



NATO, the EU, Ukraine, Russia and Crimea: The “Reset” that was Never “Reset”

By Hall Gardner

Key Points:

- The Crimea crisis reveals the complete failure of NATO, the EU and Russia to find a path toward defense and security cooperation in the post-Cold War era.
- Allied support for the “open enlargement” of NATO has continued to send the wrong signals to both Kiev and Moscow.
- Transatlantic reaction to the Russian annexation of the Crimea raises the prospects of continual, if not escalating, NATO-European-Russian tensions.
- There is a crucial need for a concerted US-EU-Russian policy to prevent Ukrainian state collapse, bankruptcy and socio-political instability.
- Two root causes of the current crisis were:
 - NATO's failure to address the regional security needs of the Black Sea and Caucasus, including legitimate Russian security concerns (as opposed to failing to expand its membership and its mission to Georgia and Ukraine, which some have argued as a root cause); and
 - The failure to sign an EU-Russia-Ukraine agreement for economic cooperation in parallel with the EU-Ukraine association agreement.
- In order to keep open communication channels with Moscow, the EU should postpone aspects of the Association Accords with Kiev that do not directly or indirectly include pro-Russian Ukrainian interests in those discussions.
- NATO needs to modify its open enlargement policy with respect to Ukraine and the Caucasus in return for the implementation of a regional “peace and development community” for the entire Black Sea and southern Caucasus region.
- It is crucial that Ukraine formally sustain its neutral, non-aligned status.
- The key challenge now is to find ways for the US, EU, Ukraine and Russia to cooperate in a Contact Group, while working with the NATO-Russia Council and NATO-Ukrainian Commission.
- A more decentralized Ukrainian federation could be achieved through the establishment of at least two International Centers of Peace and Development in Lviv and Kharkiv to serve as a bridge to help develop the eastern and western regions of Ukraine, while also linking Russia and Ukraine to Europe. A third center in Sevastopol could also help establish new forms of cooperation between Ukraine, Europe, the United States and Russia.
- A “grand compromise” between the US, Europeans and Russia (by means of a regional system of peace and development for the entire Black Sea and Caucasus) will require truly engaged diplomacy in which US, EU and Ukrainian 'vital' interests and those of Moscow are eventually redefined and reconciled. The alternative is a period of intense geopolitical and arms rivalry that could soon prove even more dangerous than that of the Cold War.

Introduction

The furtive Russian military intervention into the Crimea today is a direct reaction to the uncoordinated “triple expansion”¹ of NATO, the European Union plus American/European defense and political economic interests and military infrastructure into the so-called Russian ‘near abroad’. This uncoordinated triple expansion has been countered by Russian efforts to check both NATO and EU enlargement, at the same time that Moscow has been seeking to build step-by-step a new Eurasian geostrategic and political economic alliance in the aftermath of Soviet collapse. This rebuilding of Russia has involved the formation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Customs Union (ECU), and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (leading to closer Russian-Chinese security and defense cooperation since 2005).

President Putin’s actions in the Crimea have revealed the complete failure of NATO, the EU and Russia to find a path toward defense and security cooperation in the post-Cold War era, given Russian opposition to NATO enlargement as the primary means to achieve a new post-Cold War system of Euro-Atlantic security, and the US-European refusal or inability to develop alternative Euro-Atlantic security options that could have been more inclusive of Moscow’s interests. Specifically, the US and Europeans had failed to find ways to bring the new Russian Federation under Boris Yeltsin into a new Euro-Atlantic security relationship prior to NATO’s decision to engage in an “open ended” enlargement— which was warned against by Cold Warrior Paul Nitze in Congressional testimony.² In

¹ On the “triple expansion” see Hall Gardner, *NATO Expansion and US Strategy in Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2013)

² In a letter to Senator Moynihan, Paul Nitze forewarned: “NATO expansion distracts both us and the Russians from (the goal of lending political and economic support to the development of a democratic, market-oriented society in Russia.) Indeed, the open-ended expansion being proposed for the alliance points toward increasing friction with post-Communist Russia for years to come. Driving Russia into a corner plays into the arguments of those most hostile to forging a productive relationship with

particular, US and NATO refusal to incorporate Russian concerns during NATO’s “exceptional” intervention against Russia’s ally Serbia in the war “over” Kosovo in 1999 helped lead to the Russian backlash against NATO under Vladimir Putin. Although President Barack Obama and US Vice President, Joe Biden, attempted to achieve a “reset” of US-Russian relations in the aftermath of the 2008 Georgia-Russia war, the fact of the matter is that the “re-set” was never “re-set”—in that Allied support for the “open enlargement” of NATO has continued to send the wrong signals to both Kiev and Moscow.

In effect, Moscow’s rapid preemptive intervention in Crimea was intended to prevent the new EuroMaidan government in Kiev from evicting the Russian Black Sea fleet from Sevastopol, while concurrently hoping to check closer Ukrainian ties with the European Union plus eventual Ukrainian membership in NATO. Nearly all members of the new Ukrainian government, most prominently the new Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, had been on the record as wanting to re-negotiate, if not scrap, the Kharkiv Accords that were implemented by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Viktor Yanokovich in April 2010.³ The latter accord had agreed to extend the Ukrainian lease of the Russian Black Sea Fleet until at least 2042.

For his part, after the Russian takeover of Crimea, President Obama has stated that neither the US nor NATO wants to engage in conflict with Russia, and that the world has an interest “in a strong and responsible Russia, not a weak one.” While arguing that Moscow needs to thoroughly engage itself in diplomacy in order to avoid deeper isolation, Obama has likewise urged NATO allies to boost their defense expenditure.⁴ In short, American and European reaction to the Russian annexation of the Crimea raises the prospects of

the US and its allies. It is not a sound basis for future stability in Europe, particularly when no current or projected threats warrant extending that alliance.” Congressional Record, vol. 144 Pt 5 (April 21-30, 1998), p. 6785. For Paul Nitze’s arguments, see Hall Gardner, *Dangerous Crossroads* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

³ [Interview of Nicolai Petro](#)

⁴ [“Obama cites ‘moment of testing,’ urges Europeans to bolster NATO”](#)

continual, if not escalating, NATO-European-Russian tensions. There is consequently a real danger that a highly instable Ukraine could result in a much wider regional conflict at a time when there are already signs of a burgeoning NATO-Russia arms race, involving intermediate range missiles as well as tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.⁵

In one sign that tensions could escalate, in late March 2014, American intelligence reported that Russian forces could soon attempt to establish a land link to Crimea through the ostensibly pro-Russian regions of eastern Ukraine.⁶ These threats to Ukraine have taken place at the same time as the Russian military opted to engage in massive nuclear war drills, said to have been planned months before.⁷ Yet these reports also came at the same time that Presidents Putin and Obama had just begun to discuss “ways in which the international community can stabilize the situation” in Putin’s words.⁸

It is clear that President Putin is using power-based strategic leveraging as a means to legitimize the annexation of Crimea, with a tacit

⁵ Ian Davis, “[Tit-for-tat escalation in the Crimea crisis: where will it end?](#)” *NATO Watch* No 46 (19 March 2014); NATO Watch News Brief: “[Arms Control Advocates Lose Hope on European Tactical Nukes](#)”

⁶ It has been anticipated that Russian forces could move toward three Ukrainian cities: Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk in order to establish land access into Crimea. Russian forces are currently positioned in and around Rostov, Kursk, and Belgorod. Barbara Starr, “[U.S. intel assessment: greater likelihood Russia will enter eastern Ukraine](#)” CNN (March 26, 2014)

⁷ “[Russia Launches Nuclear-War Drill, Saying It Was Long Scheduled](#)” NTI (March 28, 2014).

⁸ President Putin [stressed](#) that Russia stands for the fair and comprehensive settlement of the Transnistria conflict and hopes for effective work in the existing 5+2 negotiation format, but he also warned against the “continued rampage of extremists who are committing acts of intimidation towards peaceful residents, government authorities and law enforcement agencies in various regions and in Kiev with impunity.” Putin is referring in part to right-wing paramilitaries who in late March threatened to storm the parliament if the interim Interior Minister was not fired after one of their members was allegedly murdered by Ukrainian authorities.

threat to assert Russian interests in the Transnistria, if not in eastern Ukraine itself—if these issues cannot soon be resolved diplomatically. It appears clear that Moscow seeks to assert Russian hegemony over Ukraine (in part by seeking to “federalize” the country)—by using “diplomacy by other means” in Clausewitz’s terms. In response, President Obama has demanded that Russian troops presently deployed on the frontier with eastern Ukraine be pulled back; yet Moscow has not yet agreed, and has thus far raised concerns about socio-political instability, violence and the rise of anti-Russian and extreme rightwing movements.⁹

Nevertheless, even in a major crisis involving “diplomacy by other means,” there can sometimes arise an opportunity to negotiate appropriate policies to deal with that crisis. There is a crucial need for the implementation of a concerted US-European-Russian policy that would be intended to prevent Ukrainian state collapse, bankruptcy and socio-political instability from degenerating into a wider socio-political conflict. Such efforts must be taken to achieve reconciliation at the national level within Ukraine itself and at the international level so that a neutral (and non-nuclear) Ukraine could truly serve as a bridge between the US, Europe and Russia, much as elder statesmen Mikhail Gorbachev¹⁰ and Henry Kissinger,¹¹ among others, have proposed. Evidently such an approach can take place only if all sides realize that compromise over presumed “vital” issues is in their mutual interests.

⁹ Groups like Svoboda and Right Sector, who consider themselves “national democratic” and not pro-Western, see themselves as playing a fundamental role in helping overthrow Yanukovich, and in preventing Russia from “subjugating” the country, while more moderate members of the interim government believe they must “co-opt” such militant parties. Critics argue these parties hold more power behind the scenes than their numbers reveal. Moscow argues that they helped stage the ouster of former President Yanukovich.

¹⁰ See *Reuters* [article](#), 23 January 2014.

¹¹ Henry Kissinger, “[How the Ukraine crisis ends](#)” *Washington Post* (March 5, 2014) See also, Des Browne, Wolfgang Ischinger, Igor S. Ivanov, Sam Nunn, Adam Daniel Rotfeld, “[Ukraine Must Not Become a New Berlin Wall](#)” (March 13, 2014).

Secession and Annexation of Crimea

The collapse of the kleptocratic regime of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in November-February 2014¹² has been followed by Russia's furtive intervention in the Crimea in early March, leading to a popular referendum to rejoin Russia.¹³ The results of the referendum with its two question options appeared to be predetermined, but the results cannot be entirely attributed to the pressures and propaganda of President Putin and Russian pan-nationalism (which included giving out Russian passports as a means to buy votes), but were also in response to perceived anti-Russian anti-Orthodox policies of the EuroMaidan movement.¹⁴

Moscow's reassurances that it will help protect Ukrainian and Tartar minorities in the Crimea should, at least to a certain extent, help to reassure Turkey, among other Muslim societies in the region as well, that Russia will not engage in discrimination against non-Russian minorities.¹⁵ At the same time, however, the Tatars, many of whom had returned from Russia since 1991 to the Ukrainian-controlled Crimea, voted March 29, 2014 for autonomy, raising the prospects of possible conflict with Russia if compromise (perhaps requiring international observers) cannot soon be reached.¹⁶

The other factor that must be taken into account is the geo-economic, historical and cultural importance of Crimea for Russia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has argued that Crimea

represents a region as important to Russia as the Falklands/Malvinas for the UK, and is thus worth fighting for. But an even better analogy is the geo-economic importance of Panama and the Panama Canal for the United States (but without quite the same weight of historical and cultural heritage), which resulted in US interventions in 1903 and 1989.¹⁷ Yet of even more direct concern from Moscow's perspective has been NATO's "exceptional" intervention in Kosovo in 1999, which President Putin mentioned in his 18 March 2014 speech and in which he announced the annexation of Crimea.

While Washington denounced Russian actions in support of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008, and now the annexation of Crimea in 2014, as "illegal," Moscow has continued to denounce NATO's "exceptional" war "over" Kosovo in 1999 against its Serbian ally as "illegal" as NATO's intervention was not backed by the UN Security Council as required by the North Atlantic Treaty itself for "out of area" operations.

Moscow subsequently denounced US support for Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008, which is also not recognized by states such as Spain. In a tit for tat response to US recognition of Kosovo, Moscow then backed the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia just after the August 2008 Georgia-Russia war. Now, in March 2014, Moscow has gone so far as to annex the Crimea in putting an end to Kiev's controls over the peninsula and by safeguarding the Russian Black Sea fleet from possible eviction by the new government in Kiev.

Sustaining control over the Russian Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol (which now possesses a

¹² On February 21, 2014, [EU representatives brokered a deal](#) with Yanukovich—in which Ukraine would have held presidential elections in December (with Yanukovich still remaining as Ukrainian president) and form a national unity government that would revert to the 2004 constitution that would have removed some of the president's powers. The deal was signed by EU Representatives, Radoslaw Sikorski Frank-Walter Steinmeier Laurent Fabius, but it was not signed by the Russian representative, Vladimir Lukin.

¹³ See *New York Times* [article](#), 18 March 2014.

¹⁴ Nicolai Petro, [Save Ukraine!](#) *Moscow Times* (March 18 2014). See also, Mikhail Gorbachev [article](#).

¹⁵ Semih Idiz, ["Turkey faces 'geography's revenge' in Crimea"](#) *Al-Monitor* (March 21, 2014).

¹⁶ See *Reuters* [article](#), 29 March 2014.

¹⁷ In 1903, the US fomented a revolution in Panama and split it from Colombia—after Bogatá had refused a significant US aid package—and then built the Panama canal. The Canal Zone was controlled by the US from 1903 to 1979. The canal itself was then put under joint US–Panamanian control from 1979 to 1999 after the 1979 Torrijos–Carter Treaties promised to return the Canal to Panama by 1 January 2000. In December 1989, George Bush, Sr. intervened militarily ostensibly to protect the Americans living there, but the real goal was to safeguard the Canal in the long term—prior to its transfer to Panama.

special jurisdiction) represents an effort to protect Russian security concerns in the Sea of Azov and Novorossiysk, as well as in the southern Caucasus. After Soviet collapse, Moscow has sought to control the Transnistria river outlet to the Black Sea, and later, the Abkhazian coastline in order to put Moscow in position to control the north of the Black Sea and the southern Caucasus. In the effort to forge a Russian version of the Monroe Doctrine, these actions, at least in part, have represented an effort to check the possibility of further NATO enlargement from the Balkans into the Black Sea and Caucasus regions ever since the 2004 “big bang” of NATO enlargement under George Bush, Jr.

Russian actions have furthermore raised the question as to whether Russia might seek to annex the latter regions in addition to the Crimea—and whether Moscow will continue to support pro-Russian movements in eastern Ukraine or even in other countries that once formed the ex-Soviet empire.¹⁸ President Obama has demanded that Russian troops presently deployed on the frontier with eastern Ukraine be pulled back, while Moscow has raised concerns about socio-political instability, violence and the rise of anti-Russian and extreme right movements. Is Moscow using power-based bargaining in order to obtain legitimacy just for its annexation of the Crimea? Or will it opt for further expansion in support of pan-Russian movements in eastern Ukraine, or elsewhere?

NATO Expansion and the Roots of the Crisis

In many ways, NATO-Russian rivalry over Ukraine had already begun to draw and quarter the country prior to Russian annexation of Crimea. It was in 2008 that Moscow began to threaten a number of possible preemptive actions in response to the proposed enlargement of NATO’s integrated military command into the Black Sea and Caucasus region. These threats were coupled with the deployment of US Missile Defense systems or radar systems in Poland, the Czech Republic and Turkey. In effect, NATO’s offer for Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO at the April

¹⁸ See Marcel van Herpin, *Putin’s Wars* (Lanham, MD: Rowland and Littlefield, 2014)

2008 Bucharest summit began to upset NATO-Russian relations, as it was at that summit that Putin had rhetorically threatened the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

At the April 2008 Bucharest NATO summit, President Putin challenged Ukraine’s territorial integrity rhetorically, suggesting that Ukraine was “an artificial creation” and that the “the Crimea was simply given to Ukraine by a decision of the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee.” Putin furthermore claimed “that 90 percent of inhabitants of the Crimea are Russian, 17 out of 45 million Ukrainian citizens are Russian, and that Ukraine gained enormous amounts of its territory from the east and south at the expense of Russia.” Putin then added, “if we add in the NATO question and other problems, the very existence of the State could find itself under threat.”

Then, during his August 9 Vladikavkaz speech, just after the outbreak of the Georgia-Russia war in which Moscow recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia, President Putin questioned the borders and the worthiness of political leadership in neighboring countries. According to NATO Ambassador Kurt Volker (as reported by Wikileaks):

These Russian challenges to the territorial integrity of neighboring states are inconsistent with the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the Rome Declaration (which established the NATO-Russia Council), and take on profound new meaning in light of Russian military actions in Georgia. NATO needs to be mindful of the connective tissue between events in Georgia, Putin's threatening language on the territorial integrity of its neighbors, and Ukraine's (and Georgia's) MAP aspirations. For many Allies, the Georgia-Russia conflict provides new impetus to moving Ukraine into MAP and toward NATO membership, provided Ukraine continues to request it. Conversely, if the Kremlin achieves all of its objectives in Georgia with few consequences and its international reputation intact - as Germany and others would have it - this may only embolden Russia to increase its bullying behavior towards Ukraine and others in the neighborhood.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Kurt Volker, cited in [Cable 08USNATO290](#), UKRAINE, MAP, AND THE GEORGIA-RUSSIA CONFLICT.

The NATO allies were accordingly divided over whether NATO's offer of potential membership encouraged Russian aggression in Georgia (the German position) or whether the lack of full support for a MAP appeared to give Russia a green light to intervene (the American, Canadian and position of eastern European states).

The problem is that the *NATO or Nothing!!!* position expressed by then US NATO Ambassador Volker overlooks other viable alternatives than doing nothing, *in that NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia has never really been in the cards, except in rhetoric:*

- 1) NATO membership alone for Georgia could not have solved the range of regional security problems in the Caucasus;
- 2) Russia would have continued to play a spoiler in the region even if Georgia possessed a MAP;
- 3) given the range of territorial, financial and socio-political disputes between Ukraine and Russia it was not really plausible for NATO to even consider protecting such a large territory as Ukraine with Article V security guarantees in the first place; and
- 4) NATO expansion to Ukraine and Georgia risks overextension of NATO capabilities and its ability to protect its core members.

The key point raised here is that it was not NATO's failure to take action by expanding its membership and its mission, *but the failure to take the correct and appropriate action with respect to the regional security needs of the Black Sea and Caucasus by taking into account legitimate Russian security concerns.* Rather than pushing for full NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia, a more reasonable US-NATO response to the 2008 Georgia-Russia war should have been for the US and NATO to support the more realistic proposal of NATO-member Turkey for a "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform."²⁰ While supported by Paris, and

²⁰ See NATO Watch [Briefing Paper No.15](#). For a proposal to place the "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" in discussion of the European Security Treaty, see Eleni Fotiou, "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform: What is at Stake for Regional Cooperation?" *International Centre for Black*

apparently by Moscow, Ankara's proposal was not given backing by Washington, in part because it did not appear, at least on the surface, to give NATO a major role. Not finding ways to build upon the Turkish proposal that would have likewise involved Ukraine as well as Russia in Black Sea/ Caucasus security, represented a major geostrategic error on the part of the US and NATO.

The EU Enlargement and Russian Reaction

On November 6, 2008, after the August Georgia-Russia war, then Russian President Dmitri Medvedev greeted President-elect Barack Obama with warnings that Moscow would deploy nuclear-capable Iskander ("Alexander the Great") missiles and radar jamming systems in Kaliningrad, among other options. Just as they had at the time of Soviet break-up in the early 1990s, Russian pan-nationalists threatened to support Crimean secession from Ukraine, and the independence of other pro-Russian regions of Ukraine, should the government in Kiev decide to repulse Russian naval bases from the Crimea and/or enter NATO. Concurrently, Moscow began to oppose EU efforts to expand its political-economic interests into former Soviet bloc states through the 2009 EU Eastern Partnership as a means to limit Russian influence over these countries.

One of the major reasons for the current Ukrainian crisis is the fact that Moscow has feared that a closer Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine will prove to be trade diverting, not trade creating, from the Russian perspective. Moscow has also feared that EU goods could enter Ukraine, free of import duties, and then be re-exported to Russia, thus competing with Russian domestic goods. European and American transnational companies could also edge out Ukrainian firms linked to Russia, particularly in military-industrial and high tech areas, generally located in eastern Ukraine.

Sea Studies (ICBSS) ICBSS POLICY BRIEF no. 16 (June 2009).

Rightfully or wrongfully, Moscow has thus tended to see the 2009 EU Eastern Partnership that has been aimed at bringing six eastern European neighbours—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine—into new Association Accords as a way for the new Europe to draw Ukraine and other former Soviet states away from Russian spheres of influence and security, thus twisting the political-economic allegiance of Ukraine and other former Soviet republics toward Europe. This appears to be a flashback to the past when it was feared by Moscow that the 1948 US Marshall Plan would draw eastern European states away from Soviet influence, particularly if Moscow itself was not included.

On the one hand, the EU has not yet determined the boundaries of its own membership or even defined what it means by “Europe.” At the same, despite its own severe financial crisis, the EU has continued to expand its political economic ties to former Soviet bloc states. For its part, the Russian Federation has somewhat similarly been readjusting to its post-Soviet status in seeking to form a new Eurasian Customs Union. The latter is to include Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, yet Moscow has also been attempting to press Armenia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—as well as Ukraine—into joining.

By 2008-10, promises of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, combined with Ukrainian demands to evict the Russian Black Sea fleet from Sevastopol (which was in part driven by the desire to use the space rented by the Black Sea fleet for new commercial and development opportunities) led to a Russian backlash. In early 2009, in an effort to force a bankrupt Ukraine to repay its significant debts, Gazprom once again (since 2006) decided to cut off all supplies to Ukraine, angering European recipients of Russian gas and raising calls for NATO to become involved in energy security issues. This occurred at a time when roughly 90 percent of Russian gas went to Europe through Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Yushchenko’s perceived pro-Western anti-Russian policies led Moscow to engage in what can be called a reverse form of “democracy engineering” in which Moscow overtly supported the ostensibly pro-Russian

candidate Viktor Yanukovich in the April 2010 elections. Almost immediately after Yanukovich became president, Russia and Ukraine reached an accord in which Kiev agreed to extend the lease of Sevastopol to Russia’s Black Sea fleet beyond the 2017 expiration date, by another 25 years until 2042, with a further five-year extension option to 2047. Russia then provided Kiev with a 30% discount on its gas bill.

Although the deal with Putin was passed by the Ukrainian parliament and Russian Duma, a number of Ukrainian parliamentarians threw eggs and tomatoes and set off smoke bombs in the Rada (Ukrainian parliament). Former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko accused President Yanukovich of betraying Ukraine to Russia. In effect, the deal represented a trade-off to sustain Ukrainian financial solvency in exchange for Russian hegemony over the country. The deal consequently generated significant protest throughout the pro-European western regions of Ukraine, but there was also criticism in the pro-Russian eastern regions, as well as in Moscow, largely over its significant costs.

Yet even though Moscow and Kiev did tighten their relationship with respect to the Russian naval base at Sevastopol, this did not mean that President Yanukovich pivoted in a totally pro-Russian direction. Yanukovich did not, for example, recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in part for the fear the independence of these regions could backfire in support of the independence of the Crimea or other regions. Nor did he seek Ukrainian membership in the Russian-led CSTO as urged by Moscow. Nor would he overtly seek membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) or in the ECU. But, against US and NATO hopes, the Ukrainian parliament declared Ukraine non-aligned in June 2010 (and thus Kiev would not seek NATO membership). This declaration of non-alignment, however, was criticized, as many Ukrainians still saw the deployment of the Russian Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol as in violation of Kiev’s “non-aligned” status.²¹

²¹ Critics argued that the constitution did not permit the stationing of foreign forces on sovereign Ukrainian territory; yet the April 2010 deal permitted the stationing of both Russian naval and air forces.

The EU Association Accord and Ukraine

From March 2012 until February 2014, even the ostensibly pro-Russian President Yanukovich appeared to be looking to forge an Association Accord and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU. But here, despite Kiev's hopes to enter such an accord, it was largely the EU that had stalled closer Ukrainian ties by protesting against the "stark deterioration" of democracy and human rights. These concerns included the jailing of Yulia Tymoshenko in 2011, and former Interior Minister, Yuri Lutsenko, among many others by 2012. Brussels insisted that Ukraine needed to engage in "Electoral, judiciary and constitutional reforms." In the meantime, the EU had also promised to open economic talks with Russia—promises which were not fulfilled as to be explained.

Throughout 2013, Yanukovich worked to pass through pro-EU reforms in the Rada, which eventually freed Lutsenko, who became one of the leaders of the EuroMaiden protests, but did not free Tymoshenko.²² In the meantime, Moscow sought to subvert closer EU economic ties to Ukraine by imposing trade blockages in August 2013; this led to a significant drop in Ukrainian industrial production and exports. Moscow warned Kiev that it would lose a strategic partner and that the Russia-led Customs Union, which also includes Belarus and Kazakhstan, might take "protective measures." At that time, more than 60 percent of Ukrainian exports (steel, chemicals and grain) went to Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Ukrainian business has hoped to open markets in Europe—or more accurately, in the EU, CIS and elsewhere.

Ukraine's "non-bloc" status had not been clearly defined or defended. See [Ukrainian protest in parliament](#) against the decision to extend the lease of the Russian fleet.

²² Even her former ally, former President Yushchenko, had testified against Tymoshenko for ostensibly selling out Ukrainian interests to Russia; yet her jailing nevertheless [held up the European association accord](#) with Ukraine.

At that time, in 2013, then Prime Minister Mykola Azarov told Moscow that a 10-year grace period after the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU would give Ukraine and Russia the chance to adjust to the new reality, according to the principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO) of which both Kiev and Moscow are now members. But Azarov also said that "after signing the Association Agreement with the EU, Ukraine will create a free trade zone with the EU - this also has to be inevitably accepted as a reality."²³ As late as September 2013, it had looked like the Ukrainian parliament, the Rada, would pass the reforms necessary to enter the Association agreement with the EU. This fact augmented Russian concerns as the EU and Russia had not yet forged their own political-economic accord.

The EuroMaidan Protests

By November 2013, a desperate Yanukovich was in search of between \$20bn to \$35bn in loans and aid from all possible sources: the EU, Russia, the US, the IMF, as well as China. The EuroMaidan protests began on November 21 when the Rada failed to pass a resolution to permit Yulia Tymoshenko from receiving medical treatment abroad (a key EU demand) and when President Yanukovich suspended preparations to join the EU Association Accord initiated since March 2012. The Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers also suspended an accord with the European Atomic Energy Community.

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov had claimed that the decision against the EU Association Accord was taken in order to "ensure the national security of Ukraine." On the one hand, the EU at that time was only offering 610 million Euros in loans, and was demanding major changes in Ukrainian regulations and laws. On the other hand, Moscow stated that it would give Kiev a \$15 billion bailout by buying bonds; Moscow also promised to cut the price of gas by one-third without demands for structural reforms. At the same time, there had been a significant drop in trade with Russia and the CIS states at least since August 2013—in part due to Russian pressures and blackmail. In addition, Kiev claimed that the conditions of promised IMF loans were too harsh,

²³ See [Reuters article](#), 28 August 2013.

resulting in extreme budget cuts and a 40% increase in gas prices. In response, the EuroMaidan movement demanded the government to restart talks with the IMF so as not to turn toward Russia; the IMF stated that Kiev could lift gas prices gradually, while helping the poor with subsidies.

Interestingly, despite the ongoing protests, Kiev agreed on a gas deal with Slovakia for importing EU gas through Slovak pipelines at the same time that Gazprom, which has diversified its routes so that only 60 percent of Russian gas (down from 90%) imported by European countries passes through Ukraine, once again warned that it might shut off gas supplies unless Ukraine paid the \$1.89 billion it claims is owed to the company.²⁴ These new gas inflows, including gas from Poland and Hungary, could be enough to meet Ukraine's entire import needs, thus reducing Ukraine's energy dependence on Russia. The EU-Ukraine agreement came less than two weeks after negotiations with the EU had broken down; this fact thus questions the image that Yanukovich was totally subservient to Moscow and Gazprom.²⁵ Yanukovich also went to China in the midst of the EuroMaidan protests in a not entirely failed effort to attract trade and investment.²⁶

At the end of January 2014, with the EuroMaidan protests growing in intensity due in large part to the exposure of extreme corruption on the part of Yanukovich government, President Yanukovich fired his prime minister, Mykola Azarov, and appeared willing to include opposition figures in a new government, including a new prime minister. But these offers were rejected by the opposition. Instead of cracking down on protesters on Maidan square as threatened, Yanukovich then invited the three factions of the opposition for negotiations in mid-February—with the participation of three EU foreign ministers, from France, Germany and Poland.

²⁴ See *New York Times* [article](#), 8 March 2014.

²⁵ "[Will Ukraine Be Putin's Energy Pet Forever?](#)" Real Clear Energy, 11 December 2013

²⁶ China, Russia Have Different Takes on Beijing's Position - as discussed in this [article](#).

At that time, former interior minister and now EuroMaidan activist, Yury Lutsenko, called for an Eastern Maidan.²⁷ This raised Russian concerns that the population in eastern Ukraine would oppose Russian influence (not to overlook the corruption of the Yanukovich government seen as backed by Moscow). Concurrently, the Russians and the Europeans did agree to put together a group of experts in a three-way trade commission between Ukraine, the EU and Russia in order to discuss the agreements that had been offered by the EU to Kiev.²⁸

Given evident socio-political tensions between Ukrainians with Moscow, the fundamental political-economic problem had been to find ways to coordinate tariffs and converge norms and regulations between the Eurasian Customs Union and EU.²⁹ European Commissioner Stefan Fuele had already suggested that the issue ultimately boiled down to a difference in tariff levels.³⁰ In many ways, the ECU had, in fact, been designed to adopt many EU standards for the purpose of making a convergence of the regulatory framework between the EU and Russia eventually possible, for the betterment of investment and trade opportunities for both Russian and European companies.

One possibility has been the creation of a three-way trade and financial commission between Ukraine, the EU and Russia, that could help resolve trade and financial issues and begin to

²⁷ "[Yury Lutsenko calls for Eastern Maidan, sets priorities for protesters](#)", zik, 9 February 2014.

²⁸ See Dmitry Trenin, "[Russia Needs to Stay Clear of Ukraine](#)", Carnegie Moscow Center, 9 October 2013; and *The Guardian* [article](#), 28 January 2014.

²⁹ "Ukraine's dependence on the Russian market means that it will have to adapt simultaneously to two competitive integration regimes, the EU and the ECU. At the same time, there are emerging opportunities for economic cooperation. Russia has been rapidly adopting EU and international standards in the context of creating the ECU and of accession to the WTO." See Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, "[Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?](#)" Russia and Eurasia Programme Chatham House (August 2012).

³⁰ See Samuel Charap and Mikhail Troitskiy, "Russia, the West and the Integration Dilemma," Survival, December 2013 - January 2014.

harmonize norms and regulations between the three sides.³¹ Such a trilateral forum would interrelate the requirements of the ECU, EU free trade agreements, and gas transit through Ukraine. It should furthermore not be impossible to envision links between the Euro and the Ruble.³² In effect, *if the EU had begun to negotiate an accord with Russia first and then with Ukraine later in consideration of IMF demands as well as WTO rules and regulations, then the present crisis might not have grown to such disastrous proportions.* In other words, an EU-Russia-Ukraine agreement for economic cooperation needed to be signed in parallel with the EU-Ukraine association agreement.³³

Yet efforts to talk to the Russians at that time were undermined by rumors that Yanukovich had secretly agreed with Putin for Ukraine to join the Eurasian Customs Union at a later date. Press reports also alleged that there was a secret agreement to bolster Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. These rumors were denied by the Ukrainian government which stated that any accords with Moscow would still need to be signed by the Rada, the Ukrainian parliament.³⁴

EU-Ukraine Relations Post-Yanukovich

The fundamental problem is that the looming debt crisis is too big for either the EU or Russia alone given a total external debt of \$140 billion.³⁵ It has been estimated that Ukraine will need between \$12 billion to \$13 billion just for 2014 in order to pay for imports and service debt. This includes a \$1 billion bond falling due in June, and

³¹ For a prescient analysis that forewarned of the crisis, see Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, "[Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?](#)" Russia and Eurasia Programme Chatham House (August 2012).

³² Jean-Pierre Chevènement, « Sans la Russie il manque quelque chose à l'Europe » *Le Figaro* (8 Mars 2014), 22.

³³ Hubertus Hoffmann, "Russia, NATO and the EU: A Plea for a True Partnership" (Berlin: *World Security Network*: March 26, 2014).

³⁴ On Maidan's demands, see CBC news [article](#), 7 December 2013.

³⁵ See [interview](#) with Nicolai Petro, Carnegie Council, 4 March 2014.

arrears on Russian gas imports.³⁶ It has been predicted that by the summer of 2014, Ukraine might need as much as \$60 billion to pay for public services, to repay a part of its IMF debt, and to service various private loans and other interest payments. This colossal sum could grow even greater given the costs of socio-political instability since November 2013.

The EU has now offered Ukraine financial assistance worth \$15 billion over the next two years, in the form of loans, grants, investments and trade concessions. The US has promised \$1 billion in loan guarantees, and the World Bank is promising to back infrastructure and social security projects worth \$3 billion.³⁷ In late March 2014, the interim government in Kiev obtained \$18 billion from the IMF, causing controversy in the US Congress due to US sponsorship of IMF policies.³⁸ The problem is that no country wants to throw public expenditure or taxpayer's money into a bottomless pit: Ukraine needs to put an end to corruption; it needs deep structural reforms, wider trade options as well as development finance and assistance from as many states as possible.

In the aftermath of the EuroMaidan protests, EU and Russian efforts to negotiate a new agreement to replace the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement have been suspended, thus making an EU-Russian-Ukrainian forum even more difficult to achieve in the near term. The present tactical problem is that EU may have boxed itself into a corner by threatening sanctions against Moscow, which include the cancellation of the very EU-Russia summit that would address these key political economic issues.³⁹

Moreover, in response to Moscow's annexation of the Crimea, the EU rapidly signed the political chapters of an Association Agreement with the interim Ukrainian government. But the EU has

³⁶ "[Ukraine to get \\$18 billion rescue from IMF](#)", CNN Money, 27 March 2014.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Scott Morris, "[Will Mr. Putin drive Congress into the arms of the IMF?](#)" (7 March 2014).

³⁹ Luke Baker, "[EU finds complications as it pressures Russia on Ukraine](#)" 10 March 2014.

also stated that the economic and trade aspects of a potential Association accord would wait until after new Ukrainian presidential elections that are expected take place on 25 May.⁴⁰ The political accord promises to enhance security and defense cooperation and to establish a joint decision-making body to facilitate the process of reforms. The final Association Accord would impact issues ranging from judicial reform, energy issues, consumer rights, environmental protection to economic integration with the European Union.

On the positive side, the *political* aspects of an EU Association Accord could actually work to disband a number of Ukrainian far right wing and extreme nationalist movements. The question, however, remains as to how and what extent these EU political accords with Ukraine might impact pro-Russian interests. Will the forthcoming Ukrainian elections bring new leaders that are truly representative of both western and eastern Ukraine? Or will the extreme nationalist Svoboda Party gain strength as has been anticipated?

There is also the risk that the economic aspects of EU policies could further splinter the eastern and western regions of the country, if such accords do not include Russian inputs and find ways to incorporate Russian political-economic interests. From this perspective, in order to keep the doors to communication with Moscow open, it seems absolutely necessary for Brussels to postpone aspects of the Association Accords with Kiev that do not directly or indirectly include pro-Russian Ukrainian interests in those discussions, and which could include members of the Party of Regions who have disavowed the corrupt Yanukovich, for example.⁴¹ Moscow has

⁴⁰ See *Reuters* [article](#), 17 March 2014.

⁴¹ Anatol Lieven has proposed, “A five-year moratorium on offers to Ukraine of accession or partnership agreements with the Eurasian Union, the EU or NATO.” “A Peace Plan for Ukraine” *The Globalist* (March 5, 2014). In my view, however, this approach postpones the pressing issue of how to deal with Ukrainian bankruptcy and security. The problem is not to foster any form of exclusive arrangements, now or in the future, but to begin to implement joint accords between the EU and Eurasian Union and NATO and the CSTO as soon as the dust settles (assuming the dust does settle!).

consequently sought a more “federalized” system of governance for the country in order to protect pro-Russian socio-political movements as well its own interests in the eastern Ukraine.

The Open NATO Enlargement

For its part, NATO has thus far opted to suspend all staff-level meetings with Russia but has stated that it would continue to meet with Moscow at the higher political level (via meetings of ambassadors in the NATO-Russia Council.) NATO also stated that it would suspend a joint NATO-Russian naval mission involved in removing chemical weaponry from Syria. According to NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, this will not impact the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, only Russian involvement in the maritime escort of those weapons.⁴²

This decision was justified by the Secretary General’s statement that “Our joint pledge to observe in good faith our obligations under international law. And our commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against each other, or any other state.” Rasmussen also stated that NATO would strengthen efforts “to build the capacity of the Ukrainian military, including with more joint training and exercises... (and) do more to include Ukraine in our multinational projects to develop capabilities.”⁴³ Rasmussen then asserted that NATO would keep the option of NATO membership open for Ukraine, depending upon whether Ukraine wanted to change its non-bloc or non-alliance position and if Kiev then met the necessary NATO criteria.

In his March 18 speech, President Putin stated his opposition to Ukraine joining NATO and against finding “NATO sailors” in Crimea. The risk is that NATO’s continued insistence on open membership for Ukraine threatens to further

⁴² [Remarks](#) by the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Press Conference held following the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council at NATO HQ, Brussels, 5 March 2014. See also, Nigel Chamberlain, “Meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels 1 April 2014: Enhanced support for Ukraine and further expansion still on the table” NATO Watch (April 1, 2014).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

exacerbate NATO-EU-Ukrainian-Russian tensions. The issue raised here is that NATO's open enlargement position sends the wrong message to both Kiev and Moscow. This appears true even if the interim government in Kiev has stated that it does not presently intend to join NATO and that it would disarm Ukrainian nationalist militias and even if Putin has promised not to annex other areas of Ukraine besides Crimea.⁴⁴ As to be argued, NATO needs to modify its open enlargement policy with respect to Ukraine and the Caucasus in return for the implementation of a regional "peace and development community" for the entire Black Sea and southern Caucasus region.

Violations of International Law and the 1994 Budapest Accords

President Obama has declared that the Russian annexation of Crimea has violated international law, and that the March 16 referendum on the future of Crimea violated the Ukrainian constitution. Washington additionally argues that Moscow's actions have broken the Alma Ata Declaration of December 1991, in which Russia recognized Ukraine after Soviet collapse; the 1994 Budapest Memorandum; the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act; the 1997 Treaty of Friendship between Russia and Ukraine; as well as the 1997 legal framework surrounding the Russian Black Sea fleet, plus the 2002 Rome Accords that established the NATO-Russia Council. In addition, one can also argue that Russian actions in the Crimean crisis appear to have violated the basic principles of the SCO (which opposes secessionist movements) plus the European Security Treaty that was proposed by Moscow itself in June 2008.⁴⁵

The collapse of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum—that had pressed Ukraine (as well as Kazakhstan and Belarus) to give up its nuclear weaponry left over from the Cold War in exchange for US, UK, French and Russian security assurances intended to protect Ukrainian territorial integrity—possesses not only regional but global dimensions. In the early 1990s,

Moscow had threatened Kiev with preemptive strikes while Washington promised financial assistance to convince Kiev to give up its former Soviet nuclear arsenal. But more recently, it was both NATO and Russian efforts to bring Ukraine into either NATO or the CSTO that has worked to undermine that treaty, which had tacitly granted Russia nuclear hegemony over the country.

On 4 December 2009, in a joint US-Russian statement, Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev re-confirmed the 1994 Budapest accords. At that date, both Moscow and Washington at least appeared, on the surface, to agree that Ukraine should remain non-nuclear—if not tacitly "neutral"—in order to sustain a rough equilibrium between an expanding NATO and the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, both Washington and Moscow continued to compete for Ukraine's political-military allegiance, with Washington trying to tempt Ukraine into NATO, and with Moscow trying to press it into the CSTO. The problem raised here is that if Ukraine had decided to join either NATO or the CSTO, it would be joining an alliance that possessed nuclear weapons—that could potentially deploy nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory. Joining either alliance would, in turn, undermine the spirit of the 1994 Budapest accords which had declared Ukraine "non-nuclear."

It should furthermore be emphasized that the failure to reinforce the Budapest Memorandum by upholding the Memorandum's promises to sustain Ukrainian territorial integrity will make it much more difficult to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal, and for Iran, among other possible countries, to give up their potential nuclear weapons programs in exchange for international security assurances.⁴⁶ In addition, the failure on all sides to address the questions raised by the collapse of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum could eventually encourage a "Gaullist" Ukraine to develop its own nuclear deterrent—an option that was once supported by a number of American "neo-

⁴⁴ See [Reuters article](#), 18 March 2014.

⁴⁵ [The draft of the European Security Treaty](#), 29 November 2009.

⁴⁶ This is being [argued](#) by Acting Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk in what appears to be an implicit warning—and not just to Russia.

realists” in the aftermath of Soviet collapse.⁴⁷ While this is not a near term concern, the threat of nuclear Ukraine was raised by one Ukrainian parliamentarian, Pavlo Ryzanenko, who is aligned with the “moderate” nationalist, Vitali Klitschko, the presidential candidate of the Udar party.

A nuclear Ukraine is not beyond Ukrainian technical capabilities, but any attempt by Kiev’s nationalists to develop a nuclear weapons capability would not only exacerbate tensions with Russia (risking preemption), but with the world at large. Similarly, should the new Ukrainian leadership join NATO or continue to engage in tighter military accords with NATO as presently planned, this would risk an additional partition of the country, if not risk perpetual tensions with Russia. Much as Henry Kissinger has argued,⁴⁸ it is crucial that Ukraine formally sustain its neutral, non-aligned status, despite its loss of the Crimea.

As to be argued, the loss of the Crimea does not mean that Ukraine cannot eventually participate in a new “internationalized” system of regional security for the Black Sea and Caucasus assuming, of course, that the US, Europeans and Ukrainians can ultimately reach a new Euro-Atlantic Security accord with the Russian Federation, much as was initially proposed by Dmitri Medvedev in June 2008 prior to the Georgia-Russia war.

Question of China

The Crimean crisis impacts on Russian allies as well. It should be additionally underscored that the Crimean intervention appears to contradict the basic principles of the SCO which was organized by Beijing and Moscow, in large part, to oppose potential secessionist movements throughout Eurasia. The fact that China abstained on the proposed UN security resolution on the Crimean crisis appears to indicate Beijing’s disaccord with Moscow over the question of

⁴⁷ See my critique of John Mearsheimer, in Hall Gardner, *Surviving the Millennium* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), Chapter 2. See also my five pessimistic scenarios in which I predicted the possibility of a Russian move into Crimea, Chapter 9, 225.

⁴⁸ Henry Kissinger, “[How the Ukraine crisis ends](#)” Washington Post (March 5, 2014).

Russian supported secessionism.⁴⁹ The proposed UN resolution had attempted to reaffirm Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence and had urged states not to recognize the results of the March 16 Crimean referendum. In seeking dialogue between all sides, Beijing, along with the other BRICS countries, has stated that hostile language, sanctions and force do not “contribute to a sustainable and peaceful solution.”⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Beijing’s efforts to play honest broker have already begun to draw both the US and EU into courting China. On the one hand, Beijing does not possess enough significant interests in Eastern Europe to engage in a policy that is entirely opposed to that of Moscow. On the other hand, it is China that will largely benefit from NATO-EU-Russian disputes over Ukraine—as Beijing will soon be able to play each side against the other. It is furthermore not inconceivable, although not to be advised, that the Europeans, in reaction to perceived Russian threats, could end the EU arms embargo since the Tiananmen Square repression in 1989 and begin to sell significant weaponry to China, as has been demanded by Beijing.⁵¹ This could further exacerbate European tensions with Russia, if not with Japan as well. Could China be thinking of Russian intervention in Crimea as an analogy to its claims to island and resources in opposition to Japan, if not to Taiwan?

International Centers of Peace and Development in Lviv, Kharkiv and Sevastopol

Despite Putin’s March 18 claims that Russia does not want to intervene or partition the rest of Ukraine, the question remains as to whether US, EU and Russian rivalries, possibly provoked by the actions of extremist movements on either side, will tend to unwittingly foster the separation of the eastern regions of Ukraine (at the real risk of civil war). The key problem is how to surmount

⁴⁹ See the [Wall Street Journal](#)

⁵⁰ “[West Seeks To Isolate Russia Over Ukraine Dispute](#)”, NPR, 24 March 2014.

⁵¹ See Hall Gardner, NATO Expansion and US Strategy in Asia, Chapters 6 and 7.

the damage and find ways for the US, EU, Ukraine and Russia to cooperate in a Contact Group, while working with the NATO-Russia Council and NATO-Ukrainian Commission. One goal (backed by Moscow but thus far opposed by Kiev) is to work toward the “federation” of the country or what is called “asymmetrical federalism.”⁵²

A more decentralized Ukrainian federation could be achieved through the establishment of at least two International Centers of Peace and Development in Lviv and Kharkiv (assuming Kharkiv is not overtaken by Russia!) whose goals would be serve as a bridge to help develop the eastern and western regions of Ukraine, while linking Russia and Ukraine to Europe. These International Centers would seek to coordinate trade, financial and energy relations between Europe, Russia and Ukraine somewhat similar to the European Coal and Steel Community that helped bring Germany and France into political economic cooperation after World War II.

In addition, another International Peace, Development and Conflict Resolution Center could be established in Sevastopol. This compromise approach may appear to legitimize the Russian annexation of Crimea, but with a major nuance.⁵³ On the one hand, it would not call for a new Crimean referendum⁵⁴ as it appears dubious that Moscow would accept such an option after having already gone to such great lengths to annex the peninsula.⁵⁵ On the other hand, the “internationalization” of Sevastopol would permit Moscow to present a more positive image, by opening the city and making Crimea a “special economic zone” in order to attract international investment. This approach could ultimately open the entire Black Sea region to international security cooperation, and thus help

⁵² Putin’s advisor on Eurasian integration Sergei Glazyev [argued](#) in early February for the “federalization” of Ukraine. Also see this [article](#).

⁵³ Nicolai Petro, “[Save Ukraine!](#)”, *Moscow Times*, 19 March 2014.

⁵⁴ Hubertus Hoffmann (op. cit.) has called for a new Crimean referendum; but an internationalization of Sevastopol would perhaps be a more plausible option.

⁵⁵ See Igor Ivanov’s comments against focusing on the Crimean question, but focusing on Ukraine instead, “[And What about Ukraine?](#)”

reduce threat perceptions on all sides, thus preventing a new arms and naval race.

An “internationalized” Sevastopol could then help establish a new relationship between Ukraine, Europe and the United States with Russia. In this sense, the implementation of an International Center in Sevastopol, would, in effect, be a “guest” of Moscow in a new Russian-controlled Crimea. Moscow would still play the key role in protecting its vital interests in the region (such as protecting the key energy transit port at Novorossiysk), but many of the security and defense activities in the region could take place as joint international efforts. This, in effect, would mean an “internationalization” of Sevastopol, opening the port to ships of all navies and peacekeepers that would participate in a new regional peace and development community.

Beyond Kissinger: Toward a Grand Compromise

Henry Kissinger argued that Ukraine should not join NATO and that Ukrainian leaders should pursue a neutral posture comparable to that of Finland. Yet, this proposal goes beyond Kissinger: The US and NATO need to modify NATO’s “open ended expansion”—at least for the Black Sea/Caucasus region. Such a modification of NATO’s open door policy would take place in exchange for the implementation of a new regional, yet internationalized, system of cooperative-collective security for the entire Black Sea and Caucasus regions. In other words, instead of extending full NATO membership to Ukraine, Georgia or other states, and then attempt to integrate these countries back into NATO’s command structure, the US, Europeans and Russians would extend overlapping US, European and Russian security guarantees for the entire Black Sea and Caucasus region in the formation of a neutral “peace and development community.”⁵⁶

The purpose is to implement a cooperative-collective security approach to the region that seeks to protect “vital” Russian and Ukrainian interests, while at the same time looking for new

⁵⁶ See my argument, Hall Gardner, *NATO Expansion and US Strategy in Asia*, Chapter 8.

forms of regional and international cooperation. A neutral, non-aligned Ukraine (with deep demilitarized zones on both sides of the Russian-Ukrainian border) could also participate in peacekeeping and joint security measures in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions alongside Russian, European and US/NATO forces, as well as with peacekeepers from states of the Caucasus, among others, in the so-called “frozen conflicts” in Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is possible that the internationalization of Sevastopol, and the opening of its port to regional security and development cooperation, could open the doors for Russia to cooperate with Ukraine, as well as the US and Europeans, despite the evident friction over the annexation of the Crimea that will not dissipate for a number of years. This could, in turn, lead both Russia and Ukraine to forge new forms of memberships with a reformed (and renamed) NATO and the EU given deeper security and defense and political economic cooperation.⁵⁷

Yet the more the Ukrainian crisis blocks Russia from cooperating fully with the EU and US, resulting in threats and counter threats to impose differing forms of political and economic sanctions, the more it will prove difficult to cooperate on issues of common concern and true mutual interest. For its part, Moscow has stated that it has no intention of reneging on START and other arms control obligations. In this regard, Moscow permitted a series of Ukrainian overflights under the Open Skies Treaty March 11 2014, and it likewise granted Ukraine’s request to conduct an inspection of a “non-declared military activity” in a border region.⁵⁸

The key diplomatic issue is that Moscow wants to separate the Crimean issue from other areas of cooperation. Yet the US and Europeans have so far remained reluctant to separate these issues given the ostensible geostrategic importance of

⁵⁷ See my argument, Hall Gardner, *NATO Expansion and US Strategy in Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2013). Chapters 7 and 8

⁵⁸ Pavel Podvig, “[What the Crimea crisis will do to US-Russia relations](#)” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (27 March 2014).

the Crimea—even if full Russian cooperation is absolutely needed in Afghanistan (after NATO withdrawal), Syria, Iran, North Korea, plus areas such as nuclear and conventional arms control/reductions (including tactical nuclear weaponry), terrorism and nuclear proliferation. This is not to overlook the real need for US-European-Russian cooperation in preventing a possible major power war in Asia between Japan and China over islands and resources in the Asia-Pacific.

A “grand compromise” between the US, Europeans and Russia that seeks to draw Russia into a new relationship with NATO and the EU—by means of establishing a regional system of peace and development for the entire Black Sea and Caucasus region—should be in the interests of all parties. But such a proposal will only work if it is given a real testing by truly engaged diplomacy in which US, EU and Ukrainian 'vital' interests and those of Moscow are eventually redefined and reconciled. And this proposal (as a starting point for discussion) may represent one of the few options left—that is, if the US, Europe and Russia are not to enter a period of intense geopolitical and arms rivalry that could soon prove even more dangerous than that of the Cold War.

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