From Cooperation to “Collusion”: Russian-American Relations in the Era of Putin, Bush, Obama, and Trump

David S. Foglesong
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

I. Cooperation between Putin and Bush

- After 9/11 attacks Putin called Bush to offer Russian help.
- Bush later ridiculed as naïve about Putin's "soul."
- But partnership in 2001-2001 was genuine and substantial.

I. Putin Sought Strategic Partnership with Bush

Russia aided war in Afghanistan:

✔intelligence
✔weapons to Northern Alliance
✔allowed US military transport planes to fly through Russia

I. Putin Sought Strategic Partnership with Bush

Signing of Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty
May 2002

II. Alleged Collusion between Putin and Trump

May 29, 2017

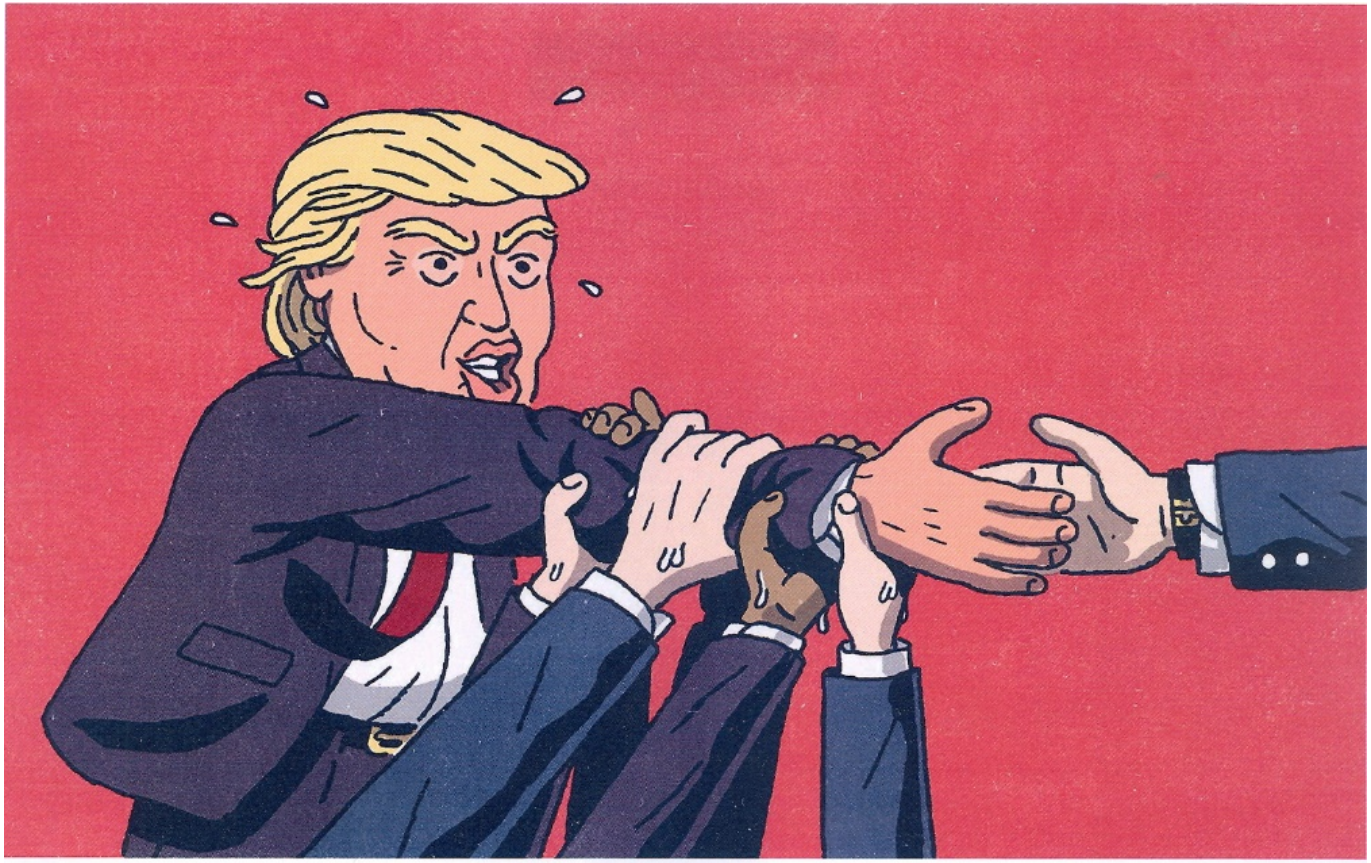
Has Trump Been “Putin’s Puppet”?

- Weapons shipments to Ukraine.
- Air strikes on Syria in 2017.
- Expulsion of 60 Russian diplomats in response to Skripal poisoning, March 2018.
- Repudiation of nuclear agreement with Iran, 2018
- Withdrawal from INF Treaty.
- Drive to remove Maduro from power in Venezuela, 2019.

Trump, US Establishment, and Russia

US media and politicians vs. Trump engagement with Russia

Trump unable to provide disciplined, articulate, effective leadership



Tim Peacock

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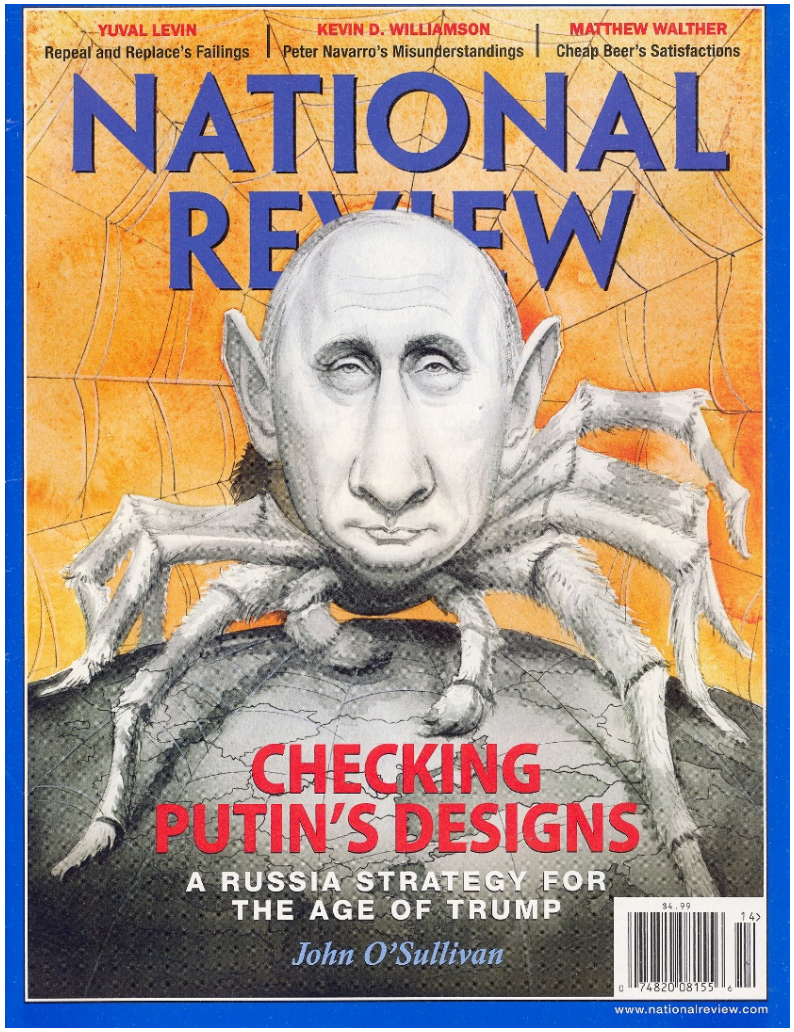
III. Explanations of Deterioration of Relations

A. Vilification of Putin

American Vilification of Vladimir Putin

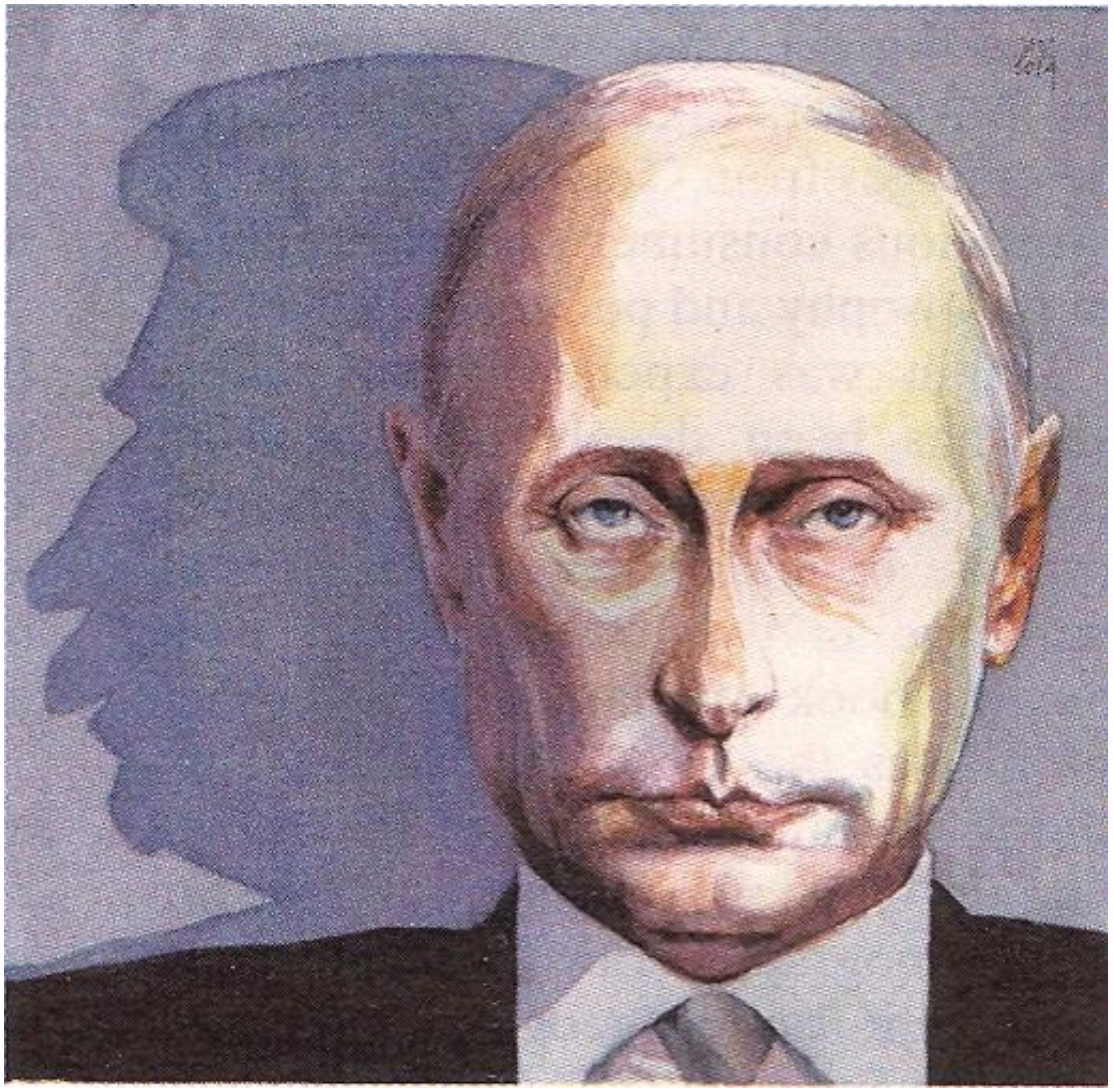
April 2017



June 2018

American Vilification of Vladimir Putin

New York Review of Books, December 7, 2017



American Vilification of Vladimir Putin

Morgan Freeman/Rob Reiner video in 2017 for the Committee to Investigate Russia:

A “true KGB spy,” Putin was so “angry at the collapse of his communist motherland” in 1991 that ever since then he has relentlessly plotted to take revenge on America and restore the Soviet empire.

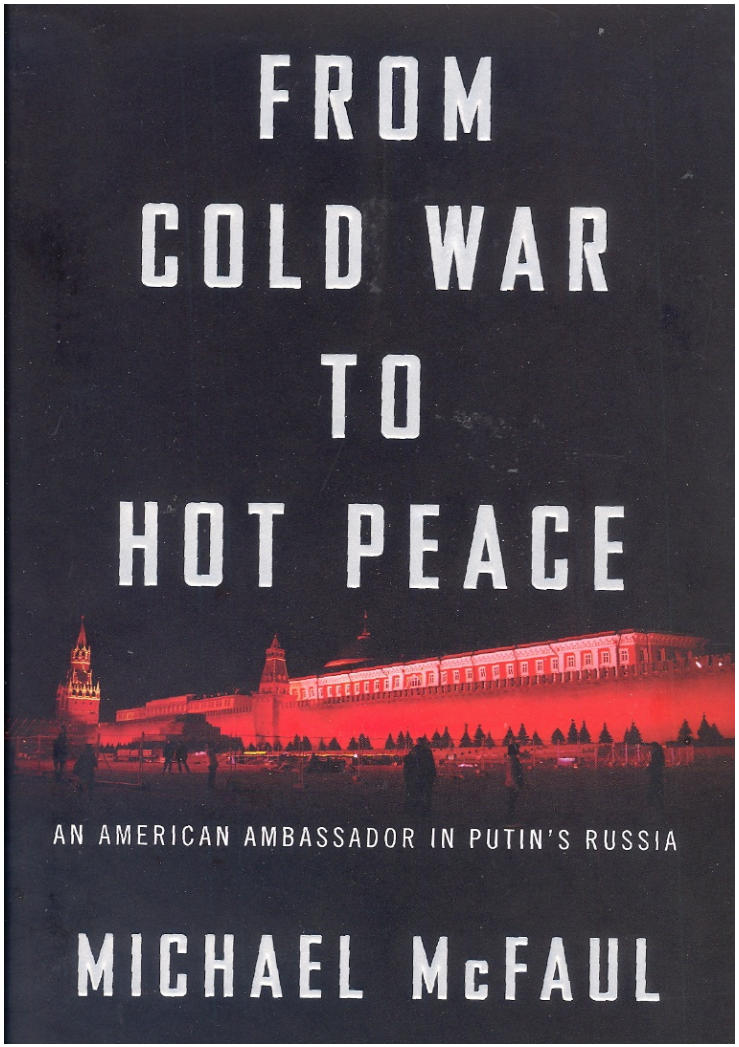
Actual Political Life of Vladimir Putin

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Putin returned to Leningrad in 1990 and, while still in the KGB, went to work as an adviser to Anatoly Sobchak, one of the leaders of the nascent democratic movement in the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union collapsed after the abortive putsch in 1991, Sobchak became mayor of the newly renamed St. Petersburg, and Putin became his deputy, overseeing foreign economic affairs.

American Vilification of Vladimir Putin

Memoir published in 2018

- “While Putin ruled Russia, strategic partnership was impossible.”
- “Throughout American history, our deepest and most reliable allies have been democracies.”
- An “alliance of American and Russian democracies was possible.”
- Putin’s need for an enemy to defend his autocracy from popular protests led him to turn against the US by 2012 or earlier.



Actually, US & Tsarist Russia were tacit allies in 19th century

JOHN BULL AND LOUIS NAPOLEON DESCRY UPON THE HORIZON A CLOUD ABOUT THE SIZE (AND SHAPE) OF TWO BIG MEN'S HANDS, AND ARE FRIGHTENED NEARLY OUT OF THEIR BOOTS BY THE PHENOMENON

The supposed consternation caused in Europe by the appearance of the Russian fleet and the fraternizing of Russians and Americans. (From *Harper's Weekly*, 1863.)

EXTREMES MEET

The Czar, against a background of massacred Polish rebels, joyously greets Lincoln, against a background of dead Confederate rebels. An example of anti-Russian and anti-United States feeling in the British press. (From the London *Punch*, 1863.)

American Vilification of Vladimir Putin

Widespread

Persistent

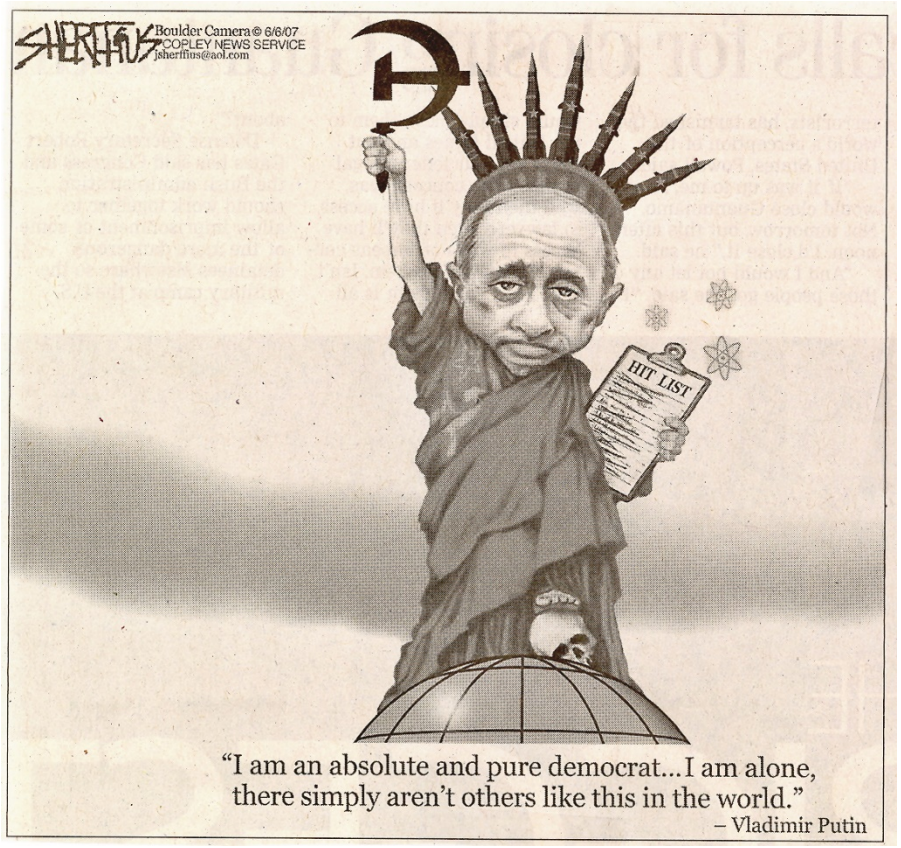
Misinformation

Distortion

Exaggeration

Earliest Expression in 2000

Escalation in 2003, 2007, 2014-



III. Explanations of Deterioration of Relations
B. Inevitable Clash?

S. Kotkin, May/June 2016:

"There has actually never been a period of sustained good relations between Russia and the United States."

"This has been due not to misunderstandings, miscommunication, or hurt feelings but rather to divergent fundamental values and state interests..."

US & Tsarist Russia Had Friendly Relations in 19th C.

1871

THE GRAND DUKE'S RECEPTION

COLUMBIA. "My long-lost ALEXIS! I am so glad you have come!"

The gifted cartoonist Thomas Nast pokes fun at the exuberance of America's welcome. (From *Harper's Weekly*, 1871.)

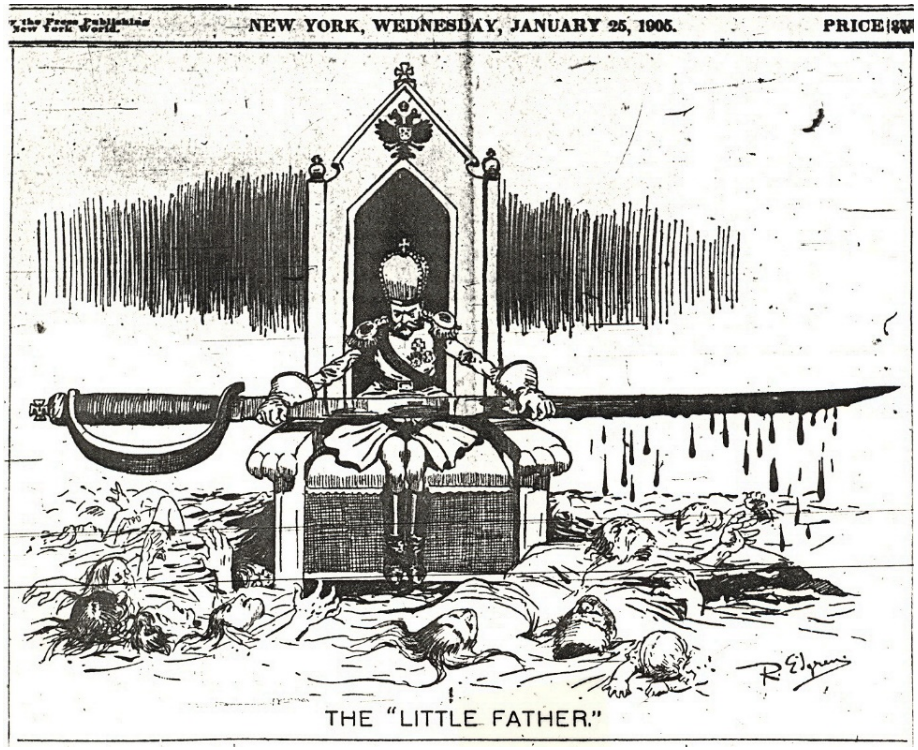
1877

American-Russian Relations Deteriorated in Early 20th C.
Vilification of Nicholas II

1903

THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYL AND MR. HYDE.

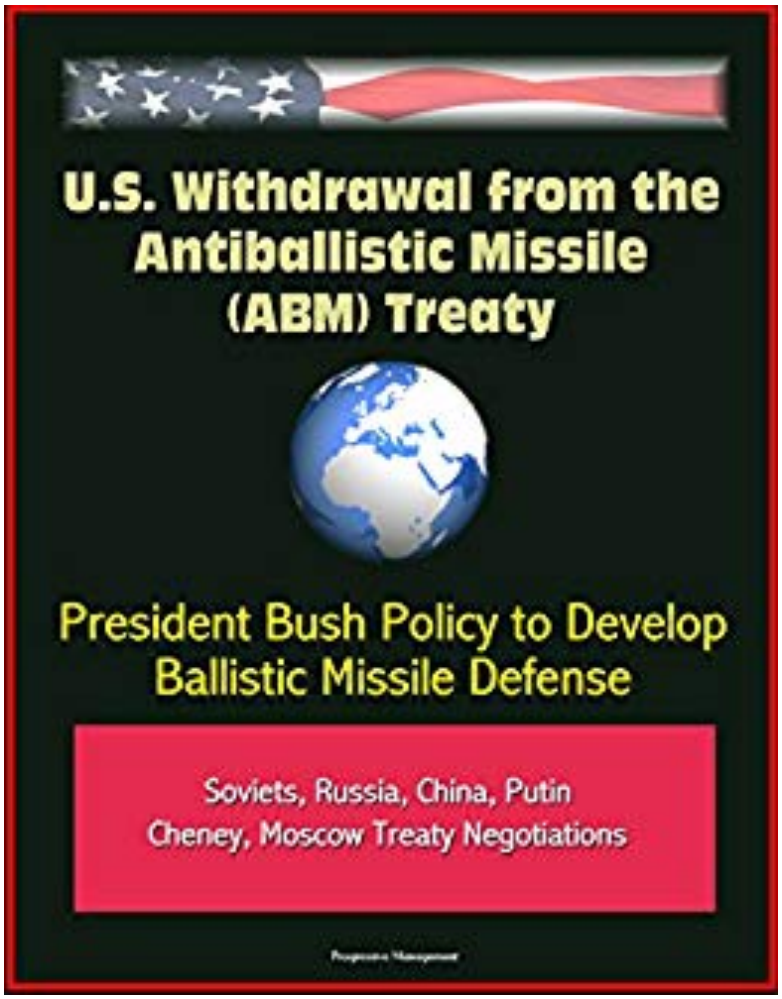
1905



THE "LITTLE FATHER."

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

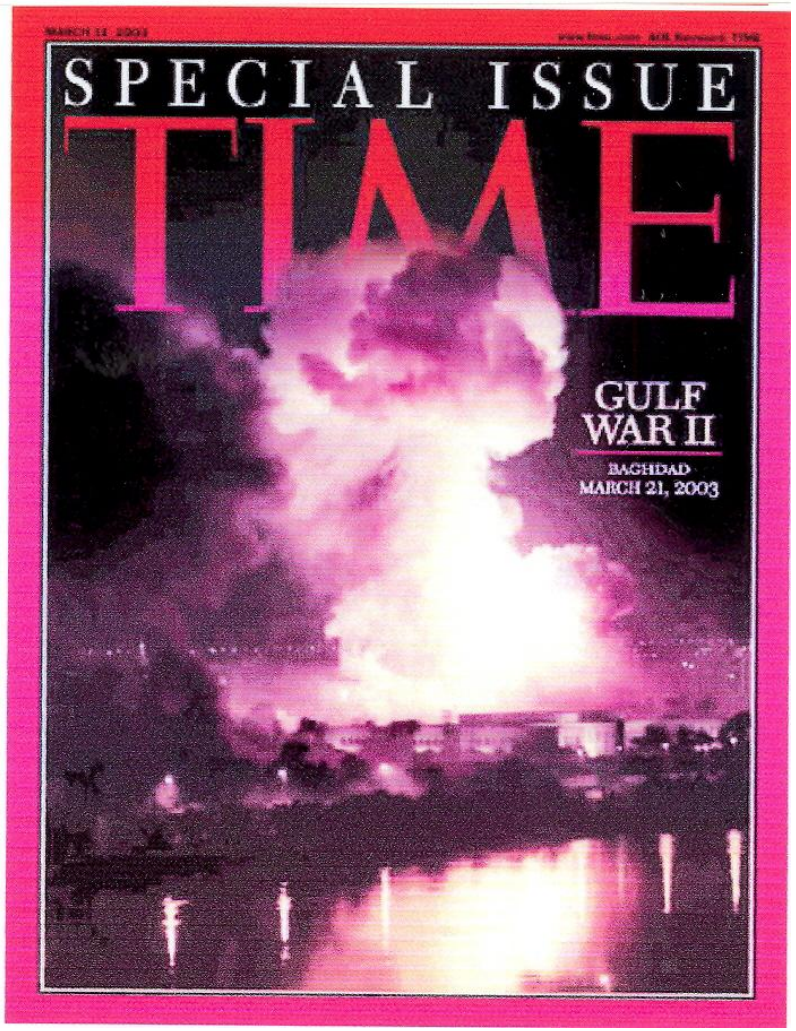
C. US Actions Ignored Russian Interests



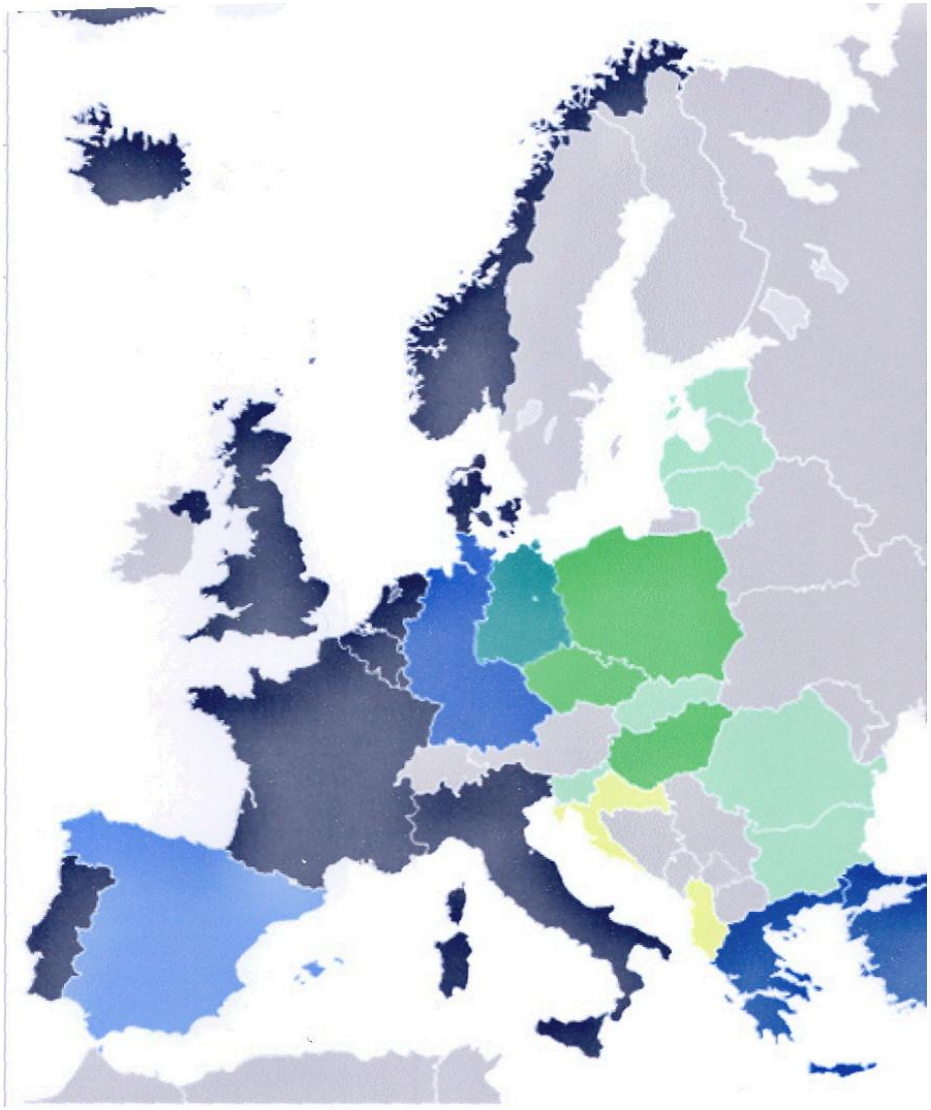
US withdrew from ABM treaty December 2001

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?
C. US Actions Ignored Russian Interests

US invaded Iraq in 2003

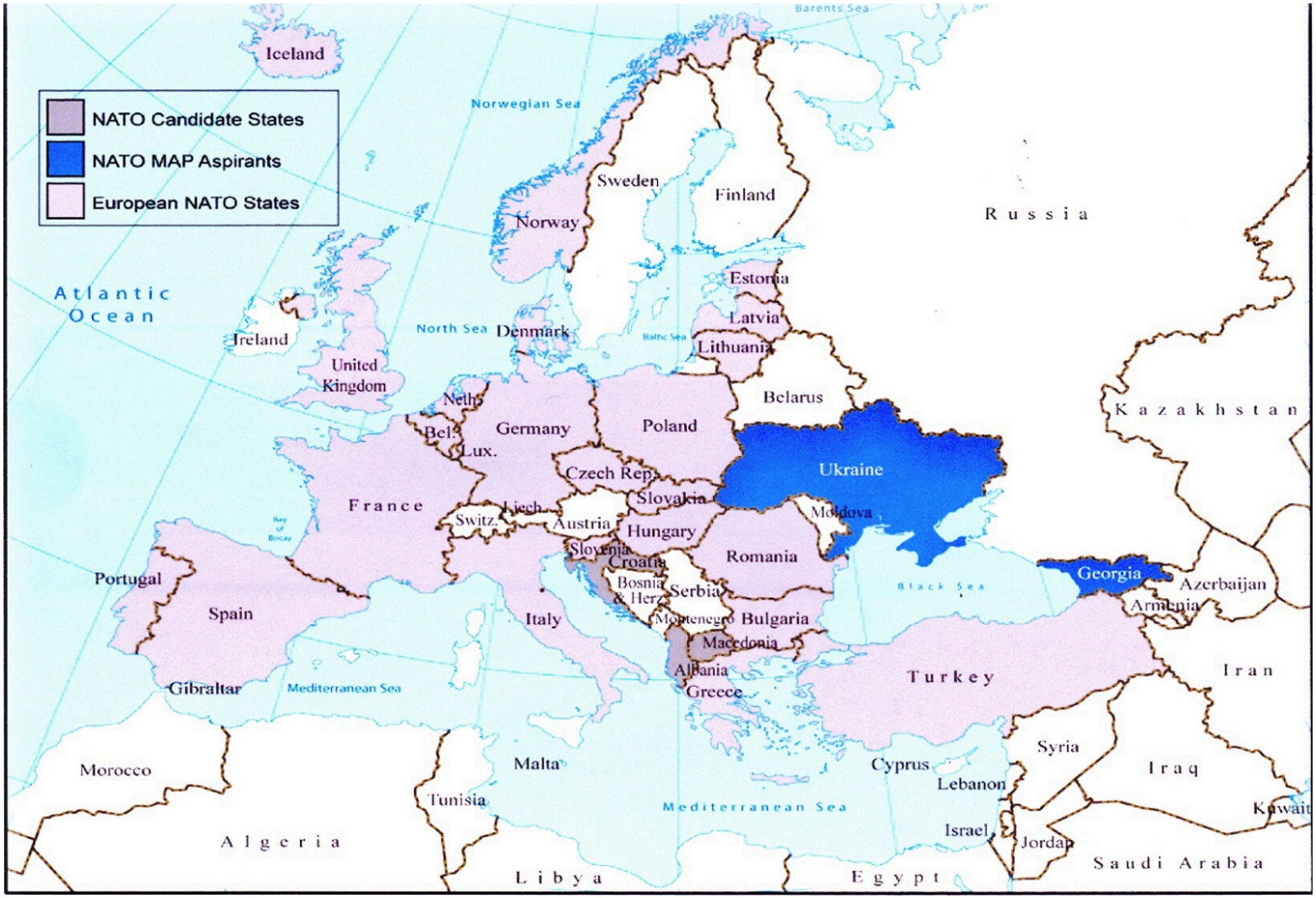


NATO Enlargement, 1999; 2004



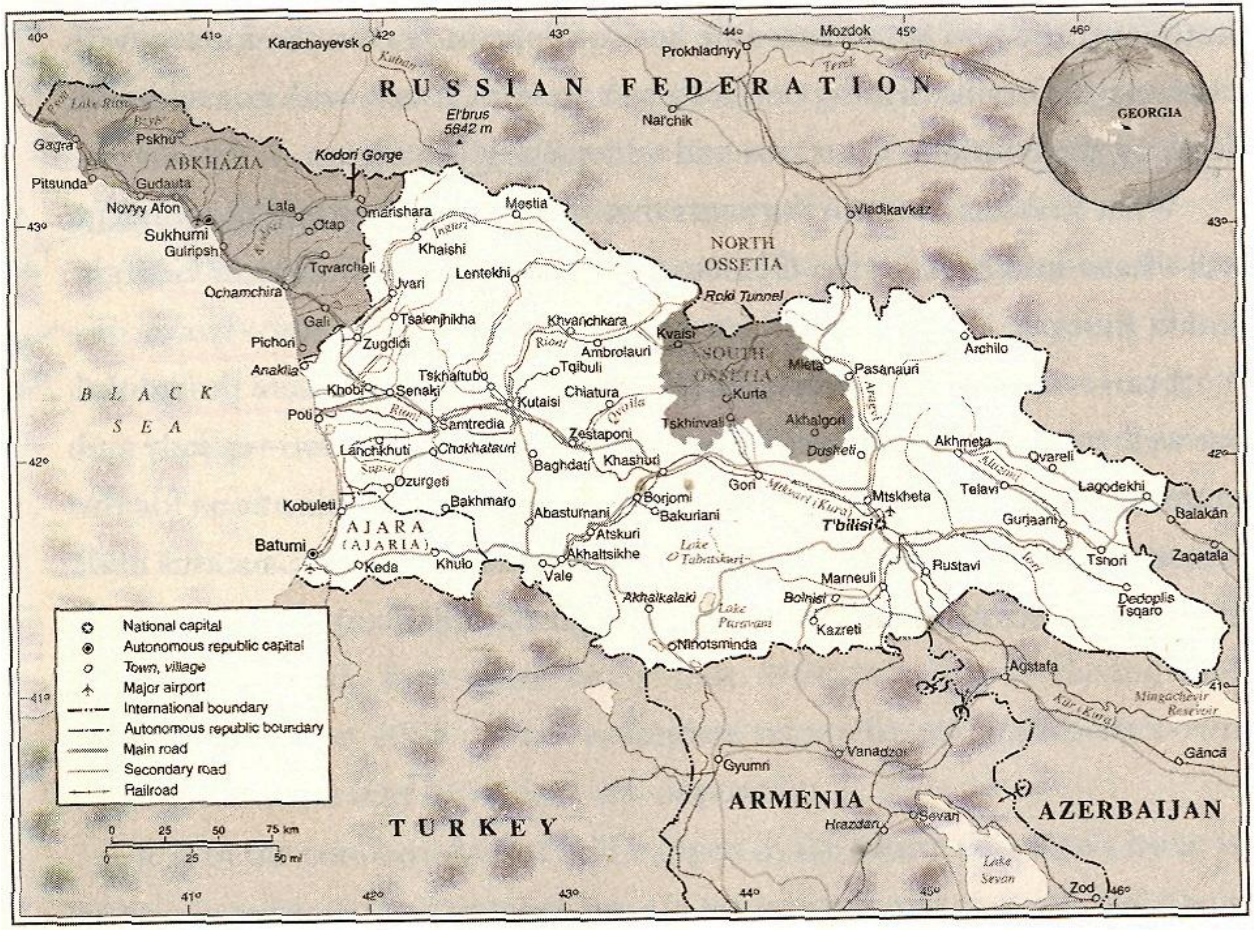
III. Deterioration of US-Russian Relations

Bush Urged NATO Membership for Georgia, Ukraine, 2007-8



Saakashvili emboldened by belief in US support

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?
Georgian attack on South Ossetia, August 2008



Map of Georgia showing the autonomous republics of Abkhazia (de facto independent) and Adjaria, and the de facto independent region of South Ossetia.

Russian Response to Georgian Attack

American View of Russian Aggression

Dick Locher for August 13, 2008 *from* www.gocomics.com

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

US missile defense systems in Eastern Europe

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?
US bombing and overthrow of Gaddafi in 2011

THE TIMES

Max 15C, min 4C | Friday October 21 2011 | thetimes.co.uk | No 70396 | £1

A bloodied Muammar Gaddafi is led away by militiamen moments before his death. The dictator was run to ground in a drainage ditch under a motorway and pleaded with his captors: "Don't shoot, don't shoot"

A tyrant meets his end

Gaddafi is killed by rebel fighters as he flees final stronghold

James Hider Middle East Correspondent
James Bone Benghazi

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the ousted Libyan leader, was killed by forces loyal to the revolutionary Government after being dragged from a storm drain that had become his final refuge in his home town of Sirte.

Badly injured but conscious, the former dictator, 69, was bundled on to the bonnet of a pick-up truck, his shirt stripped from his torso and his body dragged along the ground.

It is not clear exactly when and how he died but his bloody end came at the hands of the angry mob of fighters who recorded his last moments on video.

Pictures of his body taken later after it was driven to the neighbouring city of Misrata appeared to show bullet wounds to his head. Mahmoud Jibril, the acting LibyanPrime Minister, claimed last night that Gaddafi was caught in crossfire and died from a bullet wound to the head.

The fighters who captured him, after weeks of fighting to take Sirte, brandished a golden pistol taken from the colonel, and may now share the £1 million bounty on his head. An American defence official said last night that a French fighter jet had attacked the convoy in which Gaddafi was trying to flee.

Across Libya, the former students, computer technicians or casual labourers who have been the backbone of the eight-month revolution took to the streets in celebration. For them this was the signal that at long last their war is over and their leader of almost 42 years was finally gone.

In the chaotic last stand of the Gaddafi dictatorship, the former leader's son Muatassim was also reportedly killed or injured while there were conflicting reports about Gaddafi's heir apparent, Saif al-Islam, with a Libyan minister claiming that he had been shot in the legs and captured.

As Libyans celebrated, David Cameron, who was at the forefront of the drive for Nato intervention, said that it was "a day to remember all of Colonel Gaddafi's victims", including those who died in the Lockerbie bombing, WPC Yvonne Fletcher and victims of the IRA who used Libyan-sourced

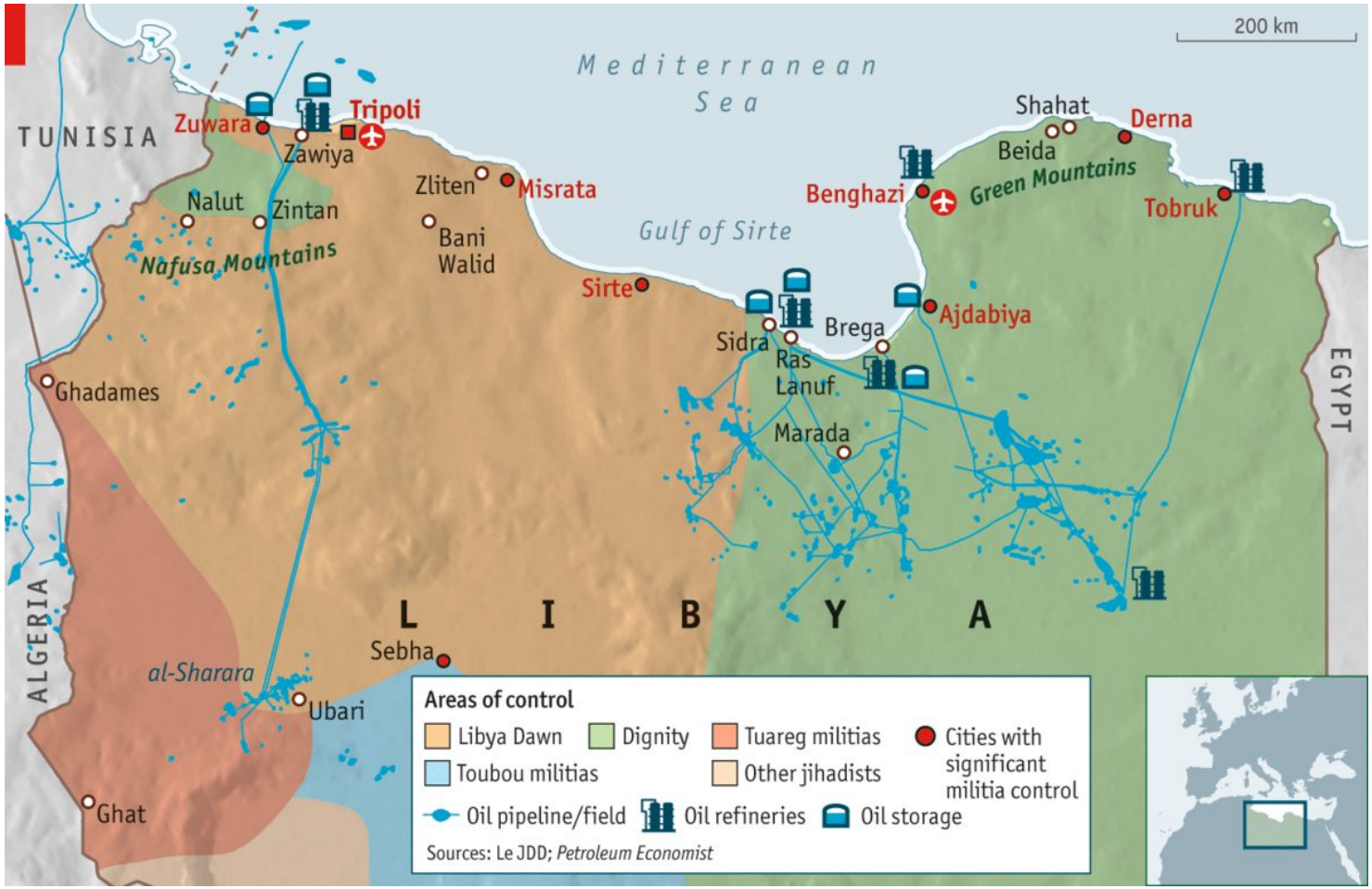
Nine pages of news and analysis
Pages 2-11

Continued on page 3, col 1

- US urged Russia to accept use of force in Libya
- Russia abstained on UN resolution, March 17, 2011
- Obama promised Medvedev US did not seek regime change
- Medvedev felt betrayed by extended bombing campaign
- Putin opposed “crusade”
- Gaddafi overthrown and killed in October 2011

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

US bombing and overthrow of Gaddafi followed by civil war



III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

US bombing and overthrow of Gaddafi

Tripoli, October 2011

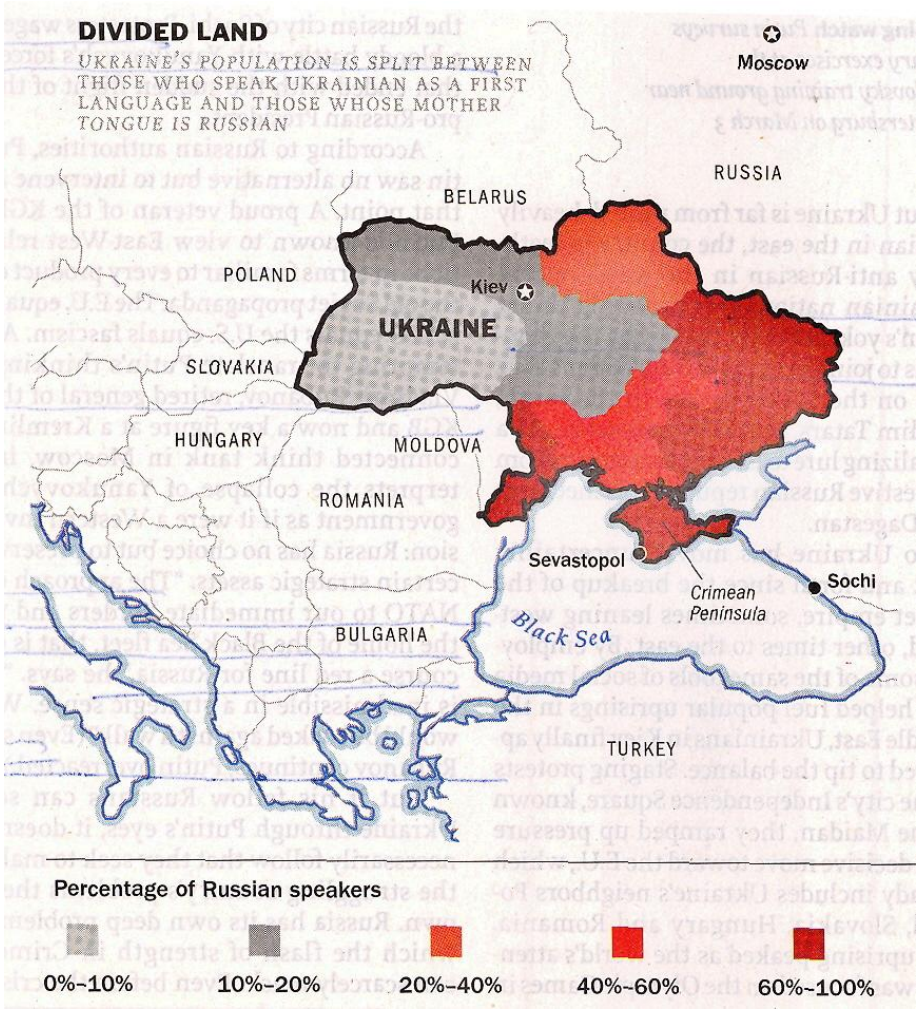
III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

US support for rebels in Syria

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

Contest over Ukraine, 2013-2014

EU vs. EEU



III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?
Role of Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland

Intercepted telephone call with US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt, Jan. 28, 2014:

"I don't think Klitsch[ko] should go into the government. … I think Yats[enyuk] is the guy who's got the economic experience, the governing experience."

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?
Violent Clashes in Kyiv, February 2014

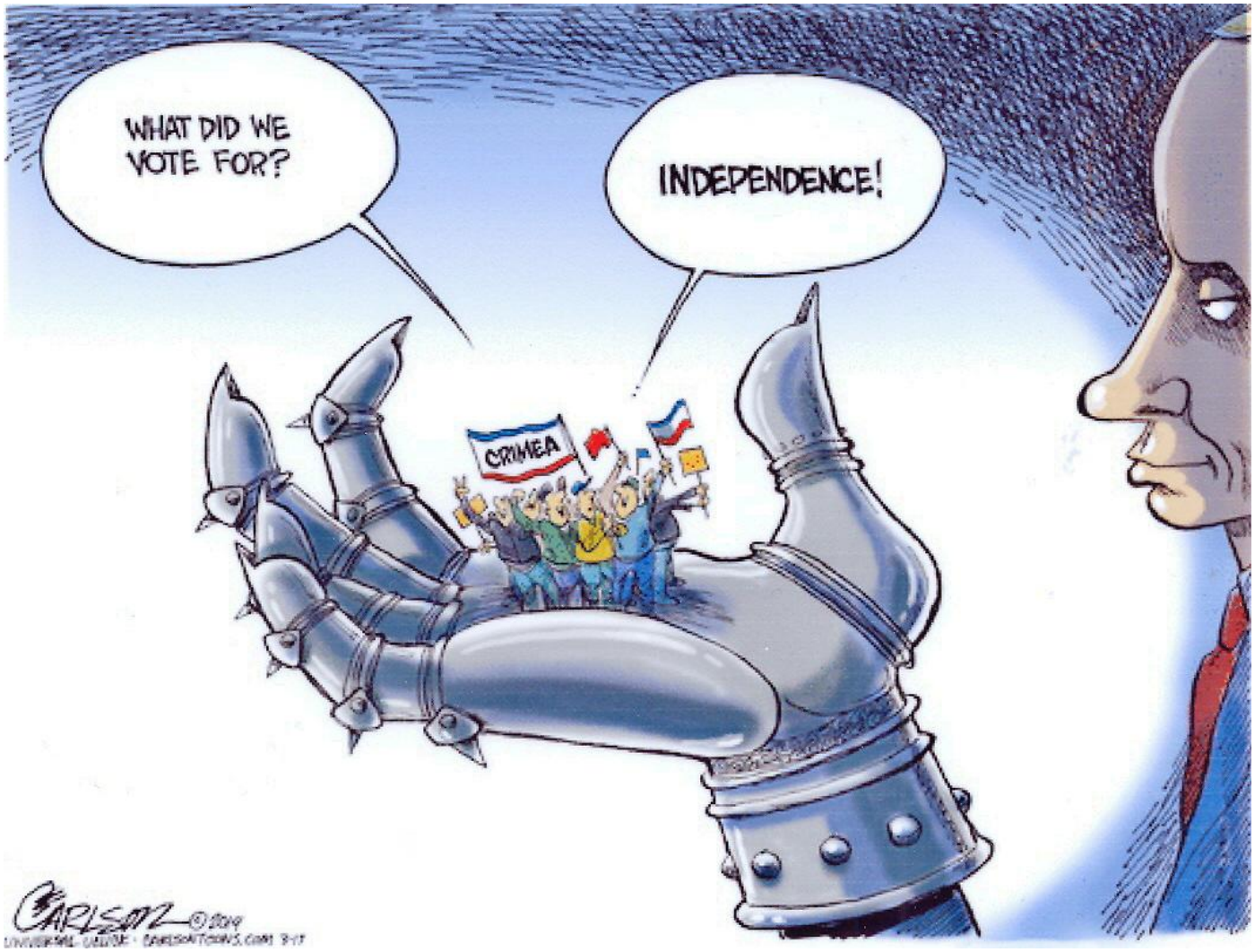
III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

John Kerry: protesters in Kiev, "unarmed except with ideas," stood "peacefully against tyranny"

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

Putin at first denied role of Russian forces in Crimea

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?
Russian Annexation of Crimea, March 2014



Russian Support for Ukrainian Separatists

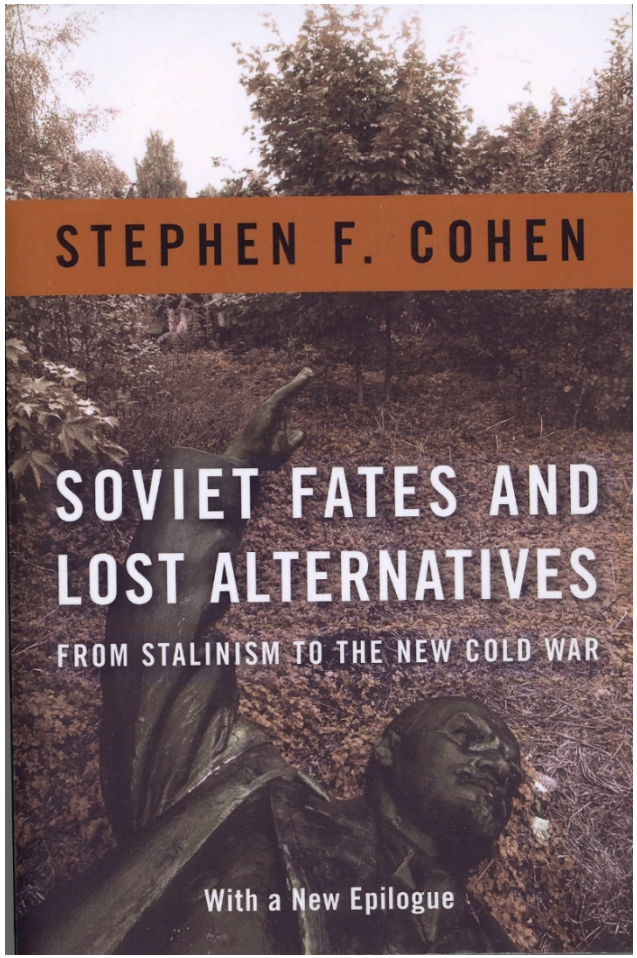
August 2014

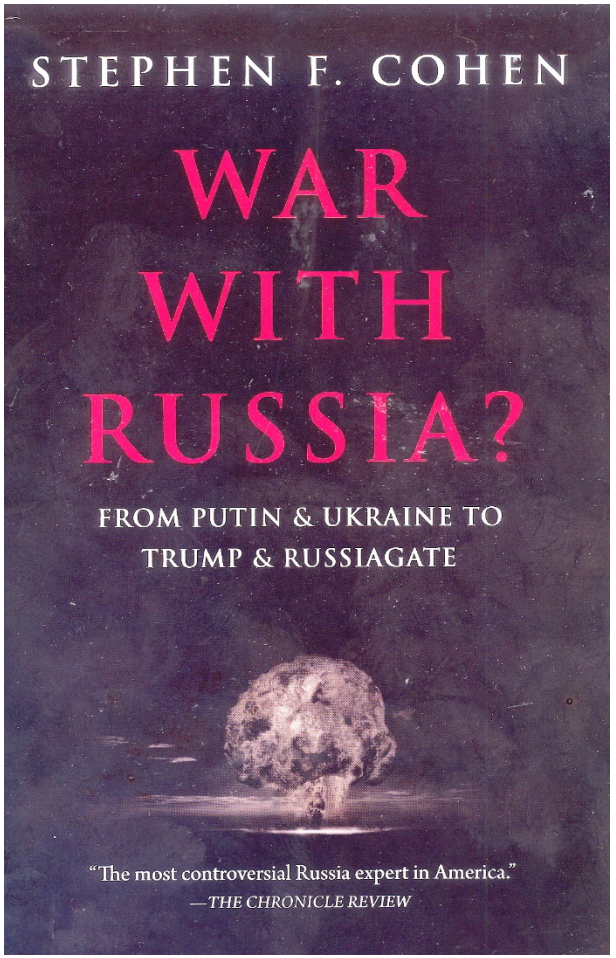
Russian Views of US Interventionism

Podvitsky cartoon, 2014

III. Why Did US-Russian Relations Deteriorate?

D. Need for Balanced View, Not One-Sided Blame





IV. Cooperation Despite Deterioration of Relations

Putin pressed Syria to give up chemical weapons 2013

Figure 1: Eliminating Syria's Chemical Arsenal

The authority for the international project to destroy Syria's chemical arsenal came in September 2013 from a plan that was formulated by the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and endorsed by the UN Security Council. That plan was based on a U.S.-Russian framework agreement. In large part because of the ongoing civil war in Syria, the plan contemplated the removal of much of Syria's declared arsenal of 1,300 metric tons of chemical weapons material for destruction outside the country.

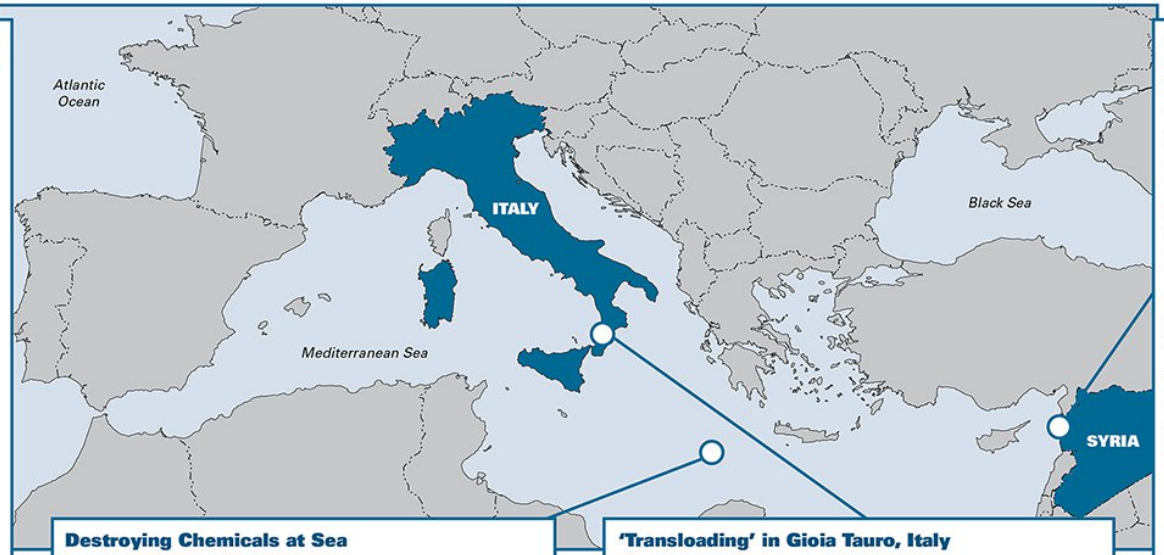
The removal was marked by delays, which Syria attributed to the hazard from rebel forces. The last chemicals left Syria on June 23, 2014, months behind schedule. By the end of October, however, 98 percent of the declared stockpile, including all of the most dangerous chemicals, had been destroyed.

Key Countries and Organizations Involved

OPCW, UNITED NATIONS, CHINA, DENMARK, FINLAND, GERMANY, ITALY, NORWAY, RUSSIA, SYRIA, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Destroying Chemicals In Europe and the U.S.

- After the transfer to the *Cape Ray* at Gioia Tauro, the *Ark Futura* went to the United Kingdom, where it off-loaded about 150 metric tons of chemicals weapons material for incineration at two sites in that country.
- The *Taiko*, a Norwegian freighter, went from Syria to Finland, where it delivered about 130 metric tons of chemicals for incineration.
- After the Finland stop, the *Taiko* traveled to Texas with several hundred metric tons of chemicals destined for incineration there.
- After completing the hydrolysis of the Syrian chemicals, the *Cape Ray* delivered to Germany 350 to 400 metric tons of effluent from the neutralization of the sulfur mustard aboard the U.S. ship.
- The *Cape Ray* then continued on to Finland, which is incinerating the 6,000 metric tons of effluent from the neutralization of the DF.
- The ship returned to Virginia in mid-September.



Destroying Chemicals at Sea

- On July 7, the *Cape Ray*, operating in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea, began neutralizing the chemicals transferred from the *Ark Futura*.
- The chemicals—the sarin precursor DF and a small amount of sulfur mustard—were neutralized in two mobile hydrolysis units that the *Cape Ray* was carrying.
- The neutralization was completed on August 17, well ahead of the announced schedule for that task.

'Transloading' in Gioia Tauro, Italy

- The Danish freighter *Ark Futura* carried 750 metric tons of Syrian chemical weapons agents from Latakia to the Italian port of Gioia Tauro.
- At Gioia Tauro, 600 metric tons of chemicals were transferred to the MV *Cape Ray*, a U.S. vessel.
- The transfer was completed on July 2.

Collecting Chemicals in Latakia, Syria

- Syrian chemical weapons agents were brought to the port city of Latakia in northwestern Syria from about 20 sites across the country.
- Syria was responsible for the transport of the chemicals to Latakia. Some of the equipment used in the operation was provided by other countries.
- From Latakia, an international convoy carried the chemicals away for destruction outside Syria.
- Syria's stockpile of isopropanol, which constituted about 10 percent of the declared arsenal of 1,300 metric tons, was destroyed within the country.

Note: This map is for illustrative purposes. It does not indicate precise areas of operation.

Source: Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, U.S. Department of Defense, Arms Control Association

IV. Cooperation Despite Deterioration of Relations

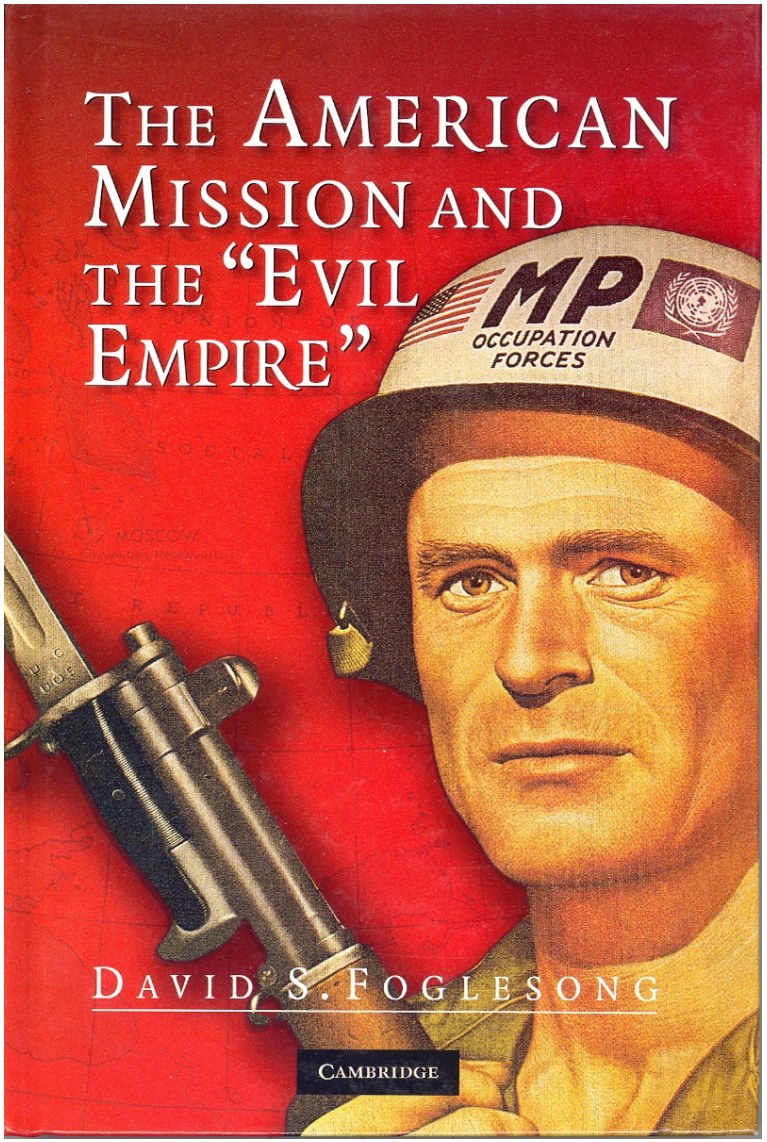
Obama surprised by important Russian help in securing deal to constrain Iranian nuclear program, 2015.

Vs. McFaul: cooperation still possible after Putin return to Russian presidency in 2012.

V. Can America and Russia Cooperate in Future?

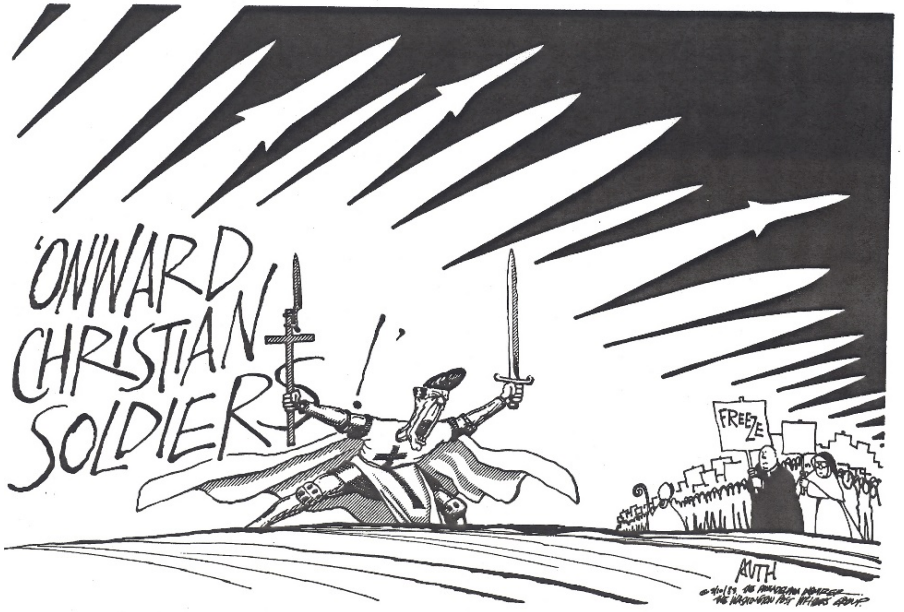
A. Cooperation in the Past

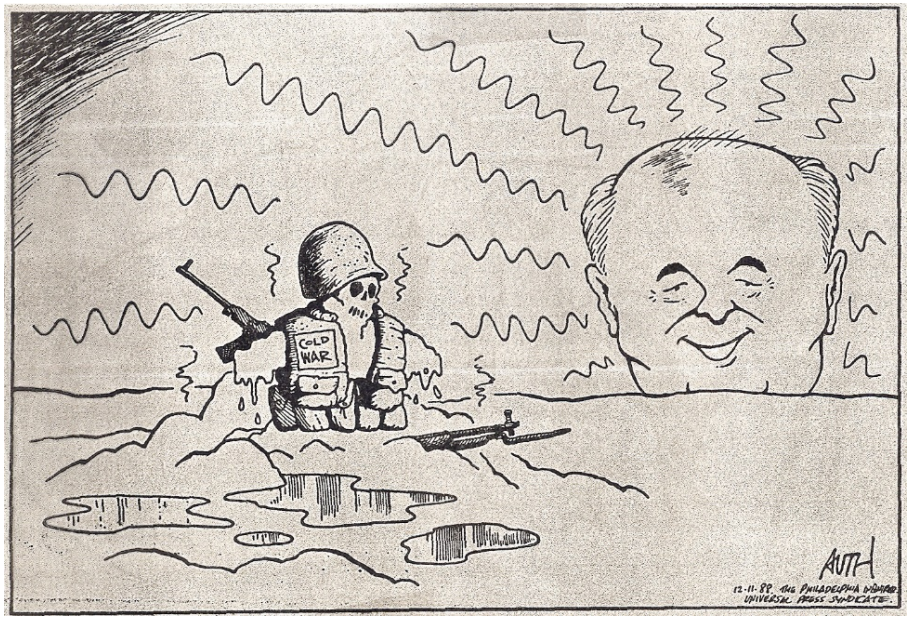
Demonization and Messianism Obstacles to Cooperation



A. Cooperation in the Past

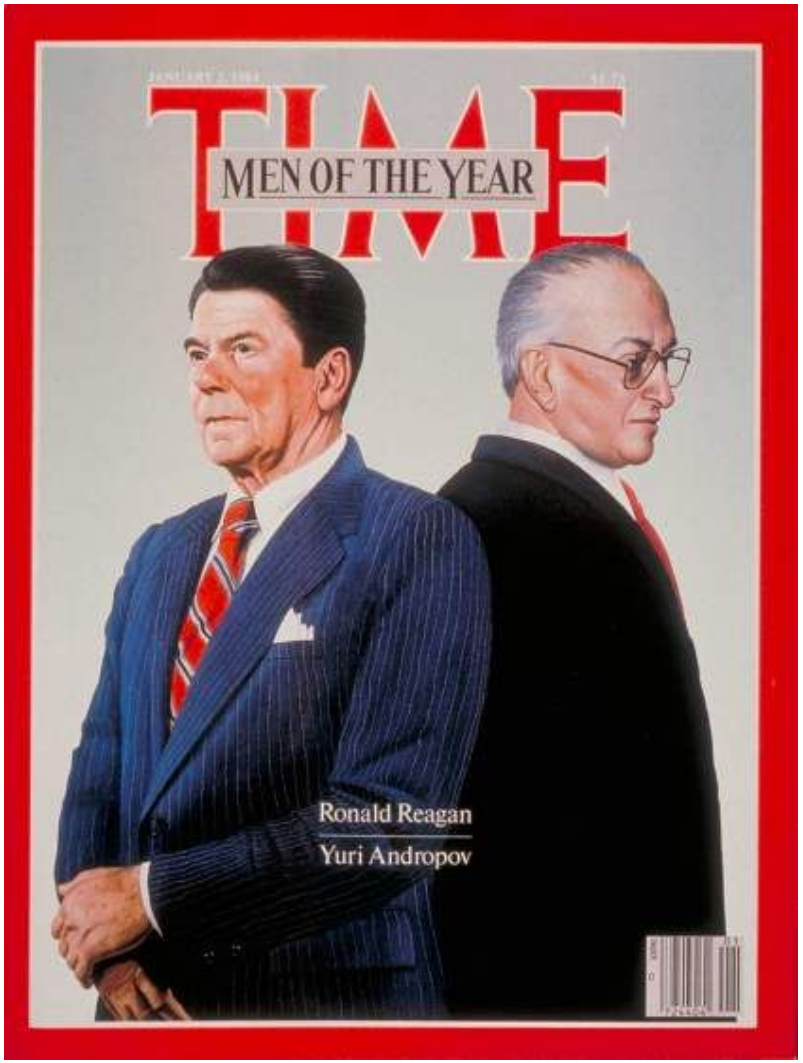
From “evil empire” in 1983 to the end of the Cold War in 1988



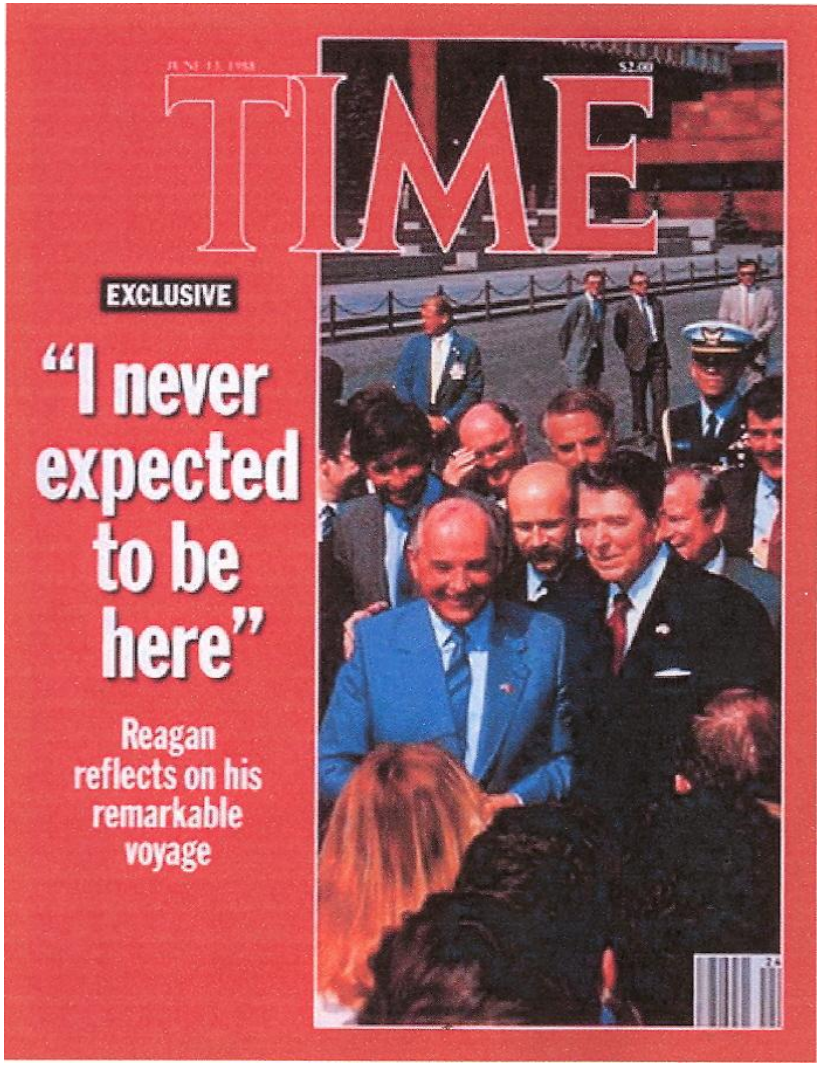


Overcoming of mutual demonization & end of Cold War

January 1984

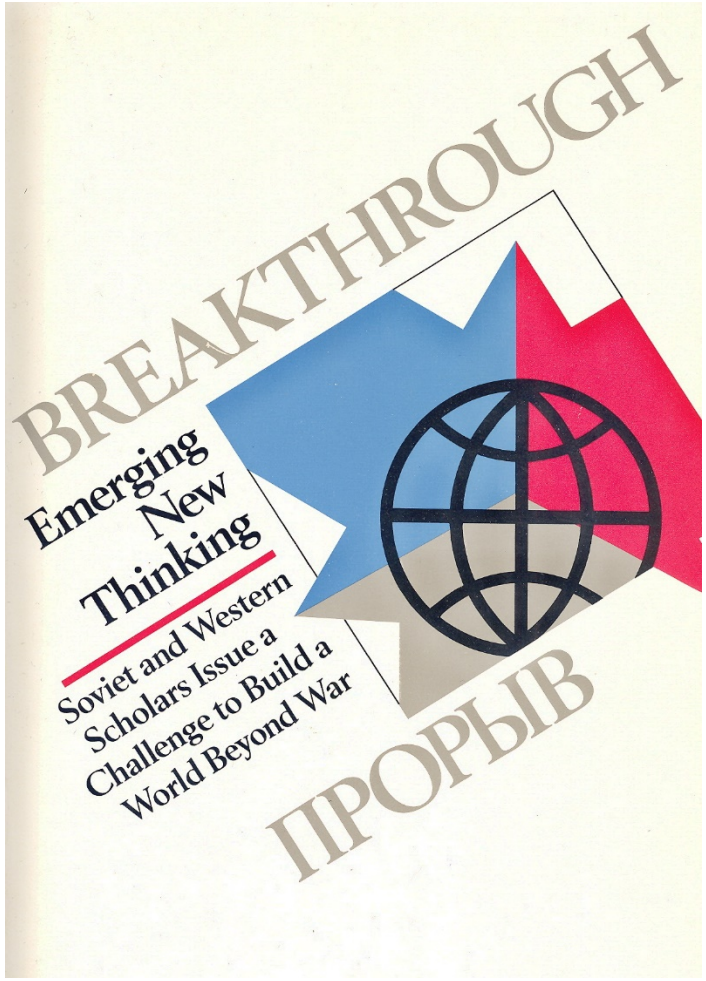


June 1988



V. Can America and Russia Cooperate in Future?

Need to recognize both sides at fault in past

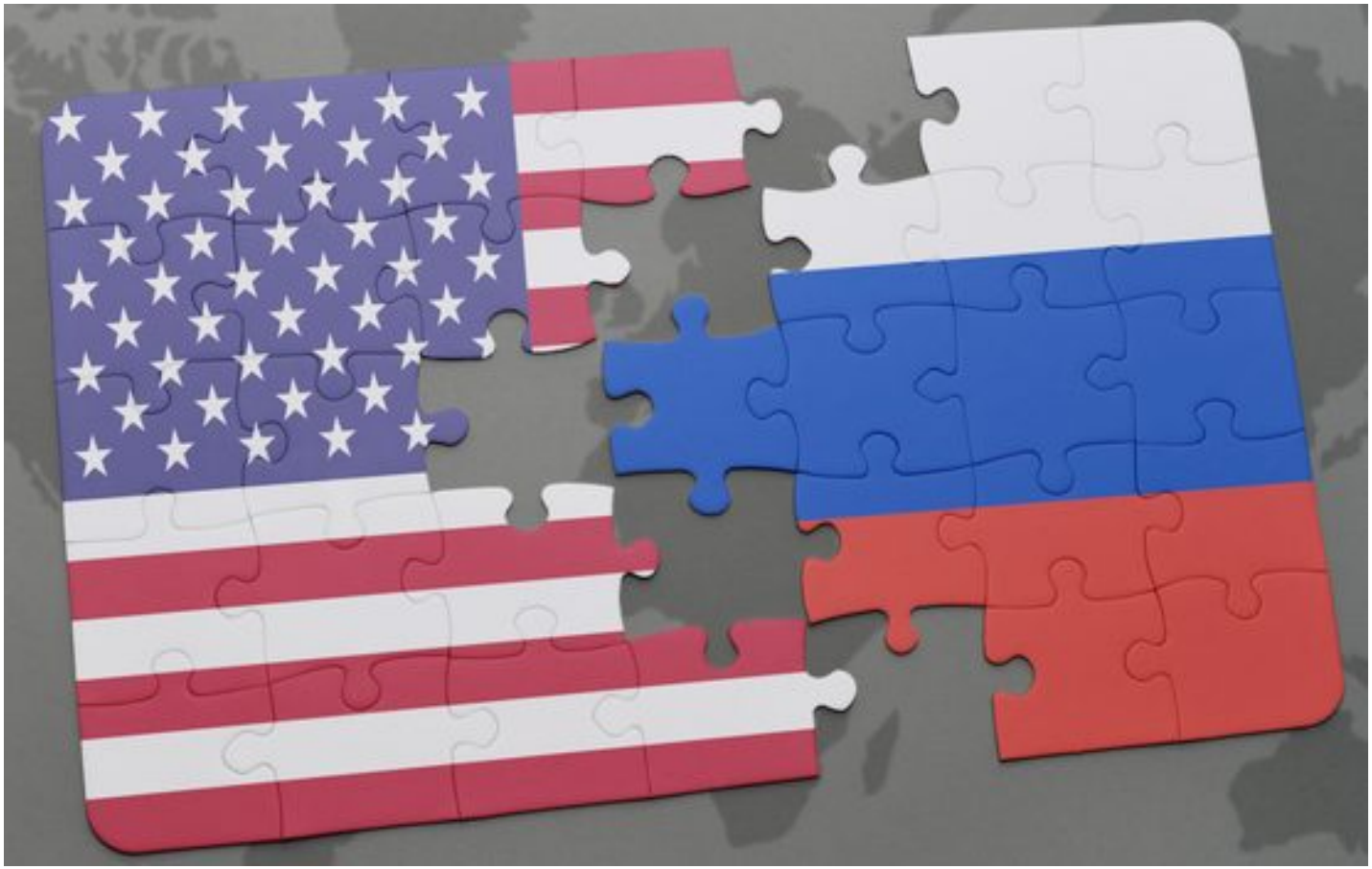


April 1987 meeting, Ben Lomond, California.

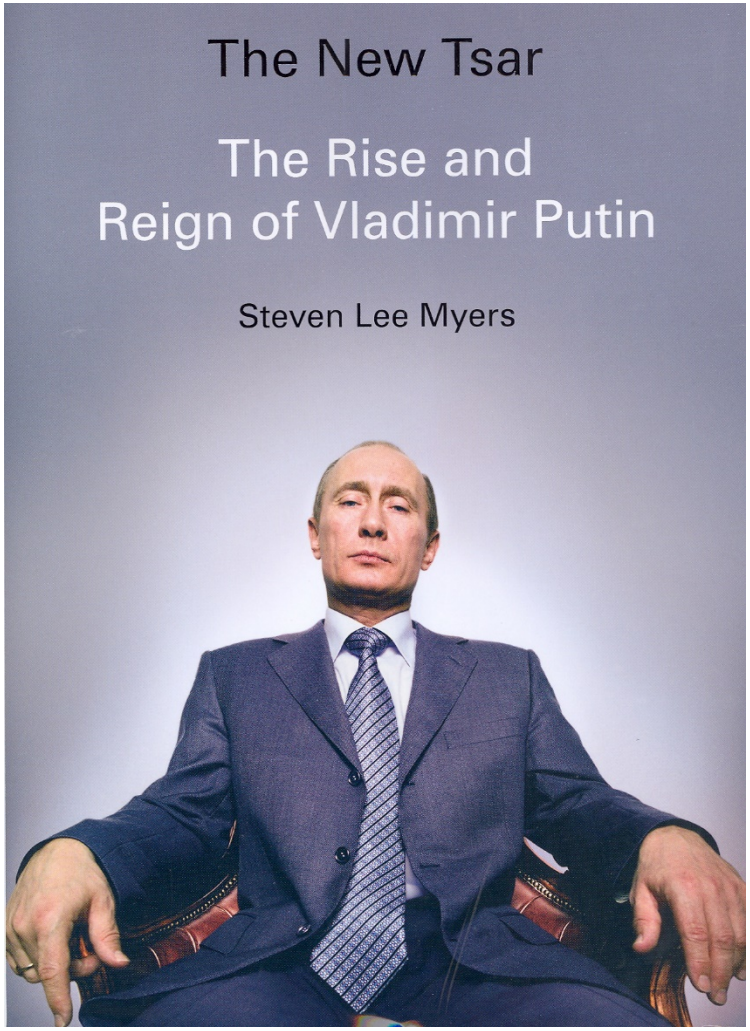
Bottom row, left to right: Alexander Nikitin, Ross Lavroff, Martin Hellman, Elena Loshchenkova, Anatoly Gromyko, Kenneth Boulding, Sergei Kapitza.

V. Prospects For Future Cooperation?

Curb costly modernization of nuclear forces
Avoid dangerous miscalculation or accident
Counter terrorism and nuclear proliferation
Promote mutually beneficial economic development



IV. American Blame on Russian Regression



Book by NY Times reporter, 2015

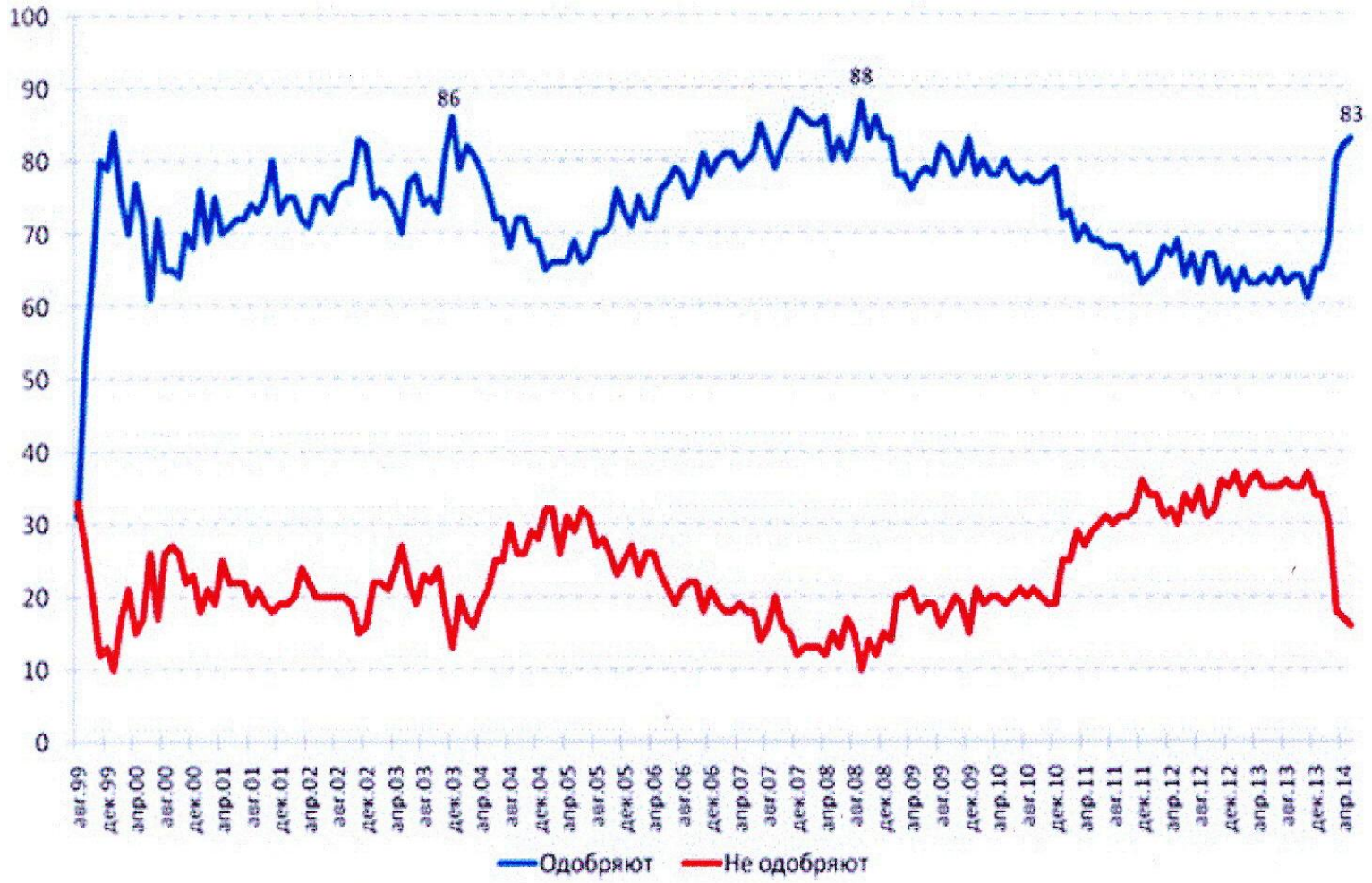
Depicts Putin as:

- Homo Sovieticus
- Paranoid
- Irrational
- Personally responsible for war in Ukraine

Blames Putin for deterioration of Russian-American relations

Approval and Disapproval of Putin, 1999-2014

Problem not just Putin but Russian nationalism?



American Interventions in Russian Election 1996

IMF loan of $10 billion; World Bank project; Clinton and G8 in Moscow; American political consultants advised Yeltsin campaign

US/NATO War vs. Serbia over Kosovo, 1999

*Note severe tension **before** Putin came to power*

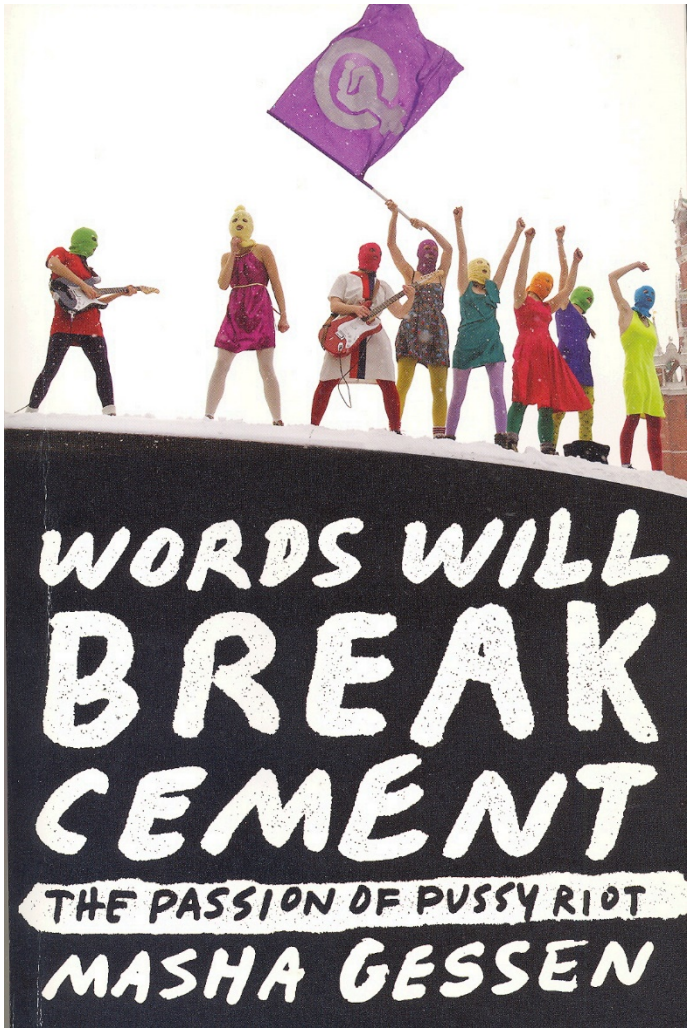
- Condemned 'NATO's attempt to enter 21st century as global policeman'.
- But approved Russian diplomatic intervention that helped bring end to war in June 1999.
- May have approved Russian military occupation of Pristina airport that provoked brief crisis with General Wesley Clark.
- Talk on both sides of WWIII.
- Told Clinton "our cooperation came to the brink of collapse with Kosovo."

American Championing of Russian Critics of Putin

Profanity-laced “punk prayer” in Cathedral of Christ the Savior, February 2012 led to arrests.

New York Times, Feb. 2014:

“They offer Russia a much better future” than Putin with his “soul-crushing repression.”



Putin's Historical Perspective

Presidential address, 12/4/2014:

"our American friends … are always influencing Russia's relations with its neighbors, either openly or behind the scenes."

"The policy of containment was not invented yesterday. It has been carried out against our country for many years .., for decades, if not centuries."