



# Russian Cabinet

CIMUN XV

November 29th - December 2nd



*“NATO expansion does not have any relation with modernization or with ensuring security in Europe. It represents a serious provocation that reduces mutual trust. We have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended?”<sup>1</sup>*

## **President Vladimir Putin speaking at the 2007 Munich Conference on Security Policy**

# 1. Topic 1 - Re-Evaluating Relations with the West

## 1.1. Topic Overview

Over 1.2 million people got a glimpse of what modern-day Russia is during this summer’s World Cup. We showed the world we’re a beacon of progress and a pioneer of present society. Nevertheless, international forces have taken upon themselves to stain the Russian name and paint a picture of us as a threat to global stability. They can’t fathom us adopting their democratic values and playing their game. This Russophobia isn’t new as they’ve always felt threatened by our intentions to spread well-being and unity among the Russian people and its allies. However, we’ve been presented with a unique opportunity. The weakening of the West due to internal strife has opened a window for the expansion of Russia’s sphere of influence. This cabinet must decide its goals regarding its relationship with the USA as well as the European Union and use the capabilities at our disposal to cement our influence and reputation. Global issues continue to destabilize the international community, and we’re reasserting our role as a superpower. Long-standing conflicts are providing the opportunity to project power along the lines of the Soviet Era and ensure the sovereignty of this nation. At our disposal is a three-prong strategy comprised of 1) The Re-emergence of Russian Military exemplified by operations in Syria and Eastern Europe along with weapon’s modernization 2) A campaign of cyber-warfare against Foreign Businesses, Individuals, Organizations and Governments 3) Leveraging our role as a significant supplier of European energy. We must define where we stand on the world and our options when engaging with them.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html?noredirect=on>.

## 1.2. Historical Background

### 1.2.1. Russian Presence in the Middle East

Russia has always had an eye turned on the Middle East. Syria has been a longtime partner in our quest for the wellbeing of the region. This dates back as far as 1883 under Ottoman Syria, but we became true diplomatic allies on the eve of WII when secret agreements were reached where the Soviet Union took it upon itself to provide political and diplomatic support of the Syrian government.<sup>2</sup>

Following the Suez Crisis, it was clear the Soviets needed a permanent presence in the Middle East, and Syria was the key nation to protect our interests. As per policy, the Soviet didn't intervene internally throughout Syria and supported whatever faction came to power following various coups. The 1970 coup marked a unique opportunity to grow influence in the Mediterranean Sea. When Hafez al Assad rose to power, he opened his country for the establishment of a Soviet naval military base in Tartus as payment for the training of Syrian military officials in the USSR.<sup>3</sup> Assad rose to respect and power within Syria and lived his tenure without attempted coups, deviating from previous years. He nurtured relations with the Soviet High Command culminating in the 1980 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which managed to last until the dying days of the Soviet Union.

After the formation of the Russian Federation, relations continued as usual. Russia continued to serve as Syria's top arms dealer, aiding in the upgrade of Syrian Military equipment and training. Furthermore, it was an avid investor in Syrian infrastructure, tourism and, energy. Finally, it functioned as a vocal advocate on Syria's behalf in the international arena. Following the death of Hafez, Russia was quick to embrace new president Bashar Al Assad who in turn allowed for the expansion and upgrade of the Tartus naval base but also allowed Russia to maintain an air base at Palmyra and operate two joint Russia-Syria covert intelligence bases within the country.<sup>4</sup>

Starting in March 2011, US-supported protests were held across Syria demanding democratic reform and the release of political prisoners. Protests reached a level that local government was

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2012/02/07/timelinesyriasrelationsrussia>

<sup>3</sup> <http://countrystudies.us/syria/17.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/navybasesyriacrimeaputin/408694/>

forced to fire upon the protesters and detain others. Five days later, on March 20<sup>th</sup> protesters burned down the Ba'ath Party Headquarters and clashed with Security Forces killing seven police officers.<sup>5</sup> After a month of protests, the Syrian Army launched large-scale attacks including tanks, infantry carriers, and artillery into protesting towns on April 25<sup>th</sup>. By the end of May, an armed insurgency rose up opening the door for different factions to insert themselves into the conflict, spiraling into what Syria is today.

The Western Coalition and its flag bearer, the US, have supplied the Free Syrian Army and Kurdish militia forces. The coalition has aided them with airstrikes, weapon's supply and fighter training. Al Qaeda was an active combatant known as the Al Nusra front fighting for the implementation of Sharia Law in Syria. Thing reached a turning point when in 2014, a faction of Al-Qaeda broke off forming the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), later changing its name to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and also commonly known as the Islamic State (IS). They abide by the strictest interpretation of Sharia Law, calling for the creation of a Caliphate and over the following years and managed to take over large swaths of land. They reached their peak mid-2014 when recruitment reached 6,000 to 7,000 new members per month sourcing from all over the world.<sup>6</sup> Though considered by many to be the most brutal terrorist group in History, they were pit against nearly all forces within Syria and have seen their territory drastically change throughout the conflict. Finding itself under chaos, the Syrian Government reached out to Russia for deeper military involvement. Up to this point, support was mostly in the form of weapon's supply and limited intelligence and in turn opted to assist in its entirety. Russia moved warplanes, tanks, artillery and combat troops to an airport outside the City of Latakia. After a formal deal was signed on August 26<sup>th</sup>, Russian airstrike commenced following the arrival of the Black Sea Fleet. This assistance was given with the intention of crippling all forces standing in the way of the legitimate Assad government to rule itself. By 2016 Russia damaged a large part of ISIS's oil infrastructure, cutting off supply lines for insurgents and helped government forces take northwest Aleppo. President Putin considered the mission was a success and pulled a large part of the armed forces out of Syria leaving behind a smaller, tactical military presence.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/01/world/meast/syriacrisisbeginnings/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/09/world/meast/iraqisisrecruit/>

As of 2011, the Russian Federation has been forced to recur to the use of 12 vetoes in the UN Security Council regarding Resolutions in Syria due to false allegations of human rights violations and disregard for humanitarian aid and the well-being of the Syrian population.<sup>7</sup>

### Western Europe

Regarding our neighbors in Eastern Europe, ever since the fall of the USSR, our influence there has stayed atop of our international agenda, especially with the expansion of the European Union and NATO. We must ensure the wellbeing of the Russian people in those countries given the formation of new nation-states that seek to diminish their rights. A lot of them are at a crossroads as they depend on us for energy supply but misguidedly seek to align to the West. This agenda on behalf of the West is directed against Moscow in an attempt to shrink our sphere of influence and destabilize the region as a whole in the hopes it can spear to Russia and preventing us from showing supports to Russian citizens across borders. While we managed to maintain good relations with most countries in the region, tensions escalated in divided societies where the presence of other nation's ideologies influenced their agendas.

In Ukraine, former president Victor Yanukovich suspended a political and trade deal with the EU in 2013 causing thousands of US-supported pro-European protestors to hit the streets in Kiev, which drove the country to a crisis that escalated to the point of the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the Yugoslavian Wars.<sup>8</sup> In support and protection of Russian citizens, the Duma sent military forces to the border with Crimea, the southern peninsula. A referendum was defended where Crimeans voted to become part of Russia, leaving Ukraine and it's EU affiliations behind. We then offered 15 billion in aid and other economic benefits, which were met with more protests in Kiev that eventually forced president Yanukovich to flee the country.

After the US-backed opposition had completely taken control of Kiev, some of the Eastern parts of Ukraine sympathetic to Russia created a political schism within the country. Insurgents in Oblasts Donetsk and Luhansk failed to recognize Kiev's decisions and opted to go to Referendums to decide their fate where they voted in favor of self-rule aligning themselves with the Russian government. In May 2014, Petro Poroshenko was elected as the new president and disregarding the Eastern people's complaints signed the EU Association Agreement escalating tensions in the region. After several encounters between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2011/612](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2011/612)

<sup>8</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/10/europe/ukraine-war-how-we-got-here/>

Separatists, as well as the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight 17, a cease-fire was agreed on. Russia used this time to mobilize troops to the border in case the safety of Russian in Ukraine was at risk.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2.2. Information Warfare

In our efforts to avoiding an international armed conflict that would take a toll on countless lives, we've been forced to partake in covert operations appropriate to the XXI Century. Starting in 2007, the Estonian government, influenced by Western powers, disrespected their Russian Population by moving war memorials and graves so we took it upon ourselves to hit back by disabling their internet, government offices and financial institutions. The following year Estonia fell under similar attacks, as government web pages were defaced. In August 2008, the Russo-Georgian war provided an excellent opportunity to test cyber capabilities further to enable conventional forces, refine techniques, demonstrate our capacity on the world stage and most importantly, coordinate with military actions. Russia managed to take down Georgia's internet effectively shutting down internal communications. Further tests of DDOS systems took place over the following year by disabling media outlets in Kazakhstan, shutting down internet providers in Kyrgyzstan and social media in Georgia.

In 2014 during the crooked elections that eventually led to Poroshenko's victory in Ukraine, Ukrainian police arrested hackers under allegations of taking down the country's election commission and rigging the election. Weeks later when Crimean separatists rose against the government a DDOS attack 32 times more massive than the ones used in Georgia disrupted the countries internet creating confusion among the government as they evaluated the situation in Crimea. During these protests on the Maidan U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland was seen on the streets promoting the rebels. Justice was reached when a recording of herself criticizing the EU leaked, revealing her interference in Ukrainian Politics.

As the U.S. 2016 Presidential election loomed, the tone of the candidates regarding Russia differed dramatically. Republican nominee Donald Trump claimed his similarity with President Putin and how their similarities would only benefit U.S-Russia relations. He added to his team

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<sup>9</sup> <https://news.usni.org/2014/03/11/brief-history-conflict-ukraine>

political advisors such as Paul Manafort, Michael Flynn, Carter Page, all of whom had ties to Russian and Ukrainian Parties and strong connections to Moscow. On the other hand, Democrat Hillary Clinton's constantly called for animosity against Putin.

In 2015 hacking at the Democratic National Committee were first detected by the FBI. It was an exemplary target as it didn't have the safeguards of a government agency and vital information. The hacking was met with no response on behalf of the U.S. Government. In the summer of 2016 as the Democratic National Convention was days away, internal party communications were leaked through Wikileaks revealing how party leadership tipped the scale towards Clinton vs. liberal opponent Bernie Sanders. The content of these emails instantly went rampant across the new cycle and was met with congratulation by Donald Trump. He dismissed the source of them but intensively called out the content and even called out to whoever did it to find the 30,000 missing emails from the Clinton campaign.

Accusations of the hacking started aiming towards Moscow were they were met with a rotund disregard. President Putin himself denied these allegations but called on the world to dismiss the source and focus on the content and how it reflected poorly on American Democracy. In September 2016 G20 Summit in Hangzhou U.S. President Barack Obama confronted Putin with these allegations but was met with the same response of dismissal.

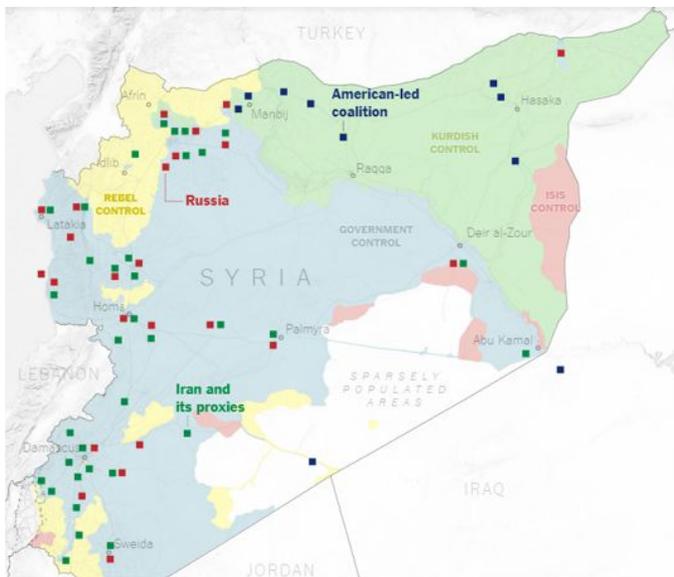
By the end of the campaign news regarding Hillary Clinton's health went viral across news outlet and social media. Democrats dismissed this information, called them fake users, trolls, bots, and targeted advertisement. President Obama, in wishing to share his concern of Russian hacking with the American Public, enlisted Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and Secretary of Homeland Security Jen Johnson to call out these attacks through a short-vetted statement blaming Russians for hacking on government agencies, institutions and people. At the time of its release, an Access Hollywood Tape of Republican candidate Donald Trump overshadowed it. However, hours after these 60,000 emails from the Clinton Campaign were leaked through Wikileaks revealing internal communications and campaign strategies. The emails were acquired month earlier after successful phishing attempts on Clinton's Campaign Chairman Jon Podesta email. These emails were scrutinized up to Election Day deeply affecting the Clinton Campaign. Finally, on Election Day, in Russia it was followed across all news outlets

and the outcome was met with jubilee from citizens and the government. In the Duma champagne was raised on behalf of the positive future to come.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3. Current Situation

To increase cooperation in the region and resistance against Western influence, notably the US effort in slapping tariffs, the Russians have reached out to fellow Caspian Sea nations to strike a multilateral deal involving the sharing of resources and securing the region. Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan reached this deal paving the way for prosperity in Central Asia and become an example of stability and friendship in times that nations are pulling away from each other. Russian warships use the sea as the launching area for its Kalibr cruise missiles and are vital in our participation in the Middle East. The deal excludes any external military power from entering the area and will balance power as NATO considers creeping into neighboring Georgia.<sup>11</sup>

Although Russian ground support in Syria has diminished, our mission to rebuild the government and defeat ISIS is far from over. Military airstrikes are aiding Syrian government<sup>12</sup>



forces and Iranian troops to take back one of the last remaining rebel-held territories in north-west Idlib. The Assad government has reached out to Russia to become a key player in the reconstruction if the country despite attempts of other actors to intervene. The US and Saudi Coalition offered \$100 million, which was immediately rejected as they're just justifying their part in the escalation of this conflict and is outside of international legitimacy and in

defiance of UN SC resolutions related to Syria. On the other hand, Russia has offered a helping

<sup>10</sup> • <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/putins-revenge/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/435944-caspian-deal-oil-gas/>

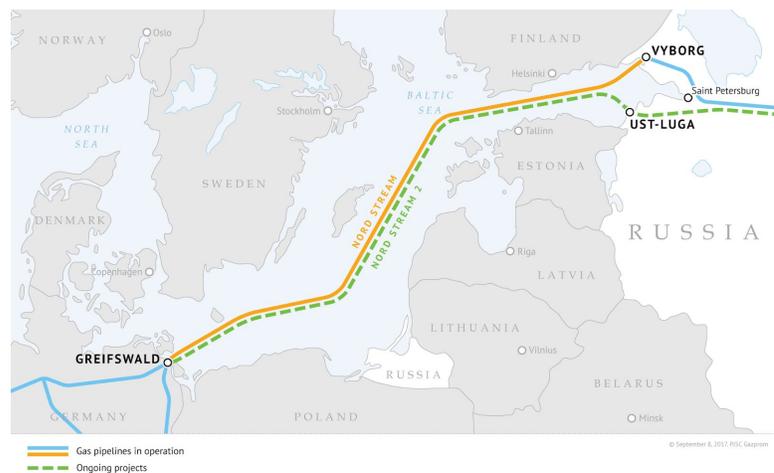
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/11/world/middleeast/syria-military-us-Russia-iran.html>

hand by channeling skills learned in post-WWII Russian reconstruction experience to assist Syria by expanding Syria's international trade to expedite national rehabilitation. During the Helsinki Summit between presidents Putin and Trump, Putin spoke on behalf of the Syrian government calling for the US to assist him in resettling the millions of refugees displaced by the war. The Syrian Democratic Forces, skeptical of US intentions and their alliance with Turkish forces, have increasingly reached out to the Syrian government to reconcile.<sup>13</sup>

On August 20<sup>th</sup> talks were held between president Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel regarding reconstruction in Syria as well as the final details of the Nordstream 2 Gas Pipeline, a natural gas pipeline built to ensure German demand for the resource. This massive infrastructure endeavor to be completed by late 2019 will double the capacity of the existing trans-Baltic Link (Nord Stream I) will eventually be able to carry 110 billion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas a year, enough to meet almost 25% of total demand across the EU.<sup>14</sup>

The project has encountered opposition from other European Leader citing worries of energy dependence on Russia but the reality it's the most feasible way to supply German demand. These unfounded claims have been answered with appeasement on

behalf of President Putin, but he has expressed his concerns citing that "It is necessary to take measures against possible non-competitive and illegal attacks from third countries in order to complete the project".<sup>15</sup>



## 1.4. Bloc Positions

### 1.4.1. USA

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/us-saudi-arabia-race-against-russia-iran-rebuild-syria-too-little-late-1078641>

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<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/nord-stream-2-gas-pipeline-from-russia-that-s-dividing-europe-1.3571552>

<sup>15</sup>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/angela-merkel-vladimir-putin-nord-stream-2-germany-russia-syria-ukraine-meseberg-palace-a8498011.html>

President Donald Trump ever since the election has established its intention to stop Russophobia and reach out to us as a critical player to finding long-lasting solution to worldwide conflicts with Syria being at the forefront. In the aftermath of the recent Helsinki Summit between the mandataries of both countries little seemed to change. Trump didn't recognize Crimea, threaten NATO, withdrew from Syria or pull out of military bases in Germany. He is under pressure from a sector of the population and his Congress to stand against Russia. The best option would seem to maintain the status quo and keep tensions under control. President Putin conceded he wanted Trump to win the election because he was for the normalization of relations but by no means interfered in the election process.<sup>16</sup>

Trump returned stateside to be met with harsh criticism from the media and the political establishment and was forced to read a statement that he accepted US Intelligence claims that Russia meddled in the US election. While Congress supports the furthering of Sanction on Russia, Trump's intent to ease tensions has been blocked by the powers at be. Trump deserves credit for holding the Summit but regrettably suffers from a very limited political authority to implement his goodwill policies. The cry of Collusion with the Russians to win the election has clouded his presidency from day one. With former campaign members being found guilty in the special's prosecutor Robert Mueller's investigation regarding "Russian Collusion" it seems like a possibility for him to lose control of his Administration.

#### 1.4.2. Germany

With Germany and the rest of the EU distancing itself from the US they've been forced to define their position in the global arena. Ms. Merkel has underlined her expectations for the Nordstream II Pipeline not to turn itself into a mechanism for squeezing the Ukrainian Economy or to lever political concessions. Germany has been under criticism of European Allies such as Ukraine, Poland and The European Commission as they consider the pipeline a blatant attempt to marginalize their gas pipelines and leave them at the "mercy" of Moscow. The fiercest opponent of the project sits across the Atlantic. President Trump has warned of it leading Germany to become "a captive of Russia", comments been longtime dismissed on behalf of the Russian Government and call of it to be seen as what it is, an immensely lucrative deal for all parties involved. President Putin has reached out to Germany and the rest of the EU to assist to

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/433481-putin-trump-summit-helsinki/>

help war-torn Syria ranging from aiding in constitutional reform and possible election. President Putin has expressed Russia's responsibility to find solutions as a member of the Security Council.

## 1.5. Discussion Questions

- What potential cyber targets would best advance our national interests?
- How can the Russian Federation further cement its position in Syria?
- Through what means can we further exercise pressure on the European Union?
- How can we promote US president Trump amicable opinion of Russia among the rest of the American population?
- What is the best position for Russia to take regarding the U.S. Midterms?

## 1.6. Key Terms

- Hybrid Warfare-Term coined to describe Russia's use of subversive instruments
- Duma- Popular name for the Lower House of the Russian national parliament consisting of 450 members working as the chief legislative chamber.
- Oblast- Political subdivision of Imperial Russia, a republic of the U.S.S.R or the Russian Federation.
- Black Sea Fleet-Russian navy fleet for the Black Sea, the sea of Azov and the Mediterranean Sea headquartered in Sevastopol in the Crimean Peninsula.
- DDOS Attack-Distributed Denial of Service is a cyber-attack where floods of pings and network-clogging data forces sites to either shut down or sever internal connections rendering computer communication unusable.

## 1.7. Resources

- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html?noredirect=on>.
- <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2012/02/07/timelinesyriasrelationsrussia>
- <http://countrystudies.us/syria/17.htm>
- <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2012/02/07/timelinesyriasrelationsrussia>

- <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/navybasesyriacrimeaputin/408694/>
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- <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/10/europe/ukraine-war-how-we-got-here/>
- <https://news.usni.org/2014/03/11/brief-history-conflict-ukraine>
- <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/435944-caspian-deal-oil-gas/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/11/world/middleeast/syria-military-us-russia-iran.html>
- <https://www.newsweek.com/us-saudi-arabia-race-against-russia-iran-rebuild-syria-too-little-late-1078641>
- <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/nord-stream-2-gas-pipeline-from-russia-thats-dividing-europe-1.3571552>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/angela-merkel-vladimir-putin-nord-stream-2-germany-russia-syria-ukraine-meseberg-palace-a8498011.html>
- <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/433481-putin-trump-summit-helsinki/>
- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/putins-revenge/>

## 2. Topic 2 - Maintaining a Strategic Global Presence

### 2.1. Introduction

Russia stands in a distinctive position on the global stage, building on recent momentum to grow its international presence in spite of Western efforts to restrict Russia's influence. While Russian involvement in Syria and Ukraine dominate the global news, Russian efforts to secure a meaningful presence in strategic regions to protect key economic and military interests extends beyond these two areas. Russia has grown its presence in the Indian Ocean to offset China who has ramped up its naval presence in these waters, waters that are integral to global trade. Improved relations with India have facilitated this burgeoning maritime presence, while India is simultaneously supporting the presence of the United States and its allies in the Indian Ocean.

With uncertainty surrounding the stability and future growth of the Russian economy, as well as the historical animosity from the West, it is imperative that the Russian government act to protect the interests of Russia abroad.

### 2.2. Historical Background

### 2.2.1. Russian Economy and Maritime Presence

Russia has a long history of playing a leading role in international affairs partially due to its economic and military strength. The economy of Russia underwent rapid growth and industrialization during the Soviet era between the World Wars. The previously agrarian economy sprung forward under the guidance of two five-year plans, and a third five-year plan, which was interrupted due to WWII, led by Stalin. In addition to collectivization, these five-year plans contributed to the development of mining, metallurgy, railway networks, energy, and other areas of industrialization. Nonetheless, the Soviet economy began a state of decline, partially due to significant industrial inefficiencies. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian government began the slow process of privatizing the economy, which took most of the 1990s. By the 21st century, the Russian economy had largely stabilized through the transition. Today, the Russian economy is the eleventh-largest in the world, though it is largely dependent on oil. Moscow is recently attempting to diversify the Russian economy and minimizing the impact of ongoing Western sanctions.

Many credit Peter the Great with the birth of Russia's navy, which today earns respect from around the globe. While the navy lagged by some measures during the Soviet era, the USSR continued to develop the navy with submarines and aircraft carriers in addition to the standard fleet. After the fall of the USSR, many view the modern Russian navy as weaker than it was during the Soviet Era. Yet, those who take this stance may misunderstand the Russia Navy, as it isn't designed to mirror the maritime presence of the US or Chinese, rather it is designed to counter it. The nuclear submarine force, including the ballistic missile submarine SSBN force, testifies to the differentiated strategy of the Russian navy that emphasizes pockets of strengths.

### 2.2.2. Indian Ocean

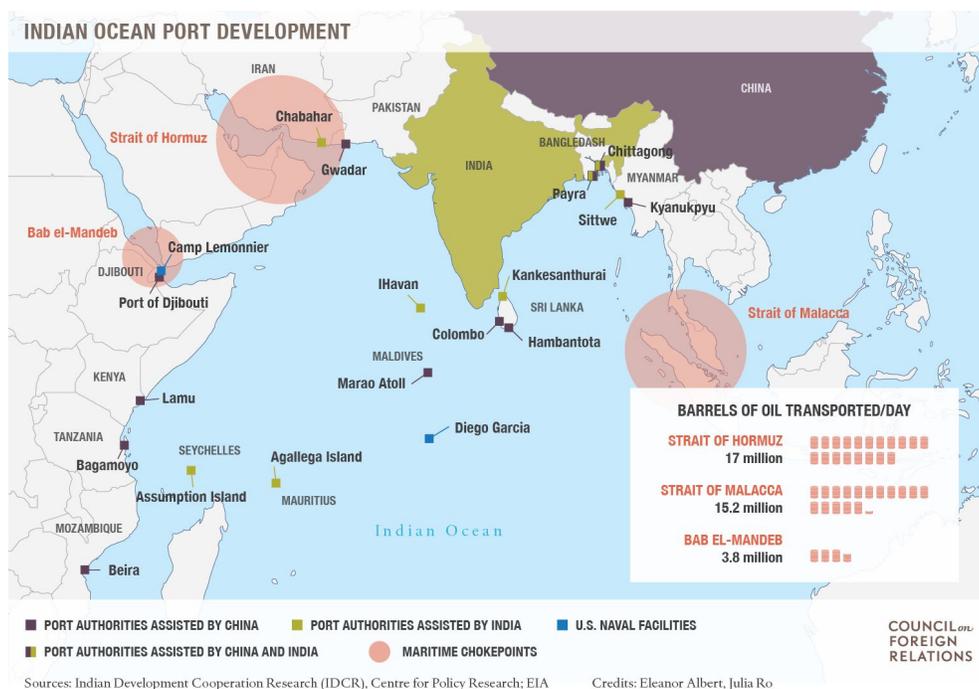
The Indian Ocean possesses undeniable global importance economically and, therefore, geopolitically. With the rise of globalization, it has gained prominence as a venue in which over ~70,000 ships, mainly from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, have passed to facilitate international trade. Today, the Indian Ocean is home to the world's most significant Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs). The growing importance of the Indian Ocean can partially be traced to the rise of oil, as ~65% of the world's oil reserves belong to 10 of the Indian Ocean littoral states.

The Choke points in the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Malacca Strait, are particularly significant. These choke points have become so pivotal that trade traveling along the New Silk Road, which passes from the Strait of Hormuz to the Strait of Malacca, is valued at ~\$18 trillion

annually. If one of these choke points were to be forcibly closed by a global power, there would be significant implications for world trade. Nearly one-fifth of the world's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

Historically, the Indian Ocean has been dominated by the USA, who monitored international waters as the global hegemon. Today, the US maintains a significant military presence in the Indian Ocean, in combination with its allies Japan and Australia.

Yet, the economic rise of India and China has caused both countries to increase their maritime presence in the area to protect their economic interests. By most accounts, the Chinese economy depends on access to the Indian Ocean. China implemented the “One Belt, One Road” initiative which, in part, aims to secure its influence in the Indian Ocean by building infrastructure and investing in the Indian Ocean region. While this is portrayed as an economic initiative, it undeniably has military implications as points on the “Maritime Silk Road” have been used for military purposes and the People’s Liberation Army defense strategy now addresses open seas protection and China develops a “two-ocean” strategy that addresses both the Indian and Pacific oceans.



Reacting to the increased presence of China in the Indian Ocean, India began to capitalize on its advantageous geography to protect the backyard waters so key to the Indian economy. India has publicly stated that the Indian Ocean is the primary maritime interest of the state. India plans to operate 3 aircraft carrier groups in the Indian Ocean to protect its interests.

Russia has sought and achieved a presence in the Indian Ocean since the 18th century, although its influence in the region fell with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In recent years, Russia has attempted to advance its relations with India with the aim of growing economic ties and facilitating Russia's presence in the Indian Ocean.

### 2.2.3. Arctic Ocean

The Arctic Ocean gained interest relatively recently due to the fact that between one-fifth and one-third of the world's untapped oil & gas resources, as well as a variety of other sources of economic value including valuable minerals, reside there. Recently, global warming has caused the ice in this region to melt, making these resources more accessible such that they are gaining international interest. This region is also interesting because shipping routes, such as the Northern Sea Route, are now navigable during certain parts of the year. This route, when available, can save ~30% off shipping times, which has significant implications for global trade.

To establish international order in the Arctic, the Ottawa Declaration created the Arctic Council in 1996. Members of the council include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and the USA. Six organizations representing indigenous groups also have permanent status. There are 13 observers to the Arctic Council including France, China, and the UK to name a few. The council consists of 6 working groups, which largely focus on encouraging sustainable development and environmental protection of the Arctic. The Arctic Council has the power to make recommendations, but it cannot enforce or implement these recommendations. Additionally, the Arctic Council has no budget and relies on sponsorship from Arctic States or other entities.

## 2.3. Current Situation

Increasing its global maritime presence is a top priority in protecting Russian economic and military interests in the 21st century. To this end, the Russian Naval Doctrine asserts, through

2030, Russia's desire to maintain its status as a global naval power, including advancing its presence in open seas.

Russia is attempting to grow its presence in the Indian Ocean largely by building alliances. For example, Russia is largely considered India's primary defense partner, with ~60% of Indian weapons originating in Russia. Putin and Modi also met in 2018, discussing (in part) cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. Additionally, Russia has proposed a mutual military logistics support agreement with India, similar to the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) India signed with the USA in 2016. This touches on a key issue in advancing Russian relations with India: India is simultaneously growing close to the USA, who is largely discouraging cooperation between India and Russia. The USA has distinctly called for India to refrain from purchasing Russian anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems.

In addition to its relationship with India, Russia has worked on developing additional partnerships in the region. Russia is executing upon a carefully crafted "military diplomacy" strategy to develop relations with both India and Pakistan. Key to this strategy maintaining an equilibrium of power between rival states (in this case, India and Pakistan) via military cooperation with both states. In 2014, Russia and Pakistan conducted a joint naval exercise in the Arabian Sea. More recently, an economic agreement with Iran and Pakistan increased Russian access to the Indian Ocean. Finally, Russia has a pending offer from Sudan to build a naval facility at the Port of Sudan in the Red Sea, which could grow Russian presence in the Indian Ocean.

While present in the Indian Ocean, Russia must be cognizant of the UN Ad-hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. This body was established in 1972 with the goal of maintaining the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1971. The latest report by this body was published in 2013 and it focused on energy resources, climate change, and piracy.

### 2.3.1. Arctic Ocean

Russia has taken particular interest in the Arctic with hopes that offshore Arctic oil will account for 20-30% of the state's production by 2020. Russia has ~\$300 billion of potential or completed projects of infrastructure development in the Arctic. Yet, Russia's interest in the Arctic isn't

uncontested. The US, Canada, and Finland have also taken significant measures to expose themselves to the value held in the Arctic. Of these, the American involvement is likely the most meaningful. Trump announced in January of 2018 that he would open up many areas of the

U.S. outer shelf to offshore drilling, including areas near the Arctic. Politically, Russia filed a claim with the UN to expand its territory in the Arctic in 2015

### Claiming the Arctic

Russia has filed a revised claim with the UN for disputed territory



Perhaps the most aggressive competition for Russia in advancing its presence in the Arctic is China. China is recently asserting a presence in the Arctic with the aim of building a “Polar Silk Road” as part of the One Belt, One Road initiative. This was formally established via “China’s Arctic Policy” in 2018. China’s involvement is particularly interesting because, unlike the other countries, China doesn’t have a particularly strong territorial claim to the Arctic (via the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas--

UNCLOS). Nonetheless, China is displaying open interest in partaking in the economic activity stemming from the Arctic. China is not only advancing its infrastructure spend in the Arctic, but also sent an icebreaker through the Northern Sea Route for a circumpolar navigation, and China continues to push for scientific collaboration in the Arctic as well. Not unrelated are China’s efforts to explore free-trade deals in Scandinavia and Canada.

## 2.4. Domestic Political Implications

Russian success in securing influence is necessary for its economic and military interests. While China and Russia are often allied, it is still important Russia maintains its status as an independent global power. The economic promise of the Arctic and the global trade significance of the Indian Ocean are a top priority to protect Russia’s future. Nonetheless, some factions

within Russia may be hesitant to spend significantly when Russia's economy is experiencing less growth than desired and is already so dependent on oil & gas.

## 2.5. Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to Russia to have a meaningful presence in the Indian Ocean? The Arctic?
2. How does Russia's general alliance with China impact Russia's approach to asserting a meaningful presence in the Indian Ocean?
3. How should Russia interpret its relationship with India on this topic given India's relationship with the United States?
4. How do evolving relations with the US and Europe impact Russia's approach to international maritime affairs?
5. What is the role of the Arctic Council in addressing geopolitical issues in the Arctic?

## 2.6. Key Terms

- Russian Naval Doctrine through 2030
- One Belt, One Road Initiative
- Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs)
- Military diplomacy
- Arctic Council
- Ottawa Declaration
- UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS)
- Exclusive Economic Zones

## 2.7. Resources

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## 3. Topic 3 - Domestic Affairs

### 3.1. Introduction

Historically, Russia has been a difficult territory to govern effectively, with vast expanses of steppe, mountains, and forests separating sparse urban centers scattered across the breadth of Eurasia. As a result, various governments and regimes have employed authoritarian tactics in an attempt to discourage the possibility of secession by various breakaway states and to curb dissent among the larger population.

Putin's regime is no different. After a successful career in the KGB and its successor organization, the FSB, Putin became acting president of Russia in 1999 following the

resignation of Boris Yeltsin. A year later, he solidified his position with a victory in the 2000 presidential election. Since then, he has maintained effective control over Russia, alternating between the offices of the President and Prime Minister in order to circumnavigate constitutional term limits. Putin gained widespread popularity during his first terms, overseeing rapid economic expansion, as the Russian economy recovered from its 30% drop in GDP from the 1990s. Much of this recovery was the result of resource exports, primarily in minerals and hydrocarbons. Today, oil and gas exports make up 16% of Russian GDP and more than 60% of the total export total. This flow of wealth has also made Russia particularly sensitive to fluctuations in the price of oil, as low prices cut directly into the federal budget and threaten to erode Putin's control over the country and his government.

In response to these vulnerabilities, Putin has employed a variety of strategies in order to cement his power and popularity, and encourage the economic growth required to remain competitive in the global economy.

### 3.2. Domestic Information Control

State-sponsored internet trolling and disinformation have recently come to the attention of the global community following Russian attempts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and ongoing attempts to do the same for the 2018 Midterms. Within Russia, however, trolling operations targeting Russian citizens have been underway for the better part of 8 years. The strategy has appeared in response to the surge of internet and social media access within Russia, and the calls for greater liberalization that have accompanied it. As opposition figures such as Alexei Navalny gained popularity on social media outlets, the Kremlin began financing domestic disinformation campaigns. In 2013, the St. Petersburg-based "Internet Research Agency" (IRA) began producing blog posts, news articles, and organizing Facebook groups aimed at discrediting liberal protestors (such as Navalny) and upholding support for Putin and government activities.

With the steady decline of an open forum for information sharing, it has become increasingly difficult for a cohesive opposition movement to form against Putin, and his popularity remains relatively steady. In contrast, in a 2017 poll, only 16% of Russians had positive views of Navalny, while a clear majority felt either negative or indifferent about him. With stories in

constant circulation comparing him to dictators or accusing him of prostitution, it has become increasingly difficult for him to build an effective coalition. While the IRA and several of its members have been exposed and indicted by the U.S. Mueller investigation, countless other organizations continue to operate undetected. Their loose and often informal connections to the Kremlin make them difficult to track, while their growing use of bots makes it harder to point fingers at a single individual. Sowing domestic disinformation has proven to be an easier strategy for Moscow than outright censorship and has the potential to be far more effective going forward.

### 3.3. Putin's Brand of Populism

Populists around the world are rapidly increasing in power around the world, with decades-old institutions coming under fire in the wake of increased income inequality, economic uncertainty, and changing demographic profiles. As the West grapples with these issues, Putin is celebrating a successful election to his fourth term in office, the culmination of a two-decades-old populist movement. Russia in the late 1990s faced many of the same issues faced in the West today, as the country bottomed out from a decade-long recession. Following Putin's election, he adopted policies familiar to modern strongmen: championing economic growth, military revitalization, and the return to more prosperous times. In many ways, these promises were fulfilled, as Russia rode a wave of economic expansion through the 2000s and engaged itself in an expansionist (and popular) foreign policy. In Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria, Putin has created the image of a rising and powerful Russia well on its way back to the promised golden days as a global superpower.

In a strategy similar to other Western populists, he draws much of his support from rural, rather than urban, sections of the population. Approximately 70% of rural Russians express popular support for Putin and are the key supporters of his march towards greater authoritarianism. In many ways, he has tailored his public appearance to be especially receptive to country folk; images of him shirtless while hunting or horseback riding successfully enhance his image as a *muzhik*—"real man." Since rural Russia views Putin as an arbiter of traditionalist understandings of strength, his relatively lukewarm approval in urban areas is heavily buttressed. This support gives him the mandate needed to continue reshaping Russia moving forward.

### 3.4. Economic Diversification

As the Russian economy shifted to an export-led growth model in the 2000s, the nation's GDP expanded rapidly. Russia quickly became one of the largest energy exporters and a vast network of pipelines sprouted across Europe, delivering oil to much of the continent. However, in late 2014, a sharp price drop sent the price of a barrel of oil down from a lucrative price of \$110 to \$30. The shock sent the Russian economy into a recession from which it has only recently begun to recover. The dual effect of increased American oil production in the short term and the long-term growth of renewable energy threaten this recovery and Russia's current economic model may soon find itself in another crisis. In response, Russia has taken major steps to diversify its export portfolio.

For many nations, climate change is expected to be devastating, as deserts and sea levels inundate economically productive tracts of land. In contrast, Russia stands to gain significantly from a warming planet, as vast stretches of marsh and tundra become arable farmland. In order to speed the diversification of the economy, Moscow has begun leveraging these growing advantages, with the aim of turning Russia into a food superpower. For the first time last year, Russia surpassed the European Union in food exports, and rapid growth in the agricultural sector is slated to continue. As Asia and Africa continue to industrialize, billions of people will be demanding more food on their plates, and Russia is well poised to reap the benefits.

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