

Russia and the New "New World Order"

Robert Hunter, Johns Hopkins University, August 2014

| EU | NATO | U.S. FOREIGN POLICY | UKRAINE |



The current crisis with Russia, focusing on Ukraine (but not limited to it), involves many basic propositions about the future of what we in our trade like to call “world order.” The most basic propositions of all are the following:

1. For the indefinite future, neither the United States nor any of our allies and partners in the Northern Hemisphere can ignore what Russia is and does.
2. Russia is contiguous to most of the areas of U.S. foreign policy and national security concern, at least in the northeast “quadrisphere,” extending from Europe

to the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, South Asia, and the Far East—especially China and Korea—and onto the Arctic. Russia also touches on a number of “functional” areas, including energy, climate change, shared interests in cybersecurity, and various arms control matters. This makes the “Russia business” of very special interest and concern, demanding of serious, integrated strategy within the West.

3. Russia does not have a realistic option of isolating itself for the long term from the outside world— this is not Lenin’s 1923.
4. No one can benefit from a new Cold War, and both Russia and the West (and others) have to do their part to have the critical factors move in directions that can benefit all of the countries involved or, indeed, just about any of them.
5. Lest we forget, “what’s past is prologue.”

Much if not most of what must happen in order for this crisis not to become a permanent sore and even perhaps lead to a new and mutually self-defeating Cold War (though one which, most likely, we would “win” once again, but at what cost?) lies with Russia, and not just Russian President Vladimir Putin. He is the symbol and much of the substance of what Russia is doing.

Part of [President George H.W.] Bush’s vision was that Russia, the big piece that emerged from the wreckage of the Soviet Union, must not be treated like Germany at Versailles.

But Putin did not just emerge fully armed from the forehead of Zeus: he is a product of a lot of factors, most of which, perhaps, have been internal to Russia, but at least some of which have had to do with the way in which many, or even most, Russians feel themselves to have been treated by the West, and especially by the United States, in much of the period since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

A brief review is in order regarding the time when much seemed possible in terms of Russia's positive engagement with the West to this time when so little seems possible, at least for now—defined by many observers as “at least as long as Putin is with us.” How we got from there to here has had a major impact on dominant U.S. narratives about Russia and Putin, and on what can be done by the West to help end the crisis and begin devising a solid basis for dealing with the future.

We started out well after the end of the Cold War, with George H. W. Bush's effort to test whether it would be possible to create a “Europe whole and free.” Two other elements were a hope that the old balance-of-power paradigm in Europe could be consigned to the “ash can of history,” along with the notion of spheres of influence. But it was understood that, to achieve these goals, the U.S. and the rest of the West had to demonstrate their own firm commitment to a new politics in Europe.

Part of Bush's vision was that Russia, the big piece that emerged from the wreckage of the Soviet Union, must not be treated like Germany at Versailles. Hence his reaching out to Russia; hence Manfred Woerner's following suit from NATO; and hence, fledgling efforts like the creation of its North Atlantic Cooperation Council, which included all the former communist states.

For Russia's part, there was notably its profound decision to accept that a unified Germany would be in NATO (where the U.S. could keep an eye on it); and its later decisions to take part in some NATO institutions and activities, plus its support for a number of U.S. and Western interests, notably regarding Afghanistan and Iran, and its continued participation in strategic arms control negotiations.

The U.S. continued to pursue the Bush vision in the first part of the Clinton administration, with a focus within NATO (paralleled by what is now the European Union) on balancing several elements, the three most relevant of

which for this discussion are:

- to take Central Europe off the geopolitical chessboard, notably through the Partnership for Peace (PFP) and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and, for some of these countries, alliance membership;
- to keep the door to engagement with the outside world wide open to Russia, which included invitations for Russia to join the PFP and the EAPC, plus conclusion of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, which included some self-denying NATO ordinances and a forum that is now the NATO-Russia Council; and
- to provide Ukraine with a special status pending developments with Russia, e.g., PFP, EAPC, and the NATO-Ukraine Charter and Commission.

The first round of NATO enlargement was designed to help stabilize Central Europe for everyone, and thus focused on Poland and the Czech Republic, with Hungary thrown in for good measure. With the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia (IFOR and SFOR), Russia was included and, indeed, sent its top-flight military personnel who worked effectively, especially with the U.S., its great power partner, as opposed to just being one of a number of countries within NATO.

Would the course of events and Russian behavior have been different if the Bush vision had been scrupulously pursued? This is an unanswerable question.

We thus were practicing what we preached regarding a “Europe whole and free” and showing that we would not seek security through a new balance of power process and creation of a sphere of influence across Europe. Of course, regarding the Russian future within Europe, this was still very much an experiment, and there was no guarantee of success, especially in terms of Russia’s own vision for a role in Europe, the requirements for achieving respect

and self-respect (especially in light of its defeat in the Cold War), and willingness to play by the rules, even if it were enabled to play a key part in writing those rules.

Then things began to go off the rails, as the U.S. foreign policy team changed in the late 1990s, as Washington largely forgot about the Bush vision, and Russia couldn't really stop an extension of the old politics of Western approaches to Central Europe and beyond. NATO enlargement went too far (beyond the Baltics which, I would argue, were a special case, because of history going back to 1939-41). The U.S. later abrogated the ABM Treaty—a minor event in terms of arms control, but a major event in terms of depriving Russia of one of the coins of power, influence, and respect. The U.S. demanded that Russia meet criteria for World Trade Organization (WTO) membership, instead of seeing it as an urgent, political step to provide incentives for Russia to work with the global economy. The U.S. Congress even waited until 2012 to repeal Jackson-Vanik, 20 years after there was total freedom of emigration from Russia.

Furthermore, the U.S. sought to deploy ABM systems in Central Europe and dismissed Russian concerns. We correctly argued that these would not pose a challenge to the Soviet strategic nuclear arsenal (Russian nuclear strategists understand this), but totally ignored the affront to Russian self-respect. This action was at odds with the spirit, if not the language, of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act and, of course, it was done as part of U.S. anti-Iran policy, with no effort on the part of the U.S. government to recognize the linkage between the two factors. Then the 2008 NATO summit said that Ukraine and Georgia “will become NATO members,” thus abandoning that aspect of “Europe whole and free” that accepted the need to take account of legitimate Russian political and security concerns before settling on a final status for Ukraine. Meanwhile, the West refused to consider two Russian proposals for broad European security arrangements even with the necessary caveats that NATO and EU requirements must be respected by Moscow.

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Of course, Russia took a number of steps that could not be justified in terms of its playing a positive role in the future of Europe, even a Europe in which it would have a role in writing the rules. These include, but have not been limited to, its unwillingness to fulfill its commitments within the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe and the Adapted CFE Treaty (minor); its cyberattacks on Estonia and manipulation of the price and supply of energy to Ukraine and Central Europe for political ends (significant); and its invasion of Georgia and support for the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (major). Then there were Putin's actions in seizing Crimea and violating the sovereignty of other parts of Ukraine, which cannot by any measure be justified no matter how provocatively the governments in Kiev or Western countries (especially the U.S.) were acting.

The West does have to respond to Putin's seizure of Crimea and threats to the rest of Ukraine, which, among other things, violate the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 2004 Budapest Memorandum. The U.S. and its allies have to take military and other steps to reassure anxious allies in Central Europe that NATO membership means what it says. And maybe the imposition of sanctions will help produce a change in Putin/Russian behavior—though not in the short term.

At the same time, however, we in the United States are expecting Russia to help us meet our interests in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, among other places. This expectation does not compute with the imposition of sanctions; but the U.S. administration doesn't seem to have a means of relating apples to oranges, of making choices, of genuinely thinking long-term, of devising a strategy that might lead from today back—or forward—to a renewed testing of a "Europe whole and free." It is no doubt too early for the U.S. with its allies to begin advancing an off-ramp for Putin, even if he were in time to be interested

in such a course; but it is not too early to begin crafting such an approach.

It will not even be possible to reach a point where this alternative for the future of all of Europe can even be considered unless we—and Russia—fully recognize that no one can be the net gainer unless the current crisis is kept from hardening into a new, permanent confrontation, of whatever form. For us in the United States (less so in much of Europe), that may be the hardest task of all: to keep from trotting out the emotional and psychological apparatus of the Cold War. These proclivities are easy to turn on; but as we have found so often in our history, they are far harder to turn off, short of capitulation by a defined enemy.

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We also have to understand that, if Russia's future does have to be with the outside world, if we have a stake in that happening in a way that can become a plus-sum game, and if we have to play our part while correctly demanding that Putin play his part, then we have to start with strategic analysis concerning the demands of a functioning international system, not just in regard to Europe but for all parts of the globe where Russia will necessarily be engaged. This analysis should not just be a recitation of what we want, but rather a deep understanding of what has a chance to work, in pursuit of basic goals of creating a politics in Europe fundamentally different from those that dominated the twentieth century.

That includes returning to the George H. W. Bush and early Bill Clinton vision of a "Europe whole and free," including all of its key strategic elements. It will

require an honest assessment of what went wrong from about the late-1990s onward—wrong in the West, especially the U.S., and wrong in Russia. It includes not abandoning, certainly not ab initio, the effort to move beyond the old and discredited balance of power approach to security in Europe, along with the notion of spheres of interest. Maybe Putin's Russia—or post-Putin Russia—will not be able and willing to proceed on this basis, now or later. But the three basic post-Cold War Western goals still objectively form the best basis for a European future that will be in the interests of all its members and, if done right, will not detract from the legitimate requirements of any of them.

If we do all that, then the practical steps can be worked out, in time with Russia and everyone else, not on the basis of excluding any country. Goals and strategy must come first; tactics can only come second.

This effort has to begin, both in the U.S. and allied and partner governments and in the Western research community, with developing approaches that deal with realities and shared requirements of political, security, and economic relationships, and including Russia—if it will in time play, and play by rules it helps to write. Then these approaches could in time have a chance of mutually beneficial success.

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Roger Wee · Chaminade University of Honolulu, HI

This article is full of America BS and ideology ! Seizing Central Europe could be a possibility if it was Yestin time. Situation in Ukraine was of pure GREED. Former President of Ukraine decides that for the best interest of its people, Ukraine will leave EU for Russia. At this point America forces the resignation of the former President and injected their own puppet president to control Ukraine, this is also to protected America interest as Biden's son have a petroleum company in Ukraine. At this point the pro-russian citizen of Ukraine rebel. Russia did not force the Crimea to revert back to Russia. The people of Crimea vote for it, 70% of it population are pro-russian.

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Nancy Perreault · Foux, Bourgogne, France

It is a shame that Europe missed the boat to become truly whole and free ...

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