Annotated Bibliography: Russian Foreign Policy

An Overview:

The literature reviewed in the following pages presents a wide spectrum of information pertaining to the state of the Russian Federation today. The focus of analysis covers Russia’s domestic policies as well as its behavior in the international arena. Though at this time the scope of the investigation I seek to conduct is aimed at exploring Russia’s international dealings with the West, the analysis of the current situation within the country is equally important. In fact, the situation I wish to understand will remain incomprehensible without serious consideration of the latter. The body of literature summarized below is far from complete, new findings will be added to the bibliography daily, nor are the reviewed selections guaranteed to be included in the final capstone examination. This compilation is a living body intended to grow and change in accordance with new information as it becomes available.

The themes drawn from the books, articles, and primary sources are meant to remain intact. At the present time, the annotated bibliography is composed of roughly 25% original sources, 25% secondary, 25% theory. The remaining 25% comes from various media outlets which all play an active role in the Russia-U.S. information war currently unfolding before our eyes. Analysis of both Russian and U.S. media outlets is critical in understanding the relationship between the two countries. It is every bit as important to gauge U.S. viewer perceptions of Russia as it is to understand the Russian take on Americans. The citizens of the two nations are constantly bombarded with an informational onslaught emitted mainly, World Values Survey suggests, from their television sets. Cathode ray sunshine of the Cold War era has long been replaced by LCD screens, but television still appears to be the main source of information on international affairs for the people of both nations and as such, will be subjected to heavy investigation.

The bibliography contains a few examples of Western coverage of Russia, ranging from sustained objectivity to blunt sensationalism and everything in between. Somewhat surprisingly, Vice News’ delivered a comprehensive, detailed, and thoughtfully explained story on the state of U.S.-Russia relations today. The story is titled Cold War 2.0 and it served as the starting point of my investigation. In the segment, Shane Smith, founder and CEO of Vice, interviews high ranking officials from both sides of the pond, hoping to get each one’s take on the situation at hand. The reportage does not conceal deployment of U.S. soldiers behind Ukrainian borders nor its leading role in training special operations forces in Lithuania and elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc. Revealing interviews from the frontlines of Ukraine’s separatist movement and government forces expose the futility of international humanitarian aid sent to Eastern parts of the country. Vice openly blames media on both sides for adding fuel to the fire, suggesting that the goal of Russian and U.S. news reports is not to provide accurate
coverage of urgent events, but instead to misconstrue and embellish in accordance with government desires and achieve high ratings.

The Vice report falls in stark contrast with certain other news outlets such as the Huffington Post example covered below. An article stereotypically titled “The Russian Bear is Rising” emphasizes the threat Russia poses to the U.S. by attempting to band with China and even Erdogan’s Turkey. The article lacks concrete evidence to back any of its claims and portrays Russia as a disgruntled giant awakening from its slumber and looking to settle the score. More likely than not the stories reported on in this and similar pieces can be corroborated to some extent. Evidence which would lend them more credibility is out there, but the point here is that the authors of this and similar publications simply don’t bother to include it.

Voices of dissent from within Russia reveal an entirely different side of the story. Though the giant may indeed have awaken, it’s slowly dying like a prehistoric dinosaur with a terminal spirit disease coursing through its veins. Scholars and journalists from the highly esteem and supposedly incorruptible Echo of Moscow radio station spin a grim tale of Russia today. Corruption, administrative incompetence, and blatant manipulation, distortion, and downright fabrication of information projected onto the weary and unsuspecting population of Russia are only surface problems the country is faced with in the present. Books by dissidents within Russia (two of which have been assassinated since the time of these books’ publications) contained in this bibliography, dig deeper.

Things are bad at home, most Russians agree on this. Reasoning behind why things are bad is the issue of contention. The brave journalists and political dissidents, some of whom traded their lives for the betterment of Russia, blame Putin, his administration, the oligarchy, and the lawless state of internal affairs they created. Russian news sources, like Regum Information Agency noted below, as well known television channels and radio stations, point the finger of blame at the West. America, Russian provocateurs claim, as they have done historically since the time of Cold War, is responsible for the inability of Russia to get back on its feet and prosper. As a consequence, the U.S. comes to be viewed by the Russian population as a perpetual roadblock standing in the way of Russia’s progress. Marcel Van Herpin’s Putin’s Propaganda Machine helps make sense of the “information war” waged against the West, providing the audience with a clear understanding of the manipulation techniques utilized by Kremlin as well as the ends such means are intended to achieve.

The Huffington Post and Fox News lead its audience to believe that Russia is on a quest for hegemony. It’s hard to not take such claims seriously when we look at the crisis in Ukraine, the situation in Syria, and the trade deals concluded between Russia and China. Yet upon closer examination, some of these Eurasian agreements Russia has entered into do not coincide with its best interests. Why would a country agree to be bound by a treaty that is detrimental to its economy in the long run and the particularities of which are interpreted by some as a threat to Russia’s sovereignty. The answer is money, of course, and lots of it. Are those at the helm of Russia seriously choosing to pursue short term economic gains over long term prosperity of their country? The Capstone exploration intends to delve deep into the binding international agreements into which Russia enters, including certain agreements with China and the NEW
START treaty intended to reduce the number of nuclear warheads possessed by U.S. and Russia, and the implications they may hold for East/West relations. What consequences ensue in the wake of a broken treaty? Does Russia really care?

A deeper look into a nation’s domestic affairs should help gain a better understanding of its behavior and motivations abroad. Yet the juxtaposition of Russia’s foreign policy and internal state of affairs only complicates matters further. How can a country pursue a higher standing in the world while it’s quite literally rotting away from the inside. A quick glance over Politovskaya’s accounts of frozen water pipes, collapsing flats, and neglected nuclear submarines on the outskirts of Russia monitored by crime syndicate supervision will surely put any pretentions of internal stability to rest. The question then arises: whose truth do we believe?

Could it be possible that Russia is making advances on the international front while undergoing a nefarious transformation from negligence to demise at home? If so, the examination will need to look well beyond the confines realism, a theoretical approach under the lens of which the situation will be heavily examined, and the explanations offered by a liberalist investigation of interplay between state actors and entities such as UN, NATO, EU, IMF, WTO, and Putin’s fabled Eurasian Council. Putin and his inner circle of Medvedevs will be looked at closely. Available literature, namely the blood chilling biographical account of the late Boris Nemtsov, suggests that it is their will that is being projected onto the international realm, not that of the people which Putin and the Medvedevs are sworn to protect against all threats, foreign and domestic. Human agency will be thoroughly evaluated, tenets of constructivism will be probed to their maximum, and where classic theory fails, mid-level theory, as propagated by David Lake, will serve as the framework in accordance with I will try to make some sense of Russia’s role in the international arena today and specifically its relationship with the West.

The topic of the book is the Cuban Missile Crisis. Allison and Zelikow, in the second edition of Allison’s 1971 publication, seek to examine central puzzles of the crisis, explore the influence of unrecognized assumptions prevalent in our thinking about this event and others of its nature, identify the frame of reference employed by individuals engaging in the analysis of international relations, and compare alternative theoretical frameworks through the lenses of which an event such as the Cuban Missile Crisis can be analyzed.

The authors delve into a multilayered investigation of questions like why did the Soviet Union place their missiles in Cuba, why did the Kennedy administration react as it did why were the missiles withdrawn, what are the broader lessons learned from this episode, and how can those lessons be applied to similar altercations (past, present, and future) plaguing the international theatre of conflict. The investigation is important because in 1962, U.S. and the Soviet Union came to the edge of the so called nuclear abyss, and the world was brought to the brink of a nuclear holocaust. History repeats itself, and a close examination of U.S./Russia relations today will reveal that the old adversaries are at it again, slowly moving toward another edge of a new dark age.
By looking at the decisions leaders of the two world powers made to steer the world away from impending doom in 1962, a student of international relations analyzing the current state of U.S/Russia relations can draw parallels between history and current affairs in hopes of proposing solutions to the emerging crisis should it transcend contained boundaries in the not so distant future. Another question pertinent to the academic quest at hand examined in the text is how should citizens try to understand the actions of their government? The answer to this question is not limited to 1962 and, through application of frameworks proposed in The Essence of Decision to the current state of affairs, is crucial in understanding relations between the government and its constituents today.

VICE NEWS
COLD WAR 2.0
Vice has emerged onto the news reporting scene with a level of intensity unmatched by its peers. Continuing to be one of the fastest growing channels on You Tube, the rouge news agency has entered the premium cable arena with Bill Maher produced Vice News, which claims to report on issues that are otherwise under-reported. The season 6 finale concluded with a foreboding report from the frontlines of the Ukrainian conflict, where pro-Russian separatists violently clash with Ukrainian military, leaving the war stricken and hungry civilians to weep in their destruction. Shane Smith, Vice founder and CEO, sits down with prominent international figures to try to make sense of the conflict and its implication.

Leaders in the West fear that Ukraine is just a taste of things to come, a bloody example of what Russia is capable of stirring up in former Soviet occupied territories. If Russia truly is trying to pull under its wing the countries once chained together under the Warsaw Pact, the logical question to ask is why. Smith and his team of journalists travel to the territories of Eastern Europe to uncover a massive build-up of NATO weapons and personnel in close proximity of the Russian boarder. As a response, Russians have increased their military presence along the Western border. From a good, safe distance of the observer’s couch, the mood of the situation is beginning to resemble a climate of unamiable hostility between the two sides, leading some to dub the unfolding situation as the new Cold War.

The role of the media on both sides of the great divide is examined at some length and brought into question. Barrack Obama and Joe Biden, both interviewed by Smith, blame the state controlled Russian media for spreading hostility toward the west, suggesting that the people would not stand behind Putin as they do if the entire spectrum of the truth was available to them. Instead of taking responsibility for internal problems and issues at the border (clad in secrecy and severely misconstrued), Russian authorities utilize Russian SMIs to tell a different story, one where America and the West are responsible for everything wrong with Russia today. Vice admirably maintains objectivity and accuses mainstream U.S. media of the same wrongdoings,
pointing out the scandalous nature of many news reports dealing with the issue of Russia’s behavior in the international arena.

**NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid:** In Russia, Anti-Western Views and Support for Putin Surge. By Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes, Jacob Poushter

The adversity between Russia and the U.S. is clearly reflected in public opinion polls. Pew report tasked with examining public opinion in Ukraine, Russia, and eight NATO countries including the U.S. reveals that half of Russians blame Western countries for the crisis in Ukraine and believe that the economic crisis Russia is experienced today is caused in no small part by the West. Russians do not have much confidence in Obama, and are not happy about NATO encroaching on their boarders, increasing military buildup near their border and conducting training operations as a response. 50 percent of Russians view NATO as a threat to their country and have near full confidence in Putin to do fix the problems plaguing the realm of international affairs, even though the economic situation at home leaves a lot to be desired.

The report also focuses on Russia’s negative perception in the West. Though Russia’s image in the west will not be the primary concern of my investigation, it is important to understand that the feelings of distrust between the two countries are mutual. The mutual distrust plays a crucial role in perpetuating the ongoing conflict between Russia and the United States. The report serves as a fantastic starting point in examination of data that will either support or discredit the hypotheses formulated around the proposed field of investigation. Raw data sets from which the reviewed conclusions were drawn will also serve as an invaluable tool in identifying certain patterns of thought and opinion within Russia and the United States. Is there a correlation between the Russian people’s seemingly impenetrable support of Putin and can the data at hand shed some light as to why exactly such is the case.

**World Values Survey**

Public opinion of Putin in Russia is relatively high, as explained elsewhere in the annotated bibliography summary. Russians have confidence that Putin will make the right decisions in international affairs. Almost 66% of Russians, as Pew Research would suggest, strongly believe in Putin’s foreign policy, even despite the fact that Russian economy is on a steady decline. How is public opinion in Russia shaped? The media plays an important role in the shaping of public opinion. SMI's are where the majority of global citizenry get their news and by reliance on which determine their outlooks on one issue or another. The issue of state controlled Russian media will be addressed in a subsequent annotation. The kinds of media sources Russians get their information from can be identified by an examination of the World Value Survey Data Base, which contains a number of useful responses on Russian attitudes in form of binary, Likert, and semantic differential scales.
A quick glance at a questioner examining reliance on SMIs shows that over 80% of Russians get their daily information from TV. The next logical step would be to identify what channels Russians watch the most and what programs dominate the prime time on those channels, and what kind of message do they send to their viewers. How are international news stories presented in popular news programs, talk shows, and film? A comparison between Russian news reports of an international issue to that of a U.S. news reports covering the same issues would be crucial to the capstone examination.

**Live Internet Stats**
The data set allows for comparisons of global internet activity. This is pertinent to the capstone research because the internet is one of the top three places where Russians obtain their information. As time progressed, from the year 2000 to 2016, the number of internet users grew, and grew drastically. To some surprise, the population of Russia over these past years has both declined and increased, but the number of internet users has steadily grown. For example, in 2003, population of Russia declined by -0.42%, but Internet usage more than doubled.

The information can be used as a backdrop to compare the type of news sources Russians are looking at online as well as the kind of message these news sources send to its audience. Can Russians find information on the internet that contradicts the official story pushed by the state? Though Russian authorities have made strides to control internet content, it is a much more difficult domain to control than TV stations. In combination with the World Values Survey Data Base, where information such as confidence of Russians in their government is readily available, interesting comparisons can be drawn. For example, has confidence in the government increased as the number of internet users increased over the past 10 years?

**Code of Access. By Yulia Latinina for radio station Echo of Moscow**
As the World Value Surveys Data indicates, Radio has not been as prevailing a source of information for Russians as it has in the past. Echo of Moscow is technically a radio station. Its relevancy to this examination is underlined by the fact that in the past several years, the radio station has established quite an influential presence online, where talk shows presenting different viewpoints on controversial domestic and international affairs, social developments, and cultural trends can be read, streamed, or downloaded. A poll conducted by the website in 2014 revealed that Yulia Latinina is the most popular contributor at the radio station.

The first of several Latinina broadcasts that will be examined in the capstone research was aired on September 17, 2016. This particular one addresses the $120 million found in possession of one of Russia’s leading authorities in the war against corruption, Dmitry Zaharchenko. If authorities wish to locate the parties truly responsible for the wide scale spread of corruption in Russia, Latinina poises, they need to look no further than the nearest mirror. $120 million, argues the author, is not simply one or two bribes, it is a system, a system under which the
Russian Federation currently operates. The system is entirely too representative of Russia as a whole, and it’s the stories not unlike this one that lead many abroad to approach Russia with pre-calculated distrust, and this distrust is widely circulated through foreign media outlets.

*Just Think. By Mikhail Weller for radio station Echo of Moscow*

*Just Think* is equally if not more critical of the current state of affairs in Russia. *Weller* has a certain mastery of words, through the wielding of which he assaults the plethora of visibly problematic issues in nearly every sector of Russian life today. The state of education, government negligence and corruption at home, and questionable foreign policies abroad.

In a particularly condemning broadcast which hit the air on September 16, 2016, Weller calls for an independent Duma, an independent judiciary, and an election in which the actual will of the people can be reflected without oppression of fear of consequences. He then urges the audience to consider that while the elites accuse the U.S. of every wrong doing conceivable, painting Americans as the embodiment of anti-Russian sentiment abroad, their billions find their way into U.S. banks where they contribute to U.S. economy. Meanwhile, Russian economy is on the decline and the citizens really have no choice other than to hang on. Instead of fronting money to the U.S., argues Weller, the oligarchy should be investing into Russian economy, but they this is something they categorically refuse to do. Why? Because it will be stolen by a likeminded group or individual. And so Russia is stuck in this catch 22.

If we were to believe everything that is said about Russia in Western news, we would think that from a realist standpoint, the country has launched a massive challenge against U.S. hegemony, and that this is exactly what we are seeing in Ukraine, Syria, and elsewhere in the world. Huffington Post articles (a specific one will be discussed below) imply that Russia is trying to form an alliance with China, Turkey, and others to counter U.S. influence in the world. And this may be true to some extents. A realist standpoint also propagates the survival of the state at any cost. According to Weller and many others, Russia is destroying itself from within.

In an earlier broadcast, the author discusses Russia’s dealings with Beijing, but unlike the Huffington Post, describes it as a rather parasitic relationship from which only the Chinese benefit. Business owners and government officials seeking only personal profit, enter into questionable agreements with China that do nothing to promote Russian security and on the contrary, compromise Russia’s ability to defend itself from foreign threats by putting in the hands of another, potentially dangerous country, resource rich territories within Russia. Weller provides many detailed examples of this “selling out” of Russia piece by piece.


Why would Russia conclude treaties that are not in its best interest? What kind of treaties is Russia a party to? Does it abide by internationally accepted legal standards? Have any
international contracts been violated in Russia’s annexation of Crimea? The study of international law may help shed some light on these and other questions pertaining to Russia’s behavior in the international front.

Murphy’s text serves as a thorough introduction into the field of international law. Murphy gently guides the reader through current international events while drawing on classic and contemporary sources of international law to make sense of the legal framework underlying the international arena. The author covers, in addition to history, structure, and important parties subject to international law, key areas such as human rights, law of the sea, and the use of force. Has Russian force been used in Ukraine, and if so, what sort of ramifications can Russia face for breaking international law?

*International Relations Theory. By Mark V. Kauppi and Paul R. Viotti*

International law goes hand in hand with the study of international relations. Just like the competing theories of IR, the two practices can be juxtaposed to achieve the most comprehensive results. Viotti and Kauppi’s definitive survey of international relations theory covers all the major schools of IR theory in considerable depths, and for that reason will serve as the cornerstone from which theoretical foundations of the capstone research are derived. In this project, Russia will be analyzed from several theoretical standpoints including realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

Realists are concerned with maintaining stability and order in an anarchic world lacking an ultimate sovereign authority. While classical realists will want to focus on the historical background of an unfolding situation, neo-realists would look at the power balance between the involved states.

Though hard pressed to define what power actually is, neo-realists would argue it to be the “sum of military, economic, technological, diplomatic, and other capabilities at the disposal of the state.” The United States then takes the helm as the most powerful state in an archaic world today. Theory dictates that weaker states will seek to band together in order to balance the power of the hegemon. Russia’s recent alliances with Iran and Syria, or as the Huffington Post suggests, an axis with China, can be interpreted as attempts to balance power against the more powerful (economically, technologically, etc.) United States. Judging from this supposition it would stand to reason that Russia is exemplifying sings of defensive realism, despite some conservative explanations for Russia’s foreign policy that suggest its desire for global hegemony.

What role do international organizations play in Russia’s relations with the West? The lens of liberalism will need to be utilized to make sense of NATO, the EU, UN, and the interplay between these and many other non-state actors involved in dealings with Russia. If people matter, and what they do and say matters, then constructivism will also be useful to this

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1 Paul R. Viotti, Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, 52.
examination. *Echo of Moscow* broadcasts condemn Putin, the oligarchy, and the echelon of corrupt minions driving Russia into the ground, while television programs proclaim Putin as the enlightened savior of Russia and label any claims to the contrary as unpatriotic and paid for by the west. The constructivist agent-structure dilemma is vital in understanding completely opposite interpretations of one and the same entity. How does the combination of various interpretations of Putin’s regime, both in Russia and elsewhere in the world, define and redefine Russia in the global domain?

*Putin’s Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy. By Anna Politovskaya*

The book was published in America, where friends of Politovksaya, who was gunned down in the elevator of her apartment building in 2006, took it upon themselves to bring to light information compiled by courageous journalist. Politovskaya’s book has had a profound effect on the way westerners understand internal Russian affairs. Accurate, sincere, and gifted with a knack for narrative, the author paints a grim picture of Russia, one where corruption has transcended all reasonable boundaries and is rotting the country from inside out. The text (save for the possibility of samizdat) has never been published in Russia and is absolutely crucial when analyzing Russia’s behavior from a constructivist point of view.

The purpose of Politovksaya’s dangerous expedition is to tell the reader exactly why Putin is bad for Russia. The military, she argues, is in a state of decay. Soldiers are starved, beaten by officers, and are more or less treated like indentured slaves. The business sector is deeply entwined with the government; the judiciary serves as a means of legal justification for blatant wrongdoings against the wellbeing of the people and the integrity of the state. Civil liberty encroachment is the order of the day. Everything, including justice, can be bought and sold, with a strike of a pen, a lawyer carrying out the will of business/government, and a judge driven by a similar purpose. The author condemns Putin for the atrocities in the war against Chechnya, for perpetuating terror rather than fighting it, for exploiting his constituency, and for smothering the hope of Russia becoming a stable and respected rational actor within the international arena.

The book is somewhat dated and does not reflect many of the realities of the East/West relationship today. Things have gotten worse. The nature of liability has shifted over the course of the past 12 years. The general trend in Russia seems to be putting blame on America for something or another, and in that, the late Politovskaya shares a common theme with the Russia of today. Where today, Russian media will claim that the U.S. is doing all that it can to undermine Russia’s image in the global arena, in 2004, Politovksaya accused the U.S. of not doing enough. “[U.S.] barely reacts to Putin’s antiterrorist policies, and finds much about today’s Russia entirely to its taste: the vodka, the caviar, the gas, the oil, the dancing bears.”

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2 Politovksaya, P 255
Confessions of a Rebel. By Boris Nemtsov

Confessions of a Rebel is a collection of observations by yet another public figure whose outspoken criticism of Putin’s regime earned a bullet to the head. The book deals with Nemtsov’s personal recollections of Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, and the many oligarchs now reigning supreme in Russia. It is not merely an observation of everything wrong with Russia today. Nemtsov gives a report from the bunker, from inside the Kremlin where he served multiple posts including Deputy Prime Minister under Boris Yeltsin, and where he observed Putin’s rise to power.

Nemtsov recalls that Yeltsin and Co. rallied for Putin, an ordinary and rather unmemorable agent of the KGB/FSB, did not care where the new president would lead the country, they only cared about securing their personal wellbeing following Yeltsin’s departure from power. The outcome of this selfish negligence have been horrific for Russia. When the Russian people decide that they have had enough lies and corruption, a new leader will emerge. Nemtsov voices some reservations as to who that leader may be. Democracy might not prevail, argues the late politician, and someone much worse could come to power. This is because there is a great dislike of foreigners in Russia, especially those hailing from the Caucasus. The hate is state sponsored.

The book will come in useful during application of critical theory to examination of Russia’s foreign affairs. The focus, of course, will be human agency. Nemtsov argues that Putin’s ascend and usurpation of power should be approached from a psychological point of view rather than an ideological one. A useful question to ask is has the KGB’s model of systematic distrust of everything and everyone been superimposed on the Russian Federation as a whole? The combination of CHEKIST paranoia and Russia’s historic weariness of the West could have catastrophic implications on RF’s foreign policy.

The Russian Bear Is Rising. By Hasnet Lais, for the Huffington Post

Track back to 2016. America is faced with threats that lack definition. Failed boots on the ground campaigns, ISIS, North Korea, China, as well as turmoil from within, illustrated by a disastrous election campaign trail and mounting civil discontent, indicate that America has entered dangerous territory. “The karmic consequence of imperial hubris stares America in the eye.” From the terrains of uncertainty an old adversary rises, letting the world know of its return to the international arena.

Russia does not hide discontent over NATO’s placement of launch missile defense systems on Russian borders, nor do they remain silent about the west’s provocative news reports of Russia. NATO’s increased occupation of the Baltic seldom gets media attention in the States. In response to this little known fact, Russia mobilizes forces in Kaliningrad and conducts its own
anti-invasion drills. Tensions escalate slowly, but surely. American public only gets one side of the story.

The trouble with an article of this nature is that there is a good likelihood the reader is looking at a wolf in sheep’s clothing. The article agrees with Russia’s criticism of instigative journalism, but in many respects follows in the same troupe as the journalism in question. Lais calls attention to Putin’s military hardware, suggesting that some experts have concluded it is capable of penetrating U.S. and Europe’s defense shields. He warns that its capabilities have grown to match and perhaps even surpass those of the west, putting forth the notion that “conventional deterrence will not be enough to eliminate the existential threat posed by a nuclear Russia.” He then goes into some detail about the supposed Russia-China angle that would most likely be torn to shreds by critical observers within Russia like Latynina and Weller.

Russia-U.S. Relations Put People in a Corner. By Yu Sui for Inosmi.ru

The title of the article in Russian yields a peculiar and somewhat confusing translation to English, perhaps very characteristic of U.S./Russia relations, the topic with which Sui is concerned. The author points out that relations between the two countries, at times friendly and at others foreboding and grim, play a significant role in everything that is happening in the world today. The framework of the article consists of re-evaluation of U.S./Relations form the time Putin came to power to the situation in the present.

In 2001, Sui recalls, Putin visited the United States. A year later, George W. Bush made a voyage to Russia. The meetings were underlined by a feeling of giddiness and a chin held high to the future and the possibilities it held for mutual cooperation. Unfortunately, the “new relationship” did not meet the expectations, and no strategic partnership was able to take old. The structure of the partnership was too fragile for either country to take seriously. It lacked the effective mechanisms which ensure effectiveness, like the one existing between between actors such as U.S. and NATO, as well as a basis for economic cooperation, like what we see between Moscow and Beijing.

The relationship between Russia and U.S. has been summarized by the author as severely lacking mutual trust. The U.S. is not happy with the direction Putin has been steering Russia in. Many in the west are of the opinion that Putin is seriously trying to reconstruct, or in some way emulate, the Soviet Union. The west’s suspicion is caused by factors like the Eurasian Economic Union, an alliance actively propagated by Moscow, and Putin’s rhetoric of restoring Russia to its former glory. In order to do so, Putin has called for unity among people and advancements in economic and political stability. The difficulty in achieving these goals has naturally been blamed on America. A lot of other interesting information pertaining to the theme of distrust is mentioned in the article, but the general takeaway point here is that in order to make positive
change happen in the world, Russia and U.S. will need to set aside their differences. This is obviously much easier said than done.

**Putin’s Kleptocracy; Who Really Owns Russia? By Karen Dawisha**
The theme of restoring Russia to its former glory has surfaced up quite a bit in the preliminary research for the capstone project. Karen Dawisha does a wonderful job of explaining what exactly this restoration entails, as well as documenting Putin’s rise to power, the regents he brought along for the ride, and billions they stole from the country and the people of Russia.

The topics covered in this text include appointments of officials to certain high ranking positions for personal gains, the Bank of Russia currently sanctioned by the United States, visa bans and frozen accounts, Putin’s palaces, and the wide spread of organized crime into the upper echelons of Russian government. KGB/FSB and Russia’s most notorious crime syndicates are examined at depth. Sources for the text include Stasi archives, investigative reports from multiple countries, Western government officials that have lived in Russia at one point or another in the not so distant past, and Russian insiders, some of whom have lost their lives in an effort to bring the corrupt usurpers out of Kremlin and into the pages of history.

**Putin’s Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy. By Marcel H. Van Herpin**
The publication deals specifically with Russia’s “information war”, the ammunition for which has been carefully researched, compiled, and implemented over the past decade. This very concept, Herpin claims, has a lot to do with the current situation in Ukraine. At an earlier point in time, Russia’s information tactics were intended to be used as a means of strengthening Russia’s soft power, but have instead become one of the key instruments in Kremlin’s imperialism. The awesomeness of the new propaganda machine is comparable to that which was employed at the height of the Cold War.

The book covers several topics pertaining to Russia’s use of information at home and abroad, including mimicking of Western public diplomacy efforts and public relations firms, media outlets as a front for backdoor dealings, purchasing of Western media outlets and payment for publication of certain supplements by major Western newspapers, global propaganda through Russia’s RT network, and much more. The author questions the role of Orthodoxy in Russia, an institution now experiencing levels of popularity matched only by those of Tsarist Russia, its close affiliation with Kremlin, and its condemnation of universal human rights and the West in general.

The information contained in the text should be carefully compared to the *World Attitude Survey*, which documents the various sources Russians rely on to get their news. If information in these
surveys is accurate, than majority of Russians get their daily news from television, the majority of which, argues Van Herpin, is state controlled. The scope of Putin’s propaganda reaches beyond the confines of Russian TV sets, soars past the conflict in Ukraine, and lands in the center of Europe, where, the author claims, it seeks to change the negative perceptions of Russia in France and Germany and usher the European powers into an alliance with Kremlin to counter the effects of NATO and the United States.

_Economic Relations of Russia and U.S.: Old Problems and New Horizons. By Pavel Kanevski for Russian International Affairs Council_  
The 2013 publication by the Russian Internal Affairs Council observes that Russia/U.S. relations are going through a drawn out transitional period. Gone are the clearly outlined rules of conduct coagulated by the Cold War, boasts Kanevski, and both sides are still looking for new avenues of engagement and cooperation. The process has not been easy and in order to overcome the inheritance of the past, more concrete modes of operation must be established between the two powers.

Syria showed, that despite disagreement, cooperation is possible. It is important to note the date of publication of the article. The instance of cooperation surely refers to Russia’s successful role as moderator between Syria and the United States in regards to Assad regime’s use of chemical weapons against enemy combatants. The affair showed some glimmer of hope, but we in 2016 know that differences between Russia and U.S. have escalated significantly in the past three years. Uncle Sam flexed his muscles and the Russian bear has shown its teeth. _Vice_ has gone as far as deeming the current relationship between the two as Cold War 2.0. But 2013 was a hopeful year.

The article covers Russia’s acceptance into WTO, repealing of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, and the nature of trade relations between Russia and the U.S. as they were in 2013. It is revealed that Russia’s biggest export to the U.S. was crude oil and oil related products which accounted for 74% of all Russian export to the U.S. Other considerable exports included metals, metal works, precious stones, and chemicals. The numbers indicated in the article should be compared to Russia’s exports of these goods today, to show how the sanctions imposed on Russia by the U.S. have expected the economic wellbeing.

One of the most interesting observations about the article is the insistence of the author for sound economic relations. By that Kanevski means not just revenue generating ventures, but ones that will attract foreign investment, modernization of technological foundations, and innovation. He suggests that normalization of relations will need more than just economic advancements. Statesmen of both sides would have to work hard to develop a systematic groundwork in accordance with which positive interaction can be established and maintained. Both journalists of _Echo of Moscow_ and laymen observers would agree that the statesmen have not done a very good job.
Russia-EU Economic Relations: Assessing Two Years of Sanctions. By Anastasia Nevskaya for Russia Direct

Oil and gas prices are falling. Sanctions on Russia are having an adverse effect on the country’s economic situation. This is very clearly felt in Russia-EU trade, which has been on the decline for the past two years. Future economic cooperation does not seem likely to prosper in any foreseeable future. According to Nevskaya, the economic collapse of the past two years is unprecedented.

Trade flows with the West are on a dramatic decline. Investors are keeping their distance. The economic damage is felt on both sides. The trade relationship has not been much to write home about, and already in 2013 Russia displayed symptoms of a weakening economy. However, with the escalation of political hostility and imposition of sanctions, trade plummeted into staggering decline. The article goes into considerable depth to discuss the parameters of the existing trade relationship and what sectors of it are suffering the most. Nevskaya estimates that sanctions are accountable for around one third of total decline. The losses suffered by the EU may have latent effects and manifest themselves at some point in the future.

The article published on September 26, 2016, claims that the U.S. is attempting to militarize Europe, provoke Russia, and in so doing is pushing the world toward wide scale military conflict. These accusations follow U.S. decision to expand its presence in Asia, namely South Korea, where under the guise of threat from North Korea, poises Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov, the United States compromises Russian sense of security and throws off the balance of the world. Neither are Russians happy about U.S. missile defense systems in Eastern Europe, which the U.S. claims are there in case Iran begins to act problematically, but seen by Russians as an enemy at the gates.

The article is interesting in that its title has little to do with the actual content, and though there is an element of truth here, to a Russian skimming the internet for news, the headline screams conflict, blaming the U.S. in this particular instance for pushing the world to war, and of course, undermining Russia’s integrity in the global arena. This type of media reporting is exactly what Van Herpin warns the audience of, and he could not be more on point. When assaulted with a constant visual bombardment lighting America in this negative light or that, time and time again and so on for an indefinite number of years, the Russian observer comes to believe that the United States really is out to get him.

The Latest: French FM Calls on Russia to Reign in Assad. Fox News.
The article takes some time to go over the recently unfolding events in Syria. Rebels have taken over some government occupied territories, while Assad’s military efforts grow fiercer. Russia is accused of providing air support for said efforts. At an emergency U.N. Security Council
meeting, French foreign minister called on Russia and Iran to “pull themselves together” and pressure Bashar al Assad to stop escalating violence. This is a good example of subtle sensationalist news on behalf of the United States.

The magnifying glass in this article hovers over the territorial gains and losses of rebels and government forces on the scorched earth of Syria. A more appropriate title could have been used, but instead, the editors chose to frame Russia as once again siding the villain. To an American browsing the internet for news, repeated claims of Russia on the offense, even if the title does not outwardly say so, paint a grim picture of world affairs, where the Kremlin is seen as the epicenter of evil.

**NEW START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)**

“The New Start Treaty responsibly reduces the number of nuclear weapons and launchers that the United States and Russia deploy, while fully maintaining America’s nuclear deterrent,” proclaims President Obama. This is a treaty on measures for further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. Signed on April 8, 2010 and entering into force on February 5, 2011, the treaty is intended to last for ten years with the option of extension of a period of no more than five years.

The aggregate limits of the treaty limit the United States and Russia to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads. “The treaty does not place any constraints on the testing, development, or deployment of current or planned U.S. missile defense programs or U.S. long-range conventional strike capabilities. Ultimately, the planned effect of the treaty is to reduce the amount of strategic nuclear missile launchers down to half of the currently existing number.

The treaty has been criticized in the United States for giving in too much to Russian demands and getting too little in return. Aside from the controversy it garnished at the time of initial signing, the treaty is at risk of becoming denounced by a Russia frustrated by U.S. encroachment on its borders. NATO is closing in, fear the Russians, and as Russia’s Foreign Minister of Affairs Sergei Lavrov has poised, the efforts of nuclear disarmament will prove futile unless the U.S. rolls back on its plans to create antimissile defense systems on territories neighboring Russia.

*Theory is Dead, Long Live Theory: The End of the Great Debates and the Rise of Eclecticism in International Relations. By David Lake.*

The field of International Relations is known for its tradition of the Great Debates. That tradition is dying and the author could not be happier. Though grandiose in intent and successful in clarifying the different assumptions made by IR theorists, the theories, argues Lake, have resolved very little. This article focuses on mid-level theory which, according to the author, allows for a progressive (and eclectic) approach to the field of International Relations. Mid-level
theory does not align itself with any particular paradigms, but rather focuses on what works. Lake insists it can offer something the paradigms have never been able to: a progressive discipline of International Relations.

“Rooted in critical approaches of the interwar period [between the first and the second world wars], these alternatives flowered with the Vietnam War and the shattering of the myth of a national interest that could be discerned by an objective observer.”

Mid-level theory highlights the role of cognitive bias when it comes to interpretation and response to crises. Relying on history and case studies as much as large data sets and concrete empirical evidence, mid-level theory focuses on parts of the political process, as opposed to the whole, and studies the effects of variables, single and multiple, on policy choices and outcomes. A tall order, but perhaps this rouge approach to theoretical speculation may shed more light on the mystery of Russia and its foreign policy than any of the classical theories are capable of. Lake offers several examples of the progressive nature of mid-level theory, one of which is open economy politics (OEP) that aims to explain trade policy, monetary and financial relations, foreign direct investment, foreign trade, regulation, immigration, and global and corporate governance. With a comprehensive approach to explaining a large range of economic policies, mid-level will be a crucial component of Russia’s foreign affairs focused research.

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3 Lake, 571


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