Russia's Foreign Policy in Historical and Cultural Perspective

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Introduction

In attempting to systematically explore Russia's international behavior, this paper situates it in the longer historical context since the early 19th century. The country's relations with the West in particular have shaped Russia's foreign policy by following patterns of cooperation, defensiveness and assertiveness, and these patterns have proved to have endured until the 21st century. Russia's identity of a Christian power encouraged the Russian rulers to frequently side with a coalition of Western states against those whom it viewed as challenging the Christian unity from inside or outside of Europe. The pattern survived until September 11, 2001, following which Russia pledged important resources to help America and European nations in fighting a global war with terrorism. However, Russia refused to cooperate with the West and acted defensively or assertively when Russia's rulers felt their interests were not respected. Examples of those include Russia's highly critical reaction to the West's decision to expand NATO after the Cold War, the Kremlin's decision to use force against Georgia in August 2008, Russia's annexation of Crimea and actions following the Ukrainian

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revolutionary change of power in February 2014.

The paper argues that considerations of state power, security, and welfare have been important in Russia's calculations, but they have not had an independent causal effect. Rather, they are filtered through cultural beliefs of the Russian state. Even when Russia's actions seem similar to the behavior of other members of the international system, such actions may originate from a culturally distinct source and can have a meaning that is different from other actors. One of the most important of these beliefs has been that of Russia as an honorable power. Russia's concept of honor is old, but it has historically evolved and assumed diverse meanings in response to actions by the West and Russia's own internal developments.[1] Russia acts in accord with the Western nations when it feels that its sense of honor is recognized, and it pursues an independent foreign policy in the absence of such perceived recognition. Depending on degree of internal strength, Russia then acts as a defensive or assertive power.

The paper reviews three central patterns in Russia-West relations – cooperation, defensiveness, and assertiveness, formulates their explanation from a cultural perspective, and selects for an illustration the most recent example of Vladimir Putin's international strategy. I argue that the latter fits the long-established pattern of Russia's assertive foreign policy that can be explained by the West's unwillingness to recognize Russia's values and interests and their country's perceived internal confidence. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and implications of the argument.

Russia's Foreign Policy in Historical Perspective

Russia's statesmen historically advanced policies of cooperation, defensiveness and assertiveness in relation to the West. These patterns reflected Russia's ability to defend its interests and values in world politics. When each of these policies was in place, they could be identified by the methods of advancing Russia's preferences, the degree of commitment to relationships with Western nations, and the opposition such policies elicited at home.

The tradition of cooperating with Western nations places the

emphasis on Russia's similarity with them and advocates loyalty to and cooperation with the West as a historic and cultural ally. Alternatively, there are those arguing for defending national values and interests as distinct from the West. They view Russia as an independent power free to choose international allies that best suits its vision and national interests. This group feels less committed to relationships with Western nations, especially when their actions are perceived as inconsiderate to Russia's identity and interests. They believe in Russia's special role in the world and are bound more by the nationalistic sense of values and social obligations than by loyalty to Western nations. Unlike those on the defensive side, the assertiveness advocates argument for a more aggressive and unilateral defense of Russia's international position that goes beyond flexible alliances and soft balancing tactics. Each of these traditions has been brought to life by different historical developments and political conditions.

The first pattern is that of cooperation with Europe with roots in Prince Vladimir's decision to accept Christianity in 988. After the two centuries of the Mongol domination, Russia sought to strengthen its Christian roots by developing ties with the Holy Roman Empire and, later, joining the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire. Peter the Great tried to improve relations with Europe by sending Russia's ambassadors to important European states and borrowing their technological achievements. Catherine the Great proclaimed Russia "a European power" and validated that status by continuing to restrain influences of the Ottoman Empire on the European continent. During the first half of the 19th century, Russia established the Holy Alliance and assisted the autocratic Europe by suppressing revolutionary activities on the continent. In the second half of the century, Russia participated in the Three Emperors League with Germany and Austro-Hungary, but then switched to the coalition of France and Britain – partly to preserve the connection to the increasingly influential part of the West.

The tradition of cooperating with Europe and the West continued even during the Soviet era. Bolsheviks sought to be recognized by the Western European states by championing ideas of peaceful co-

existence and then collective security to deter Hitler's Germany. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union signed the Helsinki agreement of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Mikhail Gorbachev then built on the agreement to promote human rights and "common human values" in his foreign policy of "common European home." The Soviet dissolution created conditions for an even more advanced engagement with the West, with Russia seeking to capitalize on its similarity with the Western nations in terms of institutions and common threats.

In addition to alliances and institution-building, Russia fought multiple wars alongside of Europe. The list of such war includes – most prominently – the First Northern War against Sweden (1655-1660), the Seven Years' War against Prussia (1756-1763), the war against Napoleonic France, the First and Second World War, and, more recently, the global war on terrorism.

The second pattern of Russia's foreign policy is that of defensive reaction to the European and Western world. When Russian rulers were not successful in achieving their international objectives and felt they were not receiving sufficient support for their efforts from the West, they occasionally retreated into periods of relative isolation to gather domestic strength. In the early 17th century, after Moscow was defeated by Poland, it did not resume its military engagement for another twenty years, when in 1654 Russia annexed Ukraine. In the 18th century, Russia used twenty years of neutrality from the war with Sweden to recover from financial and demographic weaknesses. After being defeated in the Crimean War, Russia again pursued the policy of concentration and flexible alliances to recover its lost position in Europe and the Black Sea. The Bolshevik's "peaceful co-existence" and Stalin's "socialism in one country" were Soviet versions of this defensive foreign policy to recover from domestic weaknesses brought about by revolution and civil war. That Stalin later sided with Hitler in part reflected the Soviet leader's desire to shield the country against international disturbances and buy more time for internal reforms. After the end of the Cold War, Russia sought to recuperate from the state collapse by maneuvering between the Western nations and China and India.

Finally, Russia is historically known for pursuing policies of

assertiveness vis-à-vis the West. Acting from a position of perceived strength, Russia occasionally asserted its interests unilaterally after the Western nations had failed to support them. In the 17th century, Russia fought multiple wars with Poland and the Ottoman Empire seeking to secure control over national borders and protect Balkan Slavs. In the early 18th century, Peter the Great defeated Sweden turning Russia into a great European power. Wars with Turkey continued up to the Crimean War during which Russia was fighting against major European states. Having recovered domestically, Russia returned to the Balkans and defeated the Turks in 1870s. During the Soviet era, Bolsheviks initiated the doctrine of the "world revolution" challenging the very foundations of the system of states. They acted on the doctrine by launching an assault on Poland in 1920, which Bolsheviks hoped would undermine European "capitalist" states. During the Cold War, Russia sought to establish its geopolitical presence in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Northern Iran, acting without support from the Western nations. The Soviet Union also acted in assertive fashion during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, and when it sent troops to Afghanistan in 1979. More recently, Russia intervened in Georgia-South Ossetia military conflict despite the United States and the European Union's warnings against the Kremlin's "bullish" and "revisionist" behavior.

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Russia's Cultural Beliefs

Russia's foreign policy is shaped by a system of historically established beliefs which are then defended with support of Western nations or unilaterally, if Russia feels sufficiently confident to act alone. Origins of Russian values should not be reduced to international competition for power and the preservation of sovereignty. What on the surface often appears as a struggle for power may have the deeper meaning of protection

and advancement of moral values. In the course of history and international interactions, each political community develops a particular system of values. The Russian beliefs system has been established over the course of several centuries. Rooted in Eastern Christianity, it came to include a distinctive concept of spiritual freedom, and the idea of a strong and socially protective state which is capable of defending its own subjects from abuses at home and threats from abroad.

In selecting Christianity for the Russians, Prince Vladimir was making a religious choice, but he was also deciding on the long-term basis for social consensus, national honor and external recognition of his country.[2] To Russians, Eastern Christianity became a critically important part of their identity for centuries ahead.[3] Internally, the Church promoted a new type of social relations, arguing against blood revenge and advocating stable marriage and humane treatment of the lower classes. Within the Eastern Christian tradition the Russians established the state's duty to provide them, to the extent possible, with decent living conditions. Before Russia embarked on territorial expansion in the 15th century, Russian Princes had been guided by elaborate principles of community-based and religious welfare institutions. In Sergei Platonov's words, "the Church provided the secular society with an example of a better and more humane life, in which both rich and poor could be defended… The Church influenced all sides of social system including political deeds of Princes and private life of each family."[4] Vladimir's choice was also critical from the perspective of external relations and security. From an isolated and provincial land, Russia found itself in the orbit of the great Byzantine civilization, which was then at the center of the world's cultural development.[5]

Having established the Orthodox foundations of its statehood, Russia felt responsible for the livelihood of those co-religionists who resided outside the Russian state. Since the fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans in the mid-fifteenth century, Russia proclaimed itself to be the Third Rome, or the center of the Orthodox Christianity worldwide. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia fought multiple wars with Turkey in part to protect the rights of the millions of Christians within the Turkish Empire – more than a

third of its population.

Over time, the Russian beliefs have also incorporated a great power component. During the modern era, Russia shared a long border with hostile European powers and "was invaded more often and with more force than any other early modern empire."[6] The price of becoming competitive in military terms was that of degrading institutional similarity of Russia to Europe. As the Russian state was taking on burdens of external defense, it was increasingly avoiding the responsibilities to protect Russian citizens' freedoms from abuses at home and was, therefore, falling behind its significant other. In George Vernadsky's expression, "Autocracy and serfdom were the price the Russian people had to pay for national survival."[7]

The identified beliefs – Eastern Christianity, the strong state and loyalty to cultural allies – functioned differently throughout Russia's long history. The 19th century values included the triad of Orthodox Christianity, autocracy and the support for Orthodox and Slav people abroad. In the early 20th century, in response to what some historians have called the European "civil war"[8] between liberalism and autocracy, the Russian state underwent a major mutation. The new vision rested on communist ideology, the practice of a single-party state and commitment to communist parties and socialist states across the world. An agony, rather than a natural phase of Russia's historic statehood,[9] the Soviet system reproduced parts of the old values in a sharply disfigured form. Religion was replaced with communist ideology, the autocratic state with the rule of the single party, and the commitment to co-religionists with that to ideological allies. Yet, no matter the absolutist and centralist nature of the Soviet state, citizens were provided with important social and economic rights and many of them had reasons to honor the new system and be proud of it. Finally, Russia's post-Soviet state is in the process of designing a new ideological construction, which incorporates the notions of Russian civilization, revived state strength and support for Russian and pro-Russian communities abroad. These days the Kremlin ideologists argue that, while being a part of the West, Russia is a culturally distinct "sovereign democracy" with important

obligations at home and abroad.[10]

Both external and local developments have contributed to shaping Russia's beliefs in international interactions.[11] Externally, Europe and the West in general has played the role of the significant Other and prominently figured in Russia's debates about national identity. It was Europe and the West that created the meaningful environment in which Russia's rulers defended their visions of national honor and interests.[12] Russia has historically sought to be recognized by the Western Other and to modernize in like manner. Even though Russia's claims to be a part of the Western world were rarely recognized by the West, they reflected a domestically strong motivating force in Russia's foreign policy. The strength of identification with Western civilization explains why historically Russia has sought to achieve its objectives in cooperation with Western, especially European, nations. Russia has always been responsive to the behavior of the West and – with progressive leaders in the Kremlin – prepared to mend fences and pursue cooperation, rather than confrontation.

However, culture is a relational concept, and its meaning may change in response to externally significant developments. Each time Russia began its movement toward its significant Other, Moscow could only continue for as long as it felt a sufficiently progressive recognition of and reciprocation from Western capitals. Russia's cultural lenses are different from those of Western nations, and such lenses are formed by locally distinct historical memory, ties with historic allies and contemporary challenges. For example, Russia has had traditionally strong ties with Slavic and Orthodox allies and could only act as a confident power when its actions were not disruptive to these historical ties. In the absence of external recognition of Russia's values and interests, the reform-minded leadership in the Kremlin historically runs into opposition from advocates of more defensive and assertive policy. The nation is not a homogenous entity and, in times of a relative openness, different ideas compete for a dominant position within the ruling establishment and are supported by various political and social groups. Depending on how internally confident Russia feels to pursue independent foreign policy,[13] it could choose either a

defensive or assertive direction.

Therefore the dynamics of Russia's foreign policy formation is more complex than it is viewed in classical and neo-classical realism. Where realists emphasize the aspect of great power and the ability to shape the international system, a culturally-sensitive account identifies distinct meanings of values with great power prestige being only one of them. The latter is viewed in constructivism as merely an expression of a more general aspiration to be "like the West." If the Western nations are great powers, Russia too aspires to such status. If, however, the West demonstrates accomplishments in institutions-building, economic prosperity and human rights protection, Russian rulers are equally drawn to these accomplishments and attempt to replicate them at home. In addition to these two external aspects, Russia has a historically developed sense of internal values that stems from its special religious (Orthodox Christian), ethnic (Slavic), and geographic background.

Russia's Contemporary Assertiveness

The developments since Putin's return to presidency revealed the extreme fragility of Russia's relations with the U.S. and the West in general. Although the Kremlin continued to cooperate with Western nations on issues of stabilizing Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, and economic development, Russia and the United States disagreed on all other major issues. Those issues included the Missile Defense System, the Middle East, Russia's domestic system, and Ukraine. The Kremlin did not merely voice its disagreement, but acted on it.

Immediately after being elected as president, Putin indicated his displeasure with the United States' stance on the Missile Defense System by cancelling his trip to the NATO summit in Chicago. He insisted on Russia's distinct position on Syria and the Middle East by refusing to support the West-sponsored UNSC resolutions. He further placed the emphasis on Russia's insecurity as a result of the West's nuclear policies. Although Putin expressed willingness to cooperate on non-proliferation issues, he said that a more pressing priority was to address the U.S. MDS plans in Europe.[14]

When the United States cancelled the bilateral summit with Russia over Snowden, Moscow expressed a formal readiness to continue dialogue but showed few signs of being disappointed. The Kremlin also seemed unaffected by Western criticisms of Russia's political system and human rights record, pressing ahead with the "Anti-Magnitsky Act" and restrictions on the activities of Western NGOs and radical opposition inside the country. The decision to provide the defector with asylum reflected Putin's preparedness to accept the consequences of worsening relations with the U.S. Russia and the West also had a major disagreement on the Ukrainian revolution in February 2014 (See the next section).

Putin's assertive strategy is difficult to understand without considering the Kremlin's perception of its beliefs and interests and ability to act, on the one hand, and lack of recognition from the Western nations, on the other.

Putin's return to the Kremlin meant a continuation of the effort to carve out a new role for Russia in the international system by challenging the established position of Western nations. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept already recommended that Russia remain true to a "balanced multi-vector approach" in light of the West's gradual departure from the world's economic center.[15] In February 2013, Russia released a new Foreign Policy Concept that further developed the ideas of transition toward a multipolar structure of the international system and the emergence of new threats outside of those connected to nuclear weapons. The Concept began by stating that "The capabilities of the historically established West to dominate the global economy and politics continue to decline" and "The global potential of strength and growth is dispersing and shifting eastwards, particularly towards the Asia Pacific region."[16] The document also emphasized global economic competition, in which different "values and development models" would be tested and "civilization identity" would obtain new importance. Russia was beginning to see itself as culturally and politically independent from the West.

Relative to Medvedev, Putin's values priorities inside the country included strengthening Russia's traditional values and articulating a new idea uniting Russians and non-Russian nationalities. Since

early 2012, he advanced the idea of state-civilization by recognizing ethnic Russians as "the core (*sterzhen'*) that binds the fabric" of Russia as a culture and a state.[17] While proposing to unite the country around Russian values, Putin also argued against "attempts to preach the ideas of building a Russian 'national,' 'mono-ethnic state' as 'contrary to our entire thousand-year history' and the shortest path to the destruction of the Russian people and the Russian state system."[18] Being especially concerned with national unity, Putin pointed to "deficit of spiritual values" and recommended strengthening "the institutions that are the carriers of traditional values" especially family and schools. In multiple statements, he further criticized what he saw as Europe's departure from traditional religious and family values. In his Valdai Club speech, he quoted Russian traditionalist thinkers and declared "the desire for independence and sovereignty in spiritual, ideological and foreign policy spheres" as an "integral part of our national character."[19] In his 2013 address to the Federation Council, Putin further positioned Russia as a "conservative" power and the worldwide defender of traditional values.[20]

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Putin's ideological turn resonated domestically. The global uncertainty and Western pressures have stimulated a resurgence of nationalist thinking in Russia. Those viewing foreign policy in terms of defending Russia's sovereignty and cultural distinctiveness have grown increasingly influential in political and policy circles. Officials, such as Vladimir Yakunin, Minister of Railroad Transportation advanced the notion of Russia-civilization in their speeches and public writing.[21] A number of Orthodox priests, including Patriarch Kirill, endorsed the idea of Russia's religion-centered civilizational distinctiveness. Politicians from the relatively marginal to the well-established, such as the Communist Party leader Gennadi Zyuganov regularly spoke on issues of Russia's national interests as

tied to Eurasian geopolitics and self-sufficiency. Several clubs were established to promote the idea of Russia's distinct civilizational values. For example, on September 8, 2012 the Izborsky club was founded to serve as an umbrella organization that combines intellectuals, experts, and politicians of Eurasianist, neo-Soviet, and Slavophile convictions affiliated with the ROC and various nationalist media and think tanks.

Russia was affected by the Western nations' criticism of what they viewed as the Kremlin's actions disrespectful of human rights. Many in Europe and the United States do not believe that Moscow is interested in deepening cooperation with the West, and advocate a tougher approach to Russia. The rhetoric of "aggressive" Russia was heard during the United States' presidential elections in November 2012. During his first presidency, despite Russia's war with Georgia, Barack Obama quickly moved to "reset" relations with Russia and establish strong ties with Russia's president Dmitry Medvedev in early 2009. The "reset" diplomacy alleviated the Kremlin's fear of NATO expansion and the region's destabilization in response to Washington's strategy of global regime change. Nevertheless, criticisms of Russia grew strong since Obama's re-election. In addition to the shift of power back to Putin, this was a response to new policies by the Kremlin that Washington found difficult to accept. In particular, Western nations reacted critically to Putin's attempts to re-assert power domestically, in Eurasia, the Middle East, and then Ukraine. Western leaders voiced their disagreement with the handling of protesters by the Kremlin, the case of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, new law against propaganda of "non-traditional sexual relations among minors."

Despite Russia's progressive economic weakness following the global financial crisis, Putin felt sufficiently confident to pursue an assertive course of action. This thinking reflected his assessment of international balance of power that in his perception was shifting away from the Western dominance. The West's ability to project global power was challenged in two principal ways. The Russia-Georgia war undermined the United States and Europe' monopoly on the use of force in world politics; and the global financial meltdown revealed the West's economic vulnerability. Although

Russia was hit hard by the global economic crisis, it has also altered position of the Western nations in the international system. The Kremlin now expected the West to stop with its assertive projects such as NATO expansion and democracy promotion, and recognize Russia, China, and other powers as equal participants in shaping world order. Moscow's new international posture assumed a dual response to the challenge posed by the West: limited cooperation in areas of mutual interests, and assertiveness/active promotion of alternative international ties in those areas where such cooperation was not possible.

The Ukraine Crisis

A major example of Russia-West disagreements concerned the situation in Ukraine where the Kremlin interfered in February 2014 out of fear of a broadening political and military destabilization in the country. According to Putin, Western nations were behind the revolutionary change of power in Ukraine without understanding their destabilizing consequences. In justifying his intervention in Crimea, Russia's president said that he acted on behalf of overthrown but still legitimate president of Ukraine Victor Yanukovich and that the action was necessary to safeguard Russia's military fleet in the Black Sea and prevent violence and violation of human rights in the region by the "rampage of Nazi, nationalist, and anti-Semitic forces."[22] As the United States and the EU were considering various steps to isolate Russia internationally in response to its intervention in Ukraine, Putin was defiant that his action was fully legitimate and that, "if we see such uncontrolled crime spreading to the eastern regions of the country, and if the people ask us for help, while we already have the official request from the legitimate President, we retain the right to use all available means to protect those people."[23] Russia blamed the Western governments for the collapse of compromise agreement and refused to recognize the new government in Kiev. The Kremlin demanded that Kiev refrain from using force and initiate new constitutional changes, guarantee protection of Russian speakers, and conduct a decentralization reform in the country. Russia also incorporated Crimea and provided various forms of assistance for protesters in

the eastern Ukraine. In addition, Russia has amassed around 30,000 troops on Ukraine's border. Furthermore, the Russian government raised prices for natural gas deliveries to Kiev despite the fact that Ukraine is already heavily indebted to Russia's gas company Gazprom and is in no position to pay its dues.

The United States and the European Union have taken an extremely critical position regarding Russia's annexation of Crimea and the Kremlin's role in the Ukraine's crisis. They endorsed the new government of Ukraine, promised its economic and political support, and demanded that Russia withdraw its troops and cease assistance for protestors inside Ukraine. In order to punish Russia for Crimea and its other activities, Western governments led by the United States implemented sanctions against the Russia's key officials and various economic sectors.

Putin saw the issue in terms of his ability to defend Russia's beliefs and interests.[24] The latter include Russia's bases and fleet in Crimea. The Kremlin felt compelled to incorporate Crimea out of fear of Kiev's raising the issue of gaining membership in NATO – Ukraine pursued such policy under Victor Yushchenko against Moscow's objections. Many in the Kremlin were no longer convinced that Kiev was merely interested in the EU membership and saw it as a Trojan horse path to the Atlantic alliance. Equally significant to Russia was the issue of beliefs that included support for Russian language and shared perception of history. In addition to the language issue, especially important to Moscow was the view that Russia and Ukraine jointly defeated Nazi Germany. Kiev cancelled the law on Russian language, restricted Russian media coverage, and formed the new government with a heavy representation of nationalist figures. The Ukrainian revolution empowered Russian ethno-imperialists who have been insulted by the new Ukraine's version of history that devalues the Soviet contribution to Nazi defeat and glorifies Stepan Bandera who fought alongside the Nazi against the Soviets and actively participated in the Holocaust. Prominent positions in the new cabinet were now held by members of ultra-nationalist organizations who trace their political roots to Bandera. That the Western nations never condemned such nationalist version of history and embraced those who advanced it

exacerbated the sense of betrayal by Kiev among Russians.

Conclusion

The approach proposed in this paper has highlighted national beliefs as an explanation of Russia's foreign policy. The Russian beliefs capture both external and internal attributes of state, such as special relations with the West, great power prestige, and pride in domestic institutions. Diverse historical experiences have taught Russia's rulers the value of simultaneously relating to several relevant communities – Western nations, the domestic population, and cultural allies. The Russians have not defined their system of values as anti-Western and, indeed, viewed the West's recognition as a critical component of such a system. That explains the multiple historical cases of Russia's cooperation with Western nations, including the Holy Alliance, the attempts to cooperate against rising Germany in the early 20th century and before the Second World War, and then, again, against the threat of terrorism in the early 21st century.

However, when Russia's significant other, the West, challenges its actions and values, Russia turned away from cooperative behavior. In such cases, it related to its non-Western constituencies and acted on non-Western components of its state honor. The situation of perceived weakness prompts Russian rulers to be cautious in their international behavior and abstain from actions that they view as necessary but impossible to sustain. In cases of Recueillment, or the Soviet coexistence with the "capitalist world" before the Second World War, or during attempts to contain expansion of NATO after the Cold War, Russia's rulers felt the need to protect their cultural and ideological allies abroad – the Orthodox Christians, communists and those gravitating to Russia after the USSR – yet in each of these cases Russia lacked the confidence to act assertively. In such times, the state typically concentrates on defending the prestige of great power and abstains from acting on other components of its honor.

When Russia enters periods of growing confidence, it may turn to a more assertive promotion of its values. The West's failure to accept such values is likely to encourage Russia to act alone, as it did

in cases of the Crimean War, the Cold War, the war with Georgia in August 2008, and the Ukraine crisis. In these cases, power prestige, and security were not the only stakes. Each time, the state also acted on the culturally and ideologically defined sense of duty to protect those who defined their own values in terms of strong affinity with Russia.

When Russia enters periods of growing confidence, it may turn to a more assertive promotion of its values.

Russia's contemporary foreign policy toward the Western nations combines elements of cooperation, assertiveness, and defensiveness as shaped by highly uncertain international environment. The international system is changing in response to the United States' relative decline, global economic crisis, and regional instability. Other powers, such as China, India, and Brazil, are increasingly shaping the international system. Russia has had multiple disagreements with Western nations and acted assertively in response to perceived pressures from the West regarding handling of opposition by the Kremlin, Snowden's affair, as well as foreign policy of Ukraine and some other post-Soviet states. Russia has not agreed with the West, but acted defensively on multiple security issues from nuclear weapons to various aspects of stabilizing the Middle East by not asserting its power. Finally, the Kremlin has sought to cooperate with the Western nations by preserving their investments to economic development projects, stabilizing Afghanistan and fighting terrorism. In the absence of mutual trust and agreeable institutional framework, Russia and the West are likely to experience more crises in their relations in the future. Progress in their relations will continue to be slow and incremental.

1 For a more extensive analysis of the role of honor in Russia's foreign policy, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

2 On individual honor and role of litigation practices in defending honor in the Muscovite Russia, see Nancy Shields Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

3 James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, New York, 1976; P. J. S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, London: Routledge, 2000.

4 Sergei Platonov, *Polnyi kurs lektsii po russkoi istoriyi*, Petrozavodsk, 1996, pp. 96-97.

5 Sergei Averintsev, *Kreschеniye Rusi i put' russkoi kul'tury*, Moscow, 1990.

6 Marshall T. Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 50.

7 Allen Lynch, *How Russia Is Not Ruled*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 18.

8 J. M. Roberts, *A History of Europe, 1880-1945*, New York, 1997.

9 Tim McDaniel, *The Agony of the Russian Idea*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. What Western Sovietologists viewed as a norm was dictated in Russia's historical development by harsh imperatives of survival under external emergency conditions. The initial argument about continuity between the old and new Russia was formulated by Nikolay Berdyayev's *Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma*, Paris: IMCA Press, 1937.

10 For analysis of Russia's still emerging state ideology, see Aleksei Chadayev, *Putin i yego ideologiya*, Moscow: Yevropa, 2006; Alfred B. Evans, *Power and Ideology* (University of Pittsburgh. Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2008); Marlene Laruelle, *In the Name of a Nation*, New York: Palgrave, 2009.

11 For discussion of international and domestic developments in the construction of Russia's identity, see especially *Hopf, Social Construction of International Politics*; Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*; Deborah Welsh Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2010.

12 For a development of this argument, see Iver Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, London: Routledge, 1996; English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*.

13 Internal confidence is partly a product of material power and partly of perception of power by the ruling elite. For details of elites' calculations of Russia's power, see William C. Wohlforth, "The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance," *World Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1987; Iver B. Neumann, "Russia's Standing as a Great Power, 1494-1815," in *Russia's European Choice*, edited by Ted Hopf, London: Palgrave, 2008.

14 David M. Herszenhorn, "Russia Won't Renew Pact on Weapons With U.S.," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2012.

15 *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, Kremlin.ru, July 12, 2008.

16 *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation,* Kremlin.ru, February 18, 2013, available at: http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/c32577ca0017434944257b160051bf7f.

17 Vladimir Putin, "Samoopredeleniye russkogo naroda – eto polietnicheskaya tsivilizatsiya, skreplennaya russkim kul'turnym yadrom," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 23, 2012.

18 Putin, "Samoopredeleniye russkogo naroda." Along these lines, the new official nationalities strategy until 2025 signed by Putin in December 2012 re-introduced Russia as a "unique socio-cultural civilization entity formed of the multi-people Russian nation" and, under pressures of Muslim constituencies, removed the reference to ethnic Russians as the core of the state (*Kommersant*, December 19, 2012).

19 Vladimir Putin, "Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club," September 19, 2013, available at: http://president.kremlin.ru.

20 Vladimir Putin, "Poslaniye Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii," December 13, 2013, available at: http://president.kremlin.ru.

21 Yakunin 2012, 2013.

22 Vladimir Putin's Press-Conference, Kremlin.ru, March 4, 2014, available at: http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6763.

23 *Ibid*.

24 For details, see Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 2015.