

PONARS Eurasia

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Policy Conference
September 2014

PONARS Eurasia

NEW APPROACHES TO RESEARCH AND SECURITY IN EURASIA

Elliott School of
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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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PONARS Eurasia is an international network of academics that advances new policy approaches to research and security in Russia and Eurasia. PONARS Eurasia is based at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies ([IERES](#)) at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. This publication was made possible by grants from Carnegie Corporation of New York and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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Pro-European Union activists hold a huge Ukrainian national flag outside a government building during a round-table meeting with the country's opposition leaders with Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in Kiev, Ukraine, Friday, Dec. 13, 2013. (AP Photo/Sergei Grits)

Pro-Russian demonstrators carry a huge Russian national flag during a rally in Donetsk, Ukraine, Sunday, March 30, 2014. Some in Ukraine's Russian-speaking east and south cherish ties with Russia, both economic and cultural. (AP Photo/Andrey Basevich)

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Foreword

Cory Welt and Henry E. Hale
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This collection of policy memos is an accompanying volume to the 2014 annual conference of the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS Eurasia), held at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs on September 22-23, 2014.

PONARS Eurasia is a network of over 100 scholars, mainly from North America and post-Soviet Eurasia, who advance new policy approaches to research and security in Russia and Eurasia. Its core missions are to connect scholarship to policy on and in Russia and Eurasia and to foster a community, especially of mid-career and rising scholars, committed to developing policy-relevant and collaborative research.

The thirty-one contributions in this volume were written and originally published between July and September 2014. They are grouped by topic rather than date of publication and in the order of the conference panels.

The Ukraine crisis and its consequences dominate the volume. The first section includes five memos on the future of Ukraine: its domestic politics and governance; health and demographics; and relations with Russia, the European Union, and NATO. Another section (the fourth) takes a nuanced look at the role of psychology, emotion, and other domestic factors in the Donbas insurgency and the state's response, as well as in post-traumatic political mobilization elsewhere, in the Russian republic of North Ossetia. The fifth section explores the impact of the Ukraine crisis on the foreign policies of other post-Soviet states in the EU's "Eastern Partnership," including Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.

The volume also focuses on Russian foreign policy and domestic politics in the wake of the Ukraine crisis. The second section explores Russia's efforts to secure alternative partners to the West, chiefly China, in energy and international affairs. The next section addresses two underappreciated aspects of authoritarian hardening in Russia today: tightening restrictions on internet activity and historical investigation. The sixth section takes stock of the political opposition in Russia today and trends in protest activity in Russia as well as other post-Soviet states. The seventh section investigates how the Ukraine crisis has impacted

Russian attitudes toward the West, at the level of Russian state policy and public opinion, as well as regional integration projects that previously sought to build bridges between Russia and the West. The final section explores issues of identity, borders, and nationalism: the impact of Russia's immigrants, minorities, and nationalists in shaping the contours of the state; Russia's approach to Ukraine's nation-building efforts; and the fate of borders in today's international system.

We hope you will find these policy perspectives informative and thought-provoking. Many individuals were instrumental in the production of this volume, as well as the organization of the 2014 PONARS Eurasia Policy Conference. In addition to all authors and conference participants, we would like to especially thank Managing Editor Alexander Schmemmann; Program Coordinator Olga Novikova; Graduate Research Assistant Daniel Heintz; and IERES Director Peter Rollberg.

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The Long-Term Prospects for Ukraine's Accession to the European Union

A FOCUS ON EU-LEVEL CONSTRAINTS

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 330

Hilary Appel
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When Ukraine's newly elected president Petro Poroshenko was inaugurated on June 7, he announced his intention to sign an Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union and to pursue EU membership once the EU agreed to it. This last qualifier is particularly relevant, as opportunities for membership are not only constrained by Ukraine's political and economic development and by Ukrainian- Russian relations but also by important formal and informal barriers to European integration stemming from within the EU itself. Given the size of Ukraine's population, quality of governance, rule of law, problems with corruption, level of economic development, and now the country's unsettled borders, the EU is unlikely to accelerate Ukraine's path to membership. Even in a more stable environment, challenges to Ukraine's accession to the EU remain quite significant, given the lack of enthusiasm for continued enlargement among EU member states and the procedural and structural hurdles that exist on the European level.

A Long Path toward Integration

For nearly two decades, Ukraine's successive governments have worked with EU technocrats to chart a course for increased political and economic cooperation, holding the first EU-Ukrainian summit in 1997. Efforts to strengthen Ukraine's relationship with Europe intensified with the election of President Viktor Yushchenko after the Orange Revolution of 2004-5 and once again following the 2014 political crisis. Despite years of technical discussions, political negotiations, and summits, however, there is still no formal perspective for Ukrainian membership into the EU and accession is (at best) decades away. At present, EU accession is more of an abstraction for Ukraine than it is for Turkey, a country that signed an AA in 1964, submitted its membership application in 1987, and gained the formal status of candidate country in 1999. Despite the extraordinary events that followed President Yanukovich's refusal to sign the Association Agreement in November 2013, and the great fanfare surrounding its signing this June by his successor, the AA does not offer any promise or prospect of joining the European Union. That said, the agreement does offer important immediate benefits. As

the AA moves into the ratification phase, Ukrainian exporters will gain immediate asymmetrical access to European markets for nearly all goods. Moreover, while Ukrainian exporters will no longer need to pay custom duties, Ukraine can impose duties on European goods, including in some areas for protective transitional periods for up to fifteen years.

The EU's unwillingness to offer a membership prospect has often been lost in the vast coverage of recent events. In the midst of the 2014 crisis, European leaders understandably wanted to demonstrate support for Ukraine and acknowledge the extraordinary courage and sacrifices of the many Ukrainians seeking a future within Europe. Europe's politicians have proclaimed their support for Ukraine's interim and elected governments, and affirmed Ukraine's sovereign right to determine its own alliances. In February, the European Parliament passed a resolution reiterating Ukraine's right to apply for full membership, echoing Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union which grants any European country that "respects European values and is committed to promoting them" the right to apply for membership.

Despite these offers of support and solidarity, there are many obstacles to overcome for the EU to accept Ukraine as a candidate country, let alone a full member. The lion's share of these challenges relates to Ukraine's ability and will to undertake difficult electoral, judicial, and economic reforms. It must not only harmonize its own law with the body of EU law (the nearly 100,000-page *acquis communautaire*), it must demonstrate its ability to implement EU law as well. As difficult as these challenges are, other obstacles to Ukraine's membership stem from the EU itself, owing to the EU's own overextension and widespread sense of "enlargement fatigue."

Unanimity Constraints and EU Enlargement

One challenge to future EU membership is the declining support for future enlargement within existing member states. European citizens, especially in the older member states, have grown wary of the costs and risks associated with future enlargement. Public opinion surveys have reported consistent majority opposition to further EU enlargement, starting with the spring 2009 Eurobarometer survey. Furthermore, strikingly large majorities in a number of key countries oppose further EU enlargement, with the greatest opposition recorded in Austria (76%), France (70%), Germany (69%), Finland (65%), the Netherlands (64%), and Luxembourg (64%), according to the latest Eurobarometer survey (Fall 2013). Such opposition is similarly found in surveys conducted by national polling agencies in Austria, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, reporting not only a lack of support for enlargement generally but even for Ukraine in particular.

While strong majority support for enlargement exists in many newer member states, the extent and breadth of public opposition within the EU poses a substantial problem. The

EU cannot incorporate more members without the unanimous approval of every existing member through a ratification process. It is hard to imagine that political elites in states with high popular opposition (and that make net contributions to the EU) will push for membership when popular support is so low. Indeed, when public opposition to Turkey's EU membership prospects began to mount, several European politicians promised to hold referenda prior to any future EU enlargement. For example, France in 2005 incorporated into its constitution a clause roughly similar to that in Ireland's constitution requiring a popular referendum before ratifying a treaty granting membership to a country if the country's population is more than 5 percent of the EU's overall population. While the clause in the French constitution was revised in 2008 to allow an alternative parliamentary ratification procedure, Ireland's clause remains in effect. But even should most leaders find themselves willing and able to circumvent popular opposition, it only takes one veto to block a country's candidacy given the EU's unanimity requirement.

Apart from popular sentiment, elites themselves can find reason to delay or block a membership bid by Ukraine. For example, Greece has blocked Macedonia's ability to begin accession negotiations due to disagreements over the latter's name and over differing interpretations of Macedonian and Greek history. The Czech Republic managed to stall Albania's EU candidacy due to a commercial dispute after Albania revoked the license of Czech utility company ČEZ. If the dispute is not resolved to Prague's satisfaction, the Czech government has pledged to block Albania's membership prospects indefinitely. In the case of Ukraine, it is certainly possible to imagine challenges related to Ukrainian steel exports by strong lobbies in Brussels (related to unfair state aid), or other commercial and geopolitical disputes not yet anticipated.

The EU's current Enlargement Commissioner, Štefan Füle, recently reflected upon the expanded ability of states to block the membership prospects of aspirant countries. In a June 26, 2014 interview, the Commissioner stated, "Before I started working in the European Commission, member states had just a few tools to influence, or even stop, the enlargement. Now they have more than 100 possibilities to do it. We do not want to slow down the process in any way. But every member state now has more possibilities to oversee good quality preparations of the candidate countries."¹

The unanimity requirement on key areas of EU institutional reform, including enlargement treaties, means that opposition by a small minority of member states can block reforms and treaties despite years (if not decades) of work by enthusiastic EU elites, as seen in the negative votes by France and Netherlands of the EU Constitution in 2005. While the EU managed to get around Ireland's first rejection of the Lisbon Treaty

¹ <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/enlargement/fule-bulgaria-and-romanias-accession-questioned-credibility-eu-enlargement>

through a successor Lisbon Treaty, treaty ratification remains fraught with uncertainty and risk.

The Costs of Ukrainian Membership

As uncertain as future membership is for the current approved group of small candidate states in the Western Balkans, it is all the more complicated for a very large, poor, non-candidate country like Ukraine. Public opinion data show that European respondents are more likely to support the accession of a smaller and wealthier country like Iceland than they are of poorer countries (Iceland's GDP per capita exceeds that of the EU).

There is no question that the economic dimension of enlargement has become more salient in the aftermath of Europe's financial and sovereign debt crises. Public opinion began to shift after the 2007 round of enlargement incorporated two of the poorest members to date, Bulgaria and Romania. Moreover, the shift from majority support for enlargement to majority opposition in spring 2009 occurred at the onset of Europe's recessions. Emphasizing the impact of Europe's economic crisis on public attitudes, a 2010 Eurobarometer report highlighted a substantial drop in support for enlargement in precisely those Eurozone countries under the greatest fiscal stress. From spring 2008 to fall 2010, support for future enlargement dropped 14 percent in Greece, 13 in Ireland, 11 in Spain, and 9 in Portugal.¹

A heightened sensitivity to the costs of enlargement following the recent bailouts in Europe is especially relevant for Ukraine. Ukraine is much poorer and much larger than any current candidate country (save Turkey). Whereas the total population of the EU is just over 500 million, Ukraine's population exceeds 45 million. By contrast, Croatia, the most recent EU member state to join in 2013, has a population size just over 4 million. Iceland and Montenegro, two of the five current candidate countries, together have less than one million citizens. The single recently added EU member close to Ukraine's size is Poland with a population of 38 million. The only candidate country with a population larger than Ukraine is Turkey (71 million), but like Poland its GDP per capita is more than double that of Ukraine. In any case, Turkey's very long EU accession record is not one many Ukrainians would wish to emulate.

Of course, it is not only Ukraine's population but its level of economic development that makes membership so costly for the EU. Ukraine is much poorer than Bulgaria, the poorest existing EU member state. Using 2013 World Bank pre-crisis (mid-year) figures, Ukraine's GDP per capita (\$3,900) was slightly over half (53%) that of Bulgaria (\$7,340). Ukraine's GDP per capita is also just over one-tenth (11%) that of the EU average (\$34,240). For the sake of comparison, the GDP per capita of Croatia, the newest EU

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb74/eb74_publ_en.pdf

member, is almost identical to that of Poland (\$13,520) and higher than that of the largest candidate country Turkey (\$10,945).

Ukraine's relatively low GDP per capita means it would be eligible to receive significant structural and cohesion funds from the EU budget under current rules. Such funds are intended to reduce disparities between regions within the EU. Accordingly, regions with a GDP per capita below 75 percent of the EU average can apply for structural funds. No region in Ukraine is currently above this eligibility threshold, including Kyiv. As a result, the addition of 45 million Ukrainian citizens to the EU would be a costly undertaking given current funding arrangements.

Good Governance and Rule of Law

Ukraine's membership prospects are also linked to significant legal and political challenges. In discussions over Ukraine's AA, EU negotiators repeatedly expressed concern over Ukraine's high level of corruption and insisted upon reforms within the judicial and electoral systems, as well as the release of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from prison for medical treatment. With Tymoshenko's release in February 2014, this latter impediment no longer exists. However, political and economic corruption remains especially salient in the minds of Commission officials after the 2007 enlargement round. There is a growing sense that the EU may have rushed the membership of Romania and Bulgaria, two states that have continued to suffer from persistently high levels of corruption after accession. Indeed, the carrots and sticks available to the EU to discipline countries after enlargement have proven ineffective. As Commissioner Füle stated rather bluntly in his June interview, "The last enlargement of Romania and Bulgaria brought a lot of questions about the credibility of the whole process....It was the first time that the EU decided to establish a special cooperation and verification mechanism on existing member states. The biggest challenge was to return the lost credibility to the enlargement process. It forces us to expand and tighten benchmarks."¹

If perceptions do not change and Bulgaria and Romania's accession continues to be seen as premature and problematic, Ukraine will find itself in a relatively cautious enlargement environment. While difficult to quantify, estimates of corruption in Ukraine are significantly higher than those for Bulgaria and Romania. For example, in Transparency International's 2013 "Corruption Perception" index, Ukraine ranks 144th out of 177 countries, whereas Bulgaria and Romania rank 77 and 69 respectively. (Note that Ukraine ranks even below Russia, which ranks 127th.)

¹ <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/enlargement/fule-bulgaria-and-romanias-accession-questioned-credibility-eu-enlargement>

Territorial Integrity and Ukrainian Sovereignty

A final impediment to Ukraine's EU accession relates to questions surrounding the country's territorial integrity. Ukraine must be in a position to meet the obligations of accession outlined in the 31st chapter of the *acquis* concerning foreign, security, and defense policy. This requires Ukraine to harmonize with existing political declarations and EU agreements. Accordingly, member states "must be able to conduct political dialogue in the framework of CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy), to align with EU statements, to take part in EU actions and to apply agreed sanctions and restrictive measures."¹ Ukraine may face special challenges, and find itself unable to credibly commit to the security and defense chapters of the *acquis*, given Russia's occupation of Crimea.

In a similar vein, the resolution of open border disputes is a precondition of EU membership. It is unclear for how long Ukraine's borders will remain unstable, as secessionist claims in eastern Ukraine fester and uncertainty over the status of Crimea endures. Unless Ukraine concedes Crimea to Russia or Russia repudiates its claims and relinquishes its de facto control over the peninsula, Ukraine will fail to meet one of the most fundamental conditions for opening accession negotiations.

Conclusion

Despite strong words of encouragement from European leaders and EU officials during the crisis, as well as their willingness to provide substantial financial support to prevent a downward economic spiral in Ukraine, serious obstacles to EU membership remain at both national and European levels. Given the challenges associated with Ukraine's political and economic harmonization, its ongoing conflict with Russia, and the serious obstacles stemming from within Europe itself, Ukraine's path to membership will be long and the outcome uncertain.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis/index_en.htm

Ukraine's Future Security

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 353

Volodymyr Dubovyk

Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University

The events of the last several months have proven that all existing mechanisms and arrangements to provide for Ukraine's security have been ineffective. The country has found itself in limbo, desperately trying (and often failing) to provide for its own security while defending against Russian aggression.

There is no doubt that corruption, incompetence, and negligence have prevailed in Ukraine across many domains, including national security and defense. Military reform has been ineffective. Military appropriations have been inadequate, with funds often simply not reaching the intended parties. Public oversight has been non-existent, while the social status of the military and the level of public appreciation for it have been low (if rising in recent months). Such circumstances have not encouraged the best and brightest to join the ranks.

Viktor Yanukovych's rule, in particular, was damaging for the Ukrainian military as with most sectors in the country. Ukraine was basically a "disarmed" state, whether as a result of a deliberate act of treason and/or the continuation of the corrupt system of Ukrainian governance.

What lessons can we draw from Ukraine's state of affairs in the current conflict with Russia, not just for the Ukrainian military but also in terms of broader security arrangements for Ukraine? What options exist?

Option One: Maintain the Status Quo

This is a well-traveled path for Ukraine, which for years has avoided any comprehensive risk assessments of the status quo. That Russia would directly intervene was a scenario that Kyiv believed was extreme and unrealistic. There is no doubt that even with better preparation, it would have been a daunting task to withstand Russian intervention. Nonetheless, preparing contingency plans coupled with appropriate diplomatic activity is a core part of a government's mandate and may have better prepared Ukraine for its current circumstances.

Ukrainian decision-makers, always preoccupied with their petty political and financial struggles, neglected existential threats and worst-case forecasting. They have always viewed the “Ukrainian independence project” as a way to personally enrich themselves and advance the interests of their own networks, rather than take care of national interests, nurture the nation-state, and prepare for possible threats.

Diplomatically, Kyiv has rested comfortably, believing that certain international agreements would provide for Ukraine's protection. The 1994 Budapest Memorandum is a perfect example of this. Ukraine did not receive clear and concrete security guarantees when the memorandum was signed but only muted security assurances. For years, Ukrainian security experts have tried to draw attention to the fact that the assurances in the memorandum are vague and unreliable, underlining that only by actually joining the Euroatlantic security system could Ukraine receive adequate protection against potential threats.

It should not have come as a complete surprise that the Russian Federation blatantly violated the Budapest Memorandum. Ukraine's dealings with Russia have always been a difficult business. Time and again, Moscow's words and even signatures have amounted to nothing. The other two signatories to the Budapest Memorandum—the United States and United Kingdom—look to have fulfilled their obligations. They have repeatedly highlighted Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the international community (including the UN Security Council) and engaged in intensive consultations on the subject. Unfortunately, this is all that those “security assurances” called on them to do.

The option of doing nothing should be discarded. It will doom Ukraine to more of the same troubles in the future. It will leave Ukraine fully defenseless and vulnerable, at the mercy of an aggressor.

Option Two: Neutrality

“Permanent neutrality” or the “Finlandization” of Ukraine is often suggested today by the Kremlin, and even by some sincere well-wishers for Ukraine, who see it as the only way to save the country. Any attempt to impose this “solution” on Ukraine, instead of helping it withstand Russian aggression, is normatively wrong and a bad policy recipe.

First, even if an agreement on neutrality were concluded, Russia's record on security guarantees for Ukraine suggests Russia would simply violate the agreement when it saw fit. Second, there would be no mechanism to enforce it. The logistics of such an arrangement are impossible to conceive. Third, this would be an echo of the darkest times in world history, on par with the Munich Agreement and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. It would be a final blow to international order and law, a win for the Kremlin (encouraging it again to act according to this playbook), and a loss for the West, quite

possibly leading toward the crash of meaningful Euroatlantic security cooperation. Dictators and aggressors around the globe would be emboldened: Have an interest in your neighbor? Just use force and push for a special status for your target state, while (at a minimum) placing it firmly within your sphere of influence. Finally, this would bring an end to the concept of state sovereignty. With Ukraine's sovereignty violated and then limited, such a solution would not lead to greater stability. Ukraine would cease to be a subject of the international arena. Moreover, Ukraine would remain at the mercy of its more aggressive neighbor. Both its "autonomy" and its "security" would be gone.

What some proponents of "permanent neutrality" tend to forget, or ignore, is that today's context and circumstances are entirely different from those of Austria in the post-World War II period or Finland throughout the Cold War. Ukraine is also not Switzerland. To advocate such an approach now would mean to doom both Ukraine's security and the future regional and international order to failure.

Can Ukraine provide for its own security by drawing solely on its own resources and potential, without any international assistance or specific bilateral or multilateral arrangements? This is an idea that nationalists in various states often advocate. Ukrainian nationalists, while small in number and politically marginal, are not much different.

Such an arrangement might have a better chance of working against smaller-scale threats, but Ukraine's conflict with Russia will always be asymmetrical, leaving it with a minimal chance to succeed against full-scale invasion. This option would also require the massive and permanent militarization of Ukraine, which would be detrimental to democracy, human rights, and the social sector. The country is hardly capable of supporting such an effort at present, and it would not be a welcome scenario even in the distant future.

Option Three: Nuclearization

Some consider the renuclearization of Ukraine as an option. Given the circumstances, it is not surprising that this idea is floating around the country and has gained some popularity, less among experts than in the public domain. Ukrainian nationalists, specifically within the *Svoboda* party, also invoke this idea. *Svoboda* performed poorly in the May 2014 presidential election, but there remains a chance that it can do better in upcoming parliamentary elections. In any event, the fact that the public likes the idea will probably lead to the issue remaining – at least rhetorically – on the political agenda.

Objectively, it may be said that Ukraine has already rid itself of nuclear weapons and renuclearization is not a viable option. It is not feasible and would in any case be ineffective. It would lead to greater instability for Ukraine and the entire region. It

would not help against Russia for a variety of reasons, including its geographic proximity and Russia's own vast nuclear arsenal.

Option Four: Euroatlantic Security Integration

This option is for Ukraine to become part of the Euroatlantic security zone. It is considered by many to be the optimal and, in fact, only effective solution. Both theoretically and technically, it remains on the table. It is obvious, however, that the best time for a decisive move in this direction is in the past. Current circumstances are not conducive to reanimating efforts to bring Ukraine into NATO. Russian antagonism toward the idea has grown tremendously, and there is a clear lack of willingness to proceed on the part of many NATO members. The Ukrainian public remains divided on the subject, even though polls have revealed sizeable growth since Russia's invasion in support of the idea. In the coming months, Ukrainian political elites might very well align themselves with this perspective.

That said, apart from the issue of membership (which is still possible in accordance with the decision made at NATO's 2008 Bucharest summit, its strategic concept, and other guiding documents), more cooperation between Ukraine and NATO ought to exist. The Alliance should realize that Ukraine fights for exactly the values and principles on which the Euroatlantic process is based – a fair international order, state sovereignty and territorial integrity, human rights, and a more democratic political system. NATO should act accordingly, helping Ukraine persevere. NATO should be capable of learning from this crisis and more ably adjust itself to face similar current and future threats and challenges. There is a chance for NATO to be a more relevant and stronger regional actor. As it does so, Ukraine will be a natural ally.

Option Five: U.S.-Ukraine Partnership

Finally, a bilateral security partnership with a willing United States is another – and perhaps, at this juncture, ideal – option. For this to be successful would require a long-term American readiness to devote resources and energy to Ukraine, which would include a clear understanding of why this is in the interests of the United States. If this newly launched Cold War, as some are calling it, between Russia and the West (and particularly the United States) continues to escalate, this scenario could become less a matter of choice for Washington than one of necessity. For Ukraine's part, such an arrangement would also require much. Kyiv would have to eradicate corruption and bad governance and stay on a democratic path. Unlike "permanent neutrality," this would not entail undermining Ukraine's sovereignty, however, as it is an option that would not be imposed upon Ukraine. It is an option that would make Ukraine stronger and more capable of handling existential threats with confidence. The "Russian Aggression Prevention Act of 2014" which was introduced to Congress earlier this year

that proposed for major non-NATO ally status be granted to Ukraine (and Georgia and Moldova) is a step in the right direction. It could be passed and followed up by related steps. This would help Ukraine, a friend of the United States, persevere, while advancing U.S. interests in the region and globally.

The Poroshenko Phenomenon

ELECTIONS AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 336

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Back in 2005, it seemed that Petro Poroshenko, then serving as secretary for the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, would be entirely eliminated from political activity through his rivalry with then-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. However, in the 2014 presidential election, Poroshenko defeated Tymoshenko and all other contenders in a landslide. Evidently, the Euromaidan movement has changed the whole political dynamic in Ukraine. Why did the country's political crown fall into the hands of Poroshenko? Will he be able to fulfill the demands of the Euromaidan demonstrators, especially considering the fact that the president's power is now more limited with the country's rollback to the 2004 constitutional amendments? How will he manage Ukraine's domestic and external pressures?

The Election: Post-Euromaidan Environment and Poroshenko's Electoral Strategy

Poroshenko, the fifth president of Ukraine, is the first president since Leonid Kravchuk was elected in December 1991 to win a presidential election by an absolute majority in the first round. Poroshenko was elected on a tide of enormous popular dissatisfaction with his predecessor's corrupt political culture. Similar to the situation in 1991, Ukrainians also wanted to divorce themselves from dangers emanating from Moscow.

To some extent, Poroshenko's success is based on the new Ukrainian political situation after the Euromaidan revolution, which transformed peoples' perception of political leadership as they reevaluated all the major players. Before the revolution, political leaders had used either their charisma or populist appeal to impose decisions on their constituents. However, the events of December 2013–February 2014 revealed that all too often the so-called leaders of the Euromaidan, including Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Vitali Klitschko, and Oleh Tyahnybok, were one step behind the people's demands. Although key opposition players behaved responsibly in many cases, they often fell short in explaining the motives and goals behind their decisions.

In this context, Poroshenko distanced himself from conventional Ukrainian politics and played the role of civil activist. On December 1, 2013, he was the only well-known politician who tried to stop violent protesters from storming the presidential administration building. In January 2014, Poroshenko won the sympathy of protesters by helping to save the life of Dmytro Bulatov, the kidnapped and tortured leader of the “Automaidan” civil movement. Poroshenko also avoided endorsing the agreement on resolving the crisis between President Victor Yanukovych and the opposition.

Another factor that helped Poroshenko rebrand himself as a “new politician” was that he distanced himself from the process of power distribution among the winners. Although Poroshenko played an important role in building the new interim coalition, he decided not to use his influence in the parliament to struggle with Tymoshenko’s party for the positions of parliamentary chairman or prime minister.

Meanwhile, Tymoshenko’s party *Batkivshchyna* (Fatherland) became the major holder of key positions in the parliament and government. Her right-hand man, Oleksandr Turchynov, was chosen to be the new parliamentary chairman and became the country’s acting president. Arseniy Yatsenyuk was appointed prime minister, and six other ministerial positions were given to *Batkivshchyna* members. Tymoshenko was thus regarded as a central player wielding executive power by proxy. She also did not rule out her own presidential run. In the eyes of the Ukrainian people who had just disposed of a president who had been abusing his power, such actions were somewhat suspect.

Moreover, people were wary of Tymoshenko and her businesslike approach to decision making. Her rivals cast her past cooperation with Russian president Vladimir Putin as one of the causes of Ukraine’s weak response to the occupation of Crimea. Deputies loyal to Klitschko and Poroshenko speculated that the gas contracts Tymoshenko negotiated with Putin in 2009 now made Ukraine vulnerable to Russian pressure.

Poroshenko has also been known for opportunism. He has often allied himself with the strongest players at the table, including former presidents Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yushchenko, and Yanukovych. In 2001, he was among the founders, together with Yanukovych, of the Party of Regions. In 2005, he used his power as secretary of the National Security and Defense Council to participate in oligarchic wars for the redistribution of privatized state property and television channels. In 2009, he made a deal with Tymoshenko to support her presidential campaign in exchange for the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 2012, Poroshenko agreed to promote Yanukovych’s ties with the European Union and for half a year served as minister of economic development and trade.

As for his attitudes toward Russia, in 2005, Poroshenko lobbied for developing close ties between the “Orange team” and Putin’s inner circle. In May 2005, Poroshenko and Russian parliamentary chairman Boris Gryzlov even signed a memorandum of

cooperation between Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party and Russia's ruling party, United Russia. While positioning himself as a pro-European politician and arguing that a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU was not compatible with membership in the Russian-led Customs Union, Poroshenko still acknowledged that Ukraine had to take Russian interests and concerns into consideration.

Poroshenko's actions during the crisis in Crimea decisively shifted public opinion in his favor. His trip to occupied Simferopol, his appeals to void the controversial abolition of Ukraine's language law, and his efforts to eliminate armed pro-Russian groups led people to view him as a moderate but strong leader. He also managed to recruit deputies and regional leaders who were well known in southern and eastern Ukraine (such as Inna Bohoslovskaya from Kharkiv, Oleksiy Hocharenko from Odessa, and Andriy Derkach from Sumy) and bring his message to former supporters of the Party of Regions. Judging from the results of the elections, this strategy worked well: Poroshenko won all electoral districts in eastern and southern Ukraine, with the exception of the separatist-held areas that obstructed the vote and one district in the Kharkiv region (see **Table 1** for candidate polling and election results).

An agreement with Klitschko practically secured Poroshenko's victory in the election. Early in the campaign, Klitschko stepped down from the election and called on his supporters to vote for Poroshenko. Uncomfortable in a coalition with the nationalistic *Svoboda* and Tymoshenko's *Batkivshchyna*, and with no interest in wielding interim authority, Klitschko concluded a marriage of convenience with Poroshenko and concentrated his efforts on winning local elections in Kyiv.

Meanwhile, Poroshenko distanced himself from the feuds among other opposition and Euromaidan contenders. He refused to react to Tymoshenko's accusation that he was an "oligarchic puppet." Instead, he focused on his plans for reconstructing Ukraine's economy and implementing the Association Agreement with the EU.

In April 2014, as armed conflict was unfolding in the Donbas, Poroshenko stressed that a sustainable peace could be established only if the president were decisively elected in the first round of voting. While Tymoshenko and former members of the Party of Regions (Serhiy Tihipko and Mykhailo Dobkin) looked to reconcile with the armed men who occupied administrative buildings in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Poroshenko consistently rejected any negotiations with "terrorists" and called for the use of force against them. Nonetheless, in contrast to the nationalists or populists (such as Oleh Lyashko), Poroshenko stated that he would support giving more power to local authorities and respect the rights of the Russian-speaking population.

Table 1. Public Opinion Ratings¹ and Election Results² for Major Presidential Candidates (the figures in brackets show ratings among respondents who were confident they would vote)

	December	January	February*	March	April	May	Elections
Petro Poroshenko Independent	8.6	11.2	19.8	24.9 (36.2)	32.9 (48.4)	34 (53.2)	54.7
Vitali Klitschko UDAR	19.1	16.1	12.1	8.9 (12.9)	–	–	–
Yulia Tymoshenko <i>Batkivshchyna</i>	13.0	13.9	8.4	8.2 (12)	9.5 (14)	6.5 (10.1)	12.81
Serhiy Tihipko Formerly Party of Regions	–	–	8.0	7.3 (10)	5.1 (7.4)	5.8 (8.8)	5.23
Mykhailo Dobkin Party of Regions	–	–	3.6	4.2 (5.3)	4.2 (6)	3.5 (4.9)	3.03
Petro Symonenko Communist Party	4.2	3.3	5.0	3.6 (5)	4 (5.6)	2.2 (3.1)	1.51
Oleh Lyashko Radical Party	–	–	–	3.5 (5)	3.2 (4.6)	4.1 (6.3)	8.32
Anatoliy Hrytsenko “Civil Position”	–	–	4.6	3.2 (4.6)	3.4 (5)	3.6 (6.2)	5.48
Oleh Tyahnybok <i>Svoboda</i>	5.2	2.0	1.7	1.7 (2.5)	1.4 (2.1)	1.3 (2)	1.16
Dmytro Yarosh Right Sector	–	–	–	0.9 (1.4)	0.7 (0.9)	0.6 (0.9)	0.7
Olha Bohomolets Independent	–	–	–	–	2.5 (3.6)	1.9 (2.9)	1.91
Oleh Tsarov Formerly Party of Regions	–	–	–	–	0.8 (1.1)	–	–
Viktor Yanukovych Party of Regions	29.7	20.8	–	–	–	–	–
Others	2.4	4.0	–	3.4	0.9	–	–
Don't know	8.8	15.8	17.7	14.1	14.6	23.4	–
Against all	3.1	–	17.6	9.7	9	–	–
Not voting	–	12.5	3.2	5.8	7.7	11.7	–

*Last poll conducted in Crimea.

¹ Source: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology

² Source: Central Election Commission

Poroshenko did not rule out the possibility of cooperating with all political parties that respect Ukrainian sovereignty. Therefore, his victory was acknowledged by a majority of contenders with the exception of the pro-Russian Communists and separatist supporter Oleh Tsariov. Runner-up Tymoshenko and third-place finisher Lyashko even pledged to support the new president in his efforts to restore the integrity of the country.

Poroshenko's Challenges: The Donbas Conflict and Early Parliamentary Elections

During his first two months in office, Poroshenko tried to balance various coercive and conciliatory instruments to pacify the pro-Russian separatists and maintain the conflict at a level of minimal violence. However, hostilities during the ten-day unilateral ceasefire and fruitless OSCE-mediated negotiations with leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics" (DNR and LNR) led the new president to order an offensive against the Kremlin-backed separatists.

The crash of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 confirmed the president's strategy to dismiss any talks with the "terrorists" of the DNR and LNR and to address the people of Donetsk and Luhansk directly. Poroshenko immediately ordered the restoration of social welfare and utility services as well as the provision of free food to the inhabitants of areas taken back from the separatists. Activities of the Ukrainian army, volunteer battalions, and civil activists were promoted on television and the Internet. This combination of military, humanitarian, and media elements in Poroshenko's counterinsurgency operation served to restore the legitimacy of the central government in the Donbas and undermine the separatist's "Novorossiia" project.

One of Poroshenko's biggest challenges in Donbas has been to prevent a conflict against diverse groups of pro-Russian militants from turning into a full-scale war with Russia or civil war. Heavy collateral damage, disruption of critical infrastructure, and poor economic conditions alienate people in Donbas, leading some to join DNR and LNR separatists. Upon conclusion of the military operations, Poroshenko will have to invest a great deal of money into the region and provide welfare to its discontented population.

On the national level, Poroshenko faces the dilemma of being a president elected with high expectations but limited constitutional power. He has promised to dissolve the discredited parliament and push forward with necessary political and economic reforms. By mid-summer, however, Poroshenko was already finding it difficult to steer the government and was getting squeezed between the reform requirements of the International Monetary Fund and oligarchic interests.

Early parliamentary elections scheduled for October 26 will give Poroshenko the chance to form a loyal coalition and establish a government with the presence of non-partisan technocrats willing to make unpopular decisions. The problem, however, is that

Poroshenko can likely secure an absolute majority in parliament only in coalition with other parties (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Political Party Ratings

Parties and Blocks	Percentage of respondents who are confident they will vote
<i>UDAR+Solidarity</i> (Klitschko and Lutsenko)	19.3
<i>Batkivshchyna</i> (Yatseniuk and Tymoshenko)	16.8
<i>Radical Party</i> (Liashko)	23.2
<i>"Civil Position"</i> (Hrytsenko)	10.6
<i>Svoboda</i> (Tyahnybok)	6.1
<i>"Strong Ukraine"</i> (Tihipko)	6.0
<i>Party of Regions</i> (Dobkin)	2.9
<i>Communist Party</i> (Symonenko)	5.6
Others	9.5

Source: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology poll, July 2014

Also, the upcoming parliamentary elections will test the president's ability to contain the influence of Ukraine's oligarchs. All of Poroshenko's predecessors failed to limit big money's intervention into state policy. So far, Poroshenko, himself a chocolate magnate, has selectively appointed to the highest positions in his administration extremely wealthy individuals, including former media tycoon Boris Lozhkin and poultry mogul Yuriy Kosiuk. They have been entrusted to increase the efficiency of the state bureaucracy. It is possible that Poroshenko will urge oligarchs to support his party during parliamentary elections and contribute to Ukraine's reconstruction and European integration.

Conclusion

Untouched by the failures of other opposition leaders during the Euromaidan movement, Poroshenko was able to distance himself from the mistakes of the interim authorities and win the approval of the Ukrainian people. Although Poroshenko came from the same political and business environment, he outmatched his rivals by promising a new quality of governance. Nonetheless, after winning the election, he has had to work with old enemies and face new challenges, which can make it difficult to avoid the mistakes and political schemes of the past.

From the outset, Poroshenko invested his political capital and diplomatic skill in the military campaign against Russian-backed separatists to restore order to Donbas. This has made him dependent on its success. In addition, Ukraine's new president has to make a "new deal" with the country's oligarchs, reducing their influence and forcing

them to contribute to the reconstruction of the country. By calling for early parliamentary elections, Poroshenko will look to extend his power over government and institute loyal political structures in parliament in order to achieve his goals.

After the Ukraine-Russia War

IS THERE A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 356

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The “Bosnia-zation” of Ukraine or the “Transnistria-zation” of the Donbas are the options Russian President Vladimir Putin seek to impose on Ukraine. He prefers the first option, as it ensures more hard leverage over Kyiv. Putin’s plan is to make the Ukrainian state dysfunctional by giving Donetsk (“Novorossiia”) veto power over key domestic and foreign policy decisions. For Ukraine, full-fledged sovereignty is a vital precondition for any sustainable solution to the crisis. If the United States and Europe want to see Ukraine transform itself into a functional democracy with strong institutions and an innovative economy, they should not be misled by illusions of Moscow-engineered “federalization.” If Ukraine finds itself in a truly desperate position in the East—if it is unable to effectively contain direct Russian military intervention—it would be more appropriate to accept the “Transnistria-zation” of parts of the Donbas then the “Bosnia-zation” of the entire country.

Russia’s Sabotage of Ukraine

The Russian annexation of Crimea and ongoing Russian-sponsored separatist conflict in the Donbas have already created a new political reality in Eastern Europe. Putin failed to persuade Ukraine to join the Russian-led Customs Union and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) or prevent it from building deeper relations with the European Union. The future of the EEU is uncertain. Its other members, Belarus and Kazakhstan, have abstained from Russia’s selective trade embargos against the West and expressed zero enthusiasm for Putin’s policies toward Ukraine.

In his actions today, Putin seeks “compensation” for these losses, in particular through Ukrainian territorial, human, and industrial resources. However, his purposes are not limited to compensatory demands determined by the events of the last year. He feels himself strong enough to use the manufactured Ukraine crisis to reshape the global and regional order and to the extent possible regain even older losses (from 1991 and before).

Due to the level of Russia-Ukraine hostilities, the option of setting up a soft pro-Russian government in Kyiv is not viable, likely for decades. Meanwhile, the Kremlin will

pursue military, political, and economic strategies aimed at “exhausting” Ukraine and ensuring dysfunctional national governance.

Russia’s economic means include discriminatory natural gas pricing, selective export bans through “sanitary” and “standardization” measures, withdrawal from the existing CIS free-trade agreement, and introduction of high import duties. Its political means include the recognition of DNR/LNR/“Novorossiia” as an entity eligible to negotiate “substantive issues” on behalf of that region. Alternatively, Putin would like DNR/LNR representatives to speak on behalf of all southeast Ukraine. This is why the term “Novorossiia,” which encompasses far more than the Donbas, has been actively used in Kremlin discourse since August 2014.

The Kremlin’s end goal is unclear and may vary depending on dynamics. However, the destabilization of the whole of Ukraine (not just the Donbas) is likely an integral element of any scenario. Putin seeks to punish Ukraine for “unauthorized” developments (the Euromaidan) and prevent a similar scenario from taking place in Russia and its satellite states. At the same time, he seeks to take advantage of Kyiv’s post-revolutionary weakness and the West’s lack of courage to regain Russia’s post-Cold-War losses.

No Long-Term Solution

At the moment, there is no sign of even an hypothetical consensus among the major players about Ukraine’s future. Conceptually, Putin’s regime does not accept that Ukraine, like other regional “emerging nations,” is eligible to determine its own destiny. Recognition of Ukraine’s sovereign rights is a precondition for any sustainable peace solution, but this seems unlikely to come any time soon as it would mean a dismantling of the “imperial core” of Russian statehood.

The annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas have damaged Ukraine-Russia relations to the point that the option of building some kind of “joint architecture” for both states in security or in economics is now virtually ruled out. A divorce is inevitable. Even under relatively positive circumstances, any reconciliation between Ukraine and Russia will take time, perhaps even two to three decades.

No Short-Term Solution Either

Attempts to find immediate, if temporary, common ground only provoke further scandal rather than bring the parties closer to consensus. One example of this was the June “24-Step Plan to Resolve the Ukraine Crisis,” drafted by Russian and U.S. experts in

Boisto, Finland.¹ As a group of luminaries noted in their open letter about this meeting, any attempt to find a solution without Ukrainian participation is inappropriate:

“We categorically oppose the non-Ukrainians in this initiative, because it plays to the worst instincts of domination by Russia and perhaps also by America. It turns out that Ukraine is not really an independent country, and Russia may, in agreement with the United States, determine her fate.”²

Any solution should be based on an understanding and acceptance of change as established by Ukrainian society, unhampered by the severe circumstances of ongoing external aggression.

A sustainable solution must accept that a return to the status quo before November 2013 (“Like with Yanukovich but without him”) is impossible. Moreover, the notion that Ukraine is a bridge between East and West is no longer viable.

Still, There is a Way Forward

Ukraine’s path forward requires democratic institution building, fair governance, and European integration. Any solutions to resolve the crisis in Ukraine should include these three major elements. The establishment of effective democratic institutions and the rule of law was a foundation of the Euromaidan movement. Civil society groups continue to be active in promoting reform, even when the government is reluctant to speed the process.

Considering that the central government is not yet capable of implementing policies nationwide, imposing a formula of governance as a part of a political solution is not realistic. Fair governance should include strong anti-corruption measures, where no one region has special privileges.

European integration is another element in the road ahead. In November 2013, former president Viktor Yanukovich bypassed, and Putin tried to derail, Ukraine’s Association Agreement (AA) with the EU. President Petro Poroshenko signed the AA in July, and the government declared a commitment to implement it. It has elaborated a national program for AA implementation and established a coordination system for EU integration.

¹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/a-24-step-plan-to-resolve-the-ukraine-crisis/379121/>

² The response to the Boisto Plan is available at: <http://zn.ua/columnists/otvet-na-plan-gruppy-boysto-151975.html>

Nonetheless, the AA is not the endpoint for Ukraine. Kyiv will surely submit an EU membership application once it implements its AA obligations. EU membership may be a distant prospect, but it gives the nation a sense of direction. At the same time, it is clear that the DNR/LNR project was designed by the Putin regime in part to prevent Ukraine from implementing successful domestic reforms, including democratic institution-building, and a course toward European integration.

In their first political manifesto, released in Minsk on September 1, DNR/LNR representatives declared their wish to receive a “special arrangement for their external economic activities, taking into account their deepening integration with Russia and the Customs Union.” They also sought their own law enforcement system, which would derail national governance in relevant areas.

LNR/DNR representatives are also seeking veto powers on domestic and foreign policy decisions made by Kyiv as a pre-condition for their regions to reintegrate into Ukraine. The arrangement they envision is likely akin to that which Moscow offered in the 2003 “Kozak Memorandum,” which was a proposal for political relations between Moldova and Transnistria, which was finally rejected by Moldova’s president at the time, Vladimir Voronin. Reportedly, LNR/DNR representatives also seek to give regions a veto on any issues put to a national referendum.

The kind of regulations LNR/DNR representatives propose would transform Ukraine into a dysfunctional Bosnia-like state or worse. Ukraine would be an asymmetric confederation with one region having exclusive quasi-state rights. This type of uneven system would eventually lead to the dismantling of the state. The solution instead involves local self-governance based on standardized norms, coupled with a strong and accountable central government.

Conclusion

Ukraine is on a difficult path. But if local communities have reasonable and equal rights, and Kyiv continues with needed reforms and remains accountable to the people, a workable solution can unfold. The West needs to support Ukraine in this. If that path fails, sadly, it would be less costly and more responsible for Kyiv to accept a “Transnistrian scenario” for certain parts of the Donbas then to accept a “Bosnian scenario” for the entire country.

Ukraine: Trends and Regional Dynamics in Population, Health, and Migration

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 344

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Today's conflict in Ukraine hinges on perceptions of a stark East-West political divide. This memo assesses the extent to which geographic variation characterizes other elements of today's Ukraine, mainly those related to human capital: demography, health, and migration. It also examines human capital factors as determinants or limits impacting the near- to medium-term trajectory of the country as a whole. In sum, demographic decline is even more severe in Ukraine than in Russia. As a result, an aging and unhealthy Ukrainian population will constrain pathways forward for the development of its conscription pool and labor force, and elder-care obligations will increasingly burden public sector budgets. These negative trends are significantly more pronounced in the eastern, central, and southern parts of Ukraine than in the west.

Ukraine's population has been declining steadily since 1990, with a drop of 6.3 million people, or 12 percent, between 1990 and 2012 (see **Chart 1**). The United Nations Population Division predicts a continued decline to below 34 million by 2050.¹

Ukraine performs poorly on all dimensions of population movement. The total fertility rate—the average number of children borne by a woman in her lifetime—is well below the 2.1 necessary for stable population replacement. Ukraine's women had two or more children, on average, for much of the 1980s, but childbearing began to plummet at the end of that decade. Although the total fertility rate has been on the rise since 2001, growth remains anemic (see **Chart 2**). Some analyses attribute the uptick, in part, to a 2005 increase in government payments for the birth of a child and continued financial support to the mother over the first year of a child's life, as well as expanded maternity leave, but clearly these incentives have not been sufficient to stem the direction or magnitude of population decline.

Like Russia, the Ukrainian birth rate has been far outpaced by the death rate for virtually all of the post-Soviet period. But unlike Russia, Ukraine's "scissors" (the gap between deaths and births) have not closed in recent years (see **Chart 3**). The high death

¹ Data presented throughout, unless otherwise specified, are from official Ukrainian statistical handbooks/websites and/or data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the United Nations Population Division, or the World Bank.

rates correlate with risk factors identical to those in Russia: a still-high prevalence of smoking (though reported rates have declined significantly, from 37 percent in 2005 to 26 percent in 2010, largely due to excise tax hikes), excessive alcohol consumption (especially binge drinking—consuming more than five drinks in a single day in the past month—practiced by 20 percent of the population), poor access to quality healthcare, and stress borne of low perceived control over one’s life circumstances. One-third of the adult male population are regular binge drinkers. Nearly half of the adult Ukrainian population suffers from one or more chronic diseases, with these diseases afflicting more and more young adults (for example, one in five 18- to 29-year-olds are hypertensive). As in Russia, a mortality crisis has particularly impacted men of working age. In Ukraine, more than one-fifth of men die between the ages of 40 and 60, and in the 40-49 age group, men die at a rate three times that of women. Overall, there are only 0.85 males in Ukraine for every female. Ukraine also has the highest mortality rate from infectious disease (primarily HIV and tuberculosis) in all of Europe (as defined by the World Health Organization), surpassing even Russia, though infectious disease remains a relatively low contributor to mortality when compared to non-communicable disease and injury.

As fewer women were born in the population cohorts now coming into child-bearing age, and the total number of children per woman remains low, it is difficult to see how this population decline can be reversed in the foreseeable future (see **Chart 4**). Furthermore, life expectancy remains lower than in richer countries with comparably low fertility, with Ukraine’s life expectancy numbers in 2013 (63.8 for men, 74.9 for women) even lower than Russia’s (65.4 for men, 76.5 for women).

These demographic trends bode poorly for Ukraine’s current and future pool of young men eligible for military conscription, and for its future labor force. The absolute number of 15- to 19-year-old males has been declining since 2002 and is projected to reach an absolute low point—at a level about *half* the 2002 number—in 2018, but the projected upswing thereafter is remarkably small (see **Chart 5**). The downturn in numbers of adult men in the labor force naturally trails that in the conscription pool by ten to thirty years.

These national figures mask considerable regional variation. **Charts 6-12** graph population and health statistics, primarily for the year 2012 (the most recent year for which complete data are available), by regional grouping: reading left to right, Ukraine as a whole; the western regions; the city of Kyiv; the central regions; Crimea; the southern regions; the city of Sevastopol; and the eastern regions. Reading the chart from left to right therefore produces, after the data for all of Ukraine as a reference point, a sweep of the country roughly from west to east.

Although all of Ukraine’s regions (with the exception of Kyiv city) have experienced stark population decline (see **Chart 6**) over the last two decades, the magnitude of the decline in the west is considerably outpaced by that in the center, south, and east.

A comparative regional look at birth (see **Chart 7**) and death rates (see **Chart 8**) in 2012 helps explain this variation. Birth rates in 2012 were significantly higher in the west, and lower in the east, than the national average. This has been the case for many years, producing a Ukraine whose “youngest” area is its western regions, and that progressively ages as it moves to the south, then center/north, and then finally east to its “oldest” territory. This dynamic is mirrored in abortion rates, which are considerably lower in the western part of the country and highest in the center and east.

Conversely, death rates in 2012 were higher in the east, center, and south, and lower in the west. Although life expectancy data by region for 2012 are not available, 2008 data show lower life expectancy for men in southern (61.8 years) and eastern (61.2 years) regions than for men in western Ukraine (64.0 years). Female life expectancy follows a similar regional pattern.

Combining birth and death rates over a single year produces natural population growth rates, the number of births/1,000 population minus the number of deaths/1,000 population (see **Chart 9**). In 2012, some regions in the west actually experienced positive natural population growth—an excess of births over deaths—while this held true for no regions in the southern, central, or eastern parts of the country.

The relatively low birth rates in the eastern, southern, and central parts of the country result in an older population structure there than in the west. This translates into inescapably higher burdens for pension payments and elder care in these regions than in the west, most likely for several decades into the future in the absence of an unexpectedly sharp and immediate increase in the birth rate (see **Chart 10**).

Regional variation in health and disease trends also largely favors the western parts of Ukraine. For example, the number of existing cases of HIV and tuberculosis are significantly higher in the eastern and southern regions than in the center and west (see **Charts 11 and 12**).

Can immigration stem Ukraine’s population loss? Russia, for example, has relied on a sizeable influx of labor migrants to counter, in part, the impact of its excess of deaths over births and resultant shortage of working-age males. By contrast, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO), between January 2010 and June 2012, 1.2 million Ukrainians (3.4 percent of the adult population) were working or looking for work abroad. About two-thirds of these were men, and one-third women. Most were relatively young (20-49 years old), and the ratio of rural to urban Ukrainian labor migrants is about 2:1. Most are legal, with only about one in five Ukrainian migrant workers irregular. Several non-ILO studies offer far larger estimates of total Ukrainian labor migration, some as large as five to seven million seasonal migrants over summer periods. If these larger estimates are accurate, then Ukraine has replaced now-legalized EU-8 nationals as the major supplier of irregular workers at the bottom of European Union labor markets, and the Ukraine-to-Russia corridor is now the second-largest

migration route in the world (surpassed only by Mexico-to-U.S.). According to the ILO, the main destination countries for Ukrainian labor migration (2010-2012) were Russia (43%), Poland (14%), Italy (13%), and the Czech Republic (13%) (see **Chart 13**).

Over time, Ukrainian labor migration to Russia is decreasing and to the EU is increasing. Ukrainian labor migrants tend to fall into two categories: young people leaving permanently due to a lack of job opportunities at home, and circulating migrants engaging in temporary labor. One Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy study has shown that most Ukrainians seeking work abroad do so because of low wages at home (about 80 percent), as opposed to unemployment (about 10 percent). Most Ukrainian labor migrants are working in relatively low-skilled jobs, leading to a mismatch between some migrants' skills and their current work positions. According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 65 percent of Ukrainian labor migrants have completed secondary education, 15 percent have some higher education, and 15 percent have completed higher education. This produces a situation where almost half of Ukrainian migrants are employed in work for which they are clearly overqualified, a phenomenon referred to as "downshifting" or "brain waste."

In 2012, an estimated \$7.5 billion equivalent in private remittances was transferred to Ukraine, equal to about 4 percent of Ukraine's GDP that year (and exceeding 2012 net foreign direct investment, which was around \$6 billion). This figure rose to \$9.3 billion in 2013. This makes Ukraine the third largest recipient of remittance payments in the world, after India and Mexico. According to the ILO, the Ukrainian economy would have lost about 7 percent of its activity in 2012 without the stimulus effect from these migrant transfers. Remittance flows were first registered in a significant way in 2006 (about \$1 billion) and have increased annually since then. The primary source country for remittance payments is Russia, followed by the United States, Germany, Greece, Italy, and the United Kingdom; these payments are therefore coming from members of the permanent diaspora as well as from labor migrants.

ILO data suggest that Ukraine's main source regions for labor migration are those in the far west: Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi are classified as "very high" source regions, with Volyn, Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytskyi, and Cherkasy ranking as "high" source regions. The central regions are classified as "very low" sources, with all of the southern and eastern regions except Luhansk classified as "low" (Luhansk, along with Rivne, Vinnytsia, and Mykolaiv, are classified as "average"). This means that, setting aside refugees from the recent conflict in the east, most out-migration from Ukraine is draining the most demographically stable and healthy parts of the country.

Overall, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Ukraine's human capital dynamics severely constrain its potential to move forward from its current crises. Migration outflows seem unlikely to decrease, absent a significant downturn in Russian and/or European labor markets. An aging Ukrainian population will, in the coming decades, put increasing strain on public resources funded by a shrinking and unhealthy labor

force. The development of the armed forces will be limited by a perpetual slump in the size of the conscription pool. Finally, the many threats to the country's geographic integrity are likely to be exacerbated by differential demographics that strongly favor relatively young and healthy westerners over older and more sickly easterners. In any assessment of Ukraine's prospects, across a range of sectors, human capital factors merit serious consideration.

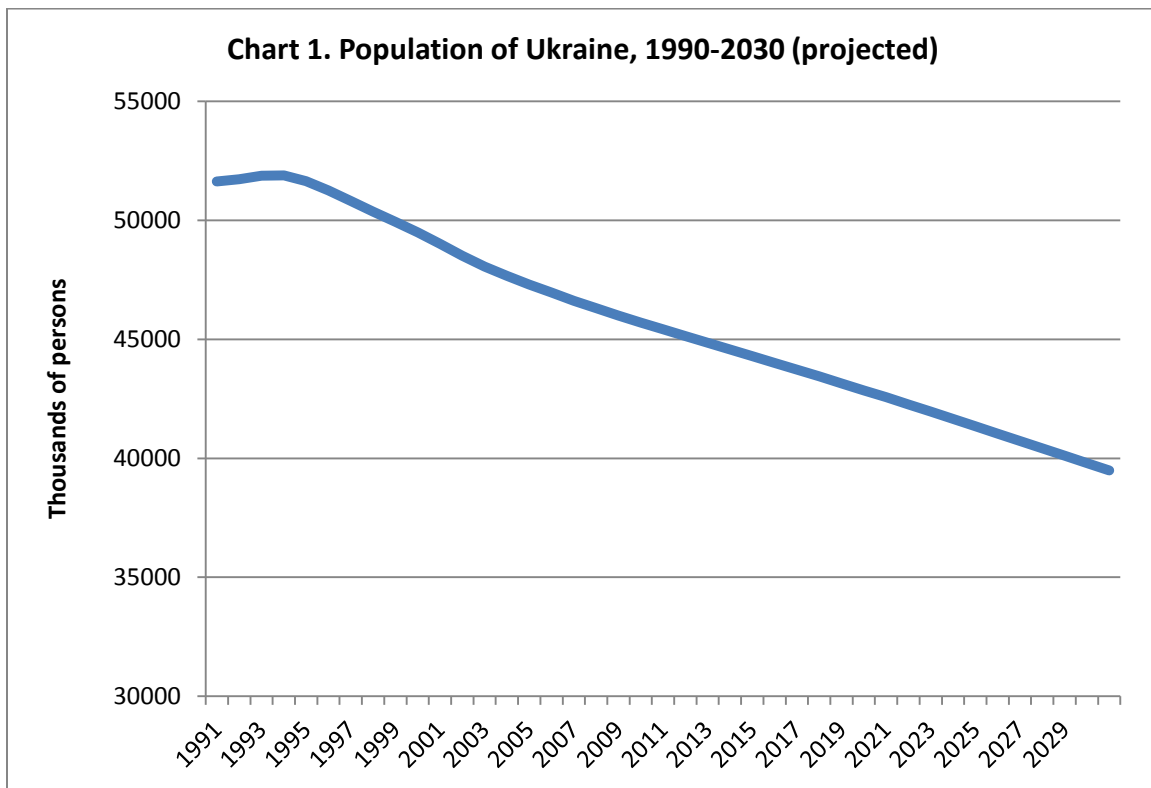
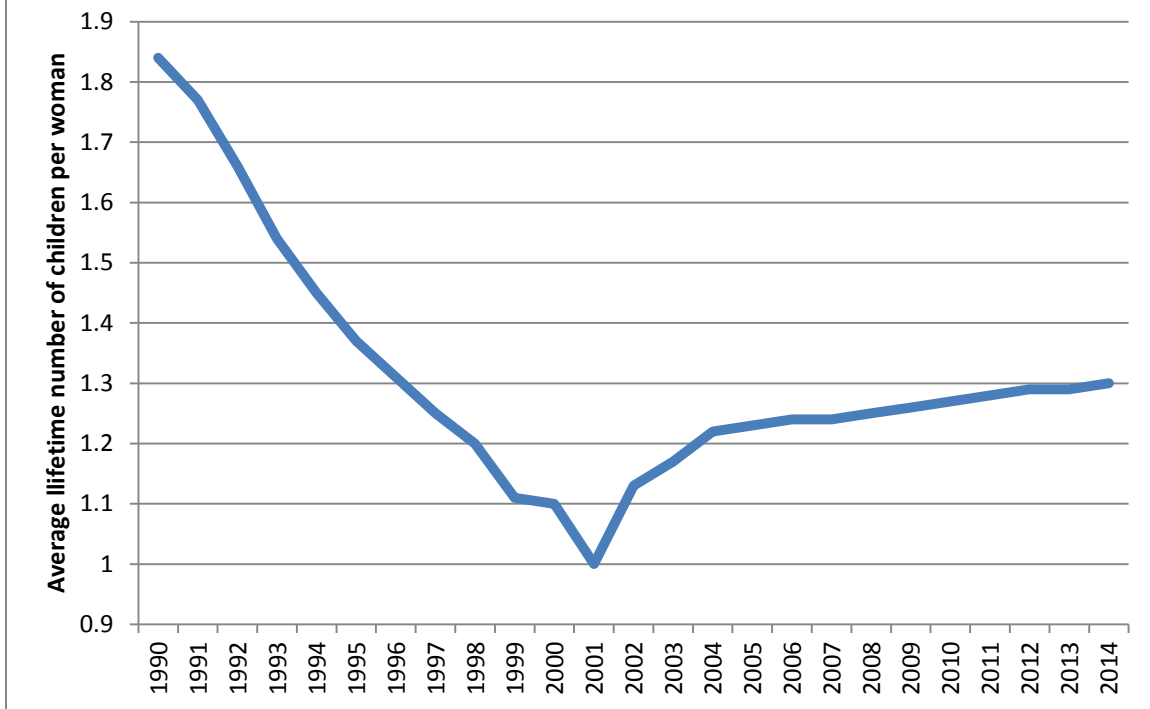
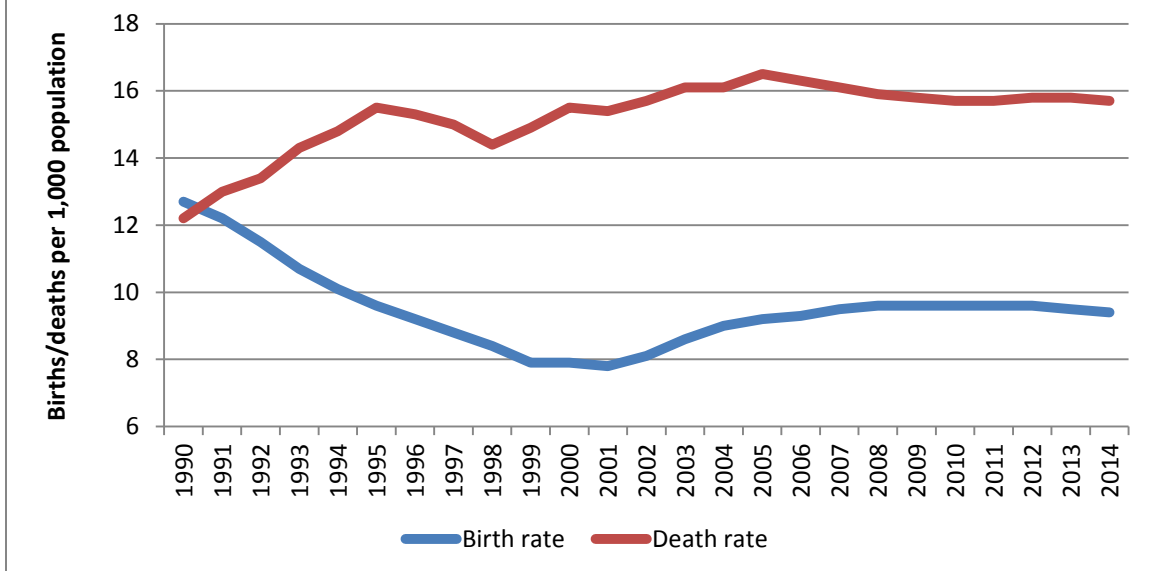


Chart 2. Total Fertility Rate, 1990-2014**Chart 3. Birth and death rates, 1990-2014**

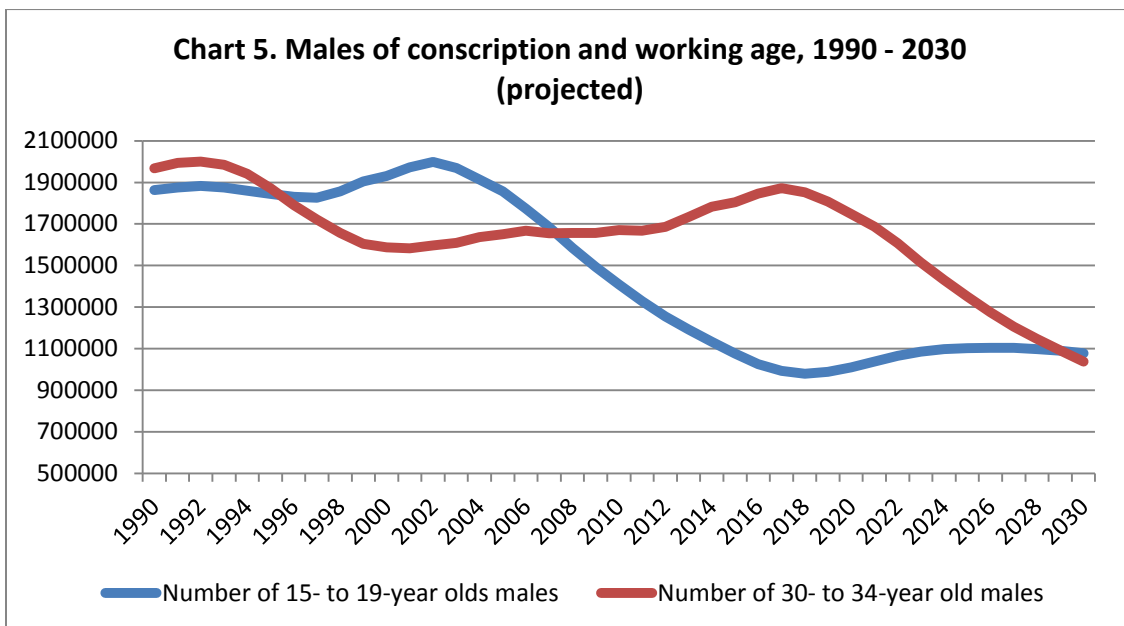
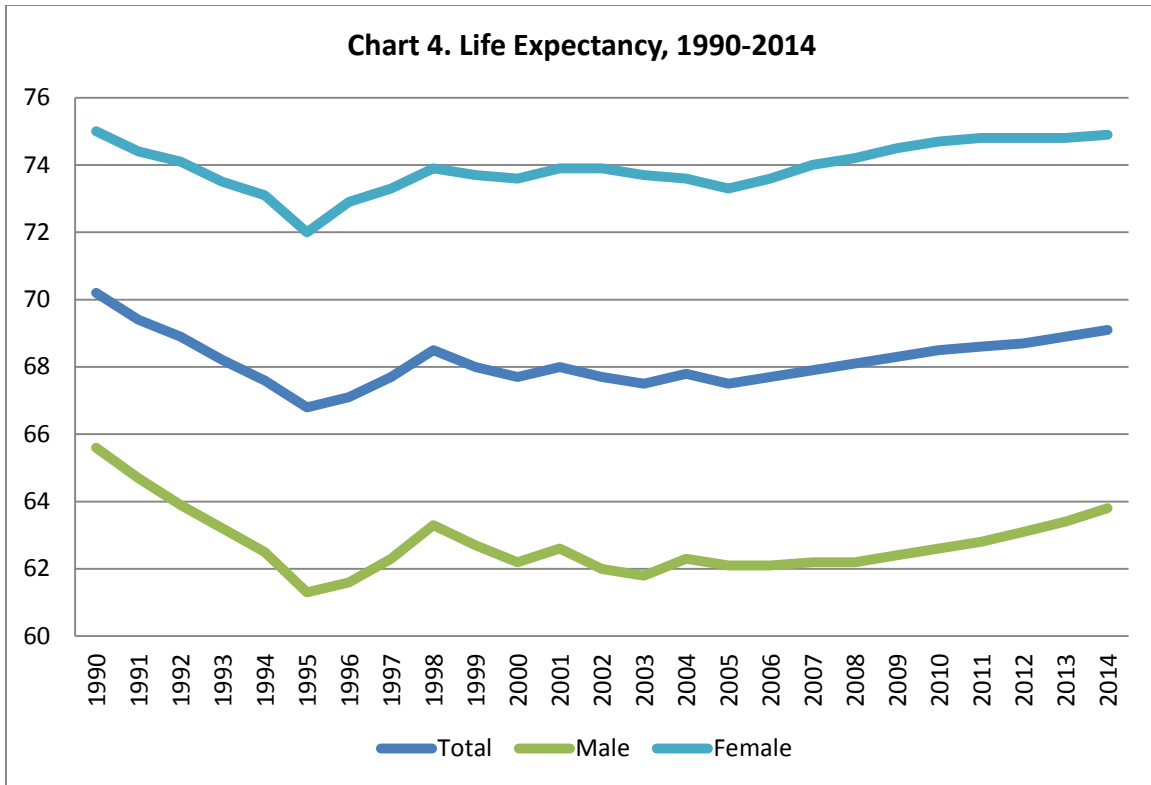


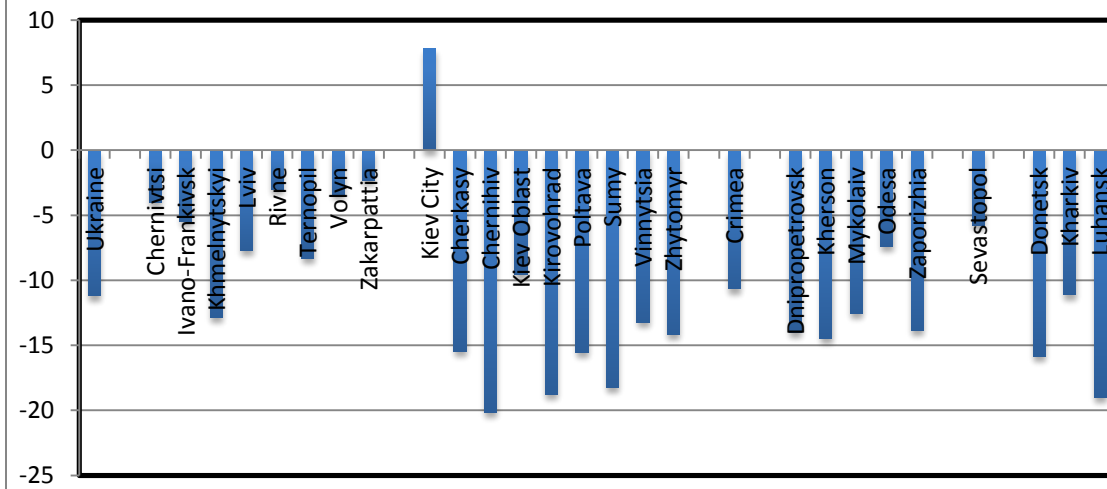
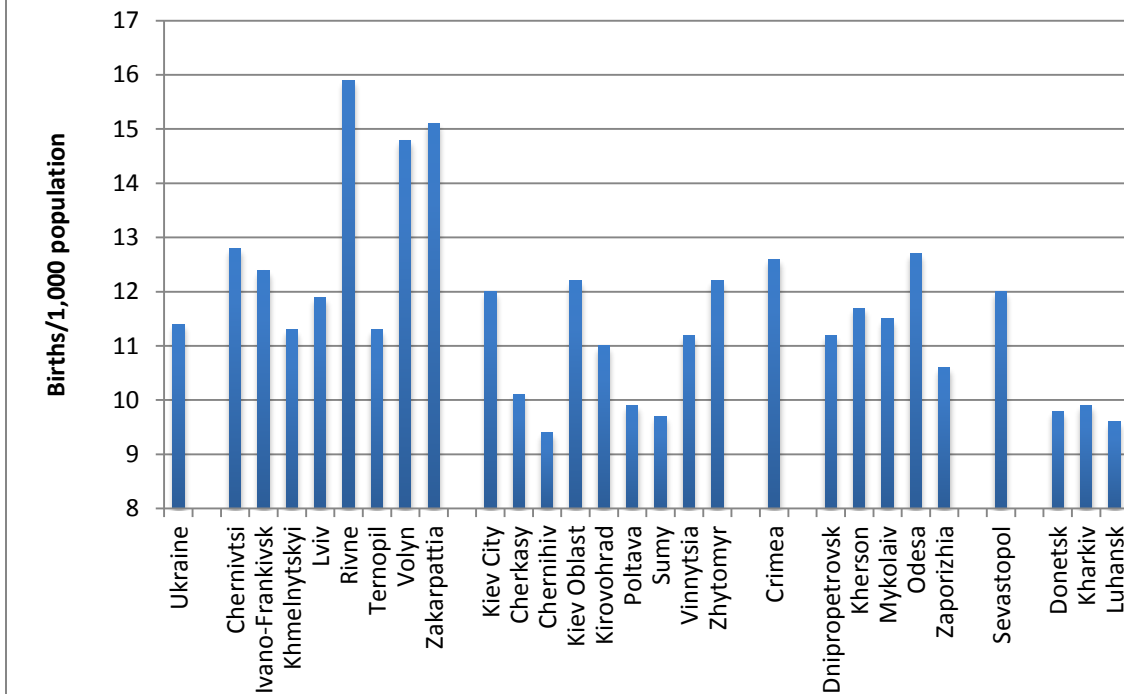
Chart 6. Percent change in population, 1996-2013**Chart 7. Birth rates by region, 2012**

Chart 8. Death rates by region, 2012

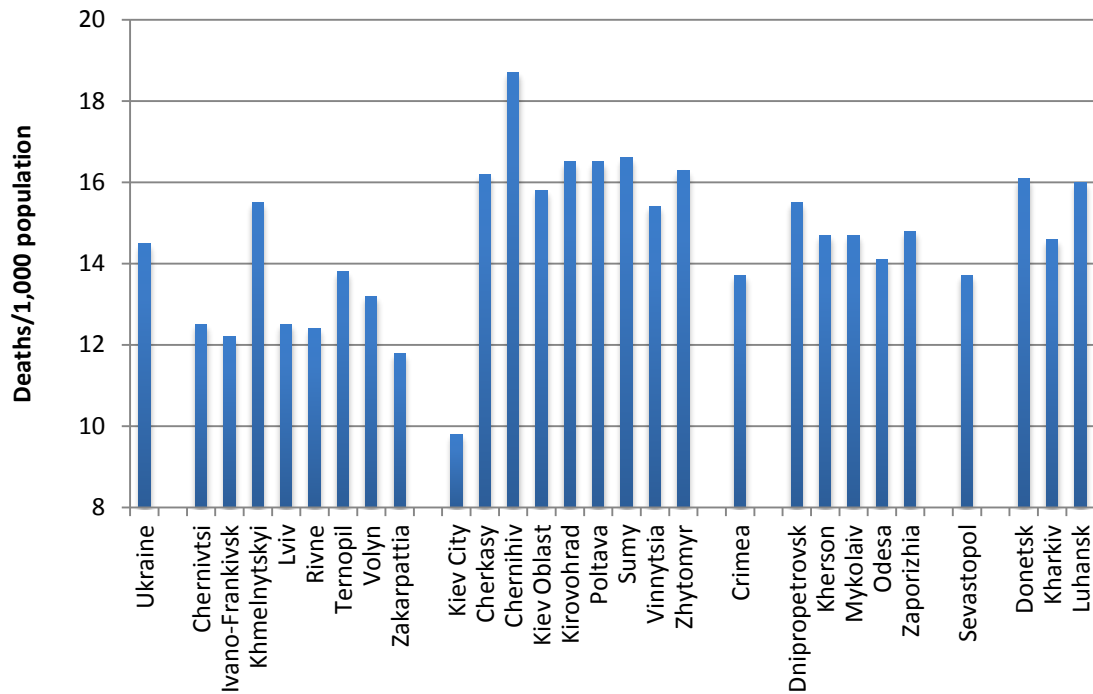


Chart 9. Natural population increase/decrease, 2012

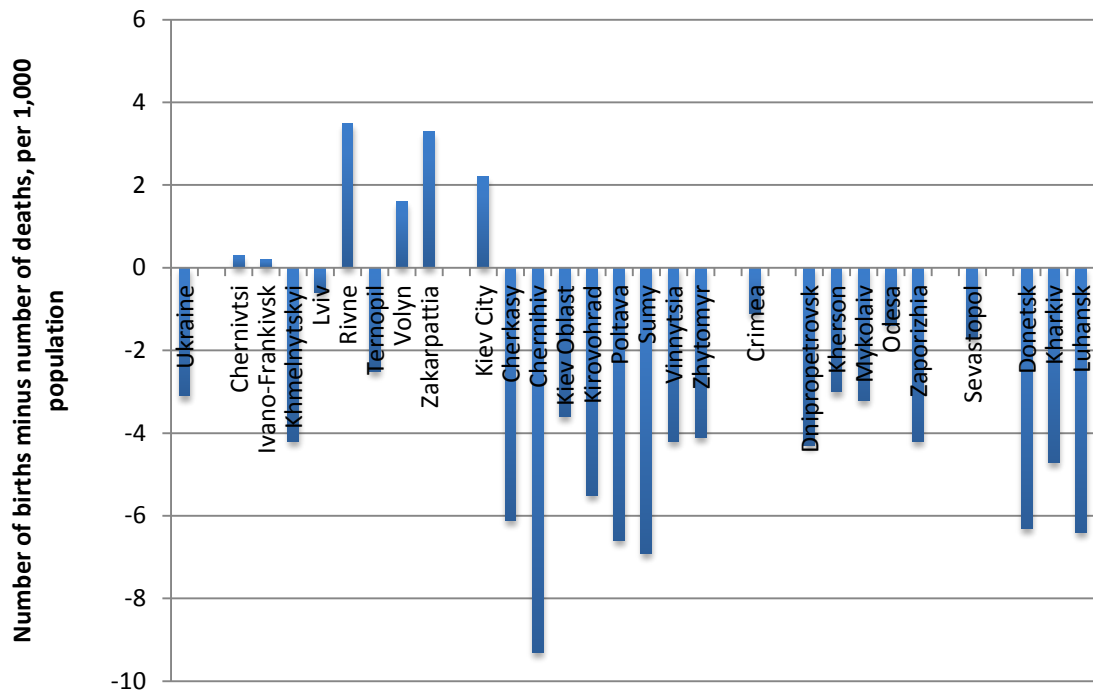


Chart 10. Pensioners by region, 2013

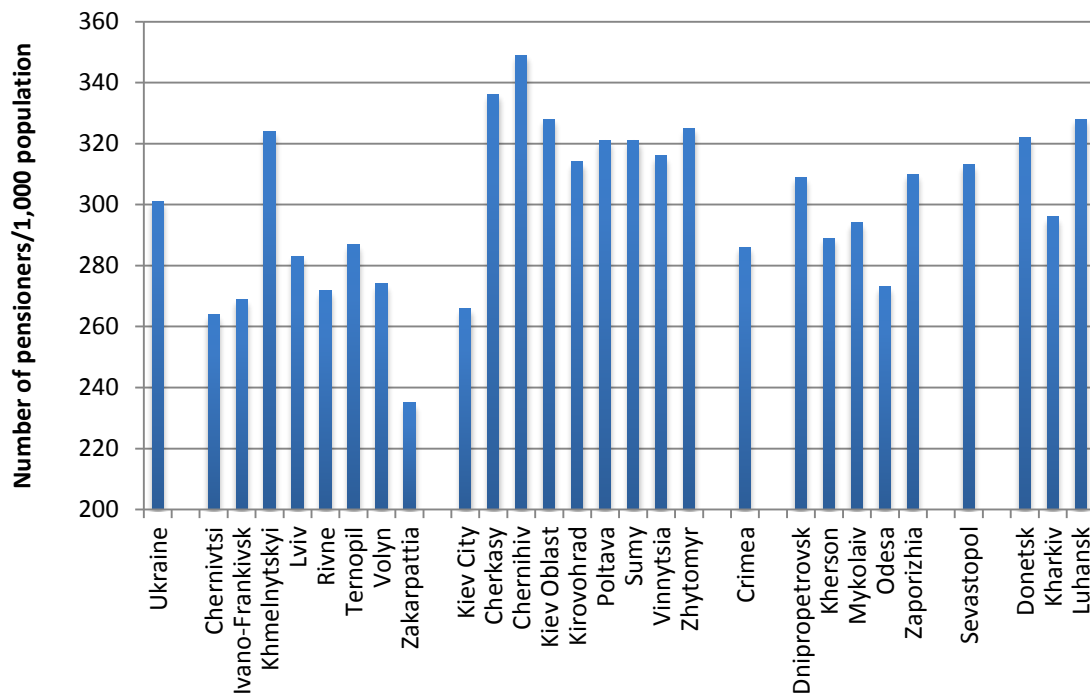


Chart 11. HIV prevalence by region, 2012

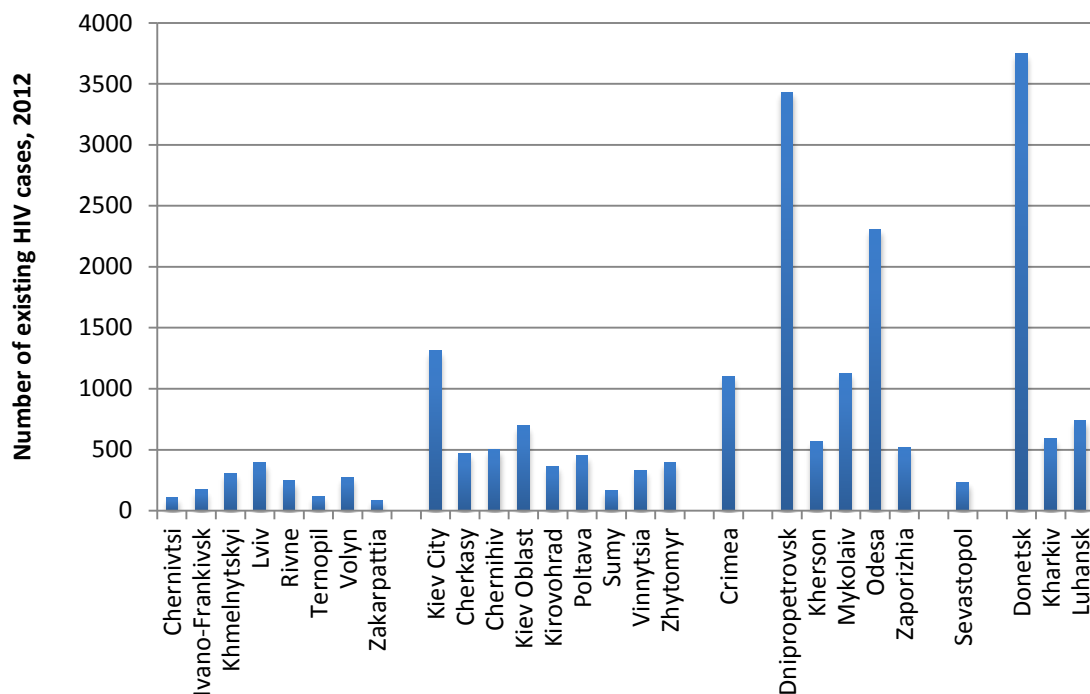
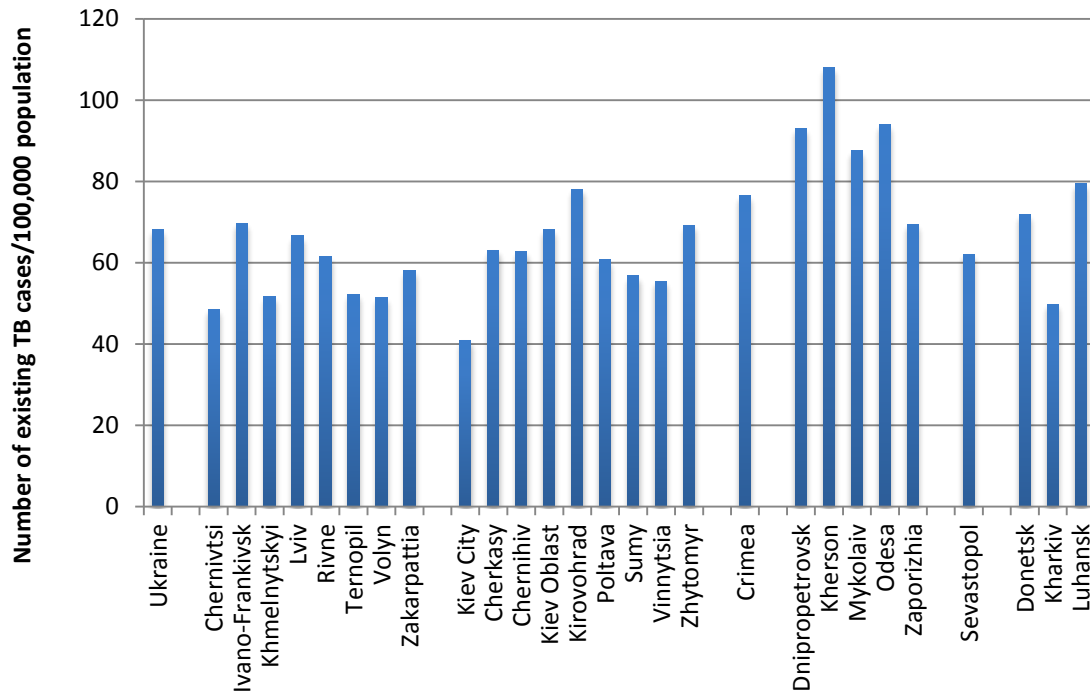
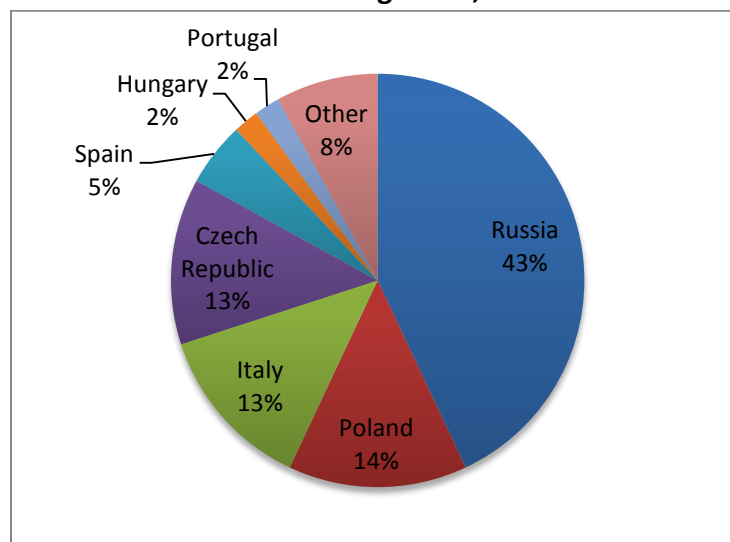


Chart 12. Tuberculosis prevalence by region, 2012**Chart 13. Main destination countries for Ukrainian labor migration, 2010-2012**

Upgrading Russia's Quasi-Strategic Pseudo-Partnership with China

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 337

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The fast-evolving Ukraine crisis has involved such high stakes and demanded so much attention from Russia's leadership that it has become the decisive force shaping the country's future. It has set this oversized incoherent state on a volatile trajectory heading (if in non-linear fashion) toward major disaster. Many Russian political elites understand that confrontation with the West is beyond their country's economic might and is detrimental to its modernization. But this confrontation has become a necessary condition for the survival of the corrupt non-democratic regime that has matured under President Vladimir Putin.

The only strategy available to him for sustaining Russia's stance and avoiding international isolation is to strengthen Russia's ties with China. This strategy, however, is loaded with complications and risks.

Neither Trust nor Chemistry

The term "strategic partnership" is too loose a term to encapsulate the relations between Russia and China. Putin recently has even talked about a Russian "strategic partnership" with Argentina. Foreign policy analyst Bobo Lo has termed the relationship an "axis of convenience," but Russian-Chinese security ties are not so rigid as to constitute an axis and the utility of these ties is seen in Moscow more as a last resort than a convenience.

Nonetheless, the Ukraine crisis has left a deep imprint on this insincere and deeply asymmetric relationship. Having entered into confrontation with the West, Russia has become dependent upon China's political support. Putin long entertained the idea of upgrading Russia's not-quite-alliance with China – but necessarily on an equal footing. Now, he has to prove Russia's value as a special partner to China and to reciprocate for every badly-needed and reluctantly given sign of benevolence.

What makes this task especially hard is the Russian leadership's inability to build a trust-based rapport with the Chinese leadership. For Putin, the Chinese method of leadership rotation is a nonsensical kind of self-decapitation, while for Xi Jinping, Putin

probably exemplifies the unhealthy egocentrism of a self-styled “irreplaceable leader.” The Chinese leadership has every reason to see Putin’s opportunistic seizure of Crimea as a reckless land grab, uninformed by strategic vision or a sober risk assessment, which ultimately delivered him into a tight political corner offering only bad choices. That said, China did not fully spell out its disapproval, considering that Russia’s recklessness challenged international norms so blatantly it gave China space to maneuver more forcefully in its own disputed zones.

Putin’s eagerness to take a stance against U.S. “hegemonism” and to decry Western values used to be convenient for China, making it possible to avoid drawing attention to its own gradually strengthening revisionism. This was especially evident at the height of the Syrian crisis, when Moscow exposed itself to severe reproach (while taking credit for the initiative that prevented U.S.-led strikes). The Ukrainian calamity, however, took Russia’s self-aggrandizement a step too far. Putin blundered into a confrontation he has no chance of winning. Supporting a loser is not an attractive proposition for the carefully calculating Beijing.

Gas Matters, But Only So Much

The central element of Putin’s plan to upgrade relations with China is to make the latter a major customer for Russian hydrocarbons. The new gas deal signed in May 2014 was an important step toward this end, but it is by no means the breakthrough the Kremlin imagined. While the gas contract was conceptualized in Moscow primarily as a geopolitical coup, in Beijing it was discussed exclusively in business terms. For Russia, the development of greenfields in eastern Siberia is hugely important, while for China the planned production would not constitute even one percent of its total estimated primary energy consumption in 2025. Meanwhile, Turkmenistan increased its gas exports to China this year to about 25 billion cubic meters (bcm) and aims for 65 bcm by 2020, about twice the most optimistic estimates for Russia’s export volumes.

The feasibility of the deal remains a major issue, but China has no control over its implementation (unlike its deal with Turkmenistan). Gazprom will not need modern technology for this fairly traditional construction project, but the supply of pipes may become a problem, as was the case in the late 1970s. The collapse of the South Stream pipeline project across the Black Sea, which never made economic sense and has now fallen victim to the Ukraine crisis, may serve as an incentive to quickly lay down the new pipe. Still, the politicization of the project in Russia goes hand-in-hand with graft and embezzlement. Chinese entrepreneurs know how to operate in a quasi-market environment but corruption is increasingly severely prosecuted in China, while in Russia corruption constitutes a fundamental premise of Gazprom’s business culture. China Gas holds no illusions about Gazprom’s efficiency and operational costs and cannot realistically expect the first delivery of gas before 2020, far beyond the current political horizon.

The undisclosed parameters of the arrangement have been assessed in different quarters, but the main point that is often obscured is that Putin got a better deal than he had any right to expect. The bargaining had continued for more than a decade, and Putin arrived in Shanghai in the worst negotiating position he had ever been in. The escalation of the Ukraine crisis made him desperate to strike a deal with China to escape international isolation. However, Beijing refrained from exploiting that weakness to maximum effect. China Gas got Gazprom to drop its “take-or-pay” condition, but it agreed to pay an advance (as high as \$25 billion) without receiving any material stake in Russian upstream projects.

By agreeing to the long-contested oil-based price formula, Chinese negotiators may have sought to secure the project’s profitability in Russia, suspecting that the deal might otherwise collapse whatever its strategic importance. To help explain China’s decision to go forward with the deal, observers also frequently cite Beijing’s desire to replace coal with natural gas in China’s energy balance. Finally, we can speculate that Beijing would in fact like to help prop up Putin’s regime; the failure of this ineffectual but irreplaceable regime could involve risks similar to those narrowly avoided in the course of the collapse of the USSR, and the lessons from that spectacular implosion are examined very carefully by the Chinese leadership.

Russia Wanders into an East Asian Sea of Troubles

The most problematic angle of the newly-strengthened quasi-alliance between Russia and China pertains to the escalation of geopolitical tensions in East Asia, in particular to the complex clashes of interests surrounding the region’s numerous maritime conflicts. It may be just a coincidence that tensions spiked in several of these conflicts at the same time as the Ukraine crisis, but China has definitely been reviving old quarrels around islets and shoals richer in symbolism than in hydrocarbons.

Russia has sought simultaneously to hold a position of absolute neutrality toward the emotional claims and counter-claims surrounding these disputed territories and to show a capacity to play its own games according to the rules of brinksmanship. It is even possible to argue that Russia has deliberately escalated its territorial dispute with Japan, centered on the three South Kuril islands (and a cluster of rocks), in order to demonstrate that it is a major party in the regional balance of forces and ready to rely on military force to protect its interests. Presently, however, both the reliability of this force and the sustainability of this neutrality are diminishing.

Up to the impromptu annexation of Crimea, Moscow had sought to preserve its freedom of maneuver and to avoid any dependency on China that could compromise this freedom. For that matter, in “strategizing” its eastward oil exports, Putin made sure that even if China were prepared to import all the oil it could carry, the East Siberia-Pacific

Ocean (ESPO) pipeline would go not only to Daqing, China, but also to the Kozmino terminal on the Russian Pacific coast. Now, however, the space for maneuvering has sharply narrowed, and Rosneft will channel as much oil as it possibly can toward its Chinese customers, so that Russia to all intents and purposes will become a one-dimensional exporter to this complex regional market.

Russia's political dependency on China is far higher than even the volume of exported and contracted hydrocarbons suggests. Beijing does not need expressions of "solidarity" from Moscow concerning its own territorial claims or actions, but it could politely suggest that Russia curtail its military cooperation with Vietnam or postpone oil and gas exploration in Vietnamese territorial waters. If so, the Kremlin would have to treat such a suggestion as an offer it can't refuse. This subordinate position is aggravated by Russia's growing fixation on confronting the United States (which it sees not only as a hegemon-in-decline but also as the main sponsor of "color revolutions" that it defines as a new form of warfare). Moscow tends to see every U.S. move in the Asia-Pacific as a hostile action that needs countering, but Beijing does not necessarily share such a simplistic view and has a low opinion about Russia's capacity for engaging in such counterbalancing.

What worries Russia the most are the prospects of an assertive Chinese policy in the Arctic. Russia's long-cherished plans to expand its internationally-recognized territorial shelf lie in shambles, while Beijing is advancing a discourse of the Arctic as a "global commons," something that is anathema for Moscow. Having introduced newly strict rules for navigating the Northern Sea Route, Russia has launched a program to increase its military presence in the High North, focusing particularly on the eastern part of this lengthy strategic transit route. The sustainability of this effort, however, remains highly uncertain.

Conclusion: Too Close for Comfort?

Russia wants a political and economic partnership with China, but its newly rigid confrontation with the West has caused the Kremlin to rely more heavily on Beijing's support and goodwill than it would like. The parameters of the gas deal are better than might be expected given Russia's desperate situation, but the deal still makes little if any economic sense and consolidates its dependency.

Russia's "pivot to the East," initially discussed in the context of the 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok, is a sound notion, but it requires sustained investment in the development of the Far East and a shift of political attention to Asia-Pacific matters. Presently, the Ukraine crisis has demanded a heavy concentration of Russian investment in and attention to the "Western theater," which not only limits its "pivot" to China but also de-prioritizes it when it comes to allocating resources. Much the same way as energy export to China is conceptualized as a re-orientation from the European market

(even if, in real terms, it is not), the upgrade of Russia's "strategic partnership" with China is portrayed as a counterbalance to Western pressure and a guarantee against international isolation. In reality, it puts Russia in a vulnerable geopolitical position and exposes it to risks that it is not prepared to manage.

Despite all the superficial cordiality, Putin is not really able to connect with the Chinese leadership on a personal level and has no clue about their real intentions and motivations. This cultural gap is deepened by Russia's inability to channel its export of corruption into this rich but particular market. The variety of semi-legal schemes that connects Putin's elites with the European financial system and generates "friendly" lobbies of various interest groups does not work in China.

Russia's deep-seated concerns about China's expansionist ambitions and appetite for resources have not evaporated. They continue to interact with, rather than be replaced by, fears of NATO "encirclement" and U.S.-backed "color revolutions." What Russian elites have to remember is that while Beijing may lend some support to the Putin regime, it will not hesitate to exploit Russia's moment of weakness when its rotten vertical of power finally collapses.

Natural Gas and the Ukraine Crisis

FROM REALPOLITIK TO NETWORK DIPLOMACY

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 338

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The current crisis in Ukraine has again foisted natural gas diplomacy to the fore of great power politics. Many view the gas weapon as Moscow's continuing trump card for coercing Kyiv with impunity and keeping Europe at bay. As was the case during the 2006 and 2009 gas wars, the asymmetric trading relationships and state control over the Russian gas monopoly, Gazprom, seem to present Vladimir Putin's regime with an effective resource nationalist stranglehold to advance a broad neo-imperial agenda. Concerns range from Moscow laying claim to energy fields off the coast of Crimea, to exerting pressure on rival Eurasian energy suppliers, to subverting European Union governance by manipulating splits among unevenly dependent member state consumers, to playing off Europe and Asia with construction of the Russia-China gas pipeline, to exploiting transatlantic differences more generally in a run-up to Cold War 2.0.

Others, however, view the tectonic shift in the global gas landscape—capped by burgeoning liquefied natural gas (LNG) trading, changing political geography of supply and demand, and booming unconventional production in North America—as facilitating more aggressive responses to Russia. Sensing that Moscow now has the most to lose by a gas showdown and shrunken energy rents amid an already listing economy, Western pundits and policymakers herald the strategic merits of slapping comprehensive sanctions on Russia's energy sector, fast-tracking U.S. LNG exports, forging European collective purchasing power, diversifying import routes and suppliers, and accelerating non-fossil fuel economies to free Europe from Russia's steel umbilical cord. Major Western energy companies and their political patrons are castigated for lacking national fortitude and indulging parochial interests by signing follow-on ventures with Gazprom and keeping alive the South Stream pipeline that would circumvent Ukraine to deliver larger volumes to Europe. Similarly, failure to redress a widening gap between these emerging market realities and current policy inertia supposedly dooms the West to self-defeating and feckless diplomacy toward Russia. Buoyed by the apparent success of oil sanctions at bringing Iran to the bargaining table on nuclear issues and appalled by Moscow's callousness following the tragic downing of flight MH-17, a broad consensus among U.S. and European

policymakers is coalescing to support a *realpolitik* corrective that includes ratcheting up coercive pressure on Russia's energy sector.

Yet, there are two core problems with these opposing narratives. First, the current crisis is distinguished by restraint on all sides. Unlike the episodes in 2006 and 2009, Russian gas deliveries to Ukraine and transit to European markets were not arbitrarily disrupted at the apogee of the recent political conflict. Gas continued to flow through mid-June 2014, notwithstanding the annexation of Crimea, the unraveling of political authority in Ukraine, and the flow of pro-Russian fighters and weapons across the border. The cut-off eventually imposed by Russia occurred after negotiations began and substantive differences narrowed, and (to date) without causing supply shortfalls in Europe. This suggests greater resilience, if not potential for accommodation, on gas issues than acknowledged by either side of the debate.

Second, fixation on new production and changing global gas flows overlooks the geopolitical significance of an emerging Eurasian gas network. This transformation is remaking influence, vulnerability, and stability in transnational relations at the national and corporate levels. If embraced, this could afford new opportunities for Western leaders to coordinate and sustain pressure on Russia while offering possible off-ramps for future engagement.

Is a Gas War a Gas War?

Physical disruptions in Russia's gas supply to Ukraine and Europe have been seemingly overdetermined, given Kyiv's vulnerability owing to dependence (up to 60-80 percent) on subsidized imports from Russia; Ukraine's position to hold up transit of Gazprom's deliveries (50-80 percent) to Europe and Europe's willingness to construct new pipelines that bypass Ukraine while deepening its co-dependency on Russian gas (30 percent of EU imports). Soviet legacy pipelines, which lack the disciplinary focus on recouping returns on investment, and pervasive domestic institutional and regulatory opacity stoke non-commercial risk-taking and credible commitment problems in contracting for all related stakeholders.

Yet, the bargaining contexts have varied considerably between these gas wars. In 2006 and 2009 the stakes were primarily commercial with political undertones. This time around, disputes over gas prices, volumes, and rents have taken a back seat to issues of national sovereignty, regime survival, territorial integrity, and strategic orientation in what has devolved into the gravest confrontation between Moscow, Ukraine, and the West since the Cold War. Furthermore, Gazprom arguably enjoyed more of a free hand to deal assertively with Kyiv and insulate itself from European blowback in the lead up to the current crisis, owing to the drop in revenues from EU sales and the opening of the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany.

For all the clamoring about gas as a potent instrument of foreign policy, and in contrast to the showdowns in 2006 and 2009, none of the central players rashly escalated the current gas conflict. Russia's resurgence and penchant for predatory pipeline politics notwithstanding, Moscow refrained from precipitously shutting off supply or coercing an increasingly indebted and enfeebled leadership in Kyiv into conceding equity stakes in Ukraine's national gas company. The Kremlin confined its early energy diplomacy to extending (and then not renewing) price discounts, while repeatedly softening ultimatums issued by Gazprom through the election of a new Ukrainian president. Even as it cut off direct supply to Ukraine in mid-June 2014 and demanded repayment of Ukraine's accumulating gas debt and pre-payment for future deliveries, Moscow offered binding price discounts via lowered export duties for the duration of a future contract.

Similarly, neither the embattled interim or newly elected governments in Kyiv nor diverse non-state actors (such as organized criminal elements, regional oligarchs, or corrupt officials) with opportunity to step into the widening power vacuum across Ukraine arbitrarily disrupted transit of Russian gas to Europe, even as their options narrowed and stakes mounted. Although Kyiv fell deeper into arrears, unilaterally abrogated the "take-or-pay" terms of the standing contract with Gazprom, faced direct cutoffs, and balked at Moscow's calculation for settling the debt and demands for pre-payments, it did not openly exploit Russia's dependency on European markets by withholding transit throughput. Like Moscow, it too has been willing to negotiate new prices and settle grievances either in or out of international court.

Restraint also has characterized the Western response. As Washington and Brussels struggled early on to demonstrate resolve and tighten sanctions on Kremlin cronies, they purposefully avoided boycotting key Russian energy interests at an otherwise propitious moment when spring was coming, storage facilities were flush, demand was decreasing, and supply options were expanding. Even after Russian gas was shut off to Kyiv and tempers flared over the escalation of military offensives and civilian casualties in pro-Russian rebel-held territory, the harsher measures imposed by the United States and the EU at the end of July still shied away from wider "sectoral sanctions" and mostly spared Russia's gas industry.

Often overlooked is that energy ties deepened from fall 2013 through spring 2014. While Russian gas supplies to Europe reached historical highs by the end of 2013, Ukraine received temporary energy discounts and advanced payment of transit fees through 2014. European companies, too, finalized international equity swaps and joint commercial ventures with Gazprom and other Russian energy companies just as Washington and Brussels imposed asset freezes, visa bans, and targeted sanctions. This mixed bag of gas diplomacy poses problems for contending *realpolitik* and interdependence paradigms that warrant closer attention to the changing regional gas landscape.

An Emerging Eurasian Gas Network

While it is premature to unpack decision making in the current crisis, a distinguishing feature is that events are unfolding as multiple pipeline and LNG import facilities, interconnectors and reverse flow options, new gas storage facilities, and a deepening of cross-border commercial ties are converging to constitute a Europe-Eurasian gas network. This increasingly dense infrastructure is marked by the interaction of mature and new hubs where gas is produced, traded, and re-routed to various locations of demand across Europe. The integration of these hubs that receive piped gas from Russia and other Eurasian suppliers, import and distribute LNG, and concentrate vertical integration with other power and transportation sectors effectively reduces the exclusivity and average path length of exchanges, as well as creates opportunities for brokerage between old and new upstream and downstream partners. The result is to add flexibility, resilience, and competition to intra-network gas markets. These trends are reinforced by well-established, strong, and cross-cutting political and corporate-level relationships between these hubs. The latter constitute the grist for building trust and securing access to energy markets and resources across the network that transcend different company ownership types and formal institutional and regulatory voids at national and EU levels.

Notwithstanding the blows to Gazprom's monopoly position, Russia will be a supply anchor within this network for the foreseeable future. With knife-edged differences among competitors in the global economy, European utilities, firms, and states are acutely sensitive to fluctuations in price. Soviet legacy investment, production, and large-diameter cross-border pipelines effectively reduce actual production and delivery costs, ensuring Gazprom suitable margins for delivering gas to Europe in comparison to the building of rival pipelines from Central Asia or covering high LNG break-even costs. But the daunting financial and technical challenges of bringing new Russian fields online, coupled with the diversity of supply, burgeoning intra-regional trade, and uncertainty of EU demand, are dampening Moscow's ability to strong-arm downstream customers, especially as long-term supply contracting turns on future expectations.

The emergence of satellite hubs within the EU also creates opportunity for incremental competition with Russian imports. The Baltic states and Poland, for example, constitute a North-Central European hub with development of related LNG facilities and interconnectors southward. Slovakia is becoming another important hub for alleviating pressure within the network, as it is the EU member best situated to "reverse" the flow of gas to Ukraine, plug into Hungary's gas grid, and link up to a newly constructed Polish LNG plant and connectors to Polish and the Czech transmission systems (as well as the burgeoning Southern Corridor for delivering Caspian gas).

The Ukraine crisis has further illuminated the intensity of inter-state corporate ties between European and Russian gas entities. Leading energy companies across Europe –

obliged to earn profits for their shareholders—rely increasingly on long-standing and trusted business partnerships with Gazprom and their experience of reliable supply to navigate the uncertainty of the changing landscape. As international tensions mounted and sanctions were imposed, some of these largest multinational energy stakeholders “doubled down” on gas investments, staved off more stringent restrictions on existing projects, and forged closer business ties with Gazprom.

The transformation from predominantly point-to-point pipelines to a regional gas network is changing the dimensions of dependence, accentuating both market constraints on unilateral supply disruptions and indirect opportunities for political gamesmanship. Paradoxically, this network constrains Russia’s market power while preserving its salience as a valued commercial partner. At the same time, it is giving rise to new hubs and clusters of trading that are dampening incentives for discretionary coercive behavior while discouraging defection from established transnational business ties.

Recommendations

Failure to appreciate this widespread restraint and the changing European gas system that render dyadic Cold War paradigms anachronistic is strategically counter-productive. It is a recipe for uniformly escalating mutual pain, encouraging evasive counter-measures, and fueling the Kremlin’s resolve. Instead, a network perspective on gas suggests new directions for pursuing a more nuanced, coordinated, and market-friendly grand strategy aimed at changing the situation “above ground,” and bolstering Western resilience at ramping up pressure on Moscow while leaving open the possibility of future constructive engagement with Russia.

With tighter sanctions already in place, the focus for Western policymakers moving forward should be on damage control that accentuates the density of the emerging European gas network. Promoting transparency and market reforms, as well as introducing targeted tax breaks and favorable lending terms and guarantees, should be the guiding principles. This could allow Western governments to accelerate investment directly in the construction and integration of the gas infrastructure and facilitate price correlation across European hubs that the ongoing recession and market itself may be slow to deliver. This also can strategically attract the Western investment redirected from the sanctions and Moscow’s retaliation to bolster inter-regional flows and price efficiency for spot market trading. Rather than confront the strong ties—both among emerging European hubs and Moscow and among Western and Russian firms—with even harsher sanctions, officials in Washington and across the EU should embrace market trends by promoting diversified and competitively priced deliveries both into and within the European gas network.

Western policymakers also would be wise to signal energy options for incrementally defusing the current political crisis, making clear that the door will be open for engaging commercially competitive Russian gas interests as tensions ease. This could include reaching out to Russia's rising gas independents to extend reciprocal influence forged out of historical relationships working with Moscow. Down the road, different Russian firms and their local partners/subsidiaries could be invited to join in the development of diversity via new storage facilities, decoupled pricing, access to transmission lines, and shale exploration. This could limit Gazprom's room to maneuver while increasing the standing of new Russian stakeholders in gas-on-gas competition across the continent. It also could facilitate, on the margins, the tough decisions needed in Moscow to return to pre-crisis liberalization of the gas industry at home. As such and amid the bitter acrimony and scars of post-Soviet conflict—energy and otherwise—the deepening regional gas network affords opportunity to demonstrate goodwill and re-ground pragmatic transatlantic-Russian relations moving forward.

Unable to Lead, Reluctant to Follow

RUSSIAN, CHINESE, AND INDIAN APPROACHES TO BALANCING AND BANDWAGONING WITH THE WEST

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 334

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Despite increased uncertainty about the economic prospects of Russia, India, and China (RIC), these countries continue to attract significant attention as potential sources of concerted counterbalancing postures vis-à-vis the developed world. Ideas about creating an informal grouping—RIC—to coordinate foreign policies have been on the table since the late 1990s.² All three prospective members have been positioning themselves as aspiring nations capable of sustaining economic growth without excessive dependence on developed states. However, relations along the three sides of the imagined China-Russia-India triangle have proven uneven. Moscow has touted its “strategic partnership” with Beijing (dating from their 2001 Friendship Treaty), and there are sizeable Chinese investments in the Russian energy sector. China has also engaged economically with India, but China-India ties have not been as close as they need to be for RIC to graduate into a full-fledged multilateral consultation forum. Defying expectations, the three states have not been issuing joint high-profile declarations highlighting their unity or aligning views to facilitate coordination on pressing issues of global relevance.

The main structural reason for this lack of cohesion is that RIC is composed of states that do not have enough allure and resources to play a global leadership role but are reluctant to follow any other powers aspiring to such a role. The RIC states do not champion attractive global agendas, their foreign policy aspirations being focused mainly on their respective neighborhoods. At the same time, the RIC states cherish their freedom of maneuver on the world stage and refrain from committing to firm rules of

¹ The views expressed here are solely those of the author and not those of MGIMO or the MacArthur Foundation.

² In the 2000s, RIC countries along with Brazil and South Africa formed BRICS—a more formalized grouping which has been holding annual summits since 2009 and contemplating far-reaching projects, such as the establishment of a development bank to rival the Bretton Woods institutions. However, while adding certain weight and legitimacy to the RIC’s bid for recognition as a global force to be reckoned with, Brazil and South Africa do not add much to the group’s distinct message to the world. Therefore, for the sake of brevity, the positioning of the group of “aspiring nations” vis-à-vis the developed world is analyzed in this paper only through the prism of Chinese, Russian, and Indian approaches.

alliance behavior—at least in the long term—if the alliance involves a peer nation and, particularly, the United States.

Pursuing their largely parochial interests, RIC states have for the most part hedged their bets when engaging in balancing behavior vis-à-vis the United States and its allies. In the course of the Ukraine conflict, however, Russia has tried to galvanize global anti-U.S. grievances and build a much more resolute anti-Western alliance. To date, this has elicited mixed responses by China and India. They have turned Russia's anti-Western bid to their own economic advantage, while avoiding picking sides in the dispute over Ukraine and refraining from conspicuously adversarial moves vis-à-vis the United States.

Responding to the West

Over a number of years, the RIC states have felt challenged by the West in a number of areas, including technology, conflict management, and international policy doctrine innovation. The technology challenge stems from Western development of high-precision weapons, potential space weapons, and prospective missile defenses. The conflict management challenge derives from the proclivity of the West to take sides in internal conflicts and support a party that one or another RIC state may not wish to win. The RIC states are also discomforted by developments in the field of international policy doctrine, whereby the West has been promoting the notion of solidarity with suffering populations of foreign states and the international community's purported responsibility to protect. Mainstream international affairs analysts in Moscow, Beijing, and New Delhi consider humanitarian concerns to be a smokescreen for action aimed at achieving "geopolitical advantage," securing access to "strategic resources," or installing "externally-controlled" governments in "strategically important" states.

Over the past two decades, China, Russia, and India have been reacting to these and other challenges in at least four different ways:

- undertaking asymmetric measures to offset the West's advantage;
- seeking to impose legal constraints on the undesired trend;
- trying to match (or mirror) Western technologies and doctrines; and
- cooperating with the West in a given area of concern.

For example, Russia has been responding *asymmetrically* to the perceived threat that U.S. missile defenses pose to the viability of Russia's strategic deterrent by upgrading its mobile strategic nuclear missiles, a capability least susceptible to a surprise disarming first strike. It is as easy to find examples of asymmetric response to armed U.S. interventions, including Russian diplomatic support and supplies to Bashar Assad's government in Syria and Russian and Chinese attempts to shield Iran from increasingly harsh non-UN sanctions by the United States and its allies.

Western doctrinal innovation—the concepts of solidarism, universal human rights, and “responsibility to protect” in the absence of UN Security Council approval—has also elicited a distinct asymmetric response. At different times, Chinese, Indian, and Russian authorities have taken care to limit the freedom of maneuver of both local and transnational nongovernmental organizations that are commonly viewed by these states as agents of hostile Western influence disguised as the promotion of universal rights or values.

Russia employed the strategy of imposing *legal constraints* on unwanted Western behavior when it sought to counter U.S. advances in high-precision conventional strategic weapons by insisting, during negotiations on the New START Treaty, that intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) armed with conventional warheads should be counted toward general ICBM limits alongside nuclear-tipped carriers.

China and Russia also have a long record of resisting “Western interventionism” through multilateral diplomacy. Both sides have vetoed or threatened to veto UNSC resolutions that opened up avenues for intervention in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Syria. Russia, China and, at times, India have countered Western doctrinal innovation by developing and promoting their own concepts. They have argued that the principle of sovereignty is one of the few powerful stabilizers in world politics, together with a balance of forces that prevents the dangerous “hegemony” of any single state.

As RIC states have grown stronger over the last decade, they have also tried out a number of *symmetrical or matching strategies*, attempting to balance the West by adopting policies that are mirror images of the West’s own. As one countermove to U.S. nascent missile defenses, for example, Moscow announced in 2011 the formation of Russia’s own Space Defense Forces (*Sily voenno-kosmicheskoi oborony*, or VKO) and earmarked for it tens of billions of dollars in funding over the next decade. Russia also claimed to mirror Western interventionism (as in Kosovo) when it engaged in conflicts over Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Crimea and then recognized or annexed them.

Russia also reciprocated Western doctrinal innovation by deploying R2P to justify its claims to Crimea and—potentially—parts of eastern Ukraine. According to the Kremlin, Russian “compatriots” in Crimea and eastern Ukraine were put at risk by the policies of the new Ukrainian authorities that allegedly sought to discriminate against ethnic Russians.

Chart 1. Responses by RIC states to Western Technological, Strategic, and Doctrinal Innovation

		RESPONSE			
		<i>Asymmetric</i>	<i>Legally constraining</i>	<i>Matching strategies</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>
CHALLENGE	<p><i>Advanced military technology:</i></p> <p>Missile defense, high-precision weapons, nuclear weapons, space weapons</p> <p>Non-proliferation regime (India)</p>	<p>Mobile missiles, anti-satellite weapons, new cruise missiles, testing of anti-satellite weapons (China 2007), high-precision anti-ship missiles</p>	<p>Inclusion of conventional weapons into strategic arms limits, proposing a treaty on non-weaponization of outer space</p> <p>Calls (by India) for abolishing nuclear weapons or being integrated into the NPT on a non-discriminatory basis (as a nuclear-weapon state)</p>	<p>Airspace Defense Forces established in Russia, Russia's upgrading of its own conventional weapons, India's development of nuclear weapons while being a NPT non-signatory</p>	<p>India's signing of the 2005 nuclear agreement with the United States, support for global nuclear disarmament initiatives</p>
	<p><i>Conflict management:</i></p> <p>Syria, Libya, Georgia, Kosovo</p>	<p>Arming the incumbent regime in Syria, resistance to the toughening of sanctions against Iran, assigning blame for the post-intervention chaos in Libya to NATO</p>	<p>Vetoing UNSC resolutions authorizing intervention or assistance to opposition in internal conflicts, asserting the indispensability of a UNSC mandate for intervention, proposals for multilateral binding treaties prohibiting the expansion of rival blocs (European Security Charter), attempting to prevent the recognition of Kosovo and enforce strict rules of peacemaking</p>	<p>Russian intervention into conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine, Chinese claims to Taiwan</p>	<p>Russia's brokering of Syria's chemical disarmament, Chinese participation in the anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden</p>
	<p><i>Doctrinal innovation:</i></p> <p>Notions of solidarity, transnational approaches to human rights and R2P, engagement with opposition movements and activists, freedom of states to choose alliances and affiliations</p>	<p>Constraining NGO activity (Russia), restricting foreign funding of NGOs (China, India)</p>	<p>Promoting rival narratives of unconditional respect for sovereignty as the only stabilizer in the international system versus external involvement in any anti-government protest</p> <p>Promoting a "spheres of influence" norm, whereby the interests of regional great powers (China in East and Southeast Asia, Russia in post-Soviet Eurasia, India in South Asia) in their respective regions should be respected by the United States and its allies; regional powers' freedom of action in "their" regions is needed to avoid security dilemmas and maintain stability in the areas around Russia and China. This norm may involve limits on the sovereignty of smaller neighbors, especially freedom to choose their own alliances.</p>	<p>Russia's display of solidarity with "compatriots" in Ukraine and upholding of the principle of self-determination</p>	<p>Russian support for UNSCR 1973 in March 2011 to protect civilians in Libya</p>

The final option for RIC states to respond to Western dominance is *to cooperate with the West*. Such cooperation has never come in the form of consistent bandwagoning but instead has occurred on an ad hoc basis. For example, upon entering the “nuclear club,” India chose to cooperate (to an extent) with the United States by signing a civil nuclear agreement. Russia, for its part, cooperated with the United States and U.S. allies on Syria’s chemical disarmament, at the time considered a step toward defusing the conflict in and around Syria. Together with a few other developing states, China took part in anti-piracy patrols of the waters around the Horn of Africa, a mission that turned out to be an indisputable success of multilateral cooperation.

The overall reaction by a RIC state to a given challenge has sometimes combined all of the above types of response. However, one type has usually been dominant in any state’s response at a given time.

Prospects for Full-Fledged Alliance

Each of the RIC states has hammered out a gamut of responses to Western challenges. Some of their reactions have converged while others have starkly differed. Coordination challenges have resulted from diverging foreign policy agendas as well as each actor’s determination to maintain its freedom of maneuver. Are the existing gaps in RIC perspectives likely to narrow in the wake of the Ukraine crisis? Can Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the subsequent conflict in Ukraine spark a more coordinated RIC response to undesired conflict management and/or doctrinal innovation by the United States and its allies?

Over the last few years, Russia has vacillated between cooperating with the West and countering U.S. positions in post-Soviet Eurasia. Moscow has made several attempts to cooperate with Washington (for example, by the U.S.-Russian “reset” in general, allowing U.S. transit to and from Afghanistan, and putting pressure on Iran). During moments of cooperation, Russia perceived the strengthening of ties with the United States to be a good hedge against potential Chinese expansionism. At the same time, Moscow has increasingly braced for direct confrontation with the United States and its allies and has been eager to test Washington’s resolve on matters of principle. By spring 2014, Russia made it clear that it aspires to nothing less than a major rewrite of the post-Cold War rules of the game—at least as applied to Russia’s neighborhood. Russia has directed its strongest objections against the norm allowing smaller states to choose their alliances regardless of Russian security or economic concerns. Talk of a “divided nation” and the bid to protect “compatriots” anywhere in the world coupled with military force have represented a dramatic move against the status quo that the West is inclined to protect.

For Russia’s Ukraine gambit to succeed, a broadening coalition of states determined to balance the United States is essential. Lukewarm support or friendly neutrality of the

other two RIC states is better than criticism, but it is likely not enough to force the United States to honor Moscow's demands.

China is prepared to extend a financial lifeline to Russia by underwriting lucrative projects, such as the Power of Siberia pipeline. The May 2014 agreement on natural gas supplies through this yet-to-be-built pipeline implies an immediate disbursement of \$25 billion in cash—an important one-time infusion into Russia's slowing economy.

But at the diplomatic and military level, China is not prepared to escalate tensions with the United States beyond the point that the overall U.S.-China relationship would be jeopardized. Rather than support Moscow, Beijing abstained from UN Security Council and General Assembly votes in March 2014 on resolutions to condemn Russian actions in Crimea. Having signed the gas deal with Gazprom, Beijing proceeded to conduct joint naval maneuvers with the United States in July 2014 despite increased tensions between China and some U.S. allies in Asia.

For the moment, China is not demanding a major overhaul of the rules of the game in Eurasia or globally. Beijing only seeks to provide an asymmetric response to U.S. power in adjacent regions of the Pacific and incrementally push the boundaries of international, especially maritime, law. China's claims do not explicitly include the right to protect ethnic Chinese minorities in neighboring states or deny those states membership in U.S.-led trade or security blocs. While China at times has coordinated a balancing act with Russia against the United States and its allies, such opposition has not been as much a "matter of principle" for Beijing as it has been for Moscow. To see that, one only needs to compare the rhetoric of Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping.

Like China, India refrained from condemning Russia for the annexation of Crimea. New Delhi is also opposed to the idea of Western sanctions. As the United States and the European Union began imposing sanctions on Russia early in 2014, India distanced itself from the West on the issue. India also clearly values its arms trade with Russia as well as access to Russian nuclear technologies. There are almost no contradictions between India and Russia on significant international issues.

However, New Delhi rejects territorial annexations in principle and does not agree with Russia's key assertion that U.S. interventions in the former Yugoslavia or Iraq legitimize interventionist policies by other players. In spring 2014, India most likely expressed concern to Moscow through diplomatic channels about any potential plans to intervene in eastern Ukraine. India is even less inclined than China to demand a rewrite of the international "rules of the game"—with the exception of those governing nonproliferation. Reportedly, New Delhi's main concern during the Crimea crisis was that China would feel emboldened to "expand its sphere of influence" at India's expense, as one Indian observer put it.

As a result, New Delhi does not feel hard-pressed to extend even symbolic support to Moscow beyond what the Indians feel to be appropriate. In addition, India's foreign policymaking capacity remains notoriously limited, which prevents New Delhi from engaging in risky international maneuvers that usually require plenty of intellectual and material resources to succeed.

Still, at the July 2014 BRICS summit, both India and China, along with Brazil and South Africa, joined Russia in issuing a declaration condemning "unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of international law" and attempts at "strengthen[ing] [one state's] security at the expense of the security of others." Contrary to its apparent relevance, the declaration was naturally not a reference to Russia's position on Crimea or the conflict in Ukraine. It was directed against the United States and U.S.-led alliances.

Conclusion

The prospects for RIC states to engage in ambitious multilateral security cooperation aimed at counterbalancing Western power, particularly in the context of the Ukraine conflict, appear limited. While China and Russia have occasionally coalesced to oppose various U.S. policies, India has been unwilling and unable to consistently challenge the developed nations in the security realm. Moscow and Beijing will continue to jointly promote legal constraints on U.S. power and leadership in multilateral fora, the United Nations and its agencies first and foremost. However, due to differences in their counterbalancing tactics, a united front of RIC (let alone BRICS) states ready to take on the United States and its allies around the globe is not likely to emerge out of the Ukraine crisis.

The “Power of Siberia”

NO LONGER A PIPE DREAM

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 332

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After two decades of discussion, China and Russia finally agreed this year to share the \$77 billion cost of building the “Power of Siberia” gas pipeline from Russia to China. On May 21, 2014, the two countries signed a \$400 billion deal to ship 38 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas to China beginning in 2018. Although the timing of the long-awaited gas pipeline agreement from Russia to China highlighted the changed geopolitical context in the midst of the Ukrainian crisis, this was not what broke the deadlock between the two countries over pricing, routing, and upstream investments. The drivers were largely economic, though there are important geopolitical consequences.

Russia’s position: Russia initially hoped to build the pipeline from the Altai region to western China, thereby enabling Russia to supply China from the same fields in Western Siberia that provide gas to Western Europe. Russia could then play the role of “swing producer” and acquire maximum political and economic leverage in adjusting gas flows between Europe and Asia. Russia also demanded the same price that Europeans paid for gas, which is higher than what China now pays Turkmenistan.

China’s position: China insisted on a Siberian routing to Northeast China. China already has a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Xinjiang in western China and needs the gas more urgently in its populous and developed eastern provinces. To ensure security of supply, China wanted its own dedicated source of gas from eastern Siberia, not one shared with Europe. As Keun-Wook Paik observed in the *Oxford Energy Forum*, the “Chinese planners did not want to be blamed for ‘robbing’ the Europeans of their gas....” Moreover, Chinese energy companies have to make up for their losses on the domestic market (where price controls remain in force) through upstream investments. Consequently, China sought as low a price as possible to minimize domestic losses and hoped for upstream investment opportunities.

Russia and China were able to narrow their differences because of changes in both countries, as well as in European and Asian gas markets. New leadership in both countries gave new impetus to the long-stalled talks. In 2013, during Chinese President Xi Jinping’s inaugural visit to Moscow, President Vladimir Putin agreed to the Siberian routing. Over the next year, Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation

(CNPC) continued to discuss the remaining stumbling blocks, particularly pricing, as domestic politics in the two countries shifted in ways more conducive to a deal.

Although the exact price of gas China is paying Russia has been kept secret to avoid unsettling other gas partners, in the end most experts believe that China negotiated a price of approximately \$350 per thousand cubic meters (tcm) (\$9-\$10 per million British thermal units), slightly less than the \$380 per tcm average for Gazprom sales to Europe (\$10.60 per mmBtu), according to Reuters. Some Russian officials told Bloomberg News that China’s base price was \$360 per tcm, just slightly less than Germany pays (\$366, among the lowest prices in Europe), so that Russia could maintain price parity between Europe and Asia (\$9 per mmBtu). China pays considerably less—about \$322 per tcm for gas from Turkmenistan—but the Russian price would still be much less than the \$501 per tcm (\$14 per mmBtu) the Chinese pay on the Asia Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) spot market, as an analysis by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission pointed out.

Gas Imports and China’s “War on Pollution”

China’s renewed interest in Russian gas reflects the greater political urgency of addressing the country’s environmental problems. Responding to unprecedented smog and growing public dissatisfaction with poor air quality, Prime Minister Li Keqiang called for a “war on pollution” in a March 2014 speech to the Chinese legislature. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, China plans to double its use of gas from 4 percent of its energy mix to 8 percent by 2015, the end of the current 5-year plan cycle.

To make domestic gas sales more profitable for Chinese energy companies, the Chinese government has been gradually raising the price of gas at home. In July 2014, China’s National Development and Reform Commission raised natural gas prices by 15.4 percent, which meant that the average price for a non-residential consumer was \$8.90 mmBtu, according to Platt’s McGraw Hill Financial. By the end of 2015, natural gas prices will be increased further for non-residential customers and high-volume residential customers. These changes made it possible for CNPC to accept a higher price than they previously demanded in gas negotiations with Russia.

Beginning in 2007, China became a net importer of natural gas and by 2013 it became the world’s third largest user. According to CNPC, China used 167.6 bcm of gas in 2013, a 13.9 percent increase from the previous year. Turkmenistan has been piping in nearly half of the gas China imports (46.5 percent) and the rest comes from liquid natural gas (LNG) imports from countries such as Qatar (17.8 percent), Australia (9.3 percent), Malaysia (6.7 percent), and Indonesia (6.6 percent). Due to concerns over the possibility of the U.S. Navy denying China access to energy imports arriving by sea, the Chinese government has been seeking additional land-based gas supply routes, from Myanmar

and now from Russia. The development of Sino-Russian gas cooperation will also help China negotiate a better price for LNG with other suppliers.

Russia (Finally!) Marches East

Five years ago, Russia's Energy Strategy to 2030 envisaged that one quarter of Russian gas exports (75 bcm) would be to Asia in coming decades. John Henderson and Jonathan Stern of the Oxford Energy Institute note that despite this goal and the location of Russian gas fields in the eastern part of the country, surprisingly Russia thus far has sold very little gas to Asian markets—just 16.6 bcm from the Sakhalin 2 offshore gas project. According to Henderson and Stern, Gazprom hoped to increase its bargaining power with China by building an LNG plant in Vladivostok that could sell to other Asian markets, but if the Siberian pipeline to China were the only source of gas for the LNG plant, this plant would not be financially viable.

In the interim, as negotiations between Gazprom and CNPC dragged on, in December 2013 Novatek and Rosneft successfully convinced Putin to allow them to export LNG. This has ended Gazprom's monopoly on these exports but also potentially brought in new sources of gas for the proposed Vladivostok LNG plant (from Novatek's Yamal fields in the Arctic, in which CNPC has 20 percent stake, and possibly from Rosneft's Sakhalin 1 project). It has also made the prospect of significantly increasing Russia's share of Asian gas market a reality. While holding 19 percent of the world's gas reserves, Russia currently accounts for less than 4 percent of global LNG sales, but Russian Deputy Energy Minister Kirill Molodstov told the Sakhalin Oil and Gas conference last year that Russia aims for a 20 percent share by 2030.

And the Winner Is....

Energy analysts have sought to identify a winner and loser in the sudden conclusion to the Sino-Russian gas negotiation. This is all the more complicated as many details have not been made public, including the exact price formula for the gas, which has fed speculation about the costs and benefits of the deal.

Some argue that China "won" because it bargained down the price and could show off its economic strength by prepaying. Others note that despite the prepayment, Russia has so far held firm and refused to allow any Chinese upstream investment. Chinese observers comment that the price is higher than they expected, though some note that the price will adjust as the yuan appreciates. Russian critics of the deal accuse Putin of giving away Russian resources in exchange for the Chinese prepayment and fear that the reliance on Chinese financing will turn Russia into a Chinese colony. Some Russian criticism of the gas agreement was even more extreme. Russian political analyst Andrei Piontkovsky warned, for example, that the deal would accelerate "the process of

amalgamation of the territories of the Far East and Siberia into a 'living space' for China."

The reality is that both sides gained and had to compromise to achieve a deal. China got a reasonable price, which will give it leverage on its growing LNG purchases in Asia, but no upstream investment so far. This could change if Gazprom faces additional difficulties down the road in obtaining financing for the project. After the deal was signed, Merrill Lynch downgraded its investment outlook for Gazprom, a reflection on the company's increasingly stretched finances.

Russia got a deal at a politically crucial moment, which will make it more of a player in Asian energy markets at a time when Europe is actively seeking to reduce its reliance on Russian gas due to the Ukrainian crisis and the changes in the gas market produced by the shale revolution. Gazprom had been slow to adjust to changes in global demand for gas and now faces additional political barriers to its longstanding relationships with European energy companies. Russia has supplied 30 percent of Europe's gas, with half of it flowing through Ukraine. As Morena Skalamera of Harvard's Belfer Center pointed out, now that Europe is looking to alternatives to long-term contracts with Gazprom, the company needs a new long-term partner and views China as a potential cash cow.

China energy analyst Erica Downs notes that this is the third time China came in and rescued a Russian energy company at a time of need. Rosneft was the previous beneficiary—first receiving a \$6 billion loan in 2005 to buy Yukos and then another \$25 billion in 2009 to build the East Siberian Pacific Ocean (ESPO) oil pipeline. In the current deal with Gazprom, CNPC agreed to a \$25 billion "prepayment" on future gas deliveries, which will provide a portion of the \$70 billion the Russian company needs to develop the gas fields in eastern Siberia and build the pipeline. According to Downs, this shows China's clout but also highlights the fact that Russia has a powerful friend in China. Geopolitically, the prospect of Chinese financing lessens the impact of Western sanctions.

Policy Implications

In this landmark deal, Russia and China have opted for greater interdependence at a time of closer Sino-Russian partnership. Despite its determination to maintain diversity of supply, with the signing of this agreement China has become more dependent on Russia for its energy than ever before. China already receives 9 percent of its oil from Russia thanks to the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) oil pipeline. Once the gas pipeline goes online, Russia will be China's number one or number two supplier of gas, depending on the level of expected increases in gas from Turkmenistan. According to Cui Shoujin of China's National Academy of Development and Strategy and Renmin University, "That the long-awaited deal could be reached at this moment is related to

the tension between Russia and the West over the Ukrainian crisis. But the fundamental cause is the energy interdependence between China and Russia.”

In the aftermath of a third round of economic sanctions, Russia is even more reliant on Chinese financing and may yet offer China upstream investment opportunities in exchange. Although dollars will be used in the gas deal, sanctions may encourage the further use of yuan-to-ruble exchanges in Sino-Russian economic cooperation. Just before the gas deal was signed, the Bank of China and Russia’s VTB bank agreed to use their own currencies to pay each other instead of the dollar.

The Sino-Russian gas deal has the potential to make Russia more of a player in Asian gas markets more broadly. One month after the Sino-Russian deal was reached, Japanese companies signed LNG deals with Rosneft and Gazprom. Some politicians from Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have revived the idea of a \$6 billion gas pipeline from Sakhalin to Japan, which could provide 17 percent of Japanese gas imports. India and South Korea also are discussing gas cooperation with Russia. All will benefit from the downward pressure on LNG prices in Asia that the Sino-Russian gas deal will exert.

Thus, at a time when the United States seeks to isolate Russia in response to the Ukrainian crisis, U.S. partners in Asia are contemplating greater energy cooperation with it. Some members of Congress are proposing that the United States respond by increasing LNG sales to Europe and Asia, thereby reducing Russia’s market share, and U.S. legislation is currently being proposed to facilitate the process for approving such LNG contracts.

Conclusion

The crisis in Ukraine has added urgency to President Putin’s quest for a gas pipeline with China, but it may now further delay its fruition (now projected for 2018) due to uncertainties about Gazprom’s access to financing and necessary technology. Some of the sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union on exports of energy production technology to Russia may affect Gazprom’s ability to obtain the equipment needed for horizontal drilling, a technique which the company announced it would use to minimize environmental damage in the Amur River border area. Despite the uncertain impact of the sectoral sanctions, Gazprom has begun work on the pipeline. At the start of August, Gazprom delivered the first pipes to Lensk in Sakha which will be used in building the Russian part of the trunkline connecting the Chayanda field in Sakha to Khabarovsk and Vladivostok, set to be completed in 2017. For the time being, the pipeline project appears to be on track.

The Clampdown on Internet Activities in Russia and the Implications for Western Policy

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 350

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One of the most worrying recent trends in Russia has been the government's clampdown on Internet access and activities. When the World Wide Web emerged in the mid-1990s, the Russian government initially did not try to prevent Russian citizens from having unhindered access to the Internet. After Vladimir Putin became president of Russia nearly fifteen years ago and began methodically re-imposing state control over all national television, the Internet became the medium of choice for urban, highly-educated Russians. Although regular Internet use was low in Russia until around 2008, the rate of daily use has grown very sharply since then. State-controlled national television remains the dominant source of news for the vast majority of Russians (roughly 85-95 percent, according to the Levada Center's periodic surveys), but the Internet is now a crucial source of information about politics for a small but influential segment of intellectuals and elites.

That is why the recent moves to assert much greater control over Russians' use of the Internet are so disturbing. In China, the government has long maintained a "firewall" (a dense set of blocking and filtering technologies and legal regimes) that prevents Internet service providers (ISPs) in China from giving access to a great deal of content, including all content related to particular topics as well as whole categories of websites. In North Korea, the regime has gone much further, banning all access to the Internet. The approach used in Russia until recently had been less heavy-handed. In 1998 the Federal Security Service (FSB) gained legal authority to compel ISPs in Russia to turn over all information and records concerning specific users and to permit the FSB to monitor those users' online activities. Although a Constitutional Court ruling in 2000 stipulated that ISPs did not have to turn over information about users unless the police displayed a valid warrant, the reality is that providers in Russia have come under heavy pressure to furnish detailed information to the FSB regardless of whether a warrant has been obtained.

The FSB's Internet surveillance powers, carried out via the System for Operational-Investigative Measures (Sistema operativno-rozyskikh meropriyatii, or SORM), were sufficient at the time to keep track of individual opposition activists and groups, but as

the number of users in Russia rapidly multiplied in the late 2000s and Internet technology rapidly evolved (including the emergence and huge popularity of social network sites), the FSB pushed for a major expansion of its control techniques and regulations. The Russian government readily complied. A series of laws adopted in 2012, 2013, and 2014 established a wide-ranging legal framework to accomplish several goals:

- 1) block access to selected websites, including those linked with political opposition, human rights, and election monitoring;
- 2) set burdensome requirements for opposition bloggers and make it prohibitively difficult for them to function properly; and
- 3) compel certain content providers, particularly foreign companies responsible for social network sites (SNS), to store all personal data about Russians on servers located on Russian territory.

Compliance with the last regulation, which takes effect in September 2016 (well before Putin will be seeking reelection in March 2018), will require foreign SNS operators to establish separate servers in Russia, where any information they store about Russians will potentially be subject to FSB monitoring.

The impetus for the crackdown dates back to 2011, a year that witnessed mass unrest in the Arab world and the outbreak of protests in Russia after widespread fraud marred the country's December 2011 parliamentary elections. The role of SNS in the protests in both the Arab world and Moscow was probably much less important than some observers initially argued, but the key thing is what the Russian authorities believed. Putin and his aides concluded that "hostile" SNS, abetted and instigated by the West, were creating subversive networks committed to the overthrow of authoritarian regimes, including Putin's. In the wake of the unrest, Russian officials began using bilateral meetings and regional forums such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to promote coordinated efforts against "Western-inspired color revolutions." The prospect of renewed mass unrest in Russia, which the authorities want to avoid at all costs, has been the major force shaping Putin's policies over the past two years both at home and abroad. The recent clampdown on Internet activities has to be understood in that light.

The Legal Thicket

In July 2012, two months after Putin returned as president, the Russian parliament adopted Federal Law 139FZ, which took effect in November 2012. Under the law, the Federal Service for Oversight in the Sphere of Mass Media and Communications (Roskomnadzor) is responsible for compiling a "unified registry" of prohibited websites, to which all ISPs in Russia must block access. The unified registry, known informally as the "black list," is provided to all ISPs but is not made publicly available. Ostensibly, the

'black list' pertains to websites that promote child pornography, illegal drug use, or suicide, but notifications to opposition-oriented websites over the past two years make clear that Roskomnadzor is also targeting outlets that are critical of the Putin regime.

This law, together with "anti-extremism" legislation adopted in 2012 and 2013 (which provides for the compilation of a Federal List of Extremist Materials), has been invoked against websites featuring such disparate content as Pussy Riot videos, Jehovah's Witnesses texts, exposés of corruption in the Russian Orthodox Church, and reports about high-level corruption and police abuse. The same laws were invoked in March 2014 to shut down nearly a dozen opposition websites such as Alexei Navalny's blog, Ekho Moskvyy, Ezhednevnyi Zhurnal, Kasparov.ru, and Grani.ru shortly before a "referendum" was staged in Crimea on March 16, 2014, a ban that has remained partly in effect. Other websites, especially those associated with human rights and freedom of expression, were blocked after mass unrest began in Ukraine in November 2013.

In March 2014, the same month the opposition websites were blocked, the Russian authorities also moved to rein in Lenta.ru, the largest and most popular independent news website in Russia. Russian officials pressured the website owner to dismiss the highly respected editor-in-chief, Galina Timchenko, who had worked at Lenta.ru from the time it was founded in 1999. She was replaced by Aleksei Goreslavskii, who had previously been in charge of pro-Kremlin websites and propaganda outlets, prompting most of the staff of Lenta.ru to quit in protest. The ostensible reason for Timchenko's firing was that she had violated "anti-extremism" guidelines when she published an interview with Dmytro Yarosh, the leader of the radical right-wing Ukrainian group Right Sector, but the move in fact was a fairly obvious effort by the regime to curtail the independence of Lenta.ru and to deter other independent news websites (e.g., Slon.ru) from acting too boldly.

The next month, the government also sought to establish stricter control over VK (formerly known as VKontakte), the most popular SNS in Russia. The founder of VK, Pavel Durov, was forced to resign, and the management of the company was placed fully under the control of wealthy executives who are staunchly loyal to Putin. Durov had tried to resist turning over information about VK users to the authorities, whereas the new management has made clear that VK will now comply with all federal requirements. Although VK has not yet been entirely neutered, it can no longer serve as a forum for freewheeling commentary and plans for collective action.

In May 2014, after the reining in of VK, the Russian parliament adopted a law to curb the activities of Russian bloggers. The law, which took effect in July 2014, requires all online writers whose blogs attract more than 3,000 readers to register with Roskomnadzor and to disclose sensitive personal information, rather than remain anonymous under a nom de plume. The same law requires bloggers to comply with the obligations of mass media outlets, including ensuring the accuracy of everything that appears in their postings, and

requires service providers, including SNS sites, to store information about readers in Russia and to make the information available to the FSB when presented with a search warrant (though presumably the warrant requirement will fall by the wayside). The legislation is so burdensome and affects such a large swath of the blogosphere in Russia that it was never intended to be enforced comprehensively. Instead, it has been adopted for the selective prosecution of critics of Putin or the FSB or other agencies as well as anyone who falls afoul of authorities at the local or regional level. The impact of the legislation has been strengthened by another law adopted in June 2014, which calls for up to five years in prison for anyone online who spreads “extremist” sentiment or instigates “mass rioting.” The legislation is phrased so broadly that it would include such things as re-postings on VK or Facebook and re-tweets on Twitter, thus criminalizing behaviors that are a routine part of online forums.

The latest blow to Internet activities in Russia came in July 2014, when the Russian parliament adopted amendments to earlier anti-terrorism legislation in order to rein in SNS operators based outside Russia. The amendments, long urged by the FSB, require all Internet companies that store data about Russian citizens to keep the data only on servers based in the Russian Federation. Popular SNS operators abroad, such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as many other content providers that want to continue to have Russian customers will be required to build servers on Russian territory at their own expense. Any information about Russian users of the services must be stored on the new servers, which come within the purview of SORM and other legal restrictions on ISPs. If companies decline to establish separate servers, their services can be blocked.

The data-retention legislation, adopted amid some of the worst East-West tension in 30 years, has caused uncertainty and apprehension among Internet users in Russia and foreign SNS operators, who are awaiting clarification of what exactly they will have to do. Even if the requirements are eased somewhat or the law is enforced haphazardly, the combined impact of the legislation adopted over the past two years has dealt a major blow to the use of the Internet in Russia.

Implications for Western Policy

In keeping with the broad authoritarian backlash after Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, the age of Internet freedom in Russia now appears to be over. There is relatively little that Western governments can do to try to ameliorate the situation in the near term, but Western Internet companies and bloggers can and should help their Russian counterparts to remain a vibrant part of the online community. The establishment of mirror sites and systematic repostings will not be a foolproof way of evading some of the new restrictions, but it will certainly magnify the FSB’s task of enforcement.

One important issue to consider is how much the Russian public cares about the crackdown on Internet use. Thus far, the outcry in Russia has been limited almost

entirely to journalists, pro-democracy activists, and opposition figures like Navalny, Andrei Soldatov, Masha Lipman, and Tanya Lokshina. Opinion polls suggest that among the broader Russian public, the new restrictions have encountered surprisingly little resistance. (Some polls show close to 65 percent supportive of the “black list” and other controls.) Potentially, public attitudes toward the growing censorship will become more negative if popular websites continue to come under official pressure, but, at least for now, the situation is not as remediable as one might hope.

One thing Western governments must avoid doing is creating the impression that free access to the Internet is strictly a “Western value” that can safely be rejected by the officially-sponsored xenophobic campaign in Russia. In promoting free access to the Internet, Western officials, scholars, and Internet companies should work with Russians (to the extent possible) and emphasize how much Russian programmers and scientists have contributed to the online community. A few Russian legislators and advisers to Putin have spoken, rather fancifully, about trying to create a separate “mini-Internet” for Russia that will be directly under the Russian federal government’s control, but such ideas are likely to die of their own impracticality. By making clear that Russia has been, and should remain, a vigorous part of the online world, Western officials, universities, and Internet companies can best help those in Russia who are trying to preserve at least a modicum of free speech and free information.

The Implications of Russia's Law against the "Rehabilitation of Nazism"

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 331

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Amid the political turmoil following Russia's annexation of Crimea and the unrest in eastern Ukraine, the Russian parliament revived a bill criminalizing the "rehabilitation of Nazism" that President Vladimir Putin promptly signed into law. Met with protests by liberal critics and professional historians, the law emerged in the context of a conservative legislation spree by the Russian parliament; the Ukraine crisis, which has encouraged ideological hardliners; and Putin's own efforts to "manage" history. Ultimately, however, the law does not help Russian "conservatism" or Putin's use of history. In the long run, the law will damage Russia's national memory, one of the main resources of Putin's management of symbols. While trying to establish historical canon, the law threatens to have a destabilizing effect on Russia's national identity.

History of the Law

The legislation was originally introduced into parliament in early May 2009 on the eve of Victory Day, Russia's main public holiday of the year. It is also a commemorative day for those who perished in the war against the Nazis. Among the authors of the law were deputies Irina Yarovaya and Vladimir Medinsky (the latter is now Minister of Culture and one of the ideologues of Russia's "historical politics"). A week after the law was proposed, then-President Dmitry Medvedev created a presidential commission "to counter attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia's interests." As a result, the bill was considered obsolete, and prominent deputies like Oleg Morozov, Pavel Krasheninnikov, and Vladimir Pligin revoked their support. The very idea of state interference into the domain of historical interpretation seemed to be abandoned as a result of the 2011-12 winter of protest; the commission was disbanded in February 2012 by presidential order.

After the protests themselves became history, a newly-elected parliament revisited the legislation. In July 2013, almost forty deputies added their names to the list of bill sponsors. For more than half a year nothing happened, but in February 2014 forty-five deputies suddenly introduced a new edition of the bill for consideration. It was approved in April, and Putin signed it into law in early May.

The new law added Article 354.1 to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, making it a criminal offense:

to deny facts recognized by the international military tribunal that judged and punished the major war criminals of the European Axis countries, to approve of the crimes this tribunal judged, and to spread intentionally false information about the Soviet Union's activities during World War II.

The law also made it an aggravating circumstance "to artificially create evidence for the prosecution" (whatever that means) and criminalized:

the spreading of information on military and memorial commemorative dates related to Russia's defense that is clearly disrespectful of society, and to publicly desecrate symbols of Russia's military glory.

Commentators linked the appearance of this latter part of the law to the activity of popular opposition bloggers who caustically criticized the use of St. George ribbons as a symbol of Russian "loyalists."

Under the law, the rehabilitation of Nazism is punishable by a fine of up to 300,000 rubles (\$8,400) or three years in jail. If a state official commits the offense, he or she could be sent to prison for up to five years or face a fine of up to 500,000 rubles (\$14,000) and be barred from government posts for up to three years. Publicly desecrating symbols of Russian military glory or spreading information disrespecting public holidays related to the country's defense will be punishable by a fine of up to 300,000 rubles or up to one year of community service.

Reasons for the Legislation

There are several explanations for the law's adoption in 2014. First, it may be seen as part of the Russian parliament's conservative-traditionalist turn. Deputies have already voted for a number of laws in support of returning to traditional values and halting the proliferation of modern fashions and "moral relativism." A law that reminds the public of the existence of absolute evil and punishes its "rehabilitation" nicely fits this legislative agenda.

The law also corresponds to the Kremlin's new tactic of symbolically dividing society. Before the protests of 2011-12, the Putin-Medvedev regime deliberately employed only symbols that could unite the nation, including the memory of the great victory of World War II. Beginning in the spring of 2012, however, the regime has regularly produced new divisive lines. The Pussy Riot trial, the anti-gay legislation, the anti-tobacco law,

and even the conflict with Ukraine—these can be seen as a series of policy acts aimed to provoke splits within Russian society.

As a result, Russian citizens opposed to the ruling party and regime formed a united front in 2011 but are now experiencing one divide after another. The wording of the new law projects a split into the major unifying memory of Russians. Despite the war's significance to almost every Russian family, details and attitudes differ based on different personal and family stories. With the new law, some of the living memories of the war will contradict the official narrative.

The law can also be explained by Putin's attachment to symbolic politics. He is famous for his skillful use of the memory of the Great Patriotic War to raise his own popularity. Just a year earlier, he initiated the unification of Russian history textbooks with the aim of creating a standard version of national history. From this perspective, Putin is seeking to prevent any challenge to the main pillar of the historical narrative that he has devised. As the generation of war veterans is fading away, the state is seizing hold of all interpretations of the war in an effort to remain the sole caretaker of national memory.

Finally, there is the timing of the legislation's reappearance, coinciding with the Kremlin's decision to annex Crimea and its propaganda war against Ukraine. The terms "Nazi" and "fascists" were widely used in Soviet propaganda after World War II to demonize political opponents. In this latest propaganda war, Russian state television has labeled the Ukrainian national movement as "Nazis," providing the pretext for seizing Crimea, supporting further interference in Ukraine, and justifying defense of the local population. The law assists in this propaganda campaign. In addition, some years ago Ukraine successfully rewrote its own national history of the war, which may now be considered illegal by Russian law.

What Exactly is Wrong with the Law?

One argument authors of the law have used in its favor is that Germany, Austria, France, and other European states have similar "memorial laws." Such laws prohibit Holocaust denial; in France, they also forbid the denial of the atrocities of French colonial administrations. These laws, however, were propagated by left-wing political forces aiming to preserve the memory of oppressed groups and the crimes of their states. The Russian variant (like memorial laws adopted in Poland and some other Central and East European states) is backed by pro-state right-wing politicians that seek to create a heroic national narrative and legislate away any doubt about the state's historical righteousness.

The law also uses exceedingly vague language. The ban against desecrating symbols "of Russia's military glory" seems distant from the "rehabilitation of Nazism." Equating hooliganism to the whitewashing of Nazism erodes the meaning of the latter as a unique

evil. Also, the clause about “spreading information on military and memorial commemorative dates related to Russia’s defense that is clearly disrespectful of society” is simply difficult to understand. How can information be “clearly disrespectful of society”?

An organization of independent Russian historians, the “Free Historical Society,” issued a warning against the legislation, pointing at flaws in the very idea of the law, as well as in its wording.¹ In particular, as the law prohibits the “artificial creation” of historical evidence, they have pointed out its dangers to scholars seeking to carry out objective research on the history of World War II. Also, the term “intentionally false information” recalls the language of the Soviet-era Criminal Code, which forbade “spreading intentionally false information about the Soviet system,” something that was used as a pretext to punish dissidents. Moreover, any punishment for “false information” as applied to history implies the existence of some final historical truth. The path of establishing a historical canon—a state-approved version of history—resembles Stalin’s creation of the infamous *Short Course of the History of the Communist Party*.

Critics have also noticed that the law upholds the “facts recognized” by the Nuremberg tribunal rather than their rulings and definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This means that any actions committed during the war that were not recognized by the tribunal as war crimes could not now be called such, even with sound evidence to support it. If such crimes were attributed to the Red Army, moreover, it could lead to criminal punishment. Needless to say, such an approach eliminates freedom in researching the history of World War II and effectively halts historical inquiry into that period of Russian history.

Finally, the new law is dangerous even to the dominant Russian historical narrative. The Great Patriotic War is the focal point of the nation’s memory; it plays a socializing role and unifies Russians. A legal ban against addressing that history turns the central part of Russia’s historical narrative into a blind spot, ruining the whole edifice. If nobody will ask new questions about the war—if it is in the public space only in the form of ossified sacred texts and untouchable memorials—it will cease to represent the actual past and lose its significance.

Conclusion

For Russia, World War II is the most important part of the national memory. Russian identity is centered on the sufferings, martyrdom, and victory of the Great Patriotic War. That is why Russia has resisted the creation of state-supported narratives and memorial laws in neighboring states. Now, however, the Russian state itself has opted to create its own historical framework. This is a dangerous path that could lead to the inability of

¹ http://polit.ru/article/2014/04/28/vio_280414/

national memory to play an important socializing role, posing a challenge to Russian national identity.

Despite criticism from many experts, the law was signed and we will have to see what the repercussions are. There are generally three possibilities: it may be widely used, used selectively against critics of the regime, or—hopefully—it will end up on the road to nowhere that was previously trod by Medvedev's presidential commission against historical falsification.

Anger and Prejudice after the Beslan School Hostage Taking

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 327

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On September 1, 2004, Russia experienced its most appalling act of terrorism in recent history: the taking of approximately 1,200 hostages at School No. 1 in Beslan, North Ossetia, where they remained for 53 hours, thirsty, hungry, frightened, and in sweltering heat before meeting a gruesome ending that included explosions, a burning and collapsed gym roof, gunfire, and widespread chaos and trauma. After these horrific events, many observers expected retaliatory violence. The conventional wisdom was that the 330-plus deaths and countless injuries sustained after the unprecedented hostage taking of schoolchildren, parents, and teachers would now revive longstanding bloody rivalries that had existed between Ossetians and neighboring Ingush and Chechens. The assumption was that the horror of the hostage taking would trigger anger, and anger would lead to retaliatory violence.

As it turns out, however, anger was actually a productive force in fueling peaceful political participation in response to the hostage taking and interestingly had little to do with support for retaliatory violence. The single most important factor explaining support for retaliatory violence was not anger but ethnic prejudice, regardless of whether or not that prejudice induced an emotional response. These findings are based on interviews held in 2007 with 1,098 victims of the hostage taking, or 82 percent of victims identified, along with focus groups of politically active and inactive victims (See Appendix). The findings of this research have implications for anticipating the aftermath of violence in other interethnic contexts.

Anger after Violence

Anger is a negative and often disparaged emotion, one that we are taught from childhood to try to minimize or at least control. It is a response to a perceived misdeed, an unpleasant emotional state resulting from the perception of unwanted, unfair, or undeserved consequences, especially when the inflicted harm is perceived as intentional.

By this definition, anger was a justifiable reaction to the Beslan hostage-taking. Children were the primary targets and victims, their victimization undeserving and therefore

maddening. Moreover, the intentionality of the perpetrators to inflict harm was clear. The deaths, physical injuries, and emotional devastation of the incident were all the result of deliberate acts of terrorism, and thus justified moral indignation. The intentions of government actors before, during, and after the hostage taking were arguably less clear, but the still unresolved discrepancies in information and the perceived callous indifference of the authorities to the victims mean that even government-inflicted harm was often perceived as intentional and warranting anger. As has been established in places like South Africa, truth-telling can “quench anger,” but the victims of Beslan and other North Ossetians to this day believe they do not know the truth about most aspects of the hostage taking and its gruesome ending. Without a true accounting, victims may ruminate and excessively attribute intentionality and feel anger.

However, not everyone experiences anger equally. People vary in their readiness for or susceptibility to anger. When asked how many days in the past week they have felt anger, victims reported modal responses of zero and two days, but responses varied across the entire range from zero to seven days in the past week.

Prejudice after Violence

Ethnic prejudice is defined as negative preconceived opinions of others based on their ethnicity. Prejudice between Ossetians and Chechens and Ingush existed well before the events of 2004. Ossetians and Ingush have had a decades-old conflict over ownership of the Prigorodny district of North Ossetia that was formerly part of Ingushetia. The conflict became violent in 1992, leading to hundreds of deaths, hostage takings, missing persons, property destruction, and the forcible displacement of Ingush to refugee camps in Ingushetia and Chechnya. Atrocities were committed by both sides, and the conflict was never quite resolved.

Historical animosity also exists between Ossetians and Chechens. Federal air raids were launched at Chechnya from Beslan during the first Chechen war, and while Ossetians are not ethnic Russians, their perceived participation in the war casts them in the minds of some as proxies for the Russian government.

The perpetrators of the violence in Beslan in 2004 were mainly of Chechen and Ingush descent. Victims and other North Ossetians often think of the perpetrators not simply as individual terrorists but as representatives of their presumably violent and barbaric ethnic groups. Survey data confirm that most Beslan victims felt negatively about dining with an Ingush, having a relative marry an Ingush, or sending their children to school with Ingush children. Over three-quarters of the victims blamed the Ingush and Chechen people for causing the tragedy in the school.

Importantly, however, not all victims held these sentiments, and among those who were prejudiced, sentiments were expressed with varying levels of intensity.

Anger Fuels Participation

According to established theories of emotion, anger leads to aggression. The urgent need of angry people to right a perceived wrong supposedly encourages confrontation and violence. The tendency of angry people to overestimate their chances for successful retaliation and to use selective memory, which heightens their prejudice and stereotyping, can also encourage further confrontation and violence. Thus, the so-called “action tendency” of anger is thought to be retaliatory harm.

Conversely, other evidence shows that anger is not always channeled aggressively. Action tendencies are socially regulated, meaning they are inhibited or promoted by social norms. Victims of violence who are angry may refrain from retaliatory violence due to the social unacceptability of violence in many, if not most, circumstances. Cases of retaliatory violence have occurred mainly in contexts where social norms promote violence or where political entrepreneurs exploit anger and increase the acceptability and necessity of a violent response. At the same time, social norms often do not promote violence, and elites often do not provoke it.

If anger does not provoke victims to engage in retaliatory violence, what does it do? Anger is an empowering emotion in the sense that anger demands expression and action. An angry victim often has stronger motivation than a less angry victim, more optimistically appraises risk, and thus may be more likely to do *something* in response to violence. What exactly such an angry victim may do is less clear. How will that anger be expressed or acted upon?

Constructive action such as political mobilization is a likely contender. This is precisely what we have seen in Beslan. The angrier the Beslan victim, the more likely he or she was to participate in politics. Victims were asked about their participation in thirty-one different and often very prominent participatory acts, including signing petitions, writing to newspapers, attending rallies, meeting with political officials, blockading a highway, and staging a courtroom sit-in. The angriest victims were roughly six to nine times more active than the less-angry victims. Only about a quarter participated in none of these activities, whereas non-participation was the norm for the majority of those who were never angry or angry only one day a week.

However, the angriest victims and least angry victims showed no difference in their support for retaliatory violence. Victims were asked an extremely blunt question about whether they approved of killing Chechens as retaliation for the hostage taking. Only a minority expressed such support, which is consistent with the fortunately minimal occurrence of actual retaliatory violence after the hostage taking. Well over three-quarters of victims somewhat or completely disapproved of violent retaliation, regardless of their level of anger.

Prejudice Fuels Violence

The literature on violence often discounts the importance of prejudice when emotions are not aroused. Feeling averse to people because of their ethnicity is supposedly insufficient to generate attack, but when an emotion such as hatred is involved, support for violence is then encouraged. However, there is a more likely, direct, and non-emotional causal mechanism linking ethnic prejudice to ethnic violence, which is the grievance itself, when that grievance is prior violence and individuals are contemplating retaliation. Individual support for ethnic violence might be ignited not by emotion but by actual grievances experienced by already prejudiced individuals. It is not that ethnic identities alone lead to violence. Such an argument ignores or even trivializes the grievance or dispute between two rival ethnic groups. In the North Caucasus, for example, had interethnic killing not occurred, especially on the part of the Russian government, it is unlikely that the negative opinions of Ingush and Chechens toward Ossetians and vice-versa would in themselves have led to violence. Rather, the argument is that, in the context of a grievance such as victimization by violence, retaliatory violence may be more likely among those who have negative feelings toward the ethnic group of the perpetrators, regardless of their individual level of emotional arousal.

In the North Caucasus, retaliatory violence for the Beslan school hostage taking was a much rarer occurrence than journalists and other students of the region had anticipated. Among victims, attitudes matched this aggregate behavioral outcome; support for retaliatory violence was also low. However, to the extent that support for violence existed, prejudice was a very strong correlate. The more prejudiced the victim, the more likely he or she was to approve of killing Chechens. This does not mean that prejudice predicts support for violence; prejudice toward Ingush and Chechens is widespread among victims, but approval of retaliatory killing was not widespread. Prejudice simply makes support for violence much more likely, and *lack* of prejudice is very strongly correlated with disapproval of violence.

Ramifications for Other Interethnic Contexts

Violent individuals are sometimes excused for their violent acts with the rationale that some legitimate circumstance angered or frightened them. In the context of retaliatory ethnic violence, that excuse may be weak. The evidence presented here does not suggest that every individual brought to some high emotional threshold would support retaliatory violence against coethnics of the perpetrators. Instead, it suggests that aversion to other individuals based on their ethnicity is dangerous in itself. The legitimate circumstance, while very real and likely anger-provoking, is nonetheless a pretext for violence based on preexisting prejudice.

When individuals support retaliatory violence in a context of interethnic conflict, they are not simply taking revenge on the initial perpetrator of violence. Instead, they are generalizing the revenge and endorsing harm brought to people of the perpetrator's ethnicity. It is not clear that anger or other emotions can account for this leap from logical revenge (kill the killer) to generalized, prejudiced revenge (kill the killer's coethnics) without numerous other intervening steps. Prejudice, however, can indeed account for the leap, since the prejudiced individual thinks in ethnic terms and is likely to see a killer as a representative of his or her ethnic group.

Appendix

ABOUT THE STUDY

We defined a victim as a surviving adult (18+) hostage, parent, or guardian of an underage hostage, or next of kin of a deceased hostage. Using lists of hostages from the Procuracy, the City Social Provision division that administers social aid to victims, Mothers of Beslan, and various journals, we compiled a rough inflated list of 1,479 hostages' names. After correcting for misspellings, duplicates, non-hostages, and non-existent individuals, we whittled the list to 1,226, which is close to the average number of published estimates. We then targeted this entire population, trying to get one victim respondent for each former hostage or two in the case of parents of underage hostages. According to these rules (one targeted respondent per former hostage or two in the case of parents), we identified and contacted 1,340 victims. Of these, 38 were out of town or otherwise unavailable for the entire duration of the survey, 7 moved and had no forwarding address, and five did not participate for other reasons. Only 192 victims refused to participate (44 former hostages and 148 parents or other relatives of former hostages), a remarkably low number given the sensitivity of the topic. Reasons for refusal for the most part involved victims not wanting to recall a painful event and instead wanting to forget and move on rather than live in the past. A smaller number of victims thought that surveys were useless and would not help them personally. The resulting sample of 1,098 victims of the 1,340 initially contacted represents an 82 percent response rate. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in respondent homes in May, June, July, and August of 2007 (213, 649, 163, and 73 respondents, respectively). Six focus groups of 6 to 9 participants each were conducted in Beslan in December 2008. Focus group participants were selected at random from the database of respondents to the victim survey, using sex, age, and level of activism as selection criteria.

Domestic Sources of the Donbas Insurgency

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 351

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The armed conflict in the Donbas has been widely portrayed in Western policy circles and mainstream media as a result of Russia's covert military aggression against Ukraine with little local support. On April 13, Ambassador Samantha Power, the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, compared events in the region to Russia's intervention in Crimea, stating that there was "nothing grassroots-seeming about it."¹ Three former U.S. ambassadors to Ukraine, in a joint article in late April, accused the Kremlin of "running an insurgency in Ukraine's east" and suggested that an order from President Vladimir Putin would compel insurgents to lay down their arms.² Since then, Western media reports and analysis have increasingly focused on exposing Russia's ties to the insurgency. Concentrating on Russia's role in the conflict, however, overlooks the fact that the armed separatist movement emerged in direct response to the violent regime change that took place in Kyiv. It initially consisted largely of locals and had the support of at least a quarter to a third of the residents of Donbas.³

This memo views the Donbas insurrection as primarily a homegrown phenomenon. It argues that political factors—*state fragmentation, violent regime change, and the government's low coercive capacity*—combined with popular emotions specific to the region—*resentment and fear*—played a crucial role in launching the armed secessionist movement there.

Structural Feasibility

On the structural level, political instability in the capital and low state capacity—two variables associated with a higher feasibility of civil war—were clearly prominent in Ukraine's case prior to the start of the insurrection. As political scientists James Fearon and David Laitin note, weak hybrid regimes with an unstable mix of political forces or

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-ambassador-samantha-power/story?id=23293462&page=2>

² Steven Pifer, John Herbst, William Taylor, "Does Putin Want War?" *The American Interest*, April 24, 2014.

³ In a June 26 – July 2 KMIS poll, 34.8 percent of respondents in the Donetsk region said they trusted the leadership of the DNR and 26.2 percent of Luhansk region residents expressed trust in the leadership of the LNR. The estimate of the composition of the insurgency has been offered by the interim deputy head of Ukraine's presidential administration Serhiy Pashynskyi: <http://reporter.vesti.ua/61677-vy-ne-predstavljaete-kak-tjazhelo-bylo-zastavit-armiju-voevat>

governing arrangements substantially increase the probability of the onset of war “due to weak local policing or inept and corrupt counterinsurgency practices.”¹ In Ukraine, regime change in late February 2014 was preceded by the gradual loss of government control over almost half of state territory as protesters seized regional state administrations. It was also accompanied by the use of violence, by both law enforcement and protest participants, which had become especially pronounced since January 19. Low-level violence quickly spread from Kyiv to other regions. The first violent clash in the Donbas between supporters and opponents of the Euromaidan occurred in the main square of Donetsk on January 21. These clashes became more intense after Viktor Yanukovych’s ouster and resulted in the first killing of a demonstrator from the nationalist *Svoboda* party in Donetsk on March 13.

Three political variables markedly increased the feasibility of war in the Donbas.

1) *Fragmented State*. Regional self-governed enclaves in western and central Ukraine that emerged in late January 2014 defied rule from Kyiv, created a sense of state fragmentation, and further accelerated in the final phase of the Euromaidan. The authorities’ failure to stop the violent seizure of government buildings and reestablish control over half of the country indicated a de facto disintegration of the state. Their continued rule in eastern and southern Ukraine rested primarily on the political dominance of the Party of Regions (PR) and limited support there for the Euromaidan. Once the regime collapsed and former opposition leaders captured power, the PR began to fall apart and a powerful centrifugal force spread to the east. This was accompanied by the diffusion of resistance tactics earlier used by Euromaidan activists and later adopted by the emergent separatist movement.

2) *Low Government Legitimacy*. Ukraine’s new post-Euromaidan authorities were widely viewed as illegitimate across the southeastern regions, but Donbas residents stood apart in the strength of their beliefs. In early April, approximately half of all respondents in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions expressed strong confidence in the illegality of the acting president and the new government, compared to about a third or fewer respondents in other southeastern regions with a similar view.² This intense rejection of the new authorities could be tied to an overwhelmingly negative opinion of the Euromaidan. Seventy percent of residents in the Donetsk region and sixty-one percent in the Luhansk region viewed the protest movement as a Western-sponsored armed coup.³ The average for the rest of southeast was almost half that number (37 percent). While new Kyiv-appointed governors in Donetsk and Luhansk had dubious legitimacy, the Party of Regions with a majority in local councils also lost its authority. Only four

¹ James Fearon and David Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97, 1 (February 2003).

² KMIS poll, April 8 – 16, 2014: <http://zn.ua/UKRAINE/mneniya-i-vzglyady-zhiteley-yugo-vostoka-ukrainy-aprel-2014-143598.html>

³ Ibid.

percent in each region wanted to see its members represented in the new government. The resulting power vacuum created an opening for previously marginalized political entrepreneurs to claim a popular mandate and lead a challenge both against Kyiv and the established local elites.

3) *Coercive Failure*. The coercive capacity of the new government in the Donbas proved highly limited from the start. This was partially because the local police was staffed with Yanukovych loyalists but also because of the perceived disregard of former opposition leaders for law-enforcement bodies. During the first anti-Kyiv rallies, police chiefs in various Donbas towns promised to remain “on the side of the people.” Berkut officers returning from the Maidan were hailed as heroes and invited to speak at the rallies. Although Ukraine’s Security Service (SBU) managed to arrest several separatist leaders in Donetsk and Luhansk in March, it did not stem the popular tide. Once protesters started seizing government buildings across the region, police either fled or defected to the protesters’ side. One high-ranking defector was Aleksandr Khodakovsky, who earlier led the SBU special operations unit in Donetsk and has since become an insurgent commander of the “Vostok” battalion. The peaceful withdrawal of the Ukrainian army from Crimea similarly signaled that the Ukrainian government was not ready to fight. Ukraine’s coercive failure became further apparent when the first armored vehicles with Ukrainian soldiers appeared in the Donbas in mid-April as part of the government’s “counterterrorism operation.” Surrounded by locals, the soldiers surrendered their vehicles or retreated back to their bases. This first encounter between the government and newly-organized rebel forces showed that local support could tilt the power balance in the latter’s favor even though they remained outmanned and outgunned.

Group Emotions

While structural theories may point to variables that create an opportunity for armed resistance, they do not specify the exact mechanisms that push people to fight. As political scientist Roger Petersen notes, “structural change produces information that is processed into beliefs that in turn create emotions and tendencies toward certain actions.”¹ He suggests three instrumental emotions—fear, resentment, and hatred—that help to explain the beginning of ethnic conflicts. Hatred requires a prior history of conflict and long-standing animosity between ethnic groups, which has not been pronounced in Ukraine. Resentment and fear, by contrast, bear direct relevance to the Donbas conflict.

Resentment emerges out of a perception that one’s group has been unfairly subordinated and would remain in a politically inferior status unless force is used. In the Donbas, this emotion was linked to the region’s regional identity as an industrial stronghold

¹ Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 22.

“feeding” the rest of Ukraine and to its predominantly Russian-speaking culture. The peculiar Donbas identity has been rooted in its historic status as a “frontier land” that traditionally resisted the metropolitan attempts at domination either by Moscow or Kyiv.¹ This identity solidified during Ukraine’s independence with 69.5 percent of Donetsk respondents identifying themselves primarily with their own region.² The region’s economic weight relative to other regions gave it a sense of political entitlement to power, or at least to having a say in Ukrainian politics. Its Russian-speaking milieu, with a heavy presence of ethnic Russians, made the Donbas, along with Crimea, particularly responsive to pro-Russian emotive appeals.³ Almost a ten-year rule of Yanukovych and the Party of Regions allowed Donbas residents to feel both politically influential and protected from discrimination on cultural or ethnic grounds. Its abrupt end accompanied by the party’s disintegration and prosecution of some of its members meant a sudden reversal of their politically-privileged status. At the same time, the parliament’s vote to revoke a language law allowing Russian to be a regional language, combined with threats to turn off Russian media, signaled a new risk of cultural discrimination. On top of this, the subsequent spread of dehumanizing terms in reference to pro-Russian activists meant that secession was not only a path to protect one’s status but also one’s human dignity.

Resentment-based emotion in Donbas was further amplified by the rise of fear. *Fear* spreads in situations of state collapse when institutions and rules safeguarding a certain group become non-functional. The resulting violence is then viewed as a form of self-defense. In the Donbas, fear was a direct response to the growing prominence of nationalist paramilitary groups, like the Right Sector, which spearheaded violent clashes with the police and seized public buildings. Ukrainian nationalists were commonly regarded as “fascists” in the Donbas during World War II, and locals still viewed them with great antipathy.⁴ The first “self-defense” units to protect the Donbas from “neo-Nazi” threats emerged even before Yanukovych’s ouster, in early February, and multiplied after he fled. Expressions of fear in reference to Ukrainian nationalist groups have been common for pro-Russian rally participants across the Donbas.⁵ Early reports of lawlessness from western Ukraine, where Right Sector activists harassed local public

¹ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s – 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 337.

² Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Istoria dvoh mist: Lviv i Donetsk u porivnialniy perspektyvi,” *Ukraina Moderna*, 2007, 49.

³ In the 2001 census approximately 38 percent of Donbas residents identified themselves as ethnic Russians; in a July 2012 survey 82 percent named Russian as their native language and 23 percent reported difficulties with understanding formal Ukrainian-language paperwork, which was a higher proportion than in any other region: http://ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG_Movne_pytannia_072012.pdf

⁴ Kuromiya, 279; in a 2004 poll, 42.7 percent of respondents in Donetsk identified “Ukrainian nationalists” as a group they had the most negative opinion of and the least in common with: *Ukraina Moderna*, 2007: http://uamoderna.com/images/archiv/12_2/1_UM_12_2_Zmist.pdf; only 2.2 percent of Donbas respondents had a positive view of Stepan Bandera compared to 21.6 percent in the rest of Ukraine, KMIS and Ivan Katchanovski, May 2014.

⁵ Interview with *Global Post* journalist Danylo Peleshchuk, July 26, 2014.

officials, probably served to reinforce this emotion. In early April, 46 percent in the Donetsk region and 33 percent in the Luhansk region viewed disarming illegal radical groups as the main step in maintaining the country's unity. Instead, the government authorized transforming them into semi-private militia battalions tasked with fighting separatists in the east. This made the desire for protection more salient and led locals to support or join their own town militias.¹

Elite Strategies

Theories of elite-led violence point to the decisive role of political leaders in: 1) setting the discursive logic of the conflict; 2) providing financial and organizational resources; and 3) coordinating initial violent actions to mobilize more members of the group. The significance of leaders in launching a separatist insurrection in the Donbas, however, remains dubious.

At first, pro-Russian demonstrations in the region lacked an identifiable leader or a coherent organizational structure. The two self-proclaimed people's governors—Pavel Gubarev in Donetsk and Aleksandr Kharitonov in Luhansk—had a history of activism in local politics, but they were largely unknown figures region-wide. After the SBU locked both of them up by mid-March, they played no role in transforming political protest into a militarized secessionist movement. The first leader with a military background—Valeriy Bolotov—emerged in early April and claimed power after seizing the SBU building in Luhansk. However, he played no prominent role in the rallies preceding the building seizures and capitalized on public mobilization instead of spurring it.

When it comes to messaging, the speakers at the anti-Kyiv rallies utilized old and familiar narratives. Yanukovych and the Party of Regions have framed their political opponents as “fascists” since the 2004 presidential election. The PR similarly used war-related symbols, like the St. George's ribbon that became an insurgent emblem, as identity markers setting the anti-fascist Donbas apart from nationalist western Ukraine. Finally, calls for federalism and the enhanced status of the Russian language have been voiced since the 1990s. The first regional referendum on Ukraine's federal structure was held in the Donbas in March 1994 with large majorities in the two regions supporting a federal system and Russian as a second state language. Another attempt to hold a referendum on similar questions occurred during the Orange Revolution when the Donetsk regional council initially approved but later cancelled the decision. Pro-Russian rallies in March-April 2014 thus relied on ideological scripts, imagery, and slogans that had been exploited for at least a decade.

¹ See the exchange on the barricades between Slaviansk's self-proclaimed mayor Viacheslav Ponomarev and locals on the threat of a nationalist incursion into town, April 13, 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDhEPsFX7I>

One relatively unknown symbol that emerged during the protests was a black-blue-and-red flag, which alluded to the Donbas' only historical experiment with statehood in 1918. However, it has also been long popular in local pro-Russian activist circles. This flag was a staple of the "Donetsk Republic" non-governmental organization that was created in 2005 and later banned as a separatist organization. One of its founders, Andrei Purgin, was active in organizing the first anti-Maidan rallies in February, but he remained peripheral to the development of the movement.

None of the groups involved in staging the rallies—Russian Bloc, Donetsk Army Volunteers, Lugansk Guard, etc.—had serious organizational or financial resources to fund the movement. At the same time, there has never been any conclusive evidence proving that the movement was funded by wealthy PR leaders such as Yanukovych or Rinat Akhmetov. In fact, appeals to lay down arms and end secessionist attempts by some of the region's most authoritative figures, such as Akhmetov, Boris Kolesnikov, and Aleksandr Lukianchenko, played seemingly no role in de-escalating the violence.¹ The Akhmetov-funded regional television channel Donbas TV portrayed the insurgency in a negative light and advocated for Ukraine's unity. Most importantly, the regional political elite, including members of regional councils and city councils, largely refused to support the separatist movement despite demonstrators' attempts to gain their endorsement. As a result, new regional self-declared councils included mainly random people chosen from among the demonstrators.

Finally, the spread of violent seizures of government buildings across the Donbas in April happened sporadically and in a decentralized manner. The self-declared "people's mayors" of different Donbas towns were local political opportunists who used the implosion of authority to claim power rather than members of a clandestine organization coordinated from a single center. Paramilitary commanders who propped them up were often in conflict regarding their respective spheres of influence. In addition, separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics followed different strategies that were adopted in an ad hoc manner—the former rushed to declare its independence in early April while the latter decided to announce its separation from Ukraine only after the referendum. A more centralized coordination of armed resistance in the Donetsk region appeared only in late May when Aleksandr Borodai's group and the Vostok battalion imposed their authority on disparate separatist groups in Donetsk.

Conclusion: Key Domestic Drivers

The armed conflict in Donbas resulted from a complex interplay of structural and agency-based variables. Monocausal explanations pointing to Russia as the sole culprit miss crucial domestic drivers of the insurrection. They include structural variables

¹ Gubarev claims Akhmetov even tried to bribe some of the separatist activists to put secessionist movement in check, but failed. Interview with Pavel Gubarev, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, May 12, 2014: <http://www.rg.ru/2014/05/12/gubarev.html>

linked to the state and regime dynamics and popular emotions based on resentment and fear. Without domestic conditions favoring an armed secessionist movement, external prodding would have failed to produce a sustained and large-scale insurgency. Those who came to lead it merely capitalized on public apprehension about the growing anarchy in Kyiv and resorted to long-established narratives to keep it in motion. This does not absolve the insurgents, together with the Ukrainian and Russian governments, of responsibility for the subsequent calamities of war. Still, as this analysis suggests, merely suppressing the insurgency by force without addressing its deeper internal causes is unlikely to make the Donbas a less troublesome and volatile part of Ukraine.

The Psychological Logic of Protracted Conflict in Ukraine

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 343

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Since the Euromaidan protests began in November 2013, the Ukraine conflict has occurred on several levels. There is a military conflict between a state, a rebel movement, and another state. There is mass-level political and material support of a pro-European government and a pro-Russian rebellion. And there has been an information war in which all parties have worked to define the conflict on their terms. This last dimension is the subject of this memo. It analyzes how psychological tendencies to view the world in self-serving ways, coupled with political opportunism, have contributed to escalation of the crisis and complicated its resolution. The resulting polarization in attitudes, while not the only factor, has made resolution of the current conflict and long-term reconciliation within Ukraine more difficult.

Fear and Loathing in Kyiv

After November 2013, several narratives took shape to define the Ukraine crisis. At the risk of oversimplifying, pro-European Ukrainians understood the situation as follows: The Euromaidan was a pure expression of the people's will to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and anchor it in the zone of European democracies. President Viktor Yanukovych ceded his right to rule when he ordered troops to kill unarmed protesters. The government that formed after his ouster was therefore legitimate.

Opponents of the Euromaidan argued that the protests involved a non-representative minority. They called the overthrow of Yanukovych a coup, which countered popular will as expressed through the 2010 democratic presidential election. Russia and its sympathizers further alleged U.S. backing of the Euromaidan and called its supporters fascists.

It is not surprising that subsequent events were viewed by the conflicting parties in ways consistent with these foundational assumptions. Psychologists have noted the tendency for people to reject new information that conflicts with preexisting views and

accept only facts that confirm them, a mechanism called confirmation bias.¹ Unaware of their biases, people will perceive new events and interpret ambiguous information in ways that reaffirm their beliefs, and then act accordingly.

Although this process takes place within the minds of individuals, biased information can be disseminated on a massive scale when organizations become involved in propagating it. Both states and insurgent groups have an interest in producing in-group solidarity and out-group hostility, and the wide reach of social media has lowered the cost of spreading propaganda.

In the Ukraine crisis, political organizations on both sides disseminated self-serving messages, but their involvement took different forms. On the pro-Ukraine side, biased claims came from the bottom up, originating among Euromaidan activists before being taken up by the interim government whose legitimacy derived from the revolution. They were reinforced by the United States and sympathetic members of the European Union, whose policies sought to safeguard the independence of Ukraine and stop Russia from extending its influence in Europe. In Russia, the process was mostly top-down, coming from the state through the mass media, echoed by rebel spokesmen, and broadcast (or tweeted) to audiences in Russia and eastern Ukraine, who were receptive to the message or lacked the wherewithal to question it.

To see how narratives fuel, and thrive on, disputed incidents amid uncertainty, take the case of a flyer posted in Donetsk that announced that Jews would have to register with the new authorities and pay 50 dollars. Immediately both sides exploited this incident, consistent with their psychological biases and group interests. On the Ukrainian side, it was taken as evidence that the rebels controlling Donetsk were not only thugs but anti-Semites, a message that was plausible to people who already believed the worst about the rebels and useful to persuade Western governments to support their cause. The incident put the pro-Russians on the defensive. They portrayed the notice as an underhanded hoax—a “provocation” by their adversaries to discredit them, also with nefarious intentions.² That it turned out to be a hoax did not dampen the propaganda value of the incident on both sides.

A second episode highlighted how even massive loss of life can be subsumed by conflicting narratives: the May 2 clashes between pro-government and pro-Russian activists in Odessa that culminated in the deaths of 42 pro-Russians. The pro-Russians insinuated that the burning of the Profsoyuz building where activists had taken shelter was deliberate and blamed extremists from the Right Sector, whose role in Euromaidan

¹ Raymond S. Nickerson, “Confirmation Bias: A Ubiquitous Phenomenon in Many Guises.” *Review of General Psychology* 2, 1998: 175–220.

² <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117415/relax-ukraine-not-ordering-its-jews-register>

and its aftermath was exaggerated by the Russian media.¹ The pro-Ukrainians emphasized that a march of its own supporters had been attacked by pro-Russian forces earlier that day, depicting subsequent actions as self-defense, and arguing that the fires were started accidentally—or, perhaps, by rebels themselves.²

Conflicting Narratives and Conflict

What both sides share, as illustrated by these cases, is a set of self-serving assumptions premised on the belief that their cause is just. It follows that the other side is misguided and wrong. So far, so typical. The post-Soviet context adds two wrinkles about the other side's motivations and means. First, it acts exclusively as the proxy of an external power: the United States or Russia. Second, it is prone to taking advantage of the fog of war by acting underhandedly in violation of established norms. To elaborate, I describe three effects, both intentional and inadvertent, that result from the partisan manipulation of information.

First, it helps mobilize forces against a constructed monolithic enemy, portrayed as a union of domestic opponents and their external backers³: Russia and its minions in the East, or the United States and its puppet regime in Kyiv. Seeing the hand of great powers behind every challenge turns run-of-the-mill detractors into insidious threats. Demands that might appear reasonable in ordinary circumstances are perceived as the chicanery of a foreign interest. For example, pro-Ukrainian desires for a less corrupt government were interpreted in eastern Ukraine and Russia as a smokescreen for the imposition of a pro-Western foreign policy. Eastern demands for more cultural autonomy are viewed by many in western Ukraine with suspicion, as a slippery slope toward federalization and increased Russian influence. Both framings lead people to portray their fellow citizens as unpatriotic, possibly even treasonous, insofar as they are acting at the behest of a foreign country.

Second, the purposeful manipulation of information enables and excuses measures outside the bounds of normal politics, including violence. The cognitive biases at work during a conflict remove any doubt that setbacks to one's side whose causes are unknown or unproven should be blamed on the adversary. If the adversary is believed to resort to devious and illegitimate tactics such as spying, spreading misinformation, or carrying out "provocations," then why not respond in kind? The perception that the other side has violated norms enables one to do the same, lest it cede the initiative to the transgressing party.

¹ http://voiceofrussia.com/2014_05_05/Fascists-burning-people-alive-in-Odessa-nazism-on-the-rise-in-Europe-4288/

² <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2014/05/odessas-fire-examined>

³ This is also a variant of attribution bias whereby observers overestimate the unity of the adversary.

Propaganda also leads participants to prioritize advocating for their side at the expense of values they claim to uphold. Thus, the United States endorsed the interim government that came to power under constitutionally dubious procedures after Yanukovych fled and gave its “full support” to the Ukrainian government and its “anti-terrorist operation (ATO),” notwithstanding its heavy-handed methods and civilian casualties.¹ The lack of concern by the United States about the deaths in Odessa—the single most violent incident to that point—reinforced beliefs that the United States was guilty of double standards.² It goes without saying that the pro-Russian side rationalizes torture, kidnapping, and murder by invoking a greater cause, whether it be anti-fascism or Russian nationalism. Both sides have patronized, and even armed, volunteer militias that are assumed to be less constrained in their actions than uniformed armies.

Third, the information war and hardening of attitudes make negotiations politically unpalatable. The combination of seeing one’s cause as just and the adversary as a model of iniquity, played out over many rounds, creates audience costs for leaders who will be accused of appeasement if they offer concessions. This has been written about extensively in the case of Russia, where Vladimir Putin’s regime has used state-controlled media to promote a coherent narrative demonizing the Ukrainian government, thus limiting his freedom of maneuver. Yet the Ukrainian government, cheered on by its supporters, pursued military victory and put negotiations on the backburner. It could be argued that this approach had a strategic logic. However, the new government was also acting on short-term political calculations, believing that it might lose support among its base if it negotiated in earnest. As of early September 2014, there is renewed talk of negotiations following a Russian advance and a ceasefire, but even if Putin is prepared to seek a settlement, Poroshenko is hamstrung by his government’s previous rhetoric. Concessions that might allow Putin to save face would risk a backlash from Ukrainian radicals. Any acquiescence to the demands of residents of the Donbas would be perceived as benefitting their malevolent benefactors first and foremost.

Counterproductive Counterinsurgency

Whether an agreement is reached or Russia continues to destabilize the Donbas, the above dynamics complicate the prospects for Ukrainian state-building. Mao Tse-tung famously likened guerrillas to fish, who “swim” in a sea of sympathetic people and defy central authority. It follows that the government must make the sea inhospitable for the fish by outdoing the guerrillas in providing protection and security. People will then buy into the system and support the government against its rivals, both internal (insurgents) and external (their foreign backers). This approach rests on the fact that

¹ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/24/ukraine-unguided-rockets-killing-civilians>;
<http://thehill.com/policy/international/207259-ukraines-new-leader-has-full-us-support>;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/23/world/europe/biden-ukraine.html>

² www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2014/may/225674.htm

state power, to be effective, requires the consent of society. When people believe the government is legitimate, they comply with its authority, for example, by following laws and paying taxes.¹

The ATO made state-building more difficult. By describing the rebels as “terrorists, snipers, and marauders,”² Poroshenko boosted support for military action to crush the insurgency only by reaffirming his supporters’ malevolent perceptions of residents of the east. By not distinguishing hard-core fighters from alienated or ambivalent citizens, this rhetoric devalued the interests of pro-Russian but non-violent residents. Furthermore, indiscriminate counterinsurgent attacks in cities alienated people and weakened the state’s legitimacy.³ Polls in July showed that 37 percent of residents of the Donbas support secession, a higher percentage than in April.⁴ Even if Ukraine succeeds in driving out the rebels and ending Russia’s military involvement, it will still leave behind a divided country.

The most surefire way to undercut Russia’s influence, in both the short and long run, is to turn the local population against it. An effective state-building package would include a good faith proposal for political and cultural decentralization to the Donbas and, ideally, redistribution of state resources to benefit the most alienated citizens.⁵ Yet implementation would face major obstacles. The legislative elections in October 2014 will likely usher in a more pro-Western and nationalist cohort, especially if voting is impeded in the Donbas. This will move the Ukrainian parliament closer to Poroshenko ideologically but it may also limit his flexibility to reach out the east. Policies that can be construed to benefit rebels or their supporters will be a hard sell among pro-Ukrainians, lest it appear they are succumbing to extortion. The result will be ongoing conflict and an increasingly riven society. Perversely, when politicians understand their constituents’ cognitive biases, they purposely poison the well to gain short-term advantages. Unfortunately, Ukrainian politicians failed to recognize that when they played this game, they played right into Putin’s hands.

¹ Margaret Levi, *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

² <http://www.dw.de/ukraine-relaunches-anti-terrorism-operation-against-separatists/a-17748517>

³ “Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies,” Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 2 June 2014, pp. 1-8, 1-9, <http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>

⁴ http://www.ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG_East_072014.pdf, p. 17. For April, see <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%205%20IRI%20Public%20Opinion%20Survey%20of%20Ukraine%2C%20March%2014-26%2C%202014.pdf>

⁵ It was not revealed publicly whether these or other reforms were discussed at international forums that also involved the Russian government.

The Ukraine Crisis: Repercussions for Georgia

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 349

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Russia's annexation of Crimea is reshaping the geopolitical map of Europe and sending ripples of apprehension across the South Caucasus and wider Black Sea region. Amid Moscow's direct involvement in eastern Ukraine, many Georgians are closely monitoring all regional foreign policy developments. With a tradition of friendly and strategic relations between Tbilisi and Kyiv, Georgians see the struggle for Ukrainian sovereignty as an analogue of their own fate.

Georgian-Ukrainian Strategic Bonds

Events in Ukraine have made national security a top priority for governments throughout the post-Soviet region. In Georgia, fears that a similar crisis can spread to Georgia have increased. In an April 2014 survey of nearly 4,000 Georgians commissioned by the National Democratic Institute,¹ half of the respondents viewed Russia as "a real and existing threat," a proportion considerably higher than before the start of the Ukraine crisis in November 2013. The reaction in Georgia has been strongly in support of Ukraine. Tbilisi dispatched political and humanitarian support to Kyiv, including a humanitarian medical mission (vital medicine, equipment, doctors), while hundreds of demonstrators gathered on the streets nightly, waving Ukrainian flags, lighting candles, and singing Ukraine's national anthem. Some Georgians have even gone to fight in Ukraine to support its territorial integrity.

Although distinct in their origins, Georgia and Ukraine were part of the same states for nearly 200 years. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Georgia was disillusioned by Russia's tacit support for Georgia's separatist regions, and Tbilisi had no choice but to be engaged in an unfolding pattern of alliances involving both smaller regional powers and great powers outside of the region. Georgia's political calculus also included the quest to find fellow states in the immediate neighborhood to rely on as strategic partners. Ultimately, Georgia's search for "*Suliko*" (soulmates) in the post-Soviet region resulted in the establishment of strategic relations with the new Ukrainian state. Due to their shared history and similar political and economic conditions, the two states have since

¹ Luis Navarro, "Public attitudes in Georgia: Results of a April 2014 survey carried out for NDI by CRRG-Georgia and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)." Available at: https://www.ndi.org/files/Georgia_April_2014_Survey_English.pdf

reached a high level of political, security, and economic cooperation. The fact that both nations are Orthodox Christian with churches that have been revamping relations with the Moscow Patriarchate has also played a role in cementing their regional bonds.

Despite leadership changes in Georgia and Ukraine, both states have more or less seen themselves as fighting a common battle against Russian domination in the post-Soviet space. Although there are significant internal and external political differences between Georgia and Ukraine, joint efforts resulted in the creation of the GUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova), which was established partially as an attempt to counterbalance Russia's influence in the region. Now that Georgia and Ukraine, two Black Sea states, have had democratic revolutions, both have gradually begun to closely identify with the European Union, NATO, and the United States as security partners. As a result, both countries were considered, albeit unsuccessfully, as potential candidates for a Membership Action Plan at NATO's Bucharest Summit in 2008, strengthening their "solidarity" in a shared Euro-Atlantic destiny. The recent signing of far-reaching Association Agreements with the EU has further reinforced bilateral relations between Georgia and Ukraine, as both countries have now committed themselves to EU standards and, together with Moldova, have bound themselves closer to the West. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia remain strongly committed to European integration and supporting Western policies. While other Eastern Partnership (EaP) states failed to sign Association Agreements for various reasons, there is hope that eventually the West may see its links with Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Chisinau as strategic allies for the coming decades, in much the same way that the Baltic states were decoupled from the "post-Soviet" framework and completed the process of European and transatlantic integration.

Why the Ukraine Crisis Matters for Georgia

Many in Georgia believe that the actions of Russia in Ukraine are a repeat of what happened in Georgia in August 2008. Distribution of Russian passports, reinforcement of military infrastructure and units, and the decision to protect the "interests of compatriots" with military force are all viewed as a violation of the internal affairs of a sovereign state. There is also a strong conviction that Russia's moves against Ukraine might have been unsuccessful, or never even begun, had the international community paid more attention to the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. The weak Western reaction to Russia's invasion of Georgia allowed Moscow to think it could get away with seizing Crimea as well.

While some voices in the West blamed Georgia for provoking its war with Russia and called for more restraint vis-a-vis Moscow, the Ukraine crisis has exposed that whatever tactic the West may prescribe for self-defense, it cannot do much to stop the Kremlin's imperialist appetite. While the immediate reaction to Russia's invasion was dealt with differently by Tbilisi and Kyiv, in both cases the end result was practically the same. Military aggression had disastrous consequences for both countries, ending in the

occupation of their territories. Meanwhile, the international community still remains unable to get Russia to comply with its obligations to withdraw troops from Georgia's occupied regions and now Crimea. Subsequently, the Kremlin's intervention is seen as a serious precedent that raises concerns about the territorial integrity of Georgia.

There is an expectation, however, that the Ukraine crisis may push Western leaders to take decisive steps to find concrete formulas to beef up the Western integration of the region. This would be much in the same way that the Russia-Georgian war prompted the EU to initiate the EaP, which included Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Though membership in the EaP did not contain any promise of eventual EU membership, it played an important role in consolidating the European foreign perspectives of at least Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.

So far, EU leaders have been unable to bridge their differences in order to deliver tangible plans that could change the geopolitics of the region. For its part, Washington is acknowledging the emerging new realities in the wider Black Sea region. One important signal was the recent introduction in the U.S. Senate of the Russian Aggression Prevention Act of 2014. If passed, the bill proposes to treat Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, along with Azerbaijan, as major non-NATO allies and pledges their closer interaction with the U.S. military. Though this status does not entail the same mutual defense and security guarantees afforded to NATO members, if passed the bill would affirm the strategic importance of the greater Black Sea region to the United States. Even though the United States is ill-prepared to defend Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova against Russia today, it is also important to counter any perception that the United States (and the West) have acquiesced to increased Russian dominance in the region.

Georgia's Ukraine Policy: Implications for Party Politics

The issue of Ukraine has been an important factor in the internal politics of Georgia as well. After the Rose (2003) and Orange Revolutions (2004), the political elites of both states enjoyed strong political ties. Based on personal contacts (former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili went to university in Kyiv) and revolutionary solidarity, the government under Saakashvili had unprecedented access to Ukrainian politics. During his tenure, Saakashvili managed to establish strong cooperative relationships with a wide array of Ukrainian politicians, including Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko. Importantly, the links he established were institutionalized by interparty cooperation by affiliation with international platforms like the European People's Party (EPP) and other European structures. Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) and Ukraine's *Rukh* and *Batkivshchyna* parties garnered the support of like-minded European politicians. Saakashvili and the UNM even tried to influence the 2010 presidential election in Ukraine when they openly supported Tymoshenko over Viktor Yanukovich and sent election observers to Donetsk, Yanukovich's political stronghold. Even today, the new authorities in Kyiv seem to be partial to Saakashvili. Some of his

team members, including Kakha Bendukidze (former Minister of Economic Development), Giorgi Vashadze (former head of the Civil Registry Agency), and others currently work as advisors for different branches of the Ukrainian government.

The policy on Ukraine that the Georgian Dream (GD) government has pursued is a significant departure from the approach its predecessors adopted. Tbilisi has underlined its full support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and referred to Russia's occupation of Crimea as a land grab. However, Tbilisi has abandoned its openly anti-Russian rhetoric and has not embraced the Georgian opposition's request that the government "condemn Russia's brazen military aggression." Instead, the Georgian authorities issue carefully-worded statements that seek to avoid irritating Moscow. Unlike previous administrations, the GD government seems less keen to use emotional and critical language against Moscow preferring instead diplomatic idioms. Tbilisi is well aware that the geopolitical stand-off between Russia and the West over Ukraine leaves little space for any meaningful incentives for Georgian diplomacy.

The Ukraine crisis is seen as potentially significant for the Georgian economy. Although the figures are not huge, there are important economic links between Ukraine and Georgia. Ukraine was Georgia's third largest trading partner in 2013 with \$795.1 million in trade turnover,¹ and any kind of political crisis or unrest immediately influences business and economic relations between the two states. Because Georgia cannot rely on the politically-managed Russian market, the Ukrainian market is of significant importance as a regional alternative to Russia. It is still not clear how trade between Ukraine and Georgia is being affected due to the current crisis, though Georgian experts fear the impact is negative. One positive element for Georgia, however, are inflows of Ukrainian tourists who would otherwise have vacationed in Crimea.

Conclusion

Even though Georgia and Ukraine can celebrate their closer ties with the EU, it is clear that neither will persuade the EU or the United States to oppose Russia militarily. On the other hand, given the current circumstances, some experts see the possibility of accelerated NATO support for Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. At the moment, however, this is unlikely. In the aftermath of the September NATO summit in Wales, it is clear that neither Ukraine nor Georgia are on a direct path to NATO membership. While Tbilisi's Western trajectory so far remains unchallenged, concerns persist that Russia's proxy war in Ukraine, if continued, could have long-term effects on security dynamics in the South Caucasus and its longstanding conflict zones, as well as on the political landscape in Georgia, where old and newly-emerging pro-Russian political forces still wait for their call. With tensions high after summer clashes between Azerbaijani and Armenian troops over Nagorno-Karabakh, the situation concerning

¹ <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26885>

regional peace and security is all the more grim. Recent declarations from Georgia's breakaway republic South Ossetia about holding a referendum on joining Russia has also aroused suspicions that Russia is preparing to annex this region. For now, however, it seems that Moscow does not wish to invite further international criticism over moves it might make on Georgia's separatist regions. Still, Georgian officials cannot be complacent regarding Moscow's designs toward South Ossetia. Georgia's present flirting with the Kremlin does not alter the perpetual intentions of the Russian Federation: to keep Georgia, Ukraine, and other post-Soviet states within its sphere of influence and to divert them from a European path. It is up to Western leaders to respond to this challenge and to responsibly address security concerns in the greater Black Sea region.

On the Road to 2015

CAN GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION LEAD TO TURKISH-ARMENIAN RECONCILIATION?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 339

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The one-hundredth anniversary of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire will be commemorated in April 2015. Armenians and Turks plan to call special attention to this tragic centenary. The occasion provides a major opportunity for change in Armenian-Turkish relations. Whether that change will be toward rapprochement or a new rise in tension remains to be seen.

Armenia Passes a Psychological Threshold

The one-hundredth anniversary of the genocide is likely to have a strong psychological impact on Armenian society. Crossing the threshold of the tragedy's centennial can reduce the emotional burden and feelings of victimization that exist inside Armenia and within the Armenian diaspora.

Many believe that the anniversary will spark greater international attention and encourage more countries to officially recognize the genocide. Some hold out hope that even Turkey will bring itself to recognize and atone for the crimes committed by its predecessor. For Armenia, recognition of the genocide is not only important as a form of moral compensation and recovery from past victimization. It is also viewed as a means to increase Armenians' sense of security.

At a minimum, the centenary of the genocide has the potential to be a vehicle for renewing efforts at normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations. The previous effort at rapprochement, the "football diplomacy" of 2009, stalled a year later due to domestic opposition in Turkey and Azerbaijan's jealous but successful efforts to stymie the process.

The Turkish-Armenian protocols that were signed in October 2009 but never ratified continue to be key to this rapprochement. Ankara's refusal to ratify the protocols without preconditions, continuing blockade of Armenia, and open support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict led to heavy criticism among Armenians; some opposition and diaspora groups have called for rejecting the protocols outright,

insisting that keeping them alive only blocks efforts at genocide recognition. Officially, however, Yerevan insists that the logic of the protocols remains the foundation of any future progress in Armenian-Turkish relations as they are the result of difficult and painful compromise reached in bilateral negotiations.

In early June 2014, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan unexpectedly invited Turkey's next president to visit Armenia in April 2015 to pay tribute to the victims of the genocide. The invitation was issued partially as a response to then-Prime Minister (and now President) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's unprecedented condolences to Armenia and the diaspora on the 99th anniversary of the genocide. Certainly, if Erdoğan accepts the invitation, it will be a convenient opportunity to revitalize the Armenian-Turkish process of normalization.

Turkey: Tentative New Steps or the Same Old Façade?

Erdoğan's official condolences in April 2014 were an important step as it was the first time when the highest Turkish official expressed official condolences to Armenia and the Armenian diaspora. True, many Armenians perceived these to be nothing more than an updated and more flexible form of genocide denial, an expression of moral sympathy *without* recognition of historical responsibility. However, at least some Turkish and foreign observers perceived Erdoğan's statement to be a genuine step toward recognition and atonement, if without using the politically-sensitive "G-word." After this, Turkish officials could even conceivably follow the lead of U.S. President Barack Obama, who to avoid the term "genocide" in official speeches ritually uses the Armenian term *Meds Yeghern* ("Great Disaster").

Domestic perceptions of the issue are important in Turkey and can influence Ankara's position. Already, discussing the genocide is no longer taboo within Turkish society, partially thanks to the rapprochement efforts of 2008-2010. Erdoğan and his political team would like to dispose of Turkey's Kemalist legacy, of which both the genocide and its denial are part; in theory, they could find themselves in alliance with those Turkish intellectuals and part of Turkish society that support genocide recognition. However, such a move would provide easy fodder to the opposition (Kemalist) Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). Moreover, there are signs that the government is seeking to avoid the issue domestically, for instance organizing a series of pompous events in April 2015 to mark the centennial anniversary of the Battle of Dardanelles.

If sincere, Ankara will have to accept that moving toward normalization of relations with Armenia will not mean the end of Armenian efforts to achieve full international recognition of the genocide. This struggle depends on more than the commemoration of symbolic dates or the dynamics of Armenian-Turkish relations. The genocide and its international recognition are key elements of the political identity of the Armenian

diaspora, which became scattered around the world mainly as a result of that tragic event. Diaspora-led efforts to secure Turkey's recognition of (and possible restitution for) the genocide will continue, even if Armenia and Turkey make tangible steps toward normalizing relations and opening their borders.

In the end, the most difficult but critical challenge for those seeking to promote Armenian-Turkish normalization is determining whether Ankara's efforts are fake or sincere, and, more precisely, whether Ankara's approaches in this normalization process are based on pure posturing or are attempts to make small but sincere steps ahead. Contradictory statements on the Armenian-Turkish normalization process by Turkish officials only sustain this uncertainty. Unfortunately, sometimes it seems that even Ankara itself may not know where imitation ends and *realpolitik* begins. Turkish authorities have significant external and internal limitations in moving toward normalization with Armenia. But dragging the process on requires Turkey to spend significant resources and to bear foreign policy costs. According to one account, "Approximately 70 percent of the Turkish Embassy's time in Washington is spent trying to persuade leading Americans to support Turkish positions on the Armenian question."¹

Regional Context and External Actors

Recent developments in the Middle East have altered Turkey's position in the region, increasing Ankara's political and geographical significance to both Washington and Brussels. Accordingly, Turkey has become less vulnerable to the West, especially the EU. Turkey's fading hopes for EU membership in the near future and the EU's preoccupation with its domestic problems and geopolitical challenges on its periphery have reduced Ankara's readiness to listen to the EU. So too have Turkish elites' unconcealed ambitions for a more independent political and economic international role, in part on the basis of a decade of self-sustainable economic development and Turkey's own penetration into European markets (as compared to the EU's permanent economic crisis and serious institutional problems). Moreover, Turkey's importance to the EU from a geopolitical point of view has grown given the Arab Spring, the Syrian and Iraq crises, and the international negotiations with Iran. Ankara's longstanding efforts to become an alternative energy hub for Europe have also reinforced Turkey's significance.

Nonetheless, Turkey's political priorities still lie with the West, and the political perceptions of the Turkish political and economic elites remain "Western-centric." Thus, the positions of the EU and the United States on the Armenian-Turkish process still matter. It is crucial to take into account that the position of the United States and a number of key European states toward Turkey is formulated in part with the input of

¹ Osman Bengur, "Turkey's Image and the Armenian Question," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* (Spring 2009), 45.

Armenian, Greek, and even pro-Israel lobbies. These lobbying structures often use the dark pages of Turkey's past, such as the Armenian genocide and its ongoing denial by Turkish authorities, as leverage to pressure the legislative and executive powers in their own countries. Washington, Paris, and Brussels, and recently even Tel Aviv, keep recalling this fact on different levels when problems arise in their dealings with Ankara. For example, in regard to the former Turkish prime minister's toughening remarks about the Israeli political elites, there can be traced a willingness to officially acknowledge the Armenian genocide, which Tel Aviv has been overcoming for different reasons. In such a way, Turkish policy toward Armenia partially represents the continuation of Turkey's relations with the West.

The Ukraine crisis and Armenia's decision in September 2013 not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU but to join the Russia-led Customs Union have also affected the political situation in the South Caucasus. At the same time, Russia's further political and economic isolation by the West can stimulate overtures by Moscow to Turkey, recalling the situation in the early 1920s, when Bolshevik Russia and Kemalist Turkey found common ground.

If, however, the West seeks to revive a containment policy against Russia, it may seek Turkey's cooperation to help deny Russia a position of influence in the South Caucasus. One of the elements of such a strategy could be the restart of the Armenian-Turkish normalization process, as the Turkish blockade and Ankara's support for Azerbaijan reinforce perceptions of insecurity in Armenia and cement Russia's military and political presence there. Accommodating these revived Western efforts may serve Ankara's long-term interests. Although Turkey and Russia are large-scale trade and economic partners, and sometimes even exhibit a common tactical convergence (such as during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war), they remain "competing allies" from a strategic perspective in their common neighborhood.

Conclusion

It is not normal for two neighboring states at peace with each other to have an absence of diplomatic relations and closed borders. The one-hundredth anniversary of the Armenian genocide offers an opportunity to resume efforts at normalizing relations between Turkey and Armenia. Despite the complexity of the historical past, Armenia declares a readiness to normalize relations with Turkey without preconditions. It remains costly for Ankara to continuously ignore these overtures, which have the support of the international community. Ankara can choose from several courses of action: accept an invitation to visit Yerevan in April 2015 that might begin a new political process, open the border with Armenia, establish diplomatic relations, and/or ratify the Protocols. Unfortunately, the new Turkish government could also go in another direction. It could create simply the illusion of a new process, something that will only fuel further Armenian mistrust.

Belarus' Renewed Subordination to Russia

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OR HARD BARGAIN?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 329

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July 20 was the twentieth anniversary of Alexander Lukashenko's inauguration as president of Belarus. Over these two decades, his country has performed a unique balancing act.

On the one hand, Belarus has declared itself Russia's most loyal ally and asserted its readiness to join any reintegration initiative Moscow proposes, including the ostensibly bilateral "Union State" that was created in 1999. In return, Belarus has obtained colossal economic benefits that have kept its unreformed economy afloat.

On the other hand, Lukashenko emphasizes the primacy of his country's national sovereignty. He has flirted with European neighbours, and Belarus has even joined the European Union's Eastern Partnership program. Russian expectations that Minsk's political advances toward Moscow would be followed by economic openings for Russian business have largely remained unmet. At times, "Russia's best ally" has even resorted to harsh undiplomatic rhetoric and deliberately provoked conflicts in order to wrest concessions from Moscow in exchange for a return to "normal" relations.¹

Events in the first half of 2014 have significantly altered this balance. Russia's annexation of Crimea in March demonstrated that Moscow is prepared to use hard power over economic incentives and sees enforced partnership as a more effective instrument of policy than buying loyalty. The May 2014 signing of the agreement forming the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) demonstrated that Lukashenko cannot escape the deepening of Belarus' institutional integration with Russia, regardless of how he may feel about any given institutional arrangement. Arguably, events in Ukraine and the creation of the EEU have qualitatively limited Minsk's freedom of maneuver and, for the foreseeable future, changed Belarus' foreign policy paradigm. Bargaining and retaining economic privileges are still possible, but a complete rejection of what Vladimir Putin sees as critically important is not.

¹ See, for example, Arkady Moshes, "Russian-Belarusian Relations after Vilnius: Old Wine in New Bottles?" PONARS Eurasia [Policy Memo No. 304](#), December 2013.

The Case of Ukraine

The line taken by Minsk toward the crisis in Ukraine is highly revealing in this regard. There is no doubt that Belarus would like to appear as an independent actor. Lukashenko has personally done a lot to emphasize the distance between the Belarusian and Russian approaches to Ukraine. Even though Lukashenko did not show any sympathy for the Euromaidan movement and called the change of power in Kyiv an “unconstitutional coup,” he immediately recognized the legitimacy of Ukraine’s new authorities and met with acting president Olexander Turchinov. After the May 25 election, Lukashenko congratulated newly elected president Petro Poroshenko on his victory and even attended his inauguration. Lukashenko recognized Crimea’s entry into Russia *de facto* but not *de jure*, and he publicly supported Ukraine’s territorial integrity and the maintenance of a unitary state. Consequently, Belarus refused to recognize the results of the independence referenda held in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. On the eve of Ukraine’s signing of the economic part of its bilateral Association Agreement with the EU in June, Belarus (supported by Kazakhstan) blocked the introduction of new import duties by the Eurasian Economic Union on Ukrainian exports, leaving Russia to act unilaterally.

Analysts were not surprised by these actions, which in fact seemed to be a continuation of Minsk’s established policy tradition. Ukraine is Belarus’ close cultural neighbor. More importantly, it is its second largest trade partner after Russia, which makes bandwagoning onto the latter neither an easy nor natural choice. Differences from Russia also typically attract positive attention from the West. Poroshenko’s inauguration, for instance, provided Lukashenko the rare opportunity to be featured in a group of international leaders. Also recall that Belarus never recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia; on the contrary, Minsk maintained stable and even warm relations with Tbilisi under its former president Mikheil Saakashvili.

Nonetheless, despite all its rhetoric in support of Ukraine’s unity, Belarus joined Russia in voting against Ukraine’s territorial integrity in the UN General Assembly in March. The only other post-Soviet state to fall in line was Armenia, which has its own reasons to prioritize self-determination over territorial integrity. Russia’s other closest partner, Kazakhstan, abstained from the vote, but Belarus was apparently not provided this liberty. Presumably, Lukashenko concluded that the absence of full and meaningful solidarity with Moscow on this issue would have consequences that Belarus could not afford to bear. This is a critical distinction from previous experience.

Russian-Belarusian “Reunification”: Still Hypothetical but No Longer Unthinkable

The key to understanding why Minsk decided not to test Russia’s patience may lie with its concern that Belarusian sovereignty and territorial integrity are less secure today than before. While Lukashenko is unlikely to feel impending doom, his government now has to treat the *Anschluss* of Belarus as at least a possible scenario.

First, rhetoric of the “Russian world” and the “gathering of Russian lands” has gained prominence in both official and unofficial circles in Russia. It is impossible to determine whether the expectations this kind of talk engenders will increase to a point requiring appropriate action. But compared to Ukraine, Belarus is a relatively easy target: it is traditionally friendly to Russia, predominantly Russian-speaking, and fairly small. Back in 2002, Putin suggested that if Belarus were to fully unite with Russia, it should do so as just “six regions.” His off-the-cuff comment prompted an emotional reaction from Lukashenko, who has hardly forgotten this slight. At the same time, Russia’s ability to plan and carry out such a conquest has been convincingly demonstrated. Without pushing the comparison too far, we can acknowledge certain similarities between Belarus and Crimea:

- Traditional sympathies for Russia, propelled among other things by a higher standard of living.
- Exposure to Russian broadcast media.
- The presence of Russian military personnel, which is expected to increase in Belarus in the coming years.
- Close integration between the Russian and Belarusian military and security services, which raises the question of the latter’s loyalty.

Second, it has become evident that the West is not in a position to protect its partners. This may not have been a big surprise for Minsk, which is well-versed in the Russian discourse on the “decline of the West” and has learned from its own experience that the EU is reluctant to go beyond mere declarations in its sanctions policy. In addition, from now on several new factors have to be taken into consideration, namely:

- The West’s apparent acquiescence to Crimea’s annexation, recalling that actions taken or discussed were predominantly aimed at preventing escalation of the conflict beyond Crimea.
- A clear line publicly drawn between membership in and partnership with Western organizations, something that is legally and technically correct but in real life leaves partners to their fate.
- Serious concerns among Belarus’ immediate western neighbours as to whether or not NATO would be willing and capable to defend them.

All this prompts the following conclusion: engagement with the West is not a guarantee of security, while simulation of engagement just provokes Russian retaliation. In the end, if the West failed to ensure Ukraine’s territorial integrity, it is highly unlikely it will do anything for Belarus, which has long been seen as part of Russia’s sphere of “privileged interests.”

Finally, there has been a change in Belarusian public opinion. Regardless of whether or not Belarusian citizens think the two countries should form one state, they are now compelled to contemplate a possible reunification by force. In a June 2014 poll by the Vilnius-based Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS), 26 percent of respondents believed that the “annexation by Russia of the whole of Belarus or part of its territory” is “highly probable” and another 4 percent found it “unavoidable.”¹ Thirty percent considered the annexation improbable, while 36 percent thought it possible but with low probability. Worryingly for the authorities, only 14 percent of people said they would be ready to take part in an armed resistance, while 48 percent would try to adapt to the new situation and 17 percent would welcome it. Grigory Ioffe, a specialist on Belarus, has rightly noticed the difference between popular opinion and “what Minsk considers to be Belarus’ national interest.”

How Does the Eurasian Economic Union Factor In?

The story of Belarus and the EEU mirrors Belarusian-Russian bilateral relations. Lukashenko criticizes Eurasian integration for its failure to create a “full-fledged” economic union without exemptions and non-tariff barriers. He has also threatened to withdraw from the organization if certain demands, first and foremost Belarus’ right to retain export duties on the oil products it refines domestically, are not met. Nonetheless, Lukashenko duly agreed to form the EEU in May 2014.

Belarus did obtain some concessions from Russia through a series of bilateral negotiations earlier that month. The parties agreed that in 2015 Belarus would keep \$1.5 billion of its export oil duties, approximately half the expected amount. Russia also agreed to supply Belarusian refineries with the amount of crude oil necessary to guarantee their operation at full capacity; previously, Minsk needed to confirm this quantity every three to six months, which was a lever Russia could use in case of disagreements. And even though Russian state loans did not arrive as expected, the state-owned Russian bank VTB provided Belarus with a so-called “bridge credit” of \$2 billion.

Moscow thus seems to recognize the need to compromise with Belarus on the economic—but not political—front. Undoubtedly, a deep economic crisis in Belarus would be a much bigger challenge for Russia and the emerging Eurasian Union than the relatively minor financial losses it incurs through concessions, while Lukashenko’s frustration with Moscow could obstruct the development of further integration. Moreover, if the EEU lives up to Moscow’s expectations, in the long run the benefits the Russian economy will receive thanks to Belarusian accession could very well compensate for the assistance package it has provided. If the process stagnates, on the other hand, the cash paid for Lukashenko’s signature will remain just another loss-making subsidy.

¹ <http://www.iiseps.org/news/49>

Conclusion

Due to the Ukraine crisis and the creation of the EEU, Minsk has largely lost its freedom of maneuver in relations with Moscow. Belarus' longtime economic dependence on Russia has now been paired with concerns that Lukashenko's hold on power, and conceivably even Belarusian statehood, can be lost.

Under these circumstances, rapprochement with the EU makes little sense. The choice that was present back in 2010—to engage in internal liberalization in exchange for Western financial assistance and political legitimacy—has ceased to exist. Today the West could not offer any package to compete with Russian economic incentives or protect Belarus from a conflict with Russia, even if it were inclined to do so. For the foreseeable future, interaction between the EU and Belarus will be ad hoc and technocratic, not strategic. This is an outcome Moscow can tolerate.

Meanwhile, Moscow will continue to provide Minsk with economic benefits. To retain Belarus under Russian control, a more dependent Lukashenko is the least costly scenario compared to other hypothetical options, such as “reunification” or the replacement of Lukashenko.

All this creates a very comfortable situation for Lukashenko as he approaches the 2015 presidential election. Without the ability to provide either positive or negative incentives, the EU will likely play no role in the election at all, while Russia can be expected to again offer support to Lukashenko's regime. Taking into account the weakness of his opposition and relatively high approval ratings, Lukashenko can be expected to face the least challenging presidential election in his entire political career.

Azerbaijan's Balancing Act in the Ukraine Crisis

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 352

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The crisis in Ukraine that began with the Euromaidan movement and flight of President Viktor Yanukovich put the Azerbaijani government in an uncomfortable position. For the last few years, Baku has been building good relations with Russia, hoping to persuade Moscow to stand on Azerbaijan's side in resolving the Karabakh conflict. Massive arms purchases from Russia, a benevolent foreign policy toward Moscow, and Baku's unwillingness to deepen relations with the European Union and NATO have all created a reasonably positive image of the country in the eyes of Russian authorities.

The Russian occupation of Crimea and support for separatists in the Donbas have complicated Azerbaijan's position, however. While the Azerbaijani government fully supports Ukraine, Baku cannot afford to spoil relations with Moscow due to the latter's significant leverage in the Caucasus. Azerbaijan is left with the option of trying not to irritate Russia while staying on the side of those who object to Russia's intervention. At the same time, the Ukraine crisis and a fear of interrupted gas supplies has led to renewed attention by the European Union to the need for an alternative transport system for delivery of gas from the Caspian region to European states. European consumers have even begun to express interest in revitalizing the idea of a Transcaspian gas pipeline that would deliver Turkmen gas to Europe via Azerbaijan. Overall, the Ukraine crisis has made Baku's geopolitical stance a high prize.

Familiar Parallels: Crimea, Donbas, and Karabakh

During the early stages of the Euromaidan movement, Azerbaijan did not take sides. The authorities tried to wait and see in the hopes that the crisis would reach a swift resolution. However, Russia's occupation of Crimea and the start of military conflict in eastern Ukraine turned public and elite opinion entirely over to the side of Ukraine's new government. For the Azerbaijani public, the situation was highly reminiscent of the Karabakh conflict. The Russian occupation of Crimea and rise of separatist-led fighting in the Donbas appeared to closely parallel Russia's actions in support of Armenia's occupation of Karabakh during the 1990s. Even the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 over a separatist-controlled area of eastern Ukraine was reminiscent of the shooting down by Karabakh separatists of an Iranian airliner in 1993.

While Russia appealed to the principle of self-determination in Crimea, Azerbaijan has long held fast to the principle of territorial integrity. Azerbaijan made clear its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity in the March 2014 UN General Assembly vote on Ukraine; Azerbaijan was among more than one hundred countries that voted in favor of the resolution in support of its territorial integrity. Among the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Moldova was the only other to vote in favor. Russia, Belarus, and Armenia voted against it while the others abstained (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) or were conveniently absent (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Baku has also supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Baku has tried to use the situation in Ukraine to its own advantage by calling attention to the parallel with Azerbaijan's own separatist conflict. President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly pointed out that the West is applying double standards: it imposes sanctions against Russia for its occupation of Crimea and support of separatism in the Donbas while it has never considered sanctions against Armenia for the occupation of Karabakh.

Russia's bold actions and disregard of international law has sparked fear that Armenia may follow Russia's path and formally annex Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding occupied territories. Although the Azerbaijani government understands that such a move would make Armenia a global pariah, Baku has some fear that Russia, which wields considerable influence over Armenia, might threaten Azerbaijan with such an outcome.

The clashes between Azerbaijani and Armenian armies in Karabakh in July and August demonstrated the fragility of the current truce. Azerbaijan considered the tensions, which left dozens dead from both sides, to be a result of Russian pressure on the eve of a meeting between the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Authorities feared that through these tensions Russia was sending a signal to Azerbaijan not to align closer with the West and even to consider the possibility of joining the Eurasian Union.

Azerbaijan's Non-Irritation Policy

As a result, as Baku cultivates positive relations with the new Ukrainian government, it also seeks to avoid spoiling relations with Moscow. While standing firm on the principle of territorial integrity and support for Ukraine on Crimea and southeast Ukraine, Azerbaijan has nonetheless tried not to irritate Russia by supporting non-binding resolutions against it. For example, the Azerbaijani delegation declined to vote against Russia in a January 2014 PACE vote on a resolution condemning the 2009 death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky. During an OSCE Parliament Assembly meeting held in Baku in July 2014, the Azerbaijani delegation voted against a U.S.-initiated resolution condemning the "clear, gross, and uncorrected violation of the Helsinki principles by the

Russian Federation.” The head of the Azerbaijani delegation, Bakhar Muradova, said that the “situation in Ukraine concerns Azerbaijan, which recognizes its territorial integrity; however, the Azerbaijani delegation stands against the selective approach by the OSCE toward conflicts in the region.”

At the same time, Baku holds out some hope that sanctions will weaken Russia sufficiently that it will seek Azerbaijan as another reliable ally in the Caucasus, leading Moscow to pressure Armenia to withdraw at least from the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh.

For its part, Moscow has already intensified contacts with Baku. In April, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev appointed Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin as chairman of the Russian delegation to the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation with Azerbaijan. The appointment of Rogozin, who has responsibility for Russia’s defense industry, reinforces the fact that military cooperation is a key element of Russian-Azerbaijani relations. Over the last four years, Azerbaijan has imported about \$3.35 billion in arms, of which 80 percent has come from Russia, including two S-300 missile systems, 94 T-90S tanks, 20 Mi-35M helicopters, and 100 BMP-3 armored vehicles. Azerbaijan has also purchased 25 Su-25 planes and 93 T-72M1 tanks from Belarus, Russia’s ally. Overall, trade turnover with Russia in 2013 amounted to \$3.5 billion, of which 83 percent were exports to Azerbaijan.

In mid-June, Rogozin visited Baku, together with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and parliamentary chairman Sergey Naryshkin. Their purpose was clear: to persuade Azerbaijan to move toward the newly formed Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). During a Russian-Azerbaijani forum later that month, eleven documents dealing with economic relations were signed. During his visit to Baku, Russia’s minister of economic development, Alexei Ulyukayev, hinted at the possibility that Azerbaijan could join the EEU, but Baku clearly responded that it was not planning to join any type of economic union.

Finally, in August of this year, the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia met in Sochi. Although the public was not informed of the results of this meeting, Azerbaijani observers surmised that Baku was the main target of the meeting, as well as of the recent escalation. Russia may yet try to forestall the development of an alternative route for Caspian gas to Europe and use its own gas as a weapon in a bid to get Western sanctions lifted. In this case, Azerbaijan will have become a victim of others’ geopolitical contests.

Oil and Gas for Europe: Pursuing the National Interest

Meanwhile, the Ukraine crisis has to some degree played a positive role for Azerbaijan in its relations with the West. The crisis has once again revealed the fragility of the energy security environment in central and eastern Europe. New Russian threats to cut

natural gas supplies to Ukraine in the absence of agreement on debts and a new pricing structure recalled the 2006 and 2009 winter “gas wars” between Ukraine and Russia that resulted in shortages for customers across the region.

The Ukraine crisis has energy security implications beyond the territory of the EU. Indeed, it directly impacts Azerbaijan. It is expected that the bulk of initial gas deliveries for the Southern Gas Corridor that is to deliver natural gas from the Caspian to Europe across the South Caucasus and Turkey will come from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz field (around 10 billion cubic meters annually, which could be expanded in the future). This corridor will significantly decrease the dependence of many eastern and central European states on Russian gas.

Azerbaijan has even been interested in supplying gas to Ukraine. Until the Ukraine crisis this year, such discussions remained purely theoretical. In February, however, Ukraine's government at last began to move forward to support the construction of an import terminal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) with an expected annual turnover of 10 bcm. The bulk of this LNG is expected to come from Azerbaijan, which is conducting negotiations with Georgia to construct an LNG terminal on Georgia's Black Sea coast. In the meantime, Azerbaijan has been actively penetrating the Ukrainian energy market. Over the last four years, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) has invested around \$160 million in Ukraine, including 39 gas stations that operate under the SOCAR brand.

The Ukraine crisis has also forced policymakers in the United States to focus more closely on Azerbaijan as a potentially reliable source of natural gas for Washington's closest allies in Europe. In an April speech, U.S. Department of State Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Carlos Pascual underlined the role of the Southern Gas Corridor in helping achieve energy security for southern Europe.

Conclusion

So long as the Ukraine crisis continues, Baku will pursue its only sensible policy option: maintaining various balancing acts between the West and Russia. Azerbaijan will continue to pour money into Russian weapons and equipment, less as instruments of war than as tribute to the Russian military-industrial complex. In addition, the sanctions against Russia and Moscow's counter-sanctions have made Baku an invaluable partner for Russia. Whether via political support or the supply of necessary agricultural products, Moscow may come to rely more on Azerbaijan than on Armenia in the Caucasus.

This, however, will not help resolve the Karabakh conflict. The unresolved fate of these territories will continue to be Moscow's card in negotiations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. All the efforts of the EU and the United States to solve the conflict will be

torpedoed by Moscow. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan will strive to maintain good relations with the EU and the United States in the energy sphere, albeit keeping its distance more generally in order to satisfy other domestic and foreign priorities.

The Troubled Rebirth of Political Opposition in Russia

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 341

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In the 2000s, most experts considered the role of political opposition in Russia as peripheral at best. But with the protest wave of 2011-12, opposition actors and movements reentered the political arena. What factors contributed to this development? How did the opposition respond to major challenges and resolve its internal contradictions? What are its current prospects? This memo presents an account of the trajectory of opposition politics in Russia. It analyzes its major organizational and strategic problems and pays special attention to the difficulties of maintaining a “negative consensus” against an increasingly harsh authoritarian regime.

A Comeback of the Opposition?

In the mid-2000s, the decline of opposition politics in Russia was so steep and clear that an article entitled “Political Opposition in Russia: A Dying Species?” was met with few objections. At the time, the impact of the opposition was peripheral at best.¹ United Russia, the “party of power,” dominated the legislature. Representatives of the opposition exerted almost no influence on decision-making. Opposition parties and candidates received a limited share of the vote during (unfair) elections. In essence, the political opposition in Russia was driven into a very narrow ghetto, and spectators were gloomy about the prospects of its rebirth.

However, as a result of the protests in Moscow and other cities in 2011-2012 that brought together hundreds of thousands of participants, the Russian opposition was able to multiply its ranks, revitalize its leadership, secure a “negative consensus” against the ruling regime, and move to the forefront of Russian politics. Opposition activists became legitimate electoral actors, and some even managed to receive a decent number of votes during elections. The public voice of the opposition became louder, and the Kremlin was forced to focus on intimidating its rivals and their supporters rather than simply ignore them.

¹ Vladimir Gelman, “Political Opposition in Russia: a Dying Species?” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 21, 3 (2005), 226-46.

The Russian opposition is still far from achieving its goals, however. It remains bitterly divided, opening the door to divide-and-rule tactics by the Kremlin. It has been coerced by authorities in various ways and has not managed to develop a clear positive agenda.

Pathways Out of the Ghetto: The Trajectory of the Opposition

The term “opposition” is used in very different contexts in present-day Russia, as in other non-democratic regimes. This analysis limits itself to what is commonly regarded as the “non-systemic” opposition, comprising those organizations, movements, and/or politicians that aim to change the authoritarian regime in one way or another. In this respect, “non-systemic” opposition is democratic opposition, irrespective of the ideological stances of its various segments. Its major difference from the “systemic” opposition is that systemic actors might oppose certain policies but are not inclined to struggle for regime change. Systemic and non-systemic oppositions are not entirely separate actors and are often linked to each other. However, their strategies differ widely: the former serve as fellow travelers and junior partners of the authoritarian regime (even as the risks associated with their potential disloyalty are sufficiently high), while the latter position themselves as explicit rivals to it.

As often happens, the rebirth of the political opposition in Russia in the 2010s resulted from structural changes not directly related to the opposition as such. To some extent, this consisted of a shift in political opportunity during Dmitry Medvedev’s interregnum presidency. But it also emerged as a side effect of the opposition’s own strategic choices.

The effect of generational change played an important role in giving latent public demands explicit form. Disagreements between “fathers” and “sons,” a perennial feature of the Russian political landscape, arose as representatives of the post-Soviet generations that grew up in the 1990s and 2000s came to the forefront. These new activists found it easier to build a negative consensus against the authoritarian regime with ideologically distant brothers-in-arms. While opportunities for leadership change were blocked within the ruling elite, in the opposition camp leaders from the younger generation could bring about a revival. During the 2011-2012 mass protests, older opposition leaders were overshadowed by their younger counterparts. This process was symbolically completed in 2013, when the opposition party RPR-PARNAS, co-chaired by 53-year old Boris Nemtsov and 55-year old Mikhail Kasyanov, nominated 37-year old Alexei Navalny as its candidate for the Moscow mayoral elections.

A second major factor contributing to the rebirth of the Russian opposition was the “modernization” program that Medvedev announced during his presidency. Although this consisted of a chaotic and inefficient set of half-measures, it was accompanied by loud liberal rhetoric and a number of moves by the Kremlin that signaled openness in decision-making, public involvement in preparing policy recommendations, and a more “progressive” style of governance. The weakening of pressure by authorities on civil

society, along with some attempts at dialogue with the public, opened room for civic initiatives to extend the scope of the opposition agenda and allowed its leaders to speak more loudly without running the risk of getting stigmatized as “enemies.” Previously closed political opportunities were replaced by a partial and illusory liberalization that gave rise to the politicization of civil society, which became the milieu for the new opposition.

The third factor contributing to the rebirth of the political opposition in the 2010s was a major shift in the opposition’s political strategy. The opposition not only shifted its style of criticism toward the regime, it overhauled its entire agenda. A new populism became the cornerstone of resistance against the regime as a whole. The opposition condemned the country’s rulers as inefficient, corrupt, and incapable and unwilling to pursue positive change. Several anti-corruption campaigns launched by Navalny and other activists reflected a growing public demand for change and also provided grounds for cooperation among various groups of regime critics. The campaign against “crooks and thieves” in Russia in the 2010s fostered a negative consensus against the regime among the opposition and within society at large. It extended beyond organizational and ideological boundaries and served as the least common denominator when it came to demands for political change. Containing a populist opposition strategy is a daunting task for any authoritarian regime. In Russia, the regime’s choice has been not to employ large-scale repression but to rely mainly upon media manipulation while buying the loyalty of its citizens.

The three sources of change in the opposition camp—generational change, expanding political opportunity, and the populist shift—merged during the 2011-2012 protests and reinforced each other. While the Kremlin underestimated the challenge from the opposition, the latter was able to take advantage of the 2011 parliamentary election campaign. Tactical voting for “anyone but United Russia” and effective negative advertising contributed to the politicization of a large number of voters, and large-scale electoral fraud became a trigger event for mass protest. Their scope was unexpected to both the Kremlin and the opposition; even in their wildest dreams, opposition leaders could not have imagined tens of thousands of protesters in Moscow’s streets, with slogans shifting from “Fair elections!” to “Putin, go away!” The protest wave put an end to the previously marginal status of the opposition and paved the way to a new role. At the same time, these changes gave the Russian opposition numerous “growing pains” and led to multiple challenges that they responded to in often imperfect ways.

Beyond Negative Consensus

It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that the opposition in the period of the 2011-2012 mass protests became a victim of its own success. It was poorly prepared to solve new tasks organizationally or strategically, and it had little experience and a limited capacity for cooperation. The course of events at the time was so rapid that the

opposition had neither the time nor the resources to defeat the regime. Not only did the regime avoid any elite defection, even the systemic opposition refused to cooperate with protesters. The “non-systemic” opposition’s strategy was to boost the standing of all political parties other than United Russia, but these parties themselves had no incentive to support anti-regime protests; if the opposition dethroned Putin, the systemic opposition might not survive the subsequent regime change. Finally, protests mobilized via the Internet and social media failed to be sustained beyond one-off events to become a more durable enterprise.

Under these conditions, the Kremlin took the initiative with relative ease. The opposition failed to counter the “tightening of screws” by the authorities, who increased legal regulations and publicly discredited the opposition. Nonetheless, the protests of 2011-2012 resulted in the liberalization of rules for registering political parties and candidates. Subsequently, the opposition pursued two different approaches to sustain mobilization: supporters of street protests attempted to increase the number of demonstrators, while critics of this approach insisted that party-building and electoral struggle were the only viable strategies. In the end, both approaches failed: mass protests exhausted themselves rather swiftly, while sub-national elections brought the opposition only limited success.

Still, even this success exceeded the Kremlin’s expectations. While authorities counted on the opposition to receive at best individual seats in regional legislatures, in numerous mayoral elections officially sponsored candidates lost to various opposition rivals. In April 2014, five candidates in Novosibirsk that were endorsed by systemic and non-systemic opposition groups established an alternative pre-election coalition around Communist Party member Anatoly Lokot, who won the mayoral race. In the Moscow mayoral elections in September 2013, the incumbent, Sergei Sobyenin, hoped for an easy victory, as Alexei Navalny, his major challenger, initially enjoyed just limited support. This is why Navalny, who was undergoing a criminal trial during the campaign, was able to squeeze through the “municipal filter” as local deputies from United Russia officially endorsed his nomination. The Kremlin presumably wanted to dispose of Navalny after the polls, but it underestimated his potential and the election results exceeded virtually all predictions. Officially, Navalny received 27 percent of votes, against 51 percent for Sobyenin, who barely escaped a run-off. Navalny rightly argued that the time was not ripe for rebellion; he canceled post-election protests but urged his supporters to be ready “to light the fire” when he called upon them.

Challenges and Alternatives for the Opposition

In 1990, American political scientist Alfred Stepan discussed the lessons of Latin America’s anti-authoritarian opposition for postcommunist Europe.¹ A quarter-century

¹ Alfred Stepan, “On the Tasks of Democratic Opposition,” *Journal of Democracy*, 1, 2 (1990), 41-49.

on, these lessons seem highly relevant to present-day Russia. Stepan considered the role of opposition actors in democratizing authoritarian regimes to be as follows: (1) resisting co-optation into the regime; (2) guarding zones of autonomy vis-à-vis the regime; (3) undermining the regime's legitimacy; (4) raising the costs of preserving the status quo; and (5) creating a credible democratic alternative.

The Kremlin's approach has likely turned more citizens and organized collective actors into enemies, making tasks 1 and 4 easier for the opposition. However, tasks 3 and, especially, 5 are more complicated. The fact that these tasks have remained unresolved hinders the transformation of the opposition into the center of gravity for all regime dissenters and independent social actors. Political and economic actors who distance themselves from the Kremlin and the systemic opposition still tend not to endorse the non-systemic opposition; neither does that large portion of sub-elites who do not share the Kremlin's priorities for whatever reason. The opposition's relative isolation has been driven not only by the risk of oppression but also by the assessment of ordinary Russians that the opposition is not a viable alternative. Even for some regime critics, the preservation of the political status quo is considered the lesser evil as compared to the possible collapse of the regime, which will not necessarily bring positive changes.

Moreover, the populist strategy that forms the basis for a negative consensus has its limits, since it prevents the formation of a positive agenda. Unlike the ruling elite, the opposition does not benefit from taking deliberately vague and uncertain positions on heavily divisive political and policy issues. At the same time, firmer stances risk undermining the negative consensus they have established.

Finally, while condemning the regime and calling on Putin to step down, the Russian opposition has yet to prioritize a fundamental revision of the key rules of the game imposed by the Kremlin. These include: (1) the president's unilateral monopoly over the adoption of key political decisions, (2) a taboo on open electoral competition among the elites, and (3) the de facto hierarchical subordination of regional and local authorities to the central government (the "power vertical"). The opposition has not stated openly and directly the rejection of these elements of the system as its major goal. Its position on these issues remains vague and uncertain, thus demonstrating the disjuncture between the opposition's populist political supply and the Russian public's political demands.

These challenges became more salient in 2014, after the Russian annexation of Crimea and the resulting aggravation of Russia's conflict with the West over Ukraine. Recent political developments provoked by Russia's aggressive foreign policy have posed a major blow for the opposition. Since March 2014, not only has the scope of abuse and repression against the opposition (and threats thereof) dramatically increased, the opposition's own mode of operation has taken on a different dimension. With the Russian public largely enthusiastic about the Kremlin's approach toward Crimea, Ukraine, and the West, the opposition has lost the initiative. On the one hand, the

negative consensus against the regime has weakened (if not entirely disappeared), and only part of the non-systemic opposition openly rejects the Kremlin's policies. On the other hand, the organizationally and strategically weak opposition has failed to propose alternative solutions to the country's problems and inserted them into the public domain. The political opposition's impact on Russia's domestic (let alone international) agenda has been diminished, while the Kremlin's harsh targeting of the "fifth column" has been met with little resistance. As a result, opposition parties and candidates were not allowed to run in September 2014 sub-national elections, the organizational potential of the opposition was challenged, and its very capacity to serve as organized political dissent came under question.

Despite a high degree of public support for the Kremlin at the moment, public demand for change will likely increase over time. However, the present decline of the leading figures of the 2011-2012 protests means that these demands may be satisfied by other anti-regime actors under different slogans (and not necessarily democratic ones). In any case, a challenge to authoritarianism in Russia can only arise from below if the opposition is able to consolidate and mobilize a large number of regime opponents. A negative consensus against the status quo is a necessary yet insufficient condition for this mobilization. Examples of regime change in other countries suggest that in order for an opposition movement to achieve its goals, it must cooperate with a number of social groups and potential allies among the elites. It is too early to say whether the opposition in Russia will be able to utilize new opportunities if and when they occur. But the impact of generational change is not negligible, and new opposition leaders will be able to learn some lessons from the previous experience. The main slogan of opposition rallies—"Russia Will Be Free!"—should be perceived not just as a call for action but as a key item on Russia's political agenda for the foreseeable future. Russia will indeed become a "free" country. The question is when, how, and at what cost.

Daring to Protest

WHEN, WHY, AND HOW RUSSIA'S CITIZENS ENGAGE IN STREET PROTEST

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 333

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The December 2011-March 2012 protests in Russia, unprecedented in scale, surprised even the most astute observers of Russian politics. Were these protests a mere blip on the “normally placid surface of Russian political life”?² Or are they part of a longer-term trajectory of political maturation for Russian society? Do they reveal a growing capacity of Russia's citizens to resort to non-institutionalized forms of political participation, as opportunities to influence governance through the ballot box progressively shrink? When and under what conditions should we expect protests to erupt again?

An original protest dataset I have assembled helps answer these questions.³ In 2007, the liberal-leaning opposition figure Garry Kasparov helped set up a website called “namarsh.ru,” which can be roughly translated as “Go and protest!” The website relies on a network of regional correspondents to post and repost news on protests occurring across Russia. While some overreporting of liberal-leaning activism is likely, given the political orientation of those who run the website, the reports do cover protests featuring diverse agendas and political groupings. These range from activism that could be construed as purely civic in nature, such as when neighborhood residents take to the streets to challenge waste dumping, to protests led by activists from the Communist Party (KPRF) and other opposition parties and groups. Altogether, some 5,100 protest events were reported between April 2007, when the first protest entry was posted, and December 2013.

The data reveal temporal variations in the kinds of causes that people rally around which correspond to broader socioeconomic, institutional, and political changes occurring over time in Russia. We see from **Figure 1** that protests with a pronounced economic component peaked in 2008-2009, corresponding to the shock wave of the

¹ I am grateful to Alisa Voznaya for her excellent work on the dataset and her comments on this memo, and to Katerina Tertychnaya for her valuable help with data input and coding. I am also very grateful to the LSE's International Relations Department, LSE Research Committee, and to the LSE Suntory and Toyota International Centers for Economics and Related Disciplines (STICERD) for providing generous funding for this research.

² Lilia Shevtsova, “Implosion, Atrophy, or Revolution?” *Journal of Democracy* 23, 3 (2012): 19-32.

³ For a detailed discussion of the data, see Tomila Lankina, “The Dynamics of Regional and National Contentious Politics in Russia: Evidence from a New Dataset,” forthcoming in *Problems of Post-Communism*.

global economic crisis. Following the post-crisis economic recovery, protests with socioeconomic demands and agendas declined. Protests coded as civic—that is, those dealing with environmental, cultural, or legal issues¹—show a more consistent, flatter trajectory over time. Furthermore, in line with the findings of political scientist Graeme Robertson, who employed data from a left-leaning opposition website run by the Institute of Collective Action (*Institut kollektivnogo deystviya, IKD*), civic protests constitute a substantial chunk of protest activism.² The data also reveal a steady rise in number of protests with an explicitly political agenda in the years and months leading up to the mass protests that erupted in December 2011, as well as a decline in political activism after the re-election of Vladimir Putin to his third presidential term in March 2012. Despite the subsequent restrictions imposed by the Russian government and the resulting decrease in protests, as **Figures 2 and 3** show, the number of protests and people taking to the streets again rose in the second half of 2013. This record might be explained by a temporary reopening of the political space in advance of the Sochi Winter Olympic Games, which were preceded by the release from prison of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and members of the Pussy Riot group. The most interesting trend that emerges from these data is the apparent metamorphosis of civic protest into political activism during the winter of 2011-12 (percentages of types of activism by year for the entire period are contained in **Figure 4**). This is followed by a swift reversal of the trend after March 2012: the shrinkage of politicized protest as a share of overall protest activism appears to correspond to the (re)expansion of activism that is framed not in political terms but in terms of a diverse range of civic agendas. In 2013, specifically, the ratio of political protests vis-à-vis other types of protests recalibrated to a much more balanced spectrum of protest activity, with civic protests lagging only slightly behind political ones.

These trends suggest the presence of a latent constituency for protest that is largely hidden from the public eye and mainstream media spotlight as it engages in “safe” forms of activism during periods of political repression and/or closure, only to re-emerge again when openings occur in what social movement theorists refer to as “political opportunity structures.” It is well known that the rise in politicized contention corresponded to the liberal opening under the interim presidency of Dmitry Medvedev in 2008-2012. The election of Putin to his third presidential term in March 2012 was followed by a crackdown unprecedented in scale against protesters and political opposition. This crackdown is epitomized by the trials of the “Bolotnaya” protestors, named after the square in Moscow around which anti-regime protests and disturbances

¹ Protests concerned with legal issues target unpopular legislation and its implementation (labor, criminal and administrative codes); the category also includes protests against illegal acts by state bodies or private companies (forced eviction, construction in inappropriate areas). Environmental protests include those that target hazardous work conditions, waste dumping, and destruction of forests, parks, and protected woodlands. Cultural protests include street rallies against the destruction of monuments and historically valuable buildings and sites and against changes in city or area names.

² Graeme Robertson, “Protesting Putinism,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 60, 2 (2013): 11-23.

occurred on May 6, 2012, which some experts have likened to Stalin's show trials.¹ The trials were initiated ostensibly due to protester violence against the police and have already resulted in nine jail sentences, arrests of a further twelve activists, and surveillance and travel restrictions on at least four other individuals. The repression and crackdown on street protests that followed Putin's re-election is systematically recorded in my dataset. As shown in **Figure 3**, a substantially higher share of protest activity after March 2012, as compared to the earlier time periods, became subject to repression in the form of arrests of protesters, attempts to disrupt events by pro-Kremlin groups (by, for example, the youth group *Nashi*), police harassment, and other disruptive activities.

By highlighting how protest repression might encourage protesters to alter the key demands articulated in a protest, I do not imply that these demands are completely divorced from citizens' particular grievances. Indeed, as noted above, in times of economic hardship more people are likely to rally around bread-and-butter issues like layoffs, wage arrears, or delays in payment of salaries. Most ordinary people—at all times—may well perceive problems in their locality or neighborhood as having the most pressing and tangible effects on their lives. What the data trends seem also to suggest, however, is that particularly when political repression increases, there may be a greater tendency to (re)frame or (re)articulate grievances in more particularistic-local-parochial terms and re-channel blame away from national leaders and onto their sub-national clients or other lesser officials in the periphery: the corrupt municipal officials who enrich themselves by generating kickbacks from illegal construction projects on beautiful nature reserves; the private companies that dupe citizens into paying for apartment blocks that never get completed, and then get away with it because of the complicity or inaction of municipal and regional officials; or reckless drivers of official luxury vehicles sporting ubiquitous blue flashing lights (*migalki*) and endangering pedestrians and other vehicles.²

Why should we pay attention to the observed fluidity in protest issues and the question of whom protesters blame for their grievances? In an earlier PONARS memo analyzing the sustainability of the momentum generated by the December 2011-March 2012 protests, Mark Kramer rightly highlighted the importance of the development of "abeyance structures."³ These structures unite protesters into something more or less whole and coherent, enabling and nurturing continuity in between phases of contention that could be separated by months or even years. Our data may not reveal the

¹ As discussed by Nikolay Petrov at the Comparative Workshop on Mass Protests, June 13-14, 2014, LSE, London.

² Putin's soaring popularity after Crimea's annexation notwithstanding, public opinion surveys reveal constant—and even growing—levels of disaffection with corruption, lawlessness, and lack of accountability at all levels of governance. For recent Levada Center surveys of citizen satisfaction with government performance, see "Kto ne odobryaet deyatel'nost' prezidenta," June 24, 2014, <http://www.levada.ru/24-06-2014/kto-ne-odobryaet-deyatelnost-prezidenta>.

³ Mark Kramer, "Political Protest and Regime-Opposition Dynamics in Russia," PONARS Eurasia [Policy Memo No. 280](#), September 2013.

development of a coherent set of structures, ideologies, and leadership unifying protesters, but it does suggest the presence of constituencies for protest—however disparate—that continue accumulating what Robertson refers to as the human capital and skills toolkit of protest in between spikes in contention.¹ The existence of such protesting constituencies may be regarded as an important constant, even if the causes and targets that the same individuals take on are fluid, shifting, and adaptable to the institutional and political environments in which they operate. Sociologist Georgi Derlugian has also highlighted the importance of paying attention to this phenomenon by tracing the life histories of quintessential Soviet and post-Soviet activists in the Caucasus: a Brezhnev-era activist in pursuit of relatively safe issues (like the environment or youth health) becomes a democrat in the *perestroika* era and a nationalist demonstrator in post-Soviet times.² These patterns are illustrative of the adaptive capacity of citizens to change the way in which they articulate grievances in an authoritarian regime—and their potential to unite in large-scale protest as circumstances change.

Under what conditions, then, should we expect to see a rechanneling of non-political forms of protest into the kinds of mass anti-regime contentious politics observed on the streets of Russia between December 2011 and March 2012? Prior scholarship on protests in other settings and analyses of Russia's "December Movement"³ highlight the centrality of elite splits in generating political protest-enabling openings; rival elite factions not only can help rally protesters around political causes but also ensure their relative safety by association—as when, for instance, they are flanked by influential political figures such as former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin who joined the 2011 protests.

The sanctions imposed on Russia following its annexation of Crimea and allegations of support for separatist forces in eastern Ukraine may have already generated intra-elite grievances that are simmering behind the façade of a patriotic and nationalist consensus. Evidence of the Kremlin's sensitivity to potential grievances of the bureaucratic elite—and hence perception of the fragility of its loyalty to Putin—is its decision to pursue its campaign to limit property ownership abroad by government officials with a relatively light touch.⁴

As more stringent international sanctions are imposed on Russia, and a wider circle of officials is affected, the patriotic consensus may well crumble in the face of lost opportunities to vacation or access bank accounts abroad. Sanctions may also affect the

¹ Graeme Robertson, "Protesting Putinism."

² Georgi M. Derlugian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³ Lilia Shevtsova, "Implosion, Atrophy, or Revolution?" *Journal of Democracy* 23 (3) 2012: 19-32.

⁴ For instance, rather than banning property ownership by state officials abroad, Putin allowed the ownership of real estate by state officials abroad as long as property was declared. Discussed by Elizabeth Teague at the Comparative Workshop on Mass Protests, June 13-14, 2014, LSE, London.

economic well-being of ordinary citizens as foreign investment into the Russian economy shrinks. Socioeconomic grievances of ordinary citizens could intensify street activism of the bread-and-butter kind. A combination of political openings—if and when they occur—and mounting socioeconomic grievances are likely to encourage the metamorphosis of non-political forms of protest—already a routine occurrence in Russia’s neighborhoods and cities, as my data demonstrate—into more overt forms of political contention.

Figure 1. Number of Protests by Category, March 2007-December 2013

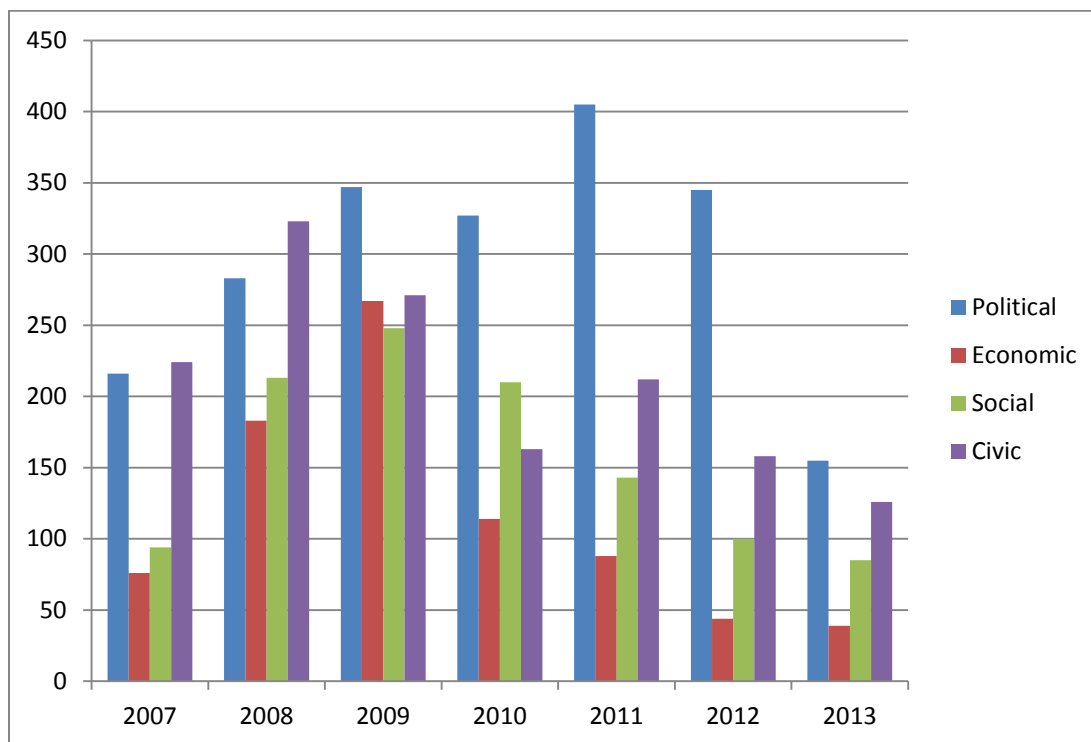


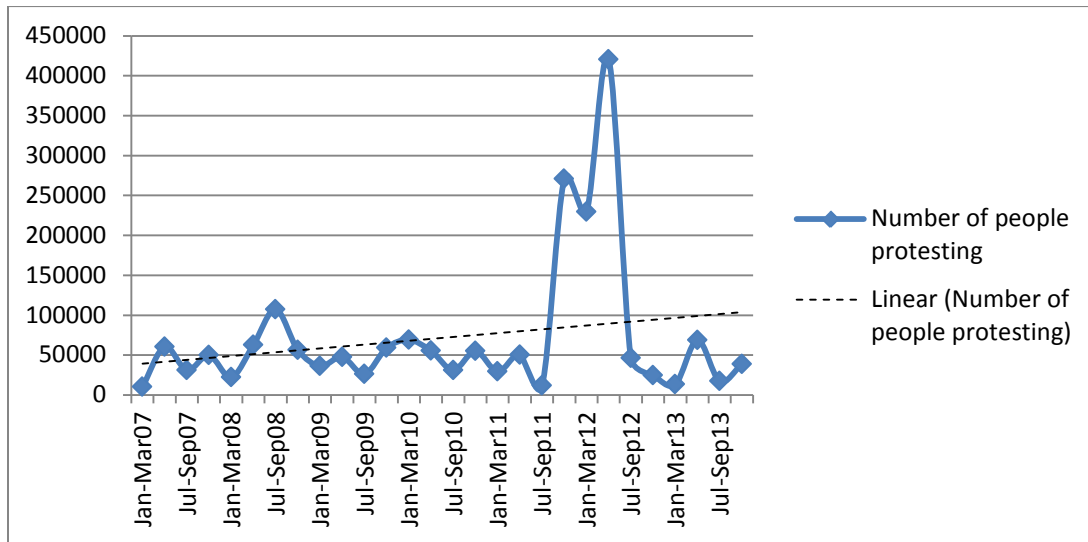
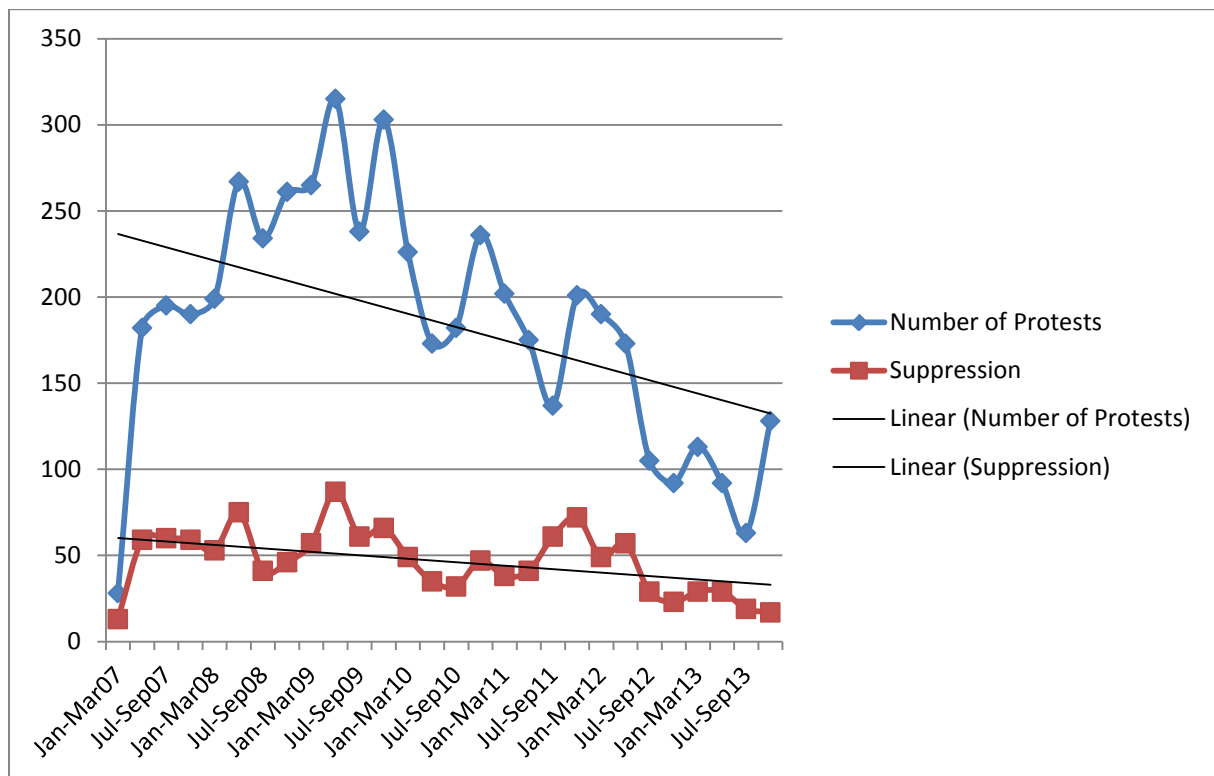
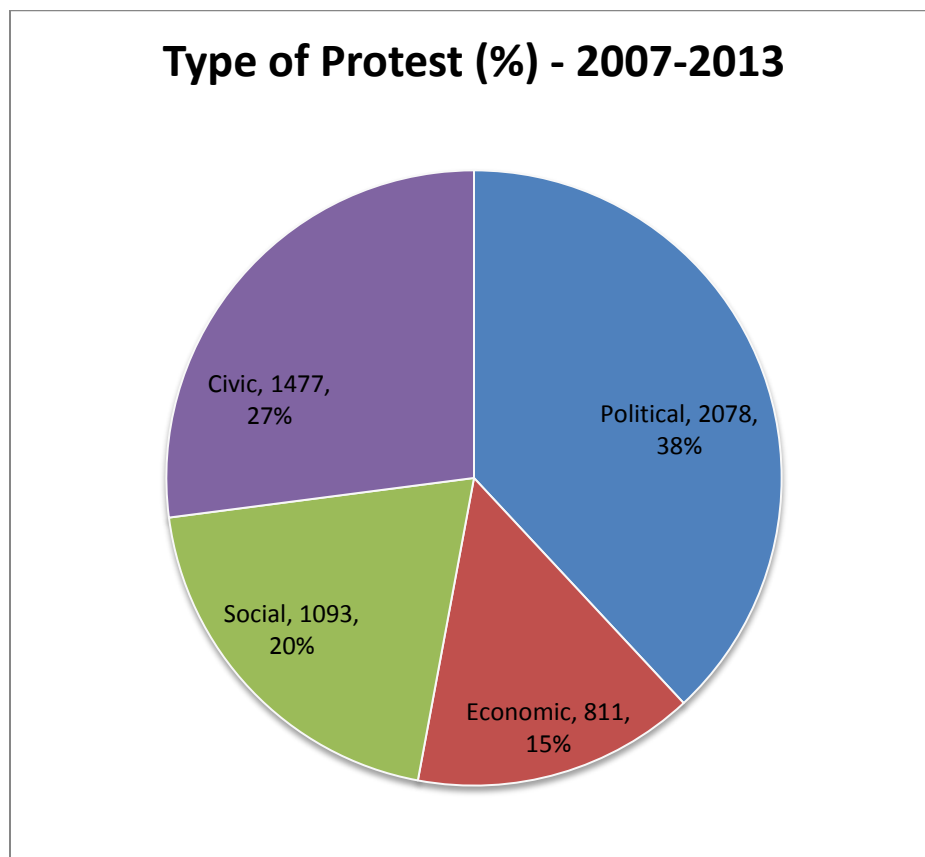
Figure 2. Number of People Participating in Protests, March 2007-December 2013**Figure 3. Number of Protests and Suppressions, March 2007-December 2013**

Figure 4. Type of Protest, March 2007-December 2013



Look Beyond the Capital

THE GEOGRAPHY OF POLITICAL OPENINGS IN EURASIA

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 335

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In the last decade and a half, the ousters of numerous national leaders and mass street protests in Eurasian and Middle Eastern capitals have taken scholars and policymakers by surprise. Political outcomes are challenging to predict, but by examining events in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010 and Ukraine in 2004 and 2013, we can see that attention to subnational influences helps. By introducing new leadership or reviving civil society, these events create political openings for greater democracy. By improving their ability to anticipate such events, local and foreign activists and policymakers could be better prepared to take advantage of these openings.

Events outside of national capitals can be precursors and facilitators of national political openings. They can be precursors in the sense that they contribute to later national upheavals. Subnational precursors include early local protests, framing of demands, local elite defection, and local election fraud. Other subnational developments, such as simultaneous local protests and the recruitment and movement of protestors, are facilitators of national political openings. These subnational developments do not precede extraordinary events in the capital but coincide with them and help fuel them. Monitoring concurrent subnational developments may help indicate when events in the capital will escalate into national political openings.

Precursors of National Political Openings

Of the precursors, local protests are particularly important because they can encourage mass demonstrations in the national capital. Combined, local and national protests can revive civil society and possibly remove national leaders.

Consider Kyrgyzstan in 2010. There were local protests in outlying towns before demonstrations in the capital resulted in the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. In February, two months prior to the ouster, an estimated 1,500 protestors filled the streets of the remote eastern town of Naryn demanding the government reverse price increases and plans to privatize energy firms. The numbers had grown to 3,000 by the time people returned to the streets in March. A month later, a protest erupted in the northern region of Talas and demonstrators occupied the regional government building. A wave of

demonstrations followed with protestors taking over district and regional government buildings in the regions of Chui, Jalal-Abad, and Issyk-Kul. Protests also spread to the capital Bishkek and Bakiyev fled.

These demonstrations in outlying regions shaped the public's political demands, offering clues as to what might later transpire on the streets of the national capital. As local protests grew in number and size, demands escalated from specific economic solutions to political overhauls. In addition to the economic demands, protestors insisted that the president's son, Maksim Bakiyev, who was widely believed to be profiting personally from his father's rule, be expelled from Kyrgyzstan. Ultimately, protestors called for the president to step down. Before the opposition in the national capital even had a chance to react, protestors in outlying regions had set the trajectory.

The actions of elites outside the capital can also be precursors of national political openings. In particular, local elite defection can portend the ouster of an incumbent regime, as occurred in Ukraine in the Orange Revolution of 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in the Tulip Revolution of 2005. In Ukraine, governments of the capital Kyiv and some western cities refused to recognize then-Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich as the new president, recognizing instead opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko. The fact that major parts of western Ukraine would refuse to recognize the government if Yanukovich took office may have encouraged the regime to negotiate to repeat the second round of the election, rather than try to thwart protestors' wishes. Large protests—300,000 in Kiev; 200,000 in Lviv; 30,000 in Kharkov; and 60,000 in Ivano-Frankivsk—provided additional encouragement. The regime's decision enabled Viktor Yushchenko to win the election and take office.

Local elites also defected prior to the ouster of Askar Akayev in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. The defectors were centrist and pro-government parliamentary candidates whose actions were prompted by court decisions to deregister them as candidates. On flimsy evidence, courts ruled that these individuals had engaged in vote buying and prohibited them from running. The real reason for their ejection from the races, however, was that they were slated to run against candidates favored by Akayev or his allies, including, for example, his wife's sister. The deregistered candidates protested the decisions and mobilized supporters to demonstrate in the streets. The protest in Kochkor was one of the most colorful, with thousands of supporters demonstrating in the streets, setting up roadblocks on the main road to China, and ultimately forcing the regional governor to flee by jumping over a fence and running out of town. The defectors' tactics of blocking roads and removing local incumbents inspired the larger post-election protests that followed. Later demonstrations used these tested tactics to protest the defeat of favored candidates.

Another elite action, local election fraud, can also be a precursor of a national political opening. In this scenario, national government officials test fraud techniques in local

elections before using them in a national contest. Ukrainian opposition leaders viewed the government's rigging of local elections in 2004 as a rehearsal for the regime's planned presidential election fraud, according to political scientist Nathaniel Copsey. Whether the local election fraud sparks a national political opening depends, of course, on the response of the masses and any organized opposition.

Facilitators of National Political Openings

In addition to subnational developments that are precursors of national political openings, there are also subnational factors that facilitate these openings. Even when local protests coincide with, rather than precede, national ones, events outside the capital can broaden the revival of civil society across the state. The spread of protest also signals to national leaders that the crisis they face is not limited to the capital but is, in fact, countrywide and thus more serious. Consider events in Ukraine that resulted in Yanukovych fleeing the country in February 2014. After the national government passed anti-protest laws, demonstrations escalated in Kyiv but even more so outside the capital. Between January 24 and 26, protestors took over eleven regional administrations and forced a wave of resignations of government officials. Police typically retreated quickly when buildings were being stormed. Such contentious activity spread from opposition strongholds in western Ukraine into the east of the country. Where governments fell, opposition executive committees formed and challenged Yanukovych's authority.

The regional government takeovers likely encouraged Yanukovych to offer a concession, albeit an ineffective one, on January 25. The occupations signaled to him that he was losing control of parts of the country—not only those historically more sympathetic to the opposition but also those he thought supported him. Yanukovych reacted by offering to share power with opposition leaders Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Vitali Klitschko by appointing them to the posts of prime minister and vice prime minister for humanitarian affairs, respectively. The concessions failed to mollify the protestors, however, as the government takeovers had signaled to the opposition that its position had strengthened. By rejecting the power-sharing agreement, Yatsenyuk, in fact, indicated as such.

Outlying areas can also influence national actions by sending demonstrators to the capital. In Ukraine in 2004 the influx to Kyiv of protestors from outside the capital appears to have helped the demonstrations there succeed. The numbers of protestors grew to nearly one million in Kyiv with hundreds of thousands thought to have come from outside the capital. The protest grew large enough that it discouraged the regime from using force to quell demonstrators because of its fear of heavy bloodshed. Likewise, in Ukraine in 2013 thousands from most regions of the country joined protests in Kyiv on November 24 after the government's reversal on agreements to integrate with the European Union. Following the November 30 Berkut crackdown, approximately half the protestors in Kyiv came from outside the city, according to a poll of 1,037

demonstrators in early December by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, a Ukrainian nongovernmental organization. Providing further indication of the geographic diversity of the demonstrators were the signs they held bearing the names of their hometowns.

Active mobilization of demonstrators from outside the capital can increase their impact. This was especially evident in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. As political scientist Scott Radnitz has described, wealthy individuals who lost in the first round of elections provided transportation from villages so that their supporters could protest the electoral losses in regional capitals. Their campaign teams were redirected to mobilize demonstrators. Villagers were responsive, in part, because many of the losing candidates were their patrons, providing them assistance and the promise of assistance. After several regional government buildings were taken over, the losing candidates organized protests in Bishkek. They provided buses so that their supporters could demonstrate in the capital and ultimately these protests, coupled with the events in the regions, resulted in Akayev's ouster. The failed attempts of major opposition coalitions to mobilize people in Bishkek earlier underscore the importance of the regional patrons' mobilization efforts. National opposition leaders did ultimately direct the protests in Bishkek that toppled the regime, but by then the government had lost control in the south, and the regime was likely already close to collapse. Moreover, the national opposition was not responsible for most of the mobilization, which had made the effort successful.

National opposition leaders acknowledged the importance of this subnational mobilization in 2005 when they planned protests against Bakiyev's regime in 2010. These leaders reached out to regional elites and organized provincial protests, according to political scientist Kathleen Collins. However, their plans were nonetheless overtaken by subnational developments, namely the spontaneous demonstrations that took place in Naryn months before the planned protests.

Subnational mobilization of protestors has played an important, but less significant, role in Ukraine. In the 2013 events, an estimated 92 percent of protestors came to Kyiv on their own, rather than being organized by a political party or other organization, according to the Ilko Kucheriv poll. In 2004 national organizations were important to recruiting protestors from the provinces, but they did not need to rely on subnational elites as much as their Kyrgyzstani counterparts did. These groups reached out through their own organizational structures to recruit demonstrators from outside of Kyiv. This was particularly true of the Ukrainian youth organization Pora, whose leading activists were from Galicia and which had cells in all provinces except some in the south and east. The aim of the national organizations was to recruit at least 100,000 individuals from each western province as well as a large number from Yushchenko's home region Sumy in northeastern Ukraine, according to political scientist Taras Kuzio. The western city Lviv served as a recruitment and transportation hub for the protests in Kyiv.

Subnational protestors, whether recruited or acting on their own, helped fuel the protests in the capital city.

Looking beyond the capital can help local and foreign activists and policymakers be better prepared for national political openings. With greater lead time, they can more effectively provide assistance that will foster democratic outcomes. What are the telltale signs in outlying regions that a national leadership change may be on the horizon? Observers would be wise to monitor the demands of local protestors and shifts in those demands over time, the availability of infrastructure and networks to mobilize citizens from outlying regions to protest in the capital, and the defections of subnational elites. Political outcomes are difficult to predict, but an eye to subnational developments can help activists and policymakers be better prepared to nurture democratic initiatives.

Pro et Contra: Views of the United States in Four Post-Soviet States¹

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 354

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Rising tensions between Russia and the West make public perceptions of the United States in the post-Soviet region an important policy issue. Positive perceptions of the United States could counter Kremlin efforts to blame Washington for conflicts in Ukraine (and elsewhere), while negative perceptions could lead U.S. leaders to reconsider how to project “soft power” in the region.

In order to gauge perceptions of the United States, we held focus groups in Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan in 2014. Two common themes emerged: 1) widespread hostility toward U.S. foreign policy and conduct; 2) respect for U.S. institutions, living standards, and culture.

One of the main conclusions is that the reputation of the United States faces a major challenge in restoring and reinforcing positive views of itself, not only in Russia but throughout the region. U.S. public relations strategy should emphasize the American “way of life” as a potential model rather than attempt to directly influence internal politics or develop civil society abroad.

Methodology

While not necessarily representative of public opinion, focus groups provide qualitative insight into the reasoning that informs peoples’ attitudes and the language they use to express their opinions. Comparing views expressed across groups within and between states can give a sense of whether specific logics and narratives represent common themes or idiosyncratic expressions. Local researchers in each state recruited participants (18-49 years old) and moderated the groups, which we observed (except for two groups in Sabirabad, Azerbaijan). The main findings are presented below.

¹ This work was supported by the Minerva Research Initiative and the Army Research Office via grant #W911NF-13-1-0303. The views, opinions, and findings herein are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing official views or policies, either expressed or implied, of the Army Research Office or the Department of Defense.

Table 1. Timing, Location, and Composition of the Focus Groups

Country	Dates	Locations and Composition
Russia	August 2014	Moscow: <i>university educated; less educated</i> Kazan: <i>ethnic Tatar; ethnic Russian</i>
Ukraine	May 2014	Lviv: <i>ages 18-30; ages 31-49</i> Kyiv: <i>Russian speakers; Ukrainian speakers</i>
Azerbaijan	April-June 2014	Baku: <i>male; female</i> Sabirabad: <i>male; female</i>
Kyrgyzstan	June 2014	Bishkek: <i>university educated; less educated</i> Osh: <i>ethnic Kyrgyz; ethnic Uzbek</i> Village near Osh: <i>male; female</i>

Russia

Anti-American themes were most pronounced in the groups from Russia. This is not surprising in light of the barrage of government propaganda criticizing the United States since the onset of the Ukraine conflict. With near unanimity, Russian participants echoed official characterizations of the United States as an aggressive and arrogant superpower that seeks to impose its will on the world and on Russia.

—Americans want to be lords of the world, and Russia now stands in their way.

Moderator: Does Russia also want to be lord of the world?

—Not in the same way. But America is afraid that Russia also wants to become lord of the world.

(Moscow, university educated group)

—It's as if America doesn't like us very much. I don't like that, their disrespect.

(Kazan, ethnic Russian group)

In particular, many blamed the United States for the Ukraine conflict:

—[The fighting in Ukraine] is the result of, I think, someone's political order....America's. [Because] who benefits from it?....They benefit from any war....It's good for business.

—Maybe they want to get closer to the Russian border, to install their [military] technology there.

(Kazan, ethnic Tatars)

Several participants believe that American soldiers are fighting on the Ukrainian government side, and one insisted that the Americans shot down flight MH17 in a botched attempt to hit Russian President Vladimir Putin's plane.

U.S. sanctions against Russia and its supposed efforts to turn its allies against Russia met with considerable criticism:

– America serves up to the world a particular point of view, and therefore a lot of other countries don't understand what's really going on here. They hate us...in their opinion Putin is an aggressor, yes, and he did a bad deed, seized Crimea. The West thinks he is a jerk who stuck a knife in its back, that he took Crimea when the country was weak. (Moscow, less educated)

Many cited the United States' fears of Russia as a competitor or intentions to seize Russia's resources as the motives behind its aggressive actions toward Russia:

–It's as if we are helping ourselves to a lot [by taking Crimea], and the Americans think that they are the only ones who can do that....as if Russia showed her teeth, that's why [they imposed sanctions]. They don't want Russia to develop in that direction....If we took a piece of Ukraine, maybe we will take something else, right?

–[They see us as] a tasty morsel, which they want to seize and divide among themselves. We have enormous territory, one sixth of the earth's mass, and 140 million people. And so they're sharpening their knives for our untold riches. They want to turn us into cattle and seize our territory. And whatever we do, sooner or later they will attack. Whatever we do, there will be war. (Kazan, ethnic Russians)

Participants singled out the United States' purported efforts to undermine Russia by sponsoring nongovernmental organizations that work on political issues (i.e., those targeted by Russia's recent laws compelling some foreign-funded NGOs to declare themselves "foreign agents"):

–I heard that [America] sends people here, supplies them with money in order to cause an uprising. Like in Syria, where Americans purposely sent in people under false pretenses, as if they were going to work there, and those people encouraged a coup. (Kazan, Tatars)

–[Foreign-funded NGOs] simply play the role of a fifth column. They are all Western-supported. (Moscow, less educated)

Russian participants had little positive to say about the United States, but when prompted they enumerated economic and cultural achievements: "high living

standards," "single-family houses," "high quality of consumer goods," "the best movies," and "all kinds of music."

The breadth of anti-American sentiment in the groups is consistent with survey evidence of strong support for Putin's policies and hostility toward the United States. But there were also hints that Russians' views are more complex than pure condemnation. First, many expressed the sentiment that "I have nothing against the American people, only against the American government." Second, participants recognized that both sides distort information about the other:

—They brainwash people there too, just like here. After all...where do we learn about the political situation? From newspapers, from television. That is, we believe the information that is served up to us. (Moscow, less educated)

Such statements, as well as those like the one quoted above that imply familiarity with the "Western" narrative about the Ukraine conflict, suggest that the conviction with which participants often repeated Russian government information may conceal underlying unease about its reliability.

Ukraine

If U.S. policymakers expect Ukrainian popular support due to their efforts to counter Russian actions in Ukraine, they will be disappointed. While nowhere near as hostile as the Russians, Ukrainian participants were skeptical of the United States' motives and disappointed in the extent of U.S. support:

—[America] is just another empire. We don't know much about either the Russian empire or the U.S., but they chose Ukraine as a point of conflict where they can fight it out to show who is cooler, in a word.

— For this whole period [America] gave us no help....[T]hey gave us something but it was too little too late....Even those sanctions took so much time and were only implemented after so many people were killed—that all shows that they just don't need us.

(Lviv, 30 and under)

—I feel neutral toward the United States. In essence they haven't done anything special for Ukraine.

— Their basic policy is to make money. [They]....pretend to help Ukraine, but above all they only look at their own interests.

—They deceived Ukraine, let's say, abandoned [us].

(Lviv, over 30)

On the other hand, the Ukrainian groups discussed at length the second overarching theme: admiration for various aspects of the American way of life, for example, respect for laws and human rights:

–If you are a citizen of the United States then you truly have rights, and they are respected, not like in Ukraine. (Lviv, over 30)

–People who have lived there...tell me how the police behave there. For example, they will give directions, help you find things....Here when you see a police uniform you immediately try to hide. (Kyiv, Russian-speakers)

Social protections are highly developed:

–I have very close friends who live there and they are ecstatic about life there. They even went driving in the desert and their car broke down, in the naked, empty desert. They made one phone call and in five to ten minutes a tow truck showed up. They have massively high taxes...but they get something in return – social protections, plus work. That means the chance to travel, rent housing. They rent and buy, they are confident in tomorrow.

–Medical care, education, the legal system – everything is on a high level there. (Kyiv, Russian-speakers)

American institutions effectively encourage business and hard work:

–I know a programmer who lived there for two years. He said that it is the only country in the world where a person's talent is truly valued....[I]f a person is talented and hardworking then the state in no way interferes with their self-realization. (Kyiv, Ukrainian speakers)

–It is heaven on earth there – except you have to work hard.

–Conditions for doing business are much easier.

(Lviv, 30 and under)

Not everyone agreed, but some Ukrainians also touted the American “mentality”:

–More than anything, [I admire] their humanity, the fact that they never just walk by [someone in need]. If you have a misfortune or some bad luck, they will help you; they will even take someone into their home and help them get set up; that's how they are.

–I actually think it's not like that; it's 'everyone for themselves' there.

(Kyiv, Ukrainian speakers)

–[I like their] tolerance and their mentality. There, every American is a patriot in the depths of his soul. Even black drug dealers from the ghetto will take up arms to fight for America. They are patriotic. (Kyiv, Russian speakers)

Altogether, the Ukrainian participants were more inclined to endorse American institutions than its foreign policies. By implication, the most potent weapons in the U.S. soft power arsenal are not efforts to counter Russian aggression or spread democracy, but American political, economic, and cultural institutions. The logical conclusion: the United States can build a positive image more effectively spreading knowledge of its internal institutions and culture rather than by its foreign policies. The latter include democracy promotion programs. Ukrainians expressed concern that the United States not get involved in domestic Ukrainian politics:

–You know, in principle Ukraine needs a strong partner because we are completely defenseless. But the main thing is that this partner who helps us doesn't then try to interfere in our personal internal affairs. That they don't, you know, say 'we paid for you, so now dance with us.' If they are helping us only out of pure goodwill, then thanks. But if it is only under certain conditions, then we have to be careful. (Kyiv, Russian speakers)

Accordingly, when the dust finally settles from the military conflict in Ukraine and U.S. policymakers turn to strategies for stabilizing the country's troubled economy and tenuous democracy, programs that look like political meddling should be avoided.

Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijani groups expressed widespread admiration for the American way of life, from cinema to civil society. This was the only theme touched on by women, who said little about foreign policy. The male groups coupled praise for some American institutions with skepticism about the United States' foreign policy aims. They also saw various institutions as potential models for Azerbaijan:

–America is a superpower state, ruling the world. America is also a well-developed country. Everything is developed in the right direction and it is a democratic country.

–The United States is a big country with a strong army and politics. We should learn lessons from their army.

–If our education and health care systems were similar to American systems, it would be really good for our country. At least people there know very well their rights, police know very well their rights and duties....If our citizens were aware of their rights like Americans, it could lead to progress in democratic development.

(Baku, men)

American efforts to promote democracy abroad were framed as self-interested and disingenuous:

–The U.S. states that it is a democracy and defends human rights....[I]t is not true. The U.S. only protects its own democracy, its own citizens' rights. America devastates the wealth of other countries. America's policy is to diminish and devastate all small nations of the world so American people and Zionists live well. (Baku, men).

The United States cannot and should not export democracy, which must be developed locally:

–There is democracy there, unlike in many Muslim countries. A historical moment in America was they elected a black president. Of course it is an indicator of a high level of democracy. But the U.S. is democratic only for itself, not for other countries. It is all words; in reality they will never do what local people are supposed to do for themselves. They will not build democracy. (Baku, men)

Similar themes prevailed in the Sabirabad groups, which included internally-displaced persons: praise for aspects of the American way of life like advanced technology, high living standards, and strong education, but criticism of the United States "interfering in the internal affairs of many countries." Overall, Azerbaijanis had less to say about the United States than about Russia and Turkey, other countries we asked about that are, of course, closer to home. Still, they mixed reservations about the United States' foreign policies with admiration for U.S. institutions.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has had more direct engagement with the United States due to the (recently closed) Manas airbase and the activities of American NGOs. But even more than the Azerbaijanis, Kyrgyz participants view the United States as remote and meddlesome. All six of the Kyrgyz groups strongly endorsed cooperation with Russia, some favored China or Central Asian neighbors like Kazakhstan, and none the United States. Specifically pressed about possibly cooperating with the United States, they were uniformly negative and skeptical:

–We do not need here [the American] political system.
 –What the American system comes to is evident in Syria, Ukraine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon.

—America has contributed to the depletion of the world's resources....So America has a plan to gradually capture everything; they keep everything in their country, crude oil and everything, and use up other people's.
(Bishkek, highly educated)

Apart from such ideas, similar to the views expressed in the Russian groups, Kyrgyz participants decried American culture as too permissive toward children and lacking respect for elders (Bishkek, less educated); emphasized how far away America is compared to Russia and the wastefulness of U.S. humanitarian spending in Kyrgyzstan (Osh, ethnic Kyrgyz); and worried that the United States uses aid to interfere in Kyrgyzstan's internal affairs (village near Osh, women). A single respondent noted a possible lesson from the United States: "The only thing we can learn from America is how to learn and protect our rights." (Osh, ethnic Uzbeks).

The only other positive statement was tempered by negative sentiments about the United States' role in the world:

—It is one of the greatest empires. I think they have a very strong economy with greatly developed technologies....But America does not respect Muslim people. From this perspective, I am against [America]. Because look at what has happened in Syria, Afghanistan, Iran—they came there and started internal conflicts, then left. And what is happening now in Ukraine...is their fault. Because they are really jealous of Russia, and we support Russia. (Village near Osh, women)

These negative views of the United States are linked to Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Russia, the influence of Russian mass media, and the perception of a growing conflict between Russia and the United States.

Conclusion

The degree of consistency and uniformity within and between these four states suggests that major themes in the groups correspond to widespread views. If these themes are, indeed, typical of popular attitudes toward the United States, then policymakers who wish to promote positive relations with these states face formidable challenges. Arguments made by Russian officials regarding the United States' ambition, arrogance, self-interestedness, and penchant for meddling in others' affairs resonate, even in Ukraine. Creating a positive image of the United States is hardly the sole objective of foreign policy. But policymakers should bear in mind that the actions of the United States may confirm the worst stereotypes of U.S. interests and motives propagated by Kremlin spin doctors.

One area where a fundamental reorientation of approach might be warranted is that of democracy assistance. Given the evident concerns that U.S. support for domestic NGOs and other civil society institutions is really just a cover for American interference in internal affairs, it makes sense to consider alternative strategies for promoting American institutions. By providing positive institutional models, the United States might eventually encourage organic movements for change within these states that would not be tarnished by the stain of foreign interference. Policymakers should leverage existing positive perceptions of American institutions, economic and technological achievements, and high living standards, and devise strategies to increase exposure to those aspects of life in the United States. This could be pursued by bolstering exchange programs and trade, facilitating travel between the United States and former Soviet states, and promoting programs that expose citizens in the region to concrete examples of how American institutions work.

Countering Color Revolutions

RUSSIA'S NEW SECURITY STRATEGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 342

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The May 2014 Moscow Conference on International Security (MCIS), sponsored by the Russian Ministry of Defense, was focused on the role of popular protest, and specifically color revolutions, in international security. The speakers, which included top Russian military and diplomatic officials such as Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, argued that color revolutions are a new form of warfare invented by Western governments seeking to remove independently-minded national governments in favor of ones controlled by the West. They argued that this was part of a global strategy to force foreign values on a range of nations around the world that refuse to accept U.S. hegemony and that Russia was a particular target of this strategy.

While the West considers color revolutions to be peaceful expressions of popular will opposing repressive authoritarian regimes, Russian officials argue that military force is an integral part of all aspects of color revolutions. Western governments start by using non-military tactics to change opposing governments through color revolutions that utilize the protest potential of the population to engineer peaceful regime change. But military force is concealed behind this effort. If the protest potential turns out to be insufficient, military force is then used openly to ensure regime change. This includes the use of external pressure on the regime in question to prevent the use of force to restore order, followed by the provision of military and economic assistance to rebel forces. If these measures are not sufficient, Western states organize a military operation to defeat government forces and allow the rebels to take power. Russian officials at the MCIS conference described color revolutions as a new technique of aggression pioneered by the United States and geared toward destroying a state from within by dividing its population. The advantage of this technique, compared to military intervention, is that it requires a relatively low expenditure of resources to achieve its goals.

Shoigu argued that this scheme has been used in a wide range of cases, including Serbia, Libya, and Syria—all cases where political interference by the West transitioned into military action. In 2014, the same scheme was followed in Ukraine, where anti-regime protests over several months transformed into a civil war, and in Venezuela, where the so-called democratic opposition is supposedly organized by the United States. While

Western readers may find the lumping together of uprisings as disparate as those in Serbia in 2000, Syria in 2011, and Venezuela in 2014 hard to swallow, from the Russian point of view, they all share the common thread of occurring in countries that had governments that were opposed to the United States. Although uprisings in countries whose governments were close to the United States, such as Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and Egypt and Bahrain in 2011, are harder to explain, such inconsistencies do not appear to trouble the Russian government.

Furthermore, while Russian discussion of the destabilizing role of color revolutions usually portrays U.S. actions as taking place around the world, there is a clear perception that Russia is one of the main targets. This drives fear that unrest in the post-Soviet region may be a wedge for the United States to force regime change in Russia itself.

Russia's Counter-Strategy

This perspective appears to be at the core of a new national security strategy that Russia is developing. Although the Russian government has not produced any kind of document summarizing this new strategy, the key aspects can be gleaned from an analysis of Russian leaders' statements and Russian actions in recent months. The counter-strategy combines political and military actions.

On the political side, Russia has stepped up its efforts to make alliances with other authoritarian regimes that are similarly concerned about the possibility of a popular uprising that could lead to their loss of power. This strategy has been used by Russia to some extent throughout Vladimir Putin's presidency, with efforts to develop ties with former Soviet allies in the Middle East and Asia. The MCIS conference highlighted a renewed emphasis in this direction. The presence of the Iranian defense minister, the Egyptian deputy defense minister, the chief of defense from Myanmar, and deputy chiefs of defense from Vietnam, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as a large delegation from China, all indicate the primary focus of attention for Russian military engagement this year. The absence of official representatives from NATO member states particularly highlighted the shift in emphasis of Russian military cooperation. By comparison, the 2013 MCIS had no representatives from Middle Eastern or Asian countries outside of post-Soviet Eurasia, while senior officials from most NATO member states were in attendance.

The second part of Russia's political strategy is to damage the unity of the Western alliance. This effort has been pursued for several years through the development of political alliances with right-wing parties throughout Europe and in the United States. As described by Marlene Laruelle and Mitchell Orenstein, among others, Russia has

supported European nationalists' anti-EU and anti-immigrant positions.¹ The core of Russia's alliance with the European far right has been a shared opposition to increased ties between the EU and its eastern neighbors. The European right has also been sympathetic to Russia's positions on issues such as the role of religion in society, same-sex marriage, and gay rights generally. These positions have also gained Russia some unlikely supporters among the Christian right in the United States, where Russian support for anti-abortion and anti-gay rights views has, in turn, been reciprocated by what would be otherwise surprising sympathy for Russian foreign policy positions on issues such as human rights and democracy promotion.

On the military side, Russia has determined that the best way to counter the perceived U.S. strategy is through a combination of strong support for existing authoritarian regimes around the world. This support has included military and economic assistance, as well as public support for actions taken against protesters, who are often conflated in Russian rhetoric with terrorists or supporters of radical ideologies such as radical Islam or fascism.

In circumstances where this proves insufficient and the situation is in an area deemed crucial to Russian national interests, Russia has shown that it is willing to go further by providing direct support to forces opposed to those supported by the West. This support may include the simulation of popular uprisings, support for local insurgents, and the threat of direct military force to protect co-ethnics.

Russia claims to reserve the right to protect Russians living abroad. Given the large numbers of Russians living throughout post-Soviet Eurasia, this claim has the potential to provide Russia with an excuse for intervention anywhere in the region. Furthermore, it may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, by which governments of other post-Soviet states come to distrust their ethnic Russian populations, leading to discrimination that creates the conditions for a potential Russian intervention.

The Russian Strategy in Ukraine

The actions that Russia has been undertaking in Ukraine in recent months are based on this strategy and closely parallel Russian officials' perceptions of how the U.S. color revolutions strategy works. Russian officials provided the Yanukovych government with advice on how to deal with anti-government protesters. This advice appears to have involved encouragement to use repressive measures, though the government appeared to lack either the capacity or willpower to carry it out to the end. Officials from Russian security services met regularly with Ukrainian government officials, with FSB

¹ Marlene Laruelle, "Beyond Anti-Westernism: The Kremlin's Narrative about Russia's European Identity and Mission," PONARS Eurasia [Policy Memo No. 326](#), August 2014; Mitchell Orenstein, "Putin's Western Allies: Why Europe's Far Right Is on the Kremlin's Side," *Foreign Affairs*, March 25, 2014.

Colonel General Sergei Beseda present in Kyiv on Feb 20-21 as the Yanukovych government collapsed.

At the same time, the Russian government provided economic assistance to Ukraine, including a \$15 billion aid package and an agreement to lower the price Ukraine paid for 1,000 cubic meters of natural gas from \$400 to \$268. This assistance was canceled after the change of government in Ukraine.

When Russian assistance proved inadequate to maintain the Yanukovych government in power, Russia took immediate steps to weaken the new anti-Russian government that was being formed in Kyiv. It seems highly likely that Russian agents were involved in organizing counter-protests in eastern Ukraine and Crimea after Viktor Yanukovych's departure from Ukraine.

From the start of the conflict, Russia repeatedly used the threat of force to try to influence the actions of the new Ukrainian government, both by making statements reserving the right to intervene in the conflict and by staging several military exercises on the Ukrainian border. The statements initially focused on the right of the Russian government to protect its co-ethnics abroad, though as the conflict accelerated over the summer they have shifted to the need to protect civilians in general from a humanitarian disaster. This parallels past Western statements that use the doctrine of the international responsibility to protect civilians to justify interventions in internal conflicts.

Finally, Russia has engaged in covert military action in Crimea and, at a minimum, provided military and financial assistance to separatist forces in eastern Ukraine. The quick Russian intervention in Crimea was made possible by the presence of a relatively large contingent of Russian troops (approximately 14,000) who were already based in Crimea and the strong antipathy of the local population to the new Ukrainian government. The Russian naval infantry based in Sevastopol were augmented by special forces troops from Russian military intelligence, who occupied key locations on the peninsula, including government buildings and the isthmus connecting Crimea to the rest of Ukraine, and surrounded Ukrainian military bases in the region. Many of these actions paralleled Russian military exercises that had taken place a year earlier in the Black Sea region.

Russian actions in eastern Ukraine have escalated more gradually, as the conflict has dragged on in recent months. Initially, Russian support consisted of a mass media propaganda campaign in opposition to the "fascist junta" that had taken power in Kyiv and in support of the actions being taken by protesters in the Donbas. As the conflict became more violent in April and May 2014, volunteers from Russia joined in the fighting. Many of these volunteers were recruited (unofficially) through military recruitment offices in Russia. While no conclusive evidence has surfaced, there is a

strong likelihood that agents from Russian security services were involved in coordinating protests in eastern and southern Ukraine from their earliest stages.

Russia's role in the conflict has increased over time, especially after the separatist forces began to lose territory in late June 2014. Early on, local protest leaders were sidelined by Russian citizens, some of whom had a background working for Russian security services. Beginning in June, Russia began to provide heavy weaponry to the separatist forces, including multiple rocket launchers and air defense weapons. Beginning in July, Russian forces have shelled Ukrainian forces from Russian territory in order to prevent Ukraine from sealing off the border and ending the provision of military assistance to separatist forces. In August, the Russian government responded to continued Ukrainian victories by sending in a limited contingent of Russian troops and opening a new front in territory previously under the firm control of government forces, near Novoazovsk and Mariupol in southern Donetsk region. This escalation in Russian military assistance caused a major shift in the path of the conflict, with Ukrainian forces taking heavy casualties throughout the Donbas and losing control of approximately half the territory they had gained over the summer.

Russian actions in Ukraine appear to mirror the actions Russian leaders believe the United States has been taking in its efforts to eliminate unfriendly governments around the world. While the increase in military support for separatist forces during the summer of 2014 appeared to have been largely improvised, the earlier actions to destabilize Ukraine in the aftermath of Yanukovych's flight from Kyiv seem to have been based on existing contingency plans. It is possible that Russian leaders believe that the United States actively seeks to destabilize opposing regimes because such activities are a standard part of their own policy toolkit.

Impact on U.S. Policy and Recommendations

There has been a continuing debate on whether domestic or international factors are primary in Russia's current foreign policy. In reality, it appears that both are working together. Russian foreign policy appears to be based on a combination of fears of popular protest and opposition to U.S. world hegemony, both of which are seen as threatening the Putin regime.

Russia's current policies in Ukraine have little to do with geopolitical calculations about Ukraine's economic ties with the EU versus the Eurasian Union or even its potential NATO membership. Similarly, the annexation of Crimea was not about ensuring the security of the Black Sea Fleet. Instead, the main goal has been to strengthen the Putin regime domestically by increasing patriotic attitudes among the Russian population. Patriotism is the means by which the Russian government inoculates the Russian population against anti-regime and/or pro-Western attitudes. This goal explains the

obsessive focus on building an anti-Ukrainian and anti-American media narrative from an early stage in the Ukraine conflict.

In this environment, it is not worth spending time trying to convince the current Russian leadership to pursue more cooperative policies. If they truly believe that the United States is seeking to force them out of power and is simply waiting for an opportune moment to strike, then Russian policies will remain committed to ensuring that the United States does not get such an opportunity.

The U.S. response to such a position needs to focus on a combination of reassuring steps to show that the United States is not planning to overthrow the Putin regime and a restatement of the core U.S. position that the citizens of each country deserve the right to determine their own government without external interference (from either Russia or the United States).

In practical terms, the U.S. government should encourage the Ukrainian government to pursue policies of reconciliation in the Donbas. While the conflict has been greatly exacerbated by Russian actions, it has an internal component that cannot be solved by military action alone. In an ideal world, Russia and the United States would work together to encourage this reconciliation, though I doubt that the current Russian government is genuinely interested in peace in eastern Ukraine. Instead, it prefers to keep eastern Ukraine unstable as an object lesson to its own population of the dangers of popular protest leading to the overthrow of even a relatively unpopular regime.

Russian Foreign Policy

TRADITIONAL VECTORS IN A NEW GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 340

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The Ukraine crisis is transforming the global geopolitical order. It is eliciting new controversies and clarifying existing ones. It is also intensifying efforts to accelerate integration processes in both the East and West. The United States, with new zeal, is working with its partners in Europe and the Pacific. Meanwhile, Russia is trying to strengthen traditional partnerships in Eurasia and Asia, but since its fundamental economic and security interests have not changed, the European vector remains its main focus.

In the newly emerging geopolitical context, however, the Eastern and Western vectors of Russia's foreign policy are acquiring different meanings and require new approaches. New strategic issues bring forward new existential problems for Russia. How can Russia preserve equality in a deepened partnership with China? How can it remain the leader of Eurasian integration? How can it avoid further deterioration of relations with the European Union and the United States? What new partnership formats can Russia seek in order to avoid isolation in light of the recently imposed Western sanctions?

The New World Order

Very few political scientists, even Zbigniew Brzezinski, could have foreseen the pivotal role Ukraine would play in the process of reformatting the post-Cold War world order. The Ukrainian crisis put an end to a long period of "innuendo," when the former Cold War adversaries spoke to each other in a straightforward manner only rarely (as Russian President Vladimir Putin did in his 2007 Munich speech) and never really achieved a level of real understanding and trust. Mutual suspicions reached their peak in 2014, with current Russian-Western relations characterized by many as a new Cold War.

This definition may be justified on the basis of the scale and level of animosities. Still, at least four elements make U.S.-Russian relations today different from during the "classical" Cold War.

First, with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the apparent ineffectiveness of the nonproliferation regime, and a lack of transparency or treaty restrictions on China's nuclear arsenal, the basic framework of the Cold War—mutual

nuclear deterrence—does not apply any longer. This does not mean that the new period of Russian-Western tensions does not touch upon the military sphere. On the contrary, it gives new meaning to and justification for Russia's recent military build-up (which many experts point out is detrimental to Russia's economic and social spheres).

Second, deep interdependence in the global economic system prevents both Russia and the West from taking overly harsh and irreversible steps. The way sanctions against Russia have been introduced and the divergent positions of Western states toward them illustrates the point.

Third, numerous problems of global security—stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran and North Korea, conflicts in the Middle East, drug trafficking, WMD proliferation, and terrorism—cannot be solved without Russia's active participation or, at the very least, consent.

Finally, with the rise of new emerging economies, China first and foremost, the new international system is no longer bilateral, as it was during the Cold War.

Integration in the New World Order

The crisis in Ukraine, which has served as a trigger in worsening Russian-Western relations, is only a minor part of a greater international transformation. Developments in Ukraine and perceptions of them in Russia and the West might have been different if they had not followed the chain of conflicts and revolutions in recent years that swept across post-Soviet (and post-socialist) states and Eastern Europe, as well as the Arab Spring. In a way, the Ukraine crisis obtained dramatic meaning as the apex of a cumulative effect of the last quarter-century of challenging East-West relations.

One element of the new "Great Game" underway is a competition for maximal independence (something Russian and Chinese policy documents especially stress) and maintenance of status in the emerging global power balance. Another element is the strengthening of one's own position through coalition-building, which makes leading powers turn to integration projects with new zeal.

It is this competition over integration projects, namely between the EU's Eastern Partnership project and Russia's Eurasian integration initiatives, that provoked the start of the Ukraine crisis in November 2013.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has striven to deepen and enlarge integration in Eurasia, in particular via the Customs Union, the Eurasian Economic Union (to be launched in January 2015), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). With the withdrawal of the ISAF contingent from Afghanistan, one cannot exclude a more active role for the CSTO, as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in maintaining stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Still,

within the SCO, Russia is keen to prevent China's domination and is trying to keep the two on an equal status. This has hampered the development of the SCO, particularly in the financial-economic sphere.

The Ukraine crisis has created serious problems for Russia's Eurasian integration project. The extent to which Russia will lose Ukraine as an economic and defense partner has yet to be verifiably assessed and depends much on the outcome of the crisis. In political terms, however, there have already been losses. Russia's partners in the Customs Union, Belarus and Kazakhstan, have already expressed their reservations, particularly with regard to Crimea's accession to the Russian Federation. Encouraging their greater integration, including a degree of devolution of national authority to the Eurasian Economic Commission, will be challenging.

Over the last few years, Russia has begun to restore and strengthen cooperation with countries outside of Eurasia. Western sanctions have provided a reason to devote even greater attention to potential partners in Central and South America, East Asia, and the Pacific. While Russia previously focused such efforts on cultivating bilateral relations, it is now paying more attention to multilateral institutions, as exemplified by Russia's efforts to give the BRICS grouping greater substance.

The logic of the Kremlin's approach is to enter into and strengthen formations that can counterbalance Western (particularly U.S.-initiated) integration projects, be they transatlantic or transpacific (Russian political scientist Sergey Rogov has referred to the United States as "The Lord of Two Rings"). Such projects do not necessarily isolate Russia, but they do leave it in a position "in-between." At the same time, in integration formats where Russia is a member, as in the SCO, it has to strive for equal status with China. Thus, as a counterweight to Beijing, Moscow is strengthening its relations with other states in the Asian-Pacific region, particularly India, Vietnam, South Korea, and Japan.

The exact nature of these new international relations depends on the outcome of the Ukraine crisis.

What Are Russia's Real Interests?

Russia's fundamental aims remain the same: modernizing the economy and ensuring a stable external environment that is amicable to domestic socioeconomic development. Modernization, apart from structural reforms, presupposes the re-industrialization of the country on a new technological level which, in turn, requires new technology and investments. Ensuring external stability requires regulating conflicts in neighboring states and combating drug trafficking, illegal migration, terrorism, and Islamic extremism.

In implementing the first aim, modernizing the economy, Europe is a key partner, as the current structure of Russia's foreign economic ties indicates. Russia's trade and investment ties heavily favor Europe. This cannot be changed overnight. In 2013 the volume of trade with the EU was \$417.5 billion, or 49.4 percent of its total trade. Russia's trade with China was practically five times less at \$88.8 billion (10.5 percent of Russia's foreign trade). By comparison, the volume of trade with the United States was \$27.7 billion (3.3 percent). During the first five months of 2014, statistics did not change: the EU made up 49.6 percent of Russia's foreign trade, China 11 percent, and the United States 3.6 percent.

Of particular importance for Russia is direct foreign investment. In 2013, the EU provided 75.9 percent of Russia's foreign investment (\$60.2 billion), while China was the source of just 0.9 percent (\$683 million), less even than Hungary. From the United States came \$459 million (0.6 percent). Russian foreign direct investment in 2013 included \$21.9 billion to the EU 23 percent, \$14 billion to China, and just \$763 million to the United States (0.8 percent).

After the introduction of Western sanctions, the present balance will not quickly change, even with respect to the arms trade. Russian arms sales account for \$15.2 billion, of which about 50 percent go to BRIC states. Imports (without the Mistral contract, the fate of which had not yet been determined as of this writing) stand at \$100-150 million and include electronic equipment for planes and tanks from France, along with drones and electronics from Israel. Russia also had contracts with Italy, Germany, Sweden, and the United States (for supplying helicopters in Afghanistan).

The real problem for Russia as a result of sanctions lies in the financial domain and, particularly, dual-use technologies. If current trends do not change in the medium-term, the sanctions will have a detrimental effect on the course of Russian economic development. China cannot replace Europe as a source of technology, while financial overdependence on Beijing's credits is highly undesirable.

Moscow is aware of this dilemma, as Putin's recent addresses and speeches have revealed. Even in his March "Crimean" speech, Putin made overtures to the West. He did the same in July after the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17. In his speech to the Russian diplomatic corps in July (at a biannual meeting where the tasks for Russian diplomacy are set), Putin elevated the EU to Russia's number one foreign policy priority, displacing the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). While making steps eastward, Russia's president still appears to be looking to the West.

Conclusion

For the foreseeable future, current trends in Russian-Western relations are likely to persist. The fostering of animosity has become the game of politicians attempting to rally

public opinion. Still, responsible realists on both sides will continue to call for keeping the doors open for dialogue, if not at an official level, then at least by other means.

The Crisis in Ukraine and the Baltic Sea Region

A SPILLOVER OF THE CONFLICT?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 345

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This memo discusses the implications of the current crisis in Russian-Ukrainian relations for the Baltic Sea region (BSR), for many years considered one of the greatest success stories of regional integration in Europe.¹ The Ukraine crisis has seriously challenged regional institutions and practices in which the region's states have invested heavily. Two major questions loom. First, given the profound conflict between Russia and the European Union, can regional institutions play a role in building a united Europe without dividing lines? Second, to what extent is Russia interested and capable of fitting into the regional milieu?

Two Facets of Baltic Sea Regionalism

From the outset, Baltic Sea regionalism was a project conceived in the pursuit of two goals. The first was to provide a foundation for regional cooperation among partners who share a similar normative background and are eager to pool resources for the sake of building a coherent regional society. The key drivers for change in this region-building process were the European Union and the Nordic states, which were instrumental in successfully integrating the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, as well as in spreading EU-based normative and institutional standards across the region.

The second priority of the BSR was to engage Russia through a number of institutional bridges, including city-to-city partnerships, trans-border "Euroregions," and the Northern Dimension program. The idea was to create a cohesive space for all regional actors to interact, avoiding the creation of East-West divides. The German-Polish-Russian "trialogue" on Kaliningrad and other issues was a model example of this sort of policy.

Instead of promoting regional networking and plugging in to existing opportunities for interaction, however, Moscow simply transferred various policy issues from discussions

¹ The Baltic Sea region includes the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; the Nordic states include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden; northern Germany; northern Poland; and Russia's northwestern region, including Kaliningrad.

at the EU-Russia level to the regional level (such as visa facilitation talks) while trying to impose a political agenda (such as “fighting extremism”). This approach was not conducive to bringing Russia closer to its Baltic Sea neighbors and made Russia’s recent presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States ineffective.

Moreover, BSR priorities in some areas pose a direct challenge to Russia’s interests. These include the diversification of energy sources, energy efficiency programs, and new energy-saving technologies. As well, the Estonian government dubs Internet access a basic “human right,” in contrast to Russian policymakers who consider social media a battlefield and/or an object of administrative surveillance, regulation, and manipulation. All this raises the question of how eager and capable Russia is to associate with the BSR economically, politically, and in security affairs.

Does Russia Fit In?

In truth, Russia’s comparative backwardness in the Baltic Sea region is evident on a number of economic and financial indicators. The most recent Baltic Development Forum report provides considerable food for thought in this regard:

- In the *Social Progress Index* (prosperity levels, growth, basic human needs, foundations of well-being, opportunity) Russia fares much lower than any other Baltic Sea state.
- Russia’s *Overall Competitiveness Ranking* is far below the BSR average and is closer to that of Vietnam, Serbia, and Ukraine.
- Russia’s position in the *Social Infrastructure* and *Political Institutions* indices, which include rule of law and human development, is far worse than that of the worst performing BSR countries. The same goes for *Corruption Perception*, *Logistic Performance*, and *Educational Performance* indicators.
- In *Perceived Country Capacity to Attract Talent*, Russia features below all of its Baltic Sea neighbors except Latvia, Poland, and Lithuania.
- For the *Innovation Systems Index* (quality of scientific research institutions, university-industry research collaboration, availability of scientists and engineers, utility patents per million population, etc.), only Poland fares worse.
- On most indicators in the *Financial Market Infrastructure Index*, Russia performs the worst of all the Baltic Sea states (except in “ease of access to loans” and “venture capital availability”).
- In *Cost of Doing Business*, Russia is the absolute loser, as it is in the *Administrative Regulations Index*.
- In the *Company Sophistication Index*, Russia is a total BSR outsider.
- Russia ranks highest on *labor mobilization* but lowest on *labor productivity*.

- Russia's composite rank in the *Competition Index* (112) is far lower than that of the worst Baltic Sea state, Poland, which ranks 48. A similar situation applies with regard to its rankings on *Labor Markets*, *Sophistication of Demand*, and *Supporting Industries*, where Russia is far below even the lowest-ranking Baltic economies.

The Ukraine crisis has undoubtedly driven Russia further away from most members of the Baltic Sea regional community. One of the most visible negative spillover effects was the cancellation, at the EU's initiative, of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) summit that was to be held in June 2014 in Turku, Finland.

Another consequence of the crisis was the rise of hard security concerns among some Baltic Sea states. This has prompted a renewed militarization of the region, a radically different outcome from those expected by the peace research school that was so popular among students of Baltic regionalism at the end of the Cold War. Under the direct influence of the Ukraine crisis, a new debate on NATO membership is underway in neutral Sweden and Finland. By the same token, the three Baltic states have appealed to the United States and NATO for stronger hard security guarantees and greater military protection from a potentially expansionist Russia.

Russia's Political Strategies in the BSR

Against the backdrop of growing conflict between Russia and the EU, Moscow has developed a number of political strategies in the BSR. First, it is eager to draw a line of distinction between "pragmatically cooperative" Finland and Poland and "ideologically unfriendly" Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Kremlin widely portrays the latter as being under the United States' political sway and funded by the EU, arguments meant to question their independence and ability to make autonomous decisions.

Second, Moscow wishes to use pro-Russian attitudes among corporate business groups in many BSR states to weaken the political forces within the EU that call for tougher sanctions against Russia. Russia is actively utilizing the concept of "cross-border interdependence," which European states cherished for decades as an instrument of integration with neighbors, as an argument for securing its immunity from external pressure and disciplinary measures.

Third, Russia negatively interprets the transformational development of the Baltic states after the 2004 EU accession, arguing that they are heavily subsidized by the EU's budget and face a severe emigration problem. Based on this critical portrayal, Russia wishes to demonstrate the futility of EU policy on eastward enlargement. The failure of the November 2013 Vilnius summit of the Eastern Partnership (a program designed by two Baltic Sea states, Poland and Sweden) is a core element of the Russian Euro-skeptic

discourse, since Moscow thinks that Armenia and Ukraine (under Viktor Yanukovych) openly defied the whole concept of the EU-led neighborhood.

Russia's Economic Policies

In the economic sphere, Russia's top priority is to depoliticize relations by focusing on joint projects in fields like energy, transportation, tourism, and investment. In truth, these "depoliticized" endeavors propose to materially reward Russia's neighbors in exchange for loyalty and collaboration.

Second, Russia seeks to disprove the notion that the Baltic states' experience of Europeanization can be useful to Ukraine and other post-Soviet states. According to the Kremlin, EU membership has been detrimental to the economies of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which suffer from outward migration, deindustrialization, and financial dependence. The way out of their economic hardship, so the argument goes, is a stronger reorientation to the Russian market.

Third, as a measure of economic retaliation, Russia reserves the right to reroute cargo flows from "unfriendly" countries (like Lithuania). This, however, only serves to demonstrate that Russia's foreign economic policy is dependent on politics, further reducing Moscow's reliability as an economic partner.

Fourth, Russia is keen to question the EU's monopoly on developing regional strategies. Moscow refers to its own strategy of developing Russia's northwestern regions as an alternative to the EU. This is a vulnerable argument, however; while the strategy represents an adaptation of different European concepts of regional development and urban planning, it only covers a specific part of the Russian Federation.

New Elements of Russia's Security Strategy

In the security domain, Russia has several aims. First, it claims that NATO military activity in the BSR provokes Kyiv into taking a more aggressive stance against the rebels fighting in Ukraine's eastern regions.

Second, Russian plans could include the further securitization of Kaliningrad. Russia may use its exclave for fostering a Russian military presence in the BSR instead of developing it as a "pilot region" within the framework of the EU-Russia relationship.

Third, Russia appears to be expanding its intelligence activity in the Baltic states. According to Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Estonia has "caught four [Russian] moles in the last five years. That means one of two things. Either we're the only country in the EU with a mole problem, or we're the only country in the EU doing anything about it."

Fourth, Moscow intends to keep the Russian-language issue alive as a tool to help achieve the goal of regaining control over the three Baltic states. Some opinion-makers shaping the mindsets of Russian communities in the Baltic states are increasingly explicit about this. Yuri Zhuravlev, head of an association of Russians in Estonia, claims that revising the status of some Estonian territories that have majority Russian-speaking populations is feasible given the appropriate “political will” (presumably Moscow’s). Andrey Neronsky, director of the Moscow-based Center for Russian Culture in Latvia, has gone even further, asserting that “five hundred rebels would suffice to discontinue Latvian statehood...The Latvian Army is weak and won’t be able to resist.”

It goes without saying that these declarations make the Baltic states feel insecure and threatened. This, in turn, fuels debates between “new” and “old” members of NATO and the EU on the meaning of common European security. Former Latvian foreign and defense minister Artis Pabriks, a member of parliament, recently noted that according to polls, 60 percent of Germans are not ready to boost the modest defense capabilities of the Baltic region. For many in Western Europe, he claimed, the further deepening of the Ukraine crisis would only have financial consequences, “since nobody imagines Putin marching through the Brandenburg Gates.” Yet for the Baltic states, the threat emanating from Russia is existential in nature. This unveils a rift between security perceptions within Europe that Russia could potentially explore.

Dilemmas for the EU and its Member States

Germany is at the center of many of these debates. A key stakeholder in the BSR, Germany sponsors many regional policy fora (such as the Baltic Development Forum and the German Baltic Nordic Forum) which serve as talking shops and laboratories for regional integration efforts and experience-sharing. At the same time, Germany is known to take positions that many in Europe would define as pro-Russian.

This leads to two different approaches toward Russia. The first is an effort to engage Russia within the BSR framework. Organizers of Baltic Sea policy fora are aware of the crisis in communication with Russia. This is something that is partially reflected by a deficit of independent Russian experts who can communicate with European audiences without reproducing the Kremlin’s discourse.

The second is the need to respond to growing demands from the Baltic states to deter and contain Russia, which they accuse of igniting an anti-government rebellion in Ukraine and expect to try and project this experience to other neighboring states. These appeals do not align with Germany’s policy of engaging and involving Russia and implicitly involve the de facto legitimization of Russia’s claim to a sphere of influence.

These conflicting approaches illuminate the challenge of developing a common policy toward Russia and the EU's eastern neighbors. As the 2015 chair of the EU, Latvia will contribute to reshaping EU policy in the east. With three countries—Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia—having recently signed Association Agreements, the EU now has a chance to revitalize its Eastern Partnership, but it will need to scrupulously monitor the implementation of these agreements. The EU will also need to maintain a “constructive ambiguity” in relation to these three states, all of which seek greater institutional engagement with the EU. At the same time, the EU will need to be prepared to deal with Russia's increased application of punitive measures against its pro-EU neighbors.

Conclusion

The latest developments in the BSR suggest that we should not overrate the capacity of regional institutions to mitigate conflicts that normatively and politically divide neighboring states. It is likely that the institutional forms of Baltic Sea regionalism will develop under the heavy influence of EU-Russian disagreement over core pan-European issues. Also, most Baltic Sea states are likely to pursue individual rather than regionally-coordinated strategies toward Russia.

This corresponds to Moscow's policy of blocking solidarity on Russia-related issues among its European neighbors. Yet conceptually, the Russian approach is feeble. The attempt to split the Baltic Sea states into two categories—“Russia-friendly” and “Russia-unfriendly”—is unsustainable against the backdrop of growing tension between Moscow and Warsaw. The cancellation of the Year of Polish Culture in Russia as a reaction to the Kremlin's policies toward Ukraine and ensuing Russian sanctions against Polish agricultural products illustrate these tensions.

It is also wrong to explain the entire array of anti-Kremlin discourse in Russia's neighboring states as a product of their alleged submission to U.S. hegemony. One should not overstate the level of U.S. interest in engaging on controversial regional issues. Moscow has little chance of finding interlocutors in the BSR who would agree that the security agendas of the Baltic states reflect the interests of Washington and not local concerns about Russian intentions.

Finally, a closer look at the political trajectories of some Baltic Sea states challenges Russia's representation of EU enlargement as a key source of tension between Brussels and Moscow. Finland's EU membership is in no way detrimental to Russia; on the contrary, even according to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Finland is one of Russia's closest economic partners. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania may have had a domestic economic price to pay as a result of their EU membership, but their orientation was not detrimental to Russian businesses operating in country; the same goes for Central European states, particularly Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. All this casts serious doubt on the sensibility of a Russian policy to prevent states like Ukraine and Moldova

from greater association with the EU. The transformative experiences of Russia's western neighbors may yet be conducive to Russia's greater inclusion into a wider Europe and to the reduced significance of regional borders, even if this is something that the Kremlin vehemently denies.

Emotions, Cognition, and the Societal Dynamics of East-West Polarization

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 355

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"Historical epochs are like volcanoes. Everything that has accumulated through the years under a thin surface of everyday events suddenly breaks open, like lava, and comes to the surface."

- Vladimir Ermolenko¹

The dramatic snowballing of events—Russia's annexation of Crimea, ongoing war in eastern Ukraine, the downing of Malaysian Airliner MH17, sanctions—have remade the global political scene. Polarization, confrontation, and media-fuelled hysteria exist on all sides. Levels of anti-American sentiment in Russia and anti-Russian sentiment in the West have skyrocketed, propelled by media portrayals and outright propaganda, which has been especially evident on Russian television.

The emotional makeup of Russian society is especially complex and ambivalent. On the one hand, the number of Russians living in constant fear of a new world war, according to the Moscow-based Levada Center, reached 27 percent this past July, while 52 percent are generally concerned about it.² On the other hand, VTsIOM, another polling agency, reported that the sense of social well-being in Russia in August hit a record high in terms of life satisfaction, material well-being, and social optimism, with numbers reaching 79, 76, and 77 percent, respectively.³ Russian President Vladimir Putin's ratings have also remained unprecedentedly high at 82-86 percent over the last few months. It appears as if the events that have startled the world, producing anxiety and fear of Russia in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, have worked to boost Russians' sense of well-being, self-confidence, patriotism, and faith in their president.

Political scientists have so far been reluctant to embrace emotion as a way of understanding political processes. The issue has been left for more casual journalistic coverage, as exhibited recently, with the media providing psychological accounts to help

¹ "A Letter to a friend from Russia," <http://gefter.ru/archive/12118>

² <http://www.levada.ru/15-08-2014/strakhi-rossiyan>

³ This is also confirmed by the experts of the Levada Center. See: <http://www.levada.ru/19-08-2014/ekspertiza-rossiyane-na-podeme>

explain the Ukraine crisis.¹ Such omission is regrettable, even if understandable, as I discuss below. The study of emotional underpinnings and drivers of political processes is important from analytical, policy-making, and political perspectives. Analytically, taking emotions into account allows for making sense of the *rationality* of particular actions that otherwise might appear irrational and difficult to comprehend. The actions of Putin with regard to Crimea specifically have often been interpreted as *irrational* and not bearing any relation to Russia's long-term interests. If one focuses on the economic and political burdens associated with integrating Crimea into Russia, this is a plausible viewpoint. But this is so only if one understands interests as a set of preferences delinked from meaning, identity, history, and memory. Once interests are seen as embedded in meaning, Putin's actions become more sensible as they placed the Crimea issue right at the core of Russia's struggles with its national identity, post-imperial legacies, and the emotional trauma Russian society experienced after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Crimea could arguably be seen as a newly-found public fetish representing the recovery (if only partial) of the lost pride and prestige associated with the Soviet Union.

Many observers focus on the role of propaganda campaigns in reshaping Russian society, blaming Putin and his political regime for carefully constructing such campaigns during the 2000s and cultivating anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism throughout the last decade. The political crisis in Ukraine led to the unleashing of an especially virulent propaganda campaign in Russia invoking the hated images of fascism and "Banderites" supposedly working in cahoots with the United States, which, in turn, seeks to take over the world. Even after the May 2014 presidential election in Ukraine, which demonstrated that radical nationalist candidates had less than two percent support among the population, the narrative about the U.S.-supported bloody, fascist, junta regime in Kyiv persisted.

Even a single session of watching Russian television channels these days provides an unforgettable impression of the sensationalized messages pounded over and over into the eyes and ears of Russian audiences, messages aimed at emotional mobilization on geopolitical grounds.² However, sociologists and psychologists assert that propaganda does not work on people who are not susceptible to it.³ People do not believe what they do not want to believe and process information selectively, with the aim of affirming their pre-existing beliefs. Most recent studies show that even when their beliefs are shown to be false, people are likely to change them only under immediate threat.⁴

¹ For example, articles by Sean Guillory, Leonid Bershidsky, and Boris Grozovsky at: <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117493/russia-suffering-post-traumatic-stress-disorder>; <http://www.snob.ru/selected/entry/75421>; <http://www.colta.ru/articles/society/3939>

² For example, http://www.gazeta.ru/lifestyle/style/2014/08/a_6170429.shtml

³ <http://www.snob.ru/profile/10069/blog/79594>

⁴ <http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/i-dont-want-to-be-right>

Unsurprisingly, more and more observers have recently turned their attention to the state of Russian society and the reasons for its susceptibility to such open brainwashing.¹

So why do the majority of Russians believe the misinformation projected on Russian television channels? What do various strands of relevant literature and data tell us?

Propaganda, Emotion, and Cognition

First, let us attend to the issue of how exactly propaganda works. There is a large body of literature in the cognitive sciences that focuses on the interconnection between emotions and cognition.² Researchers have shown unambiguously that anxiety affects interpretation: more anxious individuals tend to interpret ambiguous information in congruence with their fears and perceived threats (although context and contextual information are also very important for resolving ambiguity). Furthermore, a wide range of emotions—anger, sadness, anxiety, and more positive emotions—affect judgment; even how people estimate the likelihood of various outcomes appears to be partially a function of their mood. The central message that emerges from this literature concerns the inter-linkage between emotions and information-processing/interpretation/judgment. Emotions represent an important element in the construction of social cognition (or the societal-level understanding of present problems). Their understanding is therefore important for getting at the *societal-level* reasoning and rationality.

Propaganda on Russian television has clearly targeted the emotional state of society, specifically aiming at increasing the level of public anxiety and reviving historically-rooted national fears and hatreds associated with fascism and World War II. Furthermore, it is evident that propaganda messages have manipulated the national wounds associated with the loss of international stature and the perceived “greatness” of the Soviet Union, positing the return of Crimea as a morally superior, responsible, and justified action on Russia’s part. The new rule-making claimed and asserted by Russia on this international boundary issue was interpreted by the public as a “return” of the country to the category of “great powers” that is free to construct rules rather than be bound to follow existing ones. The resulting ambivalence in public opinion data—showing widespread fears of a new world war along with a newly found sense of well-being and self-confidence—are not surprising in this picture. They only show that propaganda has had an effect in determining public perceptions and that it was a multi-faceted instrument hitting at a number of soft spots on the public’s “emotional” body.

¹ <http://www.colta.ru/articles/society/3939>

² For an excellent, if selective review, see Isabelle Blanchette and Anne Richards, “The Influence of Affect of Higher Level Cognition: A Review of research on interpretation, judgment, decision-making and reasoning,” *Cognition and Emotion* 24, 4 (2010).

What these “soft spots” are can be gleaned through public opinion polls and through cultural studies that apprehend the deeper emotional, perhaps even subconscious, layers of Russian society that are not amenable to opinion poll analysis.

Attitudes, Opinions, and Emotional Resonance

Opinion polls are better at capturing the cognitive side: what people think about certain issues (including what they think about “how they feel”). By its very design—relying on information-processing based on language—opinion polls are not able to get at the subconscious level and uncontrolled emotional responses. Still, they have much to contribute to understanding the mindset of Russian society and comprehending the processes and public reactions unfolding in recent months. One opinion that stands out in its consistency is a popular view about Russia’s place in the world. Sixty-six percent of Russians in 2000 and 65 percent in 2010 thought that Russia as a country deserves a place of greater respect.¹ Consistent with this view, popular expectations grew that the president should focus on making Russia a great power that deserves respect in the world.² Fifty-seven percent saw that as a priority for the president, standing second only to the issue of “social justice” (which 77 percent saw as a priority) and ahead of “law and order” (which stood at 51.5 percent). The annexation of Crimea was interpreted by many as a huge step toward returning that greatness. The number of respondents that noticed increasing respect toward Russia increased from 25 percent in 2012 to 44 percent in 2014.³

In terms of perceptions of external threats and enemies, the majority of Russians (51 percent) thought in 2010 that an external threat to Russia existed (with that proportion reaching 61 percent in 2014).⁴ Furthermore, the West was considered the number one external threat; almost a third of Russians—32 percent—thought that foreign/external threats to Russia were coming from the West (while 29 percent thought the external threat was associated with the Islamic world).⁵ It is also clear that the external threat associated with the West is mostly linked to the United States; consistently in 2003, 2007, and 2010, anywhere between 73 and 76 percent of Russians thought that the United States was an aggressor that tries to control all countries in the world.⁶

Quite revealing as well are the polls showing mass confusion in popular assessments of the results of the end of the Cold War. In 2007, almost two decades after the fall of the

¹ <http://www.levada.ru/archive/strana-i-mir/kak-vy-schitaete-rossiya-zanimaet-seichas-v-mire-polozhenie-kotorogo-zasluzhiva>

² <http://www.levada.ru/15-02-2012/ezhik-v-tumane>

³ http://www.ng.ru/politics/2014-08-08/3_opros.html

⁴ <http://www.levada.ru/archive/strana-i-mir/kak-vy-schitaete-sushchestvuet-li-v-nastoyashchee-vremya-kakaya-libo-vneshnyaya>

⁵ <http://www.levada.ru/archive/strana-i-mir/ot-kogo-na-vash-vzglyad-prezhde-vsego-iskhodit-vneshnyaya-ugrozav-ot-davshikh-p>

⁶ <http://www.levada.ru/archive/strana-i-mir/dlya-vas-ssha-seichas-eto>

Berlin Wall, 36 percent of respondents could not give a clear answer to the question about what the end of the confrontation with the West meant for Russia. Thirty-one percent thought that Russia had lost in its confrontation with the West, while 33 percent thought that Russia had gained, along with others, from ending the confrontation with the West.¹ Despite these divided opinions, 78 percent of respondents thought that Russia should promote mutually beneficial links with the West, while only 11 percent thought Russia should distance itself from the West.² This last point is a good illustration of the difficulties involved in using opinion polls to get at public emotions (unless studying these emotions has been placed at the very center of research). Designed to get respondents' reactions on an array of questions, opinion polls do not allow for testing the intensity of responses to emotionally charged issues or for distinguishing between issues that are more or less emotionally charged without further and more in-depth probing. The explosive character of the emotional responses associated with the Ukraine crisis indicates that these emotions have been in the process of gestation and accumulation for some time but are only now finding a moment for open and public expression. Cultural studies appear to possess better means at getting at the emotions that society has been harboring beneath the surface for a particular period of time.

How could a study show what lies underneath the social surface? One method advanced in cultural studies is through art and literature. "[A]rt is the incision in the real which allows something unexpected to emerge or erupt, and let[s] us glimpse or guess at what lies beneath the surface of things."³ Art and literature do not speak for themselves entirely and depend on what viewers and the readers bring to the text, what they hear, and what they see. It is the public resonance of a piece of art, movie, or work of literature along with the public's identification with the sentiments promoted by these pieces that reveal they have touched on something important, something that might have been hidden beneath the surface, a powerful emotional charge that was discharged upon confronting that piece of art.

In short, this is a method of getting at societal traumas, fears, and aspirations by studying the creative pieces that have caused powerful public resonance and could therefore be explored as a gateway into the collective unconscious.

Russian director Alexei Balabanov's film *Brat (Brother) 2* (2000), for example, is one such creative piece that can serve as a powerful conduit into the Russian psyche. A sequel to the original *Brat* (1997), a film tracking its main character Danila (played by Sergei Bodrov, Jr.) as he returns from military service and faces life during the thuggish 1990s in St. Petersburg, *Brat 2* takes Danila to Chicago as he seeks to avenge a friend and

¹ <http://www.levada.ru/archive/strana-i-mir/v-rezultate-izmeneniya-vneshnepoliticheskogo-kursa-strany-v-kontse-80-kh-godov->

² <http://www.levada.ru/archive/strana-i-mir/kak-vy-schitaete-rossii-seichas-sleduet>

³ Couse Venn, "Identity, diasporas and subjective change: The role of affect, the relation to the other, and the aesthetic," *Subjectivity* 26, 1 (2009), 10.

restore justice. A gangster flick, *Brat 2* became a cult film, featuring aggressive anti-Westernism, xenophobia, and sexism, and it turned its main character, a hitman, into a cult personality. Yana Khashamova, who uses *Brat* and *Brat 2* (along with other Russian films) to explore Russia's collective imagination about the West, argues that the Russian public underwent shifting sentiments and contradictory reactions towards the West as it faced the challenges of adjusting its national identity to a new global environment. Early fantasies of the West turned illusory during the painful 1990s and were replaced by aggressive anti-Western sentiments, anti-Americanism, and admiration for Russia's moral superiority, as is evident in *Brat 2*.¹ The massive admiration and following for Danila reflects just how closely the sentiments promoted by the film coincided with the public's mood and aspirations, especially those of Russian youth.

Arguably, Putin's actions vis-a-vis Ukraine and the West have been underpinned by the same sentiment, likening Putin to Danila, and have subsequently been admired by millions of Russians. Putin's surging approval rating in opinion polls seems to indicate that the Russian public has seen its fantasies resurface as reality in recent initiatives of the Russian president. The pull of the Kremlin's propaganda messages are arguably that much more enticing given such pre-existing fantasies. The awakening from these fantasies is doomed to be painful and traumatic, once again, and can only be delayed by the continuing and, arguably, heightening confrontation with the West.

¹ Yana Khashamova, *Pride and Panic: Russian Imagination of the West in Post-Soviet Film* (Intellect Books 2007), 112.

How Immigration Aids Russia's Transformation into an Assimilationist Nation-State

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 347

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Immigration is often discussed in the framework of political economy and security studies. When discussed in the context of national identity, immigration is invariably depicted as a “challenge” or an “obstacle” for a nation-state. However, I argue that the impact of immigration on nation-building is contingent upon state policies toward ethnic diversity, something I call an “ethnicity regime.” Depending on the ethnicity regime in place, immigration can be a resource and a key instrument in support of new nationalist projects. I argue that this may have already been the case in Russia since the end of the Cold War. In Russia, mass immigration is aiding Russia's transformation from a multiethnic state to an assimilationist one.

Regimes of Ethnicity

“Regimes of ethnicity” is a concept I developed in a recent book, referring to the combination of state policies and institutions that regulate ethnic diversity.¹ Ethnicity regimes are defined along axes of membership and expression. If a state employs discriminatory citizenship and immigration laws to limit membership (i.e., citizenship) to one ethnic group only, then it has a “monoethnic” regime. Denmark, Germany, Greece, Japan, and many other states around the world exemplify monoethnic regimes. If a state grants citizenship to multiple ethnic groups but does not allow the legal and institutional expression of ethnic diversity, then it has an “antiethnic” regime. “Assimilation” of ethnic minorities summarizes the overall strategy toward ethnic diversity in these countries. Algeria, Burkina Faso, France, Turkey, and many other states around the world exemplify antiethnic regimes.

If a state grants citizenship to multiple ethnic groups and supports the legal and institutional expression of ethnic diversity found among its citizenry, then it has a “multiethnic” regime. Belgium, Canada, India, Nigeria, and many other states around the world exemplify multiethnic regimes. Both the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation definitely exemplify multiethnic regimes, but changes in key policies under former President Boris Yeltsin and President Vladimir Putin indicate that Russia has

¹ Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (Cambridge 2012).

been moving toward an assimilationist antiethnic regime, and, as I will argue below, mass immigration aids Russia's transformation as such.

The Soviet Union and Its Multiethnic Regime

The Soviet approach was based on the official promotion of ethnic diversity through a number of policies including ethnic territorial autonomy given to "titular" ethnic groups (Tatars in Tatarstan, Armenians in Armenia, etc.), recognition of multiple official languages, education in native languages, affirmative action policies in employment, and the codification of ethnic identity in individuals' passports. Many political claims and rights were tied to ethnic differences, and territorialized ethnicity was the norm. The assumption that most members of each ethnic group inhabit a specific territory where they have ethnic territorial autonomy underpinned the Soviet multiethnic model, and this assumption was reasonable in the absence of mass migration. However, the kind of mass immigration Russia has been receiving in the last two decades, combined with a conscious shift away from emphasizing ethnic identities in state policies, is likely to erode this model.

Challenges of Immigration to Regimes of Ethnicity and the Case of Russia

Whether mass immigration strengthens or threatens a particular ethnicity regime depends on the state policies that govern immigration and naturalization, as well as the ethnic and linguistic composition of the immigrants. Immigration will strengthen a monoethnic regime if most immigrants are ethnic kin, but it will threaten a monoethnic regime if most immigrants belong to different ethnic groups. Immigration will strengthen an antiethnic regime if most immigrants already speak the official national language of the state and are unlikely or unable to claim ethnic autonomy or linguistic rights, whereas immigration will threaten an antiethnic regime if most immigrants share the same ethnicity with a large and territorially compact ethnic minority already existing in the country such that immigrants are likely to exacerbate claims for ethnic autonomy or linguistic rights. The opposite is true for the role of immigration in multiethnic regimes, such as in the case of Russia. Namely, immigration is likely to threaten a multiethnic regime if most immigrants already speak the primary official national language of the state (Russian) and if they do not share the same ethnicity with large and territorially compact ethnic minority groups already existing in the country (which, in Russia's case, correspond to titular ethnic groups in the ethnic republics).

Russia: The Second Largest Immigrant Country in the World

The collapse of the Soviet Union constituted the largest loss of territory and population that Russia has suffered in its history. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia became the second largest recipient of immigrants in the world after the United States. Russian statistics report that 10.7 million total immigrants moved to Russia between

1992-2001, while UN data indicates that 13.2 million immigrants were living in Russia in 2002.¹ Looking at more recent data, Russia had 11 million immigrants in 2013, although annual net migration declined somewhat between the 1990s and the 2000s from 453,000 to 389,000.² Immigrants constituted 7.7 percent of Russia's population in 2013. This is not surprising. As large polities such as the Soviet Union break up, the core state (in this case Russia) receives many former subjects, especially ethnic or religious kin, as immigrants.

Another structural reason for Russia's continuing intake of high numbers of immigrants is its unprecedented demographic deficit due to low fertility and high mortality rates. Russia's demographic deficit makes it similar in this respect to Germany, the third largest country of immigration worldwide. Just as Germany needed non-German guest workers in addition to absorbing millions of ethnic German immigrants after World War II, Russia has been receiving millions of both ethnic Russian and other immigrants.

Who Immigrates to Russia? How Does It Affect Russian Nation Building?

What does being the second largest country of immigrants in the world mean for post-Soviet Russian nation-building? Mass migration is hastening Russia's transformation into an assimilationist nation-state, creating a Russophone "melting pot."

The two key variables determining the impact of immigration on nation-building are the ethnolinguistic characteristics of the incoming immigrants and the overall state policy on ethnic diversity that is being pursued, which I previously defined as its "ethnicity regime." In Russia, both factors currently support a gradual erosion of the formal multiethnic structure of the Russian federation, which is a Soviet legacy, in favor of a more assimilationist nation-state, as in France, Turkey, and the United States.

First, virtually all of the immigrants coming into Russia, including 99.5 percent of the 11 million that immigrated between 1989 and 2002, are from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).³ A very large majority of these immigrants presumably speak Russian, either because they are ethnic Russians or because Russian is still an official language or an unofficial language of interethnic communication in their countries of origin. A Russian speaker is not necessarily an ethnic Russian in this context. The last Soviet census of 1989 recorded 11 million non-ethnic Russians living outside of Russia who nonetheless declared Russian to be their "mother tongue." This number included 5.7 million in Ukraine, 1.9 million in Belarus, 1.5 million in Kazakhstan, 500,000 in Uzbekistan, and 446,000 in Moldova. This was in addition to the 25 million ethnic

¹ Vladimir Iontsev and Irina Ivakhniouk, "Russia in the World of Migration Flows," *World in the Mirror of International Migration* 10 (2002), 51-52.

² United Nations, *International Migration Report 2013*, New York, 2013, 5, 13.

³ Yuri Andrienko and Sergei Guriev, "Understanding migration in Russia," *CEFIR Policy Paper Series* 23 (2005), 14.

Russians who resided outside of Russia, as well as respondents who may have used Russian as their everyday language but nonetheless reported another language as their mother tongue.¹ Moreover, the majority of the population in CIS states at least has some knowledge of Russian as a second language.

The migration or "homecoming" of ethnic kin often triggers nationalism and xenophobic attacks in the new homeland while also skewing the demographic balance in favor of the ethnic majority. This is what happened in Germany in 1991-1993 when xenophobic attacks against non-German immigrants and asylum seekers more than tripled following the mass immigration of ethnic German *Aussiedler* from the former Soviet Union.² A similar process is underway in Russia with anti-immigrant attitudes on the rise. Moreover, mass immigration of ethnic kin consolidated the large ethnic Russian majority at around 80 percent of Russia's population, despite the differentially higher birthrate of traditionally Muslim ethnic groups.

Second, and more importantly, since Yeltsin's time, Russian state policy has been moving toward assimilation and away from the multiethnic nationhood that was the hallmark of the Soviet approach to ethnic diversity. Russian governments since the 1990s have been seeking to deemphasize ethnic differences and erode ethnic autonomy. Under Yeltsin, ethnic identity was removed from internal passports despite strong objections from and popular protests in ethnic republics such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Ingushetia, where citizens feared that its elimination would lead to the gradual loss of their ethnic autonomy and even their ethnic identity. While it used to be compulsory to state one's ethnic identity in individual passports, since 1997 it has been forbidden to do so, even on a voluntary basis. Ethnicity was also removed from birth certificates under Yeltsin. President Putin continued in the same direction by abolishing the Ministry of Nationalities and merging four ethnic autonomous territories (*okrugs*) with the Russian regions that surrounded them. Putin also eliminated the direct election of presidents in ethnic autonomous republics in an effort to undercut their popular legitimacy.

Mass immigration is likely to further erode the multiethnic model Russia inherited from the Soviet Union for four interrelated reasons. First, immigrants dilute the demographic weight of indigenous non-Russian minorities such as Tatars and Bashkirs. Second, those immigrants who are ethnically Russian augment the size of the ethnic Russian majority. Third, since non-ethnic Russian immigrants overwhelmingly live in cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg as one minority among many ethnic groups without any territorial claims, they offer a deterritorialized ethnic minority profile that challenges the equation of ethnic minority identity with territorial autonomy. Fourth, since immigrants do not have any of the political rights that indigenous, titular ethnic groups enjoy in their autonomous republics, such as native-language education and affirmative action

¹ Cristiano Codagnone, *New Migration and Migration Politics in Post-Soviet Russia*, Ethnobarometer Programme, 1998, 53-54.

² Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity*, 94-96.

policies, as the number and visibility of immigrants increase, indigenous non-Russian titular ethnic groups' privileges will appear anachronistic and unjustifiable. Russophone immigrants in particular are natural allies of the Russian state in diffusing ethnic separatist challenges from the autonomous republics.

Russia's titular ethnic groups are well aware of the likely negative impact of mass immigration on their status. As such, they display much higher levels of xenophobia against immigrants than other non-Russian ethnic groups in Russia, according to a fascinating study by political scientist Mikhail Alexseev, who notes that "the proportion of titular ethnics who supported wholesale deportation of migrants was more than twice as high as the same proportion among non-titular ethnics (41 vs. 18 percent)."¹ In other words, the likely losers of mass immigration in Russia, the titular ethnic groups, are aware of the threat it poses.

Conclusion

The impact of immigration on nation-building is contingent upon the prevailing ethnicity regime in a given country as well as the ethnic and linguistic composition of the immigrants. In the case of Russia, mostly Russophone immigration aids Russia's transformation away from a multiethnic regime and toward an assimilationist nation-state. This is not unprecedented. The decline of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century was accompanied by the mass migration of millions of Ottoman subjects, almost all Muslims with some exposure to Ottoman Turkish, from formerly Ottoman Balkan territories into Anatolia, which continued after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. This was followed by the founding of an unabashedly assimilationist nation-state, the Republic of Turkey, in 1923, and its mostly successful assimilation of Albanian, Arab, Bosniak, Circassian, Laz, Pomak, and other ethno-linguistic groups in its territory during the 20th century. Almost a quarter-century after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, which became the second largest country of immigration in the world, appears to be on track to become an assimilationist melting pot.

¹ Mikhail A. Alexseev, "Majority and Minority Xenophobia in Russia: The Importance of Being Titulars," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 26, 2 (2010): 101.

Russia's Ethnic Minorities

PUTIN'S LOYAL NEO-IMPERIAL "FIFTH COLUMN"

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 328

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From his insistence in early 2012 on the preeminence of ethnic Russian culture in Russia to his claim in March 2014 that Moscow annexed Crimea to defend the 1.5 million ethnic Russians living there, President Vladimir Putin's shift from civic to ethnic nationalism has been all too evident. With guards in elaborate regalia evoking Imperial Russia standing behind him, Putin's signing of Crimea's incorporation into Russia signaled a reliance on ethnic nationalism to expand Russia's territory and dominance in the former Soviet space.¹

With this shift, to what extent is Putin risking to turn against him non-Russian ethnics, a group that makes up one-fifth of Russia's population and is concentrated in geopolitically vulnerable areas of the Caucasus and Central Asia borderlands? To what extent might Putin's expansionist rhetoric reanimate common memories of imperial and Soviet-era oppression among Russia's ethnic minorities? Might Putin face especially severe backlashes in Tatarstan, home to Russia's largest ethnic minority, given the not-so-distant history of discrimination, repression, and the horrifically murderous wholesale deportation of Crimean Tatars under Stalin? Could ethnic minorities turn into an anti-Kremlin "fifth column" of Putin's own making?

So far these apprehensions have not materialized. According to a poll from the reputable Levada Center taken March 20-23, 2014, 88 percent of Russia's adult population (with a sampling error of 3.4 percent) supported Crimea joining Russia.² Only 6 percent of respondents opposed it. This means that most ethnic non-Russians supported Putin's Crimea policy. In regular Levada polls, Putin's approval rating surged from 61 percent in November 2013 – when hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians publicly protested their former president's decision to forego an association treaty with the EU – to 83 percent in May 2014, following Russia's annexation of Crimea. At the same time, the willingness of Russians to protest against their government sank to an all-time low of 14 percent.³

¹ For a review, see Nuray Aridici, "How Vladimir Putin has changed the meaning of 'Russian'," <http://theconversation.com/how-vladimir-putin-has-changed-the-meaning-of-russian-24928>.

² <http://www.levada.ru/26-03-2014/proiskhodyashchee-v-ukraine-krymu-i-reaktsiya-rossii>

³ <http://www.levada.ru/indeksy>

In Tatarstan, challenges to the Kremlin on Crimea have been mostly restricted to the separatist blogosphere (see photo). When some public protests took place in Tatarstan this past spring, they were, symptomatically, not over the predicament of Crimean Tatars but against real estate development along the Volga River that jeopardized cottage (*dacha*) smallholdings. In a twist, the anti-development protesters likened their allegedly corrupt local officials to the Ukrainian and U.S. governments and asked Putin to protect them—hardly a sign that the local public had lost confidence in Putin over his Ukraine policy.¹

Public Opinion: The Window of Insights

Survey data from Russia shortly before the Ukraine crisis can help us identify the bases of robust, if paradoxical, support among Russia's ethnic minorities for Putin's expansionist ethnic Russian nationalism. The data captures long-held and likely durable public views then unaffected by the Kremlin's anti-Ukraine patriotic media barrage since late 2013. The respected ROMIR agency conducted the polls in Russia on May 8-27, 2013 as part of "The New Russian Nationalism (NEORUSS)" project run by principal investigators Pal Kolsto and Helge Blakkisrud through the University of Oslo with support from the Research Council of Norway. The present memo uses data from all of the project's four surveys based on representative multistage probability samples of adult populations across the Russian Federation (1,000 respondents) as well as in the cities of Moscow (600), Krasnodar (600), and Vladivostok (601). Two subsamples were created. One includes all 180 respondents in four polls whose primary ethnic self-identification was non-Russian--24 percent among them Tatars, 22 percent Ukrainians, 10 percent Armenians, and 17 percent other ethnicities of the Caucasus or Central Asia. The second subsample includes respondents who identified themselves only as ethnic Russians (2,199), with a random undersampling in Krasnodar to match regional distribution in the non-Russian subsample. Age, sex, education level, and household income among respondents, as well as the size and location of the sampling units were similar between the subsamples.²

The polls provide time-tested measures of public support for Russia's expansionism in the former Soviet space, allegiance to Russian citizenship, intent to vote for Putin as president, and valuations of Russia's economic performance (typically a correlate of support for a country's leadership). Comparing responses to the related questions across the ethnic Russian and non-Russian subsamples yields nontrivial findings.

¹ <http://kazan.mk.ru/article/2014/04/07/1009967-tatarstantsam-ustroili-kryim-na-volge.html>

² Based on the independent samples t-tests with equal variances assumed and not assumed. The variance tests indicate that the difference in subsample size had no significant effect on subsample means.

1. *Backing the USSR*

Even moreso than ethnic Russians, the non-Russian ethnics in the poll wanted to see Russia's territory expand. When prompted by interviewers that state borders may shift in the course of history and asked how they would like Russia's borders to change, 47.3 percent of Russian and 53 percent of non-Russian ethnics said they wanted to see Russia's territory enlarged.¹ This was significantly more than 36.7 percent of non-Russian ethnics and 38.1 percent of Russian ethnics who said they were content with Russia's present borders.² Almost as many ethnic non-Russians as ethnic Russians—19.3 percent vs. 21.8 percent of respondents, respectively, backed the idea of Russia expanding to a "Slavic Union" of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Significantly more non-Russian ethnics (33.7 percent) wanted to see Russia's territory expand to the borders of the former Soviet Union than did ethnic Russians (25.5 percent) (see **Figure 1**). Statistical tests showed that while ethnic Russians were no more likely to support the Slavic Union than non-Russians, the latter were non-randomly more likely to back the USSR. With Ukraine being both part of the former Soviet Union and of the putative "Slavic Union," the survey data suggests that incorporating Ukraine into Russia or into a Russia-led interstate union would get strong support among both Russian and non-Russian ethnics. In particular, the ethnic non-Russians would derive considerable motivation from a preferred common institutional identity—with the data testifying to the enduring, if mythical, allure of a specific form of Soviet-era multiculturalism.

2. *Proud Citizens*

The polls found that non-Russian ethnics were just as proud of their ethnic identity and Russian citizenship as ethnic Russians. About 95 percent of both ethnic Russian and non-Russian respondents said they were proud of their ethnicity, and about 90 percent of both said they were proud to be Russian citizens (**Figure 1**). One might expect aggrieved and alienated ethnic minorities to exhibit stronger pride in their ethnicity than titular ethnic majorities, yet weaker pride in their citizenship. This was clearly not the case in the 2013 survey, which suggested Russia's ethnic minorities could be just as patriotic and support Putin's Ukraine policies just as adamantly as the ethnic Russian majority.

¹ Excluding the "don't knows" and refusals to answer the question, with valid N=166 (non-Russian subsample) and N=2,219 (Russian ethnic subsample).

² One more option respondents had was to exclude the republics of the North Caucasus from Russia, which was supported by about 10 percent of non-Russians and 14.5 percent of ethnic Russians. Even though these respondents appear to support Russia's territorial contraction, it is worth noting that ethnic nationalist motivation probably factored strongly into their exclusionist preference—a motivation that in the context of heightened nationalistic fervor could translate into support for Russia's expansion outside the North Caucasus in places like Ukraine.

3. Backing Putin

Of likely voters among respondents, ethnic non-Russians expressed as much willingness to support Putin as president as did ethnic Russians (**Figure 1**). About 71 percent of non-Russian ethnic respondents from among those who voted in the 2012 presidential election said they had cast their ballots for Putin. This is slightly more than the 67 percent of ethnic Russians who said they voted for Putin. When asked who they would vote for if a presidential election were held at survey time (May 2013), the difference between the ethnic Russians and non-Russians remained about the same (50 and 47, respectively), even though the total level of support had declined. These percentage-point differences between subsamples were not statistically significant, meaning Putin could count on about the same number of votes from non-Russian and Russian ethnics.

One important proviso here is that ethnic non-Russians were significantly more likely to say they had abstained or would abstain from voting, but even these numbers were nowhere near the same scale as the refusal of Crimean Tatars to vote in the hastily organized “referendum” on Crimea independence during the Russia-led military invasion and takeover in March 2014. In ROMIR surveys, over 43 percent of non-Russian ethnics said they did not vote in 2012, compared to about 30 percent ethnic Russians. These numbers were 15 and 23 percent, respectively, when asked if they would vote in a presidential election held at survey time in 2013. For 2012, though not for 2013, the difference on non-voting was statistically significant, possibly pointing to latent tensions between Putin's government and Russia's ethnic minorities. However, this issue hardly poses a political threat to the Kremlin. First, the scale of estimated non-participation declined from 2012 to 2013 and the between-group difference in 2013 was no longer statistically significant. Second, the data suggests overall that even if ethnic minorities develop grievances against Putin, they are more likely to express them by withdrawing from politics rather than by marching on the Kremlin.

Putin can also be satisfied with the overwhelming perception among ethnic minorities that Russia's economy was doing well and had decent prospects for the future. About 77 percent of both ethnic Russians and non-Russians in 2013 said the economy was just as strong, if not stronger, than the year before. Minorities, in fact, had a somewhat more optimistic economic outlook, with more of them—26.4 compared to 21.9 percent among ethnic Russians—saying the economy was improving (**Figure 1**).

4. Heeding Putin

A split-sample experiment embedded in the surveys showed ethnic non-Russians to be more responsive than ethnic Russians to statements from Putin. A randomized half of respondents in Krasnodar, Vladivostok, and Moscow were asked if they believed ethnic diversity strengthened Russia. The remaining half of respondents were asked the same question, but this time the question was preceded with the following cue: “Putin claims

that ethnic diversity of Russia's population strengthens our country." Among ethnic Russians, this cue practically had no effect (**Table 1**), but among ethnic non-Russians, it had a sizeable and statistically significant effect, with no more than a 0.1 percent probability that the difference between the Putin-cue and no-Putin-cue results was due to chance alone.¹

However, the Putin cue influenced ethnic non-Russians in a way that poses a challenge—though hardly a pressing or sizeable one—to the Kremlin. After hearing that Putin said diversity strengthened Russia, fewer non-Russians agreed with that statement than without the prompt. The Putin cue reduced the percentage of non-Russians who believed diversity strengthened Russia by almost a fifth—i.e., from 32 to 26 percent in absolute terms. They seemed to trust Putin's intent, but mistrust its unintended consequences -- thus, probably feeling that if Putin wanted ethnic diversity to strengthen Russia, the end result may well be the opposite. In the final count, similar to the issue with non-voting, the percentage of respondents apparently swayed by the Putin cue was still small relative to the total sample size. When considering these results, one may also recall that the Soviet regime managed to survive for decades despite an abiding mistrust of its leaders among ordinary citizens.

Implications for Russia and the West

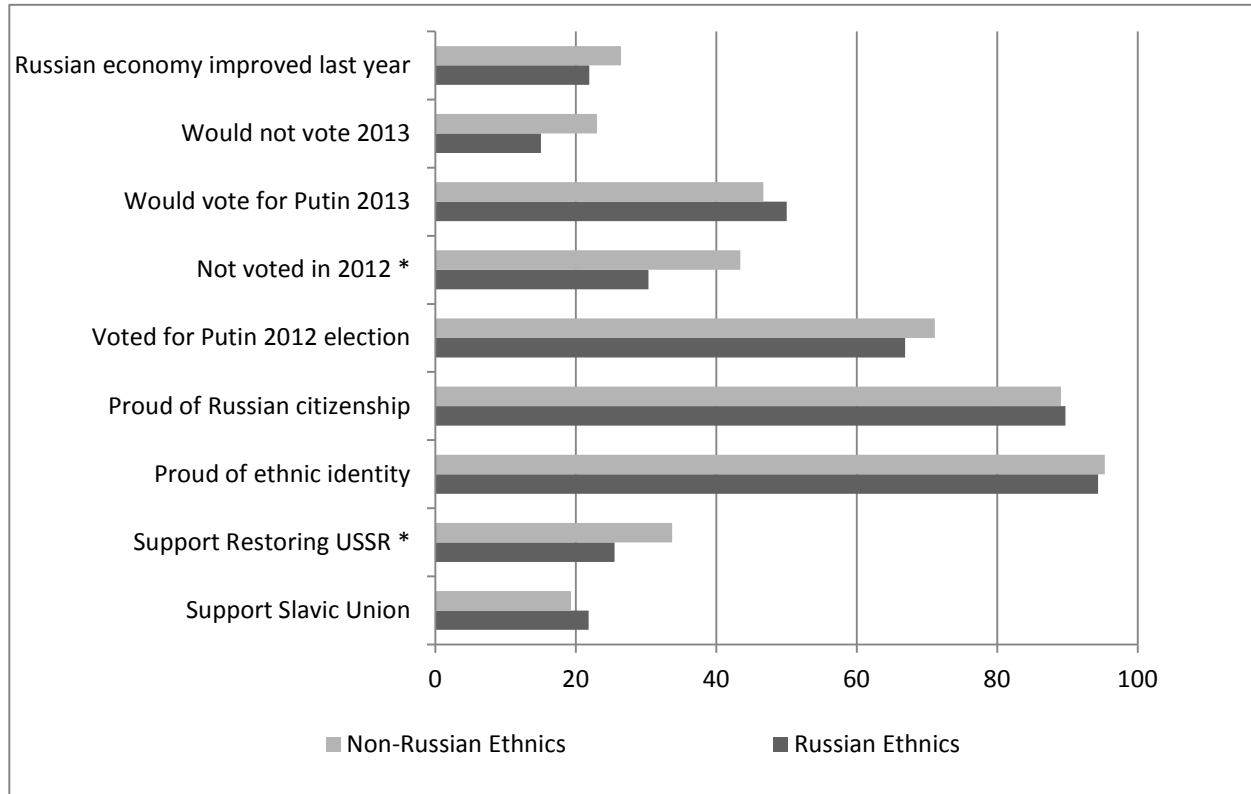
Putin's expansionist policy in the former Soviet Union under the banner of Russian nationalism—as paradoxical as it may seem—is unlikely to alienate a significant number of Russia's ethnic minorities. Moreover, ethnic non-Russians who might potentially protest the rise of Russian chauvinism or the resurgence of Soviet legacies of ethnic minority oppression are most likely to do so in silence.

Moreover, territorial expansion in the former Soviet space not only has a solid basis of support among non-Russian ethnics, it also appears to be reducing exclusionist sentiments among ethnic Russians that had stayed consistently strong for more than a decade. A moderately reliable VTsIOM poll found that support for the slogan "Russia for ethnic Russians" dropped to 38 percent in May 2014 compared to 50 percent in September 2013. Over the same time period, support for Russia being a multiethnic state spiked to 57 percent from 44 percent. If nationalist expansionism reduces ethnic tensions within Russia as this data suggests, the Kremlin gets an added motivation to carry out expansionist policies in the former Soviet space, so as to boost the longevity of Putin's rule, even beyond 2024, if desired. If Russia's ethnic minorities turn into a "fifth column," it is more likely to be one helping Putin build up a USSR 2.0, not one subverting his expansionist designs.

¹ Based on a one-sample t-test.

To the extent that Western leaders count on domestic vulnerabilities, in part arising from possible ethnic tensions within Russia, to constrain Putin's expansionist drive toward a Russia-dominated Eurasian Union, they would be discounting Putin's resolve for expanding Russia's domain. This only puts more of a premium on concerted external pressure on Moscow—especially of an economic and military nature—if the goal of the world's leading democracies is to preserve the freedom, independence, and integrity of post-Soviet states like Ukraine.

Figure 1.



Note: (*) marks statistically significant (nonrandom) differences in an independent samples t-test.

Table 1.

	RUSSIAN		NON-RUSSIAN	
	<i>No cue</i> (N=1467)	<i>Putin cue</i> (N=592)	<i>No cue</i> (N=122)	<i>Putin cue</i> (N=42)
Strengthens	10.3	11	32	26.2
Partly strengthens, partly weakens	62.3	62.8	55.7	59.5
Weakens	27.4	26.2	12.3	14.3

“Chechen Shame in Donbass” (“[Чеченский позор на Донбассе](#)”), May 31, 2014

An illustration in the Tatar nationalist blogosphere of views condemning support among Russia’s ethnic minorities of Moscow’s intervention in Ukraine.



This photo was posted on the web blog of the All-Tatar Center, a Tatar nationalist group, with the following comment: “The Chechens are ripping up the flag of Ukraine. Kadyrov’s dictatorship (*kadyrovshchina*), following Putin’s instructions and participation in the aggression against Ukraine will be added to their list of sins sending them directly to Hell.”

Source: http://tatar-centr.blogspot.com/2014_05_01_archive.html

Exceptions Prove the Rule

UKRAINE, IRAQ, AND THE FATE OF INTERNATIONAL BORDERS

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 346

George Gavrilis
Columbia University

Just months apart, the implosions of Ukraine and Iraq have alarmed many policymakers, journalists, and international affairs experts who worry that the modern state and its borders are on the cusp of a very dangerous transformation. On the eve of Russia's annexation of Crimea, *The Economist* wrote, "Europe's borderlands look more like a ring of fire."¹ Appearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee soon after Crimea joined Russia, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declared, "We have a vital national security interest in upholding international law and upholding norms for international behavior and not allowing somebody at the point of a gun to reverse settled lines of nations."

Later in the summer of 2014, extremists from the Islamic State rolled across Syria's eastern border, easily capturing major Iraqi provinces and cities like Mosul and coming one step closer to their professed goal of establishing an Islamist state from the Mediterranean to Mesopotamia. "This is not the first border we will break," declared an Islamic State fighter, "we will break other borders."² "It suddenly appears those century-old borders, and the Middle Eastern states they defined," wrote *The Wall Street Journal*, "are being stretched and possibly erased."³

Such predictions are not new. In the 1990s after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, warnings abounded that the world was in store for more state collapse and border redrawing. Dire forecasts were made about Turkey – economically hobbled, politically fragmented, and battling a severe Kurdish insurgency – as well as about multiethnic Macedonia, perpetually described as the next Balkan domino. Further afield, journalists predicted that the borders of the newly-independent Central Asian states would be redrawn, either by the hands of transnational extremist movements or by the very actions of Central Asian leaders. Today, the borders of Turkey, the Central Asian states, and even little Macedonia remain very much intact.

¹ <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21597948-ukraine-biggest-test-eus-policy-towards-countries-its-borderlands-how-be-good>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/30/isis-announces-islamic-caliphate-iraq-syria>

³ Bill Spindle and Gerald F. Seib, "Militants Aim to Redraw Mideast Map," *Wall Street Journal*, June 13, 2014

While notoriously inaccurate, predictions about the collapse of modern state borders are understandable. Policymakers and foreign affairs experts have a long tradition of warning about the death of principles they consider sacrosanct, and the fixity of interstate borders is at the top of the list. Yet if one waits long enough, somewhere a state will eventually collapse, sovereign territories will change hands, and international borders will be redrawn.

Policymakers are right when they argue that the recent conflicts in Ukraine and Iraq pose a serious challenge to regional and international security, but this is not because the conflicts create precedents that embolden other states or actors to redraw borders. The costs of violently altering borders remain high. The bigger problem states face is how to manage and police their borders in ways that can prevent conflicts from erupting or at least speed post-conflict recovery.

The Exceptions Prove the Rule

In a forcefully argued article in *The American Journal of International Law* in 1996, Steven R. Ratner called on global policymakers to reexamine their approach to international borders and state sovereignty. Ratner's position was controversial: The international community should abandon its long-standing practice of automatically recognizing new states with the administrative borders that they hold at the moment of independence. The practice allows states to attain independence in an orderly way, but creates "genuine injustices and instability by leaving significant populations both unsatisfied with their status in new states and uncertain of political participation there." Ratner was writing in the shadow of the war in Yugoslavia and conflicts that had flared up across the former Soviet Union.

Ratner's argument did not get much traction with the international legal community. Ratner's ideas did, however, coincide with the subsequent actions of policymakers in Russia and some NATO members.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 is one of several examples of Moscow – directly or indirectly – redrawing the borders of post-Soviet states. Since the 1990s, Moscow has financially propped up secessionist Transnistria's leadership and provided a peacekeeping force to buffer the territory from the rest of Moldova. And in 2008 Russian forces helped separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia formalize their break from Georgia and set up entities that variably depend on Moscow.

For all the blame laid at Russia's doorstep, however, NATO and its member states have also violated the borders of other states. In 1974 Turkey invaded Cyprus in response to Greece's bid to unify with the latter. Turkey set up a *de facto* republic in the north, which declared independence in 1983. In 1999 NATO bombed Serbia in response to

Belgrade's attempt to hold on to Kosovo where Albanians had mounted a secessionist bid. Support from the United States, NATO, and key European states cleared a path for Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008.

The debates on whether these examples of forced border changes have created destabilizing global precedents may be moot. The vast majority of international boundaries today remain highly fixed, and the barriers for changing their location are dauntingly high. Consider the Sykes-Picot agreement in which British and French diplomats laid out spheres of influence over the Ottoman Empire's lost territories after World War I and thereby created many of the boundaries of the modern Middle East. The Sykes-Picot order has been pronounced dead countless times, and yet the only state that has succeeded in redrawing borders on a seemingly permanent basis in the region since World War II has been Israel.

Experienced observers might note that the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq is perilously close to independence, partly a consequence of the disarray in Baghdad and the federal government's disastrous inability to confront the Islamic State. The KRG may very well attain independence in the near future; however, it is more significant that the KRG has so far not been able to easily move towards independence, despite its viable landmass, self-contained political system, organized military, and multi-billion dollar economy – trappings of statehood that even some formally sovereign states might envy.

Is It Worth Fretting Over?

Forced border changes and territorial dismemberment are distressing, but they remain the exceptions that prove the rule. There is still a high price to pay for altering borders, and the expanding military campaign against the Islamic State is an obvious example.

States that alter borders suffer consequences as well. Three decades after declaring independence, Northern Cyprus remains isolated and its economy stunted, despite being the richest of all such small unrecognized states and receiving huge subsidies from Turkey. Moreover, Turkey's bid to join the European Union suffered handily, encountering years of delays, vetoes, and conditions partly due to its support of Northern Cyprus. Russian policymakers who orchestrated the dismemberment of Georgia and absorbed Crimea into the Russian Federation triggered sanctions and isolation that will take years to reverse. Russian political elites may hold fast to the belief that international isolation is worth the price of incorporating Crimea—a territory that was part of Russia in living memory, the object of a deep nationalist and historical narrative, and too emotionally valuable to leave outside the Federation.

It is tempting to see Crimea as setting a dangerous precedent for Russia to absorb other parts of Ukraine, but Russia's desire to geopolitically assert its dominance in the region may restrain it from further territorial and border changes.

When it comes to the secessionist turmoil in Ukraine's eastern regions, Moscow may prefer to neither recognize them as an independent entity nor absorb them into the Russian Federation as it did with Crimea. The preferred option may be to push Russian separatists towards a political solution that results in a federal form of government for Ukraine and increase Russia's leverage over the country on a permanent basis. While Ukraine is in clear need of decentralization, political scientist Oleksiy Haran explains that the federal option "is an idea developed by the Kremlin as a tool to divide Ukraine and play one region against the other."¹ Having a Trojan horse inside Ukraine pays higher dividends than outright annexation.

Lessons for Policymakers

While the international community worries greatly about relatively rare instances of border change, there is far less worry about a greater problem—the sad state of border control in many parts of the world. As Daniel Byman notes, "Pushing the Islamic State back in Iraq does little good if it remains strong across Iraq's blurry border with Syria." Byman is correct in identifying the problem as many states struggle to cope with major security threats—such as the movement of insurgents and weapons across their borders—and yet we remain woefully short on viable measures to improve border management in conflict zones.

Plenty of international border management assistance is on offer from the United States, EU, and the various agencies of the United Nations. This aid aims to enhance the capacity of governments to manage their borders in a way that balances security against illicit movements and threats with openness to licit and beneficial movement of goods and people. Such aid has been dispersed in places as diverse as Bosnia and Tajikistan and typically includes the building of border infrastructure, transfer of high-technology equipment for border authorities, and funding of training for border services.²

Yet global border management assistance remains a patchwork that covers a small portion of the world's poorly-functioning borders. This is understandable because there will always be more miles of dysfunctional borders than funds to fix them. But sponsors of border assistance can usefully take a series of steps to improve the coordination of border aid, especially in and around states that have recently experienced territorial turmoil.

In the case of Ukraine, the EU should take the lead in reformulating its border assistance in order to help Ukraine's government cope with the long-term challenges of managing

¹ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kyiv-sees-russian-federalization-plans-as-attempt-to-destroy-ukraine/2014/04/05/a5ed291c-fd65-4a3b-bf4f-5c83f2574944_story.html

² For a discussion, see George Gavrillis, "Central Asia's Border Woes and the Impact of International Assistance," [Central Eurasia Project – Open Society Foundation](#), May 2012.

its eastern border with Russia—a border where Russia prefers to encounter weak and ineffectual Ukrainian border control institutions. EU aid to Ukraine's border management institutions has for years assisted Kyiv in equipping and retraining its border officials, but the emphasis has largely been on Ukraine's western borders, which face in the direction of the EU. The country's eastern borders will require a multi-year, costly infusion of aid, training, and equipping, and planning for this must start now rather than once the civil war ends.

In the case of Iraq, the United States can take the lead in convening stakeholders of border security agencies of Iraq and its neighbors in order to craft a coordinated response to the challenges of cross-border extremism and to prevent the Islamic State from spreading. But to be most effective, aid must be coordinated with the actors and states who are best placed to help Iraq police its borders against the Islamic State. In some cases, this means unsavory partnerships with the Bashar Assad regime and the Iranian government; it also means working closely with the KRG to build up its border police even if this irritates Baghdad's leadership, which sees border security as a federal purview.

While solutions to the conflicts in Ukraine and Iraq are not entirely comparable, it would be wrong to separate them entirely. In both cases, the international community has spent much time talking about the location and legitimacy of borders far more than it has worked to address the lapses in how borders function. There is little point in fretting over where borders lie if they never worked in the first place.

Novorossiya: A Launching Pad for Russian Nationalists

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 357

Marlene Laruelle
The George Washington University

The Ukraine crisis is a game changer for Russia's domestic landscape. One of the most eloquent engines of this is the spread of the concept of "Novorossiya," or New Russia. With origins dating from the second half of the 18th century, the term was revived during the Ukraine crisis and gained indirect official validation when Russian President Vladimir Putin used it during a call-in show in April 2014 to evoke the situation of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine. It appeared again in May when the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR) decided to unite in a "Union of Novorossiya." In August, a presidential statement was addressed to the "Insurgents of Novorossiya," though the text itself referred only to "representatives of the Donbas."

The powerful pull of Novorossiya rests on its dual meaning in announcing the birth of a New Russia geographically and metaphorically. It is both a promised land to be added to Russia and an anticipation of Russia's own transformation. As such, "Novorossiya" provides for an exceptional convergence of three underlying ideological paradigms that I briefly analyze here.

"Red" Novorossiya

The first ideological motif nurturing Novorossiya emphasizes Soviet memory. Novorossiya is both a spatial and ideological gift to Russia's reassertion as a great power: it brings new territory and a new mission. This inspiration enjoys consensus among the Russian population and is widely shared by Russian nationalists and the Kremlin. The "red" reading of Novorossiya justifies the Donbas insurgency in the name of geopolitical arguments, Russia's destiny as a large territory, and Soviet perceptions of the Donbas as a region proud of its industrial legacy and one that shows the way to a new oligarchic-free Russia.

Spearheading this conception is Alexander Prokhanov and his nationalist think tank, the Izborsky Club, which is the most vocal of the groups with developed connections in the Donbas. Prokhanov proudly stated that "all the current military elites of Novorossiya are authors of my newspapers, *Den* and *Zavtra*....These people are like my younger

brothers.”¹ The Izborsky Club directly advises DNR leaders in drafting their constitution and some of their legal documents. In deciphering the meaning of Novorossiia for Russia, Prokhanov puts an emphasis on economic issues: Novorossiia “will be above all a non-oligarchic state. Big owners such as [Rinat] Akhmetov will be expelled....I went to see the huge industries there that work with Russia. They are the products of Soviet impulse, of Soviet elites. They are the future industry of Novorossiia; this is a powerful industry that will cooperate with Russia.”² Thus, the main gist of Prokhanov’s understanding of Novorossiia is as a renewed form of the Soviet Union that will be liberated from oligarchs, have its enterprises renationalized, and will witness the emergence of a new Russian socialism.

Eurasian ideologist Alexander Dugin prefers to focus on the territorial aspect of Novorossiia. In an April 2014 interview, Dugin stated that he sees in the Ukraine crisis the birth of a “Great Russia” (*Bol’shaya Rossiia*) that he equates with “the Russian world, the Russian civilization. I think the territory of Great Russia approximately overlaps, with some minuses and pluses, the territory of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.”³ When Pozner asked him to specify the exact borders of this Great Russia, Dugin acknowledged that it excluded the Baltic states and western Ukraine but included the South Caucasus, Central Asia, eastern Ukraine, and Transnistria. With the concept of “Great Russia” Dugin attempts to merge the Kremlin’s two main foreign policy doctrines for the post-Soviet region, the Eurasian Union and the Russian World. This allows for the Russification of the concept of Eurasia, too often suspected of betraying Russia’s national interests in favor of backward peripheries, therefore allowing it to keep pace with increasingly xenophobic public opinion.

“White” Novorossiia

The “white” approach to Novorossiia sees the Donbas insurgency as a vehicle that can open the way to a renewal of political Orthodoxy. This, in turn, will confirm Russia’s status as a herald of conservative values and Christianity and, for some adherents of this view, popularize the notion of a new monarchy. It sees in Orthodoxy both a civilizational principle that makes Russia a distinct country and a political value that resonate with the regime. In many ways, this political Orthodoxy draws inspiration from the Black Hundreds, a far-right movement created during the 1905 Revolution that defended a most reactionary autocracy, refused the liberalization of the Russian political regime, organized pogroms in the name of a fierce anti-Semitism, and was also violently anti-Ukrainian.

¹ “Aleksandr Prokhanov. Vključat’ Novorossiiu v sostav Rossii eshche ne vremya i ne rezon,” Rambler, July 1, 2014, <http://www.rambler.ru/view/149118/?origin=sobesednik&topic=head>

² Ibid.

³ “Pozner. Aleksandr Dugin,” First channel, April 21, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cc0xuUgLV6I>. Full transcript available at: <http://pozneronline.ru/2014/04/7669/>

Many groups nurturing the concept of Novorossiia adopt political Orthodoxy as their main credo. Ultra-conservative Orthodox motifs are highly developed both on the ground in eastern Ukraine, in particular inside the so-called “Russian Orthodox Army,” and among their supporters in Russia. All political Orthodoxy groups promoting Novorossiia have personal connections with some senior clerics in the Moscow Patriarchate, which directly or indirectly encourages these movements, and with “Orthodox businessmen” such as Konstantin Malofeev. All make use of Tsarist imagery, including pictures of Nicholas II and his family, and utilize open or veiled anti-Semitic narratives.

The Russian imperial flag has often been flown at combat sites in the Donbas and at meetings in Russia to support Novorossiia. In August 2014, the previously adopted flag of Novorossiia, red and blue and inspired by a flag of the Tsarist Navy, was relegated for use as a battle flag to make room for a new state flag, the Russian imperial white-yellow-black tricolor. The secessionist authorities stated that through the adoption of the new flag, used as a symbol of the Russian Empire from 1858 to 1883, they “integrate their own history into the historical course of the Russian state.” Positive memories of Russia’s Tsarist past are getting an unprecedented boost from the Novorossiia mythmaking process.

“Brown” Novorossiia

Novorossiia also became the engine of the so-called “Russian spring,” which claims that the ongoing “national revolution” should not only fight Kyiv but export itself to Russia. This motif can be defined as neo-fascist; it calls for a totalitarian national revolution that would overthrow the current regime and transform society. It combines an allegedly leftist discourse denouncing corporations and oligarchs and a focus on the dangers threatening the survival of the nation, two features typical for fascist movements. Volunteer groups fighting alongside Donbas insurgents and nurturing the ideological war at home display many fascist symbols and glorify violence and sacrifice. Some of these groups claim association with the practically defunct Russian National Unity movement of Alexander Barkashov, and these are joined by dozens of other small groups offering all possible versions of neo-Nazi ideology.

Dugin is also one of the champions of this approach, seeking to open a new, domestic, front in the ideological war of Novorossiia. After years of denouncing the liberal and pro-Western “fifth column,” he recently launched the concept of a “sixth column” of internal enemies—Kremlin modernizers, in particular Vladislav Surkov—and accuses them of hampering Putin’s will to intervene militarily in eastern Ukraine.

This “brown” reading of Novorossiia is also the most internationalized. It networks with a kind of Neo-Fascist/Neo-Nazi International ready to fight for the Novorossiia cause—if, ironically, also for their right-wing Ukrainian adversaries. Both Russian and

Ukrainian insurgents are joined by dozens of foreigners from Serbia, Belarus, Italy, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Baltic states.

It should be noted that even the main Russian neo-Nazi groups are internally divided. Most of them support the Russian over the Ukrainian side but call for Novorossiia to remain free and avoid unification with a corrupt Russia. A minority, however, saw Euromaidan as a genuine democratic revolution against a corrupt regime backed by Putin and are now supportive of the current Ukrainian government. This is the case, for example, of some members of *Restrukt*, who joined the Ukrainian Right Sector and its various brigades. The *Russkie* movement, which brings together former members of Belov's Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) and Dmitri Demushkin's skinhead Slavic Union, is also divided. A pro-Ukrainian minority stand alongside neo-Nazis from all of Europe, particularly Sweden, Italy, Germany, and Finland.

The Intertwining of Narratives and Networks

"Novorossiia" is thus a unique sounding box for Russian nationalism, nurturing simultaneously "red," "white," and "brown" readings of the events happening in eastern Ukraine. These three interpretations compete but also overlap in certain doctrinal elements and organizational networks. Anti-Semitism is one of the main shared doctrines, as Jews can be simultaneously denounced as oligarchs and capitalist bankers, enemies of Christianity and Russia, and as polluting the white Aryan race in Europe. Anti-Westernism is another shared doctrinal element, but this is "softened" by the movement's complex relationship to Europe; the "white" and "brown" motifs in fact exhibit pan-European postures via their respective commitments to Christianity and "white power." Dugin straddles both the "red" and "brown" camps; he is faithful both to Eurasianist and fascist outlooks. Others, including the Russian Imperial Legion and some youth groups, intermix Black Hundred and neo-Nazi imagery. Finally, the "brown" motif is the most paradoxical as it reveals an open neo-Nazi fracture between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian groups.

Conclusion: The Revenge of 1993

This intertwining of narratives and networks should remind us of another one, associated with the clash between then-President Boris Yeltsin and the Russian parliament in October 1993. The Ukraine crisis is a new turning point for Russian nationalists. It is their most important fight since October 1993, when they helped defend the parliament against dissolution by Yeltsin. One cannot help but draw a parallel between the two events. For the first time since 1993, Russian nationalists can finally point to actions rather than words. Similar ideological groups can be identified in 1993 and in 2014, intertwining the "red," "white," and "brown" of Russian nationalism. The defunct Russian National Unity even seemed to rise from the ashes for the occasion. In both cases, paramilitary groups have embodied the fight, benefiting from personal

protection from the security services and the military and claiming legitimacy for their patriotic upbringing. The Izborsky Club stands out as an ideological successor to the Supreme Soviet, trying to articulate a coherent policy whole on the basis of diverse nationalist doctrines. Political Orthodoxy and "Orthodox businessmen" have updated the legacy of *Pamyat* that marked the Russian nationalist spectrum in the final years of perestroika and in the first years of post-Soviet Russia.

Novorossiia may eventually have a boomerang effect. If the Donbas insurgency collapses, Putin will face the return of nationalist groups unrestrained by months of ideological struggle and crowned by dead martyrs, as well as a few thousand suddenly battle-hardened men. It is uncertain how Moscow can prepare for the return of these fighters. It will require measures of either authoritarian repression, which would be costly for the regime and would impact the general "patriotic" atmosphere, or cooptation in one form or another, for instance integrating them into some kind of institutionalized paramilitary role similar to Cossacks. The anti-regime mood of many, especially those who assume that the Kremlin has abandoned them, will push them to join the ranks of the resistance to Putin. If, however, the insurgency succeeds in imposing an autonomous Donbas, then the Kremlin will have to deal with a vassal regime incommensurably more nationalist than the one in Transnistria.

In the end, the main boomerang effect may be at the level not of the insurgents but of the ideological nurturers of Novorossiia. Both the Izborsky Club and political Orthodox lobbyists have raised their profile in the Russian public space and are cultivating networks of influence that rise high in the state hierarchy. Their hope is to make nationalism, whatever its doctrinal content, the new state ideology of Russia.

Approaches to State- and Nation-Building in Russia's Ukraine Policy

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 348

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A characteristic picture of Western media evaluations of Russian foreign policy toward Ukraine (and the post-Soviet space more generally) can be discerned in the questions of French journalists to Russian President Vladimir Putin on June 4, 2014, in Sochi on the eve of a visit to France. Such questions included: What is your vision of Russian strategy—dialogue or expansionism and conquest? Do you want to reestablish an empire or develop Russia within its current borders? Russian troops annexed Crimea; do you plan to return it to Ukraine? Do you want to integrate Ukraine into Russia and have you tried to destabilize the situation there? Who convinced you that you have a special mission for Russia?

Besides the opinion widely shared in the West that Russian foreign policy is based on neo-imperialism, what other explanatory frameworks could exist for Russia's recent behavior? In contrast with the value-based foreign policy of the United States, Russian foreign policy is usually analyzed as interest-based and devoid of values. I claim that Russian foreign policy is widely based on attempts to export Russian state- and nation-building models. Mainstream official discourse and political research on the post-Soviet states in the West are framed around democracy and human rights, while for post-Soviet states, nation-building and state-building are more vital issues than regime type.

Experts most often explain the Russian role in the Ukraine crisis as a result of the non-democratic nature of Russia's political regime. Another interpretation, however, is that during the recent events in Ukraine, Russian elites have tried to demonstrate that Russian state-building and nation-building models are more successful than those of Ukraine. The annexation/reunification/reintegration of Crimea (the choice of term depends on the source of discourse, and so I will use the latter term in this memo) is the result of this type of foreign policy thinking.

¹ The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of MGIMO.

Respect for State Institutions

The Russian reaction to the Ukrainian revolution of 2014 is very similar to its reaction to all revolutions in the post-Soviet region. Igor Ivanov, former Russian minister of foreign affairs and Security Council secretary in 2005 described Georgian, Ukrainian and Kyrgyz revolutions as non-democratic, non-constitutional changes of power.¹ According to Sergey Lavrov, Russian minister of foreign affairs, by their essence the Rose Revolution in Georgia and Orange Revolution in Ukraine were *coups d'état* similar to the 1917 October Revolution.² The most recent Ukrainian revolution was characterized by Putin as a *coup d'état* with the use of force.³ Such characterizations of color revolutions are usually followed by expressions of regret that the change of power was not constitutional and the desire for a new government to return political life to legal foundations.

Terms like “regime type” or “democracy” do not feature in the Russian official discourse as explanations for the Ukraine crisis. Putin insists that the main problem in the case of Ukraine is a lack of respect for institutions: “There should be an extremely careful attitude toward state institutions, institutions of nascent states, because otherwise there will be chaos, which we are now witnessing in Ukraine.”⁴ Putin’s position is that there were legal ways for the current Ukrainian political elites to come to power without non-constitutional actions as Viktor Yanukovich had agreed to a gradual transition of power to the opposition. In the Kremlin’s narrative, the problem is not that Russia does not like the current Ukrainian authorities because of their pro-Western stance but that their accession to power was not completely legal or legitimate from Russia’s point of view. According to Putin, it would have been easy for the Ukrainian opposition to come to power legitimately, which would probably have allowed for the avoidance of civil conflict in the southeastern regions of Ukraine.

Russian confidence in state institutions and constitutions as their legal basis is based on Russia’s own experience with power transition. While many post-Soviet states changed their constitutions to assure a legal basis for heads of state to be reelected for more than two consecutive presidential terms or to transform presidential systems into parliamentary ones, Russian elites found a more sophisticated way to assure a smooth power transition in accordance with Western standards of democracy without constitutional change. Respect for the Russian constitution remained important during

¹ Interview of the Secretary of the Security Council of Russia I.S. Ivanov to the journal “Strategiya Rossii,” N 4(16) (May 5, 2005),

http://mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/258F32B8F33C9BF2C3256FF80021BDD0?OpenDocument

² Transcript of answers of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia S.V. Lavrov to the questions at the meeting with members of the International Affairs Council, New York (September 24, 2008),

http://mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/22D0E42DE56D4830C32574DA003217E2?OpenDocument

³ Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Saint Petersburg Economic Forum (May 23, 2014),

<http://kremlin.ru/news/21080>

⁴ Ibid.

the Ukraine crisis: after the Crimean referendum, Vladimir Putin requested that the Constitutional Court review the treaty of incorporation of Crimea into Russia to clarify whether it corresponded to the Russian constitution.

During his visit to Central and South America in mid-July 2014, Putin once again stressed the necessity of respecting international and national law, especially constitutions and state institutions in recently emerged states where political systems had not yet consolidated and economies were still developing. In his speech at a meeting of the Russian Security Council on July 22, 2014, Putin referred to sovereignty and territorial integrity as “fundamental values.”

From its own recent history, Russia has learned that the only viable model of solving major state crises consists of elite-level deals without Western interference. The main precedents include: 1) the process of Soviet dissolution, which proceeded rather peacefully as a result of a deal among republican elites; 2) the constitutional crisis of 1993, which was solved due to strong presidential power (an interesting parallel with the events in Ukraine in February 2014 is that the 1993 crisis resulted from inconsistencies in the legal basis of power); and 3) the Chechen conflict, which ended with an elite-level deal and considerable economic support from federal authorities. From these cases, Russia learned that sovereignty and non-interference are supreme values. Thus, Russia believes that other states also have a right to solve their internal political problems without international interference. That is the basis for Russia’s disapproval of the West’s support for the Euromaidan movement and the Ukrainian opposition. Russia’s position is that Ukrainian elites could have solved their disputes legally, assuring a continuity in gas deals and other issues such as the stationing of the Russian fleet in Sevastopol.

The reunification of Crimea with Russia will be used by Moscow to prove the effectiveness of Russian state institutions by comparison with Ukrainian ones. The intent is to show the West that Ukraine is not developed enough to become part of the European and Euro-Atlantic communities. On April 10, 2014, Putin promised to make Crimea, which was a subsidized territory in Ukraine, into a donor region in Russia in a few years. He made a rather emotional comparison between the economic development of Crimea and Russia: “...practically everything is in desolation [in Crimea].... Some things are astonishingly desolate. We have a lot of problems [in Russia], but here there are many more problems.”¹

On the whole, according to official discourse, the reasons for the crisis between Kyiv and Ukraine’s southeastern regions are internal and stem from the unstable unitary system of government that Kyiv has chosen and the lack of a balanced constitution representing

¹ Meeting with representatives of the All-Russian People’s Front, April 10, 2014, <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/20753>

the interests of all regions, as Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov stated in April 2014. Lavrov characterized constitutional changes after each presidential election in Ukraine as abnormal and “made according to the will of those political forces which won the elections.”¹ In a way, this position about the internal reasons for the crisis is supported by opinion polls. According to a March 2014 Gallup poll, the majority of the population in Ukraine has not had confidence in their government since the Orange Revolution of 2004.²

The suggested Russian solution to the Ukraine crisis has been constitutional reform and the transformation of Ukraine into a federal state, which is the Russian model for securing territorial integrity.

Nation-Building Model: Implications for Russia from Crimea’s Reintegration

In Russia’s official discourse on the reintegration of Crimea, there are three elements that have implications for nation-building efforts within Russia itself: respect for history, a fear of ethnic nationalism, and the Russian language as a source of identity.

The official Russian interpretation of events involving Crimea invokes the reestablishment of historic justice and a correction of Nikita Khrushchev’s erroneous 1954 decision to integrate the Crimean peninsula into Ukraine. The discourse on the correction of Soviet-era mistakes is based on the assumption that Russia has a right to take responsibility for the Soviet Union’s faults and to fix errors. Hence, Russia is the real successor of the Soviet Union and not just one of the fifteen newly independent states that emerged after its collapse.

References to World War II are perceived differently by Russia and, generally, the West. Western interpretations hold that the Kremlin is using the memory of World War II by referring to some right-wing Ukrainian movements as neo-Nazi or fascist to justify Russian intrusion in Ukraine as a kind of continuation of the Soviet Union’s 1940s anti-fascist struggle. These terms have somewhat different implications for Russian audiences. Russian political elites use Soviet victory in World War II (the Great Patriotic War) as a unifying factor for creating a distinct Russian national identity. On the one hand, the use of the term “fascist” is rhetorical, tremendously simplifying the task by depicting events in black and white. At the same time, Ukrainian right-wing nationalist parties personify the fears of Russia’s federal elites, who fear the development of regional ethnic nationalism and separatism in Russia.

¹ Answer by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia S.V. Lavrov to the question by *Argumenty I Fakty* newspaper, published on April 16, 2014,

http://mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/42E9FBBBD2602226E44257CBC001AECC2?OpenDocument

² “Ukraine’s Next Leader Will Need to Restore Trust,” March 11, 2014,

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/167825/ukraine-next-leader-need-restore-trust.aspx>

This brings us to the question of the model of nation-building in Russia. References to history, language, and traditions are usually considered to be part of the model of ethnic nationalism, while a desire to be part of the nation, sharing a common territory, and believing in common principles (usually democratic ones) are ascribed to the model of civic nationalism. Russia's reliance on constitutionalism and equal representation of different ethnic groups, on the one hand, and its rhetoric on Crimean reintegration, on the other, seem to belong to different models of nationalism. Has the Crimean case made Russia shift its model of nation-building from a more civic to a more ethnic form of nationalism?

This is not really the case. In Ukraine, Russia has supported the Russian language not as a majority language (and, thus, a pillar of Russian nationalism) but as a minority language. Russia interfered only when Ukraine changed its approach to nation-building in a more ethnic direction. At this point, Russia decided it had the right to interfere in the name of ethnic equality and in the name of civic nation-building in general. As Russian leaders see it, the failure of post-revolutionary Ukraine to assure civic nation-building allowed Russia the ability to step in with its own model of nation-building, the advantages of which were immediately demonstrated to the Crimean population, by, *inter alia*, the rehabilitation of Crimean Tatars and the promise of three state languages (Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar) in Crimea. Of course, it is premature to state that proclamation of a civic nation-building model immediately led to its implementation in Crimea.

The Ukraine crisis made Russian authorities more cautious about possible interethnic clashes in Russia itself, prompting a decision in early July 2014 to launch a unified system for monitoring interethnic relations and preventing possible ethnic conflicts. The federal monitoring system is planned for the start of 2015.

In sum, the ongoing Ukraine crisis and process of Crimean reintegration have given Russia a chance to test its state- and nation-building models. The major principles on which Russia seems to base its foreign policy are a reliance on constitutional procedure and civic nationalism. While attempts to export its national models to Ukraine in the form of federalization and constitutional reform have failed, Russia will continue to use Crimea as a testing ground for proving to the West (as well as to Russia itself) that the Russian models of state-building and nation-building are more viable than those suggested for Ukraine by the European Union and the United States.

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