

# From Eurasia with Love

## Russian Security Threats and Western Challenges

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The recent Ukrainian crisis displayed the US government's woeful inability to think critically about the use of force for political and strategic objectives even without resorting to combat operations. Thus, we have ruled out deploying military forces in and around Ukraine, even as Moscow created a sizable force that could be used to invade but whose more likely task is to intimidate Kyiv and the West into surrendering Ukraine's integrity and sovereignty. Clearly the United States does not appreciate the use of military force to deter credibly, show resolve, and threaten aggressive adversaries who have little or no reason to engage in actual combat to gain their objectives. It is merely deluding itself and its allies if the use of military force to help Ukraine defend itself, deter a Russian attack, and show credible resolve and deterrence is rejected outright. Certainly failure to do so means de facto acquiescence in annexing Crimea, invasion, occupation, and the preceding acts of war. If the classic purpose of US force deployments in Europe and Asia is to deter and reassure allies, this policy ranks as a stupendous strategic failure.<sup>1</sup>

There is no excuse for the US strategic failure in Eurasia except the long-standing defects in strategy and policy. Under the present circumstances, complacency or retreat from Eurasia—predispositions that seem to be increasingly popular—are, in fact, the last thing the United States needs and will only worsen its current predicament. This article focuses on threats originating in Eurasia, specifically overarching Russian desires for empire manifest in the Crimea, then critiques US policy toward Eurasia, analyzes aspects of security and sovereignty in the post-Soviet

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Caucus states and Central Asia, and considers threats and opportunities concerning energy issues. This is followed by recommendations.

## **The Empire Strikes Back**

The Ukrainian crisis of 2013–14 forces us to immediately reassess past propositions and act urgently in defense of US, allied, and Ukrainian interests. Russia's invasion of Crimea shows just how inattentive we have been to factors that have long been in evidence and how we must therefore change our thinking and our policies. Statements that the United States could not have foreseen Russia's invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea are utterly without basis, as many specialists, including this author, have warned for years. It also appears the United States had warning of the Crimean operation before it began in late February 2014 but could not assess it properly—another sign of a massive intelligence and policy failure.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in 2008 Putin had already shown his disregard for Ukrainian and Moldovan sovereignty. In late 2006, for example, Putin offered Ukraine unsolicited security guarantees in return for permanently stationing the Black Sea Fleet on its territory, a superfluous but ominous gesture since Russia already maintained Ukraine's security through the Tashkent treaty of 1992 (Collective Security Treaty Organization, or CSTO) and the Budapest Memorandum with Ukraine, Great Britain, and the United States to denuclearize Ukraine in 1994. Putin's offer also coincided with his typically dialectical approach to Ukraine's sovereignty in the Crimea where he stated, "The Crimea forms part of the Ukrainian side and we cannot interfere in another country's internal affairs. At the same time, however, Russia cannot be indifferent to what happens in the Ukraine and Crimea."<sup>3</sup> Putin thus hinted that Ukrainian resistance to Russian limits on its freedom of action might encounter a Russian-backed "Kosovo-like" scenario of a nationalist uprising in the Crimea to which Russia could not remain indifferent. Obviously, as Reuben Johnson wrote then,

Moscow has the political and covert action means to create in the Crimea the very type of situations against which Putin is offering to "protect" Ukraine if the Russian Fleet's presence is extended. Thus far such means have been shown to include inflammatory visits and speeches by Russian Duma deputies in the Crimea, challenges to Ukraine's control of Tuzla Island in the Kerch Strait, the fanning of "anti-NATO"—in fact anti-American—protests by Russian groups

in connection with planned military exercises and artificial Russian-Tatar tensions on the peninsula.<sup>4</sup>

Russian intelligence, military, economic, informational, ideological, and other forms of penetration of Crimea in anticipation of an overall nullification of Ukraine's de facto if not de jure sovereignty over the area have therefore been long apparent.<sup>5</sup> Russia also augmented its capabilities for such covert and overt subversion by instituting a substantial program whereby it gives soldiers and officers in the Transnistrian "Army" that occupies part of Moldova Russian military passports and rotates them through elite Russian officer training courses, called *Vystrel*, at the Russian combined arms training center at Solnechnogorsk. As one intelligence officer in a post-Soviet republic told Reuben Johnson,

You do not try to cover up a training program of this size unless you are someday planning on using these people to overthrow or otherwise take control of a sovereign government. . . . The facility at Solnechnogorsk is used by Russia to train numerous non-Russian military personnel openly and legally for peacekeeping and other joint operations. If then, in parallel, you are training officers from these disputed regions—officers that are pretending to be Russian personnel and carrying bogus paperwork—then it does not take an enormous leap of faith to assume that Moscow is up to no good on this one.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili in 2009 told Assistant Secretary of Defense Alexander Vershbow that Putin would incite disturbances in Crimea and then graciously offer the Ukrainian government to take the province over to solve the problems. Saakashvili said Putin wanted to keep pressure on Ukraine and Georgia as an object lesson to other post-Soviet states.<sup>7</sup>

Rethinking these problems is therefore both urgent and essential for five reasons. First, the assumption under which we have worked since 1991 that European security can be taken for granted has been shattered. Indeed, the 2008 Georgian war should have shattered this complacency, but now it is or at least should be clear beyond a shadow of a doubt. Second, it is clear Putin's Russia neither can nor wants to be integrated into Europe and European norms, thereby invalidating another complacently assumed and long-unjustified policy axiom. But if Russia cannot and will not be integrated into Europe, Russian power must be contained. And just as Russia employs all the instruments of power—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic—to further its aims, we must do also. The invasion of Crimea also confirms that for Putin

and his entourage, their state cannot survive other than as an empire, entailing the diminished sovereignty of all its post-Soviet neighbors and also the former members of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>8</sup> This quest for empire means war, because it inevitably entails the belief that Russia's neighbors' sovereignty must be curtailed and their territorial integrity placed at constant risk as Russia demands not only restoration of an empire, but also a totally free hand to do so. In this connection we must also grasp that Putin's 18 March 2014 speech to the Duma constitutes a landmine placed under the sovereignty and integrity of every post-Soviet and former Warsaw Pact state.<sup>9</sup>

Fourth, these actions confirm that Russia regards the sovereignty and integrity of its neighbors, despite solemn agreements to which it is a party, as merely "a scrap of paper." Logically, this puts all agreements with Russia, including arms control accords, under a malevolent cloud.<sup>10</sup> Fifth, it is equally clear that unless the West—acting under US leadership and through institutions like the EU and NATO—resists Russia forcefully, the gains of the last 25 years regarding European security will have been lost, and we will return to the bipolar confrontation that was the primary cause of the Cold War. This does not mean using force preemptively but does mean displaying credible deterrence used in tandem with all the instruments of power—for the task is also fundamentally nonmilitary.

The United States must understand the recent Kerry-Lavrov negotiations cannot represent a basis for resolving the crisis unless the invasion, occupation, and annexation of Crimea is revoked and Ukraine is a full participant in any negotiation. For moral and strategic reasons, Moscow and Washington alone should not decide Ukraine's sovereignty, integrity, and fate. Since 1989 the great achievement of European security is that it is indivisible, and as regards Eastern Europe, the principle "nothing about us without us" must apply to all discussions of security there. Putin's proposal that Russia keep Crimea, that Moscow and Washington jointly "federalize" Ukraine, and that Ukraine promise to be both Finland and Switzerland but that Russia refuse to deal with and thus recognize Ukraine must be rejected out of hand.<sup>11</sup> This proposal attempts to make the West complicit in the destruction of Ukraine's sovereignty and the creation of a permanent set of levers for pro-Russian forces in a weak state that Moscow can eternally manipulate. The result is neither a Finland that could defend itself, even if its reduced status was imposed by Moscow at the height of the Cold War, nor a truly neutral Switzerland. The ensuing

result of any such accord would actually be an entity with no sovereignty or territorial integrity that could ever be even a truly neutral or non-aligned country in Europe. It would open the door to endless security threats to every other European state. In any case, given the number of international accords and treaties Russia violated in invading, occupying, and annexing Crimea, of what value are Russian guarantees? Therefore unless Moscow is prepared to negotiate with Ukraine, no negotiation, let alone an agreement on sovereignty or neutrality, should even be considered. These are issues for Kyiv alone to decide. The United States should remember that the existing Ukrainian constitution and laws bar foreign militaries in Ukraine. But, the Russo-Ukrainian treaty of 2010 allowing the deployment of Russian forces in Sevastopol until 2042 broke that principle. Russia can hardly demand Finlandization even if it had not invaded and annexed Crimea. Neither is there a need for Kyiv to reinvent the wheel. If anything, Moscow's actions have shown us the value of both Russian and Western guarantees. Moreover, by virtue of the fact that Moscow has annexed Crimea, the Putin regime has essentially depleted its options, making any diplomatic resolution short of the full return of Crimea to Ukrainian sovereignty and solid guarantees of Ukraine's security highly unlikely. Undoubtedly such a "retrocession" of Crimea would now decisively undermine Putin's position at home, a factor making a genuine and proper diplomatic resolution of this crisis all but impossible.

### **Containment and Acts of War**

The United States must likewise draw the logical conclusion that if Russia refuses to be integrated and demands a free hand to replicate or expand its domestic system abroad, act without accounting to anyone or any institution, and seize its neighbors' territories when it sees fit to do so, we must then counter and contain its power. And that countering action must, despite past rhetoric, include the use of military forces to defend Ukraine and deter conflict while putting ever more economic and political pressure on Russia to relinquish Crimea.<sup>12</sup> It is essential we understand this point, because Russia's demand for an empire in Eurasia means war and ultimately also presages the destruction of the Putin system if not the Russian state. Thus Putin, without considering all repercussions, has "bet the farm." Crimea for Putin is analogous to Macbeth's

understanding that “I am in blood stepp’d in so far that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o’er,” a position that all but cancels any possibility of retreat and is therefore another reason why the invasion, occupation, and annexation of Crimea must be regarded by any available standard as acts of war.

This imperial program means war because Moscow cannot induce consent except through force. It commands no legitimate authority beyond its borders; it cannot sustain empire economically, so its efforts to do so threaten not only the peripheries’ stability, but its own internal stability. Most importantly, the peoples and/or states it targets neither want a Russian empire nor will they accept one. And that resistance, as in the North Caucasus, inevitably means war. But equally important, Russia, as we have frequently noted, begins its national security policy from the standpoint of a presupposition of conflict with the rest of the world and conceives itself to be in a state of siege with other states, if not a formal state of war.

Beyond those factors, Putin’s stated belief that he has a legal-political right to invade other countries because they allegedly mistreat Russians—a complete and willful fabrication in Ukraine’s case—means Moscow has embraced as its own formulations Hitler’s and Stalin’s justifications for empire that they, if not their forbears like Catherine the Great and Peter the Great, used to push Europe into World War II. Since Russia knows it cannot win a war against NATO, if it still provokes one it is due to Putin’s arrogant, yet so far validated, belief that Western leaders are weak, irresolute, and corruptible, and that Ukrainian democracy is a threat to Russia.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Russian officials have told Western figures like Graham Allison of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government that President Obama is essentially afraid to use force.<sup>14</sup> This delusional yet simultaneously cynical mind-set helped lead Putin to make as reckless a gamble as could possibly be imagined—one that must be reversed. Thus the United States must take urgent actions now and must also understand how to prevent such actions in the future beyond deterring war.

## **Eurasia and US Policy**

If the United States is to defend and promote its interests credibly throughout Eurasia, it must overcome the widespread belief that any intervention anywhere in the world is fated to be an excessively large military

intervention led by people who neither comprehend strategy nor local issues and is thus doomed to failure. Indeed, there is a widespread belief that any foreign intervention, essentially if not exclusively, means large-scale military operations as distinct from diplomatic or indirect approaches like providing weapons or using forces to display resolve and deter conflicts.<sup>15</sup> Adding to this belief is the pervasive but confused idea that any strong diplomatic-economic initiative abroad is doomed to failure and constitutes an unwelcome and foredoomed intervention as if it were a large-scale military operation, as in Iraq or Afghanistan. Moreover, such interventions are also believed to be inherently futile—a maxim that consigns the West to nothing but self-denying rationalizations while precluding strategy and effective policymaking. In other words, when it comes to Eurasia, the United States has not only abdicated policy; it has abdicated strategy and a belief in the use of all the instruments of power, including nonmilitary ones. Thus there is a current feeling that “American engagement in Europe [or Eurasia] is increasingly irrelevant. Or counterproductive. Or expensive. Or useless.”<sup>16</sup> The current Ukrainian crisis abundantly confirms this point and also shows what the neglect of alliance management can lead to in Eurasia. Unfortunately, the strategic torpor that has characterized current US policy regarding Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe in general, and Ukraine in particular goes far to validate this observation. Writing about the Ukrainian crisis of 2013–14, Walter Russell Mead observed, “Looking at Russia through fuzzy, unicorn-hunting spectacles, the Obama Administration sees a potential strategic partner in the Kremlin to be won over by sweet talk and concessions. As post-historical as any Brussels-based EU paper-pusher, the Obama Administration appears to have written off Eastern Europe as a significant political theater.”<sup>17</sup>

Mead’s assessment not only applies to Eastern Europe but also to the Caucasus and Central Asia. This author has already observed that the United States appears to have little or no interest in either of those regions or any policy to meet already existing, not to mention impending, security challenges in the Caucasus or Central Asia.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, this appears to be the conventional wisdom of the foreign policy establishment. A recent assessment of potential trouble spots in 2014 and the likelihood of their “eruption” into major violence concludes that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a “third-tier” conflict, or one that has a low preventive priority for US policymakers. Thus, not only is an outbreak of

violence unlikely; even if it occurred it would have little impact on US interests.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, this reinforces the conclusion, also evident in Georgia's unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, that conflict resolution plays no real part in US policy in the Caucasus.<sup>20</sup> But we know from the 2008 Russo-Georgian war that if these crises remain in a state of suspended animation, the more likely it is they will one day unfreeze with profound, widespread, and terrible strategic consequences for the United States, its allies, and its partners. To paraphrase Chekhov: if a rifle is hanging on the wall in Act 1 it must go off in Act 2.<sup>21</sup> The rifle has been hanging on the wall in Crimea for a long time, and we should have been alert to the prospect of it going off.<sup>22</sup> Worse yet, the views that the United States should renounce an active role in conflict resolution in particular and the Eurasian region as a whole are pervasive among officials and color policy toward all of Eurasia. Former high-ranking officials confirmed that not only does the United States have no real policy for Central Asia, it is even incapable of formulating or implementing one since all it knows about Central Asia it gets from the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*.<sup>23</sup> Nikolas Gvosdev of the US Navy War College wrote in connection with the Ukrainian crisis,

The unspoken reality is that the post-Cold War generation now rising in prominence in the US national security apparatus is no longer enthralled by the geopolitical assessments of Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman, who posited that Eurasia is the world's strategic axis and that an active effort to impact the balance of political forces in this part of the world is vital to the security and survival of the Western world. As the Obama administration is forced to balance between sustaining the US presence in the Middle East while laying the foundation for the pivot to Asia—the two parts of the world seen as most important for America's future—the fate of the non-Russian Eurasian republics has dropped from a matter of vital interest to a preference. If Ukraine, Georgia or any other of those countries could be brought into the Western orbit cheaply and without too much trouble, fine—but once a substantial price tag is attached, one that could then take away from other, more pressing priorities, enthusiasm diminishes. The strategic calculation at the end of the day in both Brussels and Washington is that even if Russia succeeds in binding the other states of the region into a closer economic and political entity, a Moscow-led Eurasian Union, while it may not be welcomed by a large number of Ukrainians themselves, would still not pose a significant threat to the vital interests of the Euro-Atlantic world.<sup>24</sup>

The waning US interest in these areas as a whole despite this broad acknowledgment of the area's criticality for US interests leads scholars



to believe the first, if not the second, Obama administration's policy reflected an outlook of selective commitment whereby Washington can reduce its presence and interest in certain regions and choose carefully what are its priorities.<sup>25</sup> In addition,

Ukraine and Georgia have never been very high on the list of US priorities and probably never will be. They will always fall within the ambit of broader regional policies, whether these are directed toward Greater Eastern Europe or the Wider Black Sea area (WBSA), or even the more vaguely defined Eurasia. Contrary to some expectations, the WBSA, or the so-called Black-Caspian Sea region, has not become a priority for the United States. There has been no clear vision of US interests in the region, and Washington is not really strengthening its presence in the area in a way that one might expect. . . . The first thing the administration does when talking to its allies is try to assess how they can help with efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. This has automatically reduced the relevance of countries like Ukraine and Georgia to core US interests.<sup>26</sup>

Evidently the war in Afghanistan and the Obama "reset" policy have interacted to diminish the importance of Eurasia as a whole and, in particular, Azerbaijan and regional conflict resolution in US considerations. Widespread disillusionment with failed interventions, financial constraints, domestic gridlock, and slow recovery from the global financial crisis, all contribute to this disengagement from Eurasia.<sup>27</sup> But Gvosdev and Mead rightly argued there is no strategic will or vision that Eurasia or its supposedly "frozen conflicts" merit sustained US intervention or action.

### **Caucus Security and Sovereignty**

The United States has essentially adopted a self-denying ordinance with regard to Eurasia and its conflicts, whether real, potential, or frozen. But if we have learned anything in the past it is that refusal to address the issues at stake in so-called frozen conflicts all but ensures that they will unfreeze and turn violent with profound international repercussions. We saw this in the still unresolved Georgian conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where Western abstention from the conflict resolution allowed Russia to plan a war using Georgian separatists. And the international ramifications of the Russo-Georgian war were plainly far-flung. Just to give one major example of these repercussions, in 2012 President Putin admitted he had preplanned the 2008 Russo-Georgian war since 2006 with the deliberate use of separatists.<sup>28</sup> Putin's admissions and his

recent speech should be a reminder that Russia does not believe in the genuine and full sovereignty of the states in the former Soviet Union. The evidence in favor of this assertion is overwhelming and worse, long-lasting.<sup>29</sup> Therefore it should evoke much greater public concern from governments in London to Baku, as well as Washington. As James Sherr has recently written, “While Russia formally respects the sovereignty of its erstwhile republics; it also reserves the right to define the content of that sovereignty and their territorial integrity. Essentially Putin’s Russia has revived the Tsarist and Soviet view that sovereignty is a contingent factor depending on power, culture, and historical norms, not an absolute and unconditional principle of world politics.”<sup>30</sup> And Putin has used force once already to back it up. Similarly, Susan Stewart of the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* recently wrote that Russia’s coercive diplomacy to force its neighbors into its Eurasian Economic Union and Customs Union undermines any pretense that this integration project is based on anything other than Russia making other countries “an offer that they cannot refuse.” Furthermore, its coercive behavior shows its own nervousness about the viability of these formats and the necessity to coerce other states into accepting it. She also notes, “Russia is more than willing to tolerate instability and economic weakness in the neighboring countries, assuming they are accompanied by an increase in Russian influence. In fact, Russia consciously contributes to the rising instability and deterioration of the economic situation in some, if not all, of these countries.”<sup>31</sup>

In the Caucasus, the West’s failure to seize the moment invalidated the concept of a Russian retreat but shows instead that, rhetoric aside, Moscow has no interest in regional conflict resolution. The recent revelations of Russia selling Azerbaijan \$4 billion in armaments, even as it stations troops in and sells weapons to Armenia and continues to upgrade its own military power in the Caucasus, highlights this fact. Richard Giragosian observes that

Russia is clearly exploiting the unresolved Karabakh conflict and rising tension in order to further consolidate its power and influence in the South Caucasus. Within this context, Russia has not only emerged as the leading arms provider to Azerbaijan, but also continues to deepen its military support and cooperation with Armenia. For Azerbaijan, Russia offers an important source of modern offensive weapons, while for Armenia, both the bilateral partnership with Russia and membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) offers Armenia its own essential security guarantees.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately this remains the case today. Eugene Kogan recently reached the same conclusion as did Giragosian. “Moscow remains determined to block conflict resolution as conflict resolution would eliminate much of its leverage and pretexts for militarizing the area even though it is increasingly clear that Moscow has not arrested the disintegration of the North Caucasus by these forceful policies.”<sup>33</sup> This Western absence from conflict resolution is striking because it applies to all the countries of the South Caucasus and opens the way to Russia to interfere with these states by exploiting its monopoly over the conflict resolution process to strengthen its neoimperial drive. In regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, Moscow has obtained a base at Gyumri in Armenia until 2044 and undertaken a major buildup of its armed forces in the Caucasus—allegedly in fear of an attack by Iran, more likely in response to an imaginary NATO threat and to enforce its dominion.<sup>34</sup> Ruslan Pukhov, director of the Moscow Center for the Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST) also observes that this military buildup signifies Moscow has acted to remain “in the lead” militarily in the Caucasus and invoked US and Israeli military assistance to Azerbaijan as an alleged justification for this posture.<sup>35</sup>

Both Baku and Tbilisi have good reason to worry about this buildup that now includes Russia’s dual-use Iskander missile based at Gyumri that puts both countries and their capitals within strike range. And the powerful radar installations there also enable Russia to monitor the entire airspace over all three South Caucasus countries.<sup>36</sup> But beyond this and the sale of weapons to Armenia at concessionary prices, Moscow revealed in 2013 that it has sold \$4 billion of weapons to Azerbaijan in the past few years. Moreover, Russian elements aligned with organized crime are using Montenegro, a notorious “playground for Russian organized crime” to run weapons covertly to Nagorno-Karabakh. Since 2010 the arms tracking community has recorded 39 suspicious flights leaving Podgorica airport in Ilyushin 76s for Armenia’s Erebuni military airport in Stepanakert with arms intended for Nagorno-Karabakh, where there has been a wave of border incidents since 2010.<sup>37</sup> The use of these Russian planes and the link to the long-standing large-scale arms trafficking between Russia and Armenia immediately raises suspicions of Russian involvement if not orchestration of this program. Thus Russia openly and clandestinely arms both sides in this conflict that has become steadily more dangerous with increasing numbers of incidents between both

forces. It does so to keep both sides dependent to a greater or lesser degree, and its 2011 “mediation” efforts here also revealed its unremitting focus on undermining local sovereignty.

Armenian political scientist Arman Melikyan claims that in the “mediation” Russia ostensibly “brokered” in 2011 on Nagorno-Karabakh, Moscow was to arrange for the surrender of liberated territories, thereby ensuring its military presence in return and establishing a network of military bases in Azerbaijan to prevent any further cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO. While Armenian authorities reportedly accepted this plan, Baku refused to do so and thus saved Armenia—which clearly wants to incorporate Nagorno-Karabakh—from relinquishing the territory in return for further compromising its sovereignty and Azerbaijan’s security.<sup>38</sup> Armenia furnishes an outstanding example of what happens to a state that allows Moscow a monopoly over conflict resolution. In September 2013 Moscow brutally demonstrated its power over Armenia and the hollowness of Armenia’s claims to sovereignty by publicly forcing it to renounce its plan to sign a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) or association agreement with the EU and instead join the Moscow-based Customs Union or EURASEC, even though it has no common border with any other signatory.<sup>39</sup> Armenia may have espoused a policy of “complementarity,” seeking to bridge East–West conflicts by maintaining close contacts with Russia and Iran and expanding them with the West.<sup>40</sup> But Moscow decisively ended that by threatening to withdraw support for Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh if it signed an association agreement with the EU. Thus Armenia has become a prisoner of its own success in the earlier phases of the Nagorno-Karabakh war and is being dragged even further against its will into an apparent satellization process vis-à-vis Russia. This is all the more striking when one reads a recent statement by the commander of Russian troops in Armenia that if Azerbaijan sought to restore control over Nagorno-Karabakh by force, the Russian military group at the base in Gyumri might join the war on Armenia’s side in accordance with Russia’s obligation as a member of the CSTO.<sup>41</sup> This posture is despite the fact that Russia exploits both sides, so neither can count on it to reliably protect their interests.

In this context it is not surprising Georgian commentators now openly worry, even before the invasion of Crimea, that Russia will unleash its economic power against Georgia as it did against Ukraine for gravitating toward the EU or that if it is not stopped in Crimea it will come next for

Moldova and Georgia. The Crimean affair has only intensified concerns of a future operation against Georgia.<sup>42</sup> Russian threats to Caucasian and, by extension, European security are not merely confined to Russia's forcible integration of states into its union. It also includes the creeping annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and continuing pressure on Georgia.<sup>43</sup> Georgia's new prime minister, Irakli Garibashvili, may boast that Moscow will not and cannot put much pressure on Georgia by repeating the "Ukrainian scenario" there, although Moscow has previously waged bitter economic warfare against Georgia. Georgia is not as dependent on Russia as is Ukraine, but the military instruments and creeping annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia arguably belie such misplaced optimism.<sup>44</sup>

If anything, Moscow is steadily moving forward on incorporating those areas into its formal political structure. In 2013 *Izvestiya* reported the Kremlin was pondering a defensive perimeter for the Sochi Olympics along the borders of both Abkhazia and Kabardino-Balkaria that would appear to put them on an equal administrative footing under Russian control. Such actions are not taken lightly by Russia as it fully grasps their significance.<sup>45</sup> Tbilisi may be setting its sights on a NATO membership action plan (MAP) rather than membership, but neither is likely anytime soon, especially if the Abkhaz and South Ossetian situations are not overcome and resolved—another thing Moscow fully grasps. Nor is NATO likely to take much stock in Georgian claims that failure to gain even a plan could undermine domestic stability in Georgia or to give it a MAP until those conflicts are resolved; this may only encourage Moscow in its obduracy and neoimperial policies while doing nothing for Georgian security.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, Moscow shows no sign of relenting on its territorial grab and insists that it is up to Georgia to reopen relations, a precondition of any conflict resolution. But such "normalization" is inconceivable in Georgia as long as Moscow occupies Georgian territory. Hence, we have a standoff that only benefits Russia, prevents conflict resolution, and leaves open the recurrent possibility of a new Russo–Georgian war.<sup>47</sup>

But Russian machinations against the integrity and sovereignty of the South Caucasian states do not end here. In 2008 Vafa Qulluzada observed that President Medvedev's visit to Azerbaijan was preceded by deliberate Russian incitement of the Lezgin and Avar ethnic minorities there to induce Azerbaijan to accept Russia's gas proposals.<sup>48</sup> Such policies

appear to be systematic on Russia's part. It has intermittently encouraged separatist movement among the Javakhetian Armenian minority in Georgia and all but taken control of the Crimea for potential use against Ukraine.<sup>49</sup> And, as noted above, it admitted using separatists to plan the war against Georgia in 2008. Russia states it has no claims on Azerbaijani territories, but articles in the Russian press have advocated government action to protect these Azerbaijani minorities as Russian citizens to punish Azerbaijan for flirting with NATO.<sup>50</sup>

The United States should not lose sight of the fact Russian law permits its president to dispatch troops abroad to defend the “honor and dignity” of other Russians (a group that can be fabricated out of thin air, e.g., by means of Russia's preexisting “passportization” policy) without any parliamentary debate or accountability.<sup>51</sup> Putin did not even need the legislative farce of a request or law calling for intervention in Crimea and in any event probably preempted it by ordering troop movements on 26–27 February 2014. Moscow may now claim to have new ideas about resolving Nagorno-Karabakh, but it is doubtful it will facilitate conflict resolution rather than further extend its hegemonic drive here.<sup>52</sup> European governments know full well that a revitalized Russian empire represents a fundamental threat to European security as such. Therefore the outbreak of war in Europe and Eurasia cannot be ruled out, and security throughout this expanse cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, when major demonstrations broke out in Kyiv in January 2014, the Russian media began publishing articles claiming partition of Ukraine—an outcome only conceivable if force is used—was no longer inconceivable or off the table. Other writers similarly now warn of a civil war there.<sup>53</sup> Thus what ultimately is at stake in Ukraine and in the Caucasus' many unresolved conflicts, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, is the overall structure of security in Eurasia and Europe as a whole. For as was already apparent in the 1990s, the security of the Transcaucasus and that of Europe are ultimately indivisible.<sup>54</sup>

### **Why Is the Caucasus Important if not Critical to the West?**

While it is unfortunate one must ask this question, it clearly is appropriate today. In answering this question it should become clear this region is more than a refueling stop on the way to Afghanistan, which in any case the United States and NATO are leaving, or even a major

energy center for production and transshipment of oil and gas. For example, it is clear the independence and integrity of all three states in the South Caucasus and even of Russia in the North Caucasus are all at risk today, albeit from different threats. And if this situation is allowed to fester, the risk of conflict will almost certainly spread to Europe. Nowhere has the post–Cold War settlement of Europe proven more fragile than here, and the area is dotted with unresolved conflicts that invite great-power (i.e., Russian) intervention if not aggression, to call things by their correct names. In other words, the Caucasus is today the most volatile part of Eurasia and the one in which the European security system erected after 1991 has already been challenged by force and remains at risk of new military challenges

In this context the United States should understand that the security of the overall post–Cold War settlement in Europe as well as the dream of a Europe whole and free is at risk from the failures of conflict resolution and of democratic governance in this region and have been for some time. Robert Legvold and others argued years ago that if there is anything clear about the security of the South Caucasus and its component governments it is that their security is truly inextricable from Europe and this has been true for quite some time.<sup>55</sup> The lasting consequences of the Georgian war of 2008 make that clear not just for the Caucasus, but for European security. And operating with the same logic in mind, the EU’s Eastern Partnership and efforts to advance its agenda of integration—which are the only successful post-1989 policy initiatives, along with the concurrent policy of NATO expansion for promoting peace and better governance in Europe—have now begun to make their presence felt, to judge from Moscow’s angry response. In a similar vein, Mustafa Aydin recently argued concerning the Black Sea region that

The region has become the new frontline in tackling the problems of illegal immigrants, narcotics, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the trafficking of women, and transnational organized crime. Moreover, the four “frozen conflicts” of Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh have all affected the region. As a result, the region has become the epicenter of the projects to provide stability for wider Europe and BMENA (Broader Middle East and North Africa).<sup>56</sup>

This is not an isolated view. The Turkish economist Mehmet Oğütçu also noted that this Black Sea region “is becoming a geopolitical flash-point.”<sup>57</sup> The Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–14 strongly validates that

point. Accordingly, it is no accident that as a direct result of the Georgian war of 2008 that Poland, Finland, Sweden, and the Baltic States all feel a greater threat from Russia since that war, and Russia's concurrent defense reform and rearmament plan have added to those fears.<sup>58</sup> Neither are their and the South Caucasus states' anxieties misplaced; quite the opposite. These states are, as noted above, under permanent pressure and threat. In this context the first geopolitical reason for engaging all three states of the South Caucasus is to uphold the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and the borders of the 1989–91 Eurasian settlement in the region where they are most challenged. Russian officials have also habitually reminded the Kazakh government that there is a large Russian minority in Kazakhstan and that Moscow has the power and means to incite them against the government if it diverges too far from Russian demands.<sup>59</sup> Similar threats in the Baltic States are well known and a matter of public record. A second reason is that without such engagement by the West, Russia inevitably becomes the sole or monopolizing force with regard to conflict resolution. And close examination of its policies, not only in Nagorno-Karabakh but elsewhere, demonstrates quite conclusively that conflict resolution is in fact anathema to Russia.

## **Central Asia**

In Central Asia the United States encounters multiple and diverse security challenges that could erupt into violence. The real danger to US interests is that having left Afghanistan and lacking another rationale for involvement with Central Asia of a largely nonmilitary nature, we will simply forget about it. That process unfortunately seems to be already in train.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, other interested parties, such as Russia, fully recognize that withdrawal and its implications.<sup>61</sup> Some analysts argue that Central Asian states, by virtue of letting their territories be used for the Northern Distribution Network that supplies ISAF and US forces in Afghanistan, have made Central Asia part of the Afghan theater of war.<sup>62</sup> Undoubtedly, there are signs of terrorist or extremist groups in places like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan if not the other Central Asian states, and the threats that could ensue in Central Asia once foreign forces depart Afghanistan are all possible.<sup>63</sup> But the threat paradigm requiring substantial US military presence is by no means universally accepted among analysts. Neither is it the whole story in Central Asia.



As many analysts have observed, the threat of terrorism, though real, may be overhyped and remain within the capability of host states to deal with without requiring large infusions of US troops.<sup>64</sup> Second, given the many issues of ethnic minorities, water disputes, boundary disagreements, and the consistent Uzbek threats to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the extent of repeatedly waging economic warfare against them suggests that the main threats from outside these states' borders might equally come from their neighbors rather than from Afghanistan. In fact, many experts believe the proliferation of threat scenarios connected with Afghanistan, though perhaps real, are also self-serving mythologies that are drummed up for purposes of getting weapons or political attention from the United States and other foreign powers or institutions. Therefore, the most likely threats emanate from within Central Asia itself, not Afghanistan.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, none of the Central Asian countries except for Uzbekistan are reorienting their military policy to meet the kinds of threat that might reasonably be expected from Afghanistan.<sup>66</sup> And Uzbekistan's warnings about Afghanistan may be a cloak behind which it seeks to maintain the US connection and receive substantial amounts of weapons from Washington while preparing for a Russian threat and rivalry with Kazakhstan for local leadership.<sup>67</sup> The clashes in early 2014 between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan over disputed lands are one example of this emphasis on local threat scenarios. Accordingly, it has long been known that the main reason for these states' rising defense budgets is their apprehensions about their neighbors, primarily Uzbekistan. At the same time, Russia's strong position in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and its efforts to interpret the CSTO mandates as justifying intervention in certain cases raises the specter of another Crimean-type crisis there. Alexey Malashenko has not only confirmed this point, he has also observed that the issue of protecting Russians abroad is merely an instrument or tactic, not a principled policy. Listing the goals of Russian policy in Central Asia, he writes,

This list does not mention stability since that is not one of Russia's unwavering strategic demands for the region. Although the Kremlin has repeatedly stressed its commitment to stability, Russia nevertheless finds shaky situations more in its interests, as the inherent potential for local or regional conflict creates a highly convenient excuse for persuading the governments of the region to seek help from Russia in order to survive.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, he notes, this list omits an interest in the six million Russians left behind in Central Asia. In fact by ignoring this group and leaving them to their own fate, Moscow makes clear that it cannot and will not provide for them. Russia gains a card it can play whenever it is so motivated and, indeed, has never used this issue in public polemics with its Central Asian neighbors.<sup>69</sup> However, it has played this card in private against Kazakhstan.<sup>70</sup> But even without public displays of this card in Central Asia, as opposed to its widespread deployment in the Black Sea zone, this issue and the laws allowing for Russian imperial adventures abroad carry a lethal charge. Today the Russian Duma is ready to enact legislation making it easy for foreign nationals to become Russian citizens or for Russia to invade neighboring states' territories.<sup>71</sup>

When one takes account of the dynamics furnished by Kirill Nourzhanov it becomes clear just how complex this region truly is. Nourzhanov noted the need to break away from a Western-derived threat paradigm that sees everything in terms of the great-power rivalry and the main internal threat to regimes, namely insurgency.<sup>72</sup> While these threats surely exist, they hardly comprise the only challenges to Central Asian security. Thus he writes,

Conventional security problems rooted in border disputes, competition over water and mineral resources, ubiquitous enclaves and ethnic minorities, generate conflict potential in the region and are perceived as existential threats by the majority of the local population. One of the very few comprehensive studies available on the subject arrived at the following conclusions: (1) relations among the countries of Central Asia are far from showing mutual understanding on the whole range of economic issues; (2) the most acute contradictions are linked to land and water use; and (3) these contradictions have historical roots and are objectively difficult to resolve, hence they are liable to be actualized in the near future in a violent form.<sup>73</sup>

This is not just another academic analysis. In fact, border problems, mainly between Uzbekistan and all of its neighbors, have long impeded and today continue to retard the development of both regional security and prosperity.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, given the antagonism between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, especially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, hostile relations and even the use of force is never a remote possibility. As a result of these trends, a regional arms race has taken root in Central Asia. In 2007 alone, military spending in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan rose by 48 percent.<sup>75</sup> As Nourzhanov further notes,

The bulk of the money would be spent on heavy weapons, fixed-wing planes, and navy vessels which is hard to explain by the demands of a fight against terrorism alone. Remarkably the danger of intra-regional armed conflict is not seriously analyzed in any official document. The current Military Doctrine of Kazakhstan (2000) which talks about the tantalizingly abstract “probability of diminished regional security as a result of excessive increase in qualitative and quantitative military might by certain states,” may be regarded as a very partial exception that proves the rule.<sup>76</sup>

Much evidence corroborates this last point. For example, Kazakhstan has increased defense spending by 800 percent in 2000–07.<sup>77</sup> And the state defense order was expected to double in 2009.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the trend toward militarization was already evident by 2003.<sup>79</sup> Many states also have reason to fear insurgencies due to misrule or ethnic cleavages that could then erupt and potentially provide an opening for insurgents of various stripes. Kyrgyzstan’s president fears that Uzbekistan could use water resources and ethnic tensions with Uzbeks in the south to incite violence.<sup>80</sup> Or else, their own misrule could catch up with them. For example, Tajikistan has long been known to be a narco state with all the attendant state corruption and criminality that goes with this status.<sup>81</sup> And all the other regional governments, except Kyrgyzstan, are classic despotisms. Indeed, arguably the real threats do not originate in or come from Afghanistan but from factors internal to Central Asia.

Those factors begin with the pervasive misrule, corruption, autocracy, or even sultanism of these states other than Kyrgyzstan; ethnic cleavages and weak government there and elsewhere in the region; poor conditions for the human security agenda of health, education, water supply, drug addiction; the absence of any real regional cooperation; the clear signs of mutual rivalry and suspicion among them; the absence of any viable regional security structure; and the incessant efforts by both Moscow and Beijing to subordinate these governments to their respective grand designs. This year alone there have been clashes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan over disputed territories and water. More recently, Kazakhstan’s arms purchases and overall economic-political program indicate its clear desire to play a leading role in Central Asia. For example, it has recently contracted with South Africa to produce and maintain armored military vehicles for the local and regional export markets. The two countries also collaborate in space research programs, and Kazakhstan’s launch platform at Baikonur has launched South African and many other foreign countries’ space satellites. Kazakhstan also signed an accord on security

cooperation with Israel that provides a general umbrella for cultivating defense trade and future cooperation between them. This accord formalizes more than a decade of Israeli arms sales. Apparently, Kazakhstan is especially interested in unmanned systems, border security, command and control capabilities, and satellite communications—the leading sectors of military technology.<sup>82</sup> Thus this area will soon become a platform for high-tech weapons, even if in smaller numbers. It also is likely that conflicts here will epitomize the so-called hybrid conflicts of our time in their nature, scope, and intractability as they are rooted in political misrule as much as anything else.<sup>83</sup> Certainly US officials have grounds for concern here. The Director of National Intelligence annual report downplays the threat from Afghanistan and elevates those stemming from domestic causes, including the possibility of succession struggles in Central Asia.<sup>84</sup> Neither can we wholly exclude Afghan-based scenarios or the possibility of Russian or Chinese intervention, the former of which clearly keeps Uzbekistan awake at night.<sup>85</sup> But the conclusions to be drawn given the threat profile in Central Asia suggest that large US forces should not be deployed or configured for intervention here other than in cases of massive external invasion from abroad and a request for assistance. Even then, large-scale intervention would not necessarily be the answer.

If the United States wants to secure its critical interests—such as assuring change occurs within a stable political framework, the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of these states, their immunization against terrorist-based insurgencies, and defense against attacks by their neighbors, particularly Russia or China—then it must formulate and implement a different strategy than was previously the case with a low-profile or smaller military footprint. To position ourselves better to meet those threats as our military presence diminishes, our economic and political presence—nonetheless always in service to a higher strategy—must grow commensurately. Unfortunately, there is a disconnect in solving this challenge. Inducing strategic planning in a decidedly hostile environment is always difficult, but the pervasive opposition of so many entrenched bureaucracies and interest groups to revising business as usual represents serious obstacles. Nevertheless, it must be done. The key takeaway here is, the United States, as it leaves Afghanistan, must reorient its thinking about Central Asia to a policy that aims to prevent conflicts from breaking out, either within failing states or between them,

or between Russia and China for hegemony here that might be triggered by a domestic upheaval in a Central Asian state. Military means here are subordinated to a strategically conceived and implemented foreign policy relying mainly on expanded economic and political tools and their strategic utilization or deployment across Central Asia. Such military instruments as may be employed here should revolve around training and advisory missions, educational programs for local armed forces, and the sale of weapons and/or technologies that really do contribute to local security.

In the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe, we face a highly diversified palette of threats, all of which require sustained US attention and even sometimes intervention, but much less frequently require specific military actions. Indeed, one should not confuse or conflate political and economic intervention with military intervention and lump them all together indiscriminately or think any military action is foreordained to be large scale, protracted, and ultimately futile. To do so, as we have now begun to do, is to ensure insofar as Eurasia is concerned, to quote Ibsen, “we sail with a corpse in the cargo.”

## **Energy Issues**

The geostrategic or geopolitical importance of the Caucasus does not end here, vital as those issues may be. European energy security, obviously a vital interest to Europe and to the United States, is bound up with sustaining the South Caucasian states and constantly engaging with them. The states of the Caucasus represent the only Eurasian alternative for Eastern and Southeastern Europe to avoid excessive dependence upon Russian gas and oil supplies, the main weapon of Russian foreign policy with which Moscow seeks to overturn the 1989–91 settlement in Europe and to corrode European public institutions from within. In this context, Azerbaijan’s recent decision to ship gas from the Shah Deniz field through the Trans-Anatolian pipeline (TANAP) to Turkey and thence to Europe through the Trans-Adriatic pipeline (TAP) possesses key significance. Apart from providing the only alternative to Russian gas and a basis for future expansion of that alternative, even if Azerbaijan is very careful not to provoke Gazprom and Moscow directly, the TANAP pipeline also offers several other vistas for Western exploitation.

Specifically, the TANAP pipeline, largely driven and owned by Baku, answers many Azerbaijani as well as European and potentially Central Asian interests. It encourages Turkmenistan to pursue a trans-Caspian gas pipeline, thereby diversifying its options away from exclusive dependence upon China and/or Russia. It stimulates a more active EU engagement with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan toward that pipeline objective. It enhances Georgia's transit role as an automatic part of the pipeline route and thus Georgia's importance to Europe. It greatly enhances Turkey's role as a transit hub and represents the first, indeed only, dedicated pipeline to realize the idea behind the Nabucco project if not the actual Nabucco pipeline. It makes Azerbaijan a major contributor to Georgian, Balkan, and thus European energy security while linking it organically with Turkey—a major Azerbaijani aim—and allowing it to become an investor in Turkey and Turkish energy equities. At the same time, the TANAP strengthens and validates Azerbaijan's pro-Western orientation and justifies enhanced Western attention to an engagement with Azerbaijan, especially as the European Commission regards TANAP as an integral "dedicated" segment of the planned southern gas corridor to Europe, involving potentially pipelines from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan through Azerbaijan to Europe. Indeed, the Shah Deniz consortium has already decided to triple the capacity of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline (or South Caucasus Pipeline) from 7 to 21 billion cubic meters annually to be fed into TANAP once the latter is built.<sup>86</sup> And in parallel with the TANAP, Baku is funding and completing construction of the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railroad with a ferryboat link to the eastern Caspian shore, connecting European and Central Asian rail networks. "Thus Baku initiates and implements large-scale projects of European interest from its own natural and investment resources, and with [a] business rationale buttressed by [a] strategic rationale."<sup>87</sup> There can be no doubt that all of these outcomes rebound to the West's benefit, and thus the support of Azerbaijan's endeavors here are critical to Western and US interests.

Indeed, in 2009 Amb. Richard Morningstar, then the US ambassador to Eurasia on energy issues and now ambassador to Azerbaijan, openly stated that it was US policy to promote a coalition of Black Sea riparian and Caspian states to explore, exploit, and transport their energy resources from the Black Sea to European markets and that he would personally take care that these states cooperate.<sup>88</sup> But at the same time, the failure

of the Nabucco pipeline to materialize as a real option still leaves the door open to several potential risks for Azerbaijan. It is arguably essential for the West to minimize those risks through sustained engagement with Azerbaijan and Georgia if not Armenia to maximize the potential energy, economic, and strategic returns from the TANAP project.

One risk is that the grand design of a trans-Caspian pipeline connecting Central Asian producers, particularly Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, to Europe will fail to materialize. Failure to develop that pipeline exposes Azerbaijan to risks because of the benefits to it that are inherent in the successful construction of a trans-Caspian pipeline. Building that pipeline would reduce the burden on Azerbaijan to be the sole Caspian producer bypassing Russia and the risks to which that posture exposes it. It would also greatly increase the amount of gas going to Europe that is not controlled by Russia, presumably encouraging Kazakhstan to emulate the other producers. Conversely, failure to develop that pipeline leaves Azerbaijan somewhat exposed. Indeed, it should be clear that no such pipeline will take place despite the wish of the majority of littoral states until and unless the West is prepared to give ironclad guarantees and sufficient political cover to both Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan that they could participate in this pipeline safely or find a solution that prevents Iran and Russia from threatening the energy supplies and pipelines of the other states. But it looks like that is not going to happen anytime soon. Nevertheless, the foregoing analysis should make it clear that the West has an enduring and critical interest in Azerbaijani and other Caspian states' energy going to Europe directly through pipelines with which Moscow cannot tamper to strengthen the producers' sovereignty and both Eastern and Western Europe's security from the visibly negative attempts by Moscow to use its energy weapon against European security and democracy.

These considerations do not apply exclusively to the need to support Azerbaijan and Georgia, and hopefully Armenia, should it ever be able to integrate with its neighbors. The key point of the TANAP project and potential other future pipelines is that it enhances the energy and thus general security of the United States and its European allies and EU members, particularly in Southeastern Europe, as well as our partners in the Caucasus and the independence of Central Asian states. Geostrategically speaking, the TANAP-TAP network and the possibilities it opens up embody the principle established in 1989–91 of

the indivisibility of European and Eurasian security. The Balkan diversification of energy supply is a vital economic and political interest of local governments. The greater reliance on market mechanisms and European integration actually lowers consumers' total energy bill and could also facilitate such desirable outcomes as the rapprochement with regard to the blocked energy chapter in EU-Turkey negotiations, thus keeping open the southern gas corridor through Azerbaijan and Turkey and increasing gas supplies to Europe, even as these links strengthen Caspian producers.<sup>89</sup>

## **Recommendations**

It should be clear that if Russian imperialism is to be checked, the EU and the United States must reverse the trend of recent years to wash their hands of the Caucasus and Central Asia. The EU's recent failure to continue its offer of a special representative for Central Asia embodies this kind of short-sighted neglect. Therefore, in both the Caucasus and Central Asia, the United States needs an approach that, like Russia, employs all the instruments of power. It should extend military support to Azerbaijan to defend its energy installations while at the same time taking a much more active and even proprietary approach to mediating the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia. An active mediatory role by Washington would reduce the scope or justification for such actions and reduce tensions in the area Russia exploits for its own purposes. Likewise, as a critical part of any resolution of this war, part of the solution must be ending the Turkish blockade of Armenia and full normalization of Armeno-Turkish relations to give Armenia an option for economic development beyond Russia and again contributing to the stabilization of the region. In addition, the United States should support EU membership for Turkey, provided it returns to a more democratic path away from corruption, censorship, and repression. Membership in the EU plus new energy sources would give Turkey more resources to resist Russia, which it clearly fears but is too dependent on for energy to act in the current or other crises.<sup>90</sup> In regard to Georgia, it is time to give it the weapons it needs for self-defense and expand US and NATO training programs there to prepare Georgian and Azerbaijani forces for territorial defense. Beyond that there should be a permanent NATO fleet in the Black Sea with appropriate air cover, strike capability, and an amphibious landing force. Politically, Georgia should be placed into a



NATO and EU membership track, since Moscow has now abundantly demonstrated its penchant for war. Thus, NATO could expand its remit to provide the necessary training and advisory capabilities to Georgia, as should the EU.

Europe, in particular Eastern Europe (east of Germany), is now the central theater. From the foregoing analysis, and given the fact that war here is now no longer inconceivable, it follows that there must be a fundamental change of US and NATO (and EU) strategy to contain Russia using all the instruments of power. The strategy must be to foreclose Russia's imperial option, thereby strengthening all the states around it and the transatlantic alliance and working unceasingly for the recovery of Ukraine's full integrity and sovereignty. The many arguments around Washington and Europe that we must accept this outrage and return to negotiations with Russia, implicitly or explicitly, confirm the indivisibility of European security is fiction and that spheres of influence and empire are allowed. This cannot be accepted. Apart from its moral obtuseness, that course is strategically defeating because it disarms Europe while encouraging Moscow to believe further imperial predation is acceptable. In other words, that course of appeasement licenses more wars, and not only in Europe. Indeed, all the arguments for coming to terms with Russia are the same as those first heard in the 1930s, similarly useless, and futile. None of this means we are bringing back the Cold War or that Putin's Russia equates to Nazi Germany. But it would be a salutary lesson for our chattering classes to remember that geopolitical rivalry has never ended, that peace does not preserve itself, and that Putin's Russia has proclaimed itself ready to use war or any other instrument to destroy the integrity and sovereignty of its neighbors. If that is not war, what is?

A fundamental revision of US strategy means many things. First, in the military sphere the defense budget for fiscal 2015 should be withdrawn and a new one sent to Congress. More defense spending is needed, particularly for a stepped-up information warfare campaign. Large-scale media and channels like Radio Free Europe must be planned and conducted just as Russia does. The new defense budget must also reflect the need for permanent and forward-deployed land and air defense forces in Europe, the construction of an effective transportation network into Poland and the Baltic States, and permanent bases in Poland and the Baltic States with US and NATO forces there. Since Russia broke all its agreements with Ukraine and is now revoking them and many with the

West, it is time to scrap the NATO-Russia Founding Act that barred permanent deployments in Poland and the Baltic States.<sup>91</sup> We should also acknowledge that the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaty is gone and build up to the levels allowed by it, if not more. Furthermore, to deprive Russia of the means to intimidate Poland, the Baltic States and Germany, as well as the Balkans, should place missile defenses and an air-based offensive missile strike capability in Poland and the Baltic States. We no longer need to say missile defense is just about Iran. NATO and the United States must also take on, along with the EU, the immediate and urgent task of helping Ukraine strengthen itself in every conceivable way—economically, politically, and militarily—to make it a showcase of democratic governance and thus an effective, strong state. In economics, it should be placed on a track leading to the EU, provided it begins and continues over the long term to implement the necessary reforms. Militarily, we should sell Ukraine weapons, develop its infrastructure, and send NATO and US advisors to undertake constant training and advisory missions assisting Ukrainian forces in the territorial defense of their country.

In the information sphere, we must expose and neutralize the networks of pro-Russian “think tanks,” political movements, and media figures suborned by Russian money here and in Europe. We must greatly magnify our media and professional interests in these areas and the media exposure as well. This also means a comprehensive program to educate our elites into the realities of Eastern European politics and security. Economically, we must emulate Rhinemetall and stop all Western deals leading to the transfer of military capabilities and technology to Moscow, such as the *Mistral*-class amphibious assault ship, but not only the *Mistral*. A long-term energy program must not only increase energy efficiency but also reorient European imports to other countries and developing indigenous capabilities such as renewables, nuclear energy, and also seeking shale or liquefied natural gas (LNG) wherever feasible. Large-scale deals with Russia, such as Goldman Sachs’ recent \$3 billion plan to publicize Russia’s virtues for foreign investors, must be subjected to governmental and public scrutiny, if not shame. England must take robust steps against the flood of corrupt Russian money into the city of London and its real estate and financial markets. These sanctions must be in conjunction with sanctions not only on Putin, but his cronies as well. The sources

of their wealth should be revealed and sanctions placed on the Russian banking system.

To achieve these objectives, we must employ all means at hand, consistently, and for a considerable length of time. Since the balance of capabilities is overwhelmingly Western, once it accepts the inevitable, manageable, and relatively short-term cost of a unified coherent strategy, it can gain greater security and prosperity over time. The fact is, all the arguments for accepting Russia's *fait accompli*, acknowledging the division of Europe, and conducting business as usual have all been tried and found wanting. Ultimately, these arguments serve to reward and encourage further war not only in Europe, but elsewhere. To the extent that the United States leads and reinvigorates the alliance, it and the states of Europe, including Ukraine, can save Europe by their efforts and preserve international security by their example. None of these recommendations fires a shot, but they demonstrate resolve, expand both reassurance and deterrence—the cardinal purposes of US military presence in Europe—and create the possibility for Ukraine to recover its territory and integrity under much stronger circumstances. Many will claim this brings back the Cold War. But this is a false claim: the Cold War is over, but geopolitical rivalry continues. It is Moscow that has committed open acts of war and now arrogantly believes the West is corrupt and weak. However, the Russian economy is much weaker than the West's and much less flexible. A long-term display of Western resolve and deterrence using all these instruments of power has the means to effectuate not only a return to the status quo ante, but to secure as well a change of perspective in Russia. The logic of containment today is no different than before. By foreclosing the imperial option, we engender by peaceful means the internal tensions within Russia that will inevitably force it to reform. If the United States thinks and acts strategically, it will not take 45 years to achieve that goal, since the Putin system already carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. ■■■

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