

Russia Resurrected:
Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order

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Chapter One:

Is Russia Resurrected?

Assessing State Power and Its Domestic Determinants

"Russia was never so strong as it wants to be, and never so weak as it is thought to be."

—Vladimir Putin, May 2002¹

If after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia was widely dismissed by the international community as nothing more than a regional power whose global influence had died with communism, then its flexing of its international muscle slightly more than a mere twenty-five years hence has shown that reports of Russia's death as a global power have been greatly exaggerated. From the sudden seizure of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, the rapid military deployment in Syria in 2015 to cyber interventions in Western democracies, most notably interference in the United States elections in 2016, Russia has reasserted itself, taking many professional and casual observers by surprise.

A common argument among many analysts has been that Russia has a weak hand in international politics, but plays it well. This book argues instead that Russia's cards may not be as weak as we in the West have thought. The realist approach to power sees a world organized by interests, in which states are capable of exercising influence according to their material capacities alone. Viewed through this lens, a simple tally of Russia's importance in the global economy, its human capital, the size of its military, would hardly convince an observer of

its disproportionate power over other countries' decisions in international politics. After all, twenty five years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia had a 3.15% share of global gross domestic product, compared to 15.59% for the United States, 17.76% for China, and 7.23% for India, according to the International Monetary Fund.² With an estimated 144.1 million people (including the annexed territory of Crimea), Russia's population size was less than half that the United States (321.4 million), only a tenth of China's (1.37 billion), and India's (1.31 billion), and with flat to negative growth prospects.³ Russia also ranked a distant third (at \$70.3 billion US) behind the United States (at US\$611 billion) and China (US\$215 billion) in military spending, despite moves to modernize its military beginning in 2008.⁴

Yet the focus on these sorts of metrics of power has led scholars and policy makers alike to discount Russia's actual ability to influence international politics in the 21st century. Undeniably, contemporary Russia does not compare in realist terms to the power resources of the United States or China. Nonetheless, Russia has developed an outsized ability to exercise considerable influence abroad. I argue that under Vladimir Putin's long rule, Russia has developed and deployed both traditional and new means of influence abroad, and on a variety of new dimensions. Putin's Russia demonstrates that a state does not have to be a great power that is at parity in all realms with the United States, Europe or China -- but it can be *good enough* to dramatically alter the balance of power in a new global order. How and why has this happened? Is contemporary Russia strong or weak? What does Russia's evident resurrection as a global power tell us about the actual determinants of state power in the international politics of the 21st century? These are the questions at the foundation of this book.

In important ways, Russia is distinct from the former Soviet Union and from its fellow significant powers today. Under Putin's leadership, Russia has reestablished itself on the global stage as a great disrupter rather than a traditional great power, with a much higher tolerance for risk than its international competitors or its Soviet predecessor state. Contemporary Russia has proved willing to assert itself against its regional neighbors, but has also moved far outside of its traditional sphere of geographic influence abroad, while clearly lacking the traditional means of power of its competitors. How has this happened?

In a metaphor that aptly characterizes how Putin's Russia has managed to resurrect itself in international power projection, David Baldwin emphasizes the importance of understanding the game being played, rather than just judging a player's ability to win based on the face value of the cards she holds:

Discussions of the capabilities of states that fail to designate or imply a framework of assumptions about who is trying (or might try) to get whom to do what are comparable to discussions of what constitutes a good hand in cards without specifying which game is to be played...a good hand at bridge is a bad one at poker.⁵

Perhaps then a misunderstanding of Russia's goals and motivations abroad (the game Russian policymakers are playing) has led to an underestimation of its ability to project power and the resources it has amassed to do so? Policymakers in the West have declared in public and in private that Russia is not an equal as a global power, so there is no need to bow to its complaints about containment or NATO expansion. Undoubtedly, it is partly in response to this belittling

perspective from rivals that Russia under Vladimir Putin has sought to reassert itself as deserving of global respect. History also demonstrates that Russia also has undeniable geo-strategic interests in its immediate neighborhood that any Russian leader might want to protect. It is important to consider, however, whether a Russian president other than Vladimir Putin would have made the same foreign policy choices over the last twenty or so years. That is, is Putin pursuing Russia's global strategy as any leader of a fallen "great power" would do? I think not.

Instead, I argue that Russian grand strategy under Putin has been a choice. Russia has not been historically, nor is it inevitably, an enemy of Europe or the West, including the United States. Rather, the new global rivalry with the West is a strategic choice on Putin's part to "make Russia great again" – especially in the eyes of its own people. In this way, Russia's evident resurrection as a global power is also a response to Russian domestic politics, and an overarching concern with the stability and preservation of the regime Putin has built, and from which he has profited, since entering the presidency in 2000.

A "Normal" Country? The Extent of Russia's Revival

On December 25, 1991, the hammer and sickle flag of the Soviet Union was lowered for the last time over the Kremlin, and the Russian tri-color flag was raised. This moment marked the definitive end to a vast communist empire that stretched from Europe's borders to Japan's, and from the Arctic Ocean to Afghanistan. Its demise brought about the simultaneous end to the Cold War between East and West that defined post-World War II international relations, and marked the conclusion of an ideological and existential struggle between superpowers played out through proxies in the Middle East, South and Central America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.

The collapse of the Soviet system was long in coming over decades of decline in productivity and legitimacy in the 1970s and 1980s, yet largely unanticipated when it finally arrived in 1991.⁶ Western analysts provided evaluations of the Soviet Union in the 1980s that characterized it as ideologically bankrupt, its economy in stagnation. Few, however, predicted its relatively peaceful demise and the rapid establishment of Russia as its successor state in international affairs, although a pale comparison to the super power that was—at least in the immediate aftermath of the collapse.⁷ In 1990 and 1991, Russia was the recipient of international loans from lenders of last resort like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Food aid was distributed on the streets of Moscow. As communism slipped away and the new Russian Federation emerged, the economy was already at its knees. Six years of uneven reforms by Mikhail Gorbachev, the last General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had worsened the already bad situation wrought by the inefficiencies and wastefulness of the planning system of the preceding 60 years. Russia faced a growing budget deficit of (conservatively estimated) 20% of GDP, the threat of hyperinflation, economic growth that was at best stalled and at worst negative, shortages throughout the economy, virtually nothing in foreign currency reserves, and growing international loan commitments.⁸

Faced with this dismal situation, Russia's first elected president, Boris Yeltsin, assigned a team of young neo-liberal reformers, led by acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, to draft and implement an ambitious reform program in January of 1992. The reforms attempted to free prices from Soviet-era price lists, open the economy to a rush of imports, and rapidly privatize state enterprises. The idea was to shake the economy loose of the trappings of the communist system. Yeltsin's team of liberal economists created a stock

market and real estate markets and undertook a massive program of privatization of small, medium, and large enterprises between 1992 and 1997, such that a reported 70% of GDP came from the private sector between 1997 and 2004.⁹ They opened the economy to foreign trade to ameliorate some of the shortages in the Russian economy, but the reforms and the hangover effects of 74 years of communist economics also produced many negative and largely unanticipated economic outcomes. From 1992 to 1998, Russia ran roughly 9% annual budget deficits, resulting in an eventual default on international loan obligations and currency collapse by 1998.

Even with these economic woes, the years immediately preceding and following the collapse of the Soviet Union were years of significant change in Russia. For all the instability during his tenure as president, Yeltsin also carried out enormous social and political changes that effectively killed off any possibility of the return of communism. In transforming the Soviet planned economy into a rough and ready form of market capitalism, he created stakeholders in a new order based on private ownership and supply and demand. Elections for all levels of government were held with regularity, although not always free and fully fair in the 1990s, and the media was remarkably open.

The late 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s were also years of notable cooperation between Russia, the United States, and Europe. In the early 1990s, Western countries provided billions of dollars in aid, though not substantial or timely enough to avert the crisis of 1998. In the policy arena, greater gains were made. A few years earlier, when the Soviet Union still existed, Mikhail Gorbachev signed landmark nuclear armament reduction treaties with Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Under Boris Yeltsin's presidency of the reborn Russia, U.S. President Bill Clinton pushed for, and gained admission into the G-8

nations, even when Russia's economy clearly did not merit membership among the world's strongest. In the early years of his first administration, between 2000 and 2003, President Putin himself made friendly overtures to President George W. Bush. Putin was the first foreign leader to call Bush after the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States; Angela Stent notes that Putin looked forward to an international coalition led by the U.S. and Russia to combat international terrorism.¹⁰ But under Bush, Putin's ambitions to befriend the West were thwarted by the American war in Iraq (which Russia did not support), and U.S. support of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, and Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003, both of which ushered in new governments on the borders less friendly to Russian interests. With the unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty in 2002 and the threat of a new U.S. missile defense system in Europe thereafter, U.S.-Russian relations dipped to an all-time post 1991 low—or so it was thought at the time.

After a tumultuous six years of contentious market reform, punctuated by the economic crisis of 1998, by 1999, the economy was growing again. A dramatic rise in global oil and gas prices reversed Russia's economic fortunes: by 2003, Russia's growth shot up rapidly and remarkably such that GDP rose on average 7% every year until 2008 and the global economic crisis that fall. Between 2003 and 2008, as Russia's economy boomed, analysts and observers began referring to Russia as a "normal" country, meaning that its remaining developmental challenges like eradication of corruption, were more or less typical of a country at its stage of "middle income" economic development.¹¹ Daniel Treisman and Andrei Shleifer, writing in 2005, argued: "That Russia is *only* a normal middle-income democracy is, of course, a disappointment to those who had hoped for or expected more. But that Russia today has largely broken free of its past, that it is no longer

“the evil empire,” threatening both its own people and the rest of the world, is an amazing and admirable achievement.”¹² Treisman and Shleifer were not wrong, nor were they alone in their admiration of Russia’s economic achievements by the early to mid 2000s. In 2003, Goldman Sachs analysts coined the term “BRICs” to describe the group of high growth transitional economies that included Brazil, Russia, India, and China.¹³ Of this group, according to analysts Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, Russia was a standout. They predicted that it would surpass the poorer of the G-6 economies (France, Italy, and the UK or the G-7 without Canada) in per capita income by 2050.¹⁴

These sanguine, and as it may yet turn out, overly optimistic assessments of the trajectory of Russia’s development. They were based primarily on the steady, high growth of Russia’s GDP from roughly 1999-2008, growth in foreign and domestic investment, balanced budgets, a stable ruble, the end of huge foreign debt to lenders of last resort like the World Bank and IMF, and the tripling of per capita incomes of Russian workers . By the third quarter of 2008, Russia had become the world’s sixth largest economy, the peak of its growth statistics and a remarkable achievement considering the extent of the crisis that Russia’s post-Soviet leaders inherited when market reforms began in earnest in 1992. The Russian real estate market had become the hottest in Europe by 2006 and Russian billionaires were buying sports franchises abroad and expensive property in European capitals and New York City. Internally, Russia was booming with an astounding expansion in the number of cars on its roads, the newly constructed highways crisscrossing the heartland, a modernizing army, rising salaries, and increasing integration into the global economy. With Washington’s support, Russia even joined the World Trade Organization in

2012—a mere 20 years since it embarked upon the radical transformation of its communist built economy.

But the resource revenue dependence of Russia's economy proved both a blessing and a curse. As the globally determined price of crude oil, Russia's main export fell, so too did its GDP tumble dramatically in the fourth quarter of 2008 at the onset of what would be a global economic crisis. Nonetheless, although its decline was far sharper than that of the other BRIC economies, the Russian economy recovered relatively quickly from the crisis through astute macro-economic policy aimed at supporting the ruble using reserves from Russia's sovereign wealth funds and continued payment of pensions through its state pension fund. As the rest of the world recovered through 2009 and 2010, the price of oil gradually recovered too, further aiding Russia's rebound to lower, but respectable growth rates of 3–5% annually until 2014.

The period of Russia's return to economic stability and growth was also a time of fluctuating relations with the United States and the West more broadly. When Barack Obama took over from President Bush in 2009, the new U.S. president introduced a policy of “reset” with Russia. The goal was to put U.S.–Russian relations on a more constructive path and to encourage cooperation between the two countries in the mutual interest of both nations. During the height of the reset, President Obama and then-President of Russia Dmitri Medvedev (as of spring 2008) worked together on several projects to improve the security and prosperity of both countries.¹⁵ In 2010, they signed and subsequently ratified the New START Treaty, which eliminated 30% of nuclear weapons held by the U.S. and Russian,¹⁶ and also kept in place a comprehensive inspections regime that allowed both countries to verify compliance. In that same year, the White House and the Kremlin worked

together to pass United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929, the most comprehensive set of sanctions against Iran to be adopted. Together, the United States and Russia greatly expanded the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) of air, rail, and truck routes through Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia to supply U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan and reduce U.S. military dependency on the southern route through Pakistan. Over 50% of supplies to U.S. forces in Afghanistan were transported via the NDN by 2011.¹⁷

The United States and Russia also collaborated in avoiding conflict during the reset era. While there was continued tension over South Ossetia and Abkhazia after the Russian–Georgian war of 2008, and Russia continued to effectively occupy those parts of Georgia, violent conflict was curtailed. When another popular uprising toppled President Bakiyev in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, dozens of people died in the initial fighting (almost as many as were shot in Maidan Square in Kyiv in 2014), and tens of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks fled southern Kyrgyz cities, fearing that the regime change might unleash an ethnic civil war.¹⁸ In response to this crisis, the United States and Russia could have squared off, yet the White House and Kremlin worked together to help diffuse this dangerous situation. Perhaps most remarkably, President Medvedev agreed to abstain on UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973, thereby authorizing the use of force against the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi in the spring of 2011. No Russian leader had ever acquiesced to an external military intervention in a sovereign country, (indeed, the decision was so controversial within Russian foreign policy decision making circles that it may well have been the reason that Vladimir Putin, who strongly disagreed with Medvedev on Libya, decided that he must re-assume the Russian presidency thereafter).¹⁹

In addition to security issues, the Obama and Medvedev governments collaborated on several projects to increase trade and investment between the United States and Russia during the reset years. The United States helped Russia obtain membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Trade between the United States and Russia also increased dramatically between 2009 and 2012, as did foreign direct investment.²⁰ A new visa regime expanded the number of Russians traveling to the United States, and vice versa. And even bigger plans were afoot prior to 2014, including the massive joint venture between Exxon-Mobil and Rosneft, a large oil company majority-owned by Russia.

During these years, NATO remained a bone of contention, though not to the degree that Putin, once back in the President's chair in 2012, made it out to be. In fact, aside from the addition of Croatia and Albania in 2009, two countries far from Russia, NATO did not expand in the Obama–Medvedev era. Despite pressure from George W. Bush at the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit, other NATO allies refused to allow Georgian membership. After Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008, the issue died within the alliance. Even under President Yushchenko, the leader of the Orange Revolution in 2004, Ukraine never pushed for NATO membership. There was simply no support within Ukrainian society at that time. After President Yanukovich was elected president of Ukraine in 2010, the idea faded completely. Consequently, during the reset years, neither President Medvedev nor Prime Minister Putin ever objected to NATO expansion. Indeed, President Medvedev even echoed other Western leaders in waxing effusively about NATO–Russia relations when he attended the NATO summit in Lisbon in November 2010. “Incidentally,” he said, “even the declaration approved at the end of our talks states that we seek to develop a strategic partnership. This is not a chance choice of words, but signals that we have succeeded

in putting the difficult period in our relations behind us now.”²¹ Medvedev also praised the reset, stating during his last meeting with Obama in his capacity as president in March 2012, “[W]e probably enjoyed the best level of relations between the United States and Russia during those three years than ever during the previous decades.”²²

But only two years later, with Vladimir Putin back in the Kremlin as Russia’s President, both the successes of the reset and positive relations with NATO were consigned to the past. A final repudiation of the NATO-Russia Council appeared in the 2014 Russian Military Doctrine, which identified the expansion of NATO as the primary threat to Russia.²³ In the spring of 2015 in an interview aired as part of a documentary marking his 15 years in public life, Mr. Putin indicated that he had even been ready to put Russian nuclear forces on alert during Russia’s invasion of Crimea in the spring of 2014 since he feared NATO’s response.²⁴ Further, Mikhail Vanin, the Russian ambassador to Denmark, threatened to target the Danish navy with nuclear weapons should Denmark join NATO’s missile shield program. Perhaps this was why Russia was deemed an existential threat to the United States in the summer of 2015 by several prominent U.S. military figures, including Marine Corps General Joseph Dunford, nominee for Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff; U.S. Air Force General Paul Selva, nominee for Vice Chair; and the outgoing Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Ray Odierno.²⁵ In the fall of 2015, General Philip Breedlove, then Supreme Commander of NATO and United States Central Command in Europe, insisted that Russia was “rewriting the Cold War settlement using force.”²⁶

The question of whether Russia has sufficiently recovered from the economic, social, and political devastation wrought by the collapse of the Soviet Union to rewrite the rules of international politics is often answered with attention to the man who has been at its helm

for the majority of those years. Vladimir Putin is the clear author of the assertive resurrection of Russia's influence in international politics. Without meditating on counterfactuals, it is unlikely that another leader would have responded to the set of problems facing the country in precisely the same way. Putin's leadership, and the system of government that he has built over two decades in power, has had marked influence on the extent and the aggressive direction of Russia's resurgence globally.

"A Country that Can Stand Up for Itself:" Resurgence Under Putin

Just as few predicted complete systemic breakdown by 1991, equally few observers could have fully anticipated the rocky road to revival that Russia has followed since. A combination of circumstances, such as global oil and gas prices, and policy decisions were responsible for these changes, but Mr. Putin's ascent to power marked a turning point. After Boris Yeltsin stepped down, Vladimir Putin, as his hand-picked successor, ruled Russia during the remarkable economic growth that ensued in the 2000s. His policy decisions strove for further development of the Russian economy and society, but not toward greater democracy. Instead, Putin reinserted the primacy of state over society in Russia. By 2008, he declared to Russia's parliament: "At last Russia has returned to the world arena as a strong state—a country that others heed and that can stand up for itself."²⁷ In February 2014, Russia triumphantly re-introduced itself to the world as modern and outward facing in hosting the very successful, elaborate Winter Olympic Games in Sochi at an estimated cost of \$50 billion. Less than 25 years after the Soviet collapse, Russia looked to be resurrected as an economic power, and seemingly politically stable under fifteen years of leadership by Vladimir Putin.

Along with the political, economic and social transformations that the country experienced after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was a concomitant renewal in Russia's foreign policy presence. Despite friendly and sometimes mutually supportive economic, political, and military relations with NATO, the United States, much of Europe, and China from the collapse through the early 2000s, Russian foreign policy gradually became more assertive, a trend which has intensified, as Putin's system of governing evolved. Initially, Russia flexed its muscle abroad in traditional ways. Post-Soviet Russian leaders used military force to invade two sovereign neighbors (Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014), remained involved in two other conflicts in former Soviet states—over Transnistria in Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory that is claimed by both Armenia and Azerbaijan. But the Russian military's hasty refurbishment of an old Soviet air base in Syria in the late summer of 2015 and its intervention there was the first deployment of the Russian military outside post-Soviet borders in over 25 years.²⁸ Prior to that, the Russian military reintroduced the Soviet policy of flying missions over Norwegian and Swedish airspace, as well as into the English Channel, without pilots filing flight plans or informing the affected countries in advance. Since 2015, Russian submarines have been detected not far from U.S. territorial waters and are thought to be patrolling deep sea cable lines, possibly looking for vulnerabilities to disable American access to the Internet.²⁹

Further, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has refuted its "no first use" policy on nuclear weapons, and in successive military doctrines since 2000 has foreseen the possibility of using strategic nuclear weapons in the event of conventional war with an overpowering adversary (like NATO) that the Russian president deems an "existential threat."³⁰ By 2015, in light of tensions between Russia and the United States over Ukraine

and Syria, and their commitments to modernizing their respective nuclear forces, therefore, it was unsurprising that the Bureau of Atomic Scientists moved the atomic clock to three minutes to midnight, the closest to nuclear destruction the world has been since the Cuban missile crisis at the height of the Cold War in 1962 (for perspective, it had been 17 minutes to midnight in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed).³¹

Throughout these developments, Vladimir Putin insisted that Russia was merely protecting its historical interests in its natural sphere of geo-political interest and security. For Putin, Russia had returned to international politics to retake its natural standing as a “great power” and to challenge an unfair Cold War settlement imposed upon it by the United States. In explaining Russian actions in grabbing Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, for example, President Putin asserted the essence of Russia’s “new” foreign policy:

...the Ukrainian crisis was not caused by the Russian Federation. It has emerged in response to the attempts of the USA and its western allies who considered themselves ‘winners’ of the cold war to impose their will everywhere. Promises of non-expansion of NATO to the East (given yet to the Soviet authorities) have turned out to be hollow statements. We have seen how NATO's infrastructure was moving closer and closer towards Russian borders and how Russian interests were being ignored.³²

These comments are emblematic of the rhetoric on Russia’s restored greatness that characterizes its revanchist approach to international relations.

Most notably regarding Russia’s return to prominence in international politics, perhaps, was its apparent interference, through state-employed hackers, in the United States presidential elections of 2016. No fewer than seventeen American intelligence

agencies concluded that through cyber theft, Russian operatives were able to gain access to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and Republican National Committee (RNC) during 2016 in order to steal confidential email. According to the congressional testimony of then-FBI Director James Comey on March 20, 2017, only the DNC emails were passed through an intermediary to WikiLeaks, which then published daily digests of email allegedly selected to embarrass and discredit Hillary Clinton prior to the election. In this way, Russia was able to strike at the very legitimacy of American democracy. This marked an unprecedented use of cyber tactics as part of a hybrid strategy to undermine countries Russia's leadership had decided were geo-political competitors and sow discord, rather than pursue outright confrontation, which has proven a key mechanism in Russia's exercise of 21st century power.

While Russia's military incursions and allegations of cyber intervention are proof of an increasingly assertive foreign policy, the story of Russia's successful "normalization" has not (yet?) come to its fairy tale ending. The country's still undiversified economy has proven vulnerable to the unpredictability of global commodities markets as the return to deficit budgets and decline in GDP demonstrated after the drop in global oil prices beginning in the summer of 2014. While it has been re-classified by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as an "upper middle income" country because of its rise in average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, by many concrete measures, Russia by 2016 was a country clearly in chronic economic decline. In 2015, it had a growth rate of -2.8%, far below that of other emerging economies like India's +7.9% rate or China's +6.9%. ³³ Its gross domestic product was \$1.37 billion U.S. in 2015 and dropping. compared to \$18.1 billion in the U.S. and \$11.1 billion in China, making it in 2015 the 12th largest

economy in the world, for example.³⁴ It was neither an innovation economy like Estonia, or even India, nor was it an imitation economy like China or Taiwan. Other than gas, oil, and weapons, it is difficult to find imported products stamped “made in Russia.” Despite a highly educated population, Russia has no universities in the world top 100; labor productivity (as measured by output per person employed converted to US dollars at purchasing power parity) slowed after 2014, which hurts the future competitiveness of its economy. Indeed, labor productivity was the second lowest in the countries monitored by the OECD, and less than half that of the G7 countries’ average in 2014.³⁵ In addition, foreign direct investment had dropped by more than two-thirds from 2013.³⁶ Russian GDP per capita at purchasing price parity declined to \$25,186 in 2015, putting it just below that of Poland (at \$26,862) and Hungary (at \$26,458) and significantly below the Baltic states of Lithuania (\$28,936) and Estonia (\$28,988), all of which had become members of the European Union, and none of which have benefitted from previously high oil and gas prices in the early- to mid-2000s, as Russia did.³⁷

While Russia’s development was undeniably impressive in economic terms, especially between 1999 and 2008, this did not translate into dramatic changes in human development. Russia’s male life expectancy at 66 years of age in 2015, although much improved from an all-time low in 1994 of 57.6 years, was still far below that of Poland (73), Hungary (72), and all three Baltic states. It is on par with countries with far lower GDP/capita like El Salvador, Cambodia, and Bhutan³⁸; the United Nations Human Development Report ranked overall adult life expectancy, at 70.1 years, just lower than that of Bangladesh.³⁹ Collectively, these features show the importance of domestic factors in understanding Russia as a global power, and also suggest that domestic and foreign policy

are more interrelated than is sometimes assumed. These are vital characteristics of Russia's strategies and interests that this study's approach to power seeks to reconcile.

Is Russia Strong or Weak? The Multiple Dimensions of Power

Power is one of the most central concepts in politics and international relations, and much time and trouble has been taken to define and attempt to measure it. Joe Nye has infamously said: "Power is like love, easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that."⁴⁰ The level of power Russia enjoys is debated by specialists and non-specialists alike. In a 2016 survey of 1600 Russian adults over 16 years of age by the Levada Center, a respected and still independent Russian polling service, 65% of respondents indicated "definitely yes" or "probably yes" to the question "Do you think Russia is a great power?"⁴¹ This implies there are some commonly accepted metrics of power. What, then, are real and reasonable measures of a country's power in practice versus potential? One of the goals of this book is to undertake a thorough analysis of the available data and meaningfully assess changes in Russian power in global affairs since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. With these tools and a more nuanced conceptualization of power in the foreign policy sphere, this study seeks to answer the questions of whether Russia's resurrection is real or merely imagined, how we can tell, and why it matters.

The understanding of power to be applied in this study stems from the reasonable consensus on a social scientific definition of power, encapsulated in Robert Dahl's deceptively simple rendering in 1957: "*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do."⁴² This short statement packs many logical

punches. First, power is a relative (or in Dahl's words "relational") concept between two or more actors. Second, power, control, coercion, and influence appear to be effectively the same thing—the exercise of any of these by actor A *causes* a change in the behavior of actor B. Third, parties to a power relationship can be individuals, groups, states, corporations, "or other human aggregates."⁴³

Realist theorists like Ken Waltz, Hans Morgenthau, and eventually John Mearsheimer, while generally adopting Dahl's definition, have placed emphasis on the *means* of power that a state might possess, such as population size, territory, money, and weaponry as the most important factors in determining the distribution of power among states.⁴⁴ The logical conclusion from this approach is that if one were to tally up national wealth, population, and the size of the military in any particular state, a rough ordering of national power would emerge. "Great" powers would be at the far end of the spectrum with the highest wealth and therefore, presumably, strongest military, while weaker powers would be poor with weak militaries.

Other scholars, however, like David Baldwin, have furthered the "relational" conceptualization of power found in Dahl and challenged the realist means-based approach to power. The relational approach has engendered two important arguments. First, power can be an *actual* or *potential* relationship. The case of North Korea demonstrates, for example, that power resources, like nuclear weapons, are not necessarily actual power as much as they are power in potential.⁴⁵ Second, Baldwin, along with Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, have argued that power is far more multidimensional than traditional realists would allow. This "relational" school notes that states often seem to have more

power or influence in international relations than the sum of the strengths of their economies or militaries would indicate.

In trying to discern the sources of Russian power in international relations, recognizing that power is multi-dimensional helps us to understand why it is that Russia seems to exercise influence in international affairs that is disproportionate to a simple tally of its global capabilities economically or militarily. In order to explore thoroughly sources of Russian power, therefore, I employ this broader conceptualization over the narrow, realist understanding that focuses almost exclusively on traditional *means* alone. Following Dahl and Baldwin in considering power as relational and multi-dimensional, I understand the three central dimensions of relational state power to include:

1) **Policy Scope**: Across what issues does an actor's behavior affect other actors?

A's power over B increases in relation to the number and importance of issues of B's activity that are affected by A,

2) **Geographic Domain**: How many actors are subject to A's influence? In

Baldwin's words, "how big is B? How many B's are there relative to A? Domain recognizes that "a state may have a great deal of influence in one region of the world, while having little or no influence in other parts of the world."⁴⁶

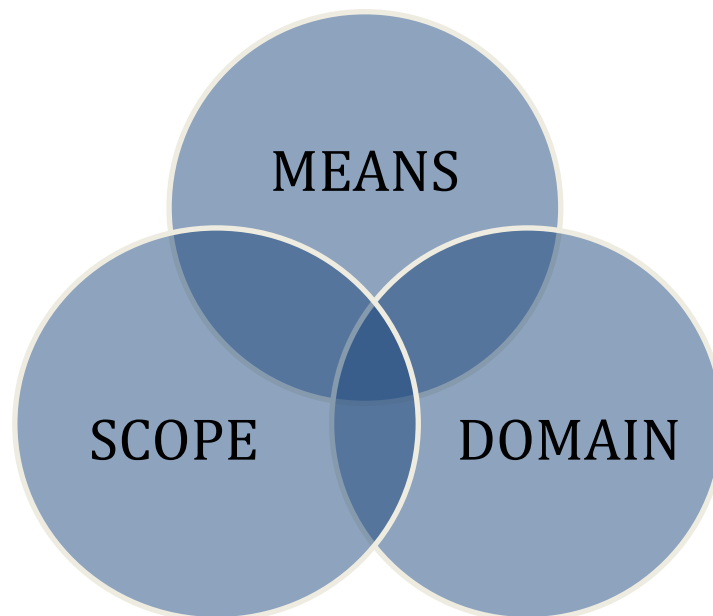
Related to the measure of actor A's policy scope and the geographic domain of its influence over other states, we might ask how "big" actor A is and how costly the exercise of A's power is in these areas of policy and geography. This entails two sub-measures: first, *weight*—how regularly or reliably can A influence B, and what is the probability that B can or will be affected by A? This can vary across policy issues and across geographic domain for any particular state. Second, *costs*—what are the stakes for A of using power in a

particular policy area or geographic area? Does it cost a little or a lot for A to influence B? Is it cheap for B to comply with A? If it costs a lot for B to comply with A, then A may exercise more power over B than if it were cheap for B to comply.

Finally, returning to the dimensions of relational power:

- 3) ***Means***: Through what capabilities does A exercise power over B? Means can include economic, military, diplomatic, cultural or “soft” power, sometimes called symbolic means or the “pull” of a state rather than the “push”; this can include, for example, culture, ideology, or membership or leadership in international organizations.

Figure 1.1. The Multiple Dimensions of State Power in International Relations



The fact that power is multidimensional means that it is difficult to arrive at a single metric that provides a comprehensive estimate of an actor's power. Figure 1, above, demonstrates also that different dimensions of power overlap, and may also vary independently: an increase in one dimension of power may occur simultaneously with a decrease in another or vice versa—in other words, the circles can change in size relative to each other. For example, a state may have a wide geographic domain of influence, but its means for actually exercising this influence might be small.

Most importantly, a multi-dimensional approach allows an analyst to answer foundational questions regarding a state's capabilities: power *over what or whom*, and power *to do what*? It also recognizes that means that are considered a "power asset" in one situation may be a liability in another. A state may lack the relative means to exercise power in one situation, but have more than enough in another. Bringing into consideration the different dimensions of power helps us to understand under what circumstances a state has the capabilities to achieve any particular policy goal in international relations.

I argue that by almost any metric, Russia has many of the trappings of a great power, but it is less clear whether it is a great power in dramatic decline rather than in dynamic recovery, despite its more assertive foreign policy stance of the last decade. If we understand "great power" to mean a country with global military, economic, and political reach, a country that influences global politics and international relations not just through hard power, but through soft power resources too, then Russia is certainly in the ballpark. Given the policy scope and geographic domain in which Russia's contemporary leadership is able to employ its power resources, and the agility of decision making under a de-institutionalized and increasingly personalized political system, Russia is a challenger to

the stability of the post war international system. That is, while perhaps not anymore (or not yet again?) a “great power” in the realist sense, it is a “good enough” power in that it has the ability to use adroitly the means at its disposal to disrupt the prevailing international order.

Domestic Levers on Russian Foreign Policy

I argue in this book that domestic political variables are as important, and often more important, in determining Russia’s ability and willingness to project its power resources abroad. The interactions between power resources, and the domestic political context that Russian policy makers face at any particular moment, play a crucial and frequently underestimated and underemphasized role in determining contemporary Russian behavior in international politics. It is the regime’s interaction with society, in combination with perceptions of external threats and interests, that often determines when, whether, and how Russia can project different dimensions of its power abroad.

This argument poses an important corrective to the “reactive” argument that focalizes Russia’s response to Western actions and economic factors in explaining the shift in foreign policy. This argument is espoused by Putin and leading Russian commentators on foreign policy, as well as a few American analysts, who have repeatedly blamed the West for celebrating the “defeat” of the Soviet Union in the Cold War and being poor partners to Russia. Even Mikhail Gorbachev (referring to himself in the third person) took up this theme in remarks on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Soviet collapse:

They [Western leaders] did not want the Soviet Union to become a powerful democratic state. It would guarantee that neither the policy of unilateral

measures, nor the policy of US domination in global affairs would work, and some American politicians saw Gorbachev as an obstacle to their plans. And then, when they made a bid for Boris Yeltsin, their goal was the same - to prevent the emergence of Russia as a powerful democratic state. Remember, when the [Soviet] Union collapsed, what was the West's reaction to this tragic event? They said, "this is a gift from God." ⁴⁷

Intriguingly, notable American scholars have also argued that Russia's aggressive foreign policy in Ukraine for example after 2014 was a natural reaction to Western provocation following the cold war. John Mearsheimer insisted that "The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West." ⁴⁸

In specific contrast to this perspective of Russian foreign policy as a natural and inevitable reaction to Western provocation, I argue that it is just as much a reaction to domestic political exigencies and an attempt to meet the need to maintain popular support for an increasingly unpopular regime. Between 2003 and 2008, Mr. Putin presided over a booming economy almost completely dependent on oil and gas export revenues. At least 50% of Russia's national state budget was generated by oil and gas sales abroad. The dramatic drop in oil prices in 2014 was quickly followed by a 43% decline in the value of the ruble. In July 2015, inflation hit 15.5%. In 2015, second-quarter results from the Russian Statistical Service indicated that Russia was firmly in recession.⁴⁹ Contrary to the argument on foreign "enemies" that President Putin blames for Russia's current predicament, "the West" did not put Russia in this situation. In his first eight-year tenure as

Russia's president (2000-2008), Mr. Putin did little to reform the fundamentals of the economy, and took credit for the five-year economic boom (2003-2008) on the back of high global oil prices (over which he obviously had no control), having to face the repercussions when those prices inevitably dropped.

Factors of ideology and the economy should also not be overstated in explaining Russian power. Despite Mr. Putin's references to Eurasianism as a counterweight to the European Union, and evocations of the vision of a Russian World (*Russkii Mir*)—regions of the world with the common bond of Russian language, the Russian Orthodox Church, and Russian nationalism—neither of these ideas constitute a transformational, expansionist guiding ideology. Further, while President Putin has exploited a conservative, anti-Western, pan-Slavic philosophy in justifying some of his foreign policy decisions, this is not widely shared (although there has been some interest in parts of Eastern Europe) or closely linked to military activity—although it contributed to post-hoc justifications for annexing Crimea and continuing a simmering conflict in Eastern Ukraine.⁵⁰ This is not to deny that Russia may have “historical interests” and goals in international politics independent from the ebbs and flows of domestic matters that any Russian leader might pursue.⁵¹ But interests are not always fixed or constant in their degree of importance, and they are not the only drivers of contemporary Russian foreign policy decisions. For if they were, then given the same resources at hand, any Russian leader might respond to changes in the international system the same way. Obviously, this has not been the case since 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union. As noted earlier, through three presidents and four presidencies—President Yeltsin in the 1990s, President Putin's first presidency in 2000-2004, and Mr. Medvedev's in 2008-2012—Russia was perfectly capable of cooperation with Europe and

the United States.

Further, economic exigencies are not determinative of Russia's ability to project its power resources beyond its border. It is true that Russia was not disruptive in international relations when its economy was at all-time lows between 1992 and 1998, but became so in 2008 in Georgia as its economy peaked. Yet it was precisely at another particularly low economic point in 2015 that the Putin leadership chose to deploy Russian forces in Syria. Economic fortunes and the means of power they can generate, then, do not, strictly speaking, drive Russian foreign policy, since they appear to explain both international cooperation and confrontation.

This means then, that society has become an important influence over Russian conduct abroad and the longevity and durability of its revival as a power of global significance. The primary goal of the contemporary Russian leadership is to maintain the regime that it has developed under Mr. Putin's leadership since 2000. Just as the Soviet Union collapsed from within, and despite Putin's arguments to the contrary, external powers cannot engineer an overthrow of the Russian government. The Russian state under Putin is in service to an elite that wants to enrich its members, while promoting elite and state interests (which have become intricately intertwined) abroad. The only *real* threat to this system comes from within: Mr. Putin fears, above all, his own "street," and Russian perhaps elites who have benefitted greatly from his regime. Russian society at large though must be kept pacified or, failing that, openly repressed for the regime to survive. After all, Russia endured two great revolutions in the 20th century—in 1917 and 1991.

In the quarter century that has passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has transitioned from a weak democracy to a hardening autocracy, one often classified with

adjectives—competitive, electoral, soft, personalistic, conservative.⁵² While this too helps explain the more confrontational stance against Western democracies,⁵³ it is not autocracy alone that has changed the conduct of Russian foreign policy. After all, the Soviet Union was an autocracy—but one of a very different type. Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects of the exercise of Russian power abroad is how very different it is in many ways from that of the Soviet Union. Gone is the centralized planning and the rigid, expansive state controls over private life that determined where Soviet citizens were educated, housed, and got their food, and even whether they were able to buy a car. The much-maligned Federal Security Service (FSB), though still powerful given the place of the *siloviki* among the elite, is only a pale shadow of its Soviet KGB predecessor—the current regime allows some forms of free speech and tolerates the existence of a weak opposition; seldom do agents kick in doors in the middle of the night to drag away dissidents.

In contrast to the exercise of power during the Soviet period, while the means overlap to some degree (especially the use of military power), they vary greatly in many areas. The flexibility and speed of decision making that now characterizes contemporary Russian foreign policy is one of the biggest differences in comparison to the Soviet Union prior to 1985. The absence of institutional constraints on Presidential power (Putin faces a compliant Duma and dependent courts, and appoints the Senators of the Upper House) is in stark contrast to the General Secretary's accountability to a Politburo that could (and did with Nikita Khrushchev, for example) overrule and overthrow him. In Putin's Russia, in partial contrast to the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, the source of regime legitimacy is based on performance more than ideology or violence, although there are signs that state violence against opposition forces is increasing. Yet dissent is not without peril in contemporary Russia. One of the troubling things about Russia

today is that the rules of politics and society seem to constantly change. Analysts have to stop and think of the ramifications of what they have said on television (and many critics of the Putin regime are no longer allowed on television). The media is no longer completely state-controlled, as in Soviet times, but it is still heavily scripted by the state, and is more often than not a tool to maintain public support of the regime that Vladimir Putin has built.

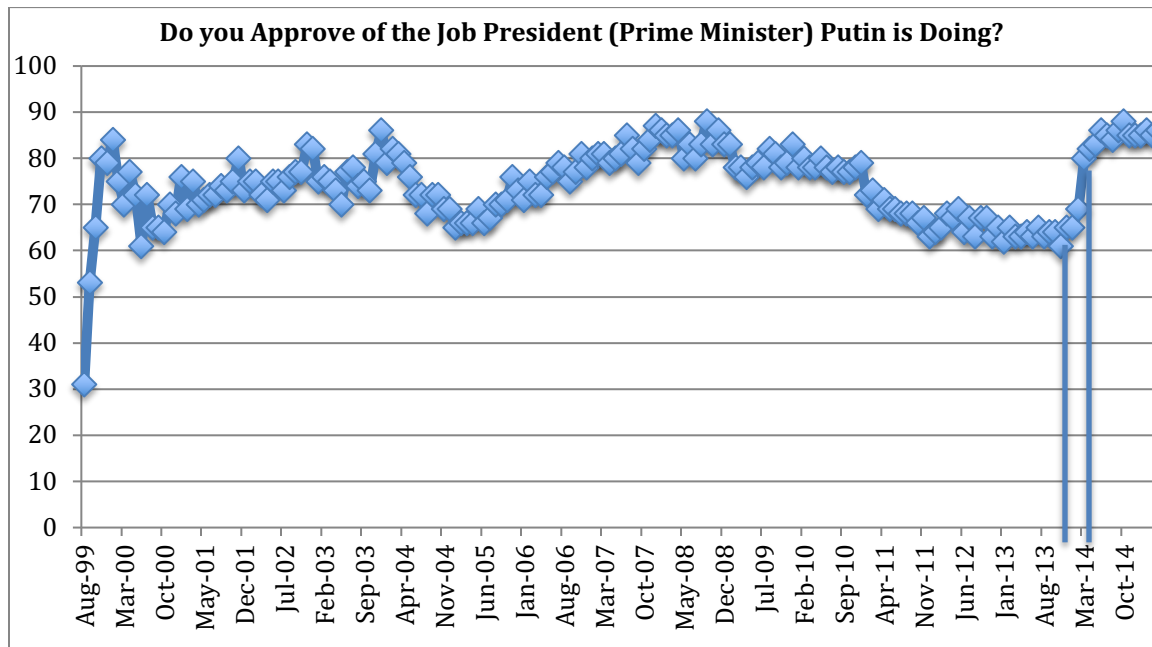
Broadly, however, pacification of the masses is less expensive than repression as long as the economy is doing well. The economic bargain that was implicitly struck between Russian society and President Putin in the early 2000s was that as long as the economy continued to grow, and real incomes effectively tripled between 2003 and 2008, then regime support was strong and its legitimacy was unquestioned despite growing social inequalities, weak rule of law, and pervasive corruption. But as economic decline and stagnation rather than growth became the most salient feature of the Russian economy after 2011, the regime needed a new foundation for its legitimacy.

The popular protests that took place on the streets of Moscow following Putin's announced return as president in the fall of 2011, and parliamentary elections that December for the State Duma, that were widely viewed as rigged in favor of the ruling party, United Russia, followed by protests against Putin himself, presented a challenge to regime legitimacy. In response, the regime became gradually more repressive by increasing fines for protesters, introducing further restrictions on civil society, and placing members of the opposition in jail or on trial. The effect was to eviscerate an already weak political opposition and suppress other forms of social protest. But even after taking these drastic measures, Mr. Putin's approval ratings remained lower than they had been since he first came to power in 2000.

As I argue in this book, an assertive foreign policy has become the basis of the regime's legitimacy. This increasingly aggressive direction in foreign policy has been a tool to demonstrate to Russians that their country under Putin is strong and influential in international relations, even in times of (temporary) economic struggle. Several examples of this strategy are worth highlighting. First, Mr. Putin effectively negotiated the removal of Syria's chemical weapons, challenging the United States' influence and resolve in removing Bashar al Assad. This had the effect of demonstrating to citizens at home that their country was a great geopolitical force to be proud of. Second, within Russia, the regime launched an assault against foreign donors and Russian civil society organizations that accepted money from abroad. Third, and most significantly, Mr. Putin intervened in Ukraine in convincing (former) President Yanukovych to forego a trade agreement with the European Union in favor of joining the Eurasian Union, headed by Russia. The ensuing protests in Ukraine beginning in November 2013 were depicted within Russia as a fascist coup, a perspective stemming from the regime's fear that the contagion of protest might spread to Russia. The impulsive (not strategic) decision to invade Crimea at the end of February 2014, therefore, was presented in nationalist terms to the Russian people. Rather than an invasion of a sovereign Ukraine, the narrative in the Russian media was that the military incursion there was to defend the Russian diaspora in Crimea from Ukrainian nationalists and their NATO allies; the same narrative was applied in Eastern Ukraine. Increasingly, nationalist and conservative rhetoric dominated the press. Russia, by its own media's account, was a nation under siege geographically, economically, and culturally. Perhaps evidence that the tactic succeeded in bolstering public approval and shoring up regime legitimacy is the fact that Putin's approval rating shot up from 60% in February 2014, at the end of the Sochi

Olympics, to 80% only a month later, following the annexation of Crimea, as indicated in Figure 1.2, below.

Figure 1.2: Vladimir Putin's Approval Rating 1999-2015.⁵⁵



The purpose of Russia's resurrection in global politics alluded to in the title of this book, therefore, is to project power in ways that maintain the current regime's apparent legitimacy at home and ensure its continued hold on control domestically. This argument, and the study's emphasis on the domestic political context as a crucial consideration in understanding Russian foreign policy, is an important addition to current understandings of Russian foreign policy. I do not view Russian uses of its power abroad as only reactive to external provocations, nor do I accept that Russian foreign policy under Putin is purely the continuation of Russian traditional interests spanning centuries. These alone, cannot explain all Russian foreign policy decisions over the last two decades. My emphasis, instead, is that Russia's revanchism comes from the interaction of these interests, Russia's power resources, and the contemporary domestic political environment.

Contribution to the Field and Plan of the Book

This study is distinctive from other literature on Russia's recent foreign policy in several ways; as a result, what follows should be of use to the area specialist as well as to the informed, general reader. First, it aims a spotlight on the interaction between domestic politics and foreign policy interests to explain how and why Russian leaders have made the choices they have in international affairs, over the last 20 years in particular. There is good work that focuses on Russian culture and history as the main explanation for Russian politics at home and behavior abroad. Andrei Tsygankov, for example, argues that how Russian leaders define national interest and identity greatly influences their conduct of international relations.⁵⁶ Undeniably, Russia's imperial and communist legacies have impressed a certain global perspective on Russian interests on its 21st-century leadership.

As acknowledged earlier, I do not debate the idea that Russia has some international interests fixed by its geography, nor can any reasonable analyst deny that history matters. But I do not think either is determinative in understanding the arc of Russian foreign policy, since the early 2000s in particular. History and geography have remained the same over the last two decades (save for the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014), yet Russia's projection of its power abroad has obviously changed.

Another distinguishing feature of this study is its focus on relative power, as opposed to Russia's relations with one or several other states or regions. I evaluate Russia's relative power in global politics using a multi-dimensional, not strictly realist, framework. I employ some international relations theory, but I make no claim to any great theoretical innovation in the field, as much as I seek to operationalize theoretical approaches put forward by others in order to examine relative power in 21st-century global politics. Other recent studies have focused on Russian relations with a particular country or regions, as does Angela Stent in her excellent study of U.S.-Russian relations.⁵⁷ Nikolas Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh have also produced an expansive overview of the different regions or "vectors" of contemporary Russian foreign policy.⁵⁸ While these books are important and inherently valuable, they do not look at the issue of relative power explicitly or empirically in the way this study does, and they were written prior to Russia's more controversial foreign policy moves in Ukraine in 2014, Syria in 2015, and its interference in US elections in 2016. Similarly, Bobo Lo's more recent book looks at how Russia is challenged by the post-Cold War order, but he does not provide as much consideration of how or really why Russia itself has become such a challenge to global stability.⁵⁹ Dmitri Trenin, too, has provided valuable evaluations of Russia's reemergence in global politics in its "near

abroad,” and also an insightful but largely polemical argument regarding whether the West should fear Russia.⁶⁰ But neither of these studies includes clear discussions or systematic evaluations of the multiple dimensions of Russian power, nor with consideration explicitly of Russian internal politics.

Finally, the study is empirically rich in exploring Russian power resources and the regime’s decisions to use them. Other recent studies of Russia have focused principally on Mr. Putin as a master tactician who has seemingly out maneuvered the West at almost every turn. Too often, domestic political considerations in these studies can be overlooked in favor of elite behavior alone in explaining Russian foreign policy. Indeed, there is sometimes an assumption that Mr. Putin controls the system to such a degree, that there are in fact no politics in Russia.⁶¹ This perspective can place too much emphasis exclusively on Vladimir Putin and his psychology with respect to foreign policy. Necessarily, such an approach shines light on only one part of the elephant in understanding what kind of animal we are viewing, so to speak, whereas I seek a broader awareness of the interaction of domestic politics and foreign policy. In sum, clearly there is plenty of room for a different perspective on why Russia acts as it does internationally.

From a theoretical standpoint, this book is also distinct in its emphasis on how political scientists evaluate state power in international relations. I seek to assess through what means, where, and when Russia can and does influence the behavior of other states. In doing so, I try to provide a more expansive understanding of the tools states have at their disposals in the twenty-first century beyond airplanes, ships, tanks, troops, missiles, and money. Russia has all of these instruments, although comparatively fewer of each than the United States, the European Union 28, and China, respectively, yet it has emerged as a

threat to all three. Mr. Putin himself has been called “the most powerful man in the world,”⁶² yet he does not possess even remotely the traditional means of power of the American or Chinese presidents. This characterization of his and Russia’s influence may well be wrong, of course, but so might our traditional metrics of power. Even without having “the most” of any of these means of power, Russia has managed, rather unexpectedly, to disrupt international relations. It is high time, then, to rethink these frameworks in order to better understand state power. It is too often said that Russia has “played a weak hand wisely” in international relations under Mr. Putin.⁶³ There is some element of truth to this, especially if one adapts a realist view on the metrics of power. But if we expand our understanding of what the means of power are in contemporary global politics, then Russia’s hand has a few very strong cards, depending on the game that is being played.

The remainder of this study develops these arguments as follows. Section II goes on to assess the geographic *domain* and policy *scope* of contemporary Russian power, including soft power such as media presence and cultural influence that, as Joseph Nye argues, can “shape the preferences of others.”⁶⁴ In this section, Chapters 2 and 3 respectively examine these components of Russian power first in the former Soviet republics and in chapter 3, in relation to other contemporary great powers (the United States, China, and the European Union) to which Mr. Putin gamely compares Russia. In the chapters that compose Section III, I use a variety of sources to compare the *means* through which Russian leaders may propagate power and influence beyond its borders: economic mechanisms in Chapter 4, its human capital in Chapter 5 (including the physical health, education, and productive capacity of its citizenry) in Chapter 6 hard power (troops and

weapons, including cyber weaponry) soft power (powers of attraction like the culture, its diaspora and media) and its cyber based “sharp” means of power. In Section IV, I assess instances in which Russian leaders employ the power assets at their disposal. Specifically, Chapter 7 presents the argument that state and society relations within Russia play a key role in determining how Russian policy makers use power resources abroad, and Chapter 8 concludes with policy recommendations for Western powers. The book’s final assessment of the implications of Russia’s resurrection or decline for international relations and the current international system makes an argument against the inevitability of a renewed Cold War between Russia and the West.

As this introductory chapter has shown, Russia’s balance sheet of change and revival is decidedly mixed, and this fact throws into question its status as a resurrected global power. Nonetheless, as the quote that opens this introduction demonstrates, Russia is complex: it is neither as weak as we think, nor as strong as its leadership would like it to be. Mr. Putin has repeatedly insisted that his country should be treated with the respect it deserves as a major global power on par with the United States and Europe. It is these factors, and elites’ interest in maintaining the domestic status quo, that have lent purpose to Russia’s resurrection on the global stage and a unique hand in the international game of power.

¹ Putin was paraphrasing the famous saying, attributed variously to Otto von Bismarck, Klemens von Metternich, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand and Winston Churchill, among others: *“Russia is never as strong as she looks; Russia is never as weak as she looks.”* See, Mark N. Katz, “Is Russia Strong or Weak?,” Washington, UI, July 10, 2006 http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2006/07/10/Policy-Watch-Is-Russia-strong-or-weak/39541152565695/ accessed December 1, 2015

² Source is the International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database. Statistics on gross domestic product as shares of the global economy can be found at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/01/weodata/index.aspx>, accessed May 2, 2017.

³ World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>. Data are as of 2015.

⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database. Figures are for 2015 and available at: <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>, accessed May 2, 2017.

⁵ David Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," chapter 11 of Handbook of International Relations, Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, Beth Simmons, eds., Los Angeles, 2013), p. 277.

⁶ Valerie Bunce made a similar observation about the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 in *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁷ See for example, Timothy J. Colton, *Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986) for a serious, but in the end positive assessment of the chances for the Soviet Union's continued survival, published only five years before the regime collapsed.

⁸ Anders Aslund, *How Russia Became A Market Economy*, (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1995), pp. 41-50.

⁹ "Russia's Economic Revival," in Anders Aslund and Andrew Kuchins, eds., *The Russia Balance Sheet*, (Washington, D.C: Peterson Institute for International Economics and Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), p. 44.

¹⁰ Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: US-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 69.

¹¹ Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Triesman, "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 19, no. 1, winter 2005, pp. 151-174.

¹² Shleifer and Treisman, p.152.

¹³ Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, "Dreaming with the BRICs: The Path to 2050," *Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper 99*, Accessed November 16, 2015, at: <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/archive/archive-pdfs/brics-dream.pdf>

¹⁴ Wilson and Purushothaman, p. 5.

¹⁵ The next 6 paragraphs draw from Kathryn Stoner and Michael McFaul, “Who Lost Russia (This Time)? Vladimir Putin,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2, September 2015, pp. 167-187.

¹⁶ Aron Bernstein, “Is President Obama Reducing the Probability of Nuclear War?” MIT Faculty Newsletter, 22, no. 4 (March/April/May 2010), <http://web.mit.edu/fnl/volume/224/bernstein.html>.

¹⁷ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, (Washington, DC, Congressional Research Service, April, 2013), p. 31.

¹⁸ “Ethnic Uzbeks Flee Violence in Kyrgyzstan,” *The New York Times*, slideshow, June 14, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/06/14/world/0614-Kyrgyzstan.html?_r=0.

¹⁹ Gorbachev did not try to stop the first Gulf War, but the U.S. response there, in cooperation with many other countries, was in response to Iraqi intervention in Kuwait.

²⁰ “Trade in Goods with Russia,” U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c4621.html>.

²¹ Medvedev’s comments can be heard in Russian at: http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/audio/audio_2010_11/20101120_101120f-01.mp3 accessed June 9, 2015.

²² Medvedev press conference Seoul, South Korea, March 27 2012, transcript available in English at: http://seoul.usembassy.gov/p_rok_032612e.html accessed June 9, 2015.

²³ The 2014 Russian Military Doctrine is available in English at: <https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads-001/2015/08/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf>; the NATO threat reference is in Article II, point 12 “Main External Military Dangers.”

²⁴ Steven J. Pifer, “Putin’s Nuclear Saber-Rattling: What is He Compensating For?” Brookings Blog, June 17 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/06/17-putin-nuclear-saber-rattling-pifer>, accessed November 16, 2015. The documentary is called “President” and aired on Rossiya TV One on April 26, 2015. Episodes can be viewed in Russian at: http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=c7f_1430284031 and in English at: <http://www.stankovuniversallaw.com/2015/05/president-putins-15-years-in-power-en-subtitles-video/> Both sites were accessed November 16, 2015.

²⁵ For statements by General Selva and General Dunford see, Paul McLeary, *Foreign Policy*, July 14, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/14/more-pentagon-generals-line-up-to->

[proclaim-russia-existential-threat-to-u-s/](#) (accessed August 12, 2015). For Odierno's statements, see Kristina Wong, "Top US General: Russia is Most Dangerous Threat," August 12, 2015, available at: <http://itk.thehill.com/policy/defense/250962-odierno-russia-is-the-most-dangerous-threat-to-us> (accessed August 12, 2015).

²⁶ General Philip Breedlove, public address at Stanford University, November 9, 2015, Stanford, California.

²⁷ Vladimir Putin, speech to expanded meeting of the Federation Council on Russia's Development Strategy through 2020, February 7, 2008, available at: http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/02/08/1137_type82912type82913_159643.shtml, accessed October 28, 2015.

²⁸ Knowledgeable readers will think of Russia's participation in peacekeeping in Kosovo in 1999, but this was not an offensive mission as was the 2015 mission in Syria. Russia participated in Kosovo as part of a NATO-Russian coalition.

²⁹ David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt, "Russian Ships Near Data Cables are Too Close for US Comfort," *New York Times*, October 25, 2015, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/26/world/europe/russian-presence-near-undersea-cables-concerns-us.html?_r=0, accessed, September 7, 2016.

³⁰ For more on recent changes to Russian nuclear doctrine, see for example, Stephen Blank, Editor, *Russian Nuclear Weapons: Past, Present and Future*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2011), available in PDF format at: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub1087.pdf>; and for more on nuclear doctrine see, <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/russia/nuclear/> accessed September 7, 2016; for nuclear war in the Russian media see for example, Steven Ennis, "Russian Media Learn to Love the Bomb," BBC Monitoring, Feb. 23, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31557254>, accessed September 7, 2016.

³¹ The doomsday clock timeline is available at: <http://thebulletin.org/multimedia/timeline-conflict-culture-and-change>

³² President Vladimir V. Putin's interview with Al-Haram Newspaper, February 9, 2015, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47643>, accessed August 3, 2015. A representative Russian perspective on Russia's complaints against the United States by Sergei Karaganov can be found at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russia-and-the-US-A-Long-Confrontation-16990>

³³ For comparative GDP growth rates by country see, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>.

³⁴ See <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table> for GDP data in current US dollars, accessed May 9, 2017.

³⁵ Labor productivity data comes from <https://www.conference-board.org/retrievefile.cfm?filename=The-Conference-Board-2015-Productivity-Brief.pdf&type=subsite> (accessed August 12, 2015).

³⁶ For data on foreign direct investment see The World Data Bank, World Development Indicators at <http://databank.worldbank.org/data//reports.aspx?source=2&country=RUS&series=&period=> (accessed August 12, 2015).

³⁷ Numbers are current GDP per capita at purchasing power parity in current US dollars. Data available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD>, accessed May 9, 2017.

³⁸ For more on Russian comparative life expectancy and mortality trends in comparison to other countries, see United Nations, Human Development Index, at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/trends> and <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.MA.IN?locations=RU> both accessed September 7, 2016.

³⁹ See “Table 1: Human Development Index and Its Components,” in 2015 UN Human Development Report, p. 208-211, available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2015_statistical_annex.pdf (accessed September 7, 2016).

⁴⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs publ., 2003), p. 1.

⁴¹ The data are available at the Levada Center website: <http://www.levada.ru/en/2017/01/09/russia-as-a-great-power/> accessed May 2, 2017.

⁴² Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science*, vol. 2, no. 3, July 1957, pp. 202-203.

⁴³ Dahl, p. 203.

⁴⁴ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (1948), Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979, and John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (2001).

⁴⁵ Baldwin, p. 277

⁴⁶ Baldwin, p. 275.

⁴⁷ Mikhail S. Gorbachev, “West spreads its democracy like coffee in bags, but people need to

make own choice,” *Russia Today*, August 19, 2016, available at <https://rt.com/gorbachev>, accessed, August 22, 2016.

⁴⁸ John Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October issue 2014, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>

⁴⁹ See Anna Andrianova, “Russian GDP Plunges 4.6%” Bloomberg Business, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-08-10/russian-economy-shrinks-4-6-as-oil-slump-risks-deeper-recession> (accessed August 12, 2015).

⁵⁰ See, “Putin’s Philosopher: Ivan Ilyin and the Ideology of Moscow’s Rule,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 20, 2015, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2015-09-20/putins-philosopher>, accessed, September 2, 2016.

⁵¹ See for example, Robert Legvold, “The Three Russias: Decline, Revolution and Reconstruction,” in Robert A. Pastor, ed., *A Century’s Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 139-190.

⁵² See for example, Steve Levitsky and Lucan Way, Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (April 2002), 51–65; see also their book, Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Timothy J. Colton, “Regimeness, Hybridity, and Russian System Building as an Educative Project”; and M. Steven Fish, “What Has Russia Become,” both prepared for a special issue of *Comparative Politics*, **forthcoming, 2017**, edited by Kathryn Stoner.

⁵³ Legvold makes this argument regarding Russian foreign policy and the legacy of authoritarianism in “The Three Russias,” for example.

⁵⁵ The data here come from the Levada Center, <http://www.levada.ru/eng/>, accessed September 7, 2015.

⁵⁶ Andrei Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, Fourth Edition, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); on the influence of culture on Russian foreign policy see also Robert Nablandov, *Not By Bread Alone: Russia’s Foreign Policy Under Putin*, (Lincoln: Potomac Books, University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

⁵⁷ Stent, 2014.

⁵⁸ Nikolas Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors and Sectors*, (London: Chatham House, 2014). See also Jeffery Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2012).

⁵⁹ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, (Washington: Brookings, 2015).

⁶⁰ See Dmitri Trenin, *Post Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2007) and *Should the We Fear Russia?* (New York: Polity Press, 2016).

⁶¹ A perusal of recent titles of books on Russian politics demonstrates the emphasis on Putin alone. See, for example, Steven Lee Meyers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015) ; Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2013).

⁶² M. Steven Fish, *What Has Russia Become?*, 2017.

⁶³ A simple Google search of this phrase brings up literally dozens of references.

⁶⁴ Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power.” See, for example, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Soft Power: The Means To Success in World Politics, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).