

ABRIDGED

MARCH 2017

RECALIBRATING U.S. STRATEGY TOWARD RUSSIA

A New Time for Choosing

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ISBN: 978-1-4422-8005-2 (pb); 978-1-4422-8006-9 (eBook)

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Rowman & Littlefield
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Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the combined efforts of the International Security Program, the Russia and Eurasia Program, and the Europe Program at CSIS. The project directors and the authors would like to thank the many experts and staff at CSIS who contributed to the research and writing of this report, especially Andrew Metrick, who lent his vast knowledge of military capabilities to this project, as well as Grant Murphy, Amelia Armitage, Matthew Melino, Max Shafron, Oliver Backes, Nick Conlon, Suzanne Freeman, Mikhail Strokan, Leland Sidle, and Katherine Baughman.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the experts at CSIS who offered insightful reviews and comments throughout the drafting of this report, including Christine Wormuth, Thomas Karako, Rebecca Hersman, Alan Dayton, Edward Chow, and Wes Rumbaugh.

We are grateful to the CSIS Dracopoulos iDeas Lab for the outstanding layout and graphics in this report, especially the inspiring efforts by Caroline Amenabar and Nirja Desai, along with the management support of Max Markusen.

The study team also appreciates the numerous experts who gathered and met with us in Brussels, Kyiv, Moscow, and Washington, D.C., to share their time and insights at various points throughout the study process. In particular, the CSIS team thanks the EU Institute for Security Studies for facilitating a productive working group meeting in Brussels.

Finally, the study team thanks the Smith Richardson Foundation (SRF), which sponsored this work. The content and recommendations presented—including any errors—remain solely those of the authors.

Executive Summary

These are turbulent times for American foreign policy. Nowhere are the challenges facing the United States more evident than in U.S. policy toward Russia. Drawing on scholars across several disciplines and perspectives, CSIS conducted a year-long study that sought to achieve two goals. First, to provide policymakers with a clearer understanding of Russia's strategic motivations and objectives, along with the tools it could use to advance its goals. Second, to lay out a comprehensive strategy to secure U.S. and transatlantic interests in the face of the complex Russia challenge set.

The Choice

- A fundamental choice faces the Trump administration: either it can work to defend and bolster the global system America helped create, or it can aid in the system's destruction, through intent or neglect, and start anew. This choice extends beyond U.S. strategy toward Russia, but is foundational to the direction any such strategy will take. In turn, how the United States approaches Russia will reverberate throughout its world affairs, setting expectations for allies, partners, and potential foes alike.
- President Putin has made his preference clear. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian security policy has been suffused to greater and lesser degrees with a sense that the West did not accord it sufficient respect as a great power. Russia's propensity to use force to right this perceived historical wrong has risen over the years, commensurate with its growing military prowess and economic and internal stability. Moscow today is viewing its options through the lens of a security dilemma that defines U.S. strength as its own weakness, and vice versa. It sees control of its periphery as central to its own security, and Putin may be seeking to reap domestic political benefits through foreign escapades abroad. Russia is testing its tools of coercion, which are increasingly unconstrained by the rule of law, and finding them sufficiently effective to meet its objectives. It does not want a war, but it is finding it can get a lot done without one.
- Accommodating Russia's preference would mean more than developing a new understanding with Russia about Europe's security. It would mean rethinking the values and organizing principles, including the role of the United States in the world, that have served as the foundation of global security since the end of World War II. It would mean a world in which political decisions are made by great powers for smaller powers; where borders can be redrawn by force; where liberal democratic values fall victim to autocratic whims; and where existing international obligations are no longer valid.

The Challenge

- Defending the international system against Russian attempts to undermine it will require addressing two interrelated problems. First is the degree of disrepair within the West's core institutions, which has been exposed and exploited by the second (more obvious) problem—Russia's renewed aggression and opportunism. The first cannot be expected to spontaneously fix itself and requires concerted action across the United States and Europe to revitalize our institutions and inoculate our societies against illiberal trends. The second will not abate while Moscow is reaping such benefits from the situation as it stands. Indeed, Russia's incentives today appear to push it toward more activism, rather than less.
- The weaknesses that have been revealed in the current international system extend beyond and are rooted deeper than the Russia challenge, but Russia is exploiting the West's vulnerabilities and increasing them. These weaknesses include the tone and

polarization of U.S. and European politics, our susceptibility to disinformation, the disengagement and disenchantment of our publics (who have largely forgotten why NATO and the European Union were created), growing income inequality, the lack of transparency and corruption in our governments, Europe's divestment in defense, and the lack of clear and shared priorities.

- Russia's revisionist turn is not the only significant challenge the U.S.-led international order faces today. In both the United States and Europe, the Russia challenge competes for attention and resources with a range of other threats: large-scale migration as well as terrorism spawned by disorder in the Middle East; economic dislocation; the rise of populism; and the continued if uneven rise of China and other non-Western powers. In contrast to the Cold War, the Russia challenge is rarely sufficient to promote unity of purpose among Western allies, especially with the emergence of populist, pro-Russian movements in several Western states.
- Russia's rebellion against Western-prescribed rules, norms, and values makes use of a range of military and nonmilitary levers. Its nonmilitary coercive tools, such as cyber infiltration and political influence operations, are being used to strong effects. It is likely still calibrating what can and cannot be done at acceptable risk, but insofar as these tools can be impactful at less human and financial cost than military tools, the United States and Europe dismiss these capabilities at their peril.
- In the conventional military realm, Russia continues to modernize and build. It has combined its niche capabilities with a low bar for the use of force to ably do more with less. Russia's armed forces remain well below the capabilities of the United States and NATO, but they are sufficient to Russia's preferred means of using them: smaller-scale operations with comparatively limited goals in defined regional spheres. The United States and its allies, by contrast, have been overly hesitant and reactive in using the wide and global array of tools at their disposal.
- Almost every facet of the collective Western response to the Russia challenge—from its overly cautious tactics to its insufficiently realistic assumptions—remains far removed from what is required to adequately manage it. To believe that Russia is committed to risk reduction, transparency, and predictability is a dangerous starting point that will lead the West astray. Russia is playing a different game—one in which Western leadership and existing institutions are to be challenged and in which threats, ambiguity, and violence have emerged as effective, and thus preferred tools. Moreover, dissonance among allies is only serving to further embolden Russia and broaden its goals. The United States and its allies must chart a clearer course in their Russia strategy, and take a bolder approach in its implementation.
- A bolder approach to Russia does not equate to warmongering or taking reckless action without concern for the consequences. It also does not mean challenging Russia at every opportunity. However, given what is revealed in this report regarding Russian motives, past use of force, instruments of power, and so-called redlines, it is logical to conclude there exists a wide gulf between the steps that have been taken to date and the steps that could be taken in the future to increase the West's leverage vis-à-vis Russia without sparking a conflict, or even coming close. This will entail lessening the West's sensitivity to Russia's reflexive protestations and false indignation, while also taking into account Russia's interests and perspective.

The Strategy

- U.S. strategy should aim to defend the current global order, protect the transatlantic relationship, and manage the Russia challenge in a way that avoids direct hostilities, discourages the sowing of global instability, and builds ties with the Russian people. This should be done until Moscow stops playing the spoiler and begins to work constructively to develop and strengthen security in Europe and the world—a long-term proposition to be sure. In support of these objectives, the United States should pursue actions across three key pillars: strengthen, contest, and cooperate.
- **Strengthen the health of our democracies, institutions, and defenses.** First, the West must shore up its vulnerabilities not simply to Russian coercion, but to all that makes Russian coercion possible. The United States and its allies will not be credible critics of Russian aggression if they do not provide a strong alternative example. Among other things, this requires practicing what we preach, standing up for human rights and democracy in Russia and elsewhere, reinvesting in NATO and expanding NATO-EU cooperation, reevaluating global interests and establishing clear priorities, and building resilience among allies and partners.
- **Contest Russian attempts to undermine U.S. interests.** Second, the United States needs more-robust offensive and defensive measures to contest Russia's increasingly aggressive actions. Russia's challenging of the international order will not be constrained only by punitive measures imposed after the fact, but must also be shaped by the proactive imposition of a predictable set of policies and actions that makes clear the United States' boundaries and expectations. This means shaping a new relationship paradigm, together with our transatlantic partners, that puts more onus on Russia to comply with international norms rather than simply imposing consequences for breaching them. The sooner that the West adjusts its expectations and begins standing firm in defense of its interests, the better able it will be to shape events vice fall victim to them. A stronger approach may include creating a predictable schedule of progressing sanctions, conducting proportional offensive cyber activities, increasing and optimizing the U.S. and overall NATO conventional military presence in Europe (including greater allied burden sharing), doing more to combat Russian propaganda, and supporting non-NATO nations, including Ukraine, in their right to maintain sovereignty.
- **Cooperate where advantageous and feasible.** Finally, engagement with Russia on areas of mutual interest is not only wise but necessary. The United States must approach engagement selectively, cautiously, and with firm limits. It must remain steadfast in upholding its core values, remain clear-eyed about Russia's motives, and understand the potential tradeoffs that deal-making with Russia might entail. Engagement that degenerates into endless accommodation does not serve U.S. or allied interests. For now, the United States and its allies may wish to focus on areas where cooperation is both advantageous and feasible. This may include: improving crisis communications and transparency measures, maintaining nuclear nonproliferation and moving forward on bilateral nuclear and conventional arms control, and working together in the Arctic.
- Attention should be paid to any potential opportunities for interaction across these pillars—particularly between the contest and cooperate pillars—that could create leverage for the United States as it seeks political concessions in its negotiations with Russia. The more strongly the United States contests Russian attempts to reshape the security landscape, the greater the opportunities later to cooperate on acceptable terms. In other words, escalate to negotiate.

- U.S. leadership in forging a common approach with allies will also be essential. The role of the United States as a leader in NATO provides a unique platform to resolve disputes and drive the agenda. While it is crucial that European voices be at the center of European policy, the United States must be prepared to push back against calls for greater isolationism and accommodation and rally allies to remain resolute in defending the rules-based international order.

◊ **The Importance of Europe.** While focused on Russia, this report also emphasizes the importance of Europe. This is not meant to suggest that Russia's ambitions are geographically limited. Europe, however, is where U.S. political, economic, and security interests come into greatest tension with Russian interests and where the stakes are arguably the highest beyond America's own shores. This is because the U.S. interest in Europe extends well beyond preserving the ideal of a just and stable global order.

◊ Next to the strength of our constitutional democracy, our alliance structure is America's greatest foreign policy advantage. Europe is home to a number of the United States' most capable and willing coalition partners, who have fought and died alongside the United States in every major combat operation since the turn of the twentieth century. Joint action under NATO adds legitimacy and capability to U.S. interventions and U.S. military bases in Europe enable rapid global force projection. Intelligence relationships with European allies multiply the United States' ability to maintain awareness of common threats. Despite needing to grow, the collective defense budget of European allies amounts to \$300 billion annually, more than quadruple Russia's defense budget. The European Union is the United States' largest and most important economic partner, with trade totaling over \$1 trillion in goods and services in 2014 alone, supporting an estimated 2.6 million U.S. jobs. Additionally, the United States' close relationship with Europe provides powerful diplomatic influence that can shape allied decisionmaking in a way that is beneficial to U.S. political and policy imperatives, as well as to American business interests. Appeals for nations to "buy American" will have less resonance with allies that feel abandoned or threatened.

- This approach in some ways builds on the strategy of the Obama administration. However, it is neither reluctant in implementation nor averse to accepting some escalation risk (criticisms that have been levied against the Obama administration's strategy). It is decisive and forceful in nature and defined by the defense of U.S. interests.

Now is the time for choosing a clear path that manifests a high U.S. priority on European and transatlantic security. Should it rush to make deals with Russia to secure lesser objectives, the United States may well find itself sacrificing a more fundamental goal: advancing a global order that benefits our people, our economy, and our constitutional values. Standing resolutely by our allies and our treaty commitments is central to upholding that order. This approach will speak to Putin's Russia in the language it best understands: power and resolve. At the same time, it seeks to avoid miscalculation and escalation by finding avenues for cooperation where possible and by adapting deterrence approaches to signal effectively across the full spectrum of Russian security threats.

GREENLAND

RUSSIA'S INTERVENTIONS AND ENTANGLEMENTS





Responding to the Russia Challenge

"You probe with bayonets: if you find mush, you push. If you find steel, you withdraw."

—VLADIMIR LENIN

Since events in Ukraine in March 2014, the United States and its allies have struggled to adjust to the new reality shaping relations with Moscow—a reality few saw coming. Many had hoped that Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia was an anomaly, a notion reinforced by evidence of Georgia's own provocative actions preceding the crisis. Russia, the theory went, having asserted itself in the Caucasus, was likely to return to a state of grudging acceptance of the status quo, as our case studies show it had done with the United States-led intervention in Kosovo, successive rounds of NATO enlargement, and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. As incoming U.S. administrations have done in the past, the United States initiated an opti-

mistic relationship "reset" in 2009 that allowed Washington to "pick off the low-hanging fruit in terms of bilateral cooperation," including agreements on arms reductions under New START, Afghanistan lethal transit, and Iran sanctions.⁶⁰³ Following its annexation of Crimea, however, an irrefutable trend line has emerged that suggests an assertive and opportunistic Russian rebellion against Western-prescribed rules, norms, and values. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford has called the Russia challenge "the greatest threat to our national security."⁶⁰⁴ Neither the United States nor a critical mass of its European allies has adjusted its approach in ways that fully accept the real and long-term

security challenges posed by an increasingly aggressive Russia, nor summoned the political will and resources necessary to implement a meaningful strategy. Today, a variety of options are possible, though Russia's behavior to date makes it clear that the United States and its allies will be best served if they approach the Russia challenge from a position of unity, strength, and clearly established priorities.

To an extent, this is recognized. Senior U.S. government officials, legislators, and policy experts have repeatedly affirmed the importance of a unified, transatlantic, and deliberate response to the Russia challenge—though the change of administrations in Washington has revived fears

that this will no longer be the case. The collective actions taken by the West in the wake of Putin's adventurism have served to enhance deterrence along NATO's eastern flank and calm nervous allies. These steps were difficult to achieve and are a credit to the skilled diplomats who worked to overcome political differences. While laudable in their own right, these steps must, nevertheless, be judged in relation to their impact, and any self-congratulation must ultimately be tempered by a realistic accounting of the work that remains. Such an accounting reveals hard-fought battles over what—when put into proper perspective—amounts to relatively modest gains. While demonstrating unity, they have also exposed fissures. While showing capacity, they have underlined a reluctance to act. And clear and shared priorities remain absent. Success in this context cannot be measured by the West's ability to reach consensus, but rather by its ability to meet the requirements of a strategy that strengthens Western institutions, contests Russia's aggression, and pursues cooperation without degenerating into endless accommodation.

The hard truth remains that Russia's pattern of interference in Eastern Ukraine, its reckless brinkmanship along NATO's air, land, and sea borders, and its search for ways to weaken transatlantic unity continue unabated. Indeed, Moscow, finding more rhetoric than resolve in the West, appears to have been emboldened by the events of the last two years to greater activism. Aside from an escalated bombing campaign in Syria, Russia appears to have embarked on a program of unprecedented interference in foreign elections. As the dis-

cussions in preceding chapters indicate, Russia's armed forces may remain well below the capabilities of the United States, but they are sufficient to Russia's preferred means of using them: smaller-scale operations with comparatively limited goals. Its

political, cyber, and information tools, meanwhile, have proven more effective than even Moscow may have expected. Russia's incentives today appear to push it toward more activism, rather than less. While politically and financially inconvenient, the Russia challenge will not be resolved anytime soon. Unfortunately, almost every facet of the collective Western response—from its overly cautious tactics to its insufficiently realistic assumptions—remains far removed from what is required to adequately manage it.

U.S. and European Actions in Perspective

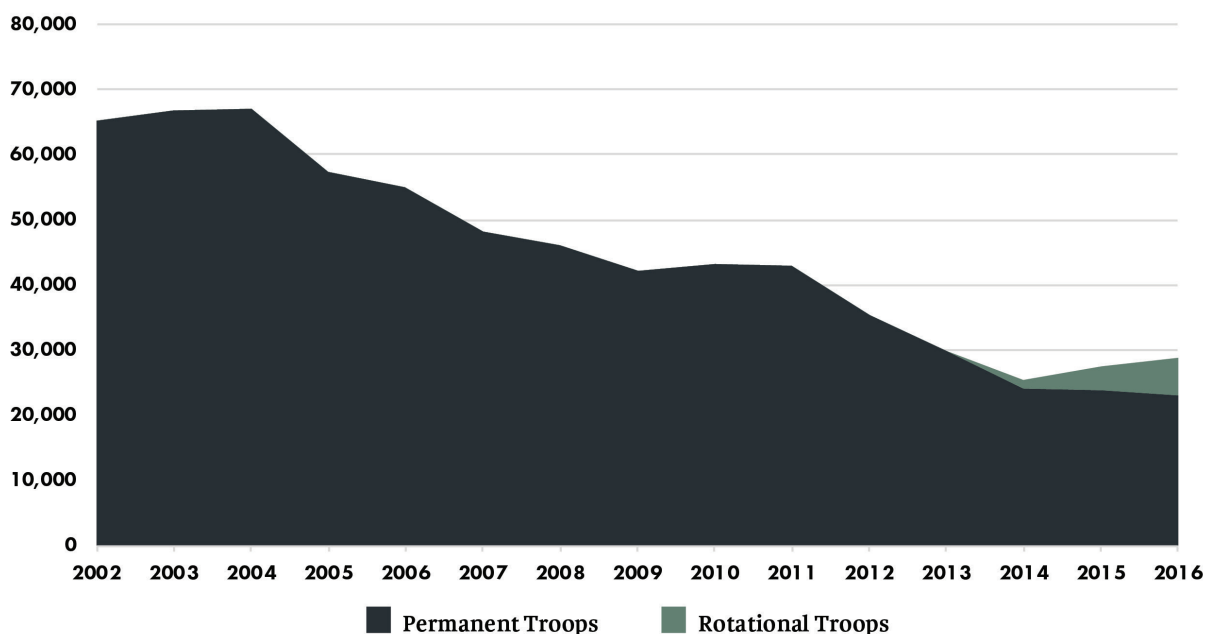
Moscow's blend of nuclear threats and conventional and nonconventional tactics, military and political, along with its demonstrated willingness to use force and violate internation-

RUSSIA'S ARMED FORCES MAY REMAIN WELL BELOW THE CAPABILITIES OF THE UNITED STATES, BUT THEY ARE SUFFICIENT TO RUSSIA'S PREFERRED MEANS OF USING THEM: SMALLER-SCALE OPERATIONS WITH COMPARATIVELY LIMITED GOALS.

al norms presents a substantial challenge to U.S. interests and the current world order. In the face of that challenge, the response of the United States and many of its European allies has been inadequate, and NATO has likewise lacked sufficient urgency and ambition in responding to this new environment.

Despite rotational increases made possible through ERI, the U.S. Army combat presence in Europe is a full brigade-strength below what it was in 2012—prior to renewed tensions with Russia. Most allies similarly have smaller forces dedicated to NATO's territorial defense than they did even five years ago. And, while the assurance and adaptation measures agreed at the Wales and Warsaw Summits were positive developments, the debates surrounding them were disconcertingly contentious given a rapidly decaying security environment that NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg deemed the “greatest challenge in a genera-

U.S. ARMY FORCES IN EUROPE 2002–2016



tion.”⁶⁰⁵ The Defense Investment Pledge, for example, was touted as one of the major deliverables from the September 2014 Wales Summit, a summit that presumably should have arrived at relatively easy consensus given its concurrence with the Ukraine crisis. The difficulty in getting all 28 allied leaders to agree to spend more on their own defense even when confronted with the fact of Russia’s invasion and annexation of its neighbor’s territory demonstrates the reluctance among some to shift toward a stronger defense posture. The final language in the pledge—in which allies agreed to “aim to move toward” NATO’s long-established defense spending target of 2 percent of GDP within a decade—reflects a watered-down compromise made at the insistence of a few nations that sought to strip anything nominally binding out of the pledge.

To be fair, 22 allies have since taken steps to reverse their downward trend in defense spending,

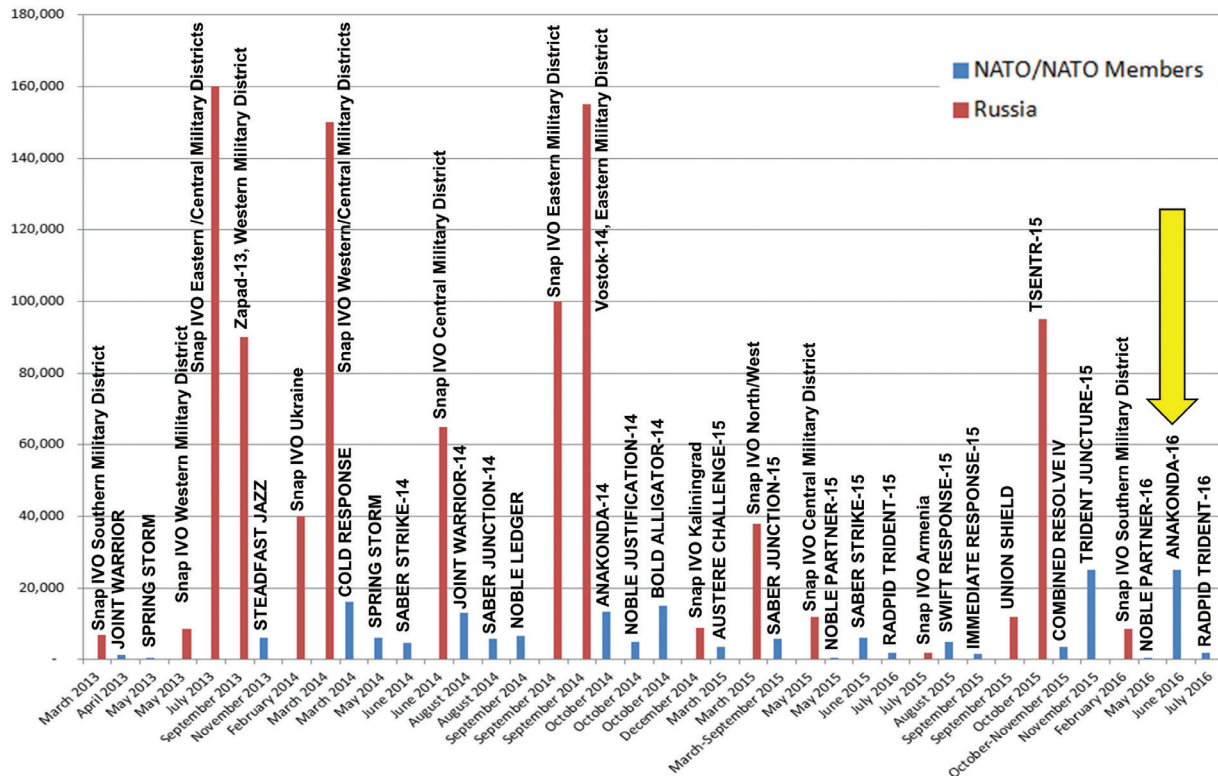
with a 3 percent increase in real terms expected in 2016.⁶⁰⁶ NATO members have also committed to allocating 20 percent of their defense spending toward major equipment and new research and development, an encouraging signal of commitment. Although progress is occurring, the lingering degree of resistance is deeply concerning, even acknowledging the economic challenge many European nations face.

Political discord within the NATO alliance has at times undermined practical steps intended to send signals of readiness and resolve. Exercises, for instance, are an essential part of the effort to deter Russian aggression on NATO’s eastern flank. Unfortunately, the alliance’s internal bickering prior to the July 2016 Warsaw Summit over whether it would be too provocative to fly a NATO flag over Exercise Anakonda in Poland was allowed to sap precious alliance bandwidth that could have been dedicated to demonstrating allied unity instead of

undercutting it.⁶⁰⁷ The criticism by German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of allied exercises as unnecessary “saber-rattling and warmongering” indicates fundamental divisions within the alliance and within the German coalition government—a message of irresolution that sows doubt about the commitment of a major ally to NATO’s strategy.⁶⁰⁸ It is true that the Anakonda exercise—to which Steinmeier alluded—was the largest exercise of NATO allies in Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War. However, in the context of unannounced Russian war games that occasionally reach well over 100,000 troops, along with Russia’s “massive militarization” along NATO borders, the idea that holding a relatively moderately sized exercise on alliance territory constitutes provocation is questionable.⁶⁰⁹

The latest debate revealing continued fissures within NATO centers on delegated authorities, or decisionmaking powers that are

MAJOR RUSSIA AND NATO MILITARY EXERCISES 2013–2016



Sources: Courtesy U.S. Army Europe. Compiled with data from U.S. Army Europe and the Atlantic Council. See Ian Brzezinski and Nicholas Varangis, "The NATO-Russia Exercise Gap," Atlantic Council, February 23, 2015.

granted to NATO's supreme allied commander (SACEUR), currently General Curtis Scaparrotti, in order to ensure timely responses in an emergency. Delegated authorities are contentious because, while enabling responsiveness, they bypass the political approval phase that certain nations feel should accompany every force decision. As with the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) before it, NATO's enhanced forward presence (eFP) has met allied resistance to provide SACEUR the authority to guarantee rapid response in an emergency.

eFP was the prize deliverable from the Warsaw Summit, establishing four NATO battalions along the alliance's eastern flank (one in Poland and in each of the three Baltic States). Secretary General

Stoltenberg refuted the Russian portrayal of these battalions as provocative, stating, "NATO battalions numbering thousands of troops cannot be compared with Russian divisions numbering tens of thousands just across the border. Our response is defensive and proportionate. But it sends a clear and unmistakable message: an attack against one will be met by a response from all."⁶¹⁰ For the battalions to be credible in sending such a message, however, they must be empowered to fight in a contingency scenario. Then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced at a meeting of defense ministers in October 2016 that the United States would put its forces under the operational control of SACEUR and the tactical control of Poland, where the U.S. battalion is located, and

"encourage[d] others to make the same kind of command and control arrangements with NATO."⁶¹¹ Whether the other eFP framework nations—Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom—will follow the United States' lead will be the next small test of the alliance's unity.

The European Union has likewise taken steps that, while valuable, require constant political engagement to sustain. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the European Union's Ukraine-related sanctions against Russia have been more impactful than their U.S. equivalents given that Europe's trade with Russia in goods is 10 times larger than that of the United States.⁶¹² This also means that European economies have more deeply felt the effects of the sanctions, which must be

renewed in the European Union every six months. The sanctions have been renewed three times without serious challenge, but certain EU member states are growing more critical. The two leading presidential candidates for France's spring 2017 election have advocated lifting sanctions, as have voices within Germany's Social Democratic Party (the junior partner in Chancellor Merkel's coalition). Other EU heads of government have indicated a desire to get back to business as usual with Moscow. Because the sanctions are directly linked to implementation of the Minsk agreements, their removal would drastically weaken the West's leverage in managing the Ukraine crisis. Regardless, the changing political dynamics in Europe could reach a tipping point in the coming year, especially if there are changes of government or U.S. sanctions policy.

Sanctions policy is only one area in which Europe faces the challenge of balancing its economic interests with broader security requirements. Five major European energy companies signed the "Nord Stream 2" agreement with Russia's Gazprom in September 2015. The proposal aims to construct a new \$11 billion, 745-mile pipeline from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea, doubling the amount of gas traveling from Russia to Germany "to the equivalent of two-thirds of current Russian [gas] exports to Europe" and ostensibly turning Germany, the de facto leader of the European Union, into a "Russian gas transit hub."⁶¹³ Beyond violating the spirit of the EU sanctions, Nord Stream 2 would also undermine EU efforts to diversify away from Russian energy supplies, make Ukraine more vulnerable to gas cutoffs

from Russia, and deny Kyiv the transit fees that currently bring in billions of dollars in annual revenue.⁶¹⁴ While the project may have been successfully stalled by Polish antimonopoly regulations targeting Gazprom, and German or EU authorities may eventually weigh in to block the project, the fact that the German government failed to oppose it demonstrates the tension between security and economic imperatives that Russia is exploiting to its advantage.

Part and parcel with its political rapprochement with Russia—which includes cooperation in Syria with talks that exclude the United States—NATO ally Turkey has also renewed energy cooperation. Following a period of heightened tensions brought on by the downing of a Russian fighter jet along the Turkey-Syria border in November 2015, the two nations have mended

pipeline agreement with Bulgaria, which fell through in 2014 due to EU objections amid the ongoing Ukraine crisis.⁶¹⁶ The construction of TurkStream would further undermine Eastern Europe's position as a gas distributor, as well as NATO's interest in diversifying away from Russian energy supplies. How much of the Turkish Stream project will be built, and how quickly, will depend on complicated Eurasian pipeline politics and whether Russia prioritizes it over Nord Stream 2 and the Russia-China "Power of Siberia" pipeline project.⁶¹⁷

Lastly, it is worth noting the European Commission's decision to green-light a no-bid, multibillion euro contract between Hungary and Russia's state-owned ROSATOM, which has been described as "one of the starkest examples of Moscow using energy diplomacy to rebuild its strategic influence in

THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT THAT RUSSIA IS BENEFITING FROM A WESTERN RELUCTANCE TO CONFRONT THE WORLD AS IT IS RATHER THAN IMAGINING THE WORLD IT WANTS.

ties and, in October 2016, Presidents Putin and Erdogan signed the "TurkStream" agreement to begin construction of a \$12.5 billion, 560-mile Black Sea natural gas pipeline.⁶¹⁵ The pipeline, stretching from Anapa, Russia, to Kiykoy, Turkey, would take the place of the failed South Stream

Europe" and has prompted an investigation into whether Europe's competition laws were broken.⁶¹⁸ Under the agreement, Russia will provide 80 percent of the financing, or €10 billion, to expand Hungary's Paks nuclear power complex. Such robust collaboration could provide a fertile breeding

ground for Russian political manipulation and corruption in Hungary, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Such agreements between Europe and Russia reflect the continued conflicting interests and half-hearted resolve that President Putin has come to expect across all areas—political, military, and economic—of the Western response to Russia. Working within a consensus-based alliance system creates challenges that do not similarly constrain lone authoritarian actors, such as Russia. Too often, in the absence of shared objectives and principled leadership, the lowest common denominator wins the day. There should be no doubt that Russia is benefiting from a Western reluctance to confront the world as it is rather than imagining the world it wants. This includes a blindness not only to Russia's motivations and actions, but also to the West's own internal vulnerabilities.

Confronting the Challenge We Face

As outlined in the previous chapter, the United States and its allies have a robust toolbox, including a wide array of coercive tools, at their disposal. But generally, they have been both overly hesitant and reactive in using them, providing Russia too free a hand in influencing alliance posture and actions. A CSIS report on U.S. Army force posture in Europe offered the following analysis of the West's internal debate over what constitutes credible deterrence versus escalatory provocation:

While it is legitimate and indeed necessary to consider possible Russian reactions to

*U.S. and allied actions, and while these assessments must include a stark recognition of the dangers of miscalculation and accidental escalation, one can also err in being too cautious. Russia is in many ways looking for reasons to call NATO's actions provocative, and will do so regardless of what they are... This situation creates the worst of all worlds: strong deterrence rhetoric but diminished credibility and operational capability.*⁶¹⁹

Considering the grim warnings from officials such as Dunford and Stoltenberg, continuing the misalignment between allied words and allied actions may well embolden an opportunistic Moscow to act with even greater impunity, threatening the shared Euro-Atlantic vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace and once again condemning the continent to an era of spheres of influence. Several leading national security experts argued in a February 2015 Atlantic Council report: "History makes clear that the only way to stop [Russian] aggression from precipitating a regional or even world-wide conflagration is to deter and defend against it as early as possible and not be fooled by protestations of innocent motives or lack of further ambitions."⁶²⁰ This means that while it is unquestionably necessary to work with Russia if true security is to be attained, the West also faces an imperative to stand up to Moscow when its core interests are threatened. Moving beyond its initial shock and uncertainty regarding Russia's intentions, the United States must now chart a clearer course in its Russia strategy, and take a bolder approach in its implementation.

As discussed in Chapter 1, critics of a stronger approach may point to the lack of self-awareness on the part of the West for the role it has played in creating and aggravating the current standoff with Russia, providing as examples such sore spots as NATO enlargement, U.S. installation of missile defense systems in Europe, Western policy during the Arab Spring, and democracy promotion that encouraged revolutions over the past 15 years. As mentioned, John Mearsheimer has gone farther, explicitly calling the Ukraine crisis the "West's fault."⁶²¹ The United States can also be held accountable for not always itself following the rules it now seeks to enforce vis-à-vis Russia.⁶²² If both sides acknowledge their respective roles in contributing to the current state of the relationship, the thought goes, then the West and Russia can begin to find common ground and deescalate tensions.

While it is valid to acknowledge the West's contribution to tensions, assigning blame neither changes how each side defines its security interests nor corrects the misalignment between them. Russia remains highly ambivalent about cooperation with the West. It retains a view that the NATO alliance exists to limit Moscow's power, and that Western efforts to engage both Russia and its neighbors threaten stability and security. It is also important to recognize that one reason Russia may be recalcitrant is that it is reaping benefits from the situation as it stands.

Despite a stagnant economy and falling oil prices, Putin remains extremely popular. Sanctions have proven a convenient scapegoat for greater structural problems within the economy, which,



Support from Russia and Iran has pulled the Assad regime back from the brink of collapse.

Moscow, Russia, October 20, 2015

Credit: Alexey Druzhinin/AFP/Getty Images

combined with low oil prices, bear far more responsibility for Russia's recession. Ukraine and Georgia's progress toward NATO membership appears indefinitely stalled, Russia now controls Crimea, and the Ukrainian state is severely handicapped. European and transatlantic cohesion is straining under the weight of growing political divisions and an ongoing migration crisis, revealing the fragility of NATO and EU cohesion. Russia and Iran have pulled Assad back from the brink of collapse. And Russia's status as an international power player has been renewed. Indeed, its standoff with the United States over Ukraine and Syria has fed its sense of importance beyond what cooperation would likely have yielded. To believe, therefore, that Russia is committed to risk reduction, transparency, and predictability is a dangerous starting point that will lead the West astray. Russia is playing a different game—one in which Western leadership and existing institutions are to be challenged and in which threats, ambiguity, and violence have emerged as effective, and thus preferred tools.

There should be no doubt that Russia is viewing its options through the lens of a security dilemma that defines U.S. strength as its own weakness, and vice versa. Russia is testing its tools of coercion, and finding them more effective than it might have thought. It does not want a war, but it is finding it can get a lot done without one by exploiting weak points in the Western systems. Even more dangerously, while it is clear that Russia has long been unhappy with current security arrangements, it has never put forward concrete positive alternatives or adaptations—to date, its behavior is only destructive, not constructive. The sooner that the West adjusts its assumptions to match this reality and begins imposing greater consequences in defense of its interests, the better able it will be to shape events vice fall victim to them. A clear-eyed approach, therefore, requires the West to deal with Russia as it is, and not as so many, including in Russia, wish it to be.

The United States and European nations must also recognize that their foundational security interest is the advancement of

a world order that operates according to Western democratic and free-market principles. If this order is not secured, it will be challenging, if not foolhardy, to advance other goals. Accordingly, the West must always weigh the potential consequences of deal-making against the risks such actions, either singularly or cumulatively, could pose to that order. Demonstrating that political decisions are not made by great powers for smaller powers; that borders cannot be redrawn by force; that liberal democratic values are defended against autocratic attempts to undermine them; and that the West still adheres to the international obligations underpinning this vision—the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter, the Budapest Memorandum, and others—are key elements in upholding it.

If the United States and its allies do not seek to maintain and strengthen the international system that has existed since the end of World War II, then it behooves the United States, Russia, and European states to define a new security order. But, here, too, a position of strength would be valu-

IT DOES NOT WANT A WAR, BUT IT IS FINDING IT CAN GET A LOT DONE WITHOUT ONE.

able. Any so-called grand bargain between the United States and Russia that carves up the European continent into spheres of influence, or allows the United States to withdraw from Europe, while appealing to some, will be difficult, if not impossible, to attain. First, any deals signed over the heads of European states will be unenforceable—particularly if the United States is no longer offering those states security and partnership. Second, and related, the United States' abdication of leadership in Europe would likely lead to renewed conflictual relations between European states that, if history is any teacher, would soon draw the United States back in. Thus, any bargain would need to be more multilateral, and more complicated, than one might want with a Washington-Moscow understanding. And, as noted above, Russia is not proposing any viable alternatives at this time—it is merely working to destroy what now exists.

Even if some components of the current order are insufficient, it would still make more sense to preserve and bolster those aspects of it that are working, rather than pursue a bargain that

dismantles the entire system with uncertain and potentially tragic consequences. Specifically, the relationship between the United States and its NATO allies has guaranteed transatlantic security since 1949. For the United States to cede it would be preemptive capitulation to Russia. It is logical to return, therefore, to the need to defend and bolster the system as it stands, and find ways to ensure that Russia accepts this reality.

It has been suggested that perhaps a middle path can be found, a path that cleverly balances the ability to uphold the system and Western principles—especially state sovereignty and the right to freely choose alliances—while also closing NATO's Open Door, thus removing a major impediment to a strong U.S.-Russia relationship. This, advocates say, could be accomplished by creating an alternative security structure for the so-called grey zone states along Russia's border that would "guarantee their sovereignty and security without NATO membership," and by securing a Russian guarantee to respect and uphold the "security of Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and other states in the region."⁶²³

Closing NATO's open door is likely an expedient way to appease Russia, at least in the near term, but doing so would sacrifice core values that have formed the Western approach for decades and would be ineffective in securing the U.S. interest of a stable Europe. An alternative security architecture that is akin to NATO without including the United States and Europe's most capable and willing military forces would be destined to fail either because: (1) it is not credible and Russia will not respect it; or (2) it is credible and Russia will not ac-

cept it. Russia does not see NATO as a threat because of its name; it fears its military capability and power projection, along with the loss of Russian political influence on European neighbors. The notion that security guarantees from Russia would be effective is belied by recent history: Russia committed to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, and pledged in the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and Charter of Paris (1990) not to use force or change borders through force. This did not stop Russia from invading and annexing Ukrainian territory. There can, therefore, be no reasonable expectation that any new security agreements would succeed where others have failed. All that said, NATO must continue to insist that candidates fully meet the responsibilities and obligations of membership and contribute to security in the North Atlantic space. Indeed, it is imperative that NATO membership not be simply a matter of checking off a list of requirements: the other states in the alliance must see real benefit to expansion. Among other things, this means that countries cannot bring to the alliance more security liabilities than assets, and NATO must be able to credibly defend any new ally.

Defining Strategic Objectives

Responding to global challenges should always begin with clearly defined strategic objectives. Without this direction, policies can become unmoored from desired end states and implementation can drift away from leaders' intent. This report offers six stra-

tegic objectives to guide a new Russia strategy based upon the U.S. national interest in defending the global order—protecting the transatlantic relationship, and smartly managing tensions with Russia.

Defending the Global Order

Strategic Objective #1: Uphold the post–World War II order, international norms, agreements, and the rule of law

The rules-based, international system established by the United States and Europe to govern the interactions between nations was a response to two world wars within a few decades that killed millions and destroyed economies. States from around the world, working together under U.S. leadership, established and evolved a network of institutions, like the United Nations and what later became the World Trade Organization, which preserved a greater degree of peace, security, and prosperity.

The system is built around a community of like-minded nations that have agreed to work together to uphold liberal values, including democracy, freedom, and equality, and to push back against the “might makes right” philosophy espoused by would-be strongmen seeking conflict and spoils. It has restricted the spread of nuclear weapons and enabled collective action to address transborder threats ranging from terrorism to climate change. Because nations have agreed and, to a degree, codified their expectations of one another, punitive measures, such as sanctions, are able to be levied against those who would chal-

THE UNITED STATES WILL NEED TO CONTINUE TO PUSH ALLIES TO DO MORE AND FASTER, BUT REDUCING THE VALUE OF THE ALLIANCE TO TRANSACTIONAL OR FINANCIAL DETAILS FAILS TO ACCOUNT FOR ITS OTHER STRATEGIC BENEFITS.

lenge the rule of law or engage in activities that introduce unnecessary risk or irrationality into the system. Without such rules and enforcement mechanisms, the world would undoubtedly be a poorer, less free, and more dangerous place.

Protecting the Transatlantic Relationship

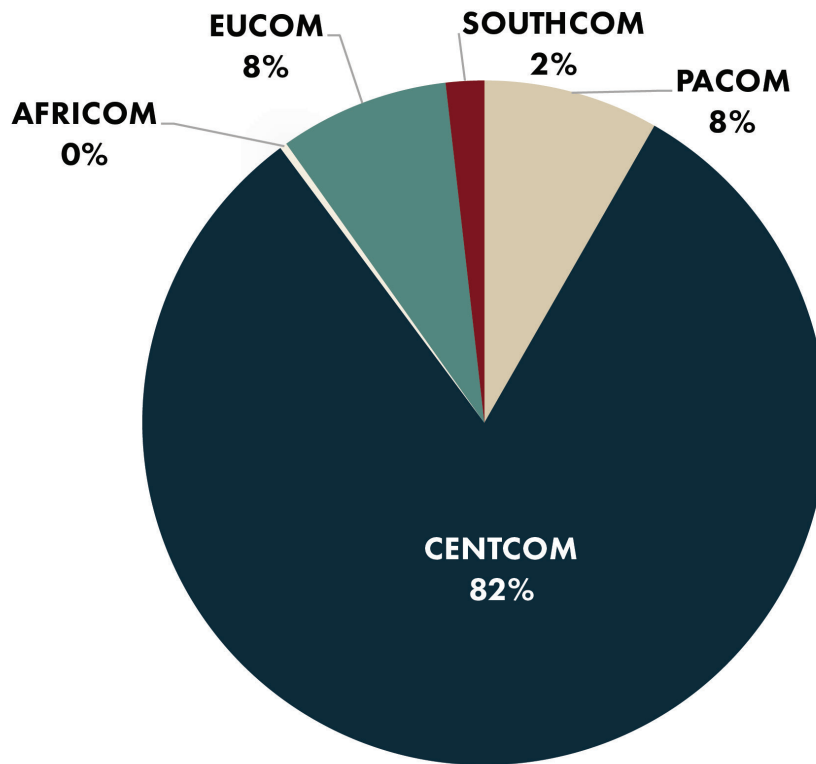
Strategic Objective #2: Maintain U.S. access to and influence in Europe and NATO

The U.S. interest in Europe extends beyond preserving the ideal of a just and stable global order. Practically speaking, the European Union is the United States’ largest and most important economic partner. The combined EU and U.S. economies account for nearly 50 percent of global GDP. In 2014 alone, the United States and the European Union traded over \$1 trillion in goods and services—trade that supports an estimated 2.6 mil-

lion U.S. jobs.⁶²⁴ Access to strong European markets is vital for continued U.S. economic prosperity. The need to cooperate on issues such as energy, the evolution of digital markets, environmental standards, and enforcement of global trade rules will only grow in the coming years.

History shows that European and U.S. paths are intertwined—that the United States cannot sit out Europe’s wars and that Europeans see U.S. security as their own. As a result, European and U.S. militaries have spent decades cultivating common doctrines; standardizing tactics, techniques, and procedures; and building the interoperability that allows them to fight “shoulder to shoulder.” Europe is home to the United States’ most capable and willing coalition partners, who have fought and died alongside the United States in every major combat operation since the turn of the twentieth century. As former SACEUR James Stavridis

MAJOR U.S. ARMS SALES IN 2016 BY GEOGRAPHIC COMBATANT COMMAND



Source: DSCA

observed, “For all the frustration we have with [NATO’s] cumbersome bureaucracy and decision making process, Europeans have generally been willing to fight alongside us.”⁶²⁵ In fact, over 1,000 non-U.S. NATO forces have been killed fighting in Afghanistan alongside U.S., Afghan, and other partner troops. Every NATO ally is also contributing in some way to the fight against the Islamic State.

Former president Obama, like presidents before him, bemoaned allied “free-riding.”⁶²⁶ President Trump’s harsh words for NATO and our allies are well documented. U.S. concerns over alliance burden sharing are bipartisan, long-standing, and legitimate, but they should not overshadow the fundamental

reality that NATO is good for U.S. and shared interests. The United States will need to continue to push allies to do more and faster, but reducing the value of the alliance to transactional or financial details fails to account for its other strategic benefits, in addition to discounting what European allies actually do spend on defense. Their collective defense budgets amount to \$300 billion annually, which is more than quadruple Russia’s defense budget and, as Stavridis points out, “still buy[s] an awful lot of hardware.”⁶²⁷

U.S. military bases in Germany and Italy, along with access to Europe’s logistical and communication networks, enable rapid global force projection in support of U.S. emergency response

plans in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Intelligence relationships with European allies multiply the United States’ ability to maintain visibility and awareness of common threats and increase the chances of being able to respond before they materialize. Beyond the obvious force-multiplier effect, joint action under NATO auspices also adds legitimacy and capability to U.S. interventions. “Remember,” Secretary of Defense Ash Carter replied when asked about NATO in a November 2016 interview, “we have a lot of people who [are] trying to attack all of us collectively and we’re much better at protecting ourselves if we can find a way to work together.”⁶²⁸

The United States’ close relationship with Europe also provides

the United States with unique and powerful diplomatic influence that can shape allied decision-making in a way that is beneficial to U.S. political and policy imperatives, as well as to American business interests. According to the Defense Security and Cooperation Agency, European governments requested over \$4.9 billion worth of newly constructed, major weapons systems from United States contractors in 2016.⁶²⁹ This includes big-ticket purchases from the United Kingdom for nine Boeing-made P-8A Patrol Aircraft and up to 26 General Atomics-made Predator drones. Separately, Poland is in the final stages of negotiations for a \$5 billion Patriot Missile Defense System made by Raytheon.⁶³⁰ Countries decide to purchase U.S. defense products in part because they value the quality of our systems and the promise of greater interoperability with the United States, but also because they hope it will bring or cement a closer relationship through mutual reliance. Appeals for nations to “buy American” will have less resonance with allies that feel abandoned or threatened.

*Strategic Objective #3:
Enhance U.S. and European
political, financial, security,
and societal stability*

Political, financial, and security stability in Europe is a prerequisite for Europe's continued global engagement, including support to U.S. military operations abroad. Should Europe once again become a security consumer rather than a security provider, the United States will not only stand to lose its most capable and willing partner in fighting extremism and enforcing global rules and norms, but

it will also face increased risks to the U.S. homeland. The United States depends on Europe maintaining and expanding its will and capacity to address common security challenges before those challenges reach U.S. shores.

A more stable and prosperous Europe means a more stable and prosperous United States. The symbiotic relationship between the United States and Europe means that the United States cannot insulate itself against the consequences of crises that occur in Europe, and vice versa. The United States must prioritize the preservation of European stability in executing its Russia strategy as the surest way to preclude the encroachment of instability westward. Moreover, the preservation of America's stability, once unthinkable to mention as at risk, is a growing concern among our allies. If we are to continue being the partner of choice for deals that advance our interests, we must prove formidable as a society, remaining a nation of laws that is true to our constitutional values.

Managing Tensions with Russia

The fact that Russian actions in recent years have had a negative impact on European security means that whatever level of cooperation the West seeks with Moscow, it must simultaneously meet the requirement to disincentivize further adventurism on the part of the Kremlin. This means a strategy that avoids direct hostilities while creating an environment that makes aggressive action in Europe unappealing to Moscow. Such an approach should be pursued until Moscow stops playing the spoiler and be-

gins to work constructively with the United States and others to strengthen and develop security in Europe and the world. But the idea that Russia will simply accept Western leadership is naïve. The United States must, therefore, model strategic patience, knowing that Russia, while currently punching above its weight, is ultimately playing a losing hand. As a Heritage Foundation report from December 2015 assesses:

The fundamental reality is that time is not on Russia's side. It has made a geopolitical splash for reasons that are as simple as they are fragile: Russia has many weak neighbors. It benefitted from the high price of oil. It faced little effective Western pushback, and as an autocracy it is capable of mobilizing force and subversion in ways that Western democracies find difficult... Russia is a declining power with feet of clay in every way except for the size and geopolitical centrality of its territory, its energy resources, its nuclear arsenal, the modern portion of its conventional armed forces, and above all its willingness to attack, subvert, and play the spoiler... It can play what is fundamentally a weak hand because it is regionally strong and acts stronger than it is, while the United States and Europe have cared little, done less, and shown less will. Russian weaknesses would come into play if the West pressed its advantages.⁶³¹

*Strategic Objective #4:
Avoid direct hostilities*

The stakes involved in fighting a war against Russia are nothing short of existential; a conventional conflict could conceivably

escalate into nuclear war and threaten the survival of both states. It is correct, then, to take extreme care to avoid moves that would cross the threshold into direct conflict. This caution should not, however, be allowed to paralyze the West from taking necessary actions to protect and advance its interests.

A bolder approach to Russia does not equate to warmongering or taking reckless action without concern for the consequences. It also does not mean challenging Russia at every opportunity. Given what we know about Russian motives, past reactions, instruments of power, and so-called redlines, however, it is logical to conclude there exists a wide gulf between the steps that have been taken to date and the steps that could be taken in the future to increase the West's leverage vis-à-vis Russia without sparking a conflict, or even coming close. This will entail lessening the West's sensitivity to Russia's reflexive protestations and false indignation.

*Strategic Objective #5:
Discourage Russia's incitement
and abetment of instability in
Europe and beyond*

Discouraging further Russian attempts to “sow the seeds of global instability” will not only be important to promoting U.S. objectives vis-à-vis Europe, but also to protecting U.S. interests beyond Europe.⁶³² Russia is renewing its attempts to challenge the United States globally. Its support for the Assad regime has extended the civil war, complicated coalition strike planning, distracted from the fight against the Islamic State, and exacerbated human suffering. Its interest in selling \$10 billion in arms—including T-90 tanks, artillery, planes, and heli-

THERE EXISTS A WIDE GULF BETWEEN THE STEPS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO DATE AND THE STEPS THAT COULD BE TAKEN IN THE FUTURE TO INCREASE THE WEST'S LEVERAGE VIS-À-VIS RUSSIA WITHOUT SPARKING A CONFLICT, OR EVEN COMING CLOSE.

copters—to Iran would increase the military capability of a state whose malign activities are already having significantly destabilizing effects across the Middle East.⁶³³ In Asia, Russia is building its military and energy cooperation with China and India, moves designed in equal parts to advance its interests and challenge the influence of the United States in the region. Similarly, in Latin America, Russia is seeking to revive Cold War-era ties and influence with increased commercial trade and major arms sales.

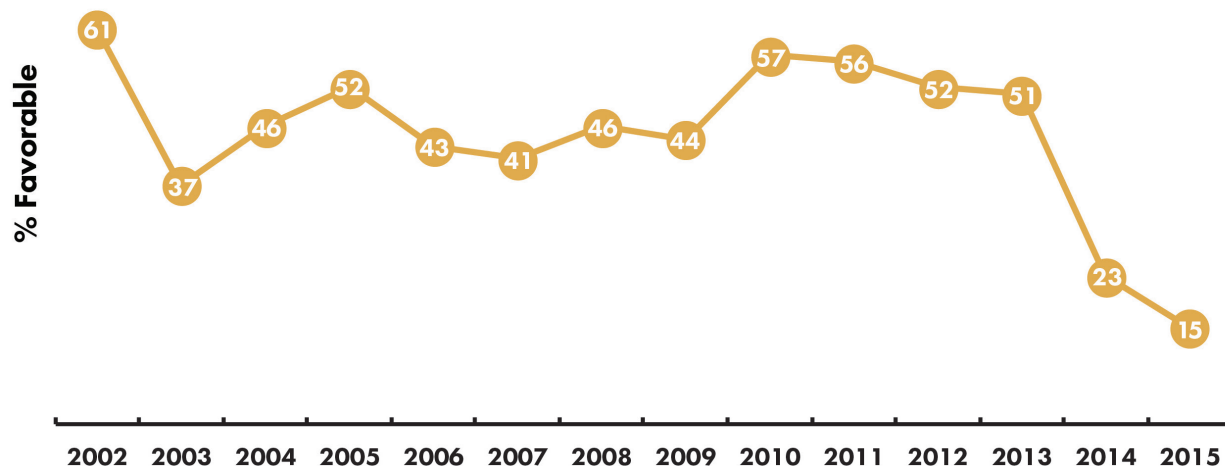
Russia's attempts to confront the United States in the cyber and space domains could have dangerous implications for how Americans live and fight, according to former U.S. director of national intelligence James Clapper.⁶³⁴ Its nuclear saber-rattling, likewise, raises worrying questions about Russia's commitment to strategic stability and to the norms that have preserved a certain degree of civility and caution in public discussions related to nuclear weapons. In these areas and others where U.S. security interests are at stake, the United States will need to take

the necessary steps to both build its capacity to resist Russia's actions, protect its alliances and global influence, and pursue options that disincentivize Russia's incitement and abetment of instability beyond its borders.

*Strategic Objective #6: Build ties
with the Russian people*

It is not in the long-term interests of the United States to alienate or condemn the Russian people based on the decisions of the Russian political leadership. U.S. strategy should, therefore, take care to not be seen as anti-Russian, but rather as standing up against the Russian government's illegality, violence, and belligerence. A survey released jointly by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Analytical Center in October 2016 revealed that only 23 percent of Russians polled reported having a positive view of the United States, and that Americans' attitudes toward Russia have “sunk to levels seen only during the latter years of the Cold War.”⁶³⁵ The ties binding American and Russian people have been built over decades through education and cultural

RUSSIAN PUBLIC OPINION OF THE UNITED STATES 2002–2015



Source: PEW Research Center

exchanges, trade, and travel, and should not be allowed to atrophy. The United States should, therefore, seek to preserve and rebuild these ties by making clear its respect for Russia's culture, history, and global contributions despite this period of political and military tension.

Maintaining connections with the Russian people will not be easy considering President Putin's efforts to promote anti-Western narratives, suppress free speech, and distance Russia from the international community, but doing so will help counteract Putin's efforts in small but important ways. Neither Russia nor the United States benefit from having younger generations that view their Russian or American counterparts as personal enemies. In its strategy, the United States should make clear that its fight is not with the Russia people and commit to doing what it can from afar to promote and defend human rights inside Russia.

The Trump administration has inherited a fraught and difficult dynamic in terms of U.S. sup-

port for democracy and human rights in Russia, both of which have been severely curtailed under Putin.⁶³⁶ Part of Russia's (and others') critique of U.S. democracy promotion and human rights policies is that these are deployed cynically and hypocritically. From this perspective, the United States uses these tools as a means to pressure states it seeks to coerce, but ignores even more blatant violations in countries such as Saudi Arabia. American societal divisions and injustices, real and perceived, further bolster resistance to an assertive U.S. human rights stance abroad.

Inconsistencies in the promotion of human rights and democracy indeed weaken the credibility of such policies. Moreover, while some dissidents and opposition groups will take whatever help they can get, many have found that Western assistance of certain sorts can end up doing more harm than good, as it leaves them open to attacks from their own government. Finally, there are many reasons to raise questions about the effectiveness of democracy-promotion activities

in countries that are hostile to these policies. For these reasons, democracy and human rights policies should not be used as a coercive mechanism, as this will certainly backfire and may hurt many of those the United States might seek to help. This, however, does not mean the United States cannot and should not play a role in supporting dissidents and promoting freedom and democracy.

The Ways and Means of a Strategy in Practice

In support of the six strategic objectives outlined above, the United States should pursue actions across three key pillars: strengthen, contest, and cooperate. Activities under each pillar should be pursued simultaneously, but can be dialed up or down in intensity as the U.S.-Russia relationship evolves. Attention should also be paid to any potential opportunities for interaction between the pillars—particularly between the

contest and cooperate pillars—that could create leverage for the United States as it seeks political concessions in its negotiations with Russia. To assist in identifying and executing such opportunities, a clear sense of national priorities and acceptable tradeoffs in the context of other global threats will be needed early. Equally important to the strategy's success in managing the current tensions will be credibility—both as it relates to promises made and threats issued. Securing U.S. interests will require us to confront Russian actions in word and in deed to demonstrate resolve and, where needed, restore interests, and to deter future threats.

Continued cooperation with allies and partners will likewise remain paramount. U.S. leadership in forging a common alliance approach will be essential, especially given the forces of populism and nationalism that are tearing at the political fabric of democracies on both sides of the Atlantic. The role of the United States within NATO, both as the strongest political and military force in the alliance, provides a unique platform to act as an honest broker in resolving disputes and driving the agenda. While it is crucial that European voices be at the center of European policy, at a time when threats are increasing from Europe's east and south, the United States must be prepared to push back against calls for greater isolationism and accommodation and rally allies to remain resolute in defending the rules-based liberal order.

This approach in some ways builds on the strategy of the Obama administration.⁶³⁷ However, it is neither reluctant in implementation nor averse to accepting some escalation risk

(criticisms that have been levied against the Obama administration's strategy). It is decisive and forceful in nature and defined by the defense of U.S. interests. Now is the time for choosing a clear path that manifests a high U.S. priority on European and transatlantic security. This approach will speak to Putin's Russia in the language it best understands: power and resolve. At the same time, it seeks to avoid miscalculation and escalation by finding avenues for cooperation where possible and by adapting deterrence approaches to signal effectively across the full spectrum of Russian security threats.

The following subsections offer brief descriptions of each of the three pillars, along with a few examples of policies or actions that could be taken to operationalize them. These measures seek to present a better balance between coercive, defensive, and cooperative measures. The actions suggested under each pillar are by no means comprehensive, but are rather reflective of what may be the most relevant to the current security situation or the most indicative of the types of actions that should be considered. Given the complex nature of certain subject matter (e.g., sanctions, force posture), the study team sought to leverage recommendations offered by recent and complementary reports from CSIS and other experts that explored each area in greater depth. In some areas, moreover, we believe that more study is needed to develop effective ways forward.

Pillar #1 – Strengthen

The first pillar—"strengthen"—is dedicated to those activities the United States and its allies should

proactively take to build the health of their democracies, institutions, and defenses. The weaknesses that have been revealed in the current system are bigger than just the Russia challenge, but are certainly a key component of what makes the West so vulnerable to it. Thus, the first order of business must be strengthening and rebuilding. This means shoring up our vulnerabilities not simply to Russian coercion, but to all that makes Russian coercion possible, including the tone and polarization of our politics, our susceptibility to false news, the disengagement and disenchantment of our publics (who have largely forgotten why NATO and the European Union were created), growing income inequality, the lack of transparency and corruption in our governments, Europe's divestment in defense, and the lack of clear and shared priorities. Much activity is already underway but should be continued and expanded. Such activities should include:

- **Practicing what we preach.**

The United States and its allies will not be credible critics of Russian aggression if they do not provide a strong alternative example. This means working within the rules of the international order, including when it comes to use of force, continuing to invest in transparency, accountability, and press freedom in their own countries, building strong and fair economic foundations, and educating populations about the benefits of democracy and liberal values. They must develop foreign policies that seek to advance global prosperity and security and stand by their agreements. This does not mean becoming



The North Atlantic Council meets at the level of heads of state and government at the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw.

Warsaw, Poland, July 8, 2016

Credit: Wojtek Radwanski/AFP/Getty Images

a “global police force.” Rather, it means making judicious decisions based on the evidence of past policies, effective and ineffective, and learning from the lessons of history. Happily, this approach also contributes to our resilience.

- **Reinvesting in NATO.** Next to the strength of our constitutional democracy, our alliance structure is America’s greatest foreign policy advantage. It multiplies our common force and resource pool and confers leadership and legitimacy on the United States. The Trump administration should take an early interest in ensuring NATO remains both united and capable, under supportive U.S. leadership. The implementation of steps NATO has taken since the Wales and Warsaw Summits should continue to be prioritized, especially high-level pressure to expedite the alliance’s collective defense spending, interoperability, readiness, and contingency planning. The United States must increase information sharing with NATO and European govern-

ments to better combat common threats. Robust bilateral relationships, including with Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, will remain important to achieving consensus within NATO and will need to be carefully tended by the new administration. Finally, the nationalist trends in both the United States and broader Europe demonstrate the need for governments to do more to draw a clearer link between the strength of NATO and the protection of their respective national interests—the memory of which has faded as the Cold War generation ages.

- **Prioritizing global commitments.** Two decades of unchallenged U.S. global leadership have enabled the United States to take action around the world without ruthlessly prioritizing its interests or always carefully evaluating the tradeoffs in its policies. Russia’s ability to challenge that leadership results in part from the reality that these practices have spread the United States thin and left it pursuing nice-

to-haves even at the cost of need-to-haves, while Russia has been able to concentrate its energies more narrowly. It behooves the United States to reevaluate its global interests and establish clear priorities, aligned with its global leadership role, so as to create a sustainable security strategy. Advancing our system of strong alliances, including NATO, should be a high global priority for the Trump administration.

- **Building resilience among allies and partners.** The United States should enhance its efforts to encourage and support European governments in building energy security, ensuring transparency and media independence so that Russian attempts at covert or corrupt influence are mitigated, and building capabilities in nondefense sectors (alongside defense investments) to resist Russian influence. An October 2016 report written jointly by CSIS and the Center for the Study of Democracy in Bulgaria explored Moscow’s malign economic influence in Eastern

Europe. The report recommends several steps European governments could take, including: (1) creating specific, high-level task forces within NATO and EU nations to focus solely on tracing and prosecuting illicit financial flows; (2) prioritizing enhanced EU-U.S. financial intelligence cooperation; (3) elevating anti-corruption by strengthening institutions as an element of NATO's Readiness Action Plan; and (4) revamping U.S. and EU assistance to Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, to combat Russian influence and strengthen governance.⁶³⁸

- **Fostering Russia expertise in the United States.** Following the end of the Cold War, the United States largely divested of the human capital it had built over decades of studying the Soviet Union, including Russian language, cultural, and historical knowledge. The United States, along with American universities, should reinvest in teaching and promoting Russian studies, create scholarship programs, and offer internships to students in the field. Growing positions for Russia specialists in our intelligence community and throughout our national security community will help create a sustainable talent pipeline.
- **Expanding NATO-EU cooperation.** Greater institutional cooperation between NATO and the European Union has long been a part of the transatlantic conversation, though in practice has been more aspirational than operational. This is in large part due to the ongoing dispute between Turkey and Cyprus,

which may be close to resolution and should be brought across the finish line. Managing the range of threats presented by Russia does not fit cleanly or comprehensively under either institutional framework. The two organizations agreed at the Warsaw Summit to deepen cooperation in areas including countering hybrid threats, enhancing resilience, defense capacity building, cyber defense, maritime security, and exercises.⁶³⁹ Concrete, urgent, and robust progress in these areas and others, such as countering terrorism, will be necessary to meet new threats.

- **Standing up for human rights and democracy in Russia and elsewhere.** To be effective and credible, the United States must maintain its moral authority by ensuring it is a model of democracy, transparency, and human rights, including press freedom, civil rights protection, and reforms of existing policies that limit these. The United States should also study the historical global experience with democracy development and human rights (including recent successes and failures) to improve its policies to promote and protect both. Finally, it should continue to monitor human rights and civil rights in Russia and elsewhere, including allied states, and report on the findings. If there are issues related to specific violations, it should raise them with foreign officials. This can keep individuals alive and can be effective in changing policies.
- **Modernizing U.S. nuclear forces.** Irrespective of current U.S.-Russia tensions, the United States must continue

to maintain a strong, safe, and secure nuclear capability through the modernization of its land, air, and sea delivery platforms, warheads, and command and control technology. While the Department of Defense is already moving forward with plans to modernize all three legs of the U.S. nuclear triad in the coming decades, the level of ambition, affordability, and specific requirements of that modernization effort remain core points of contention within the expert community and in Congress. The upcoming U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, mandated by the Trump administration in January 2017, is an opportunity to examine the specific types of capabilities that will be needed to ensure a robust and effective strategic deterrent. The United States should continue to encourage the United Kingdom—the only other ally underwriting NATO's nuclear deterrent (France remains outside of NATO's nuclear planning group)—to likewise maintain and modernize its nuclear capability through the construction of new Trident-equipped submarines, as authorized by the UK Parliament in July 2016.

Pillar #2 – Contest

The “contest” pillar is dedicated to a combination of more robust offensive and defensive measures vis-à-vis Russia. Greater offense is needed to bolster the current U.S. and European approaches, which have been overly weighted toward defense and assurance measures. To be clear, the United States should not go looking for a fight with

the Kremlin, and should do everything possible to avoid one, but it should press its advantages where it has them. Russia's current practice of seeking to elevate its status by challenging the United States and the broader international order will not be constrained only by punitive measures imposed after the fact, but must also be shaped by the proactive imposition of a predictable set of policy statements and actions that makes clear the United States' boundaries and expectations. This means shaping a new relationship paradigm, together with our transatlantic partners, that puts more onus on Russia to comply with international norms rather than simply imposing consequences for breaching them. Likewise, an elevated defense is needed to bolster security and deterrence in Europe and in the homeland, block Moscow's attempts to destabilize U.S. allies and partners and build competing global alliance networks, and infiltrate U.S. space, communication, and cyber networks. A strong approach within this line of effort may include:

- **Creating a predictable schedule of progressing sanctions.** The United States and its allies should seek to strengthen Ukraine-related sanctions and individual asset freezes and travel bans over Russia's continuing violations of the September 2014 and February 2015 Minsk agreements, rather than simply extending what is already in place until compliance is achieved or waiting for a significant deterioration of the security situation. This assumes, of course, that fulfillment of the Minsk

agreements will be a continuing goal of the new administration's Ukraine policy. Either way, the same enforcement principle would apply to any new agreement related to Ukraine, and, for that matter, to any agreements made in different contexts that are tied to clear outcomes. The United States needs tools to incentivize Russian behavior, and it needs to communicate clear consequences for actions it opposes.

Possible options for strengthening sanctions against Russia were laid out in Chapter 4. Among these, the United States and its allies should seriously consider: (1) involving more third-party states either "cooperatively by diplomatic outreach, or coercively through the imposition of secondary sanctions to force third countries' government and firms to choose between EU and U.S. markets and Russia"; (2) expanding the number of Russian entities cut off from foreign financing and increasing borrowing restrictions; (3) blocking sanctions against specific Russian banks; and (4) additional sectoral sanctions.⁶⁴⁰ For the European Union, reducing the import of Russian oil would be another important step to imposing costs on the Russian economy, but is a long-term proposition as Russia supplies 29 percent of EU oil imports.⁶⁴¹ Sanctioning Gazprom would be another big step, but also perilous for many in the European Union.

- **Conducting proportional offensive cyber activities against Russia.** Prior to confirmation

by the director of national intelligence and the Department of Homeland Security that "only Russia's senior-most officials" could have authorized the hacking of Democratic National Committee (DNC) emails, then-president Obama publicly warned President Putin that the United States has "more [cyber] capacity than anybody, both offensively and defensively."⁶⁴² The United States should make use of its offensive capabilities in this regard to respond to and disincentivize Russia's active campaign of cyber surveillance, exposure, and denial-of-service attacks against European and American targets. In addition to bolstering the defense of national networks and sharing any lessons learned with allies and partners, offensive measures are needed. The specific range of offensive cyber options requires greater study, ideally in a classified environment. The long-term goal is to create a system of cyber deterrence: to ensure that Russian attacks are both ineffective and not worth the cost. The United States must continue to innovate in this area, while setting clear norms and avoiding unintended escalations. If Russia can be adaptive, surely the United States can be too.

- **Increasing and optimizing the U.S. conventional military presence in Europe.** Strengthening U.S. and NATO posture in key areas of vulnerability will not only bolster defense and deterrence, but can also create an environment in which Russia is once again prepared to agree to transparency, predictability, and arms con-

trol measures in Europe that would increase European security. The clearest and most profound signal of NATO's post-Cold War desire for enduring positive relations with Russia was its dramatic multi-decade drawdown of military forces in Europe. As a consequence, the NATO force posture that existed prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea was largely designed for out-of-area operations. Even as subsequently augmented, NATO forces in Europe today are not adequate to deter Russian aggression at a remaining level of risk that should be acceptable to U.S. policymakers. This does not mean that the United States should return to the massive Cold War-era military presence it once kept in Europe. Threats and capabilities have evolved on both sides, and our strategic, conventional, and unconventional capabilities must evolve accordingly. It is clear, however, that the U.S. forward presence in Europe has been allowed to atrophy to levels too small to provide the baseline capability needed to deter a large power like Russia.

Additional U.S. forces are needed in Europe to provide a robust in-place tripwire and rapid-response capability, alongside allied forces. The starting point should be forward stationing an armored brigade combat team and additional Army enabling units in Europe; retaining at least six fighter squadrons with the ability to rapidly flow in more aircraft as necessary; and ensuring a robust naval presence in and around European wa-

ters. A reinforcement-based, deterrence-by-punishment strategy requires investments in reinforcement capacity—including staging prepositioned equipment, forward stationing additional logistician units, and routinely practicing reinforcement to demonstrate the capability to the Kremlin.

There is also a need to change how U.S. forces operate in Europe. While theater security cooperation and building interoperability with allies will remain important, credible

they would strengthen the cohesion of U.S. combat units, help U.S. and allied forces prepare for the complexities of a high-end fight, and improve their ability to rapidly respond to a contingency.

Lastly, the credibility of conventional deterrence hinges on U.S. and allied forces having capabilities that are adapted to the threat and the operating environment and are able to punish and defeat aggression. The United States and its allies need to reinvest in and enhance their military

capabilities in line with the recommendations made in Chapter 4.

- **Resourcing for strength.** The Trump administration and Congress must resolve the stalemate over defense spending caps, which have negatively impacted the budgetary process for years. The uncertainty surrounding the Defense Department's budget hampers sound decisionmaking and planning related to force posture, capabilities,

and readiness levels. Regardless of whether topline defense spending increases or decreases in the near term, returning to a normal budget process for the military should be viewed as a necessary component of national security strategy. Additionally, the European Reassurance Initiative—or rather

NATO FORCES IN EUROPE TODAY ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO DETER RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AT A REMAINING LEVEL OF RISK THAT SHOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO U.S. POLICYMAKERS.

deterrence must become the priority. The focus should, therefore, shift from small unit training spread across multiple locations in Europe to larger and more complex exercises with allies that develop and demonstrate NATO's warfighting prowess. While these exercises would be less frequent,



Russian information campaigns for foreign consumption rely on a combination of government-sponsored media, such as RT and Sputnik, official and unofficial social media, and orchestrated statements by Russian officials.

Moscow, Russia, June 11, 2013

Credit: Yuri Kochelkov/AFP/Getty Images

its successor, the European Deterrence Initiative, which is likely to total \$3.4 billion in fiscal year 2017—will need to continue to be funded at similar or slightly higher levels and should be codified in the Defense Department’s base budget, rather than be considered as part of the Overseas Contingency Operations account.

- **Combating Russian propaganda.** Chapter 3 discusses the Russian use of propaganda to advance its anti-Western agenda. Like cyber, the United States is not outmatched when it comes to information capabilities though it is constrained by the norms of democratic societies. In a statement as true today as it was when it was written in the eighteenth century, “Falsehood flies, and the truth comes limping after it.”⁶⁴³ At present, Russia has a disinformation advantage. Greater study of what can be effective in the current environment is needed, rely-

ing on the experience of advertising and social media campaigns. A communications blitz under the auspices of a new engagement center for information operations, as authorized in the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, should be funded and empowered to rationalize and leverage every means at the U.S. government’s disposal to “lead, synchronize, and coordinate efforts... to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining United States national security interest.”⁶⁴⁴

Activities should span both overt measures—such as increased public diplomacy, reinvestment in Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, foreign journalism training, and the creation of Russian-language information platforms—and covert measures, such as Military Information Support

Operations (MISO), which, though “repeatedly misunderstood and misrepresented... as a means of informing and influencing foreign audiences, remain as relevant in peace as in war and as vital to our nation’s defense as ever before.”⁶⁴⁵ To bolster and complement the efforts undertaken by U.S. embassy public affairs teams, Special Operations Forces should be authorized to conduct MISO, as described in Chapter 4, to combat Russian propaganda in Eastern Europe with truthful information about U.S. and allied activities and intentions. Counter-propaganda activities should also include direct outreach and educational exchanges with Russians living inside and outside of Russia.

- **Supporting non-NATO nations, including Ukraine, in the so-called grey zone.** The previously mentioned February 2015 Atlantic Council report argued for the provision

of direct military assistance to Ukraine “in far larger amounts than provided to date and including lethal defensive arms” in order to raise the risks and costs to Russia for any continued aggression.⁶⁴⁶ “If confronted by a strong Western response [in Ukraine],” the report holds, “the Kremlin would be far less tempted to challenge the security and territorial integrity of other states.”⁶⁴⁷ The new administration should indeed consider expanded support to Ukraine—conditioned on its continued progress in implementing necessary anti-corruption and transparency reforms—across the spectrum of its security, economic, and governance needs. This does not necessarily require lethal aid, although the CSIS study team project directors support lethal aid, but it should include assistance that is geared to Ukraine’s requirements and capability gaps.⁶⁴⁸ Also needed is greater engagement with and support to the other vulnerable non-NATO partners in the Caucasus, Balkans, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe as a means to check Russia attempts to undermine their sovereignty and foment regional instability. Importantly, NATO’s door must remain open to nations that meet the requirements of membership—including, crucially, that their membership benefit the alliance. With this in mind, the United States should consider more deliberately courting states like Sweden and Finland, who bring robust capacity to the alliance and challenge Russian influence in the High North.

- **Pushing back against Russia’s nuclear saber-rattling.** In response to Russia’s irre-

sponsible stewardship in the nuclear domain, NATO can take steps to signal strength through declarations in NATO summits, bolstering conventional defenses, revitalizing NATO exercises to include a nuclear component, and posturing effectively and modernizing the allied dual-capable aircraft (DCA) fleet. In addition, the United States should continue to hold itself to the highest possible standards for responsible nuclear behavior without resorting to brandishing its nuclear weapons or using them as a source of coercion or intimidation. The United States must press Russia to adopt a similar stance.

Pillar #3 – Cooperate

Engagement with Russia on areas of mutual interest is not only wise but necessary. Transborder threats such as climate change, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation demand cooperation among global powers. Cooperation has been successful in the past and can be again. As previously mentioned, the 2009 “reset” with President Medvedev produced some meaningful achievements. History has shown that it is possible to seek transparency and dialogue alongside increased competition and containment. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the more strongly the United States contests Russian attempts to reshape the security landscape, the greater the opportunities later to cooperate on acceptable terms to increase transparency and predictability. In other words, escalate to negotiate. Engaging in a cooperative manner will, of course, require the United States, along with its European allies, to acknowledge that certain Russian

security concerns are legitimate and to explore sensible compromises. Indeed, doing so is crucial to developing a more sustainable and secure Europe and world.

At the same time, the United States must hold firm to its core values, be clear about Russia’s motives, and understand the potential tradeoffs that deal-making with Russia might entail. Engagement that degenerates into endless accommodation does not serve U.S. or allied interests. In some cases, Russia has been able to use the West’s natural penchant for process and dialogue as a delay tactic with tragic consequences. In Syria, the diplomatic process, chaired by former secretary of state John Kerry for the United States and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov for Russia, failed to achieve a real or lasting cease-fire and has acted to provide Russia the diplomatic legitimacy it desires while continuing to prop up the Assad regime, attack civilians, and block meaningful action at the United Nations.

Amid renewed violence in Ukraine in late January 2017, new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley made clear her intention to confront, contest, and cooperate with Russia as evidence of its intentions and actions warrant. Expressing her frustration over Russia’s continuing support for separatists in eastern Ukraine despite the Security Council’s call for a cease-fire just two days earlier, she stated:

I consider it unfortunate that the occasion of my first appearance here is one in which I must condemn the aggressive actions of Russia. It is unfortunate because it is a replay of far too many instanc-

IN TERMS OF ARMS CONTROL, VERY LITTLE CAN HAPPEN WITHOUT RUSSIA'S COOPERATION, GIVEN THAT THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA BETWEEN THEM HOLD ABOUT 95 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL.

*es over many years in which United States Representatives have needed to do that... Cooperation on this issue is possible. Earlier this week, both Russia and Ukraine supported this Council's unanimous call to return to a ceasefire... The United States expects that those who can influence the groups that are fighting—in particular, Russia—will do everything possible to support an end to this escalation of violence.*⁶⁴⁹

The United States must approach engagement with Russia selectively, cautiously, and with firm limits. An over-eagerness to cooperate can inadvertently elevate and embolden Putin's outrageous demands; enhance Russia's diplomatic and political prestige; create false equivalencies in terms of mutual wrong-doing; provide a platform for stunts "replete with moralism and grandstanding"; and weaken the West's bargaining position by signaling that it cares more about com-

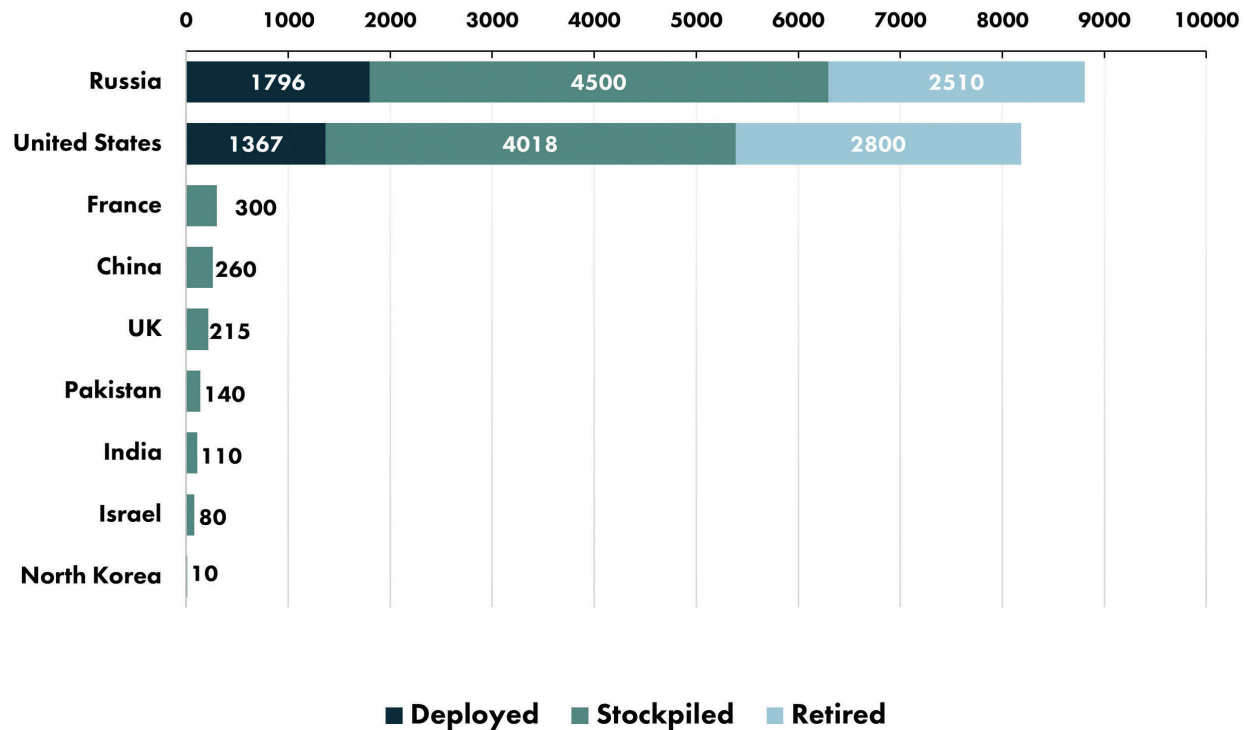
promising.⁶⁵⁰ As the U.S.-Russia relationship evolves, more areas for cooperation may emerge, to which the United States should remain open. For now, however, the United States may wish to focus on areas that are both critical and attainable. These include:

- **Improving crisis communications and transparency measures.** Russian conventional force deployments along the country's western border, violations of airspace, and frequent snap exercises are raising tensions with NATO allies and partners, who worry that the deployments could prefigure an aggressive move against them. The United States is likewise concerned that it is only a matter of time before Russia's increasingly reckless encounters with allied air and sea assets result in injury or unintended escalation. At the same time, Russian leaders claim that additional deployments by NATO forces, such as those announced at the War-

saw summit, represent a threat to Russian security. Ensuring greater transparency about these deployments and maneuvers on both sides would help lower tensions, reassure allies, and ensure there is no disconnect between messages sent and messages received. The United States should push Russia to fully comply with transparency and monitoring measures under the Open Skies agreement and the Vienna Document, "with a view to lowering the threshold for notifications and observations."⁶⁵¹ Despite Russia's withdrawal from the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, Russia, the United States, and European countries may want to consider what is possible in regards to a new agreement controlling conventional force deployments and exercises, as part of building a more sustainable European security system.

- **Maintaining nuclear nonproliferation and arms control talks.** Russia and the United States have little choice but to work with each other to achieve progress on nuclear nonproliferation, which has been a venue for fairly productive cooperation over the last 20 years. Russia has a stake in containing the risks of North Korea's nuclear weapons arsenal, of South Asian strategic competition, and of terrorist access to weapons of mass destruction or their components. Russia is key on most nonproliferation issues due to its role as a leading member of the International Atomic Energy Agency board, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and a participant in both the Iranian P5+1 talks and Six Party Talks

ESTIMATED GLOBAL NUCLEAR WARHEAD INVENTORIES IN 2017



Source: Arms Control Association

with North Korea. Russia is also a potential source of sensitive materials and technology and a “traditional friend of countries of proliferation concern.”⁶⁵²

Likewise, in terms of arms control, very little can happen without Russia’s cooperation, given that the United States and Russia between them hold about 95 percent of the world’s nuclear arsenal.⁶⁵³ Arms control has also been an area of bilateral dialogue, even when U.S.-Russian relations ebbed in the past. Each country is the only one on Earth that can threaten the world with obliteration. As signatories to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT), both countries are committed to reducing their nuclear arsenals, and they have always been most successful at this task when working together.

Recent actions by Russia have raised concerns about its commitments to these goals. Specifically, Washington has accused Moscow of violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. In 2016, Russia withdrew from the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA) and the Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. Russia, for its part, has long felt that the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty in 2002 weakened strategic stability.

Most urgently, the United States should pursue negotiations to bring Russia back into compliance with the INF Treaty. To do so, the United States will need to address Russia’s three countercharges of U.S. violations. This may entail agreeing

on language that clarifies the “differences between permitted missile defense target missiles and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, differences between [unmanned aerial vehicles] and ground-launched cruise missiles, [and]... transparency measures regarding SM-3 [missile interceptors in Europe].”⁶⁵⁴ In exchange, Russia must end its deployment of intermediate-range missiles in violation of the treaty, coupled with rigorous transparency measures to confirm its compliance.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear weapons are currently governed by the New START Treaty, which expires in 2021. If it is not renewed or superseded by a new treaty by that time, there will be no constraints on either country’s further development of strategic nuclear

weapons, other than their NPT commitments. Both states have benefited immensely from having an effective and verifiable treaty mechanism in place—it provides transparency into each other's systems; prevents runaway spending on weapons that neither needs; and ensures parity, which both have valued. Moreover, while treaty renewal would enable New START to continue, a new treaty could have further benefits, allowing the two sides to bring to the table issues that have concerned them in the past, whether they are determined in this agreement or in further talks. In Russia's case, this might include missile defenses and conventional strategic weapons. In the case of the United States, it might include nonstrategic systems. Deployments in Europe, and their ranges, could also be considered. Hypersonic weapons, now under development in a number of third-party countries, as well as in Russia and the United States, might also be included. Whether any of these topics are or are not included in a New START follow-on or another treaty, discussions are a critical first step toward resolving misunderstandings and mutual fears, particularly hazardous in the nuclear context. Indeed, as some of these issues also affect other states, multilateral discussions might be worth pursuing in some cases. Moreover, progress here will help Russia and the United States rebuild a united front on nonproliferation under the NPT.

As noted above, conventional arms control treaties can also be pursued (the INF treaty, of course, covers both sorts of systems). But we reiterate that

agreements that relate to conventional forces in Europe (or, indeed, most anywhere else) cannot be simply bilateral. Nor can they only comprise Russia and the NATO allies. Rather, they must include all European states. This creates challenges for negotiation, but there exists ways to finesse such challenges, if the commitment is there.

- **Working together in the Arctic.** U.S.-Russia cooperation in the Arctic, particularly within the Arctic Council, has remained at least partially insulated from the current tensions, and should remain so. The two nations share practical interests in environmental research on the impacts of climate change and the leakage of methane trapped in permafrost layers; search and rescue preparedness as Arctic tourism grows more popular; and oil spill rapid response measures, among other things. As the Arctic Sea warms and maritime traffic increases through the Bering Strait (which is only 44 nautical miles wide at its narrowest point), it will be important to seek collaboration to establish basic communication infrastructure and designated sea lanes.⁶⁵⁵ The melting of the Arctic also has important economic, energy, and territorial implications that, without robust cooperation, could become new sources of conflict. Maintaining an open dialogue on safety and environmental issues may make discussion of the thornier issues, including Russia's military mobilization and modernization programs in the Arctic, a bit less challenging by gradually rebuilding trust and confidence. To this end, an August 2015 CSIS report on Russia's

strategic interests in the Arctic recommended the creation of a U.S.-Russia joint working group within the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) to focus on enhancing safety and improving maritime domain awareness in the Bering Strait, and for the eight Arctic Council states to begin to negotiate a "non-binding political statement to serve as a 'Declaration on Military Conduct in the Arctic' in line with the OSCE's confidence building measures."⁶⁵⁶

Conclusion

How the United States chooses to manage the Russia challenge will shape the geopolitical landscape for decades to come. U.S. allies, partners, and adversaries in the Middle East, Asia, and elsewhere will be watching to see how the United States responds to the evolving challenges posed by Russia and will calibrate their behavior accordingly. In the rush to make deals with Russia to secure lesser objectives, the United States may well find itself sacrificing a more fundamental goal: advancing a global order that benefits our people, our economy, and our constitutional values. Standing resolutely by our allies and our treaty commitments is central to upholding that order. We must meet Russia's efforts to challenge it with the steel of our determination rather than mush that cedes our hard-won gains.

U.S. STRATEGY TOWARD RUSSIA

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PILLARS	SAMPLE ACTIONS	KEY CHARACTERISTICS
<p><u>Manage</u> tensions with Russia in a way that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Upholds the post-WWII order, international norms, agreements, and the rule of law; 2. Maintains U.S. access and influence in Europe and NATO; 3. Enhances U.S. and European political, economic, security, and societal stability; 4. Avoids direct hostilities; 5. Discourages Russia's incitement and abetment of instability in Europe and beyond; and 6. Builds ties with the Russian people <p><u>Until</u> Russia stops playing the spoiler and begins to work constructively to strengthen and develop security in Europe and the world.</p>	<p>STRENGTHEN</p> <p>The health of our democracies, institutions, and defenses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice what we preach. • Reinvest in NATO. • Prioritize global commitments. • Build resilience among allies and partners. • Foster Russia expertise in the United States. • Expand NATO-EU cooperation. • Stand up for human rights and democracy. • Modernize U.S. nuclear forces. 	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater emphasis on strengthening and contesting than today. • Scalable in implementation as tensions increase or decrease. • Credible with threats and promises. No gap between words and actions. • Comprehensive across non-conventional, conventional, nuclear threats and across geographic regions (not only Europe-focused). • Multilateral under strong U.S. leadership to maximize unity of effort. • Fully resourced but efficient, does not entail massive new defense investments. • Clear-eyed, avoids wishful thinking and cooperation that becomes accommodation. Reaffirms principled rules-based approach. • Patient and sustainable throughout the period of heightened tensions.
	<p>CONTEST</p> <p>Russian attempts to undermine U.S. interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create predictable schedule of progressing sanctions. • Conduct proportional offensive cyber activities. • Increase and optimize the U.S. conventional military presence in Europe. • Resource for strength. • Combat Russian propaganda. • Support non-NATO nations, including Ukraine, in the so-called grey zone. Keep NATO's door open. Push back against Russia's nuclear saber-rattling. 	
	<p>COOPERATE</p> <p>Where advantageous and feasible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve crisis communications and transparency measures. • Maintain nuclear nonproliferation and arms control talks. • Work together in the Arctic. 	



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