



(AP photo by RIA-Novosti, Presidential Press Service, Mikhail Klimentyev)

Russian President Vladimir Putin holds a terrestrial globe 29 August 2014 with Russian territory colored pink, seemingly including Crimea, presented to him as a gift during his meeting with participants in the youth educational forum at the Seliger youth camp near Lake Seliger, Russia.

Is a Greater Russia Really So Bad?

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The Russian military's foray into the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea in late February 2014 set in motion a chain of events that some observers fear threatens to dismantle the post-Cold War order presumed to be based on global integration and the rule of international

law.¹ Such observations are overblown and bear close, critical scrutiny. After such an analysis, one may very well conclude that developing events involving Russia and its bordering states are of grave concern to the United States, but not for the reasons one might first expect.

Are Russia's newly resurrected expansionist tendencies the harbinger of a secret plan for world conquest, or do they signal something else altogether? Why should the United States be concerned at all? The fact is that the United States should be concerned because in the evolving global system, both nations are going to need each other—a lot. Consequently, anything the United States can do to more fully grasp the underlying motivations for Russia's apparent newfound aggressiveness, and to use such insight to shape policy aimed at assuaging the bitterness Russia currently harbors toward the United States, will be hugely important to U.S. national interests.

For better or worse, the two nations share similar threats to both their long-term security and their national identities. Consequently, the policy priorities of the United States should focus on cultivating Russia as a valued ally instead of continuing with ham-fisted efforts to publicly humiliate it into compliance with American wishes on the world stage over such issues as its relationship with Ukraine. This is only serving at present to convert Russia back into a Cold War-like adversary.

Unquestionably, preservation of Ukraine as an independent, sovereign nation should be a serious objective but one that can be best achieved by a concerted effort to see the issue from a Russian perspective and reasonably accommodate Russian concerns and interests.

The Return of Russia as a Great Power?

A good place to start any critical analysis of the Russian viewpoint regarding the events in Ukraine is to consider whether Russia has any legitimate vested interest in that nation. From the Russian perspective, it certainly does. Russian interests stem in large part from historical roots in Ukraine. Ethnic Russians see Ukraine as the ancestral home of the founders of the Russian nation itself—the Kievan Rus. Consequently, Ukraine has been regarded for the better part of a millennium by many ethnic Russians as an integral part of Russian territory.² (Most ethnic Ukrainians appear to disagree with that premise.)

Irrespective of either view, there is little doubt that owing to Ukraine's geographical proximity to Russia and undeniable common Slavic ethnic and cultural

roots, Ukraine is legitimately within Russia's cultural as well as strategic sphere of interest. All the more so, Russia's only warm weather port—at Sevastopol in the Crimea—was located in Ukrainian territory (now annexed to Russia), which made it vulnerable to constant threats of closure during periods of regional or international political tension.

Seen in such context, it is understandable why Putin's bold gambit to seize Ukrainian territory was so extremely popular among ethnic Russians both in and outside of Russia. It was widely seen among such as a positive step toward reasserting Kremlin authority over what most regarded as fundamentally Russian territory and ethnic-Russian enclaves that at various times in history had been part of the Russian empire. From such a perspective, one can also readily understand why Russian troops entering Ukraine were so warmly received by ethnic Russians living in the Crimea, who saw such an incursion as rescue from ostensible infringements on their civil rights by an increasingly nationalist Ukrainian government that wanted to distance itself from Russia.

Similarly, and not surprisingly, this pan-Russian sentiment was again manifest just two months after initial Russian involvement in the Crimea by an uprising of pro-Russia militias that seized other cities and towns with ethnic Russian populations in eastern Ukraine and took control of the respective local governments.

Thus, in backing and then sponsoring ethnic revolt, Russian President Vladimir Putin took advantage of Russian xenophobia already piqued by unpopular efforts of the European Union and United States to fundamentally alter the balance of power in Europe by working to sever Ukraine's economic ties with Russia and realign them with Western Europe. By fanning the flames of ethnic Russian identity inside Ukraine, he successfully provoked an armed rebellion that he used to justify the annexation of some Ukrainian territories and the virtual annexation of others.

It should be understood that Putin is an opportunist with a larger agenda. He thinks of himself as a pan-Russian leader following in the footsteps of the tsars. This attitude is prevalent in his public discourse. For some time, he has publicly espoused the necessity of restoring Russian greatness and international

prestige by reconstituting and extending the Russian empire over its former territories. For example, in a speech to the Russian Duma (Parliament) in June 2014, he invoked as justification for renewed Russian expansionism the legacy of Vladimir the Great—the prince of Kiev who established Christianity in Russia. Putin then signed a treaty that formalized the Russian annexation of Crimea, the land where Putin's own ancestor was baptized in the year 988.³ Another manifestation of Putin's restive Kremlin has been its increasing proclivity to aggressively challenge U.S. political influence on many fronts globally.

How does this pugnacious, nationalistic attitude play among the Russian people? Reliable polls show a depth of popular Russian support for Putin's convictions and supporting actions that are nothing if not ominous. In recent months, Putin's popularity ratings, as measured by Pew Global Attitudes Polling, have soared to 83 percent—a four-year high—after a lingering period of disenchantment

with Putin following his presidential electoral victory in 2012.⁴

This stands in stark contrast to perceptions of Putin among Western leaders that are uniformly negative. Putin's aggression against the nominally independent Ukraine occasioned widespread outrage and condemnation in the West. In a display of protest and disapproval, the Obama administration quickly imposed economic and banking sanctions against Russia.⁵ The European Union followed suit and even threatened to cancel the \$20 billion South Stream pipeline, intended to export natural gas from Russia to Europe while bypassing Ukraine.⁶

At the time of this article's publication, none of these measures have had the effect apparently intended by the West on either Putin or the attitudes of the Russian people, mainly because Western Europe needs Russian natural gas. Quite the opposite, disapproval from the West, and the ineffectiveness of measures taken against Russia by the West, to protest



(AP photo by Rex Features)

A man displays t-shirts featuring President Vladimir Putin at a market in Varna, Bulgaria, 16 September 2014. With the annexation of the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, the t-shirts became very popular in the Balkan country where 300,000 Russian citizens live permanently.

annexation of Ukrainian territory have appeared to actually embolden rather than dampen resurgent Russian defiance.

In the realm of popular culture, Russians have returned as villains. For instance, one of the hottest personalities now in World Wrestling Entertainment is Lana—“the Ravishing Russian”—a female manager who praises Vladimir Putin and taunts audiences with anti-American invective.⁷ Likewise, new anti-American popular sentiment has gripped Russia in which the United States is viewed as its main enemy and geopolitical rival. Thus, on the surface, Russia under the tutelage of Putin seems to be on the dangerous course of reasserting a claim to superpower status on the international stage. However, on more detailed examination, the actions of Putin and Russia are actually acts of increasing desperation and are destined to be relatively short lived.

Russia is beset by an enormous array of internal problems that present staggering obstacles to the Kremlin’s ability to maintain its new sense of confidence or stature for anything but a limited amount of time measurable in decades, much less reclaim superpower status. Almost all of these challenges are tied to dramatic impending shifts in Russian demographics.

Russia and the Womb Bomb

U.S. policy makers should recognize that Russia is at perhaps the most critical juncture in its history in terms of its Slavic identity. Current demographic changes in Russia threaten to change the face of what it means to be Russian, and consequently the dynamics of international relations with that country. Russia’s dilemma is almost entirely related to the diminishing number of ethnic, traditionally orthodox-Christian, Russians as opposed to the rising numbers of non-Slavic ethnic groups, many of whom principally identify themselves as ethnic Chinese, Islamic minorities, or both.

With a low birth rate and a comparatively high death rate, Russia’s ethnic-Russian population has been shrinking since the early 1990s. At the time of the Soviet Union’s collapse, Russia’s population stood at an estimated 148.5 million. By 2009, the population had dropped to 141.9 million, a decline of close to 5 percent. This trend is continuing and, according to the Russian government’s own projections,

the population will drop another 5.5 million by 2025.⁸ Official Russian forecasts, along with those from international organizations such as the United Nations, project a decline to between 80 and 100 million by 2050.⁹

Russia has experienced repeated bouts of depopulation in the twentieth century, but that was during an epoch punctuated by wars, revolution, famine, and political upheaval. In contrast, the current depopulation trend differs in key respects. First, it is by far the longest period of depopulation in modern Russian history. Second, this has been taking place during a time of relative stability and peace, and, therefore, must be attributable to other factors than catastrophe.

Another peculiarity of this period of decline in Russian population is that it is being dramatically shaped by changes to its ethnic composition, which is shifting rapidly from an ethnically Slavic majority to a non-Slavic, Central Asian Islamic majority in the west and a Chinese majority in the east. If current trends hold true, without replenishment of Slavic populations to retain the Slavic character and culture of the Russian nation, there is a very real possibility that the Orthodox Christian-oriented Russia, as it is known today, will disappear by the end of this century. Such a change could lead to radical shifts in international alliances with concomitant changes to the balance of power in Asia and in Europe.

Seeking to counter these trends, the Russian government has offered incentives for ethnic-Russian couples to have babies, but so far, these measures have had only limited success.¹⁰

Impact of Population Shifts on the Relationship Between Russia and China

One of the key relationships being most affected by demographic change is that which Russia has with its sometime ally China. Since the end of the Cold War, the two countries have made progress in political reconciliation and resolving—at least for now—long standing territorial disputes along their long Far Eastern border. Bilateral trade has increased between Russia and China as well. Additionally, both countries have felt what they mutually appear to regard as the humiliating sting of living under the global hegemony of the United States. Consequently, they have worked

together in attempts to strategically undermine U.S. influence in the Far Eastern region. A good example of this is the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001—a political, economic, and military union that includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Be that as it may, there are clear indications that Russia does not count on the era of bilateral cooperation with China to endure, viewing its long-term future relationship with Beijing as one of extreme competition and conflict, not cooperation.

Among the dynamics at the root of the friction is China's sheer superiority of numbers. China's population of 1.32 billion people already dwarfs Russia's approximately 141 million. Barring some unforeseen factor that increases Russian population in the Far East, this imbalance will increase with time.

The difference in population mirrors the development and overall status of the two nations. Over the past two decades, there has been a sharp reversal in the standings of Russia and China as great powers; China has been ascending in power and influence while Russia has been in a general trajectory of decline.¹¹ Like Russia, however, progress in China has been complicated by a Muslim separatist movement in its Uyghur Province of the Xinjiang Region.¹² While the Russian and Chinese economies were roughly equal in 1993, China's was more than 3.5 times larger by 2008.¹³ Even in the current era of global economic slowdown, the Chinese economy still remains more robust than Russia's, in no small measure because the population advantage gives it greater potential for economic development.

Moscow's greatest long-term concern stems from China's undisguised claim to territory in Siberia that it regards as historically Chinese. This claim is rooted in the historical relationship between Russia and China. As the Russians commenced their eastward expansion into Siberia in the seventeenth century, the Chinese disputed and attempted to check all Russian territorial claims. As a result, bitter territorial confrontations between Russia and China have been numerous and nearly continuous, with only minor interruptions up until very recently.¹⁴

Subsequent Russian control of its eastern territories has been exercised primarily from key settlements by ethnic Russians. Although situated in an extremely resource-rich area, Russian settlement of Siberia has

never been extensive and has been greatly hampered by a bitterly cold and inhospitable climate. As a result, ethnic Russian communities in the area often were maintained only as a result of military basing, forced resettlement, or as penal colonies.

With the broadening of personal liberties following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the number of Russian inhabitants in Siberia has been dwindling. The declining population of ethnic Russians has returned much of Siberia to the status of wilderness. Such a situation has ironically made the Russian-Chinese frontier in the Far East a major flash point. The potential for increased conflict between the two countries results now in no small measure from migrating ethnic Chinese who are moving into the thinly populated Siberian border area adjoining those depopulated Russian territories as departing ethnic Russians leave for less austere living conditions and greater economic opportunity in western Russia.

Currently, the population density on the Chinese side of the Far East border is 62 times greater than that on the Russian side and is increasing.¹⁵ The already significant demographic imbalance between the ethnic groups in the area, short of some unseen significant change in population trends among ethnic Russians, will continue to increase the imbalance in favor of ethnic Chinese into the foreseeable future. Up to five million Chinese now live in Far Eastern Russia, roughly equal to the only six million Russians that remain there whose numbers are steadily declining.¹⁶ Russian observers suspect that this population is poisoning itself, with Chinese government support, to cross the border en masse at some future propitious time when the Russian government may find itself distracted by other strategic concerns and priorities, and physically unable to stem such a migration. Thus, the depopulation of the Slavic population, and the unopposed steady immigration of the Chinese near Siberia, could be setting the stage for Beijing to become the de facto overlord of Russia's resource-rich Far East in the not too distant future.¹⁷ This inevitably would result in a diminished Russia in the Far East, a circumstance that would make it no longer a counterweight to offset the rising power of China.

Such a development would have far reaching consequences for the United States since America's long-term security interests as outlined in *The National*

Military Strategy of the United States of 2011 have a decidedly Pacific-rim focus and rest on the presumption of continued U.S. hegemony in the area.¹⁸

Russia and the Muslim World

The other key impact of the decline in the population of ethnic Russians is a shift in the traditional cultural orientation and character of the Russian state itself. While the Slavic majority declines in numbers, the Central Asian Muslim minorities continue to grow rapidly.

Russia's indigenous Muslim population has grown by 40 percent since 1989.¹⁹ The native Muslim population also has been bolstered by an influx of three to four million Muslim migrants from former Soviet republics such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, who have entered the country in search of employment.²⁰ Currently, roughly 80 percent of Russia's Muslims reside in the North Caucasus and Middle Volga regions. However, Russia's capital city itself—Moscow—also hosts an estimated 2.5 million Muslims, which is more than any other European city except Istanbul, Turkey.²¹

Additionally, in 2010, the Russian Federal Security Service's Border Service reported a sharp increase in illegal immigration from the Middle East and Southeast Asia.²² Many of these new immigrants are Muslims from the former Soviet republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Illegal immigration into Russia has sparked a backlash. Xenophobic gangs of armed ethnic-Slav vigilantes now routinely assault immigrants. Reportedly, the police often ignore these attacks. In the summer of 2008, the ultranationalist Movement Against Illegal Immigration staged several large marches in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Its members are increasingly being heard by the government.²³

Precise figures are elusive, but according to some estimates, the Muslim population could be as high as 27 million, accounting for roughly 15 percent of the population of the Russian Federation.²⁴ Although Russia's Muslims are currently a minority, they are on a population growth trajectory that could make them the majority by the middle of the century.²⁵

Character of Cultural Change

As a group, Muslims in Russia exhibit fewer social maladies than their Slavic countrymen. Divorce rates are much lower for Muslims than for Slavic Russians.

In addition, Muslim women have more children on average than Slavic women and are far less likely to have abortions. Muslims also suffer fewer premature deaths and live longer than their Slavic countrymen, despite a generally much lower economic status.²⁶

What is more, Muslims generally appear to be far more observant in the practice of their faith than their Orthodox countrymen. Churches in Moscow are reported to be nearly empty during worship services, while the mosques by comparison are filled.²⁷ In 1990, there were only 500 mosques in Russia. By 2008, this figure had reached 8,000. This has some significant potential socio-political impacts.²⁸

First, generally speaking, widely shared values within growing Islamic communities encourage large families as opposed to the generally secular values that prevail among ethnic Russians that works against child bearing and the formation of large families.²⁹ The anomie of post-Soviet society created a Russian populace that continues to suffer from a severe lack of optimism and confidence in their nation's future. Faced with such malaise, fewer children are born to ethnic Russian couples, while social maladies such as drug addiction and alcoholism are endemic. As a result, not only are death rates high among ethnic Russians, but birth rates are very low. With a "total fertility rate" of 1.61 live births per woman among ethnic Russians, Russia now ranks 178th in the world in this measure of procreation.³⁰

Population disparities appear tied in some respects to the sad condition of the public health system, which has severely deteriorated in the post-Soviet era due to abysmal medical standards, runaway drug addiction, and an AIDS epidemic. One consequence has been that by 2011, Russia ranked 144th in the world in life expectancy, placing it in the bottom third of all nations and far outside the norm of industrialized countries.³¹

Observing these demographic trends, the political economist Nicholas Eberstadt noted, Russia today "resembles not an emerging middle-income market economy at peace, but an impoverished sub-Saharan conflict or post-conflict society."³²

Second, a practicing Islamic majority may in time seek to replace prevailing secular law with Islamic law over the objections of other groups that fall into minority status.

Lastly, a majority Islamic Russia, particularly one that has inherited a government legacy of animus toward the United States left by Putin or successors, could become fertile recruitment ground for those appealing for global jihad against the West. A potential radicalization of some significant segment of the Muslim population, coupled with the demographic transformation of the country, could drastically alter Russian culture, society, and politics. As Ilan Berman noted, the rise of radical Islam poses a grave threat to “the very integrity of the Russian state.”³³

In the very near future, the effects of Islamization could be reflected in the Russian military. Joseph D’Agostino of the Population Research Institute predicts that Muslims could soon comprise up to half of the conscripts in the Russian Army. Although Russians still comprise a clear majority of the population, and military service is compulsory, only about 10 percent of young Russian men actually serve due to college deferments, bribes to evade the draft, and the like. As D’Agostino points out, given the notoriously brutal nature of the Russian Army, avoiding military service is understandable. He asks—

But will the generals be able to avoid having a Muslim military if most men who haven’t fled Russia are Muslim? Will such a military operate effectively given the fury that many domestic Muslims feel toward the Russian military’s tactics in the Muslim region of Chechnya? What if other Muslim regions of Russia—some of which contain huge oil reserves—rebel against Moscow? Will Muslim soldiers fight and kill to keep them part of the Russian motherland?³⁴

Additionally, it is not inconceivable that an emboldened and ideologically polarized Muslim majority in Russia might one day seek to absorb the five erstwhile Muslim republics of the Soviet Union—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—and form a Muslim superpower that would surpass all other Muslim nations in population, resources, and military might. Thus, the transition of Russia to a Muslim-majority population could be even more disruptive than the dissolution of the Soviet Union, radically upsetting the balance of power in Europe and Asia. For example, on the Indian

subcontinent, an Islamicized Russia might seek common cause with its former adversary, Pakistan, and leave India—America’s ally and counterweight to China—in a much weaker relative position. The Russia of the future could plausibly emerge as a Muslim nuclear superpower with a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

If demographics are really destiny, then the United States must prepare for the contingency of a Muslim-dominated Russia in control of a formidable nuclear arsenal. Such a development, linked to the looming prospect of an increasingly Islamicized Western Europe, would place the United States in an extremely complex security predicament as it would have to deal with “Eurabia” in the West on the one hand, and a Muslim majority Russia in the East.³⁵ It is not hard to see in such a development a significant potential challenge to U.S. national security in the future.

Radical Islam in Russia

With regard to the current challenges Russia itself faces from radical Islam, the Caucasus region remains a political quagmire. Since the conflict with Chechnya commenced in 1994, between 10,000 and 15,000 Russian soldiers have died there, which is comparable to the estimated 13,833 Soviet soldiers that were killed in the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s.³⁶ The wars have taken an even more devastating toll on the Chechen people, resulting in significant residual bitterness and hatred for ethnic Russians.³⁷ What first began as a nationalist struggle for self-determination later morphed into an Islamist jihad with the Caucasus emerging as a critical theater. As a consequence, Chechen politics became both Islamized and internationalized, which laid the groundwork for future conflict.³⁸

Additionally, the global jihadist movement has sought to use the Chechen struggle for independence as a vehicle to transform the Caucasus into an Islamist stronghold. If such were achieved, radical Islamists could use the region as a springboard to launch terrorist strikes into Russia, Europe, and the Middle East.³⁹ With the above in mind, it is ominous to observe that, in recent years, Chechen militants have staged a comeback from earlier Russian successes against them and have carried out a number of deadly terrorist attacks in Russia.⁴⁰

Turning Russia from Ally into Enemy

In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks against the United States, the Kremlin initially was seen as a partner in the U.S.-led war against Islamic terrorism in so far as the Russian army had been fighting a protracted campaign against Chechen

separatists. The Kremlin even supported the intervention in Afghanistan by allowing the U.S. military to use bases in the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia over which it still exerted a strong influence.⁴¹ Irrespective, the U.S. government never whole-heartedly reciprocated support for the Kremlin's campaigns to squelch the jihad in the Caucasus. In fact,



in the late 1990s, the Clinton administration not only criticized Kremlin conduct of the war but even provided tacit encouragement to Chechnya's Muslim allies and private security companies to assist Islamist rebels in Chechnya.⁴²

More recently, the administration of President Barack Obama has shown even less tolerance for



(AP Photo by Alexander Zemlianichenko)

Russia's efforts to stamp out separatist movements inside Russia by defeating restive rebellions within its borders. In January of 2012, he appointed the strident Kremlin critic, Michael McFaul, to serve as the U.S. ambassador in Moscow, where he has subsequently hosted at the embassy a variety of opposition activists including secessionists, some of whom were suspected as being linked to terrorists, according to the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.⁴³

Although such policies may win short-term geo-political gains among some international groups sympathetic to separatist goals, they could have devastating consequences in the future because they stymie efforts to cultivate the kind of good will and support from Russia that the United States will need to deal with its own set of emerging security challenges.

Russia Courting the Islamic World

To counter what it apparently perceives as hostility from the West in general, and the United States in particular, Russia appears to be making a strategic effort to ingratiate itself with, and restore some of its Soviet-era influence in, the Islamic world. To that end, Putin has sought to publicly demarcate in the Muslim world his view of what constitute "good" and "bad" Islamic militants; the latter are the Chechen separatists and their allies in the North Caucasus and Tatarstan, while the former include those who challenge the United States and Israel.⁴⁴ This approach has had significant political success. At the 2003 meeting of the Islamic Conference Organization held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, amidst anti-Zionist and anti-American tirades, Putin elaborated on that theme while describing Russia in stark contrast to the West as Islam's "historic defender."⁴⁵ Russia was later invited to join that organization as an official observer in 2005.

In this same vein, at a speech on 24 June 2009 in Cairo before the Arab League Conference, then-President Dmitry Medvedev emphasized the importance of Islam to Russia, commenting that owing to Russia's large Muslim population, his

Muslims pray outside Moscow's main mosque during celebrations of Eid al-Adha, 15 October 2013. The feast, celebrated by Muslims worldwide, is called Kurban-Bairam in Russia.

country “does not need to seek friendship with the Muslim world. Our country is an organic part of this [Muslim] world.”⁴⁶

While Putin clearly identifies Russia as a largely Christian nation, he is attempting to establish a dividing line between the shared values of believers in many religious traditions and those of the secular West. Increasingly, he emphasizes Russia’s shared moral values with the Middle East, Asian, and other non-Western societies. As part of this soft power strategy, he seeks to exploit the differences between the social values between the West and the predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa, for example, on issues such as feminism and gay rights. By doing so, he is seeking to transform Western values into a liability rather than an asset for Western governments, with some significant success.⁴⁷

One apparent consequence of Putin’s outreach initiatives is that in much of the Muslim world, Russia is increasingly seen as a viable counterweight to American influence.⁴⁸ Acceptance of this view can be expected to grow as the Muslim population in Russia increases.

Additionally, Putin apparently feels secure enough politically to ignore the pleas of Western governments who have insisted that the Kremlin stop providing assistance to the Islamic Republic of Iran to complete work on its Bushehr nuclear reactor. He has further taunted the West by sponsoring the education of many Iranian nuclear scientists who have received training from Russia.⁴⁹ As a result, Putin has successfully used Iran as a lever to lessen U.S. influence and trust among Middle Eastern nations while at the same time exploiting the Sunni-Shia Islamic divide by elevating the status of Shia Iran as a barrier to Sunni radicalism in Russia’s interior.

Be that as it may, like the United States, Russia probably harbors reservations of its own toward Tehran’s quest to acquire a nuclear arsenal. No doubt, some Russian leaders suspect that an emboldened, nuclear-armed Iran might someday try to reclaim the “northern territories” of the former Persian Empire currently circumscribed within the Caucasus and Central Asia at the expense of Russia. Such an eventuality is plausible based on projected demographic changes in the region. According to

some demographic projections, by the year 2050, Russia’s population could shrink to as little as 100 million, while Iran by itself could grow to 90 million. Moreover, by that time, Iran would be in an advantageous position vis-à-vis Russia in terms of oil and natural gas development as well as nuclear technologies.⁵⁰

Reconstituting the Russian Empire

Russian President Vladimir Putin is well aware of the existential threats his nation faces due to changing demographics. In 2006, he described the demographic decline as “the most acute problem in contemporary Russia.”⁵¹ This is a circumstance that Putin—the passionate Russian nationalist—can be expected to try to reverse at almost any cost. And just how would a leader of Putin’s background and character do that? To answer that question, it may be useful to review his background and the



influences that have reportedly shaped his world view.

Under the depressing circumstances that Russia faces, it is not hard to see why a strong personality like Putin would have such public appeal in Russia. According to his primary biographer, Masha Gessen, Putin was never a communist ideologue; rather, his faith in communism was always shallow which, long before the fall of the Berlin Wall, he had concluded was no longer plausible. Rather, Putin placed his faith in Soviet institutions of the central government and the historical resilience of the Russian people.⁵² First and foremost, his loyalty was to the KGB and the Soviet empire it defended. Thus, when collapse came (as stated in his own words), the dissolution of the Soviet Union was “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe” of the twentieth century.



(Photo courtesy of NocturneNoir)

When Putin first came to power in 2000, he exploited the disillusionment and weariness of the Russian population, who had suffered under the economic instability of the Yeltsin years, ruthlessly reconcentrating power in a centralized state government.⁵³ His efforts were abetted by a concomitant surge in global oil prices that created a huge windfall for the energy sector of the Russian economy and helped the government’s fiscal position.⁵⁴ In fact, the sober, highly disciplined former KGB officer successfully established a great measure of economic stability, elevated Russia’s position in foreign affairs, and extended its international influence on the world stage.

His numerous perceived faults notwithstanding, Putin’s efforts have made him a national icon because he restored in great measure a lively sense of national pride to his countrymen, who had felt betrayed and humiliated by their nation’s rapid decline from being a recognized superpower in the 1990s.⁵⁵ Despite significant domestic dissent and rumblings in recent years protesting his autocratic style and efforts to undermine the institutions of pluralistic democracy, he appears to be firmly in control of the Russian state with widespread public support.

Influences on Putin’s Thinking

Putin may be a faithful reflection of wider Russian attitudes. There appears to be broad cultural agreement among ethnic Russians that their nation either grows or it dies. Putin apparently shares that world view, which was shaped by a broad range of nationalist politicians and intellectuals, espousing a platform of irredentism promoting expansion. Across the political spectrum, leading political thinkers have publicly advocated ways to reconstitute the Russian empire, ideas that have seemingly wide public support.⁵⁶ As far back as 1995, the late Nobel laureate Alexander Solzhenitsyn called for the reconstitution of the Slavic nations of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, along with Kazakhstan in his book *The Russian Question at the End of the Twentieth Century*.⁵⁷ On the political left, Anatoly Chubais, the liberal architect of Russia’s pro-Western economic reforms of the 1990s, also voices support for imperial expansion.⁵⁸

Opulent Chinese border gate into Russia at Manzhouli, Inner Mongolia Province, 7 July 2009.

Another strident voice is that of Alexander Dugin, an academic at Moscow State University and former KGB archivist, who is recognized as the chief ideologist of a new Russian empire. Dubbed “Eurasianism,” his worldview is an odd blend of ultranationalism, Russian imperialism, cultural traditionalism, and neopagan mysticism.⁵⁹ In his paradigm outlining the new empire envisioned, Dugin describes America in Satanic terms, asserting that it is destined for confrontation with Russia.

Dugin’s views have influenced Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Federation of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the flamboyant leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, and most importantly, Vladimir Putin.⁶⁰ According to some observers, Dugin’s geopolitical vision has become the lodestar for Putin’s foreign policy.⁶¹ For example, seemingly echoing Dugin, Putin decries unipolarity and pushes for a multipolar world system that would decentralize power.

In the face of the existential crisis Russia now faces, many such Russian opinion leaders now confidently predict the inevitable reintegration of the former Soviet republics.⁶² The Kremlin has sought

to harness this nationalist activism by taking steps to counter the current demographic decline among ethnic Russians in part by seeking justification for reincorporating Russian enclaves found in former territories into Russia. As a result, an increasingly chauvinistic Russian government may now be expected to provoke justifications for waging a series of revanchist campaigns to reclaim lost territories on its borders. Like the Crimea, Belarus and Eastern Ukraine are good candidates for future annexation by Russia. Large numbers of ethnic Russians in both regions appear sympathetic to, and see themselves as part of, the new Russian empire both in political and ethnic terms.⁶³

Russia now may see in such actions an opportunity to replenish the Russian ethnic majority. Moreover, from the perspective of Putin, it may be better to strike sooner than later while there is a U.S. administration at divided purposes with Western Europe over an array of political policies in circumstances where long-term demographic, political, and economic trends militate against waiting.

To America’s intellectual elite, aspirations for territorial expansion may seem strangely anachronistic as well as illegal under international law. For Putin, however,

as well as many Russians, such expansion may likely be seen as a matter of national survival. Thus, the foray into Crimea and efforts to promote ethnic strife elsewhere can be seen not as indicators of emerging Russian strength but rather acts that mask Russia’s festering decrepitude.

Limits of Russian Objectives

Through the lens of history, current fears of Russian imperialism extending beyond states on its frontiers into Western Europe are consequently



(AP photo by Vladimir Rodionov)

President Vladimir Putin, right, speaks with Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, secretary-general of the 57-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference, during their meeting 7 June 2006 in the Kremlin.

overwrought. Only twice in history has Russia been able to drive into the heart of Europe. The first time was at the climax of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814, when the Russian army briefly occupied Paris. The second was at the end of World War II, when the Soviet army reached Berlin. In each case, Western Europe had been severely weakened by wars. Thus, in ordinary times, Western Europe appears quite capable of resisting Russia.

Furthermore, for the foreseeable future, Russia will not be able to project sizable conventional forces far beyond its borders due to present shortages of manpower and the lingering effects of steeply reduced funding levels after the end of the Cold War.⁶⁴ According to the Kremlin's own assessment, the Russian army performed miserably in the war with Georgia.⁶⁵ Additionally, at the present time, Russia is surrounded (beyond the former Soviet sphere) by countries and regions that are more dynamic—politically, economically, and demographically—than it is.⁶⁶ Simply put, Russia's conventional forces would be no match for its principal neighbors—neither NATO in the west nor China in the east.⁶⁷

Setting aside suspicions regarding Russian territorial ambitions, the saber rattling between the United States and Russia is extremely counterproductive for both. Although Western leaders may bristle at Putin's authoritarianism and aggression, it would be folly to resurrect the Cold War with Russia. First, for obvious reasons, it is advisable that both countries refrain from rhetoric that could ignite a new arms race or even nuclear confrontation. With a greatly reduced conventional force, Russia's strategic strength lies in its nuclear warheads left over from the Soviet era.⁶⁸ Despite big cuts, these arsenals remain large, and the consequences of their actual use are unthinkable.⁶⁹ Moreover, many of the weapons are still on high alert, thus the possibility of an accidental unauthorized launch of a warhead continues.⁷⁰

Irrespective, in a May 2014 interview with the Wall Street Journal, Secretary of State John Kerry stated that the Obama administration was fully aware that a confrontation with Russia over Ukraine could lead to nuclear war.⁷¹ Such rhetoric is, to say the very least, astoundingly inadvisable,

running the unnecessary risk of escalation of global annihilation not unlike the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

Ironically, the current situation is in reality a window of opportunity for the United States (and the West in general). Setting aside their serious differences and competitive political instincts, including the unlawful incursion into Ukraine, Russia and the United States need each other. On many vital issues confronting the two nations long term, the interests of the United States, Western Europe, and Russia closely parallel and often overlap.

For example, for the foreseeable future, the U.S. military will be involved in fighting a protracted and open-ended conflict with implacable terrorists and global insurgents—mainly from the world of Islamic extremists—bent on overthrowing the West. This stems in large measure from the chronic instability that bedevils the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia as evidenced by the recent turmoil in Libya and the attempted establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria by well-armed and well-funded radicals. Inasmuch as the United States is in the forefront of combating global jihadism, it is important to maintain a solid front with other nations facing the same threat—especially with Russia.

As it happens, Russia shares with the United States a constant and unabated internal threat from radical Islamic groups with similar avowed aims against the state, mostly from the Caucasus region. Thus, like the United States, Russia is engaged in what is now a long and dangerous open-ended conflict with militant Islam. The interests of both nations will be much better served by increased efforts to cooperate more closely to combat that mutual threat and deal with it globally. (To share how closely United States and Russian interests coincide in this area, it is useful to note that Chechen and Uzbek jihadists have been found fighting U.S. troops in Afghanistan.)⁷²

In another area, the U.S. government is concerned about the stability and security of its primary Middle Eastern ally, Israel, and its other key regional allies, Jordan and Egypt. Similarly, the Kremlin is concerned over the fate of its long-term ally, Syria, and for its own national interests, wants a stable and peaceful Levant.

In yet another parallel interest, the United States and Russia have a mutual interest in stemming nuclear proliferation in the Islamic world. The immediate prospect of an Iran armed with nuclear weapons, especially, would pose a threat to both Russia as well as U.S. allies throughout the region.

Finally, among many other issues of common concern, Russia and the United States share a common potential threat from a rising and increasingly aggressive China, which in terms of sheer population outnumbers the combined population of Russia and the United States together by a factor of three to one.

These examples illustrate that the United States and Russia have a vital interest in jointly cooperating to overcome challenges that threaten common interests. Moreover, the frank truth of the matter is that without Russia's participation and cooperation, as has been demonstrated repeatedly both with the case of Iran and Syria, U.S. attempts to secure its objectives in the regions without Russian cooperation are impossible. Therefore, a rapprochement between the two countries is necessary so that the two can move forward on such important issues of collective concern together to ensure a more stable world, which is fundamental to the true national interests of both.

However, unfortunately, instead of reconciliation, since the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy toward Russia seemingly has been built around a military policy of encirclement and containment as evidenced by NATO expansion.⁷³ As Charles A. Kupchan, a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University pointed out, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States and its NATO allies have constructed a post-Cold War order that effectively shut Russia out.⁷⁴ Diplomatic isolation of Russia by the United States has only increased the Kremlin's sense of embattlement and given credence to the sentiments of the ultranationalists seeking armed expansion of Russian territory.

Thus, treating Russia as an international pariah has proven to be a terrible policy mistake on a number of levels. Further isolation of Moscow,

such as ousting Russia from the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized democracies, would only embolden Putin to forge cooperative relationships with almost every nation or aspiring nationalist group that regards the United States as an enemy, including closer ties with a rogue's gallery of regimes such as Syria, Venezuela, and Iran.⁷⁵

Instead, to ensure pan-European as well as global stability, efforts must be made to integrate Russia into the Atlantic alliance.⁷⁶ As the noted defense analyst Thomas P.M. Barnett once noted, renewing the Cold War with Russia would "simply play into the hands of al-Qaida by dividing the Core against itself."⁷⁷

Conclusion: Cultivating Russia as an Ally

As a matter of realpolitik, the current anti-Russian orientation of the U.S. government is shortsighted. In fact, greater collaboration between the two countries could go a long way in solving some of the most critical security challenges the United States will face this century. With the persistent threat of militant Islam and the growing economic and military power of China, a strong Russia is essential to the long-term national security of the United States and the West.

For example, the U.S. military is overstretched and cannot afford a ruinous competition with the Russian military despite the latter's diminished status since the end of the Cold War. Also, in an increasingly tight fiscal environment, there are only so many tasks that the U.S. military can undertake. Thus, U.S. foreign policy must be bounded, missions prioritized, and partners such as Russia sought.

For Russia's part, the United States and the West are crucial for its modernization as well as a hedge against what may develop to Russia's east and south in the coming decades.⁷⁸

Thus, it would be in the long-term best interests of both countries to resist a resumption of the Cold War, reconcile differences, make greater effort to understand the respective points of view and interests of each other, and turn their attention to dealing with threats that collectively endanger both of them. ■

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Notes

1. Michael Crowley and Simon Shuster, "This is War," *Time*, 19 May 2014, 32.
2. Wynne Russell, "Russian Relations with the Near Abroad," in *Russian Foreign Policy Since 1990*, ed. Peter Shearman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 53. Areas of Ukraine formally came under the control of the Tsardom of Russia in the late eighteenth century after the partitions of Poland and the conquest of the Crimean Khanate. Since then, Ukraine has been part of a union with Russia until it gained its independence with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. As Wynne Russell explained, some of the erstwhile Soviet republics, Ukraine and Belarus in particular, have been "viewed by many Russians as not merely former family members but in fact as indivisible from the concept of Russia itself."
3. Crowley and Shuster, 33.
4. David Paul, "Xi and Putin Playing Dangerous Games to Mask Domestic Problems," *The Huffington Post*, 12 May 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-paul/xi-and-putin-playing-dang_b_5307549.html (accessed 5 November 2014).
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7. Marissa Payne, "Vladimir Putin makes his W/WE debut at 'Extreme Rules,'" *The Washington Post*, 5 May 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/early-lead/wp/2014/05/05/vladimir-putin-makes-his-wwe-debut-at-extreme-rules/> (accessed 5 November 2014).
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9. Steven Eke, "Russia Faces Demographic Disaster," BBC News, 7 June 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5056672.stm> (accessed 5 November 2014).
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11. Parker, 20.
12. Walid Pares, *The Confrontation: Winning The War against Future Jihad* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 97.
13. Thomas Graham, "The Sources of Russia's Insecurity," *Survival*, 52(1), (February/March 2010): 55.
14. Eugene Bazhanov, "Russian Policy Toward China," in *Russian Foreign Policy Since 1990*, ed. Peter Shearman (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 159.
15. Parker, 22.
16. Joseph A. D'Agostino, "Motherless Russia – Muslims and Chinese Vie For Huge Assets of Dying Nation," *Life Site*, 26 December 2006, <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/motherless-russia-muslims-and-chinese-vie-for-huge-assets-of-dying-nation> (accessed 5 November 2014); Matthias Schepp, "Change in Russia's Far East: China's Growing Interests in Siberia," *Der Spiegel*, 6 May 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/change-in-russia-s-far-east-china-s-growing-interests-in-siberia-a-761033.html> (accessed 22 June 2014).
17. Ian Berman, *Implosion: The End of Russia and What it Means for America* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2013), 52-65.
18. Thomas Graham, "New U.S. National Military Strategy: The United States sees Russia as an Asian power," Valdai Discussion Club, 10 February 2011, <http://valdaiclub.com/opinions/a162532266.html> (accessed 10 July 2014). Thomas Graham, the senior director of Kissinger Associates, opined that the strategy suggested a shift away from the Global War on Terrorism, which lay at the center of President George W. Bush's foreign and security policy, toward a greater focus on the rise of Asia; see also *Department of Defense, The National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), <https://acc.dau.mil/adl/en-US/425505/file/55897/2011%20National%20Military%20Strategy.pdf> (accessed 5 November 2014).
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21. Michael Mainville, "Islam Thrives as Russia's Population Falls," *Toronto Star*, 3 December 2006, <http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=31875> (accessed 5 November 2014).
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23. Owen Matthews, "The Backlash Against Immigration in Russia," *Newsweek*, 13 February 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/backlash-against-immigration-russia-82703> (accessed 5 November 2014).

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25. Berman, 27-39.
26. Berman, 31-32.
27. Paul Goble, "Moscow's Orthodox Churches Deserted While Streets are Filled with Muslims," *The Interpreter*, 30 July 2014, <http://www.interpretermag.com/moscows-orthodox-churches-deserted-while-streets-are-filled-with-muslims/> (accessed 5 November 2014). Buoyed by the Islamic revival, the Union of Muftis in Russia has pressured Moscow authorities to reverse themselves and allow for the construction of at least one mosque in each of the ten administrative divisions of the city. Mayor Sergei Sobyenin has resisted this plea for fear of the reaction from Muscovites. Despite this rebuff, many Muslims in Moscow are reportedly now joking among themselves about the fate of Orthodox churches in Constantinople (which is now Istanbul) after the Muslims took over the city and made it the capital of the caliphate.
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30. Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Enigma of Russian Mortality," *Current History*, 109 (729) (October 2010): 289.
31. Berman, 13-26.
32. Eberstadt, 291.
33. Berman, 39.
34. D'Agostino.
35. Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2005). Eurabia is a neologism created by the Israeli writer Gisele Littman under her pen name Bat Ye'or. She warns that if the demographic balance in Europe shifts to a Muslim majority then the continent will move away from its alliances with the United States and Israel.
36. Parker, 4. The Moscow-based human rights organization, Memorial, estimated that 15,000 Russian soldiers have died in the conflicts; see also, International Humanitarian Law Pro Bono Project, "Chechnya: Fight for Independence from Russia," <http://www.gistprobono.org/id223.html> (accessed 5 November 2014). The Russian government has been notoriously unforthcoming on releasing casualty figures for the Chechen wars; for casualties in the Soviet-Afghan War, see "Did the USSR Win the War in Afghanistan?" *Pravda*, 28 December 2011, <http://english.pravda.ru/history/28-12-2011/120105-ussr-afghanistan-0/> (accessed 15 August 2014).
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38. Berman, 43.
39. Yosseff Bodansky, *Chechen Jihad: Al Qaeda's Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 2.
40. Berman, 44.
41. Barak Mendelsohn, *Combating Jihadism: American Hegemony and Interstate Cooperation in the War on Terrorism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 191.
42. Bodansky, 175. U.S. policy toward separatists appears to be intended to weaken Russia's hold over the region so that western firms could move forward with their plans to construct the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which runs through the Caucasus region. The pipeline would make Europe less dependent on Russian energy products and also provide a huge windfall for western oil companies. The U.S., Russian, and Chinese governments have indeed given serious consideration to Afghanistan as a prospective site for constructing pipelines. The journalist Ahmed Rashid has christened this endeavor as the "Great Game II." As he reported, the Clinton administration sought to assist a U.S. firm, Unocal, in its effort to build an oil pipeline to pump gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. The Pakistani intelligence agency, ISI, urged the United States to support the Taliban insofar as it would make Unocal's project less cumbersome. However, U.S. domestic politics soon interfered as the plight of Afghan women became a cause célèbre among feminists and prominent liberals in Hollywood. Vice President Al Gore was eager to retain the support of these constituent groups in his upcoming presidential election. Furthermore, the continuing moderation of the government in Iran made that country a more attractive partner in the region. As a result, U.S. policy began to toughen against the Taliban. See also, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale Nota Bene, 2001), 156-177.
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45. Ibid.
46. Pipes.
47. Paul J. Sanders, "Putin's Muslim family values," *Al Monitor*, 29 May 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/05/russia-putin-values-based-diplomacy-muslim-world.html#> (accessed 5 November 2014).
48. Lucas, 203.
49. Julian Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2014), 118-119.

50. Parker, 24-25. This analysis is from Yevgeny Satanovsky, the head of the Near East Institute in Moscow.
51. Michael Kort, *The Soviet Colossus: History and Aftermath* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2010), 449; see also, Christopher True, "Ghost Villages' Haunt Russian Vote," *Al-Jazeera*, 2 March 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/russianelections/2012/03/20123272311679897.html> (accessed 5 November 2014).
52. Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).
53. Lucas, 53; Gessen, 177-197.
54. Crowley and Shuster, 33.
55. United Press International, "Gorbachev Named Least Popular Russia Leader," 2 February 2012, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2012/02/02/Gorbachev-named-least-popular-Russia-leader/UPI-27121328208913/ (accessed 5 November 2014). In a poll conducted by the Russian state media in early 2012, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were identified as the two most unpopular leaders of the past century. By contrast, a respectable 61 percent of those Russian surveyed described Putin's policies during his two presidential terms as "generally positive."
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57. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Russian Question at the End of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1995).
58. Berman, 108.
59. Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (London: Arktos, 2012).
60. James D. Heiser, "The American Empire Should be Destroyed": *Aleksander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology* (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 2014), 77.
61. *Ibid.*, 96.
62. Russell, 53.
63. Ukraine government website, <http://ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/> (accessed 7 August, 2014). Ethnic Russians compose roughly 17 percent of the population in Ukraine; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 164. As Huntington noted, Belarus "is part of Russia in all but name." Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka once suggested merging his country with Russia to form a union, though he later moved away from this position in part because of public snubs from Putin; Lucas, 133-134 and 147. Previously, pro-Moscow candidates have won overwhelming victories in regional elections in Crimea.
64. Parker, 14-15. In 2009, Russia's military budget stood at \$61 billion which places it below several other nations including the United States (\$663 billion), China (\$98.8 billion), Britain (\$69.3 billion) and France (\$67.3 billion).
65. Dale R. Herspring, "Is Military Reform in Russia for 'Real'? Yes, But . . .," in *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Marty Fitzgerald*, eds. Stephen J. Blank and Richard Weitz (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, July 2010), 151, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub997.pdf> (accessed 5 November 2014); Pavel K. Baev, "Russian Military Perestroika," Center on the United States and Europe at Brookings, U.S.–Europe Analysis Series Number 45 (April 29, 2010) 3, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/4/29%20russia%20military%20baev/0429_russia_military_baev.pdf (accessed 5 November 2014).
66. Graham, 55.
67. Dmitri Trenin, "Russian Perspectives on the Global Elimination of Nuclear Weapons," in *Unblocking the Road to Zero: Russia and the United States*, ed. Barry Blechman (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2009), 6.
68. Parker, 17.
69. Federation of American Scientists, Status of World Nuclear Forces, <http://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/> (accessed 5 November 2014). According to the Federation of American Scientists, as of 2014, the total U.S. nuclear arsenal includes 7,315 warheads of which 1,920 are operational strategic weapons. For Russia, those figures are 8,000 and 1,600 respectively. Despite these large figures, they are a substantial reduction from the peak levels of roughly 32,000 and 45,000 nuclear warheads held by Washington and Moscow, respectively, during the Cold War; see also Amy F. Woolf, *The New START Treaty: Central Limits and Key Provisions* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 8 April 2014), <http://fas.org/spp/crs/nuke/R41219.pdf> (accessed 5 November 2014). Since the end of the Cold War, Washington and Moscow have entered into a number of arms control treaties. The most recent was New START which was ratified in early 2011. According to the provisions of the treaty, both the United States and Russia will reduce their operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons to 1,550 warheads.
70. Joseph Cirincione, *Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 96-97. In 1995, for example, Russian forces mistook a Norwegian weather rocket for a U.S. submarine-launched ballistic missile which prompted President Boris Yeltsin to open the 'nuclear suitcase' for the first time in the nuclear age.
71. William Pfaff, "A Real Risk of War," *Chicago Tribune*, 6 May 2014, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-05-06/opinion/sns-201405061600--tms--wpfafftr--v-a20140506-20140506_1_president-putin-crimea-war (accessed 5 November 2014). Kerry went on to describe Russians as "thugs" and called the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov a "liar."
72. Miguel Francis, "Western Experts Continue to View Russia Negatively Instead of Being Worried about Muslim Extremism – Expert," *The Voice of Russia*, 28 October 2013, http://voiceofrussia.com/2013_10_28/Western-experts-continue-to-view-Russia-negatively-instead-of-being-worried-about-Muslim-extremism-expert-9270/ (accessed 4 August 2014).
73. David Paul, "Xi and Putin Playing Dangerous Games to Mask Domestic Problems," *The Huffington Post*, 12 May 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-paul/xi-and-putin-playing-dang_b_5307549.html (accessed 5 November 2014).
74. Charles A. Kupchan, "Why Russia Should Join the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, (May/June 2010): 100-112. Kupchan went so far as to call for the inclusion of Russia in the NATO alliance. By doing so, it could revitalize the transatlantic link by making Europe the stronger geopolitical partner that the United States urgently seeks, which is important considering how slow the European Union moves on matters of defense. What is more, if Russia were to join, it would enable states such as Georgia and Ukraine to join as well without provoking a crisis with Moscow. The dividing lines and competition between these states would fade away.
75. Alison Smale and Michael D. Shear, "Russia Is Ousted From Group of 8 by U.S. and Allies," *The New York Times*, 24 March 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/25/world/europe/obama-russia-crimea.html?_r=0 (accessed 5 November 2014). Russia was ejected from the G8 in March 2014 as a consequence of its foray into Crimea.
76. Kupchan, 101.
77. Thomas P.M. Barnett, *Great Powers: America and the World after Bush* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2009), 230.
78. Parker, 1.