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Andrei P. Tsygankov

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Yuval Weber

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PETROPOLITICS

Yuval Weber

HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, MOSCOW

Introduction

The Russian Federation has been a petrostate for its entire legal existence.¹ Russia's reliance on energy resources to generate hard currency, undergird the industrial economy, and project influence abroad extends further back into Tsarist times when Baku was a leading center of oil production under the Nobel brothers and a young Joseph Stalin was agitating amongst *neftyaniki* [oil workers]. The contemporary literature on energy in Russian politics and statecraft is understandably voluminous (see, inter alia, Gustafson, 1989, 2012; Lane, 1999; Ellman, 2006; Goldman, 2008; Sakwa, 2008a, 2008b; Gaidar, 2010; Alekperov, 2011; Gaddy and Ickes, 2011; while Hewett 1984, 1988 are classic older works), but it often misidentifies how “energy” has influenced Russian domestic political outcomes and foreign policy formulation. This chapter specifies the connections between oil, war, and foreign policy in petrostates generally and Russia specifically. I show that foreign policy formulation and implementation relies much more on elite politics rather than a simple “oil weapon” correlation.

This chapter introduces a theory of *petrostate* foreign policy formulation to clarify just how oil booms and busts shape Russia's foreign policy decisions. By focusing on internal (and informal) political dynamics faced by Leonid Brezhnev and Vladimir Putin at the time each experienced an oil boom, I show that contra to the war chest theory (also known as the “oil weapon”) that claims otherwise, energy revenues do not make Russia immediately more aggressive in terms of militarized interstate disputes. Increases in energy revenues do expand the menu of foreign policy options, but when or how that is expressed is a function of that leader's political strength. Brezhnev's relative political weakness allowed subordinates to pursue countervailing expansionism in the Third World parallel to his focus on détente with the West, whereas the use of force abroad and expansion of diplomatic commitments has happened much more slowly and deliberately under Putin's leadership. This contrasts with conventional wisdom of Russian foreign policy and energy, which often draws a direct and mechanical link from oil booms and busts to more, or less, conflict abroad. The emphasis on internal and informal politics challenges two hidden assumptions usually ascribed to petrostates: they are always aggressive, limited only by fiscal resources, and their leaders possess no agency in the foreign policy decision-making process.

I provide a petropolitics theory of foreign policy formulation and implementation in which energy revenues interact with pre-existing foreign policy preferences and leadership strength.

I draw this theory from two sources: the studies of informality in Russian politics and the current state of the “resource curse” literature, which, not to put too fine a point on it, has largely debunked the “curse” aspect. Since Sachs and Warner (1995) observed the correlation that “states with a high ratio of natural resource exports to GDP in 1971 had abnormally slow growth rates between 1971 and 1989,” petropolitics scholars now hold that energy resources are more usefully thought of as fiscal resources and not as physical commodities. Since fiscal resources are inherently political resources, the presence or absence of energy resources means the presence or absence of political resources for leaders to redistribute. What matters is the executive’s patronal strength at the time of revenue shock, regardless of political regime type. As an influx or shortfall of fiscal resources enters a political environment, a strong leader will be able to control redistribution of rents or policy positions while effectively infinite financial and policy demands beset a weak leader.

The chapter concludes by evaluating the challenges posed by the current expansionist foreign policy course on a Russian state still reliant on the redistribution of oil rents for regime continuity. First, trends in the international energy market (decreased demand interacting with increased supplies of conventional and shale oil, as well as transition towards increased use of natural gas) offer few easy solutions. Second, the military and diplomatic expansionism of recent years has tested the Putin-era social contract. The underlying strategic paradox is that absent another oil boom, the Russian leader will have to evaluate a difficult trade-off: increased diplomatic commitments in Ukraine and Syria are central to domestic legitimacy, but they inhibit economic growth by isolating Russia from the international economy. Retrenchment would alleviate economic difficulties, but, like Mikhail Gorbachev before him, identify the limits of Russian capabilities and potentially provoke a domestic backlash – particularly from the security elite.

Petrostate foreign policy formulation: where does oil cause states to go to war?

The debate over petrostate foreign policy formulation and implementation is whether oil has an independent, causal effect on a petrostate’s foreign policy. Does the price of oil lead to more frequent and more extensive usages of coercive diplomacy, as measured in militarized interstate disputes, or do high prices of oil lead to expansion of military capabilities, but not necessarily more aggressive actions? I review here the empirical evidence and theoretical basis of this mechanical explanation of petrostate foreign policy and other familiar arguments linking oil to war in Russia, and provide a more modest petropolitics theory in the next section. By distinguishing what petropolitics scholars have shown from what critics of Russian foreign policy claim, I show in studies of Brezhnev’s and Putin’s tenures that oil does – eventually – lead to more expansionist foreign policy, but only after interacting with pre-existing foreign policy preferences and the strength of Russian executives relative to their political coalitions.

The war chest theory is a familiar one (Lamborn, 1983). Sometimes called “the oil weapon” (Stegen, 2011), it holds that energy prices and foreign policy outcomes are correlated, so that the price of oil determines the petrostate’s aggressiveness. An increase in revenues means an increase in capabilities, leading petrostates to demand more from their adversaries, whereas a decrease in revenues leads states to seek diplomatic solutions to settle disputes as well as to demand less from adversaries. In effect, the price of oil determines the frequency and extent a petrostate employs coercive diplomacy in its foreign relations.

Cross-national data do not confirm this mechanical correlation. The war chest has been found to have a significant effect only on certain types of international conflict: revolutionary and other political environments where state capacity is weak. Statistical results have been

confirmed only by excluding settled great powers such as Russia. Morrison (2009) reviewed the existing oil and conflict literature and found two contradictory arguments, oil “leads simultaneously to increased risk of civil conflict and exceptional regime stability.” He shows that:

[h]ypotheses linking oil to civil conflict implicitly assume a government with weak state capacity, while those linking oil to regime stability assume a government with strong state capacity . . . [showing] that oil’s tendency to spur civil conflict disappears in the context of strong state capacity, and that oil’s tendency to stabilize political regimes disappears in the context of weak institutions.

Colgan (2013, 2014) similarly showed that oil money allows revolutionary leaders the resources to expand conflict abroad to protect political changes at home, as ready oil revenues reduce the risk of domestic punishment and lessen opportunity cost of disruption through dispersal of excess rents. Ross (2012) reviews, inter alia, the literature on oil and civil conflict, finding an effect only occurs under specific conditions: when there are abundant resources far from state power, and where insurgencies have already been in operation for a number of years.

The war chest theory finds support from the universe of cases where petrostates are revolutionary or otherwise fragmented, but does it describe Russia? Critics of Russian foreign policy often claim that the war chest tells a convincing story. Starting with the Yom Kippur oil shock flooding Soviet coffers with petrodollars, we can observe expansionism in the Third World during the 1970s, pullback from there and Eastern Europe in the 1980s as oil prices crashed, abdication of an international role during the similarly lean 1990s, and finally a resurgence of sorts during the past ten years following the boom of the 2000s. The actual data do not fit as neatly. The Soviet Union might have been quite ideologically oriented, but it was a settled great power with numerous interests by the time energy made a fiscal impact on foreign policy decision-making – as well as engaging in major and smaller wars long before becoming a major oil exporter once more.

Militarized interstate disputes (MIDS) associated with the Soviet Union spike in the late 1960s, providing some superficial support for the war chest theory. Yet the actual disputes from those years collated by the *Correlates of War* Project are overwhelmingly geolocated in Southeast Asia and the western edge of the Middle East, meaning that Soviet use of force abroad is due to the Vietnam War and the wars between Israel and its neighbors, two critical Cold War theaters (Palmer et al., 2015).

The war chest theory also has a difficult time explaining direct changes later on – MIDS’ decline in the 1970s when the USSR enjoyed an initial influx of energy revenues, and increase in the early 1980s when the price of oil went bust as lingering wars of decolonization provided another theater for superpower competition. Retrenchment pursued by Mikhail Gorbachev from 1987 onwards only occurred after he had consolidated power at home, and was a surprise to the Soviet establishment even though the price of oil had gone bust much earlier in the decade (Lewin, 1991; Brown, 1997). Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war chest had a difficult time explaining Russian foreign policy. Although state capacity was at its weakest since perhaps the German invasion of World War II or the Civil War, Russia engaged in a tremendous number of disputes across the former Soviet Union as its boundaries resettled. Those early Russian MIDS were numerous but low profile for an international audience, such as intervention in Tajikistan’s civil war. More recent MIDS, detailed below in the case study on Vladimir Putin, have been much more high profile, concentrated in wars with Georgia, Ukraine, and Syrian rebels, but those have occurred in wildly differing revenue environments (Palmer et al., 2015).

Brown (2011) and Stulberg (2007) provide solid neoclassical realist interpretations of the war chest that sidestep polemical demonization of Russia, but the war chest falls short theoretically on the whole. It implies that capabilities cause outcomes – foreign policy preferences are endogenous to capabilities – so that having more money causes more expansive foreign policy behavior. This strips away agency from policymakers and leads to a conclusion that any arbitrary executive will behave identically to any other. These assumptions are not borne out. Expansionism to the Third World existed alongside détente efforts to reduce international tension. An aggressive military posture by the Soviet Union continued well into the 1980s past oil bust liquidity crunches, with perestroika scholars and participants arguing that a non-Gorbachev status quo could have seen the Soviet Union survive for a number of years more – albeit with a likelihood of even greater collapse (Miller, 2016). Expansion into Georgia and Ukraine in 2008 and 2014 respectively, occurred after specific challenges to the regional status quo and not upon a positive revenue shock, while intervention in Syria has continued even under a serious recession in Russia (Adams, 2017).

The war chest directly emphasizes the independent power of revenues and asks the observer to believe that having any leader at the helm makes no difference to Russian foreign policy. A competing approach emphasizes leaders as individuals with pre-existing foreign policy preferences who exploit energy shocks to pursue idiosyncratic foreign policy courses (Balzer, 2005). This approach argues that leaders at the helm of organizations drive decisions, which ignores the informality at the basis of Russian governance as argued by Keenan (1986) and Ledeneva (1998, 2006, 2013). The clear drawbacks to such an explanation are first, that leaders pursue different strategies at different times, and second, attributes near-magical powers to colorful or mysterious individuals, diminishing the cut and thrust of internal politics leaders must master to achieve and retain their positions, as shown by Breslauer's (1982) classic work on pluralism in Soviet governance and Anderson's (1993) clever evaluation of public politics in the Soviet Union. With particular reference to Russia, the variation in regime type and the shallowness of formal political institutions have meant that the most successful politicians are the ones that can exploit the weakness of their rivals and build informal networks.

Over-reliance on revenues and diminishment of politics for the war chest theory and the reverse problem for personality-driven arguments leave both explanations incomplete and unbalanced. The petropolitics theory of petrostate foreign policy formulation augments and links both explanations to argue that energy resources help determine the menu of choices available to policymakers, but that the content of those choices is driven by internal politics, foreign policy preferences of the executive, and his political subordinates and supporters. Since the mid-1960s, positive or negative energy revenue shocks have created varying revenue environments in which Russian policymakers have greater or fewer policy options available to them. The political strength of the executive relative to those subordinates and supporters determines the manner in which Russian leaders make foreign policy decisions. Weaker executives subject to greater political pressure, like Leonid Brezhnev, accede to the preferences of others in determining which strategies to follow to stay in office, while stronger executives like Vladimir Putin are better able to shape policy closer to their own preferences. The revenue environments determine the menu of choices, but internal politics drives which decisions are made and how.

Politics and energy conditions

Central to petropolitics and defining the inputs and outputs of petrostate foreign policy is to distinguish between oil and gas, review the institutional turn in the resource curse literature, and finally provide a theory of foreign policy in Russia. In short, the idea of energy being a “curse” has largely been debunked, and the war chest's applicability to Russia is similarly limited, so a

theory of energy revenues and foreign policy in Russia must run through familiar models of political behavior. The theory provided here is drawn from the contemporary literature, which argues that developmental outcomes from energy revenue influxes or shortfalls – booms and busts – are contingent upon the political environment that exists prior to the revenue shock, not to anything specific about oil. Similarly, the petropolitics theory of petrostate foreign policy formulation offered later in this chapter concentrates on the executive's political strength or weakness at the time an exogenous resource boom or bust actually occurs.

Whereas natural gas is a capital-intensive business centered on building incredibly costly pipelines and supporting logistical infrastructure that can run into the billions (Stevens, 2009), oil is a far different business. It is an easily transportable commodity, whose very mobility means that it is extracted, refined, shipped away, and sold to the highest bidder anywhere in the world. Oil is a global commodity whose price is set by the market and whose principal purpose is earning money – fungible for any purpose – for its producer.

The differentiation between oil and gas, and the pace by which either provides revenue, informs the conceptual transition towards treating oil as an explicitly political resource and represents the final debunking of the resource curse thesis, so named by Auty (1993: 1), who noted: “Resource-rich countries fail to benefit from a favourable endowment, [and] they may actually perform worse than less well-endowed countries. This counterintuitive outcome is the basis of the resource curse thesis.” When the oil industry transitioned ownership from private Western oil interests to indigenous national oil companies in the mid-1960s, economists and officials in the Middle East and elsewhere assumed that gaining such lucrative resources would improve developmental outcomes. Many expected states to export valuable commodities to make up for a shortfall of domestic investable capital while also attracting foreign direct investment, but economic and social indicators were unfortunately as bad or worse than before (Sachs and Warner, 1995).

That states with natural resources often performed less well on economic, social, and political indicators than originally anticipated led scholars to search for a causal explanatory theory in effectively three stages: purely economic explanations, then revisionist literature focusing on the corrosive effects of energy resources on the state, and finally contemporary research arguing that oil merely magnifies the effects, positive or negative, of the institutions already in place at the time of discovery and exploitation. That last point provides the insight for petrostate foreign policy: revenue from oil exports magnifies the positive or negative aspects of the foreign policy formulation process already in place.

Economic explanations for poor development outcomes focused on issues such as Dutch Disease, revenue volatility, excessive borrowing, and other monetary and fiscal maladies (Karl, 1997: ch. 2). These explanations failed to explain divergence in development outcomes of resource-rich countries, where some petrostates such as Indonesia and the Gulf states seemed to be stable and others such as Norway demonstrably benefitted from natural resource exports.

The state corrosion argument looked inside the state for clues on what was going wrong. Karl (1997) argued that energy resources corrode state institutions by quickly and durably generating rent seeking, which incentivizes officials to weaken regulatory and extractive capabilities. Politicians then distribute oil rents to powerful organized interests that double as bureaucratic and private sector allies, making the state less of a vehicle to drive development goals and more of a milk cow to be sucked dry (Karl, 1997: 91). Rent competition degrades political institutions associated with and responsible for successful development outcomes, such as robust taxation and redistribution systems, transparent and effective bureaucracies, political decisions made on behalf of a universal electorate, that lead individuals to overwhelm public institutions for private gain and inhibit the provision of public goods. Ross (1999: 297) provided further support for state-centered explanations, dismissing cognitive and societal explanations. The former violates

because the basic rationality assumption of leadership contends, “that resource booms produce a type of short-sightedness among policymakers,” and the latter because they impute an implausible level of influence by non-state actors over the state when commodities and their rents are controlled by the state.

Ross’s review left state-centered explanations as the main viable route to understanding the political effects of energy resources, but continued variation of development and democratization outcomes across petrostates led scholars to investigate the role played by political institutions. Instead of looking at the state as an overwhelmed object, petrostate scholars narrowed in on the state of political institutions at the time of a revenue shock. Rosser (2006) and Weinthal and Luong (2006) offered exhaustive review articles that explicitly challenged the transformative value of energy resources and expressly provided institutional accounts of political and economic capacity at the time of discovery. Smith (2007: 1) stated directly: “oil rents have effects on institutions that vary systematically according to the circumstances of oil’s entry as a major export commodity. Where rentier state/resource curse theorists have asked whether a country is oil-rich, I ask *when*.”² Smith’s work marked a turning point by labeling energy resources as explicitly political resources, that is, as revenue or the promise of revenue by politicians to current or potential supporters. In this vein, Luong and Weinthal (2010) published a book boldly titled *Oil Is Not a Curse* that demonstrated wide variation in the selection of ownership structure of oil and gas sectors by several post-Soviet governments in response to political incentives.

Petropolitics theory fits extremely well with approaches to Russian politics based on informal governance and networks. In the historiographical debates between depictions of Russian rulers as Iron Tsars dictating outcomes to subordinates (Pipes, 1974), versus more contingent interpretations of individuals balancing interests of myriad power brokers and interest groups (Keenan, 1986), petropolitics clearly fits in the latter tradition. Petropolitics asks how strong a leader is relative to her political supporters at the moment energy revenues become noticeably plentiful or noticeably absent, and how does she handle that influx or shortfall relative to the foreign policy preferences of her *okruzhenie* [inner circle]?

Recent literature on Russian politics has illuminated many aspects of both questions. Hale (2005, 2010, 2014) argues that “patronal politics” – patronage networks defined by illiberalism and punctuated by color revolutions – shape the post-Soviet Eurasian space. He argues against the transitology and neo-patrimonialist literatures, so that instead of transitions inevitably leading to democratic states defined by political competition or neo-patrimonial networks of principals relying on agents, Eurasia is a series of patronal networks. Hale depicts stable systems as ones where leaders, subordinates, and the public in general do not anticipate substantive political changes; instability and color revolutions result when there is an expectation that the future does not look like the present. “Single pyramids of power” thus cut across formal political institutions to shape future expectations of political behavior for those inside and outside the pyramid of power. In modern Russian political history, we are familiar with the phrase “vertical of power” [*vertikal vlasti*] to describe Vladimir Putin’s efforts to eliminate sources of formal or informal opposition to his rule, which Hale would say is the construction of a single pyramid of power. In Hale’s account and in similar approaches, such as McGlinchey (2011), the opportune exploitation of financial resources provided by energy exports allows the leader to distribute rents as necessary to safeguard power from competition so that the present can be iterated indefinitely into the future.

Hale uses the pyramid metaphor, but another prominent recent work, Marten (2015), employs a network metaphor to understand how Russian leaders consolidate and retain power. Although Marten notes that scholars point to the necessity of formal political institutions in providing information to national leaders on sub-national leadership performance, channeling elite conflict, shaping local outcomes, and attracting individuals with policy expertise to government

(Gel'man, 2012; Reuter and Robertson, 2012), the bulk of attention has been to informality in Russian governance. Kryshtanovskaya (2005) traces the generational origins of contemporary Russian elites, and her co-authored work with White (White and Kryshtanovskaya, 2011) looks into Putin's placement of personal acquaintances into government over his rule, which itself dovetails with Petrov's (2011) assertion that the current Russian government is a privatized facade for the KGB. Huskey (2004a, 2004b) has written extensively about Putin's shaping of cadre policy as a revival of the Soviet-era nomenklatura system to provide the leadership with pre-vetted bureaucrats. Ledeneva's research into *sistema* [system] argues that "individual players in the game matter more than bureaucratic rules or laws, because powerful individuals can use, bend, and create rules to serve their interests in a game that lacks overall coherency and consistency" (Marten, 2015: 72, describing Ledeneva's research).

If the first question of petropolitics is how strong is the leader relative to her supporters, then the second question is how that leader handles the foreign policy preferences of those supporters given that even strong leaders cannot get too far ahead of their supporters? Marten shares with Hale a focus on how leaders actually construct the pyramids or networks that insulate them from domestic and international political and economic competition. She describes strong leaders of informal networks very carefully as astute accumulators of wealth, pursuing foreign policy as simply another avenue for self-enrichment and self-protection (Marten, 2015: 74–77).

When applied to foreign policy formulation and implementation, we can formulate a basic conceptual model of foreign policy formulation and execution in a petrostate where leaders are not only bound by informality, but must respond to an exogenous revenue shock to test against the actual episodes in Russian history that can be tested. Following the literature above, I assume that (1) the executive wishes to remain in office (or help choose her successor), (2) she is not omnipotent but relies on political supporters to exercise policy decisions, and (3) trade-offs exist between self-enrichment, military spending, domestic consumption, and potential diplomatic commitments.

In turn, we can generate simple hypotheses on how leaders in petrostates will formulate and implement foreign policy upon positive or negative revenue shocks. A strong leader in a petrostate can face down pressure from subordinates to change foreign policy and stay in power upon a noticeable revenue shock, positive or negative. A strong leader can, counter-intuitively, change specific foreign policies fairly frequently, because she can pursue a single overarching strategy. Yet a weak leader has much less room to maneuver; facing a positive or negative shock, she is unable to withstand pressure from political supporters to alter foreign policy without running the risk of disaffected supporters seeking a new leader to form an opposing pyramid of power.

Does oil make Russia more aggressive?

The petropolitics theory of petrostate foreign policy formulation furnishes a simple argument that foreign policy decisions in petrostates depend on the internal political dynamics in place at the time of the revenue shock. Not merely that a shock occurs or that a specific leader is in place, but the political strength of the leader – at the time the money starts rolling in unexpectedly or does not come in as expected – explains foreign policy outcomes. This theory provides for a much simpler analysis of Russian foreign policy from the leadership tenure of Leonid Brezhnev onwards.

The case studies below contrast expansion under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev to more selective expansion and accommodation under Vladimir Putin. The differing political dynamics at the time of the revenue shock – Brezhnev was weak, and Putin was not – explain the differences in policy options selected. Brezhnev, weak relative to Politburo and military hawks, failed to stop Soviet expansion into the Third World. That alternative foreign policy brought

détente to an end as U.S. policymakers countered the “arc of crisis” by starting a peacetime arms buildup that the Soviet Union could not match (Westad, 2005). Putin, strong relative to the oligarchs and other Yeltsin-era political players prior to the mid-2000s oil boom, has overseen an expansion of Russian diplomatic interests and power projection abroad – but after some years and fairly selectively. Putin’s ongoing political strength has also allowed Russia to maintain and increase its presence in Ukraine and Syria long after energy prices have collapsed and recession continues to harm the Russian economy. I do not address the retrenchment of Mikhail Gorbachev in great detail, but the negative revenue environment of the early 1980s carried on for years without a change in Soviet foreign policy, until he consolidated enough power to withstand pressure from defense hawks to retrench Soviet interests abroad.

Leonid Brezhnev

Leonid Brezhnev became General Secretary of the Communist Party through a palace coup as a compromise candidate amongst the plotters and this defined his political weakness for years (Bacon and Sandle, 2002).³ Brezhnev found himself subject to policy pressures from powerful corners whom he had to placate or else face the same fate as his predecessor, Nikita Khrushchev. In time he acceded to an interventionist policy in the Third World that served to confound his own preferred foreign policy course of détente with the West (Ouimet, 2003).⁴ A revenue boom and weak leadership interacted to produce a foreign policy orientation further away from his personal preferences and closer to Politburo and military hawks. This section outlines Brezhnev’s political weakness, the revenue shock, the interaction of both, and the foreign policy outcome: an “arc of crisis” that led to U.S. challenges of the Soviets across the Third World and a ruinous arms race.

The palace coup (Tompson, 1991) that unseated Khrushchev had many sources,⁵ but key among them was his attempt to break the power of the economic ministries and regional Party secretaries, the previously dominant bureaucratic hierarchies (Markevich and Zhuravskaya (2011) specifically refer to Khrushchev’s efforts as trying to transform the Soviet Union from a traditional unitary-form hierarchy to a multidivisional-form organization to marginalize the Stalinist bureaucratic core. Brezhnev worked to reverse those so-called *sovmarkhoz* reforms and reestablish neo-Stalinist institutions and norms. The result was an institutional environment where those around Brezhnev were collectively much stronger than he was even if he could attack any single opponent (Yanov, 1977).⁶ Both Brezhnev and the Politburo members knew that the way he came in – deposing the previous leader – could be the way he could go out, which Roeder (1993) used to explain the leader’s painstaking efforts to signal collegiality and reassure potential rivals that he was not another leader who would, or would try, to amass too much power too quickly, as Stalin did and Khrushchev tried. As long-time Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin (1995: 219) put it:

A general secretary of course had many ways of persuasion to carry his ideas through the Politburo, but he was always careful not to antagonize the other members unnecessarily. After all, they could always revolt and replace him, as they did with Khrushchev.

As the Party consolidated oligarchical control, Brezhnev and his Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, pursued détente with the United States to improve economic relations with the West (Garthoff, 1995). Yet Brezhnev’s political weakness created a puzzling outcome where official state organs pursued accommodation with the West while hawks in the military and ideologists in the International Department of the Communist Party pushed for higher military expenditures and a more aggressive role abroad in the Third World. This split provided for two mutually

exclusive grand strategies. The Foreign Ministry conducted the country's official diplomatic relations and pursued détente, while the International Department of the Party, responsible for managing relations with foreign communist parties and movements of national liberation, treated the Third World as a growth opportunity regardless of relations with the United States.

Overseen by Boris Ponomarev, protégé of chief ideologist Mikhail Suslov, Dobrynin (1995: 401–405) described the policy rivalry:

To understand our sometimes bizarre policy in the Third World, it is important to know how the decision-making mechanism in foreign affairs operated in the Kremlin. On a day-to-day basis it was the Foreign Ministry who gave recommendations for dealing with current problems. In practice that mainly meant Gromyko himself, and as a rule all his suggestions were accepted. He was a recognized authority, especially in dealing with the West and the United States in particular, and he stubbornly defended his position in this field during Politburo meetings. Overall he was a cautious man who opposed any serious confrontation with the United States if the vital interests of the Soviet Union were not involved. But the Third World was not his prime domain. He believed that events there could not in the final analysis decisively influence our fundamental relations with the United States; that turned out to be a factor he definitely underestimated.

This is the environment into which energy revenues started to become noticeable. Figure 6.1 demonstrates the impact of energy exports in the mid to late-1960s and marks what may be the first attempt to define when the Soviet Union became a petrostate.⁷ The data show petroleum export revenues expressed in terms of nominal U.S. dollar amounts and as an annual percentage change.

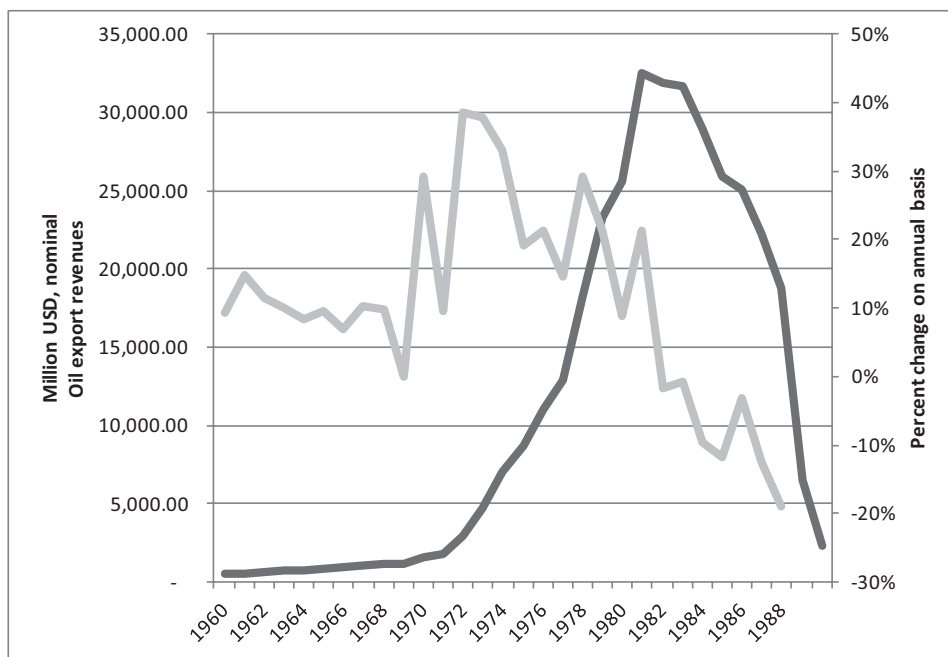


Figure 6.1 Export revenues and annual percentage change, 1961–1991

I then converted the export amounts into domestic prices, which would have been more immediate to Soviet leaders for their decision-making. From these domestic price figures, I divided the domestic price rubles by the size of the economy (of which more below) to achieve the rough figures to ascertain the second criterion of the petrostate definition: revenues from their export equal to or above 5% of GDP.⁸ The size of the Soviet economy is still unknown with complete confidence, but best available estimations of the size and growth of the economy from Khanin (Harrison, 1993), the Central Intelligence Agency (Bergson, 1991), and Kuboniwa (1997) all indicate that the Soviet Union irrevocably became a petrostate sometime in late 1974 or early 1975, but that as early as 1969, something changed. Producers in the developing countries wrested pricing control away from the international oil companies; while the Soviet Union was not a member of OPEC, it benefitted from the rise in prices alongside the increased export opportunities to the West at a time when relations with the developing world grew more contentious. From 1970 to 1971, the value of fuel exports as a percentage of the economy grew by more than 25% over the previous year, which should have alerted Politburo members that more revenue was coming into the system. It is likely that energy resources became apparent to decision-makers in 1970–1971 with this big jump, rather than in 1974–1975.

The strength of the Soviet establishment and the weakness of its leader led to foreign policy actions further away from Brezhnev's preferences, but not immediately as the war chest might suggest. A change in internal deliberations regarding the possibility of revolution in the Third World following rapprochement in Europe came from two sources, the military and the ideologues. By Brezhnev's middle years (1969–1975), nuclear settlements and relative peace in Europe led the military establishment to engage in revisionist ideology to justify new great power concerns. Military newspapers argued that given the "change in the balance of forces in the international arena in favor of socialism [i.e. the increasing wealth of the Soviet Union], another possibility is also increasing more and more – that of preventing the development of local wars into an enormous clash on a worldwide scale" (Katz, 1982: 68). This change of warfare thinking meant that the military and their advocates in the Party believed that the USSR could now control the size of conflict abroad and make foreign policy gains for itself without fear of world war (Katz, 1982: 69). The military and the military-industrial complex pushed for and received increases in arms deals, "training of revolutionary forces by Soviet military advisors," buildup of the Soviet Navy to gain and hold military bases abroad, and transport and support for allied troops.

Increased military spending overlapped with individuals in the International Department of the Communist Party, a holdover from the early days of the revolution when two foreign policy operations emerged. One was the preexisting Foreign Ministry that interacted with other governments in traditional diplomacy, but the other was a Party body responsible for coordinating relations with foreign communist parties and national liberation movements. This International Department had declined in importance with the dissolution of the Comintern and Cominform bodies, but in the political environment of Brezhnev's CPSU came back to project national power abroad in the Third World. Dobrynin, a détente supporter, lamented this alternative foreign policy line for the marginal importance of the areas and clients being supported, and the blowback it engendered:

Our Foreign Ministry traditionally was not really involved with the leaders of the liberation movements in the Third World, who were dealt with through the International Department of the party, headed by Secretary Boris Ponomarev. He despised Gromyko; the feeling was mutual . . . Under the slogan of solidarity, [Suslov] . . . his zealous followers in the party managed to involve the Politburo in many Third World adventures. The KGB supported him in this because many of the party contacts in that area

were handled through their agents. Many professional Soviet diplomats opposed our deep involvement in these remote areas, but who would openly object when all this was done in the name of the party? Some diplomats, myself included, tried on their own in informal conversations to minimize the damage in the West. We explained to our Western colleagues that all these actions were spontaneous and not necessarily part of any Soviet grand plan to deliberately undermine the world positions of the West. But this was hardly persuasive when viewed against our adventurous involvement in remote regions, and it raised a negative reaction in the United States.

(Dobrynin, 1995: 401–405)

The increase in energy revenues increased the menu of capabilities and allowed the pursuit of countervailing policies. Although expansionism did not commence immediately, pressure on Brezhnev did. The Soviet Union soon found itself pursuing détente while simultaneously supporting anti-colonial wars of liberation and specific sides in civil wars across the Third World. The profusion of foreign policy tools permitted by energy revenues and Brezhnev's inability to stop an alternative foreign policy resulted in an increased set of diplomatic commitments across the world, eventually including the decision to invade Afghanistan to support a local client against political rivals.⁹ Intervention in Afghanistan solidified U.S. fears that the Soviet Union was attempting to increase its power in West Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East, giving credence to National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski's characterization of an "arc of crisis" (Lenczowski, 1979). Jimmy Carter lamented Soviet actions that seemingly confirmed the hawkish viewpoint of Brzezinski and led to undesirable outcomes such as delaying SALT II and boycotting the 1980 Summer Olympics to be held in Moscow (Carter, 2010: 282, 382–384, 486). The impossibility of separating those different policies created confusion in the assessment of Soviet grand strategy by the United States, as the United States was obliged to counter "military adventurism" (Gelman, 1984). Energy resources expanded the menu of capabilities and eventually led to foreign policy expansionism even under the most propitious circumstances; expansion proceeded neither immediately nor mechanically as suggested by the war chest.

Vladimir Putin

Russian foreign policy under the leadership of Vladimir Putin displays even more clearly the petropolitics theory of petrostate foreign policy formulation. As an appointed successor to Yeltsin and a relative unknown, Putin appeared, like Brezhnev, to be a compromise candidate between Yeltsin's ruling clique and the oligarchs who had grown wealthy and powerful in the preceding decade, a modest individual dwarfed by the bureaucratic challenges of running Russia (Shevtsova, 2010; Hill and Gaddy, 2013). Like the Brezhnev period, Russia experienced a sustained energy revenue boom during Putin's tenure. Unlike Leonid Brezhnev, the positive revenue shock occurred after Putin had already consolidated considerable political control and eliminated rivals remaining from the Boris Yeltsin period. Putin was then (and continues to be) in a much stronger political position relative to subordinates, has controlled redistribution far more effectively than his predecessors, and has varied foreign policy expansion and accommodation far more selectively. In contrast to the war chest explanation, Russian foreign policy expansion under Putin has not directly followed positive revenue shocks, but has been in response to challenges emerging from Putin's grand strategy course of returning Russia to the great power ranks. The domestic political strength of Putin can be observed directly as Russian power projection into Ukraine and Syria has not wavered even as energy prices have steadily declined, and the Russian economy has entered what appears to be a fairly durable era of stagnation.

The details of Vladimir Putin's journey, from relative obscurity to the top of Russian power are quite well known (Putin et al., 2000). Scholarly analysis of the transition from Yeltsin to Putin initially assessed Putin as a caretaker of the system subject to intense political pressure from his ostensible subordinates. Observers reasoned at the time that without any independent source of authority, natural constituencies, or explicit political views, Putin would rule at the pleasure of those with the informal, but real, political power, and the real, but poorly understood, economic power (Shevtsova, 1999; Herspring, 2005).¹⁰ After all, throughout the 1990s, Putin had accomplished each role assigned to him without drawing any undue attention or articulating any independent policy positions (Sakwa, 2008b; Hill and Gaddy, 2013: ch. 5).

Putin took control of the political environment through a popular war in Chechnya (Lapidus, 2002) and by revealing what he had been doing in addition to fulfilling his official duties: gathering compromising information on the oligarchs individually and as a group during his various positions in the presidential administration dealing with state property and as the head of the security services (Gaddy and Ickes, 2005, 2011). Armed with this *kompromat*, he then presented the oligarchs individually and, in July 2000 as a group, with a revision of the expected contractual relationship. Putin was not to serve at their discretion, but as their ruler instead (Reynolds, 2000). In exchange for them acceding to his authority, he would not look into financial affairs of the previous decade. In this extraordinary meeting that defines the critical juncture where power began to shift from the oligarch class to Putin, those who accepted and paid their taxes would be part of the system, but those who defied him could expect criminal tax investigations up to an including dispossession, prison, and exile. The threat was credible – surprise *maskirovka* investigations by machine-gun wielding tax police had already begun (Bowen, 2013). On the face of it, the threat was also reasonable, given the uncertainty and insecurity oligarchs had in their dealings with each other.¹¹ By coopting this elite group, protecting the Yeltsin family from prosecution through decree, and demonstrating to the public that at least one individual could bring order to government, Putin addressed the sources of political pressure and potential opposition, building his power vertical. Putin also coopted economic and political liberals with ambitious reform plans (Bohlen, 2000) and “solved” the Chechnya problem by coopting one of the warlords, Akhmad Kadyrov, to attack the others with state support (Lapidus, 2002). The patron-client relationship even survived Kadyrov's assassination when the latter's son Ramzan took power and helped shape a more explicit medieval-style exchange of federal fealty for local control (Sharafutdinova, 2010).

By exploiting the insecurity and uncertainty of the political and economic elite, and the exasperation and frustrations of the public, Putin did not create any new political structures but instead generated his own legitimacy to fulfill the capacity of a super-presidential system inherited from Yeltsin. He cleared out his rivals and built massive public support, reducing political pressure to manageable levels. The resource boom followed serendipitously, and the country's leadership substituted increased living standards for public accountability (Shevtsova, 2010).

I have argued elsewhere that the goal of contemporary Russian grand strategy under Vladimir Putin is not to make the country a superpower as it once was, but to secure its position as one of several regional hegemonic powers, specifically the BRICS grouping plus the United States and Germany (Weber, 2015). The intent is to revise the international order so that great powers coordinate on issues of transnational importance and provide order within their sphere of influence, which would return Russia to the position of power negotiated by Mikhail Gorbachev and George H.W. Bush at the Malta Summit in 1989 that brought the Cold War to an end. That 1989 world barely got going before the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991. The sum effect of Russian foreign policy under Putin has been to restore Russia to the category of great power and make the international order look more post-Cold War than post-Soviet.

Independent of whether challenging the international and regional political orders or attempting to generate a hierarchical Eurasian order is advisable, the question is whether expansionism under Putin followed immediately or with a delay and in response to specific challenges. The oil money increased the menu of options available to Putin, but when and why he selected expansion has been based on the underlying strategic goal.

A short review of Russian diplomatic and military expansion since the mid-2000s makes the petropolitics story clearer. First, a minor territorial dispute with China over islands near Khabarovsk that had led to a brief war in 1969 were resolved to China's satisfaction in 2004 (Fravel, 2005) when the war chest theory would predict that Russia would be *more* inclined to take a hard line.

Second, the war with Georgia emerged from a serious dispute over the potential expansion of NATO into areas that Putin considered the Russian sphere of influence along its own borders (Asmus, 2010). At the April 2008 NATO general meeting, U.S. President George W. Bush advocated extending a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia, but was rejected by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy due to fears of destabilizing NATO relations with Russia – especially since Putin attended the talks and directly “warned President Bush and other alliance leaders that their plan to expand eastwards to Ukraine and Georgia ‘didn’t contribute to trust and predictability in our relations’” (Evans, 2008). NATO members did not extend a MAP to Georgia or Ukraine, but decided to review the decision at the following December summit. Georgia’s Minister for European Integration, Giorgi Baramidze, hailed the decision as a historic moment for the country to move out of Russia’s sphere of influence: “The decision to accept that we are going forward to an adhesion to NATO was taken and we consider this is a historic success” (NATO, 2008).

The clear commitment problem posed by NATO expansion represented a redline security issue for a Russian leader publicly opposed to membership for former Soviet republics outside of the Baltic states. The expectation that it would happen at some undefined point in the future regardless of Russia’s concerns set the stage for conflict, which duly occurred later that August (Allison, 2009). Russian advance in support of Abkhazia and South Ossetia stopped only after five days of fighting, by which time Russia had successfully expanded its foreign policy reach by using force abroad, defending clients, handing an assured defeat to a country it considered a pesky irritant, and making a geopolitical statement that it would not countenance the expansion of NATO further into its borderlands (Asmus, 2010). That was possible because of energy revenues, but the energy revenues did not cause that war.

Third, and further out from the resource boom of the mid-2000s, Russian foreign policy expansionism has occurred in relation to challenges that would hinder Russia’s ability to become a great power while maintaining Putin’s ability to keep his *sistema* in place. Quite obviously, the annexation of Crimea, the support for separatist rebels in Ukraine, and the intervention into the civil war in Syria on behalf of the government of Bashar Al-Assad represent an attempt to revise the international order (Sakwa, 2014; Menon and Rumer, 2015; Krickovic and Weber, 2017). The resource bust from 2013 onwards shows that these interventions, whatever their strategic purpose, have occurred as the energy revenues have fallen flat. If it were energy revenues driving Russian foreign policy, then we would observe Russia retrenching from those two conflicts and seeking accommodation with Ukraine and decreasing its support to Assad. The continued presence of Russia abroad while leaders at home mull over ways to improve economic performance demonstrate that the menu of policy options for Russian policymakers has shrunk, but what drives foreign policy decision-making is not energy revenues.

The petropolitics theory of foreign policy formulation also explains Mikhail Gorbachev’s retrenchment of diplomatic commitments. While space considerations limit in-depth analysis

of Gorbachev's tenure, the bottom fell out of incoming energy revenues prior to Gorbachev's ascension to the top spot in March 1985. The war chest argument would have predicted retrenchment of foreign policy commitments sometime in 1981–1982 under Brezhnev, Andropov, or Chernenko, while the leadership approach of Russian foreign policy would have predicted Gorbachev to maintain the foreign policy of the gerontocratic Politburo. What the petropolitics theory would predict is that the negative revenue environment would have reduced his menu of options in improving the political and economic health of the Soviet Union, and that Gorbachev would have used the internal political capital of his unusual candidacy (including massive public support) to overcome political pressure from hawks (often the same people from the Brezhnev period) to retrench Soviet interests abroad. The war chest argument would have only captured the retrenchment without noting Gorbachev's "New Thinking," and the leadership approach could only retroactively assign a motive for Gorbachev's actions.

Oil resources have not made Soviet or Russian leaders more aggressive as the conventional wisdom suggests or the war chest argument predicts. Increased revenues expand the menu of options available to leaders, but when and why they permit expansion reflects on internal politics. Brezhnev proved unable to restrain hawks in the Politburo and military seeking expansion, whereas Putin responded to specific (or self-declared) security threats. Gorbachev responded to a negative revenue environment, but only after shaping the internal political environment.

Conclusion

Petropolitics makes a simple claim regarding foreign policy formulation: strong leaders withstand financial and policy pressures from their subordinates in ways weaker counterparts cannot. Leaders who have already consolidated power can maintain policy consistency whether an oil boom or bust produces a revenue influx or shortfall of revenues. The oil boom of the mid-2000s will define modern Russia until the end of Vladimir Putin's time in power and likely far beyond. The Russian president had already consolidated power to a considerable extent by the time the money started rolling, but he seized the opportunity to form a relatively durable state apparatus, raise domestic consumption, and rebuild the military. He has retained power through a powerful state security apparatus that has effectively inserted the state at each level of the economy, and by maintaining a coalition of state security personnel, government employees, vulnerable economic groups, and various conservative social groups. Perhaps most importantly, over the nearly two decades of direct and indirect power, Putin has made many friends and associates around him very wealthy.

Energy resources paid for this durable political coalition, and from this position of strength, Putin has pursued a simple but far-reaching grand strategy: revise the international order to replace the U.S. hegemonic position with a series of regional powers (the BRICS, Germany, and the United States) coordinating on issues of transnational importance such as climate change and Islamist terrorism while providing public goods such as security in their own regions. The oil money increased Russian diplomatic and military capabilities so that the strategy of becoming a great power appeared feasible, and Putin's political strength allowed him to cycle through various foreign policies to work towards that goal. After failing to form a partnership with the United States after offering assistance in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, and failing to stop the invasion of Iraq through balancing with France and Germany, Putin's speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference revealed explicitly that Russia was prepared to use all means to revise the international order and be acknowledged as a relevant international player. The subsequent expansionism into the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East over the

next decade generated Russia's international credibility and domestic legitimacy, but it has also revealed the fragility of the social contract in Russia.

The expansionist foreign policy is very popular at home, but it has come at a very high price. It inhibits economic growth by isolating Russia from the international economy due to the sanctions associated with Crimea, support for rebels, and the consequences of shooting down the MH17 jetliner over the Donbas. Unrelatedly, but with terrible timing, a bust in the energy market interacted with the sanctions regime to threaten Putin's ability to claim the future will look like the present.

A series of difficult choices confront the president and his power vertical. A muscular role abroad is central to justifying privation at home through a sense of patriotism and being surrounded by foreign enemies. The social contract in which increased domestic consumption flows downwards to the population in return for quiescence flowing upwards to the state itself relies upon a tacit assumption that the leader and his government are working hard to reform the economy while maintaining the country's dignity. Corruption scandals belie this assumption, and popular dissatisfaction with the poor state of the economy has tested Putin's political strength. Shifting existing rents and benefits from the privileged members to society at large would introduce challenges to Putin's rule from the inside. Foreign policy retrenchment would alleviate economic difficulties, but, like Mikhail Gorbachev before him, identify the limits of Russian capabilities and potentially provoke a domestic backlash. Doing nothing and hoping the status quo holds means that the only savior is an exogenous fiscal shock of another oil boom or some other black swan event.

The paradox of Putin's Russia is that a tremendous amount of wealth and property have shifted from one group to another during his rule, and Putin's soft treatment of his predecessor is not guaranteed to be a precedent for his successor. The grand strategy of reasserting Russia's great power status reflects traditional foreign policy objectives for the country. Vladimir Putin now needs the latter grand strategy to be successful to generate sufficient political legitimacy to maintain his political coalition and protect the wealth and property transfer underpinning his rule, yet the very strategy challenges the international order and risks regime-ending blowback.

Notes

- 1 I define "petrostate" as a state exporting 2 million or more barrels of oil per day valued at 5% or more of gross domestic product. For a more detailed definition, see note 8.
- 2 Emphasis in original.
- 3 They describe Brezhnev as providing a stability of cadres, balancing interests, and paling in comparison to Stalin: "In other words, although Brezhnev's hold on power increased through his term in office, the way in which this power was exercised did not approach a one-person dictatorship owing to factors such as his leadership style, the existence of networks of political patrons and their clients, and the physical and mental decline of Brezhnev particularly from around 1977 onwards" (p. 8).
- 4 Ouimet's biography of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" advances a novel revisionist argument for the tough line against within-bloc ideological deviation. He argues that maintaining within-Pact rigidity allowed the Soviets to pursue détente with the West carefully and on their own terms, with a lower chance of defection from their allies. Brezhnev is portrayed as being very motivated to succeed in the détente policy with the idea of reducing military spending in the medium term and allowing greater inter-bloc cooperation.
- 5 Such as policy inconsistency ("harebrained schemes"), relaxation of control over society, backing down in the Cuban Missile Crisis, losing China in the Sino-Soviet split, pursuing "peaceful co-existence," etc.
- 6 "Both Stalin and Khrushchev were – or considered themselves – masters of the Plenum; therefore, they were fearless; therefore, they were strong leaders. Brezhnev feels like a prisoner of the Plenum; therefore, he is a weak leader. Judge for yourself. He can crush any one of the prefects individually with almost

- no difficulty, but when they are assembled together they are suddenly transformed into a mysterious, unpredictable, almost mythical force that it is unthinkable to fight against. That is the price that Brezhnev has to pay for preserving the political machine created by Stalin” (Yanov, 1977: 40).
- 7 For a fuller description of the methodology, see Weber (2017).
 - 8 There is as yet no accepted definition for a petrostate. I adopt and adapt Demkiv’s (2012) definition: a state that “[produces] two million or more barrels of oil per day and/or where oil rents are over 10% of GDP. The second criterion in the definition suggests that the country is not economically diversified and depends heavily on oil revenues for its budget. The first part of the definition suggests a benchmark for the amount of oil production that is vital in the global energy market.” The data Demkiv uses from the World Bank only go back to 1990 for Russia. I would like to extend the data much further back. Demkiv cites Kennedy (2008), who defines petrostates as “having an average of more than 5% of GDP from fuel exports during the period 1965–2001.” As the amount of relatively reliable data available from the Soviet period is less than that of post-communist Russia, I follow the measure adopted by Kennedy to ensure uniformity across the sample of cases while retaining the notion of the petrostate being economically undiversified and reliant on the export of energy resources in the national budget.
 - 9 A former aide to Konstantin Chernenko, Vadim Pechenev, noted “that strategic decisions in the Soviet Union during Brezhnev’s last years were taken by six senior members of the Politburo – Suslov, Ustinov, Gromyko, Andropov, Chernenko, and Brezhnev (with Brezhnev himself, for health reasons, playing the least active part of the six)” (Brown, 1997: 56).
 - 10 Yeltsin and those around him viewed Putin as a sort of podestà. In medieval Genoa and other Italian city-states, local oligarchs would hire an outsider to enforce rules and cooperation by maintaining the balance of power via the implicit threat of allying with those who would be threatened. As Greif (1994, 2006) has shown, this was an early attempt to create a self-sustaining political institution to commitment problem. The key element to the self-sustaining aspect of the political institution was that the podestà had a fixed term and was supposed to leave the commune once his services were no longer required.
 - 11 Putin’s behavior mirrors, to an extent, the logic of the obsolescing bargain first explored by Vernon (1971). The oligarchs resemble the multinational enterprises that make investments in a host country, i.e. President Putin. As the oligarchs came to depend on Putin to protect their fixed assets, the bargaining power shifted to Putin and the original bargain obsolesced into irrelevancy.

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PART II

Tools and actors

Andrei P. Tsygankov

Part II analyzes tools and actors on which Russia relies in achieving its foreign policy objectives. In particular the part assesses the potential and actual role of diplomacy, energy, intelligence, military, cyber capabilities, media and public diplomacy, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Each contributor proposes an approach to analyzing a particular policy instrument by situating it within existing literature on the topic. Such approach allows the author to (1) compare the analyzed tool to other instruments in terms of its potential and foreign policy effectiveness; (2) assess whether it became more or less important over time; (3) discuss important issues generated by its application; and (4) reflect on future questions and themes related to continued use of the instrument under discussion.

In his chapter on the role of diplomacy in RFP, Charles Ziegler argues that the Russian government primarily relies on the traditional diplomacy involving state-to-state negotiations by professionals. He describes principles of Russian diplomacy as those defending realist ideas in international relations including protection of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, and great power status and respect. Moscow has been generally skeptical of humanitarian intervention and the United Nations-endorsed Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Ziegler notes that Russia has been especially adamant in rejecting foreign interferences and defending its position of a great power in the post-Soviet space. Moscow has been more open to global governance, multilateral cooperation, and the search for collective solutions in areas that did not affect its vital security in the Eurasian region. Whenever the traditional norms clashed with the R2P norm, Russia sought to back its position by arguments and various methods of statecraft including military, energy diplomacy, and media. Russian diplomacy has been flexible in style and skilled in both coercive and soft power methods.

In the post-Cold War era, Russian diplomacy evolved from being cooperative toward becoming more assertive in the 1990s. This change was expressed in policies of Foreign Ministers Andrei Kozyrev and Yevgeni Primakov and reflected Russia's disappointment with the Western nations' policies such as NATO's military intervention against Serbia, Russia's traditional ally. Under Vladimir Putin – in partial recognition of Russia's growing material strength – Russian diplomacy obtained a strong coercive dimension by relying on the threat of economic sanctions or military force, rather than persuasion. The coercive tactics, Ziegler maintains, has been only partly successful in defending Russia's objectives as it alienated some allies and consolidated foreign opposition to the Kremlin. Since the second half of 2000s, Russia has also adopted

new, technologically advanced forms of diplomacy including reliance on internet, media, and non-governmental organizations. However, the international agenda of the latter organizations continued to comply with Russian state priorities.

Boris Barkanov continues with the theme of energy in RFP by considering the role of natural gas. He argues that rather than seeking to disrupt the global energy market and the dominance of Euro-Atlantic region, Russia has sought to adjust to conditions of Western “unipolarity”. It has done so by pursuing the state-driven strategy of *Gazprom*’s penetration downstream and restructuring the Eurasian gas market to assist with Russia’s objective of integration with European markets.

Barkanov’s assessment of Russia’s natural gas strategy is mixed and based on analysis of *Gazprom*’s interaction with Germany, Ukraine, and China. *Gazprom* has been successful in Germany by obtaining sizable stakes in *Wintershall*-related companies and fields and completing the Nord Stream pipeline in a consortium with Western companies. However, in the 2010s *Gazprom* faced serious complications related to cancellation of the South Stream pipeline and the crisis over Ukraine. *Gazprom* failed to purchase Ukrainian energy infrastructure or make it accept Russia’s preferred gas price. The Kremlin is now interested in bypass routes and prospects for Russia’s gas integration following the Euromaidan revolution are “bleak”. Russia’s “pivot” to China accelerated after the West had imposed sanctions against the Russian economy, but progress has been modest. *Gazprom* has accepted the pricing formula with China’s CNPC and agreed to build a new pipeline from Eastern Siberian fields. Overall, however, access of Russian energy companies to the Chinese market has been limited and China’s terms have prevailed.

Another prominent tool of RFP is the role of intelligence and security services. In their chapter, Mikhail Strokan and Brian Taylor acknowledge difficulties with researching the security services’ highly secretive activities, yet they call for a more theoretical, comparative, and generalizable framework for thinking about the topic. Dispensing with clichés such as a “KGB state” and “spookocracy” requires analyzing the role of security services over time and in comparison with other agencies and tools of RFP. Strokan and Taylor analyze the role and division of labor between various security agencies in the Soviet and post-Soviet period, stressing their relations with the political authorities. They find that intelligence agencies have been traditionally “more successful in the scientific and technical sphere than in political analysis”.

Strokan and Taylor find it difficult to assess the importance of the security services in the overall foreign policy toolkit, but provide a discussion that suggests their relatively large role, because “Russia is on a weaker footing vis-à-vis the West in the military and economic realm”. In particular, the so-called “active measures” were on display in the war in Ukraine when intelligence services performed very well on a tactical level providing accurate information on Ukrainian military. However, they were much less successful in anticipating political change in the country. Scholars of Russian security services trace the latter failure to security officers’ confrontational mentality and tendency to ignore mass sentiments. Traditionally, *siloviki* attribute revolutions and public protests to activities of foreign intelligence services such as the CIA, not to internal causes. In addition to participating in military operations, security services were involved in counter-terrorism, cyber-attacks, and covert operations.

Valeri Konyshev and Alexander Sergunin analyze the role of the military in RFP. Although Russian military is sometimes viewed as poorly controlled and aggressive, they see such position as unnecessary alarmist. In their perception, the military in Russia is largely under civilian control and is generally exploited as a last resort when other means of foreign policy are no longer available. Against some expectations, it was Vladimir Putin who oversaw the reform that established control over the military under Anatoly Serdyukov’s leadership as Defense Minister. The reform made the armed forces adequate to domestic and foreign threats in terms of both

size and technological capabilities. Russia's perception of threat has evolved considerably since the 1990s and today incorporates developments such as internal instability, terrorism, regional conflicts, expansion of NATO, deployment of the U.S. ballistic missile system in Europe, and several other military technological advancements by the Western armies.

It was also under Putin that the Russian army was deployed in Eurasia and outside in defense of international objectives. In particular, the army was used in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria. Although the nature and extent of military involvement differed in each case, Konyshev and Sergunin find that in all of these cases the use of force came as a last resort due to the failure of diplomacy and other means to bloc Georgia and Ukraine's integration with the Western economic and military organizations and prevent the Syrian regime from collapse. In the authors' assessment, the military is especially effective when it is used in combination with soft power tools. The authors also observe the overall trend toward the declining role of the military in RFP, but they acknowledge dangers of relying on new military tactics of asymmetrical or "hybrid warfare".

Another prominent tool that has been recently scrutinized by observers concerns Russia's cyber power. Julian Nocetti introduces the topic and argues against the notion of Moscow's offensive foreign policy aiming to deploy cyber capabilities in order to destroy the West's global information dominance. Rather, he maintains, Russia uses the cyber realm for defensive purposes and seeks to bring Western powers, particularly the United States to negotiate rules in digital and information spaces. Such rules are yet to be established, as Moscow and Washington disagree on their approach to the issue. While Russia emphasizes the importance of "digital sovereignty", the United States views the topic in terms of technology and free access to information. Russia has adopted several versions of the Doctrine on Information Security stressing threats of information warfare and dangers stemming from foreign governments' exploiting information and communication technologies for undermining state "sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity". In 2014, Putin famously referred to the Internet as a "CIA project".

Nocetti documents how Russia's perception of information changed in the 2000s and especially in the early 2010s in response to domestic protests and the Arab Spring in 2011. The Kremlin viewed both developments as reflecting the West's attempts to undermine Russia's political system and raised the spectrum of fear and the need to confront the perceived U.S. digital dominance. The new fear found its expression in two types of policy. One of them included measures to develop information and cyber expertise for asserting Russia's interests with respect to Western countries and those in the Eurasian region such as Ukraine and others. The other policy was to promote within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization the norm of "cyber-sovereignty" in contrast to the U.S. advocated "cyber-freedom". Overall, Nocetti finds cyber power to be on the rise in the RFP toolkit, although Russia has not yet been successful in its effort to regulate the Internet.

In addition to the potentially coercive tools, Russia has increasingly built expertise in media and public diplomacy to assist in promoting the nation's interests. Greg Simons' chapter studies the extent to which practices of media and public diplomacy in Russia reflect the "contextual intelligence" of the state. He argues that Moscow has been quite successful in breaking the West's media and information monopoly especially considering Russia's significantly more limited capabilities. The overall purpose of the Kremlin was not to fight a new Cold War of values with the West, but rather to establish Russia's own narrative and expose flaws of anti-Russian propaganda in the United States and other Western countries. One example of the latter discussed by Simons was the BBC2-aired mockumentary depicting a possible outbreak of a nuclear war in the Baltics. Through various conventional and digital media and activities of

non-governmental organizations, Russia increased its visibility in the global information space and undermined the credibility of the Western media narrative.

Simons attributes Russia's relative success in the area of media and public diplomacy to their flexible and non-ideological nature along with a commitment to realization of concrete goals and interests. At the same time, he acknowledges constraints and limitations of Russia's public diplomacy, some of which have to do with excessive reliance on state support and others with lacking awareness of the target audience and weakness of a message for a global community.

Finally, any discussion of RFP would be incomplete without investigating the role played by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). Nicolai Petro argues that the ROC acts in partnership with the state, rather than subordinate to it. Historically the Church and the state often shared values and had overlapping interests. Today the ROC seeks to establish what it always wanted from the state – not separation of church and state, but a “separation of sphere of competencies” expressed with the notion of *symphonia*. Petro demonstrates the similarity of the Church's worldview with that of the state by highlighting ideas of spiritual and civilizational distinctiveness, global cultural diversity, traditional family, and defense of Christian and Russian values. He illustrates his argument with the case of *Ruski mir*, or the Russian world.

The narrative of *Ruski mir* was endorsed and supported by both the Church and the state and developed over 2007–2017 as an alternative to the narrative of nationally minded discourses and a spiritual complimentary to Russia's special relations with neighbors such as Ukraine and Belarus. The difference between the Church and the state views, however, concerns the question of national identity and sovereignty. Petro argues that the ROC's eschatological mission is broader than that of the Russian state and extends to the larger community of those associated with Kievan Rus. Petro also maintains that however difficult the question of Russia-Ukraine reconciliation may be, the ROC remains the only institution opposing the nationalist narrative inside Ukraine. The Church has consistently called upon all its followers to refrain from confrontation and violence and to seek peaceful resolution within ROC values.