



Can Russia's Quest for the New International Order Succeed?

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Abstract: *A genesis and development of the conflict in Ukraine demonstrated fragility of the international security system and its inability to guard sovereignty of the smaller or weaker nations. By creating and then manipulating conflicts, Russia is gaining leverage over the decision making on political and economic development, governance issues, and the external alliances of those countries. By challenging sovereignty of smaller states, and forcibly changing their borders, Russia is challenging existing international order and the basic principles of Helsinki Final Act on Security and Co-operation in Europe of 1975, to which the Soviet Union, and its successor state, Russian Federation, are signatories. For the interests of global stability, it is a priority to bring Russia back to the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) without any concessions on principles of sovereignty for all OSCE member states.*

At the core of the conflict between the West and Russia is the fundamental disagreement of the current Russian leadership with the post-Cold War European order. Russia is changing realities on the ground to create conditions that will lead to negotiations on a new security architecture for Europe and the entire Northern Hemisphere. The Russian idea of this new system of security is to limit the sovereignty of the countries in its neighborhood and prevent the penetration of Western hard and soft power, as well as its system of values and governance, in the former Soviet space, an area that Russia considers as its sphere of strategic interest. Russian leadership has on several occasions communicated this message to the international community.¹

President Vladimir Putin, in his widely publicized 2007 speech at the Munich Security Conference, expressed Russia's dissatisfaction with the existing "unipolar" character of the world order. He followed with a harsh criticism of the Organization

¹ "The Draft of the European Security Treaty," Official Internet Resource of the President of Russia, Kremlin, Nov. 29, 2009, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/6152>.

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for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Western countries in general. He had already criticized the West's push to fulfill all the conditions of the 1999 revised treaty on Conventional Arm Forces in Europe (CFE), including the removal of all Russian forces from Georgia and Moldova. But most importantly, he stated that "we have reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security."²

While the speech was publicized widely, world leaders did not take Putin's statement seriously enough. The Russian leader had a plan that could lead to new realities, forcing others to pay more attention to Russian statements and actions. Implementation of that plan continues to this day. The Russian Federation took the first significant step to shake the existing European status quo in 2007 when Russia officially suspended its participation in the CFE treaty. This move was followed by the events in Georgia in 2008 when the Russian military invaded the territory of the sovereign country and maintained its military presence there after active conflict ended. Russia simultaneously recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions of Georgia, as independent states. All of these actions were publicized as a Russian response to recognizing Kosovo's independence against the will of Serbia. The same argument was used in 2014. Russian leadership considered NATO's commitment to Georgia and Ukraine at the 2008 Bucharest summit as a threat to Russia's security interests.

The immediate objective of the Russian Federation was to stop the Eastward expansion of European security and economic institutions. Its long-term goal was to push for a new security arrangement with NATO, the EU, and United States which would recognize Russian supremacy over the sovereign rights of the countries in Russia's neighborhood. Under the premise of protecting its own sovereignty vis-à-vis supra-national organizations and "universal" values,³ the Russian Federation has sought arrangements with Western powers designed to limit the sovereignty of neighboring states. Russia considers this process a legitimate method of ensuring its own security.

Sovereignty in this context is understood as the supreme authority within a territory which is exercised in both internal development and external relations.⁴ The current international relations system is based on the sovereign rights of nation states, both internally and externally sovereign, to ally, trade, conclude agreements, open borders, etc., as well as on the Westphalian premise that interfering in other states' governing prerogatives is illegitimate.⁵ The Russian Federation is using military force, coercion, and economic and energy supply disruptions to limit the sovereignty of

² Vladimir Putin, Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy, Munich, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>.

³ Alexander Dugin, *Counter-Currents*, July 2012, <https://www.counter-currents.com/2012/07/interview-with-alexander-dugin/>.

⁴ Dan Philpott, "Sovereignty," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/sovereignty/>.

⁵ Alan James, "The Practice of Sovereign Statehood in Contemporary International Society," *Political Studies*, vol. 47, no. 3 (1999), pp. 457–473.

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