



Understanding the Ukraine Crisis Through Putin Doctrine

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FEBRUARY 2022

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Introduction

'Russia Is Not Angry; It's focusing.' This is a Russian aphorism put forward by Alexander Gorchakov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian empire, in 1856, after Russia lowered its international profile following its defeat in the Crimean War. Indeed, Russia is a country that has had its ups and downs but has the ability to renew itself by **'focusing'** every time.

To understand Russia's recent rise and Russia's behavior in today's Ukraine crisis, we need to understand policy priorities of Putin Doctrine, which managed to transform Russia in the post-Soviet era.

In this context, the historical geopolitics of Russia, the transformation of Russia in the post-Soviet period, this transformation and the policy priorities of the Putin Doctrine that guided Russian Foreign Policy will be examined first. Then, in line with this doctrine, what the Ukraine crisis means and finally Russia's current and future role in Europe and Asia will be examined.

Russia's Permanent Geopolitics

For 500 years, the momentum behind the Russian grand strategy and the most prominent character of Russian foreign policy can be expressed as **'rising ambitions'**. With this ambition, starting with the reign of Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century, Russia managed to expand for hundreds of years, eventually covering one-sixth of the earth's land mass. But this remarkable Russian progress has been up and down.

Peter the Great's victory over Charles XII in the early 1700s, which placed Russian power in the Baltic Sea and Europe, Alexander I's victory over Napoleon, who brought Russia to Paris as the arbiter of great power affairs at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and Stalin's victory in World War II. Its victory over Adolf Hitler in World War II, which gave Russia a central role in shaping the postwar global order.

In contrast, Russia lost the 1853-56 Crimean War, lost the 1904-5 Russian-Japanese War, lost World War I, and this defeat led to the collapse of the imperial regime. Most recently, he lost the cold war, which resulted in the dissolution of the Soviet regime.

During this ups and downs, some emotions developed that shaped Russia's perception of itself and the outside world. The first is the belief in Russia's **'special mission'**. The Russians have always been a people with a sense of living in constant harmony *with a 'special mission'* dating back to Byzantium, which Russia claims as an inheritance.

In fact, many of the great powers exhibited similar feelings of exceptionalism. Germany and Japan's feelings of exceptionalism were suppressed by bombing in World War II. But Russia's is extremely resilient. The third Rome, the Pan-Slavic kingdom, the communist international's world headquarters are successive special missions, and today's version of Eurasianism is a movement that fuses them all into one degree and imagines Russia as neither European nor Asian.

The sense of having a special mission proudly equips Russia's people and leaders, but also fuels resentment to the west by emphasizing Russia's uniqueness and importance. Thus, relative economic backwardness is second to none, and psychological alienation is added to institutional disintegration. This feeling also contributes to the scarcity of Russia's official alliances and its reluctance to join international bodies. As a result, the Russian elites are oscillating between the search for closer ties with the West on the one hand and the anger of the insults they feel on the other.

Another emotion that shapes Russia and the Russian mind is due to the unique geography of the country. Fueled by turbulent developments in East Asia, Europe and the Middle East in this great geography, Russia has always felt '*vulnerable*' throughout its history and has exhibited a kind of '*defensive aggression*' with this feeling.

The real reason behind Russia's expansion, many of which were unplanned, has been the belief in the country's military and political class that further expansion can secure previous expansions. Russian security has therefore traditionally been shaped to move outward to prevent external attacks .

Today, smaller countries on Russia's borders are seen more as potential enemies than as potential friends, and this conviction was strengthened by the Soviet collapse.

The last and perhaps most important emotion shaping the Russian mind is always the search for a strong state. In this sense, the only guarantor of Russia's security is a strong state willing and able to act aggressively in its own interests, and a squeaky state is seen as the guarantor of the internal order.

However, efforts to establish a strong state have always led to the weakening of institutions and the prominence of leadership. This unbridled leadership tends to make the fundamental characteristic of the decision-making of the Russian grand strategy capricious and unpredictable.

Russia is a great civilization spread over an enormous geography. However, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991, Moscow was forced to largely withdraw from Central Asia, Europe and the Caucasus.

These losses after the Cold War caused major traumas that still had implications for the Russian elites with a sense of special mission and in the minds of the Russian people in their perception of Russia's place and mission in the world.

Russia is right to think that post-Cold War settlement was unstable. But this result is not due to intentional humiliation or betrayal. It is the inevitable result of the decisive victory of the West in its rivalry with the Soviet Union.

Dissolution of the Soviet Union; Bir Trauma With Effects Still Ongoing

After World War II, the Soviet Union lost in the political, economic, cultural, technological and military global competition between Western powers and the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev's Kremlin chose to bow gracefully.

In January 1992, about a month after the official dissolution of the Soviet Union, U.S. President George H. W. Bush said in his State of the Union address : **"By God's grace, America won the Cold War."** But Russian officials have never been clearer about exactly what happened from their point of view. ¹

But this result was something that post-Soviet Russia never really accepted. All Russian leaders agreed on one thing: the **"New World Order"**, which emerged after 1992, was unlike what Mikhail Gorbachev and other reform-minded Soviet leaders envisioned as the best possible way to prevent the worst consequences of the Cold War.

In this sense, the tension between Western powers and Russia stems not only from the events in Syria and Ukraine, but also from an ongoing dispute over what the collapse of the Soviet Union meant for the world order.

For The Americans and other Westerners, the meaning of Soviet collapse is simple: the United States won the Cold War and took its rightful place as the world's only superpower, while post-Soviet Russia was unable and resisting self-integration into the postwar liberal international order led by Washington.

The Russians, of course, see things differently. In their view, Russia's current situation is the illegitimate result of a never-ending campaign by the United States to hold Russia back and prevent it from regaining its worthy status.

The resulting **"New World Order"** no longer meant an arrangement between equals. According to Western powers, this meant the victory of the West, even the **'End of History'**. And so in the 1990s, Western powers launched an ambitious process to bring the rest of the world to what they see as the **"Right Side of History"**.

The **US-led Gulf War of 1990-91** brought a new dynamic to this process: without the constraints of superpower competition, Western powers were encouraged to use direct military force.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/29/us/state-union-transcript-president-bush-s-address-state-union.html>

Soon after, NATO expanded towards countries that formed a buffer zone around Russia during the Soviet era. In terms of the Russian security strategy, which was based on expanding the area around the core to avoid being caught off guard, NATO expansion meant crossing the red line.

But amid economic collapse and political disorder in the post-Soviet era, Russia was able to do little in response to EU consolidation and NATO enlargement. Starting in 1994, Boris Yeltsin and other Russian leaders have repeatedly expressed deep dissatisfaction with these actions.

Western powers, however, considered such criticisms from Russia as a reflection of an outdated imperial mindset, mostly directed at domestic politics. For Russia, **NATO's intervention in the Kosovo war in 1999** was a critical turning point. Many Russians were appalled by NATO's bombing of Serbia, which has close ties to Moscow.

The success of the intervention, which also led to the direct collapse of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic the following year, set a precedent for NATO and provided a new template. Since 2001, NATO or its leading member states have launched **military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya**. All three campaigns led to the deterioration of the state order.

In this sense, it was not only NATO'S expansion that alarmed Russia, but the transformation of NATO. According to Russia, NATO has now become not a defense alliance, as the allies argued during the Cold War, but an alliance of defenses.

As the United States flexed its muscles and NATO became a more aggressive organization, Russia found itself in an awkward position. As a country that had almost all of the capacities of the Soviet Union, a superpower, but also depended on the mercy and financial support of its former enemies, it had to overcome a systemic decline.

During the first decade of the post-Soviet era, Western leaders assumed that Russia could respond to its pre-situation by adapting to what they presented as "**Wider Europe**". What was touted as a wider Europe was a theoretical field that in essence encouraged countries that stood out from the EU and NATO but were also not members of these organisations to voluntarily adopt norms and regulations.

In other words, Russia was offered a limited space within the expanding architecture of Europe. This was not Gorbachev's dream of a '**Common European House**', in which he would become the co-designer of the Soviet Union. But, was faced with the option of giving up Moscow's global ambitions and agreeing to abide by rules in which it played no role in designing.

This formula was best stated by European Commission President Romano Prodi in 2002: Russia would share "everything but institutions" with the EU. Clearly, this meant that Russia would accept EU rules and regulations but could not influence decision-making.

Moscow appeared to have accepted this proposal for a while and made minimal efforts to expand its global role. However, neither the Russian elite nor ordinary Russians refused to accept the status offered to them.

But after a while, unipolar U.S. domination disappeared, but a multipolar world brought more uncertainty to international relations. In the Pacific region, China has begun to rise as an assertive power. Under these new circumstances, when trying to reshare roles, the only thing the parties are sure of is that perhaps the other side has overstepping the mark.

In this process, the Russians faced their own past and losses, and at the end of this confrontation they were able to make peace with the fact that they had lost their status and special missions in the world first. But was then able to transform themselves by refocusing on their special missions and status, as they had done before. However, during this difficult time, a Russian leadership was required that would allow the public to first accept this step back and 'transformation' and then 'focusing' again. Putin has taken on this role and successfully fulfilled it.

Russia Seeks Its Place in the Global Balance; Putin Doctrine

In his annual address to the Russian parliament in 2005, Putin called the disappearance of the Soviet Union a **"major geopolitical tragedy"** This statement accurately expresses the sense of loss that many Russians are associated with in the post-Soviet period.

The United States and Europe have repeatedly refused to accept Kremlin complaints, especially based on the breakup of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's secession from Russia, even before Putin. When Putin called the Soviet collapse **"a great geopolitical tragedy of the twentieth century,"** he actually lamented that after 1990, 25 million Russians suddenly found themselves out of Russia. ²

In this context, he has repeatedly criticized the finding of 12 million Russians in the new Ukrainian state. His article titled **"On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"**,³ published last summer, was recently distributed to all Russian troops. Putin previously wrote in an article that **'Ukraine has been turned into a springboard against Russia'**.

This narrative of loss depends on a particular concern of Putin : the idea that NATO can not only accept or help post-Soviet states, but then threaten Russia itself. Putin routinely complains that the global order ignores Russia's security concerns.

Given history, this concern doesn't seem unwarranted. After all, Russia has been repeatedly invaded by Western powers. Putin attributes this history to current concerns about NATO infrastructure approaching Russia's borders and Moscow's demands for security guarantees.

² <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2014/mar/06/john-bolton/did-vladimir-putin-call-breakup-ussr-greatest-geop/>

³ **Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"**<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

From the beginning until now, the behaviors of the Russian President is mainly driven by a series of foreign policy principles, which were initially not very clear but developed more over time, in order to eliminate the consequences of the dissolution of the Soviets.

Putin's doctrine main priority is to ensure that the West treats Russia as a 'force to be respected and feared, with special rights in its region and a voice in every serious international issue', as it did during the Soviet Union.

This **main priority** consists of tightly connected objectives;

1-Reversing The Consequences Of The Soviet Collapse

The priority of Putin's doctrine is the demand for the '**Special Rights to a Privileged Interest Area**', which Western powers and the world believe Russia has in the post-Soviet sphere. Underneath Putin's faith and demand lies the assumption that some states are more sovereign and therefore more privileged than others. In this sense, doctrine argues that only the strong state should have such authority, while others should submit to the wishes of the powerful.

In this sense, Putin believes that only **Russia, China, India and the United States** now have absolute sovereignty and are free to choose which alliances to join. Other countries, such as Ukraine or Georgia, are not fully sovereign, and according to Putin, just as North and South American countries respect the preferences of the United States, their neighbors should respect Russia's preferences. According to Putin, Russia's right to sit at the table on all important international decisions is absolute. The West must accept that Russia belongs to the 'Global Board of Directors'.

2- Using Force Is Perfectly Appropriate And Legitimate if Necessary

According to doctrine, the use of force is perfectly appropriate and legitimate if Russia believes its security is under threat. Russia acts as an intrusive force using many different means when it sees its interests under threat or wants to advance its interests in its "**Exclusive Interests**", as demonstrated by the annexation of Crimea and the crises of Georgia and Ukraine.

3-Dividing The Transatlantic Alliance

One of the most important objectives of the Putin Doctrine is to weaken NATO and ultimately ensure the withdrawal of the United States from Europe. In accordance with this goal, Russia develops special relations with countries within NATO that it sees as weak links. Russia has developed close ties with countries such as Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. Although this strategy was not very successful in Greece and Cyprus, Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile system was successful for Russia's political objectives. It plunged NATO into an internal crisis and led to Turkey's removal from the F-35 program.

Former US President Donald Trump was behaving precisely in line with Putin's goal, behaving in accordance with Putin's goal and behaving in contempt of the NATO alliance and some of the important European allies of the United States, and was openly talking about removing the United States from the organization. New US President Joe Biden is trying to repair the damage done under Trump. However, there is widespread suspicion in the European public about the resilience of the US position after 2024, which stems from US inconsistencies and which Russia has reinforced through social media .

4- Repelling The Liberal, Rules-Based International Order Established By Europe And The United States After The Cold War.

Putin believes that the way to weaken the liberal global order is to weaken democracies. In this respect, Moscow aims to defend authoritarian regimes and undermine democracies, supports anti-American and Euroskeptic groups in Europe and populist movements on both sides of the Atlantic, interferes in elections and works to inflame discord within Western societies.

Putin presents also Russia as a supporter of the status quo, an advocate of conservative values and an international player who respects powerful leaders, especially autocrats. As recent events in Belarus and Kazakhstan have shown, Russia is a strong ally to support hard-nosed authoritarian rulers. Accordingly, Russia supports autocrats not only in its own neighborhood, but also far beyond its own neighborhood, including Cuba, Libya, Syria and Venezuela.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the game was limited and played by certain rules. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union mostly respected the rules of the game and each other's spheres of influence. However, the post-Western order in Putin's mind seems to be a '**world of uneven Hobbes**'. Putin's '**modus operandi**' is in **pursuit of his** new system, destabilizing and keeping the West out of balance, predicting his true intentions and surprising when he acts.

Understanding the Ukraine Crisis from the Putin Doctrine Perspective

The current rift between Russia and Ukraine is actually a reflection of a 30-year showdown between Russia and western powers. It concerns the future of the European order produced after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, the United States and its allies designed a European security architecture in which Russia had no clear commitment or share, but Putin, who has gradually consolidated his power since coming to power, is now challenging the post-Cold War global order, which he believes is unfair.

Putin, who has frequently voiced complaints about the system in previous years, initially acted as the leader of a strong and players-surrounded and geopolitically vulnerable state. Russia played the role of an angry nation that sought geopolitical justice at the time and was the victim of the conditions created and influenced by others.

However, many failures of the United States in the Middle East, the 2008 global financial crisis, the economic and political crises in the EU, and China's growing power lashed out at Russia's ambitions to rebel against the Western-led international system, and the Russian government concluded that, taking all these developments into account, Western expansionism could only be reversed with an "**iron fist.**"

The overthrow of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich by pro-Western forces in February 2014 was the last straw for Russia. Moscow's Crimea operation was Russia's first response to the persistent expansion of the EU and NATO to the east in the post-Cold War era. The Russians have long viewed Crimea as the most humiliating loss of any territory except Russia.

Russia has decided that Syria will be the next place to lower the iron fist. The Syrian intervention was aimed not only at strengthening Assad's position, but also forcing the United States to agree on a more equal footing with Moscow. Putin's decision in March to begin withdrawing Russian forces from Syria did not signal a reversal; on the contrary, it was a sign of the success of the strategy. Moscow demonstrated its military prowess and changed the dynamics of the conflict, but also avoided getting bogged down in a swamp in Syria.

Due to Russia's growing influence in the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe, Putin has now decided to move to a new phase and is now taking this approach a step further with the Ukraine crisis. Putin sees a Ukraine crisis, which he planned far more extensively than the annexation of Crimea and Russia's intervention in Donbas in 2014, as an action that would undermine the current order and restore Russia's "justified" place in the European continent and the world order. Euro-Atlantic security architecture has been reorganized twice since the late 1940s. The first came when the Yalta system was divided into two rival blocs in Europe after The Second World War

In fact, Putin's main goal is not to invade Ukraine. The current crisis is ultimately related to Russia's direct challenge to this post-Cold War order and its desire to restore its lost influence over Europe. In this sense, the Ukraine crisis means Putin wants the queen in the chess game, and if he gets the queen, his next move will be trying to change post-war Euro-Atlantic security architecture. If the United States and Europe back down on the Ukraine crisis and the crisis ends as Putin wants, it could ultimately result in a third reorganization of Euro-Atlantic security.

Right now, Russia's pressure on Europe and NATO and the Ukraine crisis seem to have temporarily consolidated the alliance's unity, contrary to what Putin wants. But the United States and its allies are divided over the question of what Putin wants, as they await Russia's next move and tries to deter an invasion with the threat of diplomacy and heavy sanctions. In this moment, Ukraine is only part of the picture, and looking at the bigger picture, there are at least three factors in Western discourse that are currently missing to fully understand Russia's grand strategy.

1-Russia Has a Attack Strategy

Russia is currently undergoing an **'attack strategy'** using many vehicles in coordination at the same time. Regardless of western guarantees on issues such as ending Russia's NATO expansion, there is no guarantee that they will dissuade Russia from this strategy. In this sense, on December 21, 2021, Putin said at the Russian Defense Ministry that the West easily withdrew from the agreements and that written Western commitments guaranteed nothing.

Russia now believes that the world has changed, that the status quo is no longer legitimate, that international institutions and rules have been broken, and so it has now moved from defense to an aggressive foreign policy: Putin said in November 2021 that **"our last warnings had a certain effect"** and asked Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to **"keep Western countries as nervous as possible"**.

This strategy that Russia is currently implementing is not only about the West, but also about its broader geopolitical interests, which have no direct relationship with the West, and no guarantee of security can change that. In other words, even in the event of a deal, Russia will not guarantee the West that it will avoid its own dominant strategy.

The profile of those involved in decision-making in the Kremlin, which has tasted the attack strategy, is an important factor in the emergence and maintenance of this strategy. There are two main groups within the Russian elite. The first is made up of conservative decision-makers, predominantly siloviki, who are ready to bear any cost of the conflict⁴. They are constantly fueling Putin's concerns, provoking and escalating tensions.

Since 2014, the Siloviki in Putin's inner circle, who are also a siloviki, have begun to play a much more important role in making decisions in both domestic and foreign relations. The Siloviki see both countries as actors capable of violating international law and acting outside the rules at any time. For them, the strong are right. Therefore, conflict and sanctions do not scare siloviki, but rather offer them more opportunities.

The second group consists of technocrats and diplomats who are inside the government but have no direct influence in intervening in critical security issues or voicing concerns about geopolitics.

There are also business elites who were shunned from political decision-making years ago and are now deprived of the right to talk about geopolitics. Their best strategy is complete invisibility and silence to avoid any doubts about their loyalty or patriotism in the Kremlin, in the event of escalation of tensions.

⁴ *Siloviki*-Former intelligence and military service member, Russian Politicians. Especially Putin and Yeltsin state in times of power of they've been placed on duty at key points.

2- The Possibility Of Conflict And Embargo Will Not Weaken The Regime

The important factor to consider is the fact that in the event of a military operation against Ukraine and a conflict with the West, the Russian regime and the people will be even more consolidated. War will not provoke protests, create more opposition or weaken the regime, at least in the medium term.

In a recent poll, 50 percent of Russians blamed the United States and NATO for the escalation on the Russia-Ukraine border, while only 4 percent said their country was responsible. Any opposition that could lead to possible discontent has been completely destroyed and the fear of war provoked.

In the worst-case scenario, the Kremlin would tighten the screws further, increase political control and suppress dissent, mostly even tame "in-system" opposition. It has all the resources and tools to do this and does not face any internal resistance. Sanctions, which will greatly increase the cost of a military operation, can only have a far-fable effect on the political arena, even if it indirectly worsens socioeconomic conditions.

3- Russia's Main Target is Not Ukraine

Russia sees Soviet-era spheres of influence as regions that must be returned to Moscow's geopolitical control at all costs. For Russia, the main goal in the Ukraine crisis is to shape Ukraine's political future and to sideline all but Ukrainian players that are acceptable to the Kremlin. Putin will continue to implement a policy of repression until he establishes a breaking point on the countries that support Ukraine and Ukraine, using all means, including military threats and buildups, to achieve this goal.

The belief that Russia has an absolute right to privileged interests in the post-Soviet era means that its former Soviet neighbours, including Ukraine, should not join any alliance considered hostile to Nato or Moscow, especially the European Union. Accordingly, the Kremlin made it clear on December 17th that Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries, as well as Sweden and Finland, should commit to permanent neutrality and delay requesting NATO membership.

According to these demands, NATO will have to lift all troops and equipment in Middle and Eastern Europe and withdraw from its military posture in 1997. This would also mean Russia would have veto power over the foreign policy preferences of its non-NATO neighbors and ensure that pro-Russian governments, including Ukraine, which borders Russia, were in power.⁵

At this point, the West cannot maintain the territorial integrity of the states in the regions that Moscow considers its own sphere of influence. Bluffing doesn't work either. The governments of Bati are confused about Russia and how to deal with Russia.

⁵ <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/12/1072413634/russia-nato-ukraine>

The Problem of Dealing With Russia and the Myth of Russia's Fall

The reason western governments are confused about how to deal with Russia is because their views on Russia's decline are exaggerated, the effect of this perception of Russia is so widespread that Russia was not on the agenda of the Biden administration. Biden came up with a clear foreign policy priority that has dominated American foreign policy since the Obama era: countering a rising China.

The question of "**how to deal with Russia**" came up only when Russian troops gathered at the Ukrainian border in April. By July, however, President Joe Biden had returned to the point of declaring that Russia "**sits on top of an economy with nuclear weapons and oil wells and nothing else.**"⁶

Biden is not the first American leader to think so. Since the end of the Cold War, western politicians have periodically said that Russia's days as a true global power are numbered. In 2014, Republican senator John McCain of Arizona called Russia "**a gas station disguised as a country.**" In the same year, US President Barack Obama called Russia only a "**regional power.**" But shortly afterwards, Russia successfully intervened in the Syrian war, interfering in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the political crisis in Venezuela and the civil war in Libya. And yet, in Western countries, Russia's perception of it as a paper tiger continues.

Western leaders should have a more realistic view of Russia's real capabilities and its own vulnerabilities. Rethinking their assumptions about Russian power will allow policymakers to maintain a prolonged period of conflict with a skilled adversaries.

There are two different extreme views in the debate about the fall of Russia. It is widely believed that the country's economy is stagnant, with little value other than the extraction and export of natural resources. System is plagued by corruption and dominated by state or state-controlled enterprises, and international sanctions limit access to capital and technology. Government underfunds scientific research; bureaucratic mismanagement hampers technological innovation. Russia lags far behind the United States and China in most indicators of scientific and technological development, and the population is expected to grow by ten million people by 2050.

According to those who oppose it, Russia may now be an economically gear-shifting country. However, it remains important with its economic, demographic and military potential. As sluggish as the country's economy is, GDP rises to \$4.1 trillion in sales, making Russia Europe's second largest economy and the sixth largest in the world.

As of August 2021, Russia increased the value of the National Wealth Fund to about \$185 billion and its foreign exchange reserves to \$615 billion. The new import substitute policy, designed in response to international sanctions, has breathed new life into the agricultural sector, whose exports are worth more than \$30 billion a year. The Kremlin also directed trade to China, currently its number one trading partner. Trade with China is expected to exceed \$200 billion by 2024, double the number in 2013.

⁶ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/07/27/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-office-of-the-director-of-national-intelligence/>

Russia is the European Union's main energy supplier: the EU receives 41 percent of its natural gas, 27 percent of its oil and 47 percent of solid fossil fuels from Russia. As has always been said, it will become a shift in the future away from fossil fuels. But it's unclear how close this future really is. And Russia produces energy at such a low price that it is unlikely that Russia will get stuck before it sees the budget of other exporting countries squeezed.

Meanwhile, Russia lags behind the United States in technological innovation, but is still in the top ten worldwide in research and development spending. Moreover, Russia has a combative but viable technology sector and has developed its own systems on Facebook, Google and other popular online platforms, all of which are quite successful within Russia.

Both views contain some facts, but do not give the full picture. It is a fact that Putin cannot develop economic strategies and bring GDP where he wants it. However, not only GDP is a stand-alone and leading measure of geopolitical power. It is also true that real disposable incomes in Russia are ten percent lower today than in 2013, but international sanctions and falling oil prices caused this decline after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its invasion of eastern Ukraine. In the years since, the government has reined in spending and adjusted to lower oil prices, creating a budget surplus and a growing war fund. In general, macroeconomic indicators seem stable.

One of the most common misconceptions about Russia is the prediction that the country's demographic outlook will significantly limit its future capabilities. According to UN estimates, Russia's population will shrink by about seven percent by 2050; More pessimists see a drop of up to 11 percent. But even in the second case, Russia will continue to be the most populous country in Europe and Eurasia.

Life expectancy and mortality rates may lag behind Western countries, but Russia has improved significantly since the 1990s with reduced mortality, increased life expectancy and increased fertility rates. Until 2015, it has steadily risen in indices such as the UN's Human Development Index and the Labour Productivity Measures of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Given all these developments, the country is certainly not on the verge of a demographic collapse.

Brain drain remains a major problem for Russia. However, Russia receives a significant brain drain from the former Soviet republics. As a result, the demographic situation of Russia consists of mixed indicators showing quantitative decline as well as qualitative improvements.

Beyond economic and social indicators, Russia is and will remain a military force to be considered. Military power has historically been a Russian power that compensates for the country's relatively unequal economy, technological lack. This is partly why Russia has maintained long-term competition with economically much stronger states in the past, whether it is the United States or the Britain Empire.

Russia is estimated to spend between \$150 billion and \$180 billion a year on defense, with half of Russia's annual defense budget spent on procuring new weapons, modernizing the old ones and researching military technology, a much larger share than spent by most Western militaries in these areas. Moreover, some Russian expenditures are classified and vague.

Using these generous budgets, Russia successfully rebuilt its army. The Russian military-industrial complex has developed many new generation weapons, from hypersonic missiles to directed energy weapons, advanced submarines, integrated air defenses, electronic warfare, as well as combat capabilities in space and cyberspace. Russia has also increased its capacity to intervene in different areas with a number of special forces, mercenary models as well as its military. As a result, today, the Russian army is at its highest level of readiness, mobility and technical ability in decades. NATO, on paper, continues to excel,

Moscow's military might and its ability to threaten its neighbors have allowed it to force the West to the negotiating table, as has been evident over the past few weeks. Under these circumstances, the United States and its allies should consider Russia a serious military adversary, both in terms of capability and intent.

In this sense, compared to China, which the United States currently considers the most important threat, Russia actually poses more danger to the U.S. homeland. For one thing, despite China's growing arsenal of strategic nuclear weapons, Russia remains the leading U.S. nuclear threat. The same goes for Russia's ability to reach the continental United States with long-range conventional missiles. Russia has more troops abroad than China, has bases in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East, and has the capacity to pit its military against NATO forces.

After all, aside from the exaggerated views in the analysis of Russia's situation that Russia has fallen or become a global power, Russia is an ambitious '**Great Power**' that provides room for manoeuvre over Western conformism and emphasizes the superiority of hard power and seeks to rise, but is not yet a global power capable of threatening and reshaping the international order.

Russia enjoys '**Great Power**' status from having a permanent veto at the UN Security Council, as well as the world's foremost nuclear arsenal and world-class cyberwarfare capabilities. These and its unique geography have given it some kind of global reach. Russia is regarded as equal to the United States, the European Union and even China for its reach and its recent rising influence, and however insistent it is on its status as a global power, that is not the case at the moment.

Although Russia has demonstrated significant military capability and western capabilities in Europe, the Middle East and Africa in recent years, even the long-term sustainability of its newly acquired status as a major power could be at risk if Moscow fails to develop a coherent and successful economic strategy.

Economic weakness can only be hidden for a short time with military power or skilled diplomacy. Russia's current situation is living proof that without other dimensions of global power status, hard power is very fragile and unpredictable.

The Future of Russia's Search for Global Power

According to Russia's perception, the United States is currently less capable of pursuing a weak, divided and coherent foreign policy. Europe, on the other hand, is economically strong but politically and militarily weak and focused on its domestic problems in general. Despite the current risks and weaknesses, Russia sees this as a window of opportunity and has mobilized all its power to make good use of this window of opportunity.

In China, which sees the weaknesses of Western powers led not only by Russia but also by the United States as a window of opportunity, it is on the offensive in line with Xi's new global grand strategy, which he has revised as the "**central stage of the world.**"

Seeking to restore deteriorating global balances in line with their own goals, these two major powers are now exchanging technical and financial support by forming a strategic partnership to focus their resources on competing with the United States and Western countries, not with each other.

The effect of this collaboration is greater than the sum of its parts. When the success of the Russian-type authoritarian, strong leadership and the model of capitalist development under Chinese one-party rule is added to the failures experienced by democratic states especially in the face of the pandemic, the trend towards populist and authoritarian administrations in many countries rises significantly.

European countries, which had a period of strong economic integration during the Cold War but failed to show the same military and political capacity, are not reacting adequately to this new and challenging competition.

The United States, which has largely withdrawn from Asia and the Middle East and has serious social economic problems in itself, is having serious difficulties in dealing with Russia on the European front and China on the Pacific front at the same time. One indicator of this is the Security Strategic Guidance, released in March as one of the Biden administration's first national security analyses. In this document, the United States dealt with China significantly in depth, while leaving only a few sentences to Russia. When the Biden administration talks about its approach to Russia, he likes to say that the United States can "**walk and chew gum at the same time.**" But it's not as easy to do as to say.

As a Result; The main goal of the Putin Doctrine is to change the liberal, international order established by Europe and the United States after the Cold War and to re-establish the Global order. Putin sees dividing Europe and ultimately ensuring the US withdrawal from Europe as a crucial step towards the fundamental goal, and the Ukraine crisis is a specially designed crisis for that purpose.

Given the confusion between the United States and NATO over Russia's strategy in the Ukraine crisis, there is a possibility that Russia will get the result it wants.

If Russia's Ukraine strategy is successful, it could also succeed in removing the United States, whose position will be weakened, from Europe and rebuilding its influence over Europe,.

In this case, it will focus on the Asia-Pacific region to achieve its ultimate goal of permanently changing the architecture of the global order.

In such a scenario, they could join forces with China, overwhelmed by the strong U.S.-led alliance, to neutralize the United States in the Pacific region. Such a scenario would mean the end not only of the post-Cold War balances, but also of the liberal global order based on Western leadership and supremacy, paving the way for a new global order.

This new global order, in which Moscow is divided into the spheres of influence of the world by Russia and China in its mind, could become a new version of the Yalta system.

Even if they don't like each other very much, it is not clear at this time, whether the two powerful autocratic partners, who are now joining forces in the face of their common enemies, will begin a struggle for influence among themselves, dividing the world into their own spheres of influence when they capture the chance to reshape the global order; **but is very clear that Ukraine is the keystone of the faltering global order. If this keystone moves, there is a possibility that the entire structure will collapse.**