

THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE TO THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

EDITED BY

ROGER E. KANET



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The Russian Challenge to the European Security Environment

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PREFACE

The editor wishes to express his sincere appreciation to the authors of the contributions that comprise this volume for their central role in the project, for the quality of their analysis, and their positive responses to suggestions for revision and updating to strengthen the quality of their contributions. The idea for this volume emerged along with preparations for two ISA (International Studies Association) panels jointly entitled 'Peace or Conflict in Eurasia' held at the annual ISA meetings in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, on Wednesday, 16 March 2016. All of the contributors to this volume were able to share their views and to comment on one another's papers, thereby helping to sharpen the focus of the emerging chapters and the overall collection.

This volume is part of an informal series of books¹ dealing with Russian foreign and security policy published over the course of the past decade, or so (primarily by Palgrave Macmillan), in which many of the contributors to this volume have been involved. In most cases the volumes evolved much as this one, from a group of integrated papers prepared originally for and presented at a workshop or set of conference panels, at which the authors were able to share their ideas and contribute to the depth and quality of the analysis and to benefit from comments from colleagues in the audience. Through these interactive sessions we have emerged as something of an informal research group and, more important, have produced an increasingly comprehensive picture of the evolution of the foreign and security policy of the Russian Federation.

On behalf of the authors and myself I wish to thank, as well, the many others who have contributed to the publication of this volume, in particular the editorial and production staff of Palgrave and the anonymous readers consulted by the publisher.

NOTE

1. The projects referred to include the following: Roger E. Kanet and Matthew Sussex (eds) (2015) *Power, Politics and Confrontation in Eurasia: Foreign Policy in a Contested Region*; Sussex and Kanet (eds) (2015) *Russia, Eurasia and the New Geopolitics of Energy: Confrontation and Consolidation* (2015); Kanet and Rémi B. Piet (eds) (2014) *Shifting Priorities in Russia's Foreign and Security Policy*; Kanet and Maria Raquel Freire, Guest Editors (2012) *Russia in the New International Order: Theories, Arguments, Debates*. A special issue of *International Politics*, 49(4); Freire and Kanet (eds) (2012) *Russia and Its Near Neighbours*; Kanet and Freire (eds) (2012) *Competing for Influence: The EU and Russia in Post-Soviet Eurasia*; Kanet and Freire (eds) (2012) *Russia and European Security*; Kanet (ed) (2010) *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-first Century*; Freire and Kanet (eds) (2010) *Key Players and Regional Dynamics in Eurasia: The Return of the 'Great Game'*; Kanet (ed) (2009) *A Resurgent Russia and the West: The European Union, NATO and Beyond*; Kanet (ed) (2007) *Russia, Re-Emerging Great Power*; and Kanet (ed) (2005) *The New Security Environment. The Impact on Russia, Central and Eastern Europe*.

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Introduction: The Russian Challenge to the Security Environment in Europe

Roger E. Kanet

A quarter of a century ago the collapse of the Soviet political-economic system supposedly introduced, in the words of then US President George H.W. Bush, ‘a new world order’ that would be characterized by collaboration, negotiations and the peaceful resolution of differences. It was widely and optimistically expected, among many in both Russia and in the West, that democratization would come to Russia and that the Russian Federation would be successfully integrated into the Western-dominated security, political and economic systems. As we well know today, these expectations did not materialize. In fact, over the past decade Russian relations with the USA and Europe have deteriorated precipitously, to the point where Russia has used military force to challenge Western policies in various parts of post-Soviet space and NATO has committed itself to strengthening its military presence in countries bordering Russian territory.

The present volume brings together a group of analysts from Russia and the West to examine the factors that have led seemingly inexorably to the current confrontation between the Russian Federation and the West and to what some have even termed a ‘new cold war’ (Lucas 2014). Individually, they approach the topic of the deterioration of Russian-Western relations

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and the growing Russian challenge to the West-dominated post-cold war order that emerged in Europe and the rest of the world from a variety of theoretical perspectives which, they believe, will help to shed light on what occurred to turn the expected 'new world order' and integration of Russia into the existing international system of 1991 into the confrontational relationship that currently characterizes those relations.

It makes a difference in the factors that one emphasizes and the conclusions that one reaches about Russian policy depending upon the theoretical approach that one takes – whether one focuses on attitudes and values and domestic political and economic factors, as a neoclassical realist or constructivist, or, rather, on the interaction of states in the international system as a structural realist, whether one's orientation is that of an offensive or defensive realist.¹ In the current volume, which focuses on Russian relations with the West and attempts to explain the factors that have undermined that relationship over the past quarter century, the authors bring quite different assumptions and theoretical frameworks to the analysis.

In many respects the study of Soviet and Russian foreign policy has been something of a 'stepchild' in the field of the social sciences over the past half century. While political scientists and international relations specialists attempted to pursue a more 'scientific' and 'theory-based' approach to the study of domestic and international politics – often based upon research methods drawn from economics – in order to generalize about behaviour across political systems, analysts of Soviet and Russian politics were much more concerned about explaining the idiosyncrasies of Soviet and Russian society and politics. Immersion in the history and culture of Russia was the primary approach taken by these scholars. The result was a growing gap between political scientists and what were termed Soviet or Russian area specialists.

The challenge in the past quarter century to the dominance of positivist-oriented analysis in the IR field presented by constructivism and by an array of post-modernist perspectives has closed much of the gap between students of Russian foreign policy and their generalist colleagues. In recent decades books and articles concerned with Russian foreign policy have drawn increasingly upon the theoretical insights of constructivism in their analysis. Ted Hopf's 2002 study, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow 1955 and 1999*, presented an extended treatment of the importance of ideas, norms and issues of identity in the making of Soviet/Russian foreign policy. More recently other analysts, such as Timofey Bordachev (2008), Valentina Feklyunina

(2008), Andrei Tsygankov and Matthew Tarver-Wahlquist (2009), and Regina Heller (2012), have effectively employed the central tenets of the constructivist critique of realist and other positivist approaches to international political analysis to explain some of the vagaries of Russian foreign policy.² Several of the contributors to this current volume, Alexey Bogdanov and Maria Raquel Freire in particular, frame their analysis of Russian policy explicitly within the context of constructivist arguments about the impact of norms and values in international affairs. Yet, classical realism, which takes into account both systemic factors emphasized by structural realists, but tempered by the understanding that domestic factors, such as norms and values, also play a very important role in influencing policy choices. In the following pages, the chapter by Nuray Ibryamova and Mehtap Kara is framed explicitly by neoclassical realist assumptions, while chapters by John Berryman, Nikita Lomagin and Stanislav Tkachenko are influenced by such an approach.

In a way, however, the various approaches to the analysis of Russian foreign policy do not break significantly with past theoretical assumptions and frameworks. Foreign policy analysis became an outlier in international relations as the field moved towards more abstract and so-called scientific analytic approaches. It is heartening to observe the closing of this intellectual gap,³ with the emergence of constructivist and neoclassical realist approaches to analysis. Earlier analysts of Soviet and Russian foreign policy pursued their subject within the context of a set of assumptions about human behaviour and foreign policy that finds clear resonance in constructivism and neoclassical realism. One needs to only turn to the work of the late George Kennan (1961) or Vernon Aspaturian (1971) for examples. As I have noted elsewhere, 'Both approached the subject of Soviet policy from the perspective of the specialist steeped in the history and culture of Russia. Both were concerned about clarifying for their respective audiences the reasons for Soviet behaviour. They organized their data roughly within the framework of what would now be termed neoclassical realism – with clear assumptions about the factors that motivated the decisions of Soviet leaders. However, they were not interested in theory in the sense of developing generalizations about human behaviour that would hold across cultures. They were interested in understanding and explaining Soviet foreign policy behaviour' (Kanet 2012).

In many respects the critics of structural realism who attacked the epistemological foundations of neorealism and other mainstream theories of International Relations a quarter of a century ago helped to re-establish the place of history, culture, and ideas in the study of international politics.

They opened for analysts of Russian foreign policy the opportunity to move from the periphery of the social sciences back towards the centre – albeit a newly defined theoretical centre.

The chapters that comprise this volume are not explicitly theoretical or methodological in nature. Their purpose is to explain the factors that have contributed to the growing cleavages between the Russian Federation, on the one side, and the European Union and the USA, on the other. Given the significant diversity of the backgrounds of the authors, it is understandable that the following chapters bring not only differing methodological perspectives to the analysis, but quite different ‘takes’ on the nature of Russian policy and, thus, the central factors that explain the deterioration of Russian-Western relations in the past decade, or so.⁴

Although the authors differ, sometimes significantly, in their overall assessments of the factors of central importance in driving the growing confrontation between Russia and the West, several themes cut across most of the chapters that follow. First is the argument that the West has substantial responsibility for the deterioration of relations, beginning already in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the USSR when it largely ignored Moscow’s oft-repeated security concerns. A second central point made most clearly in the chapter by Aleksandar Jankovski is that Russia and the USA, despite the growing hostility, have continued to exercise restraint and to cooperate on key issues of international concern. A third theme that runs through most of the chapters emphasizes the importance of ‘great power identity’ for Russian policy makers, as well as the centrality of norms in the expanding confrontation between Russia and the West. A fourth issue dealt with by several of the authors, but especially by Mikhail Molchanov, concerns the hypocrisy of the West, specifically the European Union, in demanding exclusivity in any special economic relationship with post-Soviet states which would in effect cut them off from their ‘natural’ market in Russia and turn them into ‘peripheral’ members of the Western economic community. Finally, most of the authors, most clearly Stanislav Tkachenko, focus on Russia’s inherent weakness in its struggle with the West and the willingness of its leadership to engage in ‘brinkmanship’ in challenging Western incursions into Russia’s ‘special areas of interest’, as then President Medvedev noted (2008), and asserting Russia’s role in regional and global affairs.

The chapters that comprise the first part of the book focus on the specific issue of the Russian challenge to the international order, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and post-Soviet space more generally, in the years

following the end of the Cold War and the implosion of the former Soviet Union. In the second chapter, 'Growing Confrontation between Russia and the West: Russia's Challenge to the Post-Cold War Order', Suzanne Loftus and Roger E. Kanet track the gradual deterioration of Russian-US relations, with emphasis on Russia's growing resistance to what it saw as direct challenges to Russian interests. Over time, as its resource base improved, Russia has been more assertive in challenging Western initiatives. The confrontation is based in part on great power competition, but also on very different conceptions of the nature of governance, at both the state and the international levels. Loftus and Kanet are not confident that relations will improve in the near future, short of Western acceptance of Russia's expanded role in Eurasian and global security.

In Chapter 3, 'Preserving Peace among the Great Powers: Russia's Foreign Policy and Normative Challenges to the International Order', Alexey Bogdanov focuses not only on the normative aspects of Russian-Western relations and on the centrality of the idea of sovereignty to Russian policy, but also on the importance of the competition between Russia and the West, especially the EU, to re-establish a form of hierarchy throughout post-Soviet space. Two visions of that hierarchy clash and form the basis of the conflict. As Bogdanov argues, 'the incipient Russian hierarchy transforms radically the strategic landscape of the post-Soviet space, provoking both scholars and decision-makers to take a fresh look at the nature of current security challenges in the region'.

Lilia Arakelyan, in Chapter 4, 'EU-Russia Security Relations: Another Kind of Europe', argues that the failure of the Eastern Partnership initiative to implement long-awaited political and economic reforms in its partner states resulted from the fact that the European Union was more interested in containing Russia in the region that historically had been under direct control from Moscow rather than enhancing relations and closer integration with the partnership countries. As a result, only Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine signed the Association Agreement with the EU. Moreover, Moscow became increasingly hostile towards the West, painted Russia as a defender of traditional values in contrast to 'decadent' capitalist culture. It is important to recognize, she argues, that this was a long-term process based on the Russia's refusal to accept a subsidiary position in a Europe dominated by the Euro-Atlantic states.

In Chapter 5, 'A Cold Peace between Russia and the West: Did Geoeconomics Fail?', Nikita A. Lomagin examines the ways in which Russia has used its economic dominance within post-Soviet space and beyond to achieve political objectives. After a brief discussion of the place of economic

sanctions in international affairs, Lomagin examines in some detail the Russian response to Western sanctions after the Ukraine Crisis, as well as Russia's earlier use of economic pressures, primarily against post-Soviet states, in the effort to accomplish political goals. Although Russian geo-economic policy has been only partially successful, it has become an integral part of Russia's effort to defend its perceived interests in post-Soviet space and beyond.

Chapter 6, 'The Coercive Diplomacy of Vladimir Putin (2014–2016)', by Stanislav Tkachenko, examines the increasing willingness of the Russian regime under President Vladimir Putin to employ the threat and the use of limited military pressure to accomplish its political goals. In many respects Tkachenko is examining the other side of the relationship on which Lomagin has focused – the strengths that Russia, as the weaker side in the competition, has drawn upon to pursue its interests, including re-establishing a multipolar international system. Tkachenko is especially interested in demonstrating that increasingly Russia has not merely been reactive to Western challenges. The coercive diplomacy of Russia's leaders represents a new thrust of Russia's policy, driven by the willingness to protect its vital interests in the former Soviet republics and benefit from equal relations with the USA and major European powers. Yet, coercive diplomacy, in his view signifies Russia's weakness in the contest with the West.

As a group the first five chapters in Part I of the book all focus on the factors that have contributed to the growing confrontation, at virtually all levels, between the Russian Federation and the West and the means that the former has employed in pushing forward its interests. At the centre of the confrontation are two visions of the future of Europe and Eurasia in almost complete opposition to one another and the willingness to date of both sides to push forward these visions. However, in the final chapter of the first part of the book, Chapter 7, titled 'The Russian Federation and the United States: The Problem of International Order', Aleksandar Jankovski alerts us to the fact that the confrontation continues to be tempered by an awareness among the protagonists that they have 'responsibility' for ensuring that their divisions do not challenge the very existence of the international system and of humankind itself. Basing his argument on insights drawn from the English School, he demonstrates that 'for all the irritants, the relations between the two great powers have continued to be remarkably orderly *and constitutive of international society*'. They recognize their indispensable role in collaborating in the workings of the common good of international society.

The chapters that comprise the second part of the book examine 'The Ukrainian Crisis and Beyond in the Restructuring of Russian Relations with the West'. They begin with Chapter 8, 'Russia and the European Security Order: Impact and Implications of the Ukraine Crisis', by John Berryman, which provides an important lead in to the issue of the impact of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine. He tracks in some detail twenty years of NATO's encroachment eastward and the growing challenges that the West has generated to Russia's sense of security.

In Chapter 9, 'Ukraine and the Restructuring of East-West Relations', Maria Raquel Freire draws upon the norm literature to track the deterioration of Russian relations with the West, in particular as it relates to the Ukraine crisis. She emphasizes the West's attempts to serve as the diffuser of norms, norms strongly and increasingly resisted by Moscow. The increasingly hostile discourse between the two sides has solidified the sense of security conflict on both sides.

Mikhail Molchanov continues the detailed discussion of the Ukraine crisis in Chapter 10, 'Regionalism and Multivectorism in Europe's Borderlands: The Strange Case of Ukraine'. He demonstrates quite conclusively that Ukraine would have been much better served economically to have joined the Russian-sponsored Eurasian Union, where there were markets for its heavy industrial product. The West has done Ukraine a serious disservice by in effect forcing it to abandon a foreign economic policy that balanced relations with both Russia and the West in favour of an either-or decision. As is the case of most of the other authors, he is pessimistic about the future of both Ukraine and of Russian relations with the West.

The final substantive chapter in the book, Chapter 11, 'Russia and Turkey: Power, Individuals, and Identities in the Syrian Conflict', by Nuray Ibryamova and Mehtap Kara, extends the discussion to the place of Russia's involvement in Syria in the conflict with the West and to the involvement of Turkey in the emerging security environment. The authors focus on both the systemic and internal factors that have driven the policies of the two countries, including shifting senses of national identity and of their role in the region and the world and the ways in which their mutual relations impact on the Russian-Western relationship.

The book concludes with a twelfth chapter entitled 'Russia and the Future of European Security' in which Andrei Tsygankov responds to and builds upon the earlier chapters by drawing upon five major themes

concerning the factors that have led to the growing impasse between Russia and the West and the prospects for future relations. It is these overlapping themes that tie the volume together.

Overall the following chapters attempt to make sense of the dramatic changes that have occurred in Russian relations with the West in the quarter century since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The positive relationship that many expected to evolve soon soured and now is characterized by what some analysts see as a revival of cold war hostilities minus the ideological component. The answers presented by the contributors to this volume differ in many respects. However, they all contain the overlapping element of what one can only term great power competition for regional influence, even dominance that, virtually by definition, pits the two sides against one another.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of the impact of theoretical perspectives on the analysis of Russian foreign policy and for analyses based on alternative frameworks, see the special issue of *International Studies* coedited by Kanet and Freire (2012). The current discussion draws upon that special issue.
2. See, also, Andrei Tsygankov's (2012) major study of Russian foreign policy.
3. Needless to say, epistemological and methodological differences continue to divide the academic international relations community. What is important for those concerned with Russian foreign and domestic politics is the fact that, with the intellectual changes in the social sciences in recent decades, they have once more been admitted inside the tent.
4. As noted in the Preface, all of the authors were able to share their interpretations, and at times differences, in person in several panels at a scholarly conference before preparing final drafts of their contributions. They have also benefitted from the comments of anonymous external readers contacted by the editorial staff at Palgrave Macmillan.

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