



The flags of the 28 NATO member countries flap in the wind in front of headquarters in Brussels.

NATO in Context

Geopolitics and the Problem of Russian Power

BY ROBERT E. HUNTER

Since the end of the Cold War, the question “Whither NATO—and why?” has come up regularly, especially in the United States. This is not an idle question nor one that can simply be dismissed. If anything, it is remarkable that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization still exists a quarter-century after the key reason for its creation—the widely shared perception of a political, strategic, and military threat from the Soviet Union—ceased to exist. To be sure, there is now renewed challenge from the Soviet Union’s principal successor state, the Russian Federation. From the beginning of the 1990s, however, until the Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014, a span of nearly 25 years, the argument could have been made that there was no need for continuing the Western alliance that did so much to contain Soviet power and the Warsaw Pact and that played a significant role in the dissolution of both. Many people did argue just this point, both in the United States and elsewhere, but they were never in the majority (or at least they never prevailed in public and parliamentary debate). The reasons for NATO’s continued existence are important to understand, including to provide a basis for considering its future and, more precisely, the tasks it should be asked to perform and its very character as an alliance of sovereign states spanning the two sides of the Atlantic.¹

Power in Europe: Until the End of the Cold War

NATO has been only one of the many instruments and political-security efforts designed to deal with problems of power in Europe. The modern history of this subject can be said to have begun

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with the end of the Napoleonic wars, when the Congress of Vienna fashioned a set of understandings that, based on the overarching concept of the balance of power, largely kept the peace on the continent until 1914, when it fell with a crash that led to the most cataclysmic war (to that time) in European history. The collapse that led to the Great War had many causes, but perhaps none so important—and certainly none so consequential for the aftermath—as the problem of German power. This had emerged with full force upon the completion of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s project to forge a more or less united Germany, with the final phase in the period between 1867 and 1871. From that time until 1945 (with a hiatus from 1918 until the late 1930s, or the “phony peace”), dealing with the “German problem” was central to forging arrangements that could bring some reasonable predictability and a method of preventing a radical imbalance of power (and hence the risk of a major European war). These efforts, too, failed and cataclysmically so. After the Second World War, one of the central problems on the continent was how to deal with the future of German power.

One key objective, shared by all the nations of Europe and extending into the time of the division of Europe between East and West, was to keep Germany from again being a principal source of instability and potential conflict in Europe—in other words, to “keep Germany down,” in the oft-quoted phrase attributed to Lord Ismay, NATO’s First Secretary General.² Furthermore, once the lines of division in Europe solidified, with Germany divided between the American, British, and French occupation zones on one side and the Soviet zone (later becoming the separate nations of West Germany and East Germany)

on the other, there was tacit East-West agreement to keep the country divided—one of the few things on which all could agree.

But concern about growing German power from 1867 onward was not the only problem plaguing Europe. Beginning in the mid-1940s, there was awareness of Soviet power in the heart of the continent—awareness that had been building for some time, certainly from the solidification of Bolshevik control in Russia and the formal creation of the Soviet Union in 1924—that embraced the old Russian empire at close to its furthest historical dimensions. The Second World War and the defeat of Nazi Germany—and especially the central role of Soviet forces in bringing about that defeat—brought Soviet military power and then progressively developing communist control to the middle of Germany, as well as north and south along a line that stretched, as Winston Churchill put it, “[f]rom Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic[.]”³ Thus, the problem of Soviet power overlapped with that of German power from the late 1940s until the end of the Cold War, when further basic transformations took place. First, by the beginning of the 1990s, it became evident that the German “problem” had been “solved,” in large measure because of developments within German society—a truly remarkable event in European history. This “problem” had to of course remain “solved.” Second, the contemporaneous collapse of the Soviet internal and external empires appeared (erroneously) to many observers to be at least a partial solution to the problem of Soviet power in Europe and, more broadly, elsewhere in the world. Indeed, the collapse of these two Soviet empires was the most profound retreat of any major nation’s or empire’s power, without war, in all of recorded peacetime history.

At that time, views regarding Germany's future coalesced. As Soviet military forces and the resultant political influence were withdrawn from both East Germany and elsewhere in Central Europe, leaders in Moscow swallowed hard and accepted not only that the two halves of Germany could be unified, but also that it could be a member of NATO, subject to some transitional arrangements contained in the so-called Two-Plus-Four Agreement (the two Germanies and the four post-World War II occupying powers).⁴ In effect, the Soviet Union/Russia had decided (or accepted) to rely on the United States to keep watch over united Germany, in part through embedding it in a Western institution that had its own practices for organizing security relationships and behavior-expectations among allied countries. This embedding was also facilitated by the membership of a united Germany in what is now the European Union.

Even so, added insurance was useful. This was especially important for Germany, as it sought to forestall the reawakening of fears among some Central European peoples and governments. Therefore, when NATO and then the European Community took in new members—most important in the first tranche were Poland and the Czech Republic, which “surrounded” Germany with these two institutions—it helped to ensure that the future economic success of—and perhaps even dominance by—a united Germany would not be perceived as “here comes Germany again,” but rather as “here are NATO and the European Union.” The same logic applied to the creation of the euro: the German economy would still be uppermost (and it continues to be so in Europe), but a visible instrument of that predominance would not be the *deutschmark*. Notably, the leading architect of these

particular insurance policies was Helmut Kohl, who served as Chancellor of both West Germany (1982-1990) and of a reunified Germany (1990-1998).

The United States as a European Power

This analysis is important background to the entry of the United States as a European power, first episodically (1917-1919 and 1943-1946) and then continually from the late 1940s onward. The third U.S. engagement was derived in part from memories of what had happened after the United States left Europe following the First World War; it was also stimulated by emerging concerns that the rapid withdrawal of the overwhelming bulk of U.S. forces from the continent after the end of World War II could lead to exploitation by the Soviet Union. Of course, that conclusion was not immediately obvious and did not reflect a consensus at the time. Indeed, there is still some debate about whether there had to be a division of Europe and a Cold War with the Soviet Union. That point is raised here because it is relevant to current circumstances. Is it possible for leaders (and nations) to live with an anomalous situation in terms of relations involving powerful states—a powerful Soviet Union in the late 1940s and today's resurgent Russia—or is the cliché “nature abhors a vacuum” (of power) too psychologically compelling? Is this the case even in circumstances where solidifying lines of division and requiring certainty in calculations about relationships could be antithetical to the securing of national interests? It is no accident that many of those in both the United States and, presumably, Russia who talk about a “new Cold War” come from the ranks of those who fought the first Cold War. These individuals were then reassured by the confidence and predictability

conferred by the existence of a stable, more or less rigid, and overarching paradigm of East-West confrontation, as opposed to the anomalous and psychologically unsettling situation of a “paradigm gap”⁵ in U.S. foreign policy following the disappearance of the Soviet Union.

Viewed in retrospect, U.S. grand strategy toward the European continent from April 1917 onward can be summarized as preventing the domination of Europe by a hostile hegemon or, at a minimum, by any country or empire that would seek to deny to the United States the prosecution of its own national interests, especially defined in economic terms.⁶ (This resistance to a “hostile hegemon” also has a major “values” dimension: the advance of liberal democracy, the twin, historically, to pursuit of national interests as prime movers of American engagement in the outside world). This definition fit the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II (with the Austro-Hungarian Empire in its wake), Nazi Germany (and, until September 1943, fascist Italy), and then the Soviet Union with its European satellites. By contrast, the United States supported the rise of a “friendly” hegemon—what is now the European Union because, beginning with the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the European Economic Community and its successors helped provide coherence and capability in dealing with the problems of German and Soviet power, while at the same time advancing the Kantian proposition that democracies are more pacific than authoritarian or totalitarian societies. Even this American acceptance of a role for the EU has its limits, however, as the U.S. does from time to time still try to play EU members off one another⁷ and it still has not fully accepted a major role, in potential

competition with NATO, of the EU’s Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).⁸

In the late 1940s, the United States came to believe that, without a reassertion of American power on the continent on a lasting, rather than an episodic, basis, Soviet power (both geopolitical and ideological-economic) was likely to prevail across Europe, to the detriment of U.S. interests and values, as well as those of the European liberal democracies.⁹ It is important to note that the establishment of American power in Europe did not happen overnight but was progressive¹⁰, and that it also involved both public and private sector elements.¹¹ Revival of democratic politics (and opposition to communist politics, especially in France and Italy) went hand in hand with economic revival.

It was only near the end of the decade that these political and economic efforts appeared to be insufficient as Soviet power and influence were being consolidated farther east. There was a growing belief that the United States had to make a strategic commitment to the continent to promote confidence on the part of what were becoming known as West European countries. As such, in signing the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, the United States for the first time committed itself permanently to the defense of other countries.¹² Even so, the North Atlantic Treaty contains no automatic commitment by any ally to come to the defense of another signatory against “armed aggression.” Rather, in the words of Article 5, each of the Allies is obligated to take “such action as it deems necessary.”¹³ At U.S. insistence, sovereignty was and continues to be fully preserved. (It is not for nothing that the North Atlantic Council takes all decisions by consensus, which in itself conveys strength, not weakness. When the Council has taken a

decision, including for the use of military force, no allied country has ever gone against that decision, even though no NATO operation has ever included all of the Allies. NATO has always operated militarily as a “coalition of the willing,” though not in terms of the political commitment to stand together).

Even so, the U.S. commitment to the security of its initial 11 Allies was political—a strategic commitment without any tangible manifestation at first. However, critically important despite that limitation—especially as measured against the historic reluctance of the United States and the American people to make such a commitment—was the fact that it received bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate.¹⁴ It was only after the start of the Korean War in June 1950, which seemed to show that the Soviet Union was prepared to use military force to advance its geopolitical ambitions, that NATO was militarized. Indeed, Allied Command Europe only came into being almost two years to the day (April 2, 1951) after the North Atlantic Treaty was signed.

This review is important because it presages so much of what happened at the end of the Cold War, as well as what is happening now.¹⁵ The process in the late 1980s and the early 1990s was remarkably similar to what had happened in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and consisted of an amalgam of politics, economics, strategic commitment, and military forces and institutions. It is this process and its relevance to the problem of dealing with Russian power in Europe today that is the focus of the balance of this article. Further, given the centrality of the problem of Russian power, the article will not explore other key aspects of the development of NATO, including the so-called “out of area” issues, extending beyond Europe and into the Middle East

and North Africa, or critical security issues on the continent, including the influx of refugees and other migrants that is posing the most severe crisis for the EU in decades.

NATO’s First Break-Point: When the Music Changed

The most remarkable thing about NATO in the post-Cold War period was that it continued on, something that historically does not happen to alliances when the war is over. Equally remarkable was that the United States did not leave Europe, either by taking out all of its military forces¹⁶ or—more importantly, in fact—by in any way slackening its strategic commitment to the continent.

There were a number of reasons for both phenomena. Perhaps most important was inertia, an all-important quality in international relations or indeed in any big organization; there was no impetus to dismantle NATO, especially with its elaboration of processes and products that had made it truly the most successful (political-) military alliance in history. That included the historically unique integrated military command structure, the layering of committees and processes to take decisions across national lines, the standardization of many weapons and procedures, and the fact that, for most of the European Allies (plus Canada, though not the United States), military affairs and activities had been effectively “denationalized.” Each nation retained its sovereignty and maintained its own way of conducting its national security, but all of these non-American Allies focused in the first instance on responsibilities that were denominated by their membership in the North Atlantic Alliance.¹⁷

Why the United States sustained such a strong European commitment is more

complex. The United States was then and continues to be, in NATO jargon, the “800-pound gorilla.” Without going into the full history of what transpired, there was the memory of what had happened at earlier moments when the United States had withdrawn strategically and militarily from the continent. More significantly, Europe continued to be important to the United States, although following the end of the Cold War this was denominated more in economic and other non-military terms than militarily. There was also strategic security business to be done, both to ensure that the great challenge to European security, the Soviet Union, was indeed fractured beyond repair, as at the same time its forces were being withdrawn, and to help restructure relations among countries that were emerging or reemerging from decades of suppression under Soviet power and tutelage.¹⁸ While it cannot be

quantified, the United States has learned over the years that its strategic commitment to European security, however that may be defined in any period, buys it a lot of political and economic influence. In short, it gets cut a lot of slack by Allies simply because it can be relied upon to be ready and willing to help if there are security-related troubles. Indeed, testing whether that proposition continues to be true and, if so, to what degree and in what forms, is one of the key conundrums facing the Alliance at the moment and is likely to be so for the foreseeable future. The United States at the end of the Cold War confirmed itself as a European power; the extent to which it will continue playing that role lies at the heart of many of the challenges that face the West, including the future and value of NATO.

The reconstruction of European security and other developments made possible by the



Leaders from Russia, Belarus, and the Ukraine gathered to sign the documents dissolving the Soviet Union and creating the Commonwealth of Independent States on December 8, 1991.

end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the internal and external Russian empires, and the withdrawal of most of Russian military and strategic capacity from Central Europe all have many fathers and mothers, as is true of most great historical developments.¹⁹ One such “father,” as noted earlier, was certainly Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl. But perhaps the most important was U.S. President George H.W. Bush, who argued in Mainz, Germany, as early as May 1989 (six months before the opening of the Berlin Wall), for a “Europe whole and free,” later supplemented with the words “and at peace.”²⁰ It may be that President Bush did not himself at the time understand the full import of what he was proposing. These few words constituted a basic grand strategy for the United States and the West in Europe and set forth an ambition that has never been realized in European history.

Pursuing a Europe Whole and Free and at Peace

In the first years after the end of the Cold War, the United States provided most of the leadership in transforming NATO so that it could attempt to accomplish this basic strategic vision.²¹ This included several elements, each of which was designed to meet a particular strategic problem and, more importantly, was dependent on all of the other elements. The most important were as follows:

- Retaining the United States as a European power, in whatever terms and dimensions are necessary to make this convincing to all, as well as both to foster strategic confidence in Europe and to advance America’s own national goals on the continent;
- Preserving the “best of the past,” notably the structure and practices of the NATO

Alliance, with the integrated military command structure being most important, along with continued efforts to forestall the “rena-tionalizing” of NATO military forces;

- Keeping the German problem solved;
- Taking the Central European countries off the European geopolitical chess board where they had been proximate causes of the 20th century’s two world wars and, to a significant degree, the Cold War. This includes inhibiting the reemergence of old national quarrels or at least doing as much as possible to suppress them. (Of course, what the European Union has done is also important and arguably more so than what NATO has done to achieve this purpose);

- Preventing, if at all possible, an impetus in Russia—following the Soviet Union’s geopolitical, political, and economic collapse—for revanchism, as had happened in Germany after the First World War and the “unequal peace” imposed on it in the series of treaties that came out of the Versailles and other post-war conferences;²²

- Ensuring that Ukraine, newly independent and the most important country bordering on European Russia, would not fall under Moscow’s sway but would also not, at least at first, be formally and fully integrated into key Western institutions, including NATO, even though Western “aspirations” would be honored;

- Downsizing and repositioning NATO military forces, in effect reorienting them about 120 degrees from the old inner-German border toward southeast Europe (for example, the nations of the former Yugoslavia and possibly beyond), with the U.S. Air Force notably being largely moved from its principal locus at Ramstein, Germany, to Aviano, Italy. At the same time,

the U.S. proposed, and the Alliance accepted, the creation of Combined Joint Task Forces, which would provide the NATO military with greater flexibility; and

■ Beginning to break down walls between NATO and the European Union, operating on the principle that “security” in Europe would be as much as, if not more than, about economic and political developments—that is, democracy—as about military matters.²³ The EU would thus necessarily play an instrumental role in economics and politics that had proved so successful in Western Europe during the previous four decades. The Western ambition at the start of the 1990s was to extend this principle and practice into countries suddenly coming out from under Soviet influence and control. There were even hopes that this could happen in Russia.

The principal reason for listing these core parts of the new grand strategy is to denote that each element related to a fundamental objective of European security, including America’s interest in it. They show the intersection and interaction of political, economic, and security (military) factors, in a symbiotic relationship, as had been true from the onset of the Cold War. Of course, the private sector also has had a major role to play. Indeed, one reason for the continuing strength of transatlantic ties is that economic relations between the United States and the EU countries, in both public and private sectors, are closer to balance both in terms of trade and balance of payments, as well as in cross-border investments and ownership, than is true, in particular, with China, and as was true at the time of U.S. concerns with Japanese economic competition.

President George H.W. Bush’s vision, as elaborated both during the balance of his administration and in much of the Clinton administration, was also to try achieving something even more fundamental in terms of relations among states, especially given Europe’s often painful and tragic history: to try to move beyond two historic practices, namely the balance of power and spheres of influence. This was a tall order and, in fact, this transformation has so far proved to be unattainable, though at first there did seem to be some promise of doing so and it remains a goal worth pursuing.

Key to achieving the strategic elements of the overarching grand strategy was and still is dealing effectively with the great problem of power on the continent that remained after the end of the Cold War: the future of Russia. Clearly, making it possible to avoid a reintroduction of spheres of influence and balance of power politics, as well as the risks of renewed challenges to European security writ large, would require incorporating Russia into a larger framework. More than any other, it is this problem that has not been solved, nor is there currently much prospect of achieving that goal, if it can be at all, at least for the foreseeable future. Indeed, from the time “Europe whole and free and at peace” was proposed as an organizing principle for Europe, three criteria regarding Russia had to be fulfilled: 1) there would not be an onset of serious revanchism in Russia; 2) Russia would have to abstain from trying to establish suzerainty over countries in its neighborhood;²⁴ and 3) any new arrangements in European security could not be at the expense of the security or other legitimate interests of any European country (including Russia and every other European nation) or of the continued operation of the

NATO Alliance²⁵, including the critical continued engagement of the United States.

Part of the problem has been the way in which the different elements of the grand strategy, as unpacked here, have been pursued.²⁶ The most critical efforts have had to deal with the triple issues of: 1) taking Central European states off the geopolitical chessboard; 2) making a place for Ukraine, without either its falling under the sway of Russia or its premature, formal incorporation in Western institutions such that Russia would have legitimate (not “neo-imperial”) cause for concern; and 3) not isolating Russia, but rather trying to draw it productively into the outside world, and more particularly the West, without its either threatening or being threatened by others.

NATO’s most important effort to try squaring these various circles was to create the Partnership for Peace (PFP).²⁷ Given the differing interests found within the West, in particular on the part of national institutions (for example, the military), PFP coalesced around three basic purposes: 1) to help transform and “socialize” the militaries of non-NATO member countries that joined PFP and, building on the inculcation of Western standards and practices, to have a positive impact on broader society; 2) to help aspirant countries prepare themselves for possible NATO membership so they could be “producers and not just consumers of security;”²⁸ and 3) to help countries that would never (or not soon) join NATO as full Allies to advance their security capabilities, work with NATO, and, in the process, fall within the “penumbra” of NATO engagement, though without the benefit of the Washington Treaty’s Article 5 security guarantees.²⁹ Further, it was decided that any countries that belonged to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) could join PFP

and also NATO’s Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and thus presumably have a chance for Alliance membership.³⁰ That definition included all of the so-called neutral and non-aligned countries, all components of the former Yugoslavia, and all components of the former Soviet Union—thus defining as “European” countries as far afield as Kyrgyzstan!

Two major problems intruded. First, it was difficult to get the Russians to join PFP, as something fashioned by NATO, though the Yeltsin administration eventually did so. Second, for many of the Central European states, PFP was clearly not enough, despite the working relationships with NATO that it afforded. For them, coming out of decades of domination and with no confidence in their future security in the absence of something more tangible, only NATO membership would suffice (even EU membership would not be enough, given that it would not include security guarantees backed by the United States). This desire, strongly backed for some countries by the German government (for reasons discussed earlier), was responsible for the beginning of NATO’s enlargement into Central Europe. However, moving in this direction raised two major problems with regard to the basic issues of dealing with Russian power in Europe, present or future. The first was how to reassure Russia that including Central European states in the NATO Alliance would not be a first step toward either “confronting” Russia, “excluding” it from Europe, or “surrounding” it with Western power, at least on the European side. The second problem was that, if there were to be some effort to reassure Russia on these points, what needed to be done about Ukraine so that it would not feel itself to be consigned to a Russian sphere of

influence, either hard or soft? The Ukraine piece of the puzzle had to be pursued in a way that would not consign it to a no-man's land or that would set aside the additional principle that countries should have the right to decide their own future orientation and associations. (Of course, that has never meant that any country wishing to join NATO can automatically do so). This is a tricky balance to strike and has often led to misunderstandings and disappointed expectations.³¹

The Interlocking Steps of 1997—And Russia's Later Reactions

Key developments took place in 1997 in a series of interlocking steps. NATO decided to take in three new members (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic);³² it negotiated with Moscow a NATO-Russia Founding Act which, among other things, created a Permanent Joint Council at NATO Headquarters and the ambition to work together in 19 areas;³³ and it negotiated a NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership and created a NATO-Ukraine Council at NATO Headquarters.³⁴

For many officials and commentators in the West and, in particular, in the United States, these arrangements, taken together with other steps, constituted a new set of understandings about the future of power in Europe and a way to avoid reversion to the kind of difficulties that had led to the two great wars of the 20th century and the Cold War.

Unfortunately, Russia has never accepted this analysis, nor is it obvious that there was any formulation that Russia would have been willing to accept, either then or since, short of the dissolution of NATO and maybe not even that. Perhaps nothing the West could have proposed would have made possible a workable similarity of interests and practices between

NATO and Russia, even if Vladimir Putin had not come to power but rather the Kremlin had continued with leaders such as Boris Yeltsin or Dmitry Medvedev, who was Russian president from 2008 to 2012, between the two Putin presidencies. Indeed, there is a popular Western view that what Putin has done is more or less in Russia's DNA and thus inevitable.³⁵

But whether what has transpired could have been different does have bearing on what might be possible in the future. In particular, is there anything the West, especially the United States, can do to deal with Russian power in Europe, while fully preserving Western interests, without simply accepting the need to confront the Putin administration for as long as is necessary, presumably until there is some change within the Russian government, economy, and society analogous to the developments that led the Soviet Union to dissolve?

This article will prescribe a number of steps for the United States, NATO, and other Western countries and institutions to take now or in the near future to ameliorate the current problem of Russian power in Europe.³⁶ First, however, it is necessary to examine things that have been done over the last several years that contributed to the current imbroglio. They can at least be instructive as illustrative "thou shalt nots" for the future, on both sides.

With his seizure of Crimea in February 2014 and the extension of Russian military activities (both direct and indirect) into other parts of Ukraine, President Putin's Russia is clearly violating agreements that bind the country, notably the Helsinki Final Act of 1975³⁷ and the Budapest memorandum of 1994.³⁸ Moscow has also not fulfilled its commitments regarding Ukraine under the so-called Minsk II Agreement.³⁹ Russia's direct

military actions within Ukraine have been supplemented by activities in other spheres and in other places in Central Europe, notably cyber attacks, manipulation of energy markets, economic penetration, and either direct or indirect propaganda and efforts to subvert democratic practices and institutions. These efforts also supplement what Putin and others have done to reduce the chances for development of liberal democratic politics and society in Russia—a subject that is indicative of parallel attitudes toward matters of Russia’s projection of power beyond its borders.

Yet while fully recognizing Russia’s primary responsibility for current challenges to European security, we in the West still need to try devising a set of strategies that can offer a

means for dealing effectively with the problem of Russian power in Europe in order to avoid being condemned to another open-ended, potentially dangerous, and certainly costly confrontation. One step in this process is to understand that the West and especially the United States also played a considerable part in bringing us to the current situation.⁴⁰

This understanding needs to start with recognition that it is incorrect to argue that Russia has been violating agreed norms of the post-Cold War world in Europe and a new order (other than violation of particular treaty commitments). Since Russia has not in fact been involved in creation of such norms and order, it cannot be said to be in violation. This is a key point that is generally ignored by critics of



A group of unmarked soldiers conduct a routine patrol at the Simferopol Airport in Crimea. These “little green men,” as they were referred to by the media, were later identified as members of the Russian armed forces.

Putin's behavior who stigmatize what he has been doing. We do not like it, and we can and do oppose it, but he has not gone against some agreed-upon understandings, since such understandings could not exist in the absence of serious Russian participation in framing them. This is a basic principle of statecraft and a lesson for the future.

Following the period when the United States and other Western countries believed that an effective system of security relationships had been put in place for Europe, several Western and especially U.S. actions, particularly under President George W. Bush, could reasonably have been viewed by Moscow, under any leadership, as pushing it aside or at least as not taking its legitimate interests into account. In effect, from the latter part of the Clinton administration through the next two U.S. administrations, President George H.W. Bush's ambition to try including Russia fully in development of European security was largely ignored. Russia (the Soviet Union) had lost the Cold War, so the reasoning went, and it could be marginalized or at least accorded minor status in deliberations about the future of Europe. The first part of this statement is true (the Soviets lost the Cold War); the second (Russia could be ignored) helped to sow the wind. Ukraine, more than any other country, has reaped the resultant whirlwind.

Notably, in June 2002, the U.S. unilaterally abrogated the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.⁴¹ Following the Cold War and the effective end of U.S.-Soviet nuclear confrontation, the treaty arguably was no longer important strategically; symbolically, however, it showed that Russia was still "at the top table" along with the United States. Abrogation was a gratuitous act, a demonstration that the U.S. could do whatever it wanted, as it also did

when it led NATO in attacking Serbia in 1999 (over Kosovo), without a UN Security Council Resolution, and in invading Iraq in 2003⁴²—a country not close to Russia, but also not in a part of the world of no interest to it.⁴³

Then, in 2004, NATO took in seven more members in addition to the first three.⁴⁴ Russia had moderated its criticism of the first enlargement because, as noted above, including the Poles and the Czechs "surrounded" Germany with NATO, thus helping to insure against any risk of German revanchism. For NATO to invite the three Baltic countries to join could be cited as a "special case," though the Russians didn't like it, since the West had never accepted their incorporation into the Soviet Union under the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. But Romania and Bulgaria, along with Slovakia and Slovenia? And later Croatia, Albania, and now, in 2016, Montenegro? Including Romania and Bulgaria especially fed Russian fears, realistic or not, that NATO was bent on determining the future of European security on its own, particularly in Central Europe.⁴⁵

Two other Western steps played into Russian suspicions. The first was the U.S. decision, eventually blessed by NATO, to deploy anti-ballistic missile sites in Central Europe. These are designed to defend against North Korean missiles and those that Iran might develop at some point in the distant future—the latter rationale being advanced on security grounds but in fact essentially reflecting U.S. domestic politics. The U.S. has argued that these missile defenses would in no way impact Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal—that is, eroding mutually assured destruction. In fact, the U.S. is correct in its reasoning, and Russian analysts know it. But that is not the point. As viewed from Moscow, the United States was

showing it could act militarily at will in Central Europe, regardless of what the Russians might say, and, in the process, go against the spirit (though not the letter⁴⁶) of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.

More important, however, was NATO's declaration at its April 2008 Bucharest summit that "[Ukraine and Georgia] will become members of NATO."⁴⁷ This was designed as a face-saving device for U.S. President George W. Bush when several European members were not prepared to give these two countries even a non-committal Membership Action Plan, pointing toward potential NATO membership at some unspecified point in the future, but without any guarantee that it would in fact occur. Unfortunately, the wording of the summit declaration could only be read—however unwittingly it was drafted—as the actual formal commitment by the Allies ("they will become members") to the security of these two countries against external aggression under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili read NATO's declaration that way and tested the proposition in South Ossetia. Vladimir Putin also obviously read the NATO declaration the same way and slapped Georgia down in a short conflict. Given that no NATO ally came to Georgia's military defense, the Bucharest declaration proved to be worse than useless, not just by showing that no ally truly saw Georgia as a future NATO member, but also by implicitly calling into question the worth of Article 5.

Matters may have rested there, but competition over Ukraine began to increase. Russia sought to draw Ukraine closer to its orbit, while the U.S. worked gradually to draw Ukraine fully into the West. Thus both sides acted to erode the tacit understanding about

Ukraine's future relationships, both with Russia and with NATO, before there was a serious exploration into whether to include Russia in the future of European security arrangements and, if so, how. In 2008, then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev sent NATO a number of proposals on a broader framework, but they fell well short of what the West could accept and were thus not given serious consideration.⁴⁸

The West also did not fully explore the economic track. Russia was admitted to the World Trade Organization only in 2012, after 18 years of negotiations, whereas in order to demonstrate to Russia the West's desire to include it in global institutions that step should have been taken immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Further, the U.S. Congress only then repealed the Jackson-Vanik Amendment of 1974⁴⁹, which had limited trade with the Soviet Union in order to punish it for restricting Jewish emigration, even though the rationale for the amendment had collapsed some 21 years previously. Finally, no U.S. public officials of any stature attended Putin's showcase Winter Olympics in Sochi in early 2014, a clear and obviously intended departure from past practice and a rebuke to Russian human rights abuses as viewed in the United States. (Despite American actions, only Putin knows whether or not they had any instrumental impact.)

A Way Forward in Dealing with the Problem of Russian Power

With this brief analysis of "how we all got here from there" and without trying to be comprehensive, a few general principles are in order regarding Western policies that could, among other things, help to deal with the continuing problem of Russian power in Europe:

The United States In. The United States needs to remain deeply engaged as a European power. This is so in part because the basic U.S. grand strategy toward Europe, from April 1917 onward, is essentially unchanged. Clearly, the potential challenge from Russia to the continent as a whole is not what it was during the Cold War. Nevertheless, most of the states on Russia's western periphery, not just Ukraine, are deeply concerned, and they would be even more so if none of them had become members of NATO. Of course, this statement begs the question whether, without NATO enlargement and other Western steps that ignored legitimate Russian interests, Putin would have taken the steps he did against Ukraine and also, less directly, against a number of other Central European states. But "better safe than sorry" is a good principle when history cannot be undone or "tested" in a controlled experiment.

Further, there is a common understanding in Europe that no matter how much military capacity any European country has, none, even in combination, would be able to deal with a Russia determined to have its way in this area, for example, against one or more Baltic States. The United States remains indispensable. Indeed, even after the Cold War, the European Allies have worked assiduously to keep the United States engaged strategically on the continent—with "strategically" defined more in terms of political commitment than in actual deployment of military forces (though interest in the return to Europe of some U.S. forces has risen since the beginning of Russian actions against Ukraine). Insuring continued U.S. strategic commitment to Europe was a major reason that the Allies responded so promptly and strongly after the U.S. was attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, which led, the next day, to NATO's only ever invocation of Article

5 (without a request from the United States to do so). Further, when the United States sought European (and other) support for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, every single NATO Ally, as well as a number of PFP partners, sent military forces and other security personnel. Arguably, almost all of them did so not because they felt threatened at home by Taliban-instigated terrorism, but rather to help ensure that the United States would come to their aid if need be—and the "need be" has meant, more than anything else, a potential threat from Russia. Thus it is natural that the Allies, whether those directly in the potential line of fire from Russia or others more remote within Europe, want the U.S. to be prepared to redeem this implicit bargain.

Remember Europe. The United States must show that it has not reduced its interest in Europe. It does not take much imagination or insight to realize that the attention paid by the U.S. Government to Europe generally has been slackening over the years, especially after the completion of NATO's restructuring during the 1990s, followed by the U.S.-led military actions in Bosnia and over Kosovo.⁵⁰ Though some reordering of U.S. global priorities between the time of operations in Kosovo (1999) and Russia's seizure of Crimea (2014) was clearly merited, this did become a matter of concern to Europeans when the U.S. announced that it would undertake a "rebalancing" to Asia. This was a natural development that derived from shifts in global economics and, thus, in some degree geopolitics. The United States has long been a power in both the Pacific and the Atlantic, and did not isolate itself from the Western Pacific in the 1920s and 1930s to the degree it did from Europe. The United States thus correctly

believes itself able to “walk and chew gum at the same time.” Nevertheless, concern developed in Europe about an excessive shift in U.S. attention and thus possibly reduced readiness to respond to perceptions of insecurity regarding Russian power in Europe.

This sense that the United States might not be as willing to engage in Europe or that it may not be making intelligent judgments was compounded by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, which provoked the worst crisis ever within the NATO Alliance and which has presented major problems for the West ever since.⁵¹ There has also been concern expressed about the manner in which the military campaign against Muammar Gadhafi’s Libya was conducted⁵², as a problem more of perception (U.S. “leading from behind”) than of reality, considering the critical role of American airpower in that conflict. Furthermore, there has been a common belief in recent years (at least up until events in Crimea and even to a significant extent afterward) that Washington has been less interested in exercising leadership in Europe than in the past. Given the many uncertainties regarding Russian intentions, this is not a good message for United States to send to its Allies.

The military response. Some of the Western response to Putin’s actions thus far, as well as to the uncertainties regarding what he might do next, does require a military response of an appropriate and useful nature and needs to involve the United States. It must at least be clear that the United States does take—and will continue to take—seriously European security matters. This is necessary in order to reassure Allied states, especially the three Baltic nations, that NATO is committed to their security. NATO took several steps at its 2014 summit in Wales.⁵³ These steps included,

“continuous air, land, and maritime presence and meaningful military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance...developing force packages that are able to move rapidly and respond to potential challenges and threats...[and] a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a new Allied joint force that will be able to deploy within a few days to respond to challenges that arise.”⁵⁴ It is also important, however, to recognize that NATO is unlikely to prevail against Russian conventional forces if Putin were to take further direct military action⁵⁵, as opposed to steps in areas such as cyber or energy, or stirring trouble among Russian populations in any of these states. The political and, hence, strategic commitment is of the essence, beyond some “demonstration effects,” and it applies in particular to perceptions of U.S. engagement, not just militarily or even in NATO terms, but in terms of overall commitment to Europe⁵⁶

Striking a balance. It is also important to differentiate between Western efforts to reassure Central European countries and actions that would contribute little to actually affecting Putin’s calculations, but which, by contrast, he can represent to the Russian people as further evidence that Russia is being “surrounded” by the West or is being “disrespected” and denied its “proper place in the sun.” As argued above, the West, and particularly the United States, has been derelict in this regard, although it is not possible to prove whether the series of U.S. errors has been instrumental in helping to determine Putin’s projections of Russian military power against Ukraine and indirectly elsewhere in Central Europe. The NATO Allies need to be mindful of the spirit as well as the letter of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, as well as its original purposes, in deciding what to do militarily in

terms of deployments and bases. Balances need to be struck. To be sure, Russia is in default on treaty commitments, but the circumstances of perception are not symmetrical. Putin uses what the West does in his domestic propaganda, which is all the more psychologically compelling given that it must be clear to all attentive Russians that their country is indeed inferior in most of the constituent elements of national power and influence. Something similar relates to the imposition of sanctions on the Russian economy, in hopes that domestic political pressures will cause Putin to change course. Maybe they will, but Western calculations reflect at least in part the tendency to see in economic sanctions greater capacity to change behavior than is borne out by historical experience, except on rare occasions. Furthermore, if a nation's leadership considers that something truly important is at stake, sanctions almost always fail. The West does have to calculate that, at least in the short-term, sanctions that affect the average Russian can be used by Putin for anti-Western domestic propaganda. Indeed, imposing sanctions is classically more of a "feel good" option when others are not attractive than a serious effort to achieve goals.

Remember first principles. In seeking to deal with the problem of Russian power in Europe, both now and later, it is important to revert to first principles of the 1940s: that military instruments are only one element in the overall mix for mobilization of Western power and influence, both absolute and countervailing. Politics (including support for democracy) in Central European states is a critical factor, as is economics—in both the public and private sectors. Indeed, the "hollowing out" of the Soviet Union was accomplished less by Western military power (which proved to be

the shield) than by economic power and political example (the sword). Something similar might also prove to be true regarding Russia's future. (This is the case for sanctions). The roles of political and economic factors are even more applicable to Ukraine, where entrenched corruption helps to facilitate Russia's intervention, notably because of the impact of corruption on Ukraine's economic and political failures. The failure of Ukrainian liberal democratic politics goes along with lagging Western investment in the country, as well as Kyiv's unwillingness to consider arrangements that will grant significant autonomy to Russian-ethnic and Russian-speaking regions. In short, dealing with the problem of Russian power overall requires a package of instruments, approaches, and attitudes that emphasize inherent Western strengths⁵⁷ and needs to include steps by Ukraine that focus on its future success as a nation. The same is true in other Central European states that are lagging behind in economic and democratic development.

Rethinking NATO Enlargement. Even if there were to emerge further credible threats from the Russian Federation toward its Western neighbors, the Alliance needs to consider carefully the pace and extent of further membership enlargement under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The Allies have already accepted that they will cope with the added administrative, political, and even military integration challenges posed by having many more members than before. But calculations also need to be made about what added security is truly to be gained, especially by countries in Central Europe that are not "in the line of fire" from Russia, so to speak. Every country within Europe proper that could have legitimate concerns about the need for Article

5 strategic-military guarantees against potential aggression is already a member of the Alliance.⁵⁸ It can, in fact, be argued that there has already been too much NATO enlargement, at least prior to further attempts to see whether Russia could be included in a mutually advantageous and mutual security-producing way in a “Europe whole and free.” Of course, most Central European states remain under the illusion that they can truly be full members of the West and attractive to Western investment only by being members of NATO. This is not the case; rather, they must undertake necessary internal economic, political, and social reforms.⁵⁹ PFP and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (along with steps by the EU) put countries in the Western “family”; increasing NATO membership at this point is likely on balance to be counterproductive in

terms of overall security and other requirements, especially in dealing with the problem of Russian power and Putin’s domestic exploitation of NATO’s expansion. Of course, this also means that Finland and Sweden should continue their current non-membership relationships with NATO, rather than seeking to join. That would serve no useful purpose either for them or for the Alliance.

Ukraine’s case remains most important. Given the value of not bringing Ukraine formally into either NATO or the EU, at least until efforts were exhausted to create some overarching security arrangements in Europe that would include Russia—the original tacit “bargain” of 1997—there is merit in considering a status for Ukraine for the foreseeable future similar to that adopted by some of the Neutral and Non-Aligned (NNA) countries



A pro-European protest held in Kyiv in 2013 embodied the willing nature of the Ukrainian democratic movement, however as of yet Ukraine has been unable to translate this into a successful and stable regime.

during the Cold War. Most instructive were the position, politics, and practices of Finland. While firmly within the Western family of nations (and implicitly to be assisted if it were attacked by the Soviet Union), it also maintained relations with Moscow that were non-threatening. This relationship was called “Finlandization” and, while some U.S. observers found it morally unacceptable in terms of “friends versus enemies,” it proved to be effective. Something similar could be a useful transitional device for Ukraine.⁶⁰

Instruments of Western power and influence: integration and balance. The requirements of dealing intelligently and effectively with the problem of Russian power in Europe has now demonstrated beyond argument the critical requirement that NATO and the European Union finally break down remaining barriers to their cooperation with one another, and not just those that involve the EU’s Common Security and Defense Policy. The problems facing Europe and the United States do not arrange themselves according to neat institutional lines, but rather will require broad understanding of interconnections and the need for coordinated responses. It is nonsense that three countries—Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus—have been able to stymie developments in NATO-EU cooperation that should have been achieved two decades ago. Further, it is now necessary to have a method—a political-level process—that will foster integrated Western analysis and action across the full range of political, economic, and strategic (including military) matters. This needs to include analysis of the best uses of scarce resources. NATO has developed a goal of two percent of GDP spending on defense by each Ally, a goal that few Allies are able to meet. In fact, as argued above, the role of NATO

conventional military forces would be limited in dealing with a projection of Russian military power in Europe if Moscow were to do more than it already is doing.⁶¹ More relevant (and thus likely to be more efficacious for the West over time) is to provide substantial resources to help build up economies (especially that of Ukraine) that are vulnerable to Russian inroads. It is therefore far better for the NATO nations to set a standard for contributions to *security* overall rather than *military* spending, perhaps even a higher level of effort than two percent of GDP. Indeed, even if all of the NATO Allies met the goal of two percent of GDP in military spending, it would likely be of marginal value in deterring or countering any further hostile Russian intentions in Central Europe.⁶² A commitment to a broader definition of security, however, focusing especially on the economic realm, could have a significant impact.

At the same time, increased military and related activities designed to dissuade Russia from further adventures against Ukraine and other parts of Central Europe must not, in the West’s overall interests, lead it to drift into a permanent confrontation with Russia as a byproduct of taking those actions that are necessary, unless Russia makes such a permanent confrontation unavoidable which, at this juncture, seems unlikely. Indeed, the original idea of Partnership for Peace (and EU analogues)—that participation by every “European” country is possible and even desirable—needs to apply here as well. This is not to be naïve or to expect that Russia will want to participate in institutions and processes that it has had no role in designing anytime soon. It is also possible that Putin has already decided that maximizing Russian advantages, whatever the penalties, is the best course to pursue. Clearly, he has to

decide the balance of risks and benefits, especially regarding the potential long-term isolation of the Russian Federation from deep engagement in the outside world, where poor choices made by the Soviet Union ultimately led to its self-defeat and fall from the ranks of great powers. In the meantime, however, the West needs to make its own calculations regarding whether it might, in time, be possible to develop with all the countries of Europe a workable approach to the problem of Russian power that is also supportive of Western interests. This goal should be kept in mind in designing and implementing efforts for existing, reformed, and possibly new institutions.

In general, there needs to be balance between acting where necessary against unacceptable assertions of Russian power and seeking opportunities to engage Russia productively, if at some point it will be prepared to do so, rather than the West's concluding now that Moscow will continue to choose the ultimately self-defeating path of single-country aggrandizement. A major risk in the alternative to such a search for possible cooperation, of course, is the development of a rigid approach, the over-militarization of responses, and the playing into Putin's hands (for as long as the Russian leadership pursues current policies and approaches in Central Europe) with regard to his using Western actions to convince the Russian public that their country is being denigrated and treated with far less respect than Russians believe it merits as a (putative) great power.

Moving onward? Finally, in judging approaches for a long-term strategy regarding the problem of Russian power in Europe, it is important not to lose sight of an "off ramp" from what Putin has been doing. That includes

not exaggerating Russian capabilities, military and otherwise, and not forgetting lessons from retrospective analysis of Cold War developments, including, perhaps most critically, that viewing military capabilities as a good predictor of political intentions can be self-defeating and even dangerous. Furthermore, it is perhaps most important that current debates not lead to a solidification of views in the West, especially in the United States, that Russian behavior is irremediable or that it must be confronted for the indefinite future, perhaps in a new Cold War. The risks of self-fulfilling prophecy are all too real, especially when viewed in terms of the tendency of human nature to desire sharp lines of division and even, as so often appears in U.S. debate, a division between "good guys" and "bad guys." Currently, Putin is quite willing to play his part as the villain, and he may see his stature in Russia rising as a result. But it would be a profound mistake for the West to take this as an invitation to create a new line of division within Europe and to condemn ourselves to another lengthy period of self-defeating confrontation or worse.

Attitudes in the West will be critical and must include self-confidence and a willingness to engage Russia where that can be both advantageous to the West and also mutually attractive and beneficial.⁶³ This does not mean neglecting what Putin has done so far; that cannot—and must not—be ignored. But it is also important to be intelligent in judging what is to be done rather than ceding the initiative to Putin. A good place to begin looking for potential opportunities is in the 19 areas of potential NATO-Russian cooperation contained in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.⁶⁴ These areas of potential cooperation should include the NATO-Russia Council if

Russia is prepared to engage seriously to mutual benefit—a testing ground of its intentions. At some point, there could be consideration of supplementary security arrangements.

In sum, the overall objective in dealing with the problem of Russian power on the European continent should be that first advanced by President George H.W. Bush: to build a “Europe whole and free and at peace.” Above all, for the West to seize and retain the initiative, it must be clear and unemotional in its analysis, thoughtful in strategic planning, resistant to both overreaction and underreaction, and confident of the West’s inherent strengths, which are vastly superior to those of Russia. **PRISM**

Notes

¹ Because of NATO’s current central concerns with Russia, this article will focus primarily on NATO’s role in continental Europe: in particular, its collective defense function, less so its crisis management and cooperative security functions. See: “Chicago Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012,” <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

² “Lord Ismay Quotes,” *Goodreads*, <https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/4322359.Lord_Ismay>.

³ See: “Churchill’s Iron Curtain Speech,” <<http://www.westminster-mo.edu/explore/history-traditions/IronCurtainSpeech.html>>.

⁴ “Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany,” September 12, 1990, <<http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/2plusfour8994e.htm>>

⁵ The author coined this term in about 1992.

⁶ The United States was in effect adopting the view propounded by Professor Halford J. Mackinder of the London School of Economics, often paraphrased that whoever controls the heartland of Europe controls the world. See: “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (April 1904), <<http://www.thinkorbebeaten.com/Library/M/MacKinder's%20Heartland%20Theory.pdf>>.

⁷ This is particularly evident in negotiations on trade deals, even though the Treaty of Rome invests this authority in the European Commission (Article 113). The United States will seek advantages from one or another European country, a common practice in diplomacy.

⁸ Robert E. Hunter, *The European Security and Defense Policy: NATO’s Companion or Competitor?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1463/MR1463.fore.pdf>.

⁹ Notably, the United Kingdom played a major role in seeking the engagement of U.S. power permanently in Europe. The British Labour government helped to inspire what became the Marshall Plan and took the lead in creating, through the March 1948 Brussels Treaty, the Western Union (which later evolved into the Western European Union and, today, CSDP), which was instrumental in fostering America’s

lead in developing the North Atlantic Treaty (Treaty of Washington) of April 1949.

¹⁰ Former Prime Minister Winston Churchill's now historic speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946, proclaiming the onset of an "Iron Curtain," was widely criticized in the United States and it can be argued even now that he was premature. It is also interesting to note that Churchill had previously apparently tried to cut a deal with Joseph Stalin on the future of the Continent. See: Winston S. Churchill, "Sinews of Peace" (speech, Westminster College, Fulton, MO, March 5, 1946), National Churchill Museum, <<https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/sinews-of-peace-iron-curtain-speech.html>>. On U.S. responses to the speech, as reported to the Foreign Office in London by the British Embassy in Washington, see: Paul Halsell, "Winston S. Churchill's 'Iron Curtain Speech' March 5 1946, Joseph Stalin's response, and British Foreign Office assessment of speech impact," *The Internet Modern History Sourcebook*, 1997, <http://nebraskastudies.org/0900/media/0901_0102iron.pdf>. On Churchill's diplomacy with Stalin, in which he purportedly tried to work out Anglo-Soviet arrangements for Europe, without the United States, before he turned to pursuing the engagement of the United States, see: Fraser J. Harbutt, *Yalta 1945: Europe and America at the Crossroads* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹¹ Many of the architects of this role for U.S. power and presence in Europe were major private sector figures. See: Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

¹² "Treaty of Alliance with France," February 6, 1778, <<https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=008/llsl008.db&recNum=19>>.

¹³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The North Atlantic Treaty: Article 5*, Washington D.C., April 4, 1949, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm>.

¹⁴ See: *Vandenberg Resolution*, S Res. 239, 80th Congress, 2nd session, (June 11, 1948), <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/decad040.asp>

¹⁵ The intervening period is far less interesting or instructive for the future and will not be dwelt on here.

¹⁶ Though in the summer and fall of 1990, most of the U.S. forces stationed in Europe departed for the Persian Gulf after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, never to return. See: John R. Galvin, *Fighting*

the Cold War (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2015): 404-413.

¹⁷ Of course, there were exceptions. Greece and Turkey still have special preoccupations with one another. And some allied countries with interests beyond Europe, notably France in francophone Africa, have continued to look in that direction as well as, and often in distinction to, engagements with allies in Europe or across the Atlantic.

¹⁸ For East Germans, the history of suppression that ended in 1989-1990 began in 1933 under the Nazis, for the Baltic States in 1940, for other parts of the Former Soviet Union from many years earlier, and for most of Central Europe from the end of World War II or later in the 1940s.

¹⁹ Mikhail Gorbachev, for example, must be considered to be one of those "fathers." Yuri Arbatov, Director of the Institute for USA and Canada Studies—the semiofficial Soviet liaison to Western research institutions during the Cold War—commented laconically that, "We are going to do something terrible to you... You will no longer have an enemy." Of course, it can be argued that Vladimir Putin has reversed the process by again giving the West an enemy. See: "Georgi Arbatov," *The Telegraph*, November 14, 2010, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/politics-obituaries/8132697/Georgi-Arbatov.html>>.

²⁰ George H. W. Bush, "A Europe Whole and Free" (speech, Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, May 31, 1989), <<http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm>>.

²¹ Notably, Germany took the lead on NATO enlargement and on what became the NATO-Russia Founding Act, although the NATO draft of that Act was written mostly in Washington.

²² Notable in this regard was article 231 of the Versailles Treaty: "The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies." Ironically, it was written by two young Americans at the conference, John Foster Dulles and Norman Davis, the former of whom was later secretary of state, the latter president of the Council on Foreign Relations. See: Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003).

²³ Early in the author's tenure as U.S. ambassador to NATO (1993-98), he characterized this as, "NATO and the European Union are two institutions living in the same city on different planets."

²⁴ See: Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

²⁵ That would also have to include operations of the European Union.

²⁶ Many of the steps taken will not be discussed here, notably the structure of NATO forces, levels of funding and defense investment, burden-sharing among allies, and practical relations between NATO and the EU, because they are less central to the basic problem of power on which this article is focusing.

²⁷ This is only shorthand. See: *Partnership for Peace Programme*, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

²⁸ This author's formulation.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See, for example: Warren Christopher, "A New Atlantic Community for the 21st Century," address at the State Theater in Stuttgart, Germany, September 6, 1996, <<http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/briefing/dispatch/1996/html/Dispatchv7no37.html>>.

³¹ One matter has always been the "criteria" for being accepted as a member of NATO. Many ideas have been advanced and many hoops designed for aspirants to jump through. In fact, however, there is only one criterion for NATO membership: whether all the existing members of the alliance are prepared to extend an Article 5 security commitment. The rest is procedural fluff.

³² The details of these decisions, formally taken at NATO's Madrid Summit, need not be discussed for the purposes of this analysis. See "NATO Summit" (Madrid, Spain: July 8-9, 1997), <<http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/1997/970708/home.htm>>.

³³ *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation* (Paris, France: May 27, 1997), <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm>.

³⁴ *Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine*, July 9, 1997, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25457.htm>.

³⁵ See, for example: Stephen Kotkin, "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics: Putin Returns to the Historical Pattern," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016.

³⁶ Given the limitations of the subject and other articles in this edition of *PRISM*, this article will also

not deal with the possible results of sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation or on the complexities regarding Russia's engagement in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East, including the idea that it is trying to "buy itself out of Ukraine sanctions" by being helpful to the United States or, at least in partial contrast, by showing that it can "play in the West's backyard" in another region, as well.

³⁷ *Helsinki Final Act*, August 1, 1975, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/39501>>.

³⁸ "Budapest Memorandums on Security Assurances 1994, December 5, 1994, <<http://www.cfr.org/nonproliferation-arms-control-and-disarmament/budapest-memorandums-security-assurances-1994/p32484>>.

³⁹ "Full text of the Minsk agreement," *Financial Times*, February 12, 2015, <<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/21b8f98e-b2a5-11e4-b234-00144feab7de.html#axzz49ogRGcIT>>.

⁴⁰ The author is avoiding the term "Cold War," which he defines as a circumstance in which two states or coalitions in confrontation are unable to distinguish between issues on which they can engage in potentially productive negotiations and issues where they cannot do so—when virtually everything is "non-negotiable." That was true during a significant part of the traditional "Cold War." It is not true now in Western relations with Russia; and thus the concept will be avoided as not likely to contribute to useful analysis and debate and of emotive rather than practical value.

⁴¹ See: *Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems*, Signed Moscow May 26, 1972, <<http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/abm/abm2.html>>.

⁴² Putin also criticized the West for military actions against Libya in 2011: "When the so-called civilized community, with all its might, pounces on a small country, and ruins infrastructure that has been built over generations—well, I don't know, is this good or bad?" Mr. Putin said. "I do not like it." Ellen Barry, "Putin Criticizes West for Libya Incursion," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/27/world/europe/27putin.html?_r=0>.

⁴³ For its part, in 2007, Russia decided to suspend its observance of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. See: Andrew Kramer and Thom Shanker, "Russia Suspends Arms Agreement Over U.S. Shield," *The New York Times*, July 15, 2007, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/world/europe/15russia.htm>>. In 2015, it withdrew from the

Joint Consultative Group on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. See: Kathrin Hille and Neil Buckley, "Russia quits arms pact as estrangement with Nato grows," *Financial Times*, March 10, 2015, <<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/f6c814a6-c750-11e4-9e34-00144feab7de.html#axzz49ogRGciT>>.

⁴⁴ The added member nations were Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

⁴⁵ NATO did adopt a working principal that no country, referring indirectly to Russia, would be permitted a veto on any decisions that NATO would make about security, including membership decisions.

⁴⁶ "NATO reiterates that in the *current and foreseeable security environment*, the Alliance will carry out its collective defense and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by *additional permanent* stationing of *substantial* combat forces [emphasis added]. *Founding Act*, Op.cit.

⁴⁷ *Bucharest Summit Declaration*, issued by the Heads of State and governments participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest, April 3, 2008, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm>.

⁴⁸ *The draft of the European Security Treaty*, June 2, 2008, <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/6152>>.

⁴⁹ Doug Palmer, "Obama signs trade, human rights bill that angers Moscow," *Reuters*, December 4, 2012, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-obama-idUSBRE8BD12620121214>>.

⁵⁰ NATO's air campaigns in Bosnia (1995) and Kosovo (1999), followed by the deployment of peacekeeping forces (the Implementation Force and Stabilization Force in Bosnia, and Kosovo Force), were only indirectly related to issues of Russian power in the continent or threats to European security more broadly. They had to be undertaken in response to the most extensive conflicts and human suffering on the European continent since World War II, not just for moral reasons, but also to show that the Western alliance was relevant to real situations, thus to validate all of the efforts to adapt NATO for the future. Had NATO stood aloof from the fighting and dying in Bosnia, it would have lost both political and moral legitimacy. Further, at the time everyone involved in European security agreed that there would be no wider war emanating from events in either Bosnia or Kosovo. Also, in both cases, in the end

Russia cooperated with Western countries in helping both conflicts to end and, regarding the NATO-led Bosnia peacekeeping forces, Russian troops played an active role, under U.S. command, for the first such cooperation since U.S. and Soviet forces met on the Elbe River in 1945. By contrast, NATO's intervention in Kosovo, without a UN Security Council Resolution—which Russia would likely have vetoed, along with China—was one of the elements in Russian calculations that it was not being treated as an "equal" in deliberations concerning European security.

⁵¹ As noted, this discussion will not attempt to assess the relationship between Russia's engagement in Syria and what is happening with regard to Ukraine.

⁵² For President Obama's comments on this issue, see: Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine: The U.S. president talks through his hardest decisions about America's role in the world," *The Atlantic*, April 2016, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>>.

⁵³ See: *Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales*, September 5, 2014, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm>. Note: this article was completed before the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016. It is slated to build upon the decisions taken at Wales and other NATO military steps since then in Central Europe.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ For example, see: David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics," RAND (2016), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html>.

⁵⁶ To be effective, NATO and the United States would have to rely primarily on horizontal as opposed to vertical escalation—that is, to make clear to Russia that it would pay a heavy ("disproportionate") price elsewhere in the world for unacceptable actions in Central Europe. What that price would be needs to be thought through carefully and relate to the extent possible to Russia's own calculations of cost and benefit. It is for this reason—a "disproportionate" price—that it is hard to conceive of Putin attacking any NATO member state with military force, or even to seek to occupy major areas of Ukraine, as opposed to lesser "threats"—what NATO now calls "hybrid warfare," and probably not even that.

⁵⁷ Thus, surely, comments by the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff that Russia poses an “existential threat” to the United States are not only nonsensical and potentially dangerous, they play into paranoia on both sides and reduce the opportunities for either side to move beyond the current imbroglio, even if both sides wanted to do so. See: “If you want to talk about a nation that could pose an existential threat to the United States, I’d have to point to Russia,” Dunford said. ‘If you look at their behavior, it’s nothing short of alarming.’ See: Dan Lamothe, “Russia is greatest threat to the U.S.,” says Joint Chiefs chairman nominee Gen. Joseph Dunford,” *The Washington Post*, July 9, 2015, available at <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/07/09/russia-is-greatest-threat-to-the-u-s-says-joint-chiefs-chairman-nominee-gen-joseph-dunford/>>.

⁵⁸ This definition does not include Georgia and, of course, Moldova and Belarus. But the Allies have already demonstrated by their refusal to support Georgia during its conflict with Russia in 2008 that there will not be a consensus to admit it to NATO.

⁵⁹ The political and foreign policy backsliding of the current Hungarian government shows the risks of adding countries to the NATO alliance without at the same time imposing continued requirements for democratic development. In 1998, U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Tex.) proposed a mechanism whereby new NATO members, which experienced internal political developments, such as now in Hungary and Poland, could formally be counseled by existing Allies in matters of democracy and governance. The U.S. administration rejected her suggestion, unfortunately as it has transpired.

⁶⁰ For one perspective on this idea, see: René Nyberg, “Finland’s Lesson for Ukraine,” *The New York Times*, September 2, 2014, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/opinion/finlands-lesson-for-ukraine.html>>. While Ambassador Nyberg seeks to refute arguments for “Finlandizing” Ukraine, he also cites the conditions whereby it can be effective. For example, “Finlandization isn’t a synonym for capitulation; it’s the key to managing an asymmetric power relationship.... [During the Cold War,] Finland was far from a vassal to the Soviet Union. It maintained its democracy, a low-profile military defense and above all its Western orientation.”

⁶¹ This article will not attempt to deal with the complexities of questions relating to nuclear weapons in Europe, including in the strategies of NATO and

the Russian Federation. It is an area for potential arms control negotiations, however.

⁶² This judgment leaves aside the value of the defense spending goal in convincing the U.S. Congress that the European allies are “pulling their weight,” an issue that has gained added saliency now that NATO has proclaimed the 2 percent goal; it also leaves aside the potential role that increased European defense spending could play in regard to potential military actions “outside of area,” e.g., in the Middle East, if that were to transpire. Ironically, the 2 percent goal actually betokens weakness rather than strength since, as of the writing of this article, only 5 of the alliance’s 29 members meets the goal.

⁶³ Thus Western (including U.S.) cooperation with Russia in the Arctic continues virtually unabated, as being in everyone’s self-interest. This region has been “fenced off” from U.S. restrictions on dealing with Russia, and that position is supported by most federal agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard. Common perceptions of the threats posed to everyone by climate change may help to explain this cooperation.

⁶⁴ In May 2002, the NATO Rome Summit agreed with Russia on a new NATO-Russia Council to replace the Permanent Joint Council set up under the 1997 Founding Act. Most important, arrangements would no longer have all the NATO Allies on “one side of the table” and the Russian Federation on the other; henceforth, all members of the NRC would be treated as equals, with veto power over decisions. The 19 areas of potential NATO-Russia cooperation remained the same. See: *NATO-Russia Council, 2002 Rome Summit*, May 28, 2002, <<http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0205-rome/rome-eng.pdf>>. Note: Arms control might be particularly attractive, both for its own value and as according Russia equal status in perceptions as well as in fact.

Photos

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