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Letter from the Editor

The Post-Cold War optimism was never so utopian as to predict a world without conflict, but it did surmise that more peaceful days were on the horizon. That optimism has faded as the Unipolar moment has disappeared to reveal the new reality of a multipolar world. Conflict, in its many forms, physical, cultural, economic, remains ubiquitous throughout the international system.

Conflict both within and between nations shapes the international agenda. Everything from Russian aggression in Eastern Europe to the multifactional war in Syria are the defining events of our time. The conflictual flashpoints that this issue intends to explore, shape the international system in our changing world.

In this, our 19th volume, we attempt to shed light on these flashpoints. Rodger Kanet and Charles Zielger explore Russian revanchism in Eastern Europe. Julia Buxton covers the preeminent flashpoint in Latin America, Venezuela. Dr. Buxton discusses and provides a framework on how the confrontation between Venezuela, its neighbors, and the West can be managed. Michael Gunter shifts our focus to transnational issues by discussing the paradoxical struggle for an independent Kurdistan with the continued disunity of different Kurdish factions. Finally, Ramon Pacheco Pardo tackles perhaps the most pressing flashpoint for conflict in the world today, the crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Dr. Pardo discusses a series of policy proposals he believes would be conducive to deescalating tensions.

The Journal of Diplomacy is also proud to publish an interview with Former Cypriot President George Vasiliou. Mr. Vasiliou, who guided Cyprus towards integration with the European Union, discusses with the Journal the origins and future of the "Cyprus Problem" bringing into focus for our readers the frozen conflicts that exist around the world.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and that it may help you better understand the conflicts that are coming to define our time.

Dennis T. Meaney
Editor-in-Chief

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Flashpoints::

Conflicts in a Changing World

The Seton Hall

Journal of Diplomacy

and International Relations

Call for Papers

The Journal is pleased to invite articles for the upcoming Spring/Summer 2018 issue:

Africa Rising: The Future of the Continent

By 2030 one in five people will be African. If the late 20th century and early 21st century were defined by the East Asian Miracle, perhaps the next portion of the 21st will be defined by an African Dream. With a growing population and vast untapped resources, pundits have not been shy about touting African potential. Investors have taken note; Foreign Direct Investment has begun to flow from abroad creating opportunities to build the infrastructure necessary to harness African states' vast potential.

But challenges remain. Poor governance still plagues much of the continent. Security threats from extremism in the Saleh, to the civil conflicts raging in Central Africa threaten possible prosperity. Even FDI may be a double-edged sword, making Africa a proxy battleground for Great Powers to wage an influence war.

Africa's path to the future will be of great importance both to itself and for the international system at large. Analyzing the continent's present becomes ever more important as we look to its future.

For our 20th issue, the Journal is accepting articles that cover topics related to Africa, its present and future. Submissions should be between 3,000 and 6,000 words and are due April 2nd, 2018.

For more information regarding submission requirements and deadlines, please visit our website: www.journalofdiplomacy.org or forward all inquiries to:

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Defusing Venezuela

By Julia Buxton

Introduction

Venezuela, location of the world's largest crude oil reserves, sits in the increasingly congested category of 2018 global flashpoints alongside geographically distant countries such as Syria, North Korea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, and Iran. The perceived risk factors are multiple: state collapse, civil war, humanitarian crisis and, as suggested by U.S. President Donald Trump in August 2017, the possibility of an externally instigated military intervention to remove sitting President Nicolas Maduro.[1] This, in turn, could lead to civilian casualties, add to the flood of Venezuelans who have already left the country, and fragment patterns of organized crime. These scenarios are all equally likely if Maduro and the ruling *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV) remains in power.

After decades of close diplomatic and commercial ties, bilateral relations between the U.S. and Venezuela have been brittle since Hugo Chávez was first elected president of the South American country in December 1998. Tensions have ratcheted up as the "Bolivarian Revolution" has evolved. Initially, a relatively modest ambition to make sclerotic institutions less corrupt, a profoundly unequal society fairer, and a dependent country more autonomous, the Bolivarian Revolution was repositioned as a quest to build "Twenty-First Century Socialism" in 2005.[2]

Under Maduro, who succeeded Chávez in April 2013, advancing this ideological project has relied on manipulation and violation of the constitutional and legal order and constraints on free and fair elections. The economy has been haplessly mismanaged, offsetting all gains in human development made during the early 2000s and fuelling hyperinflation and shortages of basic goods and medicine.[3]

The political and social situation in Venezuela is critical. It is argued here that current foreign efforts to isolate and dislodge the Maduro government led by the U.S. and supported by the European Union (EU) and some member countries and the General Secretary of the Organization of American States

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(OAS), are counterproductive. The use of sanctions targeted at government and party officials appear to have strengthened, not ameliorated the *esprit de corps* of the ruling clique. Financial sanctions introduced by the U.S. in August 2017 and which prohibit U.S. institutions and citizens from handling new Venezuelan debt issues are at best fuelling the Maduro government's anti-imperialist rhetoric; at worse they are exacerbating the economic crisis and social suffering.[4]

Venezuela's status as a conflict flashpoint can only be defused by concerted dialogue and negotiation efforts. However, there are obstacles to a peaceful exit. The "Venezuela issue" became problematic and will remain so because the U.S., as well as the OAS, are out of configuration with the seismic political shifts experienced in South America in the 2000s. The U.S. is a key actor in maintaining hemispheric peace and security, but it has remained locked in traditional, ideological, diplomatic security perspectives and responses. Framed during the Cold War, these are inappropriate for the challenges of the post-Washington Consensus period.[5] Inter-American relations require pluralist modes of exchange and engagement, less not more militarized "solutions" to social and political problems, and recognition that China and Russia have heightened financial and political stakes in the region's political economy.

The Salience Of Venezuela's Crisis

In the 1970s, Venezuela was one of the twenty wealthiest countries in the world.[6] It enjoyed democratic stability and political party consensus during periods of brutal right-wing military dictatorship on the continent.[7] Save for the inflow of an estimated 3 million refugees and migrants from neighboring Colombia, it was also largely insulated from that country's protracted civil war, paramilitary violence and $10 billion per year trade in cocaine. Relations with the U.S. were close, underpinned by strong cultural and commercial ties framed by the oil sector.[8]

Venezuela's "high risk" status today relates to the country's calamitous economic situation, the breakdown of its constitutional order and the alleged infiltration of drug money in senior government and military ranks.[9] On current trajectories, the need for humanitarian assistance and the potential for civil disturbance, violent social conflict and a default on the $130 billion external debt are all high, with reverberations for neighboring countries, oil and financial markets, and for all three global powers: the U.S., China, and Russia. [10]

China has lent Venezuela an estimated $65 billion through the framework

of its R4I (Resources for Infrastructure) policy since Chávez first began to cultivate ties in the early 2000s.[11] Courting China, and other emerging powers such as Russia was seen by Chávez as a means of diversifying the country's trade and commercial dominance by the U.S. Russia and China now have a high level of contract and debt exposure in the country, particularly in the hydrocarbons sector. [12]

At the regional level, South and Central American states and Caribbean countries are impacted by outflows of an estimated 2 million migrants, Colombia must additionally insulate its peace process from the risk of cross-border weapons, drugs, illicit goods, and paramilitary movement while for Cuba, a change of government in Venezuela brings the prospect of perilous isolation.[13] Canada and European countries have significant private commercial concerns in Venezuela, including ongoing litigation over assets expropriated by the Venezuelan state, as well as hosting Venezuelan migrants.[14] For the Dutch and British governments, considerations extend to the security implications for Commonwealth and territorial dependencies such as Aruba, Curaçao, and Trinidad of their proximity to a highly unstable Venezuela.

The dimensions and divergence of interests in Venezuela are multiple and global. Many countries are impacted by the continuity of the Maduro government, and also by the prospect of regime change. The Venezuelan presidential election scheduled controversially by the National Constituent Assembly for April 2018[15] (subsequently put back to May) will be a focus of intense international attention, with the process and outcome opening up the possibility of an intensification or modest alleviation of the crisis.

Options For Change

In an attempt to overcome the chronic political polarization that has driven Venezuela's deterioration, former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, led efforts to bring together representatives of the Maduro government and opposition political parties.[16] The dialogue meetings were fraught, hesitant and convened in the face of strident hostility from a range of domestic and external interests. They achieved limited progress since first initiated with the support of the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in May 2016, but had the potential to forge agreement around humanitarian assistance, electoral transparency and restoration of the rule of law before the opposition pulled out, allegedly under pressure from the US.[17]

An alternative approach put forward by U.S. President Donald Trump

is "a possible military option,"[18] a reiteration of the position of Admiral Kurt Tidd, Commander of the U.S. Southern Command. In April 2017, Tidd presented his view to the Senate Armed Services Committee that "the growing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela could eventually compel a regional response."[19] This narrative of externally led and militarized regime change was echoed in a January 2018 article by Ricardo Hausmann, a former minister of planning in Venezuela[20] and which accused Maduro of being: "willing to starve millions to remain in power." Hausmann urged consideration of the "once inconceivable option" of military intervention in order to "free Venezuela" of the Maduro government.

Criticism that Maduro was causing an "unimaginable level of suffering and humiliation" was simultaneously made by Rafael Ramírez, a senior figure not only in the Maduro government but also Chávez's administration. After the Venezuelan Attorney General launched an investigation into corruption in the state-owned oil company Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA) in October 2017, Ramírez, its former president and minister for energy issued a scathing attack on Maduro's leadership of the revolutionary process:

> *"If our Commander were with us, standing in line for food, or walking the streets of Caracas seeing children looking through garbage, what would he do? And what would you tell him?"*[21]

This critique of Maduro's authoritarianism echoed former senior figures around late-president Chávez who had been pushed out or expelled from the PSUV, including former Attorney General Luisa Ortega[22] and Minister of Planning Jorge Giordani.[23] From this critical *intra-Chavista* perspective, Maduro's tenure has seen a constriction the circle of influence around the president. Where Chávez once promoted a civil-military union for national renewal and held together a diversity of trade unions, grassroots, popular, youth, cultural and left of centre movements, Maduro has built his authority around the support of the Venezuelan armed forces.[24] Serving and retired military officials dominate positions in the government, state administration, and PDVSA, and the armed forces have responsibility for the distribution of food as well as internal security — the latter with negative consequences for human rights observation and the right to peaceful protests.[25]

The suffering of ordinary Venezuelans is perverse, but proposals for military intervention — whether instigated by a domestic rebellion of lower level officers, or by foreign forces, marginalizes the reality of a weak and fragmented political opposition that lacks program of governance or widespread national support.[26] There is no popular and competent

alternative waiting. Addressing the grave economic situation, (re-) establishing legitimate and functioning institutions and confronting the grotesque problems of insecurity that have propelled Venezuela into the top five countries with the highest violent death rates, requires a minimum of national policy and political consensus.[27] This cannot be achieved by perpetuating the "zero-sum" and polarized political framework that has emerged in the country.

Overthrowing the Maduro government by force ignores the president's democratic mandate from the April 2013 election and the reality that the ruling PSUV party still draws votes and loyalty from a quarter of the electorate.[28] In this context, any external military intervention will face resistance; from Venezuela's armed forces, from grassroots and community militias loyal to *Chavismo* and even possibly from sympathetic insurgent groups from the wider region — notably Colombia. Ultimately the use of external force to exact a change of national government risks setting precedent, more acutely where the deposed administration and its supporters believe they held electoral, popular and sovereign legitimacy. In this context, why would aggrieved *Chavistas* not employ violent force to overthrow some future opposition-led administration?

In the particular context of South and Central America, the suggestion that the security sector play a role in political affairs is sensitive, and specifically when seen to be at the urging of the U.S. This is a legacy of the Cold War, which played out as a brutal, violent effort by national militaries to prevent encroachment by Soviet or Cuban communism in the US "backyard." Most notoriously, Operation Condor co-ordinated between the right-wing military dictatorships of Argentina, Bolivia , Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in the 1970s and 1980s led to the murder of over 50,000 people, the disappearance of a further 30,000 and the incarceration of 400,000 people.[29] In Central America, civil war and genocide against indigenous populations accounted for the murder and disappearance of an estimated 200,000 people in Guatemala and 75,000 in El Salvador. In contemporary Mexico, where the military have been deployed to fight a domestic "war" on drugs since 2006, there have been over 150,000 homicides, human rights violations and "disappearances" and yet no receding of drug production and trafficking.[30] For these reasons and many more, military intervention should remain inconceivable. It is a simplistic solution to deeper structural problems.

The 2000s: Flux and Change in The Americas

Following transitions to democracy from authoritarian military rule in South America and peace accords in Central America, the early 1990s were a period of optimism for the Americas. National militaries were reoriented toward external peace and security missions under the architecture of United Nations peacekeeping operations, while the Organization of American States, the 35 country member regional body was proactive in institutionalizing hemispheric advances in peace, security and development cooperation.[3132] The administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton forged hemispheric market integration and liberal democracy with the "carrots" of trade deals and financing for democracy assistance, and the "sticks" of decertification and tariff walls.[33] There was strong economic growth of 3.2 percent in South America, and liberal democratic institutions and norms appeared to be consolidating after decades of military dictatorship.[34]

Despite the assumptions of the transitology literature, the Americas were not on a smooth and linear trajectory towards free markets, liberal democracy and amicable co-existence within the U.S. sphere of influence.[35] Nascent ideological challenges to the centre-right consensus were emerging from non-traditional political movements rooted in trade unions, indigenous and human rights, land reform, and other grassroots issues. They articulated popular disenchantment with the new "democratic" arrangements. The political compromises deemed necessary to guarantee a transition from military governance, generated an outcry over impunity for egregious human rights abuses; political parties were seen as unrepresentative of social interests, and national governments were perceived as technocratic, elite and remote from the social impacts of market adjustment, which were severe.[36]

There was a strong regional economic performance, but this growth was not pro-poor. Per capita income fell below the levels of the 1970s, while long-standing historical problems of "excess inequality" were deepened by economic stabilization and structural adjustment policies.[3738] Informal sector employment increased from 25 percent of the economically active population in the region in 1980, to 32 percent by 1990.[39] And while the share of wealth concentrated in the top ten percent increased, middle-class sectors were in particular impacted by the new free-market orientation that followed from the "lost decade" of hyperinflation and the balance of payments crises in the 1980s. It was this experience that served as an entry point for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank into the region's economic policy making and the ensuing adoption of orthodox economic prescriptions of privatization, public spending cuts and currency devaluations that galvanized such popular hostility in the 1990s.[40]

Despite deepening problems of social, political and economic exclusion

and rising popular protests, the direction of national and regional policy remained one of state retreat from social provision and political engagement, and a "locking in" of unpopular free trade strategies through bi- and multilateral agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed between Canada, Mexico and the U.S. in 1994 and the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) established between Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay in 1991. [4142]

The U.S. and the region's governing elite failed to read a changing political tide that was gaining momentum in the Southern Cone countries of Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil, and the Andean states of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. In this context, Venezuela became the focus of retroactive and *ad hoc* U.S. efforts to contain the threat of liberal reversal.

The "Threat" of Venezuela

If Venezuela constitutes a foreign policy problem for the U.S. today, it is very much one of America's own making. The strategies pursued by Democratic and Republican administrations have aimed to discredit and isolate the Venezuelan government. This reflects a limited tolerance for a more plural and intellectually diverse landscape in South America, and a continuity with Cold War concerns of socialist and communist infiltration of the hemisphere. This positioning has minimized the legitimacy of demands for political change in Venezuela, and has failed to engage with the depth of popular alienation and grievance in other South American countries.

Despite intense popular antipathy to neoliberal economic policies that were adopted in Venezuela in 1989, Hugo Chávez did not frame his 1998 presidential campaign around a strident anti-free market, or anti-American discourse.[43] Echoing Anthony Giddens, who was frequently cited by Chávez, the presidential candidate urged a balance between the market and the state, the latter correcting and attending to the distortions and social needs neglected by the former. [44] There was a critique of privatization, but this was focused on the sale of key strategic assets, in particular, the controversial partial privatization of the national oil company PDVSA. Chávez maintained a pro-business rhetoric, both during the election campaign and following his presidential victory; Chávez and his officials continued to reach out to investors including through business promotion tours in the U.S. and Europe.

Hugo Chávez also did not contest the 1998 presidential election on the basis of a "Cuban" or communist ideological agenda. His platform was articulated as a staunchly nationalist program theorized in his publication

Libro Azul: Árbol de las Tres Raíces as the "EBR system", influenced by Ezequiel Zamora (1821-1860) leader of the federalist forces during Venezuela's *Guerra Federal* (1859-1863), Simón Bolívar the hero of the independence movement from Spanish colonialism (1783-1830) and Bolívar's teacher Simón Rodríguez.[45]

The objective of the Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200 (MBR 200) that Chávez founded as a serving military officer in 1982, and the Movimiento V (Quinta) República (Fifth Republic Movement, MVR) established in 1997 to contest the presidency, was to revive Venezuela in order to fulfil the goals of sovereignty, Southern hemisphere integration, social justice, and cultural pride, which were read by Chávez as the frustrated ambitions of Bolívar. Most importantly, the MBR 200 / MVR critique was configured around hostility to the Fourth Republic (1958-1998) and the two centrist political parties AD and Copei, that had established the so-called *Puntofijo* state following democratization in 1958.[46]

Chávez's electoral proposition prioritized constitutional change to overhaul the *Puntofijo* state, establish mechanisms for popular empowerment (in contrast to the restrictive model of two-party dominance), and to institutionalize state responsibility for social and economic provision necessary to overcome the country's profound inequalities. Elected with 56 percent of votes, Chávez moved immediately to convene a constituent assembly, setting in motion a series of referenda and election processes that culminated in the Bolivarian Constitution of 1999, and the political dominance of MVR in executive and legislative branches in the 2000s.[47]

The U.S. eschewed early opportunities to cultivate ties with the new government. Even before Chávez was elected, U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright denied him a U.S. visa on the grounds of MBR 200's role in a coup attempt in 1992 against President Carlos Andrés Pérez, whose administration had negotiated an IMF economic adjustment package.[48] This narrowed U.S. options for managing the perceived, if ill-defined threat that Chávez posed — be this to Venezuela's own flailing and discredited political system, democracy in the wider hemisphere, or to U.S. commercial and energy interests. Around 40 percent of Venezuelan oil exports were shipped to the U.S., and the country maintained a network of oil refineries and gas stations across the U.S. through its CITGO arm.[49]

The visa denial additionally made the US vulnerable to claims of double standards in its diplomacy, as highlighted in a question put to Albright at a press conference in Caracas in June 1998:

> *"Secretary Albright, the United States has denied a visa to Hugo Chavez, the former coup leader here, who's leading the presidential race. Yet, the U.S. has*

> *also granted a visa to Emmanuel Constant, a leader of the paramilitary squads in Haiti who were accused of torturing and murdering several thousand people. He's now living openly in Queens, New York. Also the U.S. has granted visas to Salvadorian military officials who have been accused of covering up the rape and murders of US churchwomen in El Salvador in 1981. How do you explain this?"* [50]

The administration of Bill Clinton did grant the new president a visa on the recommendation of John Maisto, the U.S. ambassador to Caracas[51] Maisto's view, which was echoed in European capitals, was that it was less Chávez's populist narrative and more his policy actions that should determine U.S. engagement. This positioning changed with the accession in 2000 of George W. Bush and as Venezuela's legal framework was revised in line with the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution.[52]

The Axis of Subversion

According to interviews conducted by Anderson, the incoming Bush administration did not have a position on Venezuela.[53] One official explained: "Hell, we don't have a policy in Latin America. The policy is not to have a policy, because we don't know how to rein Chávez in without breaking the crockery. And he sort of carries the crockery closet around with him." But this was a period of intensifying polarization within Venezuelan society, and domestic opponents of Chávez were looking to the U.S. government and high-level contacts for support.[54]

For critics, the polarization following Chávez's election resulted from his flouting of the constitutional order, his government's manipulation of elections and placement of partisan loyalists in the judiciary, military, electoral administration and other high-offices of state. This reflected an authoritarian lurch that risked a domino effect across the region. Land and wealth redistribution programs were claimed to portend a revival of Cuban communism, a fear that brought the U.S. anti-Castro lobby led by congressional representatives, Marco Rubio and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, into alliance with Venezuelan opposition groups. But it was the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. that prompted a more assertive position on Venezuela from the Bush government.[55]

In the context of the new Manichean world order created by the "war on terror", the Bush presidency was receptive to the message that *Chavismo* was a slide into dictatorship and that the new legal framework for the exploitation of Venezuela's hydrocarbons sector threatened U.S. energy security. These concerns were elevated by Chávez's overtures to oil-producing states in the Middle East, a move that aimed to lift the international oil price through

OPEC negotiated production cuts, and by his criticism of the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.[56]

Subsequently, pursuing strategies intended to promote a return to the *status quo ante* in Venezuela, including the funding of opposition groups through the Department of State and National Endowment for Democracy (NED), receiving opposition leaders in Washington DC and condoning a coup attempt against Chávez in April 2002, the Bush administration identified with actors and interests that had limited popular support in Venezuela.[57] This positioned Chávez to tap a deep seam of nationalist and anti-American sentiment not only in Venezuela, but across the wider South American region.

U.S. promotion and support of opposition groups were also counter-productive in further disconnecting Venezuela's traditional political parties from the electorate, with financial disbursements enabling opponents of the Chávez government to short-circuit the arduous but necessary process of reconnecting with the grassroots and developing party platforms and policy proposals that responded to popular concerns.[58] By contrast, U.S. partiality and reluctance to engage with the Venezuelan government served to radicalize Chávez — specifically after the 2002 coup attempt. Policies were introduced to accelerate economic redistribution, and Chávez adopted a more aggressive class narrative to consolidate the government's support among the poor.[59]

The assumption of a more bellicose position during the Bush presidency, placed the U.S. on the outside of major political, economic, and geostrategic shifts that conversely boosted President Chávez. Three are significant here. Firstly, left of centre governments were elected across the region in what was termed "the Pink Tide." Starting in Brazil with the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva January 2003, this political shift extended to Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Ecuador. This reversed U.S. led efforts to isolate Venezuela, while catalysing new regional alliances cohering around opposition to neoliberalism, the IMF and the dominance of the U.S.[60]

Pink unity translated into a more assertive stance against U.S. policy in the region. U.S. ambitions to extend NAFTA to a wider Free Trade Area of the Americas were blocked, and there was pushback on the presence of U.S. military and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) bases and operations.[61] These government alliances worked proactively to establish a new regional architecture that excluded the U.S., and which was intended to serve as an alternative to the OAS, which was criticised as a tool of U.S. imperialism.

New regional groupings that included the *Alianza Bolivariana para los*

Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) initially constituted by Venezuela and Cuba in 2004, the 12 member state *Unión de Naciones Suramericanas*, (UNASUR Union of South American Nations) founded in 2008, and the 33 member state *Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños* (CELAC Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) established in 2010, aimed to institutionalize a new continental unity and promote regional political and economic integration on the basis of complementarities, resource interdependence and social solidarity.[62]

The strong surge in international oil prices in the mid-2000s was a second factor in the weakening of the U.S. position. It enabled Venezuela to assume a central role in regional integration initiatives, and to extend economic co-operation agreements to Caribbean and Central American countries through projects such as Petrocaribe.[63] This project supplied Venezuelan crude exports on preferential payment terms to 17 countries in exchange for imports of goods, services and in the case of Cuba, medical personnel. On the domestic level, the oil price increase positioned the Venezuelan government to roll out an expansive raft of social welfare initiatives or "missions" in education, health, housing, employment, and microcredits. These programs served to reduce poverty, extreme poverty and social immobility in Venezuela, in turn cementing popular loyalty and support for Chávez.[64]

The Bush administration maintained a critical stance during this period of intense cultural and nationalist reawakening in South America. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, criticised Chávez as a negative force in the region during her 2005 confirmation hearing, indicating limited openings for dialogue.[65] There was no meaningful engagement on issues of poverty, inequality, and perceptions of U.S. imperialism that had fuelled the Pink Tide. Anti-communist narratives, first raised by the Venezuelan opposition, were resurrected by State Department officials who had previously served during the Cold War pushback against the left in South and Central America in the 1970s and 1980s. Otto Reich, the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela during the presidency of Ronald Reagan and Roger Noriega, his successor as Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs claimed that the Pink Tide represented an "axis of subversion", while academics and media commentators framed a "good" and "bad" left in symmetry to the "for us" or "against us" polarity of the war on terror.[66]

A third area in which the U.S. was diplomatically and politically negligent relates to the expansion of Russian, and particularly Chinese investment and lending in South America. As the U.S. focused on the Middle East, China

rapidly expanded trade relations with South America, with the value of trade flows between South America and China increasing from $10 billion in 2000 to $270 billion by 2012.[67] The growing multipolarity of the world order reconfigured the foreign relations of South American countries, reducing dependence on, and consequently the leverage of, the U.S.

Denouncement

Leaked e-mails and diplomatic cables of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, demonstrate that the government of President Barack Obama concurred with the Bush administration's strategy of isolating Venezuela. Diplomatic overtures from Chávez were pushed back, with ongoing hostility contributing to the suspension of diplomatic ties between the two countries. There was a move away from the Cold War rhetoric and unilateralism of the Bush presidency: Obama pursued political rapprochement with Cuba, a move read by Venezuela as a divide and rule strategy, and the US sought to engage the OAS as the regional interlocutor with the Chávez administration.[68]

There was continuity with the strategy of financing, meeting with and endorsing the Venezuelan opposition movement, but where Bush officials had supported the opposition's strategy of boycotting election processes, there was a push for a more participatory and unified approach.[69] The Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD) alliance made important gains in the 2010 National Assembly election, eliminating the PSUV's 2005 supermajority in the legislature, and favorably positioning the opposition for the critical presidential elections in 2013, following the death of Chávez from cancer.[70] In the legislative assembly elections held in 2015, the MUD won a majority, ending the electoral hegemony of *Chavismo*.[71]

The factors that enabled Chávez to resist isolation dissipated for his successor Nicolás Maduro who won power by a wafer-thin 1.5 percent of the vote.[72] The Pink Tide receded with right-wing election victories and impeachment proceedings that removed presidential allies from power. The oil price fell to a third of the mid-2000s boom, making social welfare commitments and regional cooperation models unsustainable.[73] Exchange and price controls initially introduced to stabilize the economy after the 2002 coup attempt against Chávez were still in place, contributing to distortions in the macro-economy, inflation, and a rampant dollar black market.[74]

There were also other problematic legacies. Corruption and bureaucratization were as endemic in the Fifth Republic as they had been in the Fourth; and violent crime, homicide, and insecurity had reached record high-levels following an almost annual turnover of officials in the Justice

and Interior ministries.[75] Rather than liberalizing or reversing the policy course, the Maduro years have seen a deepening of economic controls and constitutional manipulations to bypass the National Assembly. This included Maduro's convening of a new, pro-government and sovereign National Constituent Assembly in July 2016.

At these moments of weakness for the government, radical opposition factions that led the election boycott strategies of the 2000s, have sought to accelerate regime demise. Strategies of violent street protest in 2014 and 2017 failed to galvanize popular support and were suppressed by the security sector.[76] This in turn positioned the Obama presidency - and the anti-Cuba lobby in Congress and Senate, to reframe the critique of Venezuela around a human rights discourse — a narrative that has allowed alliance building with Canada, the EU and the OAS to address the Venezuela "problem".

In 2014, on the initiation of Marco Rubio, the U.S. Congress passed legislation to freeze the assets and ban visas for Venezuelan officials accused of human rights violations. Sanctions against seven officials were introduced in 2015, alongside an executive order that determined Venezuela an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."[77] The US sanctions on financial transactions introduced in 2017 have sharply eroded the Maduro government's room for maneuver and its ability to sustain an artificial economy. Importantly though, despite sanctions the Maduro government remains in power. With the accession of Donald Trump, there is the temptation, and proclivity, for a final push to remove the Maduro government from power. This repositioning by the U.S. has served to bolster those factions of the Venezuelan opposition that reject any form of compromise with Bolivarianism, undermining the viability of May's presidential contest as a mechanism for pacific regime change.

Examined over the *longue durée,* it can be argued that U.S. strategy defeated the Bolivarian Revolution by forcing Venezuela towards a series of grave miscalculations, overextending the state economically and increasing dependence on oil revenues. But the legacy of the 2000s, of the Chávez government and the Pink Tide more broadly, is of a new pluralism and a new political consciousness. In this context, a reverse to US unilateralism, dominance in inter-American relations and support to right-wing governments in the region will be neither legitimate nor sustainable. It also risks putting the US on a conflictual footing with other global powers whose interests must be accommodated.

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Kurdish Disunity In Historical Perspective

by Michael M. Gunter

Kurdish Identity, Disunity, and the Future of Kurdistan

Kurdish nationalism is challenged not only by the more developed counter-nationalisms of the states in which the Kurds live (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria) but also by the problem of Kurdish disunity and infighting. The seventeenth-century Kurdish poet Ahmad-i Khani, for example, lamented in *Mem u Zin* (the Kurdish national epic): "If only there were harmony among us, if we were to obey a single one of us, he would reduce to vassalage Turks, Arabs, and Persians, all of them. We would perfect our religion, our state, and would educate ourselves in learning and wisdom."[1] A century ago the Wigrams (Christian missionaries who chronicled their travels through Kurdistan) concluded that although the Kurds "are a very ancient people," they 'have no national cohesion," and "a 'United Kurdistan' is a...Utopian conception."[2] Jonathan Randal (the then senior foreign correspondent of the *Washington Post*) jocularly "suspect[ed] a rogue chromosome in Kurdish genetics causes...fissiparous tendencies."[3]

Kurdish disunity was on exhibit for all to witness yet again during the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq's advisory referendum held on September 25, 2017. Its disastrous outcome led to the KRG losing half of its territory as well as access to its two modern international airports in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah, among other losses. In the first place, it should be noted that too often the Kurds and others discuss independence as if it were the end of a process, rather than the beginning. Thus, it would be invaluable to suggest the likely problems that would have been associated with KRG independence.[4] In the second place, it should be clear that we are talking about sequenced or cascading independence for the KRG only, not some type of pan-Kurdish state that would also include the Kurdish portions of Turkey, Syria, and Iran.

Although many Kurds dream of a pan-Kurdish state, one is highly unlikely given the vastly different stages of Kurdish nationalist development in each state the Kurds inhabit. Thus, at least until the disastrous failed

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advisory referendum on independence, the Kurds in Iraq seemed to be the ones most likely to become independent soon, followed by those in Syria. Given the continuing strength of Turkey and Iran as viable states, the Kurds in these two countries were much less likely to follow suit, although those in Turkey were more likely to achieve some type of ethnic rights.

Thus, the question arose, what would be the relationship between an independent KRG and the other constituent parts of Kurdistan still part of Syria, Turkey, and Iran? Would the KRG make irredentist claims on these other Kurdish areas? Would the KRG offer automatic citizenship for all Kurds, as Israel does for the Jewish Diaspora? Would an independent KRG allow dual citizenship for Kurds living in other states? In addition, when Massoud Barzani finally did step down from the extraordinary and technically illegal extension of his presidential term in the KRG following the failed referendum on independence and Baghdad's reclaiming of Kirkuk, he continued as the president of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), one of the two main political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus, any new president or KRG leader would have less real power than the life-long president of the KDP. What kind of precedent would this constitute, and more importantly, what would this mean for the constitutional development of a successful, independent KRG?

What about other likely legal problems involving separate visa regimes and financial laws? How would an independent KRG organize its economy? Abdullah Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) still seems a staunch advocate of socialism (Marxism), while the KRG pursues a capitalist route. Would the gas-rich KRG share its oil resources with the gas-poor Kurds living in Turkey? In other words, would KRG oil be a pan-Kurdish resource or a localized one? Similar problems existed among the Arab states and indeed were used by Saddam Hussein as a justification for invading Kuwait in 1990.[5] Unfortunately, too many Kurdish officials have long seemed to put personal wealth accumulation ahead of pan-Kurdish munificence. On the other hand, rentier states dependent on oil resources provide an unstable foundation for solid economic development, as witnessed by the KRG's current economic problems.

In addition, what kind of economic infrastructure would an independent KRG have? At the present time, a banking infrastructure is non-existent, and ATMs remain few, forcing many people to carry their life savings around in their pockets or keep them stashed at home.[6] The KRG is largely a cash economy, lacking a long-term sophisticated monetary policy, fiscal discipline, and sufficient reserves. Any attempt at creating a KRG currency would probably collapse. A possible compromise might be to create a

symbolic currency pegged to the U.S. dollar or euro. A precedent for this already exists in Liberia, Panama, and East Timor, which use the U.S. dollar. Furthermore, what about the large-scale crony capitalism and corruption prevalent today in the KRG? And in Turkey, what would be done with the Village Guards who still provide the income for some 50,000 Kurds and their families?

Early in 2016, the World Bank Group released a 219-page economic report on the KRG, proposing reform options for fiscal adjustment and the diversification of the economy. The report addressed the KRG's high dependency on the oil sector, the excessive role of the public sector in the economy, dependency on imports, weaknesses in the financial system, and dependency on a cash economy. According to the report, economic diversification could plausibly be affected by taking advantage of land and water resources, by greatly expanding the private sector through available human resources and entrepreneurial spirit, by exploiting the advantageous geographic location through the east-west trade routes between highly productive industrialized economies, and by taking advantage of foreign expertise. A World Bank study carried out in conjunction with the KRG ministry of planning, estimated KRG's stabilization needs at $1.4 billion in 2015.[7]

What about water resources? An independent Kurdistan in Turkey would inherit a large proportion of that state's fresh water supply and its ability to generate hydroelectric power, which, of course, is an important reason why Turkey continues to oppose Kurdish independence. The KRG and Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), on the other hand, obtain their fresh water supplies from upstream Turkey and, on this point at least, are thus in a potentially much less advantageous position than their Kurdish brethren in Turkey. A lesser, but still important symbolic problem involves choosing a flag and national anthem. Currently, many Kurds do share "Ey Raqip" (Hey Enemy) as a common anthem.

Shortly before the new Trump administration came to office on January 20, 2017, the Atlantic Council, a prominent think tank in Washington, issued a detailed report chaired by former Ambassador Ryan Crocker calling for the KRG to remain part of Iraq in the interests of future peace and stability.[8] Faced with the KRG advisory referendum on independence, the Trump administration opted to support this recommendation for all the reasons detailed above and more. Trump's Secretary of State Rex Tillerson declared: "The United States does not recognize the Kurdistan Regional Government's unilateral referendum...The vote and the results lack legitimacy, and we continue to support a united, federal, democratic and prosperous Iraq.[9]

Among the multitude of reasons for its position, the Trump administration specifically listed: maintaining unity in the fight against ISIS; shoring up the seemingly fragile Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi ahead of upcoming elections early in 2018; the KRG overreach by including the disputed oil-rich Kirkuk in the referendum; the KRG failure to postpone the referendum in exchange for promised U.S. support in negotiations with Baghdad; and the strong opposition of the neighbouring, regional states of Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. Israel alone supported the referendum, which was understandably yet another negative, among others.[10]

After the Iraqi forces retook Kirkuk with considerable Iranian aid on October 16, 2017, a U.S. Pentagon spokesman claimed that U.S. commanders in the region were actively trying to mediate between the two sides in the city, but did not allude to the ironic situation that both the U.S. and Iran were on the same side. The U.S. embassy in Baghdad asserted that: "We support the peaceful reassertion of federal authority, consistent with the Iraqi constitution, in all disputed areas," while Trump himself said: "We don't like the fact that they are clashing, but we're not taking sides."[11]

H.R. McMaster, Trump's national security advisor, ambiguously affirmed that the president's "sentiments are with both — with the Kurdish people and with the Iraqi people,"[12] and then elaborated that, "what we need to do though, is we have to work to mediate this conflict in a way that allows our Kurdish friends to enjoy the safety, security, and prosperity they built over so many years and not regress from that."[13] Six weeks later, McMaster reiterated that bringing Baghdad and Erbil together "is a big priority for President Trump and for Secretary Tillerson and the whole [Trump] team."[14] In a telephone call between Rex Tillerson and Nechirvan Barzani — the KRG prime minister and now highest-ranking KRG official following his uncle Massoud Barzani's resignation as president a month earlier — Trump's secretary of state "expressed his support for the democratic process...and hoped that the Kurdistan Regional Government will overcome the current challenges in the Region, for which he expressed his country's support."[15] The Trump administration was trying to square the circle with two of its allies who were strongly at odds with each other.

However, in the end, probably the most important reason for the referendum disaster was KRG disunity. KRG President Massoud Barzani's historic Iraqi Kurdish enemy, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), saw the referendum as mainly a ploy by Barzani to maintain his power at their expense, while both the Gorran Movement and Kurdistan Islamist Group (Komal) also opposed the referendum. Thus, when Baghdad sent its newly empowered forces to retake Kirkuk with considerable Iranian support on

October 16, 2017, the Kurds could not agree on defending their position and simply melted away. As Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the KRG representative in Washington, concluded: "Disunity is definitely our Achilles heel. Kurdish disunity is our worst enemy. Whatever we think of our opponents and detractors, our disunity is our worst enemy."[16]

To understand better the continuing problem of Kurdish disunity, and how the seemingly well-positioned KRG partially collapsed so quickly following its referendum on independence, this article will seek to analyze Kurdish disunity in a historical perspective. In particular, among several other prominent examples of Kurdish Disunity that occurred in the past. It will analyze, as a historical case study, the outbreak of violence in September 2000 and again in December 2000 between two groups which seemingly had been on rather good terms, Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Abdullah (Apo) Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The Kurds are often said to be the largest nation on earth without its own independent state, and since they have become increasingly important in the recent struggles in the geo-strategically important Middle East involving ISIS, the civil war in Syria, and many others, such an analysis promises to be useful.[17]

Background on Enduring Disunity

Continuing primordial allegiances to tribes (*ashiret*) and other similar units (*tayfe, tire*), tribal leaders (*agha*), and religious leaders (*shaikh*) contribute to Kurdish disunity and fracture nascent Kurdish nationalism.[18] At times, the modern Kurdish parties seem to function as neo-tribal confederations complete with their traditional spirit of disunity and infighting. Political and linguistic differences also promote disunity: Kurdistan is politically divided among four different states that frequently try to control Kurdish unrest by divide-and-rule tactics. Depending on how one counts them, there also are four different Kurdish languages: Kurmanji, Sorani, Zaza (Dimili), and Gurani, as well as numerous other dialects. The Kurds prefer to call these languages dialects so as not to call attention to their linguistic disunity.[19]

During the Iraqi Kurdish uprising of the 1960s, infighting between the Mulla Mustafa Barzani and the Ibrahim Ahmad-Jalal Talabani factions sometimes seemed to upstage their very struggle against Baghdad. Their animosity helped lead to Barzani's characterization of Talabani as an "agent for everybody," and Talabani's retort that Barzani was "tribal, feudal, and reactionary." [2021] After Mulla Mustafa Barzani's final defeat in 1975, this on-

again, off-again Iraqi Kurdish disunity continued between Barzani's son, Massoud Barzani and his Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The more conservative KDP was associated with the Kurmanji- or Bahdinani-speaking areas of the mountainous northwest, while the leftist-inclined PUK prevailed in the more cultured, Sorani-speaking areas of the southeast.

In October 1992, however, the then-allied KDP and PUK (in cooperation with Turkey) attacked Abdullah (Apo) Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a group of Turkish Kurds sheltering in Iraqi Kurdistan from where they could raid into Turkey. Barzani and Talabani declared that the PKK was challenging the very existence of their fragile de-facto state that had been created after the defeat of Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War: "Ocalan's men acted as if they were the authorities and...threatened to expel the government and parliament from Irbil [the capital of the de facto Iraqi Kurdish state]."[22] Ocalan, on the other hand, accused both Barzani and Talabani "of trying to stab the PKK in the back by cooperating with Turkey," and concluded that "these two leaders are now our enemies."[23]

At the end of October 1992, the Kurdish infighting supposedly forced the PKK to surrender some of its forces to the PUK, whose territory — unlike that of the KDP — did not border Turkey. Soon many Turkish commentators began to accuse Talabani of having provided a new base and safehouse for the PKK in the Zaleh camp northeast of the PUK's stronghold of Sulaymaniyah. The situation helped lead to a détente in PKK-PUK relations, while those between the PKK and KDP remained hostile. Indeed, in March 1993, Talabani met Ocalan in the PKK's stronghold in Syria and helped to broker a brief, unilateral cease-fire between the PKK and Turkey.[24] In May 1994, the PUK and the KDP fell into an intermittent civil war that cost some 3,000 lives; tacitly involved Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq; and lasted until a cease-fire was finally reached through mediation by the United States in September 1998. The KDP-PUK fighting and resulting anarchy created new opportunities for the PKK to establish bases in Barzani's territory that bordered Turkey. Increasingly, therefore, the KDP looked toward Turkey to help it control and eliminate these PKK bases, while the PUK began to view the PKK as a second front against the KDP, its new enemy. For its part, Iran tended to support the PUK as a counterweight against further Turkish influence in northern Iraq.[25]

In August 1995, the PKK suddenly attacked the KDP, claiming that as part of a settlement trying to end the KDP-PUK fighting, Barzani's party had promised to police its border with Turkey to prevent PKK infiltration. The PKK explained that the KDP had "to be wiped out because it was backing

Turkey's bid to crush PKK rebels."[26] In a lengthy interview, the PKK leader Ocalan termed Barzani's *peshmergas* (guerrillas) "primitive nationalist forces" who "have for 40 years slaughtered Kurdish patriotic forces for their own narrow tribal interests and in league with the Turkish intelligence services." By attacking the KDP now, the PKK "will play a significant role in putting an end to this" and "open the way for the people of south [Iraqi] Kurdistan to move towards a federation."[27] Ocalan added, "we do not expect the PUK to oppose these developments very much." Barzani retorted by reminding Ocalan that in the 1980s the KDP had given the PKK shelter and assistance in its struggle against Turkey. The KDP leader declared that "it is high treason to aim weapons at the legitimate Kurdish administration in the region, the KDP,"[28] and "confirmed that Ocalan is the enemy of Kurds."[29]

In August 1996, the Iraqi Kurdish civil war between the KDP and the PUK suddenly escalated with a PUK offensive that Barzani claimed was supported by Iran, a charge Talabani denied.[3031] An increasingly desperate Barzani then did the unthinkable and turned to Saddam Hussein for help.[32] The KDP leader rationalized his action as necessary to preserve Iraqi territorial integrity, which was supposedly being threatened by Iranian support for the PUK. Saddam Hussein, of course, obliged, and a joint Iraqi-KDP strike quickly forced the PUK out of Irbil and into a headlong retreat to the Iranian border. Barzani's apparent victory, however, was soon reversed when Talabani's forces launched a successful counterattack that retook much of his lost territory in October 1996. A tenuous cease-fire followed.[33]

The so-called Ankara peace process initiated by the United States, Britain, and Turkey at the end of October 1996 sought to extend the cease-fire, in part, by creating a peace monitoring force of some supposedly neutral 200 Turkomen and Assyrians (living as minorities in Iraqi Kurdistan). Given the unresolved KDP-PUK power struggle and the suspicion that Turkey was actually seeking to use the peace monitoring force to further interfere in the region's affairs and possibly even to establish a Turkomen client state there, the Ankara peace process proved unsuccessful.[34]

In May 1997, some 50,000 Turkish troops entered northern Iraq in another attempt to destroy the PKK units based there and to shore up the KDP forces Turkey hoped would help prevent future PKK attacks upon Turkey from the region. This time, however, the Turks did not fully withdraw after completing their mission, but maintained a military presence that amounted to an unofficial security zone. Barzani explained: "The PKK has behaved as an alternative authority and has denied the KDP the right to exercise its authority in the border areas inside Iraqi Kurdistan...Therefore, we would not feel sorry for their removal by whatever force."[35] Talabani

concluded, however: "Turkey has discarded its neutral role and is now an ally of Barzani," while the PKK leader Ocalan threatened that the KDP would "be annihilated should you continue with your collaboration. Give up your dirty alliance [with Turkey] at once." [3637]

In October 1997, some of the heaviest fighting of the entire KDP-PUK civil war broke out as hundreds were killed and thousands displaced. After the PUK made significant initial gains, the Turks, who had been carrying out military operations against the PKK in the region again, intervened heavily on the side of the KDP. Turkey bombed the areas controlled by the PUK along the strategic Hamilton Road northeast of Irbil and accused the PUK of actively cooperating with the PKK.[38] Barham Salih, then PUK spokesman in the United States and later prime minister of the PUK administration in Sulaymaniyah, renewed the charge that "the Turks have shifted from being a sponsor of the [Ankara] peace process to being a party to the conflict."[39] Salih also claimed that Turkey did not want peace between the KDP and the PUK because it would "help consolidate a viable Kurdish self-government in Iraq, that some in Turkey view with alarm and [as] detrimental to their own Kurdish community." Accordingly, with Turkish aid, the KDP reasserted control over all the territory it had just lost, and another cease-fire developed.[40]

PKK-PUK Conflict

Given this background of PKK-PUK cooperation, Iranian support for the PUK, and the resulting Turkish enmity for the PUK; it was particularly ironic that, at the partial behest and support of Turkey, the PUK and PKK fell into a bloody conflict in September 2000 and again in December 2000. The roots of this chapter in the history of Kurdish disunity and infighting stemmed from Turkey's capture of the PKK's leader Ocalan in 1999 and the PKK's resulting withdrawal to areas in northern Iraq under PUK administration. Based in Northern Iraq, the PUK perceived the PKK forces to be a threat to the PUK's base of operations.[41] The KDP remained neutral in this particular incidence of intramural conflict. This was a turnaround from less than two years earlier, when Turkey was aiding the KDP in its struggle against the PUK and also continuously accusing the PUK of supporting the PKK, while the KDP was assisting the Turkish army in its cross-border operations against the PKK.

The Washington Accord (or process) Barzani and Talabani reached in September 1998 to halt their infighting obligated both parties to prevent

the PKK from using northern Iraq as a base to attack Turkey. The Iraqi Kurds agreed because they needed Turkish acquiescence for their own local administration. Not only did Turkey have the military power to intervene regularly in the area, but also trade over the Turkish border was a prerequisite for the economic survival of the Iraqi Kurds. As Turkey's NATO ally, the United States supported the Turkish position, especially against the PKK. In addition, of course, as the KDP-PUK fighting against the PKK in October 1992 illustrated, PKK activities in northern Iraq potentially challenged the very position of the Iraqi Kurds. The PKK, of course, did not see it this way, arguing that *all* Kurds should be allowed access *anywhere* in Kurdistan. "Despite our party's intensive efforts to bring about national unity, peace, and democracy, the KDP and PUK refrain from making such efforts. They reject unity and peace and are tricked by foreign powers."[42]

At the behest of their imprisoned leader Ocalan and to demonstrate their goodwill in calling for a cease-fire with Turkey that also hopefully would save Ocalan's life, the PKK began to withdraw most of its forces from southeastern Turkey in September 1999. After entrenching some 3-5,000 fighters in PUK territory at the northern end of the Qandil Mountains bordering the Iraqi-Iranian frontier, the PKK announced the formation of a local administration and began to requisition supplies from the locals. The situation even allowed the PKK potentially to threaten the nearby cities of Ranyia and Qalat Diza which lie along the road to the PUK capital, Sulaymaniyah.

Returning from talks in Washington, Talabani stopped in Ankara on July 25, 2000, and was prominently received by Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and the military leaders.[43] Given their past tendentious relations, it was the first time the PUK leader had visited the Turkish capital in a year and a half. The mutually perceived PKK threat had changed the situation. Turkey wanted to prevent what it termed "the politicization of separatism" by totally eliminating the PKK before it could transform itself into a civilian force by using Turkey's EU candidacy and its requirements for greater democracy to pull political victory out of the jaws of its military defeat. Ankara also wanted to continue to foment Kurdish divisions that would hopefully prevent a Kurdish state from materializing in northern Iraq. Once the PKK was finished, Turkey would then encourage renewed PUK-KDP fighting that would either prevent the creation of an Iraqi Kurdish state or even facilitate Saddam Hussein's reassertion of control. Turkey called this policy of instigating the problem of Kurdish disunity and infighting, "letting dogs kill dogs."[44]

For its part, the PUK needed Turkish support to eliminate the PKK threat. Talabani also hoped to win Turkish approval to open a special border

corridor between his territory and Turkey so the PUK could begin enjoying the lucrative trade benefits long monopolized by the KDP. The United States encouraged this PUK demarche as a way of weaning Talabani from his longtime dependence on Iran. To the satisfaction of their Turkish hosts, PUK officials claimed they had been preparing buffer zones to prevent the PKK from using PUK-controlled areas as a base for attacks on Turkey.[45] Talabani sought further to win Turkish support by claiming that since the Washington process was not functioning, the Ankara process needed to be revived.[46] Although in truth there seemed to be little to choose from between the two processes, and indeed both the United States and Turkey were involved in both processes, the very term *Ankara process* implied greater sensitivity to Turkish concerns, such as the position of the Turkomen in northern Iraq.

At the same time, Turkish relations with the KDP were cooling because Ankara objected to the KDP assuming state-like airs, with officials bearing titles such as prime minister and minister, as well as prominently displaying a Kurdish flag in conspicuous places under its authority. In addition, an Iraqi Turkomen party linked to Turkey was experiencing increasing difficulties with the KDP and was seeking to form an armed militia. Two Turkomen leaders in the KDP area had recently been killed during sporadic armed attacks, supposedly by KDP elements. In contrast, during his visit to Ankara, Talabani stressed that the Turkomen were another national entity in Iraq after the Arabs and Kurds, and that they should have the same democratic rights as all other Iraqi citizens. The PUK leader also had lunch with Turkomen representatives in the Turkish capital.[47]

On September 14, 2000 — just six weeks after Talabani's visit to Ankara — fighting broke out between the PUK and PKK when the former apparently launched unsuccessful assaults in an attempt to prevent the latter from expanding its positions. Since reporters were not allowed into the area, however, reports were sketchy and contradictory. As many as 160 PUK fighters were killed, 250 wounded, and still, others captured before a tenuous cease-fire was declared on October 4, 2000.[48] Further fighting broke out on December 3, 2000, and lasted for approximately one week. Although specific figures were not available, one source indicated that possibly 150 PKK fighters had been killed, while as many as 200 PUK soldiers had also died. [4950] Talabani himself asserted that a "big number" of people had died during the PKK-PUK clashes.[51] PKK reports claimed that Turkey had provided up to $80 million in aid to the PUK during the first round of fighting and another $15 million during the second, figures which the PUK denied.[5253]

Further PKK reports asserted that Turkey had deployed some 5,000 troops near the contested area and dozens of armored vehicles, tanks, and

personnel carriers in support of the PUK.[54] The Turkish prime minister, Bulent Ecevit, retorted that his country had only given "technical and economic assistance" to Talabani's party, while a Turkish foreign ministry official owned that Talabani "is putting up a very serious struggle against the PKK."[55]

In a communiqué on the fighting, the PUK asserted that "the PKK leadership commits the greatest and dirtiest national betrayal in the Kurdish political history,"[56] with "the intention of imposing itself on the Kurdistan regional government." In an ironic reference to Ocalan's capture and offers to cooperate with Turkey, the PUK communiqué referred to the PKK leader as "the PKK defeated and kneeled down leader Abdullah Ocalan" who was pursuing "criminal policies, aggression and provocation," with "the assistance of the occupiers of Kurdistan."[57]

Duran Kalkan, a member of the PKK presidential council that had been created after Ocalan's capture in February 1999, retorted that "the PUK has become a pawn of the international conspiracy to liquidate the PKK."[58] Murat Karayilan, another member of the PKK's presidential council, added that although Turkish troops had entered Iraqi Kurdistan before, "what was happening this time was different...[and] was the first time that the TSK [Turkish military] had entered the Soran region....The aim is to render ineffective Kurdish institutionalization in this region and take it under their own control."[59] A manifesto issued by the PKK presidential council referred to the "collaborationist politics of the feudal tribes," and concluded that "a close relationship with external powers, not only offers no solution, but on the contrary leads to constant intra-Kurdish quarrels."[60]

The KDP denied reputed PUK claims that the Barzani-led group was supporting the PKK, and reminded its listeners what "the PUK leadership did throughout the last decade when it provided shelter for, supported, and encouraged the PKK gangs to fight the KDP."[61] The KDP then concluded that although the PKK "presence and activities in Iraqi Kurdistan constitute a threat to the region's security and stability," the "PUK leadership in its current bloody conflict with the PKK is only paying for its fatal political mistakes and it is reaping what it had sown." KDP sources also asserted that although Turkey was trying to convince the KDP to join the PUK in the fight against the PKK, "at least for now, they did not want to fight against the PKK."[62]

On January 9, 2001, Talabani again visited Ankara for further high-level talks with Ecevit and other Turkish officials, declaring: "We want to bolster our co-operation with Turkey," and "we will oblige [the PKK] by all means to leave our area." [6364] Turkish authorities replied that "we neglected

Talabani for a long time. Now we feel the PUK is doing an excellent job...in the struggle against the terrorist PKK group in northern Iraq and deserves Turkey's support."[65] Ecevit went so far as to claim that "the real struggle in the region is between the PUK and the PKK."[66]

Iraqi Role

The PUK also claimed that the Iraqi military helped to transport PKK fighters sheltered under Baghdad's protection to the battlefield.[67] "The Iraqi regime, which hosts thousands of PKK fighters close to Kurdish-controlled areas, rushed many of them to the front in army trucks and personnel carriers."[68] The Iraqi motive was to weaken the PUK and facilitate eventual Iraqi reintegration of Iraqi Kurdistan. Supposedly there were three PKK bases contained within Iraqi military bases in Shekhan, Ayen Zala, and near Makhmor.[69] Iraq also remained extremely angry with Turkey for its continuing cross-border raids into Iraq in pursuit of the PKK.[70]

Covert Iraqi support for the PKK was nothing new. Despite its overt cooperation with Turkey during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), some Turkish officials charged that at the same time Iraq secretly had supplied weapons to the PKK in return for information about the KDP. One Turkish officer explained: "The Iraqi regime has an interest in the border region where they cannot enter because of Barzani forces."[71] He added that the Iraqis "give weapons and ammunition to the PKK in order to receive information on activities of Iraqi Kurds. The PKK, while on the one hand received support from those [Iraqi] Kurds, on the other sells them out for its own survival."

After Saddam Hussein's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, Turkish officials charged that "Ocalan and Saddam Hussain met in al-Mawsil [Mosul] some time ago and decided to cooperate."[72] "The Iraqi government is arming and supplying the Kurdish separatist movement...in retaliation for Turkey's close cooperation with allied forces during the Gulf War."[73] Talabani himself agreed that the PKK "is cooperating with Saddam Hussein's administration."[74] The joint KDP-PUK Kurdistan regional administration also charged in 1992 that "the PKK is collaborating with Iraqi officials," adding that "the Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian governments help the PKK against the Iraqi Kurdish movement ...because they do not want our parliamentary and governmental experiment to be successful."[75] In June 1992, a Turkish source claimed that Saddam Hussein, "has received Abdullah Ocalan...with open arms after the latter was evicted from al-Biqa [the Bekka Valley] by Syria."[76] Six years later, after Syria had evicted Ocalan himself as well as his fighters from its territory, the PKK had an even greater rationale for seeking sanctuary from Baghdad.

Iranian Role

Having supported both the PUK and the PKK in the past, Iran now played an uncertain role as the two Kurdish parties fell into their internecine infighting in September 2000. Nizamettin Tas, a member of the PKK's presidential council, charged that Iran was supporting the PUK in its current fight against the PKK in an attempt to force the PKK back into Turkey, where it would renew violence and chaos in Iran's regional rival.[77] Others argued that Iran was supporting the PKK because it disapproved of the PUK's newly established cooperation with Turkey.[78] During his visit to Ankara in January 2001, Turkish sources declared that they "appreciate[d] the fact that Talabani [was] under intensive pressure from Iraq and Iran for his cooperation with Turkey."[79] Immediately after Talabani's return home, a high-ranking Iranian delegation visited the PUK leader for discussions about the talks he had just held in Turkey. Clearly, Iran was concerned with the situation.[80]

Iran had long been dismayed over the implications to its own security involved in the continuing Turkish military interventions into northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK. This concern deepened in 1995 when Turkey's president, Suleyman Demirel, briefly proposed a change in Turkey's border with Iraq in favor of Turkey, a proposal that potentially raised Turkey's irredentist claim to northern Iraq from the 1920s.[81] The renewal of heavy KDP-PUK fighting in August 1996, which saw Turkey and Iran support opposing sides, exacerbated these tensions. An adviser to Iran's president denounced "the covetous eyes of the Ankara statesmen, which are focused on the oil resources in northern Iraq."[82]

Accordingly, Iran also condemned the so-called Ankara peace process to end the KDP-PUK fighting (see above), as an attempt by Turkey's U.S. ally to establish "a spying base and springboard to carry out its malicious schemes in the region"[83] and, in a reference to Turkey's new alliance with Israel, "a concerted effort [by] the US and the Zionist regime...to create another Israel in the Kurdish areas."[84] The PKK saw the joint effort of the United States and Turkey that established a peace monitoring force of local Turkomen as a Turkish attempt "to create another Cyprus in the region"[85] and a Turkish "occupationist force."[86] In these characterizations, the PKK was clearly espousing a position similar to that held by Iran.

The May 1997 Turkish military intervention into Iraqi Kurdistan in pursuit of the PKK quickly led to yet a new low in Turkish-Iranian relations. Iran denounced the Turkish action "as not only a violation of all international laws but [to] the sovereign rights and territorial integrity of the

Iraqi Muslim nation."[87] Turkey also accused Iran of not only supplying bases, transportation, medicines, hospitals, and uniforms for the PKK but also of supplying S-7 heat-seeking missiles that the PKK, in an unprecedented action, used to down two Turkish helicopters over northern Iraq.[88] Thus, when the PUK and the PKK fell out with one another in the fall of 2000, their infighting also involved an old and continuing Turkish-Iranian rivalry for influence in the region.

Conclusion

The above analysis of Kurdish disunity and infighting through a historical perspective gives useful background to current examples and vividly illustrates the famous French saying that the more it changes, the more it stays the same. However, the continuing problems of Kurdish disunity and the Kurds' stunted sense of nationalism are not unique. In his iconoclastic analysis of the development of French nationalism, for example, Eugen Weber documented how most rural and village inhabitants of France did not think of themselves as members of the French nation as late as 1870 or even up to the eve of World War I. [89] As much as 25 percent of the population could not even speak French, while half the people considered it a foreign language. Indeed, even today, the *langue d'oc* survives as Provencal with some ten million speakers in southern France. The *langue d'oil* of the northern Paris region gradually developed into modern French. Related dialects of each still persist as patois in some rural areas.

Despite the conventional view that the French were among the oldest nations in Europe, much of her population had yet to be truly integrated well into the nineteenth century. With the partial exception of the areas north and east of Paris, the typical French village remained physically, politically, and culturally isolated. As one nineteenth-century French observer put it: "Every valley is still a little world that differs from the neighboring world as Mercury does from Uranus. Every village is a clan, a sort of state with its own patriotism."[90] To the majority of its inhabitants, the Jacobin model of a centralized, monolingual French nation-state remained a dream.

The similarity to the current Kurdish situation could not be more apparent. Weber's findings suggest that if the now-prevalent sense of French nationhood had not penetrated into the psyches of the rural masses more than a hundred years after scholars had pronounced it to be in full bloom, then today's fractured Kurdish nationalism and its problem of disunity and infighting should not be so surprising. In time, like French nationalism,

it may yet develop into a united Kurdish nationalism shed of its incessant divisions.

Furthermore, the persisting profusion of separate Kurdish dialects — Kurmanji, Sorani, Dimili (Zaza), and Gurani, among others — that is often blamed in part for the problem of Kurdish disunity is not unique. Two principal divisions of the German language still persist as *Hochdeutsch* (High German) and *Plattdeutsch* (Low German). The former is recognized as standard German. There are also two official forms of Norwegian: *bokmal* (book language) or *riksmal* (national language), and *nynorsk* (new Norwegian) or *landsmal* (country language). Modern Greek, too, has two different versions, a demotic or popular literary style, and a reformed classical style. What would help further develop Kurdish nationalism and, therefore, possibly moderate the dilemma of Kurdish divisiveness would be for one of the Kurdish dialects to emerge as the standard Kurdish language.

Kurdish divisions are perpetuated, however, because Kurdistan remains part of already existing states. An independent Kurdistan would threaten the territorial integrity of such states as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. No state on earth will support a doctrine that sanctions its own potential destruction. Kurdish unity would only emerge if there were a major collapse of the existing state system in the contemporary Middle East. Thus, Kurdish disunity is reminiscent of the Polish plight between 1795 and 1919. It took the upheaval of World War I to shake loose a Polish state from the shackles of internal colonialism imposed by Germany, Austria, and Russia. Although the Gulf wars against Saddam Hussein and the Syrian civil did result in the halting, defective emergence of rump, proto-Kurdish states in northern Iraq and northeastern Syria, only a total rerolling of the national dice that would follow another world war would be likely to lead to the creation of an independent pan-Kurdistan and Kurdish unity.

The predicament of Kurdish disunity is not primarily the fault of others, however. As detailed above, the Kurds have been victims of leaders guilty of selfish partisanship and greed. The PUK, for example, points out how the KDP justified Barzani's reasons for not joining the Kurdish regional administration created in 1992: "We shall not allow the sacredness and greatness of Leader Barzani to be disgraced" by "the questioning, criticisms, innuendoes and daily abuse" that would be entailed in the parliamentary process.[91] Barzani himself has admitted that in part, at least the infighting, "has to do... with the question of hegemony."[92] As one NGO worker in northern Iraq put it: "Barzani thinks he's the true leader of the Kurds. So does Talabani and they'll fight each other down to their last peshmerga to prove themselves right."[93] Although Barzani and Talabani subsequently

managed to achieve some unity in the guise of the KRG, it shockingly collapsed following the failed advisory referendum on independence held on September 25, 2017. So far, no Kurdish leader has proven able to make the transition from tribal or provincial warlord to a true national statesman. Since the Kurds lack a Bismarck or Garibaldi, they remain divided, as did Germany and Italy before their unification.

Notes

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Confrontation in Eastern Europe: The Russian Challenge to the European Union

by Roger E. Kanet

Introduction

A quarter century after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union are frozen, in large part as a result of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and the ensuing economic and political sanctions imposed on Russia by both the EU and the United States. But, the conflicts between the two sides extend much further than just to the issue of Ukraine. Other potential flashpoints, from Nagorno Karabagh and the secessionist regions of Georgia, to frictions in Russian relations with the Baltic states, and Russian meddling in domestic politics in European countries are all evidence of the fragility of relations between Russia and the European Union. Over the course of the past decade, Russia has increasingly challenged the existing global order to which the member states of the EU have been strongly committed for more than half a century. It has also begun to challenge the Union itself, as well as the democratic institutions upon which the national governments of the EU are based.[1]

In the following pages we intend to trace the factors that explain the shifts in Russian policy from the early to mid-1990s, when Russian leaders were committed to joining the international system dominated by the European Union and the United States, to the present confrontation between Russia and the West.[2] Why has the relationship deteriorated as it has? I will first discuss briefly the essentially unsatisfactory nature of relations between the Russian Federation and the West; from the Russian perspective, in the 1990s, and their role in determining the central goals that have driven Russia's evolving sense of identity and policy since Vladimir Putin came to power at the turn of the century. I will note the aspects of Western policy that seemingly led to the decision in Moscow, around 2005, that cooperation with the West on terms of equality was impossible and that Russia should forge ahead to achieve its own objectives, even if that resulted in confrontation with the

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West. This decision resulted in the so-called "gas wars" with Ukraine in 2006 and 2009, the Russo-Georgian war of August 2008, and more recently the intervention in Ukraine since 2013, including the absorption of Crimea into the Russian Federation and the ongoing military support for the government of President Bashar Hafez al-Assad of Syria, an assessment of which will comprise the final substantive section of the article. All these Russian policies contributed to the growing confrontation in relations between Russia and the European Union, as did EU efforts to tie East European states more closely to the EU itself.

From the Short-lived Honeymoon to the Policy Shift under Putin

During the 1990s, when Russia was attempting to adjust to its new and reduced post-Soviet status and seemed willing to join with the West, Europe and the U.S. generally ignored Russia's interests and expanded their own involvement into what had been the Soviet sphere of domination. This expansionist approach, which included NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia, despite strong and persistent Russian opposition and growing Western criticism of political developments in Russia itself, culminated in the middle of the 2000s with the extension of both NATO and the EU into Central Europe and the Baltic region, the EU's commitment to a new Eastern Neighborhood policy even further east, and Western support for the "color revolutions" that deposed Moscow's allies in Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Bishkek and brought to power groups committed to closer ties with the West.[3]

Although Russian policy toward the West had begun to shift in the mid-1990s, as the United States and its NATO allies intervened militarily in the former Yugoslavia, ignoring and challenging Russian interests, it was not until Vladimir Putin became president — and most clearly, after the Bush Administration's unilateral decision to invade Iraq, the expansion of both NATO and the EU eastward, and the challenge of the "color revolutions" — that Moscow decided that achieving security and foreign policy objectives on the basis of cooperation with the West was impossible.[4] The result has been a shifting sense of identity that differentiates Russia from Europe and a growing challenge to the dominant position of the West, both in Central and Eastern Europe and globally, as Russia has pursued the goal of reestablishing its position as the preeminent regional power across Eurasia and as a top global actor.

The Western initiatives that impacted relations with Russia so very strongly had their roots in the 1990s but expanded with the decisions of the

United States to intervene militarily in Iraq as part of the new "War on Terror." Moscow, as well as several U.S. allies, strongly opposed that policy, which set the stage for a broader deterioration of East-West relations. The second set of developments that impacted Russian relations with the European Union was the EU and NATO's expansion eastwards, the EU's Eastern neighborhood policy, and the EU's support for the color revolutions. Although Russian leaders strongly opposed NATO's expansion eastward, they did not initially oppose post-communist states joining the European Union.[5]

By the early 2000s, however, Russia recognized that EU membership not only would cut into future markets for Russian exports, but was also part of a much more comprehensive economic-political-social approach — part of the European Union's game plan for integrating East European states and societies into the Western order and, thus, undercutting long-term Russian interests in the region. The development of the Eastern Neighborhood program, which aimed at tying six former Soviet republics closely to the EU, without granting full membership, along with visible support for the political upheavals in several post-Soviet states, referred to as the color revolutions, were important factors in the evolving tensions in Russo-EU relations. As viewed in Moscow, these were disguised efforts of Western governments and Western NGOs to shift the political orientation of these countries toward closer ties with the West.[6] As Vladimir Putin has noted much more recently, "We see what tragic consequences the wave of so-called color revolutions led to. For us this is a lesson and a warning. We should do everything necessary so that nothing similar ever happens in Russia."[7] Thus, by 2005, the leadership in Moscow viewed the continued entrance of post-communist states into European political, economic, and security institutions as a long-term challenge to Russia's commitment to reestablish its dominant position in Eurasia and to reclaim its role as a major global power. This development directly impacted relations between the two sides. President Putin's commitment to reestablish Russia's role as a global power — through a combination of assertive domestic and foreign policy initiatives and the good luck of exploding world market prices for energy — allowed Russia to reemerge as a major player in Eurasia and world politics. It was around this time that Putin publicly claimed that the collapse of the USSR had been the most catastrophic geopolitical event of the twentieth century and that he began asserting that NATO and the United States were serious threats to Russia and international security.[8]

President Putin's wide-ranging attack on the United States and the West, at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, represents a rhetorical watershed in Russian foreign policy, for it announced that Russia was once

again a major international actor and would no longer follow the lead of the West in pursuing its security and foreign policy interests. It also indicated that Russia saw itself as a pole in the international system separate from, and in conflict with the West. It is at roughly this time that Moscow also began to assert itself rhetorically in response to Western charges that it was corrupting or abandoning democracy.[9] For example, in response to EU and US criticisms of the quality of Russian democracy, the Russians argued that they had their own special form of "sovereign democracy" that had a great emphasis on the sovereignty aspect, what Nigel Gould-Davies terms "sovereign globalization."[10] It is during this time that concrete Russian policy actions targeting Western interests, including those of the European Union began.

The initial major confrontation with the European Union concerned the "gas wars" of 2006 and 2009 between Russia and Ukraine, cutting off natural gas supplies to EU member countries in mid-winter as a spillover result from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the military intervention in Georgia in 2008 (when the Georgian president decided to use his new US-built military to force the reintegration of secessionist territories), and economic boycotts and cyberattacks against new EU member states, which Russia was in increasing political disagreement with. All these conflicts had their roots in the West's push eastward and Russia's determination that further Western encroachment into what Moscow viewed as its legitimate sphere of influence had to be stopped and reversed.[11]

In the case of the "gas wars," the issue was the longstanding division over both costs of Russian supplies to Ukraine and Ukrainian transit charges for Russian gas being marketed to Europe. Until the Orange Revolution and the overthrow of the pro-Russian government in Kyiv, this issue had been successfully worked out each year. Now, however, with an EU-friendly government in Ukraine, it became a deal contingent on the relative political status of the two countries. this impasse resulted in a showdown in which Moscow accepted the costs to its longer term economic relationship with the EU for failure to deliver gas supplies, which resulted in the complete shutdown of gas flowing to Ukraine, as part of Moscow's objective of showing Ukraine who was the dominant actor in the dispute.[12] As part of the commitment to reestablish Russian dominance in post-Soviet space, Russia could not appear to back down in the dispute with Ukraine, even if that resulted in long-term costs with the EU, who began a strategy of energy diversification to shift energy reliance away from Russia — a strategy that has contributed to the deterioration of relations between Russia and the EU.[13]

In many respects the underlying issue that led to the five-day war between

Russia and Georgia in August 2008, contributing to the deterioration of Russian-EU relations, had similar root: Russia's growing opposition to the continued shift of former Soviet republics toward integration into Western-dominated institutions. The Rose Revolution had brought to power in Tbilisi a government committed to closer ties to the West, including first and foremost NATO membership and expanded ties to the EU. In other words, from Moscow's perspective, developments were likely to move counter to Russia's goal of reestablishing preeminent position within former Soviet space. Even though NATO was not yet prepared to accede to President Bush's desire to admit Georgia to membership in 2008, Georgian president Saakashvili decided that the refurbished military that NATO and the United States had provided through the Partnership for Peace program could be used to resolve the longstanding problems associated with Russia's frozen-conflict strategy in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.[14] The result for Georgia was a total disaster. Russia forces overwhelmed the new Georgian army, the secessionist provinces declared their formal independence, emulating the Kosovo example, and the Russian Federation officially recognized their independence. The Russian military intervention sent a clear message to several audiences — the Georgians, the Ukrainians, and the Americans most clearly — that after more than a decade of verbal opposition to NATO expansion, Russia was now in a position, and willing, to use military means to prevent further eastward expansion, even if this meant a further deterioration in relations with both the United States and the countries of Western Europe, resulting in Western sanctions to "encourage" Russia to reconsider the wisdom of its policy.[15]

Besides these broad negative developments in East-West relations, several other factors contributed to the increasing frigidity of the relationship. Most important was the entrance of former communist states into full membership in the European Union, which brought with them concerns and animosities toward Russia based on decades, or centuries, of past dealings. [16]

Russia's willingness to coerce and bully small neighbors revived serious fears among new EU members about the prospects for their long-term security in the face of an increasingly assertive Russia. In 2007, for example, after the Estonian government decided to move a Soviet war memorial from the center of Tallinn to its international military cemetery, Russians — in both Estonia and in the Russian Federation — mounted attacks on the Estonian government in Tallinn and its embassy in Moscow. This was followed Russian oil and coal delivery cut-offs and a massive cyber-attack that virtually closed the entire information technology sector of this former Soviet colony. In addition, after bilateral disagreements with Russia, both

Poland and Lithuania used their "veto" power to prevent for more than a year and a half the negotiation of a new partnership agreement between the EU and Russia. At a joint meeting between the EU and Russia in May 2007, these and other issues split the two sides and precluded any meaningful agreement on issues deemed important by either side. [17]

Thus, during the period of Putin's second term as Russian President and into the Medvedev presidency, Russian relations with the European Union and with its major member countries deteriorated significantly. Russia no longer saw the EU as a largely irrelevant institution around which it was easily able to maneuver. Even though the European Union lacked a unified response to relations with Russia, during this time, on issues such as energy dependence, overall relations declined significantly. Russian challenges to the EU's claims to moral authority and the charge that the EU pursued a double standard expanded during this period.[18]

Thus, by the time that Vladimir Putin turned over the presidency to Dimitri Medvedev in 2008, relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union had deteriorated both as part of the general developments in East-West relations, which included the United States, but also for reasons independent of the Russo-American confrontation. The four years of the Medvedev presidency did little to change the overall nature of Russian-EU relations, even though Medvedev was able to pursue a somewhat more liberal foreign policy.[19]

The Ukraine Crisis and the Collapse of EU-Russian Relations

In a series of articles published prior to the 2012 presidential elections in Russia, then prime minister and presidential candidate Putin laid out his new foreign policy program which was now focused on "preserving Russia's distinct identity in a highly competitive global environment."[20] Abandoning the remnants of earlier efforts to integrate into the West-dominated international system, Putin emphasized the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Russian civilization and how Russia represented the core of a special Russian world composed of people who associate themselves with traditional Russian values, such as the Eastern Slavs of Belarus and Ukraine. He also argued that Russia should be the center of a large geo-economic unit, or Eurasian Union, consisting of political, cultural, economic and security ties between the states of the former Soviet republics. Putin argued the importance of defending indigenous values in a highly-globalized world and highlighted how this new vision promotes that path. He maintained that Europe has taken a negative turn from its historical model that existed prior to the 1960s

and now possesses a "post-Christian" identity that values moral relativism, a vague sense of identity and excessive political correctness.[21] Putin concluded that European countries have begun "renouncing their roots, including Christian values, which underlie Western civilization."[22] Putin rather emphasizes the values of old Europe, while stressing Russia's unique ones rooted in the Orthodox Christian tradition. These values include the union between a man and a woman and the sanctity of family, religion, the centrality of the state, and patriotism.[23] This set of arguments is relevant to relations with the West, and the EU in particular, since it lays the ideological groundwork for Russia's merger with post-Soviet states into a Eurasian political and economic union, in direct competition with the EU's Eastern Neighborhood Policy and the incorporation of countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus into a broad EU-centered political-economic system.

By the time of the presidential election campaign of 2012, Russian leaders clearly viewed the emergence of a special relationship between the European Union and additional post-Soviet states such as Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia as a direct challenge to long-term Russian interests in the region and a threat to the campaign to reestablish Russia's role as the dominant regional power and a major global actor. In part, as noted by Mikhail Molchanov, this confrontation between Russia and the EU resulted from the latter's decision that those countries that opted for involvement in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood policy had to forego any special economic ties with other international institutions, such as Mr. Putin's proposed Eurasian Union. In many respects, closer economic ties to the EU were actually economically disadvantageous to countries like Ukraine which could market its industrial products in the emerging Eurasian Union, but was hardly competitive in industrial production when dealing with the countries of the European Union.[24] Since the EU insisted on an "all or nothing" approach from those to whom they offered Neighborhood status, countries such as Ukraine were forced to make a choice between a westward or eastward orientation.[25]

Therefore, when Russia began to push its Eurasian integration project, the geopolitical confrontation with the EU escalated.[26] This is important for our understanding of the Russian explanation of their policy in the Ukraine crisis and its impact on overall relations with the European Union. As Foreign Minister Lavrov has stated in repeating the points made by President Putin,

> *The EU Eastern Partnership program was also designed to expand the West-controlled geopolitical space to the east…. There is a policy to confront the CIS countries with a hard, absolutely contrived and artificial choice – either you are with the EU or with Russia. It was the use of this approach to Ukraine that pushed*

that country…to a profound internal political crisis.[27]

After Vladimir Putin resumed the presidency of the Russian Federation in 2012 he moved forcefully to implement plans for the consolidation of the Eurasian Union. In the western portion of former Soviet territory this meant that Russia and the European Union were both actively pursuing six states — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. In reality, the competition focused on Armenia and Ukraine and, to a lesser extent Moldova. Russia initiated a major pressure campaign to "encourage" these countries to opt for EEU membership — from economic and security threats targeted against Armenia, should the latter decline to join the organization, to major loans to Ukraine as part of a membership package.[28] By summer of 2013, it was clear that Georgia and Moldova were prepared to counter Moscow and to strengthen their ties with the European Union, that Belarus and Armenia would join Russia's Eurasian Union, and that Azerbaijan would remain outside both organizations. Ukraine, under the government of President Yanukovych, attempted to play off the EU and the EEU as long as possible and eventually scheduled a signing ceremony with the European Union for fall 2013. When Yanukovych announced in November 2013 that Ukraine would, instead, join the Eurasian Union, massive demonstrations against his government broke out that eventually resulted in his fleeing the country, a new Western-oriented government coming to power.[29] The change in government led to direct Russian military intervention in Ukrainian affairs, including the Russian incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation and support for Russian and Russophone secessionist elements in southeastern Ukraine.[30]

Almost immediately the European Union and the United States introduced sanctions against Russia as punishment for the latter's military intervention in Ukraine and in the hope of convincing the Russians to rethink their policy and to withdraw their support and their troops from the *de facto* Ukrainian civil war. As Peter van Ham has noted,

Since Russia's annexation of Crimea (in March 2014) and its on-going support for anti-government rebels in eastern Ukraine, relations with the EU have deteriorated. The EU no longer considers Russia a strategic partner and has made it clear that its sanctions policy will remain in place until Russia is prepared to recognize the integrity and sovereignty of its neighbors.[31]

The Russian Challenge to the European Order

More than three years after the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, of Russian

intervention in that crisis, and the introduction of Western sanctions, little has changed in the overall relationship. The confrontation continues, the sanctions are still in place, and relations are still frozen. Russia has proven to be more resilient than many in the West had expected. Despite the collapse in international energy prices and the costs associated with the sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States, the Russian economy appears to be in the process of stabilizing, with growth of 1.1 and 1.2 percent predicted for 2017 and 2018, respectively.[3233] More important, the sanctions and the ensuing domestic economic problems in Russia have not influenced the political leadership — or the general population, for that matter — to initiate a significant shift in Russian policy. In fact, Russia's assertive policy in Ukraine, as well as more recently in Syria, have become an important part of the Putin regime's drawing upon growing nationalism to strengthen its political support among a large portion of the population — this is despite the economic malaise already noted as a result of the economic sanctions.[34] Not only has Russia not backed off from its confrontation with Europe and the US, but it has also taken that confrontation to its opponents by intervening in the political process of a number of countries by providing substantial support to extreme nationalist, rightwing political movements, in different forms, especially cyber involvement in elections.[35]

As we have demonstrated throughout this discussion, Russian relations with the European Union have declined precipitously since the turn of the century and the commitment under President Putin to reestablish Russia's dominant role in regional and global affairs. Given the Russian political elite's commitment to re-establishing Russia's place as a major global power, as well as its own control over the Russian domestic political system, assertive nationalism by the Russian Federation has become an important instrument in accomplishing both of those objectives. The European Union, which a quarter century ago was viewed in Moscow as a benign development, is now seen as a challenger for influence in post-Soviet space and as an impediment to Russia's reestablishment as the dominant actor in Eurasia and as a major player in global affairs. This competition lay at the root of the confrontation that exploded in Ukraine in 2013-2014, which continues to sour relations almost four years later.

Prospects for a significant improvement in relations in the foreseeable future are dim, since the longer-term goals of Russia and those of the European Union contradict one another.[36] The Russian leadership's commitment to reestablish a dominant position across Eurasia comes into direct conflict with the specific EU objectives of stabilizing post-Soviet space in Eastern Europe and the more general objectives that have been in place

ever since the Second World War of establishing and strengthening, along with the US, the liberal international order that has been dominant for the past quarter century.

As Russian leaders, from Vladimir Putin to Sergei Lavrov, have made most clear in recent years, Moscow does not accept the fundamental principles that underlie the current international system and will do whatever it can to undermine that system.[37] Military intervention in Georgia and Ukraine, cyber-attacks against a range of post-communist states, support for radical nationalist groups in EU member states, meddling in the electoral processes of democratic states in Europe and North America are all tools that Russia has used in recent years to help weaken the Western-dominated international system in place since the end of the Cold War.[38]

The confrontation between Russia and the European Union will continue until one side or the other abandons some of the objectives that have been central to their policy — in effect, to its sense of identity — which is highly unlikely to occur in the near future.

Notes

[1] Evidence of this effort can be seen in the recent meddling in the electoral process of some countries in the EU, support for right-wing political movements that are nationalistic and authoritarian in orientation, and similar attacks against the United States. See John R Schindler, "Putin's Support for Europe's Far-Right Just Turned Lethal," *Observer.* October 27, 2016. Available at http://observer.com/2016/10/putins-support-for-europes-far-right-just-turned-lethal/ and Ronald Browstein, "Putin and the Populists," *The Atlantic,* January 6, 2017. Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/putin-trump-le-pen-hungary-france-populist-bannon/512303/.

[2] It is important to note that it is impossible to discuss Russian-EU relations without considering the impact of the United States and of US-Russian relations on the former. See Roger E. Kanet, "Russia, the EU and the United States: Intertwined Relationships", in Kanet and Maria Raquel Freire, eds., *Russia and European Security.* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Republic of Letters Publishing, 2012) , 147-177. The current article, in part, builds on this earlier analysis, as well as on Roger E. Kanet, "The Russian Challenge to the European Union," *Debater a Europa,* (University of Coimbra), and is included with permission here.

[3] Analysts such as George F. Kennan and Stephen 1f. Cohen warned already in the 1990s that NATO expansion would initiate a new cold war. See Thomas Friedman's interview with Kennan, *New York Times,* 2 May 1998, Russian discussions of the color revolutions as a form of irregular warfare are summarized in Tony Papert, "Mocow Conference Identifies 'Color Revolutions' as War," *Executive Intelligence Report,* 13 June 2014, pp, 7-11.available at http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2014/eirv41n24-20140613/07-25_4124.pdf; Stephen F. Cohen, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia.* New York: W. W. Norton, Updated edition Pub. 20.

[4] For a detailed discussion of this change see Roger E. Kanet and Nuray Ibryamova, „Verpaßte Gelegenheiten? amerikanisch-russische Beziehungen in den 90er Jahren,", *Osteuropa*, 51: 8 (2001), 985-1001.

[5] See James Green, "Russian Responses to NATO and EU: Enlargement an Outreach," Cha-

tham House, Russia and Eurasia Programme, June 2012. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0612bp_greene.pdf.

[6] On Russian resistance to color revolutions see Abel Polese, and Donnacha Ó Beachán, "The Color Revolution Virus and Authoritarian Antidotes: Political Protests and Regime Counterattacks in Post-Communist Spaces," *Demokratisiya,* 19;2 (2011), 111-132.; on the role of Poland in supporting democratic elements in Ukraine see Tsveta Petrova, "Polish Democracy Promotion in Ukraine," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (April 2014), \http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/10/16/polish-democracy-promotion-inukraine/hs21?mkt_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRoku6nNZKXonjHpfsX54%2BsvXq%2Bg38431UFwdcjKPmjr1YEATcp0aPyQAgobGp5I5FEIQ7XYTLB2t60MWA%3D%3D.; On the argument that the West *de facto* manipulated the color revolutions see Paul Craig Roberts, "Russia's Rise to Global Power," *Strategic Culture Foundation,* May 22, 2014, http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2014/05/22/russia-rise-to-global-power.html.; On the growing ideological divide between Moscow and the West see Joan DeBardeleben, "Backdrop to the Ukraine Crisis: The Revival of Normative Politics in Russia's Relations with the EU?" in Roger E. Kanet and Matthew Sussex, eds., *Power, Politics and Confrontation in Eurasia: Foreign Policy in a Contested Area.* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[7] Darya Korsunskaya, "Putin says Russia must Prevent 'Color Revolution'", Reuters, *Yahoo! News,* 20 November 2014, https://www.yahoo.com/news/putin-says-russia-must-guard-against-color-revolutions-135807378.html.

[8] In a speech to the Russian people in 2005 President Vladimir Putin stated: "The collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. For the Russian people, it became a real drama. Tens of millions of our citizens and countrymen found themselves outside Russian territory. The epidemic of disintegration also spread to Russia itself." see Vladimir Putin, 'Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation', April 25, 2005," *President of Russia, Addresses to the Federal Assembly.* http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/04/25/2031_type70029type82912_87086.shtml.

[9] Vladimir Putin, "Putin Slams US for Making World More Dangerous," *DW—World. DE Deutsche Welle.* February 10, 2007. http://www.dw6 world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2343749,00.html.

[10] Nigel Gould-Davies, *Russia's Sovereign Globalization: Rise, Fall and Future*, Research Paper (London: Chatham House The Royal Institute of International Affairs, January 2016), 2. https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/russias-sovereign-globalization-rise-fall-and-future.

[11] See Polese, and Ó Beachán, "The Color Revolution Virus"; Papert, "Moscow Conference Identifies 'Color Revolutions' as War"; and Putin, "Putin Slams US for Making World More Dangerous."

[12] For the rationale of Russian policy in the gas wars see Dina Moulioukova and Roger E. Kanet, "Decoding Russia's Energy Security. Perceptions Matter," in Piet, Rémi, Bagley, Bruce, and Zorovich, Marcello R.S., eds., *Energy Security and Environmental Policy in the Western Hemisphere.* (New York: Lexington Books, 2017), 275-98.

[13] Frank Umbach, "Global Energy Security and the Implications for the EU," *Energy Policy,* 38:4 (2010), 122-40. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421509000421?via%3Dihub.

[14] See Thomas Ambrosio, "Instrumentalising the Frozen Conflicts of the Greater Black Sea Region," in Roger E. Kanet, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security.* London: Routledge, in press; Luke March, "Nationalist Grievance and Russian Foreign Policy: The Case of Georgia," and John B. Dunlop, "The August 2008 Russo-Georgian War: Which Side

Went First?" in Maria Raquel Friere and Roger E. Kanet, eds., *Russia and Its Near Neighbours.* Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 63-88, 89-105.

[15] For a discussion of Russian policy leading to the five-day war in August 2005 see Bertil Nygren, "Russia and Georgia: From Confrontation to War. What is Next?" in Roger E, Kanet,. ed., *Russian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century.* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 101-20.

[16] Joan DeBardeleben, "The Impact of EU Enlargement on the EU-Russian Relationship, in Roger E. Kanet, ed., *A Resurgent Russia and the West: The European Union, NATO, and Beyond*, (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Republic of Letters Publishing, 2009(, 93-112; Anke Schmidt-Felzman, "Is the EU's Failed Relationship with Russia the Member States' Own Fault?" *L'Europe en Formation,* 4: (2014), 40-60. Available at https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-europe-en-formation-2014-4-page-40.html.

[17] Christian Lowe, "EU Snubs Russian Requests at Frosty Summit," *Reuters,* May 18, 2007. Reprinted in *Johnson's Russia List,* no. 2007:113, available at www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/;- Judy Dempsey, "EU and NATO Seek to Quell Russia-Estonia Spat," *International Herald Tribune,* May 3, 2007. Available at http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/05/03/news/union.php; "Bronze Meddling: Russian Hypocrisy and Heavy-Handedness Towards a Former Colony," *The Economist,* 5 May 2007, 65; and "A Cyber-Riot," *The Economist,* May 12, 2007, 55.

[18] See Iver B Neumann,. *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*. (New York: Routledge, 2014); Roger E. Kanet, "The Failed Western challenge to Russia's Revival in Eurasia?" *International Politics* 52:5 (2015), 503-522; and Isabelle Facon, "The EU-Russian Summit in the Light of the Georgian Crisis," *European Issues*, no. 17, 10 November 2008.

[19] Dmitri Trenin, *Russia's Breakout from the Post–Cold War System: The Drivers of Putin's Course.* (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center), 22 December 2014. http://carnegie.ru/2014/12/22/russia-s-breakout-from-post-cold-war-system-drivers-of-putin-s-course-pub-57589.

[20] Vladimir Putin, "A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making," *Izvestiia*, October 3, 2011, https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3-; Vladimir Putin, "Russia and the changing world," *Moscow News*, February 27, 2012, http://worldmeets.us/MoskovskiyeNovosti000001.shtml#axzz4xs0qNxbK.

[21] Masha Gessen, "Russia Is Remaking Itself as the Leader of the Anti-Western World," *Washington Post*, March 30 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/russia-is-remaking-itself-as-the-leader-of-the-anti-western-world/2014/03/30/8461f548-b681-11e3-8cc3-d4bf596577eb_story.html.

[22] "Russia Will Develop as Democratic State, Defend Christian Values–Putin," *Voice of Russia,* September 19, 2013, https://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/news/2013_09_19/Russia-will-develop-as-democratic-state-defend-Christian-values-and-morality-Putin-2355/.

[23] Trenin, *Russia's Breakout*.

[24] Mikhail A. Molchanov, "Choosing Europe over Russia: What has Ukraine Gained?" *European Politics and Society*, 17:3, (2016), 380–395; Mikhail A Molchanov, "Regionalism and Multivectorism in Europe's Borderlands: The Strange Case of Ukraine," in Roger E., ed. Kanet, *The Russian Challenge to the European Security Environment.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 211-34. As Putin argued in his speech in Sevastopol justifying the occupation of Crimea, the West's actions in eastern Europe such as support for the color revolutions and the NATO membership promise to Georgia and Ukraine were offensive in

nature. "Crimea Crisis: Russian President Putin's Speech Annotated," *BBC News,* March 19, 2014. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26652058.

[25] The dramatic deterioration of US-Russian relations at this same time also contributed to the general decline of the EU's relations with the European Union. For example, U.S. legislation passed in 2012 targeting Russian political leaders associated with President Putin for their presumed role in the death of the Russian civil rights lawyer Sergei Magnitsky received a very hostile response in Moscow. Max Seddon, and Neil Buckley, "Russia: Magnitsky's Bitter Legacy," *Financial Times,* June 12, 2016. https://www.ft.com/content/1eb38914-2ca4-11e6-a18d-a96ab29e3c95.

[26] Richard Sakwa maintains that EU policy has consistently attempted to exclude Russia from Europe. See his "The New Atlanticism: The Alternative Atlantic Security System." *Russia in Global Affairs*, 21 September 2015. Available at http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-New-Atlanticism-17695 and his more comprehensive argument in *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands.* (London: Tauris, 2015).

[27] Sergei Lavrov, "Conferencia del Ministro de Asuntos Exteriorer Serguéi Lavrov sobre la política exterior de Rusia," October 20, 2014. https://spain.mid.ru/blogosfera-y-periodistas/-/asset_publisher/w90ODju28zfw/content/id/8014711.

[28] Stephen Blank, "Russia Pressures Armenia to Join Customs Union," *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 27 August 2013. https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12793-russia-pressures-armenia-to-join-customs-union.html.

[29] Oksana Grytsenko, "Yanukovych Confirms Refusal to Sign Deal with EU," *KyivPost,* 26 November 2013. https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/yanukovych-confirms-refusal-to-sign-deal-with-eu-332493.html.

[30] Boris Barkanov, "Crisis in Ukraine: Clash of Civilizations or Geopolitics," in Roger Kanet and Matthew Sussex, eds., *Power Politics and Confrontation in Eurasia: Foreign Policy in a Contested Region,* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 228-30.

[31] Peter van Ham, "Introduction," in *The EU, Russia and the Quest for a New European Security Bargain.* Clingendael Report, November 2015, 3. https://www.clingendael.nl/pub/2015/eu_russia_rapport/.

[32] Rebecca M. Nelson, *U.S. Sanctions and Russia's Economy.* R43895. (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 17 February 2017), 6.

[33] "Russian economy seen growing from 2017 onwards: World Bank," *Reuters,* May 23, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-worldbank/russian-economy-seen-growing-from-2017-onwards-world-bank-idUSKBN18J1DK.

[34] Mikhail Alexseev and Henry Hale, "A New Wave of Russian Nationalism? What Really Changed in Public Opinion after Crimea," Policy Memo 362, *Ponars Eurasia,* May 2015. http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/new-wave-russian-nationalism.

[35] Oren Dorell, "Alleged Russian political meddling documented in 27 countries since 2004," *USA TODAY,* 7 September 2017. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/09/07/alleged-russian-political-meddling-documented-27-countries-since-2004/619056001/.; Edward Graham, "Russian Election Meddling in Europe Growing Bolder, Officials Say," *Morning Consult,* June 28, 2017, https://morningconsult.com/2017/06/28/russian-election-meddling-europe-growing-brazen-officials-say/.

[36] The following argument assumes that the commitment to an integrated Europe that has characterized the EU for the past half century continues to flourish. The author is aware of the negative implications of the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and the rise of authoritarian and nationalist political movements across several EU countries for the continued strengthening of integration.

[37] For a more complete discussion of this issue see Roger E. Kanet, "Russia and Global Governance: The Challenge to the Existing Liberal Order," *International Politics,* (2017).

[38] In some respects, Russia has been joined by the United States under President Donald Trump as an opponent of globalization and of many of the global institutions still supported by the European Union. Thomas Wright, "Trump, Xi, Putin, and the axis of Disorder," Brookings, 8 November 2017. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/11/08/trump-xi-putin-and-the-axis-of-disorder/.

Talks, Markets, and Recognition? Addressing the North Korean Nuclear Conundrum

By Ramon Pacheco Pardo

North Korea has become a *de facto* nuclear power. Regardless of one's views about the regime and its treatment of the country's ordinary citizens, its nuclear and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs, and its illegal activities ranging from proliferation of WMD to currency counterfeiting, the international community has to accept that it is dealing with a nuclear North Korea. This means that stopping and rolling back Pyongyang's nuclear programme is no longer a realistic goal, at least in the short term. Both in public and in private, the regime has clearly indicated that the program itself is not a bargaining tool.[1] Rather, the Kim Jong-un regime considers a nuclear deterrent the best means to avoid the same fate as the Muammar Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein regimes: military strikes led or supported by the U.S., followed by the execution of their leaders at the hands of their former citizens.[2]

The debate has to now shift towards how to deal with a nuclear North Korea. Sanctions have clearly not worked. The current round of UN and bilateral sanctions implemented from July 2006 onwards has failed. Pyongyang had not even conducted a nuclear test when sanctions were first implemented. Today, it is believed to be in possession of dozens of nuclear devices.[3] Isolation of the Kim Jong-un regime has not worked either. Two consecutive South Korean conservative governments led by Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye dismantled many of the cooperation mechanisms set up by their predecessors. The Barack Obama administration refused to countenance diplomatic engagement with Pyongyang unless it changed its behavior. Xi Jinping is yet to meet with Kim Jong-un, even though they sit less than two hours away from each other. In return for sanctions and isolation, North Korea has pressed ahead with its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Deterrence is a useful way to prevent a North Korean attack on Seoul, Tokyo or the U.S. mainland. Nevertheless, few experts think that Pyongyang would strike first.[4]

Engagement thus seems to be the only viable option to deal with Pyongyang. Critics argue that talks, aid, and other forms of cooperation

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have failed in the past. They point out that North Korea reneged on the commitments it signed up for with the Agreed Framework of 1994 and the Six-Party Talks agreements of 2005 and 2007.[5] Whilst it is true that Pyongyang failed to fully comply with its obligations, it is not less true that other parties also did — including the US, a point acknowledged by high-level American officials themselves.[6] However, understanding that North Korea's main motivation for developing its nuclear and WMD programmes is self-preservation underscores why engagement could now work. For once that Pyongyang feels that it has achieved this goal, discussion of other matters such as North Korea's military links with the Middle East, the country's on-going economic reforms or ensuring stability in the Korean Peninsula can take place. In other words, the international community should replace the unrealistic goal of denuclearisation with more likely objectives that can be achieved through engagement in the form of talks, economic exchanges, and, if conditions allow, some form of political recognition of North Korea.

Talks as a Means to an End

Multilateral talks involving a mixture of Northeast Asian powers plus the US and bilateral talks between both Koreas and the U.S. have of course been held before. They took place sometimes during the Cold War, and were regularly held at different times during the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. Indeed, North Korea has long sought talks with the U.S., which Pyongyang sees as a form of implicit recognition from Washington as well as the only way to solve the Korean Peninsula nuclear conundrum. South Korea and China, the two other powers with real leverage on Korean Peninsular affairs, also believe that talks in which the U.S. and North Korea are involved are the best means to deal with the latter. Meanwhile, inter-Korean talks on a range of issues have also been a regular feature at different points over the past few decades — and especially when South Korean liberal presidents have been in power.[7]

In other words, multilateral and bilateral talks have been tried before in different formats and will be held again. They are actually part of the toolkit of the Donald Trump administration to deal with Pyongyang, as the president himself has stated.[8] For its part, the Kim Jong-un regime has also expressed its willingness to discuss its nuclear programme if it feels that the U.S. is not hostile towards Pyongyang, as well as other matters.[9] Talks involving North Korea, however, need to have a purpose. They have to be a means to an end, rather than an end in and by themselves. Otherwise, they become another talking shop, of which East Asia has been accused of having many.

Building trust or at least easing mistrust is or should be the first goal of any talks involving North Korea. A lack of engagement at the official level seems to make Pyongyang more willing to move forward with its nuclear and WMD programmes, as well as to continue its proliferation activities.[10] With inter-Korean talks interrupted since 2015, no official U.S.-North Korea engagement during the Obama administration, and the Six-Party Talks involving both Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan, and Russia last held in 2008, there has been no recent trust-building attempt through talks with Pyongyang. This has served to increase suspicions between North Korea and other powers in the region regarding their actual intentions. Talks would serve to allay them.

A case in point is the multilateral talks held during the Clinton and Bush administrations. The Four-Party Talks of 1997-99 and Six-Party Talks of 2003-08 allowed the different parties to communicate directly and openly with each other, and in front of other parties.[11] According to veterans of the Clinton administration, the Four-Party Talks helped to bring new life to the Agreed Framework and led to then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's October 2000 meeting with then-North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang.[12] Similarly, officials involved in the Six-Party Talks believe that they provided North Korea and the U.S. with a platform that allowed them to hold their own bilateral talks.[13] These talks resulted in the two Six-Party Talk agreements of 2007.

Talks also serve the different parties involved to communicate and understand each other's goals and red lines.[14] Pyongyang might have made clear that it will not give up its nuclear weapons program and that it sees it as the ultimate deterrent against a possible American strike. But we can only speculate as to what might make the Kim Jong-un government consider a cessation of nuclear and missile tests, stop proliferation of WMDs and other illegal activities, or enact more ambitious economic reforms. Similarly, North Korea might not know what the ultimate goals of the U.S. are or how far South Korea is willing to go with its engagement activities. The different parties involved in any talks can also use them to draw red lines and explicitly state what is not up for discussion.[15] These goals and red lines can also be codified, as was the case following the two inter-Korean summits of June 2000 and October 2007 or through the multiparty agreements referred to above. In this regard, communicating through third parties, in informal settings, or social media does not have the same effect in terms of promoting mutual understanding.

An added benefit of holding talks is that they allow for discussion of a range of issues of importance — instead of only focusing on Pyongyang's

nuclear programme.[16] The Moon Jae-in government grasps this. Thus, it is government policy to hold inter-Korean talks without hard preconditions and not necessarily focusing on this program.[17] Issues such as economic engagement to improve the situation of ordinary North Koreans, reunions among Korean families divided by the Korean War, or establishing mechanisms to avoid military skirmishes escalating into full-blown conflict are important as well. The 2000 inter-Korean summit created a level of goodwill in the Korean Peninsula that allowed the Kaesong Industrial Complex to open in 2002 and family reunions to be held regularly.[18] Even if denuclearisation of North Korea is one's ultimate goal, other benefits resultant from talks should not be dismissed.

One last important goal that should be part of any dialogue involving North Korea is supporting the development of a framework for a more permanent security forum in Northeast Asia since the region lacks such a forum. The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat established in Seoul in September 2011 and involving China, Japan, and South Korea is useful for the three Asian powers to discuss security matters.[19] But it cannot credibly deal with the North Korean nuclear issue when Pyongyang and Washington are absent. The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism explicitly mentioned in the Six-Party Talks joint statement of February 2007 or the proposal for a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative from the Park Geun-hye government — which the Moon government seems to be keen to continue — are more promising venues.[20,21] Involving the US and Russia as well, they would be open for Pyongyang to join. They would thus be useful for the powers in the region to discuss the North Korean nuclear issue in the context of other traditional and non-traditional security threats that are part of the political landscape in Northeast Asia, such as territorial disputes or climate change.

Encouraging Markets

Economic engagement to support the reforms being implemented by the Kim Jong-un regime, expanding the North Korean economy, and ultimately improving the lives of ordinary North Koreans should be part of any strategy aimed at ensuring stability in the Korean Peninsula. Former socialist economies such as China and Vietnam are successfully transitioning into capitalism, lifting millions of people out of poverty, and in the process improving their lives. While it cannot be denied that human rights abuses persist in both countries, the improvement in the economic well-being and individual and social liberties of Chinese and Vietnamese peoples cannot

be overlooked either.[22] These twin improvements go hand-in-hand. As unthinkable as it might seem today that the same process might happen in North Korea, this was also the case when China initiated reforms in the late 1970s and Vietnam did the same in the 1980s. With North Korea sitting in one of the most economically dynamic regions in the world, supporting its economic reforms could result in a similar cycle of improving economic and social conditions.

The Kim Jong-il regime initiated the implementation of economic reforms in July 2002.[23] These were initially modest but marked the starting point of Pyongyang's *de facto* official support for *jangmadang* or private markets to play a role in the North Korean economy. Very importantly, the reforms were recognition that the country's great famine of the mid-1990s — officially known as the Arduous March — had resulted in the development of an incipient market economy by ordinary North Koreans. That is, the July 2002 reforms were an acknowledgment that the centralized food distribution system characteristic of the Cold War era was not viable without the support of communist allies.[24] Besides, the Kim Jong-il regime's continuation of the *songun,* or military-first politics, meant that the state prioritized the development of its military programmes over the restoration of a viable centralized economy.[25] As a result, private markets continued to grow, and small-scale economic reforms loosened the grip of the state on the country's economy to be implemented.

The Kim Jong-un regime has elevated the importance of economic reforms politically and implemented them more rapidly than his father. His *byungjin*, or parallel development policy, calls for the joint improvement of economic and military capabilities.[26] This means that economic development has been afforded the same importance as military progress since the policy was first introduced in early 2013. Not only are private markets allowed, but state-owned factories and the remaining agricultural cooperatives are encouraged to sell their surplus production on the open market. Agricultural cooperatives themselves are being dismantled, with farmland management being distributed to individual households — reminiscent of reforms introduced by China under Deng Xiaoping. Meanwhile, private enterprises are not being persecuted, and side-jobs are commonplace — even if both remain technically illegal.[27] Recent surveys and studies show that a large percentage of North Koreans use markets to buy food and other products.[28] Given the centrality of the state to the lives of North Koreans for decades, many of these activities involve public officials and institutions. The Kim Jong-un regime itself has set up ambitious plans to develop sectors such as tourism or electronics. In other words, Pyongyang is on the way towards

becoming a market-dominated economy.

For Pyongyang, the models are clear: China and Vietnam.[29] These are two countries that have transitioned towards market-dominated economy status, but in which the single-party system still dominates politics and is not seriously challenged. Economic reform accompanied by political stability would allow Pyongyang to integrate into international markets and attract foreign direct investment in the same way that China and Vietnam do. This is particularly important for North Korea, where up to ninety percent of trade and investment comes from China — a situation that Pyongyang seeks to end. North Korea's cheap and well-educated labor would be as attractive as Chinese and Vietnamese labor has been for years.[30]

In order to support the country's economic reforms, targeted aid, expertise sharing, entrepreneurship promotion, and similar micro-level economic engagement activities would be useful. Take the case of aid. Beyond supporting the most vulnerable North Koreans who have limited access to food, aid donors could also focus on training and supporting the building of non-military infrastructure.[31] Some countries do so, including several EU member states as well as the EU itself.[32] But aid flows to North Korea are minimal and prone to be affected by the government's actions. While the latter is understandable, past crackdowns on its own citizens by China, Vietnam or, more recently, Myanmar has not stopped cooperation with an economic development goal in mind. The same could be the case with North Korea. Meanwhile, expertise sharing, entrepreneurship promotion, and other activities aimed at improving the business and economic acumen of North Koreans could be better institutionalized. At present, it is provided by well-meaning yet small organizations without a large institutional capacity.[33]

Encouraging North Korea's emerging marketization would have the added benefit of supporting other goals. A more developed North Korea better integrated into international trade and financial flows would make for a more stable Korean Peninsula. In the same way that the interconnectedness between China and Taiwan, and the former's deepening integration in world markets, have reduced the likelihood of full-blown war between the two, stronger economic links between both Koreas and between North Korea and other countries would reduce its appetite for military escalation.[34] Similarly, a more economically integrated North Korea would arguably lead the government to have fewer incentives to try to raise funds through the proliferation of WMD and nuclear technology or engaging in illegal activities such as drug trafficking or currency counterfeiting.

The Recognition Carrot

One of Pyongyang's foremost foreign policy goals — if not the most important — is diplomatic recognition from Washington. This is thus a carrot that the U.S. and other countries dealing with North Korea can use to engage and influence Pyongyang's behavior. The U.S.-led the UN forces that North Korea fought in the Korean War, signed the armistice that put an end to the war, was the leader of the Western bloc during the Cold War, and remained so afterward, and is the sole superpower today. In contrast, North Korea is a small country sandwiched between China, Japan, Russia and much more prosperous South Korea, has no real allies, and is treated as an international pariah by many. From its perspective, recognition from the U.S. would be a diplomatic victory and would go a long way to redress the sense of betrayal that Pyongyang felt when Beijing and Seoul normalized diplomatic relations in 1992 — a move portrayed by North Korea as a betrayal to any special relationship it might have had with China.[35] For the Kim Jong-un regime, it would also represent the fulfilment of his grandfather Kim Il-sung's dream to see the country he founded establish diplomatic relations with the U.S.

This last point should not be underestimated. Normalisation of diplomatic relations with the US is an old North Korean ask, dating back to the 1970s. In March 1974, North Korea's Supreme People Assembly wrote to U.S. Congress to request the establishment of diplomatic relations between both countries. In September 1978, Kim Il-sung publicly called for these relations during the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of North Korea. This made sense in the context of the normalization of relations between Washington and Beijing. Ever since the Kim Il-sung regime first and the Kim Jong-il regime later periodically raised this possibility.[36] The Kim Jong-un regime has not deviated from this goal. Considering that it was Kim Il-sung's wish, we can assume that Kim Jong-un would see the attainment of this goal as the fulfillment of his grandfather's vision.

Full normalization of diplomatic relations might seem inconceivable under the current circumstances. Yet, it was also unthinkable that Washington would dump Taipei and normalize diplomatic relations with Beijing in the 1970s.[37] Similarly, the establishment of bilateral relations between China and South Korea or the U.S. and Vietnam in the 1990s were not necessarily predictable.[38] These three normalization processes show that previously improbable diplomatic relations can be forged. Even in the case of North Korea-U.S. relations, the Clinton administration considered the possibility of opening a liaison office in Pyongyang toward the end of his tenure.[39] And the Six-Party Talks joint statements signed during the Bush administration

had normalization as one of their goals, showing that the U.S. has been at least willing to entertain the idea.[40]

Were normalization to prove impossible to realize in the short term, a peace treaty could be an alternative carrot to offer Pyongyang. The 1953 armistice ending the Korean War was signed by North Korea and China on one side and the U.S. on the other. Thus, Washington's acquiescence to a peace treaty would signify that technically it does not recognize Pyongyang as an enemy anymore. In fact, North Korea has often called for a peace treaty with the U.S.[41] It would represent a diplomatic victory for Pyongyang and open the door to the eventual establishment of diplomatic relations.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between North Korea and the U.S. — as well as Japan —would also bring economic benefits to Pyongyang. Currently, North Korea is excluded from the regular World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) programs that have been extremely beneficial for China and other developing and emerging countries across East Asia. One of the main reasons for this exclusion is the absence of normal relations with Washington and Tokyo.[42] Access to World Bank and ADB programmes would facilitate access to billions of U.S. dollars for investment in infrastructure and other projects. Furthermore, World Bank and ADB funds would come together with much-needed technical expertise. In addition, it would also signal to international investors that North Korea is open for business. In short, normalization of diplomatic relations between North Korea on the one hand and the U.S. and Japan on the other would support Pyongyang's economic reform process.

Engagement: the Only Remaining Game in Town

Addressing the North Korean nuclear conundrum requires a different way of thinking. Sanctions and isolation have failed to stop Pyongyang from developing its nuclear program. Deterrence serves to prevent a first strike by North Korea that few think will happen anyway. Thus, the international community now confronts a *de facto* nuclear power unwilling to give up its nuclear weapons, but one which seems not to have the intention to use them anyway. This opens the possibility to try to achieve other goals that are more realistic and important in their own right. They include stopping North Korea's proliferation of WMDs and illegal activities, which would support stability in the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia and beyond.

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to understand how to reach out to the Kim Jong-un regime to obtain concessions. Engagement is the best means to do — arguably the only one. Pyongyang has its own objectives beyond

self-preservation through nuclear deterrence. Engagement can encourage the Kim Jong-un regime to think that it is becoming more integrated into regional and global diplomatic and economic exchanges. It would thus be seen as a marker of the guarantee of the survival of the regime. And it would encourage Pyongyang to continue the economic reform process that holds the most promise to reduce tensions in the Korean Peninsula.

Engagement should, therefore, be the preferred option for policy-makers tasked with dealing with North Korea. Kim Jong-un's New Year message shows his willingness to try this path when consistently offered by others, such as Moon Jae-in. It also fits with Pyongyang's long-term policy of seeking dialogue and recognition from the U.S. and others. Ultimately, only talks, economic reforms, and a degree of recognition of North Korea as a 'normal' country will ensure stability in the Korean Peninsula, some openness from Pyongyang, and a better life for ordinary North Koreans.

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Russian Diplomacy: Challenging the West

By Charles E. Ziegler

Introduction

According to classical realism, diplomacy is the means by which states defend their interests and achieve their objectives short of war, using a mixture of persuasion, compromise, and the threat of force. In the quarter-century since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian diplomacy has evolved from a passive, Western-orientation toward a muscular, multilateral and assertive posture. In the immediate post-perestroika years Russian diplomacy reflected the nascent democratic character of the new Russia, and the search for a new post-Soviet identity. Since Vladimir Putin ascended to the presidency, Russian diplomacy has become highly effective at several diplomatic issues. These include: Promoting and representing Russian national interests; defending key principles of sovereignty; non-interference in internal affairs; and respect for Russia as a great power; consolidating the former Soviet space as a privileged sphere of Russian influence; and addressing Russia's vital security concerns in the Eurasian region, including concerns with The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) expansion eastward.

Russian Politics and Diplomacy

In Russia's political system the President is instrumental in setting the main contours of Russian foreign policy. According to Article 80 of the Russian Federation Constitution, the President is the head of state and represents the country in international relations. Since assuming the presidency in 2000, Vladimir Putin has centralized policy-making in his office. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and various high-level officials of the Ministry coordinate and implement the details of foreign policy, but policy is closely aligned with the President, who sets foreign policy guidelines.[1]

Russian diplomacy under Putin reflects his personal approach to the

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world. For example, after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Putin offered Russian support to President George W. Bush and Russian diplomacy followed his lead. Six years later, convinced that Bush had been weakened by the Iraq adventure and angered by U.S. support for color revolutions, Putin delivered his 2007 Munich speech condemning the U.S. for unilateralism and the hyper-use of force.[2] Russian diplomacy subsequently reflected this more aggressive approach. It also reflects the unpredictability of Russian foreign policy, which is subject to the personal whims of Mr. Putin.

As with most chief executives, the Russian president frequently engages in summit diplomacy. High-profile meetings enhance the leader's image abroad, and confirm Russia's great power status for domestic audiences. By inviting Boris Yeltsin to the G-7 meetings in 1994, the leading industrial states were signaling their willingness to include Russia in this elite club. Conversely, after Russia flouted international norms by annexing Crimea and supporting separatists in southeastern Ukraine, President Putin was excluded from G-8 summits. To minimize this slight, Russian media have played up Putin's participation in G-20, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and BRICS (referring the countries of Brazil, Russian, Indonesia, China and South Africa) forums, together with bilateral summits and hosting such events as a meeting of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders at Sochi in 2016, and the 2018 World Cup.

As Russia transitioned from centrally planned state socialism toward a capitalist market economy, foreign policy adjusted to prioritize economic diplomacy as a tool to promote development and modernization.[3] Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Department of Economic Cooperation coordinates trade and investment activities and promotes Russia's integration in the global economy through such mechanisms as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Russian energy diplomacy is often conducted at the very highest level, as in negotiations over the Nordstream natural gas pipeline between Putin and former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and those of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline finalized by Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping in early 2014.

Maintaining a prominent presence on the world stage enhances the legitimacy of Russian leaders, who can point to their diplomatic successes as evidence that Russia is a respected major player in global affairs. Soviet leaders valued détente so highly because the United States in effect acknowledged parity with the Soviet Union, recognizing its status as a co-equal superpower. Similarly, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has praised Russia's "special role in European and global history," and approvingly quotes Henry Kissinger

that "Russia should be perceived as an essential element of any new global equilibrium…"[4]

Diplomacy and Military Power

In foreign policy, military capabilities are closely linked to diplomatic influence. Russia's militarily weakness in the 1990s resulted from the collapse of the economy and the inability to build effective political institutions. Under these conditions, foreign policy tended to be more accommodating.[5] One example is the development of pacific diplomacy between NATO and Russia in the immediate post-Communist period, to the point that the possibility of using force in the relationship became unthinkable.[6] However, the dismissive attitude toward Russia expressed by NATO officials nurtured resentment and a determination to reassert Russia's interests more vigorously once the power balance had been restored.

As Russia modernized its military under Putin, its diplomatic approaches have become more assertive and confident. Russian diplomacy is very much realist in orientation, power-oriented and premised on defending the country's national interests. In addition, there is a clear hierarchy whereby more powerful states are accorded respect, while smaller and less powerful countries are frequently dismissed as inconsequential. Respect and status are very important for Russia — top leaders consistently assert that Russia must be treated as an equal great power by other states. Much of the resentment of NATO's expansion eastward derives not so much from an existential security threat posed by the admission of new member states, but because NATO did not take Russian interests seriously in the 1990s.[7]

Since NATO's assault on Serbia in 1999, Russian leaders have been fixated on the principle that state sovereignty should be inviolable. Following the West's support for Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 against the expressed wishes of Serbia, Russia politicized its approach to diplomatic recognition. Immediately after the brief Russo-Georgian war in August 2008, Dmitri Medvedev's government extended diplomatic recognition to the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, citing a parallel to Kosovo's status. Russia has refused to recognize Kosovo and upon annexing Crimea in March 2014, asserted that in this case, self-determination trumped sovereignty.[8] During earlier negotiations on Kosovo's status, Putin dismissed the American claim that Kosovo was a unique situation, positing instead a universal model that equated it with the Georgian territories.[9] If Europe and the United States applied a certain model of self-determination in the Balkans, the reasoning went, then Russia was fully justified in applying the

same logic to the former Soviet space.

Equality and Respect

The need for full equality and respect in foreign affairs is a key goal of Russian diplomacy. Foreign Minister Lavrov describes "normal" diplomatic relations as characterized by respect — he criticized the Barack Obama administration for being obsessed with American exceptionalism and global leadership, and for a tendency to impose values by force rather than example.[10] Similarly, Putin has decisively rejected a unipolar world with only one sovereign, where countries like Russia are constantly being lectured about democracy and where the U.S. imposes its policies on other nations.[11]

If equality and respect are major Russian diplomatic goals, then reciprocity is a basic diplomatic strategy. As Lavrov observed in an interview, "You always reciprocate. Positively, negatively, but this is something which you cannot change. It was not invented by us. It is the law of international relations. Reciprocity is the key."[12] Reciprocity was evident when, in 2017, Russia and the United States engaged in tit-for-tat sanctions and diplomatic expulsions. In July, the U.S. Congress passed legislation imposing sanctions on Russia for interfering in the 2016 elections . Putin responded by ordering the American diplomatic mission in Russia reduced by 755 personnel, and Washington, in turn, reciprocated by closing Russia's San Francisco consulate, a key center for espionage operations in the United States.[13]

In sum, Russian diplomacy defends principles of inviolable state sovereignty; promotes recognition of Russia as a great power with a Eurasian sphere of influence; demands respect in international affairs; seeks to restrain U.S., NATO, and EU advances; and asserts Russia's right to participate fully in major global forums and institutions. Russian diplomatic methods include both cooperation and coercion, and reciprocity is a key strategy in preserving Russian honor. Finally, Russian diplomacy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was forced to adjust to conditions of economic crisis, limited military capabilities, and a unipolar world dominated by the United States. As chaotic democratization under Yeltsin gave way to consolidated authoritarianism under Putin, Russian diplomacy became more centralized, secretive, and assertive.

From Soviet Diplomacy to Diplomacy of the 1990s

Following a short period of revolutionary idealism, where Bolshevik leaders rejected traditional bourgeois diplomacy and sought to undermine the

bourgeois international order, Soviet diplomacy reverted to a more typical European style of conducting foreign affairs.[14] Soviet diplomacy was soon tasked with promoting the country's national interests, rather than the cause of proletarian internationalism, although foreign policy behavior was always conceptualized through the ideological prism of Marxism-Leninism.

The Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed a reputation of professionalism, with diplomats well-schooled in foreign languages and history, and tough negotiators. In 1934, the Diplomatic Academy of the USSR was founded under the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to train Soviet diplomats. Toward the end of World War II, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) was established to educate students for careers in foreign affairs. Both institutions survived into the post-communist era and continued to train foreign service professionals. The USSR had diplomatic legations in virtually every country in the world and this policy of great-power engagement has continued in the post-communist era. Diplomacy was a vital tool in the Cold War struggle with the United States.

Much of this Soviet foreign policy bureaucracy would be carried over into the post-communist period — with Cold War thinking and a residual Marxist-Leninist worldview evident among older diplomats. The foreign ministry also inherited a centralized, top-down form of decision making characterized by a high level of formality and secrecy.[15] In the Soviet period, all major foreign policies were formulated by the Communist Party's Politburo, and decisions of the Party leadership were above criticism. Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking" in foreign policy sought to de-ideologize Soviet foreign policy, to open it up to more critical scrutiny and to admit foreign policy failures, as in the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. In today's Russia, the President and his closest advisors dominate foreign policy decision-making, much like the Politburo in Soviet times, and certain issues are no longer open to critical discussion.

Diplomacy in the new post-communist Russia sought to compensate for the country's isolation, its lack of economic clout, and diminished military capabilities. In a world order dominated by the United States, promoting multipolarity became a means of limiting U.S. power. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev (1992-1996) struggled mightily to integrate Russia into the Western world, but in large part failed. One of his successors, Igor Ivanov (Foreign Minister from 1998 to 2004), dismissed Kozyrev's approach to the Post-Cold War order as "a romantic vision."[16] While Ivanov is more highly respected than Kozyrev, it was Evgeniy Primakov's efforts at restoring the balance of power during his tenure as Foreign Minister (1996-98) that earned him a reputation as Russia's consummate diplomat. Primakov was

professional, experienced, a realist and a pragmatist dedicated to advancing Russia's interests abroad by strengthening alliances with the non-western powers.[17]

A key priority of Russian diplomacy from the beginning was to provide the conditions for Russia's economic development and economic reform through integration into the global economy.[18] During the 1990s, the Russian economy suffered from hyperinflation, unemployment, and the stress of transitioning toward a market economy. Russia's economic diplomacy was tasked with encouraging foreign investment, making foreign markets more accessible to Russian exports, developing economic ties with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and ASEAN members, and preserving economic links to the former Soviet republics. Participation in the WTO was a top priority — Russia eventually acquired WTO membership, but only after 18 years of arduous negotiations. As the economy improved, Russian diplomacy prioritized the re-integration of the post-Soviet space through the Customs Union, and later the Eurasian Economic Union.

Russia's diplomats faced the daunting challenging of reorienting their country's foreign policy in the midst of political transition, major economic reforms, and virtual political anarchy. Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was charged with establishing diplomatic ties to the 14 new states on Russia's border, while contending with the Defense Ministry freelancing foreign policy in the Caucasus, Moldova, and elsewhere.[19] A central problem was the question of Russia's national and foreign policy identity, which in the earliest years was oriented toward joining the Western world. But Moscow's perspective quickly evolved in a different direction. By the mid-1990s many Russian elites became disillusioned with the West, believing that Russian weakness in the 1990s led the West to take advantage of Russia, to humiliate it while ignoring Russian interests.

Soviet diplomacy was premised on the ideas of Marxist-Leninism. Russia inherited much of this legacy, including personnel, institutions, and experiences. The Marxist-Leninist ideology that had shaped Soviet foreign policy was abandoned, but a democratic ideology never really took hold. In the more liberal political atmosphere of the 1990s, new foreign policy actors emerged — the state Duma, independent media, business groups, regional officials, and public opinion — effectively decentralizing the conduct of foreign policy for a time.[20] However, under Putin's leadership, power to shape foreign policy gravitated back toward the presidency — no other institution has as significant a role in Russian diplomacy. The State Duma has a Committee on International Affairs, for example, but it lacks the policy-making or oversight authority to constrain either the president's

office or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[21]

The new Post-Communist Russian diplomatic corps retained much of the Soviet foreign policy structure and personnel.[22] However, like many other government bureaucracies, the new Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs experienced a significant decline in budget and personnel following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some thirty-two embassies and consulates were closed and many talented younger diplomats — especially those with good language skills — left for more lucrative employment in the private business sector. Women found professional advancement in the diplomatic service highly limited.[23] Careers in the Foreign Ministry proved unattractive to younger specialists not because of low salaries, but rather due to the perception that power was concentrated in the ruling elite, and a belief that the Foreign Ministry lacked autonomy in policy-making.[24] This concentration of power stemmed from Vladimir Putin's determination to rebuild the "power vertical" in Russian politics, to address the weakness of a decentralized, nearly feudalistic polity.

This weakness was evident on the international stage. Many conservatives and nationalists in Russia decried the country's subservient position in relations with the West, blaming weakness in Russian diplomacy on Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev.[25] His successor, Evgeniy Primakov, was a committed communist who personified the turn away from Kozyrev's Western orientation toward greater multilateralism in foreign policy. Primakov's strategy of creating the best possible conditions for a severely weakened Russia to pursue internal reforms, while avoiding isolation and preserving an international balance of power favorable to Russia's interests, was modeled on the diplomatic precedent set by Prince Aleksandr Gorchakov, who served as foreign minister (1856-1882) to Tsar Alexander II in the aftermath of the Crimean War.[26] Using Gorchakov as his model, Primakov sought to restore Russia's global influence in the 1990s, balancing the United States by strengthening Russia's ties with China and India.

The current Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov draws on both tsarist and Soviet traditions. He has continued to pursue a Primakov-style multipolar diplomacy, while constraining the exercise of U.S. power through the United Nations and other international institutions. Like Primakov, Lavrov reveres Gorchakov for restoring Russian influence in the 19th century solely through diplomacy, without resort to force. And like his Soviet counterpart Andrei Gromyko, Lavrov personifies staunch Russian opposition to American policies, earning the same nickname often applied to the stone-faced Gromyko — "Mr. Nyet."[27] Reflecting Putin's confrontational approach to the West, Mr. Lavrov and lower-ranking MFA personnel have pursued an

aggressive, even crude style of personal diplomacy.[28]

Vladimir Putin and Russian Diplomacy

In the early years of Vladimir Putin's presidency, Russia largely continued the cooperative diplomacy toward the West pursued by Yeltsin's administration, albeit leavened with an emphasis on multipolarity. Putin demonstratively supported the US in its war on terror following the September 11, 2001 attacks, overruling his generals to approve American military transit bases in Central Asia. However, with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the succession of color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan (2003-2005), Russian policy shifted toward confrontation.

The most prominent backlash to American unilateralism was Putin's 2007 speech to the Munich Security Forum, which took Western leaders by surprise. By that time Russia was developing the economic and military capabilities to back up its diplomatic maneuvering to gain acceptance as an equal partner. But the effectiveness of Russia's material capabilities cannot rest solely on energy resources and military might. Russian leaders realized that to maintain Russia's status as a great power the country would also need to develop soft power. Former Foreign Minister Ivanov advocated pursuing a "smart" foreign policy — one that was more flexible and backed by expert advice — with better inter-agency coordination; incorporated civil society institutions; and public-private partnerships. Ideas, Ivanov stressed, could confer a decisive advantage in a globalizing world. These non-material dimensions of foreign policy had been underestimated or neglected by the traditional diplomacy of the past.[29] The concept of "network diplomacy" exemplifies this new strategy.

Foreign Minister Lavrov first advanced the concept of "network diplomacy" in 2006, though the concept may be traced back to the system of flexible alliances advocated by Count Gorchakov in the nineteenth century. The idea is purely pragmatic, to move beyond the bloc politics of the Cold War and engage any combination of states based on coincident interests. Network diplomacy, Lavrov claimed, is aimed at solving common problems and is not directed against any particular state or organization. One major configuration Lavrov specified was the Russia EU-U.S. partnership. This triangle was not directed against China, but rather, could cooperate with China on issues of mutual concern such as North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Similarly, Lavrov asserted, a network like BRICS was not directed against the interests of the United States or the European Union.[30] Following the annexation of Crimea and deterioration of relations

with the West, Russia's network diplomacy focused more on the SCO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Russia-China-India triangle, groupings that excluded Western powers.

For Russia, network diplomacy aligns with the primary goal of shifting the global order away from American dominance and toward a more balanced, multipolar system. The SCO and BRICS process are examples of diplomatic successes because they include non-Western powers, China, and India, and so constitute the realization of Primakov's Eurasian vision. These organizations, together with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and CSTO, form the new ideal of network diplomacy. Lavrov has identified the Iran Nuclear Agreement, the deal to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons, and terrorism as issues where collective action is needed.[31]

These diplomatic initiatives may be considered a form of global governance, but it is governance on Russia's terms. Russian support for the UN, for example, can be viewed as a form of network diplomacy and support for global governance. However, since Russia has veto power in the UN Security Council, and can work with shifting coalitions of like-minded states in the UN General Assembly to realize foreign policy goals, this global institution provides Moscow with an effective means of restraining American power.

Personal ties are also vital to Russian diplomatic efforts. In the decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union personal diplomacy at the highest levels augured well for bilateral relations between Russia and the United States. Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin personally met eighteen times over the eight years that Clinton was in office, and developed a close friendship. A second regular line of diplomatic communications was the Gore-Chernomyrdin commission, proposed by Andrei Kozyrev and headed by U.S. Vice President Al Gore and Russia's Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin. The commission dealt with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality provisions (a sore spot with Chernomyrdin), energy development, joint space exploration, and Russia's nuclear deal with Iran. Through these high-level channels, the principals negotiated a number of major agreements including securing Ukraine's nuclear weapons, withdrawing Russian troops from the Baltic states, and institutionalizing Russia's relationship to NATO.[32]

As Russian diplomacy, like Russian politics, was recentralized under Vladimir Putin, his penchant for secrecy and lack of any significant institutional constraints made foreign policy more unpredictable. Putin established close personal relations with some leaders, most notably former

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Schröder had criticized the American invasion of Iraq, while Berlusconi admired Putin's macho authoritarian style of leadership. With other world leaders, Putin had tense relations, including with President Barack Obama who, early in his first term, chided Putin for "having one foot in the old ways of doing business and one foot in the new."[33] And with Schröder's successor, Angela Merkel, who was famously intimidated by Putin's black Labrador. Putin's extensive experience as the leader of Russia and his intelligence training give him an edge in personal diplomacy. One senior US intelligence officer remarked on how Putin's KGB training helps him discern vulnerabilities in others and exploit them to his advantage during negotiations, exploited Chancellor Merkel's fear of dogs being one such instance.[34]

Russian diplomacy in the early years of the Yeltsin administration was fairly idealistic, but under Putin it became far more pragmatic in advancing Russian interests. American-style moralism which resists engaging with certain international actors (rogue states, for example), is absent from Russian diplomatic practice. Indeed, Putin sought to reestablish close ties with states that had been effectively abandoned following the breakup of the USSR, and he made a point of courting leaders hostile to Washington. These included Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Syria's Bashar al-Assad, and North Korea's Kim Jong-un. In each of these cases, anti-Americanism dovetails with converging interests, whether arms sales to Latin America, restoration of Russian influence in the Middle East, or developing rail and gas links on the Korean peninsula.[35] Classical diplomacy attaches great importance to developing long-term personal relationships based on understanding of each other's national interests. But even the closest personal relationships cannot surmount competing national interests, which often lead great powers to engage in more forceful diplomacy.

Putin's Coercive Diplomacy

Coercive diplomacy relies on the threat of force rather than persuasion, it can include economic, trade, and visa sanctions, in addition to a willingness to use military force in at least a limited capacity. Russia's weakness and its determination to limit American influence along its periphery has led Moscow to move quickly from coercive diplomacy to a demonstration of military power, as in Ukraine and Georgia. In 2015, Russia utilized coercive diplomacy when it imposed a range of sanctions on Turkey following the downing of a Russian fighter jet over Syria.[36] Russia has used similar

forms of coercive diplomacy, including sanctions and energy supplies, against Estonia, Poland, Kyrgyzstan and other states near its borders. These actions are designed primarily to limit U.S. power in Russia and throughout former Soviet space, to oppose infringements on Russian sovereignty, and to protect its perceived sphere of interests.

Russia's coercive diplomacy seeks to create a new multilateral balance of power in the regional, if not the global, order. The goal is to force the United States to accept certain changes in the status quo favorable to Russia — namely the frozen conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and limits on Kiev's authority in southeastern Ukraine. Russia's coercive diplomacy has been applied along the country's periphery, and beyond that to Syria, but not much further. Conventional military power is sufficient to allow Moscow to exercise a regional form of coercive diplomacy, but despite its ambitious aspirations, at present Russia has neither the capability nor the inclination to extend its reach globally.

Diplomacy is effective only if it is backed up by the prospect of credible verbal or non-verbal signaling, substantial economic power (needed for imposing sanctions or providing incentives), and a willingness and ability to use military force. Russia has modernized its military forces since the Georgian war, giving it sufficient capabilities to back up coercive diplomacy regionally.[37] Diplomacy alone was not sufficient to ensure that Georgia and Ukraine remained outside NATO, a key goal for the Kremlin. The George W. Bush administration had pushed membership for both states at the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, and while France and Germany were opposed, the Bucharest Summit Declaration expressed support for their eventual membership.[38] Lavrov asserted NATO membership for either country was a critical threat to Russian national security and blamed the events in Ukraine on NATO's 2008 declaration.[39] Similarly, Syria exemplifies the new Russian strategy of coercive diplomacy backed by a demonstration of military capabilities, while calling for the destruction of terrorists and an eventual negotiated settlement.

Generally, more powerful states are better positioned to make use of coercive diplomacy. Russia uses coercive diplomacy not only against weaker states such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, but is increasingly using intimidation against stronger entities like the U.S., EU, and NATO. Diplomacy, especially coercive diplomacy, is an essential dimension of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy which incorporates a range of measures, many of them non-kinetic, to disrupt and weaken a potential opponent. These include cyber-attacks, trolling, disinformation, and similar methods that are especially effective against open democratic systems.[40]

Russia uses secretive instruments of coercive diplomacy in tandem with public diplomacy which relies on a country's soft power, or cultural attractiveness. As communications technologies have advanced, public diplomacy — the practice of influencing public opinion among publics in foreign nations using governmental and non-governmental organizations — has moved into prominence as a form of soft power.[4142] Russia's government utilizes a network of organizations to advance Russian interests abroad including RT (formerly Russian Television), Sputnik, Rossotrudnichestvo (Federal Agency for the CIS Region, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation), Russkii Mir (Russian World), and the Russian Orthodox Church. The Kremlin skillfully uses modern forms of public diplomacy to complement Russia's successful traditional diplomacy.

Reaffirming History

Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a proud tradition dating to September 1802 when it was formally established under Tsar Alexander I. Russian diplomats have rediscovered Tsarist imperial practices and routinely praise Russia's contribution to European statecraft. Foreign Minister Lavrov has heralded Russia's central contribution to the defense of Europe and preservation of civilization, while noting the continuity of Russian history and diplomatic traditions. Russia's great historical mission, the Foreign Minister claimed, was to serve as a bridge between East and West. The Russian Revolution and Communist rule resulted in tremendous violence, Lavrov acknowledged, but on the positive side, the Soviet state played a vital role in defeating fascism and promoting decolonization and the right of self-determination. Russia's diplomatic experience provided "the basis for moving vigorously forward and asserting our rightful role as one of the leading centers of the modern world, and as a source of values for development, security and stability."[43]

Historical continuity may be discerned in Russia's current promotion of stability and opposition to revolutionary movements or popular protests that threaten authoritarian government which recalls the Holy Alliance of conservative monarchies sponsored by Alexander I (1801-1825). Popular uprisings near Russia's borders threaten Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, much as French revolutionary ideas threatened Europe's monarchies in the nineteenth century. The Kremlin has enlisted Russia's Orthodox Church, led by Patriarch Kirill, to promote Russia's image as guardian of conservative Christian values, and to legitimize the regime's actions in

Ukraine and Syria.[44] This search for a new unifying Russian national idea based on religion recalls the symphonia tradition of close collaboration between church and state of the pre-Petrine era.[45]

The historical messianism of Moscow as the Third Rome, Soviet efforts to spread Communism internationally, and the Kremlin's current paternalistic approach toward compatriots in the former republics exemplify this relationship. Close linkages between foreign and domestic politics are evident in the dominance of President Putin, together with a few close associates, as chief decision makers in foreign affairs, and the degree to which national interests actually reflect elite group interests.[46]

Russian diplomacy also reflects political culture, most notably the pride in national greatness, recognition as an influential major power, and the importance of preserving honor in international relations, aspects of Russian foreign policy that have endured for centuries.[47] To honor Russia's diplomatic service, in 2002, President Putin decreed a Diplomatic Worker's Day, marking the 200th anniversary of Russia's Foreign Ministry.[48] In his congratulatory remarks to Foreign Ministry personnel marking the 2017 holiday, Putin said, "Russia's diplomacy has a long and glorious history and our diplomats have always remained true to their professional duties and served the homeland with honour."[49] Russian diplomacy pragmatically expresses Russian national interests, as realism would suggest, but it also reflects the quest for international respect and defends a distinct Russian national identity, dimensions neglected by a purely realist approach.

Russian diplomacy is in a process of transition away from the traditional high diplomacy of the Soviet era and the diplomacy of weakness of the 1990s, toward a multifaceted and complex diplomacy, balancing effective traditional mechanisms with newer, more nimble forms of diplomacy. It builds on pre-revolutionary and Soviet traditions, and is tightly controlled by President Putin, who is assisted by a small group of foreign policy elites. Russia's professional diplomatic corps has played an important role in restoring the country to a position of prominence in world affairs, though a tendency to resort to coercive diplomacy and intimidation has heightened tensions with the West and contributed to Russia's isolation. Russian diplomacy has been more successful with the non-Western world, through an extensive network of multilateral institutions that either exclude or constrain American and European actions.

The skill and professionalism of Russia's diplomatic corps has served the country well, enabling the Kremlin to exercise a larger global influence than its economic or military capabilities would suggest. Nonetheless, in the absence of effective long-term domestic reform, economic and demo-

graphic factors will constrain Russia's foreign policy options. Diplomacy can only partially compensate for these structural weaknesses. Moreover, Russia's increasing reliance on coercive diplomacy has often proved counter-productive, alienating friends and strengthening opposition to the Kremlin's aggressive tactics.

Notes

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[19] I am indebted to Ambassador Kenneth Yalowitz for this insight.

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Frozen Conflicts: The EU and Future of Cyprus
Interview with Former President of the Republic of Cyprus George Vassiliou

Journal of Diplomacy: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. I would like to ask, given your experience as Chief Negotiator for Cyprus's European Union accession talks, could you describe some challenges you faced in that process?

President George Vasilliou: You think this is one question, it's twenty questions. If you want to have answers that will help you, we should take questions that are of interest to you one by one, but not generalities. On generalities I would say, we are all nice people, and we all want peace, and we all want Cyprus to solve its problem and so on, but that doesn't get us anywhere.

JD: Let me rephrase, is there a specific example in the European Union accession process you'd point to as challenging, what made the process especially difficult given "the Cyprus Problem"?

GV: If you negotiate the accession of a country there are thousands of challenges. The most important and also the most difficult is to accept and implement all the rules and regulations of the European Union. This is why negotiations need to last so long. The first major enlargement of the EU involved 10 countries: Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, the three Baltic States, the Czech Republic, Hungary plus Malta and Cyprus. We had to ensure that our rules, regulations, taxes, everything, would be in conformity with EU regulations. That's easy to say, but extremely difficult to implement. It takes time, but if you have decided you want to join, you do it.

With the accession of Cyprus, the biggest problem was that the EU always said they wanted a united Cyprus to join. In the beginning, it was very clear, "first you unite, and then you join." Mr. Denktaş, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community at that time was against the reunification contrary to Mr. Akıncı, leader of the T/C community, today who supports the creation of a Bi-zonal Bi-communal Federation. We wanted very much to solve the 'Cyprus problem' but this was easier to desire than to achieve.

You ask, how did we succeed accomplishing this while the "Cyprus Problem" was not solved? By being consistent and honest in our desire to achieve the reunification while Mr. Boutros Ghali, the then UN Secretary General stated that Mr. Denktas was not prepared to accept the UN proposals. Accordingly, I raised the issue and stated that the EU cannot punish us because Denktas is so negative. The EU stated "we prefer to have a united Cyprus, but we will decide after things move forward".

The decision to accept Cyprus into the EU was taken at the Copenhagen Summit in 2002. There, we had final discussions with Mr. Denktaş, he rejected again every proposal by the UN, and we accepted all.

Of course, no proposal from the UN would 100% satisfy either party. This was certainly the case with the Annan plan as well. So, I asked the then president of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. (Tassos) Papadopoulos, "you understand that the main question that all member countries will ask is, will you accept the Annan Plan?" and he replied "of course I accept, I told them many times". I then asked "do you authorize me to say that you will vote yes (on the Annan plan)?" and he said "of course I authorize you". In response to his assurances, my answer was if he authorized me to say that and he would vote yes on the Annan plan I could guarantee we would join the EU.

And that's how it went, we were accepted. The understanding now was that the Cyprus problem was not solved beforehand as the EU had initially wanted, but since we were going to vote yes on the Annan Plan, the problem would be dealt with. But by then Papadopoulos had already started carrying out a campaign against the Annan Plan. He did so by saying that "We (ROC) accept the Annan plan but want improvements." but you can never reach an agreement if you don't say finally "Yes, ok." Until then, the conventional wisdom went that the Turkish Cypriots would vote no, and the Greek Cypriots would vote yes. When it became evident that Papadopoulos was against the plan, the instruction came from Ankara to the Turkish Cypriot leadership to vote yes. So, in a surprising reversal, the Turkish Cypriot side voted yes and the Greek Cypriot side voted no.

JD: What is your opinion on the ideas promoted by some for two states?

GV: There are some Cypriots both Greek and Turkish Cypriots that say, "Well we are used to it, so let us divide Cyprus, and we will live in peace, and we can both be members of the EU." This is a stupid idea and the EU

will never allow it. The EU is already a Union of 28, perhaps soon to be 32 countries. If tomorrow the EU is subdivided into different countries, how can they compete effectively with China, Russia, the US and so on? They cannot. The future lies in a stronger union, not in separation. The EU takes a very adamant position. They will never accept the division of any member country into two or more. Two examples of this attitude are that of Belgium and Spain. In Belgium the Dutch-speaking Flemings and the French-speaking Walloons wanted partition, but the EU refused it. The Belgians compromised, now the King is the head of both communities and Belgium remained one country. A newer case is that of Catalonia. A small majority of Catalans tried everything, but the EU refused to grant independence and split Spain in two.

JD: Since the accession of the Republic of Cyprus have the benefits of membership been sufficient for the people of Cyprus, are there detractors?

GV: The fact alone that the small island of Cyprus with just over a million inhabitants is an equal member in a union of 500 million, permits us to enjoy the many benefits of the Common Market. Being in the union means there is security. In the last 60 years Europe has lived in peace. It was the longest period in history with no wars. We are not fighting each other anymore and we are enjoying an unprecedented increase in the standards of living.

JD: I suppose pushing back on that I'd ask does Cyprus get its due within the EU. In regard to the banking crisis, it seems unlikely that another country in the union would have to adhere to the terms of the Cypriot "bail-in."

GV: You're talking about the so-called 'haircut'. This is, indirectly, a result of the accession. People with money from Russia, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries wanted to take advantage of the fact that Cyprus was an EU state, part of the Euro area, and they deposited several billions in Cyprus. This led to a bubble; the banks had so much money they didn't know what to do. For example, if someone was going to buy a car, he would be granted immediately a loan and even asked "don't you want to buy another car for your wife?" But when later the Banks were obliged to request repayment of the loans, many debtors were unable to meet their obligations. Thus, we ended up with all these nonperforming loans. But you are right. The 'bail-in' used in Cyprus was never repeated in other member country.

JD: Moving beyond the EU and Cypriot accession, looking to your presidency, what would you say is your legacy in that position?

GV: It is not easy to speak about yourself. When I became president, we had no real democracy. You could not be a civil servant without reading the paper of the government party; you could not criticize the president. So, I said from now on, you can read any paper you like, you can say anything you like because you live in a free country. We insisted the state-monopoly over the radio and television should be abolished. People remember my Presidency years as the time when Cyprus became a real democracy.

Another thing I'm proud of is the establishment of the University of Cyprus. Some Greek Cypriots were hesitant in creating a domestic university, saying that they didn't want to "cut the umbilical cord" to Greece. I insisted that without a University a country cannot really have a future. After a lengthy fight, I succeeded in establishing that university.

I also insisted that we should have a proper, comprehensive town planning law and ensured that all political parties accepted it. Furthermore, there were no regulations about the environment. We created the Department of Environment and all related rules.

JD: It sounds like those are the building blocks of a successful state, good governance, democracy, autonomy, free press, uniform regulations. That seems like a robust legacy to me.

GV: Yes. That is my legacy.

JD: I'm going to ask what is probably an expected question. You said earlier you cannot imagine a two-state division of the island or an indefinite continuation of the status quo. Given current political developments, the elections that just took place both in the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot community, is there, in your opinion, a chance for fruitful talks to begin again?

GV: The answer is very simple, we will have to do it, full stop. If we don't do it both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots will suffer. It's not to the advantage of Turkey either; Therefore, it's to the benefit of Turkey to solve it, and it's to our benefit not to have problems. If we stumble, we will both pay in one or another way.

JD: You said, we have to do it, that the status quo or permanent partition isn't an option. What is the catalyst we need to break out of this cycle?

GV: The catalyst should be realization by the Cypriots how dangerous is the continuation of the current stalemate. Greek Cypriots know that if we don't solve the Cyprus Problem, we will be in trouble. Turkish Cypriots recognize that if there is no solution, after some years Turkish Cypriots as an entity will not exist. There will be Turkish speaking people but not a separate Turkish Cypriot entity. Imagine 300,000 Cypriots in a country (Turkey) of 80 million.

JD: This controversy over natural gas exploration in the Cypriot EEZs, Eni came to drill, now Exxon is on its way, can that be a catalyst?

GV: Yes, it can be. Turkey would never permit us to exploit the natural wealth, but on the other hand, Turkey will also not be able to exploit this wealth. Everyone will lose. Whether we like it or not we have to sit down and be prepared for compromise and by the way let me point out that building a pipeline through Turkey would benefit all of us.

JD: Do you think Akıncı and Anastasiades may sit down for a face to face meeting soon?

GV: Yes, but both of them must say what is and what is not feasible. Talks need to start, but importantly, must end, you cannot have unending talks.

JD: To conclude we'd like to ask what drove you to seek the presidency of Cyprus.

GV: I was not consciously preparing for it; I was not dreaming of being president. But when I realized that a change was necessary, I submitted my candidacy. When I became president, I continued behaving as I did before, bringing the same attitude to the job I had always held. We worked hard, and we achieved a lot of things. Unfortunately, the most important thing I wanted to see was Cyprus reunited, but we didn't have enough time to achieve it.

In a democracy, you have influence over a certain number of factors in the political environment, but it's really up to the electorate. I lost the re-election

by a few hundred votes and since then I've met many, many people who said to me, "oh how stupid I was not to vote for you, I would have better cut off my hand rather than not vote for you." When I hear this, I answer in joking "ok, but what would I do in a country with so many people with one hand!" What I really regret is that since 1993, 25 years passed and Cyprus is still divided. But we are not permitted to give up. We have to continue trying.

This interview was conducted on March 8th, 2018 at President Vasiliou's Office in Nicosia, Cyprus, and has been edited for length, content, and clarity.