

[H-Diplo Roundtable XXIII-31 on Stoner. Russia Resurrected Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order](#)

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H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXIII-31

Kathryn E. Stoner. *Russia Resurrected Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9780190860714 (hardcover, \$29.95).

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Russia Resurrected: Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order is an innovative piece of research challenging conventional interpretations of Russia's muscular return to the world stage under President Vladimir Putin. Rather than accept the standard belief that Russia has "played a weak hand well," Kathryn E. Stoner posits that Russia's hand is not that weak and she uses a variety of metrics to assess the extent of Russia's power. The traditional measures—"men, military, money"—do not explain how Russia under Putin has become such a disruptive power internationally. Power is, she argues, multi-dimensional and contextual. For instance, Russia is much more powerful than any other country in the post-Soviet space and has re-established its influence there since the nadir of the 1990's. Russia may be relatively weaker than other countries aspiring to be great powers because of

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its declining population, its raw-materials based economy and a military that is still recovering from the Soviet collapse. But it is “a behemoth geographically, economically and demographically in comparison to its post-Soviet neighbors” (35).

The book also analyzes the domestic drivers of Russian foreign policy—its economy, the clout it derives from being an energy superpower, its human capital and the unique authoritarian system which Putin has built. Another ruler, she argues, might not have chosen to make Russia such a disruptive power and use non-traditional means such as disinformation, cyber, and other forms of hybrid warfare to project power abroad. If Putin’s patronal regime does not survive him, she argues, Russia may not continue to be such a disruptive global actor.

I would compare *Russia Resurrected* to Bobo Lo’s *Russia and the New World Disorder* and to my *Putin’s World: Russia against the West and with the Rest*.^[1] Both books cover some of the same ground but neither deals systematically with domestic drivers in the way that Stoner does, nor do they address the theoretical issues arising from her challenging realist definitions of power. Kimberly Marten’s writings on NATO enlargement and on the Wagner mercenary group also enhances our understanding of how Russian foreign policy is made and implemented.^[2] There are not many other scholars writing about the broad contours of Russian foreign policy and its domestic roots; this is why this book is so timely.

Timothy Frye praises Stoner for providing a comprehensive treatment of Russia’s foreign policy activity, and for her argument for looking beyond traditional indicators to understand Russia’s ability to project power. He agrees that domestic politics, as opposed to security threats, drive Russia’s foreign policy. Frye also argues that it would be helpful to have a better framework for interpreting the impact of Russia’s more assertive foreign policy. How much, he asks, should we care about what Russia is doing in Syria or Venezuela? He would have liked to have seen more of a discussion of outcomes.

Yuval Weber focuses his review on Stoner’s challenge to the realist interpretation of international relations and her emphasis on patronal political culture as the key driver of the Kremlin’s foreign policy. He applauds her emphasis on a relational concept of power, one where Russia is able to find places, issues, and tools that enable it to be a “great disrupter” or a “good enough great power” without needing to be as powerful as either the United States or China. He emphasizes the role of patronal politics in determining how Russia acts internationally. Cascading clientelist networks and Putin’s obsession with stability necessitate him satisfying the elite’s need for constant access to state resources. Confrontation with the West helps consolidate the Putin system and keep the population at bay. When people’s living standards are falling, the government’s depiction of the West as an enemy trying to starve the Russian population and glorifying the patriotic return of Crimea to Russia helps to maintain Putin and his inner circle in power.

Robert Orttung applauds Stoner’s book as provoker of debates. However, he questions a number of her arguments. Rather than analyzing how well the Kremlin is doing with its limited economic resources, he posits that Russia could be doing much better internationally than it is today had it not squandered its natural and human capital under Putin. Moreover, he argues that Russia, rather than pursuing a well-thought-out foreign policy, is simply taking advantage of the West’s mistakes and

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divisions. He describes the underestimation of the value of democracy as one of the book's blind spots. Russian leaders have failed to use the enormous power they possess to reform their economy or modernize the Russian state, both of which would have made Russia more competitive on the world stage. Moreover, he believes that Stoner should have focused more on Russia's education system, which inhibits freedom of thought and communication and discourages innovation, all of which hamper Russia's development. Finally, he asks, if power projection abroad is necessary to maintain domestic legitimacy, will the Russian people continue to support Russia expanding its international influence in perpetuity?

Jonathan Haslam praises Stoner's book for being the only existing analysis of Putin's foreign policy that is objective (no doubt there are other foreign policy scholars out there who might object to this characterization) but he raises a number of questions. Rather than reading an accurate current snapshot of Putin's foreign policy, he would have preferred an analysis of how this foreign policy evolved and where it is heading. He blames the United States for the deterioration in US-Russian relations when Putin felt that Moscow did not receive what it deserved following its support for Washington during the initial phase of the war in Afghanistan. He also argues that Germans do not view Russia as an adversary, a claim that is not borne out by developments over the past few years.

The reviewers express different opinions on a crucial question that Stoner poses at the end of her book: once Putin is gone, will Russia continue this disruptive, anti-Western foreign policy? Stoner is inclined to believe that without the patronal Putin system, Russia might pursue a different policy. Most of the reviewers disagree. Russian patronal political culture has existed for centuries and will in all likelihood outlast the current occupant of the Kremlin. But it may not always produce such a disruptive foreign policy.

Participants:

Kathryn Stoner received a Ph.D. in Government from Harvard (1995) and is the Mosbacher Director of the Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, and a Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, a Professor of Political Science (by courtesy) and a Senior Fellow (by courtesy) at the Hoover Institution all at Stanford University. In addition to many articles and book chapters on contemporary Russia, she is the author or co-editor of six books: *Transitions to Democracy: A Comparative Perspective*, written and edited with Michael A. McFaul (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins (2013); *Autocracy and Democracy in the Post-Communist World*, co-edited with Valerie Bunce and Michael A. McFaul (Cambridge University Press, 2010); *Resisting the State: Reform and Retrenchment in Post-Soviet Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); *After the Collapse of Communism: Comparative Lessons of Transitions* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), coedited with Michael McFaul; and *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton University Press, 1997). Her most recent book is *Russia Resurrected: Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

Angela Stent is Professor Emerita of Government and Foreign Service at Georgetown University and a Senior Adviser to its Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies. She is also a Senior non-resident fellow at the Brookings Institution. Her latest book is *Putin's World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest* (Twelve books 2020) for which she won the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy's prize for the best book on US-Russian Relations.

Timothy Frye is the Marshall D. Shulman Professor of Post-Soviet Foreign Policy at Columbia University and the Co-Director of the International Center for the Study of Institutions and Development (ICSID) at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. He also edits *Post-Soviet Affairs*. He received a BA in Russian Language and Literature from Middlebury College and Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University. With Ora John Reuter and David Szakonyi, he is writing a book on how employers mobilize their workers to vote during elections. His most recent publication is *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

Jonathan Haslam has just retired as the George F. Kennan Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. He continues as Professor Emeritus at Cambridge University and as a Fellow of the British Academy and a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. His most recent book is *The Spectre of War. International Communism and the Origins of World War II* (Princeton University Press, 2021). He is currently working on the Latin American literary left and the Cuban revolution.

Robert Orttung received a Ph.D. from UCLA in Political Science and is currently Research Professor of International Affairs at the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs and Director of Research for Sustainable GW. His recent publications include Robert W. Orttung, ed., *Urban Sustainability in the Arctic: Measuring Progress in Circumpolar Cities*, New York: Berghahn Publishers, 2020, and Orttung and Sufian Zhemukhov, *Putin's Olympics: The Sochi Games and the Evolution of Twenty-First Century Russia*, London: Routledge, 2017. Currently he is involved in several research projects examining various aspects of the Arctic, including urban sustainability, tourism, and the impact of wildfires.

Yuval Weber, Ph.D., is a Research Assistant Professor at Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service in Washington, DC. He is currently working on two projects, one that develops a tool to measure great power influence and the resilience of smaller states to chart the course and conduct of great power competition. That project is funded by the Department of Defense's Minerva Research Initiative. The second examines the tension between demands of economic modernization and the security state in Russian political economy. The latter manuscript is scheduled for publication in 2021 (Agenda/Columbia University Press).

Review by Timothy Frye, Columbia University and Higher School of Economics-Moscow

Is Russia a declining or rising power? Kathryn Stoner's book is clearly in the latter camp. Against the common view that Russian President Vladimir Putin is playing a weak hand well in international affairs, Stoner argues that the cards in Putin's hand are stronger than many realize and that Putin has been quite skilled at playing them. ^[3] In her view, analysts overstate Russia's weakness by focusing too much on a narrow set of traditional indicators, such as country wealth and military spending, and notes that even by many traditional indicators, Russia's position has rebounded far more quickly than many realize. In particular, few appreciate the extent of Russia's military build-up in the last decade.

Stoner advocates a multi-dimensional analysis of Russia's capabilities and encourages us to look beyond traditional indicators to grasp Russia's ability to project power. Key to Russia's resurgence is

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the Kremlin's willingness to assume more risk than its rivals and its skillful use of non-traditional means to exert influence. In her view, Russia under Putin is a "great disrupter rather than a traditional great power" that uses cyber-hacking, propaganda, economic dependence, and covert operations to exert influence far and wide (4).

Drawing on the political science literature on power, a deep knowledge of Russian politics, and vast secondary research on Kremlin moves from the Arctic and Venezuela to the Central Africa Republic and India, Stoner correctly upbraids those who dismiss Russia as a regional power – a country that largely distracts the U.S. from responding to a fast-rising and hard-charging China.^[4] This is a minority view, but it is certainly part of the conversation. She reminds us that power in international relations is not only derived from statistical tables, but from purpose and strategy as well. By traditional measures, Western powers should not worry a lot about Iran's activity in international politics, but they should and they do. The ability to influence politics flows from a mixture of capabilities and intentions and we need to understand both.

Stoner argues further that domestic politics, not security threats, drive Russian foreign policy. In Russia's autocratic political system, Kremlin insecurity at home leads to more assertiveness abroad. She engages in a useful exercise by envisioning what foreign policy might look like in a democratic Russia. The idea is not so far-fetched as it may appear. Contextual factors, such as the vagaries of international oil prices that collapsed during the more open and competitive politics of the 1990s and surged shortly after Putin came to power, shaped Russia's autocratic turn in the 2000s to a considerable degree.

The last twenty years have seen a resurgence in academic research on Russian domestic politics, but book-length treatments by academics on the whole of Russian foreign policy are harder to come by.^[5] Stoner's book should be widely read by policymakers, academics, and Russia-watchers of all kinds for its wide-ranging research, attention to the big picture, and subtle treatment of Russia's power in international affairs.

To be sure, measuring power is always a challenge. Stoner's baseline for measuring Russia's resurgence is Moscow's position in 1991 – a reasonable choice, but also an outlier in Russian history. Other choices for comparison paint a different picture. Relative to 1985, Moscow's power is decidedly weaker. As Brian Taylor notes, in terms of population and economic output relative to the rest of the world, Russia at the moment is at its weakest point in the last 300 years.^[6] The collapse of the Soviet Union meant the end of the military alliance in Eastern Europe, a network of client-states from Vietnam to Cuba, and military parity with the United States. Boris Yeltsin would be overjoyed with Russia's current global status, but Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev would be in a panic.

Seen in broader historical perspective, Russia's return to global politics is more a regression to the mean than a triumph of skillful policymaking. The Kremlin's power comes in part from strategic choices, but more important are the enduring sources of Russian power – geography, nuclear-weapons, and a large and well-educated population. To the West and South, Russia continues to face countries with far weaker militaries and smaller populations, thereby ensuring its predominance in the region.

Early on Stoner argues that Russia's power position is "good enough to dramatically alter the balance of power in a new global order" (4) That seems a stretch. Later in the work, she notes that "a resurrected Russia has gained a few strong cards with which to challenge other players in the construction of a new global order" (265). This is right on the mark.

One key claim of *Russia Resurrected* is that Russia has been successful because Putin's team has a "much higher tolerance for risk than its international competitors or its predecessor" (4). This is an interesting argument, but also a frustrating one. Like power, risk has multiple dimensions. The annexation of Crimea was high-risk in violating international laws against changing borders, but low-risk in its execution given Russian military dominance on the peninsula. Just as Stoner expertly dissects the multiple dimensions of power, it would be helpful to have an equally subtle treatment of risk acceptance among great powers that measures risk tolerance independent of observed behavior, an admittedly difficult task.

Russian foreign policy is more assertive under Putin than it was under Presidents Boris Yeltsin or Dimitry Medvedev. Greater risk tolerance plays a role. So does a vast increase in Russia's capabilities and strategic retreats by foreign powers. Russia intervened in Syria only after the U.S. desire for intervention waned, and Moscow befriended Venezuela only after relations between Caracas and Washington soured. Separating the role of risk from relative capabilities and interest is a challenge.

Stoner provides an encyclopedic account of Russian foreign policy efforts, and her treatment of recent developments in Russia's military development is especially good. We have many excellent studies of Russia's foreign policy in particular regions, but, by depicting Russian foreign policy on a global scale, Stoner gives us a far richer appreciation of the full scope of Kremlin behavior.^[7]

Looking beyond Russia's increased global reach, the far trickier exercise is to evaluate Moscow's influence over outcomes and, by this metric, the Kremlin's record as a great disruptor is more mixed. Many efforts at disruption have weakened Russia's position in global politics and damaged the interests of those in the Kremlin as well.

Most observers in 2014 predicted that European sanctions on Russia would be lifted after a year or two, but the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH-17 in July 2014 and Russia's hacking of the German government in 2015 has led to a hardening of the sanctions regime.^[8] In May 2021, the European Union extended sanctions on Russia for an eighth year.^[9]

The poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in March 2018 in Britain increased European opposition to Russia more than it promoted the narrow interests of the Kremlin. The Czech government recently expelled more than 60 Russian diplomats and staff for Moscow's role in blowing up an arms depot in the Czech Republic in 2014.^[10] These expulsions cost Moscow a key outpost for espionage. Russia's attempts to bully the Estonians in a cyberwar in 2007 produced few tangible results other than to convince Tallinn to become a global leader in cybersecurity.^[11]

Russia's efforts in Ukraine are far from an unqualified success. The Kremlin-backed conflict in

eastern Donetsk and Luhansk has tied down Kyiv, but also brings costs for Moscow. The annexation of Crimea raised Putin's domestic approval ratings from the 60s to the 80s, but also turned Ukraine from a friend to a rival.^[12] In 2012, more residents of Ukraine preferred a military alliance with Russia than with NATO, but today a majority prefer joining NATO and only 5 percent favor a military alliance with Russia.^[13] And Russia's efforts have increased Kyiv's economic independence. Russia is now Ukraine's third largest trading partner after China and Germany, and Russian products account for just 8 percent of Ukrainian imports.^[14]

Russia's multi-platform intervention in the U.S. election in 2016 on balance rebounded to Russia's detriment. It is far from certain that Russian efforts influenced many voters in the United States, but it surely poisoned U.S.-relations with Russia more than any act in recent memory.^[15]

Russia's soft-power efforts are as extensive as Stoner notes, but identifying their impact is another matter. For all the funds that Russia spends to broadcast its message on RT and Sputnik, global surveys from the Pew Foundation show little love for Moscow. A 2020 survey found that just 12 percent of Swedes, 33 percent of the French, and 34 percent of Brazilians had favorable views of Russia. Moreover, in only 4 of 33 countries did a majority express a favorable view of Russia.^[16] Russian was the lingua franca of the post-Soviet region, but is receding quickly. Among Central Asian countries, only in Kazakhstan do a majority of citizens speak Russian comfortably.^[17] In 2025 Kazakhstan plans to become the third Central Asian country to change its script from Cyrillic to Latin.

More generally, it would be helpful to have a sturdier framework for interpreting the impact of Russia's heightened activity. How much should Western powers care that Russia intervened in Syria, is taking sides in the Libyan civil war, or is cozying up to Nicolò Maduro in Venezuela? Are these just opportunistic moves that reflect the West's lack of interest in these countries? Or, do they indicate a Russia willing to challenge core interests of the West?

Russia uses non-traditional means to extend its power, but so do other great powers, if in somewhat different ways. Beijing and Washington rely on military might, but also use soft-power, economic dependence, covert operations, and cyberespionage to bolster their global positions.^[18] A comparison with how Washington and Beijing use non-traditional sources of power would be a welcome discussion for the field.

Stoner has done a great service by providing a comprehensive treatment of Russia's activity in foreign policy. And it is an impressive list, but the argument would benefit from more discussion of the outcome of these efforts. All policies involve tradeoffs and many of these disruptions have come at high cost to Russia and to pro-Putin elites as well.

Stoner argues that Russian foreign policy is largely driven by domestic politics. More specifically she traces Russia's more assertive policy abroad in recent years to increasing insecurity of the Kremlin at home. She notes that

“a willingness to project power abroad might have some root in a misperceived sense of danger to national security, but more crucially, it is based on the desire to buttress a narrative of regime legitimacy designed for internal consumption by Russian society and elites” (266).

A more assertive foreign policy may help bolster Putin’s position with Russian elites who are much more skeptical of the West than is the general public.^[19] This is no small concern as the security elite are the key constituency for Putin. Given the great concentration of power in Russia’s Security Council, support from this group may be enough to drive Russian foreign policy.

While foreign policy elites back an assertive foreign policy, the Russian public is less convinced. Russians overwhelmingly embrace Russia’s great power status, but national pride is rooted more in victory in World War II and in Russia’s scientific achievements than in Putin’s foreign policy.^[20]

Putin’s approval ratings fell after the Georgia war in 2008 and intervention in Syria in 2015.^[21] The annexation of Crimea remains wildly popular, but support for the introduction of Russian troops into Ukraine has always been low. In 2014, just 31 percent of Russians favored introducing Russian troops into Ukraine, with 24 percent “more or less supporting” and just 9 percent “fully supporting” the move.^[22]

In 2017, just three in ten respondents thought that Russian forces should remain in Syria.^[23] Since 2003, the Levada Center has regularly asked respondents whether they wanted Russia to be a “great power that other countries fear and respect” or as a country with “a high standard of living, but not one of the most powerful countries in the world.” In five of the six surveys,

Russians preferred the latter, and often by large margins.^[24] In 2017, 57 percent of Russians favored economic development and 42 percent chose great power status.^[25] When asked to choose whether Russia should devote its resources to increasing “its military power or the standard of living of its citizens,” just 12 percent choose the former in a Levada Center Survey in March 2021. In six surveys since 1999, no more than 20 percent chose increasing military power. All this suggests that Stoner is correct that a democratic Russia might have a far different foreign policy.

A somewhat different explanation is that Russia has assumed its role as a great disrupter because it is much weaker than its rivals by the traditional tools of a great power – foreign aid, persuasion, alliance-building, an attractive model of government, and military might. Even with Russia’s impressive recent military build-up, it remains a great power with few cards to play. Its strategy of hacking foreign governments, creating frozen conflicts, poisoning opponents abroad, and spreading propaganda are the weapons of a country struggling to keep pace with its great-power ambitions, weighed down by its stagnant economy and corrupt government.

Stoner has done a great service by presenting a comprehensive treatment of Russian foreign policy. Her encouragement that observers should view Russia’s power in its subtler forms is a welcome change from quick dismissals of Russia based on outdated impressions of Russia’s economy and society. Scholars and policymakers should and will refer to *Russia Resurrected* as the go-to book that documents Russia’s rise in global politics.

Review by Jonathan Haslam

It has been a long time coming and no established Russian specialist in political science has yet provided it: a lucid, coherent analytical account of Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy that strikes an objective tone. And it is no accident that it emerges from Stanford University where knowledge of Russia long ago attained a critical mass, and the libraries (with the Hoover Institution collection now incorporated into the main holdings) ensure the availability of all the crucial journals and the secondary works in Russian that one could wish for. The accessibility for consultation with and scrutiny from Russian specialists at Stanford Condoleezza Rice (on the right), Mike McFaul (on the left) - with whom she has published separately ^[26] - and David Holloway (dead centre) is not easily found in similar form elsewhere; quite apart from the broader community in the field of international relations (Stephen Krasner). But not everyone makes the most of what they have in hand. And Stoner has clearly exploited every opportunity.

The tightening of repression with the persecution and imprisonment of opposition leader Alexei Naval'ny plus the similar use of obscure poison to assassinate former KGB men designated enemies of the state like Alexander Litvinenko and Sergei Skrypal' in Britain makes it hard indeed to sustain a balanced judgement when writing anything to do with Putin. This, Stoner has admirably succeeded in doing, though her arguments forcefully laid out elsewhere that the threat from Russia should be taken more seriously identifies her as one of those who does not see China as the main enemy of the United States. It fits the narrative highlighted by the Democrats in opposition.

But is it really correct? Just as armies have a tendency to train and provide for the last war, so too do great powers tend to focus on rivals past their prime rather than rising powers that threaten to dislocate the international system. China is now becoming a global power in a way that the Soviet Union never succeeded in doing. Its economy is highly productive, massive and predatory, whereas Russia's is about the size of Italy and burdened by military expenditure that is, like that of the United States, oriented towards and heavily invested in old threats rather than new challenges. It is a petrodollar economy (though shedding dollars for gold) whose fortunes are tied to the ups and downs of world commodity prices - no less so than Venezuela - from which it receives the bulk of its external income.

Stoner's book is so impressive that we can be excused for asking for more. What she offers so precisely and succinctly is an accurate snapshot of Putin's foreign policy but not a frame by frame moving picture of the process that gives us a sense of its trajectory from past to future. In addition, everything from the presentation in eight carefully crafted chapters assumes equal importance yet, as we well know, statesmen and ministers of state can rarely cope competently with more than a couple of items on the agenda at any given moment. So the picture we are presented with ultimately makes for a questionable representation of reality.

Missing are the assumptions made when Putin first came to office (about the importance of economic as against military power), what those assumptions implied for policy (during the commodity boom,) and what happened to those assumptions after 9/11 (when the Russian deep state became more assertive). So, as a historian, I naturally want to see how policy evolved rather than receive a clear,

static picture of where we are now. The expansion of NATO was already a fact when Putin came to power, what had not yet happened was 9/11, the American invasion of Afghanistan and its subsequent invasion of Iraq and the blatant abuse of secret intelligence to justify it. Not only was it evident that war was an instrument of policy in the post-Cold War world, but also at this crucial juncture President George W. Bush's most senior advisers, notably Condoleezza Rice, dismissed the significance of the Soviet Union as a factor to be accounted for in deciding policy. This was proud U.S. exceptionalism writ large. When Putin took the risk against all expert advice and opened up the books on al-Qaeda to the Americans after 9/11 self-evidently in a bid to revive Moscow's status as an equal on the world stage, the Russians were then shunted aside as the White House unilaterally - with the supine British in tow - began a war against Iraq, the Soviet Union's closest ally in the Near East. This was the acme of humiliation for Putin. Thereafter relations with the United States were destined for the freezer.

Russian foreign policy thereafter focused instead on strengthening the country's periphery through force and disrupting the main enemy and its allies. But, as the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency acknowledged in 2017, Russian military power was "not the same Soviet force that faced the West in the Cold War" and the large raft of reforms to bring it up to date were "largely unimplemented, unsuccessful, or abandoned."^[27] The report on "Russia's Military Power" essentially dashed the notion that Russia any longer represented a massive threat to the West. Moscow did not know quite how to respond. The initial reaction was that "Soon Russia will become more confident and effective."^[28] A few days later, no doubt after the expression of fury from both the Ministry of Defence and the Kremlin, the commentary switched messages: "The West is seriously disturbed by the growing power of Russia."^[29] Basically in terms of images, Stoner's book reacts to the latter rather than the former. But of course the threatening image is what Putin very much wants us to see, despite the fact that most observers would understand that this is entirely counter-productive. "Russia Resurrected"? Lazarus was successfully conjured up from the dead. Miracles, however, are rather more rare in international politics. None the less, the fearsome mask is all too plausible because of historical precedent.

At home the weight of the Soviet past obviously also exerts a huge burden on contemporary Russia. The frightening legacy of autocracy can be traced back through the centuries. The complete destruction of any democratic forms under Stalin cannot be ignored. At the same time, however, the more contemporary alternative tradition of rebellion and reform equally has to be incorporated into any understanding of Russia. The leader of the Russian opposition is an honourable heir to that tradition. Certainly in the twentieth century the legacy is a mixed one, though it is clear that Putin on balance chooses the Stalinist past as a crucial point of reference, highlighting the glories of victory in the Great Patriotic War, which has considerable populist appeal. But for how long this will be the case, if it continues to fail in raising standards of living, is not clear

It should also be borne in the mind that no state escaped the loss of empire without traumatic effects on its internal life. France effectively had a revolution with the emergence of President Charles de Gaulle and the creation of the Fifth Republic in 1958. Britain was psychologically damaged by a much less dramatic and less violent process of decolonisation that took place over two decades (1947-1967). Even there the rise of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the spirit of

revenge shown in the Falklands War (1982) showed just how deeply the scars had penetrated. And the revolution against fascism in Portugal (1974) was also bound up in the collapse of empire. Why should we expect better from Russia?

However, returning to our own core interests, Russia's present and the consequences of Putin's policies: what of NATO? Germany does not see Russia as a serious threat, otherwise it would not be underspending on defence. And to the extent it does see it as a problem the Germans believe, rightly or wrongly, that the gas pipeline Nord Stream 2, which conjoins Germany (and the EU) to Russia, means that Moscow would never go to war with its best customer and likewise would never believe the customer would jeopardise its energy supplies by going to war. So whereas we tend to view Russian policy as somewhat irrational - making enemies needlessly for little material gain like targeted assassination - the Germans mirror-image them as entirely rational. NATO is therefore purposeless if this logic is followed through. And President Donald Trump's temper tantrums at NATO do make sense in those terms: either the Russians are a military menace or they are not. If they are, then making one's country wholly dependent on them for such a vital resource as natural gas (the Germans are abandoning coal and have abandoned nuclear power) is utterly irresponsible.

Review by Robert W. Orttung, George Washington University

I found Kathryn E. Stoner's new book, *Russia Resurrected*, much like its subject, a provoker of debates. In that sense it is a good book and a useful guide to this country at the current moment. I will definitely assign the second chapter to my class on Eurasian politics since it provides a fantastic overview of Russian foreign policy among the countries that used to make up the Soviet Union.

With this contribution, Stoner makes two basic arguments. First, she claims that Russia is not just a weak country on the international stage doing a good job with its scarce resources, but a powerful player that can shape the international order. Second, she argues that to really understand what Russia does abroad one has to know the domestic politics of the country. I think that the first argument is an exaggeration of the current situation and, while I wholeheartedly agree with the second, I have a few quibbles with the way it is framed.

With this book, Stoner enters an extensive discussion on Russia's place in the world. Russia's decline in the thinking of American military planners accelerated quickly after the demise of the Soviet Union and especially after 9/11, which launched the war on terror. The Obama administration had relegated Russia to the ranks of a "regional power." As concerns about global terrorism receded, the Trump administration focused more heavily on great power competition, emphasizing China but often including Russia as well. This book fits well in that model given its focus on the global reach of Russian influence. As the Biden administration seeks to impose order on the chaos of foreign policy under his predecessor, it will find a lot of value here. The research is well sourced using a wide range of academic and policy inputs.

Stoner offers a *tour d'horizon* when she lays out her case that Russia is an important player on the global stage. In smooth and compelling prose, she takes us through the former Soviet Union, Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, and the Arctic, leaving only Russian actions in Antarctica unexamined. In other words, there is a lot of data here. However, her case for Russian relevance has

a strong half-empty, half-full character (“... the Russian economy could have been performing far better. Nonetheless, given the Russian Federation’s dismal starting point in 1992, it has come a very long way.” (120). In a less sympathetic pair of hands this data could easily be deployed to make an argument contrary to Stoner’s – namely that Russia is squandering the enormous natural and human capital at its disposal and overall is doing much less well than it should be at this point in history.^[30] To the book’s credit, the author does not cherry pick her facts and reasonable people can disagree about what the information provided all means.

An alternative interpretation to the one the author provides is that Russia really has little influence and that it is simply good at taking advantage of other people’s problems.^[31] If the U.S. or the European Union (EU) could get their acts together, Russia would have much less room for maneuver. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s homeland is predictable in efforts to cause problems abroad given the weak foundation of its government at home.^[32] One could easily use the model of this book, summing up the total of a country’s external actions, to show how countries like Iran, Turkey, Israel, and, of course, China have extensive global reach. Russia’s most notable achievement is its demonstrated prowess in Syria, a place where the Soviet Union had long ties. At the end of the day, though, does Russia really gain much from its exertions there since it was not able to translate its military successes into leverage against the West.^[33]

The analysis takes history seriously and has a strong focus on the here and now. What is missing is a sense of where things are headed. Similarly, it is often hard to say what trends are important and which are trivial in the deluge of information. Despite the exhaustive analysis of Russia’s behavior abroad, some things are missing. There is a strong focus on fossil fuels here, but no real discussion of the accelerating energy transition underway that will prioritize renewable energy sources over current fuels.^[34] For sure, Russia benefits from its strong position as an exporter of oil and natural gas. Renewables currently make up a small percent of total energy consumption.^[35] But the situation is changing and Russia has made little progress in really diversifying its economy into things that likely will matter more in the future, such as technology.^[36] The words ‘climate change’ are not in the index and not discussed in the text. Russia’s leadership is not interested in this topic, but it is going to shape future policies.^[37] The lack of analysis of this key trend in such a wide-ranging discussion seems to be a missed opportunity.

Another blind spot is the book’s underestimation of the value of democracy.^[38] Without a democratic system, countries like Russia (and China) lack the ability to deal with change and the growing contradictions within their own society. Sure, authoritarian leaders have considerable power, but the history of the USSR and Russia is often the story of power concentrated and then never used. Gorbachev stood at the apex of power in 1987 but did not undertake radical economic reform of the Soviet Union.^[39] Putin fits this model domestically because he theoretically can do whatever he wants, but he has not implemented the kind of economic reforms that would make Russia more competitive on the world stage. Of course, many have argued that Putin is in fact quite weak on the

domestic stage, but that line of thinking does not really fit well with the argument of this book.^[40]

Even without a democratic system, Russia has not collapsed and even has managed to grow slowly, but as the data here shows well, it has not reached its potential. Theoretically, an authoritarian government could serve the will of its people, but such an outcome is more likely in a democratic country. In this sense, it might be useful to move past discussions of whether Putin is really “popular” (254) and start examining more carefully whether Kremlin policies do the best they can in meeting the day-to-day needs of Russia’s population as a measure of stability.

While the book does not need to be longer, I thought that there should have been more of a focus on Russia’s education system. The quality of its schools and universities is a key driver of future prosperity and international influence. The problem in Russia is not just a lack of funding. More important is the lack of freedom to think innovative thoughts and follow ideas wherever they go.^[41] Inventing new technologies is much more likely in an atmosphere of extensive personal freedom, where thinkers have the ability to follow their ideas wherever they lead them. . The Soviet Union’s *Akademgorodok* the city of scientists in western Siberia, enjoyed the relative freedom of being far from Moscow, and existed in a land that had long nurtured critical thinkers like Peter Kropotkin, the anarchist who showed how cooperation prevailed among communities in contrast to Darwin’s focus on competition, even when authoritarianism reigned in Moscow. Russia’s failure to develop its education system and the regime’s inability to contain the growing rebellion of its youth are key variables in the failure of Russia’s current domestic system.

I enthusiastically agree with the argument that Russia’s foreign policy is really Putin’s foreign policy and is driven mainly by his efforts to stay in power for as long as possible (19). The book’s clarity on these points is a real contribution to the literature and a great service in our understanding of Russian behavior abroad. Since Putin and the people around him are thoroughly corrupt, they can never leave office for fear of being prosecuted by the leader who follows them. This basic fact defines the Russian regime domestically and prevents any real change as long as Putin remains in power. Naturally his actions abroad are designed primarily with this purpose in mind.

However, I wonder about the way that this works in practice. If power projection abroad is necessary to maintain domestic legitimacy, does that mean that the Russian people in general support expanding Russian influence as far as it will go? Is this really enough to make Putin ‘popular’ with the population that he feels obliged to repress with the crackdown on opposition and free press that is only increasing over time. Do Russians as a group really prefer their state’s ability to projecting power abroad to having a decent life in relative freedom? Putin seems to realize that the answer is no and therefore feels a growing need to clamp down even more firmly.

Along these lines, I am not sure that Stoner’s assertion that only Russian society, presumably through overwhelming street protests, will be able to bring the Putin regime to an end is persuasive (266). More likely cracks among the elites, leading some to ally with rising social groups to seize power would be a more effective force against the regime.^[42] The fact that the existing elite depends heavily on Putin helps ensure that his position is relatively stable.

Finally, on the question of Russian propaganda such as RT (the acronym that now serves as the title for the former Russia Today) and Sputnik, the analysis takes for granted that they are successful without really showing what their actual impact on their intended audience is. This is an important point because it is crucial to Stoner's first claim that Russia is doing a good job with its resources. The problem is that ultimately this debate remains unresolved. The internet is a huge place and it is difficult to show the specific impact of one actor there, especially in a situation in which other prominent actors share Russia's interests and work along similar lines. Certainly, Russia is hyperactive in this space, but what does it really gain from these efforts? In the U.S., for example, to what extent has Russia really intensified the polarization that has been sharpening in this country for decades? Nobody really knows.

Russia Resurrected raises a lot of good questions and helps us to think more carefully about what is going on in this important country and why it behaves the way it does outside its borders. Since Putin thinks that an aggressive stance abroad is the best way for him to preserve his power at home, there is little hope for an improvement in relations between Russia and the West while he remains in power. The optimistic hope that Stoner's analysis provides is that once he is gone, Russia's leaders might behave differently and other scenarios are possible.

Review by Yuval Weber, Texas A&M University, Bush School

The opening epigram to Kathryn Stoner's *Russia Resurrected: Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order* is one of Russian leader Vladimir Putin's better-known melancholic and rueful quotes: "Russia was never as strong as it wants to be, and never so weak as it is thought to be" (3). In this superb new book, Stoner's overarching argument is the inverse of Putin's lament, that is, that Russia is not as weak as it is thought to be by the West, nor is it as strong as the longtime leader would like it to be.

There are two substantive components to the book. The first assesses how powerful Russia is (or not) in the international system and the second assesses how purposeful Putin is (or not) as the central political figure in Russia. While both are important to understand contemporary Russia and how it works, Stoner clearly places more emphasis on Russia's 'patronal' political culture as the driving force behind domestic and especially foreign policy in Russia. By building upon Henry Hale's excellent work on patronal politics in Eurasia,^[43] Stoner taps into the rich tradition of studying Russian political culture—as described further below—to locate the national peculiarities of a country that can do seemingly everything or nothing with the same set of resources depending on one's perspective and argument. Unsurprisingly, the chief intellectual rival Stoner engages throughout the work is the Realism paradigm, represented most prominently by John Mearsheimer, who argues that structural and balance-of-power factors such as geography and NATO expansion explain Russia's external behavior.^[44] The first argument is that since Russia lacks many physical barriers to invasion, it must always be an imperialist expansionist to create buffer zones given that nuclear weapons have made physical invasion a remote possibility at best in the modern day. The second is that Russia has been both cooperative and antagonistic towards the United States before and after NATO expansion, which strongly suggests that the value of cooperation with the 'West' is not

determined solely by the United States or by NATO.

In arguing against materialist, Realist depictions of Russia, Stoner also takes implicit aim at concomitant definitions of power that rely on quantitative (who has the most coercive capabilities relative to others) or qualitative (who has the best coercive capabilities relative to others) categories.^[45] Stoner points out that Russia's power cannot really be understood strictly in those terms because it has long been saddled by severe economic, demographic, technological, and other shortcomings relative to other contemporary leading powers while at the same time being central but not decisive to the European and international security architecture for the last few centuries. For example, victories over revisionist France and Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could not have happened without Russian/Soviet participation, yet both also occurred in very broad coalitions with Western allies of convenience. Stoner therefore describes Russia in the international system as neither a rising power (compared to the post-Soviet nadir) nor a declining power (compared to the Soviet period), but as something like a weak great power or what she calls a "great disruptor" (4) or a "good enough power" (18).

Instead, Stoner reviews Russia's geographical projection of power and its economic, military, and social capabilities in the middle chapters of the book to lay out the case that Putin has acknowledged the disparities between his country and the United States and China by seeking and utilizing comparative advantages on the margins on international politics and norms. She provides a novel schema drawn from a relational conception of power in which policy scope (how many issues can this actor effect the behavior of others), geographic domain (how many states can this actor effect the behavior of others) and means (how many specific capabilities can this actor bring to bear on issues and other states) do not compel a state to charge hard against its rivals.^[46] Instead, the task is to find the places, issues, and tools that make a difference in international politics relative to doing nothing. That is how Russia can be 'a great disruptor' or a 'good enough power' without the impetus to be an equal of the United States or China. Being part of the conversation of great powers thus resolves, at least to some extent, the diminution of status experienced in the aftermath of Soviet dissolution in 1991 by returning Russia to a status closer to the end of the Cold War in 1989, wherein the United States was clearly superior to the Soviet Union on a material basis, even as the latter continued to be decisive in international and European security. In Putin's first governing manifesto, "Russia at the turn of the Millennium," which was published right before taking office on New Year's Eve 1999, he warned as forcefully as possible that "For the first time in the past 200-300 years, [Russia] is facing a real threat of sliding to the second, and possibly even third, echelon of world states." Who would argue that now? Jeffrey Mankoff argued even in 2009,^[47] Putin's efforts to steer Russia into a position where it is central but not decisive to European and international security hearken back to its traditional offshore balancing role in power politics. In this interpretation, the Soviet Union's overreach in the Cold War and underreach thereafter were both anomalous (albeit opposite) states for Russian power, and Putin has righted the ship.

The book makes the most compelling addition to the literature on contemporary Russia in outlining how Putin achieved this. Stoner places Putin in the 'patronal politics' tradition of Russian leaders recently revived by Hale and tracing back to historians such as Edward Keenan and J. Arch Getty, political scientists such as Seweryn Bialer, Jerry Hough, Merle Fainsod, and Richard Anderson, and

even the 'operational code' work done by Nathan Leites and Alexander George who all considered the pluralist, or group, tradition within Russian politics.^[48] This view contends that Russian leaders are understood best as the heads of cascading clientelist networks in which their own clients are patrons for others, who are patrons for others, and so forth until one reaches the most obscure provincial official in the dustiest, most remote village of the realm. In that way, that lowly official has a superior, who has a superior, who has a superior, and so on, until one reaches Putin himself. In this conception, Putin's key functions, therefore, are first, to maintain the stability of the elites closest to him, in order to ensure that they have sufficient access to the state budget so that they do not consider alternative patrons and are able to disburse enough resources down the line to maintain their own networks. Second, he must adjudicate disputes between his closest clients so that they do not mobilize against each other directly or in coalitions that potentially catalyze escalatory spirals. Finally, he acts to ensure that society itself plays no more or less than a supporting role to Putin himself. Should any of those things happen, then instability in one patron-client relationship, or between equals at a certain rank, or between regions or sectors, or between the public and the elites could cause instability elsewhere and start a chain reaction that could overwhelm the Kremlin. Putin's obsession with political and social stability is not misplaced: the 'Time of Troubles' after the death of Ivan the Terrible, the Bolshevik Revolution and Civil War, and the end of the Soviet period into the 1990s show that what Russian elites will rebel against is not having a strong ruler to keep them in line and shower them with access to state resources. The death of a leader without an heir, the abdication of a ruler without a viable successor, and the end of a political regime into a system that consolidated under neither authoritarianism nor democracy started struggles of all against all, and Russia's elites are well-advised to consider that the system Putin built in the traditional fashion is unlikely to have a different result once he goes.

Stoner argues that the fear that Putin and his elite both have, wherein any change to the status quo will bring down the whole country, is the true source of Russia's grand strategy: "*private, rather than national, interests are also important drivers of contemporary Russian foreign policy decisions*" (21, emphasis in the original). All countries pursue foreign policies to advantage themselves at the expense of others or to find mutually beneficial outcomes, but what makes Russia unique is, according to Stoner, Putin and his elite's mutual need for a confrontational foreign policy to consolidate a system that keeps the population at bay—especially when resources are insufficient to raise living standards for all. Russia can handle autarchy, especially in military production, and functions best under conditions of wartime mobilization (see, especially, Wendy Goldman and Donald Filtzer's work on World War II-era industrial production under conditions of extreme privation published this year),^[49] but it needs a patriotic reason. To flip (label) John Quincy Adams's famous admonition, the Russian state *does* go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. That specific need to have an external enemy (and to look for that external enemy's internal collaborators) is not new to the Putin era, and Stoner's book shows why it is a recurring pattern in Russian history: since times of plenty are few and far between, staying in power means the leader needs to work with his elite to make sure that neither one is better off without the other. The domestic need to stay in power is also why Russia is never as strong as Putin and his other long-serving predecessors wish it to be; such leaders and their elites are focused on short-term survival and the fear of societal breakdown instead of trying to build de-personalized institutions. The resilience that this system produces serves leaders well but makes each substantive reform or succession procedure so fraught with risk because one

wrong move might really bring the whole system down.

I will conclude by suggesting that this book would be best assigned for advanced undergraduates or master's degree students. It speaks to the literature to provide numerous points of intellectual battle against other viewpoints but is sufficiently self-contained that it does not require excessive additional explanation about Russia.

Response by Kathryn E. Stoner, Stanford University

I want to thank Diane Labrosse and Thomas Maddux for managing this Roundtable and bringing together a diverse and interesting group of scholars to review and respond to some of the arguments in *Russia Resurrected: Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order*. All four reviewers engaged meaningfully with the book's arguments and I'm grateful to them for their careful reading.

I am pleased that all of the roundtable members thought that the book was a balanced (if not complete) account of Russia's recovery from the initial hangover of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and its development into a disruptive global power. As is likely to be expected, I disagree with some of the criticisms - explicit and implicit - of my conclusions, especially in the Jonathan Haslam and Robert Orttung reviews.

Haslam, while acknowledging that the book is a fair evaluation of Putin's Russia as a disruptive global influencer, seems to overlook some of the empirics of the book and also the theoretical argument on the dimensions of power - that it is more than just men, military and money - even though I document pretty thoroughly that not all of Russia's cards in those areas are weak. But the entire point of the theoretical part of the book is that countries can do a lot to disrupt international relations *without* having most of those things and can use other power tools (sharp and soft) across policy areas and geographic regions to get other countries' leaders to do what they might not otherwise do.

Haslam does not discuss chapter one, where I lay out the argument that if we retain a realist focus on traditional measures of power, we cannot explain countries like Russia today or even Japan in World War II as disruptive and influential in international relations. In discussing China relative to Russia, he reverts to realist form by describing China as having a massive economy, while "Russia's is about the size of Italy that is burdened by military expenditure..." But my point is that the size of a country's economy alone is not a good indicator of its potential influence in international relations. Some power tools (like cyber for example, or soft power influence) are not that expensive but can be quite impactful in a state's exercise of power. As a result, I argue that we must look beyond the traditional measures of power to policy weight and scope and geographic domain of influence. Further, Haslam does not take into account chapter 5, which documents a rise and decline in Russian military spending during its extensive reform from 2008-2020, and which contradicts his argument.

I am further puzzled when he continues in the same sentence to describe Russia as the following: "It is a petrodollar economy (though shedding dollars for gold) whose fortunes are tied to the ups and downs of world commodity prices - no less so than Venezuela - from which it receives the bulk of its external income." Yet, this is precisely the kind of crude (pardon the pun) caricature of the Russian economy that the book rebuts. Indeed, chapter four, on the changes to the Russian economy since

1991, demonstrates quite clearly that Russia is in no way like Venezuela – a true economic basket case whose leaders mismanaged its assets in a classic resource-cursed way, although we may wish it were so. In fact, as I document in the chapter, Putin has used revenues from high oil prices to smooth out the ‘ups and downs’ of world commodity prices by establishing a National Wealth Fund, maintaining low debt to GDP ratios, and balancing the national budget. Further, while obviously the Russian economy remains overly dependent on natural resource revenues, chapter 4 also demonstrates that there has been some diversification in agriculture, chemicals, and increasingly high tech. As far as the Russian economy has come, could it be doing better? Absolutely, as the book argues by noting corruption and the political barriers to running businesses in some sectors.

Finally, and equally puzzling in Haslam’s review, especially in light of the events of the last few months of 2021, is the discussion of Germany. Germany’s leaders and others in the European Union obviously *do* see Russia as a threat to their national interests, but not as an exclusively military threat. It is as much or more of an economic threat given that Germany’s economy has become dependent on Russian natural gas. Again, Haslam’s argument clings to realist measures of power – if Russia were a real threat, then Germany would spend more on defense, wouldn’t it? The point of my argument is that not all power is derived from having a strong military (although, as the book documents, Russia does indeed have that – exceeding the combined capacities of the EU). Beyond that, however, part of the agreement upon German re-unification at the end of the Cold War was that the German military would not exceed 370,000 troops (down from 660,000 in the combined East and West German militaries). Nonetheless, German military spending is indeed increasing: “by 2024, German military expenditure is slated to rise from €40 to €60 billion annually. That would then be 1.5 percent of GDP – and approximately the same total that Britain and France devote to their armed forces.”^[50] Still, even though Russia’s economy is smaller than Germany’s, the real threat from Russia to Germany is, as noted above, an economic one: German reliance on Russian natural gas resources (I would refer readers to chapter 3 on this). The sharp increases in the price of natural gas in the autumn of 2021 are pretty clearly indicative of the problem for Germany, and it is becoming a problem for NATO and the EU in terms of their solidarity against Russia for its incursions into Ukraine. As of the writing of this response in late January 2022, it seems as though Germany might even be willing to break with its allies and partners over Russian behavior on its Eastern border should natural gas supplies be seriously disrupted.

In his review, Robert Orttung describes the book, like Russia itself, as a “provoker of debates.” I view this as high praise indeed! He argues that the book may exaggerate the degree to which Russia is powerful and is actually shaping a new international order, a concern that Tim Frye shares to some degree in his review. I think the concern that arose in late autumn 2021 that Russia was amassing as many as 100,000 troops and their equipment on Ukraine’s borders in apparent preparation for a huge invasion, and the desperate shuttle diplomacy that ensued between the United States and other members of NATO (and Ukraine), would indicate that indeed Putin’s Russia may well be reshaping the European balance of power. In many ways, that rebalance has already happened. In fact, as *Russia Resurrected* indicates, should Putin decide to send more of his armed forces into Ukraine, there would be very little the United States and NATO could do and/or be willing to do to take the territory back for Ukraine. As Haslam notes, the German military is depleted (although spending more), and France, and the UK are no match for the reformed Russian defense forces without more help from the United States. But as *Russia Resurrected* notes in chapter 6, getting US and other

NATO forces and equipment in place in the Baltics, Poland or Ukraine to turn Russia back would take months at best.

Another concern Orttung raises related to my assessment of Russian power is that perhaps Russia is not getting stronger so much as it is “good at taking advantage of other’s problems.” This is essentially an admission that indeed Russia does have significant influence globally but implies that it is reactive not proactive in its use. However, the exercise of power is a combination of capabilities *and* opportunities. Russia today has both. So, yes, of course, the political polarization of the United States, the disastrous presidency of Donald Trump, the withdrawal of the US from global leadership in the Middle East, and European factionalization have created opportunities for ambitious autocrats like Putin and China’s President Xi Jinping. But part of the point of my argument is that one still has to have some means by which to burst through those already open doors. And Russia is too often discounted in terms of its actual capabilities – its economic situation described as a glass half-empty as opposed to half-full. A glass like that still has some water in it after all.

Both Orttung and Frye question the degree to which under Putin’s autocratic leadership, Russia has actually gained much by attempting to extend its geographical influence – especially in Syria. Orttung cites an article written in 2018 on Russia in Syria that is now somewhat outdated. Chapter 3 of *Russia Resurrected* notes that Russia’s gains in Syria are a permanent port in Tartus, control over some pipelines, an (albeit unsteady) alliance with Iran, a home base from which to launch projects in other parts of the Middle East, and the opportunity to essentially exclude the United States from the table in negotiating any future settlement between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his opposition. Beyond that, Syria has served as a terrific marketing opportunity for Russian advanced weaponry that it now purveys throughout the Middle East. How would we measure the value of all of these things? Some of the gains are more easily quantifiable than others, to be sure, but the Syrian intervention has hardly proved to be a big drain on the economy or the ‘quagmire’ that observers (including then president Barack Obama) assumed it would become when the mission began in 2015.

I am somewhat perplexed by Orttung’s suggestion that the book has a “blind spot” when it comes to discussing democracy in Russia and alternative outcomes to its current foreign policy. This is actually a good part of the argument in chapter 7, so I am uncertain what Orttung means. As Frye notes, I present a counterfactual to Russia’s developmental trajectory under Putin and argue that a more open political and economic system might have (and indeed did under the later years of Mikhail Gorbachev, then Boris Yeltsin and Dmitry Medvedev and even the early Putin era) pursued its foreign policy rather differently. I argue that as Russia has become more autocratic (especially since Putin’s return to the presidency in 2012), its foreign policy has become more aggressive (see pages 249-265). In particular, I argue that analysts who invoked the Weimar Russia analogy in purporting the inevitability of a harsh Russian reaction to the West, and thus effectively danced in the endzone after the Cold War by expanding NATO, should try to envision an alternative German analogy for Russian development – the trajectory of Germany following its loss in World War II. Germany today is democratic, the indisputable political and economic leader of Europe, and a relatively steady ally to the United States -- “arisen from the ashes of defeat in World War II only fifty years earlier” (263).

I am grateful to Yuval Weber for his generous comments about the book, and appreciate his noting certain historical continuities in some of the pathologies that drive Russian politics today. I agree that one of the differences between a personalist autocracy and democracies is that of time horizons –

autocrats tend to be focused more on short-term survival and preventing instability than on building depersonalized political institutions beyond their control. The one positive aspect of this perspective is that such systems become very vulnerable at moments of leadership transition, and no leader lives forever, of course.

Finally, Frye's lengthy review I think appreciates the argument and understands the framework I employ in assessing power, noting that Iran, after all, is also more of a worry than it should be by traditional measures. He quibbles with my starting point in assessing Russia's resurrection. He suggests comparing the condition of contemporary Russia to 1985, but that is a difficult task since there was no independent Russia in 1985. There was only a Russian Republic, the largest of the 15 republics that comprised the Soviet Union. How would we separate the Russian military from the Soviet one? How would we assess the Russian economy as part of the Soviet economy? We would have to decide what entity 'owned' what enterprise, and that is a difficult task post hoc. But the more compelling reason to take December 1991 as the starting point in Russia's ongoing revival is because it was shortly thereafter that it really reached its nadir in terms of economic, political, and social development. And so, the starting point is not intended to be chronological, so much as situational - when Russia was in almost all ways at its worst compared to what it has become.

One of Frye's many astute observations about some of the arguments in *Russia Resurrected* is the issue of risk in Putin's foreign policy making. I agree that this is difficult to assess systematically, but it is still something that upon observation, reasonable people might agree. For example, running across a busy street in the dark is risky. Similarly, grabbing a piece of land within another country and not knowing for certain how one's own population or the rest of the world might react was similarly risky.

Another point that Frye raises is the issue of what Putin's Russia has actually gained by expanding its global reach. I addressed this somewhat in my response to Orttung's review above regarding Syria, but I would add that not every risk turns out to be worth taking. Vladimir Putin is not omniscient, as Frye has of course argued himself.^[51] Some of Putin's gambles have paid off, while others may not have. The Crimean annexation played well at home, Frye agrees, but made more Ukrainians supportive of NATO membership thereafter. Ukrainian hearts and minds are not the ones Putin cares about, however. His popularity soared at home after 2014, and stayed high for years, dipping back to about 60% as COVID hit Russia in 2020.

Certainly Russia's activities in Venezuela have paid off materially; one could say the same in the Central African Republic, and Syria, as I noted earlier. With respect to Russia's waging friendship (its use of soft power as policy) and sharp power, I do think we can see a payoff, even if we cannot measure it precisely. Frye argues that Russia is not that popular internationally - with only 33% of respondents in France in 2020 having a positive view. He describes this as evidence of soft power failure. But is it? I am frankly surprised that so many respondents from democratic France had such a favorable view of Putin's autocracy six years after the illegal Crimean annexation in 2014. Other recent Pew surveys are even more troubling regarding favorable and unfavorable views of Putin. In the summer of 2020, for example, more Canadians, French, Belgians and Germans trusted Putin over Trump to "do the right thing in international affairs." In Italy more than twice as many trusted Putin than the American president!^[52] It is problematic for the future of democracy in Europe that Putin's

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support is strongest among those respondents who describe themselves as supporters of far right populist parties – exactly the populations that RT, Sputnik, and Russian cyber misinformation campaigns target.^[53]

All of the reviewers have made useful comments on further avenues of research in assessing Russia's relative power for which I am very grateful. I thank them again for the time they took to read and engage with my book.

Notes

[1] ___ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015); Angela Stent, *Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest* (New York: Twelve Books 2020).

[2] ___ Kimberly Marten, *Reducing Tensions Between Russian and NATO* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations 2017) <https://www.cfr.org/report/reducing-tensions-between-russia-and-nato>; Marten, *The Wagner Group: Untangling the Purposes of a Russian Power Tool* (Stanford: Freeman Spogli Institute) 2020. https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/memo_8_-_marten.pdf.

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