

Ukraine Was Not the Tipping Point:
Russia- European Union Relations

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ABSTRACT

The European Union and Russia have had conflictual relations since their founding. However, in recent years this has escalated to a great extent. Despite early hopes for strong cooperation after the fall of the Soviet Union, this has not come to fruition. Due to the actions of Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Ukraine, these relations have nearly halted altogether. However, this thesis argues that the partnership between the European Union and Russia was already fractured due to the poor economy in Russia, the rise of Russian nationalism, and European enlargement. My conclusion is that the Russian Federation and the European Union would have inevitably clashed and that Ukraine was not the tipping point in their relationship.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU: European Union

RF: Russian Federation

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

EEAS: European External Action Service

ENP: European Neighbourhood Policy

INTRODUCTION

The Russian Federation, also referred to as RF, and the European Union (hereafter referred to as the EU) have had a conflictual and critical relationship in recent years. This is a result of several factors, and although the crisis in Ukraine is an important one, I argue that it is not the reason why these relations have stalled. The EU and Russia are both relatively new as regional and global actors, therefore they are both in the process of creating their own foreign policies.

This thesis examines the relationship between the EU and Russia in light of the Ukrainian conflict. My hypothesis is that the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict was not the catalyst of their poor relations. Instead, I will look into the theories as to how their relations have disintegrated. This occurred before Russia's aggression in Ukraine, which I will argue is a result of the difficult relationship between the EU and the RF. Russia and the EU are facing political and economic discord which has escalated due to the Ukrainian conflict, which began from, the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU, the Russian economic downturn, and the rise of Russian nationalism.

This thesis is organized into the four main chapters. In the first I will provide the historical context between the EU and Russia. This covers the relationship they have had from 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union to present day. It is important to realize how these relations have changed over the years, and how they impact the current situation.

The EU provided assistance to the RF in the form of advice and finance during the 1990s transition stage. This was part of a cooperative effort between the U.S. and the European countries. Their economists and political leaders suggested that Russia quickly

integrate into the capitalistic system in order to get their feet back on the ground financially. As we will see, this meant harsh reforms for the Russians, which have resulted in some backlash. However, relations were reasonably strong up until the early 2000s when President Putin came into power.

In this chapter, I also give background on the recent Ukrainian revolution in order to show the results of the poor relationship between Russia and the EU. As Ukraine is both culturally and economically important to both the RF and the EU, it has been the battleground between the two entities. As Ukraine struggles to decide with which entity it chooses to align, the country is at war within itself as well.

The second chapter is on the economic relationship between the European Union and Russia. This remains a critical relationship as they are both dependent on one another for their economies to stay strong. Even before the sanctions were put into place, the two were having difficulties coming to agreements, and Russia often preferred to work directly with the individual member states rather than with the union as a whole, especially Germany. Over the course of this chapter, I outline the weaknesses they have had in reaching economic partnerships that could benefit both of their countries.

In the third chapter, I provide an analysis of the current nationalistic sympathies in the RF. Nationalism has been promoted by President Vladimir Putin of Russia in the past ten years in order to keep his public popularity high and provide support for his foreign policy interests. Through this, Putin has censored the media, promoted extremism, and advocated for anti-Western sentiments. In addition, he has changed the election system to

allow him more control over the elections. The results of this have made Russian citizens and public opinion distrustful of the West and the EU.

I have written the fourth chapter to point out some of the actions the EU has taken that have kept Russia wary of a strong partnership. The EU in recent years has expanded to the Russian border and has added more governance to its system. In addition, its close relationship with NATO has worried the RF government and fueled anti-Western sentiment. By moving towards the Russian border, the EU makes Putin's case that Russia should feel antagonized and threatened.

The conclusion provides a summation of my findings and ideas for future policy which can benefit both the EU and Russia. I determine that the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 was not the catalyst that has resulted in the antagonism between the two, but instead the inevitable clash due to the continuous lack of cooperation over the past ten years.

A large part of the relationship between the EU and the RF is the fact that the EU is still very influenced by the United States. The position that the United States takes toward Russia is often the same position that the EU takes. Due to this, I occasionally refer to "the West" as the collective of the EU, Western European countries, and the U.S. throughout the course of this thesis.

There are many scholars who have done research on this subject since the late 1990s. Overall, there are two schools of thought on the reason why the European Union and Russia are unable to coordinate and work together. One side argues that the West overall did too little in helping the RF become a strong capitalistic society. The other argues that they did too much and pushed Russia further than it could go. I use both

arguments in this thesis to show the overall beliefs of the causes leading to the current situation.

CHAPTER I: EU-RUSSIAN RELATIONS HISTORY

Due to its geography, culture, and politics, Russia is seen apart from the European continent. According to Josef Janning at the European Council on Foreign Relations, “Russia has always thought of the country’s role as being with Europe, but not of Europe.”¹ Russia is always on the outskirts, somewhere between a European nation and an outsider. This keeps it on the fringe with its relations with the EU; however, there are also many other historical factors which have resulted in their current political and economic ties.

The European Union and Russia had no formal relationship until 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union. At this time, they “launch[ed]...the EU-Russia cooperation programme” and started the process of strengthening their economic and political relationship.² This also included the opening of the EU delegation to Russia. The Soviet Union had been involved in cooperation with individual countries that compose the European Union, and was one of the largest trading partners of Europe prior to the Russian Federation. The European Union, an entity created with goals largely consisting of the promotion of capitalism and democracy, would not enter into any formal agreements with the USSR. The partnership was, therefore, unable to begin until the USSR dissolved, and a new democratic government was installed. In fact, the European Union’s official website, EUROPA, gives a timeline of the events that occurred within

¹ Josef Janning, “Ruxit is real: Russia’s exit from Europe,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, February 27, 2015.

² “Chronology of Bilateral Relations: 1991-2011,” *EEAS (European External Action Service)*, Accessed April 2, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/eu_russia/chronology/1991-2011/index_en.htm.

Europe and provides several examples of atrocities which the Soviet Union committed during the mid to late 1900s.³ This can be construed as an example of how relations between the RF and the EU are still tense due to the former political regime's relationship with many EU countries.

Russia had a difficult time adjusting to life after the fall of the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin was the President of Russia from 1991 to 1999. However, the so-called "family" was the influential group of advisors to Yeltsin that essentially ran the country, as Yeltsin himself was often ill. As the "family" supported the ideological orientation towards the West, during President Yeltsin's nearly 10 years in office, the EU and Russia had, arguably, the best diplomatic relations before or since.⁴ Part of this was because Russia was, at the time, a "weak western-oriented (at least rhetorically) country that tried to develop its relations with Western Europe on the basis of sharing common values."⁵ During this time they worked more closely with the EU because they needed to build their economy and their political system as well as recreate the alliances they had lost.

Russia had many hurdles to overcome in order to become a stronger nation. Economic structural reforms were put on the backburner, the ruling elite in the Duma were weakened, and there was a significant spread of corruption. These issues are still very prominent today.

³ "The History of the European Union," *EUROPA*, Accessed April 2, 2015, http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm.

⁴ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Coldwar* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2015), 2.

⁵ Irina Busighina, "Analysis of the EU-Russia Relations," *Project Bridge*, 2012, <http://www.project-bridge.eu/datoteke/Actions2012/BRIDGE-ANALYSIS%20OF%20THE%20EU-RUSSIA%20RELATIONS.pdf>

A deepening of the partnership occurred in 1994 when the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed. This is the current basis for cooperation. This cooperation allowed Russia to receive financial assistance from the EU through funding from TACIS (the program of technical assistance to CIS countries). This program was responsible for the “2.7 billion Euro [which] has been granted to Russia and has been used in 1500 projects in 58 regions.”⁶ TACIS helped to make the transition for the Russian economy easier.⁷ This program’s assistance ended in 2006 and was replaced by the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which will be discussed later.

The EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which is the legal basis for EU relations with Russia, was instituted in 1997.⁸ According to the Delegation of the EU to Russia, “The PCA covers a wide range of policy areas including political dialogue; trade in goods and services; business and investment; financial and legislative cooperation; science and technology; education and training; energy, cooperation in nuclear and space technology; environment, transport; culture; and the prevention of illegal activities.”⁹ This agreement has been renewed annually since 1997. In 2008, the EU and Russia launched negotiations to create a new cooperation agreement, which has

⁶ EU-Russia Cooperation Programme (Takis/ENPI), *EEAS (European External Action Service)*, Accessed April 2, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/eu_russia/tech_financial_cooperation/index_en.htm

⁷ U. Kivikari, "The Northern Dimension — One Pillar of the Bridge Between Russia and the EU," *Russian Economic Trends* 11, no. 3 (2002): 26-30, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed October 2, 2015).

⁸ “Legal Framework: The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement,” *European External Action Service*, Accessed April 7, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/eu_russia/political_relations/legal_framework/index_en.htm

⁹ *Ibid.*

now been halted due to Russia taking control of Crimea.¹⁰ They began these negotiations in order to accommodate for more expansive relations and include more “substantive commitments.”^{11 12}

Relations between Russia and the EU quickly began to fall into harder times when President Putin came into power in 1999. Shortly before his election in 2000, Putin, in a conversation with the BBC, said, “Russia was ‘part of European culture’ and that he ‘would not rule out’ the possibility of it joining NATO.”¹³ Although the EU was hopeful of maintaining a strong relationship with their neighbors, a series of issues came between the two; and they saw a weakening in their political relations, even as their economic relations grew. The State Duma of Russia, which is the lower chamber of parliament, ended gubernatorial elections and tightened down on the ownership of media and industries.¹⁴

In order fully to understand the relationship of Ukraine in relation to the EU and Russia, we must first look at its history. Ukraine is a country that is slightly smaller in geographic size than Texas.¹⁵ The first Russian civilization was founded in Ukraine as “Kyivan Rus, which during the 10th and 11th centuries was the largest and most

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “EU relations with Russia,” *European External Action Service*, Accessed April 2, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/about/index_en.htm

¹² Katherine Stubblefield, “Russia and the European Union: A Strained Relationship,” April 14, 2015, unpublished manuscript.

¹³ Alec Luhn, “15 Years of Vladimir Putin: 15 Ways He Has Changed Russia and the World,” *The Guardian*, May 6, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/06/vladimir-putin-15-ways-he-changed-russia-world>.

¹⁴ Jim Nichol, *Russian Political, Economic, and Security Issues and U.S. Interests* (CRS Report No. RL33407) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014) <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33407.pdf>

¹⁵ The World Factbook, “Ukraine,” Washington D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, September 24, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/up.html>.

powerful state in Europe.”¹⁶ This means it was essentially the first capital of Russia, and therefore has a strong historical tie to the country. It became completely absorbed by the Russian state again in the late 18th century where it essentially remained until 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union.¹⁷ “Many Russian politicians, as well as ordinary citizens, have never been fully reconciled to Ukraine’s independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and think that the country belongs in Russia’s political and economic orbit.”¹⁸ The EU think that Ukraine should be able to be an independent country without worry about its own sovereignty. This can be seen through the words of the European External Action Service, which says, the “EU supports all efforts for a lasting peaceful solution respecting the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and which ensures a stable, prosperous and democratic future for all Ukrainian citizens.”¹⁹ The conflict of interest between the EU and Russia is the main reason why they are at odds over this country.

The Ukrainian crisis began when the citizens of the country began anti-government demonstrations in November of 2013 in response to the corrupt, pro-Russian President Yanukovich denying an Association Agreement with the European Union.²⁰ Yanukovich then promised to sign the agreement in December and backed out due to Russian pressure.²¹ The following February 18th, the regime approved a violent suppression of the protests and over 100 people were killed. Two days later the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Steven Woehrel, *Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. RL33460) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014) <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33460.pdf>

¹⁹ “EU – Ukraine Relations,” *European Union*, accessed September 24, 2015, <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/ukraine/>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Woehrel, *Ukraine: Current Issues*

protestors, who stayed mostly in Maidan Nezalezhnosti, or Independence Square, took over the government buildings and President Yanukovich fled the country.²² Elections were held that spring and pro-West president Petro Poroshenko assumed office on 7 June 2014.²³

The Russian response to the fall of the former regime was quick. In late February, Russian troops invaded Crimea.²⁴ On March 16th, 2014, “the Crimean authorities held a referendum on Crimea’s annexation to Russia. According to Crimean officials, Crimea’s union with Russia was allegedly approved by 96.77% of those voting, with a turnout of 83.1%.”²⁵ This “referendum” has been declared illegitimate and illegal by the US, the EU, Ukraine, and the UN General Assembly.²⁶ Shortly after, sanctions were imposed on Russian business leaders and state officials, and the “EU countries also supported the suspension of negotiations over Russia's joining the OECD and the International Energy Agency” among other things.²⁷

These fractures have now evolved from European continental conflicts to worldwide issues. There are now many additional tensions between the EU and Russia, including the recent events in Syria and the Iran Nuclear Negotiation. In the following sections, I will delve further into the factors that have led to a fractured EU-Russian

²² Ibid.

²³ The World Factbook, "Ukraine"

²⁴ Woehrel, *Ukraine: Current Issues*

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The World Factbook, "Ukraine"

²⁷ Delegation of the European Union to Russia. "In Focus: EU Restrictive Measures in Response to the Crisis in Ukraine." *EEAS (European External Action Service)*. June 26, 2015.

http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/press_corner/all_news/news/2015/20150219_en.htm.

relationship and explain how the crisis in Ukraine is now an example of Russian backlash towards the West.

CHAPTER II: ECONOMICS IN THE SPHERE OF RUSSIA-EU RELATIONS

In 2014, total EU trade with Russia equaled 285,137 billion euros making it the third largest trading partner to the European Union.^{28 29} Most of this trade is composed of Russia's exporting of oil and gas to the EU. Russia is the world's largest exporter of natural gas with more than 20% of the world's known gas reserves and 5% of all oil reserves.³⁰ The EU provides more in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the Russian economy than any one country does with an estimated 75% of all FDI in Russia coming from EU member states.³¹

The EU, as a combination of 28 different countries' economies, is larger than the US economy and accounts for 20% of the world's imports and exports.³² It imports more than 50% of its energy, much of which is bought from Russia.³³ Despite recent financial troubles, the EU economy grew to around €14 trillion in 2014.³⁴

Russia, on the other hand, went from being a globally-isolated economy, which was centrally organized, to a market-based economy literally overnight. Understandably, it had a difficult time transitioning and are still not at the same level of market freedom that most western countries are. In the late 1990s, Russia took out a loan from the IMF

²⁸ "EU Relations with Russia," *European Union*, accessed September 19, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/about/index_en.htm.

²⁹ Eurostat (Comext, Statistical Regime 4), "Client and Supplier Countries of the EU28 in Merchandise Trade," *European Commission Directorate General for Trade*, June 15, 2015, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_122530.pdf.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Investments," *European External Action Service*, Accessed April 7, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/eu_russia/trade_relation/investments/index_en.htm

³² "The economy," *European Union*, Last updated September 22, 2015, http://europa.eu/about-eu/facts-figures/economy/index_en.htm

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

for \$10.2 billion.³⁵ The IMF gave the money to them with a plan for a more privatized economic system and trade liberalization. Although this improved their economy, Russia continues to have an under-reformed economy with high levels of corruption.

In recent years, Russia made some progress towards a more global economic system. In 2012, they were admitted to the World Trade Organization after 18 years of tough negotiations. Upon admission, they were able to create most favored nation status partnerships with many other European countries which are part of the EU. As one of the largest exporters of oil and natural gas, their economy is subject to the boom and bust cycle of that commodity.³⁶

The Russian economy benefitted from the rising gas and oil prices from 1991 to 2008 and experienced large growth.³⁷ The recession left its economy, “which had averaged 7% growth during 1998-2008,” as “one of the hardest hit by the 2008-09 global economic crisis as oil prices plummeted and the foreign credits that Russian banks and firms relied on dried up.”³⁸ Russia was severely affected with an 8% drop in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).³⁹ Although the economy did rise slowly again for several years, the combination of sanctions imposed by the EU and the US as well as the falling oil prices as a result of the global oil glut has severely hurt the Russian economy. Russia

³⁵ Michael Gordon, “Russia and I.M.F. Agree on a Loan for \$10.2 Billion,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/23/world/russia-and-imf-agree-on-a-loan-for-10.2-billion.html>

³⁶ The World Factbook, "Russia," Washington D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, Last updated September 24, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

³⁷ Nichol, *Russian Political, Economic*

³⁸ The World Factbook, "Russia"

³⁹ Ibid.

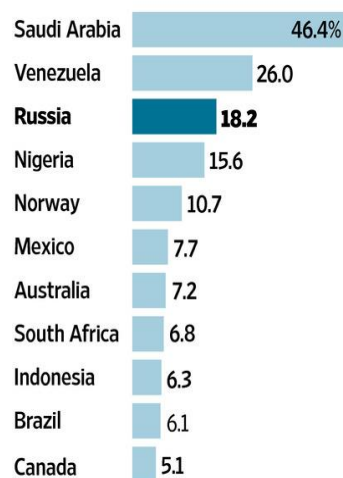
has imposed some of their own sanctions on the EU and the US in retaliation, including bans on certain food products and even laundry detergent.⁴⁰

The Perils of Being a Petrostate

Russia is paying the price for being one of the world's most oil-dependent economies.

Russia's high dependence on oil and gas...

Natural-resource rents* as a percentage of GDP in 2013



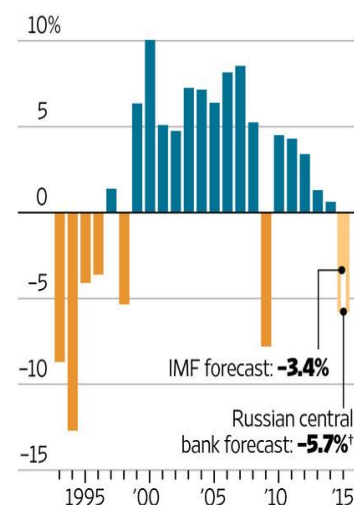
...has sent its currency plummeting...

How many rubles one dollar buys



...and its economy into deep recession.

GDP, change from a year earlier



*Rents are profits, taxes and other revenues net of production costs from oil, gas, coal, minerals and forest products †Assuming \$40 a barrel oil

Sources: World Bank (natural resource rents); WSJ Market Data Group (ruble); IMF and Bank of Russia (GDP)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Figure 1. The Perils of Being a Petrostate

These sanctions have affected the Russian economy because of the incredible importance the EU has in trade and economics. The EU is the world's largest trading

⁴⁰ Paul Sonne and Ellen Emmerentze Jervel. "Russia Restricting Sale of Some Western Cleaning Products." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 25, 2015, Business sec.

⁴¹ Greg Ip, "For Russia, Oil Collapse Has Soviet Echoes," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2015, Economy sec. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/for-russia-oil-collapse-has-soviet-echoes-1441215966>.

bloc, which accounts for 16.5% of the world's imports and exports. This includes being the world's biggest exporter of manufactured goods and services.⁴² EU exports to Russia are mostly composed of machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, medicines and agricultural products. Russia then relies on EU member states as transit states for Russian gas to other markets.⁴³

Although Russia and the EU had a brief period of improved economic relations after the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of oil prices, by the beginning of this century there were many issues affecting their abilities to cooperate due to many political and social differences between the two. In 2005, the Institute for Security Studies put together a report called "What Russia sees," which explained the difficulties they were already experiencing:

A situation has emerged where repeated declarations about the development of partnership at every summit do not conceal and, in fact, only emphasize the absence of joint long-term goals and an increasingly limited bilateral partnership. As one European expert has noted, 'basic differences largely preclude the European Union and Russia from reaching agreement on what the actual results should be in the first place.'⁴⁴

In 2003, the EU and Russia agreed to a long-term "Common Economic Space," which would cover fourteen dialogues, many of which were regulatory.⁴⁵ It has been slow to progress and since 2013 has been completely halted due to the sanctions. Some

⁴² "Trade," *European Union*, last updated July 16, 2015, http://europa.eu/pol/comm/index_en.htm

⁴³ Jessica Leigh Riester, "Russian Public Opinion and its Role in the Security Policy between Russia, the European Union, and NATO," Order No. 1438733, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu:3443/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305280044?accountid=4886>.

⁴⁴ Dmitry Danilov, "The European Security System as seen from Moscow," *Studia Diplomatica* 65, no. 1 (January 2012): 17, Supplemental Index, EBSCOhost (accessed October 11, 2015).

⁴⁵ "EU Relations with Russia," *European External Action Service*, 2015, Accessed October 12, 2015.

progress was made in economic cooperation on areas such as the trade of pharmaceuticals and technical regulations.⁴⁶

In 2009, Russia was recovering from the recession and therefore introduced protectionist measures to prevent further weakening. These included increased import tariffs, road and rail tariffs, and export taxes on wood and other natural resources.⁴⁷ In the 2009 EU-Russia Common Spaces Progress Report, the EU stated, “a number of the economic dialogues have slowed or even not met at all in 2009, or produced little tangible results besides exchanges of views on policy or legislative changes.” The report explains this is due to “lack of real interest on the Russian side.” This report indicates the EU and Russia had little cooperation years before the Ukrainian revolution and prior to any sanctions being put in place.

Russia is not the only one that is reluctant to enter into strong agreements. The EU was also nervous about working with Russia because of its history. Soon after the fall of the Soviet Union the question of whether Russia would become more “Europeanized” was raised; however, the countries in Eastern Europe, in addition to the U.S., were opposed to this vision.⁴⁸ Although a strong economic partnership would be beneficial for both, lack of trust on both sides keeps them from moving forward.

⁴⁶“EU-Russia Common Spaces Progress Report 2009,” *European External Action Service*, March 2010. http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/docs/commonspaces_prog_report_2009_en.pdf

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Walter Laqueur, "State of Mind: A Future Russia," *World Affairs* 177, no. 5 (January-February 2015): 54, Accessed October 12, 2015, https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE|A401505702&v=2.1&u=tel_middleten&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=db53aae2233c2232b5811ea517ed826b.

Russia is still very far behind in its economic freedoms. Russia has a reliance on high oil prices to run its economy and a poor institutional structure to handle the changes in global energy. According to Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index, Russia is ranked 136th out of the 174 countries included,⁴⁹ which places it between Nigeria and Comoros. This is much lower ranking than most countries of similar development and industry. It has also been argued that corruption has now been ingrained in the system as the method for wealth creation and distribution.⁵⁰ The government tried to control political corruption by creating a highly centralized government in the early 2000s, however; this has proved to be ineffective and has, in fact, led to the poor growth of the economy. Part of this is because corruption is seen more as political loyalty instead of as a means for economic benefit.

One of the problems with this high level of corruption is the lack of trust it instills in the system. The policy-makers create agencies to review or control other agencies because they are distrustful of them, which creates a cycle of distrust.⁵¹ Businesses begin to lose faith in the system, and industry is stalled.

Other issues with the Russian institutional structure include capital flight, rising inequality, and the stagnation of state-owned enterprises that keep the economy from growing further. Russia loses billions of dollars to capital flight, which is a result of the fact that the businesses do not trust their money in the Russian stock market.⁵² The EU

⁴⁹ "Corruption Perceptions Index 2014," *Transparency International*, 2014.

⁵⁰ "World Scenario Series: Scenarios for the Russian Federation," *World Economic Forum*, January 2013. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Scenarios_RussianFederation_Report_2013.pdf

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Kenneth Rapoza, Investing, *Forbes*, March 2, 2015,

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2015/03/02/russia-warns-of-capital-flight-market-considers-capital-controls/>

has created programs to work with Russia on these issues, however, none have come to fruition. Overall, it is important to recognize that Russia's economy is badly in need of reforms and has a resource curse which relies on the prices of oil and, therefore, cannot be stable. Unfortunately, due to these problems, the EU and Russia have been unable to create a strong economic partnership that could mutually benefit both of them.

CHAPTER III: RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

Russian nationalism has become widespread in recent years. This is a reason for President Putin's high poll ratings, why there have been pushes to claim back former USSR territories, and why there is a pervasive anti-West sentiment in the country.

Although nationalism is something which Russia has always experienced, the recent rise of ethnic and militant nationalism has affected its political and social life. Russians are known for their xenophobic tendencies and a distrust of foreigners. Part of this distrust comes from its history of invasions, especially from Europe. During the Soviet Union, many countries which are now sovereign, were part of the USSR. Now, these countries have many ethnic Russians living in them, and many Russians today see these countries as areas which should be back under Russian influence and protection. This sentiment has now come into fruition as we see Russia beginning to invade other countries and attempt to force them back under their influence.

There are several different factors that have led to the rise of nationalism in recent years. As the economy suffers, Putin has attempted to divert attention away from it by distracting the public with foreign affairs and the idea of a strong Russia. He also has taken control of the media and has been able to spread the anti-Western dialogue and promote the Russian Orthodoxy as the moral background for which he is working.

As mentioned earlier, the Russian economy is stagnating due to the falling oil prices and a lack of reforms. The recession, in addition to the political issues, has led to the rise of nationalism in Russia. As the economy struggles, Putin has put more of an emphasis on nationalism in order to prevent frustration with the current government. He

has also blamed the economic recession on the sanctions the EU has decreed for simply trying to help other ethnic Russians. By blaming the West for the economic struggles that Russia is experiencing, he allows the Russian public to continue in their xenophobia and distrust of the EU and the U.S.

Another way in which nationalism has grown is through the media. Russian media is virtually controlled by the government. This was done through laws that Putin put into place in 2008, during the height of the economic boom due to record-high gas prices.⁵³ These laws allow the government to take away broadcasting licenses if they are not being more responsible towards the state.⁵⁴ This has essentially strangled the independent media sources and allowed Putin to spread anti-Western propaganda to the masses. Today, this propaganda is virtually all that is seen in Russia, and finding unbiased news is nearly impossible.

Putin has also encouraged the spread of nationalism through the Russian Orthodox Church. As this denomination is unique to Russia, it is a symbol of Russian pride and religion. According to the former U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Michael McFaul, and professor Kathryn Stoner at Stanford University, “Putin had nurtured the rebirth of a conservative Orthodox Christian society” through the use of the state-controlled media outlets. These media outlets portray the West as “decadent, hedonistic, godless, and homosexual,” and therefore the Russian Orthodox Church is a

⁵³ Kathryn Stoner and Michael McFaul, “Who Lost Russia (This Time)? Vladimir Putin,” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2015): 175-176, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0163660X.2015.1064716>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

form of protection against these Western ideas.⁵⁵ Recently, the Russian Orthodox Church “declared that only members of the church can be considered Russian and that the Russian world is....Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.”⁵⁶ They are declaring that citizens who are not part of the Russian Orthodox Church are therefore not Russian at all.

These factors have all led to the rise of nationalism in Russia and have resulted in many different domestic issues. However, they also have created a society with an anti-Western sentiment. In 2015, the Pew Research Center published their findings on Russian public opinion in a report. This report shows how strong nationalist sympathies have affected the relationship between the EU and Russia.

Since the annexation of Crimea, Russian sentiments have changed dramatically towards the EU. The below chart shows the percentage of Russians with a favorable view of the US, NATO, the EU, and Germany. All of these saw a decline in favorable views since 2011.⁵⁷

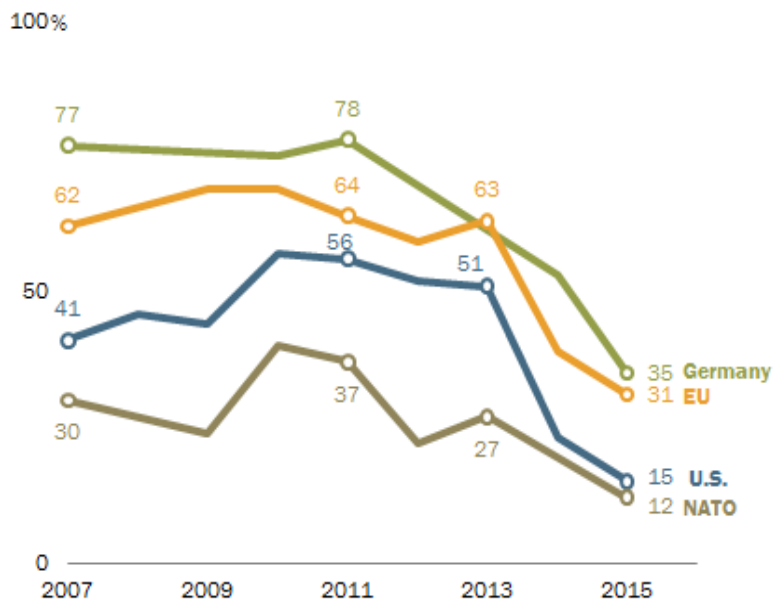
⁵⁵ Stoner and McFaul, “Who Lost Russia,” 178.

⁵⁶ Michael Khodarkovsky, “Putin’s Disunited Nation,” *The New York Times*, May 19, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/20/opinion/putins-disunited-nation.html?_r=0

⁵⁷ Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes, and Jacob Poushter, “NATO Public's Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid, In Russia, Anti-Western Views and Support for Putin Surge,” *Pew Research Center*, June 10, 2015.

Views of Western Powers Plummet in Russia

Russians who have a favorable view of ...



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q12a, e-f, o.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

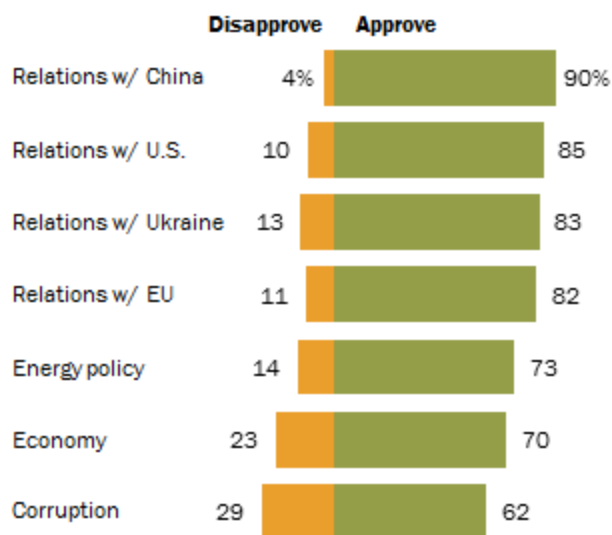
Figure 2. Views of Western Powers Plummet in Russia

Another part of the report provides a chart which shows how Russian citizens perceive Putin's foreign policies. Eighty-three percent approved of his handling of Ukraine and 82% approve of his relations with the EU. In addition, "the percentage of Russians who say they have a very favorable image of their own country has continued to climb, from 29% in 2013, to 51% in 2014, to 63% today – the highest it has been in Pew Research Center polling since first asked in 2007."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Russians Overwhelmingly Support Putin's Foreign and Domestic Policies

Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Vladimir Putin is handling ...



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q81a-g.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 3. Russians Overwhelmingly Support Putin's Foreign and Domestic Policies

Putin is driving this nationalism through his political party, United Russia, and his own speeches. He wants to restore Russia to a global power and be the hegemon over the region. By firing up the Russian public on this, he sees a spike in his own popularity as well as a rise in the amount of citizens who approve of his policies.

The idea of "protecting ethnic Russians" in separate countries is not an idea that came with Ukraine. In August 2008, Russia invaded Georgia with the same premise

when claims that South Ossetia, a former region of Georgia occupied by Russian peacekeepers, and Georgia both claimed that the other was launching artillery barrages at one another.⁵⁹ Nicolas Sarkozy, the president of France at the time, managed to get Russia and Georgia to agree to a peace plan only a few weeks after the initial attack.⁶⁰ They then created a follow-up agreement which put around 200 EU observers in the region and required a Russian military pull out.⁶¹ The Russian President at the time, Dmitry Medvedev, claimed that they entered into Georgia in order to protect Russian citizens in South Ossetia and asserted Russian dominance by saying, “historically Russia has been, and will continue to be, a guarantor of security for peoples of the Caucasus.”⁶²

With this rise of nationalism, Russian citizens are less likely to sympathize with the West, which has implications for the relationship Russia will have with the EU in the future. It is difficult to foresee any strong level of cooperation between the two in the immediate future, especially as Russia has now gone much further than former soviet states in its aggression. Russia is now entering Syria and the Artic regions and attempting to reassert itself as a global power. It is building up its military, flooding the media with anti-Western propaganda, and ignoring Western grievances.

⁵⁹ Jim Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests* (CRS Report No. RL34618) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34618.pdf>

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

CHAPTER IV: EUROPEAN ENLARGEMENT

The European Union and Russia are two hegemon, which both see Eastern Europe as part of their own spheres of influence. Russia sees the former Soviet states as their regions, and the EU wants to expand their own influence into these regions as well. This obviously leads to a clash of interests and has resulted in the current situation in Ukraine.

In 2004, the EU added several new countries to its list of member states. These included the former Soviet States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as several Eastern European countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia. All of the countries listed were under Soviet influence in some way. Now, they are full members of the EU and several of them are beginning to adopt the Euro.⁶³ Russia therefore felt that the EU was invading in their suzerainty and took offense to the EU's actions. In addition to the size of the EU, they also expanded its political and economic responsibilities.

The EU has nearly doubled its size as 13 of the 28 member states were admitted from 2004 to 2013.⁶⁴ Many of these countries were formerly under Russia's "zone of influence." Four more eastern European countries are on the candidate list to become members: Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.⁶⁵ Many Eastern European countries would rather work more closely with the EU

⁶³ European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, *The EU explained: Economic and monetary union and the euro*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014

⁶⁴ "Countries," *European Union*, last updated October 13, 2015, http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/index_en.htm

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

than Russia since they have been economically and politically oppressed by Russia and the USSR since World War II.⁶⁶ This can be seen in this quotation from the article, “Russia's perceptions and misperceptions of the EU Eastern Partnership,” “Russia's actions, aimed to consolidate the post-Soviet area, often against the will of individual states in that region, provoked retaliatory measures by Brussels and vice versa.”⁶⁷

Another issue with EU expansion is that Russia feels that it is being left out of “Europe.” This quotation, from the book *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: An Uneasy Partnership*, states that, “The EU’s conditionality vis-à-vis Russia, perceived to be selective and instrumental, always irked Russia, considering itself by right a European country and thus resentful of an organization that claimed the prerogative to decide what was and what was not European.”⁶⁸ Russia therefore feels as though it is no longer being considered “European” and that the EU is determining what countries can or cannot be part of this exclusive club. Russia, of course, does not wish to be in the European Union, nor does the EU wish to have it join; however, it is still a sore subject for the Russians that they are not treated as equals to other Europeans.⁶⁹

In an article by the *EU Observer*, German Prime Minister Angela Merkel is quoted as saying that the EU cannot worry about asking Russia’s permission to expand,

⁶⁶ Katherine Stubblefield, “Russia and the European Union: A Strained Relationship,” unpublished manuscript, April 14, 2015.

⁶⁷ Igor Gretskiy, “Russia's perceptions and misperceptions of the EU Eastern Partnership,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47, no. 3-4 (2014): 375-383, accessed February 25, 2015, <http://ejournals.ebsco.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/Direct.asp?AccessToken=95X15IM8XE1K9U4IMZXME9RR11DD81QQJX&Show=Object>

⁶⁸ Richard Sakwa, “Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Policy Towards The West: Towards a New Realism”, in *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: An Uneasy Partnership*, ed. Jackie Gower and Graham Timmins (London: Anthem Press, 2009), 17.

⁶⁹ Stubblefield, “Russia and the European Union,” 10-11.

especially in regards to Ukraine, as it could set the EU behind 40 years.⁷⁰ Although the EU wants to continue in talks with Russia, there is a limit to what the EU is willing to concede in order to make these talks friendlier with Putin.⁷¹

European expansion has been a hot topic of debate in the past 15 years as many countries have been admitted to EU membership. Although there are many critics to the recent expansionism, it has made the European Union a much larger influence in Eastern and Southern Europe. However, there are only so many countries which they will take on as member states, therefore the EU created a program that allows them to reach out to other countries, but not necessarily make them members.

The European Union created the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2004, which is a bilateral agreement between the EU and several of the individual governments of countries in Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. This program was developed so as to increase trade relationships with the EU's neighbors in return for higher levels of human rights and democracy in the neighboring regions with the European Union.⁷²

Some of the participating countries include those in the Soviet zone which the RF considers as under its sphere of influence such as Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, all of which are fully participating members.⁷³ Russia felt insulted by the program as it seemed to be asking the countries included in the former USSR if they

⁷⁰ Andrew Rettman, "Merkel: Russia cannot veto EU expansion," *EU Observer*, November 17, 2014

⁷¹ Stubblefield, "Russia and the European Union," 12.

⁷² Katherine Stubblefield, "European Neighborhood Policy," 15 January 2015, Unpublished manuscript.

⁷³ "European Neighbourhood Policy," *European Union*, Accessed 20 September, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/about-us/index_en.htm

would side with the European Union or with Russia. Russia declined to be a part of the Program when it first was developed, and it was “appalled that the EU’s new neighbourhood plans appeared to put Russia in the same category not only as Belarus and Moldova, but also as the states of North Africa.”⁷⁴ In fact, “in 2011, together with Kazakhstan and Belarus, Russia launched its own alternative integration project, the Eurasian Customs Union, and invited other post-Soviet states to join.”⁷⁵

The EU has also created the “Eastern Partnership Initiative,” which is a program designed to bring the EU closer with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.⁷⁶ Created in 2009, the program encourages reforms to the countries in order to create good governance, a market economy, and respect for human rights.⁷⁷ The Russian response to this initiative was seen when “Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the EU of trying to create a “sphere of influence” in eastern Europe.”⁷⁸ According to John Mearsheimer, an international relations theorist, in his article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, “In the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion.”⁷⁹

NATO, formally called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, expansion is the other form of enlargement which is occurring in Europe. The EU and NATO cooperate

⁷⁴ Stephen White and Margot Light, “The Russian Elite Perspective on European Relations,” In *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: An Uneasy Partnership*, ed. Graham Timmins and Jackie Gower (London, GBR: Anthem Press, 2007), ProQuest ebrary, 41.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “EU Relations with Eastern Partnership,” *European Union*, accessed 20 September 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/about/index_en.htm

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ John J. Mearsheimer “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault.” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September 2014): 77-89. OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson), EBSCOhost (accessed August 19, 2015).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

on many levels, and 22 of the EU member states are also NATO members.⁸⁰ Although the EU does have a common security and defense policy of its own, the ESDP, it works closely with NATO and is considered a subsidiary asset.⁸¹ In 1999, NATO enlarged to include Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland.⁸² Then in 2004, it included Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.⁸³ All of these were former Soviet States or republics of the Eastern European states under the Soviet sphere of influence.

Russia views NATO as an encroaching enemy which is determined to box them in and attack their interests. As the United States is a large part of NATO, it is suspicious of U.S. containment strategy working through NATO. The EU is very influenced by the United States, and although Russia views the EU as a group of bumbling politicians who cannot ever become a global actor, it is still wary of the U.S. and NATO's partnership with the EU. The EU and NATO together have the ability to crush the Russian economy and pose a military threat. This keeps Russia from closer ties with the EU and keeps the EU distrustful of Russia, which inevitably results in poor relations all around.

⁸⁰ "NATO-EU: a strategic partnership," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Last updated September 28, 2015. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49217.htm

⁸¹ Jessica Leigh Riester, "Russian Public Opinion and its Role in the Security Policy between Russia, the European Union, and NATO," Order No. 1438733, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu:3443/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305280044?accountid=4886>.

⁸² Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis"

⁸³ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The Russian Federation and the European Union do not have a history of strong cooperation. In fact, they have escalated from mere annoyance towards each other to all-out hostility. Russia is reacting against the EU's expansion, the ignoring of Russian desires, and the general belittling of the country it feels is present. The EU is reacting against Russia's lack of political, social, and economic freedoms, their actions in Crimea and Ukraine, and the overall anti-Western sentiment which is permeating the country. The two sides are completely at odds and the likelihood of this changing is slim. However, there are some measures that the West and Russia could make in order to reduce the conflict between them.

It is unlikely Russia will take steps in the near future for closer ties with the EU. Putin's tactics make it apparent he will be pushing to reestablish Russia as a global superpower and will be pushing neighboring countries to stay within Russia's sphere of influence. As we have seen in recent months, Russia is eager to expand into the Arctic Circle and has entered the conflict in Syria as well. This is in addition to the current conflict in Ukraine, which is one of the main issues between the EU and Russia.

Putin's rally-around-the-flag nationalism cannot last forever. While the "us against the world" sentiment has raised Putin's political popularity numbers, eventually Russian citizens will grow weary of the poor economy, the lack of media freedom, and the corruption which permeates their economic and political systems. The questions are when and how will Putin respond? Putin will either choose to scale back his foreign involvements in favor of solving some of the domestic issues, or he will not and instead

choose to go further in his endeavor to make Russia into a global superpower. In the meantime, Putin will continue to create a situation where Russia has influence, if not complete authority, over its surrounding neighbors.

The EU has also had its fair share of difficulties. The Greek Bailout has raised doubts as to whether it can continue to enlarge and take on countries who do not have the capability to become part of the Euro. However, they are expanding their foreign policy system and have many economic partnerships which have allowed them to have influence over the region.

The relationship between Russia and the EU is extremely fractured, and there are several different theories about what the EU, and the West in general, can do to keep Russia from going further in their endeavors to expand their influence. Some believe that the West should give Russia more leeway and concede Ukraine and Crimea to them. Others contend the West is allowing Russia to get away with too much and it should be shown militarily that the EU, the US, and the individual European countries are not going to allow them to assert their influence.

In general, the two entities should not continue on their current path. The EU, in its attempt to stay out of war with Russia, has imposed sanctions on specific persons who are responsible for the annexation of Crimea, as well as several embargos on Russian goods, including some in oil related industries. Although this has some impact, the EU must decide on a course of action in order to prevent Russia from further breaking international law, and the current sanctions are not working to this purpose. Recent news

has referred to what could be the coming of a “New Cold War,” where the West and Russia are once again divided and fearful.

The European Union and Russia are both at fault for the current situation today in their own ways, and the combination of the conflicts between them has led to a potentially critical situation in the near future. The next few years will be pivotal as Putin continues on his foreign policy agenda. Because of this, the decision on what course of action the EU should take must be made soon.

In regard to Ukraine, the EU wants to help the country preserve its independence and sovereignty but it does not know how to accomplish this as Ukraine also relies on Russia economically and is vulnerable in its security. Essentially, the EU must determine how much of Ukraine they are able to protect and then go from there in their relations. The government of Ukraine is not likely to see military support in the form of boots on the ground from the US or NATO and must conclude what they can or cannot do on their own. Crimea will most likely stay under Russian control, as Sevastopol is an extremely important warm water naval port for the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Eastern Ukraine is also war-torn but could be brought back under Western influence. It will be up to the Ukrainians to decide which of their regions would want to align with the EU, and then returning them to Ukrainian sovereignty.

In conclusion, the European Union and Russia are at a crossroads. Their relationship has spiraled downward and now they face many economic, political, and social issues which could possibly result in a new “Cold War.” If the Western coalition of the US and the EU can find the political will to contain or even expand current economic

sanctions, Putin will be forced to determine the value of his ongoing support for continuing his destabilizing efforts in Eastern Ukraine. The EU can outlast the lack of Russian natural gas and petroleum products. Potentially the US might lift its ban on the export of domestically produced oil and gas to supplement the EU countries' supplies if necessary.

The expansion of NATO has given Putin an excuse for the average Russian citizen to accept additional hardships for the good of the country. The world community needs both a carrot and a stick approach to Vladimir Putin. Make the economic sanctions work then tie progress on Ukrainian autonomy to removing the economic barriers.

At the same time, financial support to the current Ukrainian Government must be predicated on internal economic and political reforms by the new government. Continued corruption and malfeasance cannot be an acceptable course. The people of Ukraine are accustomed to the corruption problems, but any long term financial support should come with conditions, and the EU should not accept a new set of oligarchs replacing the ones from the Russian-backed regime.

The EU must confront Putin on the continued small, but important, issues of Ukraine, Syria, Iran, and the Arctic. If we do not, I am fearful he will continue his unilateral push to expand Russian influence to the detriment of the EU and the United States.

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