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Russia, Ukraine, and the New Battle for Eastern Europe

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Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea is neither primary evidence for a new Cold War nor a return of Russia as a global power. It is reflection of Russia's return as a traditional European power in conflict for control along its borders. Since the 16th century, Russia has been one of several major powers in the European balance of power. The Cold War was a global contest. Ideology was a central factor in the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Ideology is not critical to the dispute today. Russia's rivalry with the United States and NATO is restricted to Eastern Europe and the Levant. Russia, no longer a global power like the Soviet Union, is a European power. In this context, its focus is, as it was 200 years ago, maintaining a favorable balance of power in Europe and security along its frontiers. This paper attempts to put Russia's recent actions in its border areas in the context of its historical foreign policy to test whether today's choices represent a divergence from or a continuation of previous foreign policy objectives.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, New Battle, Cold War

Geopolitics and Regional Politics

Tensions between Russia and the West seem to be on an upward trajectory from an ever-increasing set of antagonisms. The occupation of areas of Georgia in 2008 was followed by the annexation of part of Ukraine in 2014. Low grade hostilities continue in eastern Ukraine as Russian cyber attacks rattle its neighbors in the Baltic. Relations between the United States and Russia are dominated by the mounting investigation into Russia's actions during the 2016 elections in the United States and colored by conflicting involvement in the Syrian Civil War. A serious backlash against Russia in Europe continues in the wake of the murder of a former Russian military intelligence officer who cooperated with British intelligence. No field from energy politics to the reduction of armaments is without controversy.

Russia's involvement in Syria coupled with its ambiguous rapprochement with Turkey is further signs of Russia's desire to play a more active role beyond its borders. In recent elections, Russian money, propaganda, and diplomacy provided support for nationalist and populist political movements across Europe—unsuccessfully in France, but with a degree of success in both Germany and Italy.

Western responses have been far from coherent. Economic sanctions have damaged Russia's economy while causing pain and uncertainty among Europe's weaker economies.

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Under President Trump, the United States has displayed a somewhat schizophrenic attitude. Intelligence officials and senior military leaders have roundly criticized Russia. The president and some of his supporters within the administration have been more agnostic about the threat posed by Russia to the United States. Carrots and sticks have been employed with a degree of disjunction.

This paper will explore how this larger picture influences dynamics in Eastern Europe. It will attempt to frame the situation in that region through a historical lens in order to understand both the present challenges and the likely scenarios for future developments. A number of the Western tensions with Russia are present in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe is now the frontline of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). For Russia, NATO remains the "main external military risk", particularly the bringing of "the military infrastructure of NATO member countries near the borders of the Russian Federation" (The Atrum-Belli, 2014). Eastern Europe figures prominently in pipeline politics disputes over domestic political orders, trade relations, and cyber activity. It is also characterized by more traditional power politics. At the end of August 2017, NATO announced that the four battle groups deployed to the Baltic countries and Poland were operational.[1] These 4,500 troops represented, in the words of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: "the biggest reinforcement of our collective defences since the end of the Cold War" (NATO, 2016). To some, these moves demonstrated a continued American interest in Europe and the existence of continued geostrategic tensions with Russia. This is only partially true. They also reflect the balance of power competition within Europe. Russia is no longer a superpower; but it remains a major European power. As such it challenges other European powers. Still, it does not represent a threat to the European balance of power, *perse*. Russia still lacks the capability to establish itself as a European hegemon. Because of this, and because Russia does not represent a global threat to the United States or European powers, they are unlikely to confront Russia through a new Cold War. Russia is back, but only as a European power, playing the old European balance of power game and attempting to increase its influence and security along its borders. In some ways, this works to Russia's advantage. Countries on Europe's periphery, like Turkey, do not consider Russia to be the same existential threat that the Soviet Union was. On issues like arms sales and Syria, some NATO countries have moved towards selective cooperation. Some nations within the European Union are also wary of confronting Russia for economic and political reasons. It is no accident that countries like Cyprus and Greece did not follow suit with the majority of European Union members in expelling Russian diplomats in response to the Salisbury poisoning. Russia maintains economic as well as political influence in these countries, where it makes special use of the narrative of a shared Orthodox heritage.

The logic of NATO is to preserve a balance of power in Europe. In the first instance, this meant preventing the Soviet Union, and now Russia, from dominating the continent. Before 1990, the threat was primarily seen through conventional military and conventional political means: Invasion of Soviet forces on the one hand and either the electoral or revolutionary success of communist parties on the other. But Russia's interest in controlling lands in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus is far older than NATO. Control of Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Chechnya, Georgia, and Armenia, represents an imperialist strain in Russian foreign policy that has been remarkably consistent whether practiced by Tsars, commissars, or Vladimir Putin. It is not fueled by ideology, but by Russian perceptions of its security needs. It reflects Russia's needs as a conventional European power.

[1] Available athttps://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_146557.htm (Accessed March 21, 2018).

These realities shape two fundamental questions confronting NATO today. If Russia is not a player for world domination, but merely a 21st century manifestation of the Tsarist empire, with the ambition for territorial, economic, and political control in the regions mentioned, is American and a broader Western opposition desirable and possible? Under such geopolitical realities, should NATO be interested in assisting nations on Russia's borders in their goal (often centuries old) of moving away from Moscow's domination?

Cold War Conventions in a New World

For many Americans, NATO is often remembered as an organization which protected Europe from the Soviet Union and communism during the Cold War. NATO's military capabilities (both conventional and nuclear) along with its doctrine of collective defense played a role in preventing Soviet military aggression in Western Europe between 1947 and 1990.Collective defense and nuclear deterrence are successful legacies from the organization. NATO grew into an alliance that also provided collective security, by binding nations that had been enemies for decades (like France and Germany) on the same side. At the same time, NATO allowed the United States to exert a deep and powerful role on the European political landscape and act through both overt and covert means to prevent communist advances, which themselves were both overt and covert.

At its heart, however, NATO was less about communism and the Soviet Union in particular than it was about maintaining a European balance of power. Communist or not, the position of the Red Army in 1945 and the realities of a prone Europe, meant that the Soviet Union was uniquely positioned to dominate the continent. This was what the United States and Britain, through NATO, aimed to prevent. For more than four decades, NATO was the mechanism preventing the establishment of a single European hegemon. Lord Ismay's famous phrase, now a cliché, that NATO was designed to "keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down" (Reynolds, 1994, p. 13) tells us a great deal about the balance of power politics which defined NATO's role during the Cold War. The logic was simple: Both America and Britain did not want a rival nation to become a European hegemon. American policy-makers followed British policy-makers in this goal.

Preventing a single nation from achieving hegemony in Europe was British policy for centuries. Over 400 years, it led to a series of malleable alliances. In the 16th century, the British allied with the Dutch and French against the Spanish. From the late 17th to the early19th century, they confronted France with aid from German states and Spain. At the start of the 20th century, they allied with France, Italy, and Russia against Germany and then with France, Russia, and the United States against Germany and Italy. Through NATO, Britain allied with France, the United States, Italy, and eventually Germany, to oppose Russia. Each somersault was directed to the purpose of preventing the establishment of a European hegemon.

The ability of the Soviet Union to project power into Western Europe through various political, covert, and military means, declined in the period between the end of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, even the veneer of it posing a threat to the European balance of power disappeared. Although some scholars argued that this vacuum might be filled by a return of the "German question", or perhaps inter-European security competition, neither materialized—certainly not in the traditional form of military confrontation (Joffe,1990; Mearsheimer, 1990, 1991). German unification, however, did re-establish Germany as the preeminent European power by virtue of its economy, size, and geography.

Again, NATO faced new challenges. These centered on existential issues: Should NATO expand east to incorporate countries, like Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia that wished to reinforce their independence from Russian power with international security guarantees?

Should it attempt to incorporate Russia itself into NATO proper, or at least into a new "Concert of Europe?" With the Soviet Union gone, did NATO have a reason for being, or was it nothing but a Cold War relic whose days were (rightly) numbered?

This was the predominant debate of the late 1990s. Reasoned voices warned that expanding NATO to countries from the Warsaw Pact was inherently provocative to Russia and would carry the potential for conflict (Russett & Stam, 1998). Limiting or preferably stopping expansion was seen as the prerequisite for Russian cooperation in establishing a peaceful, post-Cold War order.

Potential new members from "the contested zone" in this view had "no God-given right to NATO membership" (Art, 1998, p. 399). Certainly, there is no God-given right to join any alliance. But in the case of NATO, one enormous legal and one significant moral issue remain opposed to this thinking. Legally, NATO's charter leaves membership open to "any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty" (NATO, 1949). Morally, the dilemma confronting Western policy-makers remains whether to seek closer relations with countries on Russia's borders (to include membership in NATO), or to allow those countries to be subdued by the latest incarnation of Russian imperialism.

NATO has always confronted challenges—leading to the trope that it is perennially an organization in "crisis" (Thies, 2009). Nevertheless, the collapse of the Soviet Union did create a unique test. Russia does not present the same ideological or material threat to Europe that the Soviet Uniondid; Russia remains too weak to assert itself as a European hegemon. It has no ideology which might spread beyond its borders. Its population is smaller than that of the European Union; smaller than that of the Soviet Union and shrinking. Its economy has suffered from corruption, economic sanctions, and lower prices for oil and natural gas. Individual nations within Europe have also recovered since 1945. The European Union has broadened European power. Germany has once more become a global power in economic terms even if this economic power is not matched in terms of military power or political will. Given its material and ideological limitations, the prospect of Russia coming to dominate Europe, Germany, or even central and Eastern Europe is remote.

It was this Russian weakness, after all, which prompted the rapid absorption of former Soviet states and clients into NATO. But NATO's push east has provided Russia the opportunity to adopt a more assertive stance. Geographically and politically, countries like Latvia, Georgia, and Ukraine are too remote from the West. They have frequently been seen by Russian national security thinkers—whether Tsarist, Soviet, or post-Soviet—as integral parts of Russia. Their history is replete with examples of achieving independence during periods of Russian weakness only to be absorbed by Russian when it was strong. Russia is stronger than it was in 1991, but remains considerably weaker than it was in 1961. This middle position is part of the challenge. The extent of Russian strength is contested; the commitment of the United States and other NATO nations is ambiguous. Eastern Europe and the Caucasus are the areas where Russian strength and Western commitments will be tested.

At the same time, Russia is not shying away from presenting some challenges further afield. Its support for Euro-skeptic and nationalist parties in France, Italy, and Germany has paid dividends. The European Union, as a project, has been weakened. A report prepared by the American Senate Committee on Foreign Relations outlined how Russia used a variety of familiar tools from "bots and trolls… [to] stories in Russian state-sponsored media outlets playing up fears of migration and globalization" in order to support the vote for Brexit. Evidence is also mounting that Moscow financed pro-Brexit forces (Committee on Foreign Relations

United States Senate, 2018).Such actions are not designed to bring about regimes that will do Moscow's bidding, *perse*. But it does have the possibility to dramatically weaken the coherence of the European Union as a political actor—something that works to Russia's advantage in Eastern Europe.

The History of the Near Abroad

A tumultuous and bloody history exists between Russia and its non-Russian neighbors to the West. This has roots not in past millennia, but over the previous two and a half centuries.

Since the late 18th century, Russian policy has been one of expansion to the West and southwest. Poland was partitioned out of existence in three rounds between 1772 and 1795, along with Lithuania. In 1801, Georgia was formally annexed from the Persian Empire. Between 1817 and 1864, Russia waged a war of conquest in the Caucasus, culminating in the deportation and ethnic cleansing of the Circassians. After the First World War, Soviet forces engaged in wars against Poland, Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia, attempting to maintain, or expand Russia influence. In Poland, they were defeated in 1921, but in Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia, they succeeded in reestablishing Russian power and bringing these nations into the Soviet Union as socialist "republics".[2]

Under Stalin, ethnic minorities were directly targeted in the Soviet Union, predominantly Poles and Ukrainians, but also Balts, with resettlement, imprisonment in the Gulag, starvation, and execution. Between 1932 and 1933, Stalin's policy of forced collectivization directed at Ukraine starved more than three million Ukrainians (Snyder, 2010). In the years that followed, persecution of minorities continued. As one party leader put it, national minorities "should be forced to their knees and shot like mad dogs" (Snyder, 2010, p. 89). During the Great Terror of 1937-1938, 681,692 individuals suffered precisely that fate, shot by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, the infamous NKVD. Of these victims, more the 85,000 were Poles; 247,157 of the victims came from national minorities, making those groups 20-time more likely to suffer execution than Russians. In this way, Soviet Russia hoped to exterminate all nationalist murmurs in those territories and prevent a further breakup of the Tsarist Empire it had inherited. These actions represented a significant duplicity within the Soviet ideology.

Proclaiming itself internationalist and focused on class struggle, it nevertheless targeted national minorities more brutally than any previous Russian regime.

Ideology was so secondary to nationalist goals that the Soviet Union came to terms with its ideology antithesis, Nazi Germany, to partition Poland in 1939. Between the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland on September 17, 1939 and the Nazi invasion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on June 22, 1941,109,400 Polish citizens were arrested by Soviet authorities. Most were sentenced to eight years in the Gulag; 8,513 were sentenced to death (Snyder, 2010, p. 126). Polish prisoners of war, some 14,587 soldiers held in three major camps were shot and buried in mass graves, including the infamous site at Katyn (Snyder, 2010, pp. 135-137). After the Soviet Union invaded and annexed the Baltic States in June 1940, deportations began there as well: 17,500 people from Lithuania, 17,000 from Latvia, and 6,000 from Estonia (Snyder, 2010, p. 143).

As Russian power expanded again into Eastern Europe following the collapse of the short-lived Nazi empire, control of minority nations again resulted in both persecution and resistance. Hungarians and Czechs

[2] Armenia was partitioned in collusion with Turkey. Half was absorbed into the new Turkish Republic, half became a Soviet Republic.

rose up against Soviet power in 1956 and 1968 respectively, but were brutally suppressed. More recently, the breakup of the Soviet Union renewed fighting between Russia and Georgia, saw separatist movements against Russia in Chechnya (suppressed and then coopted after two bloody campaigns), and conflict between Moldovan and pro-Russian forces in Transnistria. These tensions have culminated in the frozen conflicts of Georgia and Transnistria, the annexation of Crimea, continued violence in eastern Ukraine, and in the rhetoric of a new Cold War.

While Western countries have murmured disapproval for human rights violations in Chechnya or the invasion of Georgia, few concrete steps were taken until the sanctions regime that followed the annexation of Crimea. This remains something of a puzzle. Russian weakness in the late 1990s and even in 2008 should have made a robust Western response more likely inthis period. The stronger position of Russia in 2014 should have warned off sanctions. But this was not how things turned out.

Sanctions or not, rhetoric between Russia and the West remains hostile. In this light, discussion of a new Cold War with Russia is seductive but misleading. Ideology and economics underpinned the Cold War, which was a global struggle. Some of its bloodiest and ugliest acts played out not in Europe where American and Soviet power clearly abutted, but in Latin America and Asia, where they did not. Ideology pitted the American and Soviet systems against each other. Those systems won them opprobrium or approbation throughout the world. Today, the conflict is not economic in nature. It is not global, but highly specific in its geography.

Ideology plays a role only so far as the American ideological proclivity to support the ideal of democracy will lead it to support countries opposing Russian attempts to control their local politics.

Membership in NATO allowed countries, like Poland, Romania, and the Baltic States to move away from their Soviet pasts, establish functional democratic regimes, and open their economics to trade and transparency. While progress still needs to be made, their trajectory remains positive. The question confronting American policy-makers and NATO is whether supporting similar movements even closer to Russia's borders is feasible and desirable. NATO expansion has come with substantial costs and has provided Russia with opportunities (that it is attempting to exploit) to divide NATO nations and halt its progress as an institution.

Moscow's Return

While the United States spurred and supported NATO expansion, it did not pay sufficient attention to the new geopolitical realities that such an expansion would create. A vigorous debate in the second half of the 1990s centered on whether NATO expansion would act as a hedge against future Russian strength (and aggression) or whether it would spur precisely the sort of behavior it was meant to nullify. There were fears of preemptive action in the Baltic, "pressure on Ukraine, or foreign adventures elsewhere" (Garthoff, 1997, p. 10). Those who argued that NATO expansion would precipitate Russian reaction seem to have been proven correct. Georgia was invaded, Abkhazia and Ossetia occupied in 2008. Ukraine has suffered the annexation of Crimea and continued civil war in the east. Russia's campaign in Syria certainly follows the mold of a "foreign adventure elsewhere".

There are more cynical views of NATO expansion as well. In 1998, *The New York Times* reported on the extent of lobbying efforts by major arms manufacturers directed at Congress. According to the report, written by Katharine Seeyle, America's "six biggest military contractors…spent $51 million lobbying" Congress between 1996 and 1998 (Seeyle, 1998). In this view, NATO was not a moral crusade to bring democracy and freedom to Eastern Europe. Instead, it was a cynical way to exploit a new arms market. Russian enmity was the

blowback not of American grand strategy, but of rewards for American big business.

It is sometimes mooted that NATO expansion violated an agreement between the US and Russia during the collapse of the Soviet Union (Sarotte, 2014). In broad terms, the dying Soviet Union permitted the reunification of German to proceed without violence in return for American promises that NATO would not push further east. Gorbachev, with his state collapsing, even proposed that the Soviet Union could join NATO. He was rebuffed by Secretary of State Baker (Sarotte, 2014). According to the information now available "contrary to Russian allegations, Gorbachev never got the West to promise that it would freeze NATO' borders" (Sarotte, 2014, p. 96). In any case, it would have been naïve of them to believe that NATO would not expand.

That expansion, ironically, has opened opportunities for Russia as much as it has backed it into a corner. Using a toolbox containing both conventional and unconventional means as well as justifications based on broad interpretations of national commitments, Russia has succeeding in undermining the US led world order that prevailed after the fall of the Soviet Union. Still, discussions of a conventional war with Russia are also misleading. Deterrence and the realities of mutually assured destruction make a conventional war among nuclear powers highly unlikely. The escalatory costs of attacking NATO nations outright are too high. Russian forces are not likely to flood over Eastern Europe as they did during 1939 and 1940, when Stalin's alliance with Hitler allowed both dictators to shatter the post-Great War settlement.

Nor are we likely to witness the sort of advance carried out against the exhausted *Wehrmacht* in Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania in 1944. Russia assaults drawn up to mirror the advance of the 1st Baltic Front during Operation Bagration are anachronistic. Future Russian threats, like ones of the present and recent past will reflect aspects of hybrid war, sophisticated manufacture of internal instability, cyber action, and "little green men". Diplomacy and domestic politics will also continue to play a major role in the struggle. After all, Soviet military superiority alone did not defeat Poland in 1939. It was the Soviet alliance with Nazi Germany that enabled it to expand power to the east to territories that it had lost during the First World War. Russia diplomacy is attempting to do its best to undermine the coherence of both the European Union and NATO.

Episodes of "hybrid warfare" from the cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007 and continuing in more conventional operations to protect separatist factions in Georgia did not lead American policy-makers to inflict a substantial price on Russia. There was a failure to grasp that instead of a new Cold War, Russia was intent on re-asserting power in its near abroad, consistent with policies from the late 18th century. At the same time, the broad scope of methods employed by Russia made developing a coherent response more challenging. In addition to military intervention on the pretext of protecting minorities, cyber-attacks, and annexations, Russia played politics with energy supplies in Eastern Europe, and even had diplomatic rifts with Belarus and Armenia when their policies have appeared too independent from Moscow.

Successes have emboldened the Kremlin and made Russian leaders more likely to engage in such behavior going forward. The post-Cold War aspiration of the Soviet Union could be transformed into a Russia that would be incorporated into normal European politics somewhat misses the point. Russia is a major player in European politics. It is playing according to normal (realist) rules. It is not playing according to the (softer) legal rules recognized by most European countries today.

Some scholars argue that there has been insufficient engagement with Russia and that NATO's future must include membership for Russia (Russett & Stam, 1998; Kupchan, 2010). There is plenty in the historical record, however, to suggest a great deal of engagement and compromise in spite of provocation. And the payoffs from engagement are far from clear-cut. Russia was admitted to the Council of Europe in February 1996, even as the

First Chechen War (1994-1996) raged and Russian troops committed gross violations of human rights including the mass expulsion of civilians. This was sad irony given that the stated purpose of the Council of Europe is the promotion of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.[3] In spite of Russia's failure to modernize its economy or root out the corruption of its oligarchs, it was invited to join the G7 in 1998. Although the invasion of Georgia could be viewed as necessitating the famous "reset" in US-Russia relations in March 2009, it was nevertheless a gesture of conciliation on the part of the United States that followed a violation of international law and an act of aggression against a nation supporting America's operations in Iraq. Meanwhile, Russia has continued to use energy resources and trade policy punitively. In 2006, Georgia and Armenia faced 100% increases in the price of natural gas. In 2007, Russia increased natural gas prices for Azerbaijan then stopped exporting when Azerbaijan failed to pay up. Belarus had its own dispute over supplies in 2007 while the Czech Republic saw supplies of Russian oil decrease after agreeing to host an American radar system to track ballistic missiles. In spite of these actions, Russia was invited to join the World Trade Organization in 2012. Only the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the continuing war in eastern Ukraine have resulted in sanctions of substance, but the durability of these remains under threat both from pressure within the European Union and through uncertainty around the intent of the new presidential administration in the United States.

Continued Unrest in the "Near Abroad"

Debates over whether to continue the sanctions put in place because of Russia's actions in Ukraine represent only the tip of the iceberg of the choices now confronting NATO policy-makers, especially the United States. Countries like Ukraine and Georgia, but also Azerbaijan, to a lesser extent Armenia, will continue to have differences with Russia. In countries like Ukraine and Georgia, political groups exist that will resist attempts to bring back Russian political and economic control. As non-NATO countries like Ukraine and Georgia persist in their attempts to end Soviet legacies, end corruption, open their economics, and reduce the power of oligarchs, the United States is confronted with a profound policy choice: Support these moves even if it means enmity from Russia or refuse to extend any new commitments and accept that countries in the "near abroad" will be Russian satellites as they were in the days of the Tsars.

Choosing to support them is a difficult sell in European capitals and Washington. The benefits for American or Western European security in supporting Ukraine are ambiguous, compared with the tangible realities of Russian pressure. In addition, these nations are not primarily seeking alliances with the West. They are seeking to establish and assert their sovereignty and freedom of action. They do not want to avoid being the satellite of one power, Russia, to become satellites of another, the United States or the European Union. To some extent, this is a false dilemma. The United States and Europe do not have a choice of a happy partnership with Russia on the one hand and the uncertain independence of Russia's near-abroad on the other. Decades of policy has left Russia a powerful revisionist actor in its near-abroad. Dominating this area, economically when possible, through violence when necessary has been a constant in Russian foreign policy since the time of Catherine the Great. It is unlikely to undergo a fundamental change now. Having expanded NATO to Romania, Poland, and the Baltic countries, NATO has already made its choice. Policy-makers from NATO nations will now have to defend it unless they wish to have the entire architecture of NATO come crashing down. Part of defending it means recognizing that Russia is using a variety of means at its disposal to undermine and overturn

[3] The Council of Europe identifies itself as "the continent's leading human rights organization", available athttps://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/who-we-are (Accessed March 1, 2018).

this order. Russia is a revisionist actor recovering its power and confidence and attempting to take back areas that it considers essential to its national security and even to its national identity. But those areas are not Russia's by right. They belong to the people of those countries and they, like people in all nations, have a right to choose their political future. NATO should defend this right, or its principles and the promises of European-security enunciated in the alliance's founding treaty will suffer a harmful if not lethal blow.

Conclusion

Before Soviet Union and today Russian Ideology is not critical to the dispute today when president Putin take the power at 2000 especially after 911 Putin call US president George W. Bush. Russia's rivalry with the United States and NATO is still restricted to Eastern Europe and the Levant when Ukraine get problem with Russia at Crimea. President Putin already mentioned that Russia, no longer a global power like the Soviet Union, is a European power. In this context, its focus is, as it was 200 years ago, maintaining a favorable balance of power in Europe and security along its frontiers. In the end this paper considers that Russia is a revisionist actor recovering its power and confidence and attempting to take back areas that it considers essential to its national security and even to its national identity.

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