



# Russia Analytical Report, Dec. 11-18, 2017

***Dear readers: Please be advised that the Russia Analytical Report will not be coming out on Dec. 25 or Jan. 1 due to U.S. public holidays. We look forward to resuming publication Jan. 8.***

## I. U.S. and Russian priorities for the bilateral agenda

### Nuclear security:

- No significant commentary.

### North Korea's nuclear and missile programs:

- No significant commentary.

### Iran and its nuclear program:

- No significant commentary.

### New Cold War/saber rattling:

- No significant commentary.

### NATO-Russia relations:

"NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard," Svetlana Savranskaya and Tom Blanton, GWU's National Security Archive, 12.12.17: <<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>> The authors, a senior research fellow and the director at the National Security Archive, respectively, write that newly declassified documents lend credence to claims that Western leaders repeatedly reassured their Soviet counterparts during German reunification in the early 1990s that NATO would not seek to expand eastward. "U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's famous 'not one inch eastward' assurance about NATO expansion in his meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on February 9, 1990, was part of a cascade of assurances about Soviet security given by Western leaders to Gorbachev and other Soviet officials throughout the process of German unification in 1990 and on into 1991, according to declassified U.S., Soviet, German, British and French documents posted by the National Security Archive at George Washington University," the authors write. The documents show these negotiations "were not at all narrowly limited to the status of East German territory, and that subsequent Soviet and Russian complaints about being misled about NATO expansion were

founded in written contemporaneous memcons and telcons at the highest levels. ... President George H.W. Bush had assured Gorbachev during the Malta summit in December 1989 that the U.S. would not take advantage ('I have not jumped up and down on the Berlin Wall') of the revolutions in Eastern Europe to harm Soviet interests; but neither Bush nor Gorbachev at that point (or for that matter, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl) expected so soon the collapse of East Germany or the speed of German unification." Not all European leaders were on the same page, the authors note. French leader Francois Mitterrand told Gorbachev in Moscow that he was "personally in favor of gradually dismantling the military blocs," the authors write, while noting that the French leader "continued the cascade of assurances by saying the West must 'create security conditions for you, as well as European security as a whole.'"

"Russia and NATO: Headed for a Missile Arms Race in Europe?" Dave Majumdar, *The National Interest*, 12.17.17 <<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russia-nato-headed-missile-arms-race-europe-23693?page=show>>: The author, who is the magazine's defense editor, writes that "at this point, the INF treaty is essentially dead. It is very unlikely that the Kremlin will return to compliance with the treaty anytime soon. Indeed, in many ways the treaty was outdated—the most obvious drawback is that it is a bilateral treaty. ... Perhaps the best option is to negotiate a new treaty that includes other parties such as China."

#### Missile defense:

- No significant commentary.

#### Nuclear arms control:

"U.S.-Russia arms control was possible once—is it possible still?" Strobe Talbott, *Brookings Institution*, 12.12.17 <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/12/12/u-s-russia-arms-control-was-possible-once-is-it-possible-still/>>: The author, a former journalist and ambassador and currently a distinguished fellow at the think tank, urges policymakers in the U.S. and Russia to "take a lesson from their predecessors" before concluding that current relations are too tense to deal meaningfully with arms control. Near-catastrophes like the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 "convinced the leaderships in Washington and Moscow how dangerous unregulated nuclear competition was," the author writes. "As a result, they initiated a long, tough, but ultimately successful series of agreements that stabilized mutual deterrence, thereby keeping the nuclear peace intact even as the ideological and geopolitical struggle raged. If our current leaders let the arms control regime unravel, the years ahead could all too plausibly be even more perilous than the Cold War itself."

"If the INF Treaty Dies, America and Russia Could See an Arms Race (And It Would Be a Massive Waste of Money)," Leonid Nersisyan, *The National Interest*, 12.17.17 <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/if-the-inf-treaty-dies-america-russia-could-see-arms-race-23680?page=show>>: The author, a Russian military columnist, argues that the Senate's allocation of \$58 million for the development of intermediate-range ballistic missiles will bring the INF Treaty "closer to dissolution than ever before. ... The potential withdrawal of one party—either Russia or America—from the INF Treaty would lead to a full dissolution of the treaty itself. This development has two possible

outcomes: the parties blatantly restart production of a small quantity of ground-based cruise missiles ... and stop at that; or a more serious arms race will begin. Russia has a better starting position in such a race."

"Enough Is Enough: Why the U.S. Must Address Russia's Violations of the INF Treaty," Lawrence J. Korb and Shannon McKeown, *The National Interest*, 12.17.17

<<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/enough-enough-why-the-us-must-address-russias-violations-the-23678?page=show>>: The authors, *a senior fellow and an intern at the Center for American Progress*, respectively, argue that "the future of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty is in jeopardy. ... The current political landscape is very different than [in] 1987 when the Treaty was negotiated—incentivizing the Russians to come to the table without deploying new nuclear weapons or escalating tensions will be a political and diplomatic test. The best way for the United States to deal with this issue is through diplomacy. The Trump administration must engage in direct talks with the Russians to encourage them to reenter compliance with the treaty once again."

See also "NATO-Russian relations" above and "Ukraine" section below.

### Counter-terrorism:

- No significant commentary.

### Conflict in Syria:

"Putin's Plan for Syria," Dmitri Trenin, *Foreign Affairs*, 12.13.17 <<http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=75001>>: The author, the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, outlines some of the challenges facing Russian President Vladimir Putin in Syria, where "through military intervention and diplomatic maneuvering," he has made his country into "one of the major players in the conflict." The fate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is one key question. "Now he looks and behaves like a victor, and may be thinking that he does not need the Russians as much as he used to. The Kremlin, however, understands that restoring his control over all of Syria is impossible and even undesirable, since other groups, from the Sunni opposition to the Kurds, adamantly reject this outcome." The author continues: "Syria is de facto divided into several enclaves controlled by different forces: the Assad government; anti-Assad opposition groups; pro-Turkish and pro-Iranian militias; and the Kurds." While Russia insists on the territorial unity of Syria, it also favors real autonomy for the Kurds. There are also the interests of neighboring countries and powers to consider. "Even as Moscow supported the Assad regime with its air power, Iran and its allied militias were fighting on the ground. After the war, Tehran wants to institutionalize its presence on the ground in Syria, both to influence the future of that country and to maintain a physical link to its main regional ally, Hezbollah"—a reality Russia must balance with Israel's interests.

"Israel Draws a Redline in Syria. Will Russia Prevent an Iran-Israel Showdown?" Meir Javedanfar, *Foreign Affairs*, 12.14.17 <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-12-14/israel-draws-redline-syria>>: The author, an Israel-based expert on Iran, writes about the momentary alignment of Russian and Israeli interests amid the shifting sands of the Syrian civil war. Israel, the author

notes, sent a clear message when it struck a military site near Damascus that reportedly housed Iranian forces: “Israel will not tolerate the permanent presence of Iranian militias and military infrastructure in Syria.” But, the author writes, that message was also meant for Russia. “So far, Russian and Iranian goals in Syria have been aligned, but that is changing as the war enters a new phase. Although Russian President Vladimir Putin would not hesitate to act against Israel if necessary, the two countries have common interests in Syria—and those common interests may help Israel enforce its redline against Iran. ... The Kremlin recognizes that pressure from Israel could strengthen its hand when it comes to convincing Assad that he should not allow Iran to carry out its apparent plans for a permanent military base in Syria.”

“Kennan Cable No. 28: Russian and U.S. Roles in the Middle East: An Israeli’s Perspective,” Yuri Teper, Wilson Center, 12.12.17 <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no-28-russian-and-us-roles-the-middle-east-israelis-perspective>>: The author, a postdoctoral fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, writes: “Russia’s perceived determination and readiness to use force, coupled with its consistent policy, allowed that nation to significantly increase its leverage in the Middle East far beyond its actual power or investment of resources might suggest. ... In contrast, the perceived lack of U.S. credibility among both its allies and opponents significantly inhibited the originally much stronger American position. Consequently, the United States lost its role as a pivotal security guarantor for its regional allies. ... Like the traditional Sunni regimes, the Israeli leadership came to realize it would have to assume full responsibility for its security without relying on U.S. mediation. ... The Israeli case ... vividly demonstrates that the ‘new Cold War’ paradigm that is often introduced as shorthand to describe the (presumed) emerging standoff between Russia and the United States in the Middle East is invalid and misleading. In contrast to the Cold War era, currently there is no clear and inescapable divide between the two camps. The secondary players enjoy much greater room for political maneuvering and therefore stronger bargaining positions relative to the two powers.”

### Cyber security:

- No significant commentary.

### Elections interference:

“The Real Russia Scandal,” Bret Stephens, New York Times, 12.15.17:

<[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/opinion/russia-trump-putin.html?](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/opinion/russia-trump-putin.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=d58c7f03faff68dd9391dabe4ca337af&gwt=pay&assettype=opinion)

[mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=d58c7f03faff68dd9391dabe4ca337af&gwt=pay&assettype=opinion](https://www.google.com&gwh=d58c7f03faff68dd9391dabe4ca337af&gwt=pay&assettype=opinion)> The author, a columnist for the newspaper, offers several theories <<https://www.russiamatters.org/blog/just-what-does-he-see-him-8-theories-trumps-affection-putin>> for President Donald Trump’s seeming infatuation with Russian President Vladimir Putin: “(a) The president is infatuated with authoritarians, at least those who flatter him; (b) he’s neurotically neuralgic when it comes to the subject of his election; (c) he’s ideologically sympathetic to Putinism, with its combination of economic corporatism, foreign-policy cynicism and violent hostility to critics; (d) he’s stupid; or (e) he’s vulnerable to Russian blackmail.” The author’s answer is all of the above. “But let’s have that conversation at another time. There’s no need to obsess about electoral collusion when the real issue is moral capitulation.”

"The Russia facts are hiding in plain sight," David Ignatius, Washington Post, 12.14.17 <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-russia-facts-are-hiding-in-plain-sight/2017/12/14/81de3c56-e106-11e7-89e8-edec16379010\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.ac2e1847621e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-russia-facts-are-hiding-in-plain-sight/2017/12/14/81de3c56-e106-11e7-89e8-edec16379010_story.html?utm_term=.ac2e1847621e)>: The author, a columnist for the newspaper, writes that President Trump's latest denunciations of the Russia investigation recall the famous legal advice: "If the facts are against you, argue the law. If the law is against you, argue the facts. If the law and the facts are against you, pound the table and yell like hell." Trump is now pursuing the latter course, the author writes, citing a litany of damning facts that have already come to light. These include the March 2016 meeting between Trump campaign advisor George Papadopoulos and a London professor who would later tell him "the Russians had emails of Clinton . . . thousands of emails"; and Donald Trump Jr.'s email ahead of a June 9 meeting at Trump Tower in which he said Russian authorities "offered to provide the Trump campaign with some official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary."

"In battle with Mueller, Trump has a big advantage that Nixon did not," Greg Sargent, The Washington Post, 12.18.17 <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2017/12/18/in-battle-with-mueller-trump-has-a-big-advantage-that-nixon-did-not/?utm\\_term=.0e1db65dadb9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2017/12/18/in-battle-with-mueller-trump-has-a-big-advantage-that-nixon-did-not/?utm_term=.0e1db65dadb9)>: The author writes that "what we are seeing right now in the Russia affair is a kind of double game: Fox News and a constellation of President Trump's outside allies are escalating their attacks on the special counsel and on law enforcement, even as Trump's lawyers—and Trump himself—keep telling us that Trump has no intention of trying to remove Robert S. Mueller III. ... [T]his double-track approach will take us into new territory. Trump is heading into a period of some sort of sustained confrontation with the special counsel and with law enforcement that is similar to the one Richard Nixon entered into just over four decades ago. Yet Trump will be benefiting from a very powerful and far-reaching network of media propaganda on his behalf — one that casts all these ongoing efforts to subject Trump to basic accountability as fundamentally illegitimate — that is nothing like anything Nixon had at his disposal."

"Russia's threat, unchecked by Mr. Trump," Editorial Board, The Washington Post, 12.16.17 <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/russias-threat-unchecked-by-trump/2017/12/16/0c30c962-e0ff-11e7-bbd0-9dfb2e37492a\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.ac170a3296a1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/russias-threat-unchecked-by-trump/2017/12/16/0c30c962-e0ff-11e7-bbd0-9dfb2e37492a_story.html?utm_term=.ac170a3296a1)>: "The cacophonous and frequently confusing debates over the Russia investigations ... tend to obscure some big and virtually uncontested truths: that the regime of Vladimir Putin intervened in the 2016 election with the intention of harming U.S. democracy; that it will almost certainly seek to do so again; and that there has been no concerted effort to defend the country from this national security threat. ... A comprehensive report by Post reporters Greg Miller, Greg Jaffe and Philip Rucker contains dismaying evidence of the resulting dysfunction. Mr. Trump has never held a Cabinet-level meeting on the Russian intervention or on how to prevent its recurrence. At the National Security Council, it is understood that to bring up the Russian threat is to risk enraging the president. The same goes for the CIA officials who conduct Mr. Trump's daily intelligence briefing; they sometimes leave material on Russia out of the oral session, so as not to send the session 'off the rails,' in the words of a former senior official."

### Energy exports from CIS:

- No significant commentary.

## U.S.-Russian economic ties:

- No significant commentary.

## U.S.-Russian relations in general:

“Trump National Security Strategy Sees U.S. Confronting China and Russia,” David E. Sanger and Mark Landler, *New York Times*, 12.18.17 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/18/us/politics/trump-security-strategy-china-russia.html>>: The authors describe “President Trump’s first national security strategy,” released Dec. 18, a document that “envisions a world in which the United States confronts two ‘revisionist’ powers—China and Russia—that are seeking to change the global status quo, often to the detriment of America’s interests. But while the document outlines a detailed plan to push back against China’s global economic ambitions, it says little about dealing with the kind of cyber and information warfare techniques that Moscow used to try to influence the 2016 presidential election.”

“A revived Russia and the U.S. vie for center stage,” Thomas Graham and Eugene Rumer, *Financial Times*, 12.17.17 <<https://www.ft.com/content/94f74692-e0df-11e7-a0d4-0944c5f49e46>>: The authors, *a managing director at Kissinger Associates and an analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, respectively, write that “over the past 25 years ... [t]he U.S. grew accustomed to the world following its lead. No more. Both the world and America have changed. And lately it seems as if another country is emerging as the new indispensable nation on the world stage—Russia. Certainly, this is what President Vladimir Putin wants us to believe. ... Although Washington’s demonization of Russia would suggest otherwise, the U.S. should be able to engage [Moscow] with confidence. It still leads the world in hard and soft power, and attracts more talented, enterprising people from around the world than any other country. American ideals are widely shared and admired, even if the country is doing a poor job of living up to them. It may no longer be the indispensable nation, as that idea was understood in the 1990s, but it still remains more indispensable as a partner in more places than Russia. The U.S. just needs to regain the will to act like the great power it is.”

## II. Russia’s relations with other countries

### Russia’s general foreign policy and relations with “far abroad” countries:

“The End of European Bilateralisms: Germany, France, and Russia,” Sabine Fischer, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 12.12.17 <<http://carnegie.ru/commentary/?fa=74950>>: The author, the head of the Russia Research Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, examines the shifting attitudes in France and Germany toward Russia. “The German attitude toward Russia was (and is) shaped by the legacy of World War II. The DNA of Willy Brand’s ‘Ostpolitik’ became deeply engraved in the German collective memory as a key contribution to German unification and the end of the Cold War. Political relations between Germany and Russia were underpinned by growing economic interdependence.” France, by contrast, “occupies only a minor position in Russia’s foreign trade. ... From a French perspective, political partnership between the two countries unfolded more on the international level, where France and Russia share a number of key features: both have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, both are nuclear powers

and consider themselves great powers in the international system, both have often taken issue with U.S. international hegemony." However, the author notes, the attitudes informing French and German policy toward Russia have changed substantially over the past few years. "Trust in Russia has crumbled, particularly with the experience of Russian attempts to impact elections."

"Actually, Egypt Is a Terrible Ally," Andrew Miller and Richard Sokolsky, New York Times, 12.18.17 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/18/opinion/united-states-egypt-pence.html>>: The authors, former government officials who are now analysts at the Project on Middle East Democracy and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, respectively, argue that "any doubts that Egypt has ceased to be a strategic partner to the United States were eliminated with the recent preliminary Egyptian-Russian agreement to grant reciprocal access to each other's air bases. But this is just the most recent example of profoundly unfriendly behavior by a purported friend. In Libya, Egypt has consistently provided military support to Gen. Khalifa Hifter, whose Libyan National Army has clashed with forces loyal to the internationally recognized and United States-backed government. At the United Nations Security Council, Egypt has made common cause with Russia to oppose the United States on issues from Syria to Israel/Palestine. And this year, revelations emerged of Egyptian military and economic cooperation with North Korea."

#### China:

- No significant commentary.

#### Ukraine:

"Interpreting the Bomb: Ownership and Deterrence in Ukraine's Nuclear Discourse," Polina Sinovets and Mariana Budjeryn, Wilson Center, December 2017 <[https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/npihp\\_working\\_paper\\_12\\_sinovets\\_budjeryn\\_ownership\\_deterrence\\_ukraine\\_nuclear\\_discourse\\_0.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/npihp_working_paper_12_sinovets_budjeryn_ownership_deterrence_ukraine_nuclear_discourse_0.pdf)>: Nuclear deterrence thinking has become so entrenched in U.S. academic and policy circles that it only seems natural that other states regard nuclear weapons in the same terms. Yet is it necessarily so? In this article, the authors examine the case of Ukraine to understand how its leaders interpreted the value of the nuclear weapons deployed on Ukrainian territory in 1990-1994. They demonstrate that deterrence thinking, far from being a "natural" or systemically determined way of regarding nuclear weapons, is a socially constructed and historically contingent set of concepts and practices. The authors examine what broader conclusions can be drawn from the decision of the leaders of Ukraine to not maintain a nuclear deterrent at its inception as an independent state. "Further research is necessary to understand why deterrence thinking was so conspicuously lacking in Ukraine and why the military, defense industry and expert communities that could have generated such thinking failed to formulate a more forceful position in favor of deterrence," the authors note. "Ukraine's case supports the argument that technological availability and scientific capacity, the so-called supply-side of nuclear proliferation, is far from being determinative of the decision to go nuclear. ... At the same time, it suggests that the political and security motivation, the so-called demand-side of proliferation, may be more complex than previously assumed."

"Through a Glass Darkly: Three Scenarios for Russian Aggression in Ukraine," Michael Kofman, American Enterprise Institute, 12.12.17 <<https://www.aei.org/publication/through-a-glass-darkly-three-scenarios-for-russian-aggression-in-ukraine/>>: The author, a research scientist at CNA Corporation and fellow at the Kennan Institute, writes: "The conflict in Ukraine remains an interstate war, though its relatively stable front line is beset by recurrent cycles of escalation. ... Russia's overarching objective remains keeping Ukraine in its privileged sphere of influence, denying the country opportunities to join either NATO or the European Union. ... Given the interests at stake, Russian leadership is unlikely to let the present situation drift, with its attendant political and economic costs, without taking some action to alter the present state of affairs."

"Russia's Unfinished Business in Ukraine," Andrew Wilson, American Enterprise Institute, 12.12.17 <<https://www.aei.org/publication/russias-unfinished-business-in-ukraine/>>: The author, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, writes that Russia "still has unresolved issues with accepting Ukraine's right to exist as a nation-state, and Russia is likely to try to keep Ukraine weak and dysfunctional in whatever way possible." He continues: "Although Ukraine is less vulnerable to Russian subversion and destabilization than it was in 2014, Russia will concentrate its efforts in the many areas where Ukraine is weakest. ... Ukraine making real economic and political progress is the best protection against Russian destabilization."

"Democracy in Ukraine: Four years after the Euromaidan," Denys Kiryukhin, Russia File/Kennan Institute, 12.11.17 <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/democracy-ukraine-four-years-after-the-euromaidan>>: The author, a research scholar at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, writes there is still hope for democracy in Ukraine four years after the Euromaidan protests, despite new accusations "of corruption and inefficiency as oligarchs have taken over the offices of high-ranking officials and control the political activity of many parliamentarians." The author points to several alarming recent trends, including that "street democracy and direct action remain the only effective means for citizens to influence the decisions of the authorities" and "disappointment in the choice of democracy and a European vector of integration" and the rise of "populism and radical nationalism." Despite all this, the author writes, changes are possible. "Today, Ukraine urgently needs support for democratic reforms, but a significant change in course heading is possible only if the country becomes more integrated into Western institutions than it is now."

"How I Went From the Governor's Office to a Jail Cell," Mikheil Saakashvili, New York Times, 12.15.17 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/opinion/mikheil-saakashvili-ukraine-russia.html>>: The author, former president of Georgia and former Odessa governor, writes: "The prosecutor general announced that I am an agent of the Russian secret police and that my goal is to destabilize Ukraine. Ukraine is, indeed, being destabilized by Russia. And indeed, Russia has powerful allies in this destabilization: Ukraine's homegrown, greedy and corrupt elites, who have turned what could be one of Europe's wealthiest countries into one of its poorest. ... As in other countries in Eastern Europe, [Ukraine's] success, I believe, lies in the reversal of a trend in which oligarchs, who have learned to manipulate elections, are winning."

Russia's other post-Soviet neighbors:

“Uzbeks Feel Challenged by October Terror Attack,” Navbahor Imamova, *The National Interest*, 12.14.17 <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/uzbeks-feel-challenged-by-october-terror-attack-23657>>: The author, a journalist with the Voice of America’s Uzbek Service, writes that about “350,000 immigrants have arrived [in the U.S.] from Central Asia since the 1950s. The largest group, Uzbeks, is scattered from Key West, Florida, to Anchorage, Alaska, with estimated numbers at 250,000. ... Yet these new Americans—citizens and Green Card holders—remain atomized and politically passive... Now, that may be changing... The Oct. 31 attack in New York by Sayfullo Saipov has fueled new debates about what it means to be both Uzbek and American at a time of political ferment in the United States around questions of extremism, immigration and both the causes and consequences of terrorism. ... Uzbekistan is not the overgeneralized ‘hotbed of Islamic extremism’ that some Western media have claimed. Still, while the community at home and abroad may resent the association with ‘terrorists,’ ... lack of justice, widespread corruption, poverty and complex socio-economic conditions are the principal factors that drive millions of young Uzbeks to look for opportunities overseas. And a small percentage of these people may have turned to ISIS and other radical movements.”

“Estonia: Potential Vulnerabilities Amid Progress,” Agnia Grigas, *American Enterprise Institute*, 12.18.17 <[http://www.aei.org/publication/estonia-potential-vulnerabilities-amid-progress/?utm\\_source=paramount&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=grigas-giles&utm\\_content=new-research](http://www.aei.org/publication/estonia-potential-vulnerabilities-amid-progress/?utm_source=paramount&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=grigas-giles&utm_content=new-research)>: The author, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, argues that “all three Baltic States have been consistently targeted by Moscow’s compatriot policies, information warfare, and various forms of military intimidation; there is an ever-present risk that Russia will try to use the Baltic states’ sizable ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking minority to advance its foreign policy and potentially even territorial ambitions by subverting local governance and exacerbating internal political and social rifts; Estonia and its allies would do well to deter and prepare for Russia’s hard offenses while mitigating and neutralizing its softer efforts at destabilization.”

“Russian Hostile Action Against Estonia: Military Options,” Keir Giles, *American Enterprise Institute*, 12.18.17 <[http://www.aei.org/publication/russian-hostile-action-against-estonia-military-options/?utm\\_source=paramount&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=grigas-giles&utm\\_content=new-research](http://www.aei.org/publication/russian-hostile-action-against-estonia-military-options/?utm_source=paramount&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=grigas-giles&utm_content=new-research)>: The author, a researcher with Chatham House in London and the Conflict Research Studies Centre in Cambridge, UK, argues that “Russia’s past aggression toward states along its periphery calls into question what action it might take against Estonia” and considers “three possible scenarios for military intervention against Estonia in decreasing order of scale: a full-scale military offensive, a limited ‘land grab’ and an ongoing campaign of subversion with no intent to take or hold territory.” He concludes that “continuing prioritization of military and civil resilience for Estonia is both prudent and a sound investment of local and NATO resources.”

### III. Russia’s domestic policies

#### Domestic politics, economy and energy:

“Putin’s Legacy: Brezhnev Lite?” Andrew C. Kuchins, *Russia Matters*, 12.14.17 <<https://www.russiamatters.org/blog/putins-legacy-brezhnev-lite>>: The author, *a senior fellow at Georgetown’s Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies*, argues that we are getting “a good sense not just of the domestic economic policies we can expect from President Vladimir Putin, who did not

exactly shock the world this month when he announced his candidacy for another six-year term, but also a hint of the legacy we might expect him to leave behind when his time as Russia's de jure and de facto leader—now at 17 years and counting—comes to an end. Operating on the assumption of a Putin victory in 2018," the author suspects "that (a) his early economic successes—like robust growth of 7 percent annually in 2000-2008—will be eclipsed by much weaker economic performance to come and (b) we will not see significant change for the better in Russia's relations with the West."

"Two Russian Power Brokers Dueled. Putin Stayed Out," Leonid Bershidsky, Bloomberg View, 12.15.17 <<https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-12-15/two-russian-power-brokers-dueled-putin-stayed-out>>: The columnist argues that the trial of former Economy Minister Alexei Ulyukayev, which ended in Moscow on Dec. 15, "set the tone for Russian President Vladimir Putin's next term in power... Ulyukayev was found guilty of accepting a \$2 million bribe from Igor Sechin, the chief executive officer of state-controlled oil major Rosneft. This was, in effect, a dispute between two powerful officials, of the kind Putin used to arbitrate quietly. It's significant that he chose not to this time. ... The West still perceives Russia as a place where Putin makes all the decisions. But Putin appears confident that the system he built has sufficient internal checks and balances to operate reliably in his interest, regardless of which loyal group or individual wins a specific dispute or undertakes a policy project. ... Putin is likely to demonstrate his power every once in a while just to keep them on their toes. For now, he's experimenting with hands-off leadership."

"Putin's Russia Keeps Getting More Dangerous," Sergey Aleksashenko, The National Interest, 12.17.17 <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/putins-russia-keeps-getting-more-dangerous-23697?page=show>>: The author, a former Russian finance official and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, writes that the arrest and trial of former Economy Minister Alexei Ulyukayev raises many questions, none of them particularly flattering for Putin's Russia. These include questions about holes in the prosecutors' case and speculation about the true reasons for Ulyukayev's punishment.

"Don't Speak, Memory. How Russia Represses Its Past," Nikita Petrov, Foreign Affairs, 12.12.17: <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2017-12-12/dont-speak-memory>> The author, deputy director of the board of Memorial's Center for Research and Education in Moscow, writes: "In 1987 ... Mikhail Gorbachev ... said that Stalin had committed 'enormous and unforgivable' crimes. Today, such a clear statement would be unthinkable. In 2000, during his first inauguration as president, Putin set the new official tone, declaring that 'there have been both tragic and brilliant pages in our history.' ... In modern Russia, with its deep-rooted tradition of authoritarianism, the danger of returning to bad habits is real. ... the new popular Russian ideology ... consists of a paternalistic conception of government paired with the glorification of the past. ... A slave mentality remains deeply ingrained in Russian minds, along with a latent monarchism and paternalism. The general mood is summed up in a formulation long accepted in conservative circles: 'We don't need a government that serves us; we need a government that's like a father, even if that father is strict.' ... As long as Russia refuses to officially acknowledge the darkness in its past, it will be haunted by ideas that should have died long ago."

"It's an Unequal World. It Doesn't Have to Be," Eduardo Porter and Karl Russell, New York Times, 12.14.17 <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/14/business/world-inequality.html>>: The authors note that "among the more unequal regions of the world—the United States, say, or Russia—income disparities are reaching levels not before seen in modern history: The bottom half of Americans captured only 3 percent of total growth since 1980. The income of the bottom half of Russians actually shrank."

### Defense and aerospace:

"Russia's Military Is Leaner, But Meaner," Leonid Bershidsky, Bloomberg, 12.14.17 <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2017-12-12/dont-speak-memory>>: The author, a columnist and veteran Russia watcher, asks: "How, with a relatively small and decreasing military budget ... is Russia still a formidable military rival to the U.S.?" The two countries' well-balanced nuclear deterrents is enough of a reason to avoid direct confrontation. And, the author observes: "Putin may well understand the nature of modern military challenges better than U.S. President Donald Trump and U.S. legislators—and Russia's authoritarian system may be more efficient when it comes to military allocations. ... Russia is now almost an equal to the U.S. as a power broker in the Middle East, where the Russian military has just helped Syrian President Bashar al-Assad effectively win a civil war—in which the U.S. was helping the other side."

### Security, law-enforcement and justice:

- No significant commentary.



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