# Russian Natural Gas Negative

## File Explanation

This is the negative file against the Russian natural gas affirmative. A very strong set of 1NC arguments would look like this:

--the Russian appeasement DA (separate file)

--the China DA (separate file)

--the Lift Sanctions Counterplan (this file)

--the case arguments (this file)

#### Case arguments against the Natural Gas Advantage

All of the arguments here are very strong. The best argument is that US companies won’t invest in the Arctic. They did invest prior to 2022, but then they were burned by sanctions and lost a lot of money, so they aren’t likely to do so again. Another very strong argument is that Putin is resilient, and there’s no real threat to his leadership.

**However**, you do need to be careful about how arguments interact. If you are saying that Putin is resilient, or that Russia’s economy won’t collapse, that could potentially harm your arguments on the Russian appeasement DA (which assumes Russia will negotiate genuinely because their economy is hurting and Putin is facing domestic pressure). If you say that US companies won’t invest, that could harm your link to the China DA (which assumes US companies will invest in Russian LNG). It’s probably OK to read all of these arguments in the 1NC, but be selective and consistent about what you extend in the negative block.

#### Case arguments against the Relations Advantage

The best arguments by far are that Putin will pocket concessions given to him by the United States, and won’t reciprocate with further cooperation. Relatedly, Putin is also very unlikely to live up to any arms control agreements that would be negotiated.

#### The Lift Sanctions Counterplan

This is a **plan inclusive counterplan** – a counterplan that does part, but not all of the plan. Think of the plan as two actions: first, it must to lift sanctions (because US investment isn’t possible without doing so), and then second, it offers an agreement to engage in joint ventures with Russia over liquid natural gas (LNG), and offers sub-zero drilling technology. The counterplan only does the first part.

It claims to solve the case because lifting sanctions allows Russia to develop stronger LNG partnerships with other countries (such as China). It also claims to solve relations, because sanctions are the biggest thorn in US-Russian energy relations.

The **net benefit** is the China DA. There are very good cards in this file that say a U.S. economic cooperation agreement with Russia drives a wedge between Russia and China. The plan is that agreement, but the counterplan just lifts sanctions with no further promise of economic cooperation.

# Case

## Natural Gas Advantage Answers

### 1NC – Natural Gas Advantage

#### 1. Putin is resilient. No risk of regime collapse

Julian G. Waller, 2024 - is Research Analyst in the Russia Studies Program at the Center for Naval Analyses and Professorial Lecturer in Political Science at George Washington University. “Putin the Resilient: Predicting the Collapse of His Regime Is Wishful Thinking” Foreign Affairs, 8/14, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/eastern-europe-and-former-soviet-union/putin-resilient> //DH

The political regime that Russian President Vladimir Putin helms today is not the same as the one he started a war with in 2022. Russia has been an authoritarian country for years, with national elections heavily weighted in favor of Putin’s party and the ruling elite connected through long-standing patron-client networks. But since the invasion of Ukraine, Russia has turned into a true personalist dictatorship, with unchecked power in the hands of one man—Putin—and the rest of the country’s political institutions relegated to subordinate positions in the authoritarian hierarchy.

The German political theorist Carl Schmitt defined a sovereign ruler as “he who decides the exception,” a description well suited to Putin’s extraordinary wartime authority. As the war enters its third year, Putin’s regime is more closed than ever before, with elections largely functioning as displays of loyalty and a restrictive system of coercion and censorship maintaining social order. Institutions that even just nominally remain connected to the Russian electorate, such as the parliament or gubernatorial offices, have been pushed aside in favor of security agencies or elite, unelected council bodies, such as the Security Council, that serve Putin’s administration as an ersatz tsar’s court.

Because there are few mechanisms in such a system to check the whims of the ruler, many observers, especially those in the democratic West, tend to think of it as brittle, as one bad decision away from collapse. Writing in Foreign Affairs in April, for example, the analyst Maksim Samorukov argued that the personalization of power in Russia made Moscow “liable to commit self-defeating blunders.”

Such a reading of Putin’s system is understandable. Events since the start of the war, however, suggest that the Russian regime is far more resilient than many have predicted. The evidence is especially compelling because the Kremlin has had ample opportunities to succumb to a self-inflicted catastrophe. In the past two years, political disputes over the prosecution of the war, the armed rebellion of the former Wagner paramilitary company leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, and, most recently, a delicate elite reshuffling have all presented internal challenges to the political order in Russia. But the Kremlin has faced down each of them. These instances have demonstrated not just Putin’s firm rule but also the regime’s capacity to react and reorient. The Kremlin has navigated many politically sensitive moments—and even existential crises—and emerged relatively unscathed.

In doing so, the Russian regime has shown it is fully able to maintain its own authority and ensure the acquiescence of both elites and the masses. It has proved it can do what it needs to do in order to survive. It could still encounter unexpected challenges, and the question of political succession after Putin exits the scene looms large. But the most salient feature of the current phase of Putin’s rule is not the vulnerability his consolidation of power creates. It is the regime’s resilience and its demonstrated capacity to adjust.

#### 2. The economy’s not about to collapse

Dr Richard Connolly, 2025 – RUSI Associate Fellow in International Security “Russia’s Wartime Economy isn’t as Weak as it Looks” 1/22 <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-wartime-economy-isnt-weak-it-looks> //DH

Desperate but not Serious

Unfortunately, hopes of an imminent economic crisis are unlikely to be realised. Although Russia undoubtedly faces significant challenges, there is little to suggest that these will result in any significant political consequences that might prompt the Kremlin to rein in its ambitions in Ukraine.

The tight labour market has benefitted many Russians used to stagnant income growth in the decade before the war. Real wages have soared since 2022, fuelling the fastest sustained growth in consumer spending in over a decade. Soaring military production and record-high wages for soldiers have helped reduce some of Russia’s chronic regional inequalities.

Crucially, the absence of a large pool of latent labour need not constrain growth so long as labour productivity continues to rise. Russia’s low-productivity economy means that there are plenty of easy wins available for firms prepared to undertake simple organisational changes or investment in new machinery.

Inflation also has its advantages. Rising prices send important signals to firms to expand supply by investing in areas where prices are growing fastest. Investment – chronically low for most of the post-Soviet period – has grown faster than GDP since the war began. Rising prices have also helped swell public coffers, with turnover taxes like VAT growing at record levels and boosting the Kremlin’s fiscal position.

The CBR’s record-high key rate is not as damaging as it might be in a Western economy, either. Large swathes of Russian business – including those in strategically important sectors – can access state-subsidised loans at considerably lower interest rates. Even those firms unable to access subsidised loans will be able to use record-high retained earnings to finance investment.

Russian consumers have also benefitted from state support. Most mortgages offered during the recent housing boom were taken on at subsidised rates.

Even the extent to which Russia has a ‘war economy’ is exaggerated. While the broad NATO measure of military expenditure is likely to account for around 40% of federal spending this year, this will amount to closer to 20% of Russia’s consolidated state spending (that is, including both regional and national expenditure).

Although this is high, it is comparable to US military spending during the Vietnam War. The militarisation of the economy has undoubtedly grown. However, it remains well below the crippling levels observed in the ‘hyper-militarised’ Soviet economy.

Importantly, many of the features of true war economies – such as price controls, the centralised allocation of resources, and widespread nationalisation of private sector assets – have yet to appear in Russia.

Sources of Resilience

If Russia’s weaknesses are not as severe as many hope, its sources of strength and durability also remain impressive.

Take the country’s balance sheet. Despite fighting the most intense war in Europe since 1945, Moscow has managed to fund the war with staggeringly modest budget deficits of between 1.5–2.9% of GDP since 2022. As a result, the Kremlin has barely had to borrow to fund the war. At around 15% of GDP, Russia has the smallest state debt-to-GDP ratio of the G20 economies.

Despite being cut off from most external sources of capital, Russia remains more than capable of financing domestic investment and government expenditure with its own resources. Over the past two years, Russia has recorded a surplus on its current account – that is, the gap between aggregate savings and investment – of around 2.5% of GDP. For as long as Russia can continue to export large volumes of oil, this is unlikely to change.

Crucially, the Kremlin’s fiscal position remains very healthy. Tax revenues generated by domestic activity have soared since the war began. Oil and gas revenues are forecast to account for 28% of federal government tax receipts in 2024, significantly lower than the 53% recorded in 2018.

Even if export revenues slump, perhaps due to a looming trade war or China’s spluttering economy, Russia has plenty of resources it could tap to maintain elevated levels of state spending. The largely state-owned banking system is sitting on piles of cash that could be paid as dividends to their owner: the state. Banks could also be directed to buy government bonds, as they were at the end of 2024. If all else fails, the CBR could buy government bonds.

Importantly, Russia’s resilience is not purely financial in nature. The foundations of the market economy built in the turbulent 1990s remain strong. Much of Russia’s unexpected adaptability has come not only from its well-trained and professional economic managers, but also from its large and growing class of private business.

Accustomed to operating in an often hostile and challenging business environment, privately owned firms have exploited the opportunities created by sanctions to supply soaring demand from the government and consumers. The number of registered private businesses has grown briskly since the war began, reaching a record high in 2024. It is this strong base of commercially oriented firms that will enable Russia to continue adapting to sanctions and the demands of war.

#### 3. No impact to regime change. History proves it will be stable

Andrei Kolesnikov, 2023 - Former Senior Fellow, Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center “Regime Change in Russia Won’t Lead to Chaos or Collapse” 9/25, <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2023/09/regime-change-in-russia-wont-lead-to-chaos-or-collapse?lang=en> //DH

It’s odd to try and scare the world with the specter of a leader more terrible than Putin. What could be worse than the biggest military conflict in Europe of the twenty-first century, and greater repression in Russia than the late Soviet Union? Thanks to the Kremlin and a spineless elite, we’re already living in an anti-utopia.

Who is this future monster who would take the reins from Putin? Perhaps Security Council head and notorious hawk Nikolai Patrushev? But is he worse than Putin? He’s just one voice of the current regime; a spokesperson for conspiracy theories and anti-Americanism.

Would a military commander like the deceased Prigozhin be worse? Firstly, nobody would have heard of Prigozhin if he hadn’t first been nurtured by the Putin system, allocated billions in state money, and become the Kremlin’s most talented freelancer. Secondly, you need to have his charisma, business resources, and ability to get access to state money to be a serious threat to the authorities. There are simply no more such people.

Is a coup possible? It’s not in the political culture. To think that conspiracy is the most likely outcome is like seriously predicting mass protests because of falling living standards.

It’s important to remember in all this that any major anti-Putin street protest would be quashed within seconds by today’s police state. It would likely be over even quicker than the events of January 25, 1968, when police detained eight people protesting on Red Square against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. One of the police officers who wrote up dissident Pavel Litvinov that day uttered a phrase that would go down in history: “You fool—if you’d stayed at home, you’d have lived a peaceful life.” That’s exactly the message the authorities today are sending people.

And, even in an anti-utopia, Russia’s social fabric is not unraveling. Despite all the problems, the country’s economic system has remained relatively stable. Russian society’s ability to adapt was underestimated: alongside the indifference of most people to political events, a facility for adaptation helps ensure at least some support for the authorities.

Widespread indifference in Russia will help an orderly transition to a new regime: ordinary people will obey any ruler who appears to be legitimate. Beloved Putin will no longer be beloved as soon as a power transition takes place. That’s how it has always been.

Moreover, if we’re talking historical precedents, a change of leader in Russia has almost always been accompanied by liberalization, not bloody chaos (Khrushchev’s thaw after Stalin, Gorbachev’s perestroika after Brezhnev’s gerontocracy, and Yeltsin’s reforms after the end of the Soviet Union). Even power struggles at the top have not, historically speaking, tended to lead to chaos.

Notably, the collapse of the Soviet Union did not lead to really serious unrest in Russia. Most people were focused on survival, adapting, and—most importantly—taking advantage of the new opportunities. It’s true that the country witnessed a battle between the president and parliament that ended in a brief moment of civil war in October 1993. But most people were not involved, and accepted the side that won. In short, there is nothing to indicate that Russia’s upcoming power transition, which will happen sooner or later, is fated to lead to a more hawkish regime, or to chaos.

Another bogeyman promoted by some analysts is the disintegration of Russia. But this is even less likely than civil strife or the emergence of a leader worse than Putin. The rush for sovereignty in Russia in the early 1990s was the result of regions trying to survive amid the trials of constructing a new economy, and new state institutions. When we remember the 1990s, we often forget the huge challenges facing the government: from the lack of state agencies and a bureaucracy, to empty coffers.

There are compelling economic, budgetary, and political-management reasons why Russia will not disintegrate in the post-Putin era. Russia is not a particularly rich country, and wealth inequality is compounded by regional inequality—making many regions dependent on federal subsidies. In short, regional economies cannot survive on their own, and leaving the Russian Federation would cause serious problems.

#### 4. No lash-out risk. Putin doesn’t feel insecure.

Andrea Kendall-Taylor, 2022 – Senior Fellow and Director, Transatlantic Security Program, Center for a New American Security “Myth 4: ‘Russia launches military adventures to distract from domestic troubles’” 7/14, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/06/myths-and-misconceptions-around-russian-military-intent/myth-4-russia-launches-military> //DH

Putin’s domestic standing is not a useful predictor of Russia’s use of military force abroad. For one thing, it is all but impossible to gauge how an authoritarian leader like Putin assesses his own security in office. Even when Putin’s public approval rating falls, growing repression and the lack of viable alternatives to him make it difficult to know if Putin actually feels insecure. Conversely, highly personalized autocrats like Putin are prone to paranoia. They often receive incomplete or misleading information from their advisers, and, especially as elite and citizen repression grows, autocrats can worry that they have a distorted view of public sentiment. In other words, autocrats can feel insecure – and therefore incentivized to use foreign policy to boost their standing – without public approval ratings hitting record lows. Observable indicators of public support, therefore, provide little insight into a leader’s sense of security, and are an unreliable lens through which to assess Kremlin decision-making.

More concretely, Putin’s popularity has fallen without prompting conflict. For example, the president’s public support began declining in 2019 after an unpopular change to the pension age and stagnating living standards. But Russia did not threaten a military conflict until over two years later, underscoring just how imprecise Putin’s public approval rating is as an indicator of the likelihood of foreign conflict. Conversely, military force has been used – notably the insertion of forces into Syria in September 2015 – when Putin’s public approval was strong. Public support for Putin, in other words, has not been the decisive factor behind his decisions to use military force. In contrast to some prevailing narratives, more insightful analysis of Russian public opinion data concludes that the Kremlin’s ‘aggressive foreign policy does not correlate with public support for the government in a way consistent with the diversionary war argument’.

#### 5. Turn: Regime change is good. Continuous war is inevitable under Putin.

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In the 1930s, as the international order began to unravel and authoritarianism swept across Europe, democratic leaders faltered. Faced with growing evidence of aggression from Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy, they chose caution over confrontation.

The doctrine of appeasement, rooted in fear of another great war and a belief that revisionist powers could be satisfied through concessions, proved fatally misguided. By the time Europe awoke to the true nature of the threat, it was already engulfed in flames. That bitter experience left a powerful legacy. Allowing expansionist regimes to operate unchecked does not bring peace. It invites catastrophe.

Nearly a century later, Europe confronts a similar moment of strategic reckoning.

The regime of Vladimir Putin, far from being a predictable actor that seeks only to protect its borders, has shown itself to be profoundly revisionist. It has redrawn international boundaries through force, sought to disrupt Western politics, weaponised everything from energy to information and undertaken a sabotage campaign throughout Europe.

For too long, Western policy has sought to contain the Kremlin, hoping that deterrence at NATO’s borders and economic sanctions would suffice. But recent history shows that containment alone is no guarantee of safety. As Europe discovered in the last century, it is not enough to build walls around a threat. Eventually, the source of the danger must be confronted directly.

That danger lies not in Russia as a state, but in the specific characteristics of Putin’s regime. Built on repression, kleptocracy, and imperial nostalgia, the Kremlin under Putin has constructed a political order that is inseparable from external aggression. Its legitimacy rests in part on the myth of Russia’s global resurgence and that Russia as a global power has a sphere-of-influence and a right to dictate international affairs with other great powers like China and the US. This myth requires the West as an enemy and Ukraine as a conquest.

Within Russia, dissent is crushed, the media is controlled, and the judiciary is an instrument of the state. Abroad, Moscow engages in hybrid warfare, cyberattacks, electoral interference, and the deliberate sowing of discord in European societies. Russian society is increasingly militarised, and its economy is bent towards war. It is not simply that the regime poses a threat. Rather, it thrives on threatening others.

This is not the behaviour of a status-quo power that can be deterred or accommodated. It is the logic of an autocracy that sees its survival as contingent on permanent confrontation. Therein lies the heart of the strategic dilemma. If the Kremlin’s survival is rooted in conflict, then Western attempts to avoid escalation through restraint are interpreted not as prudence, but as weakness. Every concession is taken as encouragement, every pause as a moment to regroup and rearm. The invasion of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea and the Donbas war in 2014, and the full-scale war of Ukraine in 2022 all followed the same logic. That is to probe, assess the Western response, and act with impunity if the costs seem manageable. Each time, the Kremlin draws the lesson that the West is divided, hesitant, and unwilling to pay the price of resistance.

Yet the price of inaction is always higher in the long run. Just as the failure to confront fascism in its early stages led to a far more devastating war, so, too, could the failure to deal with Putin’s Russia result in a wider, more destructive conflict.

Already, Russian sabotage teams operate across European cities, its hackers target critical infrastructure, and its intelligence services fund political actors aimed at weakening democratic cohesion. This is not a future threat, it is present reality. If Ukraine is eventually forced into a settlement that leaves large swathes of its territory under Russian control, the precedent will send a message not only to Moscow, but to autocracies everywhere, that force works and that the West lacks the will to defend the principles it proclaims.

The current approach – anchored in containment and deterrence – has imposed real costs on Russia, but it has not shifted the Kremlin’s fundamental trajectory. Sanctions, while important, have not broken the regime’s resilience, partly because they were always designed to constrain, not to coerce. Military support to Ukraine has helped hold the line, but it has not changed the balance of initiative. What is needed now is a strategic shift. Rather than defend against Russian aggression, it is necessary to undermine the very system that enables it.

This is not to argue for military intervention in Russia or reckless escalation. The destabilisation of the Kremlin need not – and should not – take the form of direct confrontation. It must involve instead a deliberate, coordinated effort to erode the foundations of Putin’s power. That means supporting opposition figures and civil society within Russia, not merely as a moral gesture, but as a strategic imperative. It means amplifying the voices of those who reject the Kremlin’s war narrative and giving them the tools to survive and communicate. It means exposing the corruption and brutality that sustain the regime, both to the Russian public and to the global audience.

Europe must increase its economic pressure, not merely through broader sanctions, but through smarter and more aggressive enforcement. Loopholes must be closed, enablers punished, and the shadow networks that sustain the Russian economy disrupted. The assets of Russian elites should be not only frozen but repurposed and used to support Ukraine’s recovery and demonstrate that the costs of loyalty to Putin are permanent and personal.

Beyond that, Europe must do more to attract Russian talent, offering pathways out for those willing to defect from the system. Every scientist, entrepreneur, or bureaucrat who leaves is one less cog in the Kremlin’s machine.

A bolder strategy requires turning the tools of hybrid warfare back against the Kremlin. Just as Russia has meddled in our political systems, so, too, must we contest the information space within Russia. This is not about propaganda but about truth – ensuring that Russians can access unfiltered information about the war, the Kremlin, and the alternatives. The West has long been too cautious in this regard, fearful of provoking further repression. But repression is already the default in Putin’s Russia. Silence only enables it.

At the same time, Europe must prepare for a future in which the transatlantic alliance may be less reliable. With the US drifting towards abandonment of European security, European capitals can no longer outsource defence. Thus, the task of dealing with Russia falls increasingly on Europe’s own shoulders. That is not merely a burden, it is an opportunity. For the first time in decades, Europe can shape a security architecture grounded not in deference to Washington, but in its own strategic interests and historical memory, which tells us that peace is not preserved by hoping for the best, but by preparing for the worst.

To destabilise the Putin regime is not to pursue chaos, but to pursue clarity. It is to recognise that the only path to a stable Europe is through the weakening of the system – and to show strength – that has brought war back to the continent.

A Russia without Putin does not guarantee peace. But a Russia with Putin guarantees continued danger. Just as past generations understood that fascism must be defeated, and not merely contained, so, too, must we recognise that autocracy – when armed and unrepentant – must be resisted at its source.

Europe has spent too long fearing the consequences of Russian instability. It is time to fear the consequences of Russian stability under Putin. The hour is late, but not yet lost. To secure the future, we must have the courage to unmake the past.

#### 6. No solvency. US companies won’t invest in Russia.

Vakhtang Partsvania, 2025 – Economist, Professor of Management at Caucasus University “Back to Russia?” Riddle, 3/10, <https://ridl.io/back-to-russia/> //DH

During the full-scale war, the Russian government has built a system that has made exiting the market prohibitively costly for companies from «unfriendly» countries. Companies choosing to leave Russia are forced to either sell their assets at a fraction of their value or lose them through coerced deals structured with massive discounts and additional contributions to the state budget. They face increasingly stringent procedural and legal requirements, under which asset sales now mandate a discount of at least 60% off market value and additional payments to the budget of up to 35%. As a result, foreign investors often receive just 5% of their assets’ true market value. Some strategically important enterprises, such as car factories or food production facilities, are «voluntarily» transferred to state control—often for symbolic sums (e.g., Renault’s Moscow plant was sold for two rubles)—or outright nationalized, as seen with the assets of Danone and Carlsberg.

A special mechanism of alienation without formal expropriation has also been introduced, affecting energy giants like Fortum and Uniper. The Russian government imposed external management over their assets in the country, causing the companies to lose control of their Russian subsidiaries despite billions in investments in the energy sector. Fortum is now pursuing a case against Russia in international arbitration, seeking compensation for the value of its shares, while Uniper has exhausted all legal avenues to challenge a Russian court ruling transferring its assets to Gazprom.

For Western businesses, leaving the Russian market comes with significant losses. Volkswagen’s subsidiary invested around € 2 billion in Russian production but faced asset freezes after the full-scale war began, followed by a forced sale for just € 125 million. Similar losses were incurred by other international corporations: McDonald’s wrote off $ 1.3 billion in assets, Fortum lost $ 2 billion, IKEA lost about $ 200 million, Heineken over $ 300 million, and companies like Inditex, Uniqlo, H&M, and Decathlon collectively lost around $ 900 million.

By creating such conditions, Russian authorities have placed international companies with significant assets in the country in a dilemma: either stay in Russia despite sanctions, reputational risks, and financial uncertainties, or leave the market with colossal losses. However, they overlooked a critical point: companies that have endured this grinder are unlikely to risk returning to the Russian market, fearing a repeat of losses and difficulties in divesting or selling assets. Thus, despite conditions emerging for the war’s end, the Kremlin is not receiving signals from departed companies about a desire to resume operations in Russia.

### Extend: Putin is Resilient

#### Putin empirically shuts down media criticism and armed rebellion.

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ONLINE DISCONTENT

The first trial that Putin endured since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine was the fallout from his failure to achieve a swift victory. By all accounts, Russia’s aim in early 2022 was regime change: Moscow intended to decapitate Ukraine’s leadership and install a friendly government in Kyiv. But strong Ukrainian military resistance, the unwavering commitment of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and other leaders to the fight, and supplies of Western arms, aid, and intelligence helped Ukraine keep Russian forces at bay and thwarted Moscow’s political objectives.

Over the summer and fall of 2022, after Russia drew back from its early assaults on Kyiv and Kharkiv, a pro-war but regime-skeptical commentariat began casting doubts on the efficacy of Russia’s war effort and the competence of its military leadership. Although this ecosystem of “war correspondents,” as they are known in Russia, held no formal role in the country’s political system, the criticism they circulated online began to delegitimize the decisions of government officials in the eyes of the public. The correspondents’ social media reports decrying the military’s battlefield failures reached millions of Russians, earning these critics a measure of sway.

There are few mechanisms in the Russian system to check the whims of the ruler.

Rather than fight these commentators, the Kremlin co-opted them. As early as June 2022, Putin began meeting with members of their ranks. Later that year, he established a working group of military bloggers to open channels of dialogue between the war correspondents and the government, elevating their position in the public sphere.

The commentators’ influence on decision-making in Moscow might have ended with discussions in the working group were it not for the shocking success of Ukraine’s September 2022 counteroffensive. That autumn, the Kremlin, seemingly in agreement with the war correspondents about the incapacity of Russia’s military leadership, intervened in the military command structure and launched a round of mobilization that sent hundreds of thousands of new soldiers to the frontlines. In October, Putin named General Sergei Surovikin commander of all troops in Ukraine, signaling the military’s intention to shift to a defensive posture and striking a reputational blow to Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, who had been directing the war effort.

Eventually, the country’s defense leadership swung back; by January 2023, Shoigu and Gerasimov had pushed Surovikin aside, feeding the perception of mistrust between Russian generals fighting on the ground and the military-bureaucratic leadership in Moscow. Yet appointing Surovikin and replenishing the army’s ranks stabilized the battle lines and set up Russian forces to weather Ukraine’s follow-up counteroffensive in the summer of 2023. The Russian public, meanwhile, calmly adjusted to the new phase of the war. The fact that greater political disorder did not follow and that the Kremlin managed to keep military-bureaucratic tensions contained, at least for a time, is evidence of a challenge successfully met.

OPEN REBELLION

Friction between Russia’s formal military hierarchy and its irregular forces, namely the Wagner fighters, persisted after Surovikin was sidelined. Throughout the spring of 2023, Prigozhin publicly clashed with Shoigu over supply shortages in Bakhmut and over the ministry’s efforts to assert authority over the paramilitary group. Prigozhin castigated the Russian defense bureaucracy for his soldiers’ lack of ammunition, blamed Shoigu for Wagner’s heavy casualties, and made statements on social media vilifying the military leadership that were widely circulated by the war correspondent networks.

Wagner’s strength and autonomy made Prigozhin’s complaints dangerous for Russia’s leadership. Prigozhin controlled tens of thousands of soldiers, including both well-trained, experienced fighters and former prisoners promised amnesty by the government in exchange for military service. The latter group alone numbered as many as 48,000 men, of which 17,000 were killed in the bloody battles for Bakhmut and Soledar.

Wagner operated independently of the Russian armed forces and its decision-making structures, but the company still received logistical and financial support from the Russian government. Prigozhin was effectively a political-military baron, maintaining personal, vassal-like ties to Putin and key handlers in the Kremlin (a curious position similar to that of the subnational dictator of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov). Prigozhin and his personal army were thus an aberration in the regular order of civil-military relations in Russia. Wagner’s relative autonomy from the military hierarchy and its significant capacity in terms of size and materiel gave Prigozhin an unusual degree of independent, coercive power. Recognizing the threat Prigozhin posed, the Ministry of Defense sought to assume control of all Wagner contracts in June 2023—a move that prompted Prigozhin to launch an armed rebellion and demand that Putin replace the leaders of Russia’s military bureaucracy.

Prigozhin’s revolt was more than just the culmination of high-stakes jockeying among Russia’s military factions. The Wagner commander also raised a political challenge. Prigozhin tried to enlist the support of Russian politicians in the days leading up to the rebellion. A party that belongs to the “systemic” opposition that has been co-opted by the regime, A Just Russia—For Truth, had considered assuming the mantle of Russia’s “angry patriots,” the segment of the public that supported the war but criticized its conduct and had become close with Prigozhin. As the dispute over the Wagner contracts reached its peak, Prigozhin was expected to attend a roundtable event in the Russian State Duma and make a public speech denouncing the Russian military leadership, continuing his campaign for the dismissal of Shoigu and Gerasimov.

The Russian regime has proved it can do what it needs to do in order to survive.

Such a public display of discontent within the halls of Russia’s parliament would have violated the unspoken rules of the country’s authoritarian system. As one source told The Moscow Times, “[Prigozhin] was going to voice the whole array of problems with the SVO [special military operation], with the Defense Ministry, the real number of casualties among our fighters, etc. The whole f\*\*\*\*d up thing, in fact.” Unconfirmed rumors even suggested that Surovikin was planning to accompany him; the presence of a top general would have underscored the challenge to Russia’s civilian leadership. The spectacle never took place, but if it had, it would have given the already influential Prigozhin a foot in the door of Russia’s formal institutions. Instead, the roundtable proceeded without Prigozhin, and a few hours later the Wagner leader launched his rebellion, pushing for the dismissal of Russia’s military leadership by threat of arms.

The Russian regime responded swiftly and effectively to Prigozhin’s provocation. First, the Kremlin negotiated a settlement with the Wagner leader that halted Prigozhin’s advance and transferred his paramilitary forces to Belarus. And just two months later, in August 2023, Prigozhin was assassinated. His death in a plane crash outside Moscow, according to reporting in The Wall Street Journal, was coordinated and greenlighted by Nikolai Patrushev, then the secretary of Russia’s Security Council. Patrushev is known as an illiberal vizier-like figure, close enough to Putin to act as his second-in-command.

A year later, it is as if the rebellion never happened. There is no cult-like following dedicated to Prigozhin’s memory, and the Russian government has made sure that no figure can wield the same power as the former Wagner warlord. The group’s materiel and manpower have been distributed across various security agencies, where they are managed by functionaries who are more loyal and less ambitious. Russia’s remaining parastatal armed groups are subservient to the Kremlin and possess little capacity to operate autonomously.

This is not to say the episode will have no long-term repercussions. After Prigozhin’s rebellion, Surovikin was placed under house arrest, and other high-ranking officers who criticized the Ministry of Defense were dismissed. Russia’s officer corps and veterans will not forget these purges, nor will they be able to disregard how close the country came to civil conflict. But for now, at least, the Russian regime demonstrated it could successfully respond to a serious, armed challenge and then correct its previous mistake, which was to allow the conditions for such a threat to emerge in the first place.

#### Putin’s not vulnerable at all. Affirmative arguments make comparisons to the collapse of the Soviet Union, but Putin is far stronger

Peter Rutland, 2024 - is a Professor of Government at Wesleyan University and associate of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University. “A Putin collapse? The dangers of wishful thinking” Responsible Statecraft, 4/30, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/putin-russia-collapse/> //DH

Historical analogies can be attractive but misleading in that they may focus our attention on superficial similarities, while ignoring structural differences. And there are several important respects in which Putin’s regime is in a very different place from the Soviet Union of the perestroika era.

First, Mikhail Gorbachev was only in power for six years and he was never able to establish effective control over the inner circle of Soviet leaders, nor the bureaucracy at large. As a result, his policy initiatives were blocked from effective implementation, forcing him to adopt more radical measures which destabilized the entire system.

In contrast, Putin very quickly established strong control over rival elites after he came to power in 2000, restoring the “power vertical.” He has been in charge for 24 years, and most analysts agree that the institutional foundations of the Putin regime are robust and it will likely survive the death of its founder.

Second, a critical factor in the unraveling of the USSR was the fact that it was fighting an unwinnable war in Afghanistan, which forced it to enter negotiations with the West. Russia is fighting a war in Ukraine which it is still confident it can win.

Third, the Soviet Union was bankrupt, running trade deficits and borrowing money abroad. In contrast, despite the pressure of Western sanctions, Russia ran a $50 billion trade surplus last year. The Soviet planned economy was rigid and value-destroying, a sinkhole of state subsidies. Unlike the Soviet Union, Russia has a dynamic capitalist economy, well integrated into the global economy, and one whose entrepreneurs have been adept at evading Western sanctions.

Fourth, the USSR was a federation where ethnic Russians made up 52% of the population. Putin’s Russia is a more centralized state where Russians are 82% of the population.

Admittedly, the possibility of an Islamist insurrection in the North Caucasus is a potential security challenge. But the logic that turned Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov into a loyal vassal of Moscow would apply to any successor. It is better to enjoy a flow of subsidies from Moscow and buy Lamborghinis, than to have Grozny turned back into a sea of rubble. The Chechens have learned their lesson from the first and second wars: that pursuit of independence is not worth the effort. None of the other ethnic republics in the Russian Federation are remotely interested in starting a war with Moscow.

The Crocus City Hall attack of April 22 was not only a reminder that Islamist terrorism remains a security threat for Russia, but it represented a massive intelligence failure by the Russian security services. They were warned in advance by the U.S. that such an attack was coming: they should have placed armed guards at all concert halls in Moscow. However, attacks like Crocus are not going to cause regime change in Russia.

The terrorists did not come from North Caucasus, but from Tajikistan. That indicates that the 8 million migrant workers from Central Asia are a potential security risk. But their value in Russia’s labor-short economy still outweighs the security challenge, at least for now.

The Wagner insurrection in June 2023 was an extraordinary development, the most serious threat to the stability of the Putin regime since its foundation in 2000. We’ll never know what would have happened if the dog had caught up with the car: if Yevgeny Prigozhin had not turned back, but had ordered his troops to advance into Moscow. What we do know is that the insurrection failed. Prigozhin is dead and buried, and regime stability was quickly restored.

Allowing the Wagner group to develop to a point where it could launch that mutiny was a serious error by Putin — second only to his decision to launch the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. But it remains an outlier, and cannot serve as a foundation for U.S.policy.

To prevail in diplomacy and war one needs a realistic assessment of the adversary’s strengths and weaknesses. The abrupt collapse of the Soviet Union reminds us to expect the unexpected. But Putin (and China’s President Xi Jinping) have learned from Gorbachev’s mistakes. Washington should not build its Russia policy on the assumption that lightning will strike twice in the same place.

#### Propaganda disempowers the Russian public

Maria Domanska, 2024 - was a Visiting Fellow with the Democratic Resilience program at the Center for European Policy Analysis “Lost in Translation: Western Misconceptions about Putin’s Russia” 10/16 <https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/lost-in-translation-western-misconceptions-about-putins-russia/> //DH

Kremlin-promoted propaganda needs no formal institutions, as it spreads like a virus through pop culture and the internet.43 At the same time, the authorities carefully suppress alternative ideas through mass censorship, surveillance, and encouraging citizens to denounce the “wrong-headed.”44 Russians who speak out against the war have been rendered speechless: The language they could use to describe their emotions and reflections has been banned, and there is no space where it is safe to use it.

It is highly doubtful that the authorities will realize their aspirations. The Russian public is mainly passive and fatalistic, with most people trying to distance themselves from the state.45 For decades, the embrace of great power rhetoric and geopolitical revanchism served primarily as compensation for the political disempowerment of citizens, economic hardships, and the lack of a vision for the future. Still, the widespread acceptance of the war expressed in public opinion surveys shows the state holds sway over how people behave.46 Moreover, the reflex of “downward adaptation” (constant adjustment to deteriorating conditions of living), persists in the next generation of Russians, making it even more challenging to lead the country out of authoritarian dependency.

#### Nationalism makes regime change extremely unlikely

Andrew Latham, 2025 - is a non-resident fellow at Defense Priorities and a professor of international relations and political theory at Macalester College in Saint Paul “The Fall of Putin: The West’s Great Russia Regime Change Dream” National Security Journal, 7/10, <https://nationalsecurityjournal.org/the-fall-of-putin-the-wests-great-russia-regime-change-dream/> //DH

The notion that the West can effectively engineer a change in the Russian regime is equally misguided. Russia’s political landscape is characterized by a strong sense of nationalism and a populace that, despite grievances, often rallies around its leadership in times of external threat. The Kremlin has adeptly framed its narrative, portraying the West as an existential adversary. This narrative not only consolidates domestic support for the regime but also complicates any external efforts aimed at fostering dissent or promoting alternative governance structures.

Moreover, the consequences of regime change efforts extend beyond the immediate chaos they create. They can lead to long-term strategic instability, emboldening adversaries and undermining the credibility of Western powers. The perception that the West seeks to impose its will on sovereign nations can foster resentment and resistance, driving countries like Russia to adopt more aggressive postures. This dynamic has been evident in the Kremlin’s response to Western interventions, which it interprets as direct threats to its sovereignty and security.

### Extend: No Economic Collapse

#### Even if Russia faces recession, it will be mild with no collapse

Economies.com, 2025 – a global financial portal providing news and analysis about the different financial markets “As the Russian economy suffers: Is it on the verge of collapse?” 7/3,

[https://www.economies.com/forex/news/as-the-russian-economy-suffers:-is-it-on-the-verge-of-collapse%20-46786](https://www.economies.com/forex/news/as-the-russian-economy-suffers%3A-is-it-on-the-verge-of-collapse%20-46786) //DH

Inflation remains stubbornly high, interest rates have surged to 20%, and firms face an acute labor shortage. Globally, oil prices had declined earlier this year before being driven back up by the ongoing Israel-Iran conflict.

On Thursday, Russia’s economy minister warned that the country is "on the verge of recession" following a phase of "overheated economic activity," while some observers see signs of a looming collapse.

“Absolute Lies”?

But how realistic are these predictions—and what might they mean for the war?

Evgeny Nadorshin, a Moscow-based economist, told the BBC: "Broadly, it’s going to be an uncomfortable period through the end of 2026. We’ll certainly see some defaults and bankruptcies."

Still, he expects a "moderate" slowdown and calls talk of an outright collapse "an absolute lie."

"There’s no question," he added, "that the Russian economy has endured deeper recessions before."

Nadorshin points out that unemployment is at a historic low of 2.3%, and he expects it to peak at just 3.5% next year. For comparison, the UK’s unemployment rate was 4.6% in April.

### Extend: No Impact to Regime Change

#### Putin will be replaced by a moderate

Max Bergmann, 2023 - Director, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and Stuart Center at CSIS “What Could Come Next? Assessing the Putin Regime's Stability and Western Policy Options” 1/20,

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-could-come-next-assessing-putin-regimes-stability-and-western-policy-options> //DH

It is impossible to predict how Russia would transition to someone else or something new if the situation becomes untenable for Putin—yet the emerging consensus that Putin would likely be replaced by someone worse may be unfounded. An effort to replace Putin will probably emerge out of a movement to end the war, not to further it.

Most analyses of what could come next tend to look at Putin’s court and examine who among his inner circle might be a potential successor. This has led to fears that Putin could be replaced by even more of a hardliner, such as Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev. Such analysis can lead to the conclusion that the West should favor stability in Russia and a face-saving end to the war for Putin because a humiliating defeat could give rise to a truly unhinged president (i.e., it is better to deal with the devil you know—Putin—than the devil you don’t).

However, it is difficult to see a dynamic forming in which Putin is replaced by a marginally more hawkish figure from within his inner circle. This is because Putin is already hawkish. This is, after all, his war, on which he is already doubling down. Under Putin’s “partial mobilization,” the military is bombing civilian targets, committing war crimes, pulverizing cities, and showing a willingness to take enormous battlefield losses. The Russian strategy being pursued is the hardline strategy. Moreover, Putin has also shown that he listens to hardliners. Those advocating taking the war to Ukrainian civilians and mobilizing the population have gotten what they wanted. Yet, for hardliners there is always more that can be done. A more depraved hawk could marginally dial up the atrocities or could move to use a nuclear weapon—but this is a road to ruin. In fact, the effort to move in a more hardline direction could prompt the elite and public to step in to stop such a leader from ascending.

The replacement of Putin with a more hardline figure is not impossible, but neither does it help fellow hawks preserve the regime. Putin has a two-decade relationship with the Russian public and has built up an immense reservoir of trust. Although that reservoir is being depleted, any new hardline successor would likely come from within the regime’s inner circle and would have similar baggage. Why orchestrate a risky soft coup to just stick with the same hawkish approach?

Moreover, if power transitions to a member of Putin’s court, the new administration will likely be short-lived due to infighting. In Egypt in 2011, Hosni Mubarak tried to end his 30-year reign by transferring power to his former intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman, whom he abruptly made vice president. However, this was not sustainable, and the armed forces almost immediately assumed power until elections could be held. Any time a long-standing autocrat departs, it destabilizes the entire governing network they have built up over the course of their rule.

Putin has created a regime that centers around him, a power-vertical, in which he is not just the key decisionmaker but also keeps all the nodes of power in balance. If he is removed, the system would likely be in danger of toppling. Putin himself has not figured out the conundrum of succession, either how to leave or who should succeed him. Instead, he has kept all options open while preventing the rise of any undisputed successor. The 2020 constitutional reforms, instead of bringing clarity on a transition, allowed him to stay in power for life. This is in part because of Putin’s ego; many politicians are reluctant to leave the stage. However, it is also because he cannot figure out how to leave without the system collapsing—and his legacy with it. If Putin surrendered his position at the top of the patronage network he has spent over two decades constructing, he would no longer be able to guarantee his personal safety, nor the security of his wealth. The same goes for Putin’s closest lieutenants, who rely on his legitimacy to defend their own positions within the country’s vertical power structure.

It is therefore hard to see how the existing regime survives without Putin. Far from pushing Putin out, hardliners and regime stalwarts are probably incredibly reluctant to move against him. In fact, they will likely do everything they can to keep him in power. This is perhaps the most important factor protecting the regime from collapse. Thus, if Putin is replaced or loses power, it will likely be because the war in Ukraine goes very badly. It will be because there is a desperate need for change, not just for a new leader but for a new approach to the war that does not double down on but rather ends it.

#### Oligarchs will ensure a pro-western leader

Max Bergmann, 2023 - Director, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and Stuart Center at CSIS “What Could Come Next? Assessing the Putin Regime's Stability and Western Policy Options” 1/20,

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-could-come-next-assessing-putin-regimes-stability-and-western-policy-options> //DH

Second, elites or insiders might initiate a coup. The need to blame someone if the war goes badly could prompt the security services and the military, as well as oligarchs, to mobilize. However, Putin has worked hard to coup-proof his regime, and there are few informal connections between leaders of the security services’ various power centers. Treisman explains that “the obstacles to such a coup are formidable. Putin has rigged the system with numerous tripwires to prevent one. Multiple agencies watch over each other. . . . Those with armed men at their command lack the mutual trust to organize a conspiracy, and any attempt to do so would be hard to hide.”

But working in an intense crisis environment can also quickly build connections, relationships, and trust among officials. Moreover, if a person’s job and life are on the line, they may be more willing to take risks to plot or scheme. As one former Putin confidant in Moscow described “the atmosphere in the halls of power” to the New York Times, “We’re giving each other looks, but to say something is impossible.” However, as pressure builds, the risk calculation can shift as well, and discontented oligarchs with large reserves of cash could bribe or incentivize officials.

History is also replete with coups led by resentful mid- and junior-level officers mobilizing against their inept senior officers and political leaders. Russian officers’ utter mismanagement of the war in Ukraine and the disregard for the well-being of their soldiers could trigger a backlash.

Third, regime stalwarts might move to replace Putin, not to end the regime but to save it. A new leader could be appointed simply to try to relieve pressure on the regime. This might be someone from inside who could end the war and negotiate with the West, perhaps a technocrat—for example, from the Central Bank or the Ministry of Finance—or a Western-friendly oligarch. As Vladimir Milov, a former deputy minister of energy and an economic adviser to Alexei Navalny, has remarked, “This may look as something resemblant of the environment which existed in the Soviet Union before 1985 and the arrival of Gorbachev: he started his ‘perestroika’ not out of the blue, but rather as a response to diminished public credibility of the Soviet system and visible bottom-up popular demand for change.” Alternatively, power could be transferred to a regime insider in a desperate effort to maintain continuity, as occurred in Egypt with Mubarak.

#### No risk to Russian nuclear weapons

Bennett Ramberg, 2023 - former foreign affairs officer in the US State Department’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs “Preparing for a Russian Nuclear Meltdown,” Project Syndicate, 11/10, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/us-must-prepare-for-russia-nuclear-risk-by-bennett-ramberg-2023-11> //DH

Indeed, in 1990, dissidents attempted to seize nuclear weapons near Baku. The following year, when the aborted coup against Mikhail Gorbachev separated the Soviet leader from the nuclear chain of command, authority fell to military personnel linked to the putschists. Moreover, such risks are not unique to Russia: in times of domestic upheaval, there have been attempts to commandeer nuclear weapons in French Algeria, China, and Pakistan.

That none of these efforts were successful reflects a combination of factors, from effective defenses to the restraint of various adversaries, and suggests that future political turmoil in Russia would not necessarily compromise the security of the world’s largest nuclear arsenal. In fact, the US Defense Department’s most recent Nuclear Posture Review, from 2022, fails to mention the matter, as does the February 2023 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community.

But the Wagner Group’s aborted rebellion in June renewed fears about the Russian arsenal’s vulnerabilities: the late Yevgeny Prigozhin’s mercenaries allegedly approached the Voronezh-45 nuclear facility. When asked, soon after the revolt, whether the US is prepared for the fall of the Putin government, and whether Russia’s nuclear cache is secure, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken responded, “We always prepare for every contingency. In terms of what happens in Russia, it’s an internal matter for the Russians to figure out.”

Leaving aside the vagueness of “every contingency,” consider three scenarios that could lead to nuclear conflict: a palace coup, a hostile takeover of a nuclear-weapons base, and nuclear suicide. The first is the least concerning. If Russia’s top military brass or security services stripped Putin of power and assumed control of strategic and tactical weapons, the nuclear status quo would likely survive. But any internal divisions could raise fears about intentions – and about command and control.

The chances of unauthorized actors – whether rogue military units, private armies, or dissatisfied members of ethnic minorities – capturing an intact nuclear weapon and detonating it are exceedingly low, but not zero. To do so would require breaching many layers of security, starting with the defense forces at nuclear sites.

Moreover, most tactical nuclear weapons, with the notable exception of gravity bombs, are unassembled and have digital locks that prevent detonation. Finally, while such weapons could be delivered by aircraft, truck, or boat, mounting them for missile delivery would require the cooperation of the Russian Ministry of Defense directorate that manages the country’s nuclear arsenal. But if these coordination challenges are overcome, the consequences could be catastrophic.

### Extend: No Lash-Out

#### No data supports Russian lash-out

Mikhail Polianskii, 2024 – Department of International Institutions, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), Frankfurt am Main, Germany “Russian Foreign Policy Research and War in Ukraine: Old Answers to New Questions?” Communist and Post-Communist Studies (2024) 57 (2): 156–172.

<https://online.ucpress.edu/cpcs/article/57/2/156/200348/Russian-Foreign-Policy-Research-and-War-in> //DH

Second, as far as the “diversionary war” and related “democratic contagion” theories’ application to Russia’s foreign policy are concerned, one cannot avoid stumbling upon several inconsistencies of these explanations with observable reality. First, it seems puzzling why Putin would believe that he could use the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (which, even in the optimistic scenario, would cost dearly in blood and treasure) as a way of averting domestic attention from everyday problems. Moreover, why do Russia’s military losses not seem to affect the domestic political trajectory of Russia that much, if the foreign policy allegedly has such a strong bearing on the inner politics in Russia? Lastly, as far as the employment of foreign policy to stay in power theorem is concerned, it remains equally questionable why Putin would need a wholesale war in 2022 to remain president if he ensured himself “presidency for life” in constitutional amendments two years prior to that. In other words, the timing of the attack through this lens seems somewhat puzzling.

### Extend: Regime Change Good

#### Regime change solves endless Russia war, including on NATO states

Motyl 25, professor of political science at Rutgers University-Newark. A specialist on Ukraine, Russia and the USSR, and on nationalism, revolutions, empires and theory, he is the author of 10 books of nonfiction, as well as “Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires” and “Why Empires Reemerge: Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival in Comparative Perspective.” (Alexander, “When Putin’s Brittle Regime Implodes, Our Protection Will Be a Stable Ukraine,” *Atlantic Council*, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/when-putins-brittle-regime-implodes-our-protection-will-be-a-stable-ukraine/)//BB

Although “regime change” has become a dirty phrase, the best thing that could happen to Russia, its neighbors, and the world would be a change from Vladimir Putin’s brand of strongman authoritarianism to some form of democracy.

Putin’s regime is oppressive at home and imperialist abroad. Power is concentrated in the hands of Russia’s dictatorial leader, who routinely violates human and civil rights and quashes all opposition, while legitimizing his rule by appealing to Russian dreams of erstwhile glory and great-power status and systematically engaging in military adventures in supposed defense of Russian minorities in Russia’s “near abroad.” Putin’s cult of personality centers on his hyper-masculine image as a tough leader willing and able to stand up to real and imagined internal and external foes.

Russian rights and democratic aspirations will continued to be stifled, and non-Russian states will continue to be invaded, as long as Putin’s regime stays in place.

Putin Is Expanding, Not Negotiating

Western hopes of resolving the Russo-Ukrainian war in eastern Ukraine by means of negotiations are therefore misplaced. Whatever Putin agrees to—even Ukraine’s agreement never to seek NATO membership—will be at best a temporary retreat from his expansionist foreign policy. And Putin’s choice of countries to pressure is large, extending from the Baltic states to Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to the five Central Asian states. Russians or Russian speakers inhabit all these states and can, in principle, be used to justify Moscow’s strong-arm tactics.

The only effective short- to medium-term solution to this expansionism is the capacity of Russia’s neighbors to withstand Putin’s imperialism. The key state in any such emergent cordon sanitaire is, of course, Ukraine. But Belarus and Kazakhstan, both of which have very sizeable Russian-speaking populations, are a close second. If all three could be denied Putin, his imperialist proclivities would be effectively contained.

The only effective long-term solution to Putin’s expansionism, however, is regime change. Putin and his fascistoid regime will always be prone to repress Russians and oppress non-Russians. The Putin regime’s removal is thus the precondition of a freer and more neighborly Russia.

### Extend: Companies Won’t Invest

#### Sanctions are inherently uncertain and US companies won’t invest because of the possibility of their return

Vakhtang Partsvania, 2025 – Economist, Professor of Management at Caucasus University “Back to Russia?” Riddle, 3/10, <https://ridl.io/back-to-russia/> //DH

It’s also worth noting that international companies are likely to consider the risks of sanctions being reimposed after the next U.S. election or if Russia violates any agreements reached. The case of Iran illustrates that U.S. sanctions are not just a punitive tool but also a lever of political pressure that can be applied based on the current situation. After the 2015 nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) was signed, anti-Iran sanctions were gradually eased as Tehran met its obligations. However, in 2018, the U.S. withdrew from the deal, and sanctions returned in an even harsher form. This instability cost Western companies dearly: PSA Peugeot Citroën and Renault invested hundreds of millions of dollars to reenter the Iranian market and develop their businesses, only to be forced to abandon their projects and suspend investments shortly thereafter.

#### Prior losses mean US companies won’t invest

John Zadeh, 2025 - founder and CEO of Discovery Alert, a leading platform that provides real-time alerts on ASX-listed mineral discoveries “US-Russia Joint Ventures in Energy and Metals: 2025 Outlook” 4/26, <https://discoveryalert.com.au/news/us-russia-business-cooperation-energy-minerals-2025/> //DH

Russia's foreign direct investment plummeted to $12 billion in 2024, representing a 70% decline from 2021 levels. This capital flight reflects the uncertain outlook for long-term investments in Russia, even in a scenario where a peace accord is reached.

American companies have experienced significant losses in previous Russian ventures. Exxon Mobil's loss of the Sakhalin-1 project, which produced 220,000 barrels per day before the war, stands as a cautionary tale. Similarly, BP wrote off $25 billion in Russian assets following the 2022 invasion, including a 19.75% stake in Rosneft.

Direct competition between US and Russia for the European LNG market further complicates cooperation. US LNG export capacity reached 13.9 billion cubic feet per day in 2025, rivaling Russia's 12 bcf/day pipeline capacity to Europe. This market competition makes pure collaboration difficult, as both nations vie for the same customers.

Structural Limitations

The disproportionate scale of Russia's economic relationships presents another significant challenge. Russia's trade with China is approximately 70 times larger than US-Russia trade, giving Beijing substantial leverage over Moscow that would be difficult to displace even with ambitious new American investments.

European efforts to diversify away from Russian energy supplies following the 2022 invasion have created lasting structural changes in the market. The EU's roadmap to phase out Russian fossil fuels represents a multi-year, multi-billion dollar commitment that has already reshaped energy infrastructure and trade routes.

Russia's "mirror sanctions" law allows for asset seizures from "unfriendly" nations, creating significant risk for any US equity investments. This legal framework, established in response to Western sanctions, creates a persistent threat of expropriation that standard investment protection agreements may not adequately address.

The historically limited US presence in Russian energy and commodities sectors means American firms lack the institutional knowledge and local networks that would facilitate rapid reentry. Unlike European energy majors that maintained substantial Russian operations for decades before 2022, US companies would face steeper learning curves and relationship-building challenges.

Alexander Gabuev of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center summarizes the challenge bluntly: "Any significant influx of US investors remains utopian given $50 billion in corporate losses since 2014." This skepticism reflects the practical obstacles beyond political agreements.

#### Trump can’t compel companies to invest, and they see it as overwhelmingly risky

Meduza, 2025 - a Russian- and English-language independent news website, headquartered in Riga, Latvia. Article interviews Illa Shumanov, the director of the Arctida project, non-profit organization focused on analysis and investigation within the Russian Arctic, and Arild Moe, Senior Research Fellow at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute (Norway). “Breaking the ice As the U.S. and Russia tease Arctic cooperation, climate science could offer common ground — but neither side seems interested” 4/22,

<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2025/04/22/breaking-the-ice> //DH

Indeed, while Trump has yet to deliver the swift peace in Ukraine he once promised, talk of U.S.- Russia cooperation in the Arctic has expanded into ambitious (if vague) proposals — potentially spanning everything from trade routes to energy development projects, according to Trump envoy Steve Witkoff. But even amid the attempted rapprochement between Washington and Moscow, serious obstacles to Arctic cooperation remain.

As Arild Moe, research professor at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute, told Meduza, while Trump may have grand ideas about U.S. companies getting involved, he doesn’t have the power to dictate strategic decisions to private American firms the way Putin does to Russian state-owned companies. “There’s no deal that can commit American business to investments in Russia happening overnight,” Moe said. For any of this to be plausible, the risks would have to be manageable — and right now, Moe said, “long-term investments in Russia look quite risky because the economic [and] political situation is unpredictable.”

Even if sanctions were lifted, “American companies don’t seem particularly eager to return to the Russian market right now,” Shumanov concurred. There’s also the matter of nationalization, which the Kremlin has been actively using to seize foreign-owned assets since the full-scale war began. As Shumanov put it, when Trump leaves office, “Vladimir Putin, if the mood strikes him, could easily sign another decree nationalizing the next enterprise.”

## Relations Advantage Answers

### 1NC – Relations Advantage

#### 1. Can’t solve relations. Putin inherently distrusts the United States

Alexandra Prokopenko, 2025 – Fellow, Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center “Trump’s Moscow Mirage: Profits for a Select Few” 3/7 <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/03/russia-business-economic-hopes?lang=en> //DH

But Washington’s flirtation with Moscow cannot fail to have consequences. No economic project will make Putin see the West as anything but a rival, even with a friendly Trump in the White House. Putin’s paranoia, historical grievances, and unchecked authority at home will likely push him toward future conflicts. By pursuing potential short-term profits, the United States risks enabling a larger global threat—and investors risk facing the same devastating losses they endured in 2022. History shows that in dealings with the Kremlin, there are no easy wins—only costly lessons.

#### 2. Putin will pocket concessions, genuine cooperation isn’t possible

Daniel Fried and Kimberly Donovan, 2025 – \*Weiser Family distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council. He is also on the board of directors of the National Endowment for Democracy and a visiting professor at Warsaw University AND \*\*director of the Economic Statecraft Initiative within the Atlantic Council’s GeoEconomics Center.“There’s a right way to lift sanctions on Russia. Follow these Dos and Don’ts.” New Atlanticist, 3/25, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/theres-a-right-way-to-lift-sanctions-on-russia-follow-these-dos-and-donts/> //DH

The United States has a long history of leveraging economic power and restrictive economic measures to advance its national security objectives. It also has a history of offering sanctions relief as a bargaining tool in negotiations to achieve its desired end states. Sanctions and the economic pain they inflict can effectively bring an adversary to the negotiating table, and sanctions relief can often get the adversary to agree to a deal.

After three years of increasingly restrictive sanctions targeting Russia over its unlawful invasion of Ukraine, Russia is feeling the pain. Its economic growth is minimal, and it has retracted into a “wartime economy” that is driven by military spending and government support. Annual inflation remains high, holding at 10 percent as of February. For comparison, a healthy inflation rate is generally between 2 percent and 3 percent per year. The Central Bank of the Russian Federation held interest rates at an all-time-high 21 percent in February. Russia is having trouble selling its oil as a result of sanctions and the expiration of General License 8L earlier this month, which makes it even more difficult to buy Russian oil without risking exposure to secondary sanctions.

The sanctions are working, and Russia’s economy is in a downturn. Moreover, despite Russian success in driving Ukrainian forces out of most of Russia’s Kursk region, Ukraine is holding off Russian advances and inflicting serious casualties. In short, the United States, its Group of Seven (G7) partners, and Ukraine have the upper hand in negotiations to end the war. They should use it.

As the Trump administration pursues a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin, US President Donald Trump must determine which US sanctions should be eased or lifted and when that sanctions relief should come as part of a negotiated peace settlement. To ensure Trump can negotiate peace from a position of strength and to hold Putin accountable to his end of the deal, we offer the following do’s and don’ts of lifting US sanctions on Russia.

Don’t give something for nothing

Do not lift or offer to lift sanctions to generate “goodwill.” Russia will pocket concessions and consider them a sign of weakness, emboldening Moscow to make further demands. Don’t lift any sanctions in advance of full and verified Russian adherence to the terms of a cease-fire. Russian attacks on Kyiv with Iranian-made drones this past weekend and ahead of cease-fire talks in Riyadh further demonstrate why sanctions should stay in place.

#### 3. Arms control fails – China and Russia will never agree

David J. Trachtenberg, 2025 - is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy. Previously, he served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. “Why Arms Control Must Fail” 6/12, RealClear Defense <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2025/06/13/why_arms_control_must_fail_1116338.html> //DH

Americans typically believe that fundamental disagreements can be overcome through the patient application of logic, reasoning, and common sense. In international relations, creative diplomacy is often seen as the key to solving intractable problems. This applies to negotiations with adversaries; it is often assumed that international tensions and the risk of war, especially nuclear war, can be alleviated through arms control agreements. Though a noble sentiment, this view is naïve, unsupported by history, ignores contemporary realities, and is unlikely to produce the desired positive results.

This stark conclusion runs counter to the American cultural belief that disagreements among opponents can always be overcome with good faith dialogue and discussion. Such a belief is premised on the notion that all sides share a common desire to bridge their differences in ways that lead to mutually beneficial outcomes.

This is a culturally egotistical view that assumes opponents share the same goals and objectives as the United States and that, with due diligence, the United States can succeed in concluding agreements that not only enhance U.S. security but provide outcomes that make the overall strategic environment more stable and secure.

The central problem with this belief is that there is a growing body of evidence supporting the proposition that U.S. adversaries do not share such goals and objectives. In simple terms, both China and Russia—which pose the greatest threat to U.S. security—are not interested in “stability” as the United States defines it. Rather, their goal is to work against a stability that preserves the status quo. These opposing objectives are what make meaningful arms control impossible.

#### 4. No nuclear arms racing, Russia can’t afford it

Sonya Dymova, 2024 – reporter “The only US-Russia nuclear arms control treaty is nearing its end. What’s next?” Medill on the Hill, 12/10 <https://medillonthehill.medill.northwestern.edu/2024/12/the-only-us-russia-nuclear-arms-control-treaty-is-nearing-its-end-whats-next/> //DH

A new nuclear arms race is possible but disadvantageous for Moscow

The absence of a formal treaty, even if coupled with informal understandings, leaves the nations free to reassess their nuclear strategies, raising fears that the world is teetering on the brink of a new, high-stakes arms race.

But Russia is unlikely to be the one to start it, Liang said.

The U.S. could increase the number of deployed warheads without having to spend a lot of money buying new missiles because its launchers have the capacity to upload more than Russian ones, he explained.

That could increase the U.S. stockpile to a “much higher number” than Russia’s, he said.

If the two countries were to arm their delivery systems to accommodate the maximum number of possible warheads, the U.S. could increase the number of deployed strategic warheads to 3,570 on 715 strategic launchers. In contrast, Russia could increase the number of its deployed warheads to 2,629 on 533 existing launchers, according to a 2023 report by the Federation of American Scientists.

“So for Russia, there’s a reason not to start that down that path,” Liang said.

The country’s declining war economy is another factor that could undermine the ability to expand its arsenal.

The Kremlin has been unable to expand production fast enough to replace conventional weapons at the rate they are being lost on the battlefield, with around half of all artillery shells used by Russia in Ukraine now coming from North Korean stocks. The country is expected to face severe shortages in several categories of weapons, leaving little budget to pursue a costly process of expanding a nuclear arsenal.

Even maintaining and modernizing the current arsenal inflicts high costs for the country: Russia spent $37.3 billion on it over the past five years, according to the 2023 International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons’ report.

### Extend: Can’t Solve Relations

#### Putin’s humiliating Trump, sustainable relations aren’t possible

Times of India, 2025 – “Trump’s Ukraine pivot: How Putin played US President - and won” 7/15,

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/explained-why-critics-say-new-superman-movie-is-anti-israel-decoding-the-politics-of-james-gunn-film/articleshow/122502931.cms> //DH

► In an about-turn, Trump delivered an ultimatum to Russia on Monday, demanding Putin end his war on Ukraine within 50 days or face massive economic sanctions and a wave of new weapons flowing into Kyiv.

► Trump's announcement, a stark policy shift after months of friendly outreach and failed diplomacy, included the threat of unprecedented "secondary tariffs" targeting Russia's trading partners, notably China and India, who continue buying Russian oil.

► Flanked by Nato secretary general Mark Rutte in the Oval Office, Trump openly expressed his frustration with Putin:

► "We're going to be doing very severe tariffs if we don't have a deal in 50 days, tariffs at about 100 percent," Trump said, adding that he was "very, very unhappy" with the Russian leader's refusal to negotiate seriously.

► This tough public stance follows weeks of private humiliation, as Putin repeatedly ignored Trump's requests to halt missile strikes on Ukraine even after pleasant personal conversations, according to a report in the Atlantic.

Why it matters

Trump's sudden, forceful change on Russia highlights how Putin has repeatedly humiliated the US president, exploiting Trump's desire for personal diplomacy by escalating violence whenever Trump attempted peace talks.

Initially confident he could quickly end Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II within 24 hours, Trump is now being forced into a far more aggressive stance by domestic political pressures and his own bruised ego.

Putin's continued military escalation not only embarrassed Trump publicly but also eroded his political standing domestically, leaving him vulnerable to criticism from both sides of the aisle, as the conflict drags into its fourth brutal year.

As a White House official told the Atlantic, Trump now privately admits Putin has made him look like "the junior partner."

This reversal isn't a new Trump doctrine. As Jonathan Lemire noted in the Atlantic,

Trump hasn't suddenly embraced transatlantic unity or Kyiv's cause.

Rather, Trump "got insulted"-and now he's lashing out. For Putin, who often views geopolitics as a game of personal dominance, embarrassing Trump seems a strategic success.

Senator Lindsey Graham captured Trump's humiliation starkly. "One of the biggest miscalculations Putin has made is to play Trump," Graham told CBS' "Face the Nation'.

### Extend: Putin Pockets Concessions

#### Putin has revisionist goals which make genuine cooperation impossible. He’ll pocket the plan then demand more

Michael McFaul, 2025 - served as U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014, and before that, oversaw Russia and Eurasia policy at the National Security Council under President Barack Obama. He is a professor, senior fellow and director at Stanford University’s Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies

“I’ve Negotiated With Russia. Trump Is Doing It All Wrong.” US News & World Report, 3/3, <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2025-03-03/trump-ukraine-russia-war-putin-zelenskyy> //DH

I served as U.S. ambassador to Moscow a decade ago and lived there for years before, so I know from firsthand experience that Putin cannot be trusted. He is a cynical strongman whose priorities and policies are antithetical to American values and interests. And no matter how much U.S.-Russian relations might be repaired or restarted, there is no universe in which Putin is a U.S. ally or trustworthy partner. He seeks to weaken the United States, divide us from our allies and strengthen the autocratic world at the expense of the democratic one. A strongman who’s held an iron fist on power in Russia for a quarter-century, Putin has single-mindedly pursued these objectives for decades, dating back to his time in the Soviet-era KGB security agency.

Over the years, I have negotiated with the Russians many times and learned that if you give concessions to Putin’s Kremlin without asking for anything in return, they pocket those concessions and ask for more. I can tell you that our president is going about this the wrong way; he is giving away his “cards,” to use Trump’s favored metaphor, up front.

#### History is overwhelmingly against the plan

Walter Russell Mead, 2025 – Alexander Hamilton Professor of Strategy and Statecraft at the University of Florida's Hamilton Center “Trump's Russia Policy Isn't All That New; It echoes Angela Merkel, Barack Obama, Joe Biden—and Henry Wallace” Wall Street Journal, 2/24, Proquest //DH

As Donald Trump almost blew up the trans-Atlantic alliance last week, the usual hand-wringers who have bemoaned every step in the president's rise were out in force, as incandescently eloquent and as irredeemably futile as ever. Mr. Trump's MAGA-world supporters also were in full cry, hailing the daring originality of a man whose supposed 3-D chess moves break all the rules.

What the cheerleaders and the mourners alike missed is that Mr. Trump's Russia policy is, in many respects, mainstream. Like Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel, the president wants to look past political and ideological differences with Moscow to develop mutually beneficial economic links. Like Barack Obama, he believes that antagonism between the U.S. and Russia is an anachronistic echo of the Cold War. Like Joe Biden, Mr. Trump wants to park Russia: to avoid the pain, difficulty and expense of confronting Moscow by establishing some kind of working arrangement with it.

The substance of the Trump administration's proposals to Russia—accepting territorial gains along with providing inadequate security assistance to Ukraine—is where the Biden administration and its chief European allies would likely have ended up. This is how George W. Bush, Mr. Obama, Ms. Merkel and Mr. Biden treated Russia's actions against Georgia during and after 2008 and its 2014 attack on Ukraine.

But there are differences between the old and the new Russia policies. While his predecessors used harsh anti-Russian rhetoric and symbolic sanctions to disguise their supine pragmatism to their supporters and possibly to themselves, Mr. Trump wants to send Vladimir Putin candy and flowers. For Mr. Trump, treating Mr. Putin with "respect"—as Tony Soprano would put it—is the way to a stable, businesslike relationship with the Russians. If this approach isn't a comprehensive answer to America's Russia problem, it isn't entirely wrong. If you want someone to park on your street, don't throw dog poop at their car.

There is more. In the Trump view, European countries haven't merely stiff-armed American requests to increase defense spending. Led by Germany, they have seized every opportunity to trade with Russia, even when that trade weakened European security and strengthened Moscow. The old American policy locked the U.S. into the ridiculous posture of begging Berlin to stop undermining its own security by relying on Russian energy.

Team Trump wants to flip this dynamic. Since Russia is closer to Germany and presumably a greater threat to it than to the U.S., let Germany take on the burden of its security, while the U.S. establishes close commercial relations with a country that doesn't directly threaten us. In a properly run universe, Team Trump feels, Germany should be begging the U.S. to avoid trade deals with Russia that undermine European security, not the other way around.

Mr. Trump's course is disruptive and risky, but it is internally consistent. Offering Russia an economic partnership with the U.S., dropping the ideological campaign against it and reducing America's role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization can all be seen as efforts to achieve the longtime Western goal of neutralizing Russia or even enlisting it against the greater danger posed by Beijing.

The Trump administration's approach echoes the views then-Commerce Secretary Henry Wallace laid out to President Harry S. Truman in a letter dated July 23, 1946. Joseph Stalin's distrust of the West, Wallace argued, stems from defensiveness resulting from more than a thousand years of foreign invasion and encroachment. Containing Moscow by building alliances around it would deepen Stalin's paranoia and increase his hostility. The solution was to win the Kremlin's trust by withdrawing from contested areas, accepting Soviet proposals to guarantee their security, combating American hostility toward the Soviet system, offering the possibility of a deep economic partnership and promoting bilateral trade.

Diplomat George Kennan, the architect of America's Cold War containment strategy, spent most of his career calling for American restraint in the Cold War, but he thought Wallace was badly misguided. Kennan argued that stable, businesslike relations with Moscow were possible, but only after Stalin realized that the West could and would successfully resist his expansionary efforts. Détente could follow containment but could never replace it.

There are clear risks to Mr. Trump's Wallace-inflected policy. Europeans, including some historically very pro-American voices, won't soon forgive or forget Team Trump's affronts to their dignity and threats to their security. Mr. Putin may well pocket all the concessions Washington offers him and then double down on both his alliance with China and his aggression in Ukraine. Japan sees Mr. Trump's cavalier attitude toward longstanding allies in Europe as a threat to its own security.

#### Putin will never genuinely cooperate – it’s a charade to buy time in Ukraine

John Lough, 2025 - Associate Fellow, Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House “Putin’s negotiation strategy is predictable: move slowly, keep Trump interested, and reset expectations” 4/16, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/putins-negotiation-strategy-predictable-move-slowly-keep-trump-interested-and-reset> //DH

Unlike Trump, Putin is not in a hurry. His military can carry on fighting for several months without additional pain. He will feel reasonably sure that Ukraine’s fighting reserves will dwindle from early summer, since it is highly unlikely that Trump’s administration will agree another military aid package for Kyiv. He also knows that Europe will struggle to fill the gap.

In the meantime, he intends to placate Trump with broader goodwill signals, agreeing to a quick restoration of bilateral relations with the US and embracing the idea of cooperation in the Middle East.

Putin plans to use such gestures, along with minor concessions like the energy ceasefire, to keep Trump’s belief in Russian commitment to negotiations alive. Meanwhile, Russia can pursue greater gains on the battlefield and slowly reset Trump’s expectations for an agreement.

Why would Putin think of anything other than achieving his maximal goals when relations with the US have shifted from deeply antagonistic under President Joe Biden to unimaginably friendly under Trump? Conditions could not be more favourable.

### Extend: Arms Control Fails

#### Russia regularly violates arms control commitments

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For the past century, arms control agreements have been used to constrain threats posed by potential aggressor nations. But for the most part, these agreements have worked only when none of the signatories harbored aggressive intent. Where there was such intent, arms control treaties have been covertly or overtly violated or channeled arms competition into areas that were not limited. The naval treaties of the 1920s and 1930s offer a case in point: they limited capital ships but excluded submarines, allowing a robust competition in the latter. And by the 1930s, some of the parties, particularly Nazi Germany, merely pretended to abide by treaty limits. In more recent decades, the Soviet Union and now Russia have been repeat offenders. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union violated the Biological Weapons Convention shortly after its signing, and then went on to violate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in the 1980s.

Since coming to power in Russia, Putin has violated nine separate arms control agreements and now appears ready to skirt two more: the State Department’s most recent arms control compliance report notes that Putin is following his Soviet predecessors in contravening the Biological Weapons Convention by maintaining “an offensive biological warfare program,” and after intelligence reports indicated Russia may be planning to put a nuclear weapon into Earth’s orbit, Russia vetoed a UN resolution reaffirming the Outer Space Treaty. Moreover, by deliberately taking reckless actions such as cutting in front of U.S. naval and air forces, Putin’s military routinely ignores the 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement and the Reagan-era Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities Agreement, which both sought to regulate militaries’ conduct in order to avoid accidents that could lead to inadvertent escalation or miscalculation. Given these willful and continuing violations, the prospect of negotiating a meaningful arms control deal with Putin under the best of circumstances is far-fetched. Add to the calculus that Moscow’s forces have stepped up attacks on Ukrainian cities even as Putin gives rhetorical support to peace talks, and it beggars belief that Russia would engage in good-faith arms control negotiations over the next year.

#### Communication with Russia won’t build trust or lead to credible arms control – Russia’s objectives are irreconcilable with the US

David J. Trachtenberg, 2025 - is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy. Previously, he served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. “Why Arms Control Must Fail” 6/12, RealClear Defense <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2025/06/13/why_arms_control_must_fail_1116338.html> //DH

Indeed, it strains credulity to believe that open lines of communication will reduce tensions and improve the overall strategic environment when the parties’ goals and objectives are diametrically opposed. Similarly, it is unlikely that greater “transparency” in armaments will lead Moscow or Beijing to accommodate the U.S. desire to preserve the existing world order, which they both believe is decidedly unfavorable to them. Tellingly, leading Russian spokespersons have declared Russia to be already at war with the United States. For example, as the director of the Center for Middle Eastern and Central Asian Studies in Moscow stated, “The United States is the enemy. It is our enemy. It is a hostile state that aims to destroy our country… We are at war!”[24] Such views, increasingly spread by Russian propagandists, reflect the worldview of a Russian leadership that believes, as Putin has stated, that Moscow is in an “irreconcilable struggle” with the United States and the West over the nature of the world order. In this struggle, Western notions of arms control as a mutually beneficial endeavor and a stabilizing factor in international relations do not align with Russia’s strategic objectives and, therefore, cannot succeed.

#### Historically, arms control fails, causes cheating, and doesn’t induce Russian restraint

David J. Trachtenberg, 2025 - is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy. Previously, he served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. “Why Arms Control Must Fail” 6/12, RealClear Defense <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2025/06/13/why_arms_control_must_fail_1116338.html> //DH

The United States has historically deluded itself into believing that U.S. strategic restraint would be reciprocated by adversaries; that American accommodation and good will would prompt China and Russia to become partners with the West rather than adversaries; that neither side benefits from escalating tensions or instability; and that arms control agreements would serve as a catalyst for improved political relations. Each of these expectations, and similar optimistic hopes, have been dashed by reality. As one trenchant analysis concluded, the U.S. government’s “systemic delay” in calling out Russia’s repeated arms control violations, the “enduring lack of government openness regarding the immense Chinese nuclear build-up,” and the long-delayed U.S. nuclear modernization program have not produced the kind of reciprocal restraint or improved political relationships that U.S. decision makers expected. Indeed, U.S. arms control policy has been driven by self-deception.[25] And in today’s environment, there is little reason to believe the results will be different. As the statement, often attributed (or misattributed) to Albert Einstein, goes, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”[26]

There are existing channels for communication that could be resuscitated in an effort to seek greater insight into Russian posture and programs. For example, although the Congress severely restricted U.S.-Russian military-to-military interactions after Russia’s illegal invasion of Crimea in 2014, the legislation did not prevent military-to-military communication.[27] But even military-to-military discussions are liable to prove disappointingly inadequate as long as Russian strategic objectives remain contrary to U.S. national security interests. Above all, the United States should refrain from turning dialogue into a negotiation with the expectation that concrete results can be achieved to the benefit of all parties as though this is a zero-sum game. It is not. The United States must be prepared to acknowledge and accept that certain disputes are unbridgeable, no matter how creative U.S. diplomacy is and how determined American diplomats are in seeking common ground. Even Russian officials have acknowledged that political realities make meaningful arms control negotiations with the United States unlikely. As Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov recently stated, “At the moment, it is very difficult to imagine the beginning of such negotiations.”[28]

### Extend: No Arms Racing

#### There won’t be races in emerging technology and there’s no threat

Dominika Kunertova 22. Senior Researcher in the Global Security Team at the Center for Security Studies. “Strategic Trends 2022.” https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/ST2022.pdf

More Hype, Less Sonic

The idea of flying at hypersonic speeds has been around for some time. Although the theoretical foundations were laid down in the 1960s, the lack of suitable manufacturing processes hindered the development of hyper- sonic systems. In addition, air-breath- ing engines for space shuttles were judged too heavy and costly. Today, spurred by great-power rivalry, recent scientific advances have brought these systems within reach, as they have allowed prototypes to be construct- ed and tested. This has sparked hype and impatience among trendspotters about whether hypersonic technology will unleash a new industrial and/or military revolution.

The hype is not unique to hyper- sonic weapons. The phenomenon of emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) is plagued with a lack of understanding of the time it takes for a given technology to mature, innovation and adoption challenges, and its real-world effects in both the short and long runs. According to a 2020 NATO Science and Technology Organization report, the EDTs include data, AI, autonomy, space, hypersonics, quantum technologies, biotechnology, and materials. The report suggests that all of these are either currently in nascent stages of development or are undergoing rapid development.25

Technology is labeled as “emerging” when it is coming to maturity. At this stage, the use of such technologies is not widespread, nor are their effects and functions fully known. Although a technology maturity timeline is of- ten difficult to determine, emerging technologies make policymakers re- consider the status quo and ponder their implications for future warfare.

Technologies considered “disruptive” are those that are expected to have major or even revolutionary effects, but have yet to be exploited. For ex- ample, they could undermine nuclear deterrence, increase risk of a nuclear first strike, expand opportunities for crisis escalation, and heighten insecu- rity caused by some form of duality in a technology. Dual-purpose tech- nologies having both civilian and mil- itary uses or application in both the conventional and nuclear realms can be destabilizing.26 In contrast, some experts point out that disruptive technologies can also have stabilizing effects. For instance, this could occur if a technology were to improve early warning and detection mechanisms or enable new arms control verifica- tion measures.27

Other researchers disagree in principle, arguing that a technology itself cannot be disruptive, stabilizing, or game-changing. This view emphasizes the importance of technology adoption processes. For example, here, the success of armed forces in using open architecture and modular systems to absorb fast-paced technological changes is vitally important. Ultimately, the military technology represents the means to the political ends; only the ways in which the latter are achieved can be disruptive.

Insights from the sociology of technol- ogy adoption can help in understand- ing the hype surrounding hypersonic weapon systems and temper unreal- istic expectations. In the early 1990s, Howard Fosdick outlined the stages of technological development through scientific discovery, innovation, and increased public awareness, but also through failures and efforts along ul- timately unproductive avenues. He noted that the greatest amount of discussion about many technologies takes place before they reach maturity, prior to their real use. In doing so, he suggested that usability of a technology and its publicity are inversely correlated.28

According to the Gartner Hype Cycle, the most well-known cycle of techno- logical progress built upon Fosdick’s work on technology adoption, a trending technology goes through five key phases, each of which describes a state of attention towards the technology: 1) the Innovation Trigger, marking a new technology or scientific discovery; 2) the Peak of Inflated Expectations, when the technology gains publici- ty; 3) the Trough of Disillusionment, when the limitations of the technology come to the fore; 4) the Slope of Enlightenment, which comes with a better understanding of the technolo- gy’s utility; and 5) the Plateau of Pro- ductivity, the stage of a mature application of the “unhyped” technology.

Based on these criteria, data, AI, autonomy, space, and hypersonics will produce significant or disruptive im- pacts on military capabilities over the next five to 10 years, while quantum technology, biotechnology and mate- rials are still emerging and will need 10–20 years to produce their disrup- tive effects (see figure).29

This hype cycle shows that the attention does not represent a technical assessment. Instead, it often reflects the interests of political actors and profit-oriented industries. It also highlights the role that media play in promoting the impatient expectation of an impending industrial-military revolution. All technologies face the test of proving their usefulness and viability, but this is something that usually happens only after the hype fizzles out.

International security scholars and tech experts who look beyond the allure of wonder weapons question the technical feasibility and military effectiveness of hypersonic weapon sys- tems.30 They warn that these systems have yet to reach maturity in terms of materials, propulsion, and control. Indeed, even though unpropelled hy- personic gliders use existing ballistic missile technology for their boost, such gliders may only become fully operational by 2030 at the earliest.

#### History disproves escalation from cyberattacks

Erica Lonergan and Shawn Lonergan, 2023 - Erica D. Lonergan is an assistant professor at the Army Cyber Institute at the US Military Academy at West Point and a research scholar at the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. Shawn W. Lonergan is a US Army Reserve officer assigned to 75th Innovation Command and a senior director in the Cyber, Risk & Regulatory Practice at PricewaterhouseCoopers. Escalation Dynamics in Cyberspace, google books, p. 6-7 //DH

The NotPetya case is just one example. Nevertheless, the overall absence of any meaningful instances of cyber escalation raises questions about the extent to which the cyber domain is truly escalatory, let alone more dangerous than other domains of warfare or strategic competition. In other words, there is a significant mismatch between the cyber escalation views held by many prominent experts and the available evidence. Three factors could account for this gap.

First, differences between theoretical expectations and empirical reality may stem from definitional issues—specifically, how those who assert that the cyber domain is inherently escalatory define what "escalation" means. As we discuss in detail later in this chapter, we conceptualize escalation as something that changes the nature of a strategic interaction between parties in a way that makes war more likely or, if conflict is already taking place, more severe. According to this definition, neither the sheer volume of cyber incidents in the international system nor evidence of any type of response to a cyber incident necessarily constitutes escalation.2, In contrast, some may point to the observation of a high volume of cyber incidents or any form of tit-for-tat dynamic (irrespective of the relative level of cost and risk they may generate) as forms of escalation. However, the mere presence of behavior or activity per se is not sufficient evidence of escalation.

Alternatively, some may acknowledge that cyber escalation has not yet occurred, but it could be lurking around the next corner. This reasoning has some parallels to academic debates about the success of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War. Deterrence optimists opined that the absence of nuclear war between the United States and Soviet Union was due to the success of the strategy, while others have argued that the world simply got lucky.28 However, unlike the Cold War, where neither superpower ultimately chose to unleash its nuclear arsenal on the other, the offensive employment of cyber capabilities is hardly unthinkable. States have developed and employed offensive cyber capabilities since the 1980s and their use is only becoming more prevalent.29 The sheer number of cyber incidents that has occurred over the course of multiple decades raises questions about how likely it is that cyber escalation would take place in the future, given the multi-decade track record of cyber incidents not causing that outcome. That said, as part of our analysis in this book we explore plausible hypothetical escalation scenarios, with a focus on cyber operations that take place during conflict. Finally, there may simply be a mismatch between the conventional wisdom about cyber escalation and the empirical reality because the conventional wisdom is wrong. This is the core contention of our book.

# Lift Sanctions Counterplan

### 1NC – Lift Sanctions Counterplan

The United States federal government should lift its sanctions on Russian liquid natural gas produced in the Arctic.

#### Unilateral lifting of sanctions boosts relations and Russian status

Bill Farren-Price, 2025 - Senior Research Fellow, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies “Russia-US thaw: Defrosting Arctic LNG sanctions?” March,

<https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Comment-Russia-Sanctions.pdf> //DH

International relations have been a critical arena for the new US administration’s first 100 days. In terms of US-Russia diplomacy, the biggest early benefactor from a thaw in relations could be Russia’s beleaguered LNG sector, where a warming of relations could herald an easing of US secondary sanctions on the Arctic LNG 2 project, which could resume operations as soon as LNG marketing restrictions are removed. Modelling a restart/start of the project’s trains 1 and 2 from the second half of 2025 using NexantECA’s World Gas Model2 implies a decline in TTF prices of more than $1MMBTU through 2027, with Russian LNG edging out volumes from other global producers, particularly those in Oceania and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The political pathway to a potential easing of US sanctions on Russian LNG reflects more an improvement in bilateral relations than progress on the Ukraine file. The Trump administration’s Ukraine ceasefire initiative was never likely to be a swift or straightforward win. While Ukraine has ultimately fallen into line with White House demands, Russia’s steadfast adhesion to its maximalist war aims means that there is very little common ground on which to fashion a truce, let alone a broader peace agreement. As headlines inevitably focus on the twists and turns of the US-led diplomacy aimed at ending the fighting, there appears to be a bigger prize in the sights of the White House: a strategic partnership with Russia, where economic interests outweigh the interests of Ukraine and its European backers. That overarching US objective has not been expressed explicitly, but it brings a rising likelihood that as part of a bilateral thaw in relations, the US could ease some unilateral sanctions on Russia.

The question about what White House priorities are is instructive. Whether the efforts to bring about a ceasefire in Ukraine are successful or not, it has become clear that both Presidents Trump and Putin will try to rebuild bilateral relations. Ukraine ceasefire diplomacy is therefore a potential stepping stone but failure may not derail a deeper bilateral thaw. Any unilateral easing of US sanctions on Russia would be a big step towards normalization that could, on its own, dramatically reduce Russia’s economic isolation.

Russia’s strategy is also important. While there is a list of well-publicized conditions that Moscow has demanded as the price for a battlefield truce, it is also seeking to divide western commitment to the sanctions that have hobbled its economy. Media speculation about the restart of Russian gas deliveries to Germany through the single remaining Nordstream pipeline fall into this category. While there are voices on the German right wing that would welcome a restart of Russian gas imports under a putative peace deal, that prospect sits well outside the political mainstream, not just in Berlin but also in the EU.

Given that the US has been historically one of the most active supporters of sanctions against Russia through its control of global banking and settlement systems and its readiness to levy secondary sanctions, a volte face would have profound ramifications. It is now not just possible but likely that a defrosting of US-Russia relations will occur regardless of progress on the Ukraine file, for which it is hard to identify any realistic near-term pathway to peace.

The shape of potential US energy sanctions relief

In market terms, a lifting of US energy sanctions on Russia would have least impact on crude oil and products markets. US and G7-led efforts to cap prices of Russian crude oil sales have had limited impact on revenue3 or sales volumes, although European sanctions have forced Russia to switch trade flows away from Europe towards buyers in India and China. While Russia is part of OPEC+ supply management, it has been broadly successful at maintaining export volumes since 2022. Spare production capacity available to be brought onstream were oil sanctions to be eased is therefore limited.

#### The net benefit is the China disadvantage. The CP solves without offering further economic cooperation or US investment, which preserves China’s role in the Arctic

Donna Kennedy-Glans, 2025 – Former Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta “Putin, Trump and the Arctic prize” Montreal Gazette, 4/19, factiva //DH

Russia's Arctic is resource-rich; the remote region has vast reserves of hydrocarbons, immense deposits of rare earth minerals and metals and provides access to the Northern Sea Route along Russia's northern coast, a far shorter shipping route between Asia and Europe.

In February, Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, met with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and floated the idea of American companies returning to Russia to collaborate in joint projects in the Arctic. A few weeks later, Kirill Dmitriev, head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund and President Vladimir Putin's special envoy on economic co-operation, posted on X: "The Arctic is too important for Cold War-style politics. Russia & the U.S. must find common ground to ensure stability, resource development & environmental protection."

Dr. Tim Reilly, a Russian-speaking, U.K.-based expert in Sino-Russian relations in the Arctic and northeast Asia, and associate with the Scott Polar Research In-stitute at the University of Cambridge, is gobsmacked by the implications.

"If Putin is serious about offering Big Oil an opportunity back into the Arctic, LNG (liquefied natural gas) or otherwise," says Tim, "Putin knows full well ... he's sacrificing the Sino-Russian relationship, which he's built over the last 15 years."

When I catch up with Tim for a conversation to help me decipher this fastchanging landscape, he's at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in the heart of Washington D.C. Alongside other clever folks from NASA, U.S. Space Force, and the intelligence community, he's participating in a conference to examine "space and the relationship to the Arctic." Looking very serious in a formal grey suit, Tim chuckles, "there are no jeans here."

"Isn't it premature to talk of Western sanctions against Russia being lifted, and Western investors being invited to participate in resource development in the Russian Arctic?" I posit. Everyone can see that ceasefire talks between Ukraine and Russia are stalled; on Palm Sunday, a Russian missile strike on the Ukrainian city of Sumy killed at least 34 people. Half of the U.S. Senate (25 Republicans and 25 Democrats) joined forces to introduce a bill to "sanction the hell" out of Russia if Moscow doesn't engage in peace talks. U.S. President Donald Trump threatens to impose secondary tariffs on buyers of Russian oil if Moscow keeps blocking efforts to end the war. And on Friday, Rubio told reporters, "If it is not possible to end the war in Ukraine, we need to move on."

Geo-politics doesn't move in straight lines, Tim reminds me. In anticipation of a peace deal, the back-channels are flowing. There's even speculation that the Nord Stream pipelines could be reactivated - a -l lowing Europe to return to importing Russian gas - if Russia and Ukraine reach a peace agreement.

In a March 21 interview with Tucker Carlson, Steve Witkoff, the U.S. special envoy helping Trump navigate Ukraine and Gaza, suggested Russia and America were considering "integrating their energy policies in the Arctic," sharing sea lanes, collaborating on artificial intelligence and sending liquefied natural gas "into Europe together."

A week later, at the Arctic Forum in the northern Russian city of Murmansk, Putin's special envoy, Dmitriev, announced an investment fund for Arctic development to attract partners from the Gulf and the West.

Would Western companies risk returning to Russia? When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, ExxonMobil gave up its role in a massive oil project with Rosneft (the Russian state-controlled oil company) on Sakhalin Island. TotalEnergies of France, another Western player, also wrote off billions in Russia but held onto its stake in the Yamal LNG facility that it had helped develop in the Russian Arctic with Novatek, a Russian gas company.

"Big Oil thinks in decades," Tim quips. Over the years, Tim's advised ExxonMobil and Shell, super majors with long-standing experience operating in Russia. Western companies' access to Arctic frontiers of this scale is financially attractive, says Tim; "You're looking at what's going to be, or is, the biggest energy market in the world in the 21st century, northeast Asia.

"The big operation in the Arctic is Novatek LNG," Tim explains. "It's a high-quality international project, well-financed, well-managed, good technologies," backed by Russian oligarch Gennady Timchenko, a friend of Putin's and even "a bit of a golden boy," Tim adds, with a smile and just a hint of a raised eyebrow.

And, Tim continues, Western investment in Russia's Arctic resources would undermine China's influence in that region.

Chinese players own a significant stake in the Novatek LNG joint venture; the project affords them the opportunity to build icebreaker tankers and invest in the "Polar Silk Road" (under China's Belt and Road Initiative) to leverage Arctic navigable sea routes. That work, Tim explains, "includes digitalizing the Northern Sea Route, within the sort of undersea defence and strategic intelligence game that's absolutely exploding."

"You're destroying the Sino-Russian relationship," with Western investment in Russia's Arctic, Tim concludes, "which de facto means you have completely strangled at birth further co-operation with China and Russia in space." Because the real prize, according to Tim, is not just economic opportunity, it's access to space over the North Pole and the Northern Hemisphere.

"There is an assumption that governance in the 21st century over the Arctic is terrestrial-based - NATO, the Arctic Council and those sorts of organizations," he says. Tim sees the world differently, in three dimensions: "If one can position oneself in space above the Arctic, one can influence two oceans and three continents - the entire Northern Hemisphere." That's in part, he suggests, why the United States, some years ago identified the Indo-Pacific, the continent of Eurasia, and the Arctic as the three most important regions in the 21st century; all three are in the Northern Hemisphere.

It also explains, Tim adds, why the Chinese are suggesting that the two poles, Antarctica and the Arctic, be included in what's known as the "global commons" (alongside the deep seabed, deep space, cyberspace) belonging to all mankind.

Tim and like-minded experts spend a lot of time connecting the dots between the Arctic and access to space. Head-spinning stuff, but it's his opinion that "a new world order will be decided in space," and the structure of it "will then be reflected on our life on Earth."

Western investment - Arctic LNG - access to space over the Northern Hemisphere: it could be a threelegged stool for prosperity in the Russian Arctic. Or it could be a ruse to promote Russia as a collaborative actor. "Putin is hedging," Tim agrees, "he always does."

### They Say: “Permute: Do Both”

#### The permutation links to the China disadvantage. The counterplan alone doesn’t offer to cooperate with Russia, instead it just removes barriers to cooperation. Including the plan neutralizes China’s Arctic influence

K.M. Seethi, 2025 – Director, Inter University Centre for Social Science Research and Extension, is the Academic Advisor of the International Centre for Polar Studies at Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala “Polar Realignment: Trump, Putin, and the Future of Arctic Power Politics” The Geopolitics, 3/11, <https://thegeopolitics.com/polar-realignment-trump-putin-and-the-future-of-arctic-power-politics/> //DH

A potential U.S.-Russia Arctic collaboration will also cast a long shadow over China’s ambitions in the region. While China has aggressively branded itself a ‘near-Arctic state’ since 2018, much of its influence has hinged on investments in Russian energy and logistics infrastructure—particularly in the Northern Sea Route (NSR). Beijing’s strategy has been to use economic partnerships to expand its strategic footprint without provoking direct geopolitical confrontation. However, a Trump-Putin rapprochement could dramatically alter these calculations.

With Russia potentially rekindling energy and logistical cooperation with the United States, China could find its economic leverage in the Arctic significantly diminished. The mutual suspicion between Moscow and Beijing is already evident in Russia’s reluctance to grant China greater influence in Arctic governance mechanisms. Trump’s strategy to “drive a wedge” between Moscow and Beijing might inadvertently succeed if Moscow perceives greater strategic and technological gains in partnering with Washington instead of relying exclusively on Beijing’s capital.

Such a shift would put China on the defensive, forcing it to rethink its Arctic investments and potentially seek new bilateral alliances with smaller Arctic states or increase engagement with Arctic Council observers like South Korea and Japan. More broadly, it may reduce China’s capacity to shape Arctic norms and infrastructure development to its advantage. China’s Arctic presence has so far been largely economic and scientific, avoiding military entanglements—but a weakening of its strategic positioning may compel Beijing to rethink its posture.

#### Greater US-Russian cooperation risks isolating China

Asia Pacific Task Force, 2025 - Beyond the Horizon International Strategic Studies Group (BtH) is an independent next-generation think & do tank in Belgium “Xi Jinping’s May 2025 Visit to Russia: Geopolitical Significance and Strategic Implications” 5/12 <https://behorizon.org/xi-jinpings-may-2025-visit-to-russia-geopolitical-significance-and-strategic-implications/> //DH

Xi’s meeting with Putin also needs to be understood in the context of U.S.-China-Russia triangular dynamics, particularly with a new U.S. administration under President Donald Trump in 2025. The Trump administration’s stance added an extra layer of complexity. Unlike his predecessor who treated Russia as a pariah, Trump came into office signaling a possible rapprochement with Moscow – a move that both intrigued and unnerved Beijing. Indeed, Washington was reportedly embarking on a behind-the-scenes diplomatic reset with the Kremlin, even as it publicly pressed Russia and Ukraine toward a peace agreement. Some observers noted that Beijing harbored concerns about a Russo-American thaw, fearing it could lead to a geopolitical realignment that leaves China isolated. Xi’s high-profile visit can be seen in part as insurance that Moscow stays closely aligned with Beijing, sending a reminder to Putin that China is his most reliable partner. The optics of warm Xi-Putin ties in Moscow likely counteracted any overtures from Trump, making clear that Russia gains more from sticking with China than risking a pivot West.

#### Greater US cooperation will separate Russia from China over the Arctic

Mary Ilyushina, 2025 – reporter on the Foreign Desk of The Washington Post, covers Russia and the region. She began her career in independent Russian media before joining CNN’s Moscow bureau “Lure of the north: What Russia’s Arctic can offer Trump” Washington Post, 3/31, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/03/31/russia-arctic-gas-minerals-trump-putin/> //DH

“The big thing here is the narrative of Arctic exceptionalism,” he said, referring to a policy first proposed by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that suggested the region should be exempt from geopolitical tensions, “where cooperation can happen despite conflicts.”

“Working together in the Arctic is still important for Russia’s great power status,” he said.

There is also a theory in the U.S. administration that engaging with Russia, such as in the Arctic, could help it disengage from China, a goal recently put forward by Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Last year, the Pentagon highlighted in an updated Arctic Strategy the threat posed by Russia and China joining up in the region. In recent years, the United States expanded its military readiness in the Arctic in response to Moscow and Beijing’s “growing alignment” in economic and military cooperation, as the two states held joint military drills in the Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska.

A recent analysis by Rand noted that Moscow has grown increasingly reliant on Beijing to finance its Arctic projects.

“We could find ourselves in a situation where, whether Russia wants to improve its relations with the U.S. or not, they can’t because they’ve become completely dependent on the Chinese because we have cut them off,” Rubio told conservative outlet Breitbart News on Feb. 25.

### They Say: “US Technology Solvency Deficit”

#### Russia gets enough technological support and investment from China to compensate for the loss of American tech

Isha Rao and Max Gruenig, 2024 - \*student at Georgetown’s Walsh School of Foreign Service AND \*\*climate and energy economist with expertise and experience in the US and Europe, working with climate think tank E3G in Washington DC and lecturing at Georgetown University.”Sanction-Proof? Russia's Arctic Ambitions and the China Factor” The Arctic Institute, 11/21, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/sanction-proof-russias-arctic-ambitions-china-factor/> //DH

Cut off from Western technology, Russia is doubling down on developing its own Arctic-capable technologies, potentially making it more self-reliant in the long run. Western sanctions, while creating challenges, have had some unintended consequences. They’ve pushed Russia and China closer together in the Arctic, potentially creating a more solid alliance than before.

China’s deepening involvement in Russia’s Arctic endeavors has become a crucial factor in Moscow’s ability to weather Western sanctions. As Western companies withdraw from Russian Arctic projects, Chinese firms are stepping in, providing much-needed investment and technological support. This support aligns with China’s own Arctic ambitions. Despite not being an Arctic state, China has declared itself a “near-Arctic state” and is leveraging Russia’s isolation to expand its footprint in the region. Chinese companies maintain significant stakes in key Russian Arctic energy projects, with combined holdings of 30 percent in Yamal LNG and 20 percent in Arctic LNG-2.

While this Sino-Russian cooperation in the Arctic helps Russia bypass Western sanctions, it’s raising concerns among A7 countries – the seven Arctic Council members without Russia – about China’s growing influence in the region and the long-term implications for Arctic security.

#### Both the EU and China are providing Russia Arctic LNG technology now

Nurlan Aliyev, 2024 - Lecturer, University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw “Moscow’s Arctic Projects Amidst the War: Sanctions, LNG projects, Icebreakers and the Northern Sea Route” 6/24, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/moscows-arctic-projects-amidst-the-war-sanctions-lng-projects-icebreakers-and-the-northern-sea-route-178452> //DH

This year China is continuing to provide LNG modules for Arctic LNG 2. The delivery of the plant module has enabled the Russian energy company NOVATEK to complete the construction of a second production unit for Arctic LNG 2. Yet, it is not clear whether NOVATEK will be able to build the third gravity-based production unit, as initially planned. However, a vessel carrying the first two LNG modules for the third production train of Arctic LNG 2 set sail several days after the US sanctioned four heavy lift vessels for carrying LNG technology to Russia.

In 2023, NOVATEK started opening tenders for Russia-based contractors to supply auxiliary equipment and machinery for Arctic LNG 2, but major machinery such as gas turbines and generators were contracted in China. NOVATEK has recently ordered key equipment for supplying power to Arctic LNG-2 from the Russian company “Power Machines”, instead of purchasing machines from the Chinese Harbin Guanghan Gas Turbine, because of the deadline; but there are question marks over the quality of this equipment.

Russia also actively uses schemes to circumvent sanctions. In recent years, Arctic LNG 2 has continued to receive prefabricated modules from China, even though EU sanctions prohibit their export. However, not only Chinese companies have been involved in this business: EU firms have also supplied over $630 million worth of equipment to Arctic LNG 2 despite the sanctions imposed since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. Nonetheless, sanctions have affected NOVATEK’s projects: NOVATEK’s plan to lease a floating power plant from the Turkish company Karpowership was not implemented, because the terms of the lease were subject to change every month.

#### Russia has sufficient expertise to overcome the technology problem

Nurlan Aliyev, 2024 - Lecturer, University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw “Moscow’s Arctic Projects Amidst the War: Sanctions, LNG projects, Icebreakers and the Northern Sea Route” 6/24, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/moscows-arctic-projects-amidst-the-war-sanctions-lng-projects-icebreakers-and-the-northern-sea-route-178452> //DH

Nevertheless, Russia might overcome the lack of some Western technology. Mainly thanks to NOVATEK, Russia has acquired and developed the know-how to manufacture cryogenic equipment. Russian state companies have also tried to develop substitution projects – for instance, Rostec has listed among its priorities the production of turbines for the energy sector. However, how successful they will be in producing high-quality equipment is an open question.

### They Say: “Status Deficit / Patronage”

#### China provides Russia great power status recognition

Asia Pacific Task Force, 2025 - Beyond the Horizon International Strategic Studies Group (BtH) is an independent next-generation think & do tank in Belgium “Xi Jinping’s May 2025 Visit to Russia: Geopolitical Significance and Strategic Implications” 5/12 <https://behorizon.org/xi-jinpings-may-2025-visit-to-russia-geopolitical-significance-and-strategic-implications/> //DH

Chinese President Xi Jinping’s state visit to Moscow in May 2025 – timed with Russia’s grand World War II Victory Day celebrations – carried immense geopolitical weight. It came as Russia’s war in Ukraine ground through its third year, with global politics increasingly polarized between East and West. Xi’s presence in Moscow was a boost for Vladimir Putin, who has cast his Ukraine campaign as a fight against “modern-day Nazis”. Indeed, Putin thanked Xi for joining the 80th anniversary observances of victory over Nazi Germany and declared that China and Russia now stand together against “neo-Nazism”. This rhetoric tied the legacy of WWII to the current conflict: just as the Allies defeated fascism in 1945, Moscow portrays itself (and by extension Beijing) as defenders of the historical truth of that victory and opponents of any resurgence of fascism – a thinly veiled reference to Ukraine’s government. Ukraine and its Western allies reject Putin’s Nazi characterization as a “grotesque falsehood”, accusing Russia of an unprovoked imperial-style invasion. Xi’s highly publicized visit at this juncture signaled that Beijing is firmly in Moscow’s corner, even as the West isolates Russia.

The timing was critical. The celebrations in Moscow occurred “at a key moment in the war with Ukraine, as Moscow and Kyiv [came] under U.S. pressure to reach a peace deal”. In fact, reports indicated the United States – under President Donald Trump’s administration – was pushing Russia and Ukraine to negotiate an end to the conflict, even threatening to walk away from talks if progress stalled. For Putin, having Xi at his side in Moscow sent a message of strong Chinese backing, undermining any Western attempt to isolate Russia. Xi was “the most powerful of more than two dozen foreign leaders in attendance, outshining the others and emphasizing that China’s friendship is what matters most to Moscow. Tellingly, Ukraine’s government had urged countries to boycott Russia’s Victory Day parade, warning that foreign military participation would betray claims of neutrality. Most Western leaders indeed stayed away, leaving a spectacle dominated by Russia, China, and a handful of other allies. The optics of Xi and Putin together on the Kremlin stage underscored the emergence of a tighter Sino-Russian axis in defiance of Western pressure.

Both leaders framed their partnership as a force for stability in a divided world. In Moscow’s opulent Kremlin halls, they greeted each other as “dear friend” and cast themselves as guardians of global order and historical memory. Each is grappling with Washington’s assertive stance – Putin with U.S. involvement in Ukraine, and Xi with an ongoing trade war and strategic rivalry with the U.S. Under these conditions, the two have sought to present their countries as alternative centers of power championing a “more equal, multipolar world”. Xi explicitly inveighed against “unilateralism and bullying on the international stage,” a swipe at U.S. dominance, and vowed that China and Russia would shoulder their “special responsibilities” as major powers and U.N. Security Council members to uphold global stability. In effect, Moscow and Beijing are drawing closer together to withstand what they view as Western hegemony, each buttressing the other amid geopolitical storms – be it sanctions and diplomatic isolation in Russia’s case, or U.S. strategic pressure in China’s. The May 2025 meeting made clear that the war in Ukraine has accelerated this convergence, hardening an East-West divide reminiscent of a new Cold War.

#### China also provides Russia enough revenue for patronage

Asia Pacific Task Force, 2025 - Beyond the Horizon International Strategic Studies Group (BtH) is an independent next-generation think & do tank in Belgium “Xi Jinping’s May 2025 Visit to Russia: Geopolitical Significance and Strategic Implications” 5/12 <https://behorizon.org/xi-jinpings-may-2025-visit-to-russia-geopolitical-significance-and-strategic-implications/> //DH

Beyond political theater, economic interdependence forms the bedrock of the China-Russia alignment. Xi’s visit spotlighted a burgeoning partnership in trade, energy, and infrastructure that has helped Russia withstand Western sanctions. Since the Ukraine invasion in 2022, Beijing has essentially given Moscow an economic lifeline. China is now Russia’s largest trading partner, and by 2024 their bilateral trade hit a record high of about $245 billion. Chinese purchases of Russian oil and gas have surged to make China the top buyer of Russian energy exports. This steady demand (often at discounted prices) provides critical revenue to Moscow while keeping China’s factories and vehicles running. As Putin himself noted, China buys more of Russia’s oil and gas than any other country – a crucial buffer as Europe cuts its energy dependence on Russia. In return, Russia has leaned heavily on Chinese imports for everything from machinery to consumer goods. With Western firms exiting the Russian market, Chinese brands in automobiles, electronics, and appliances have swiftly expanded their presence to fill the void. The result is a tighter economic embrace: Russia’s reliance on China for trade and technology has grown, and China has gained a secure source of commodities and a market for its goods, aligning both nations’ interests.

During the Moscow talks, Xi and Putin signed numerous agreements to deepen this “no limits” economic partnership. Energy infrastructure was high on the agenda. Notably, the two sides discussed the proposed “Power of Siberia 2” natural gas pipeline, a massive project to send Russian gas to China via Mongolia. This long-delayed pipeline had stalled over pricing disagreements, but economic pressures on both Beijing and Moscow have pushed them closer to compromise. For Russia, finding new gas markets in Asia is a priority after losing much of the European market; for China, additional gas supply boosts its energy security. Xi’s visit likely gave political impetus to such projects. Likewise, the leaders touted cooperation on transportation infrastructure across Eurasia – from railways to ports. Putin highlighted upgrades to the Trans-Siberian railway and development of the Arctic Northern Sea Route for shipping, which have steadily increased freight flows between Russia and. These routes, often discussed under China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Russia’s own infrastructure plans, promise to further integrate the two economies.

#### Chinese partnership is sufficient to Russian perceptions of status – it’s Russia’s top foreign policy priority

Robert D. Blackwill and Richard Fontaine, 2024 - \* Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations AND \*\*chief executive officer of the Center for a New American Security “No Limits? The China-Russia Relationship and U.S. Foreign Policy” Council on Foreign Relations, December, <https://www.cfr.org/report/no-limits-china-russia-relationship-and-us-foreign-policy#chapter-title-0-3> //DH

Russia’s View of the China-Russia Relationship

Russian leaders view China as an economic lifeline, a military supplier, and an autocratic partner similarly discontented with the existing international system. Putin has invested heavily in his personal relationship with Xi, spending hundreds of hours in conversation across more than sixty personal meetings, and the two are linked by a determination to alter the U.S.-led order, which, they believe, serves as little more than a smoke screen for American domination at their expense.[25] Russia wants Chinese technology and components, markets and financial arrangements, diplomatic cover and political support.

As the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center’s Alexander Gabuev summarizes, Russia values China’s assistance on the battlefield in Ukraine, support for sustaining the Russian economy and circumventing sanctions, and help in pushing back against the West and punishing the United States for supporting Ukraine.[26]

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that enhancing ties with China represents Russia’s top foreign policy priority, and with such tangible results it is not difficult to see why.[27] Even as the United States struggles to pivot to Asia, Russia buttresses its relationship with China. Russian aspirations, however, go beyond immediate benefits, and include Chinese help in making fundamental revisions to existing international arrangements. Putin in May 2024 described bilateral ties to China as a “stabilizing” force in the world, one that acts in defense of a “democratic world order that reflects multipolar realities.”[28]

That includes a healthy respect for great-power spheres of influence. Putin has expressed support not only for China’s actions to “protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity,” but also to “reunify the country,” a barely veiled reference to Chinese ambitions in Taiwan.[29] The two coordinate a grand narrative, aimed especially but not only at the Global South, that condemns overweening American power as riddled by hypocrisy and accustomed to domination, notwithstanding soaring U.S. rhetoric about liberal order and universal values or the reality of American decline.