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Russia and the International Order

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Abstract

This paper considers Russia's international position and the power resources that the country has by discussing four main issues: Russia's power resources in international comparison; trends in perceptions of Russia's role in the world among Russian security and foreign policy elites; the internal crisis of the Russian political system that emerged following the financial crisis of 2008; Russia's domestic and foreign policy reorientation since 2011. The author argues that while Russia, namely due to its military build-up and military actions in Ukraine and Syria, is indeed seen as an important international actor again, Russia's claim to great power status essentially draws on an interpretation of history that underlines continuity to the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. Such an interpretation of history will

ultimately lead Russian foreign policy into a dilemma, since Russia does not have sufficient resources to sustain the role of a great power over a longer period of time. Particularly when its position is compared against the capabilities of other great powers, namely the United States and China, it is quite clear that Russia's demographic, economic, and technological resources are far too limited for it to survive alone – without alliances – in a new, multipolar world. Sooner or later, Russia's orientation towards the past will lead the country into a deadlock. Moreover, the current Russian discourse of self-reassurance makes it very difficult to initiate a constructive dialogue between Russia and the West regarding a solution to the various areas of conflicts.

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Russia and the International Order

By Hans-Henning Schröder, Berlin

► Introduction

A very singular image of Russia has been projected in Western media and public discourse in the first half of 2018.¹ Russia and the Soviet Union are seen as one and the same thing, and Russia is viewed as “the other superpower,” on a par with the United States. Politics has also become personalized, with Putin portrayed as the sole actor and decision-maker. Furthermore, the relationship between Russia and the “West” is frequently referred to as a new “Cold War.”

In many ways, this also corresponds to the Russians’ image of themselves. They see Russia as a great power and the continuation of the USSR. Some 81 percent of the respondents to an FOM survey believed that Russia was feared in the world, which almost 70 percent of them saw as a good thing.² Putin is portrayed in the Russian media as a “strong man,” with 85 percent of respondents rating his performance as positive.³ The “West” is perceived as the enemy, and even the Russian foreign minister described the international situation in April 2018 as “worse than during the Cold War.”⁴

The difficult state of the relations between Russia, the United States, and the EU since 2014, if not before, is undeniable, but it may be useful to look more closely at Russia’s position internationally and the power resources that the country actually has.

To this end, this discussion will consider four thematic complexes:

1. Russia’s power resources in an international comparison.
2. Trends in perceptions of Russia’s role in the world among Russian security and foreign policy elites.
3. The internal crisis of the Russian political system that emerged following the financial crisis of 2008.
4. Russia’s domestic and foreign policy reorientation since 2011.

► Russia’s geopolitical situation and power resources

On the basis of its surface area and geopolitical situation and as a strategic nuclear power, the Russian Federation, as one of the 15 successor states of the USSR, fulfils all the conditions for playing a role internationally.

With a total surface area of 17 million km², the Russian Federation is 47 times larger than the Federal Republic of Germany, and also has a wealth of mineral resources.

Table 1: Surface area and population, 2014

	Total surface area (km ²)	Surface as a % of Russia’s surface area
Russian Federation	17,125	100
Canada	9,985	58.3
United States	9,629	56.2
China	9,597	56
Germany	357	2.1
Switzerland	41	0.2

Source: Federal’naia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki (Rosstat), *Rossia i Strany Mira 2016: Statisticheskii sbornik* (Moscow: Rosstat, 2016), pp. 13ff., <http://www.gks.ru/freedoc/doc2016/world16.rar> (accessed 30 December 2016).

Russia’s geopolitical situation is complex. To the north, over the Pole, Russia borders on the United States (which is on a par with Russia in strategic nuclear terms, but far superior economically); in the east, it borders China and Japan (which marginalize Russia demographically, economically, and technologically); to the west are the EU and NATO (which are economically, technologically, and militarily superior to Russia); and in the south, it borders on the crisis regions of the Near and Middle East. Merely on the basis of its size and geographical position, the Russian Federation has no option but to be an international political actor. The question, however, is whether the country has the capability to play this role in a credible manner.

Russia certainly does have a certain level of capability in military terms. In the strategic nuclear domain, it has parity with the United States,⁵ but it lags well behind the United States and China in terms of military expenditure.⁶ Its conventional armed forces are currently being restructured. Russia had a total of around 800,000 men under arms in 2015. A proportion of those forces are deployment-ready.⁷ The country is given great power status due to its strategic nuclear capability. Its conventional structures enable it to play a role in two or three local conflicts. In terms of its military resources, Russia is therefore in a position to assert its interests effectively.

Russia's demographic, economic, and technological resources are less impressive. The population, at 146 million inhabitants, is well behind that of the United States (323 million) and the Schengen zone (424 million), to say nothing of China and India (1.3 billion each).⁸ Its demographic resources are therefore limited.⁹

The same applies to Russia's economic capability. Even on the basis of the comparison procedure most favorable to Russia – purchasing power parity – Russia lags behind Germany and is only just ahead of Brazil, Indonesia, and France.¹⁰

Table 2: The 20 largest economies in comparison

	Population 2016 (million)	Surface area 2016 (1,000 km ²)	Population density 2016 (pers./km ²)	GDP Atlas 2016, billion US\$	GDP Atlas per capita 2016, billion US\$	GDP PPP 2016, billion US\$	GDP PPP per capita 2016, billion US\$	Growth 2016 vs. prior year (%)	Growth per capita 2016 vs. prior year (%)	No.
China	1,378.7	9,562.9	147	11,393.6	\$8,260	21,366.1	15,500	6.7	6.1	1
United States	323.1	9,831.5	35	18,153.5	\$56,180	18,749.7	58,030	1.6	0.9	2
India	1,324.2	3,287.3	445	2,220.0	\$1,680	8,594.2	6,490	7.1	5.9	3
Japan	127	378	348	4,825.2	\$38,000	5,443.8	42,870	1	1.1	4
Germany	82.7	357.4	237	3,609.4	\$43,660	4,094.8	49,530	1.9	0.7	5
Russia	144.3	17,098.3	9	1,425.7	\$9,720	3,305.7	22,540	-0.2	-0.4	6
Brazil	207.7	8,515.8	25	1,836.0	\$8,840	3,075.5	14,810	-3.6	-4.4	7
Indonesia	261.1	1,910.9	144	889	\$3,400	2,929.4	11,220	5	3.8	8
France	66.9	549.1	122	2,605.8	\$38,950	2,835.2	42,380	1.2	0.8	9
Great Britain	65.6	243.6	271	2,782.3	\$42,390	2,763.4	42,100	1.8	1	10
Italy	60.6	301.3	206	1,914.1	\$31,590	2,316.5	38,230	0.9	1.1	11
Mexico	127.5	1,964.4	66	1,152.8	\$9,040	2,262.9	17,740	2.3	1	12
Turkey	79.5	785.4	103	888.8	\$11,180	1,907.5	23,990	2.9	1.3	13
South Korea	51.2	100.3	526	1,414.4	\$27,600	1,833.9	35,790	2.8	2.4	14
Saudi Arabia	32.3	2,149.7	15	702.1	\$21,750	1,799.7	55,760	1.7	-0.5	15
Spain	46.4	505.9	93	1,278.0	\$27,520	1,687.7	36,340	3.2	3.2	16
Canada	36.3	9,984.7	4	1,584.3	\$43,660	1,575.4	43,420	1.5	0.2	17
Iran	80.3	1,745.2	49	511.8	\$6,530	1,361.8	17,370	-1.5	-2.7	18
Australia	24.1	7,741.2	3	1,313.0	\$54,420	1,109.2	45,970	2.8	1.3	19
Thailand	68.9	513.1	135	388.3	\$5,640	1,106.8	16,070	3.2	2.9	20

Source: World Bank figures, <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/WV.1#> (accessed 14 September 2017).

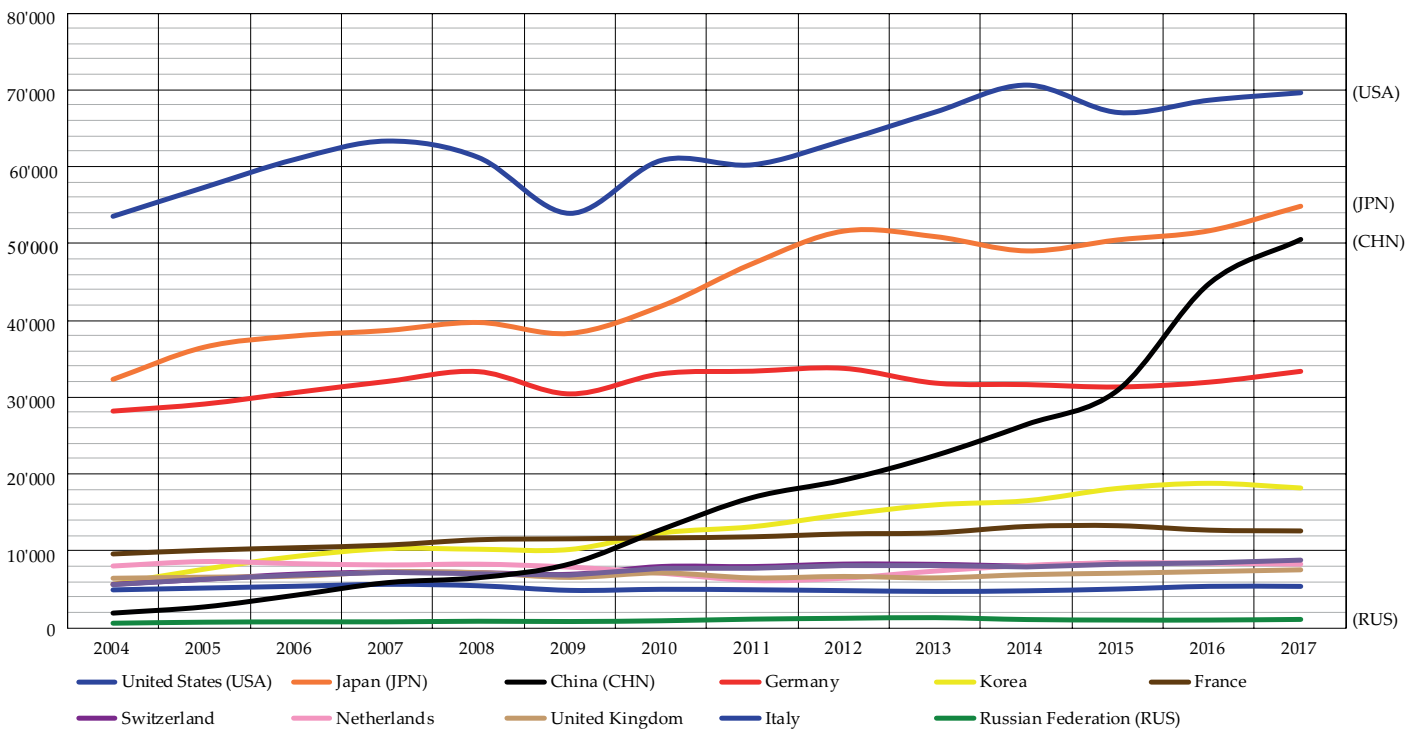
Russia as an economic power clearly does not have the base needed to be a great political power on a par with China and the United States. An even greater problem is the low level of innovation.

If the number of patent applications filed with the European Patent Office is taken as an indicator of the innovation capability of economies, then Russia is lagging far behind.¹¹

Particularly when the Russian trend is compared against that for China, it becomes clear that Russia has not actively participated in technological developments in the last 15 years. It is difficult to imagine how the Russian economy will be able to become competitive on the world market without far-reaching reforms, and without external assistance.

Overall, the picture is therefore a contradictory one: Russia is in a position to be an international actor militarily, yet demographically, economically, and technologically, it should be seen as a middle power. As a further consequence of this constellation, the Russian leadership, given its very limited possibilities for exercising influence politically, has been forced since 2008, and still more so since 2014, to rely on the military domain in order to present itself as a great power. In a situation in which the Russian leadership sees itself as being isolated, it is therefore behaving in an entirely logical manner in making use of military force to assert its interests, whether in the post-Soviet area or in the Middle East.

Table 3: Patent applications filed with the European Patent Office 2004–17 according to citizenship of the first-named applicant (the ten highest-ranking countries, Switzerland, and Russia)



Source: Figures from the European Patent Office (last published data for 2008–17), [http://documents.epo.org/projects/babylon/eponet.nsf/0/5F76E784867AC2D2C125824700558F7A/\\$File/Filings_by_country_of_origin_2008-2017_en.xlsx](http://documents.epo.org/projects/babylon/eponet.nsf/0/5F76E784867AC2D2C125824700558F7A/$File/Filings_by_country_of_origin_2008-2017_en.xlsx) (accessed 8 May 2018).

► Russia as a great power

The limited extent of its demographic, economic, and technological capability is restricting Russia's options for playing a decisive role internationally. Yet this geopolitical second-class status is at odds with the self-image of Russian foreign and security policy elites, who during the period of inter-bloc confrontation were accustomed to seeing the Soviet Union as "the other superpower" alongside the United States.

Gorbachev's departure from a policy of confrontation and the transition to the "new way of thinking" in the 1980s was perceived by conservatives among the elites as a form of weakness rather than as an opportunity for a restructuring process that would make the USSR internationally competitive. The failure of perestroika and the collapse of the USSR at the end of 1991 was seen by a majority of foreign and security policymakers – and not just the conservative element among them – as a defeat.

The notion of a "fresh start," with a Russian, as opposed to Soviet, foreign policy was highly problematic, given the inherent contradictions in the goals defined by the Yeltsin leadership. On the one hand, the priority was to ensure Russia's autonomy, to protect its interests against incursions from outside and maintain its dominance in the post-Soviet space, but on the other there was a desire to build non-confrontational relations with the United States and European countries, not least in order to underpin Russian economic development and provide the necessary political support for the transition from a planned to a market economy. In the turbulent environment of the transformation period, it was scarcely possible to achieve both of these aims, so the ambiguous and inherently contradictory nature of Russian policy was hardly surprising.¹²

The reformers around President Yeltsin, too, were at pains from the outset to establish the status of Russia, now that it had successfully overcome the "imperialist-totalitarian system," as a "normal great power."¹³ Second-rank status would not be acceptable. Yeltsin himself complained of anti-Russia discrimination in an interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in 1994:

Even without atomic weapons, Russia remains a world power. Our stature is based on tradition, history, our culture. No offense to the Americans, but their history stretches back only 200 years, as compared with ours dating back thousands of years. [...] Then there is our enormous territory of 17 million square kilometers, our population of 150 million. And our natural resources. Everything that people need to live, our country possesses it.¹⁴

This sounds very like the arguments advanced in subsequent years, such as Putin's statements at the Munich Security Conference in 2007.¹⁵ President Yeltsin again referred to Russia's claim to great power status in 1994, while also criticizing "the West" for failing to give Russia the place it deserved. This was a reiteration of the imperative formulated in the first foreign policy plan published in 1993 (i.e. for Russia as a great power to be part of the world community).¹⁶

The political leadership held to this aim in ensuing years, even if it was formulated in much more cautious terms after the severe crises of the 1990s. In a manifesto article that appeared on 31 December 1999, immediately before Putin replaced Yeltsin as president, Putin emphasized that Russia was a great country, with a policy and history defined by geopolitical, economic, and cultural conditions. But looking ahead, he argued, it must demonstrate its might not through military strength, but by its ability to develop pioneering technologies, ensure the welfare of its population, and protect its national interests.¹⁷

Subsequent years saw a change in this future-oriented view of Russia's role in the world. The political leadership distanced itself from a cooperative view of international relations, since it had the impression that the United States and "the West" no longer respected Russia and were ignoring Russian interests. In this context, special significance was given to the unilateral termination of the ABM treaty by the United States on 13 December 2001. The treaty had limited the development and deployment of anti-missile systems, and was therefore an important part of "mutual assured destruction" (MAD), as the foundation of strategic nuclear stability. That foundation was now being called into question by the termination of the treaty, the Russians felt. In an

immediate reaction, Putin stated that this was the wrong move by the United States, but that it did not represent a threat to Russia's national security.¹⁸ But just a few years later, in 2007, the president described the US initiative differently and warned that the further development of anti-missile systems could become a problem, and that the Russian side was alarmed by plans to deploy anti-missile systems in Europe.¹⁹

Admittedly, in 2007, Russia was in a different situation. In the early 2000s, oil prices started to rise, with a particularly rapid increase in 2006 and 2007.²⁰ This had the effect of strengthening the Russian economy and stabilizing the social situation, which in turn boosted the self-confidence of policymakers. This is reflected in Putin's address at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007. The main purpose of the address was to urge the United States and European countries to again take Russia seriously as a partner in international affairs.²¹ The Russian president took issue with the "unipolar" attitude of the United States in a "multipolar" world; he called for the observance of international rules and emphasized the importance of international organizations such as the UN and the OSCE. While Putin avoided using the term "great power," he stressed the fact that Russia was a country with a history dating back thousands of years, which "had virtually always had the privilege of conducting an independent foreign policy." Russia did not intend to change this, he said, while remaining realistic as to the possibilities available to it.²²

The Russian leadership was well aware of the limits of their country's power but claimed a place for Russia that was commensurate with its historical and cultural role. It saw Russian status as a "great" country as an unconditional premise for any form of foreign policy planning. The fact that the leaders of Western industrial nations were treating Russia as a negligible quantity because of its economic weakness was a source of intense frustration for the Russians.

National Russian ideas

Whereas the elites were looking for ways to reconcile their great power aspirations with the country's real capabilities, from the 1990s onward, Russian national ideas started to be debated more prominently in the media and public discourse. Already during the phase of

the breakup of the Soviet Union, some sections of the intelligentsia were rediscovering the Slavophile heritage.

When the debate on the national identity of the new Russian state started in the ensuing years, these ideas again became the focus of attention.²³

Texts by Nikolai Danilevskii, Vladimir Solov'ev, and Nikolai Berdiaev were reprinted and discussed. While, in the 1990s, political discourse and practice was dominated by concepts of Western transformation theory, this period also saw the formation of an intellectual milieu that took up the ideas of the Slavophiles and "Eurasians."

Radical exponents of these ideas included ideologists such as philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, writer Aleksandr Prokhanov, political scientist Sergei Kurginian, and historian Nataliia Narochnitskaia, who developed concepts that reinterpreted Russian history, constructed a national Russian tradition, and deliberately distanced themselves from Western ideas. Such positions, which in Germany could well be classified as obscurantist or extreme right-wing views, became an accepted part of intellectual discourse in Russia. An analysis of Russian press articles from the years 2003–8 reveals how confrontational concepts and views looking back to the past (again demonizing "the West" and returning to Russian traditions) started to have a greater impact on the public debate over Russia's international position.²⁴

These ideas fell on fertile soil among wider public opinion, as demonstrated by the results of surveys of citizens' political views on questions such as the historical path that Russia should follow.

Table 4: What historical path do you think Russia should follow?

	March 2000	March 2001	February 2008	March 2013	March 2014
Its own, particular path	60%	53%	60%	37%	46%
Return to the path followed by the Soviet Union	18%	19%	11%	22%	22%
The path towards European civilization, shared by the whole modern world	15%	21%	22%	31%	21%
No response	7%	7%	8%	10%	11%

Source: Survey by the Levada Center, 21–24 March 2014: *Osobyi Rossiiskii put*, 7 April 2014, <http://www.levada.ru/print/07-04-2014/osobyi-rossiiskii-put> (accessed 10 April 2014).

Only one-fifth of those surveyed saw the path of "European civilization" as suitable for Russia, while 70–80 percent preferred the "own path" option or the Soviet path. A skeptical view of "Western" models was widespread, and a majority wanted above all to maintain

the country's historical identity, whether by returning to the Soviet era, or with the country's "own" model, not further defined. Given these attitudes, Russian citizens were receptive to a policy focused on national identity and the assertion of "traditional" values.

Accordingly, in the years 2007/8, the Russian Federation was led by an elite that could only conceive of their own country as a great power, even though most of them were aware that Russia did not have the capability needed to perform the role of a great power in a credible manner. And in sections of the intelligentsia, during the 1990s, a national Russian discourse had emerged that constructed a separate tradition and separate values. Meanwhile, a latent anti-Western mood and a search for national identity had become widespread in the population, as views that could be mobilized for political ends.

► The domestic crisis in 2009–12

This ideological groundswell became significant politically when a crisis called the political arrangement formed in Putin's first two terms of office, in the years 2000–7, into question.

The power relations in Russian society that had developed following the collapse of the Soviet Union with the transition to a market economy were characterized by latent social tensions. The redistribution during the transformation years had resulted in a deeply divided society, of "rich" and "poor." Russian public opinion was well aware of this dichotomy.²⁵ However, the rapidly rising oil prices and associated upswing in the economy led to a marked improvement in the standard of living between 2000 and 2008, which boosted acceptance of the existing power relations and stabilized the political system.

The tacit compact between the rulers and the ruled was brought to an end by two things: the financial crisis of 2008, which led to significant falls in living standards in the following year; and the increasing numbers of Internet users, creating a new information space that the leadership was not able to control.²⁶

This led to increasing dissatisfaction, which was manifested between 2010 and 2012 in protests flaring up, particularly in the major cities, fueled by social factors and anti-foreigner and anti-regime sentiments. Both the nationalist and "liberal" oppositions sought to use this discontent to mobilize opinion in favor of their cause.²⁷

The stability of the political arrangement, which was based on a majority of the population accepting the leadership,²⁸ was called into question by these expressions of discontent. The new administration installed following Putin's election as president in May 2012 therefore had to develop ideas for winning back the acceptance of Russian society. It faced a number of challenges in this regard: stabilizing economic trends and preventing any further decline in living standards; controlling the alternative information space (Internet and social networks); and developing strategies for healing the split that had formed in Russian society.

The leadership was clearly aware of the problems it faced. Immediately after taking office, on 7 May, Putin signed a series of decrees formulating goals for the economy, social policy, health and demographics, education, housing construction, administrative reform, inter-ethnic relations, and foreign and defense policy.²⁹ The focus was on increasing prosperity and standards of living, creating the conditions for accelerated economic growth and hence strengthening Russia's international position. In parallel with these decrees, the administration developed mechanisms for controlling the use of the Internet and social media.³⁰

All this was complemented in the autumn of 2012 by a campaign for the dissemination of national values, with clear anti-Western and anti-foreigner tendencies.³¹ This started in the Russian parliament, the Duma, with the ban on US citizens adopting Russian children, passed as a response to the Magnitskii list banning travel to the United States for a number of Russian politicians and officials.³² The campaign gained significant further momentum from the performance by the punk band Pussy Riot in the Spasskii Cathedral, which was disapproved of by an overwhelming majority in Russia.³³ The campaign also included initiatives against non-governmental organizations, in some cases branded as "foreign agents," and therefore "enemies."³⁴ State media also now gave nationalist ideologues such as Aleksandr Prokhanov, Nataliia Narochnitskaia, Aleksandr Dugin, and Sergei Kurginian more scope to express their views.

All of this brought a major shift in the social climate, but it also had some unwanted side-effects. Kurginian, for example, called for a national revolution targeted mainly against the chinovniki (high-level public officials),³⁵ and Duma deputies initiated legislation

banning public officials from holding accounts and owning properties and businesses abroad.³⁶ During 2013, there were also localized anti-foreigner protests, in a Moscow suburb and the Saratov region.³⁷ To this extent, the patriotic mobilization could be seen as having a generally detrimental impact on the domestic political arena: without significantly boosting the acceptance of the regime, it created new dangers, since “right-wing” groups, such as those taking part in the “Russian March,” were just as critical of the Russian elite as were the “leftists” and “liberals.” This was doubtless one of the reasons for the administration’s decision in the second half of 2013 – during the regional elections, for example – to give liberal forces more freedom to express their views.

Comeback as a great power

When Putin took up his third term of office as president on 7 May 2012, as well as facing challenges on the domestic policy front, he had the task of realigning Russian foreign policy with the changes taking place domestically and in the international situation. The president himself, and a majority of the foreign and security policy elite, proceeded on the assumption that Russia continued to be a great power, despite all its limitations, and were frustrated by the unwillingness of the United States and European politicians to accept this. And indeed, both the Obama administration and European governments were giving the Moscow leadership the “cold shoulder.” While the Putin administration was confronted with a crisis of acceptance domestically, it could assume that a national, “tradition”-based attitude would not encounter resistance from the population. The leadership also realized, however, that Russia did not have sufficient capability in terms of its economy and technology, so military force was the only option available for giving weight and substance to its foreign policy.

In deliberate contrast to the United States, the Russian foreign and security policy elite defined the international situation as multipolar (i.e. as a world in which there was not only one, but a number of “poles,” or power centers).³⁸ As well as being based on its position as a strategic nuclear superpower, Russia’s perception of its foreign policy role was founded on its aspiration of becoming an integration space that

neighboring countries would seek to join. On 4 October 2011, Putin announced in an article in *Izvestia* that the Eurasian integration process that had been under way for some time would enter a new phase on 1 January 2012 through the creation of a single integration space, to include Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.³⁹ The aim was to form a Eurasian Union, which would also be open to other states, and would act as a partner to the EU. In this way, the Russian leadership gave formal expression to its integration competition with the EU, which had grown with the eastward expansion of the EU and NATO in 1999, 2004, and 2007, a process that the Russian side viewed as a threat.

By creating its own integration space, the Russian leadership was aiming to set limits on the expansion of Western organizations. The main zone of contest at this time was Georgia and Ukraine. Latent competition turned into open conflict in the autumn of 2013, when the Ukraine administration headed by then President Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign the EU Association Agreement. When large-scale demonstrations broke out in Kiev, followed by the ousting of Yanukovich in February 2014, the Russian side took advantage of this situation by annexing Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula, in clear breach of treaty obligations (Budapest Agreement, OSCE Charter) and by supporting armed groups in the eastern regions of Ukraine seeking the secession from Ukraine of the areas under their control.⁴⁰ The calculation of the Russian side paid off to the extent that Western states or organizations did not respond with force, but instead sought a political solution to the conflict. This emboldened the Russian leadership in its decision on 1 September 2015 to intervene militarily in Syria.

In this way, Russian diplomacy was able to make some gains in 2015/16. In negotiations with France, Germany, and Ukraine, it created a diplomatic framework for the Russian–Ukrainian process that excluded the meddling of non-Minsk states, without the Russian side having to give up any substantive positions.

In the negotiations on the atomic weapons agreement with Iran and lifting the sanctions that led to an agreement being reached in July 2015 in Vienna, Russia played a major role as a member of the 5+1 group (United States, China, Russia, Great Britain, and France plus Germany). In the civil war in Syria, Russia’s military involvement,

accompanied by an intensive diplomatic offensive in the region, has contributed to changing the power relations in the conflict, significantly strengthening the Assad regime. It has also become even clearer than before that no political solution in Syria will be possible without Russian participation. Russia has made its comeback in world politics.

These successes in Ukraine and Syria have boosted Russia's role in international politics significantly. No solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict or the Syrian civil war would be possible without Russia's involvement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov formulated his view of Russia's historical role in the present and future in a March 2016 manifesto article.⁴¹ This article is well worth close scrutiny, because in it Lavrov (or his ghost writer) develops a narrative of Russian history that legitimizes the great role to which Russia aspires:

It seems that in the context of the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, it is important for us to understand the continuity of Russian history, which should include all of its periods without exception, and the importance of the synthesis of all the positive traditions and historical experience as the basis for making dynamic advances and upholding the rightful role of our country as a leading centre of the modern world, and a provider of the values of sustainable development, security and stability.⁴²

Yet, Lavrov argues, the world has changed and has become much more complex than in the era of East-West confrontation. Global development has led to the emergence of new major power centers, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, he says. In this world, "the West" is merely one center among many, and its "value system" is no longer the sole yardstick: "the West" is becoming less influential. There are multiple models of development, he argues, and the Western value system is far from being the one and only correct one. In this context, the article raises the question of the significance of international norms as set down in the UN Charter, for example.

In his article, the Russian foreign minister set out a series of goals for Russia's role in the international political arena:

- He claims that Russia is entitled to be recognized as a great power, and calls for its recognition as one of the world's leading states.
- He makes it clear that Russia intends to play a part in defining the shape of Europe, and claims a significant place within Europe.
- At the same time, he rejects the universal applicability of the canon of values formulated by the European Union, on which the UN Charter, the Helsinki Act, and the Charter of the Council of Europe insist. Instead, Lavrov invokes Russian tradition and a special cultural and civilizational path.
- He calls for a cooperation of equals with the EU and the United States, and a stop to criticism of Russia's internal affairs. A policy such as the "modernization partnership" between Russia and the EU is no longer acceptable, he says.

It has to be assumed that the views formulated here by the foreign minister also define the perceptions and policy actions of the Russian elite, and will continue to do so. They will definitely not encounter any resistance in the Russian population, and in fact correspond to positions that are very widely held by Russians.⁴³

The fundamental problem for Russian foreign policy

Since 2014/15, Russia is again seen as a significant international actor. It is a partner in the negotiations with North Korea and Iran. Without Russian involvement, it will not be possible to ring-fence the risk of war in the Middle East. A solution to the Ukraine crisis and the creation of a new security order in Europe will be possible only if the Russian leadership is prepared to play a part in the process.

However, the Russian foreign and security policy elite is pursuing its own, nationally defined goals. The problem is that it is taking its cue from the past and attempting to legitimize its future importance with its historical role in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The claim to be a great power that arises from Russia's interpretation of its own history will lead Russian foreign policy into a dilemma in the long term, since Russia does not have sufficient resources to sustain the role of a great power over a long period of time. Particularly when its position is compared against the capabilities of China, India, or the United States, it is quite clear that Russia's demographic, economic, and technological resources are too limited for it to survive alone – without alliances – in a new, multipolar world. In the long run, the Russian foreign policy perspective looking back to the past will lead Russian policy into a deadlock.

But this conclusion does nothing to alleviate the tensions we face now. The focus here and now must be on a persistent and untiring quest for solutions to individual conflicts. Europe, and especially Germany, are more than willing to enter into dialogue with Russia. However, the current Russian discourse of self-reassurance makes it very difficult even to initiate a constructive dialogue, let alone arrive at an acceptable compromise.

One final note: we are constantly being told that we are back in the “Cold War.” I do not believe that is the case. The “Cold War” was a conflict between two blocs, representing different ideological models, different social systems. The conflict took place between two “camps” of comparable military capability. And from the end of the 1960s, the system was regulated by a system of treaties designed to exclude the possibility of

a nuclear confrontation and a violent extension of the conflict in Europe.

Today, we no longer have competing ideological systems. There are no blocs forming around superpowers. Also, the regulatory system from the time of the confrontation between East and West is no longer in operation. Accordingly, the present position is less reminiscent of the situation during the “Cold War” than perhaps of situations such as those in 1911 (the Agadir crisis) or 1938 (the Czechoslovakian crisis), when there were a number of great powers competing with each other politically and militarily, and the elites of the German Reich thought they could assert claims to be a significant player on the world stage.

The conclusion that today's situation cannot be regarded as a return to the days of the “Cold War” is far from reassuring. The confrontation between East and West was able to be kept under control because it was regulated by a series of international agreements. No such regulatory systems were in place at the time of the competition between great powers in 1911 and 1938 – nor are they in place today – which means that today's situation is even more dangerous than during the Cold War.

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Notes

- 1 For a shorter, German-language version of this article, see: Hans-Henning Schröder, “Russland und die international Ordnung,” *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, vol. 46, no. 6 (2018), pp. 8–12.
- 2 See opinion poll by the Foundation for Public Opinion (FOM), held during 28/29 April 2018, <http://fom.ru/Mir/14025> (accessed 11 May 2018); see also surveys conducted by the Levada Center during 20–24 April 2018, <https://www.levada.ru/2018/05/07/vladimir-putin-6/> (accessed 8 May 2018), in which almost half of those polled see Putin’s greatest achievement in giving Russia back its great power status.
- 3 See the surveys of VTsIOM in April & May 2018, <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=9080> (accessed 8 May 2018).
- 4 “Interv’iu Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S. V. Lavrova dlia programmy ‘Khard tolk’ na telekanale ‘Bi-Bi-Si,’” MID RF, No. 720-16-04-2018, Moscow, 16 April 2018, <http://www.mid.ru/ru/pressservice/ministerspeeches/-/assetpublisher/7OvQR5KJWVvR/content/id/3172318> (accessed 11 May 2018).
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- 6 Cf. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex> (accessed 4 August 2018).
- 7 Cf. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2016* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 189ff; see also *ibid.*, pp. 163ff.
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- 9 The World Bank, WV.1 World Development Indicators: Size of the Economy (last updated on 30 June 2017), <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/WV.1#> (accessed 14 September 2017).
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 [http://documents.epo.org/projects/babylon/eponet.nsf/0/5F76E784867AC2D2C125824700558F7A/\\$File/Filings_by_country_of_origin_2008-2017_en.xlsx](http://documents.epo.org/projects/babylon/eponet.nsf/0/5F76E784867AC2D2C125824700558F7A/$File/Filings_by_country_of_origin_2008-2017_en.xlsx) (accessed 8 May 2018).
- 12 Cf. Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 365ff.; on the historical background of Russian foreign policy, also: Olga Oliker et al., *Russian Foreign Policy in Historical and Current Context: A Reassessment*, PE-144-A (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE144.html> (accessed 4 August 2018); Regine Heller, “Wenn Status zur fixen Idee wird: Russland – zur Großmacht verdammt?,” *Osteuropa*, vol. 63, no. 8 (2013), pp. 45–58.
- 13 Quotes from an article by the first Russian minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, which he published after being replaced: A. V. Kozyrev, “Vneshniaia politika preobrazhauishcheisia Rossii,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1994), pp. 3–11, here pp. 3, 4, and 6.
- 14 “‘Zu jedem Kampf bereit’. Präsident Jelzin über die Weltmacht Russland und das Verhältnis zu den Deutschen,” *Der Spiegel*, 25 April 1994, pp. 154–57, here pp. 155f.; cf. also Yeltsin’s security advisor Baturin in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1994: “The United States view Russia already as developing country. This may be correct under economic viewpoints. But in the past, we also were not a leader in the global market, and were still classified as a great power. Why? Because everybody was afraid of this country full of nuclear weapons and a huge army. Now, the West is afraid that in the turmoil of disintegration of the [Soviet] Union, there will be an explosion, the consequences of which Europe or others might feel. According this criterion, we stay a great power.” Baturin quoted from: “‘Wir bleiben Großmacht’: Jelzins Sicherheitsberater Jurij Baturin über die russische Krise,” *Der Spiegel*, 7 February 1994, pp. 123–25, here p. 124.
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- 16 “Kontsepsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii 1992 goda,” *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, nos. 1–2 (1993), pp. 3–23; the document is available in full at: <http://fmp.msu.ru/center-for-security-and-development-studies/anthology/document-inventory/countries/item/1619-kontsepsiya-vneshnej-politiki-rossijskoj-federatsii-1992-goda> (accessed 4 August 2018). Russia’s Council for Foreign- and Defense-Policy (SVOP), in a strategic paper of 1992, took a more pessimistic – and realistic – position at the time, asserting that Russia has in many areas indeed descended into a middle-sized power; SVOP suggested a foreign policy line that would help Russia’s consolidation and modernization through cooperation with both Europe and China: “Strategiia dlia Rossii: Nekotorye tezisy dlia doklada Soveta po vneshnei i oboronnoi politike (opublikovany v *Nezavisimoi gazete* 19 avgusta 1992 g.),” <http://www.svop.ru/files/meetings/m037913400978831.pdf> (accessed 16 May 2018), pp. 1ff. in the online version.
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- 20 Cf. <https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/RBRTED.htm> (accessed 25 June 2018).
- 21 Putin’s Munich Address (footnote 14).
- 22 *Ibid.*; on Putin’s notions of Russia as a great power, see also: Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Vladimir Putin’s Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2005), pp. 132–58.

- 23 Cf. Hyung-min Joo, "The Soviet Origin of Russian Chauvinism: Voices from Below," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2008), pp. 217–42.
- 24 Cf. Rutger von Seth, "All Quiet on the Eastern Front? Media Images of the West and Russian Foreign Political Identity," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 70, no. 3 (2018), pp. 421–40; further reading on the subject: Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008); Marlène Laruelle (ed.), *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia* (London: Routledge, 2009); Bettina Sieber, "Russische Idee und Identität": "Philosophisches Erbe" und Selbstthematisierung der Russen in der öffentlichen Diskussion 1985–1995; *Studien zum russischen Konservatismus Teil I*, Dokumente und Analysen zur russischen und sowjetischen Kultur, vol. 12/1 (Bochum: Projektverlag, 1998). Cf. on developments until present times: Ulrich Schmid, *Technologien der Seele: Vom Verfälschen der Wahrheit in der russischen Gegenwartskultur*, edition suhrkamp 2702 (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2015).
- 25 Cf. the survey conducted by VTsIOM on 29/30 October 2016, <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115947> (accessed 15 November 2016).
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- 42 Lavrov, “Russia’s Foreign Policy” (see footnote 40).
- 43 See Table 4: What historical path do you think Russia should follow?



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