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Order and Counter-Order: The European System and Russia

Ted Middleton

ABSTRACT: This article explores how today's post-modern, interdependent European system of order interacts with a competing system led by a modern, realist Russian Federation. Russia's great power identity is based on a long-standing statist tradition of foreign policy thinking combined with a legacy of conviction in the uniqueness of Eurasian civilization. Key to meeting the Russian challenge is systemic adaptation to engender cooperation in the common economic space, thereby permitting the two systems not only to co-exist, but co-evolve as stable, interdependent entities.

In 2008, Charles King wrote the five-day Russian-Georgian war “will mark a time when Russia came to disregard existing international institutions and begin, however haltingly, to fashion its own.”¹ The war was a manifestation of Russia's claim to a key zone of “privileged interests,” and shocked the post-Cold War geopolitical order by challenging the expansion of NATO into post-Soviet Eurasia.² The true significance of the crisis, however, was twofold. The unilateral intervention signaled Moscow's general distrust of multilateral institutions as organs of global governance, thus affirming a Russian conviction that hard power was the true currency of international relations.³ Further, the intervention was proof a recalcitrant Russia would no longer accept western indifference to its Great Power aspirations or to its strategic interests in the newly independent neighboring republics.

With US-Russia relations at their lowest point since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Obama administration extended an olive branch by proposing a “policy reset.” By acknowledging Russia's leading role in the post-Soviet space, ending (temporarily) NATO expansion, reconfiguring the US concept for missile defense in Europe, supporting Russia's membership in the World Trade Organization, and deepening bilateral economic relations, the reset brought the relationship from the brink of collapse towards effective rapprochement.⁴ Although the reset policy did not return the breakaway provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to full Georgian control, it was largely successful. In 2009, President

1 Charles King, “The Five-Day War: Managing Moscow after the Georgia Crisis,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (November/December 2008): 2-11.

2 Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Canada: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 263-264.

3 In 2008 there was a lingering feeling among Russian leaders that multilateral institutions like the United Nations Security Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe existed only to promote the interests of the United States and its allies. See King, “The Five-Day War.”

4 Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 89-93, 263.

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Medvedev steered Russian foreign policy back towards a more pragmatic course of international cooperation and economic modernization.

In 2010, President Obama's National Security Strategy mentioned Russia specifically only 14 times in the document's 52 pages. Each of these references was in a positive light, emphasizing partnership, inclusion and cooperation in recognition of the fact that power in an interconnected world was no longer a zero-sum game.⁵ Acknowledging the deepening integration of the European Union alongside the rise of global engagements by China and India, the strategy described Russia as an emergent twenty-first century center of influence, a nation that shared with the United States mutual interests and respect.⁶ Russia was not included in the strategy's list of states endangering global security by flouting international norms. Quite to the contrary, the strategy touted cooperation and partnership as key elements to a stable, substantive, and multidimensional relationship with a strong, peaceful, and prosperous Russia. The strategy identified common ground in terms of advancing nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, confronting violent extremism, forging new trade and investment opportunities, as well as promoting the rule of law, accountable government and universal values. In short, the 2010 strategy clearly signaled the United States' intention to seek Russia's cooperation as a responsible partner in Europe and Asia.⁷

By comparison, President Obama's 2015 National Security Strategy specifically mentions Russia 15 times and while the frequency is almost identical to that of 2010, there is a marked difference in the context. Replacing the 2010 emphasis on partnership, inclusion, and cooperation is an unequivocal condemnation of Russian aggression, coercion, deception and belligerence.⁸ The strategy speaks of America's indispensable leadership in a global effort to deter Russian aggression and to dissuade Russia from using its vast energy resources as political leverage to manipulate an energy-dependent Europe. In stark contrast to the 2010 strategy, Russia is now specifically named as a state endangering international norms regarding inter-state conflict, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.⁹ Flagged as the hallmark of Russian belligerence in the near abroad, the crisis in Ukraine polarizes American-Russian relations and draws US attention and presence into Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁰ While the door may be closing on the prospects of Russia becoming a responsible partner in Europe and Asia, it has not yet slammed shut. Despite the pledges to deter Russian aggression through sanctions and other means, to remain alert to Russia's strategic capabilities, and to help American allies to resist Russian coercion, the strategy leaves "the door

5 Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 3.

6 *Ibid.*, 8, 11.

7 *Ibid.*, 44.

8 "Aggression" is paired with "Russia" eight of the fifteen times the country is named in the 2015 *National Security Strategy*. The remaining references to Russia include contextual descriptions of deception, coercion, belligerence, and energy security concerns. See Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), i, 2, 4, 5, 10, 16, 19, 25.

9 Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 10.

10 The Near Abroad is commonly considered the region encompassed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) during the Cold War. It includes Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The term "Near Abroad" emerged as a term of Russian diplomatic parlance to describe not just Russia's immediate neighbors, but the special relationship Russia maintained with these former republics in the post-Soviet space.

open to greater collaboration” in areas of mutual interests, should Russia choose “a path of peaceful cooperation that respects the sovereignty and democratic development of neighboring states.”¹¹

This article explains the context of this fluctuating ally-adversary relationship by exploring the concept of world order since the end of the Cold War, Russia’s challenge to the evolution of that order, and the potential disorder that may ensue given Vladimir Putin’s current foreign policy vector. The central question is: how does today’s post-modern, interdependent European system of order interact with a competing one led by a modern, realist Russian Federation? The analysis reveals Russia’s great power identity is based on a long-standing statist tradition of foreign-policy thinking combined with a legacy conviction in the uniqueness of Eurasian civilization. This identity, which is not unique to Putin’s presidency but is consciously perpetuated by his foreign policy, challenges the European paradigm of post-modern order, the predominance of which is underwritten by the power of the United States. Key to meeting this challenge will be systemic adaptation that limits confrontation in the contested space and encourages cooperation in the common space so the two systems can not only co-exist, but co-evolve as stable, interdependent entities.

Order

“Our age is insistently, at times almost desperately, in pursuit of a concept of world order.”¹² In any discussion of order, it is important to acknowledge from the onset two things: first, the world is a complex and adaptive system, and as such it should come as no surprise if the existing system of order is not performing its function, a new system will emerge; second, the lexicon used to describe the system matters. This article borrows Kissinger’s distinction between world order, international order and regional order to establish a baseline understanding of these interrelated systems.

World order describes the concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world. An international order is the practical application of these concepts to a substantial part of the globe – large enough to affect the global balance of power. Regional orders involve the same principles applied to a defined geographic area.¹³

Arguably, no world order has ever existed in the truly global sense; but that fact does not dissuade a region or civilization from perceiving its sense of order is globally accepted. What conceptually differentiates these systems is a matter of scale. What undergirds them is a commonly accepted set of rules regulating state behavior. A balance of power construct “enforces restraint when the rules break down, preventing one political unit from subjugating all others.”¹⁴

11 Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 25.

12 Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2014), 2.

13 *Ibid.*, 9.

14 *Ibid.*

A Brief History of Order in Europe

The “rules-based” system that best represented the twentieth-century paradigm of world order traces its lineage back to the Peace of Westphalia, the accords of 1648 that marked the end of the Thirty Years’ War and the emergence of the European state system. Prior to 1648, conflict was all but endemic, permeating all levels of society, and the battle to reestablish peace and order in Christendom dominated the relationships between powers. After the Peace of Westphalia, the concept of a regional system based on a balance of power construct emerged where “the state, not the empire, dynasty, or religious confession, was affirmed as the building block of European order.”¹⁵ For the better part of the next three centuries the European system evolved and expanded, becoming the accepted system of international order. Throughout this evolution, the international system’s anarchical state of nature remained, more or less, in equilibrium, absorbing and adapting to the shocks of revolutions, the fall of empires and even the re-ordering of spheres of influence.¹⁶

By 1914, the European system of order became synonymous with world order as the Westphalian concept took root on every continent. The system continued to evolve and adapt over the course of what some historians have identified as a second Thirty Years’ War, noting the period from 1914 to 1945 brought about a level of destruction the European continent had not witnessed since 1648.¹⁷ In the 40 years following WWII, the system evolved as a bipolar order with crisis stability preventing the system from exploding into chaos.¹⁸ The doctrine of mutually assured destruction that characterized the Cold War promised a potential devastation so vast the actual devastation of the two world wars combined paled in comparison.

The Cold War was the culmination of the continual evolution of international order since 1648, an evolution characterized by a series of adaptations in response to shocks that threatened the equilibrium of the system. In other words, the system evolved in response to foreign policies that threatened to upset the balance of power between European states. In the wake of WWII, the foreign policies of the United States and Russia drove the transition of world order from Europe’s multi-lateral balance of power system to one of global bipolarity. The end of the Cold War, however, ushered in an entirely new system of order; one that did not rely on balance of power, emphasize sovereignty, or isolate domestic from foreign affairs.¹⁹ Instead, a new European order emerged that rejected the use of force as an instrument for settling conflicts in favor of increased mutual dependence among states. At the heart of

15 Ibid., 26.

16 For more on Hobbesian anarchy and the Hobbesian state of nature, see Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 9th ed. (New York, NY: Pearson Education, 2013), 4-10.

17 Ian Kershaw, “Europe’s Second Thirty Years War,” *History Today* 55, no. 9 (September 2005): 10-17.

18 Crisis stability describes the phenomenon where an acute international crisis is avoided at all costs due to the severity of the consequences for all actors. See Nye and Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation*, 50.

19 Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, “The New European Disorder,” *European Council on Foreign Relations* 117 (November 2014): 2, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR117_TheNewEuropeanDisorder_Essay.pdf.

the new system was a mutual consent to supranational activity in the domestic affairs of states and the idea that security can best be achieved through cooperation rather than competition. In a system that stresses openness and transparency, a system that appeals to the jurisdiction of international institutions, European states today are less absolute in their sovereignty and independence than ever before.²⁰ The year 1989, therefore, marked not only the end of the Cold War, but most significantly it marked the end of the balance of power system in Europe.²¹

Pre-modern, Modern, and Post-modern Order

The British diplomat and special advisor to the European Commission Sir Robert Cooper described the post-Cold War international order in terms of divisions between pre-modern, modern, and post-modern constituents of the world.²² In the pre-modern parts of the world, states are not fully functioning; in the modern part of the world, states are concerned with issues of territorial sovereignty and the pursuit of national interests; and in the post-modern world, foreign and domestic policies are inextricably intertwined, tools of governance are shared and security is no longer based on control over territory or balance of power.²³

The pre-modern world is characterized by the pre-state, post-imperial chaos congruent with places like Somalia, Liberia, and Yemen, where the state cannot claim the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within its territory.²⁴ The state is fragile and dysfunctional. By and large, the pre-modern regions of the world are considered chaotic, where non-state actors thrive and occasionally threaten regional order or the interests of the powerful. The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is a prime example of pre-modernity. The concept of security in such a scenario is well beyond the scope of this article as it implies bringing order to a chaotic system. The Russian Federation is not a pre-modern state, though some of the former Soviet republics might qualify as such.

In the modern world the traditional state system remains intact, sovereignty is paramount, and order is maintained primarily through a Westphalian balance of power. Military force is not only the principal guarantor of security, but also a viable instrument of power to change international borders. In the modern world, the strategic calculus of interests from a Hobbesian worldview defines state interaction. Russia represents the traditional paradigm of a modern world state, a legitimate and internationally accepted paradigm shared by other significant powers such as China and India.

20 Robert Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order* (London: Demos, January 2000), 7, <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/thepostmodernstate.pdf>; and Krastev and Leonard, "The New European Disorder," 2.

21 Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order*, 7.

22 Ibid., 17. The term "modern" is used as a reference point not because it represents something new; quite to the contrary, "modern" in this context refers to the Westphalian concept of the nation state, which was considered "the great engine of modernization."

23 Ibid., 15-23.

24 For more on the monopoly over the legitimate use of force as a criterion for statehood, see Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Garth and C. Wright Mills (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1946).

The post-modern world is a reflection of the new European order described earlier; a system based on interdependence, openness and transparency. What is particularly interesting about the post-modern world is, while its traditional state system is conceptually collapsing, it is not descending into some pre-modern state of chaotic disorder. Quite to the contrary, its collapse is bringing greater order to the European system.²⁵ Take for example the state's traditional monopoly over the use of force; in the post-modern European system, the state's use of force is subject to international, albeit self-imposed, constraints. War is therefore to be avoided. Another example is the state's traditionally exclusive purview over domestic affairs. In post-modern Europe, international institutions such as the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are now deeply involved in the standards of state domestic behavior. By representing "security through transparency, and transparency through interdependence," the EU and OSCE provide frameworks for dispute resolution and transnational cooperation.²⁶

The post-modern state has become more pluralist, more complex, and less centralized than the modern state from which it evolved. While EU countries are clearly post-modern states, the relationship EU countries have with other states may not necessarily be post-modern in nature. There is dissonance between the modern and post-modern systems concerning perspectives of interests and security. In the post-modern context, foreign policy has become the continuation of domestic concerns beyond national boundaries, and individual consumption trumps collective glory as the dominant theme of national life.²⁷ The opposite is true of the modern state system, which continues to view the world through a Hobbesian prism. Therein lies the rub; for a post-modern system to succeed, it requires all of the most powerful constituents of the system to behave as post-modern states. So long as Russia remains fixated on *raison d'état* and power politics, it will remain a modern state, an incompatible and uncomfortable neighbor to post-modern Europe.²⁸

Counter-Order

Viewed through a Western prism, Russia is a country that has only fitfully and recently emerged from an isolation imposed by its geography, culture and political system.²⁹ Situated at the junction of civilizations and trade routes, the "land of the Rus" is a uniquely Eurasian power "sprawling across two continents but never entirely at home in either."³⁰

It has been nearly twenty years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a breakup that marked the symbolic loss of Russia's historical empire and the transition from communism to a political system resembling liberal democracy. The West had great hopes Moscow would integrate into the Euro-Atlantic international order as an emergent

25 Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order*, 19.

26 *Ibid.*, 26.

27 *Ibid.*, 31-32.

28 *Ibid.*, 41.

29 Celeste A. Wallander, "Global Challenges and Russian Foreign Policy," in *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Shadow of the Past*, ed. Robert Legvold (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 443.

30 Kissinger, *World Order*, 51.

center of influence with a strong voice in the international arena.³¹ Those hopes were unfortunately based largely upon three flawed assumptions: the first, Russia was committed to becoming a full member of the democratic and capitalist West; second, Russia would consent to join a common security community led by the United States; and third, the struggle for influence around Russia's borders ended with the close of the Cold War.³²

Misplaced Hopes

The first assumption – the integration of Russia as a full member of the democratic and capitalist West – faced two insurmountable challenges. The collapse of the Soviet Union was synonymous with an economic collapse, the magnitude of which plunged Russia into the depths of political and civil chaos characterized by corruption, crime, and widespread destitution. Russia's gross domestic product fell between 50 and 83 percent, capital investment by 80 percent, and three quarters of the Russian population found itself below, or just marginally above, the subsistence level.³³ Sadly, the Russian people conflated economic prosperity with liberal democracy and, as a result, the economic collapse brought with it widespread disenchantment. Liberal democracy, as the Russians were growing to understand it under Yeltsin's leadership, lost all popular resonance and by 1993 the promise of democracy became the scourge of the nation.³⁴ The second challenge was the appearance that the West lacked the will to embrace Russia fully as one its own. For integration to succeed the West needed to draw Russia into the post-modern European system, not just by exporting the ideas of democracy and free markets, but by welcoming Russia into the Euro-Atlantic system of multilateral diplomacy.³⁵ That welcome was unfortunately less than genuine and fell well short of a full embrace.

The second and third assumptions – Russia's consent to join a US-led common security community and the belief in the cessation of competition for influence in the post-Soviet space – conflicted with Russia's great power ambitions and the sense of Russia's evolving national identity. In the uncertainty of the immediate post-Cold War years the major international trends of economic globalization, the emergence of a "single Europe" through NATO and EU enlargement, the United States' consolidation of global dominance, and the rise of China as a regional power all eclipsed Russia's desire to be taken seriously as pillar of international order.³⁶ Struggling to accept the idea of membership and station in a system of order that operated according to rules devised by and for the Western powers, Russia devolved, retreating from the possibility of post-modernity and retrenching as a modern state on Europe's periphery. Whether overcome by some euphoric sense of Cold War victory, or overcautious due to decades of distrust, the West's assessment

31 This hope was reaffirmed by President Obama in 2010. See Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 8.

32 Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 130.

33 Stephen Cohen, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 169.

34 Daniel Beer, "Russia's Managed Democracy," *History Today* 59, no. 5 (May 2009): 37-39.

35 Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order*, 35.

36 Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 113; and Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 132, 267.

of the situation failed to understand the Russian perspective, squandering the opportunity for rapprochement. Thomas Graham, Condoleezza Rice's principal advisor on Russia, affirmed the misplaced hope in an essay published in 2002:

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Russia remains far short of having fulfilled the grand hopes for its future widely entertained in both Russia and the West at the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union. If there has been a transition at all, it has not been the hoped-for one to a free market democracy, but rather a reincarnation of a traditionally Russian form of rule that in many respects is premodern. Russia has not been integrated into the West in any significant way, contrary to the goals set forth by the Russian and Western governments a decade ago.³⁷

The Russian Lens

Russia's leadership viewed the dissolution of the Soviet Union – Russia's exit from empire – more as a pragmatic decision than a surrender to national liberation movements. The collapse was not some chaotic implosion of the political system. Facing rapidly mounting domestic economic and social pressures, Russian nationalists recognized the opportunities of separate states far outweighed the burden of empire and therefore did not stand in the way of the sovereign aspirations of the Soviet republics in east Europe.³⁸ From President Yeltsin's perspective, it was the Russian people, not the United States and its Cold War allies, who toppled the regime, bringing an end to communism and the great power rivalry that had characterized the Cold War.³⁹ Russia in 1991 was actively seeking inclusion and integration with the West in the hope of developing a cooperative partnership capable of joint global leadership.⁴⁰ "From their new partners in the West, they expected proper recognition for their unique feat of embracing democracy, ending the Cold War, and recognizing former Soviet satellites in East Europe as fully independent states."⁴¹

What Moscow got for its concessions was much less than "peace with honor," or in more practical terms, "partnership with prosperity." Russia was not to be integrated into the core West, but managed by it.⁴² Moscow watched NATO extend a warm welcome to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, while its own informal bid for NATO

37 James Goldgeiger and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: US Policy toward Russia after the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 321.

38 Given the fact that USSR was collapsing and the Russian Federation was forming, there was public disagreement between Gorbachev's view and Yeltsin's view on the sovereign aspirations of these republics.

39 The counter-view to this is that Russia's concessions in the post-Soviet space were more the result of Russian weakness than any sort of fundamental redefinition of national interests. See Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 265.

40 Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 2009): 7.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 7-8.

membership stalled.⁴³ In lieu of some grand Marshall Plan to alleviate the economic aftermath of the collapse, Russia's massive debt accrued in International Monetary Fund trenches while Western borders tightened in anticipation of waves of desperate economic migrants from the East.⁴⁴ Moscow's attitude towards the West was bound to shift with mounting resentment and a growing perception the United States and its allies preferred insulation from post-Soviet Russia to inclusion of the Russian Federation.

Consequently, when Vladimir Putin came to power, he abandoned Yeltsin's aim of integration, and instead pursued a more pragmatic course of integration with the West, intending to reestablish Russia's global prestige as a "great power" on the world stage.⁴⁵ He transformed the failing Russian political system into what it is today: a managed democracy, a form of political authoritarianism characterized by "the centralization of political and economic power, the emasculation of parliamentary politics, the muzzling of the media, a return to the rhetoric of Great Russian nationalism, and a bullying interference in the affairs of neighboring states."⁴⁶ With this transformation well under way, Putin set about redefining his foreign policy objectives. In short order, Putin's Russia sought soft dominance in its immediate neighborhood and rightful membership in a global multipolar order as an equal to the United States and the European Union.⁴⁷ Part of this modern state concept of soft dominance is Russia's right of regard to order its traditional space as suits Russian interests; a right shared by other regional powers such as China and India.

Putin's decision to lead Russia away from integration marked not only a tectonic shift in relations with the United States, but also his intent to establish a regional order based on a Russian sphere of interest rivaling the order of post-modern Europe. It is important to recognize Putin was not trying to recreate the Soviet empire. In fact, Putin once quoted a Ukrainian diplomat who had quipped those who do not regret the passing of the Soviet Union have no heart; but those who want to bring it back have no brains.⁴⁸ Instead, Putin looked to solidify spheres of "privileged interests" that included but were not limited to

43 Yeltsin and Kozyrev viewed reconciliation with NATO as critical and therefore sought promise from the major Western powers that NATO would not seek to expand to fill the power vacuum in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin opposed any expansion of NATO into the post-Soviet space that did not include a path for membership for Russia itself. Russia became a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace – a halfway house on the road to full membership – in 1994. Prospects for reconciliation, and Russia's membership, deteriorated in 1997 with NATO's decision to expand. Arguably, Russia would likely have been reticent to join NATO without securing for itself a veto in the decision-making structure. See Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 152-156.

44 Russia secured an expedient \$10 billion loan from the IMF in 1996. See Cohen, *Failed Crusade*, 140-141; and Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence," 8.

45 Jim Nichol, *Russian Political, Economic, and Security Issues and US Interests* (Washington, DC: US Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2014), 38.

46 Beer, "Russia's Managed Democracy," 37-39.

47 Dmitri Trenin, "Russia Reborn: Reimagining Moscow's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6 (November 2009): 64-78.

48 Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence," 9.

the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).⁴⁹ Through integration, alliance-building, and the expansion of Russian presence in the near abroad, Putin aimed to bring about a less Western-centric system of order, with Russia holding the place of first-among-equals in its own neighborhood.⁵⁰

Disorder

While one can argue there is no new world order in the post-Cold War era that satisfies Kissinger's definition, there is no denying the emergence of a new European order. What challenges this emergence is the confrontation with Putin's alternative view, which sees Russia as the pole of a competing regional order. By rejecting the universal nature of Europe's post-modern system, Putin has effectively put a halt to the notion of its global expansion as a potential world order. Reflecting upon the observation of Charles King cited earlier, the invasion of Georgia marked the beginning of this rejection and Russia's intent to push-back. The annexation of Crimea and engagement in Ukraine highlight the fragility of the post-modern system's equilibrium when one of its powerful constituents behaves as a modern state. This situation illustrates the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the post-modern system and the post-modern state: one requires the other in order to thrive. As globalism increases and draws more modern states into contact with the post-modern system, equilibrium can quickly become agitation.⁵¹ Agitation can quickly lead to disorder.

What contributes to the agitation of the system is the relative isolation of its continual evolution. Europe's post-modernity, while innovative, isolates Europe from states that do not share the same perspective of the universal applicability of security through interdependence. This difference becomes a point of considerable geopolitical friction for states on the system's periphery if they do not identify with the new Europe. In the case of Russia, an isolated Europe completely overlooked Moscow's resentment of the Western-led emergence of the post-modern international system; Europe simply "could not understand that what they saw as the best possible order seemed to many Russians to be both hypocritical and unstable."⁵²

From the Russian lens, the perception of hypocrisy is understandable as the evolution of Europe's post-modern system was arguably enabled by the security guarantees of a less than post-modern United States. As the most powerful state in the world, the United States presents a peculiar dilemma for the European system, espousing post-modern values and principles yet often demonstrating classic modern geopolitical behavior. There are numerous examples of America's practical disregard

49 Russia regarded the former Soviet republics as a key zone of strategic interest and believed it only natural for those republics to regard Russia in much the same way. Unlike the historical reference to the Soviet Union's spheres of influence, Russia's spheres of interest do not feature territorial control, they are more specific and identifiable. Rather than whole countries they include various politico-military, economic and financial, and cultural areas within them. See Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence," 4, 6, and 13.

50 *Ibid.*, 5, 11.

51 Globalism is defined as "a condition of international relations in which networks of interdependence connecting states and societies transmit effects in one part of the globe to other parts of the globe that are not in direct proximity." See Wallander, "Global Challenges and Russian Foreign Policy," 443-444.

52 Krastev and Leonard, "The New European Disorder," 2.

for multilateral norms and institutions that undermine any claim to full membership in the club of post-modern states.⁵³ The most obvious was perhaps the unilateral decision to ignore international consensus and the will of the United Nations Security Council by invading Iraq in 2003, an example not lost on Putin. In his 2007 speech at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy, Putin accused the United States of overstepping its national borders, perpetuating an almost uncontained use of military force in international relations.⁵⁴

Labeling the OSCE as “a vulgar instrument” of American foreign policy interests, Putin described the existing system of order as unacceptably unipolar: “One single center of power. One single center of force. One single center of decision making . . . a world of one master, one sovereign.”⁵⁵ The rhetoric aside, the US government has not shown a convincing acceptance of “either the necessity and desirability of interdependence, or its corollaries of openness, mutual surveillance, and mutual interference to the same extent as most EU governments.”⁵⁶ These observations lend credit to the idea the evolution of Europe’s post-modern system of order is nurtured by America’s post-modern principles, yet back-stopped by its modern state interests. This unique relationship with the United States unmoors the EU from the rest of the continent by making the EU a hostage of geopolitical confrontations that are not of its choice, weakening the EU’s role in the global decision-making process.⁵⁷

At the heart of the dissonance between post-modern Europe and Russia’s modern statist alternative is the concept of sovereignty. Russia continues to subscribe to sovereignty as the capacity to act, a concept at odds with Europe’s post-modern interpretation of sovereignty as merely a legal construct.⁵⁸ In the words of Putin’s ideologue-in-chief, Vladislav Surkov, “sovereignty is the political synonym of competitiveness,” which implies economic independence, military power, and cultural identity.⁵⁹ The power Europe (and the United States) sees therefore as benevolent, symbolized by NATO expansion and American anti-missile defence systems in Europe, Russia sees as a threat.

This difference in perspective is potentially dangerous, and the West ignores such differences at its own peril. In the words of Admiral Gortney, Commander US Northern Command, “what we believe is interesting, but what the Russians believe is what really matters.”⁶⁰ The

53 The United States remains cautious about post-modern concepts, particularly as they apply to concessions of sovereignty and the notion of security interdependence. Furthermore, the United States has yet to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, is somewhat reluctant to accept challenge inspections under the Chemical Weapons Convention and refrains from participating in the International Criminal Court.

54 “Putin’s Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy,” *The Washington Post*, Transcript, February 12, 2007.

55 Ibid.

56 Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order*, 29.

57 Alexey Klebnikov, “What Globalization and Sovereignty Mean for Russia Today,” *Russia Direct*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/what-globalization-and-sovereignty-mean-russia-today>.

58 Krastev and Leonard, “The New European Disorder,” 3.

59 Ibid.

60 Admiral William Gortney, “WEST 2015 Keynote Address,” public speech, Western Conference and Exposition, San Diego, California, February 10, 2015, YouTube, video file, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1EHwzbsIKI>.

fact Russia remains convinced all the color revolutions in the post-Soviet space, including the protests in Russia, were designed, sponsored and guided by Washington, cannot be brushed aside as preposterous.⁶¹ Putin sees this unrest as a crisis of legitimacy for Russian interests and by extension a threat to his regime.⁶² As long as Putin holds this perception, Russia will remain wary of ceding any sovereignty to a post-modern European system. Furthermore, Putin's confidence in the global economic system was shaken by the financial crisis of 2009, convincing him that Russia's great power status is contingent upon having an economic region of its own – i.e. a sphere of strategic interest.⁶³ Globalism and the EU presence in the post-Soviet space have combined to present what Russia perceives as an encroaching threat to its political identity. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Russia is less inclined to depend on its uncompetitive, one-dimensional economy and instead focus on its military strength to exert its place in the international order.

If the paradigm of world order is accepted as “an inexorably expanding cooperative order of states observing common rules and norms, embracing liberal economic systems, forswearing territorial conquest, respecting national sovereignty, and adopting participatory and democratic systems of governance,” then Vladimir Putin is challenging this paradigm; he is creating conditions “where borders can be changed by force, where international institutions are powerless, where economic interdependency is a source of weakness, and where predictability is a liability rather than an asset.”⁶⁴

Conclusions & Recommendations: Where to From Here?

The shift in the strategic relationship between Russia and the West can be attributed to Russia's view of the world since making the conscious decision to abandon the notion of integration first into the West, and later with it. That view rejects the universality of the post-modern principles and instead sees order, at least regionally if not internationally, to be sustained by a system that allows for both power competition and collaboration.⁶⁵

Western efforts to transform Russia into the image of a post-modern state have been unsuccessful and show no real promise in the near future, despite President Obama's warning in the 2010 National Security Strategy:

To adversarial governments, we offer a clear choice: abide by international norms, and achieve the political and economic benefits that come from greater integration with the international community; or refuse to accept this pathway, and bear the consequences of that decision, including greater isolation.⁶⁶

This warning has not fallen on deaf ears; Putin seems prepared to bear the consequences and embrace the isolation. That isolation,

61 Trenin, “Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence,” 11, 12; and Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 176.

62 Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 266.

63 Krastev and Leonard, “The New European Disorder,” 3.

64 Kissinger, *World Order*, 1.; and Krastev and Leonard, “The New European Disorder,” 1.

65 Trenin, “Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence,” 4.

66 Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 8, 11.

however, is not proving to be as complete as forewarned. In an effort to overcome the ongoing economic sanctions, Russia is befriending former Balkan allies, Greece and Eastern Europe while forging stronger relationships with China and India.⁶⁷ By providing attractive solutions to the energy needs of countries like Hungary and Bulgaria as well as potential economic relief to Greece, Putin is pressuring the unity of the EU and frustrating the United States.⁶⁸ The hope, therefore, of sanctioning Russia into adopting a more Westernist foreign policy is misplaced so long as Putin remains in power, and that is unlikely to change with whomever succeeds him. To borrow from the wisdom of Clausewitz, the first and most far-reaching act the statesman must make is to establish what kind of state Russia really is; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.⁶⁹ Putin's is a modern, statist regime with civilizationist undertones.

Key to establishing a sustainable international order with this state will be acknowledging Russia as a major power and developing a system that can co-exist with Russia, as well as co-evolve with it. "Russia is too big, too important, and too embedded in international institutions to hope that we can isolate it on our terms."⁷⁰ If integration is not possible, and isolation is not practical, then cooperation becomes vital to systemic evolution. For meaningful cooperation to occur, there needs to be a common space between the Euro-Atlantic system and Eurasian system; that space is likely economic and the best entry point is the convergence between the European Union and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

The EEU – an economic and political bloc formed in 2014 uniting Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia – may be considered a flawed project by post-modern Europe, but it may also be the best opportunity Europe has to divert Russia away from the politics of military pressure and nationalist rhetoric.⁷¹ Russia has been the driving force behind the Eurasian integration project with the goal of creating a single economic space for the full and free movement of goods, capital, services and people.⁷² The population base of the Eurasian Economic Union is approximately 171 million people and the expectation is that its gross domestic product could reach 3 trillion dollars next year.⁷³ Paradoxically, the Eurasian Economic Union could be "a powerful manifestation of the EU's soft power – an attempt by Moscow to gain status and recognition by mimicking the institutions and structure of the EU."⁷⁴

67 China's National Bank has opened a credit line for three of the major Russian banks sanctioned by the West. While foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from Europe to Russia shrank by 63% in the last three quarters leading up to 2014, FDI from Asia to Russia, primarily from China, increased by 560% in the first quarter of 2014. See Krastev and Leonard, "The New European Disorder," 5.

68 Eugene Bal, "Russia's New 'Trojan Horse' Strategy for Breaking European Unity," *Russia Direct*, February 19, 2015, <http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/russias-new-trojan-horse-strategy-breaking-european-unity>.

69 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 88.

70 Krastev and Leonard, "The New European Disorder," 7.

71 "Eurasian Economic Union is Open for New Partners," *RT Online*, December 24, 2014, <http://www.rt.com/politics/217359-putin-russia-allies-eurasia>.

72 Christopher Hartwell, "Will Ukraine become a Roadblock to Eurasian Integration?" *Russia Direct*, March 20, 2014, <http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/will-ukraine-become-roadblock-eurasian-integration>.

73 "Eurasian Economic Union is Open for New Partners," *RT Online*.

74 Krastev and Leonard, "The New European Disorder," 7.

Conceived as an inclusive organization, the Eurasian Economic Union offers engagement through trade and economic links rather than military competition. As Putin's alternative to the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union is founded on the principle of economic interdependence, meaning that each of its constituent members can, in theory, veto any joint policy.⁷⁵ It is, therefore, the closest approximation to a post-modern institution that has emerged from the CIS to date. Engaging the Eurasian Economic Union as a legitimate regional institution could temper Russia's nationalistic rhetoric and present opportunity for cooperation and healthy competition between the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian systems of order. For co-existence and co-evolution of these systems to occur, post-modern Europe must recognize Russia's right to advance the Eurasian integration project rather than attempting to subsume it as a subordinate constituent of European order. This implies various forms of overlap and collaboration between the systems, to include potential dual membership of states.⁷⁶

The Eurasian Economic Union may just be the vehicle through which this is possible. Austrian diplomat and former Secretary General of the Council of Europe Walter Schwimmer endorses the notion of exploring the common ground for cooperation between the European Union and Eurasian Economic Union. Despite the geopolitical tension, the European Union remains Russia's main trade partner and Russia remains a strategic partner for the European Union in terms of energy security.⁷⁷ Schwimmer sees the Eurasian Economic Union as a reflection of the European Union and posits that a common market could be built between them. A productive relationship, therefore, between the European Union and Eurasian Economic Union built around a common market may serve to bridge the gap between the divergent European and Russian approaches to security and sovereignty.

As highlighted in the opening pages, these are complex and adaptive systems; as they interact it must be understood "the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules."⁷⁸ For the US Department of Defense, and more specifically for US European Command, it is therefore imperative that military posture and security policy focus on managing peace and prosperity rather than containing risk. Focusing on the former does not imply that risk is not real, but it holds greater promise for co-evolution and co-existence in the common economic space. Focusing on the latter may lead to confrontation in the contested security space. The US Department of Defense must appreciate the Russian view of sovereignty and how Russia perceives US security policy. European Command must factor that appreciation into every action on the continent so as not to provoke an irreversible reaction – counteraction spiral. Key to European Command managing the peace will be: (1) avoiding miscalculation; (2) developing and maintaining a thorough understanding of the environment; (3) sharing information amongst not

75 Ibid., 8.

76 Krastev and Leonard, "The New European Disorder," 8.

77 Alexey Klebnikov, "There is no Europe without Russia and no Russia without Europe," *Russia Direct*, March 19, 2015, <http://www.russia-direct.org/qa/there-no-europe-without-russia-and-no-russia-without-europe>.

78 James Gleick, *Chaos – Making a New Science* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 24.

only European allies but with Russia as well; and (4), developing an appreciation of unintended consequences.

As the Department of Defense considers a range of military options to bolster security in Europe, it must resist the warfighter mentality that only through credible threat will bullies blink. Russia is not threatening to cross swords with European Command so much as it is challenging US policy, US values, and the US political machine. To meet these challenges, the United States must synchronize its levers of national power and not rely solely on the military to contain Russian antagonism. European Command should continue to build NATO's military capacity in Europe, particularly in the Baltic States, but it should also be wary of the unintended consequences of building up a large US Army presence in the region. Developing the capability of the Baltic armed forces through individual and collective training should be complemented by diplomatic efforts to incentivize increased European defense spending and to encourage European forces to demonstrate consistent, measured presence in the region. That presence could be reinforced by a US over-the-horizon force capability that provides strategic depth to NATO Response Forces while avoiding some of the overt military-political tensions that result from establishing a permanent US forward force as a deterrent.

Ultimately, Russia has rejected the role allotted to it by the Euro-Atlantic system of order, an order that did not include Russia in its design or evolution. In hindsight, it was likely erroneous to believe that Russia's desire for economic prosperity at the end of the Cold War signaled a commitment to post-modern evolution and an enduring dominance of the liberal, Westernist foreign policy tradition. Russia is deliberately challenging the European paradigm of post-modern order by emerging as a modern, statist pole in the post-Soviet neighborhood.

Key to meeting this challenge is systemic adaptation that engenders a degree of cooperation in the common space that outweighs confrontation in the contested space. As an incremental step towards systemic adaptation, the common economic space between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union shows the greatest promise of promoting the co-existence and co-evolution of the competing systems. While the Eurasian Economic Union is not a comprehensive solution to the legacy battles over the military balance in Europe, it may be a start towards negotiating a new European order, where geopolitical differences are narrowed on the heels of narrowing economic differences. The alternative is for both systems to remain focused on the sovereignty interests and security issues that polarize the contested space, which for post-modern Europe is the drum that beats the retreat to modern state nationalism.

