

Conclusion: Foreign Policy as the Continuation of Domestic Politics by Other Means

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Analysts and policymakers alike were largely caught by surprise, if not by the Ukraine crisis itself, then at least by its form and magnitude. The crisis was influenced by various causal factors (both internal and external to Ukraine) and went through different phases (political, economic, military), but by many accounts it was Moscow's decision to annex Crimea that appears in retrospect to have been the most crucial development. The active use of political, economic and even military levers by Moscow to secure its interests in its immediate post-Soviet neighbourhood does not constitute a new feature in Russia's post-communist foreign policy. However, the absorption of territory into the Russian Federation does. In that sense, it could be argued that, in analysing Russia's foreign policy course, the organization of the referendum in Crimea is even more significant than the military manoeuvres deployed to secure the naval base in Sevastopol. It has certainly constituted a thread line for the present volume and a backdrop against which the authors test their hypotheses.

What factors shaped Russia's decision to annex Crimea?¹ Is this decision an isolated convulsion of Russia's foreign policy that arose from the context of the crisis in Ukraine, or is it, more profoundly, the sign of a deeper trend? Addressing this key question implies reflecting on the evolution and main determinants of Russia's foreign policy choices, which is the analytical endeavour that this collective volume set for its authors.

The decision to annex Crimea and Russia's actions during the crisis more broadly are to a great extent the product of the specific context of the political revolution in Ukraine. It should be emphasized once more that, in general terms, Ukraine is by far the most important post-Soviet neighbour for Russia (whether economically, strategically or

symbolically). Most crucially, the specific and extraordinary political configuration born out of the Maidan revolution provided – depending on interpretations – opportunities or incentives for Moscow to act. It was during the decisive period of political vacuum (following the fall of Viktor Yanukovich) and of uncertainty (after the establishment of an interim government in which southern and eastern regions were under-represented and a weekend of feverish legislating in the Ukrainian parliament) that Russia intervened in Crimea and eventually decided to annex it. This peculiar context certainly influenced the Kremlin's choice of instrument in pursuing its objectives in Ukraine. Before the Yanukovich regime fell, Russia had used coercive measures, such as trade restrictions, in an attempt to deter Ukraine from joining Western politico-economic structures and, in particular, from signing an Association Agreement with the EU. After the fall of Yanukovich, Russia resorted to actions such as annexing Crimea and manufacturing unrest in the east of Ukraine in pursuing the same objective. Although speculative and counterfactual reasoning is in essence never fully satisfactory, one can wonder whether Russia would have resorted to retaliatory measures of that magnitude had Yanukovich signed the Association Agreement in November 2013. This, highlights the influence of the political context of the Maidan revolution as a more decisive factor in Russia's decisions than the prospect of Ukraine's association with the EU.

At the same time, however, while the peculiar political context prevailing in Ukraine certainly played a crucial role, Moscow's actions before and during the Ukraine crisis also bear the mark of more profound trends that have characterized Russia's foreign policy since the start of Putin's third presidential term. These emerging trends, which the contributors document by approaching Russia's foreign policy from various angles and focusing on its different segments, can be summarized as follows: an increasingly nationalistic tone in foreign policy discourse with a strong emphasis on traditional values; the growing characterization of Europe as a threatening 'other'; an uncompromising attempt to constitute Russia's immediate post-Soviet neighbourhood as a trading bloc and a political buffer (notably through the Eurasian Union project and an investment in soft power instruments); a rhetorical 'pivot' to Asia.

This volume has sought not only to take stock of these emerging trends but also to explain them. The main findings that emerge from this collective analytical endeavour are that the chief drivers of Russia's contemporary foreign policy behaviour are objectives and imperatives linked to domestic regime consolidation. The concern for regime

stability has been at the heart of Putin's foreign policy since his first year in office (2000), but certain recent external and internal developments have exacerbated it. The colour revolution movement of the mid-2000s exposed the fragility of several post-Soviet regimes, as well as the attractiveness of the Western political model for a significant share of their societies. These movements were seen in Moscow as orchestrated from the outside, and political transformation has increasingly been regarded since then as a geopolitical tool wielded by the West.² The deterioration of Russia's economic situation following the financial crisis of 2008/9 put into question the implicit autocratic social contract prevailing in Putin's Russia, where the encroachment on political and civic liberties was compensated by improved economic conditions based on sustained growth. The Kremlin has had to find new sources of legitimacy, and in this context foreign policy constitutes a possible terrain and nationalism a potential resource. Finally, the public protests in Russia after the 2011 parliamentary elections directly and explicitly challenged the rule of the Putin regime, which had to find new means to consolidate its support base.

Putin's strategy of regime consolidation has affected foreign policy both because some internal measures and postures have ramifications for Russia's external behaviour and because international politics constitutes an arena where Putin can score points with the domestic audience. Since 2012, this strategy has consisted in political insulation, 'national community building' and 'mental self-determination', which has led to a practical, rhetorical and ideational distancing of the West and of Europe, as they are seen both as a source of external political influence threatening to the regime and as an ontological 'other' in opposition to which Russia's identity can be reinforced. As hinted by the description of events above, perceptions both individual (i.e., Putin's) and collective have also played a large role in assessing the threats to regime stability and framing policy responses.

We set out below some of the main – often convergent – findings our contributors have reached about the way Russia's foreign policy has changed recently and about the determinants of these changes.

Characterizing Russia's foreign policy

Acknowledging elements of continuity is a necessary first step in tracing change. Of the markers characterizing Russian international behaviour today, far from all are new. Light's examination of official documents and foreign policy speeches emphasized the recurrence of certain themes

and priorities. The sanctification of Russia's great power status and the declared preference for a multipolar world order based on sovereignty and non-interference in states' internal affairs has been a constant. This translates into a profound aversion to regime change policies, one that is based not just on these principles or on considerations linked to Russia's domestic situation but also often on the feared security consequences resulting from the toppling of authoritarian governments (as illustrated, for instance, in Moscow's condemnation of NATO's intervention in Libya or by its concerns after the fall of Mubarak in Egypt).³ The recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia or the annexation of Crimea undoubtedly constitutes a direct violation of these sovereignty and territorial integrity principles. This contradiction between discourse and practice is, in itself, not a new phenomenon in Russia's foreign policy, however, nor is it one that is limited to Russia for that matter. In this specific instance, it takes root in a lasting world outlook shared among Russia's policymakers in which great power management is regarded as the most desirable order for the international system, which authorizes great powers to take certain liberties in fulfilling these tasks. Bond's contribution shows, for example, how this outlook is reflected in Russia's actions and discourses in the UN framework.

Similarly, the determination to preserve Russia's strategic and economic positions in the post-Soviet space and prevent the deployment of NATO troops in this region – objectives that have been salient in the context of the Ukraine crisis of 2014 – have been perennial features of Russian foreign policy since the 1990s. As early as 2000, for instance, the Military Doctrine castigated military build-ups on Russia's border as a threat to national security, while the Doctrine of Information Security denounced Western policies that encouraged the political, technological and scientific reorientation of CIS countries. In other words, the post-Soviet space has long been regarded in Moscow as a necessary buffer zone. Overall, there is a significant degree of continuity in many foreign policy objectives and interests. The ways in which some of these objectives and interests are pursued has evolved, however.

There has been a salient change, first and foremost, in Putin's political and rhetorical posture. The Russian president has adopted a more ideological, more conservative and more nationalist tone since he started his third term in office. It is ideological, first, in the sense that it seemingly departs from the pragmatic and managerial stance that had mainly characterized Putin until then. Hill notes, for example, that by referring, in the context of its annexation, to Crimea as 'ethnically Russian', Putin broke with his previous cautious attitude (expressed, e.g., in his Millennium

Message) of presenting Russia as a multiethnic state and thus carefully avoiding linking 'Russianness' to an ethnic dimension. Mendras also points to the increased reference to the notion of Russianness in foreign policy discourse and questions its compatibility with Russia's integration policies in the post-Soviet space. Overall, the progressive ideologization of the ruling regime is palpable in official discourse, while previously its key discursive markers were mainly managerial and largely apolitical.

This emerging ideological stance is conservative above all in the sense that it places the emphasis on traditional values and on social and biopolitical regulation. Trenin highlights, for instance, the growing reference to the Orthodox faith in foreign policy discourse and the increased role of the Orthodox Church, which cooperated with the Kremlin in framing and promoting the notion of the 'Russian world' as a transnational community united around traditional Russian values. The investment in soft power instruments described by Lankina and Niemeczyk is largely constructed around these values and the castigation of the 'moral decadence' of the West.

In addition to conservatism, several authors point to a growing resort to nationalism as a tool of domestic political mobilization, a resort that spills over into foreign policy discourse. Putin's speech delivered to the Duma on 18 March 2014, in which the annexation of Crimea was justified with reference to Russia's 'history and pride', is undoubtedly a prime example. Some nationalist sentiments were apparent before the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, however. During the 2012 presidential campaign, Putin appealed to certain strains/elements of the nationalist agenda, while in both domestic politics and foreign policy he had, until then, balanced liberal and nationalist strands and placed himself at the centre.

A shift is also noticeable in the geographical compass of Russian foreign policy. While the relationship with the USA remains of major importance, it is perhaps not as fundamental as it used to be. The fact is that this relationship has become increasingly intractable: the Arab Spring and the Syria crisis exposed profoundly discrepant world outlooks in the two capitals, and the political climate between them has deteriorated because of Putin's anti-American rhetoric during the presidential campaign and Washington's criticisms of the repression of the protests in Russia. The Snowden affair and the Ukraine crisis have exacerbated the tension between the two countries.

What is perhaps even more salient, however, is that the narrative on Europe has changed, displaying a notably new level of animosity. The recent history of EU-Russia ties has been characterized by normative

disagreements, tensions around specific points of contentions, empty summits and failed attempts to agree a new contract for the bilateral relationship. Overall, however, Moscow had regarded the EU as a difficult but necessary partner in European security rather than as a problem in itself. Russia's reaction to EU policies in the post-Soviet spaces already signalled that it increasingly regarded the union as a potential long-term threat: Moscow condemned the launch of the Eastern Partnership in 2009 with a level of rhetoric it had until then reserved for NATO, and it resorted to coercive measures in 2013 in an attempt to deter Ukraine and Moldova from joining EU economic integration schemes. Most importantly, Makarychev and Yatsyk show that the domestic representation of Europe in official discourse has changed since 2012. It is not simply EU policies that are rejected, but Europe is, in itself, increasingly negatively portrayed as a cultural alien whose practices are unacceptable to the Russian ethos. So negative has Europe's image become in official discourse that the two authors talk of a voluntary reconsideration of Russia's European identity.

The CIS countries, particularly those on the European continent, have been a perennial priority in Russia's foreign policy. Cadier argues, however, that the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) constitutes a genuinely new instrument in Moscow's regional policies, with regard to both the nature and the rationale of the project. Contrary to previous Russia-driven regional platforms in the CIS space, the EEU rests on a modern regulatory architecture and places the emphasis on economic sectoral integration (rather than on historical legacy or shared political ideology). In essence, the EEU constitutes an attempt to develop Russia's structural power in its immediate neighbourhood so as to establish a regional bloc based on its norms and standards and be competitive globally.

Lastly, in the change in Russia's geopolitical compass, the growing emphasis on and investment in Russia's relations with Asia is another important trend in the country's foreign policy. This increased prioritization of the East on Russia's world navigation map is demonstrated, for instance, in diplomatic symbolism (as during the 2012 APEC summit) or in far-reaching energy projects, but it is also apparent in the attempt to foster the economic development of the Russian Far East. Asia's economic dynamism and Russia's growing trade with the region are important structural factors prompting this shift in focus, which has come to be elevated to the rank of official foreign policy narrative by the Kremlin, particularly in response to sanctions imposed by the USA and the EU over Ukraine, thereby accrediting the idea of Russia's 'pivot to Asia'. While undeniably prominent in discourse and in (economic)

potential, the pivot to Asia is not yet fully substantiated in terms of policies, however, and it is unlikely to be as clear-cut as Russian rhetoric suggests. Sakwa shows that Russia's 'bicontinentalism' is not just a geographical feature but also a hedging strategy in its foreign policy, aimed at preserving its freedom of manoeuvre. As a result, the new partnership sought with Asia is unlikely to be pushed to the level of exclusive strategic alliance. Similarly, Kuhrt emphasizes that Russia's Asia strategy remains largely undetermined, as uncertainty persists among Russian policymakers regarding the nature and extent of the threat posed by China's rise. Overall, the pivot to Asia hardly constitutes a panacea or even an easy and definitive solution to the emerging confrontation with the West: Kuchins points out that Russia's deteriorating ties with the USA and Europe are, in fact, reducing its leverage towards China (as illustrated by the terms of the May 2012 Russo-Chinese gas deal).

Explaining Russia's foreign policy

The brief characterization presented above does not amount to a definitive or exhaustive picture of Russia's foreign policy; these trends are neither absolute nor necessarily irreversible. Rather, the purpose of identifying recent changes has been to pave the way to a reflection on the drivers of Russia's behaviour in international relations. What clearly emerges from the collective analytical contributions to this volume is that, more than ever, internal factors such as the nature of the ruling regime and domestic political dynamics are the main determinants of Russia's foreign policy choices. Regime insecurity and individual political insecurity (i.e., personal power), which are made salient both by the peculiar nature of the political order and by evolving dynamics in domestic politics, are the main factors that can explain change.

Considerations linked to regime (in)security stem from the very nature of Russia's political order. It is a common maxim of political science that being removed from power is more costly in an autocratic political system than in a democratic one, as it might entail not just losing office but also potentially losing personal wealth and freedom. The coexistence of a constitutional order based on legal norms and an administrative regime relying on arbitrary power – Sakwa refers to this as the 'dual state' – leads political actors to constantly navigate between the two while attempting not to be constrained by either, a situation that generates policy indeterminacy and short-termism. This dualism is projected onto foreign policy practice, accounting, for instance, for the apparent discrepancy between Russia's relentless insistence on international law

and certain discretionary decisions contradicting its principles. Most importantly, this insecurity and indeterminacy, inherent to Russia's political order, affect foreign policy in the sense that they make political actors particularly wary of external influences and lead them to constantly seek to maximize their independence.

External and internal developments since the beginning of the 2000s³ have reinforced regime insecurity. NATO enlargement was not per se directly linked to regime considerations, but it was certainly received in Moscow as a signal that the West would push positions in spite of Russia's interests or to their detriment.⁴ More crucially, when it comes to political dynamics, three developments significantly altered the context in which Russia's foreign policy is formulated. First, the colour revolutions that brought down several post-Soviet regimes in the mid-2000s (Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan in 2005) were perceived in Moscow not only as a short-term threat to Russian interests in the region but also as a potential long-term threat to the regime. Second, the effects of the 2008/9 economic crisis and the reversal of the boom in energy prices contributed to erode the foundations of the Putin regime, which had rested on economic growth and material redistribution as its main source of legitimacy. Third, the public protest in Russia during the parliamentary elections of 2011 and the relatively low score obtained by Putin at the subsequent presidential elections fostered not only a feeling of regime insecurity but also of political insecurity, in the sense that his own personal power was threatened. While the two former developments laid the ground for the changes described, it is first and foremost the last that seems to have prompted them. The responses to this evolving context – in other words measures to strengthen the regime's security and Putin's political power – underpin the emerging trends in Russia's foreign policy.

The aim of the first set of measures is insulating the regime from external influences; they entail both an external and internal component as well as an offensive and defensive dimension. Countering the effects of colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space and preventing new ones has been a core feature of Russia's regional policies since the second half of the 2000s. The objective has been not only to back rulers that are more favourable to Russian interests but also to constitute the region as a political buffer against Western influence; ultimately the overarching aim is to counter the risk of a colour revolution at home.⁵ This translates into a thorough and extensive investment in soft power instruments that are targeted at the post-Soviet space first and foremost (but also certain segments of Western societies) and that serve, as explained

by Lankina and Niemczyk, the dual objective of leveraging influence abroad and of diffusion-proofing at home.

Curtailling external influence also obviously entails an important internal dimension. Particularly since the beginning of his third term, Putin has sought to minimize Western involvement in Russia's public sphere and civil society and to foster a 'nationalization' of the elites. This insulating posture has materialized in the adoption of various regulations (e.g., on the NGOs, the Internet and the repatriation of the personal assets of Russian elites) and in a more vehement discourse against the West (e.g., increased anti-American rhetoric during the presidential campaign) as well as against revolutionary movements (e.g., demonization of the Maidan movement).

Beyond attempts to proof the regime, as much as possible, from external influence, the second set of responses to the evolving political context has aimed at reinforcing internal cohesion – which Trenin labels 'nation building at home' and Makarychev and Yatsyk term 'national community making'. This has implied finding alternative sources of legitimacy for the regime in a context of slow economic growth and budget cuts. Foreign policy and nationalism are potential resources, and Putin has increasingly mobilized them in his nation-building endeavour. Bond shows, for example, that Russia's discourse in international organizations during the Ukraine crisis was mainly directed at its domestic audience while, by contrast, it was targeting other states during the Ossetia conflict of 2008. Concretely, the objective of reinforcing internal cohesion and strengthening the foundations of the regime has been pursued both through the denunciation and exaggeration of external threat and through a growing ideologization of the ruling system. Mendras argues, for instance, that Putin has deliberately sought to cultivate and exacerbate a 'besieged fortress' (or 'enemy at the gates') syndrome to consolidate people's loyalty to his rule. The growing ideologization of the ruling regime translates into an attempt to unify the population around a platform of values, such as patriotism and the Orthodox faith. International politics is then seen as an arena to fight for and denounce threats to these values.

The conservative texture of these values and of the ideologization pattern of the regime more generally should be linked to the 2011 electoral upheavals in Russia; in other words, not just to regime insecurity but also to Putin's political insecurity. While he had until then sought to occupy an independent middle ground on the Russian political spectrum between liberals and conservatives and to keep both of them at bay, several contributors to this volume find that in response

to the (largely liberal) public protest, Putin has increasingly seized upon elements of the conservative agenda. Essentially, he has sought to reinforce the political support base for his personal power by integrating social and biopolitical conservative elements. This has translated into such internal measures as the unification of textbooks, the adoption of laws ~~preventing same-sex marriages~~ or the trial of the Pussy Riots rock band for having symbolically challenged Orthodox values. It has also affected foreign policy discourse and, in particular, the official rhetoric on Europe. Makarychev and Yatsyk show that the Kremlin has increasingly sought to consolidate the foundations of the Russian political community by discursively fixing a political borderline between Russia and Europe – in other words, by constituting Europe as an ontological other. In this context, opposing this discursively constructed imagery of Europe is seen as a means to strengthen internal cohesion and the political foundations of Putin's power, which partly explains the new level of animosity in the official discourse on the EU.

Similarly, relations with the USA have deteriorated over a mismatch of strategic outlook (the two states being in turn revisionist or status quo and in profound disagreement on their assessment of the Arab Spring) but also over considerations linked to Putin's political insecurity: Kuchins explains that during the interregnum period of 2008–2010, the US administration had made its undeclared, underlying strategy to strengthen Dmitri Medvedev's position in Russian politics at the expense of Putin. In addition, Putin largely saw the hand of Washington behind the 2011 protests in Russia (as he had believed it was behind the colour revolutions).

In sum, internal political objectives of regime-proofing to external influence, consolidation of the regime's internal cohesion and renewal of Putin's support base have affected Russia's foreign policy since 2012 and prompted, in particular, a heavier nationalist rhetoric in foreign policy discourse, the growing characterization of Europe as a threat, a growing investment in soft power and a renewed attempt to constitute the post-Soviet space as a political buffer zone. Domestic political considerations also shed light on Russia's action during the Ukraine crisis: the events in Ukraine both reinforced the fear of regime change dynamics and provided opportunities for nation building at home and harvesting domestic political support.

Stressing the role of internal political factors and regime considerations in explaining recent evolutions in Russia's foreign policy does not amount to disregarding other factors that shape policy. On the contrary, several contributions to this volume emphasize the role of individual

and collective perceptions in evaluating external threats and mediating the choice of policy responses. This is obviously particularly true of Putin's individual perceptions: the president is the only man in charge when it comes to important international issues, and therefore decisions are based on his interpretation of the country's national interest and on his world outlook. Hill shows that the perceptions of external threats to regime stability – the importance of which for Russia's foreign policy making has been stressed here – cannot be properly accounted for without understanding how Putin's past personal and professional experiences shaped his world vision (i.e., psychobiography) and nurtured, in particular, a very negative view of the consequences of the rise of political opposition movements.

More generally, foreign policy choices are embedded in a set of collective ideas that inform them and delimit the range of acceptable outcomes. Analysing foreign policy documents and speeches, Light points to a series of discursive landmarks around which foreign policy choices ought to be articulated to correspond to the state's vision of itself – a decision that cannot be accommodated, one way or the other, with Russia's self-image of great power – will not, or at least is much less likely to be adopted. Similarly, in attempting to explain how Russia came to regard a modest bureaucratic EU policy – the Eastern Partnership – as a threat, Cadier points to the perception of regional relations as a geo-economic competition and to the concern for strategic depth central to Russia's strategic culture (which underpins its will to constitute the post-Soviet space as a buffer zone).

The importance of external events and structural changes has not been overlooked either. Developments such as NATO's enlargement and its intervention in Kosovo, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Arab Spring have had a profound impact on Russia's foreign policy. Yet the interpretations and choice of response to these events have been mediated by internal political factors and by collective and individual perceptions. Russia's adamant opposition to any deployment of NATO troops in bordering countries can be linked, for instance, to the concern for strategic depth already noted. Putin's negative perceptions of public protest and opposition movements, added to the fact that he had given his personal support to Presidents Kuchma and Yanukovich, led him to see the Orange Revolution as both a regional calamity and a personal blow. Similarly, the interpretation of and reaction to the Arab Spring should be read in light of Russia's internal situation – not simply through a regime change lens but with reference to the political consequences of this movement in bringing to power Sunni fundamentalist forces

partly like those against which Moscow struggles in North Caucasus. The partial reorientation of Russia's geopolitical attention towards Asia largely proceeds from structural factors. Yet this strategy remains diffuse and underconceptualized, as uncertainty remains among Russian policymakers regarding their perceptions of the level of threat posed by China and as energy decision making is marked by contradictions resulting from the fact that state interest and industry interest do not always align.

Finally, the importance of economic factors and motivations as drivers of Russia's behaviour has also been stressed, thereby somehow contributing to 'normalizing' the analysis of Russia's foreign policy by considering classic determinants of state behaviour. This is particularly salient concerning Moscow's policies towards the post-Soviet space. The economic importance of Ukraine to Russia should not be underestimated, and this factor ought to be reflected upon in accounting for the recent crisis. In 2013, Ukraine was Russia third-biggest trading partner (4.5% of Russian exports and 4.9% of its imports), and the contention with the EU over Ukraine has largely been regarded as a rivalry in trade integration and as a struggle for markets (or geo-economic competition). In the context of the Orange Revolution, Viktor Yushchenko was seen as a threat by Moscow not just for his campaign declaration about Ukraine's determination to join NATO but also for the economic reforms he had implemented as prime minister in the late 1990s.

The EEU has been conceived precisely as a means to secure post-Soviet markets for Russia and to re-establish some of the trade and economic linkages that were ruptured after the collapse of the USSR. By constituting such a trading bloc around Russia, the objective is also to place it in a better bargaining position vis-à-vis its global competitors (e.g., China, the EU, and the USA). Overall, Putin's foreign policy vision has an important economic dimension that is often overlooked. In fact, one of the root causes of disagreement between Putin and Medvedev revolved around some of these issues, with the former continuing to privilege a resource-based economy, while the latter was more favourable to investment in new sectors.

Most importantly, Russia's internal economic situation, in part affected by energy prices and other global structural factors, has impacted on its foreign policy, either by providing concrete resources and confidence in times of sustained growth or, alternatively, by rendering critical the need to secure a new form of legitimacy for the regime when the economy slows down. Reflecting on the drivers of its foreign policy behaviour allows us to shed light on the variables to monitor in trying to anticipate

Russia's diplomatic course. Based on the findings of this volume, one can forecast that in situations where regime insecurity is high and the economy lags, Russian foreign policy is likely to remain the continuation of domestic politics by other means.

Notes

1. Pointing to the apparent degree of preparation of the operation through which Russia secured key strategic assets and communication hubs in Crimea, several analysts have speculated about the existence of contingency plans prior to the actual outbreak of the crisis. Even if one endorses this hypothesis, the question remains: why did Moscow choose to activate these plans at this specific juncture?
2. Beyond the colour revolution movements, the 2004 enlargement demonstrated the EU's power to transform political and economic structures in post-communist central Europe. The European Neighbourhood Policy launched that same year is largely interpreted by Russian policymakers as an attempt to reproduce this transformative power in the post-Soviet space.
3. This aversion is to regime change in particular rather than to external intervention in general, as testified, e.g., by Moscow's support for France's intervention in Mali, where the stability of the country's democratic regime was threatened by jihadist groups.
4. It can also be noted that although it is a military-security alliance, political considerations are supremely important to NATO; the cement that unites its member states is the collective identity of liberal democracy. It is on this basis that enlargement takes place.
5. This objective was, in fact, explicitly stated by Putin in his address to the Security Council. See President of the Russian Federation, Address to the Security Council Meeting, 20 November 2014; <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/23268> (accessed 1 December 2014).