RUSSIA: WHAT’S NEXT?
America & Russia after the Cold War (1991–2017)
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Shortly before his inauguration in January 1993, and barely a year after the collapse of the Soviet Union, President-elect Bill Clinton declared Russia “the biggest and toughest thing out there.” This would prove a prophetic judgment. In the quarter century since the Cold War came to an improbably abrupt and peaceful conclusion, the question of Russia policy repeatedly confounded US leaders and policymakers—posing one of the most consequential and revealing tests of American power and leadership in the modern world.

The purpose of this seminar is to study the trajectory of U.S. policy towards Russia over the course of the past 25 years—an arc of history that includes five presidencies, three Kremlin leaders, and the reordering of the modern world. Our goal will be to understand both how we got to where we are now—but just importantly, what that journey reveals about the character of American power in the 21st century.

Sunday, July 29, 2018
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Opening Dinner
Hertog Foundation
1875 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 500

Readings:

The End of the Cold War
- George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” Foreign Affairs, July 1947
- Stephen Kotkin, Chapters 1–3, Armageddon Averted (2001)

Key Questions:

1. What was the Cold War? Why did it end? How did it end?
2. How does Henry Kissinger explain the end of the Cold War? What are the rival explanations offered by Stephen Kotkin? How did Kennan prophesize that the Cold War would end?
3. What role did the U.S. play in the dissolution of the Soviet Union? How does Kissinger explain Reagan’s role?
4. How was the collapse of the Soviet Union experienced and perceived inside Russia? How did Russians explain what happened to their system?

George H. W. Bush Policies toward Russia
Readings:

- Richard Nixon, “How to Lose the Cold War,” Memo, March 1992

Key Questions:

1. What were the policies of the Bush 41 Administration towards newly-independent Russia following the end of the Soviet Union in December 1991? What were Washington’s priorities, and what did it choose not to prioritize?
2. What was Richard Nixon’s critique of this approach? Do you think it is fair?

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Monday, July 30, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon The 1990s and the Clinton Administration

Readings:

*Two Visions of the Post-Cold War World*
- Henry Kissinger, Excerpt from Chapter 31, *Diplomacy*, p. 813–26

*Russia Policy under Clinton*

Key Questions:

1. The Clinton Administration came to office at a moment when the organizing concept for U.S. foreign policy for the past 40-plus years—the Cold War—was suddenly gone. What was the alternative vision it put forward in its 1994 National Security Strategy? How did Russia fit into that vision?
2. What were the instincts and policy priorities of the Clinton Administration towards Russia when it entered office? What was its strategy for pursuing them? To what extent did its approach differ from that of the George H. W. Bush Administration? What were the similarities?
3. Kissinger and Fukuyama offer strikingly different predictions about what the post-Cold War future is likely to look like. What are their respective ideas? In hindsight, who made the better arguments? To what extent did the Clinton Administration follow any of their recommendations?
4. The U.S. had high hopes in the early 1990s for Russia’s evolution into a free-market democracy. What went wrong? Who is to blame?
5. The Clinton Administration invoked a number of historical analogies to justify its Russia policy. What were they? What historical analogies did Russian leaders invoke to explain their experience in the 1990s?
Noon to 1:00 p.m.  Group Lunch

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  The Clinton Administration Continued

Readings:

**The NATO Expansion Debate**

**The Serbian Revolution**

Key Questions:

1. One of the major flashpoints between the U.S. and Russia during the 1990s was the question of NATO expansion. What were the arguments for expanding NATO eastward? What were the arguments against? What were the alternatives? Imagine yourself as a decision-maker at the time: which course would you have supported?

2. What was the impact of developments in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s on the trajectory of U.S.-Russian relations? How did Russia react to U.S. intervention in Bosnia in 1995 versus Kosovo in 1999? What happened in Serbia in late 2000?

3. By the end of President Clinton’s term in office, U.S.-Russian relations had deteriorated. Why did this happen, in your view? To what extent was this a failure of American policy? How should the Clinton Administration be assessed for its handling of Russia?

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Tuesday, July 31, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon  The Bush Administration (2001–2009)

Readings:

- Condoleezza Rice, “Promoting the National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000
- Angela Stent, Chapters 3 and 5, *The Limits of Partnership* (2014)
Key Questions:

1. How does Condoleezza Rice, writing on the eve of the 2000 election, characterize the Clinton Administration's approach to Russia in the 1990s? What approach does she counsel instead?

2. What does the Bush Administration adopt as its Russia policy upon coming to office? To what extent did its policy change after 9/11—and if so, how? What did Bush hope to achieve with Russia? How was the Bush approach to Russia similar or different from that of President Clinton? Did he succeed? Was it the right approach?

3. How does the 2002 National Security Strategy talk about Russia? What are its assumptions about Russia and its place in the broader international order? How are these similar or different from the Clinton approach?

Noon to 1:00 p.m. Group Lunch

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Bush Administration Continued

Readings:

- Peter Finn, “Outspoken Putin Critic Shot Dead,” Washington Post, October 8, 2006
- “Russia’s Booming Economy,” The Economist, June 8, 2007
- Angela Stent, “Chapter 7: From Kosovo to Georgia: Things Fall Apart,” The Limits of Partnership (2014)
- Lindsey Graham and Joe Lieberman, “Russia’s Aggression is a Challenge to World Order,” Wall Street Journal, August 26, 2008

Key Questions:

1. What are the reasons for the deterioration in U.S.-Russian relations under President Bush? Was this downturn unavoidable? What is President Bush’s explanation for what happened? What is Angela Stent’s?

2. What happened in Chechnya in the 2000s?
3. What were the manifestations of Russia’s increased international assertiveness in the mid-2000s? Did this reflect a fundamental shift of the Russian foreign policy outlook? What explains them? How did the U.S. react to these actions by Russia?

4. What were the causes of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War? What was the relationship between events in the Balkans and the conflict in Georgia?

5. What are the competing views of the significance of the 2008 Georgia War offered by Kissinger, Stent, and Lieberman-Graham? What are their respective recommendations and implications for U.S. policy following the war?

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon The Obama Administration, Part 1 (2009–2013)

Readings:

The Reset
- Michael McFaul, Chapters 6-8 (“Launching the Reset,” “Universal Values,” “The First (and Last) Moscow Summit”), From Cold War to Hot Peace
- “An Open Letter to the Obama Administration From Central and Eastern Europe,” July 16, 2009

Libya
- Steven Lee Myers, “The Real Story Behind Putin’s Syria Strikes: Inside the Kremlin Rivalry that Radicalized Russia’s Strongman,” Politico, October 1, 2015

Russian Internal Developments (2011–12)
- Julia Ioffe, “Net Impact: One Man’s Cyber Crusade Against Russian Corruption,” The New Yorker, April 11, 2011
- Will Englund and Kathy Lally, “Medvedev confirms he will step aside for Putin to return to Russia’s presidency,” Washington Post, September 24, 2011
- Elise Labott, “Clinton cites ‘serious concerns’ about Russian election,” CNN, December 6, 2011

Key Questions:
1. What was the Obama “reset” with Russia? What were its goals? Did it accomplish them? What did it not seek to accomplish? What were the criticisms of the reset, and to what extent do you think they are valid? What were the alternative approaches that Obama might have taken upon taking office? Why do you think he chose the path he did?
2. What was the domestic political and economic situation in Russia at the time that Obama entered office? How do you think that influenced Russia’s response to the reset?
3. What role did the 2011 war in Libya play in shaping U.S.-Russian relations? How did the Russian leadership view the U.S.-led intervention there?
4. How did domestic developments in Russia in 2011 shape the U.S.-Russian relationship? How did the Obama Administration react to the 2011 protests following the Duma election? Why do you think this was the Obama approach, and was this the right response?

Noon to 1:00 p.m. Group Lunch
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Obama Administration, Part 1 Continued

Readings:

U.S. Human Rights Policy
- Steve Guterman, “Russia Bars 18 Americans in Retaliation for Magnitsky List,” Reuters, April 13, 2013

Post-Reset Reflections… and What Next?
- Timothy Heritage and Steve Holland, “Russia Gives Snowden Asylum, Obama-Putin Summit in Doubt,” Reuters, August 1, 2013

Key Questions:
1. What were the arguments for and against the Magnitsky Act? How did the Obama Administration react to the proposed legislation?
2. U.S.-Russian relations had deteriorated by the end of Obama’s first term. Why? Do you think this was inevitable for the U.S., or was it the consequence of mistakes on the part of Obama? If so, what was the alternative approach?

3. What were the possible approaches towards Russia for the Obama Administration as it began its second term? What approach did outgoing Secretary Clinton recommend? What path did Obama ultimately pursue? Did it work?

Thursday, August 2, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon The Obama Administration, Part 2 (2013–2016)

Readings:

*Syria Diplomacy and the Red Line (2013)*

*Ukraine Explodes (2013–16)*
- David Sanger, Chapter 7 (“Putin’s Petri Dish”), *The Perfect Weapon*
- “The European Reassurance Initiative,” CSIS, February 9, 2016
Russia’s strategy in Syria from 2011 to 2014? What were its interests there? Conversely, how did Russia fit into the Obama Administration’s Syria policy, and how did Syria fit into its Russia policy? What were the alternative paths available to the Obama Administration? Why do you think it took the course it did?

2. What was the calculus behind the Russian offer to partner with the U.S. to remove Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile? How did the U.S. react? Was this the right choice?

3. What precipitated the crisis in Ukraine in late 2013 / early 2014? What role did the U.S. play? Could the crisis have been averted? Was it foreseeable?


5. What is hybrid warfare? How does it work? How was it manifest in Ukraine in 2004 and Syria in 2015–2016?

6. Was Russia’s intervention in Ukraine a success, or a mistake, on Putin’s part? How should the answer to this question affect the U.S. response?

7. How did the Obama Administration react to the Ukraine crisis? How did U.S. allies react? What were some of the alternative policies it might have pursued, as described by Flournoy and Kissinger? Why did it pursue the path it did, as against the alternatives?

8. How did Russia escalate its involvement in Syria in late 2015? What was its strategy? Was it successful? Was Russia’s intensified involvement in Syria a sign of newfound strength or, as President Obama argued, an indication of weakness?

9. How did the U.S. respond to Russia’s escalation in Syria? What were the alternatives?
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The 2016 Election and the Obama Legacy

Readings:

- David Sanger, Chapters 8-10 (“The Fumble,” “Warning from the Cotswalds,” “The Slow Awakening”), The Perfect Weapon

Four Views on “What Went Wrong?”

- Michael McFaul, Chapter 24 (“The End of Resets (For Now)”), From Cold War to Hot Peace

Key Questions:

1. How did the Obama Administration react to evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 election? What were the options available to it? Why did it pursue the path it did? Was this a mistake?
2. What were Russia’s reasons for its interference in the 2016 election? What was it trying to achieve?
3. Mearsheimer, McFaul, Kotkin, and Kirchick offer competing explanations for, “What went wrong?” and, “Who is to blame?” in the collapse of U.S.-Russian relations between 2014 and 2016. What are their respective arguments? Who is most persuasive? If you are a U.S. policymaker, what are the implications of each analysis?

Friday, August 3, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon The Trump Administration and the Future

Readings:

- Readout of President’s Call with Russian President Vladimir Putin,” The White House, January 28, 2017
- Philip Rucker et al, “Trump Administration Expels 60 Russian Officers,” Washington Post, March 26, 2018
• Courtney Weaver, “U.S. Imposes Toughest Russia Sanctions to Date,” Financial Times, April 6, 2018
• Michael R. Gordon, et al., “U.S., Russia Trade Threats on Syria Strikes,” Wall Street Journal, April 11, 2018
• Ryan Browne, “Trump’s Defense Strategy Sees China and Russia As Biggest Threats,” CNN, January 19, 2018
• Yaroslav Trofimov, “At Putin’s Parade, Netanyahu Seeks Understanding on Iran,” Wall Street Journal, May 9, 2018
• Julian Borger and Anne Perkins, “Donald Trump Calls for G7 to Readmit Russia Ahead of Summit,” The Guardian, June 9, 2018
• Michael R. Gordon, “Trump Expected to Seek Putin’s Help to Curb Iran’s Military in Syria,” Wall Street Journal, June 28, 2018
• Edward Fishman and Mark Simakovsky, “The Do-No-Harm Principle of Kremlin Relations,” Foreign Policy, July 6, 2017
• Eugene Rumer et al., “Can the Trump-Putin Summit Restore the Guardrails to the U.S.-Russia Relationship?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2, 2018
• Julia Ioffe, “What Putin Really Wants,” The Atlantic, January/February 2018

Noon to 2:00 p.m. Group Lunch & Closing Conversation