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TOWARD A "REAGANOV" RUSSIA:
ASSESSING TRENDS IN RUSSIAN NATIONAL
SECURITY POLICY AFTER PUTIN

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning, everyone. I think we'll go ahead and start, right on time. We are all invigorated by the Redskins' win in this beautiful fall weather, so we'll get right at it. Thank you for coming today.

I'm Mike O'Hanlon, and I'm joined by two of my colleagues from the Brookings Foreign Policy Program; Cliff Gaddy, and Steve Pifer. And we are to talk about Russia, and as you may have noted from the write-up to our event, we are actually beginning the discussion with an attempt to think more about what's inherent to, essentially, the Russian National Security psyche or character.

In other words we are trying not to, immediately rivet our attention on President Putin. Inevitably we'll come back to him, inevitably we'll come back to current events, and I'm sure that many of your questions, which we'll field in the second half of the event to day, we'll focus on current events. But the event grew out of a project that Cliff and I undertook, which was trying to get at the question of what would Russia's long-term national security paradigms or choices be, and to some extent how could American policy, perhaps, influence and affect the way Russia would make its choice.

And so I was trying to, in a way, divide the inner Russian mind beyond or apart from Putin. It's pretty hard to do at this juncture, given the degree to which the old KGB operative has come to dominate the Russian national security and political space. And I think many of you know that Cliff Gaddy is the co-author of an excellent book, with Fiona Hill, on that subject. So, I'm doing a little bit of introduction here by show and tell, and I think many of you have already seen this book, *Mr. Putin, New and Expanded Edition*, which came out after we were well into the Crimea, Ukraine, crisis.

So it's Mr. Putin operative in the Kremlin. This is one of Cliff's many books here, and a career stretching about a quarter of century of Brookings. He is also a paramount Economist, understanding Russia's economy, and one of the best books he ever wrote, in my judgment, was called *The Price of the Past*, which helped to understand the legacy of the Soviet militaristic economy for post-Soviet Russia, and he has written many other great books over the years as well, and an article called *Russia's Virtual Economy*, which was extremely influential in understanding this period too.

Steve Pifer, was a career Foreign Service Officer, working largely on issues of Russia and Ukraine before he came to Brookings about a-half-a-dozen years ago. In the same spirit of show and

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tell, one of his Brookings writings is called *The Opportunity*, and this was about next steps in U.S.-Russia arms control. I had the opportunity to help out a little with that book, but it was really his brainchild in many ways, in most ways.

And also it was Steve reflecting his previous work in the arms control space where a lot of his foreign-service career had been spent, but he also was U.S. Ambassador to the Ukraine. And so as the likelihood of U.S.-Russia and arms control has declined in recent years, he has focused a lot of his attention on the crises of Central Europe, and also is now working on his next book, which will be, in fact, on the Ukraine itself.

Let me just say a brief word, and in the spirit of show and tell, I'm also going to plug, shamelessly, my latest book which is called *The Future Of Land Warfare*, and which has Russia, Baltic States scenario. Not that I am predicting that we'll have to fight such a thing, but like many of you, I'm more worried about it than I might have been a couple of years ago, and more worried that we have to, at least, think about shoring up deterrence for that and other potential problems with Russia.

But today's event will focus, as I say, at least as its starting point on this notion of, what inherence of the Russian national security psyche? Or, to what extent can we define several different possible paradigms, and explain them, try to root them in Russian history, Russian politics, and then again, try to discern which way the Russian State may be headed, and to the degree we have influence on that, how we might exercise that influence.

So the way we'll proceed this morning, I'm almost done with this long introduction, don't worry, I'm going to hand the floor to my co-author on the article that I was referring to, Cliff Gaddy. We wrote this article in *Washington Quarterly*, and it came out of this notion of trying to think 10 years down the road, when we hope Mr. Putin will finally be taking his leave from the political stage, if it hasn't already happened by then.

As you are aware, he could, in theory, stay another decade in power. And is there a possibility that he might try? But also there is the separate question of, to what extent the Russian population is really inherently with him, to what extent the Russian population and political system could go in a different direction?

So, before turning over to Cliff, who is then going to explain a couple of the conceptual

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frameworks that he and I developed, and then Steve to comment on those and give his own take on where Russia might be headed. Let me just quickly list for you the five main philosophies, paradigms, concepts that we think Russia may consider, as it defines its longer-term national security policy. Getting at the issue of what really drives Russian foreign policy and national security thinking.

We developed a total of eight concepts, but I'm not going to list all of the eight. There were three that we thought, pretty unlikely. And in fact, even of the five that we are going to put before you today, the first one is going to sound very unlikely. Remember, we are trying to think beyond Putin, so please stay with us on a little bit of potential for getting beyond the rut we are in at the moment, but the first one we define as a pro-Western Russia.

This is not a Russia that's all warm and fuzzy in its dealings with us, or knocking on the NATO door trying to join, or anything like that necessarily. We are going back a little bit to the feel that we sometimes had in the Yeltsin years, for example.

And then there's a notion we call a minimalist Russia, and this is a Russia that sort of decides to mind its own business in the national security realm, and focus primarily on economic development.

Obviously, Russia, with its huge land mass, huge natural resources, northerly climate, which may actually become more conducive to agriculture as the planet warms, and many other things about its basic character, basic economic character, it could, in theory, decide to emphasize economic development which, of course, would be desirable in many ways. And so we describe this Russia as a minimalist Russia, not as interested in throwing its weight around the national security realm.

The third concept, and perhaps the centerpiece of the article, and I'm sure one Cliff with talk about a little as he develops a couple of these frameworks in more detail; we call, a Reaganov Russia. And here we are trying to evoke, of course, the notion of Ronald Reagan. Well, let me be a little more specific before Cliff gets into the concept in more detail. We mean by this is a Russia that is patriotic, that sees its defense industry as helping spur broader economic growth, and then ideally doesn't use its military a lot.

If you think of the legacy of Ronald Reagan in the United States, from our point of view, he won the Cold War without firing a shot, and he actually didn't use force much around the rest of the

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world either. And so to the extent that a Russia could be proud, patriotic, somewhat pro-military, and yet restrained in its use of military power, this may or may not be the worst possible world we could imagine. In any event, we define this as a Reaganov Russia, and that's our third paradigm.

The last two are a little more negative. One is the besieged Russia, that's angry at the world and looking to lash out. And the final one is a Greater Russia, that's trying to exercise as much influence as possible, especially in areas where Russian speakers live around the world. These last two concepts may evoke more of the way Putin is behaving these days, and I think they sort of speak for themselves in that regard.

So, thank you for being here today. As I say, we'll turn now to Cliff and then Steve, and then we'll get into the discussion with you as well, including of course attention to current events as you see fit. But, again, thank you for being here; and now, over to my good friend, Cliff Gaddy.

MR. GADDY: Thanks a lot, Mike. Well, first of all, thank all of you for coming. It's good to see such a big group, and good to see a lot of people that I haven't seen in a while, so old friends, it's always a pleasure to see you. I want to thank Steve, also, for taking his time. Like Mike said, he's an expert on everything these days that's in the news, and so it's valuable for us that he can actually spare this hour-and-a-half, or so, to be with us, so we appreciate that.

I, especially, want to thank Mike. Now, Mike said that this article, this project that we did towards the Reaganov Russia was our joint work. Mike is modest as usual, and he followed, I guess, the economists' tradition of always listing authors in alphabetical orders. So, I'm actually listed as the primary author. But for me, Mike was the -- much of the brains behind it. This was so refreshing. Mike said, I've been here for a long time. He's been here for a long time at Brookings, too, and we have in the past, actually, done a few things together.

But it's been a long time. So working with Mike on this was very refreshing, specifically because, you know, I think Mike is sometimes described as an expert on pretty every issue in foreign policy, but he's not really an expert on Russia. And that turned to be, for me, incredibly refreshing. Here is Michael O'Hanlon, an expert on defense and security issues including most notably, on budgets and on actual capacity of militaries.

Looking at the problem of a country, Russia, that he knows a lot about, not maybe

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everything, but he's able to step back from this narrow kind of blinder view that a so-called Russia expert like myself may have. And just ask some fundamental questions about this country, its history, its culture as he said, and even its geography, its security challenges, but also its constraints, the same way you would look at the military budget and the capabilities and the possibilities of the United States or other NATO countries.

And that's exactly, I think, what characterizes what we've done, and what I hope comes across to those of you who take time to read this very short article, I mean, it's very brief and telegraphic almost, is the notion of just always keeping in mind, realities. That there is a reality constraint, no matter what's happening in Russia today, and what we may think President Putin is up to, there is a reality constraint there, and there will be in the future, and it is perhaps most important of all that we keep those in mind.

Now, Mike said we started off with eight scenarios, we have kind of like a playoff system, and we eliminate three, and we are down to five, and then we work through those, and we are down to two, sort of like finalists here. And that was the one he mentioned, the Reaganov option. By the way, a brilliant, provocative term; you have to read the paper to really understand exactly what we mean, and of course it's not implying that they are going to behave like the United States under Ronald Reagan.

Except in this dimension that we talked about of creating a very expensive, very large military force, with lots of shiny, new weapons, and you boast about them, and you parade them around, and you occasionally throw them out there in the world a little bit, but that's not really what's it about. It's not building a military for the purpose of, you know, expanding your power, your empire and your domain, it's has a strong domestic dimension.

In the United States it was about reviving pride in the country, and patriotism, and so forth, and this is what we would mean in the Russian context, so to sort of adjust everything for what you might think about a Russia, and that's what we say might be one of the potential outcomes. The other one is not that different, the other one we ended up as what we said would kind of be likely, is a somewhat more aggressive Russia, we call it besieged Russia, both of these are kind of in the middle of the spectrum. I think they are five and six on the scale of, you know, starting with the absolutely utopian, Post-Westphalian Russia that's just the nicest guys in the world.

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I don't want to hurt anybody, like Austria or Switzerland, or somebody, all the way to one that would revive the Soviet Union quite literally, we call it Brezhnevian Russia. So that's one to eight. And so we are talking about that somehow it is most likely that the Russia of the future, down the road, 15 to 20 years, is going to end up somewhere in the middle there. We'll, that's a sensible, easy, you know, copout if you think, but it's also because the forces of realism, economic reality and political reality, we think, are going to compel a kind of a consensus with ups and downs, with some volatility, to move in that direction.

The Reaganov Russia, I guess -- I mean, I'm not going to go into a lot of details, as I say, this paper itself is telegraphic, so it still would be more difficult for me to go into a lot more detail, and so it's in there. What I actually would like to talk about is not the other "finalists" that we came to, the ones -- the more aggressive variant of the Reaganov Russia, which has a lot of stuff, a lot of weapons but doesn't really aggressively, necessarily use them frequently.

But the one that was not there, in the end, and this is the minimalist Russia. Do you remember Mike said, this minimalist Russia would be driven more with considerations for the economic realities of a country like Russia, realize that there are limits to what you can spend. What you can spend on the military, because you are impinging, you are damaging your economic strength, and if you think, perhaps, that economic strength is the name of the game, that's where the competition will be in the global arena, you concentrate on that. And you could also justify that emphasis on backing off a bit from the global activism, concentrating your own economy because you simply point out the reality that your military strength depends on the strength of your economy.

And if your economy is not strong, then you are just not going to be able to realize these. So, it could be a mixture of the two. And the reason I want to concentrate on this minimalist option a little bit, it's because I think that maybe it's unknown, or maybe it's not familiar to you, that there is actually a debate in Russia, a pretty vigorous debate really, as usually kind of below the scenes, behind the scenes, and among the elites of course, that's really all that counts there, in which this minimalist Russia, is actually quite strong.

Now, its strength among certain elites doesn't necessarily translate into political likelihood, I don't think the pure minimalist variant, a variant in which Russia concentrated, was satisfied

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with having its nuclear forces above all, providing the adequate security and protection that it needs, and then it would back off from global politics and maneuvering in the geopolitical sphere, concentrate on obviously reforming, developing its economy.

This is a group in Russia that's led by the technocrats, the liberal economists, some of whom were the most active people, of course, during the 1990s, and by business elites. They recognized interestingly enough, this is not a utopian vision, in the sense of they do not ignore the political realities, if we think about the Reaganov version as being more, perhaps, attuned to political realities, the culture, the Russian mind, the desire for patriotism, nationalism, national pride.

Also, by the way, attuned to political domestic realities in Russia, because you build up a big military, because you produce a lot of stuff, and a lot of stuff being produced means those factories out in the Urals and elsewhere are cranking out whatever, tanks and everything else, providing jobs for people, maintaining therefore, the social piece and the political inside of Russia.

I've always argued that that's probably the more important reason for having this whole big defense industry program that Russia has. It's about getting and keeping the jobs out there in the Heartland. But the minimalist Russia, concentrating more on the economic constraints is also attuned to this political reality. These guys are patriots, and they always stress that, they call themselves enlightened patriots, and they do not question the need for Russia to defend itself, they don't even question the fact that Russia is threatened by the outside world.

Their argument tends to be that we cannot -- It is counterproductive for us to overextend ourselves in military spending and in foreign adventures, and we have to concentrate, above all, on getting our own house in order; getting our own economy in order. It is tempering, if you like, that group, whether or they actually, and I don't think will, fully implement their vision of what Russia's security future should be like.

I think they always will be tempering the more extreme versions including those that we rejected as being too, kind of, regressive and expansionist, as well as perhaps even some of the ones that we considered might be more likely. What we have here, in brief, and I think this is important to realize is the notion, as I began; realism asserting itself, and particularly asserting itself in Russian history.

This is a patter in Russian history. More than 100 years ago, after Russia's fiasco in the

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Russia-Japanese War, 1905, the Prime Minister at the time, Sergei Witte, a person who Putin has referred as kind of one of his heroes, Witte, the Prime Minister, wrote a letter to the Commander and Chief of the Russian Army, General Kuropatkin, and he told them, you know, "I think," Witte says, "It would be smart if Russia would go ahead and learn the lesson from this war, acknowledge that it's actually a second-rate power, it should stop trying to pretend like it is a first-rate power and vie for a global leadership position. And instead should concentrate on getting its own house in order."

He said, literally -- he wrote literally, "We need to begin a new active phase of our national life, a phase of sensible construction. We need about 20 to 25 years in which we should concentrate on our own affairs and back off from international relationship." A pretty interesting quote, now of course it obviously didn't happen, other things intervened in those 20 to 25 years, but Witte was neither the first, nor the last, of very prominent Russian figures to adopt that sort of sober realism that, again, had an influence on policy even if it never completely dominated, or if so, only for a brief period.

Go back 100 years before Witte, there were advisors close to the Tsars, advisors to Nicholas I, coming from Benkendorf, these were realists who thought, you know, if we don't get our system in order, we are not going to be able to play a role globally. And above all they stressed this breathing space notion. The idea that we just need some period, some people -- Stalin said 10 years, Stalin was also at one point thinking this as well. Others, 20 to 25 years in which we need calm and we can concentrate on our own affairs.

Another Prime Minister after Witte, Stolypin, said the famous quote, "Give this state years of calm at home and abroad, and you won't recognize Russia." This is the notion of a kind of strategic retreat, a regrouping, a rebuilding, it is not abandoning the ultimate aspiration of Russia's role as a great civilization and great force, but is acknowledging the reality that, if you push too hard, too fast, too aggressively, overspend, you are going to undermine your own position, and this is part of this minimalist creed that I'm thinking is important.

And my final point is that, don't dismiss even changes in Vladimir Putin, he may well remain in power, as Mike said, until 2024, the end of a possible second term as President. But remember that he came into office in 2000, with kind of a valiant of this minimalist creed, at least that Witte, Stolypin idea of the breathing space, and he expressed it in his document that's called the *Millennium Manifesto*,

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and he has always, then and now, had people with influence on him, at least people to whom he listens, who espouse to this view.

And today, as I said, it's a rather strong group, in terms intellect, and in terms of influence, or at least voice to Putin, it is anchored in those technocrats and liberal economists, we can name some names; Alexei Kudrin, Putin's long-time associate and Former Finance Minister who still Putin's ear, people like Igor Yurgens, and others who are concentrating on this.

And a few days ago, just to make the concrete point, they issued the report in which they literally said, and I quote, "It may be a good thing that we got booted from the G8 after the Crimea thing, because it then forces us to recognize we are not, as they say, in the premier league of international politics, we've been relegated back to --" Essentially they mean, where Russia belongs at the present time in the lower division, like in global soccer terms. Right?

So, it's a wake-up call. We don't belong there, and they even quoted this Witte quote that I gave to you earlier. And by the way, they are using, of all people, Dmitry Medvedev again, a guy who nobody even remembers anymore, even inside of Russia it seems. Medvedev made a big manifesto himself a couple of weeks ago in the papers, and it attracted a lot of mocking comments in the social media, but he kind of said the same thing, that these guys are saying.

And I think we have to only assume there, not that Medvedev is a serious actor, but that Putin must have sanctioned what he wrote. That being my point, that these thoughts, these scenarios, they are kind of alive and well in Russia, and we should always keep them in mind. All options, in a way, are open and that's why I hope that this little paper that we wrote can be a handy outline as people begin to think forward. I mean, obviously track current events, but think forward 5, 10, 15 years, in which our planning on our side, which maybe we can talk about, how we would respond to this militarily, in our own military planning, would take this into account.

So we have a little score card, a little outline, and it's like at a ball game, you've got to fill in the scorecard, we don't fill it in for you, the game is not over, but we have what we think is a handy way to think about these issues

MR. O'HANLON: Cliff, thank you. And before going to Steve, I am however going to ask you to fill in the scorecard very briefly for the three options that I think you focused on most. The

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minimalist Russia, the Reaganov Russia and the besieged Russia; and if you -- I'll just ask one question, one brief question, if you had to rate the odds of each of those being the most influential paradigm in a decade in Russia, based on, not only what you are seeing Putin do, not only what you see the United States do, by way of reaction, but what you see going on within Russia itself. Do you have a ranking in terms of likelihood, or is it just really way too soon even to be able to bet?

MR. GADDY: I think it's too soon, but think it's -- I think implicit in what I was saying is, the story is the interaction of these three maybe, you can say, because it's -- minimalist Russia, right, and we also put this in financial terms, or in budgetary terms, we talked about, we had another sort of dimension of the thing between a muscular Russia, a big-spending, muscular Russia that would spend 100 to \$150 billion a year, putting it clearly in as second tier, not the U.S., nobody competes with the U.S., we spend more than everybody put together, but way ahead of all the European powers, that's a muscular Russia.

The minimalist -- and we say the Reaganov version as well as some of the others would fit into that paradigm in terms of outcome, we sought the minimalist Russia being a much smaller, maybe as little as \$50 million a year, arguing that a minimalist Russia, the kind of defense that would be needed for a minimalist Russia would focus obviously on nuclear. Russia would retain its parity, essentially, with the United States in nuclear, and Special Forces.

You know, this is the new game in Russia that I don't think they are going to back off from, which is, you don't need this mass mobilization, million-man army that was pretty worthless anyway, but you can take whatever the number is, I don't even know if anybody knows the number of their real Special Forces these days, the two, three, whatever, a thousand, a handful, a relative handful of incredibly well-prepared and equipped soldiers, and get a lot done.

And the interesting thing I think is, that showing how these things bleed into each other, is that, you know, we say in the paper that maybe Putin today is more of the besieged, you know, because there's more aggressiveness there than this Reaganov option we take. But you could say, well, it depends on what you -- first off it depends on what you think Putin's intentions are, with both the Ukraine, and Syria now.

I think it can be interpreted in both cases, that these are more demonstration -- these are

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the kind of bluffs, the kind of trying to puff yourself up a like a peacock to get some recognition, and a place at the table, the respect that you obviously didn't get in the 1990s, and not gotten until now, so we are going to act tough, and act, not just talk but act, but not with the intention of expanding an empire of whatever some of the other versions of Putin's intentions may be.

And then in a way, it fits almost into a Reaganov version if it doesn't go further. I mean, again, this is the Russian version of a Reaganov version. And Reagan, Reagan, we invaded Grenada or something, right, but you know Putin, he's going to do it in a more -- he's Russian, he's going to do it in a more aggressive way, but still quite different than the idea of trying to reconquer the Soviet Union.

So, what is still in Putin's -- and I think those around him, whether or not, you know, they succeed him or not, but the entourage around Putin, they are very, very much concerned about Russia's economic strength and role in the global economy. They don't have the illusion that Russia can cut itself off from the world economy, so they couldn't possible go for some of the more hard-lined variance, unless events push them to that.

So I would suggest looking at the way these things -- the realities again, the economic reality being foremost in the minimalist version. The political realities being kind of in the Reaganov or the besieged Russia, these three that are in the middle; and they are kind of tempering each other, so you won't ever get a pure minimalist version, but I don't think you really will easily get a pure politically-driven, throw all economic constraints to the wind, kind of approach, and not likely.

So it's still going to be somewhere there in the middle, and I guess that's why we kind of landed on the Reaganov/besieged as being in the middle, but it could, you know, pull in on or the other direction.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And Steve, over to you now. Thank you for playing this game with us with our spectrum of specific constructs, but also feel free in addition to commenting on any of those you wish to lay out your own view of how you think about Russia's future.

MR. PIFER: Sure. Well, thank you, Mike. First of all, let me commend the article, I think it does a really good job of laying out that spectrum of security paradigms that you can see for Russia looking out over the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years. And I think it's also important to look beyond Vladimir Putin.

If he adheres to the Russian Constitution, which he did in 2008, he stepped down and

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became Prime Minister; he will be out of the Presidency in 2024 at the latest. And so then you get into the question, who comes after? And that's a hard game to play, although I think in terms of looking at these various models for Russian security future, it's probably at least as likely as the person that comes in after Putin, is going to look a lot more like Putin than he'll look like a Gorbachev 2.0.

That's sort of the way I look at it. Certainly in the next 5 to 6 years. And I think Mike and Cliff have done a good job in sort of ruling out the less likely paradigms and focusing just on three. And I'll just talk briefly about those three and then offer some comments on some implications and some constraints.

First of all, I hope Cliff, I think you are right, there is this debate going on about this minimal side, and I think you use the phrase sober realism, I hope you are right on that, because I think from the point of view of the American security interest, that's the best Russia to deal with. But it does seem to me that that requires a real change in thinking at the top, in terms of basically, Mr. Putin, in the next several years, concluding that Russia's future is not going to be based so much on its place on the international stage militarily or geopolitically, but on focusing on economics at home, and deciding that he's going to really make some changes to build in Russia, a competitive free market economy. And I'm not sure how likely that is.

The second paradigm, the Reaganov, may well be of the two remaining ones, the ones that is most in the American interest, certainly better than the besieged Russia, but if you look at where Russia is now, I think it's best described as you did in the article as the besieged Russia. And it's a Russia that's driven I think by a mixture of both foreign and security policy goals, but also heavy domestic policy influence.

In the last several years the play up that Mr. Putin has made to Russian nationalism, but also this theme of Russia is back, we are on the world stage, you know, we matter. And I think that has as a big domestic aspect. But it's also an approach that seems to be driven by a large sense of grievance. If you look at the way that Putin and others have come and talk it's just driven with grievance against the West.

Middle and large with the objective of hemming in Russia; the Orange Revolution, the Tulip Revolution, the Rose Revolution, the Maidan Revolution, Arab Spring, these were not

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manifestations of local populations unhappy with bad government that stole elections, these were all planned, instigated, organized by the CIA, and Western European security services, again, targeted at Russia.

And you even go back to some that's saying, you know, the Soviet Union had collapsed, again, that was somehow engineered in the West. I think that narrative has huge holes in it. There's not a good basis, but when you at what Mr. Putin says, and he says it so much he appears to believe this, and certainly that is the narrative that they are sowing to the Russian people, and what is I think as probably a far more intense propaganda campaign, domestically, than you've seen even in Soviet times.

So, that's the kind of Russia I think we have to deal with now. In the article they sort of outlined two alternates to Russia, a muscular Russia that tries to have not only nuclear forces at the base, but full spectrum. So special operations forces, but also conventional forces, and I think that's the kind of Russia that Mr. Putin and the Kremlin now aspire to. I mean, it's not just nuclear forces and special operations forces; they are talking about revitalizing the Russian fleet. The Russian Navy going out in the Mediterranean, going out in the world's oceans, in a way that it hasn't done for the last 20 years.

Now I think that's the aspirational goal, the big question is whether they are able to achieve that, and if they can't then they fall back to the model I think you described as the porcupine Russia, which is very heavily-dependent on nuclear forces, perhaps the special forces, but doesn't have the full spectrum of capabilities, and that will largely be determined, I think, by economics.

Now, that kind of Russia, either aspirational, as a muscular Russia, or a porcupine Russia, I think is going to require some more attention from the United States, we are going to have to think about Russia and we should be thinking now, in geopolitical terms and in military terms, in a different way, than would, say, in the case three to four years ago. Because we've seen Russia now asserting itself, and using military force in a way that three or four years ago, most did not think that other Russians would do.

Now having done that -- said that, I think also it's important to recognize where Russia aspires to muscular would have to settle for the porcupine rhetoric, there are some very significant constraints on what Russia can do. And I'll just go through some of them. First of all, can Russia sustain the accelerated level of defense spending that we've seen over the last six or seven years, at a time when

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the Russian economy is suffering because of the low price of oil, Western economic sanctions were having some impact, and the Russians passed up some opportunities in the last five or six years to reform the economy that may have made it perform in a better way.

Second, can the Russian defense industrial base deliver in terms of what Russia wants? And this is a base which I think has been widely seen as probably one of the more corrupt sectors of the Russian economy. There is a question, you know, can they deliver high tech goods particularly when they are now sanctioned, in terms of what the West is doing is blocking the flow of high tech to the Russian defense industry. And in some cases there are some huge holes.

There was an interesting article last week that said, Russia is considering now selling three brand new frigates that are under construction, because they can't -- they have no engines, because the engines were gas turbine engines built in the Ukraine, and the Ukraine has now said, we are not going to provide those engines. So, there are holes, and there are some dependencies that actually has on the Ukraine that their defense industrial base in Russia, may have a hard time filling.

I think there's the question, can Russia match the western high technology? Where you have some analysts saying, it's not the issue of, can Russia close the gap, when you get into things like long-range conventional strike, but can Russia increase that gap from growing.

I'll just raise a couple of examples, the Russians, about three years ago, with great fanfare, unveiled the new T-50 Fighter, this is their so-called fifth fighter. It's the equivalent of the F-22. Now the F-22 has been deployed for more than 10 years now, but there again, you have a Deputy Minister of Defense, a few months ago, saying that they are going to reduce the buy of the T-50 to 12 aircrafts in the next five or six years.

That does not suggest that that high tech, fifth generation fighter is written in a way that the Russians want, or that they can afford. One other example of where I think limitations on high tech, and I think Mike has been following this pretty closely, if you look at Russian air actions in Syria over the last five or six days, it seems that they are dropping lots of dumb bombs, not very many precision-guided weapons, whereas I think in the U.S. case now, virtually everything that the American Air Force drops, and sometimes they hit the wrong target, but it's precision-guided weapons.

So I think there are some limitations in terms of the Russian's ability to integrate high tech

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into the forces.

And the limitation is demographics, in 2017, the number of Russian males who turn the age for military service will be half of what it was in 2006. That's a limitation if you want a big army. You have an army in Russia that is still largely dependent, about 50 percent of the enlisted personnel in the army, are conscripts, these are people who get one year training and they are out. And my guess is that most Western militaries would consider the level of performance that somebody with just one year in the army can achieve, particularly aspiring towards a modern high-tech military is pretty limited.

And I think the other constraints that we can see, and we may be seeing it as we speak, is do the Russians make mistakes that in fact get them into difficult situations? It may turn out that the Russian Military action in support for separatism in the Donbas in Eastern Ukraine was a mistake. And I think we may well be seeing the Russians now inserting themselves into potentially a bigger mistake in Syria, and I'll come back to that in a moment.

Now these constraints don't mean we don't have to worry about Russia, but I think, you know, in terms of the adjustments we make to our security thinking, and our own military policy we can be smart. So, looking at two or three main areas, strategic nuclear forces, and as the article makes clear, that's going to be the foundation for Russian security, and if they have to cut back defense spending, they are going to, I think, devote still, running to building or modernized strategic nuclear forces.

I don't think we have to worry a lot about that, because a lot of what the Russians are doing now, is replacing old missiles and old bombers that they would and should replace 5, 7, 10 years ago, but in the 1990s they simply had no money to do it. So in the current modernization program, that's supposed to go out to 2021, Russia is going to buy 400 Intercontinental ballistic missiles, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

That sounds like a large number, except that's basically the number they need to replace the missiles, the SS-18s, the SS-19s, the SS-25s, the old U.S. submarine-launched ballistic missiles, are they going come out of the force in the same time. So I don't worry that much about the strategic nuclear force modernization as long as two conditions apply, one is, we continue to observe the limitations in the New Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty, which both sides continue to do, and second, the United States goes forward with the steps to modernize its own strategic forces, which are now being planned out and

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we will begin to see take effect in 2020s.

A second consideration, non-strategic nuclear forces, that's something I tend to worry about a little bit but it gets into some Russian doctrinal questions, and it's also the issue of Russia's violation of Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Missiles, but I don't think that requires that the United States, as you get into now, a buildup in non-strategic nuclear weapons, simply because we have a different approach.

We look at those weapons as no advantage in a competition in non-strategic weapons for the United States in large part because our doctrine says, those weapons have a relatively small role, it's mainly political, as a signaling purpose, and the signal is that we are on the verge of going into something, that neither you nor we want, which is escalation at a strategic level.

On conventional forces, I think there are some things that the United States should be doing now, and we should be thinking more seriously about in Europe compared to three years ago, and that is look to maintaining conventional hedges, particularly in the qualitative hedge. So things like precision-guided munitions, intelligence, surveillance reconnaissance, those sorts of assets which have been strained, that are multipliers for the U.S. military, we want to maintain.

And I would argue that in the sense of sort of deterring and assuring -- deterring Russia but also assuring allies in Central Europe and in Baltic States, it probably would smart to, you know, build up somewhat that America will need a military presence there. I'm not talking about anything large, currently the United States has persistently rotation of deployments of units of about 150 troops each in the three Baltic States in Poland. You know, it may that if you take it after 3 to 600, and again, light infantry, I think that will be useful in terms of deterring Russia, also in terms of assuring those states, but if it was light infantry, it would not be a huge offensive threat to the Russians.

So, again, I think looking at whatever paradigm the Russians end up choosing, it's well within the capacity of the United States and NATO, particularly when you are looking at countries that marshal economies that are what, 15 times the size of Russia. The West ought to be able to challenge. Let must add -- having said that, I think Russia is now in the besieged paradigm.

What does that mean for the third crisis of the day, which is implications for Syria? I think some cooperation is possible, but I think it's going to be limited, so this channel which has now been set

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up between the U.S. military and the Russian military to de-conflict ongoing air operations in Syria makes a lot of sense.

We have those military forces operating in close proximity, you what to have some conversations so there's no miscalculation, and the point was higher over the weekend when the Russian military aircraft flew into Turkish airspace and was escorted out by F-16s of the Turkish Air Force. So, you want to make sure you avoid mistakes like that. I tend to be skeptical about broader corporations, because it seems to me that there are a couple of big obstacles.

One is, Washington and Moscow do not agree on what happens to Mr. Assad in any kind of transition, and that's a huge political obstacle between Russia on the one side which supports Assad, and the United States, other European countries, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, probably -- rightly in my view, that any transition has to include the departure of Assad from power.

That's a big obstacle. I think the second obstacle that's become clear in the last five or six days, is we may not be fighting the same things in Syria. U.S. Military action has been directed at the Islamic State and ISIS. Now, the Russians have said different things. On Wednesday, when the Federal Council was asked to rubberstamp Russia's use in force, my guess is that before it actually took place after the Russian Air Force in Syria had already received its marching orders.

But Sergei Ivanov, the Head of the Presidential Administration said, "Our goal will be exclusively in the Islamic State." The next day they said, "Well, the Islamic State and extremists," now extremists is a really broad word when used in Russia, if you take part in a peaceful demonstration in Moscow and hold out the Ukrainian flag, you can be charged with extremism.

On Thursday, in New York, Foreign Minister Lavrov made a very interesting comment. He said that, "If it looks like a terrorist, if it acts like a terrorist, if it walks like a terrorist, if it fights like a terrorist, it's a terrorist." And presumably subject to Russian military action. Based on what we've seen in the last six days, the Russians are not dropping many bombs on ISIS, or I'm going to say, they are basically conducting military activities designed to support Assad's regime and targeting a lot of groups, including groups that we would consider to be relative moderate opposition groups.

So I guess I would amend what Mr. Lavrov said, I think what Russian policy as we've seen in the last six days is: if it looks like a terrorist, acts like a terrorist, walks like a terrorist, fights like

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terrorist, or if we, Russia, choose to bomb it, it's a terrorist by definition. And I think that's going to be a problem, because again, we are going after different things, as very different objectives now in Syria, which are going to make coverage complicated.

If I can just say one last one thing that -- a specific implication of what the Russians have done, is it seems to me that it's been an option talked about from time to time over the last couple years, should the United States and the West impose a no-fly zone over Syria? I think that option has now become very, very difficult if not impossibly difficult. If you are going to do a no-fly zone, you have to be prepared to shoot down offending aircraft, and shooting down a Syrian Air Force is one thing, shooting Russian down Russian airplanes is going to be something very, very different. So my guess is that option is now off the table.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much, Steve. And we can come back to Syria in just a moment, or anything else you wish in the discussion period. I've got one question for Steve though before we do that and then we'll go straight to all of you. And before my question to him, let me just add one clarifying comment on how we've developed some of these options.

You heard Cliff refer to the possibility of Russia spending maybe 150 billion a year on its military rather than 50 billion, those being sort of two relatively extreme choices along the spectrum that we would consider plausible. Steve talked about a porcupine Russia, or a muscular Russia. So, just to map these things, because I know we are throwing a number of terms at you, which may or may not be useful to your understanding of the situation. Steve is kindly going along with what Cliff and I have in our article.

But the porcupine Russia, the nuclear first special forces for Russia, of course that corresponds more to this \$50 billion a year entity, in terms of Russia's military, but Russia essentially spends about as much as the larger European nations each spend on their militaries. The \$150 billion a year Russian military budget, by contrast, is of course the muscular Russia, and that's the one that puts Russia, clearly, into the number three spot. The clear, bronze medal spot internationally in terms of its overall military budget, and of course either way it's going to stay tied for the gold medal, at least that's going to be the aspiration in terms of nuclear force.

But the 150 billion a year, muscular Russia, they would be, presumably, still less than

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China's budget, but much more than any other country. And so this would allow Russia to continue to sort of tell itself and tell the world the story of being the great Eurasian land power. So, anyway, I just wanted to tie some of those pieces together as we develop them in the article.

But, Steve, my question for you, going back to besieged Russia, as you know in the article, and other people have made similar kinds of arguments, there actually are two even more dangerous Russias on our spectrum, and one of them is the Greater Russia, where a Putin or a future leader could aspire to actually control most of the areas in the world where Russian speakers live today.

Of course this could include parts of Latvia and Estonia in theory, it could include parts of the Central Asian Republics, that's obviously a pretty dangerous Russia if anybody really wants to go there. And then of course, there's the Brezhnevian Russia, which is any former Soviet ally, in theory should be brought back into Moscow's orbit. Do you worry --

MR. PIFER: Does that include the Eastern half of Germany?

MR. O'HANLON: Well, that's a good point. Yes, so there's a little play in these concepts. But if you worry about either of those, and especially the Greater Russia, do you worry that Putin fills the mandate that wherever he can, opportunistically, he may try to actually either annex or at least create, you know, frozen conflicts in places like the Eastern Baltics where there have been Russian speakers historically?

MR. PIFER: Well, that's a really good question, Mike. I guess I'll make two comments, one is, I think it would be unwise for NATO not to think about what in essence is the Greater Russia. I mean, I worry a little bit about, could you see a little green man scenario in Latvia or Estonia? In each of those countries the population is about 25 percent ethnic Russian.

Now I don't think it's a high probability, but it's not zero, and I think four years ago I would have said it's a zero probability. And so when I talk about doing some things to beef up NATO presence in the Baltic States, it's basically to take steps to deter that kind of scenario.

Now having said that, my second comment would be, and when I read the article, I guess at the end of the day I probably do discount the Greater Russia model, because when you look at basically we're reoccupying territory, and the Kremlin has said, now going back to 2008, that Russia has this unique, I think, internationally, a very questionable right, but they claim a right to be able to defend

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ethnic Russians or Russian speakers wherever they are and whatever their citizenship.

The Daily Show, about a-year-and-a-half ago said people in Brighton Beach ought to be a little worried about that, but the point is, that taking on those territories, then that means that the Russian economy has to subsidize them. And my guess is, in Moscow they are not very enthusiastic about that. I mean, Cliff knows the economics. But it's interesting to me when you watch the Ukraine case, within a month after Russian Special Forces, without insignia, called little green men by the Ukrainians, ceased Crimea. Russia had an ex-Crimea.

Now there is a history there, 60 percent of the population, ethnic Russian, you know, Russia originally colonized Crimea, the Sevastopol was design and intended to be the home fort for the Russian Black Sea Fleet. In the year-and-a-half of conflict in Eastern Ukraine, you have seen no suggestion out of Moscow that they want to annex and take in that part of eastern Ukraine. And a big part of that is, because they recognize, even setting aside the huge damage that's been done through the 18 months of conflict, that the Russians and the Russian separatists instigated there, even before then, economically, that was going to be an area requiring subsidies.

So, my guess is that the economic argument is a big constraint on those in Moscow who want to build the Great Russia, because they don't want to go back to the model that I think was the norm during Soviet times, where basically Russia was subsidizing all the other pieces of the Soviet Empire.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Why don't we go to you, and we look forward to your questions. Please wait for a microphone, identify yourself, if you could, and if you have a question that you want to target primarily towards person, please indicate that as well. We'll start up here in the very front row, my good friend, Gary.

QUESTIONER: Thanks very much, to all three of you, a fascinating discussion. As I listened to it I was thinking, it seems to me, possibly in error, that what the two of you in your paper have considered is a realm of realistic options. Some more realistic than others, but it sort of, given what we know, given Putin, given Ukraine, given Syria, these five options are the ones that you've identified the two that focus on mostly.

I wondered if, in your thinking, if not for this paper, just in general, if the assignment instead had been, what does Russia need to do in order to regain a place of similar stature in a 21st

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Century world? Whether in thinking about that, you might have -- I've been trying to think about, you've mentioned the Reaganov model.

I've been trying to think of whether the one that is in my head, and I want to ask you about is, is whether or not Russia is capable of, under any leadership, Putin or otherwise, whether given its history and its culture, is there any likelihood that instead of taking the sort of more militaristic approach that it's taking in Ukraine and Syria, et cetera, that it could have said to its 10 years ago, we've got to get off the oil and gas, you know, one-crop economy, we need to grow our economy.

The future of that is clearly in the realm of technology, so we want to become -- we want to compete with the West in the realm of technology. I don't know whether you want to call it a Lee Kuan Yew model, or an Asian Tiger model, and this is a thought experiment. Would it have been possible 10 years ago, is it possible now; would it be possible 10 years from now for Russia to say, this is how we are going to do it, not with a larger military, not with the model that people have been seeing, but to really become a high tech 21st Century advanced manufacturing technology kind of economy?

MR. O'HANLON: Cliff, do you want to take that? That gets right to the heart of what you've worked on your whole career with Russia's economy and (inaudible) fittings?

MR. GADDY: Yes. I think that's a utopian idea that Russia could move to the forefront of technology as an entire economy, there's just too many, too many legacy problems. Not a fault of most of the current generation, it's just a fact of that many decades of very, very distorted economy that can't be just undone by changing the economic policy. Even the best of policies can't undo the physical changes in that economic structure, the geographical changes that you have with you.

You just have to deal with cities of million people and more that really aren't all that viable as cities. I mean, you can think of what in the United States or a Western country, we deal with regions that are under-developed, or coal mining towns that have to shut down, because the coal is gone or the demand for the coal is gone. Or steel plants that supported a whole city of whatever, I grew in a town that's 50,000 people and had a textile mill that employed 10,000 people and it's the most depressed place you can imagine.

Think if that were a million, 15 -- you know a-million-and-a-half people and think if there were a dozen or more of those kinds of places, that's just part of the problem. So I mean, my point I've

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always made about Russia is that it's the band and the utopian ideas, think about realism that's why I'm really attracted by anybody in Russia that talks in those terms, just accept the fact, oh, you've got a long way to go to get even up to this second-level competitive area.

And that doesn't mean that -- that's not a goal worth aspiring for, it doesn't mean -- I don't want to go into a long discussion of this, but it's recognizing that pride in a country doesn't have to be that your number, you are the populous, or have the most nuclear weapons, or most anything in that way, it can be because of your civilization and your culture, and that can, I think, be separated from the military and great power aspect of it.

If you have the goals of becoming a great power, okay fine, but then earn it, I mean, work for it and see where, you know, where the competition is these days, but none of that's happening in Russia right now, so when you ask, there's an economic reality to it. I just talk about the economic utopianism of such an idea, of thinking that Russia can leap forward, you know, within a decade or even two or three, to the forefront of economic development and technology.

And there is a political aspect, and that is the vested interest that, who is going to do this? The only person, I hate to say it, but provocatively, the only person who is going to reform the Russian economy is going to be a Vladimir Putin, it's got to be an autocrat. Because right now the vested interest every populist force in Russia, which there are a lot, are absolutely retrograde when it comes to progressive economic -- liberal economic market policies.

So if you had more democracy in Russia, you would have worse economic policy even than you have now. I mean, actually the economic policy is not all that bad, you'd have really bad economic policy, so this is the dilemma that Russia has. And so you have to scale back your expectations, it seems to me, to think about the political and economic realities, you know, no matter how you are looking at this, that's the way we did it in the paper, and that's the way we assume, that even the Russian leadership has to do.

And everything that Steve said about the constraints on Russia being a big, powerful military might that we need to fear, I think is irrational. Russia is tiny, Steve says, you know, as he correctly pointed out, the Russian economy, GDP is an order of magnitude smaller than only the United States, you add NATO onto that, and you double it, add China on to that and you triple it. So, you know,

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it's a fraction of just a few percent of its potential rivals.

Okay. Japan was only one-tenth the size of the United States in World War II and can be a problem, okay, there's a way to concentrate and be nasty, those shouldn't be ruled out, but I think that's exactly what Steve was -- and we've tried to suggest in the paper, Steve said it more clearly, we need to hedge our bets against the really -- or may be tiny, but really nasty Russia that happens to have as many nuclear weapons as we do, and various other forces, and yet, don't go overboard.

I mean, Russia is not the biggest threat that United States faces, not even in security terms much less in all other dimensions.

MR. O'HANLON: Steve, I don't know if you want to comment on that part, but whether you do or not, I hope you'll say something Ukraine's underlying economic potential as you see it. Maybe not in response, or if you wish, to Gary's question, but just as you look longer term, you were Ambassador there, you know a lot of Ukrainians, obviously a part of the Former Soviet Union that had a lot of economic, military, manufacturing, scientific capacity, but has turned into a much poorer country even than Russia. So, I'd be curious for your thoughts.

MR. PIFER: No, I mean, I mean, I think the Ukraine, economically, has a lot of the same problems that would be there for Russia, in terms of overcoming the legacy of 70 years of Communist rule. I think the difference serve -- hopefully the difference in the Ukraine is, I do think this leadership which has flaws, it has flaws, I think that they have a model for Ukraine, and it's Western oriented, it's moving more towards a market economy. The question is going to be is, can they overcome the very debilitating effects of corruption which are still enormous in the Ukraine as they are in Russia.

Can they move past that? But also I think, where Ukraine has a easier challenge than Russia is, Ukraine really doesn't have this aspiration to be a great power, or even a regional power. I mean, what basically the Ukraine would like to do is, they'd like to be left alone. They'd like to see the Russians let them have the freedom to develop relations with Europe. They do and I think this is not just the Ukrainian elite now, but increasingly the Ukraine populace, they aspire to be a normal European State. The model would be like Poland.

They would like to be a member of the European Union, they probably understand that the European Union is going to be very reluctant on that count. The instant change geopolitically in

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Ukraine over the last year, is that for the first time ever, you now have the majority of Ukrainians saying they would like to be a member of NATO, which is something that's not going to happen for the foreseeable future.

NATO is not prepared to put Ukraine on a membership track, but it's interesting that for the first time in 25 years, you now have polls showing 50-plus percent of Ukrainians say, we want to be in NATO. Being invaded by another country will do that, but aside from that, I think Ukraine does not have the aspirations that you have in the Kremlin to be a major player on the international stage, and to some extent that's an advantage for Ukraine in terms that it rules out -- you know, if you were designing a set of security paradigms for the Ukraine, you could rule out the more ambitious ones and the more threatening ones.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. The next question, please. Let's see, where shall we go? Let's take two at a time, and there are two hands one behind the other here on the fifth and sixth row. On my right, yes, right there; right there, and then behind also.

QUESTIONER: Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you very much for a very interesting discussion. My question is on something that many people in this room probably aren't thinking about because, you know, it's not the hot news of the day, but in America's own backyard, you know, over the last 10 years we've seen Russian engagement in Latin America, and what I've been wondering is what do you think Russia's strategic goals are in America's backyard, in Latin America? And where do you think -- What do you think Russia might do over the next 10 years in Latin America? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: And if you could hand the microphone to the woman right behind you, please? Identify yourself.

QUESTIONER: Hello. Eleanor Baccarat, Former USAID, Ukraine. You've presented three very rational value-free models of what might happen in Russia, but something you've only barely alluded to, the fact that Russia is a major kleptocracy, a huge drain on resources are not going into the economy, and driver of many of those in power, it would seem primarily to enrich themselves, so I'd like you to comment on where that fits into your picture.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Steve, do you want to start this round, and take either or both?

MR. PIFER: I'll let Cliff do the kleptocracy issue. Other than to say that, in general, I

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oppose corruption, but to the extent that corruption reduces the amount of resources in the Russian defense industry to build up military power, I'm not -- I can live with that. On where Russia is going in Latin America, I tend to put that in the category of, it's mischief-making, it's designed to tweak us.

And for a long period, from 1991 up until 2005, 2006, you know, the Russian Navy was not going to Cuba or Venezuela, they weren't flying airplanes there, and that was basically because they didn't have the money to go that far. In 2006, as the price of oil came up, and you had greater flows of revenues in the Russian Government and they were beginning to work more to their military, they begin to be able to buy the fuel, get the training, and you saw the exemption, for example, of (inaudible) flights going down into Latin America.

You know, that was something that was new, if you were looking back just to 1991, but if you went to the '70s and '80s, this happened all the time. So I would look at it as a sort of mischief-making, it's tweaking, and part of it is a bit tit for tat, is that the Russians are very unhappy about the fact that, you know, the American Navy enters the Black Sea, visits Georgia, visits the Ukraine, they see that as sort of in their "backyard." I think the difference is, that those countries do not want to be seen in Russia's backyard.

So, again, it's designed to be an irritant, I don't think it's something that the U.S. Military spends a huge amount of time. You know, I mean, they certainly watch Russian aircrafts when they fly by, but they don't worry about it. It's kind of, when you read the Russian press now, I mean, the Russian press sees this as a big deal, you know, we now are -- our aircraft fly along the East Coast of the United States and they fly around NATO countries.

And it's really interesting, when you read these articles, they also say, you know, "And we were escorted by American fighters, the F-22s off of Alaska were British typhoons when we were (inaudible)." I'd just say, it's kind of a weird article. I mean broadcasting or sort of bragging about the fact that you are flying your bombers, and you are being escorted, most bomber pilots that I know on the American side think that being escorted by somebody else's fighter is a bad thing.

MR. O'HANLON: Cliff?

MR. GADDY: Yes. Good response by Steve on the Latin America question because I don't think Russia has either the soft-power capability, or the hard-power capability to represent any

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particular great concern to us. It's what Steve describes, it's a tit for tat little mischief making.

Kleptocracy, I don't think though is a popular term to explain that that's what's Russia is.

Kleptocracy, ruled by thieves; I don't think that's a good explanation for Russian motives, Russian behavior, the leadership. It's just, it doesn't make sense to me, and I will simply refer you to the book that Fiona Hill and I wrote about Putin, we have a very different explanation of what motivates people and what their concerns are. We do point out, and this is perhaps part of the reason for the misunderstanding, in our opinion, corruption is extremely important in Russia.

Besides kleptocracy, it is literally used as a means of control of people, especially those with economic interest of the oligarchs; it's a mafia-style thing. You get people to commit crimes, you have control over them. I won't go any further because it's all in the book.

MR. O'HANLON: Very good. Two more questions. We'll go here in the third row, and the second row, and then the next round we go further back.

MR. CAREW: Gentlemen, I'm Lawrence Carew, from International Energy Partnership. I have two projects on hold in the Ukraine. What I'd like to hear from all three of you, what do you think of RT? I was flipping through it and there it was last night on cable. Is that Putin's mouthpiece, or is it more in the center?

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Then we'll go over here to the second group.

MR. HENDRICKS: Hi. Jerry Hendricks from George Washington University, a freshman. Where do you see Russia going with their, like, new annexation of, like, Crimea, like now they are connected with the (inaudible) or something like that. Or do you see them using that as well as like the populace with their, like, Russian ethnicity, with their new-found patriotism to their motherland. Where do you see them going with that?

MR. O'HANLON: If you don't mind I'll take a brief crack at the RT question and then work down the row for my colleagues who may want to add to that, and then take your question as well. I've been on RT a few times, I don't if Steve has, he may have as well. You may know that on the Ukraine issue, I have a position that is slightly more tolerable in the Russian space than Steve's; which means that RT treats me a little better, perhaps, than some Americans. But it's still some of the most challenging media experience as you could ever want to have, because there is a very strong point of view.

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And it's very consistent with Putin's world view. And so you have to always ask, are you getting through? Are you being given the opportunity to express your disagreements with Russia's world view, or is there a trampling out of that? And it's sometimes on a fine line. But I'm talking to them right now about maybe doing a show later in the week, and so I'll report back to you about whether that experience is happy or not, it's always tough.

I've judged that, if they let me finish my sentences it's still worth it. But again, you are being pushed, and the other American guests who are on the show, and other guests internationally, usually have a view that seems consistent with Putin's world view as well. I'll leave it at that. Do you want to start with that one too, because I think you've been back a couple of times?

MR. PIFER: Well, not in the last five years. No, I have a different view on RT, I do not think that RT is a serious media outlet, it is a propaganda arm of the Kremlin.

MR. O'HANLON: I didn't really disagree with that.

MR. PIFER: Yes. We can agree on it. But the reason I don't, you know, Mike is a very serious, insightful and thoughtful person, my preface it would not be going RT because I think he confers credibility on that generally, because most of the people that I watch when I turn to RT, and they are experts on Russia, and I go, I've never heard of that person. And so, again, I think it gives -- your presence to gives them a little bit more credibility than they deserve.

On the question about Crimea, the annexation there, I mean, the annexation Crimea was usually popular in Russia. Again, Crimea was the only part of Ukraine where you had ethnic Russians in the majority, about 60 percent of the population, this long, historical association with Russia it was actually part of the Russian Federation in the Soviet Union until 1954 when it was transferred to the Ukraine.

And the way it was taken over, you know, by the little green men, or that you referred to as the very polite soldiers, it's I think the way the Kremlin refers to them. It was bloodless. And it was bloodless because the Ukrainians I believe made a decision not to oppose it. In addition to 10 or 12,000, Russian Sailors and service people on Crimea, they are also 8 or 10,000 Ukraine Military, they stayed in garrison, they did not oppose.

And so, yes, if you fight quick six-day campaign, you know, you don't use a lot of military,

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there's no casualties you get -- you know, that's going to be popular. But I'm not sure it has wider implications. The question of Russia's involvement in Eastern Ukraine; and the evidence is overwhelming. If you don't believe the United States, if you don't believe NATO, if you don't believe the Ukrainians, just go and look at social media and you have the Ukrainians, you have Russians, you have Russian soldiers posting pictures that establish the Russian Military is in Eastern Ukraine.

I mean, there is Graham Phillips, who is a reporter who is widely seen as pro-Russian, he is, I think, quite (inaudible) on Russia today. He ran a story of the last February about the attack of the fighting around the Bolshevik on the border between occupied Donbas and the West Ukraine, and behind him were three tanks rolling by. And those three tanks, you know, the separatists have been saying, well we always carry our heavy equipment we capture from the Ukrainians.

Except these three tanks are clearly configured, they have reactive armor, they have gun sights, but have never been in the Ukrainian military, that in fact have never been exported from Russia, these tanks only came from Russia. Last week there was a picture of a rocket launch system, again, it's only in the Russian inventory. So there's absolutely compelling evidence there, and the interesting thing about the Russian Kremlin is, the Kremlin to this day denies that there's any Russian military presence in Eastern Ukraine, and I think that shows that they very quickly, clearly understand in the Kremlin, that there no positive gain to build on Crimea by trying to go and grab additional territory, or even within their involvement in Eastern Ukraine.

MR. O'HANLON: Cliff, do you care to comment?

MR. GADDY: Steve covered the Crimea thing. The RT, you know, I think Mike's response was a good one. It's how we as scholars, members of Brookings' staff react to the media. I mean, one could an analysis of what RT is. There's no question that it's the propaganda arm of the Kremlin. But there are all kinds of state-run media all over the world, and we do interviews with them. I think it comes down to what you as an individual feel for, not just the journalist, the individual journalist's integrity, but also those who run the show.

I've had situations -- I mean, I don't do the interviews anymore with RT, or pretty much any Russian media, especially when I know what the context is and what they really want to get out of me. I've had situation where I gave really nice interviews, they let me talk forever in the Brookings studio,

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and I got my point across, and it was a clearly -- you know, I what I really thought, but then when it was broadcast they took and took pieces of what I'd said and for a totally different context to support something else.

Now that, I've got to say, this happens in the U.S. too. This has happened with newspapers, this has happened with broadcast media. What you do then, or at least what I do, phew, they are on my blacklist. I have folder in my email, bad people. I'm just not going to deal with them anymore. But the problem with the Russian with a situation like RT is that they are just so blatantly so, and you can't -- it's not enough that you don't like the journalists, but I've seen, some of them seem quite good people, but you can't trust that what you are saying and doing will not be exploited, and I can see Steve's point of view about even appearing on RT now.

Just even if you think they are accurately relating what you said, you know, there is a bigger context for that, but that's an individual decision. Thank God, at Brookings we can make our own calls. I don't think anybody has ever told us, don't do or don't appear for any media.

MR. O'HANLON: I'll just add one footnote. So the shows I've done have been live, which hopefully reduces the potential for monkey business, although who knows. But also part of what I try to do is to be clear about differences with President Putin, but also to remind the Russian viewer of why I think there is -- there should be a basis for U.S. collaboration, if we can get beyond these silly problems, which I'm very emphatic, I attribute primarily at President Putin.

But nonetheless, I've tried to thank the Russians for letting us go through the Northern Distribution Network to supply the Afghanistan Mission; or how we collaborated on Iran Sanctions Policy. To remind people that we actually have a basis and a history of cooperation, and if we could stop -- if they could stop, if their President could stop inventing crises in other parts of the world maybe we could get back to that. So whether that message is of any utility or not, I don't know, but that's part of my philosophy.

So we'll go here in the sixth row, and then the gentleman over here on the outside. Yes, right there.

QUESTIONER: Shriya Raheem, Rumsfeld Fellow. I'm from Afghanistan. And my question relates to the recent happenings in Afghanistan where the war is slowly shifting from the

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southern borders, to the northern borders, closer to Central Asia. So one narrative/conspiracy theory would be that after Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the whole Ukraine situation, that the West, or more particularly NATO and United States was on the back foot, and so this is sort of a response where the United States and NATO allies are allowing this shift in geography, so the Taliban/ISIL, or whomever is there, are able to disrupt, or somewhat potentially destabilize Central Asia, by being based there.

And the recent one week fall of Kunduz, was one of the indications of that, and so I'd be interested in hearing what your thoughts on that would be. Would such a thing be plausible? Do you think it makes any sense? Or do you see a logic in that sort of narrative?

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Thank you. Over here?

QUESTIONER: Mohamed Monsurum from Egypt. I want to ask about, now Syria is air striking -- sorry -- Russia is air-striking Syria under the Egyptian, which is supposedly Egypt as a ally to U.S., but they support Russia, and this is the official stance of Egypt now. And I saw in the Jazeera that they are saying that it is U.S. is -- the U.S. policy doesn't exist in the Middle East or retreating from the Middle East that's why they left a gap and Russia is filling the gap. So what do you think of the Russia Rule in the Middle East after what they are doing in Syria? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: I think I'll take a third question in this round, too, and then we'll just see, everybody can take their pick as to which they'll answer.

MR. NELTON: Hello. My name is Mark Nelton. My question, when you were talking earlier about the differences between besieged Russia and Reaganov Russia, it appeared to me that in 10, 20 years from now, if from the U.S. we are observing this, we may not be able to tell the difference between the two, and my fear is that the U.S. would see a Reaganov Russia and interpret it as a besieged Russia, and then we would respond, miscalculate, and eventually force a conflict, or force some type of confrontation where Russia then goes into a besieged Russia even though they did not want to.

Is there a way to avoid that? And, like how could we, as American observers who are not well versed and those voters are not well versed in Russian issues, how would we be able to tell the difference between the two?

MR. O'HANLON: I just want to thank you for that question because it's very well couched, and also it begins to tie all the pieces of this discussion together; because the one thing we

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promised at the beginning, we want to ask what are the implications for American policy, of thinking of these possible Russia futures. Steve, do you want to start, and then we'll just work --

MR. PIFER: Yes. Russian motivations in Syria, there are, I think, several motivations. One is, Russia wants to support Assad, they did not want to see Assad go down as a result of the conflict in Syria. Part of that is because you are sitting there in Moscow, you don't have very many international allies, and Assad is one of them.

Second, to the extent that your model is, you are worried about color revolutions, Orange -- and things like that. Is this seen as another, again, Western-inspired plot to bring down a country? A third part is, and this is why I actually have some empathy for the Russians, it's the Russians have asked the question for the last several years, if Assad goes, what comes after?

And I think we, in the West, don't have a good answer for that, and that's not reassuring to Moscow. But another part of the Russian involvement here again, is trying to maintain some total. They may calculate that the United States is -- I wouldn't say withdrawing, but trying to reduce its footprints in the Middle East, and then you see an opportunity to increase their presence, and Syria really is the only entry point that they have at this point. So I think those motivations explain where the Russians are going. Just one brief comment on Reaganov, and let the two authors then address it --

MR. GADDY: What about Afghanistan?

MR. PIFER: I'll let Mike handle that, that's more of an Afghanistan question, I think, than a Russia question.

MR. GADDY: Yes.

MR. PIFER: On Reaganov, this is where I tend to see besiege is a better model than Reaganov, because if you go back to 1983, when the embassy was bombed in Beirut, and then you had the horrible attack which killed 200-plus American Marines. Basically, President Reagan made the decision, it wasn't worth it, or we pulled out, or we pulled offshore, we did some shelling and things like that, but we basically backed down.

I'm not sure Vladimir Putin would do that, and I think this is the risk to Russia and Syria, is while I'm sure they are taking the necessary steps, and the ground force presence that they are deploying now, my guess is that the current numbers, it's forced protection. They want to be able to secure their air

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bases, but what happens if ISIS or another opposition group, mounts an attack, succeeds and then there are 30 or 40 Russian casualties, I don't think Putin does a Reagan and says, this isn't worth it.

I think he doubles down, and I think that's the risk for Russia and Syria, is while they go in with an intention of a very limited action, events may drive them, in part, because of the way Mr. Putin looks at the world, to a deeper, much more expensive much more costly involvement than they originally anticipated.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Cliff?

MR. GADDY: Okay. So Mike takes the Afghanistan question. I want to kind of link a little bit to the question that Mark asked, and the one about the idea that Russia is filling a gap that the United States leaves. Because the question of distinguishing, to me, between these two scenarios, rather similar, and similar enough on the surface, as Mark points out, that could easily be confused. Reaganov, bit military, mainly for show, mainly for purposes other than actually using it to achieve direct military goals of conquering territory or people or whatever; and the other one which is literally doing exactly that with your military.

So, maybe same size military, the same force structure, or whatever, but with a different motivation and mentality behind them, and here I think, I want to come back to something I said before. To me it's even more difficult to distinguish between the two, because I think that it's at least possible to think about some of very blatantly, aggressive over-actions on the part of the Russians, now or in the future, that are really not designed to achieve what everybody is claiming.

That they want to take over the Middle East or rival the U.S. in the Middle East, or even, you know, establish a stronghold in the Mid-East, or obviously challenge the United States as a new international order, or U.S. leadership -- or start a new Cold War. Marco Rubio, you know, challenged the U.S. leadership.

Rather, is it possible that what is going on, including Crimea, including Syria now, are these almost bluff-like demonstrations of; we are big, we are back, you've got to listen to us now. We tried to tell you, you needed to listen to us, we tried to tell you all the time, you can't make -- you, the United States, you can't make these decisions about nations and their leaders and regime change, and stuff about thinking about the consequences, and especially without thinking about how it impact

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somebody, mainly us, Russians.

So, we've got to send the message, and for instance in the case of Syria here is what happens when a country goes around and does something without, you know, worrying about the other guy. Hey, how do you like it? And so now we are all obsessed with, oh, my, god, the Syrian -- you know, Russia is going to screw us up in Middle East and Syria, and it's basically that message. How do you like that? Okay. But you are not intending to commit big forces to Syria. I mean they can't. Russia can't change -- they can't Assad if other forces are there, they can't defeat ISIL when we can't.

I mean, there's nothing that the Russians can do, in my opinion, that we have failed to do, right? All they can do is make people kind of think that and get all worried about it, and that's the purpose of it. Crimea, as Steve says, a nice, quick little operation, Grenada-like, you know, just do something get all this, you know, huge support. However, you miscalculate, Eastern Ukraine, that's a different story, and what Steve is really important.

In the Reaganov option, in the Russian context, you are trying to do things that show -- give people the impression you have all this power, both at home and abroad, the potential for miscalculation, and as Mark -- misperception, how are we supposed to know, oh, that was just a demonstration, excuse me, we didn't really mean to conquer half of Ukraine. So, people are interpreting this in a way that you are being too smart about this, and that's real risk of miscalculation on both sides. But then, Mike, maybe we should also get into the question of what can we do to avoid, is there anything we can do to avoid these sort of misperception?

MR. O'HANLON: I'll say something, but Steve has a --

MR. PIFER: No, I just want to -- I agree with a very important point that Cliff just made, which is, you know, what can Russian Military do in Syria? You know, where is the silver bullet? What capabilities do the Russians bring to the game that the U.S. Military has not been able to apply? But that seems to me to suggest the whole risk of this venture, is, you know, if they can't predict success and I think most people think they are going to fail, they are starting off on a voyage that's doomed from the start. And that's where I think it's potentially a big risk --

MR. GADDY: Yes. But they are just trying -- let's say this, that they are just trying to force us to act. You know, they don't intend to solve or to succeed in Syria. So, of course their intention

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in that scenario, is they'll never even push it to that point, but they can easily, easily be trapped into situation where, it didn't work there, okay, we've got to a little bit further, and a little bit further, and then like you say the Putin mentality is not to give up, not to give up in a fight, and he said that.

You know, there's a great story in our book about him learning lessons of life, and one of which is, if you start a fight don't ever back down. So whether he sticks to that or not, it's a kind of a dangerous mentality.

MR. O'HANLON: Very quickly, on Syria. I think there actually is a decent chance that Putin will accomplish his immediate goal of helping Assad survive, and I don't think he really has any other goals. So, he'll let us defeat ISIL, or at least contain ISIL, and he'll say that's what he's doing, and I think there's a decent chance, that at least, you know, Assad fought to a stalemate for four-and-a-half years, he seems to be slipping a bit this year. He gave a speech in which he said he has a manpower shortage in his army; he lost a couple of the areas, even near the traditional Alawite area up near the Coast.

I think that Russia is going to concentrate on taking back those areas and propping up his rule in the part of the country he still hold on to, and we'll see how they do. But in a sense their goals are less ambitious than ours, so they may be able to achieve them.

On this, going -- The final question that was posed a very interesting question. I guess one way I would comment would be to say, I would love to a pro-Western Russia, or even a minimalist Russia, I will tolerate, happily tolerate a Reaganov Russia by the way we defined it. Which is a Russia mostly concerned about being a little bit, you know, a little standoffish with the West, and certainly patriotic and a little bit of more boasting, and a little more occasional semi-scary rhetoric than we would like, but overall restrained in its foreign policy.

I do not think Putin is a Reaganov Russia guy. Putin is a besieged Russia guy with occasional tendencies towards a Greater Russia mentality. So I'm hoping to pull it back or to see the Russians pull it back. And that would be one way to just sort of, again, give some specificity to these different images we created and link them to current events.

If Reaganov Russia is something -- by the way -- one thing we haven't really gotten into is detail on how to think about the future of Ukraine where we have different points of view on this

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podium, and so in terms of thinking, however, about how we handle the Ukraine crisis, and what kind of security strategies we think about for Central Europe, again, to the extent we could steer the Russians more towards a Reaganov model, I think there's some utility in that, but I won't, I won't provoke Steve by saying what I think that might be, that's a different conversation for a different day.

My very last comment, however, is on Afghanistan, and I don't think that we are trying to encourage our enemies to move northward and ultimately put pressure on the Russian flank, or any other parts of the Former Soviet Union. What you saw in Kunduz -- by the way, despite the tragedies, and there have been a lot of them in the last week, including most recently the hospital bombing, it's something I've criticized, and also the tragic loss of 10 Americans in Jalalabad in the C-130 crash, and the fall of Kunduz itself.

Despite that we are seeing the Afghanistan start to take back a big chunk of Kunduz. So don't give up yet, this is not you know -- there is room to be at least hopeful here, because this is not another Mosul, there is an immediate counter attack, and there's at least some reason to hope it's partially successful. But I think Kunduz fell in the first place because of local politics.

The politics in Kunduz were a mess, and my colleague, Vanda Felbab-Brown, our colleague is there right now in Afghanistan, and I'm sure she'll probably write about this when she's back, but she's been writing for a long time, she knows Kunduz better than I do, and this is a region where there have been a lot of militia actors competing for influence in ways that we can strengthen the overall government and created an opportunity for the Taliban.

And Kunduz, even though it's in the North, historic Tajik region of Afghanistan is roughly a third Pashto, the group as you all know from which the Taliban tend to hail. And so there's a base there, there's a population base that there's already trouble and mischief and it's a very clever way of using force, in a sense, we should respect the Taliban Military decision-making. They did find an exposed flank, but I'm hopeful that they've bought more than they reckon with, and that the Afghan army and police and going to do a better job than they counted on. So I remain hopeful on that front.

I think we have time for one final question which we'll then use as a way to wrap up here as well. And I should go to the back, if I can, so the gentleman in the blue shirt please; just one question please.

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MR. SCARLIS: I'm Basil Scarlis. I'd like to go back to Mr. O'Hanlon's last comment on Ukraine, and link, perhaps -- I want to ask, if the U.S. and the European Union decided to provide massive economic assistance to the Ukraine, no military assistance, but in support of the economic reforms, and if the EU also made clear that EU membership for the Ukraine is far in the future, and not something that's likely to occur soon. How would that affect Putin's Russia today? Would it make him feel more besieged?

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Either of you wants to start that, and then the other could finish?

MR. GADDY: I think it's an interesting question because it gets to, you know, what are Putin's objectives in the Ukraine? I think, the Kremlin did not have a grand strategy towards Ukraine; a lot of this has been making it up as it goes, tactics. Crimea in the immediate aftermath of Yanukovich's leaving and the important inner government was a target of opportunity, but I don't think in this grand strategy it lays all this out.

It seems to me that in Donbas you do not have a Russian interest in acquiring that territory. There was a brief period for a couple months, where they talked about no (inaudible) see this concept in the Southern 40 percent of the Ukraine breaking away, they quickly became very disabused of that notion when they saw that there were simply no public support for the Ukraine. So, what the Russians have been doing is basically using Donbas as a means to distract and destabilize the government in Kiev, and make it harder for the government in Kiev to succeed.

The question is, could you get the Russians to change that position? And in terms of the objectives that Moscow articulates, a year ago, you know, one could have seen the basis for a win-win solution. Poroshenko was talking about some kind of devolution of power to the Donbas, he was talking about the status of the Russian language, he said, look, we'll take NATO off the table. He wasn't prepared to say no NATO ever, but he was prepared to take it off the table. And he said, we are prepared to have a dialogue, EU, Russia, Ukraine, and talk about, how do you ensure that as the Ukraine implements the Association Agreement with the European Union, it doesn't have a negative impact on Ukrainian Russian economic relations?

MR. PIFER: There was no interest shown by the Kremlin a-year-and-a-half ago in picking up on that. And that leaves me to conclude that the Russians you know, again, it's destabilization

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of Kiev, and I don't know that we've seen a change today. You know, we certainly -- the good news out of Eastern Ukraine is that since September there actually has been a real ceasefire.

Maybe, and we'll see it in the next coming days, whether in fact, the agreement on withdrawing the heavy equipment from the (inaudible), where that's moving to. But there are still a lot of other parts of Minsk Agreement from February that haven't been implemented. And there is reason for skepticism. One of the things that they talked about when Putin, and the Ukrainian President Poroshenko, and Chancellor Merkel, and President Hollande made in Paris on Friday, was this question of local elections.

The Minsk II Agreement says local elections will be held in accordance with the Ukrainian law, and you have the occupation authorities in the Donetsk and Luhansk setting up in their own elections. Now, there was some hope, the French President said, well we think we can -- we'll have to postpone elections, but we think we can achieve it as per the requirement of Minsk, which is in accordance with the Ukrainian law with oversee observers, and President Putin spokesman went out and said, well, yeah, President Putin is going to send an envoy to the Donetsk, Luhansk, to talk to them about this.

That's just subterfuge. If Russia wanted the election in Donetsk, Luhansk, to be held in a manner in accordance with the Ukrainian law, Russia has the weight, the influence, the power with the separatists to make it happen immediately. And so my guess is, that we are still seeing a Russian goal which is destabilization of the Ukraine, maybe they are less focused on the military part of the Eastern Ukraine. Maybe they figure at this point they don't need it, but I'm not sure we have seen a change in Russian objectives.

I guess my last point would be is, because of what's happened over the course of the last year-and-a-half, and the hardening of public opinion in Ukraine, which does things like, now saying, we want to join NATO, that may create a difficulty for President Poroshenko, in that his freedom from maneuver now in terms of accepting terms that might allow a win-win solution that would allow the Russians to extricate themselves, is probably less today than it was 16 or 17 months ago.

MR. O'HANLON: Cliff?

MR. GADDY: Oh, just quickly. And Steve such an expert on Ukraine, I'm not. But on the

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one hand that question is so hypothetical I don't even know that I can begin to answer. The idea that there would be massive amounts of economic assistance from the EU, and from the United States to Ukraine, it's so remote that I just don't know. Think about it, there's no way we can -- no way they or we, are going to do that.

Okay. Let's assume that it happens, or it was a real possibility, I don't think that Putin would see economic assistance or economic stability of the Ukraine as any particular threat, it's the military and the political threat, and the Eastern Ukraine situation is what the heart of it is, but the Russians, they have plenty of levers who destabilize Ukraine economically that they haven't used. I mean, they just have a whole arsenal. But that's not really in their interest, but they will be employed if they think that's necessary to prevent a literal threat that the Ukraine might join NATO, or that there be stationing of missiles, or something in the Ukraine that they would regard it as a threat.

MR. O'HANLON: I'll just say one very last word in conclusion, this will have to be it, which is that I would like to hope that we could increase the odds of a Reaganov Russia, or even a minimalist, or even some day, pro-Western Russia, with some kind of big, new idea on essentially European security architectures. And again, there's disagreement on the Panel here, not everybody would agree with this, but I would like to see us, along with Russia, guarantee the sovereignty and security of Central Europe as part of a deal by which those countries would not join NATO, not now and not in the future.

And this would be conditional. Russia, verifiably, upholding its end of the bargain, and I would like to see that kind of an idea considered. I think the chances are that it actually might increase the odds of one of the more benign Russias that we write about in our article. But obviously I'm risking provoking a new conversation just as we are about to finish up. So I'll stop there. And thank you all very much for being here. (Applause)

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