To weaken Western institutions, Putin foments and exploits political disagreements among and within Western states. By discrediting Western governments and institutions, Putin seeks to shift the world from an institutional, rules-based world order to a state-based world order where state interests are paramount.

It is important to note two limitations of analyzing Putin's rhetoric. First, this essay analyzes English translations of speeches in Russian. Thus, there will always be nuances that are lost in translation. The second limitation is that Russia's political system is not transparent. It is impossible to know exactly how the Russian government makes

¹ Information warfare and narrative dominance refer to not only traditional methods such as disinformation, forgeries, lies, and leaks, but also creating false realities that translate into political action. For example, a narrative can be used to not only describe one's version of what happened, but also can have a self-fulfilling effect. Perceptions can become reality if enough people believe them.

decisions. However, this chapter assumes that Putin is the central decision maker for major national decisions. Mark Galeotti, a Russian expert at New York University, notes that while Putin is not the only decider, he is the final decider for all major domestic and national security decisions.²

Putin's Millennium Address—Dec. 31, 1999

Putin's Millennium Address entitled, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," is his first major public address that offers insight into his grand strategy. When Yeltsin resigned in December 1999, Putin quickly began charting a path for what would become his domestic and foreign policy priorities. On December 31, 1999, with the Russian economy in turmoil and its foreign policy appearing hapless, Putin laid out his vision for the future. In his first address, Putin signaled that he did not want to recreate the Soviet economic model. However, he did not want Western-style capitalism either. Putin believed capitalism led to the economic and social chaos of the 1990s. In the most important section of his Millennium Address, however, Putin outlined a grand strategy based on a unique 'Russian idea.' This Russian idea contains three tenets: patriotism, statism, and social solidarity. Putin still talks about this Russian idea today and uses it as justification of many future actions. This essay analyzes the context and content of Putin's Millennium Address. Putin's entire address can be read in Appendix A.

Context

Context is critically important to understand Putin's address. Most importantly, when Putin delivered his Millennium Address, Russia's economy was in tatters. During the 1990s, Russia's economy contracted two times more severely than the US economy during the great depression.³ Adding to the economic misery, a few well-connected oligarchs became very rich as ordinary Russians suffered. Badly in need of cash, the government sold valuable state assets at huge discounts. In one such example, the

² Mark Galeotti. "Stolypin: How many Putins are there?" *BNE Intellinews*, 12 March 2015, www.bne.eu/content/story/stolypin-how-many-putins-russias-are-there.

³ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 40.

government sold Mikhail Khodorkovsky ownership rights in Russia's largest energy company, Yukos, for \$309 million dollars. In 2003, when Khodorkovsky was arrested for corruption, Yukos was valued at \$25 billion dollars, an 80:1 return on investment.⁴ Adding insult to injury, the money that the government earned from these fire sale deals often went towards short-term obligations like funding Yeltsin's 1996 reelection campaign.⁵ Unable to pay civil servants like police officers and judges, the system generated rampant corruption. Thus, in the domestic arena, perceived virtual anarchy was the context surrounding the beginning of Putin's presidency.

In addition to Russia's economic woes, Putin's address must be analyzed in the context of the upcoming Presidential election that Putin sought to win. Because Boris Yeltsin's primary concern was the safety and prosperity of his family after his presidency, he knew that he needed a loyal follower to succeed him. Because of the loyalty to Sobchak that Putin demonstrated following Sobchak's lost election in St. Petersburg and the loyalty Putin showed Yeltsin as Prime Minister, Yeltsin decided to step down early so that Putin could take advantage of quick elections.⁶ Lynch notes, "Yeltsin's resignation triggered a constitutional clause stipulating that, in the event of the president's resignation or death, new elections would be held in three months' time, which is by March 2000 instead of June. Yeltsin's move thus deprived the opposition of three months' campaigning time and presented an enormous tactical advantage for Putin, who could deploy all of the trappings of incumbency, including the formidable symbolism of chief of state, to his electoral advantage."⁷

Running against now-interim President Putin were weak politicians and a divided opposition. The most prominent candidate opposing Putin was Gennady Zyuganov of the Communist Party. He tried to paint Putin as a continuation of Yeltsin, but Lynch argues that such claims did not stick because Putin's "youth, vigor, competence, and decisiveness" impressed Russian voters.⁸ Moreover, because Putin was so successful leading the opening phases of the Second Chechen War, in contrast to Yeltsin's failure

⁴ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 41.

⁵ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 41.

⁶ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 60.

⁷ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 62.

⁸ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 63.

during the First Chechen War, many voters saw Putin as a strong leader who could rediscover Russian greatness. Opposite the Communist Party, the Liberals put forward Grigory Yavlinsky who tried to paint Putin as “a looming Russian Augusto Pinochet.”⁹ According to Lynch, however, this backfired because the Russian people wanted a strongman in charge, especially after the liberal economic policies of the 1990s failed so miserably.¹⁰ Thus, Putin’s Millennium Address should be analyzed not only based on its content, but on the context of the upcoming election. In order to defeat the communists and the liberals, Putin sought to carve a middle path between the two opponents, especially on economic policy. Putin’s middle path laid forward in his Millennium Address turned out to be very successful. He won the election with 52.9 percent of the vote compared to the Communist Party’s candidate, Zyuganov, at 29.2 percent and the Liberal Party’s candidate, Yavlinsky, at 5.8 percent.¹¹

Content

Amid economic and foreign policy chaos, acting President Putin unveiled his first major set of policy proposals in an address titled, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.” Putin’s statements revealed important insights about his worldview, national interests, and strategy. Perhaps surprising to some in the West, Putin rebuked Soviet-style communism as a failed Bolshevik experiment. Less surprisingly, Putin criticized Western economic models that he believes led to the economic and social chaos of the 1990s. In perhaps the most telling section of the address, Putin offered a grand strategy based on a ‘Russian idea.’ This Russian idea contained three tenets: patriotism, statism, and social solidarity. These tenets remain critical pillars of Putin’s grand strategy today.

Putin began his speech by acknowledging Russia’s severe economic decline in the 1990s. He notes, “Its [Russia’s] GDP nearly halved in the 1990s, and its GNP is ten times smaller than the USA and five times smaller than China.”¹² He continues, “It will take us approximately fifteen years and an annual growth of our GDP by 8 percent a year to reach the per capita GDP level of present-day Portugal or Spain.” Throughout the

⁹ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 64.

¹⁰ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 64.

¹¹ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 64.

¹² Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.”

speech, whenever Putin cites economic statistics, he always uses numbers relative to other countries, especially the United States. Putin implies that Russia belongs with the great powers of the world like China and the United States, but has fallen woefully behind geopolitical lightweights like Portugal and Spain.

For Putin, there are many causes for the economic decline. The two greatest causes, however, are Soviet communism and Western capitalism. Putin condemns past Soviet leaders and their economic philosophies. He notes, “The current dramatic economic and social situation in the country is the price we have to pay for the economy we inherited from the Soviet Union.”¹³ Putin continues,

For almost three-fourths of the outgoing century Russia lived under the sign of the implementation of the communist doctrine. It would be a mistake not to see and, even more so, to deny the unquestionable achievements of those times. But it would be an even bigger mistake not to realize the outrageous price our country and its people had to pay for the Bolshevik experiment. What is more, it would be a mistake not to understand its historic futility. Communism and the power of the Soviets did not make Russia a prosperous country with a dynamically developing society and free people. Communism vividly demonstrated its inaptitude for sound self-development, dooming our country to a steady lag behind economically advanced countries. It was a road to a blind alley, which is far away from the mainstream of civilization.¹⁴

Here one can see that Putin’s views on Russia’s greatness do not entirely extend to the Soviet Union. In his mind, the Soviet Union encompasses a mere 70 years of Russia’s thousand-year history. Although he is personally proud of his service to the state while a member of the KGB, he is not wedded to the economic model or communist ideology that underpinned the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Putin is a nationalist, a capitalist, and a religious man, all traits which fly in the face of Marxist ideals. So, while he is proud of Soviet world standing, scientific achievements, and military power, Putin

¹³ Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.” Putin was one of the few Soviets that had a first-person perspective of the economic differences between Russia and the West during the Cold War. Because he was stationed in East Germany, he saw the disparities in wealth, innovation, and dynamism between East and West Germany. Many of the Soviet people were shielded from such inconvenient realities.

¹⁴ Putin, *Russia at the Turn of the Millennium*, 5. It is important to note that when Putin made this statement, his primary rival for the presidency, Gennady Zyuganov, was from the Russian communist party. With the presidential election only three months away, Putin’s staunch repudiation of Soviet communism may have also been a political maneuver to discredit his opponent.

is not committed to his Soviet predecessor's communist ideology. This perspective was also apparent in 2005 when he said, "Those Russians who do not regret the downfall of the Soviet Union have no heart; those who want to bring it back have no brain."¹⁵ Thus, while Putin is proud of the Soviet geopolitical standing, scientific achievements, and military power, he does not seek a return to communism.

Although Putin rejects communism, he does not embrace Western capitalism either. Since he first became President in 2000, Putin's anti-Western rhetoric has steadily increased, but he has been consistent from the beginning that laissez-faire economic models are not suited for Russia. In his Millennium Address he notes, "The experience of the 90s vividly shows that our country's genuine renewal without any excessive costs cannot be assured by a mere experimentation in Russian conditions with abstract models and schemes taken from foreign text-books."¹⁶ Despite his misgivings about capitalism, Putin is a pragmatist and embraces some Western ideals. He notes, "We can pin hopes for a worthy future only if we prove capable of combining the universal principles of a market economy and democracy with Russian realities."¹⁷ Thus, in his economic policy, Putin does not embrace either Soviet-style communism or Western capitalism.

By denouncing Soviet communism as well as Western capitalism, Putin positioned himself as an economic centrist on the Russian political spectrum. For Russian grand strategy, this is important because Putin gave himself wide latitude to direct the Russian economy. For example, if Putin wanted economic growth or foreign investment, he could utilize some aspects of capitalism. If he wanted the state to reap profits directly from higher energy prices, Putin could involve the state more directly in the energy industry. Thus, a "market economy with Russian realities" does not enchain Putin to a specific economic model.¹⁸ Rather, Putin gave himself strategic flexibility to manage the Russian economy in whatever manner he deemed necessary.

Putin's extraordinary approval ratings during his Presidency allowed him to pursue the Russian idea he put forward in his Millennium Address. This Russian idea is very important for understanding Putin's grand strategic ends and ways. Putin has

¹⁵ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 1.

¹⁶ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium."

¹⁷ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium."

¹⁸ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium."

actually been very straightforward and consistent about his grand strategic ends. He wants Russia to be a great power. Putin noted that “Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic, and cultural existence. They determined the mentality of Russians and the policy of the government throughout the history of Russia and they cannot but do so at the present.”¹⁹ In this excerpt, Putin displayed his realist worldview by focusing on great power status. Moreover, Putin does not see Russia as an ordinary state vying for power in an anarchic system. Instead, he believes in a form of Russian exceptionalism, or *derzhavnost*, whereby Russia is unique and destined to be a great power.²⁰ Stephen Kotkin notes that *derzhavnost* is rooted in Russian history and deeply instilled in the Russian psyche. Kotkin writes that “Russians have always had an abiding sense of living in a providential country with a special mission—an attitude often traced to Byzantium, which Russia claims as an inheritance.”²¹ With great power status as Putin’s strategic end, patriotism, statism, and social solidarity are three tenets of the Russian idea that Putin uses to secure that end.

In his Millennium Address, Putin notes that patriotism, statism, and social solidarity are “traditional values of Russians.”²² These values are not especially intriguing by themselves. After all, many societies engender patriotism, turn to state solutions to problems, and encourage social solidarity. However, in Russia these concepts are intriguing because of what, by implication, they oppose. For Putin, patriotism stands in stark contrast to Western internationalism and cosmopolitanism. He notes patriotism, “is sometimes used ironically and even derogatively.” This is true in much of Europe where many view patriotism as an anachronistic idea.²³ Because it is often difficult to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism, many in the West are cautious of nationalist sentiments that contributed to past wars. However, as Hill and

¹⁹ Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.”

²⁰ Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, 36.

²¹ Stephen Kotkin, “Russia’s Perpetual Geopolitics,” 3.

²² Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.”

²³ The 2016 refugee crisis in Europe has begun to challenge some of these norms. More Europeans are turning back to a nationalist worldview as reflected by the reemergence of right wing political parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in recent elections.

Gaddy note, Putin is an expert in utilizing patriotic and nationalist sentiments to pursue domestic and foreign policy aims.²⁴

Statism is the second tenet of Putin's Russian idea. In his Millennium Address, Putin notes that Russia is different from states like the United States and Britain where liberal values have "deep historic traditions."²⁵ Instead, Putin notes, "A strong state is not an anomaly which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they [Russians] see the state as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change."²⁶ Here again, Putin widened his political operating space on economic and societal norms between Soviet-style communism and Western-style capitalism. He is carving out decision space concerning the size and power of state institutions. Contrary to Western ideas of free speech, free media, and governmental checks and balances, Putin believes Russia operates more effectively when the state is powerful and that power is centralized. As a former KGB agent, Putin has a keen understanding and appreciation for the power a state can wield. Particularly when it comes to information and media, Putin believes the state must protect the people from subversive influences that undermine Russian power. Thus, Putin believes that a powerful state is essential to a safe and prosperous Russia.

In a democracy, a state's legitimacy depends on the support of the people.²⁷ Therefore, to achieve a strong state, Putin needed the people's support. For this reason, social solidarity is Putin's third tenet of his Russian idea.²⁸ When Putin was elected, Russian society was deeply fractured. Liberals, Europhiles, nationalists, communists, former apparatchiks, oligarchs, and common people battled for control of Russia's future. Each group had conflicting values that Putin felt were tearing Russia apart. To unite the

²⁴ Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, 36.

²⁵ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium."

²⁶ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium."

²⁷ While there is debate whether modern Russia is a democracy, when Putin released his Millennium Address, Russia met most of the basic standards of democracy. There were free elections, free speech, free press, property rights, and some rule of law. Since Putin became President, he has pushed Russia towards a uniquely "Russian" form of democracy whereby the regime becomes more authoritarian, but values at least a veneer of popular legitimacy.

²⁸ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium." Putin uses social solidarity to contrast with everything from dissent to revolution. Because Putin fears popular overthrow more than any other threat, social solidarity is critically important to him.

country, Putin insisted that Russians put their individual interests aside and unite under what he deemed traditional Russian values. Putin notes, “It is a fact that striving for cooperative forms of activity has always prevailed over individualism. Paternalistic sentiments have struck deep roots in Russian society. The majority of Russian connect improvements in their own condition more with the aid and support of the state and society than with their own efforts, initiative, and flair for business.”²⁹ In the West, where individual rights are paramount, a political statement like this would meet significant resistance. In Russia, however, the idea of sacrificing individual rights for the betterment of the state has historical roots. Spanning hundreds of years, Russians have only known autocratic tsarist rule and Soviet communism. Individual liberties have never been a central pillar of Russian society. Thus, Putin’s call for social solidarity was a call for Russians to prioritize the state’s interests and his Russian idea ahead of individual interests. Based on the country’s history, it is not surprising that Putin’s subsequent authoritarian measures did not trouble most Russians. After all, Lynch noted, “Russians were not demanding liberal democracy, and Putin was not supplying it.”³⁰

So what can one take from Putin’s Millennium Address? On the surface, Putin was clearly trying to distinguish himself as a different leader than Boris Yeltsin, former Soviet communists, or Western capitalists. Especially on economic issues, Putin positioned himself as a Russian centrist, embracing some state driven economic ideals of the Soviets and some private business ideals of capitalists. Given the context of economic disaster in the 1980s and 1990s, the Russian people yearned for an alternative economic model. Putin satisfied those yearnings with his state directed capitalism.

More than the economy, however, the most significant portion of Putin’s Millennium Address was his notion of a Russian idea. By highlighting patriotism, statism, and social solidarity, Putin laid the groundwork for what would become his defining ideology and the justification for future actions such as defending “Russians” in Georgia and Crimea. Patriotism, and its first cousin nationalism, have been a central unifying theme for many of Putin’s speeches. By framing Russia as a victim of Western exploitation and positioning himself as Russia’s defender, Putin uses Russian patriotism

²⁹ Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.”

³⁰ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 93.

to unify Russians from diverse sections of society. Moreover, by framing himself as the ultimate Russian patriot, Putin can discredit those who oppose him as being unpatriotic. Furthermore, because many Russians share Putin's beliefs about the central role the Russian state should play in solving problems, Putin gained wide latitude to organize and empower a strong central government under his control. This has become known as Putin's 'power vertical.' To ensure his power vertical remains stable and powerful, Putin's tenet of social solidarity aims to incentivize conformity and comradery, while disincentivizing dissidence and dissent. Thus, for those paying attention, Putin's Russian idea, first posited in his 1999 Millennium Address, laid the groundwork for what would become central tenets of his grand strategy.

Putin's Munich Speech—Feb. 10, 2007

Putin's Millennium Address had both domestic and foreign policy implications. However, on the eve of an election, Putin's audience was largely domestic. Due to the economic turmoil of the 1990s, much of the speech dealt with domestic issues such as the economy, patriotism, statism, and social solidarity. At the time, foreign policy still mattered to ordinary Russians, but less so than domestic policy. Seven years later, Putin enjoyed wide support largely due to a prosperous economy fueled by high oil prices. With his political power at home secure, Putin was free to pursue his foreign policy goals. Although Putin's foreign policy rhetoric remained broadly consistent from the beginning of his presidency, the Munich Security Conference in 2007 represented a pivot point where Putin openly rejected the current world order and defiantly outlined his strategic aims.

At Munich, Putin displayed his realist foreign policy perspective. His primary interests remained consolidating power at home and regaining great power status abroad. To reclaim great power status, Putin sought to maintain influence in the former Soviet states and weaken Western institutions like NATO and the EU. By discrediting US-led institutions, Putin sought to shift the world from an institutional, rules-based order to an interests-based order where great powers' interests are paramount. Putin sees Russia as a critical balancer against what he describes as America's unipolar global domination.

This essay analyzes the context and content of Putin's Munich Speech. Putin's entire Munich Speech can be read in Appendix B.

Context

The context surrounding Putin's Munich speech is dizzyingly complex and spans centuries. At its base, Putin's approach to foreign policy is rooted in the idea of *derzhavnost* that he outlined in his Millennium Address. As a great power, Putin believes Russia is entitled to not only its own sphere of influence but also a large voice in matters of international importance.

Putin's Munich speech has both recent and deep historical roots. Hill and Gaddy contend that Russian history is central to Putin's persona and his agenda.³¹ He has a "firm conviction that his personal destiny is intertwined with that of the Russian state and its past."³² In recent times, Russia's foreign policy embarrassments angered Putin. In fact, a year before his Munich Speech, Putin started reading from notecards that he kept in his pocket and listing his complaints at meetings with Western officials. These cards became known as Putin's "grievance cards."³³ His grievances included more commonly heard complaints like NATO expansion and NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia. However, the cards also included Putin's frustrations with the West meddling in what Putin viewed were Russia's internal affairs. For example, in Chechnya, Putin argued that Chechen fighters were terrorists and Russia should have wide latitude to stop them.³⁴ Instead, the West criticized Putin for human rights violations. After 9/11, Putin attempted to cooperate with the United States on terrorism. He saw counterterrorism as a common interest that would gain him leeway in Chechnya and greater say on future world issues. In November 2001, however, he felt his goodwill was betrayed when the United States repudiated the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM).³⁵ The 2003 Iraq invasion is another of Putin's common complaints condemning the United States for taking action without full UN approval. Closer to Russia, in Stalin's home country of

³¹ Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, 63.

³² Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, 63.

³³ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 157.

³⁴ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 95.

³⁵ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 104

Georgia, Putin felt that the 2003 Rose Revolution was a Western-funded and orchestrated operation.³⁶

The 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine significantly influenced Putin's Munich Speech. After Russia's many previous foreign policy embarrassments, Ukraine was the last straw. For Putin and many Russians, Ukraine has special importance. Henry Kissinger noted, "To Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country. Russian history began in what was called Kievan-Rus. The Russian religion spread from there. Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before then. Some of the most important battles for Russian freedom, starting with the Battle of Poltava in 1709, were fought on Ukrainian soil. The Black Sea Fleet is based in Sevastopol, in Crimea. Even such famed dissidents as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky insisted that Ukraine was an integral part of Russian history."³⁷ In fact, Putin privately told George W. Bush in 2008, "You don't understand, George, Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territory is Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us."³⁸

While there were many contextual events that shaped Putin's 2007 Munich speech, Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution was the most important.³⁹ In the Ukrainian presidential elections of November 2004, Russian-backed Viktor Yanukovich defeated the Western-backed candidate Viktor Yushchenko. Amid massive protests and accusations of voter fraud, the Ukrainian Supreme Court directed that the election be re-run.⁴⁰ This time, Yushchenko defeated Yanukovich, 52 percent to 44 percent.⁴¹ Putin could only watch as a state with deep historic, cultural, and demographic ties to Russia turned westward. As in Georgia, Putin blamed the West for funding and organizing the

³⁶ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 126.

³⁷ Henry Kissinger. "To settle the Ukraine crisis, start at the end." *Washington Post*, 5 March 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9_story.html.

³⁸ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 128.

³⁹ The Orange Revolution is vastly complex. Too complex to explore in full during this essay. However, its importance to Putin cannot be understated. Putin believed (and still believes) that if the West can trigger regime change through a colored revolution in Ukraine, it can also do so in Russia. Moreover, Putin's inability to stop Yushchenko from gaining power in Ukraine exposed his weakness in a country he believed that Russia would control forever.

⁴⁰ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 142.

⁴¹ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 142.

political movement that elected Yushchenko over Yanukovych.⁴² A close Putin advisor, Sergey Markov, summarized the Kremlin's perspective of the Orange Revolution. He said, "The Orange never came to power as the result of free election. They came to power as the result of an anti-constitutional coup supported, of course, by the American administration and the Western observers. No matter how many American senators say that it was legal, it was anti-constitutional."⁴³ Markov went on to describe Yushchenko (the Western backed candidate) as being "completely controlled by his wife, and she belongs to a circle of radical Ukrainian nationalists connected with the Nazi movement."⁴⁴ Their goal, according to Markov, was to "create maximum conflict between Ukraine and Russia—even a small war." Angus Roxburgh, a BBC correspondent in Moscow, notes that "These are quite astonishing claims, but they are important for it is highly likely that Markov's apocalyptic view was shared by his masters in the Kremlin."⁴⁵

With Ukraine shifting towards the West, Putin abandoned notions of partnership with the United States and accelerated rearmament. The 2015 Chatham House Report on Russia notes that following the Orange Revolution, Putin convinced himself that the United States and its allies were bent on 'tearing' Ukraine, Georgia and other states away from Russia; he abandoned thoughts of partnership with the United States and NATO. Among Russians, he fueled the perception that the West was encircling Russia, and announced a program of rearmament in response. Russia reverted to the role of competitor and opponent to the West."⁴⁶ Like the Rose Revolution in Georgia, Putin believed that the West organized and funded the Orange Revolution to weaken Russia and bring regime change to Moscow. These events were monumental in shaping Putin's worldview leading up to his Munich speech.⁴⁷

⁴² Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 142.

⁴³ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 143.

⁴⁴ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 132.

⁴⁵ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 133.

⁴⁶ Keir Giles, Philip Hanson, Roderic Lyne, James Nixey, James Sherr, and Andrew Wood. *The Russian Challenge*. London: Chatham House, 2015, 8.

⁴⁷ After the Orange Revolution, other events continued the downward spiral of relations between Russia and the United States. These included in 2005 when Russia turned off the gas to Ukraine, further progress towards Georgia and Ukraine entry into NATO, skirmishes in South Ossetia, Anna Politkovskaya's murder, Alexander Litvinenko's murder, Ramzan Kadyrov's human rights violations in Chechnya, and Putin's continued crack downs on free media in Russia. While these

Content

At the Munich Security Conference of February 2007, attended by many heads of state, top defense ministers, and generals, Putin delivered what Roxburgh called, “the bluntest, most powerful speech of Putin’s career.”⁴⁸ In the speech, Putin framed the international order as being dominated by the United States, a reckless, hypocritical, and unipolar actor. Due to US actions, Putin warned that a new iron curtain descended upon Europe. Analyst Dmitry Trenin of the Moscow Carnegie Center, a think tank in Moscow, described Putin’s speech as “The start of a new phase in his [Putin’s] thinking. If phase one was rapprochement with Europe and the US, and phase two (following the Iraq War) was non-alignment, but reluctance to confront the West, then phase three, after Munich was one of coerced partnership.”⁴⁹ According to Trenin, Putin aimed to coerce the United States into partnership based on the understanding that the two states are equals.⁵⁰ Trenin later wrote, “The coerced partnership never took place, because in 2008 and 2009, Russia began moving towards increased isolation from its would-be partners.”⁵¹ During Putin’s speech, Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense, sat in the front row scribbling edits for his speech the following morning.

Putin began his Munich speech by outlining his perspective of the world order in 2007. He said,

What is a unipolar world? However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one center of authority, one center of force, one center of decision-making. It is a world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within.⁵²

In this section, Putin sought to drive a wedge between the United States and its allies by demeaning Europe when he suggested that they dominated by their US master. Putin

were all important events, the Orange Revolution was likely the most consequential in Putin’s mind.

⁴⁸ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 196.

⁴⁹ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 200.

⁵⁰ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 200.

⁵¹ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, 200.

⁵² Vladimir Putin, “Prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy.”

highlighted many Europeans' disagreement with the Iraq War as evidence that the United States operated unfettered in the international realm. Putin believes that he can slowly divide the West by playing on political disagreements on issues like Iraq and Middle Eastern migrants. In the long-term, Putin believes the West is susceptible to political fracturing.

Putin then turned to US advocacy of democracy to try to expose its hypocrisy. He said,

And this [unipolar world] certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority. Incidentally, Russia – we – are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves.⁵³

Putin concluded that by preaching democracy but supporting undemocratic regimes in Georgia and Ukraine, the United States was guilty of double speak. Moreover, because the United States did not gain UN approval for military engagement in Kosovo or Iraq, the United States ignored the world's opinion. Here Putin displays a common technique: using his opponent's language against them. Putin's authoritarian actions in Russia indicate that cares he little for democratic norms. However, because the United States preaches democracy, but, in Putin's mind, does not abide by democratic processes elsewhere, it is guilty of hypocrisy.

Later in the speech Putin identifies the United States as not only reckless, but power hungry and overly anxious to use force. He said,

Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result, we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.⁵⁴

One state, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations. Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this?⁵⁵

⁵³ Vladimir Putin, "Prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy."

⁵⁴ Vladimir Putin, "Prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy."

⁵⁵ Vladimir Putin, "Prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy."

In this section, Putin restates complaints lodged by America's European allies that the United States is too eager to use force to solve international problems. At this point, the war in Afghanistan had lasted six years and the war in Iraq four years. Neither conflict had an end in sight. Once again, Putin sought to drive a wedge between America and its European allies. Moreover, Putin cites US cultural and educational policies as an international grievance. Here Putin is playing on European right-wing political concerns that cosmopolitanism, women's rights, homosexual rights, and other US and European left-wing causes have become the norm. These concerns resonate especially well among European far right political groups and in Eastern Europe.

Putin criticized the United States for placing NATO and the EU alongside the UN as international decision-making bodies. He said,

I am convinced that the only mechanism that can make decisions about using military force as a last resort is the Charter of the United Nations. The use of force can only be considered legitimate if the decision is sanctioned by the UN. And we do not need to substitute NATO or the EU for the UN. When the UN will truly unite the forces of the international community and can really react to events in various countries, when we will leave behind this disdain for international law, then the situation will be able to change.⁵⁶

Think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended?

Here Putin paints NATO and the EU as international bodies that Russian adversaries use to feign legitimacy while negating Russia's veto authority in the UN Security Council. Once again, one of Putin's main foreign policy goals is to weaken NATO and the EU because united, the institutions are strong, but if states start to question institutions' legitimacy, then Putin can begin to influence these countries one by one. It is a divide and conquer strategy. Moreover, Putin described NATO as a military alliance as a threat to Russia's security. While many in the West dispute Putin's notions that NATO would

⁵⁶ Vladimir Putin, "Prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy."

ever act aggressively towards Russia, many in Russia believe that NATO wants to topple Putin's regime militarily.

By identifying NATO and the EU as threats to Russian security and sovereignty, Putin is "identifying threats" which Goddard and Krebs contend is one of the four constituent elements of grand strategy.⁵⁷ Although Putin has few ways to break up NATO or the EU in the short-term, over time, Putin believes he can undermine, divide, and eventually collapse these international institutions.

Near the end of Putin's speech, he spoke extensively about a nongovernmental organization (NGO) called the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Putin said,

People are trying to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries. And this task is also being accomplished by the OSCE's bureaucratic apparatus which is absolutely not connected with the state founders in any way. Decision-making procedures and the involvement of so-called non-governmental organizations are tailored for this task. These organizations are formally independent but they are purposefully financed and therefore under control.

According to the founding documents, in the humanitarian sphere the OSCE is designed to assist country members in observing international human rights norms at their request. This is an important task. We support this. But this does not mean interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and especially not imposing a regime that determines how these states should live and develop.

It is obvious that such interference does not promote the development of democratic states at all. On the contrary, it makes them dependent and, as a consequence, politically and economically unstable.

The subtext of Putin's criticism of the OSCE is undeniable. Putin believed that the OSCE was a strategic tool the United States used to trigger color revolutions such as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Putin's sarcasm is telling. He called the OSCE a "so-called nongovernmental organization" that is "a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries" in order to interfere in the internal affairs of others and impose an illegitimate regime.

⁵⁷ Stacy Goddard and Ronald Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," 5.

Stephen Lee Myers, a former *New York Times* Moscow bureau chief, wrote that as far back as 2003, Putin became convinced that America was using its soft power, especially NGOs, to undermine Russian interests.⁵⁸ In response, Putin ended the work of the Peace Corps, stripped the broadcast rights of Radio Free Europe, and ended the OSCE's mandate to observe fighting in Chechnya.⁵⁹ Myers notes, "Putin began to see American conspiracies to isolate or weaken Russia, aided by a fifth column within that was increasingly in his mind the greatest threat to the state he was creating."⁶⁰ Because Putin believed the OSCE was instrumental in the Orange Revolution, and could be used in other similar revolutions, he used his Munich speech to identify the OSCE as a serious threat to Russian interests. Moreover, a keen observer of Putin's rhetoric could have concluded back in 2007 that in the future, if Putin believed that Western NGOs aided another popular uprising in a state where Russia has strategic interests, he may respond harshly. Four years later, during Ukraine's Euromaidan, those conditions were the trigger for Putin's actions in Crimea.

Finally, in his Munich speech, Putin concludes that the United States has triggered a new Cold War. Like the last Cold War, this war could have grave consequences for Europe and the world. He said,

The stones and concrete blocks of the Berlin Wall have long been distributed as souvenirs. But we should not forget that the fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice – one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia – a choice in favor of democracy, freedom, openness and a sincere partnership with all the members of the big European family. And now they are trying to impose new dividing lines and walls on us. These walls may be virtual but they are nevertheless dividing, ones that cut through our continent. And is it possible that we will once again require many years and decades, as well as several generations of politicians, to dissemble and dismantle these new walls?

In conclusion, I would like to note the following. We very often – and personally, I very often – hear appeals by our partners, including our European partners, to the effect that Russia should play an increasingly active role in world affairs. In connection with this I would allow myself

⁵⁸ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*. Simon and Schuster, 2015, 240.

⁵⁹ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 240.

⁶⁰ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 240.

to make one small remark. It is hardly necessary to incite us to do so. Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today. At the same time, we are well aware of how the world has changed and we have a realistic sense of our own opportunities and potential. And of course we would like to interact with responsible and independent partners with whom we could work together in constructing a fair and democratic world order that would ensure security and prosperity not only for a select few, but for all.

To stop this new Cold War, Putin determines that the West need only consult with Russia and give Russia the respect he feels it is due. After all, according to Putin, Russia is a historic great power that will not be pushed around. Here Putin is reminding the world that Russia is still militarily powerful. And while he does not mention it in his Munich speech, Putin is fond of reminding his listeners that Russia remains a great power with nuclear weapons. If the world does not heed his warning, Russia will defend itself as necessary.

Putin's Munich speech marked a major turning point in US-Russian relations. By so bluntly admonishing the United States, the EU, and NATO, Putin laid down clear dividing lines. While Putin did not directly reference the revolutions in Georgia or Ukraine, these two revolutions were clearly in the subtext of Putin's remarks on democracy promotion and his remarks on the OSCE. After all, Putin believes two things that are fundamentally at odds with the West. One, that Russia has a special sphere of influence in the former Soviet States such as Georgia and Ukraine.⁶¹ And two, that Georgia and Ukraine's decisions to leave that sphere of influence were Western concoctions.

The next day, Robert Gates gave a speech at Munich where he attempted to lighten the atmosphere with humor. Gates said,

Many of you have backgrounds in diplomacy or politics. I have, like your second speaker yesterday, a starkly different background—a career in the spy business. And, I guess, old spies have a habit of blunt speaking. However, I have been to re-education camp, spending four and a half

⁶¹ Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 111. This assertion is based on Putin's comments to G.W. Bush that Ukraine is not a real country and Lynch's assessment on pg. 111 that Putin believed that Ukraine's foreign policy must be run through Moscow.

years as a university president and dealing with faculty. And as more than a few university presidents have learned in recent years, when it comes to faculty it is either 'be nice' or 'be gone.' The real world we inhabit is different and a more complex world than that of 20 or 30 years ago. We all face many common problems and challenges that must be addressed in partnership with other countries, including Russia. One Cold War was quite enough.⁶²

Gates sought to deescalate the situation caused by Putin's speech the previous day. Despite Gates's humor, the die had been cast and a new Cold War began to take shape.

Putin's Speech at the Valdai Conference, 24 October 2014

If Putin's speech at Munich uncovered the fundamental rifts between the United States and Russia, his speech at the 2014 Valdai Conference in Sochi, Russia openly exposed the differences for the world to see.⁶³ Amid international criticism for Russia's military action in Crimea seven months earlier, Putin responded defiantly to what he called the United States' "unilateral diktat."⁶⁴ Because of the conflict in Ukraine, many in the West paid close attention to Putin's remarks at Valdai. Those who had not listened to Putin recently were surprised by his blunt, anti-western comments. However, Putin's remarks at Valdai were consistent with his Munich speech, and contained some similarities to his Millennium Address in 1999. In his Millennium Address, for example, Putin rejected Western economic and social models, praised Russian patriotism, and outlined a unique Russian identity that was incongruent with the cosmopolitan, liberal identity that he asserts is prevalent in the West. Moreover, in Munich, Putin rejected the unipolar world order that he deemed did not account for Russian interests. Putin's Valdai speech advanced the Munich narrative further. Putin abandoned all possibilities of

⁶² Robert Gates. "Prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy."

⁶³ The Valdai Club is an annual conference started in 2004 where international experts from Russia and abroad meet to discuss Russian and global issues. Many, but not all of the contributors are from countries either neutral or sympathetic to Russia's interests. The Russian President typically gives the keynote address of the conference and the audience is both domestic and international.

⁶⁴ Vladimir Putin. "Prepared Remarks at the Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club" (speech, 24 October 2014).

cooperation with the United States and set the framework for a long-term global competition that in many ways resembles the Cold War.

While many in the West were surprised when Russia annexed Crimea, Putin's actions and his subsequent remarks at Valdai represent the culmination of a worldview and a grand strategy that he continually foreshadowed for 14 years. Since he became President, Putin's worldview has been that of a realist, nationalist, and statist. His primary interests remain consolidating power domestically, maintaining influence in the former Soviet states, and weakening Western institutions like NATO and the EU. To weaken Western institutions, Putin foments and exploits political disagreements between and within Western states. To justify his actions, Putin claims to be the sole defender of the Russian identity, which contains ethnic and ideological elements, and is under assault from Western ideas. Through this narrative, Putin seeks to shift the world from an institutional, rules-based order to a state-based order where great powers' interests are paramount. This portion of the paper analyzes the context and content of Putin's 2014 Valdai Speech. Putin's entire Valdai Speech can be read in Appendix C.

Context

As with Munich, the context surrounding Putin's 2014 Valdai speech is complex and layered. Putin remained critical of United States' interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, since 2007, authoritarian regimes had not fared well. The Arab Spring threatened many established regimes in the region and Western military action in Libya helped topple Muammar Gaddafi. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad, a traditional Russian ally, was also under threat. Moreover, the 2011 protests in Moscow and 2014 protests in Ukraine forced Putin to question the stability and longevity of his own regime. These developments, combined with falling oil prices, left Putin uneasy about his own hold on power. As with the context surrounding his Munich speech, Putin's assessment that the West desires regime change in Moscow significantly influences his rhetoric and strategic calculus.

In February 2014, Sochi hosted the winter Olympics. Leading up to the Olympics, Putin received a great deal of criticism from the West over new laws that

discriminated against homosexuals.⁶⁵ Two days before the opening ceremony, two hundred writers from thirty countries wrote an open letter criticizing Putin.⁶⁶ Regarding the letter, Stephen Lee Myers wrote, “Publicly, Putin feigned indifference to the criticism...but it was said to have infuriated him.”⁶⁷ In Putin’s mind, this was another example of the West sticking its head where it did not belong. Despite the initial criticisms, the Olympics went quite well and Putin was very excited that Russian athletes won the most medals. According to Myers, the Sochi Olympics represented Putin’s idealized world. Myers wrote that during the opening ceremonies, “He [Putin] had achieved his dream: Russia was at the global center of gravity, a rich, indispensable, united nation playing host to the world. Russia, in his mind had achieved the glory, the respect that the Soviet Union had when he was a boy, when Gagarin was in space, when the Red Army was formidable and feared.”⁶⁸

One day before the closing ceremony, however, Putin’s dream was interrupted by his nightmare in Ukraine. The Euromaidan protests in Kyiv ousted Viktor Yanukovych, the Russian-backed President.⁶⁹ During the Olympics, Putin anxiously monitored the Ukrainian protests, but when Yanukovych fled, the world turned its attention to Kyiv. Russia’s Olympic moment of glory was overshadowed by another former Soviet state choosing the West over Russia. Myers notes, “That a sixteen day sporting event had taken on such symbolic and ideological importance for Putin and for Russia only made the upheaval in Ukraine seem even more humiliating.”⁷⁰ Shortly after, Russia invaded and then annexed Crimea. Then, on July 17, 2014, a Russian-made surface-to-air missile (SAM) shot down Malaysian Flight 17, killing 283 passengers and 15 crew.⁷¹ Witnesses, including reporters from the Associated Press, reported seeing pro-Russian separatists move the SAM through nearby villages.⁷² Later reports traced the SAM to the 53rd Anti-

⁶⁵ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 452.

⁶⁶ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 452.

⁶⁷ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 452.

⁶⁸ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 452.

⁶⁹ Yanukovych was defeated in 2004 during the Orange Revolution. He was elected in 2010, but fled Ukraine on 23 Feb after violent protests spilled into the streets and his loyalists in parliament politically abandoned him.

⁷⁰ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 459.

⁷¹ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 472.

⁷² Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 472.

Aircraft Missile Brigade based in Kursk, Russia.⁷³ Due to these events, few state leaders, if any, held out hope for cooperation between the West and Russia.⁷⁴ From Putin's perspective, the West's criticism leading up to the Olympics, Euromaidan, and the falling oil prices were just three more examples of the West's cynical, calculated attacks against Russia. In his mind, Russia's views and interests would never be respected so, according to Myers, Putin "simply no longer cared how the West would respond."⁷⁵ This is the context surrounding Putin's remarks at Valdai in 2014.

Content

As in his Millennium Address and his Munich speech, the idea of Russian exceptionalism, or *derzhavnost*, is central to understanding Putin's comments at Valdai. Also similar to Munich, Putin identifies American recklessness in a unipolar world as the root cause of many of the world's problems. While Putin's remarks towards the United States at Munich were pointed, his comments at Valdai clearly reflect the disintegration of relations in 2014. For example, at Munich Putin referenced the United States only six times. At Valdai, Putin referenced the United States 36 times.

In this first excerpt, Putin displays another example of how US – Russia tensions have escalated. Putin believes that the United States did not win the Cold War. Instead, as Putin described at Munich, "The fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice – one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia."⁷⁶ In the chaos that followed, according to Putin, the United States took advantage of Russia during a vulnerable period.

Not only does Putin believe that the United States did not win the Cold War, the Russian people share his belief. Rather than viewing the fall of the Soviet Union as an indictment on the Soviet communist system and a failure of the Warsaw Pact, many Russians view the collapse of the Soviet empire as a cowardly surrender by Gorbachev.⁷⁷

⁷³ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 472.

⁷⁴ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 473.

⁷⁵ Steven Lee Myers. *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 474.

⁷⁶ Vladimir Putin, "Prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy."

⁷⁷ As noted earlier, Putin is more lucid in his assessments of the causes of the Soviet collapse. In fact, in his millennium address, he called it a failed Bolshevik experiment. However, many of the Russian people, as Bennett argues, have succumbed to a revisionist history where the Soviet

Kirk Bennett, a former US Foreign Service Officer who worked on post-Soviet issues, notes,

There is a residual sense of Central Europe as part of a Soviet-led bloc [among many Russians], with a still-imperfect understanding that most Central Europeans viewed the arrangement as less an alliance than a yoke. But quite apart from what Central Europeans might have felt, Russians justified their domination by the colossal sacrifices of the Soviet Union during World War II. To this day many Russians are incapable of grasping the dynamic that led to the peaceful withdrawal of Soviet/Russian forces from Central Europe in the early 1990s. What was in fact a candid recognition of the bankruptcy of the Warsaw Pact, they see instead as a traitorous surrender of forward positions without a shot fired. This withdrawal remains one of the most deeply held Russian grudges against Gorbachev and his Foreign Minister, Shevardnadze.⁷⁸

Thus, because there was no victor in the Cold War, Russia, as a great power, was still entitled to its own sphere of influence based on *derzhavnost*. Moreover, now that Russia was powerful again, it was time to exercise that power. Putin outlines the idea that the United States did not win the Cold War in his Valdai speech.

We need to carry out a rational reconstruction and adapt it to the new realities in the system of international relations. But the United States, having declared itself the winner of the Cold War, saw no need for this. Instead of establishing a new balance of power, essential for maintaining order and stability, they took steps that threw the system into sharp and deep imbalance.

The Cold War ended, but it did not end with the signing of a peace treaty with clear and transparent agreements on respecting existing rules or creating new rules and standards. This created the impression that the so-called ‘victors’ in the Cold War had decided to pressure events and reshape the world to suit their own needs and interests. If the existing system of international relations, international law and the checks and balances in place got in the way of these aims, this system was declared worthless, outdated, and in need of immediate demolition.⁷⁹

collapse was due to Gorbachev’s cowardice. Putin uses the Russian public’s revisionist history to stir public discontent with the West and maintain this idea of Russian exceptionalism.

⁷⁸ Kirk Bennett, “Condemned to Frustration,” *The American Interest* (1 Apr 2016): <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/04/01/condemned-to-frustration/>

⁷⁹ Vladimir Putin, “Prepared remarks at the 2014 Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.”

Here, Putin displays his revisionist account of history. Unlike World War II, where the victors won the war on the battlefield, the Cold War was never decided. Thus, unlike Yalta, where the victors rightfully determined the global world order, the United States had no right to reshape the world. Another central assertion of the speech is that America has exerted its power recklessly in the post-Cold War world. The result has been war, chaos, and insecurity for all involved.

Once again, Putin is attempting to divide the United States from its European allies by bringing up the failed interventions in the Middle East that were unpopular among many Europeans. Putin's goal is not necessarily to convince the world that a Russian-influenced world order is good, but rather that a US-led order is bad. This is a theme for many of Putin's recent remarks. He aims to cast doubt on long-term viability of the United States, NATO, and the EU. Ariel Cohen, a *Washington Post* writer, notes, "Putin stumped for a new 'multipolar' world order based on an 'equality of blocs.'" Against NATO and the European Union, Russia wants to deploy its own Eurasian Union and Collective Security Treaty Organization."⁸⁰

At Valdai, Putin continued his line of logic that a US-dominated world order has led to the rise of many bad actors.

Colleagues, this period of unipolar domination has convincingly demonstrated that having only one power center does not make global processes more manageable. On the contrary, this kind of unstable construction has shown its inability to fight the real threats such as regional conflicts, terrorism, drug trafficking, religious fanaticism, chauvinism, and new-Nazism.⁸¹

By identifying the "real threats" to global security as, "regional conflicts, terrorism, drug trafficking, religious fanaticism, chauvinism, and new-Nazism," Putin reveals his own insecurities about an internal movement overthrowing his regime as he claimed neo-Nazis did in Ukraine. Putin's number one interest is, and has always been, maintaining domestic power. With the Arab Spring, protests in Russia, and Euromaidan, Putin sees

⁸⁰ Ariel Cohen, "Putin's Valdai Folly," *Washington Times* (30 Oct 2014):

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/oct/30/cohen-putins-valdai-folly/?page=all>

⁸¹ Vladimir Putin, "Prepared remarks at the 2014 Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club."

civil unrest as the biggest threat to his regime. Cohen notes, “What does he [Putin] really want? First, security of his own regime, which the West deems lacking in legitimacy owing to severe irregularities in the Duma’s 2011 elections and the 2012 presidential election. To make matters worse, Mr. Putin’s circle has crafted a narrative that connects the democratic revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine with the Arab Spring. Many Russian officials, including the Russian president, think that the internet is a brainchild of the CIA, and that social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are being used to sow regime change.”⁸²

Once again, instead of being popular movements representing the democratic wishes of the people, Putin sees such uprisings against authoritarian regimes as Western concoctions. At Valdai he said,

Our colleagues tried to somehow manage these processes, use regional conflicts, and design ‘color revolutions’ to suit their interests, but the genie escaped the bottle. It looks like the controlled chaos theory fathers themselves do not know what to do with it...the same people are called fighters for democracy, and then Islamists; first, they write about revolutions and then call them riots and upheavals. The result is obvious: the further expansion of global chaos.⁸³

Here Putin displays a bias that Robert Jervis describes as a “perception of unity and planning.”⁸⁴ Jervis claims that often times world leaders see the behavior of others as more centralized, planned, and coordinated than it is.⁸⁵ Jervis notes, “They see not only plans, but sinister ones. Within society, this perspective characterizes the paranoid. But since threats and plots are common in international relations, the perception that others are Machiavellian cannot be easily labeled pathological.”⁸⁶ Clearly, Putin sees the West as a united, scheming entity under US domination, set on destroying Russia from the inside. In light of the popular uprisings in Georgia and Ukraine, and the protests in Russia, Putin’s paranoia was predictable and perhaps understandable.

⁸² Ariel Cohen, “Putin’s Valdai Folly,” *Washington Times*.

⁸³ Vladimir Putin, “Prepared remarks at the 2014 Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.”

⁸⁴ Robert Jervis. *Perception and misperception in international politics*. Princeton University Press, 2015, 320.

⁸⁵ Robert Jervis. *Perception and misperception in international politics*, 320.

⁸⁶ Robert Jervis. *Perception and misperception in international politics*, 320.

It is important to note that not only is Putin paranoid, but all the people who have come to rely on Putin's regime for money and stability are paranoid as well. Political scientist Karen Dawisha notes that many Russian elites fear a state collapse like in 1991.⁸⁷ Moreover, these elites have come to rely on Putin's regime, for money, order, and stability.⁸⁸ Myers notes that during the Russian protests of 2011, "All the bureaucrats and boyars who depended on Putin's system were increasingly haunted by the specter of the Orange Revolution, and now the Arab Spring, which had toppled strongman after strongman like dominoes. Suddenly the armies of subversion seemed to be everywhere. Mubarak was in jail, Gaddafi was dead, and Assad was besieged by an armed rebellion that fractured Syria along bloody fault lines. Putin would not be next."⁸⁹ If Putin were to fall, many among the Russian elite would be significantly hurt financially.

Putin's Valdai remarks highlight his rhetorical practice of sowing doubt in US world leadership, portraying Russia as a victim under siege, and characterizing popular uprisings as Western manipulations that present an existential threat to his regime. While there is a great deal of hypocrisy and false equivalencies in Putin's speeches, his ideas should not be summarily dismissed because he almost certainly believes the strategic narrative he has crafted. Angus Roxburgh, the former BBC Moscow correspondent, notes that Washington and Moscow routinely talk past each other, "each side failing to see the other's concerns, causing a spiral of mutual mistrust."⁹⁰ Putin's Valdai speech represents a high-water point for mutual distrust between Russia and the West.

Beginning with his Millennium Address, Putin outlined a unique Russian idea that is fundamentally at odds with Western notions of sovereignty, market capitalism, and democracy. Putin uses this Russian idea and the shared Russian identity of those who live outside Russia to justify his actions in places like Georgia and Ukraine. In Munich, Putin raised the stakes of the competition between Russia and the West. Perceiving that the United States was trying to weaken Russia by extending NATO and fomenting color revolutions, Putin lashed out against what he deemed a reckless hegemon. At Valdai,

⁸⁷ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*, 10.

⁸⁸ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*, 10.

⁸⁹ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, 394.

⁹⁰ Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman*, xiii.

Putin's paranoia about the security of his regime reached a fever pitch. The mass protests in Russia and the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine convinced Putin that the West was set on removing him from power. Valdai marks a definitive rhetorical point where Putin abandoned any hope for cooperation with the West and set the framework for a long-term global competition that in many ways resembles the Cold War.



Chapter 5

Implications for Russian Grand Strategy

Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.

Sun Tzu

Thus far, this essay contended that rhetoric matters, studied Putin's worldview, and then analyzed his rhetoric and the context surrounding his rhetoric. One central assertion of the essay is that Putin foreshadowed many of his subsequent actions during his speeches. Another important assertion of the essay is that leaders, including Putin, use rhetoric to formulate, legitimate, and adjust grand strategy. To that end, this chapter uses the findings of the previous chapters to offer ideas about Putin's grand strategy. The chapter uses the four constituent elements of grand strategy outlined in chapter two to frame the analysis.

Defining National Interests

The first constituent element of grand strategy is to identify the state's national interests. Putin's preeminent interest is consolidating and maintaining power. While this may appear cynical, it is common among many national leaders that their overarching desire is to maintain power. After all, Putin believes that he is best suited to lead Russia through these trying times. Moreover, Putin believes that Russia is unique in that the state works best when the central government is strong. In his Millennium Address he articulated this viewpoint when he wrote, "A strong state is not an anomaly which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they [Russians] see the state as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change."¹ In Putin's mind, he is the best leader to ensure Russian security from NATO and revolutionary threats. He also believes that he is the best leader to ensure social stability and economic growth in Russia. Thus, Putin foreshadowed his desire for a strong state, and, by extension, a strong leader during his Millennium Address back in 1999.

¹ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium."

As previously mentioned, Putin's desire for power may also have stemmed from his days in the KGB. The failure of the Soviet Union marked Putin deeply. In fact, Lynch notes that when the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet leadership did nothing, Putin realized, "that the Soviet Union was in a diseased condition, that of a fatal and incurable paralysis: the paralysis of power."² Thus, Putin clearly believes that Russia needs a strong, powerful figure to lead it, or else it could fall like the Soviet Union.

Putin's interest in maintaining personal power may have cultural roots as well. Throughout its history, Russia seems to prefer strongmen to lead it. Despite massive political overhauls, Russia has continually fallen into what Kotkin calls personal rule.³ Kotkin describes personal rule as having no enduring political parties that represent the people, a security state that is largely run by a single figure, an economy that is treated as a personal fiefdom, media that marches in lockstep with the leader, and no rival center of power.⁴ As Stanislav Belkovsky, a Russian political analyst observed at Valdai in 2014, "If there is no Putin, there is no Russia."⁵ Why then does Russia fall into personal rule? Stephen Hedlund, a Russian expert from Uppsala University in Sweden, contends that it stems from Russia's "deeply ingrained preference for informal rules."⁶ Hedlund claims that Russia's attempts to modernize have always led to anarchy. This anarchy then leads to the desire for powerful state control, which ends up with personal rule.⁷ Thus, Putin's central desire to maintain power may not be entirely of his doing, but a Russian condition for which he sees no way out. Regardless of whether this desire is the product of nature or nurture, Putin's number one interest is maintaining power.

Putin's second primary interest is securing and maintaining Russia's great power status. As evidenced by Putin's Millennium Address where he stated, "Russia was and will remain a great power," while all states desire some power, Russia's maintenance, quest for, and the inevitability of its great power status, or *derzhavnost*, appears to be a unique national interest. Kotkin notes that Russia has always had an infatuation with

² Allen Lynch, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 25.

³ Stephen Kotkin, "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 140.

⁴ Stephen Kotkin, "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 140.

⁵ Stephen Kotkin, "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 140.

⁶ Stephen Hedlund, quoted in: "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 149.

⁷ Stephen Hedlund, quoted in: "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 149.

how it is viewed by the broader world. He notes, “Russia’s quest for great-power status, and especially its perennial difficulties competing with stronger powers, has produced both the collapses and the trying aftermaths, during which an imperative to revive national greatness comes to the fore.”⁸ While it is true that many states have become fascinated with their status in the world, Pax Britannica and American exceptionalism for example, it seems that Russia’s *derzhavnost* has especially strong roots and continues today despite the geopolitical, economic, and demographic challenges Russia faces.

Putin’s desire to see Russia remain a great power has deep historical roots, but it is also rooted in recent times. After all Putin grew up during the height of the Soviet empire and worked for the KGB, one of its most powerful entities. *The Economist* contends that Putin would like to turn the clock back to the era of Yalta and Potsdam “when America, the Soviet Union, and Britain divided Europe into Soviet and Western spheres of influence.”⁹ *The Economist* claims that this is not only a central interest of Putin, but the Russian people as well. In fact, according to polls carried out during 2000 when Putin became president, the Russian people cared more about “restoring Russia to the position the Soviet Union had once held” than any other concern, including the economy that was still in dilapidated shape after the 1990s.¹⁰ Thus, channeling his own, as well as the people’s, desires to return Russia to greatness, Putin references Russia’s unique, destined place in the world in nearly all his speeches, including the Millennium Address, Munich, and Valdai.

Identifying Threats

Identifying threats is the second constituent element of grand strategy. As with national interests, when leaders speak about potential threats, they are not just reflecting their internally held beliefs; instead, there is also a self-reinforcing effect. For example, before Putin’s Munich speech in 2007, many people in the United States did not view Russia as a threat.¹¹ However, after Putin conjured images of the Cold War by claiming

⁸ Stephen Kotkin, “The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin,” 149.

⁹ “A strategy of spectacle.” *The Economist*, 19 March 2016, 22.

¹⁰ “A strategy of spectacle.” *The Economist*, 22.

¹¹ The best evidence that the United States did not view Russia as a serious threat prior to the Munich speech was the shocked and outraged tone of American political leaders and the media

that the United States was building virtual walls around Russia and that Russia would eventually dismantle these walls, it would be reckless for US leaders not to consider that Russia may pose a threat to national interests. Similarly, in Russia, Putin's speech likely swayed many Russians to deem the United States a threat. Because the regime largely controls the media channels that amplify Putin's messages, and Putin already garners a high-level of trust among the Russian people, his words carry enormous weight with the Russian people. Thus, rhetoric can have causal effects on identifying threats specifically, and grand strategy holistically.

Beyond the theoretical elements of rhetoric, Putin's speeches clearly identified and prioritized threats to Russian national interests. Because consolidating power is Putin's primary interest, it is not surprising that threats to this interest are a high priority. Having seen the Soviet, Georgian, Ukrainian, and many Middle Eastern regimes collapse from internal pressure, Putin's number one threat is a popular revolution. By highlighting social solidarity in his Millennium Address, Putin laid the groundwork for addressing internal turmoil as a national threat. Especially after the Rose and Orange revolutions, Putin used social solidarity as a justification for suppressing "Western-concocted" popular uprisings in Russia. In his Munich speech, Putin claimed that the international order established by the United States perpetuated internal conflicts, in part through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) like OSCE. At Valdai, Putin was more blunt. He claimed that the United States was a "brilliant artist" that could stop throwing together new color revolutions.¹²

In terms of viewing color revolutions as a national security threat, Putin's actions match his rhetoric. Following the Orange revolution in 2004, Putin banned NGOs which he believed fomented dissent. Michael McFaul, the former US ambassador to Russia and a current Stanford professor, notes that in 2007 at his annual address to the Federation Assembly, Putin warned of Western plots to undermine Russian sovereignty. Putin said, "There is a growing influx of foreign cash used directly to meddle in our domestic

following the speech. For example, see the *New York Times* article by Thom Shanker and Mark Landler titled "Putin says U.S. is undermining global security" where White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said, "We are surprised and disappointed with President Putin's comments."

¹² Vladimir Putin, "Prepared remarks at the 2014 Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club."

affairs...not everyone likes the stable, gradual rise of our country.”¹³ McFaul also notes that Putin took over television stations and newspapers to, in part, protect against dangerous dissenting opinions. In Putin’s mind, if it can happen in Ukraine and Georgia, it can happen in Russia.

In addition to popular revolutions, the West (the United States, EU, and NATO) is Putin’s other primary threat. Because Putin believes that the West causes, or at least contributes to, popular revolutions, there is overlap between these two threats. Putin identified NATO as a threat very early in his Presidency. In fact, before Putin became president, NATO bombed Serbia to stop the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. Because Serbia is a traditional Russian ally, are fellow Slavs, and NATO went forward without UN approval, Russian leaders were incensed. In fact, then-Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov was so angry that he turned his plane around over the Atlantic Ocean from Washington DC back to Moscow.¹⁴ James Sherr, a Russian expert at Chatham House, argues that from Russia’s perspective, intervention in Kosovo proved that NATO was not a “strictly defensive alliance.”¹⁵ He contends that the commonly held belief in Russia was “today they are bombing Yugoslavia but aiming at Russia.”¹⁶ Further, NATO expansion cemented in Putin’s mind that NATO is not just a defensive alliance but an offensive weapon aimed at Russia. Thus, Putin’s explicitly-stated opposition to NATO expansion during his many speeches should have been a warning of Russia’s possible military response to talk of NATO membership for countries like Georgia and Ukraine.

Putin also used Kosovo and the UN’s right to protect doctrine to justify military actions such as Crimea. At Valdai, concerning Crimea, Putin said that Ukrainian nationalists and neo-Nazis threatened the lives of Crimeans so Russia had to step in and help.¹⁷ Moreover, Putin asserts, “This legitimate body of authority [in Crimea] declared

¹³ Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss. "The Myth of the Authoritarian Model-How Putin's Crackdown Holds Russia Back." *Foreign Affairs*. 87 (2008): 68.

¹⁴ Robert H. Gregory. *Clean Bombs and Dirty Wars: Air Power in Kosovo and Libya*. U of Nebraska Press, 2015., 77.

¹⁵ James Sherr, “The New East West Discord: Russian Objectives, Western Interests.” *Netherlands Institute of International Relations* (December 2015), 52.

¹⁶ James Sherr, “The New East West Discord: Russian Objectives, Western Interests,” 52.

¹⁷ Vladimir Putin, “Prepared remarks at the 2014 Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.”

a referendum, and then based on its results, they adopted a declaration of independence, just as Kosovo did, and turned to the Russian Federation with a request to accept Crimea into the Russian state.”¹⁸ While Putin ignores the fact that Kosovo did not become part of the United States or any NATO state, nearly twenty years later his animosity towards NATO intervention in the former Soviet sphere is apparent. Thus, Putin’s primary threats, as articulated in his speeches, are popular revolutions and the West. In the West, the United States, NATO, and the EU are especially dangerous to Putin.

Feasible Ways to Address Threats

The third constituent element of grand strategy is to identify possible remedies to address the perceived threats. In other words, the third element is the ways that a state connects ends with means. Putin’s strategy to address the aforementioned threats is multifaceted. To guard against uprisings at home, Putin has become increasingly more autocratic. To maintain influence in the former Soviet states, Putin employs an array of asymmetric means, including violence under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians and ensuring stability. To weaken Western institutions, Putin foments and exploits political disagreements between and within Western states. Common among all these strategies is Putin’s use of information warfare. Putin realizes that Russia’s economic and conventional might is no match for the West, so he has utilized information warfare to even the playing field. Through his speeches and state-controlled television networks, Putin manipulates information to shape his own reality.¹⁹ While one could say that all politicians have selection biases in the information they choose to highlight, Putin’s regime has taken the practice to a new level, where the difference between fact and fiction are irrelevant. It is important to note that information warfare is not the only way Putin addresses threats, it is a part of a multifaceted approach that leverages conventional and unconventional means. However, this section focuses on Russia’s unique use of information warfare in support of its grand strategy.

¹⁸ Vladimir Putin, “Prepared remarks at the 2014 Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.”

Information warfare is a critical tool that Putin uses to weaken adversaries like NATO. In fact, at a summit in 2014, NATO's top commander, General Philip Breedlove, said, "Russia is waging the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen."²⁰ Peter Pomerantsev, a senior fellow at the Legatum Institute in London, takes General Breedlove's assertion a set further. He claims that Putin's information warfare campaign is unlike anything we have ever seen. Pomerantsev notes, "The new Russia doesn't just deal in the petty disinformation, forgeries, lies, leaks, and cyber-sabotage...it reinvents reality, creating mass hallucinations that then translate into political action."²¹ For example, when Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 went down over eastern Ukraine, Russian reports characterized the crash as everything from Ukrainian fighter jets to Americans attempting to shoot down Putin's plane.²² The goal, according to Pomerantsev, is not to convince viewers of a single version of events, but rather leave people "confused, paranoid and passive—living in a virtual reality that can no longer be mediated or debated by any appeal to truth."²³ Because Russian television is now broadcast heavily in Eastern Europe and the Kremlin-financed network, RT, is global, Putin's information warfare has regional, if not global reach.

In addition to casting doubt on Western narratives, Putin advances his own narratives in the hope that they will become self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, in Ukraine, Putin could easily annex the contested regions in the east by using military power, but he is not interested in governing and paying for the regions that would likely prove unruly under Russia. Instead, Putin wants to ensure the Ukrainian government looks weak. So, Putin advances the narrative that Ukraine is a failed state, he then maintains a sufficient level of military pressure and funds just enough rebel activity to

²⁰ Peter Pomerantsev. "Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin is Revolutionizing Information Warfare." *The Atlantic* (9 Sep 2014), 2.

²¹ Peter Pomerantsev. "Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin is Revolutionizing Information Warfare," 5.

²² Peter Pomerantsev. "Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin is Revolutionizing Information Warfare," 5.

²³ Peter Pomerantsev. "Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin is Revolutionizing Information Warfare," 4.

keep the conflict going, thus “verifying” his initial narrative that Ukraine is a failed state.²⁴

Putin uses these advanced narratives for defense as well. For example, Putin realizes that his rule and the rule of authoritarian regimes around the world are always in danger of falling to popular protests. So rather than wait for the popular protests to happen and then address the issue, Putin prophesizes that the West will devise popular uprisings in places like Russia and Ukraine. Then, when the predictable protests occur after people become tired of authoritarian rule, Putin can say, ‘see I told you so’ and blame the West. The fulfillment of these narratives can make Putin seem prophetic in some people’s eyes. Moreover, Putin can then demonize the protestors by calling them ultra-nationalists, neo-Nazis, or puppets of the West.

Putin also uses information warfare to turn foreign policy into entertainment, particularly since Russia’s economy has fallen in recent years. *The Economist* calls Putin’s new information strategy, “A strategy of spectacle.”²⁵ Using the state run media outlets, “Putin has made Russian foreign policy must see TV.”²⁶ To distract Russians from the economic hardships due to dropping oil prices and Western sanctions, Putin creates foreign policy adventures, like Syria, and then turns them into reality television. The article notes, “Russian television does not simply cover wars that are driven by foreign policy. It takes foreign adventures as raw material from which to generate events that stoke domestic passions and reinforce the government narrative.”²⁷ Pomerantsev agrees. In *The Atlantic*, he wrote, “The point of this new propaganda is not to persuade anyone, but to keep the viewer hooked and distracted—to disrupt Western narratives rather than provide a counter narrative.”²⁸ Thus, foreign policy adventures have become not only the ways that Putin pursues his ends, but the televised drama of soldiers defending Russia from its enemies and returning home victoriously has become an end

²⁴ Peter Pomerantsev. "Brave New War: A new form of conflict emerged in 2015—from the Islamic State to the South China Sea," *The Atlantic*, (29 Dec 2015), 4.

²⁵ “A strategy of spectacle.” *The Economist*, 21.

²⁶ “A strategy of spectacle.” *The Economist*, 21.

²⁷ “A strategy of spectacle.” *The Economist*, 23.

²⁸ Peter Pomerantsev. "Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin is Revolutionizing Information Warfare," 5.

itself. This spectacle allows Putin to secure his number one interest, maintaining power despite a poor and declining economy.

On the surface, Putin's use of information operations, false narratives, and a strategy of spectacle may seem to contradict one of the paper's central ideas: that Putin foreshadows his strategy through his rhetoric. Although Putin's rhetoric should be analyzed with some skepticism, the two ideas are not contradictory. After all, identifying ways to address threats is just one of the four constituent elements of grand strategy. Putin clearly uses rhetoric to perform the other three elements of grand strategy: define national interests, identify threats, and mobilize publics. Moreover, Russian information operations are just one of many ways that Putin addresses threats. Just as the scholars in the United States identify the pillars of national power as diplomatic, informational, military, and economic, Putin also uses all levers of Russian power. Furthermore, within the information realm, Putin's rhetoric is just one part of Russian information operations. Often times, instead of risking his own credibility in perpetuating a false narrative, Putin uses the Russian media to make outlandish claims while he appears to stay above the fray. Thus, Putin's rhetoric should always be analyzed in context. The fact that Russia uses information operations does not undermine the value of analyzing Putin's rhetoric and its implications for Russian grand strategy.

Mobilize Publics and Resources

The fourth constituent element of grand strategy is to mobilize publics and resources. Although this is the fourth element, it is important to note that the process of forming and implementing grand strategy is iterative. So interests are constantly updated, threats are added and removed, and ways to address the threats constantly evolve. For Putin, mobilizing the public is especially important because it reinforces the first three elements. Because Putin has retained such high popularity ratings throughout his presidency, he has been able to marginalize anyone that might threaten his hold on power. As Kotkin noted in Russia, "there is no rival center of power."²⁹ The centralization of power then allows Putin to prioritize threats that he deems are important without internal pushback. After prioritizing the threats that are important to him, Putin

²⁹ Stephen Kotkin, "The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin," 140.

has wide latitude on the ways to address those threats. And finally, as long as he can mobilize and retain the support of the public, the cycle become self-reinforcing with Putin consolidating more and more power. The obvious drawback to this dynamic is that Putin's circle of trusted advisors has dwindled, but that discussion is outside the scope of this essay. Regardless, mobilizing publics is a very important element of Russian grand strategy.

Putin uses rhetoric to mobilize the Russian public in two primary ways. One, he paints Russia as a victim surrounded by enemies seeking its demise. Two, Putin asserts that Russia was, is, and will remain a great power. This can be a difficult balancing act because Putin simultaneously has to convince people that Russia is a strong, great power, but also that Russia is surrounded by enemies who threaten its very existence. However, this is not new for Russia. Stalin too choose to walk this contradictory rhetorical tightrope. *The Economist* notes that in Putin's narrative, "Russia must be seen as both unconstrained and beleaguered—a duality that harks back to the years of Stalinism, which saw the Soviet Union both as a beacon leading the world into an inevitable communist future and as a fortress besieged by enemies and shot through with spies."³⁰ Although it is difficult, Putin has mastered the rhetorical art of balancing Russian greatness with victimhood in order to mobilize people to his side.

As Richard Nixon once said, "People react to fear, not love; they don't teach that in Sunday school, but it's true."³¹ Putin understands that fear is a great motivator and he uses rhetoric to instill fear in his audiences. To those he views as threats, Putin is fond of reminding them that Russian maintains a large nuclear arsenal. Putin uses these 'reminders' to deter Western adversaries from acting against his interests. A 2015 Chatham House Report notes,

Alarming messaging comes in the form of new emphasis on the potential for use of nuclear weapons in statements by President Putin and other officials. In addition to the distinctive role strategic nuclear weapons play in Russian national identity, use of both strategic and tactical nuclear weapons is now presented within Russia as a realistic possibility and even something to be embraced. This gives rise to a dangerous mismatch of the unthinkable. Soviet offensive plans for Europe included early use of tactical nuclear weapons, and they still play a significant – but not publicly

³⁰ "A strategy of spectacle." *The Economist*, 23.

³¹ Richard Nixon, Quoted in: *William Safire, Before the Fall, Prologue*, (1975).

acknowledged – role in Russian doctrine. The experience of Crimea shows that just because something is unimaginable for Western planners does not mean it is not considered a viable option by Russia.³²

With the second largest nuclear arsenal in the world and a demonstrated willingness to break taboos, Putin's nuclear threats cannot be taken lightly.

In addition to fear, Putin uses the Russian idea that he laid out in his Millennium Address to mobilize the public. In 1999, Putin proposed, “patriotism, statism, and social solidarity” are “traditional values of Russians” that together form the Russian idea.³³ Putin articulated the Russian idea in 1999 and it has remained a central mobilizing message for his entire political career. Of course, the Russian idea has gone through some permutations since 1999. Putin now uses Russian idea and Russian identity interchangeably. For example, at the 2013 Valdai forum, Putin claimed that the Russian national idea stems from a Russian national identity.³⁴ From there, Putin frames people who shares the Russian identity as fellow compatriots even if they no longer live inside Russian borders. Marlene Laruelle, a professor at George Washington University, notes “Only one nationalist storyline has gone from being marginal in the early 1990s to becoming part of the state policy in the 2000s, namely that of compatriots, under the argument of Russia as a divided nation.”³⁵ Because patriotism is central theme of the Russian idea and because Putin constantly cites patriotism as an essential element of a strong nation, over the years, Russians have become supportive of acting in the interest of Russians abroad. Thus, when Putin decided to annex Crimea, his staff did not need to generate a new narrative or justify the military action to the Russian people. Putin had already spent 14 years mobilizing the public in support of a unique Russian identity. All he had to do was give the thumbs up for the military operation.

³² Giles, Keir, Philip Hanson, Roderic Lyne, James Nixey, James Sherr, and Andrew Wood. *The Russian Challenge*, 43.

³³ Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.”

³⁴ Vladimir Putin. “Prepared Remarks at the Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club” (speech, 19 Sep 2013.)

³⁵ Marlene Laruelle. “Russia as a “Divided Nation,” from Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy.” *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no. 2 (2015): 88.

This chapter explored Putin's grand strategy by breaking down its four constituent element. Putin's central interests are maintaining power domestically and achieving great power status internationally. The primary threats to these aims are popular revolutions and the West, especially the United States, the EU, and NATO. Putin uses many tools to connect means with ends, but he has become particularly adept at using information warfare to mitigate these threats. Finally, Putin uses a perception of national victimization and a Russian idea to mobilize publics in support of his cause.



Chapter 6

Conclusion

In 1999, when Putin delivered his Millennium Address, Russia was in social and economic ruin. A civil war raged in Chechnya and Russia had a gross domestic product of \$195 billion, twenty billion less than Austria.¹ Its per capita GDP had dropped below Guatemala, Bulgaria, and Morocco.² Since then, Russia has undergone great changes. With Putin at the helm, Russia has experienced an unprecedented economic revival and transitioned from a near third-world state to a resurgent great power. Internally, Russia has transitioned from an imperfect democracy to a quasi-authoritarian state. Externally, Russia has become more belligerent, culminating with its invasion and annexation of Crimea. During this transition, world leaders, analysts, and scholars desired to know what Putin wanted. This paper contends that if people hope to know what Putin wants, they should start by listening to what he says. Through his rhetoric, Putin reveals key aspects of his grand strategy.

The essay began with the contention that rhetoric matters. Based on studies conducted by Ronald Krebs, Stacie Goddard, and others, the essay showed how rhetoric is an important tool by which leaders formulate, legitimate, and adjust grand strategy. Just as Winston Churchill's rhetoric leading up to World War II influenced British grand strategy, so too does Vladimir Putin's rhetoric shape and legitimate Russia's grand strategy.

The essay then analyzed Vladimir Putin's past, his worldview, and his interests because, after all, people are products of their environment. It is impossible to understand Vladimir Putin the speaker without first understanding Putin the individual. At his core, Putin is a nationalist, a statist, a realist, and a pragmatist. By understanding Putin's past influences and biases, one can then better analyze his rhetoric.

¹ The World Bank, World Development Indicators, World Bank Publications.
http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_1999+wbapi_data_value&sort=desc&page=3

² The World Bank, World Development Indicators, World Bank Publications.
http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_1999+wbapi_data_value&sort=desc&page=3

The essay studied three of Putin's major landmark speeches -- his 1999 Millennium Address, his 2007 Munich speech, and his 2014 Valdai speech -- to glean insight into his grand strategy. Through his speeches, it is clear that Putin places a significant importance on Russia's great power status, or *derzhavnost*. Along with its great power, he believes Russia is entitled to unique privileges in the international system such as a regional sphere of influence. Through his rhetoric, it is also clear that Putin views the West as a threat. In Putin's mind, the West threatens Russia in two primary ways. One is through the institutional expansion and the rules-based world order that accompanies organizations like the EU and NATO. Secondly, Putin believes that the West actively encourages, funds, and coordinates popular revolutions in Russia and in its sphere of influence in order to weaken Russia.

To counter these moves rhetorically, Putin frames the United States as a reckless, unipolar master that must be constrained. He paints Russia as a victim of America's universal diktat. At the same time, Putin uses rhetoric and propaganda to push the Russian idea which contains elements of nationalism, shared Russian identity, and conservative cultural values. Using propaganda and rhetoric, Putin seeks to provide disinformation and cast doubt on prevailing Western narratives.

Putin's grand strategy is multi-faceted. His primary interests are maintaining power domestically and reinvigorating Russia's great power status abroad. Putin deems the West to be the primary threat to these interests. Through its international institutions like NATO and the EU, Putin believes the West seeks to encircle his country and undermine Russian power. Moreover, through its NGOs, Putin believes that the West wants to orchestrate a popular uprising in Russia similar to the uprisings in former Soviet states like Ukraine and Georgia. He uses many tools to address these threats, but he has become particularly adept at using information warfare to spread disinformation and counter Western narratives. Moreover, Putin seeks to exploit political differences between Western countries in order to weaken and eventually dissolve their alliances. Finally, Putin uses Russian exceptionalism and victimization to mobilize publics in support of his aims.

Appendix A

Vladimir Putin's Millennium Address

Posted on the Russian Federation Government website on 31 December 1999

Humankind is witnessing two major events: the new Millennium and the 2000th anniversary of Christianity. I think that the general interest and attention paid to these two events is more profound than the usual celebration of red-letter dates.

New Possibilities, New Problems

It may be a coincidence - but then again, it may not be - that the beginning of the new Millennium coincides with the dramatic turn in world developments in the past 20-30 years. I mean the deep and rapid changes in humankind's whole way of life related to the formation of what we call the post-industrial society. Here are its main features:

- Changes in the economic structure of society, with the diminishing importance of material production and the growing importance of secondary and tertiary sectors.
- Consistent renewal and quick introduction of novel technologies and the growing output of science-intensive production.
- Landslide developments in information science and telecommunications.
- Priority attention to management and the improvement systems of organization and guidance in all spheres of human endeavor.
- And lastly, human leadership. It is the individual and his or her high standards of education, professional training, business and social activity that are becoming the guiding force of progress today.

A new type of society develops slowly enough for careful politicians, statesmen, scientists, and all those who use their brains, to notice two issues of concern.

The first is that changes bring not only new possibilities to improve life, but also new problems and dangers. These problems and dangers became obvious in the ecological sphere first. But other acute problems could soon be detected in all other areas of social life. Even the most economically advanced states are not free from organized crime, growing cruelty and violence, alcoholism and drug addiction, and experienced a weakening of the family and its educational role, and the like.

The second alarming issue is that many countries do not benefit from the booming modern economy and general prosperity. The quick progress of science, technology, and advanced economy is underway in only a small number of nations, populated by the so-called 'golden billion'.

Quite a few countries achieved new economic and social development standards in the 20th century. But they did not join in the process of creating a post-industrial society. Most of them are still far from it. And there are grounds to believe that this gap between pre- and post-industrial societies will persist for quite some time yet.

This is probably why, at the turn of the new Millennium, humankind is peering into the future not only with hope, but also with fear.

The Modern Situation in Russia

It would be no exaggeration to say that Russia feels this mixture of hope and fear particularly strongly. There are few nations in the world which have faced as many trials as Russia in the 20th century.

First, Russia does not rank among the countries with the highest levels of economic and social development. And second, our Fatherland is facing difficult economic and social problems.

Russia's GDP nearly halved in the 1990s, and its GNP is ten times smaller than the US, and five times smaller than China. After the 1998 crisis, the per capita GDP dropped to roughly \$3,500 dollars, which is roughly five times smaller than the average for the G7 states.

The structure of the Russian economy has changed. Now the fuel industry, power engineering, and ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy occupy the key positions in the national economy. They account for some 15% of Russia's GDP, 50% of our overall industrial output, and over 70% of exports.

Labour productivity and real wages in the economy are extremely low. While our production of raw materials and electricity is about equal to the world average, our productivity in other industries is 20-24% of the US average.

The technical and technological standards of manufactured commodities largely depend on the share of equipment that is less than five years old. In Russia, that share dwindled from 29% in 1990 to 4.5% in 1998. Over 70% of our machinery and equipment is over ten years old, which is more than double the figure in economically developed countries.

This is the result of the consistently dwindling national investments, above all to the real economy sector. And foreign investors are not in a hurry to contribute to the development of Russian industries. The overall volume of direct foreign investments in Russia amounts to barely 11.5 billion dollars. China received as much as 43 billion dollars in foreign investments.

Russia has been reducing allocations on research and development (R&D), while the 300 largest transnational companies provided 216 billion dollars on R&D in 1997, and some 240 billion dollars in 1998. Only 5% of Russian enterprises are engaged in innovative production, and the output is on an extremely low scale.

The lack of capital investments and the wrong attitude toward innovation resulted in a dramatic fall in the production of commodities that are world competitive in terms of

price-quality ratio. Foreign rivals have pushed Russia especially far back in the market of science-intensive civilian commodities. Russia accounts for less than 1% of such commodities on the world market, while the US provides 36%, and Japan 30%, of them.

The real incomes of the Russian population have been falling since the beginning of the reforms. The greatest plummet was registered after the August 1998 crisis, and it will be impossible to restore the pre-crisis living standards this year. The overall monetary incomes of the population, calculated by UN methods, add up to less than 10% of the US figure. Health and the average life span - the indices that determine the quality of life - deteriorated, too.

The current dramatic economic and social situation in our country is the price we have to pay for the economy we inherited from the Soviet Union. But then, what else could we inherit? We had to install market elements into a bulky and distorted system based on completely different standards. And this was bound to affect the progress of the reforms.

We had to pay for the Soviet economy's excessive focus on the development of the raw materials and defense industries, which negatively affected the development of consumer production and services. We are paying for the Soviet neglect of such key sectors as information science, electronics and communications. We are paying for the absence of competition between producers and industries, which hindered scientific and technological progress and prevented the Russian economy from being competitive in the world markets. This is the cost of the brakes and the bans put on Russian initiatives and enterprises and their personnel. Today we are reaping the bitter fruit, both material and mental, of the past decades.

On the other hand, we are responsible for certain problems in this current renewal process. They are the result of our own mistakes, miscalculation and lack of experience. And yet, we could not have avoided the main problems facing Russian society. The path to the market and democracy was difficult for all nations that searched for it in the 1990s. They all shared roughly the same problems, although in varying degrees.

Russia is completing the first, transition stage of economic and political reforms. Despite problems and mistakes, it has embarked upon the highway that the whole of humanity is travelling. As global economic experience convincingly shows, only this path offers the possibility of dynamic economic growth and higher living standards. There is no alternative to it.

The question for Russia now is what to do next. How can we make the new, market mechanisms work to full capacity? How can we overcome the still deep ideological and political split in society? What strategic goals can consolidate Russian society? What place can Russia occupy in the international community in the 21st century? What economic, social and cultural frontiers do we want to attain in 10-15 years? What are our strong and weak points? And what material and spiritual resources do we now have?

These are the questions put forward by life itself. Unless we find clear answers that all

people can understand, we will be unable to quickly move forward to the goals, which are worthy of our great country.

The Lessons to Learn

Our very future depends on the lessons we learn from our past and present. This is a long-term job for society as a whole, but some of these lessons are already clear.

1. For most of the 20th century, Russia lived under the communist doctrine. It would be a mistake not to recognise the unquestionable achievements of those times. But it would be an even bigger mistake not to realise the outrageous price our country and its people had to pay for that Bolshevik social experiment.

What is more, it would be a mistake not to understand its historic futility. Communism and the power of Soviets did not make Russia a prosperous country with a dynamically developing society and free people. Communism vividly demonstrated its inability to foster sound self-development, dooming our country to lagging steady behind economically advanced countries. It was a blind alley, far away from the mainstream of civilisation.

2. Russia has reached its limit for political and socio-economic upheavals, cataclysms and radical reforms. Only fanatics or political forces which are absolutely apathetic and indifferent to Russia and its people can make calls for a new revolution. Be it under communist, national-patriotic or radical-liberal slogans, our country and our people will not withstand a new radical break-up. The nation's patience and its ability to survive, as well as its capacity work constructively, has reached the limit. Society will simply collapse economically, politically, psychologically and morally.

Responsible socio-political forces ought to offer the nation a strategy of revival and prosperity based on all the positive elements of the period of market and democratic reforms, and implemented only by gradual, prudent methods. This strategy should be carried out in a situation of political stability and should not lead to deterioration in the lives of any sections or groups of the Russian people. This indisputable condition stems from the present situation of our country.

3. The experience of the 90s demonstrates vividly that *merely experimenting with abstract models and schemes taken from foreign textbooks* cannot assure that our country will achieve genuine renewal without any excessive costs. The mechanical copying of other nations' experience will not guarantee success, either.

Every country, Russia included, has to search for its own path to renewal. We have not been very successful in this respect thus far. We have only started groping for our path and our model of transformation in the past year or two. Our future depends on combining the universal principles of a market economy and democracy with Russian realities. Our scientists, analysts, experts, public servants, and political and public organizations should work with this goal in mind.

A Chance for a Worthy Future

Such are the main lessons of the 20th century. They make it possible to outline the contours of a long-term strategy which will enable us, within a relatively short time, to overcome the present protracted crisis and create conditions for our country's fast and stable economic and social improvement. The paramount word is 'fast'. We have no time for a slow start.

I want to quote the calculations made by experts. It will take us approximately 15 years and an 8 percent annual growth of our GDP to reach the per capita GDP level of present-day Portugal or Spain, which are not among the world's industrialised leaders. If during the same 15 years we manage to annually increase our GDP by 10 percent, we will then catch up with Britain or France.

In terms of GDP derived from purchasing power parity (PPP) calculations, the World Bank today lists Russia as having not only overtaken Britain and France, but also Germany, making it the 5th largest economy in the world.

Even if we suppose that these tallies are not quite accurate, our current economic lag is not that serious and we can overcome it faster, but it will still require many years of work. That is why we should formulate our long-term strategy and start pursuing it as soon as possible.

We have already made the first step in this direction. The Strategic Research Center, which was created with the most active participation of the government, began its work at the end of December. This Center will bring together the best minds of our country to draft recommendations and proposals to the government for both theoretical and applied projects. It will devise both the strategy itself and will find the most effective means to tackle the tasks, which will come up in the course of implementing the strategy.

I am convinced that ensuring the necessary growth dynamics is not only an economic problem. It is also a political and, in a certain sense - I am not afraid to use this word - ideological problem. To be more precise, it is an ideological, spiritual and moral problem. It seems to me that the latter is of particular importance in our current efforts to ensure the unity of Russian society.

The Russian Idea

The fruitful and creative work, which our country needs so badly, is impossible in a split and internally disintegrated society, a society where the main social sections and political forces do not share basic values and fundamental ideological orientations.

Twice in the outgoing century has Russia found itself in such a state: after October 1917 and in the 1990s.

In the first case, civil accord and social unity were forged not so much by what was then called 'ideological-educational' work as by brute force. Those who disagreed with the ideology and policy of the regime were subjected to different forms of persecution and oppression.

As a matter of fact, this is why I think that the term 'state ideology' advocated by some politicians, publicists and scholars is not quite appropriate. It creates certain associations with our recent Soviet past. A strict state ideology allows practically no room for intellectual and spiritual freedom, ideological pluralism and freedom of the press. In other words, there is no political freedom.

I am against the restoration of an official Russian state ideology in any form. There should be no forced civil accord in a democratic Russia. Social accord can only be voluntary.

That is why it is so important to achieve social accord on such basic issues as the aims, values and orientations of development, which would be desirable for and attractive to the overwhelming majority of Russians. The absence of civil accord and unity is one of the reasons why our reforms are so slow and painful. Most of our energy is spent on political squabbling, instead of handling the concrete steps toward Russia's renewal.

Nonetheless, some positive changes have appeared in this sphere in the past year or so. The majority of Russians demonstrate more wisdom and responsibility than many politicians. Russians want stability, confidence in the future and the ability to plan for themselves and for their children - not for a month, but for years and even decades to come. They want to work in peace, security and a sound, law-based order. They want to use the opportunities opened by various forms of ownership, free enterprise and market relations.

It is on this basis that our people have begun to perceive and accept supra-national universal values, which are above social, group or ethnic interests. Our people have accepted such values as freedom of expression, freedom to travel abroad, and other fundamental political rights and human liberties. People value the fact that they can own property, be engaged in free enterprise, and build up their own wealth, and so on and so forth.

Another foothold for the unity of Russian society is our traditional values. These values are clearly seen today:

Patriotism

This term is sometimes used ironically and even derogatorily. But for the majority of Russians it retains its original, positive meaning. Patriotism is a feeling of pride in one's country, its history and accomplishments. It is the striving to make one's country better, richer, stronger and happier. When these sentiments are free from the tints of nationalist conceit and imperial ambitions, there is nothing reprehensible or bigoted about them.

Patriotism is the source of our people's courage, staunchness and strength. If we lose patriotism and the national pride and dignity that are connected with it, we will no longer be a nation capable of great achievements.

The Greatness of Russia

Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence. They determined the mentality of Russians and the policy of the government throughout our history, and they cannot help but do so now.

But Russian mentality should be expanded by new ideas. In today's world, a country's power is manifested more in its ability to develop and use advanced technologies, ensuring a high level of general well-being, protecting its security, and upholding its national interests in the international arena, than in its military strength.

Statism

Russia will not become a second edition of, say, the US or Britain, where liberal values have deep historic traditions. Our state and its institutions and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly to be gotten rid of. Quite the contrary, it is a source of order and the main driving force of any change.

Modern Russia does not identify a strong and effective state with a totalitarian state. We have come to value the benefits of democracy, a law-based state, and personal and political freedom. At the same time, people are alarmed by the obvious weakening of state power. The public looks forward to a certain restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state, proceeding from Russia's traditions as well as the current state of the country.

Social Solidarity

It is a fact that a striving for corporative forms of activity has always prevailed over individualism. Paternalistic sentiments have deep roots in Russian society. The majority of Russians are used to depending more on the state for improvements in their own condition than with their own efforts, initiatives, and flair for business. And it will take a long time for this habit to die.

Let's not dwell on whether it is good or bad. The important thing is that such sentiments exist. In fact, they still prevail. That is why they cannot be ignored. This should be taken into consideration in the social policy, first and foremost.

I suppose that the new Russian idea will come about as an organic unification of universal general humanitarian values with the traditional Russian values which have stood the test of time, including the turbulent 20th century.

This vitally important process must not be accelerated, discontinued and destroyed. It is important to prevent the first shoots of civil accord from being crushed underfoot in the heat of political campaigns and elections.

The results of the recent elections to the State Duma inspire great optimism in this respect. They reflect a turn towards a growing stability and civil accord. The overwhelming majority of Russians said 'No' to radicalism, extremism and revolutionary opposition. It is probably the first time since the reforms began that such favourable conditions for constructive cooperation between the executive and legislative branches of power have been created.

Serious politicians, whose parties and movements are represented in the new State Duma, are advised to draw conclusions from this fact. I am sure that their sense of responsibility for the nation will prevail, and that Russia's parties, organizations and movements, and their leaders, will not sacrifice Russia's interests, which call for a solidary effort of all sane forces to narrow partisanship and opportunism.

Strong State

We are at a stage where even the most correct economic and social policies can start misfiring because of the weakness of the state and the managerial bodies. A key to Russia's recovery and growth is in the state-policy sphere.

Russia needs a strong state power. I am not calling for totalitarianism. History proves all dictatorships, all authoritarian forms of government, are transient. Only democratic systems are lasting. Whatever our shortcomings, humankind has not devised anything superior. A strong state power in Russia is a democratic, law-based, workable federal state.

I see the following steps in its formation:

- streamlining state agencies and improving governance; increasing professionalism, discipline and responsibility amongst civil servants; intensifying the struggle against corruption
- reforming state personnel policy through selection of the best staffs
- creating conditions that will help develop a full-blooded civil society to balance out and monitor the authorities
- increasing the role and authority of the judicial branch of government
- improving federative relations (including budgetary and financial)
- launching an active and aggressive campaign against crime

Amending the constitution does not seem to be an urgent, priority task. What we have is a good constitution. Its provisions for individual rights and freedoms are regarded as the best constitutional instrument of its kind in the world. Rather than drafting a new code of law for the country, a serious task indeed is to enforce the existing constitution and the

laws passed under it, to apply the constitution for the state, society and each individual.

Russia currently has more than a thousand federal laws and several thousand laws of the republics, territories, regions and autonomous areas. Not all of them correspond to the above criterion. If the justice ministry, the prosecutor's office and the judiciary continue to be as slow in dealing with this matter as they are today, the mass of questionable or simply unconstitutional laws may become critical. The constitutional security of the state, the federal center's capabilities, the country's manageability and Russia's integrity would then be in jeopardy.

Another serious problem is inherent in government authority. Global experience leads us to conclude that the main threat to human rights and freedoms - to democracy as such - emanates from the executive authority. Of course, a legislature that makes bad laws also does its bit. But the main threat emanates from the executive. It organises the country's life, applies laws and can objectively distort these laws rather substantially - although not always deliberately - by making executive orders.

The global trend is that of a stronger executive authority. Not surprisingly, society endeavours to better control itself in order to preclude arbitrariness and misuses of office. This is why I, personally, am paying priority attention to building partner relations between the executive authority and civil society, to developing the institutes and structures of the latter, and to waging a tough war against corruption.

Efficient Economy

I have already said that the reform years have generated a heap of problems in the national economy and social sphere. The situation is complex, indeed. But it is too early to bury Russia a great power. Troubles notwithstanding, we have preserved our intellectual strength and human resources. A number of R&D advances and technologies have not been wasted. We still have our natural resources. So the country has a worthy future in store.

At the same time, we must learn the lessons of the 1990s and ponder the experience of market reform.

1. Throughout these years we have been groping in the dark without having a clear sense of national objectives and advances which would ensure Russia's standing as a developed, prosperous and great country of the world. Our lack of long-range development strategies for the next 15-20 years hurts our economy.

The government firmly intends to act on the principle of unified strategy and tactics. Without it, we are doomed to just patching up holes and responding to emergencies like the fire department. Serious politics and big business are done differently. The country needs a long-term national strategy of development. I have already said that the government has launched a program to design it.

2. Another important lesson of the 1990s is that Russia needs to form a system for the state to regulate the economy and social sphere. I do not mean to return to a system of planning and managing the economy by fiat, where the all-pervasive state was regulating all aspects of any factory's work from top to bottom. I mean to make the Russian state an efficient coordinator of the country's economic and social forces, balancing out their interests, optimising the aims and parameters of social development, and creating conditions and mechanisms for their attainment.

Of course, this notion goes beyond the bounds of the standard formula, which limits the role of the state in the economy to establishing the rules of the game and then monitoring their enforcement. In time, we are likely to evolve to this formula. But today's situation necessitates deeper state involvement in social and economic processes. While establishing the dimensions and planning mechanisms for the system of state regulation, we must be guided by the following principle: the state must act where and when it is needed; freedom must exist where and when it is required.

3. The third lesson is the transition to a reform strategy that is best suited to our conditions. It should proceed in the following directions:

3.1. To encourage dynamic economic growth

Primarily, to encourage investment. We have not yet resolved this problem. Investment in the real economy fell by 5 times in the 1990s, including by 3.5 times in fixed assets. The material foundations of the Russian economy are being undermined.

We call for pursuing an investment policy that would combine pure market mechanisms with measures of state guidance.

At the same time, we will continue working to create an investment climate attractive to foreign investors. Frankly speaking, without foreign capital, our country's road back to recovery will be long and hard. We don't have time for slow growth. Consequently, we must do our best to attract foreign capital to the country.

3.2. To pursue an energetic industrial policy

The future of the country and the quality of the Russian economy in the 21st century will depend above all on progress in the high technologies and science-intensive commodities. 90% of economic growth today depends on new achievements and technologies.

The government is prepared to pursue an economic policy of priority development of the leading industries in research and technology. The requisite measures include:

- assisting the development of extra-budgetary internal demand for advanced technologies and science-intensive production, and supporting export-oriented high-tech production
- supporting non-raw materials industries working mostly to satisfy internal demand

- buttressing the export possibilities of the fuel and energy and raw-materials complexes

We should use specific mechanisms to mobilise the funds necessary for pursuing this policy. The most important of them are the target-oriented loan and tax instruments and the provision of privileges against state guarantees.

3.3. To carry out a rational structural policy

The government thinks that, as in other industrialised countries, there is a place in the Russian economy for the financial-industrial groups, corporations, and small and medium businesses. Any attempts to slow down the development of some economic entities, and artificially encourage the development of others, would only hinder the rise of the national economy. The government will create a structure that would ensure an optimal balance of all forms of economic management.

Another major issue is the rational regulation of natural monopolies. This is a key question, as they largely determine the structure of production and consumer prices. They therefore influence both economic and financial processes, as well as people's incomes.

3.4. To create an effective financial system

This is a challenging task, which includes the following directions:

- improving the effectiveness of the budget as a major instrument of the economic policy of the state
- carrying out tax reform
- getting rid of non-payments, barter and other pseudo-monetary forms of settlement
- maintaining a low inflation rate and stable rouble
- creating civilised financial and stock markets, and turning them into a means of accumulating investment resources
- restructuring the banking system

3.5. To combat the shadow economy and organised crime in the economic and financial-credit sphere

All countries have shadow economies. But in industrialised countries their share of GDP does not exceed 15-20%, while in Russia they control 40% of GDP. To resolve this painful problem, we should not just raise the effectiveness of the law-enforcement agencies, but also strengthen the license, tax, hard currency and export controls.

3.6. To consistently integrate the Russian economy into world economic structures

Otherwise we will not rise to the high level of economic and social progress attained in the industrialised countries. The main directions of this work are:

- to ensure the state's active support of Russian enterprises, companies and corporations operating in foreign economies. In particular, we must create a

federal agency to support exports, which would guarantee the export contracts of Russian producers

- to resolutely combat discrimination against Russia in the global commodity, service and investment markets, and to approve and apply national anti-dumping legislation
- to incorporate Russia into the international system of regulating foreign economic operation, above all the WTO

3.7. To pursue a modern farming policy

The revival of Russia will be impossible without the revival of the countryside and agriculture. We need a farming policy that will organically combine measures of state assistance and state regulation with the market reforms in the countryside and in land-ownership relations.

4. We must insist that virtually all changes and measures entailing a fall in the living conditions of the people are inadmissible in Russia. We have come to a line beyond which we must not go.

Poverty has reached a mind-boggling scale in Russia. In early 1998, the average world per capita income amounted to some 5,000 dollars a year, but it was only 2,200 dollars in Russia. And it dropped still lower after the August 1998 crisis. The share of wages in the GDP dropped from 50% to 30% since the beginning of reforms.

This is our most acute social problem. The government is elaborating a new income policy designed to ensure stable growth in the real disposable incomes of the people.

Despite these difficulties, the government is resolved to take new measures to support science, education, culture and health care. A country where the people are not physically and psychologically healthy, are poorly educated and illiterate, will never rise to the summits of world civilization.

Russia is in the midst of one of the most difficult periods in its history. For the first time in the past 200-300 years, it is facing a real danger of sliding to the second, and possibly even third, echelon of world states. We are running of time to avoid this. We must strain all intellectual, physical and moral forces of the nation. We need coordinated, creative work. Nobody will do it for us.

Everything depends on us, and us alone - on our ability to see the size of the threat, to consolidate forces, and set our minds to prolonged and difficult work.

Appendix B

Putin's Munich Speech

Delivered at the Munich Conference on Security Policy on 12 February 2007

Thank you very much dear Madam Federal Chancellor, Mr Teltschik, ladies and gentlemen!

I am truly grateful to be invited to such a representative conference that has assembled politicians, military officials, entrepreneurs and experts from more than 40 nations.

This conference's structure allows me to avoid excessive politeness and the need to speak in roundabout, pleasant but empty diplomatic terms. This conference's format will allow me to say what I really think about international security problems. And if my comments seem unduly polemical, pointed or inexact to our colleagues, then I would ask you not to get angry with me. After all, this is only a conference. And I hope that after the first two or three minutes of my speech Mr Teltschik will not turn on the red light over there.

Therefore. It is well known that international security comprises much more than issues relating to military and political stability. It involves the stability of the global economy, overcoming poverty, economic security and developing a dialogue between civilizations.

This universal, indivisible character of security is expressed as the basic principle that "security for one is security for all". As Franklin D. Roosevelt said during the first few days that the Second World War was breaking out: "When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger."

These words remain topical today. Incidentally, the theme of our conference -- global crises, global responsibility -- exemplifies this.

Only two decades ago the world was ideologically and economically divided and it was the huge strategic potential of two superpowers that ensured global security.

This global stand-off pushed the sharpest economic and social problems to the margins of the international community's and the world's agenda. And, just like any war, the Cold War left us with live ammunition, figuratively speaking. I am referring to ideological stereotypes, double standards and other typical aspects of Cold War bloc thinking.

The unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place either.

The history of humanity certainly has gone through unipolar periods and seen aspirations to world supremacy. And what hasn't happened in world history?

However, what is a unipolar world? However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one center of authority, one center of force, one center of decision-making.

It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within.

And this certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority.

Incidentally, Russia - we - are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves.

I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's - and precisely in today's - world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilization.

Along with this, what is happening in today's world - and we just started to discuss this - is a tentative to introduce precisely this concept into international affairs, the concept of a unipolar world.

And with which results?

Unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions have not resolved any problems. Moreover, they have caused new human tragedies and created new centers of tension. Judge for yourselves: wars as well as local and regional conflicts have not diminished. Mr Teltschik mentioned this very gently. And no less people perish in these conflicts - even more are dying than before. Significantly more, significantly more!

Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force - military force - in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.

We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. And independent legal norms are, as a matter of fact, coming increasingly closer to one state's legal system. One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations. Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this?

In international relations we increasingly see the desire to resolve a given question according to so-called issues of political expediency, based on the current political climate.

And of course this is extremely dangerous. It results in the fact that no one feels safe. I want to emphasize this -- no one feels safe! Because no one can feel that international law is like a stone wall that will protect them. Of course such a policy stimulates an arms race.

The force's dominance inevitably encourages a number of countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, significantly new threats - though they were also well-known before - have appeared, and today threats such as terrorism have taken on a global character.

I am convinced that we have reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security.

And we must proceed by searching for a reasonable balance between the interests of all participants in the international dialogue. Especially since the international landscape is so varied and changes so quickly - changes in light of the dynamic development in a whole number of countries and regions.

Madam Federal Chancellor already mentioned this. The combined GDP measured in purchasing power parity of countries such as India and China is already greater than that of the United States. And a similar calculation with the GDP of the BRIC countries - Brazil, Russia, India and China - surpasses the cumulative GDP of the EU. And according to experts this gap will only increase in the future.

There is no reason to doubt that the economic potential of the new centers of global economic growth will inevitably be converted into political influence and will strengthen multipolarity.

In connection with this the role of multilateral diplomacy is significantly increasing. The need for principles such as openness, transparency and predictability in politics is uncontested and the use of force should be a really exceptional measure, comparable to using the death penalty in the judicial systems of certain states.

However, today we are witnessing the opposite tendency, namely a situation in which countries that forbid the death penalty even for murderers and other, dangerous criminals are airily participating in military operations that are difficult to consider legitimate. And as a matter of fact, these conflicts are killing people - hundreds and thousands of civilians!

But at the same time the question arises of whether we should be indifferent and aloof to various internal conflicts inside countries, to authoritarian regimes, to tyrants, and to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction? As a matter of fact, this was also at the

center of the question that our dear colleague Mr Lieberman asked the Federal Chancellor. If I correctly understood your question (addressing Mr Lieberman), then of course it is a serious one! Can we be indifferent observers in view of what is happening? I will try to answer your question as well: of course not.

But do we have the means to counter these threats? Certainly we do. It is sufficient to look at recent history. Did not our country have a peaceful transition to democracy? Indeed, we witnessed a peaceful transformation of the Soviet regime - a peaceful transformation! And what a regime! With what a number of weapons, including nuclear weapons! Why should we start bombing and shooting now at every available opportunity? Is it the case when without the threat of mutual destruction we do not have enough political culture, respect for democratic values and for the law?

I am convinced that the only mechanism that can make decisions about using military force as a last resort is the Charter of the United Nations. And in connection with this, either I did not understand what our colleague, the Italian Defense Minister, just said or what he said was inexact. In any case, I understood that the use of force can only be legitimate when the decision is taken by NATO, the EU, or the UN. If he really does think so, then we have different points of view. Or I didn't hear correctly. The use of force can only be considered legitimate if the decision is sanctioned by the UN. And we do not need to substitute NATO or the EU for the UN. When the UN will truly unite the forces of the international community and can really react to events in various countries, when we will leave behind this disdain for international law, then the situation will be able to change. Otherwise the situation will simply result in a dead end, and the number of serious mistakes will be multiplied. Along with this, it is necessary to make sure that international law have a universal character both in the conception and application of its norms.

And one must not forget that democratic political actions necessarily go along with discussion and a laborious decision-making process.

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

The potential danger of the destabilization of international relations is connected with obvious stagnation in the disarmament issue.

Russia supports the renewal of dialogue on this important question.

It is important to conserve the international legal framework relating to weapons destruction and therefore ensure continuity in the process of reducing nuclear weapons.

Together with the United States of America we agreed to reduce our nuclear strategic missile capabilities to up to 1700-2000 nuclear warheads by 31 December 2012. Russia intends to strictly fulfil the obligations it has taken on. We hope that our partners will also act in a transparent way and will refrain from laying aside a couple of hundred superfluous nuclear warheads for a rainy day. And if today the new American Defense

Minister declares that the United States will not hide these superfluous weapons in warehouse or, as one might say, under a pillow or under the blanket, then I suggest that we all rise and greet this declaration standing. It would be a very important declaration.

Russia strictly adheres to and intends to further adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as well as the multilateral supervision regime for missile technologies. The principles incorporated in these documents are universal ones.

In connection with this I would like to recall that in the 1980s the USSR and the United States signed an agreement on destroying a whole range of small- and medium-range missiles but these documents do not have a universal character.

Today many other countries have these missiles, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, India, Iran, Pakistan and Israel. Many countries are working on these systems and plan to incorporate them as part of their weapons arsenals. And only the United States and Russia bear the responsibility to not create such weapons systems.

It is obvious that in these conditions we must think about ensuring our own security.

At the same time, it is impossible to sanction the appearance of new, destabilizing high-tech weapons. Needless to say it refers to measures to prevent a new area of confrontation, especially in outer space. Star wars is no longer a fantasy ; it is a reality. In the middle of the 1980s our American partners were already able to intercept their own satellite.

In Russia's opinion, the militarization of outer space could have unpredictable consequences for the international community, and provoke nothing less than the beginning of a nuclear era. And we have come forward more than once with initiatives designed to prevent the use of weapons in outer space.

Today I would like to tell you that we have prepared a project for an agreement on the prevention of deploying weapons in outer space. And in the near future it will be sent to our partners as an official proposal. Let's work on this together.

Plans to expand certain elements of the anti-missile defense system to Europe cannot help but disturb us. Who needs the next step of what would be, in this case, an inevitable arms race? I deeply doubt that Europeans themselves do.

Missile weapons with a range of about five to eight thousand kilometers that really pose a threat to Europe do not exist in any of the so-called problem countries. And in the near future and prospects, this will not happen and is not even foreseeable. And any hypothetical launch of, for example, a North Korean rocket to American territory through western Europe obviously contradicts the laws of ballistics. As we say in Russia, it would be like using the right hand to reach the left ear.

And here in Germany I cannot help but mention the pitiable condition of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

The Adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was signed in 1999. It took into account a new geopolitical reality, namely the elimination of the Warsaw bloc. Seven years have passed and only four states have ratified this document, including the Russian Federation.

NATO countries openly declared that they will not ratify this treaty, including the provisions on flank restrictions (on deploying a certain number of armed forces in the flank zones), until Russia removed its military bases from Georgia and Moldova. Our army is leaving Georgia, even according to an accelerated schedule. We resolved the problems we had with our Georgian colleagues, as everybody knows. There are still 1,500 servicemen in Moldova that are carrying out peacekeeping operations and protecting warehouses with ammunition left over from Soviet times. We constantly discuss this issue with Mr Solana and he knows our position. We are ready to further work in this direction.

But what is happening at the same time? Simultaneously the so-called flexible frontline American bases with up to five thousand men in each. It turns out that NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders, and we continue to strictly fulfil the treaty obligations and do not react to these actions at all.

I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: "the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee". Where are these guarantees?

The stones and concrete blocks of the Berlin Wall have long been distributed as souvenirs. But we should not forget that the fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice - one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia - a choice in favour of democracy, freedom, openness and a sincere partnership with all the members of the big European family.

And now they are trying to impose new dividing lines and walls on us ¿ these walls may be virtual but they are nevertheless dividing, ones that cut through our continent. And is it possible that we will once again require many years and decades, as well as several generations of politicians, to dissemble and dismantle these new walls?

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

We are unequivocally in favor of strengthening the regime of non-proliferation. The present international legal principles allow us to develop technologies to manufacture nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes. And many countries with all good reasons want to create their own nuclear energy as a basis for their energy independence. But we also understand that these technologies can be quickly transformed into nuclear weapons.

This creates serious international tensions. The situation surrounding the Iranian nuclear program acts as a clear example. And if the international community does not find a reasonable solution for resolving this conflict of interests, the world will continue to suffer similar, destabilizing crises because there are more threshold countries than simply Iran. We both know this. We are going to constantly fight against the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Last year Russia put forward the initiative to establish international centers for the enrichment of uranium. We are open to the possibility that such centers not only be created in Russia, but also in other countries where there is a legitimate basis for using civil nuclear energy. Countries that want to develop their nuclear energy could guarantee that they will receive fuel through direct participation in these centers. And the centers would, of course, operate under strict IAEA supervision.

The latest initiatives put forward by American President George W. Bush are in conformity with the Russian proposals. I consider that Russia and the USA are objectively and equally interested in strengthening the regime of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their deployment. It is precisely our countries, with leading nuclear and missile capabilities, that must act as leaders in developing new, stricter non-proliferation measures. Russia is ready for such work. We are engaged in consultations with our American friends.

In general, we should talk about establishing a whole system of political incentives and economic stimuli whereby it would not be in states' interests to establish their own capabilities in the nuclear fuel cycle but they would still have the opportunity to develop nuclear energy and strengthen their energy capabilities.

In connection with this I shall talk about international energy cooperation in more detail. Madam Federal Chancellor also spoke about this briefly - she mentioned, touched on this theme. In the energy sector Russia intends to create uniform market principles and transparent conditions for all. It is obvious that energy prices must be determined by the market instead of being the subject of political speculation, economic pressure or blackmail.

We are open to cooperation. Foreign companies participate in all our major energy projects. According to different estimates, up to 26 percent of the oil extraction in Russia - and please think about this figure - up to 26 percent of the oil extraction in Russia is done by foreign capital. Try, try to find me a similar example where Russian business participates extensively in key economic sectors in western countries. Such examples do not exist! There are no such examples.

I would also recall the parity of foreign investments in Russia and those Russia makes abroad. The parity is about fifteen to one. And here you have an obvious example of the openness and stability of the Russian economy.

Economic security is the sector in which all must adhere to uniform principles. We are ready to compete fairly.

For that reason more and more opportunities are appearing in the Russian economy. Experts and our western partners are objectively evaluating these changes. As such, Russia's OECD sovereign credit rating improved and Russia passed from the fourth to the third group. And today in Munich I would like to use this occasion to thank our German colleagues for their help in the above decision.

Furthermore. As you know, the process of Russia joining the WTO has reached its final stages. I would point out that during long, difficult talks we heard words about freedom of speech, free trade, and equal possibilities more than once but, for some reason, exclusively in reference to the Russian market.

And there is still one more important theme that directly affects global security. Today many talk about the struggle against poverty. What is actually happening in this sphere? On the one hand, financial resources are allocated for programs to help the world's poorest countries - and at times substantial financial resources. But to be honest -- and many here also know this - linked with the development of that same donor country's companies. And on the other hand, developed countries simultaneously keep their agricultural subsidies and limit some countries' access to high-tech products.

And let's say things as they are - one hand distributes charitable help and the other hand not only preserves economic backwardness but also reaps the profits thereof. The increasing social tension in depressed regions inevitably results in the growth of radicalism, extremism, feeds terrorism and local conflicts. And if all this happens in, shall we say, a region such as the Middle East where there is increasingly the sense that the world at large is unfair, then there is the risk of global destabilization.

It is obvious that the world's leading countries should see this threat. And that they should therefore build a more democratic, fairer system of global economic relations, a system that would give everyone the chance and the possibility to develop.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, speaking at the Conference on Security Policy, it is impossible not to mention the activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). As is well-known, this organization was created to examine all - I shall emphasize this - all aspects of security: military, political, economic, humanitarian and, especially, the relations between these spheres.

What do we see happening today? We see that this balance is clearly destroyed. People are trying to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries. And this task is also being

accomplished by the OSCE's bureaucratic apparatus which is absolutely not connected with the state founders in any way. Decision-making procedures and the involvement of so-called non-governmental organizations are tailored for this task. These organizations are formally independent but they are purposefully financed and therefore under control.

According to the founding documents, in the humanitarian sphere the OSCE is designed to assist country members in observing international human rights norms at their request. This is an important task. We support this. But this does not mean interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and especially not imposing a regime that determines how these states should live and develop.

It is obvious that such interference does not promote the development of democratic states at all. On the contrary, it makes them dependent and, as a consequence, politically and economically unstable.

We expect that the OSCE be guided by its primary tasks and build relations with sovereign states based on respect, trust and transparency.

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

In conclusion I would like to note the following. We very often - and personally, I very often - hear appeals by our partners, including our European partners, to the effect that Russia should play an increasingly active role in world affairs.

In connection with this I would allow myself to make one small remark. It is hardly necessary to incite us to do so. Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy.

We are not going to change this tradition today. At the same time, we are well aware of how the world has changed and we have a realistic sense of our own opportunities and potential. And of course we would like to interact with responsible and independent partners with whom we could work together in constructing a fair and democratic world order that would ensure security and prosperity not only for a select few, but for all.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix C

Vladimir Putin's Valdai Speech

Delivered at the Valdai International Discussion Club in Sochi, Russia on 24 Oct 2014

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, friends, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the XI meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.

It was mentioned already that the club has new co-organizers this year. They include Russian non-governmental organizations, expert groups and leading universities. The idea was also raised of broadening the discussions to include not just issues related to Russia itself but also global politics and the economy.

I hope that these changes in organization and content will bolster the club's influence as a leading discussion and expert forum. At the same time, I hope the 'Valdai spirit' will remain — this free and open atmosphere and chance to express all manner of very different and frank opinions.

Let me say in this respect that I will also not let you down and will speak directly and frankly. Some of what I say might seem a bit too harsh, but if we do not speak directly and honestly about what we really think, then there is little point in even meeting in this way. It would be better in that case just to keep to diplomatic get-togethers, where no one says anything of real sense and, recalling the words of one famous diplomat, you realize that diplomats have tongues so as not to speak the truth.

We get together for other reasons. We get together so as to talk frankly with each other. We need to be direct and blunt today not so as to trade barbs, but so as to attempt to get to the bottom of what is actually happening in the world, try to understand why the world is becoming less safe and more unpredictable, and why the risks are increasing everywhere around us.

Today's discussion took place under the theme: New Rules or a Game without Rules. I think that this formula accurately describes the historic turning point we have reached today and the choice we all face. There is nothing new of course in the idea that the world is changing very fast. I know this is something you have spoken about at the discussions today. It is certainly hard not to notice the dramatic transformations in global politics and the economy, public life, and in industry, information and social technologies.

Let me ask you right now to forgive me if I end up repeating what some of the discussion's participants have already said. It's practically impossible to avoid. You have already held detailed discussions, but I will set out my point of view. It will coincide with other participants' views on some points and differ on others.

"The world is full of contradictions today. We need to be frank in asking each other if we have a reliable safety net in place. Sadly, there is no guarantee and no certainty that

the current system of global and regional security is able to protect us from upheavals. The international and regional political, economic, and cultural cooperation organizations are also going through difficult times.“

As we analyze today's situation, let us not forget history's lessons. First of all, changes in the world order – and what we are seeing today are events on this scale – have usually been accompanied by if not global war and conflict, then by chains of intensive local-level conflicts. Second, global politics is above all about economic leadership, issues of war and peace, and the humanitarian dimension, including human rights.

The world is full of contradictions today. We need to be frank in asking each other if we have a reliable safety net in place. Sadly, there is no guarantee and no certainty that the current system of global and regional security is able to protect us from upheavals. This system has become seriously weakened, fragmented and deformed. The international and regional political, economic, and cultural cooperation organizations are also going through difficult times.

Yes, many of the mechanisms we have for ensuring the world order were created quite a long time ago now, including and above all in the period immediately following World War II. Let me stress that the solidity of the system created back then rested not only on the balance of power and the rights of the victor countries, but on the fact that this system's 'founding fathers' had respect for each other, did not try to put the squeeze on others, but attempted to reach agreements.

The main thing is that this system needs to develop, and despite its various shortcomings, needs to at least be capable of keeping the world's current problems within certain limits and regulating the intensity of the natural competition between countries.

It is my conviction that we could not take this mechanism of checks and balances that we built over the last decades, sometimes with such effort and difficulty, and simply tear it apart without building anything in its place. Otherwise we would be left with no instruments other than brute force.

What we needed to do was to carry out a rational reconstruction and adapt it to the new realities in the system of international relations.

But the United States, having declared itself the winner of the Cold War, saw no need for this. Instead of establishing a new balance of power, essential for maintaining order and stability, they took steps that threw the system into sharp and deep imbalance.

The Cold War ended, but it did not end with the signing of a peace treaty with clear and transparent agreements on respecting existing rules or creating new rules and standards. This created the impression that the so-called 'victors' in the Cold War had decided to pressure events and reshape the world to suit their own needs and interests. If the existing system of international relations, international law

and the checks and balances in place got in the way of these aims, this system was declared worthless, outdated and in need of immediate demolition.

Pardon the analogy, but this is the way nouveaux riches behave when they suddenly end up with a great fortune, in this case, in the shape of world leadership and domination. Instead of managing their wealth wisely, for their own benefit too of course, I think they have committed many follies.

We have entered a period of differing interpretations and deliberate silences in world politics. International law has been forced to retreat over and over by the onslaught of legal nihilism. Objectivity and justice have been sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. Arbitrary interpretations and biased assessments have replaced legal norms. At the same time, total control of the global mass media has made it possible when desired to portray white as black and black as white.

In a situation where you had domination by one country and its allies, or its satellites rather, the search for global solutions often turned into an attempt to impose their own universal recipes. This group's ambitions grew so big that they started presenting the policies they put together in their corridors of power as the view of the entire international community. But this is not the case.

"The Cold War ended, but it did not end with the signing of a peace treaty with clear and transparent agreements on respecting existing rules or creating new rules and standards. This created the impression that the so-called 'victors' in the Cold War had decided to pressure events and reshape the world to suit their own needs and interests."

The very notion of 'national sovereignty' became a relative value for most countries. In essence, what was being proposed was the formula: the greater the loyalty towards the world's sole power center, the greater this or that ruling regime's legitimacy.

We will have a free discussion afterwards and I will be happy to answer your questions and would also like to use my right to ask you questions. And during the upcoming discussion let someone try to disprove the argument that I just set out.

The measures taken against those who refuse to submit are well-known and have been tried and tested many times. They include use of force, economic and propaganda pressure, meddling in domestic affairs, and appeals to a kind of 'supra-legal' legitimacy when they need to justify illegal intervention in this or that conflict or toppling inconvenient regimes. Of late, we have increasing evidence too that outright blackmail has been used with regard to a number of leaders. It is not for nothing that 'big brother' is spending billions of dollars on keeping the whole world, including its own closest allies, under surveillance.

Let's ask ourselves, how comfortable are we with this, how safe are we, how happy living in this world, and how fair and rational has it become? Maybe, we have no real

reasons to worry, argue and ask awkward questions? Maybe the United States' exceptional position and the way they are carrying out their leadership really is a blessing for us all, and their meddling in events all around the world is bringing peace, prosperity, progress, growth and democracy, and we should maybe just relax and enjoy it all?

Let me say that this is not the case, absolutely not the case.

A unilateral diktat and imposing one's own models produces the opposite result. Instead of settling conflicts it leads to their escalation, instead of sovereign and stable states we see the growing spread of chaos, and instead of democracy there is support for a very dubious public ranging from open neo-fascists to Islamic radicals.

Why do they support such people? They do this because they decide to use them as instruments along the way in achieving their goals but then burn their fingers and recoil. I never cease to be amazed by the way that our partners just keep stepping on the same rake, as we say here in Russia, that is to say, make the same mistake over and over.

They once sponsored Islamic extremist movements to fight the Soviet Union. Those groups got their battle experience in Afghanistan and later gave birth to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The West if not supported, at least closed its eyes, and, I would say, gave information, political and financial support to international terrorists' invasion of Russia (we have not forgotten this) and the Central Asian region's countries. Only after horrific terrorist attacks were committed on US soil itself did the United States wake up to the common threat of terrorism. Let me remind you that we were the first country to support the American people back then, the first to react as friends and partners to the terrible tragedy of September 11.

During my conversations with American and European leaders, I always spoke of the need to fight terrorism together, as a challenge on a global scale. We cannot resign ourselves to and accept this threat, cannot cut it into separate pieces using double standards. Our partners expressed agreement, but a little time passed and we ended up back where we started. First there was the military operation in Iraq, then in Libya, which got pushed to the brink of falling apart. Why was Libya pushed into this situation? Today it is a country in danger of breaking apart and has become a training ground for terrorists.

"In a situation where you had domination by one country and its allies, or its satellites rather, the search for global solutions often turned into an attempt to impose their own universal recipes. This group's ambitions grew so big that they started presenting the policies they put together in their corridors of power as the view of the entire international community. But this is not the case."

Only the current Egyptian leadership's determination and wisdom saved this key Arab country from chaos and having extremists run rampant. In Syria, as in the past, the United States and its allies started directly financing and arming rebels and allowing them to fill

their ranks with mercenaries from various countries. Let me ask where do these rebels get their money, arms and military specialists? Where does all this come from? How did the notorious ISIL manage to become such a powerful group, essentially a real armed force?

As for financing sources, today, the money is coming not just from drugs, production of which has increased not just by a few percentage points but many-fold, since the international coalition forces have been present in Afghanistan. You are aware of this. The terrorists are getting money from selling oil too. Oil is produced in territory controlled by the terrorists, who sell it at dumping prices, produce it and transport it. But someone buys this oil, resells it, and makes a profit from it, not thinking about the fact that they are thus financing terrorists who could come sooner or later to their own soil and sow destruction in their own countries.

Where do they get new recruits? In Iraq, after Saddam Hussein was toppled, the state's institutions, including the army, were left in ruins. We said back then, be very, very careful. You are driving people out into the street, and what will they do there? Don't forget (rightfully or not) that they were in the leadership of a large regional power, and what are you now turning them into?

What was the result? Tens of thousands of soldiers, officers and former Baath Party activists were turned out into the streets and today have joined the rebels' ranks. Perhaps this is what explains why the Islamic State group has turned out so effective? In military terms, it is acting very effectively and has some very professional people. Russia warned repeatedly about the dangers of unilateral military actions, intervening in sovereign states' affairs, and flirting with extremists and radicals. We insisted on having the groups fighting the central Syrian government, above all the Islamic State, included on the lists of terrorist organizations. But did we see any results? We appealed in vain.

We sometimes get the impression that our colleagues and friends are constantly fighting the consequences of their own policies, throw all their effort into addressing the risks they themselves have created, and pay an ever-greater price.

Colleagues, this period of unipolar domination has convincingly demonstrated that having only one power center does not make global processes more manageable. On the contrary, this kind of unstable construction has shown its inability to fight the real threats such as regional conflicts, terrorism, drug trafficking, religious fanaticism, chauvinism and neo-Nazism. At the same time, it has opened the road wide for inflated national pride, manipulating public opinion and letting the strong bully and suppress the weak.

Essentially, the unipolar world is simply a means of justifying dictatorship over people and countries. The unipolar world turned out too uncomfortable, heavy and unmanageable a burden even for the self-proclaimed leader. Comments along this line were made here just before and I fully agree with this. This is why we see attempts at this new historic stage to recreate a semblance of a quasi-bipolar world as a convenient

model for perpetuating American leadership. It does not matter who takes the place of the center of evil in American propaganda, the USSR's old place as the main adversary. It could be Iran, as a country seeking to acquire nuclear technology, China, as the world's biggest economy, or Russia, as a nuclear superpower.

Today, we are seeing new efforts to fragment the world, draw new dividing lines, put together coalitions not built for something but directed against someone, anyone, create the image of an enemy as was the case during the Cold War years, and obtain the right to this leadership, or diktat if you wish. The situation was presented this way during the Cold War. We all understand this and know this. The United States always told its allies: "We have a common enemy, a terrible foe, the center of evil, and we are defending you, our allies, from this foe, and so we have the right to order you around, force you to sacrifice your political and economic interests and pay your share of the costs for this collective defense, but we will be the ones in charge of it all of course." In short, we see today attempts in a new and changing world to reproduce the familiar models of global management, and all this so as to guarantee their [the US'] exceptional position and reap political and economic dividends.

But these attempts are increasingly divorced from reality and are in contradiction with the world's diversity. Steps of this kind inevitably create confrontation and countermeasures and have the opposite effect to the hoped-for goals. We see what happens when politics rashly starts meddling in the economy and the logic of rational decisions gives way to the logic of confrontation that only hurts one's own economic positions and interests, including national business interests.

"A unilateral diktat and imposing one's own models produces the opposite result. Instead of settling conflicts it leads to their escalation, instead of sovereign and stable states we see the growing spread of chaos, and instead of democracy there is support for a very dubious public ranging from open neo-fascists to Islamic radicals."

Joint economic projects and mutual investment objectively bring countries closer together and help to smooth out current problems in relations between states. But today, the global business community faces unprecedented pressure from Western governments. What business, economic expediency and pragmatism can we speak of when we hear slogans such as "the homeland is in danger", "the free world is under threat", and "democracy is in jeopardy"? And so everyone needs to mobilize. That is what a real mobilization policy looks like.

Sanctions are already undermining the foundations of world trade, the WTO rules and the principle of inviolability of private property. They are dealing a blow to liberal model of globalization based on markets, freedom and competition, which, let me note, is a model that has primarily benefited precisely the Western countries. And now they risk losing trust as the leaders of globalization. We have to ask ourselves, why was this necessary? After all, the United States' prosperity rests in large part on the trust of investors and foreign holders of dollars and US securities. This trust is clearly being

undermined and signs of disappointment in the fruits of globalization are visible now in many countries.

The well-known Cyprus precedent and the politically motivated sanctions have only strengthened the trend towards seeking to bolster economic and financial sovereignty and countries' or their regional groups' desire to find ways of protecting themselves from the risks of outside pressure. We already see that more and more countries are looking for ways to become less dependent on the dollar and are setting up alternative financial and payments systems and reserve currencies. I think that our American friends are quite simply cutting the branch they are sitting on. You cannot mix politics and the economy, but this is what is happening now. I have always thought and still think today that politically motivated sanctions were a mistake that will harm everyone, but I am sure that we will come back to this subject later.

We know how these decisions were taken and who was applying the pressure. But let me stress that Russia is not going to get all worked up, get offended or come begging at anyone's door. Russia is a self-sufficient country. We will work within the foreign economic environment that has taken shape, develop domestic production and technology and act more decisively to carry out transformation. Pressure from outside, as has been the case on past occasions, will only consolidate our society, keep us alert and make us concentrate on our main development goals.

Of course the sanctions are a hindrance. They are trying to hurt us through these sanctions, block our development and push us into political, economic and cultural isolation, force us into backwardness in other words. But let me say yet again that the world is a very different place today. We have no intention of shutting ourselves off from anyone and choosing some kind of closed development road, trying to live in autarky. We are always open to dialogue, including on normalizing our economic and political relations. We are counting here on the pragmatic approach and position of business communities in the leading countries.

Some are saying today that Russia is supposedly turning its back on Europe — such words were probably spoken already here too during the discussions — and is looking for new business partners, above all in Asia. Let me say that this is absolutely not the case. Our active policy in the Asian-Pacific region began not just yesterday and not in response to sanctions, but is a policy that we have been following for a good many years now. Like many other countries, including Western countries, we saw that Asia is playing an ever greater role in the world, in the economy and in politics, and there is simply no way we can afford to overlook these developments.

Let me say again that everyone is doing this, and we will do so to, all the more so as a large part of our country is geographically in Asia. Why should we not make use of our competitive advantages in this area? It would be extremely shortsighted not to do so.

”Today, we are seeing new efforts to fragment the world, draw new dividing lines, put together coalitions not built for something but directed against someone, anyone, create the image of an enemy as was the case during the Cold War years, and obtain the right to this leadership, or diktat if you wish.“

Developing economic ties with these countries and carrying out joint integration projects also creates big incentives for our domestic development. Today’s demographic, economic and cultural trends all suggest that dependence on a sole superpower will objectively decrease. This is something that European and American experts have been talking and writing about too.

Perhaps developments in global politics will mirror the developments we are seeing in the global economy, namely, intensive competition for specific niches and frequent change of leaders in specific areas. This is entirely possible.

There is no doubt that humanitarian factors such as education, science, healthcare and culture are playing a greater role in global competition. This also has a big impact on international relations, including because this ‘soft power’ resource will depend to a great extent on real achievements in developing human capital rather than on sophisticated propaganda tricks.

At the same time, the formation of a so-called polycentric world (I would also like to draw attention to this, colleagues) in and of itself does not improve stability; in fact, it is more likely to be the opposite. The goal of reaching global equilibrium is turning into a fairly difficult puzzle, an equation with many unknowns.

So, what is in store for us if we choose not to live by the rules – even if they may be strict and inconvenient – but rather live without any rules at all? And that scenario is entirely possible; we cannot rule it out, given the tensions in the global situation. Many predictions can already be made, taking into account current trends, and unfortunately, they are not optimistic. If we do not create a clear system of mutual commitments and agreements, if we do not build the mechanisms for managing and resolving crisis situations, the symptoms of global anarchy will inevitably grow.

Today, we already see a sharp increase in the likelihood of a whole set of violent conflicts with either direct or indirect participation by the world’s major powers. And the risk factors include not just traditional multinational conflicts, but also the internal instability in separate states, especially when we talk about nations located at the intersections of major states’ geopolitical interests, or on the border of cultural, historical, and economic civilizational continents.

Ukraine, which I’m sure was discussed at length and which we will discuss some more, is one of the example of such sorts of conflicts that affect international power balance, and I think it will certainly not be the last. From here emanates the next real threat of destroying the current system of arms control agreements. And this dangerous process was launched by the United States of America when it unilaterally withdrew from

the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, and then set about and continues today to actively pursue the creation of its global missile defense system.

Colleagues, friends,

I want to point out that we did not start this. Once again, we are sliding into the times when, instead of the balance of interests and mutual guarantees, it is fear and the balance of mutual destruction that prevent nations from engaging in direct conflict. In absence of legal and political instruments, arms are once again becoming the focal point of the global agenda; they are used wherever and however, without any UN Security Council sanctions. And if the Security Council refuses to produce such decisions, then it is immediately declared to be an outdated and ineffective instrument.

”Sanctions are already undermining the foundations of world trade, the WTO rules and the principle of inviolability of private property. They are dealing a blow to liberal model of globalization based on markets, freedom and competition, which is a model that has primarily benefited precisely the Western countries.“

Many states do not see any other ways of ensuring their sovereignty but to obtain their own bombs. This is extremely dangerous. We insist on continuing talks; we are not only in favor of talks, but insist on continuing talks to reduce nuclear arsenals. The less nuclear weapons we have in the world, the better. And we are ready for the most serious, concrete discussions on nuclear disarmament – but only serious discussions without any double standards.

What do I mean? Today, many types of high-precision weaponry are already close to mass-destruction weapons in terms of their capabilities, and in the event of full renunciation of nuclear weapons or radical reduction of nuclear potential, nations that are leaders in creating and producing high-precision systems will have a clear military advantage. Strategic parity will be disrupted, and this is likely to bring destabilization. The use of a so-called first global pre-emptive strike may become tempting. In short, the risks do not decrease, but intensify.

The next obvious threat is the further escalation of ethnic, religious, and social conflicts. Such conflicts are dangerous not only as such, but also because they create zones of anarchy, lawlessness, and chaos around them, places that are comfortable for terrorists and criminals, where piracy, human trafficking, and drug trafficking flourish.

Incidentally, at the time, our colleagues tried to somehow manage these processes, use regional conflicts and design ‘color revolutions’ to suit their interests, but the genie escaped the bottle. It looks like the controlled chaos theory fathers themselves do not know what to do with it; there is disarray in their ranks.

We closely follow the discussions by both the ruling elite and the expert community. It is enough to look at the headlines of the Western press over the last year. The same people are called fighters for democracy, and then Islamists; first they write about revolutions

and then call them riots and upheavals. The result is obvious: the further expansion of global chaos.

Colleagues, given the global situation, it is time to start agreeing on fundamental things. This is incredibly important and necessary; this is much better than going back to our own corners. The more we all face common problems, the more we find ourselves in the same boat, so to speak. And the logical way out is in cooperation between nations, societies, in finding collective answers to increasing challenges, and in joint risk management. Granted, some of our partners, for some reason, remember this only when it suits their interests.

Practical experience shows that joint answers to challenges are not always a panacea; and we need to understand this. Moreover, in most cases, they are hard to reach; it is not easy to overcome the differences in national interests, the subjectivity of different approaches, particularly when it comes to nations with different cultural and historical traditions. But nevertheless, we have examples when, having common goals and acting based on the same criteria, together we achieved real success.

Let me remind you about solving the problem of chemical weapons in Syria, and the substantive dialogue on the Iranian nuclear program, as well as our work on North Korean issues, which also has some positive results. Why can't we use this experience in the future to solve local and global challenges?

"You cannot mix politics and the economy, but this is what is happening now. I have always thought and still think today that politically motivated sanctions were a mistake that will harm everyone."

What could be the legal, political, and economic basis for a new world order that would allow for stability and security, while encouraging healthy competition, not allowing the formation of new monopolies that hinder development? It is unlikely that someone could provide absolutely exhaustive, ready-made solutions right now. We will need extensive work with participation by a wide range of governments, global businesses, civil society, and such expert platforms as ours.

However, it is obvious that success and real results are only possible if key participants in international affairs can agree on harmonizing basic interests, on reasonable self-restraint, and set the example of positive and responsible leadership. We must clearly identify where unilateral actions end and we need to apply multilateral mechanisms, and as part of improving the effectiveness of international law, we must resolve the dilemma between the actions by international community to ensure security and human rights and the principle of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of any state.

Those very collisions increasingly lead to arbitrary external interference in complex internal processes, and time and again, they provoke dangerous conflicts between leading

global players. The issue of maintaining sovereignty becomes almost paramount in maintaining and strengthening global stability.

Clearly, discussing the criteria for the use of external force is extremely difficult; it is practically impossible to separate it from the interests of particular nations. However, it is far more dangerous when there are no agreements that are clear to everyone, when no clear conditions are set for necessary and legal interference.

I will add that international relations must be based on international law, which itself should rest on moral principles such as justice, equality and truth. Perhaps most important is respect for one's partners and their interests. This is an obvious formula, but simply following it could radically change the global situation.

I am certain that if there is a will, we can restore the effectiveness of the international and regional institutions system. We do not even need to build anything anew, from the scratch; this is not a "greenfield," especially since the institutions created after World War II are quite universal and can be given modern substance, adequate to manage the current situation.

This is true of improving the work of the UN, whose central role is irreplaceable, as well as the OSCE, which, over the course of 40 years, has proven to be a necessary mechanism for ensuring security and cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic region. I must say that even now, in trying to resolve the crisis in southeast Ukraine, the OSCE is playing a very positive role.

"Russia is a self-sufficient country. We will work within the foreign economic environment that has taken shape, develop domestic production and technology and act more decisively to carry out transformation. Pressure from outside, as has been the case on past occasions, will only consolidate our society."

In light of the fundamental changes in the international environment, the increase in uncontrollability and various threats, we need a new global consensus of responsible forces. It's not about some local deals or a division of spheres of influence in the spirit of classic diplomacy, or somebody's complete global domination. I think that we need a new version of interdependence. We should not be afraid of it. On the contrary, this is a good instrument for harmonizing positions.

This is particularly relevant given the strengthening and growth of certain regions on the planet, which process objectively requires institutionalization of such new poles, creating powerful regional organizations and developing rules for their interaction. Cooperation between these centers would seriously add to the stability of global security, policy and economy. But in order to establish such a dialogue, we need to proceed from the assumption that all regional centers and integration projects forming around them need to have equal rights to development, so that they can complement each other and nobody can force them into conflict or opposition artificially. Such destructive

actions would break down ties between states, and the states themselves would be subjected to extreme hardship, or perhaps even total destruction.

I would like to remind you of the last year's events. We have told our American and European partners that hasty backstage decisions, for example, on Ukraine's association with the EU, are fraught with serious risks to the economy. We didn't even say anything about politics; we spoke only about the economy, saying that such steps, made without any prior arrangements, touch on the interests of many other nations, including Russia as Ukraine's main trade partner, and that a wide discussion of the issues is necessary. Incidentally, in this regard, I will remind you that, for example, the talks on Russia's accession to the WTO lasted 19 years. This was very difficult work, and a certain consensus was reached.

Why am I bringing this up? Because in implementing Ukraine's association project, our partners would come to us with their goods and services through the back gate, so to speak, and we did not agree to this, nobody asked us about this. We had discussions on all topics related to Ukraine's association with the EU, persistent discussions, but I want to stress that this was done in an entirely civilized manner, indicating possible problems, showing the obvious reasoning and arguments. Nobody wanted to listen to us and nobody wanted to talk. They simply told us: this is none of your business, point, end of discussion. Instead of a comprehensive but – I stress – civilized dialogue, it all came down to a government overthrow; they plunged the country into chaos, into economic and social collapse, into a civil war with enormous casualties.

Why? When I ask my colleagues why, they no longer have an answer; nobody says anything. That's it. Everyone's at a loss, saying it just turned out that way. Those actions should not have been encouraged – then it wouldn't turn out that way. After all (I already spoke about this), former Ukrainian President Yanukovich signed everything, agreed with everything. Why do it? What was the point? What is this, a civilised way of solving problems? Apparently, those who constantly throw together new 'color revolutions' consider themselves 'brilliant artists' and simply cannot stop.

I am certain that the work of integrated associations, the cooperation of regional structures, should be built on a transparent, clear basis; the Eurasian Economic Union's formation process is a good example of such transparency. The states that are parties to this project informed their partners of their plans in advance, specifying the parameters of our association, the principles of its work, which fully correspond with the World Trade Organization rules.

I will add that we would also have welcomed the start of a concrete dialogue between the Eurasian and European Union. Incidentally, they have almost completely refused us this as well, and it is also unclear why – what is so scary about it?

"We have no intention of shutting ourselves off from anyone and choosing some kind of closed development road. We are always open to dialogue, including on normalizing

our economic and political relations. We are counting here on the pragmatic approach and position of business communities in the leading countries.“

And, of course, with such joint work, we would think that we need to engage in dialogue (I spoke about this many times and heard agreement from many of our western partners, at least in Europe) on the need to create a common space for economic and humanitarian cooperation stretching all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

Colleagues, Russia made its choice. Our priorities are further improving our democratic and open economy institutions, accelerated internal development, taking into account all the positive modern trends in the world, and consolidating society based on traditional values and patriotism.

We have an integration-oriented, positive, peaceful agenda; we are working actively with our colleagues in the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and other partners. This agenda is aimed at developing ties between governments, not dissociating. We are not planning to cobble together any blocs or get involved in an exchange of blows.

The allegations and statements that Russia is trying to establish some sort of empire, encroaching on the sovereignty of its neighbors, are groundless. Russia does not need any kind of special, exclusive place in the world – I want to emphasize this. While respecting the interests of others, we simply want for our own interests to be taken into account and for our position to be respected.

We are well aware that the world has entered an era of changes and global transformations, when we all need a particular degree of caution, the ability to avoid thoughtless steps. In the years after the Cold War, participants in global politics lost these qualities somewhat. Now, we need to remember them. Otherwise, hopes for a peaceful, stable development will be a dangerous illusion, while today's turmoil will simply serve as a prelude to the collapse of world order.

Yes, of course, I have already said that building a more stable world order is a difficult task. We are talking about long and hard work. We were able to develop rules for interaction after World War II, and we were able to reach an agreement in Helsinki in the 1970s. Our common duty is to resolve this fundamental challenge at this new stage of development.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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