
U.S.-Russian relations

The path ahead after the crisis



Jeffrey Mankoff

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Ce qu'il faut retenir

Après 1991, la Russie n'est jamais devenue une participante pleine et entière de l'architecture de sécurité européenne, qui restait fondée sur l'Organisation du traité de l'Atlantique nord (OTAN) et, dans une moindre mesure, sur Bruxelles. La crise d'aujourd'hui en Ukraine est la conséquence de la position ambiguë de la Russie dans ce dispositif que Moscou cherche désormais activement à renverser.

Même s'il n'est pas idéal, les États-Unis et leurs alliés n'ont pourtant pas d'autre choix que de défendre ce *statu quo*. Céder devant la Russie constituerait un exemple désastreux, qui remettrait en cause toutes les frontières protégées par Washington dans le monde.

À court et moyen terme, les États-Unis n'ont que peu d'options.

Les sanctions économiques et diplomatiques n'ont pas encore eu les effets attendus ; pire, elles renforcent la Russie dans sa conviction que les États-Unis cherchent en réalité à provoquer un changement de régime à Moscou.

Washington et ses alliés doivent renforcer leurs efforts dans les États que la Russie cherche à déstabiliser : assistance et dissuasion plus crédibles de la part de l'OTAN, aide occidentale financière voire militaire (limitée) sont les voies à suivre. En parallèle, il faut néanmoins chercher à négocier une solution au problème de l'Ukraine qui reconnaisse les intérêts fondamentaux de la Russie.

À plus long terme, cette politique de *containment* devra s'accompagner d'une politique d'*engagement* de la Russie. Il est bien certain que cette dernière ne « rejoindra » pas l'Occident dans les années à venir. Il est cependant imaginable que soit mise en place une relation Est-Ouest qui permette à chacun de mener ses activités économiques dans cette zone grise qu'est l'Europe de l'Est sans poser de problèmes de sécurité pour les autres.

La place de l'Ukraine, de la Biélorussie et de la Moldavie dans cette future carte de l'Europe reste la question la plus complexe. Pour l'instant en tout cas, l'Ouest doit pouvoir négocier en position de force, ce qui requiert une forte unité transatlantique et des investissements financiers, ou autres, suffisants pour assurer le succès de la transition en Ukraine.

Executive Summary

After 1991, Russia never became a full participant in the new European security order, which remained based on NATO and, to some extent, the European Union. The Ukraine crisis of today is in many ways a consequence of Russia's ambiguous position in that security architecture, which Moscow is now seeking actively to overturn.

While the status quo may not be ideal, the U.S. and its allies have little choice but to defend it right now. Backing down under Russian pressure would set a disastrous example, not only in Europe, but in every part of the world where a U.S. security umbrella restrains interstate conflict.

In the short to medium term, the U.S. has few options.

Relying on economic and diplomatic sanctions has not had the desired effect so far, and encourages Russia in its belief that what the U.S. really seeks is regime change in Moscow.

U.S. policy needs to step up efforts to confront Russia in states that it seeks to destabilize. This can be done if NATO's presence and deterrence are both more credible, and through financial and even (limited) military assistance from the West. Meanwhile, a negotiated settlement that recognizes at least Russia's baseline interests in Ukraine must be sought.

In the longer term, containment needs to be supplemented by a real effort to reshape relations between the West and Russia along less zero-sum lines. While the prospect of Russia "joining" the West today seems more remote than ever, it remains conceivable that Moscow and the Western powers can find a *modus vivendi* that allows both to pursue their economic interests in the grey zone between them without posing an undue threat to one another's security.

Figuring out where states like Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova will fit in the European quilt will remain the most significant question. For now though, the West needs to be sure it can negotiate from a position of strength, which requires strong trans-Atlantic unity and sufficient investment of financial and other resources in ensuring the success of Ukraine's transition.

Table of content

INTRODUCTION	5
Russia's change of attitude	5
East-West relations after 1991	7
THE SHIFT IN THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY	11
Russian perceptions of Western influence	11
Fighting political unrest at home.....	13
CRAFTING THE U.S. RESPONSE	16
CONTAINMENT.....	21
NATO's extended deterrence for a new era.....	21
Stabilizing the post-Soviet Periphery.....	24
FROM CONTAINMENT TO ENGAGEMENT	29
CONCLUSION.....	33

Introduction

Russia's change of attitude

Relations between Moscow and Washington have cycled through periods of cooperation and confrontation ever since the end of the Cold War, but the ongoing crisis over Ukraine marks a fundamentally new and more dangerous stage in the relationship. After two decades on the periphery of a post-Cold War international order centered on the United States, today's Russia is taking steps that directly challenge that order, most starkly in Ukraine. Yet the present crisis in U.S.-Russian relations goes much deeper than Ukraine, and is likely to last much longer than similar confrontations of the past two decades. Future observers will most likely see the conflict in Ukraine as the parenthesis closing an era that began with the December 1991 Belovezha Accords that dissolved the Soviet Union, and ushering in a new and more dangerous era of great power confrontation in Europe and Eurasia—one that could have global implications given the demonstration effect Russia's actions (and the West's response) have for other potentially revisionist powers like China.

To confront the challenge posed by a revisionist Russia, Washington should emphasize a combination of Cold War-style containment and engagement.¹ The U.S. should take the lead in escalating not only economic, but also political-military pressure on Russia, while maintaining lines of communication to Moscow to explore possibilities for a diplomatic settlement. At the same time, the U.S. should work to broaden the agenda with Moscow as much as possible, offering both an opportunity to address Russia's legitimate interests in Ukraine, as well as a stake in resolving a range of challenges around the globe. This would shift the focus of U.S.-Russian interactions away from the increasingly dangerous Ukraine conflict and onto areas of greater common interest.

Whatever deficiencies exist with the post-1991 European security framework, the U.S. has a strong interest in ensuring the failure of Russia's strategy of seeking to change the status quo by force. Thus far, Washington has been slow to rise to the occasion, its

¹ In discussing North Korea, the scholar and former White House official Victor Cha refers to a version of this strategy as "hawk engagement", or "containment-plus-engagement." See Victor Cha, "Hawk Engagement and Preventive Defense on the Korean Peninsula", *International Security*, Summer 2002, 27(1): pp. 40-78.

attention diverted by the theatrically bloody challenge of Sunni militants from the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the winding down of a decade-and-a-half long war in Afghanistan, the emergence of a more assertive China, not to mention an American electorate weary of foreign entanglements and eager to focus on what President Barack Obama has described as “nation building at home.” A weary hegemon facing the passing of its unipolar moment, the United States has done its best to avoid a sustained confrontation with Russia. Its approach has focused on gradually ratcheting up the economic pressure on Moscow through sanctions, while emphasizing the availability of “off ramps” to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

This strategy has been clearly ineffective. While sanctions have imposed significant costs on the Russian economy, they have done little to shift the cost-benefit calculus of the leadership in the Kremlin, which has secured its grip on Ukraine’s occupied Crimean Peninsula (seized by a mix of regular and irregular forces in February 2014) while continuing to provide military assistance to the self-proclaimed “people’s republic” separatist movements in Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Even as it tightens its grip on these pieces of Ukrainian territory, the Kremlin has simultaneously escalated its military provocations against the United States, other NATO allies, and even neutral states like Finland and Sweden. Meanwhile, the trans-Atlantic unity needed to uphold the sanctions regime remains tenuous, especially as the economies of many European states accustomed to significant trade with Russia remain weak.

The crisis centers to a significant degree on the question of Ukraine’s position in the European security order and, perhaps more importantly, Russia’s. Both have remained on the outside of the liberal, deeply integrated set of institutions that increasingly define what being “European” and Western means. This Europe is structured around principles of democratic government, liberal economics, and collective security. Its institutional expressions are the European Union and NATO, which have gradually expanded to fill the void left by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the USSR. Russia was not seriously considered for inclusion in these institutions, but the assumption that Moscow shared their underlying values facilitated the assumption that Russia too would be part of this expanded trans-Atlantic West. Unfortunately, Russia’s post-Soviet transition got bogged down in nationalist resentments and economic collapse, while efforts to construct a new European security order that included Russia foundered on institutional inertia, lingering suspicion of Russia in the West, as well as post-Soviet Russia’s continued efforts to bully and intimidate its neighbors.²

² The most comprehensive account of this period of strategic fluidity is provided by Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2011). See also Samuel Charap and Jeremy Shapiro, “How to

East-West relations after 1991

In Moscow, the emergence of a post-Cold War order centered on an expanded EU and NATO soon came to look like a victor's peace, analogous more to the approach taken by the victorious Allied powers in 1919 than in 1945 when a defeated (West) Germany and Japan were included as pillars of the new order.³ But while Russia remained aloof from the Euro-Atlantic world, the two sides often made an effort to cooperate, for instance with the creation in 2002 of a NATO-Russia Council designed to give Moscow a voice in Alliance decision making. In any case, the belief in Russia's (and its neighbors') progressive integration with the West remained steadfast; even in the Kremlin, few could picture a future that did not involve Russia as part of a wider Europe.

Though Russia was long ambivalent about its relationship to the West, most of its former satellites were not. The former Warsaw Pact states of Eastern Europe were largely unambiguous in their desire to throw off the legacy of Soviet domination and anchor themselves in the EU and NATO. Despite some misgivings, the U.S. came to share this view. NATO membership was easier to confer, since the domestic transformations demanded of aspirants were less extensive. Today, a rather heated and senseless debate rages about what promises were or were not made to Soviet leaders in 1990-91 about NATO expansion.⁴ Regardless of who said what, to whom, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland became the first former

Avoid a New Cold War", *Current History*, Oct 2014, 113(765): pp. 265-71. For an account emphasizing Russia's continued post-Cold War aggression against its neighbors as a driver of NATO expansion, see James Kirchik, "NATO Expansion Didn't Set Off the Ukraine Crisis", *Foreign Policy*, 8 Apr 2014: <www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/04/08/nato_expansion_didnt_set_off_the_ukrainian_crisis>.

³ For the rejection of the comparison with Germany and Japan, see Yevgeny Primakov, "Turning Back Over the Atlantic", *International Affairs (Moscow)*, 2002, 48(6): pp. 65-74.

⁴ The crux of the debate centers on competing interpretations of then-Secretary of State James Baker's offer to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990 that if Moscow permitted German unification, NATO would not shift its troops "one inch to the east." Baker, and most Americans, insists that this offer (never codified in writing) applied solely to the territory of the former GDR, as NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe was not on the horizon in 1990. Even if it only referred to the ex-GDR, Baker's offer proved a dead letter, since NATO and the United States had no authority to tell the leaders of the reunified Germany where on their own territory troops could be based. See Bill Bradley, "A Diplomatic Mystery", *Foreign Policy*, 24 Aug 2009:

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/13/a_diplomatic_mystery. For an overview of the larger debate, see Mary Elise Sarotte, "A Broken Promise? What the West Really Told Moscow about NATO Expansion", *Foreign Affairs*, Sep/Oct 2014, 93(5). Many Russians, including Gorbachev, insist that Washington violated a promise not to bring new members into NATO. Whatever the (questionable) validity of this position, Russian expectations about the shape of post-Cold War European security have clearly been disappointed. See for instance Alexander Lukjnj, "What the Kremlin is Thinking", *Foreign Affairs*, Jul/Aug 2014, 93(4).

Warsaw Pact states to join NATO in 1999. They were followed by Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, as well as the three Baltic states in 2004.⁵ The EU did not take in any former Warsaw Pact members until 2004, when the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltic states joined. They were followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

Russia's official opposition (in contrast to the intemperate statements of some in the press and the Duma) to NATO expansion was real but generally muted. Most Russians continued to see NATO in its Cold War guise as an element of containment, and a potential threat to Russian security. Nevertheless, for most of the past two decades, Russia had bigger problems to worry about. In 2002, Russian President Vladimir Putin went out of his way to assure the West that Moscow would not overreact to the prospect of the Baltic states becoming NATO members, despite opposition from his own security establishment.⁶ And while Russia objected to NATO expansion, it was neutral or even supportive about the expansion of the EU. Moscow saw a stronger EU as a counterweight to the United States, one whose capabilities in the hard security sphere were minimal.⁷ Given the extensive links between Russia and its former satellites, having these states in the EU also meant improved access to the rest of Europe for Russian goods, investment, and tourists.

The confrontation with Moscow intensified when the front lines of expansion moved from the former Warsaw Pact states to the post-Soviet countries that only became independent when the USSR collapsed in 1991.⁸ Notwithstanding the breakup of the Soviet Union, Moscow continued to regard these countries as part of its own sphere of influence, whether in the guise of the "near abroad", the Commonwealth of Independent States, a region of Russian "privileged interests" or, most recently, "Eurasia." To the extent that Russia has remained outside the Euro-Atlantic West, it has argued that these states too should be defined by their Soviet past, and therefore lacked the sovereign right to choose Euro-Atlantic integration for themselves.

The West meanwhile preferred keeping the door to both NATO and the EU theoretically open, as a carrot dangling in front of the post-Soviet states to encourage liberal reform, even if an actual

⁵ Albania and Croatia, which had not part of the Warsaw Pact, joined NATO in 2009.

⁶ A. V. Kelin, "Spokoino negativnoe otnoshenie k rasshireniyu NATO", *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, 31 Dec 2003.

⁷ See Stephan Kux, "European Union-Russian Relations: Transformation through Integration", in Alexander J. Motyl *et al.* (eds), *Russia's Engagement with the West: Transformation and Integration in the Twenty-First Century*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005, pp. 170-84.

⁸ That is, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine in Eastern Europe, as well as the South Caucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The West never recognized the incorporation of the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) into the Soviet Union, and considered them independent but occupied throughout the Cold War.

path to membership remained elusive. Following the colored revolutions that installed pro-Western governments in Georgia and Ukraine, NATO agreed at its April 2008 Bucharest Summit that Tbilisi and Kyiv would eventually become members of the alliance, but refused to offer them membership action plans.⁹ This outcome represented the worst of both worlds: NATO had marked Georgia and Ukraine for inclusion in the face of Russian hostility, but would not extend NATO's security guarantee to protect them from Russian reprisals, which in Georgia's case came when Russian forces attacked across the border in August 2008. Fear of Ukraine's eventual NATO membership is similarly an important subtext of the current crisis.

As for the EU, enlargement fatigue and populist rage at Brussels have made the prospect of large-scale expansion similarly remote for the time being. Instead, the EU developed a series of "neighborhood" policies, including those designed to promote the progressive integration of the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus into a wider community operating on the basis of EU standards. The most ambitious of these efforts was the Eastern Partnership (EaP), established in May 2009, and designed to pursue convergence with EU norms by encouraging economic and political reforms based on the EU's own *acquis communautaire*.¹⁰

This EU push into the former Soviet Union eventually sparked deep hostility in Moscow. Especially as Russia's own efforts to deepen ties with the EU stalled, Moscow came to see Brussels' activities in its neighbors, including the EaP, as an attempt to roll back Russian influence by grafting onto these states European institutions and encouraging them to pursue anti-Russian policies.¹¹ Indeed, the reforms demanded of EaP states would to a significant degree sever the institutional linkages and corruption that serve as tools of Russian influence and perpetuate these states' "post-Sovietness." EaP partners were also offered the opportunity to sign an association agreement with Brussels, which includes a so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) that would, if implemented, reorient member states' trade patterns and economic center of gravity away from Russia and toward the EU. Given Russia's failure to modernize its economy, coupled with the prospect of accessing the vast European market, most of the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus were eager to take

⁹ This compromise reflected tension between the Americans, who favored MAPs for Georgia and Ukraine, and many Europeans (especially the Germans) who opposed extending NATO's security guarantee to these states.

¹⁰ European Commission Director General for Home Affairs, "Eastern Partnership", 22 Jan 2014: <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/eastern-partnership/index_en.htm>.

¹¹ "EU's New Eastern Partnership Draws Ire from Russia", *Deutsche Welle*, 21 Mar 2009.

advantage of the EaP.¹² The prospect that EaP partner Ukraine would sign an association agreement led Moscow to place enormous pressure on former President Viktor Yanukovich to backtrack; Yanukovich's capitulation in turn provided the spark for the confrontation on Kyiv's *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* and ultimately for Russia's military intervention in Crimea and the Donbas.

¹² All six of these states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) were EaP partner states, and all but Azerbaijan and Belarus initially signaled a willingness to sign association agreements.

The shift in the Russian foreign policy

The conflict in Ukraine, however, is at heart about much more than a trade agreement. Underlying it is the fact that a fundamental shift has taken place in Russian foreign policy in recent years. Motivated by the combination of the global financial crisis as well as the pathologies of Russia's own political system, Putin's Kremlin aims not just to check the expansion of Western institutions into the post-Soviet region, but increasingly to create an alternative order. The latter would operate at both the European and global levels, and reject the universality of the liberal principles underlying the post-World War II international system, particularly in Europe. Russia's strategy appears a form of coercive bargaining: using force in Ukraine to bring not only Kyiv, but also the West to the bargaining table to hammer out a new framework for European security on Russian terms.

Russian perceptions of Western influence

While Moscow has complained about the expansion of Western influence up to its borders since the 1990s, it long did little to check that expansion. In recent years though, the perception that the West is in decline while Russia has become a "rising" power had left Moscow more willing to push back against Western influence, both at home and in the grey zone to the east of Europe's core. The global financial crisis, which hit Europe particularly hard, has fed into this narrative of Western decline, especially since Russia itself recovered fairly rapidly from the 2008-09 crisis, and until recently continued enjoying a windfall from high oil prices. At the global level, Russian efforts to bandwagon with China and to create alternative multilateral institutions such as the BRICS forum reflect this growing conviction that the West's "unipolar moment" is passing and that Russia has an opportunity to assert itself as an independent power center in a new multipolar global order, one that pays less heed to the liberal ideals the U.S. and its allies have promoted as the foundation for international security since the end of the Second World War.

The shift to a more confrontational foreign policy is also about Russia's view that Washington has been reluctant to accept constraints on its ability to project power, including in areas Russia

identifies as being vital to its interests. As Putin noted in his notorious 2007 Munich Security Conference speech, “the United States...has overstepped its national borders in every way” by imposing solutions through force.¹³ NATO expansion is one example, but so too are U.S.-led military interventions in states ranging from Yugoslavia to Iraq to Libya, as well as U.S. willingness to support regime change when doing so is in its interest. Again, Moscow has been particularly sensitive about the post-Soviet region, where it sees U.S. hands behind the colored revolutions that installed pro-Western governments in Georgia and Ukraine. No longer constrained by the logic of bipolarity, the U.S. in this view is not compelled to take Russia’s (or other states’) objections into consideration, nor to accept the constraints imposed by international law.

As a country that self-consciously regards itself as a great power, Russia argues that Washington’s unilateral actions both undermine stability in ways that damage Russian security interests, and set a precedent that it and other major powers are entitled to follow. As Putin pointed out in his October 2014 speech to the Valdai Discussion Club, “unilateral *diktat* and the imposition of [the West’s] own template has brought about the opposite result: instead of resolving conflicts, they have escalated; instead of sovereign, secure states, [there is a] growing field of chaos...”¹⁴ This policy of equivalence was most visible during the 2008 crisis in Georgia, when Russia argued that earlier U.S. support for Kosovar separatism both violated established norms and established a precedent that Russia itself invoked when it proclaimed the independence of the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.¹⁵ As with the “colored revolutions” of the early 2000s, Moscow saw the unrest that drove Yanukovich from power in early 2014 as part of a broader U.S.-sponsored strategy of installing pro-Western regimes as a prelude to pulling states on the post-Soviet periphery out of Russia’s geopolitical orbit, while expanding U.S. influence right up to Russia’s frontiers. Keeping Ukraine and its post-Soviet neighbors out of both NATO and the EU is now consequently a central Kremlin aim.

¹³ Vladimir Putin, “Putin’s Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy”, 12 Feb 2007: <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>.

¹⁴ Vladimir Putin, “Zasedanie Mezhdunarodnogo diskussionogo kluba ‘Valdai,’” The Kremlin, 24 Oct 2014: <<http://news.kremlin.ru/news/46860>>.

¹⁵ Pavel K. Baev, “The ‘Kosovo Precedent’ and Russian-Georgian Relations”, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo (5), Mar 2008: <www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm_005.pdf>. Also see Nino Kemoklidze, “The Kosovo Precedent and the ‘Moral Hazard’ of Secession”, *Journal of International Law & International Relations*, 5(2), 2009, pp. 117-40.

Fighting political unrest at home

Paradoxically, Russia's turn to revisionism is also connected to the growing fragility of Russia's own political system. Massive street protests following disputed parliamentary elections in December 2011 forced the Kremlin to confront the first sustained challenge since Putin's ascension to the presidency in 1999-2000. Russia's new middle class was strongly represented among the protestors, who took to the streets again following Putin's return to the Kremlin in May 2012. This group was more educated and cosmopolitan, traits allowing them to draw unfavorable comparisons between Putin's energy-fueled kleptocracy and the more open systems they had experienced in the West. This cosmopolitan sensibility led many of the hardliners in the security services and elsewhere to see the new middle class as not just unpatriotic, but also as potential kindling for something like a colored revolution in Russia itself. The Kremlin's response to this new threat was a combination of repression (restrictive NGO laws, efforts to "nationalize" elites) and the deliberate cultivation of national chauvinism to provide an alternate narrative. Attacking the West and all its works fit well into this strategy of national mobilization.

In the process, Moscow has more openly challenged the basic principles of post-Cold War European security, not just violating existing rules, but in several cases questioning at a minimum their universality, suggesting instead that Russia and other major powers have the right to determine the rules by which they will operate for themselves. Thus in declaring that Crimea has "always been an inseparable part of Russia" and that Russia would always defend the interests of "Russians and Russian-speaking people" outside the borders of the Russian Federation, Putin effectively sanctioned a doctrine privileging national-historical claims over the principles of non-aggression, state sovereignty and territorial integrity enshrined in documents ranging from the UN Charter to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act to the 1990 Charter of Paris.¹⁶

Russia has also been taking active steps to weaken the institutional and ideological pillars of the post-1991 status quo, in which assimilation to Western norms is held to be inevitable. As an alternative to Western liberalism, Russia instead has increasingly embraced the ideological doctrine of Eurasianism, as popularized in recent years by the Moscow State University professor and ideologue Aleksandr Dugin. Eurasianism is an anti-liberal, ethnocentric ethos juxtaposing the allegedly decadent West with Russia and its neighbors, which are held up as bastions of "the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization" (hence the Kremlin's

¹⁶ Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation", 18 Mar 2014, The Kremlin: <<http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>>.

recent obsession with homosexuality).¹⁷ This ideology is designed to appeal not only to Russians and other ex-Soviet citizens, but also to Europeans and others uncomfortable with globalization and its cosmopolitan consequences. It represents an illiberal alternative to the “universal” values the U.S. and its allies have sought to nourish since the end of the Cold War.

It is also the ideological framework for the project of Eurasian integration that became the Kremlin’s primary foreign policy objective after Putin returned to the Kremlin.¹⁸ Eurasian integration, embodied initially in an essentially technocratic customs union, is set to culminate in the establishment of the supranational Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) at the beginning of 2015.¹⁹ With its industrial economy, large population, and ties to Europe, Ukraine was always the key state in this planned union, which was why Yanukovich’s decision to eschew membership in favor of an association agreement with the EU led Moscow to take drastic steps (similarly, in September 2013, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan abruptly reversed his plans to sign an association agreement with Brussels, and agreed instead to join the Russian-led EEU after a face-to-face conversation with Putin).

While much about the basic functioning of the EEU remains to be negotiated, Moscow sees it as an alternative and a rival to the EU. The EEU project is based on a set of incompatible principles derived from an amalgam of Dugin’s atavistic ideology; the perpetuation of post-Soviet patronage networks; and Russian imperial nostalgia such as that visible in the discussion of Crimea’s historic ties to Russia or the invocation of “Novorossiia”, the Tsarist-era term for much of eastern Ukraine. Because the principles underlying Russia’s vision of Eurasia are designed as a challenge to the liberal ideals underlying the EU and NATO, Moscow sees its Eurasia and liberal Europe as incompatible, which explains the efforts and the risks Moscow has undertaken to secure neighboring states’ membership in the Eurasian group, and to prevent states like Armenia and Ukraine from pursuing even a looser affiliation with the EU that would over time erode their “post-Soviet” characteristics.

¹⁷ Vladimir Putin, “Vladimir Putin Meets with members of the Valdai International Discussion Club”, Valdai Discussion Club, 20 Sep 2013: <<http://valdaiclub.com/politics/62880.html>>. More broadly, see Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2008. Also Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, “Putin’s Brain: Alexander Dugin and the Philosophy Behind Putin’s Invasion of Crimea”, *Foreign Affairs*, 31 Mar 2014: <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141080/anton-barbashin-and-hannah-thoburn/putins-brain>>.

¹⁸ For the original vision of this project, see Vladimir Putin, “Novyi integratsionnyi proekt dlya Yevrazii – budushchee, kotoroe rozhdaetsya segodnya”, *Izvestiya*, 3 Oct 2011.

¹⁹ This EEU is initially set to comprise Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, with Armenia and Kyrgyzstan in line to join soon thereafter. Tajikistan is on record as favoring membership though has taken few concrete steps in that direction.

As Russia increasingly seeks to overturn the post-1991 settlement in Europe, it aims not just to halt the expansion of the EU and NATO, but to weaken them from within. Using a mixture of institutional corruption, manipulation of access to energy, and financial support for various populist and pro-Russian organizations, the Kremlin seeks to encourage disunity among EU member states, while encouraging opposition to Euro-Atlantic integration within them. What's more, Moscow's development of unconventional "hybrid war" techniques, as well as its conventional military buildup are designed to put pressure on NATO members and sow dissension between front-line states and those, including the United States, that bear the burden of implementing NATO's collective security guarantees. If NATO's weaker members lose confidence in the ability of the U.S. to underwrite their security in the face of Russian provocations, then NATO itself will cease to function.²⁰ Underpinning these efforts, like with Moscow's opposition to the EaP, is the growing identification of the West as a hostile force.

²⁰ One respected Russian analyst laid out the logical conclusion of this strategy—efforts to repeat the Crimean scenario among ethnic Russians in the Baltics, backed up by the (potential or actual) use of nuclear weapons in eastern Europe, leaving Washington with the options of escalating to a full-scale nuclear holocaust on behalf of its Baltic allies, or backing down and confirming once and for all that NATO's security guarantee, which rests on extended deterrence by the United States, is an empty vessel. See Andrey Piontkovsky, "Putin nameren vyigrat' 4-uyu mirovuyu voynu", *Ekho Moskvy* blog, 8 Aug 2014. For an English-language overview of Piontkovsky's argument, see Jeffrey Tayler, "Putin's Nuclear Option", *Foreign Policy*, 4 Sep 2014: <www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/09/04/putins_nuclear_option_russia_weapons>.

Crafting the U.S. response

The good news is that the confrontation with Russia is, and is likely to remain, fairly localized. Unlike the Soviet Union, today's Russia is not capable of pursuing a global rivalry with the United States. Its political and economic model holds little attraction for other countries. And whatever their discontent with the existing global order, countries like India, Brazil, and even China have limited interest in upsetting the apple cart on Russia's behalf. Besides, Russia itself has equities and interests around the world that a sustained rivalry with the West would undo. If anything, Moscow and Washington are on the same page in much of the Middle East (at least since the United States has become more jaded about the Arab Spring), where they seek to contain the spread of extremism and sectarian violence. The U.S. and Russia are both seeking an expanded presence in the Asia-Pacific, and have generally parallel views of the challenges facing the region, notwithstanding Moscow's recent efforts to move closer to Beijing. For U.S. policy makers, the challenge is to check Russian aggression in Ukraine, as well as Russian revisionist ambitions in Europe more broadly, ideally without setting the stage for either military escalation or a long-term rivalry with Moscow along the lines of the Cold War.

Precisely because Russia's intervention in Ukraine has major implications for both European security and world order, the U.S. as the main pillar of the status quo has a significant interest in rolling back the Russian intervention, regardless of the fact that its own concrete interests in Ukraine, a non-NATO member whose trade turnover with the U.S. totaled just \$2.9 billion in 2013, are limited.²¹ Not only would Russian success in Ukraine come at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty, it would set a dangerous precedent for other potentially revisionist powers about the West's capacity to be bullied into backing away from its principles. Russia's aggression in Ukraine also threatens to hollow out the existing international order, leaving behind a more competitive, nationalistic, and dangerous framework for relations among major powers.

Given the inability to fight a military confrontation with a nuclear-armed Russia, reaching a negotiated solution to the conflict in Ukraine is imperative, but for the U.S. and its allies to achieve a generally acceptable outcome, they need to be able to negotiate with

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods with Ukraine", 2013: <www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c4623.html#2013>.

Moscow from a position of strength. That requires a strong commitment to trans-Atlantic unity and common purpose, as well as a willingness to employ a wider range of tools than the West has been willing to deploy hitherto. That is, the U.S. and its allies need to make sure Moscow understands they are capable of confronting it with a grinding insurgency against its forces in Ukraine and a larger U.S./NATO military presence in its neighborhood, while also recognizing that a mutually agreeable settlement is available that can address some of its principal concerns both in Ukraine and more broadly. Pressure is imperative, but must be used in the service of a negotiated solution to the Ukraine conflict that accommodates at least some of Russia's demands vis-à-vis Ukraine (particularly those related to language/cultural rights for Russian speakers and Russian economic interests). While engaging Russia diplomatically over Ukraine, the U.S. and its allies should also conduct a broader engagement strategy designed to prevent Russian society's isolation from the West, and to think more conceptually about Russia's role in a more diverse post-post-Cold War world order.

Washington's principal response to the crisis thus far has been the imposition of sanctions against Russian individuals, companies, and sectors of the economy, which the White House argues aim to impose costs on Russia for its violations of international law in Ukraine.²² In reality, the sanctions aim not just to impose costs, but to change behavior, and after nine months and despite the very real prospects of economic stagnation (or worse) in Russia, the effects on Russian policy are hard to identify above the tactical level. Simply put, the Kremlin has decided that the economic pain of sanctions is an acceptable price to pay for securing its geopolitical aims. Sanctions may ultimately be enough to shift Russia's cost-benefit calculus, but not before Moscow has an opportunity to inflict considerable damage, in Ukraine and elsewhere.

By relying on sanctions, moreover, the U.S. and its allies have communicated the message that they possess few other tools for confronting the challenge before them. As in previous crises around the world, sanctions have been attractive precisely because they stop short of "kinetic" activities, and thus appear to provide an alternative to military confrontation, in line with U.S. President Barack Obama's repeated observation that "there is no military solution" in Ukraine. Yet sanctions are a weapon of war, and the West faces the real risk that the combination of mounting economic pain and what appears to be the West's unwillingness to fight will precipitate military escalation by Russia. The danger is greater insofar as Russian officials believe that the ultimate goal of sanctions is "not to change Russia's policy

²² Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Ukraine", The White House, 29 Jul 2014: <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/29/statement-president-ukraine>.

(which by itself is illusory) but...to change the regime – and practically no one [in the West] denies this.”²³

And should the trans-Atlantic unity necessary to make sanctions effective start to crumble (many European companies and leaders remain worried that sanctions will harm their own still vulnerable economies), whatever leverage sanctions have created will dissipate, shifting the bargaining leverage strongly in Russia’s favor. Sanctions as a tool have their place, but in confronting the Russian challenge, they need to be embedded in a more coherent strategy that is explicit about both the ends of U.S./allied policy, and the means available to achieve them.

The U.S. has a vital interest in maintaining a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. Notwithstanding the long-running crisis in the Middle East and Washington’s efforts to rebalance towards Asia, the trans-Atlantic relationship remains a cornerstone of U.S. security, with NATO the institutional expression of that relationship. Although NATO’s emphasis has expanded beyond Europe, with the Alliance taking on a prominent role in Afghanistan, Libya, and other conflict zones around the world, the U.S. can only expect its European allies to carry significant responsibility for global security if they feel secure at home. Unfortunately, the Ukraine crisis has called into question the assumption that European security had been “solved” with the end of the Cold War.²⁴ The continued credibility of NATO’s mutual security guarantee to all members is thus a vital security interest of the United States, one that Washington should be prepared to uphold at all costs.

In order to reinforce the international norms regarding aggression, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, the U.S. should also press for the restoration of Kyiv’s control over all of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (with some measure of regional autonomy and likely an acknowledgement that Crimea may have to be bracketed off for the time being), the dismantling of the separatist “people’s republics” in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the complete withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine, physically securing the Russo-Ukrainian frontier, fulfillment of existing energy contracts, and respect for Ukraine’s sovereign decision to participate in an association agreement with the European Union. As the U.S. also maintains a vital interest in the continued viability of Western-style liberal democracy, in Ukraine and elsewhere, any agreement also needs to include guarantees for

²³ Sergey Lavrov, “Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V. Lavrova na XXII assamblee Soveta po vneshnei i oboronoi politike”, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 Nov 2014: <www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newsline/DC5FF1F87726417FC3257D9800518D9A>.

²⁴ Jeffrey Mankoff, “Who Lost Europe?”, *Foreign Policy*, 14 Mar 2014: <www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/14/who_lost_europe_ukraine_asia_pivot>.

Ukraine's democratic constitution and the democratically elected government of President Petro Poroshenko.²⁵

Russia's intervention in Ukraine, coupled with its efforts to undermine the EU and NATO from within represent the most serious challenge yet to European security in the post-Cold War era. The U.S. should therefore be prepared to this challenge head-on. Much as in the late 1940 when George Kennan first articulated the doctrine of containment, the best way to ensure Russian acceptance of its neighbors' borders and sovereignty today is to confront the Russians with "unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world."²⁶

Of course, today's Russia does not pose a global challenge in the same way that the Soviet Union did. "Unalterable counter-force" need not be applied everywhere (indeed, in places like Syria and the Asia-Pacific, Russian power may be part of the solution more than part of the problem). In the vulnerable areas of Europe and Eurasia, however, Kennan's crucial insight, that the weakness and disorganization of neighboring states act as a lure for Russian expansionism, remains relevant. Checking Russia's challenge thus requires ensuring the credibility of NATO's commitments to its members, and promoting the success of pro-Western governments in vulnerable post-Soviet states including Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

While containment is an appropriate response in regions where Russian expansionism threatens fundamental U.S. interests, Russia is neither strong enough nor interested in sustaining a global military-ideological confrontation with the West. Even in Europe and Eurasia, Moscow's aims are more limited than was the case during the Cold War. Unlike the Cold War, the current confrontation need not end in the total capitulation of one side or the other, or in regime change in Moscow. Russia has legitimate security and economic interests around its borders that the U.S. and its allies should be willing to acknowledge, as long as Moscow pursues them in ways that do not in turn pose a threat to wider security or U.S. interests.

Relations between Washington and Moscow also have a global dimension that is not always dominated by the security dilemma and zero-sum mentality now prevailing in Europe and

²⁵ On this point, see Matthew Rojansky, "Why Ukraine's future is vital to West", CNN, 3 Nov 2014: <<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/03/opinion/rojansky-west-ukraine-elections/?c=&page=0>>.

²⁶ George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", *Foreign Affairs*, Jul 1947, 25(4). For a further discussion of the relevance of Kennan's insights to the present crisis, see Jeffrey Mankoff, "Is it Time to Bring Containment Back?", *The National Interest*, 15 Jul 2014: <<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/it-time-bring-containment-back-10881>>. Also James Goldgeier, "To Contain Russia, the U.S. Should Return to Cold War Policies", *The New Republic*, 7 Nov 2014: <www.newrepublic.com/article/120140/25-years-after-fall-berlin-wall-new-containment>.

Eurasia. In the Middle East, Russia has been a central player in the Syrian civil war and, as U.S. enthusiasm for the uprising against Bashar al-Assad has waned, Washington and Moscow increasingly find themselves on the same page. The destruction of Syria's chemical weapons represents a notable bright spot for U.S.-Russian cooperation in what has otherwise been a very difficult year. Similarly, Russia has a potentially important role to play in resolving the standoff over Iran's nuclear program. Moscow is also an increasingly important actor in the Asia-Pacific region, even though the U.S. "pivot" to Asia has failed to come to grips with Russia's potential contribution to peace and security in the region. While Russia is influential in all of these areas, its assistance is vital to U.S. aims in none of them, a reality that allows Washington to keep the focus squarely on resolving the security crisis in Europe and Eurasia even as it pursues engagement on these other issues.

Given the limited nature of the confrontation, engagement needs to remain an important component of U.S. and European policy. Engagement should focus in the short run on finding a diplomatic resolution to the crisis around Ukraine. Since Russian sensitivities about American power underlie the confrontation in Ukraine, the U.S. needs to play a more visible diplomatic role, rather than outsourcing the search for a settlement to the EU, much less the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (which was a party to the moribund Minsk ceasefire agreement and is futilely attempting to monitor the conflict in eastern Ukraine). At the same time, Washington should also continue efforts to engage Russia as a stakeholder in Middle Eastern and Asia-Pacific stability. De-linking progress in these regions from the confrontation in Europe and Eurasia is one way of ensuring both Moscow and Washington have a continued stake in cooperation, limiting prospects for the confrontation over Ukraine to tip the bilateral relationship into a sustained security competition.

Containment

The success of diplomacy will depend however on the ability of the West to negotiate from a position of strength, which is why efforts to reinforce NATO and shore up Russia's vulnerable neighbors are necessary preconditions, even while maintaining the pressure on Russia's economy through some form of sanctions. The first piece of a new U.S. strategy for Russia then should focus on ending the current crisis on terms favorable to the West through a policy of limited containment, directed in different ways at shoring up both the vulnerable post-Soviet states on Russia's periphery (starting with Ukraine) as well as the Euro-Atlantic institutions that uphold the current status quo. The goal of containment should be to shift Russia's strategic calculus by demonstrating that its pursuit of revisionist aims through force is unsustainable and dangerous to its own interests. That requires frustrating Russia's efforts at destabilization, in Ukraine and elsewhere, and demonstrating that the U.S. is able and willing to jeopardize the Kremlin's ability to achieve its strategic interests—while keeping open the door to a less confrontational relationship based on resolving the current crisis to mutual satisfaction.

NATO's extended deterrence for a new era

The principal threat to U.S. interests in the present crisis stems from Russia's efforts to sow uncertainty about the credibility of U.S. defense commitments to its NATO allies. Even more than reversing Russia's occupation of Ukraine, the U.S. needs to take steps to provide reassurance to its allies, promoting consensus and marshalling the resources to make NATO's mutual security guarantee credible, even when applied to threats below the threshold for triggering full-scale military action.

NATO operates on the basis of principle of collective security as embodied by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty: a threat to one member state is treated as a threat to the alliance as a whole. In practice, this guarantee has always rested on the United States' willingness and ability to come to the defense of its allies, including ultimately through its use of nuclear weapons. The Soviets, and many Europeans, were often skeptical of the resulting concept of extended deterrence, questioning whether Washington would risk nuclear Armageddon to prevent the Red Army from overrunning Western

Europe. Fortunately, the U.S. was never called upon to give substance to this commitment, but like the USSR during the Cold War, Russia today appears intent on probing its limits.

Even as Moscow has sought to alter the territorial status quo in Ukraine, it has engaged in a series of “hybrid war” activities targeting vulnerable frontline states within NATO, particularly the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. These activities include cyber attacks, manipulation of energy supplies, disinformation campaigns through the media, and political subversion such as payoffs to pro-Russian movements, parties, and NGOs. There are also aggressive military exercises along Russia’s western frontier, airspace violations and the threat of incursions by unmarked Russian forces (“little green men”) as occurred in Crimea.²⁷ Over the past year or so, the frequency and seriousness of these provocations has increased substantially.²⁸ Such provocations create a climate of uncertainty in the affected states and within NATO. To the extent that the alliance struggles to craft an effective response, this uncertainty undermines the perception of NATO’s effectiveness and foments division between member states. As it stands, NATO’s capabilities, and U.S.-backed extended deterrence, are blunt instruments, premised on overwhelming force. Russian strategy in the Baltics and elsewhere aims at undermining the credibility of those capabilities by engaging in provocations falling below the threshold of a full-scale military response, demonstrating to the Balts and others that Moscow can threaten them in ways that the U.S. and NATO cannot prevent, thereby causing them to question the value of the NATO security guarantee and, ideally, forcing them to make some kind of accommodation to Russian demands. The worst outcome, of course, would be for the U.S. and NATO to prove unable or unwilling to use force to defend these states in a crisis, a scenario some warn could spell the end for NATO.²⁹

²⁷ Sam Jones, “Ukraine: Russia’s new art of war”, *Financial Times*, 28 Aug 2014
Peter Pomerantsev, “Yes, Russia Matters: Putin’s Guerrilla Strategy”, *World Policy Journal*, Sep/Oct 2014.

²⁸ In September, an Estonian intelligence officer was kidnapped by Russian security forces on Estonian territory near the Russian border (Moscow claimed he was on the Russian side of the border) and transported to Russia, where he was charged with espionage. The kidnapping occurred just days after President Obama had spoken in Tallinn to reassure the Estonians and others that the NATO’s security guarantee remained inviolable. See Andrew Higgins, “Tensions Surge in Estonia Amid a Russian Reply of Cold War Tactics”, *New York Times*, 5 Oct 2014. Similarly, Russia seized a Lithuanian fishing boat in the international waters of the Barents Sea in late September, and has even made efforts to prosecute Lithuanian deserters from the Soviet army of the 1980s. It also loudly protests the treatment of ethnic Russians in Latvia and Estonia, precisely the issue that Moscow used to justify its military intervention in Ukraine. See Richard Milne, “Frontline Latvia feels heat as Putin probes Baltic states’ resolve”, *Financial Times*, 8 Oct 2014.

²⁹ See for instance Victor Davis Hanson, “The End of NATO?”, *National Review*, 7 Aug 2014.

The challenge is that NATO has few tools for responding to such activities under its collective security mandate, short of full-scale conflict. Poland and the Baltic states have requested large-scale, permanent NATO bases on their territory, a step Moscow argues would violate the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.³⁰ Unwilling thus far to jeopardize the Founding Act, NATO (including the U.S.) only approved smaller rotational deployments, as well as prepositioning of supplies that would allow for quicker crisis response.³¹ Meanwhile, NATO agreed at its Wales Summit in September 2014 to develop new capabilities, allowing it to more effectively combat non-conventional threats (e.g. subversion, cyber warfare, etc.) against its members.³² Nevertheless, the alliance's capacity for dealing with hybrid warfare activities of the kinds employed in Crimea and eastern Ukraine remains limited; further developing these capabilities should be a priority as NATO moves to implement decisions taken in Wales.³³

Working with its NATO allies, the U.S. will need to develop a more flexible conception of deterrence designed to raise the costs to Russia from these activities, while pressing its allies to address their own vulnerabilities, including dissatisfaction among ethnic Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia and a low level of military readiness in many states.³⁴ At the same time, the U.S. and its NATO allies need to develop credible military plans for defending Eastern European members from conventional attack, and ensure the commitment of

³⁰ Marcin Goettig and Marcin Gocłowski, "Poland: NATO should send troops to eat Europe, ignoring Russia's objections", Reuters, 15 Apr 2014. For NATO's perspective, see "Russia's Accusations – Setting the Record Straight", Apr 2014: <www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_109141.htm>. For Russia's, see "Diplomat: NATO Used Crisis in Ukraine to Boost Presence at Russian Borders", RIA-Novosti, 5 Sep 2014: <<http://en.ria.ru/politics/20140905/192675224/NATO-Used-Crisis-in-Ukraine-to-Boost-Military-Presence-at.html>>.

³¹ "Fact Sheet: European Reassurance Initiative and Other U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners", The White House, 3 Jun 2014: <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/03/fact-sheet-european-reassurance-initiative-and-other-us-efforts-support>.

³² Steps include the creation of a rapid response force (the so-called Very High Readiness Joint Task Force), forward deployments in eastern member states, expansion of NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission, and creation of a new headquarters to monitor potential threats. See Philip Breedlove, "Breedlove: NATO Has Begun Shaping Rapid Response Force", Atlantic Council of the United States, 17 Sep 2014: <www.atlanticcouncil.org/events/past-events/breedlove-nato-has-begun-shaping-rapid-response-force>. "NATO to extend air policing in Baltic states amid Russia tensions", *Baltic Times*, 13 Nov 2014: <www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/35782/#.VGeZ02e9a1Y>.

³³ For useful ideas on the of capabilities NATO ought to develop, see Jakub Kufčák, "NATO After the Wales Summit: Readying the Alliance for the Future", *Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky* (Prague), Oct 2014: <www.amo.cz/editor/image/produkty1_soubory/amocz_pp_2014_03.pdf>.

³⁴ For discussion of this point, I am grateful for the insights from an unpublished paper by Christopher Chivvis, "A Cold Peace? West-Russia Relations in Light of the Ukraine Crisis", presented at the Instituto Affari Internazionale, Rome, 20 Oct 2014.

sufficient resources. Regular exercises in the region would both enhance these capabilities and strengthen deterrence.³⁵

As shifting significant assets to frontline states would like violate the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the U.S. should be clear that if the current standoff continues, it will consider suspending the Founding Act entirely, opening the door to large-scale ground force deployments in frontline states like Poland, Romania, and the Baltics. The U.S. could make this commitment unilaterally, but the more NATO allies are on board, the stronger its deterrent effect would be. At a bare minimum, NATO allies will need to adhere to the commitment made at the Wales Summit for all to bring defense spending up to 2% of GDP.³⁶ Changing the prevailing dynamic in eastern and central Europe requires convincing Moscow that its strategy of de-stabilization is counterproductive to its own ends, and will lead above all to greater trans-Atlantic unity and a more operationally capable NATO, with assets positioned closer to Russia's own borders.

Stabilizing the post-Soviet Periphery

The other component of a limited containment policy is to promote stability and prosperity in those vulnerable states along Russia's borders that are not NATO members but have taken risks to create more decent, transparent, and pro-Western societies, including Georgia and Moldova in addition to Ukraine. Russian policy aims to sow chaos in these states in part to make them less attractive as partners for the West. Not only are weak, unstable states less likely to find a path to membership in the Euro-Atlantic community, but instability will also undermine support for pro-Western leaders like Poroshenko, whose failure would go some way towards discrediting the entire notion of Euro-Atlantic integration among the population—even if Moscow's actions have likely alienated Ukrainians from Russia for a generation. Moscow hopes that a kind of "Ukraine fatigue" will set in among the U.S. and Europeans, who will eventually seek to cut their losses by leaving Ukraine (and other unstable post-Soviet states) to their fate. Countering these efforts at destabilization will require a sustained strategic focus on state-building on the post-Soviet periphery, on the part of both the U.S. and the EU.

It will also take substantial resources, beyond what has already been committed, especially from Washington. The IMF provided Ukraine \$17.1 billion in aid in April 2014, while the EU has

³⁵ Jeffrey A. Stacey and John Herbst, "How to Beat Down a Bully", *Foreign Policy*, 16 Aug 2014: <www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/08/16/russia_sanctions_ukraine_arms_nato>.

³⁶ At the time of the Wales Summit, only four of NATO's 28 members fulfilled the 2% requirement: Estonia, Greece, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

given more than €3 billion in macrofinancial aid, plus another €8 billion in development assistance loans from European financial institutions.³⁷ Despite this assistance, the IMF estimated in August that Ukraine could need another \$19 billion just to stay afloat over the next year if the conflict in the east does not subside—while predicting that Ukraine’s economy will shrink by 6.5% in 2014.³⁸ In subsequent months, Ukraine’s economic situation has only worsened, and its financial needs have become still larger.

U.S. assistance though has been limited. Washington underwrote a \$1 billion loan guarantee in April, and has committed around \$320 million in other assistance, much of it for capacity building in the security sector.³⁹ Unfortunately, the IMF’s capacities are already stretched, and EU members are understandably reluctant to step in with additional aid as long as the U.S. is unwilling to do more itself.⁴⁰ And since shoring up Ukraine is among the most important mechanisms for averting similar crises with Russia in the future, providing additional resources in the short-term is in the United States’ long-term strategic as well as financial interest.

That interest is all the greater now, as Ukraine’s October 2014 parliamentary elections returned a strongly pro-Western Rada that gives Kyiv its best opportunity since independence to push through real reforms. The window of opportunity is narrow though, and failure to make progress relatively quickly is likely to provoke a backlash that Russia will be all too ready to exploit. Stepping up U.S. financial assistance would thus also be a wager on the success of Poroshenko, Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk, and the new Rada. Should these leaders fail, it will become much more difficult to place Ukraine on a stable footing, and U.S. leverage with Kyiv will be much diminished as the corruption and infighting that have characterized the Ukrainian elite takes hold again.

Nevertheless, conditionality will have to be part of any aid package, given Ukraine’s pervasive dysfunction, much of it due to corruption. Progress has been slow so far, with Poroshenko blaming

³⁷ International Monetary Fund, “Ukraine Unveils Reform Program with IMF Support”, *IMF Survey*, 20 Apr 2014: <www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2014/new043014a.htm>. European Commission, “Support Package for Ukraine”: <http://europa.eu/newsroom/files/pdf/ukraine_en.pdf>.

³⁸ Daryna Krasnolutska, “IMF Says Ukraine May Need \$19 Billion More Aid Amid War”, Bloomberg, 2 Sep 2014. International Monetary Fund, “IMF Announces Staff Level Agreement with Ukraine on First Review under the Stand-By Arrangement”, 18 Jul 2014: <www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2014/pr14351.htm>.

³⁹ U.S. Treasury Department, “Treasury Secretary Lew Announces Signing of \$1 Billion Loan Guarantee Agreement For Ukraine”, 14 Apr 2014: <www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2359.aspx>. The White House, “Fact Sheet: U.S. Assistance for Ukraine”, 21 Nov 2014: <<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/11/20141121311147.html?CP.rss=true#axzz3JjVmDa8z>>.

⁴⁰ International Monetary Fund, “Ukraine: Stress at the IMF”, *Policy Brief*, 49, Oct 2014.

the parliament he inherited from the Yanukovych era for the delays. With a pro-reformist majority in the Rada, the imperative of moving forward with anti-corruption legislation and energy pricing reform is greater than ever, and U.S. assistance should be tied to specific commitments to reform, even if at least some of the aid will have to be delivered in advance of the results. Keeping the IMF involved will be critical since the Fund is best placed to ensure Kyiv sticks to its conditionality.

Nor should U.S. aid be limited to financial assistance. While much U.S. assistance to Kyiv has gone to the security sector, Washington has refused to provide lethal military equipment despite significant pressure from Congress, as well as the Ukrainian leadership itself.⁴¹ This reluctance stems largely from a desire to avoid provoking Russia or exacerbating a conflict in Europe as the White House tries to focus on a range of other global challenges.⁴² Given Russia's physical proximity to Ukraine, it will always enjoy escalation dominance in the conflict. U.S. officials fear that promises of military assistance could lead Moscow to more open intervention in the widow before such aid could be delivered.

The problem is that, while the White House insists there is no military solution to the conflict, in the absence of effective resistance, Moscow *does* appear to believe in the existence of a military solution, and the threat of military escalation is a crucial element of the Kremlin's tactics—Putin claimed in early September that his military could take Kyiv in two weeks if he chose.⁴³ To be sure, the lack of weaponry is not the sole, or perhaps even the main impediment to a more effective Ukrainian military.⁴⁴ Corruption, lack of resources, and training deficiencies all compound the problem. Yet despite its corruption and equipment shortages, the Ukrainian military acquitted itself reasonably well in the fight against the Russian-backed separatists of the Donetsk and Luhansk “people's republics”, only

⁴¹ Poroshenko made a direct appeal for military assistance in his September address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress. See Petro Poroshenko, “Address by the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko to the Joint Session of the United States Congress”, President of Ukraine, 19 Sep 2014: <www.president.gov.ua/en/news/31252.html>. In mid-September, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a bill to provide lethal security assistance to Ukraine and designating Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia “major non-NATO allies” of the U.S. The bill was not passed by the full Senate. See U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, “Senate Foreign Relations Committee Unanimously Passes Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014”, 18 Sep 2014: <www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/senate-foreign-relations-committee-unanimously-passes-ukraine-freedom-support-act-of-2014>.

⁴² Also see Ben Aris, “Russia is Actively Preparing for War”, *Business New Europe*, 30 Sep 2014: <www.bne.eu/content/story/comment-russia-actively-preparing-war>.

⁴³ Andrew Roth, “Putin Tells European Official That He Could ‘Take Kiev in Two Weeks’”, *New York Times*, 2 Sep 2014.

⁴⁴ Michael Kofman, “Weapons Are Not the Answer to Ukraine's Military Woes”, *Wilson Briefs*, Woodrow Wilson Center, 1 Oct 2014: <www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/weapons-are-not-the-answer-to-ukraine%E2%80%99s-military-woes>.

succumbing following intervention by thousands of Russian regular troops in September 2014, when the separatists were on the verge of being wiped out.⁴⁵

No matter how well equipped, the Ukrainian military will never be able to defeat a full scale Russian invasion. However, a more effective, better armed Ukrainian force could do more to secure the Russo-Ukrainian frontier, and place any Russian invasion force at sufficient risk to give the Kremlin pause before ordering any future incursions, while strengthening Kyiv's hand in subsequent rounds of bargaining. Since the U.S. is—rightly—unwilling to engage in direct combat itself over Ukraine, arming the Ukrainian military is the most effective means of exerting pressure on Russia to limit its military intervention. Given the dangers of military assistance provoking a wider Russian offensive, the U.S. should make clear to Moscow both its willingness to provide military assistance, and the conditions and timeline under which it will do so. It will also need to make concrete preparations to deliver such aid on an accelerated time-frame if needed.⁴⁶

Despite Russia's local superiority over Ukraine, Moscow does face serious constraints on its ability to escalate militarily. Efforts to cover up the casualties already suffered by Russian forces in Ukraine speak to concern that public support for a real war is tenuous—a conclusion reinforced by polling of Russian public opinion.⁴⁷ The prospect of significantly higher casualties, backed up by a credible U.S./allied commitment to provide Kyiv with heavier weaponry should Moscow seek to expand the conflict beyond Donbas or fail to uphold its existing commitments, including those contained in the Minsk ceasefire agreement, would change Moscow's calculation of risk, especially given growing economic vulnerabilities.

Elsewhere along Russia's post-Soviet periphery, the situation is also volatile. Georgia and Moldova, both of which also signed association agreements complete with DCFTAs with Brussels at the November 2013 Vilnius Summit, are particularly vulnerable. Both are making efforts to create more decent, accountable states that look increasingly towards the West, and both also face the threats from internal fragility as well as Russian manipulation.

⁴⁵ Isabel Gorst, "Russians invading, says Ukraine leader; tanks reported crossing border", *Los Angeles Times*, 28 Aug 2014.

⁴⁶ Robert D. Blackwill and Dmitri K. Simes, "Dealing with Putin", *The National Interest*, 16 Nov 2014.

⁴⁷ Reid Standish, "Is Vladimir Putin Covering Up the Deaths of Russian Soldiers in Ukraine", *Foreign Policy*, 1 Sep 2014: <http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/09/01/is_vladimir_putin_covering_up_the_deaths_of_russian_soldiers_in_ukraine>. Thomas Grove and Maria Tsvetkova, "Moscow Stifles Dissent as Soldiers Return from Ukraine in Coffins", Reuters, 12 Sep 2014. Fred Weir, "As Ukraine fighting surges, so too do Russian, Ukrainian doubts about the war", *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 Aug 2014. On Russian public support for the conflict, see "Voina mirovozzrenii", Levada Center, 30 Sep 2014: <www.levada.ru/30-09-2014/voina-mirovozzrenii>.

Chişinău and Tbilisi have turned to the West in large part because they too have suffered from Russian-backed frozen conflicts since the early 1990s. Georgia's attempt to re-take the separatist region of South Ossetia by force precipitated the August 2008 Russo-Georgian war and *de facto* independence under a Russian protectorate of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Joint EU-Russian efforts to address the frozen conflict in Moldova's Transnistria region, encouraged by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, bore no fruit.⁴⁸ Today, the illegal presence of Russian forces in both Georgia and Moldova continues undermining those countries' sovereignty, while posing a continued military threat. Indeed, several observers feared that Moscow's military intervention in eastern Ukraine was designed as the first step in an effort to create a land corridor from the Russian frontier to Russian-occupied Transnistria.⁴⁹

While ending the Russian occupation of these territories is a longer-term challenge, the U.S. and its allies have an interest in sustaining Georgia and Moldova's pro-Western turns while preventing any further deterioration of their territorial status quo. For that reason, a more limited variant of containment should be adopted to sustain Georgia and Moldova's democratic and pro-Western transitions. That is, financial, technical, and security assistance should be offered to facilitate implementation of their EU association agreements and to deter additional Russian intervention. Security sector support, including training and rotations of small U.S. contingents ought to part of the package.

⁴⁸ In late 2010, Russia and the EU established the so-called Meseberg Initiative to address the frozen conflict in Moldova's Transnistria region. German Chancellor Merkel viewed the process as a test case of Russia's sincerity in cooperating on European security. For an overview, see Stefan Meister, "A New Start for Russian-EU Security Policy? The Weimar Triangle, Russia, and the EU's Eastern Neighborhood", Stiftung Genshagen, *Genshagener Papier*, 7, Jul 2011: <www.robertschuman.eu/en/doc/actualites/genshagener-papiere-2011-7-eng.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Josh Rogin and Eli Lake, "Is Putin's Next Move to Take Over Odessa?", *Daily Beast*, 17 Apr 2014: <www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/17/is-putin-s-next-move-to-take-over-odessa.html>.

From Containment to Engagement

Finding a stable equilibrium for U.S.-Russian relations will be impossible as long as the crisis in Ukraine continues in its current form. Ukraine is simply too central—as a matter of European security, and of Russia’s own self-definition—to bracket off. Not only will the crisis continue to overshadow all other issues in the bilateral relationship, but it also contributes to a classic security dilemma and deepening spiral of confrontation.⁵⁰

Containment is a necessary first step, but by itself does not represent a permanent solution to either the crisis in Ukraine or the larger challenge of managing relations between the West and Russia. While containment can confront Russia with eventually unacceptable consequences, it cannot guarantee that in the interim, Moscow will not succeed in crushing Ukraine and sowing immense discord throughout Europe. A policy of frank containment not only risks provoking Moscow into riskier actions in the short-run as a means of breaking out, it is also likely to entrench the current, confrontational status quo for the longer term, complicating efforts to cooperate with Russia on other issues, while deepening Russia’s own isolation from the international mainstream. Long-term containment, at least in Europe and Eurasia, may ultimately prove necessary, but before embarking on that course, the U.S. should exhaust the possibilities of finding a more agreeable *modus vivendi* with Moscow. Accompanying containment then must be a path to a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Ukraine, which in turn requires some positive inducements for Russian compliance.

A dialogue on Ukraine is necessary, but even establishing trust will be difficult. As Russia continues to deny that its forces are engaged in Ukraine and has repeatedly violated the agreements it has signed, including the Minsk ceasefire accords signed in early September, the West and the Ukrainians have little basis for trusting the Kremlin. That said, many Russian officials seem to recognize that they have backed themselves into a corner, only strengthening trans-Atlantic unity and Ukrainian nationalism in the process, while doing great economic and reputational damage to Russia itself. A firm commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, coupled

⁵⁰ On this dynamic, the classic text is Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, *World Politics*, Jan 1978, 30(2): pp. 167-214.

with strong trans-Atlantic unity, would allow the U.S. and its allies to enter these negotiations in a stronger position.

Though negotiations are necessary, the U.S. needs to be clear about what it can and cannot accept. Many of the Kremlin's demands, including those laid out in its March 2014 proposal for a contact group, are unacceptable.⁵¹ For the U.S. and its allies, formal acknowledgment of Crimea's "self-determination" is and should remain non-negotiable, and any agreement on disbanding armed groups has to include the Russian-sponsored "people's republics" in Donetsk and Luhansk. Any agreements about Ukraine's neutrality and de-centralization are only realistic if Kyiv agrees, but the U.S. ought to be willing to explore possible compromises, including a commitment to keep Ukrainian NATO membership off the table for a given length of time. That said, a more limited deal agreeing to disagree on Crimea, establishing an effective cordon along the Russo-Ukrainian border while withdrawing Russian weapons, and acknowledging Russia's economic interests in Ukraine remains conceivable, especially if it includes a path towards lifting of sanctions.

Even if agreement remains out of reach, it is important for the West to keep the lines of communication to Moscow open. Above all, the Kremlin needs to have confidence that the U.S. is not pursuing a policy of regime change. Unlike most of the Cold War, both sides today have significant equities in the relationship that go beyond fraught questions of European security. For that reason, and because the current confrontation is less intractable than that of the Cold War, the U.S. should also consciously eschew a policy of linkage. As much as possible, the standoff over Ukraine should remain circumscribed, with the minimum amount of spillover onto other issues and other regions of the world. Pursuing engagement elsewhere helps ensure that Moscow and Washington will continue to need each other to secure their aims on issues such as arms control, in the Middle East, Asia, and elsewhere, in turn limiting the potential for their current rivalry to descend into a Cold War-style zero-sum, global confrontation.

Ukraine aside, European security will have to be dealt with in some fashion. Absent a full-blown confrontation and long-term

⁵¹ "Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Zayavlenie MID Rossii o Grappe podderzhki dlya Ukrainy", 17 Mar 2014: <www.mid.ru/bdcomp/ns-rsng.nsf/6bc38aceada6e44b432569e700419ef5/44257b100055e87744257c9e0036b79a!OpenDocument>. The five points include the disbanding of illegal armed groups (presumably not including the Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republic" forces), a new Ukrainian constitution affirming Kyiv's neutrality, direct elections for regional administrations, respect for Crimea's "right" to self-determination, and joint implementation of the agreement by the U.S., EU, and Russia via a UN Security Council resolution. On this proposal, see also Samuel Charap, "Samuel Charap: Is a Stable Agreement Possible between Russia and Ukraine?" International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1 Nov 2014: <www.iiss.org/en/expert%20commentary/blog/sections/2014-051a/november-dcf3/is-a-stable-agreement-possible-897b>.

containment along the line of the Cold War, European security cannot be assured if Russia seeks to actively undermine it. Between the need to offer Moscow positive incentives and the strategic uncertainty unleashed by the Ukraine crisis, the U.S. and its partners now have an opportunity, missing since the early 1990s, to think comprehensively and strategically about where Russia fits in the European security landscape. Any kind of strategic dialogue with Moscow on European security under present conditions is impossible, but both sides ought to quietly explore (through track-2 and track-1.5 initiatives) ways forward for when the political climate is more amenable.

Europe and the former Soviet space have been the site of repeated confrontations between Russia and the U.S., but in much of the rest of the world, Washington and Moscow have compatible aims. Both are interested in limiting the spread of religious extremism in the Middle East and South Asia, both are executing “pivots” to the Asia-Pacific, and both are seeking to expand opportunities for transcontinental trade throughout Eurasia.⁵² Lasting progress on any of these issues is unlikely as long as the Ukraine crisis continues boiling, but at the same time, the crisis will be easier to manage if the U.S. can expand the diplomatic agenda as much as possible.

One consequence of the U.S.-Russian rivalry over Ukraine has been an acceleration of Russia’s ongoing “pivot” to Asia, especially China. While Moscow has long sought good relations with Beijing, for most of the past two decades, Sino-Russian cooperation was limited by competing regional priorities in Central and East Asia, strategic distrust, and a growing power disparity. While none of these factors have disappeared, the prospect of sustained U.S.-Russian confrontation has led Moscow to downplay the difficulties in its relationship with Beijing, most notably by signing a massive energy deal in May 2014 whose terms seem, on balance, more beneficial to China.⁵³ Moscow’s willingness to accept suboptimal agreements with Beijing reflects a belief that it now faces an implacably hostile West, and partnership with China is the best path towards creating a more multipolar global order in which the West’s dominance is less pronounced.

Nevertheless, playing second fiddle to China is not a prospect many Russians embrace. If anything, U.S. and Russian visions of the

⁵² Michael R. Gordon, “U.S. and Russia Agree to Share More Intelligence on ISIS”, *New York Times*, 14 Oct 2014. On the dual U.S. and Russian Asia “pivots”, see Jeffrey Mankoff and Oleg Barabanov, “Prospects for U.S.-Russia Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: The United States and Russia in the Pacific Century”, Working Group on the Future of U.S.-Russia Relations Report, Jul 2013: <<http://us-russiafuture.org/publications/working-group-papers/prospects-for-us-russia-cooperation-in-the-asia-pacific-region>>.

⁵³ Jane Perlez, “China and Russia Reach 30-Year Gas Deal”, *New York Times*, 21 May 2014. Richard Weitz, “The Russia-China Gas Deal: Implications and Ramifications”, *World Policy Journal*, Sep/Oct 2014.

Asia-Pacific region's future share numerous common features. These include keeping open lines of communication, managing regional rivalries to limit the prospect for conflict and ensuring a fluid regional balance that is not dominated by China. As it re-thinks the kind of relationship it wants with Russia, the U.S. should ensure that Moscow also has a place in Washington's unfolding Asia pivot.

More broadly, the U.S. and its allies need to continue reaching out to Russian society. Part of the Kremlin's strategy for differentiating Eurasia from the West is to limit (though for the time being not stop) the exchange of ideas and individuals across the barrier between the two. Efforts to counteract the Kremlin's propaganda through the media, openness to Russian visitors and immigrants, and continued professional exchanges are all tools for maintaining societal level communication between a more isolated Russia and the West. While such communication does not guarantee warm feelings (plenty of Russian nationalists have spent time in the West) it at least encourages honest exchange of ideas and views. The current phase in Russian politics is not eternal, even if Putin remains in power for another decade, and it will be important for the United States and Europe to continue cultivating the significant percentage of Russians who do not share the Kremlin's autocratic and imperial ambitions.

Conclusion

The U.S. faces a complex challenge in dealing with a revisionist Russia. Putin's Russia sees the maintenance of a "friendly" Ukraine and an end to the eastward expansion of Western institutions towards its borders as existential issues. The United States, conversely, struggles to devote sufficient resources and attention to this crisis in Europe as it attempts to deter Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, defeat the Islamic State threat, and continue its efforts to manage relations with a rising and unpredictable China. Amidst the din of these competing demands, the Obama Administration has often given the impression that Ukraine is not a top level priority. The resulting policy has emphasized off-ramps and de-escalation, without thinking through the larger significance of a Russia that rejects the validity of the post-Cold War settlement on principle. Even if Russia upheld the Minsk ceasefire in full, the broader question of post-Soviet states' sovereignty and territorial integrity would remain, as would Russia's efforts to sow dissension within European structures, as well as between Europe and the United States. U.S., European, and NATO officials have gradually come to regard Putin's Russia as an adversary, but have been slow to come to grips with either the consequences, or to elaborate a strategy for dealing with a more adversarial Russia over the longer term.

The best outcome, of course, would be for the rivalry with Moscow to fade. Given the tensions that have emerged over Ukraine, that prospect seems far off, at least as long as Putin remains in power. Nevertheless, to the extent that Russia itself has a strategy for the current crisis, it appears predicated on a form of coercive bargaining, not the nihilistic revisionism of, for instance, Nazi Germany. As Russia's goals are not limitless, and as the West has no desire or ability to fight a war with Moscow, negotiations will sooner or later be required to end the standoff over Ukraine. For the West, the major question is under what conditions those negotiations will take place. If the U.S. and its allies can maintain a common front, ensure that Ukraine does not become a failed state, and face Russia with the certainty of a confrontation it cannot win, they will be better placed to negotiate a favorable outcome, i.e. one that maximizes Ukraine's sovereignty and territory, while minimizing Russian intervention in that country.

Ukraine is only the most acute symptom of a problem that goes much deeper, namely Russia's ambiguous position in the post-1991 European security architecture. The failure to build a new

system of European security that encompasses Russia was unfortunate, but also probably inevitable given Russia's failure to break with its Soviet past to the extent that the Federal Republic of Germany (under Allied occupation) broke with the Nazi era. As long as Russia could neither openly challenge its exclusion nor offer up an alternative, the messy post-1991 settlement appeared sufficient. The more assertive Russia that has emerged under Putin throws into question the viability of that settlement over the longer term. Yet because Russia is now directly challenging the pillars of post-1991 European security, the U.S. and its allies have little choice but to defend the status quo with all their might. Backing down under Russian pressure would set a disastrous example, not only in Europe, but in every part of the world where a U.S. security umbrella restrains interstate conflict. That is why Japan, the Philippines, Israel, and other U.S. allies are watching very closely Washington's ability to see off the challenge posed by a revisionist Russia.

In the short to medium term, the U.S. has few options short of stepping up a robust effort to contain Russia in Europe as well as around its borders in Eurasia. Relying on sanctions has not had the desired effect, and also risks making the conflict intractable by encouraging Moscow in its belief that what the U.S. really seeks is regime change. Instead, the focus of U.S. policy needs to be on stepping up efforts to confront Russia in states where it seeks to upset Kennan's "interests of a peaceful and stable world", while emphasizing the importance of a negotiated settlement in Ukraine that recognizes at least Russia's baseline interests. To make such a deal stick, the U.S. should demonstrate that time remains on its side, that the longer Moscow waits to engage in good faith, the more extensive containment it will face.

In the longer term though, containment needs to be supplemented by a real effort to reshape relations between the West and Russia along less zero-sum lines. While the prospect of Russia "joining" the West today seems more remote than at any time since the end of the Cold War, it at least remains conceivable that Moscow and the Western powers can find a *modus vivendi* that allows both to pursue their economic interests in the grey zone between them without posing an undue threat to one another's security. Figuring out where states like Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova will fit in the European quilt will remain the most significant question, but at the very least, the various players all need to recognize that they have a stake in getting the answer right.

In a world whose major contours are being shaped in other parts of the world, re-fighting the Cold War in Europe is not a prospect that should be of interest to anyone.

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