

# STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



What Additional Future Steps Should the United States and Europe Take, If Any at All, to Counter Russian Ambitions?

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# What Makes Vladimir Run?

*Victor Davis Hanson*

A line from President Vladimir Putin's April 2005 state of the nation address is now often commonly footnoted to explain his latest aggressions:

"Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century. As for the Russian nation, it became a genuine drama. Tens of millions of our co-citizens and co-patriots found themselves outside Russian territory."

Putin was not necessarily lamenting the collapse of Soviet communism. Even the former KGB officer realized that the system was largely self-immolating. Rather, Putin was mourning the collapse of the vast Russian Empire. Specifically, he missed the wealth, influence, and power that accrued from the incorporation of the so-called former Soviet Republics. In his mind, the implosion of all that had led to a "geopolitical" catastrophe.

More importantly, however, was Putin's often ignored following sentences, especially his remorse that "tens of millions of our co-citizens and co-patriots found themselves outside Russian territory." A near decade ago, Putin tipped off the West of an upcoming agenda to make sure "co-citizens" and "co-patriots" would not have to remain "outside Russian territory."

Two impulses—both a desire for past geopolitical power and status, and a wish to refashion borders to include "tens of million" of Russian speakers in Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine, and the Baltic States—drive Putin. He apparently believes that twenty-first-century Russia could become an updated nineteenth-century Czarist Empire, characterized by oligarchy, Orthodoxy, and the glories of Russian language and culture. The Russian Union could become as powerful on the world stage as was the Soviet Union, but without its internal weaknesses and unsustainability.

In that vein, Putin has so far been successful in adding territory to Russia without prompting a war, in much the same eerie manner of Adolf Hitler who had cobbled together a new Third Reich in the late 1930s without war—at least before he had overstepped in 1939.

Why has Putin gotten away with such blatant aggression so far?

One, the West feels exhausted by the 2008 financial meltdown, the crisis in the European Union, the wars and their dismal follow-ups in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, as well as the growth of the premodern Islamic State. In reaction to all these past interventions, and

present challenges, and with Western finances still shaky, many Westerners would rather not become involved anywhere. The fighting in Ukraine is our generation's Czechoslovakia ("a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing"). And no one knows whether the Baltic States may become our Poland—tottering allies that we do not wish to defend, but in theory must, if only halfheartedly through a *Sitzkrieg*, due to past treaty obligations.

Second, Putin sits atop Russia's nuclear arsenal. He understands that his apparent instability and unpredictability prove valuable cards in nuclear poker—as we have seen from occasional lunatic pronouncements from both North Korea and Iran. Each time, Russian jets buzz the coastlines of Scandinavia or Britain, or an obscure general smarts off about Western military weakness and Russian nuclear strength, Westerners are not quite sure what Putin might do if challenged or checked—and therefore hope he will just take only one or two more countries, and then satiated go away and leave them alone.

Third, Europe for now still needs Russian gas and oil, or at least finds such energy more easily accessible than imports from elsewhere. It enjoys a huge and profitable export market in Russia. Less important, Germany, the font of European power, either appears to show penance for its past aggression that led to 20 million Russian dead, or is now so weak militarily that it has no ability to deter Putin if it wanted to. In the case of Orthodox states like Serbia, Greece, and Cyprus, Putin's Russia is far more popular than is the United States.

Fourth, some Westerners shrug that many of the recently annexed territories were Russian at various times, well before Joseph Stalin's aggressions. They point out that Putin has understandable emotional claims to these lands that are linked with past bloody Russian sacrifice. Think of the failed Russian defenses of Sevastopol in 1854–55 during the Crimean War or General Erich von Manstein's bloody capture of the city in July 1942, when Russia suffered over 100,000 casualties. We in the West think of an autonomous, post-Soviet Ukraine; Putin instead recalls the 1941 first battle of Kiev, when Russians suffered over 700,000 casualties in failed efforts to save a Ukraine cut off by the sweeping pincers of the Wehrmacht. Almost all the foci of Putin's recent annexations have long histories of strife, in which Russia battled to defend these lands against foreign attackers or itself sought to conquer them. For Putin, these borderlands are his irredentist updated versions of the Rhineland, Saarland, Austria, Sudetenland, and Danzig where millions of German speakers were supposedly orphaned outside the Third Reich. For many Westerners, to the degree that they care about Putin's aggrandizement, they have conceded that Russia has a longer history and interest in all these regions than they do.

Fifth, others in the West do not just locate Putin's aggression in historical contexts, but rather are sympathetic to his grand talk about contemporary Christianity, traditional



Russian values, a decadent West rife with abortion, homosexuality, multiculturalism, and opposition to radical Islam. He has become a sort of paleocon, whose reactionary views may be eccentric, but are at least admirable for his political incorrectness being unapologetically felt and expressed.

Finally, Putin does not just think that Barak Obama is weak—after the backdown on missile defense in Eastern Europe, the pink lines in Syria, the serial empty deadlines with Iran, and the deer-in-the-headlights confusion about the Islamic State—but pompous in his impotence. For Putin, Obama combines the worst of both worlds—speaking loudly while carrying a small stick. In condescending fashion, he has psychoanalyzed Putin as the proverbial adolescent cutup in the back of the room or the wannabe strutting about with his “macho shtick.” In reaction, Putin seems to go out of his way to try to make Obama look weak, by turning “reset” into a cruel joke and deliberately embarrassing him in the Middle East.

Can Putin be deterred, if, as is expected, he begins to bully the Baltic States with his now accustomed modus operandi—persecuted Russian minorities, unfair and gratuitous smears and slanders about a past noble Russian contribution to those countries, and the need for plebiscites, federalism, and semiautonomy? For Putin, the fact that the Baltic States are NATO members is an enticement, not a deterrent. He wagers that it is more likely that NATO would fold than fight should he cross into Estonia. And with such a backdown would come the dissolution of the alliance itself. Some Eastern European states are already concluding that a proximate and aggressive Putin is a better bet than a distant and retiring America.

The United States and its NATO allies should beef up collective air and ground defenses in the Baltic States. They should keep sanctions on Russia, and reopen missile defense with Poland and the Czech Republic, despite the apparent realpolitik Russian tilt of much of current Eastern Europe. Instead of outsourcing traditional



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American leadership responsibilities to Germany, the United States should craft precise NATO contingencies—which NATO ally will do what—the moment Putin masses forces on his borders.

Most of all, President Obama should keep quiet and stop psychoanalyzing Putin. We forget the historical role of personal pique in geopolitics. Chamberlain was so fond of explaining Hitler to others—and Hitler to Hitler himself—that the Fuhrer finally went out of his way to find a method of provoking Chamberlain and the Western democracies with him. Of the solicitous and verbose but apparently appeasing Chamberlain who gave Germany what it wanted at Munich, Hitler scoffed, “If ever that silly old man comes interfering here again with his umbrella, I’ll kick him downstairs and jump on his stomach in front of the photographers.”

If an American president were seen by Putin as reticent, unpredictable, and quite dangerous rather than garrulous, predictable, and acquiescent, he might pause, worry—and back off.



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# We Can End Russia's War Against Ukraine

*Paul R. Gregory*

To stay in power with declining living standards, Vladimir Putin must invent a foreign enemy (the United States), which has overthrown the legitimate government of Ukraine, props up a puppet government with a "foreign legion," and plans a sneak attack on Russia. In Putin's "alternative world" narrative, Russia's actions in Eastern Ukraine are purely defensive and humanitarian. His requirement for "peace" is veto power over Ukrainian policy for his puppet "people's republic" of Eastern Ukraine, e.g. the de facto end of an independent Ukraine.

Putin's peace conditions are not acceptable to the "New Ukraine." Nevertheless, the United States and Europe pay lip service to striking a peace agreement that cannot be. The only possible resolutions are either Ukrainian capitulation (which would be welcomed in many European capitals) or raising the cost to Putin to such a level that he must seek a face-saving way out.

I suggest the following measures that, if applied correctly and consistently, can bring Russia's war against Ukraine to a satisfactory conclusion:

## **Continue and strengthen sanctions over the long run**

International sanctions have taken a deep bite of the Russian one-commodity economy, especially in combination with collapsing energy prices. They must be preserved, and Western leaders who understand their importance must maintain European resolve in the face of the reservations of countries like Hungary, Greece, and even France. Notably, the American

economic recovery works in favor of sanctions resolve. It is better to be friends with the growing United States than the collapsing Russia. Note that Russia's crisis deprives Putin of the financial wherewithal to wage war and acquire more territory by depleting rainy day funds, diverting money from pension reserves, and lacking resources for the humanitarian crises in Russian-controlled territories of Ukraine.

## **POLL: WHAT ADDITIONAL FUTURE STEPS SHOULD THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE TAKE, IF ANY AT ALL, TO COUNTER RUSSIAN AMBITIONS?**

- ☐ Nothing. Additional punitive measures against Putin would be unduly polarizing and counterproductive.
- ☐ Nothing. Increase US oil production that is doing more harm to the Russian economy than sanctions.
- ☐ Work more closely with Europe, and outreach to India and China, to create a firewall to Putin's agendas.
- ☐ NATO must station more ground and air troops in Eastern Europe and the Balkans to showcase Western deterrence.
- ☐ Issue a red line that Russian entry into an Eastern European or Baltic nation will be met with armed force.

### Lethal weapons

The West has yet to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine to match the troops and equipment flowing in from Russia across open borders. Barring such weapons, Ukraine cannot inflict real harm on Russia's forces as the fighting heats up. A strong Ukraine places Putin under severe pressure. Russian deaths on the Ukrainian field of battle already number in the thousands—a fact the Putin regime has tried to conceal. The Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia has mobilized against the war, and the Russian people oppose sending their sons to fight in Ukraine. Despite Congressional authorization, President Obama will likely choose not to send weapons for fear of angering Russia. This is wrong. A muscular Ukraine means less danger from Russia for Europe, NATO, and the United States. Obama must understand that the United States will remain enemy number one in Putin's propaganda war whether he authorizes weapons or not.

### Give Ukraine the financial resources to build the New Ukraine

Europe and the United States must pitch in financially to make Ukraine's turn to the West a success. Ukrainians revolted on Maidan Square one year ago because they were tired of corruption and lawlessness. Ukraine wants to be Europe, not Russia. Those who oppose generous financing must consider that Ukraine has lost some 20 percent of its territory in a hot war and must rebuild its military and an intelligence agency infiltrated by Russian spies. Without a Ukrainian Marshall Plan that recognizes these special conditions and the New Ukraine's resolve to reform, the Ukraine experiment will fail, and Putin will have won without lifting a finger. A successful, reformed Ukraine would



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reveal that it is Putin's Russia that is flawed and in need of reform, not Ukraine, as Putin claims.

### Destroy Russia's natural gas weapon

Europe must finalize its united energy policy, which liberalizes the free flow of gas among European countries. If Russia withholds deliveries from one country, other countries will simply transfer gas to them. Europe must dismiss Russia's latest threat to divert deliveries from Ukraine to Turkey, and require Europe to pay for the new infrastructure. Any infrastructure investments should go for LNG terminals and non-Russian sources



of supply. Europe's anti-monopoly commission must declare the obvious—that Gazprom's monopoly must be broken up into production and transportation companies. Russia's use of the natural gas weapon in the course of the Ukrainian standoff has been a major strategic mistake. It has convinced Europe it cannot rely on Russia. Without the gas weapon, Russia will have lost its leverage over Europe. This will be Russia's major loss from its Ukraine adventure.

### Engage in the propaganda war

The West must seriously counter Putin's "alternative world propaganda" that his Russian audience accepts. Putin employs a vast army of propagandists to promote the Putin story both at home and throughout the Western world, which absorbs the blows without responding. Europe must open its planned Russian broadcast station, and the United States must upgrade Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to broadcast straight news to Russia and Ukraine. Fighting back is essential in the new era of hybrid warfare in which propaganda plays an outsized role.

Putin bases his legitimacy on his high favorability ratings, which requires that the Russian people believe a rather incredible fairy tale of the world. Nonstop bombardment with this fable has had its toll, but there is no reason to believe that it cannot be rolled back by honest reporting that reaches the Russian-speaking world.

### Understand Putin and his kleptocracy

We live in the "civilized world" of norms and accepted behavior that cannot conceive of an entire nation run as a criminal enterprise, by kleptocrats whose concern is their power and wealth. We accept instead the convenient image that Putin presents to the outside world—a true Russian nationalist bereaved by the loss

of an empire, encircled by NATO enemies planning a sneak attack. Western apologists argue he has no choice but to strike back, and we must be sensitive to his fears, find face-saving solutions, and live in peace. That is the naïve view of the world that Putin must propagate in order to survive.

Russian kleptocrats, Putin chief among them, understand that they have constructed an illegitimate regime that has no rule of law, other than the whim of the ruling circle, and they live in fear of a Euro-Maidan demonstration on Moscow's Bolotnaya Square. They tremble at the prospect of a prosperous Europeanized Ukraine on their border. How long would it be before their people learn from the Ukrainian experience and rise up to overthrow them?

We cannot predict the future because it depends on whether the West uses its levers to tame Putin. If it does, the outcome is not in doubt. The biggest question of all is whether Europe and the United States are willing to deploy the vast array of instruments at their disposal to defang Putin and his regime.



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# To Restrain Russia, Drop the Ambiguity

*Angelo M. Codevilla*

Lack of means is no part of the reason why US policy is failing to restrain Russia. Rather, that reason lies in the US government's simultaneous pursuit of self-contradictory objectives, what Henry Kissinger extolled as "creative ambiguity." This has opened a fateful gap between words and deeds. Clear, univocal policy that unites words and deeds, ends and means, has ever been the prerequisite of seriousness.

Ukraine's 1991 departure from the Soviet Union made possible the Baltic States' and others' independence from Moscow. Ukraine, therefore, is the natural focus of Vladimir Putin's drive to recover as much of the Soviet empire as possible. Nor has there ever been any doubt about any Russian government's desire to incorporate Ukraine within its grasp. Possession of Ukraine is the difference between Russia being a potentially great power and Russia as just another European country. By contrast, US policy toward the relationship between Russia and Ukraine has always been ambiguous. From Stalin's time into our own day, it has tried to combine recognition that Ukraine is something other than Moscow's possession with refusal to interfere seriously with Moscow's treatment of Ukraine as a possession.

By showing a wide gap between America's pretensions and practices, this ambiguity has contributed to discrediting America. America's interests—as well as those of peace in general—would be best served by articulating to one and all precisely what America's objectives are with regard to that relationship, and then by deploying whatever means might be required

to achieve those objectives. In short, let us start being serious.

In 1944–45, the US government agreed to Stalin's demand that Ukraine be admitted to the United Nations (along with Byelorussia) as if it had been an independent nation—a transparent fiction to increase Stalin's voting power. Nevertheless, this contributed to keeping alive the Ukrainian people's desire for independence, especially since during the early postwar period the US government clandestinely armed Ukrainian nationalist rebels. Uncounted thousands died and millions suffered in a fight without hope. But US support for the Soviet hold on Ukraine was so strong that, on July 31, 1991, as the Soviet Union was breaking up, President George H. W. Bush warned Ukrainians to beware of nationalism and to trust in Gorbachev. After the breakup, the Bush administration fostered, and the Clinton administration consummated, Ukraine's delivery of its third-largest-in-the-world nuclear arsenal to Russia in exchange for US guarantees—loosely worded because insincere—of its independence and territorial integrity. Since 2013, when Putin began using military force to keep Ukrainians from leaving Russia's orbit, the United States has led NATO in loud condemnation and insignificant sanctions, what Theodore Roosevelt called "the unbridled tongue and the unready hand." As Russia's modern weapons have outgunned the Ukrainians, our aid to them has consisted of "Meals Ready To Eat." At least we might have treated the doomed to French or Italian rations, with wine.



This ambiguity has enabled Russia's rulers to shore up domestic support by charging America with interfering in Russia's domestic affairs while actually enjoying effective US complaisance. Thus in January 2015, as Putin's forces were routing a Ukrainian army bereft of Western aid, Putin told his people, *"We often say: 'Ukrainian Army, Ukrainian Army.' But who is really fighting there? There are, indeed, partially official units of armed forces, but largely there are the so-called 'volunteer nationalist battalions.'"* This is not the army of the Ukrainian people, said Putin. Rather, it is *"a foreign legion, in this case a foreign NATO legion, which, of course, doesn't pursue the national interests of Ukraine."* Rather, he said, it is in the service of NATO, whose geopolitical goal is *"restraining Russia."* In short, America's and NATO's pro forma support of Ukrainian independence is allowing Putin to take as much of it as he wishes while shoring up his own domestic support at our expense.

Certainly, restraining Russia, especially as regards Ukraine, is one of the US government's objectives and, by extension, NATO's as well. The independence of Ukraine from Moscow is the key to the independence

of Eastern Europe. Not facing something like the Soviet empire again is a core concern of ours. Getting along with Russia is also an important objective of US policy. It would be nice if these objectives were mutually compatible. Minimizing their incompatibility in our own minds does not decrease it, but only leads to policies that work at cross purposes.

All know that the US government has the capacity to inflict such economic damage on Russia via secondary sanctions that Russians will suffer crushing personal costs for Putin's pressure on Ukraine. All know that the United States can impose a serious blood tax by supplying modern arms to the Ukrainians. But no one can tell to what end, precisely, the United States might do this, if at all.

It would help the American people, the Ukrainian people, and—because it would help the cause of peace—it would help Russia as well, for the US government to decide precisely what it is willing to do to secure whatever degree of independence it deems appropriate, and then to go ahead and do it. Once upon a time, statements of policy from the US government might have sufficed. But over a half century of "creative ambiguity," of divergence between "declaratory policy" and what the US government actually does, has destroyed US credibility.

Restraining Russia will take deeds, not words.



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Service officer and served on the Senate Intelligence Committee as well as on presidential transition teams. For a decade he was a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is the author of thirteen books, including *War Ends and Means*, *The Character of Nations*, and *Advice to War Presidents*. He is a student of the classics as well as of European literature; he is also a commercial grape grower.





# Inaction in Ukraine Sets a Dangerous Precedent

Max Boot

The United States and Europe have been slow and hesitant in countering Vladimir Putin's outrageous land grab in Ukraine. If allowed to stand, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its ability to wrest the eastern part of the country from Kiev's control will set a dangerous precedent that will encourage aggression by China and other states. A more serious counter to Russia's actions is necessary. For a start the United States and Europe need to beef up sanctions on Russia to bar all Russian companies from doing business in dollar-denominated transactions. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Cyprus, where billions in ill-gained Russian loot has been stored, should also freeze the accounts of Putin and his oligarch supporters. France should make clear that it will never deliver either of the two amphibious assault ships that Russia has commissioned from French shipyards (so far only one of them is on temporary hold). The United States should also lift its ban on oil and gas exports to allow more oil and gas to reach European markets in order to make up for disruptions in Russian supplies. In addition, the United States needs to beef up its military presence among NATO states in Eastern Europe. At a minimum one Brigade Combat Team needs to be stationed in each of the Baltic Republics and Poland along with significant airpower to signal to Russia that further land grabs will not be tolerated. The United States should also provide Ukraine with the intelligence support, weapons (especially antitank and

antiaircraft missiles), and training it needs to defend itself without fear of further provoking Putin. Finally the United States should declare that it is suspending further cuts to the defense budget to enable us to field armed forces capable of responding to provocations by Russia or other international predators. Even these steps would probably not succeed in making Russia disgorge Ukraine, but at least they would inflict such a steep price for Putin's actions that others (read: China) would hesitate before following his lawless example.

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# Countering Russian Ambitions

Angelo M. Codevilla

Any thought of countering Russian ambitions in Europe must be premised on the fact that Western Europeans' interest in doing this is verbal at best. Absent Western Europe's active cooperation, US attempts to strengthen the frontline states of the former Warsaw Pact and of the former Soviet Union would face formidable hurdles and perhaps invite Russia to test our seriousness.

Hence the proximate question must be how Western Europe's attitude might be changed. The only possible answer seems to be the same as what would be America's fallback position were "Old Europe" to persist in its current attitude, namely: to inform all concerned that, given the circumstances, the American people having no intention of wasting resources on a foredoomed cause, we would make no effort whatever to counter Russian ambitions in Europe. Only the prospect of being helpless inside Russia's sphere of influence stands a chance of leading "Old Europe" to reflect on how tender Russia's mercy to those within it really are.

Beyond that, American statecraft must follow the primordial rule of all professions: Do no harm. Whether by commission or omission, we should avoid helping Russia's pursuit of its ambitions. That means treating Russia economically and diplomatically as the US government treated the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Russia does not live by commerce with American companies. Its oligarchs can find pleasure palaces on non-US soil. But the United States does not have to institute formal secondary sanctions to tell whoever

might interact with Russians that we do not favor Russia's pretenses and look far more kindly on those who share our view of them than on those who do not.

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# Western Military Aid for Ukraine

*Frederick W. Kagan*

Vladimir Putin's neo-imperialism has already brought interstate warfare back to Europe for the first time since World War II. Its likely continuation threatens the existence of Ukraine, but is also the first traditional military test of the NATO alliance in Europe since the end of the Cold War. Western responses to Russia's unprovoked and illegal aggressions in Georgia and Ukraine have been inadequate.

Putin has annexed Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Crimea to Russia in clear contravention of international law, and is continuing offensive operations, directly and by proxy, to seize eastern and southern Ukraine as well. Yet the West has done little except to impose economic sanctions on Russia. It has sent no meaningful military assistance to Ukraine, Georgia, or the Baltic States, and it has not even provided the economic assistance to Ukraine that might allow Kiev to try to defend itself.

Ukraine faces a difficult winter because Russia controls its energy flow. The West could have acted aggressively to provide alternate sources of natural gas to offset those Putin cut off. It should still do so, but it is too late to affect the course of this winter. The challenge has become more explicitly military as Russian mechanized forces supporting separatist troops (equipped, trained, and helped by Russian troops) are moving to consolidate control over key cities in Ukraine.

The West should provide training and lethal military assistance to Ukraine at once to help defend against this continued threat. It should, moreover,

deploy significant additional military forces to the Baltic States and Poland in order to deter Russian aggression against those NATO allies. Port calls, presidential visits, and training rotations of a few hundred troops are not enough. Putin is unlikely in the short term to attack when doing so would bring him directly into conflict with American and Western European troops. But he is probing weaknesses in the alliance and finding many. It is past time to make clear where the red lines really are.

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# The Language of Power and Force

*Peter R. Mansoor*

Two and a half millennia ago during the ruinous conflict between Athens and Sparta, Thucydides recorded a conversation between Athenian negotiators and the representatives of the people of Melos, a Spartan colony that the Athenians wanted to bring into their orbit. In reply to Athenian demands, the Melians argued that justice demanded that the Athenians respect their right to remain neutral and at peace. The Athenians responded (5.89): "For ourselves, we shall not trouble you with specious pretenses—either of how we have a right to our empire because we overthrew the Mede, or are now attacking you because of the wrong that you have done us—and make a long speech which would not be believed; and in return we hope that you, instead of thinking to influence us by saying that you did not join the Spartans, although their colonists, or that you have done us no wrong, will aim at what is feasible, holding in view the real sentiments of us both; since you know as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

If one were to substitute Russians for Athenians and Ukrainians for Melians, we would have a close approximation to the situation in which these two peoples find themselves today. To confront the challenge presented by Vladimir Putin and a revanchist Russia, the United States and NATO need to communicate in language he understands—that of power and force. A good place to start is Poland—the most economically vibrant state of the "new Europe," the historic middle

ground between Germany and Russia, and the most strategically significant of the NATO members of Eastern Europe. The US administration should station US ground combat troops in Poland (and the Baltic states) on a permanent basis. Such action would show, in a far more serious way than diplomatic demarches, economic sanctions, or temporary military deployments, that the United States will go to the mat to defend its NATO allies. And where the United States leads, other NATO members will follow.

Unchecked, Putin will continue to chip away at the "near abroad" and make the spirit of NATO cooperation a dead letter. For, as the Athenians noted in their dialogue with the Melians (5.105.2), "Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can. And it is not as if we were the first to make this law, or to act upon it when made: we found it existing before us, and shall leave it to exist forever after us; all we do is make use of it, knowing that you and everybody else, having the same power as we have, would do the same as we do."

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# Bolster US Military Presence in Eastern Europe

*Williamson Murray*

It is useless to talk about Europe taking any steps to counter Russian ambitions. For the British and French, Eastern Europe is too far away, and the problems of Russian aggrandizement too insignificant for those powers to take any steps that might have any impact on Vladimir Putin and his crew of former KGB thugs. In the case of the Germans, the situation is even more dismal. Much of Germany's elite across the political spectrum and professions is in the hands of Putin's narrative, driven by a belief that somehow the Russians have achieved a civilization of far greater depth than that represented by the American way. In the largest sense, this explains the widespread acceptance by those who should have known better, that the Ukrainian uprising in January represented a fascist attempt to overthrow a legitimate and relatively popular government.

Matters are quite different in Eastern Europe. The Poles and Baltic states have suffered for centuries under the heels of Russian oppression. They have had no difficulty in recognizing the Russian moves against the Crimea and the eastern Ukraine for what they represent—a serious attempt to recreate the old Russian Empire. Here the United States possesses the ability to use its power to stabilize what could prove to be a dangerous instability. The presence of one or two combat brigades with an establishment equivalent to the brigade present on the Korean Peninsula would go far to presenting the Russians with a serious

deterrent to further mischief, particularly in the Baltic region. There, the presence of substantial minorities—nearly 40 percent in Estonia—offers Putin significant opportunities for further mischief. Yet, Putin does confront the fears of the Russian people that they might find themselves involved in a major war. In the case of Poland and the Baltic states, the stationing of American ground forces in Poland would represent a significant deterrent, given those fears.

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# Words Are Not Nearly Enough

*Ralph Peters*

When all is said and done—or, rather, after much has been said and little done—the only way to deter a military aggressor is by demonstrating equal resolve and superior capabilities. Diplomacy, economic sanctions, and “pregame” rhetoric all have their place, but the actions necessary to make President Putin think again before plunging ahead with his long-range program of conquests are all military in nature, save one.

The United States should unilaterally abrogate the most recent Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russian Federation. It always has been a completely one-sided treaty, amounting to a measure of American unilateral disarmament, while Putin gave up nothing he valued or could afford to rehabilitate and keep in his arsenal. We gave up Ferraris, while Putin gave up old beaters without any wheels. Walking away from that ill-starred treaty would put Putin on notice, since his rearmament program relies on cost-savings at the strategic level.

NATO must permanently station battalion-size battle groups in each of its three Baltic state members (as trip wires), as well as a division equivalent and air wing in Poland. Temporary deployments, however regular, are no substitutes for an established presence.

The United States, in coordination with NATO and host governments, must revive and expand the missile defense program President Obama cancelled for Eastern Europe (which he did in order to get his longed-for START agreement with Moscow).

Even if NATO will not do so, the United States and other interested parties must arm, train, and

support the Ukrainian armed forces, which a previous president in Kiev, a puppet of Moscow, emasculated. Supplying rations is no substitute for supplying rifles, and trainers are a nonhostile-intent means of putting boots on the ground. Today, Ukraine is to Europe what Serbia was in 1914: A powder keg of disproportionate explosive potential.

The fifth and only nonmilitary measure that would have an effect would be far-tougher and longer-lasting economic sanctions—sanctions so fierce they left the Russian Federation economically isolated and functionally crippled. Paradoxically, this is the least likely of the five listed measures to be put into effect, since Germany and other European states put profit above regional security.

**RALPH PETERS** is the author of twenty-nine books, including works on strategy and military affairs, as well as best-selling, prize-winning novels. He has published more than a thousand essays, articles, and columns. As a US Army enlisted man and officer, he served in infantry and military Intelligence units before becoming a foreign area officer and global scout. After retiring in 1998, he covered wars and trouble spots in the Middle East and Africa, and remains Fox News's strategic analyst. His recent *New York Times* best seller, *Cain at Gettysburg*, received the 2013 Boyd Award for Literary Excellence in Military Fiction from the American Library Association.

# Taking Additional Steps to Counter Russian Ambitions

Barry Strauss

Vladimir Putin and the Russians more generally are practical people. They seize opportunities presented by their opponents' weakness, and they pull back from confrontation when enemy strength makes success unlikely. Fundamentally, Russia and the West have more things in common than they have dividing them. Therefore, the best policy for the United States and Europe towards Russian ambitions is to show greater strength. They can do this in a variety of ways, among them: (1) station NATO troops in Poland, (2) establish missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic, as the Bush administration planned to do but the Obama administration cancelled, (3) facilitate the export of US natural gas, which would help Europe and make it easier to (4) increase sanctions on Russia, (5) give weapons to Ukraine. At the same time the United States should prepare for possible Russian retaliation both by clamping down on energy exports to Ukraine and Western Europe and by increasing aid and intervention in Cuba and Venezuela. The Russians might well engage in threatening behavior toward the Baltic States as well, but Western inaction would make that even more likely. Meanwhile, American diplomats should make clear to the Russians that our goal is peace and friendship, provided only that Russian military expansion ceases.

BARRY STRAUSS (Cornell University) is a military historian with a focus on ancient Greece and Rome. His *Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece—and Western Civilization* was named one of the best books of 2004 by the *Washington Post*. His latest book, *The Death of Caesar: The Story of History's Most Famous Assassination* (Simon & Schuster, March 2015), has been hailed as "clear and compelling" by *TIME* and received three starred reviews from book journals (*Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, *Shelf Awareness*). His *Masters of Command: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar and the Genius of Leadership* (Simon & Schuster, May 2012), was named one of the best books of 2012 by Bloomberg.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

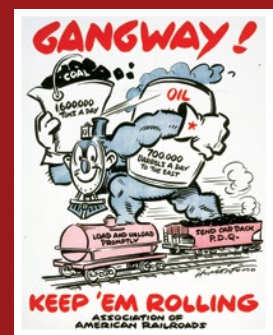
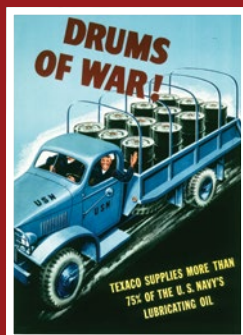
WHAT ADDITIONAL FUTURE STEPS SHOULD THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE TAKE, IF ANY AT ALL, TO COUNTER RUSSIAN AMBITIONS?

1. How valid are Russian historical claims of a natural and inherent unity with Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine?
2. What are the larger catalysts that drive Vladimir Putin's territorial ambitions—historic Russian imperial designs, a desire to reclaim the influence and power of the Soviet Union's old empire, a need for additional population and resources, or a geo-strategic desire to spite and embarrass the West?
3. Is Putinism emblematic of generally held Russian beliefs or the megalomania of an eccentric who does not represent Russian aspirations and whose agenda will pass along with him?
4. How valid is the common pessimistic demographic, economic, political, and social prognosis about Russia's next fifty years?



**IN THE NEXT ISSUE:**

**HOW WILL NEW GAS AND OIL PRODUCTION AFFECT, IF AT ALL,  
AMERICA'S MILITARY AND GEOSTRATEGIC ROLE ABROAD?**



## Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

## Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

## Strategika

*Strategika* is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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