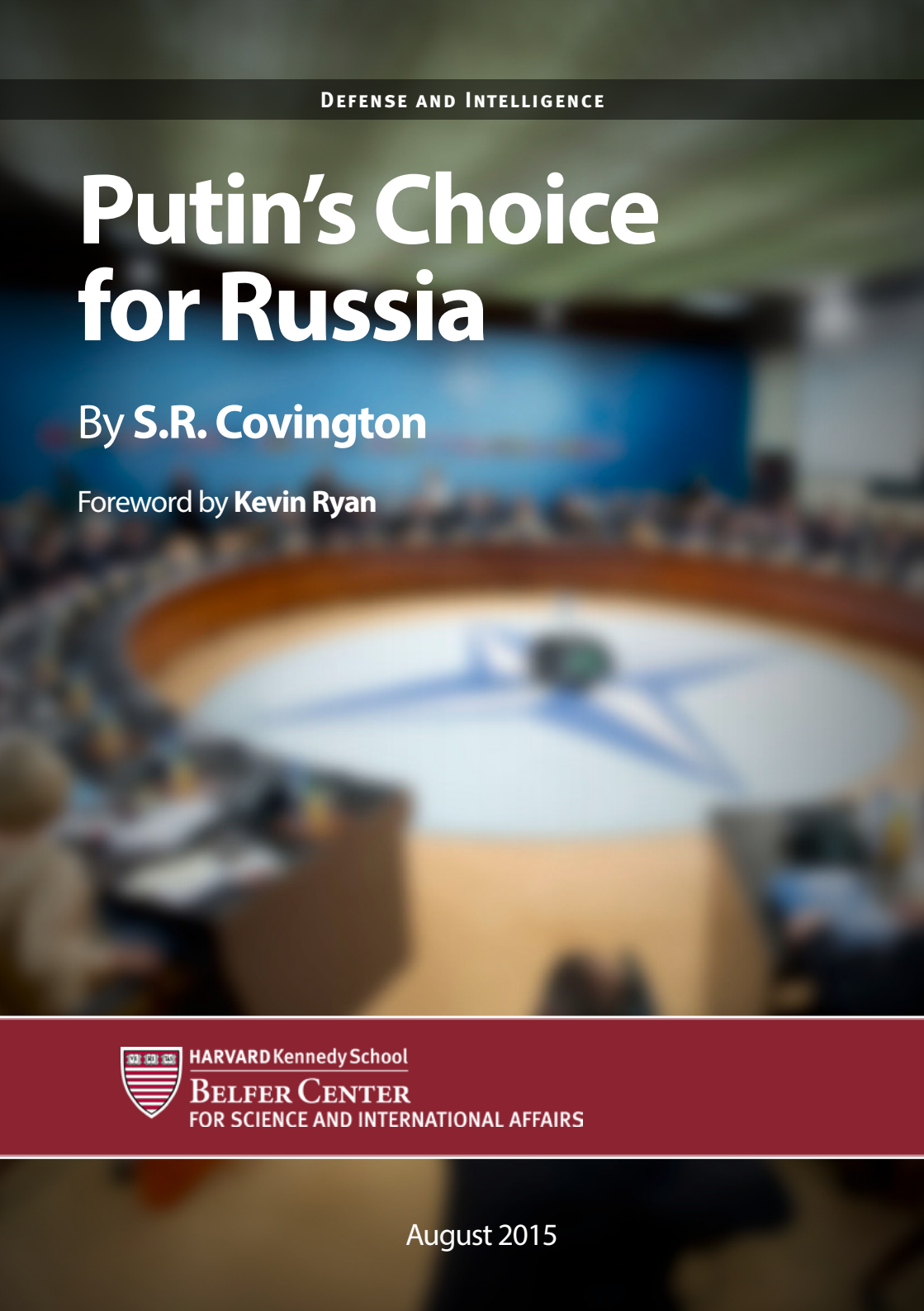

Defense and Intelligence

Putin's Choice for Russia

By **S.R. Covington**

Foreword by **Kevin Ryan**

HARVARD Kennedy School
BELFER CENTER
FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

August 2015

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Foreword

This paper by Stephen R. Covington exposes the roots of Russian President Vladimir Putin's policies toward Europe, his challenge to European security, and the consequences for Russia's own future.

"Previous Russian approaches could be characterized as attempting to 'break into" the European security system to politically divide and overrule. In contrast, Putin's current approach attempts to 'breakout' of the European security system, divide Europe, and establish new rules. This is a fundamental change of approach that reflects a fundamental change of policy."

Stephen Covington has advised nine NATO Supreme Allied Commanders over a quarter of a century on strategic and international affairs. His insights and understanding of the Eurasian strategic landscape are based on years of study and firsthand experience in dealing with regional leaders—military and civilian. Serious students of Russia and NATO will find Covington's assessment of President Putin and the impact of his policy decisions on Russia most helpful.

BG Kevin Ryan (U.S. Army retired),
Director, Defense and Intelligence Projects

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General meeting of defence ministers for the NATO–Ukraine Commission, Brussels, 24-25 June 2015

Courtesy NATO

1. Introduction: **Gorbachev's and Putin's Different Strategic Choices to Enhance Global Competiveness**

In 1985, a Soviet leader came to power, leading one of the two superpowers in a bi-polar world, commanding a powerful military, and leading a party mandated with changing the world. Mikhail Gorbachev was also equipped with something far more powerful than the weapons in the Soviet arsenal—forecasts of the USSR's future inability to compete with the United States in economic, technological, and military terms. Gorbachev was convinced that the Soviet war economy and its priorities would constrain and exhaust its national capacity to compete successfully at the end of the 20th century—and that the internal system needed change for the USSR to sustain itself as a competitive, global power.

Gorbachev decisively chose economic reforms and disengagement from strategic confrontation with the West to address Soviet non-competitiveness. Internal political and economic changes to the Soviet system were intended to strengthen the USSR and renew its economic and technological base for sustained global competition in the 21st century. He disengaged the Soviet Union from external strategic confrontation through conventional and nuclear arms reductions, changed Soviet security and defense policies, and reduced arms expenditures. Gorbachev's choice ended decades of direct military confrontation between the Soviet Union and NATO, and Eastern Europe's

political revolutions ultimately led to the geographic separation of Soviet and NATO military forces. In 1991, Gorbachev was swept from power by the political and economic forces unleashed by his attempted internal reform of the USSR.

30 years later, another Russian leader driven by similar concerns about future strategic non-competitiveness has set this country on a path to address and reverse its non-competitive position in the world. Vladimir Putin's Russia today, however, is on a very different course from Gorbachev. After implementing liberal economic reforms aimed at strengthening Russia's sovereignty in the early years of his rule, Putin has rejected structural, internal economic and political reforms, fearing that like Gorbachev he too could be swept from power. Putin's choice reflects a view that Russia can *only* address its non-competitiveness by changing the world around Russia, and most critically, by changing the European security system. In Putin's view, any solution short of *changing* the European security system—including full integration, separation by erecting new walls, freezing the status quo around Russia, or partnering with other countries to counter-balance the powers in the European system—only means Russia's inevitable loss of great power status and the loss of his personal power at home.

Consequently, Putin is rearming Russia, remilitarizing Russia's overall approach to security, changing Russia's defense concepts, adopting continuous destabilization strategies against neighboring states, and returning to old policy formulas for internal and external security—all justified and rationalized by the perceived threat posed by the U.S./European security system around Russia. His policy requires a changed Europe to enhance Russian strategic competitiveness and requires a changed Europe

to avoid political change inside Russia. These two Russian campaigns—one external and one internal—are interfused. Success in one campaign is dependent on success in the other. More importantly, failure in one campaign is perceived as prompting failure in the other.

President Putin's decision is influenced by Russia's experiences since the end of the Cold War—internal coup attempts, terrorist attacks, 'colored revolutions' around Russia, wars inside and outside of Russia, unfinished reforms, and perceptions of Russia's natural vulnerability to a fate similar to that of the USSR given its one-dimensional economic base and political superstructure. However, Putin's policy is driven mostly by concerns about Russia's inability to compete on almost any level and in almost any sphere with the world's greatest powers absent fundamental changes to the security, energy, economic, and financial systems around Russia.

"Putin's decision is influenced by Russia's experiences since the end of the Cold War."

Russia does have long-standing critical views of the European security architecture. U.S. and NATO Ballistic Missile Defense programs, a variety of NATO and EU policies and actions, and U.S. security and defense integration on the continent have been a few of the many points of criticism from Moscow over the years. Dimitri Medvedev, then the President of Russia, proposed a new European security architecture shortly after the Russian conflict with Georgia in 2008 to change the European security system. While Putin's policy is consistent with well-documented Russian criticisms of Europe's security architecture, his actions differ substantially from previous Russian approaches.

Previous Russian approaches could be characterized as attempting to 'break into" the European security system to *politically divide and overrule*. In contrast, Putin's current approach attempts to 'breakout' of the European security system, divide Europe, and *establish new rules*. This is a fundamental change of approach that reflects a fundamental change of policy.

"Putin's current approach attempts to 'breakout' of the European security system, divide Europe, and *establish new rules*."

Russian political and military experts also have long envied the Chinese security model. In many ways, Putin's Russia seeks a security system in Europe that resembles the security environment China has in the Pacific. For the Chinese, there is no real Asian-wide architecture of transpacific security akin to Europe's transatlantic security that collectively counter-balances national power. China is able to use its economic and military strengths with a wider range of freedom, acting opportunistically, wielding its power to divide and overrule, protect territories and interests, and navigate its strengths in a security environment with strategic, but isolated pockets of US-Pacific defense integration. Simultaneously China has integrated economically, gained access to technology, modernized its economic system, and maintained continuity in political control over the internal system. Russian security experts also have admired the fact that China has evolved and grown into a great economic power without the political and economic turmoil Russia suffered in the 1990s—turmoil that has cost Russia time, money, energy, and opportunity.

Russia's leadership wants a Europe without strategic Alliances, without multi-national organizations, and without a U.S.-Europe Transatlantic link that can through collective policies and action offset the national strengths Russia would hold over any one European nation. It would be a European security environment that would allow the Russia to apply its national strengths to great effect without challenge and competition - enhancing its power abroad and at home. This is the end-state of Putin's strategy, and it requires changing the European security system—the rules of the game—to sustain Russia's capability to compete with Europe and other regional powers poles outside Europe. Conversely, the policy strictly seeks to freeze the political rules of the game inside Russia, and end meaningful political competition at home.

Russia's leaders have concluded that the European system is both vulnerable and unjust.[1] In the Russian view, the European security system is vulnerable because it is weakened by a diffusion of global power, political devolution, sapped of economic wealth, and attacked by forces of disorder in other parts of the world. Putin also has concluded that the current European security system is unjust because it confines and restricts Russia's ability to exercise her inherent national strengths, inflicting a modern form of *multi-dimensional, multi-level strategic encirclement* of Russia. Russia's leaders claim the European security system is part of a global system whose purpose is to advance a unipolar, US-dominated global order.[2] Moreover, Russia's leaders assert that preventing Russia from attaining its proper place in a just global order is a prerequisite to sustain the current unjust global order. Russia's policy seeks to change *first* the principles and rules upon which Europe and other countries have prospered and grounded their economic and military security, then replace

them with new principles and new rules that would enhance the strengths of an unreformed, Putin-led Russia and compensate for its weaknesses.

As Russia's campaign against Ukraine has demonstrated, this is a 'rule breaker to be rule maker' strategy, and the strategy relies on a variety of internal and external means to achieve its ends. Internally, the strategy feeds nationalism, familiarity, and orientation to the disempowered Russian people, offers the prospect for greater profit to the powerful rich, and promises purpose, identity, and resources to the power ministries (e.g., Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior.). Externally, the strategy relies on the use of all elements of power—including military—to discredit, devalue, and delegitimize the current European security system.

The roots of this strategy have many antecedents in Soviet policy, yet his policy is not that of the Soviet Union. Nor is it a policy that *strictly and narrowly* follows nationalist aims for redrawing borders to revive a Novorossiya or rebuild the Soviet empire. His policy is a mixture of the very old, old, and new in a completely different global strategic context. Putin needs the Russian people, the country's powerful rich, and the power ministries to support his policy. The Soviet-inspired symbols, messaging, and parades, the nationalism associated with a Great Russia, the rearmament, increased defense budgets, the declarations of an unjust peace at the end of the Cold War, and the accommodation of the narrow financial interests through new energy contracts with China and others are used to fuel support for his policy at home and attempt to legitimize it abroad.

President Putin has merged these three lines of ideas, ideals, and vision for Russia into a single system of thought, policy, and action to drive his strategy and build support internally for his agenda. Righting the perceived wrongs inflicted on Russia and rebuilding Russia's power, prestige, and place in the former Soviet space after its perceived humiliation at the end of the Cold War are the public lines of Russian policy. Away from public view, Putin constructs unchallengeable political control over Russia that is built on the narrow aims of a Kremlin leadership interested in obtaining more wealth and more power. Individually, these public and non-public lines of effort are single elements of Putin's policy, each with their own appeal to their targeted audience. However, these three lines of Putin's policy are mixed together into a single political and strategic military logic for breaking out of the perceived strategic encirclement of the European security system around Russia to establish a stronger, more globally competitive Russia.

2. ‘Strategic Encirclement’ and Breaking Out to Break Up the European Security System

Russian military and civilian leaders make reference to the encirclement of Soviet cities in World War II. “Breaking out” to “break up” the integrity of an opponent’s system of defense was a classic element of Soviet military strategy in World War II to end strategic encirclement. In the strategic defense operations of that time, Soviet political and military leaders relied on breakout operations to create ruptures in their opponent’s encirclement. Some breakout operations were tactical in scope and limited to the purpose of demonstrating resolve to not accept encirclement and defeat. Other breakout operations were operational and strategic in scale and purpose. Operational-strategic break out actions were designed to change the overall strategic situation with decisive large-scale actions. These breakout actions quickly broke the opponent’s defense lines on a large scale, and moved to greater depths to damage the integrity of the opponent’s system of defense, ultimately creating advantages that allowed for a transition to more offensive action. These large-scale operations ended the encirclement and reversed a fundamental, operational-strategic disadvantageous situation into one more advantageous for the Soviet Union.

Russia’s political and military leaders describe their current security environment as one of strategic encirclement.[3] Breaking out to break up the integrity of the European security system appears to be an integral part of Putin’s grander strategy to

address this perceived encirclement. In this modern context of perceived strategic encirclement, Russia's strategic nuclear aviation flights and maritime deployments can be seen as the modern day versions of tactical breakout actions from World War II, designed to demonstrate the Kremlin's resolve to not accept encirclement. Russia's comprehensive destabilization campaign in Ukraine—including the use of the military—can be seen as the modern day version of an operational-strategic breakout operation designed to breakout of encirclement permanently by breaking up the European security system.

In this context as well, Ukraine's destabilization is an end, and a means to the much more strategic end of breaking up the European security system. Russia requires a continuous, inconclusive process of destabilization of Ukraine—not a frozen conflict - to achieve its grander objectives. A frozen conflict in Ukraine would effectively freeze Russia's strategic-scale instrument for bringing about the fundamental changes to Europe's security system. The Russians would fear that a frozen conflict in Ukraine would lead the more powerful West to build a new wall of reinforced, sustained containment (encirclement) around Russia on top of this new frozen conflict, effectively undercutting and countering Putin's overall breakout strategy—and placing Russia in a significantly weakened post-crisis situation, still unable to compete strategically and less capable, with fewer options to challenge the European security system in the future. Additionally, a frozen conflict in Ukraine

"A frozen conflict in Ukraine would effectively freeze Russia's strategic-scale instrument for bringing about the fundamental changes to Europe's security system."

also would compel Russia to pay for eastern Ukraine and its reconstruction, and shift its focused destabilization actions to other geographic areas with more direct, less ambiguous means to achieve the overall aims of its strategy, risking direct, intensified strategic competition and confrontation with the West. Consequently, Ukraine represents an operational-strategic breakout opportunity that serves the aims of an overall Russian breakout strategy. In the framework of Russia's broader breakout strategy, the resolution of the conflict with Ukraine—political, military, economic—without a change to the European security system would not be in Moscow's interest.

Russia's breakout strategy is supported by many other actions that break with, and break out of the European security system. Russia's breakout actions include the use of force in Crimea, withdrawal from the CFE treaty, military, financial, and political support to separatists in eastern Ukraine, direct financial, political, and military actions to destabilize Ukraine on a broader scale, a military rearmament program, the buildup of military capabilities in the Arctic, Black Sea, and Baltic Sea, sudden large-scale military exercises that shift forces to higher combat readiness involving long-range deployments, nuclear force exercises designed to posture and intimidate, and energy, financial, and informational pressure on European countries. All of these political and military actions break with the norms, rules, and practices of the post-Cold War period and destabilize the current security system.

In March and April of this year, Russia conducted a strategic command staff exercise for multi-theater war, a tactical snap exercise involving the Baltic and Arctic regions, and an internal Interior Ministry (MVD) exercise in the West, Northwest,

Central, and Southern sections of Russia in coordination with the FSB to respond to Maidan-type unrest in Russia.[4] In June, the Russian military conducted snap exercises of their mobile nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles.[5] The Russian military has adopted an approach to conflict in peace, crisis, and war that couples large-scale conventional and nuclear forces to the application of non-attributable, ambiguous means of destabilization.

This Russian model of hybrid warfare differs fundamentally from other models in this latter respect. No other nation in Europe is implementing such an array of actions that break with post-Cold War European norms and practices. If Russia produces and fields a missile system that violates the Intermediate Nuclear Forces,, Russia's reversal on this agreement would be the final move in Putin's restoration of most, if not all, of the major military lines of the pre-Gorbachev military competition with Europe, ending the single most important Gorbachev-era military agreement, and one that sparked the unwinding of the Cold War.

"No other nation in Europe is implementing such an array of actions that break with post-Cold War European norms and practices."

Moscow's reframing of strategic competition with Europe supports and justifies Putin's breakout policy. In the Cold War, East-West confrontation was a central part of a contest between two socio-economic systems, the outcome of which would determine a just or unjust world social order. Putin's policy now frames today's strategic competition with Europe as a contest between two security systems, one supposedly designed to trap, marginalize, and disempower Russia in an unstable global security system. Routinely, the Russian leadership describes the

current European system as one that offers a future with Russia on the periphery, while a new system offers a future with Russia at the center. In Putin's view, the existing European system offers a future with Russia under control and influenced by others, the other offers a future with Russia in control and influencing others. Russia's goal is to breakout of a perceived unjust security system, and to liberate and expand Russia's power. This modernized ideological framework resonates with the people, the powerful rich, and the power ministries, uniting them in support of Putin. It also sets the overall justification for the decision to breakout and the strategy to do so. In turn, this creates acceptance for the wielding of power externally, the employment of forces to achieve diverse aims, and the posturing of conventional and nuclear forces in an intimidatingly way to reinforce ambiguous destabilization actions or demonstrate Russian power.

"Breaking Europe's political cohesion is the fundamental prerequisite for changing Europe's security rules, principles, and norms."

The main focus of the breakout strategy now is the political cohesion of the transatlantic community. Breaking Europe's political cohesion is the fundamental prerequisite for changing Europe's security rules, principles, and norms. Russian political and military leaders have a long history of expertly exploiting gaps in their competitor's strengths, and exploiting gaps between allies on policy has been, and remains, a common tactic of Russian diplomatic, economic, energy, and military pressure. The Soviet military attempted to exploit the Fulda Gap and the gaps between Allied corps boundaries in NATO's Cold War military strategy. The Russians exploited the gap between NATO member states over the 2008 Georgia

conflict, and this gap allowed for the anchoring of Russia deeper into Georgia's security and the displacement of Western influence. Russian direct pressure on European cohesion remains centered on Ukraine and Europe's responses to this crisis. At the same time, Moscow has expanded sharply its campaign to undermine political cohesion in NATO and the European Union over the last year.

Vladimir Putin's regional breakout strategy is set against the backdrop of a global security system the Russians see to be under assault by the forces of disorder in many parts of the world, punctuated by a perception of decreasing U.S. power and influence.[6] Those forces of disorder are attempting to stake their claims and attain their interests now as the basis for negotiating a new order for the future. The Russian leadership thinks those other forces of disorder will produce changes in the regional and global security order. Putin's regime also may be betting on the forces of disorder globally to occupy Europe's attention as ISIS, Al Shabaab, Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda, and other organizations attempt to dismantle national and regional elements of the current global system. Europe's occupation with this second, very critical, different strategic challenge from the South, effectively gives Putin the opportunity and flexibility of having a second strategic flank unconnected to Putin's direct campaign against Europe, but one that allows Russia to maintain the strategic initiative, increase or decrease pressure, and to move more decisively or move more cautiously as the security situation permits in Europe and other challenges play out to Europe's south. This Russian strategy against Europe attempts to profit from the West's occupation with other challenges to the global security system, challenges that consume the time, energy, and resources of the West and allow Russia to create regional power

advantages with Europe that do not exist on a global scale. This is a critical element in Putin's strategy given Russia's inability to compete directly with the stronger, richer, technologically advanced West.

Post-Soviet Russia is no longer a status quo power centered on preserving Russia's place in the security order through static, *no change* policies and the static presence of forces in frozen conflicts. Russia today is a system change power. Putin's breakout strategy is designed to destabilize, and the approach seeks to unfreeze frozen conflicts, break rules, and foster tensions where useful to accelerate the melting away of Europe's proven security principles and rules. Putin gains little for Russia's security today from these actions. It is a carefully developed policy and strategy. It is not a carefully balanced strategy. It shows scant regard for the instability created by this policy—that is the intent of the policy. It is a strategy designed to test wills and determine who will tire first and compromise on the principles of security. These actions set Russia, and consequently Europe with it, on a course to compete over Europe's future security arrangements.

3. Implications of Putin's Breakout Strategy for Russia

In 1991, President Yeltsin proclaimed in his inaugural address that Russia was rising from her knees, rising from a Soviet past and Soviet system that had weakened and deformed Russia's place in the world. Twenty-four years later, Putin's Russia is breaking out of a European security system he claims is designed to weaken and subjugate Russia's sovereignty.

President Putin has made a choice for Russia, a choice that is dangerous for Europe and ruinous for Russia. Putin has chosen a path intended to strengthen Russia's internal, regional, and ultimately global position in the world, ending a two-decade long internal struggle over Russia's security orientation.

This is Putin's strategic choice for Russia, and it is a flawed choice. His choice prioritizes preserving personal power internally and is based on a distorted understanding of the world around Russia. Putin's policy strategists like to believe they are bridging to a new future and have Europe's security on a corrective course that will return Russia to greatness. In reality, Putin has embraced a set of *solutions* to Russia's insecurity that was identified as the source of the USSR's weakness and non-competitiveness in the Gorbachev period—measures that may very well compound inherent weaknesses, narrow alternative avenues to building security, and undermine Russia's competitiveness.

Putin's choice ignores the fact as well that most of the

fundamental strategic dilemmas challenging strategic competitiveness that Gorbachev wanted to solve with his reforms 30 years ago are still in place. At the same time, Putin's policy does not address the real source of Russia's insecurity and weakness - the incomplete modernization, built on sufficient political, economic, and military reforms that align with 21st century realities. This lack of completed reform and a commitment to modernizing a large conventional and nuclear military on a regional power economic base, combined with a political system designed to solely preserve Putin's power is a significantly flawed formula to readdress Russia's weakness and non-competitiveness.

The decision to finance the rearming of a very large conventional and nuclear equipped military is more than a decision about specific capabilities and levels of defense spending. It is a move away from a political and economic course of modernization, diversification, and liberalization. This policy will produce a Russia with reduced economic strength, less stability, and a national security policy shaped even more by distorted perceptions of an unjust security order, military imbalance, and hostile neighbors. Russian economic integration with the world around Europe and global partnership will only suffer from these policies. This policy actually squanders Russia's natural strategic geo-political, economic, and military advantages, and turns natural strengths into weaknesses.

President Putin's campaign against Europe thus far has led to Russia forfeiting these advantages and acquiring a long list of toxic assets. Paying for Crimea, the cost of 'breaking and owning' eastern Ukraine and its separatist military, damaged relations with neighbors in the former Soviet space, diminished

standing and power status in their relationship with China, and the price of losing trust and strategic cooperation with the West that Russia so badly needs to compete with China and other emerging powers are a few of the results of Russia's campaign that are damaging to Russia's current and future stability.

"President Putin's campaign against Europe thus far has led to Russia forfeiting these advantages and acquiring a long list of toxic assets."

These are the results of the Russian campaign without factoring in any of the measures that have been taken by the G-7, EU, NATO and other bodies to demonstrate collective opposition to Putin's policy. The Russian leadership has bundled together these toxic assets and resold them to the Russian people as success on the path to strengthening Russia. However, when policy failure can no longer be hidden from the Russian people, the Russian leadership describes the outcomes of Moscow's policy as the direct result of hostile Western policy and intent. Russia's future policy failures also will be blamed on the West, and this will lead in turn to a potential vicious cycle of heightened threat perceptions of the "West" as policies fail and Russia weakens.

Putin's policy also negates many of the advantages Russian policy had built over the last 25 years, notably the acceptance by most EU members to accord a dominant role for Russia in the energy sphere and the willingness to pursue strategic partnerships to solve the most pressing challenges of global security together. Fundamentally, Moscow's policy jeopardizes the most crucial element of Russia's security and one that has been the source of the power and wealth it has developed in

the post-Cold War period—the overarching umbrella of strategic cooperation with the West. There are many implications as well for a policy that embeds strategic competition inside the Vancouver to Vladivostok strategic space, and attempts to undermine the most stable component of the global security system. Russia's policy will inhibit political agreement on common solutions with the West to global problems and reduce the collective capacity of the global security system to address other fundamental threats and issues. Removing the fundamental dimension of strategic cooperation from Russia's policy and replacing it with one of strategic competition with the West sets Russia on a completely different azimuth, requiring completely different, and extremely challenging ways to sustain, let alone develop and strengthen its power and security in the future

"Putin's worldview has set a new purpose and identity for the Russian military."

These are destabilizing political formulas the Russian leadership holds and they shape the views of Russia's power ministries, and in particular the military. Putin's worldview has set a new purpose and identity for the Russian military, one built on a sense of humiliation from the end of the Soviet Army and the Russian political leadership's defunding and disempowering of the military internally in the 1990s. This new Russian military identity and purpose is connected directly to the task of breaking out of perceived strategic encirclement and protecting Russia during a very unstable period of regional and global transition. The Russian military has embraced a vanguard role in the competition between two security systems, just as the Soviet military framed its purpose as a leading institution for the Soviet Union in the Cold

War contest between two social systems. This reframing of the Russian military's identity and purpose under Putin has many destabilizing implications for Russia's future national security policy and military strategies for the conventional and nuclear defense of the Russian homeland.

Putin's policy places enormous stress on a Russia society and economy that lacks the inherent capacity to sustain competition with the West. Russia's initiation of even selective strategic competition with the U.S. and Europe to reverse the realities of an ever-shrinking core of Russian national power is a path that will accelerate the decline Putin hopes to arrest. Putin's policy is likely to damage Russia's security more acutely than Western security in the mid-term and long-term. This strategy will make Russia weaker, less secure, less stable, and more unpredictable.

4. Implications of Putin's Breakout Strategy for Europe

Putin's course is a decisive turn against the European security system, with practices and language that clearly differentiate Russia from Europe. When economic integration is labeled encirclement, balance of interests is labeled loss of statehood, when consultation is criticized as 'diktat' by others, when Russia's own policies fail and are called conspiracies by the West, and when securing personal power is labeled protecting Russia - there is little in common between Russia and modern European democratic countries' approaches to security. There is also little in common with a Russia that conducts military campaigns against neighboring states and destabilizes a carefully developed military balance in Europe with an overly ambitious military rearmament program, large-scale, short notice rehearsal military exercises, and military buildup in the Arctic, Baltic, and Black Sea regions.

Europe's strategic environment is completely different today from the Cold War and immediate Post-Cold War period, with Russia holding radically different strategic aims, capacities, and timelines. Russia's non-competitiveness is the prime motivator for President Putin's policy and action. This is a core, fundamental if not, existential, campaign for Putin and the challenge from Russia is more about the stabilization of the continent from a power that is opportunistically employing a variety of means—including military means—to reverse its strategic non-competitiveness. Europe's policies also must reflect an understanding that Russia is a competitor intent on pursuing a

policy that requires both the destabilization of Europe to achieve its aims, and a changed Europe to avoid change inside Russia. Only in understanding Russia's main aim to change the European security system, why and how Russia competes in the 21st century, and how Russia employs its means and strengths for this competition will a modern 21st century transatlantic concept of protection from Russia's new challenge emerge.

This new environment requires different ways of thinking to address this challenge when compared to the Cold War. The question of what *deters* Russia—or what *alters* Russia's policy course—in the multi-polar, fluid 21st century will not be answered *solely* by the solutions of the 20th century. Political, economic, and military deterrence measures of the 20th century will have a place in the 21st century. However, relying exclusively on formulas for deterring and containing an expansionist superpower in the 20th century bi-polar, linear confrontation with the USSR may not produce the desired results if implemented wholesale.

"The Russians do not want a war with the West."

The Russians do not want a war with the West. Putin cannot achieve his overall strategic aims through direct conflict and confrontation with a more powerful West. However, the Russian leadership wants a new security system in Europe and have demonstrated a willingness to use power and use force to achieve it. Russia is attempting to achieve its aims indirectly and without sparking a mobilization of that superior Western power that could be concentrated on the Russia challenge. Consequently, Europe's security responses must be more strategic, more multi-dimensional, and more

enduring than the policy adopted by Moscow. This requires flexible responsiveness across economic, political, military, informational, and financial lines of power to offset Moscow's opportunism in these very same spheres and the maintenance of core capabilities that strengthen Europe's strategic stability, resilience, and depth.

Europe should be *persuasive* in its communication to Moscow that their campaign will succeed neither in rewriting Europe's security principles, nor in restoring its strategic competitiveness by the means and measures it is currently employing. At the same time, European security policy should seek to *dissuade* Russia's destabilizing approaches to attain these aims. Appropriate, balanced, meaningful and sustained political, economic, and military measures that *devalue* Russia's investment in anachronistic approaches to security, *deflate* tensions, and *deflect* deliberate acts of destabilization will be of greatest value to Europe in this period of renewed competition from Moscow.

President Putin's worldview and associated priorities now are more deeply institutionalized into the Russian power ministry system, shaping threat perceptions and strategies. As demonstrated in Ukraine, the Russian military designed a military strategy to achieve the political aims of the overall campaign. Russia's emerging military strategy, capabilities, and practice in support of Putin's grander aims—and specifically Russian military strategies to address their perceived encirclement - will be a challenge for Europe.[7] Over the mid-term, however, the main source of potential crisis with Europe will be Russian misperception of threats from abroad and extreme assessments of threats to power at home. Both forms of miscalculation by Moscow—internal and external - can rapidly and unpredictably complicate and escalate

a crisis into conflict. European crisis management efforts will be stressed to prevent destabilized regions from transitioning into crisis and potential conflict.

Europe will be compelled to deal with Russia's buildup of regional tensions and instability caused by both ambiguous means of destabilization and the non-ambiguous destabilization caused by Russian military buildups in the Arctic, Baltic, and Black Sea regions. Moscow has designed, programmed, resourced, and operationalized its strategies. Counter-balancing Russia's non-attributable, ambiguous destabilization efforts around Europe by denying Russia decisive political, economic, informational, and financial advantages in their campaigns is critical to Europe's stability. At the same time, diffusing key geostrategic military power buildup points in the Arctic, Baltic, and Black Seas - potential Russian military power flex points in Russia's campaign against Europe - will be a major line of effort for Europe. Preventing Russia from achieving decisive conventional military advantage in these key military buildup regions from being attained will be fundamental to Europe's overall political and military equilibrium.

"Counter-balancing Russia's non-attributable, ambiguous destabilization efforts ... is critical to Europe's stability."

Europe's future will be heavily influenced by the unpredictability of Moscow's decision-making as it seeks to attain the strategic aims of its policy. Russian strategists advance stark alternative futures for Russia - one where Russia either achieves a changed European security system or one where Russia experiences a colored revolution that replaces Putin. This false choice logic

frames Putin's world, priorities, and choices and sustains his priority to preserve power at home. President Putin's choice is not necessarily irreversible, and further crisis and conflict are not inevitable. In fact, a different Russian policy change could emerge over time that does not equate the need to protect against a colored revolution at home by remaking Europe's security system on a Russian model. However, Putin's inability to think beyond these two sharply contrasting, alternative futures for Russia reinforces Moscow's unwillingness to amend its policy course, and portends a worsening of the European security environment in the future.

For over two decades, transatlantic security was built on an approach that sought the development of common strategies with Russia to address global and regional security issues, not competitive strategies against Russia to resolve regional security issues. The breakout, breakup, and buildup elements of Putin's strategy constitute a fundamental change of Russian policy and a fundamental, enduring, strategic challenge to Europe. This is a strategic course for Russia, a decision taken and a strategy "in play", and one that is deeply rooted in both the Russian mindset and Russian institutions of power, that is shaping how that power will be developed and employed over the months and years ahead. Consequently, this is not only a crisis management challenge for Europe, but a broader strategic challenge with potential for multiple, diverse forms of crises to arise as this Russian strategy is implemented.

Vladimir Putin's policy takes European and other countries into an unpredictable period with the potential for heightened tensions sparked by destabilizing Russian military strategies nested in unstable political frameworks designed to reassert

Russia's place in the world and amend her non-competiveness. Europe's security policy and associated strategies must be aligned to the new realities of Moscow's strategy. Protecting Europe from the indirect instability caused by a Russian leadership that in the pursuit of a flawed change agenda for Europe, damages and destabilizes Russia in the process is as important as protecting Europe from Russia's direct and deliberate actions to breakup the European security system. European countries and European security organizations will require clear, deliberate, creative, and collaborative 21st century strategic approaches to protect and uphold the principles, rules, and structure of Europe's security—all now challenged by Putin's choice for Russia.

Endnotes

1. The author wishes to acknowledge the extremely valuable contributions to this paper by Mr. John Lough, Dr. Andrew Monaghan, and Mr. Mark Voyger.

   For example, see Putin's speech on Crimea, 18 March 2014 where he describes a multi-century policy of containment imposed on Russia by the West and criticizes US, NATO, and European policy and security for ignoring Russian interests. These themes are also reflected in the revised Russian military doctrine, amended in December 2014 and numerous other official Russian statements including the Foreign Ministry's annual assessment of Russia's foreign policy in 2014; and see Putin's October 2014 Valdai Speech under the theme "New Rules or a Game with No Rules".

2. See Putin's Comment on the strategic purpose of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in **Путин**: **Киев использовал мирную передышку для перегруппировки сил Политика** 26 **января**, 16:08, TASS; and see Putin's comments on the international security environment at the Victory Day Parade in Putin warns against 'bloc mentality' in his Victory Day parade speech Moscow Rossiya 1 Television in Russian 0700 GMT 09 May 15: "…in recent decades the basic principles of international cooperation have been increasingly frequently ignored. Those principles that mankind has achieved through suffering after the global ordeals of the war. We have seen attempts to create a unipolar world. We see how military bloc mentality is gaining momentum. All this is undermining the stability of world development. Our common task should be the development of a system of equal security for all states, a system that is adequate to modern threats, a system built on regional and global, non-bloc basis. Only then we shall ensure peace and tranquility on the planet." and see National Security Adviser Patrushev's comments on U.S. objectives toward Russia in his interview for Kommersant Daily "Destabilizing Ukraine Hides an Attempt to Radically Weaken Russia" on 22 June 2015.

3. See Putin's Speech to the FSB Management Board on 26 March 2015.

4. See http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150409/1057475626.htm on Operational-Strategic Exercixe "Zaslon 2015" and see Minister of Defense Shoigu and Chief of General Staff Gerasimov outbrief to Putin on the March 2015 operational-strategic command staff exercise for an example of evolving Russian military thinking, Встреча с Министром обороны Сергеем Шойгу и начальником Генштаба Валерием Герасимовым 24 марта 2015 года, 17:10 Москва, Кремль

5. See Interfax Report, 1 June, "Every third Strategic Nuclear Force Exercise will be Sudden (Combat Readiness Check Exercise)—Ministry of Defense".

6. See Chief of General Staff Gerasimov's speech on "Military Dangers and Threats to the Russian Federation in Contemporary Conditions", April 16 2015 at the 4th Moscow Conference on International Security where he asserts the world order is experiencing a sudden rapid destruction and the regional and global security systems have just stop functioning.

7. See "Встреча с Министром обороны Сергеем Шойгу и начальником Генштаба Валерием Герасимовым" 24 марта 2015 года, 17:10 Москва, Кремль and see "Putin Orders Northern Fleet to Full Alert for Combat Readiness Drills, *Sputnik News*, Military and Intelligence, 16.03.2015.

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