

# Russia's Syrian "Gambit"



Amb. Grigol Mgaloblishvili

February 9, 2016



## Opinions

# How America can counter Putin's moves in Syria

By **Condoleezza Rice and Robert M. Gates** October 8, 2015

*Condoleezza Rice was secretary of state from 2005 to 2009. Robert M. Gates was defense secretary from 2006 to 2011.*

One can hear the disbelief in capitals from Washington to London to Berlin to Ankara and beyond. How can Vladimir Putin, with a sinking economy and a second-rate military, continually dictate the course of geopolitical events?

Whether it's in Ukraine or Syria, the Russian president seems always to have the upper hand.

“Diplomacy follows the facts on the ground, not the other way around”

...

# Today's Agenda

- Assumptions
- Russia's Strategic Objectives
- Why Syria? Why Now?
- Levels of Analysis – Individual, State, System
- Diagnostic: How we've got here?
- Way Forward

# Assumptions

- Russia pursues **multiple goals** in Syria out of which Syria related objectives are not of primary importance or priority
- Russia wages **proxy war** against United States
- Russia and Iran for separate but entirely compatible reasons want to **keep Assad in power** for indefinite period of time
- For Russia Assad's continued incumbency proclaims Moscow's **return to great power status**
- Russia does not wage military campaign against DAESH -fighting DAESH is simply a "Potemkin" pretext aimed to **eliminate both alternatives for Assad and DAESH**
- Russia uses Vienna diplomatic process as **time buying** tactic

# Russia's Strategic Objectives

- Reverse the outcomes of the post Cold War order
- Back to the “spheres of influence” – not just post-Soviet space but Middle East as well
- Push US out from the European security theatre and Challenge its interests in Middle East



# Why Syria? Why Now?

## International:

- Emerging as the US's counterweight in Middle East
- Showing that Russia is stronger in its allegiances than US when it comes to its partners
- Emerging as a major power broker – no solution without Moscow's "blessing"
- Breaking international isolation and extracting some concessions on Ukraine

## Domestic:

- Displaying to domestic public that Russia is a global power
- Changing focus from falling economy
- Diverting attention from Ukrainian issue
- Pleasing military; showing its ability to wage two wars simultaneously

## Arkady Ostrovsky

Mon Nov 02 2015

### EUROPE

Turn on Russian television and the country that emerges from the screen is a new  
(or rather, restored) superpower challenging America's foolhardy attempt to  
dominate the world. Having pushed America back from Russia's own backyard  
in Ukraine, the country is now projecting its power beyond the territories of the  
former Soviet Union. Its bombs and missiles in Syria have transformed it from a  
regional power into a global one. Far from being ostracised for the war in  
Ukraine, Mr Putin has become the world's greatest power-broker.



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# Showing that Russia is Stronger on its Allegiances

"We are stronger on our allegiances than others, I think, and this is being recognized internationally ... Being a Russian diplomat, for us, if you have good relations with a country, a government, for years, for decades, then it's not so easy to ditch those politicians and those governments because of political expediency. "

Churkin suggested that other leaders in the region would realize that when push comes to shove Russia could be trusted more than the United States to back its friends.

- said, he considered it a national honor to stand by Russia's friends. "We are stronger on our allegiances than others, I think, and this is being recognized internationally," he said. "Being a Russian diplomat, if you have good relations with a country, a government, for years, for decades, then it's not so easy to ditch those politicians and those governments because of political expediency."
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# No political solution to Syria conflict without Russia - German FM

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Steinmeier says that Russia is needed to achieve a political solution to the Syria crisis

No political solution in Syria without Russia - those were the words of German Foreign Minister [Frank Walter Steinmeier](#) as he addressed parliament in Berlin.



“It is impossible to achieve peace  
without Russia involved”

*Matteo Renzi*  
*Prime-Minister of Italy*

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## ARGUMENT

# Putin Aims at Syria — and Strikes Europe

Take note, Europe: By bombing Syria, Putin has finally put Russia back at the center of the world.

BY BENJAMIN HADDAD, HANNAH THOBURN

OCTOBER 2, 2015



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Putin's move into Syria is old-fashioned great-power politics. (Yes, people do that in the 21st century.) There is a domestic benefit to him, but he is not externalizing his problems at home. Russian domestic and international policies have always been inextricably linked. Russia feels strong at home when it is strong abroad — this is Putin's plea to his propagandized population — and the Russian people buy it, at least for now. Russia is a great power and derives its self-worth from that. What else is there? When is the last time you bought a Russian product that wasn't petroleum? Moscow matters again in international politics, and Russian armed forces are on the move.

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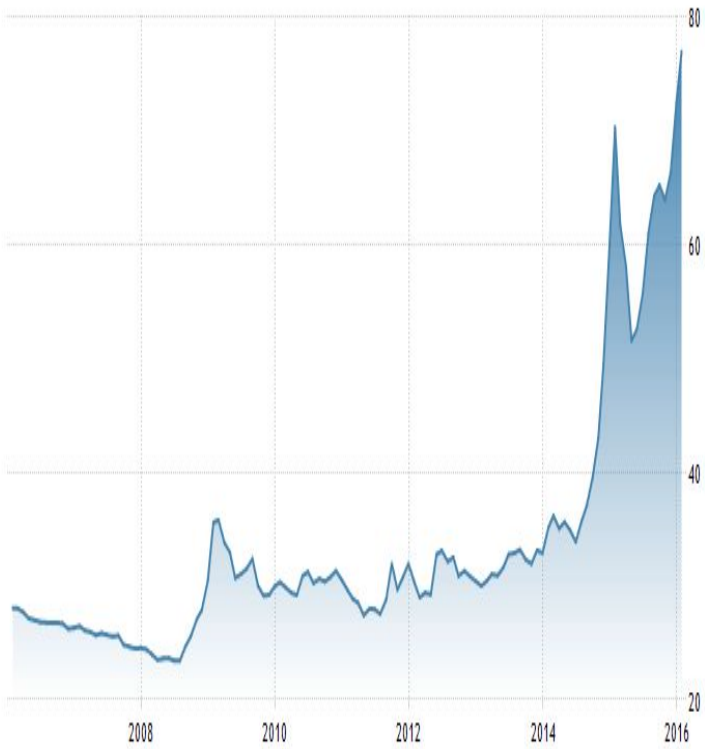
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1Y 5Y 10Y MAX

Export Data API Access

### RUSSIAN RUBLE

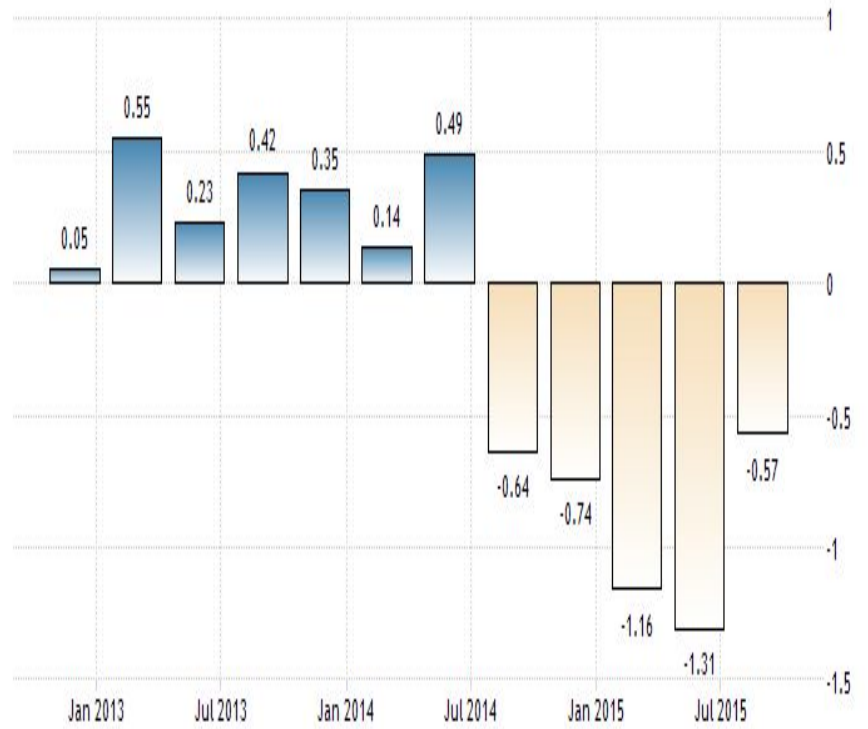


SOURCE: WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | OTC INTERBANK

1Y 5Y 10Y MAX

Export Data API Access

### RUSSIA GDP GROWTH RATE



SOURCE: WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | FEDERAL STATE STATISTICS SERVICE

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“Mothers’ Rights” Foundation since 1989

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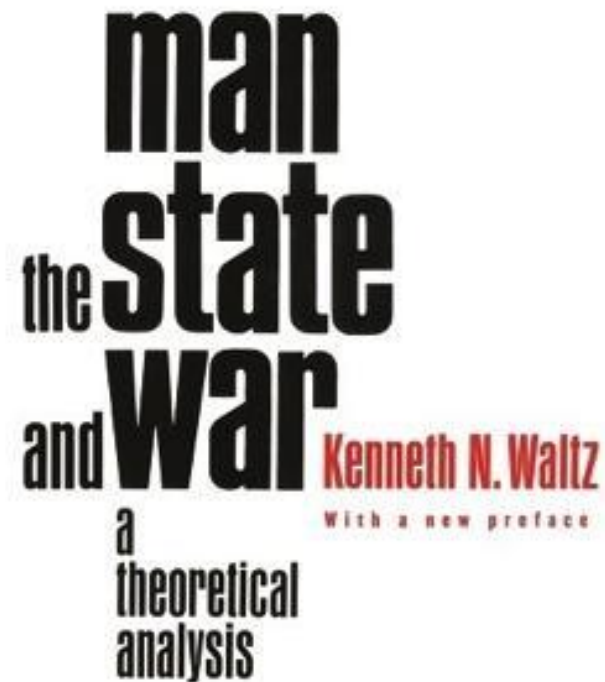
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# Levels of Analysis

A good place to start, when attempting to determine why things happen in world politics, is to see whether we get the most explanatory power by looking at the reasons why people (such as leaders) do what they do (the individual level of analysis), by looking what happens within individual states (the state level), or by looking at the interactions between actors (the system level).”



**man**  
**the State**  
**and War**  
Kenneth N. Waltz  
With a new preface  
a  
theoretical  
analysis



# Individual(s) and Syrian Intervention



Vladimir Putin sees Barack Obama's coolness as weakness  
– and it is hurting America

Russia's bombing of American allies in Syria underlines how much more powerful and provocative Putin is than he was before Obama took office



**Dmitry Rogozin** ✓  
@Rogozin



Follow

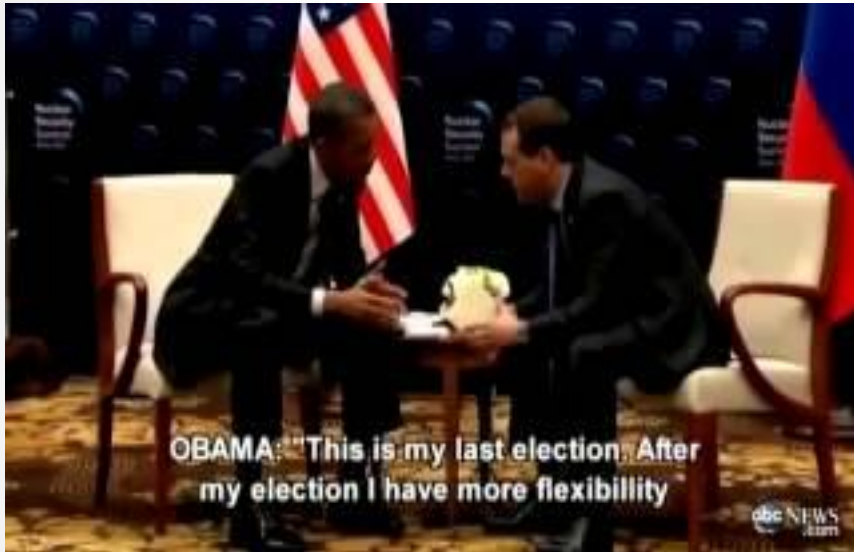
У нас разные ценности и союзники

View translation



“If anyone was wondering what the Kremlin thought of America at the moment, one politician has laid bare his own feelings by tweeting a picture showing the "different values" held by the two nations' leaders.....

The image appeared with the message: "We have different values and allies".





# Warm Welcome...Without Defense Capabilities



# State(s) and “Revisionist” Russia



**The president's men**  
Close allies hit by sanctions and other powerful figures

**Vladimir Yakulin\***

Head of Russian Railways. Has denied claims by opposition activist Alexei Navalny that he has several properties and considerable personal wealth

**Sergei Naryshkin**

Speaker of the Duma, or lower house of parliament, a member of the National Security Council and also of the pro-Putin United Russia party

**Viktor Ivanov**

Former KGB officer, ex-deputy director of the FSB security service. Now director of Russia's Federal Drug Control Service and a member of its National Security Council

**Gennady Timchenko**

Until this week the main owner of oil trading company Gunvor, which denies US claims of association with Putin

**Yuri Kovalchuk\***

Once dubbed one of Putin's 'cashiers'. Largest shareholder in Bank Rossiya, which the US has called 'the personal bank for senior officials of the Russian Federation, with assets of approximately \$10bn

**Boris Rotenberg**

Brother of Arkady, with whom he co-owns various businesses; president of football team Dinamo Moscow. The Rotenbergs received billions of dollars in contracts for the Sochi Winter Olympics

**Arkady Rotenberg**

Business empire includes gas pipeline construction and supplies to Gazprom, road construction and banking; president of Dinamo Moscow ice hockey club

**Igor Sechin**

Ex-deputy chief of staff under Putin and rumoured to be a former military intelligence officer. Was made chief executive of Rosneft, Russia's largest oil company, in 2012

**Nikolai Patrushev**

Former head of the FSB, now secretary of the National Security Council

**Sergei Ivanov**

Presidential chief of staff. Former KGB general, long-time Putin friend and ally. Has been defence minister and deputy prime minister

**Vladimir Kozhin**

Head of the presidential property department since 2000, which the US says gives him oversight of over 100 enterprises and institutions including the Kremlin

**Andrei Fursenko\***

Presidential aide since May 2012. Has held various government posts, such as industry minister and education minister

**Alexander Bortnikov**

Career intelligence officer who replaced Nikolai Patrushev as head of the FSB in 2008

\* Members of the Ozero lake-side dacha enclave located outside St Petersburg; set up by Vladimir Putin and associates in the 1990s

Source: FT research FT graphic



High risk taking leadership

## Putin's Vertical of Power:

- Money, Media, Local Elections

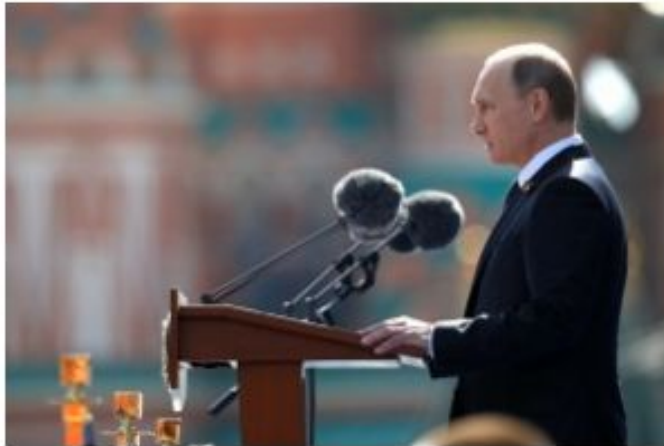
## Non-inclusive Political Establishment/High Risk Taking Leadership:

- Economic liberals and old Moscow establishment marginalized
- Very narrow circle, with similar background

# International System and the Syrian Intervention

14:14 May. 9, 2015

## **Guardian: US trying to create 'unipolar world' - Vladimir Putin**



Russian President Vladimir Putin addresses the Victory Parade marking the 70th anniversary of the defeat of the

Russian president uses Moscow's annual Victory Day parade to accuse the US of ignoring principles of international cooperation

Vladimir Putin has used an address commemorating the 70th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany to accuse the US of attempting to dominate the world.

# International System and the Syrian Intervention



“ the global financial-economic architecture was largely created by the West to suit its own needs. And now...we are watching the generally recognized shift of financial-economic power and influence toward new fast-growing economies, such as China, India, Russia and Brazil...<sup>23</sup>



# Diagnostic

## Action:

- Ethnic cleansing in Chechnya
- Russia imposed trade embargos on its neighbors, used energy resources as a weapon of intimidation
- Russia identifies NATO as the the main threat
- Russia fails to modernize its economy (Russia is nether democracy nor industrial power)
- Russia invades its neighbor

## Consequence:

- Russia becomes a member of the Council of Europe
- Russia becomes a member of World Trade Organization
- Russia-NATO Council is established
- Russia is invited to G-7 (G-7 becomes G-8)
- US initiates reset policy

# Example of “Minsk Agreement”

## Action:

- Annexation of Crimea; military intervention in Eastern Ukraine; downing of Malaysian Airliner
- Russia promptly violates Minsk I Agreement and occupies additional 500 square kilometers of the Ukrainian territory

## Consequence:

- With the mediation of Germany and France, Russia in September last year signed Minsk I Agreement
- Putin receives more favorable Minsk II agreement in February last year

# Questions?

...



# Why it matters?

Implications of Russia's assertive policies for UAE:

- Broken consensus between major players on fundamental principles (*UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act, Charter of Paris*)
- Weakened Non-Proliferation Regime
- Devalued US security guaranties
- Changed pattern of a warfare

# Russia's Multifaceted Diplomacy in Syria

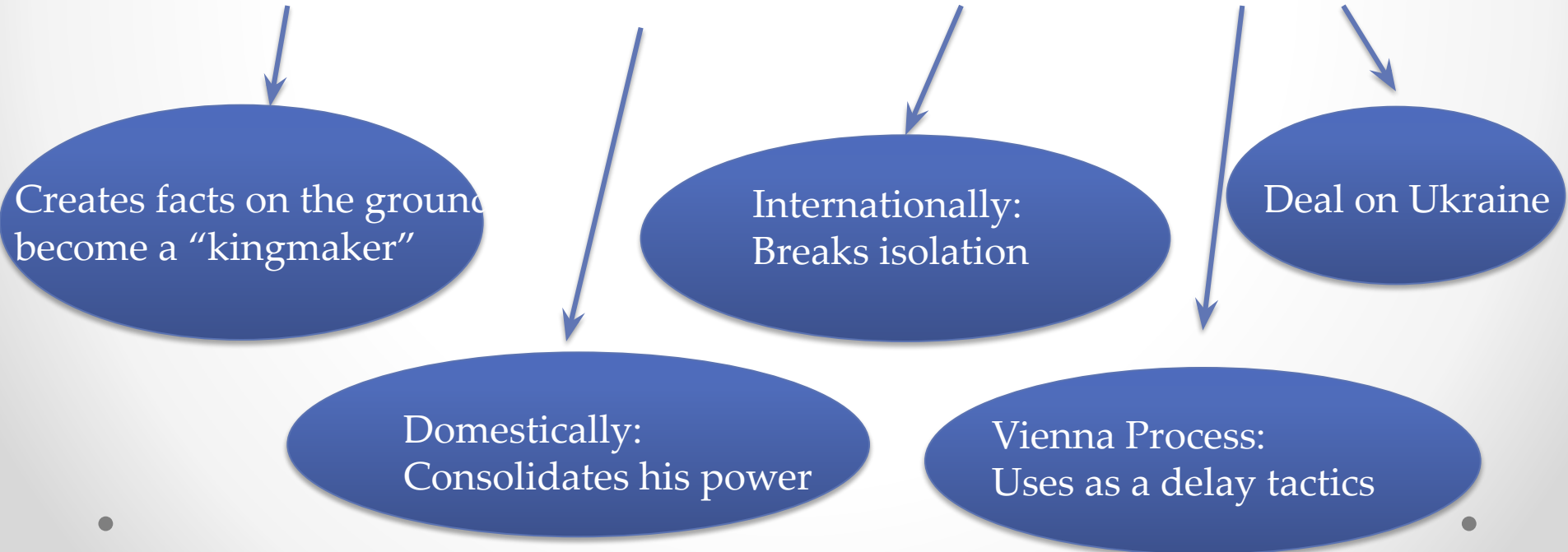
Coercion



Persuasion



Compromise





# Preserving Ukraine's Independence, Resisting Russian Aggression: What the United States and NATO Must Do

Ivo Daalder, Michele Flournoy, John Herbst, Jan Lodal, Steven Pifer, James Stavridis,  
Strobe Talbott and Charles Wald

# State(s) and the Syrian Intervention

## High Risk Taking Leadership:

- Putin's Vertical of Power
  - Money, Media, Local Elections
- Non-inclusive Political Establishment
  - Economic liberals and old Moscow establishment marginalized
  - Very narrow circle, with similar background and world view