

The Trump Administration and U.S.–Russian Relations¹

Gábor CSIZMAZIA²

President Trump’s controversial foreign policy performance, particularly in relation to Russia, raises the question of his administration’s stance towards U.S.–Russian relations. While the President has displayed initial intentions of reaching out to Moscow, his administration’s overall view of the world sets U.S.–Russian relations in a competition-based framework. This “global arena” perspective is reflected in official national security policy documents and by major foreign policy decision-makers as well. Thus the Trump Administration not only maintains its predecessor’s initiatives countering Russia but enhances them by further emphasizing deterrence and containment measures in Europe through an increased European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) budget, addressing Russian violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, and arming Ukraine with lethal defensive weapons.

Keywords: *Trump, United States, Russia, great power, competition, Europe, deterrence*

Introduction

The Trump Administration’s foreign policy performance has been an issue of debate among scholars of international relations and by the general public alike. The tone and decisions of the 45th President of the United States—especially when compared to that of his predecessor—are controversial, and his stance towards Russia is no different. On the one hand, President Trump is under constant fire of accusations due to the alleged collusion between his election campaign team and the Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. In addition to his suggestions on trying to mend relations with Russia, his remarks on the scope of Russian meddling did not help his situation in mainstream media or Congress. For example, in early 2018 the Editorial Board of *The Washington Post* described the President’s behavior in the matter inappropriate and called on the legislative branch to fill the void of absent presidential leadership. [1] In other words, at home President Trump is in a politically weak position to form his own Russia policy. On the other hand, the Trump Administration has preserved several of its predecessor’s initiatives in addressing Russia’s assertive foreign policy. In fact, it has gone further on this road, enhancing some of

¹ The work was created in commission of the National University of Public Service under the priority project PACSDOP-2.1.2-CCMOP-15-2016-00001 entitled “Public Service Development Establishing Good Governance”.

² Assistant Lecturer, National University of Public Service; e-mail: csizmazia.gabor@uni-nke.hu; ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4907-2414

these measures quantitatively and qualitatively alike. These include the continuing targeted U.S. sanctions against Russian individuals, the authorization of sending lethal weapons to Ukraine, and ordering air strikes against the Kremlin-endorsed Assad regime for allegedly using chemical weapons against civilians in Syria. [2] It is without doubt that U.S.–Russian relations have not improved at all thus far under the Trump presidency. The aim of this article is to examine the driving factors behind the Trump Administration’s position on U.S.–Russian relations. The analysis reviews external (inherited) factors and internal actors (administration team), highlighting the policy outputs through concrete examples.

The Outside World as It Is

In order to understand the Trump Administration’s stance towards Russia, it is necessary to set it into context and examine Washington’s view of the international environment and particularly U.S.–Russian relations. The latter has re-occurred several times on the high end of the post-Cold War American foreign policy agenda with each president at the time having tried (and ultimately failed) to establish lasting good bilateral relations. As a result, the bilateral relationship has displayed fluctuations. This article does not intend to map up the history of the post-Cold War U.S.–Russian relationship in its entirety but to highlight its characteristics that emerged by the time the Trump Administration took office.

President Obama’s Turn from Partnership to Deterrence

Washington’s most recent serious attempt to cooperate with Moscow was made by the Obama Administration in 2009. The “reset” with Russia was rooted in President Obama’s view of the international environment. Barack Obama was regarded by some to have a more realist view of the world than his predecessor. While the realist nature of President Obama’s foreign policy is debatable,³ it is clear that he tried to look at the world as it is. Firstly, his administration recognized that that the “international architecture that was largely forged in the wake of World War II is buckling under the weight of new threats”. [4: 40] This went hand in hand with the other realization, namely that while America is in fact the leader of this international order, its power is limited.⁴ Secondly, this acknowledgment was primarily true in case of global challenges which the Obama Administration was most concerned with. President Obama’s 2010 national security strategy characterized the United States’ strategic environment with threats, risks and challenges of a “global age” such as: violent extremism, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) (which it considered to be the gravest danger to America), challenges in space and cyberspace, dependence on fossil fuels and climate change, failing states and global criminal networks, as well as the economic inequalities of globalization. Another attribute of the global landscape was that new and emerging powers (including Russia and China) were gaining

³ For an overview of President Obama’s realist-like instincts but the lack of realist worldview, see Stephen M. Walt’s article “Obama Was Not a Realist President” published in *Foreign Policy* in April 2016. [3]

⁴ “In an interconnected world, there are no global problems that can be solved without the United States, and few that can be solved by the United States alone.” [5: 3]

influence. [4: 8] These recognitions led the Obama presidency to try to build partnerships addressing these global challenges and at the same time to shape a “just and sustainable international order” that represent “the diffusion of influence in the 21st century.”⁵ [4: 12] It is important to emphasize, however, that the Obama Administration did not want to dismantle the international system let alone discard America’s role of leadership. This is a crucial point, as it reveals the conceptual differences between the respective world views of the White House and the Kremlin. While the Obama Administration pursued a cooperation-oriented multi-partner world that would replace the competition-based multi-polar one,⁶ the Medvedev/Putin Administration was hanging on to the latter before⁷ and after President Obama’s term in office alike. [8] Hence this fundamental divergence in views existed in parallel to all of the accomplishments of the “reset” with Russia.

President Obama’s national security team knew about the presence of inter-state competition in the world but thought that other global players would share their analysis of the international environment: specifically, the Obama Administration took the liberal view of international competition being “self-defeating” with defectors being punished by exclusion from the opportunities of cooperation.⁸ In other words, Washington assumed that common global challenges will lead to common ground with others who would have no real interest in competition. This was also thought of Russia. Expecting “win–win” situations,⁹ President Obama emphasized the incentive of Russia being a responsible great power in the international system and his hope of the “reset” bringing a lasting qualitative change in bilateral relations.¹⁰ At the same time, the Obama White House was not entirely naïve. It was aware of the above mentioned dissent in American and Russian world views, as well

⁵ “The test of this international order must be the cooperation it facilitates and the results it generates – the ability of nations to come together to confront common challenges like violent extremism, nuclear proliferation, climate change, and a changing global economy.” [4: 12]

⁶ As U.S. Secretary of State (2009–2013) Hillary R. Clinton noted in July 2009: “In short, we will lead by inducing greater cooperation among a greater number of actors and reducing competition, tilting the balance away from a multi-polar world and toward a multi-partner world.” [6]

⁷ As Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov wrote in May 2007: “Russia has restored its foreign-policy independence – as a sovereign democratic state. Thus, for the first time in many years, a real competitive environment has emerged on the market of ideas for the future world order that are compatible with the present stage of global development. The establishment of new global centers of influence and growth, a more balanced distribution of resources for development, and control over natural wealth, represent the foundation for a multipolar world order.” [7: 13–14]

⁸ “Even though many defining trends of the 21st century affect all nations and peoples, too often, the mutual interests of nations and peoples are ignored in favor of suspicion and self-defeating competition. [...] And when national interests do collide [...] those nations that defy international norms or fail to meet their sovereign responsibilities will be denied of the incentives that come with greater integration and collaboration with the international community.” [4: 40]

⁹ Speaking in Moscow in March 2011, Vice-President Joseph R. Biden said he believed in “‘win–win’ situations” [...] [and rejected] the tired theory that our values and our interests must compete for influence over our politics.” [9]

¹⁰ President Obama said in 2009 in Moscow that global “challenges demand global partnership, and that partnership will be stronger if Russia occupies its rightful place as a great power. Yet unfortunately, there is sometimes a sense that old assumptions must prevail, old ways of thinking; a conception of power that is rooted in the past rather than in the future. [...] These assumptions are wrong. In 2009, a great power does not show strength by dominating or demonizing other countries. The days when empires could treat sovereign states as pieces on a chess board are over. [...] The pursuit of power is no longer a zero-sum game – progress must be shared. That’s why I have called for a ‘reset’ in relations between the United States and Russia. This must be more than a fresh start between the Kremlin and the White House.” [10]

as of Russian tendencies for assertiveness—after all, it took office right after U.S.–Russian relations had cooled down due to the 2008 Russo–Georgian War. It did warn the Kremlin that while the “reset” offers great opportunities for achieving common goals in nuclear arms reduction, economic cooperation, and the fight against terrorism, it is not a trade-off in which Washington would be easy on Moscow’s possible violation of international norms and principles. Moreover, the Obama Administration’s liberal stance was also felt in its willingness to stand up for political reforms and against human rights violations in Russia.¹¹ This ultimately led to the deterioration of bilateral relations during Russia’s 2011 parliamentary and 2012 presidential elections. The Ukraine crisis obviously worsened the situation. President Obama introduced a set of financial economic sanctions against Russian individuals in accordance with its aforementioned world view that offenders of the international order need to be punished. His 2015 national security strategy continued to value partnerships for addressing global challenges while calling for a U.S.-led international order championed by most countries. At the same time, it acknowledged that “in many cases [...] coercive measures are meant not only to uphold international norms, but to deter severe threats to stability and order at the regional level.” [5: 23] Thus by the end of the Obama presidency, U.S. efforts to conform eastern European allies have formally turned from the latter group’s re-assurance to the deterrence against Russia.¹² The Obama Administration’s second national security strategy also declared that “power among states is more dynamic”, adding that Russia’s aggression will “significantly impact the future of major power relations”. [5: 4] This was a moderate statement compared to that of the Trump Administration on this subject but it revealed that Washington’s more emphasized view on power struggles began to take shape.

President Trump’s Global Arena of Competition

Throughout the 2016 presidential election campaign, Donald J. Trump made a series of outspoken statements on what he believed to be the failures of the American foreign policy after the Cold War. [11] His foreign policy turn within his “America First” campaign was named “principled realism” which gave a heavy weight to the realist themes of power and national interests in President Trump’s 2017 national security strategy.¹³ The Trump Administration’s hitherto adherence to realist concepts is debatable,¹⁴ nevertheless, it clearly

¹¹ In his aforementioned speech, Vice President Biden reminded that addressing Russian domestic issues are “necessary to have a good relationship [...] [and that Washington] will continue to object when [...] human rights are violated or democracy and the rule of law is undermined [in Russia].” [9]

¹² The Obama Administration’s European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) was announced in June 2014. In addition to conforming Eastern European allies, it was also meant to increase deterrence against Russian aggression. The latter aspect received further emphasis by the summer of 2016 while the budget for FY 2017 already mentioned European Deterrence Initiative (EDI).

¹³ “This strategy is guided by principled realism. It is realist because it acknowledges the central role of power in international politics, affirms that sovereign states are the best hope for a peaceful world, and clearly defines our national interests. It is principled because it is grounded in the knowledge that advancing American principles spreads peace and prosperity around the globe.” [12: 55]

¹⁴ As Stephen M. Walt highlighted, while some of the President’s ideas (such as mending relations with Russia, reforming international trade arrangements, and adjusting the transatlantic burden-sharing in defense) do have rational foundation, their execution has been counterproductive. [13]

has a more competition focused mindset than its predecessor. Nadia Schadlow, leading author of the 2017 national security strategy document, for example, indicated in early 2017 that American diplomacy was still not fully aware of the essence of the political competition present in the world.¹⁵ When explaining the concept of “America First”, Lt. Gen. Herbert Raymond McMaster, President Trump’s National Security Advisor (2017–2018) and Gary David Cohn Director of the National Economic Council (2017–2018) at the time reminded that the administration has “a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a ‘global community’ but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage”. [15] This, they emphasized, does not mean that America is alone, as the Trump Administration also intends to rely on partners and international institutions. However, it is noticeable that these institutions are primarily meant to serve U.S. national interests and although Washington is open to reform them, it also retains the option of a selective approach in such engagements.¹⁶ In fact, the Trump Administration concluded that some of the international institutions have proven to be ineffective in transforming other major powers (such as China and Russia) into cooperative partners.¹⁷ This means that the earlier concept of ultimate democratic peace through inclusive engagement of countries has failed.¹⁸ Instead, the Trump team states that “a central continuity in history is the contest for power” and that “geopolitics is the interplay of these contests [over influence] across the globe”, [12: 25–26] leading to the return of great power competition. The 2018 U.S. national defense strategy outright says that with the United States “emerging from a period of strategic atrophy, [...] facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order [...] inter-state competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security”. [16: 1]

The 2017 U.S. national security strategy confirms the Obama Administration’s view that China and Russia are becoming more assertive, but at the same time it goes further and openly declares that they are revisionist powers “contesting [the United States’] geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor”. [12: 27] The Obama Administration’s 2015 national security strategy came to the same conclusion

¹⁵ “The Trump administration has an opportunity to build up what we lack: the capacity to engage these long term political competitions. [...] Today, the word ‘compete’ is rare in State Department strategy documents. The new team has an opportunity to develop approaches to counter adversaries, convince the undecided, and influence the competitions unfolding all over the world.” [14]

¹⁶ “The United States must lead and engage in the multinational arrangements that shape many of the rules that affect U.S. interests and values. A competition for influence exists in these institutions. As we participate in them, we must protect American sovereignty and advance American interests and values. [...] All institutions are not equal, however. The United States will prioritize its efforts in those organizations that serve American interests, to ensure that they are strengthened and supportive of the United States, our allies, and our partners. [...] If the United States is asked to provide a disproportionate level of support for an institution, we will expect a commensurate degree of influence over the direction and efforts of that institution.” [12: 40]

¹⁷ “The competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades – policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false.” [12: 3]

¹⁸ “Since the 1990s, the United States displayed a great degree of strategic complacency. We assumed that our military superiority was guaranteed and that a democratic peace was inevitable. We believed that liberal-democratic enlargement and inclusion would fundamentally alter the nature of international relations and that competition would give way to peaceful cooperation.” [12: 27]

but expressed it in a more restrained way.¹⁹ The Trump Administration is more outspoken on the respective rise and aggression of China and Russia who (along with others) have also changed the “character of competition” by “operating below the threshold of open military conflict and at the edges of international law” in order to covertly and gradually reach their goals, and ultimately “over time, a new status quo”.²⁰ [12: 27–28] Thus the competition between the United State and Russia exists on a wide scale ranging from the spheres of military, economy and technology, to politics and public opinion. Accordingly, Russian efforts to counter U.S. (and Western) influence are visible in its military—especially nuclear weapons—development programs, cyber attacks against and subversions within other countries’ domestic political affairs. The Trump team shares the Obama Administration’s views that Russia is using economic tools—particularly Europe’s energy dependence—for increasing its political influence. [5: 5] [12: 38] Moreover, while Russia perceives the U.S. and the EU as threats, [12: 25–26] the competition affects other regions as well, including the Middle East.²¹ All of this, however, does not mean that the Trump Administration intends to completely isolate Russia. Similarly to his predecessors, President Trump signaled his intent to find areas of joint cooperation, should Russia change course. [12: 25]

Actors and Decisions

The recent chill in U.S.–Russian relations is felt through various issues including the war in Syria. After President Trump announced coordinated air strikes against the Syrian Government’s facilities on the 14th of April 2018 as a punishment for a chemical attack in the country the week before, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki R. Haley indicated the future introduction of a new set of sanctions against Russia for supporting the Syrian regime. Director of the National Economic Council Lawrence A. Kudlow denied this, saying that Ambassador Haley’s incorrect statement was due to her “momentary confusion”. This caused a minor inter-administration clash with Ambassador Haley remarking: “With all due respect, I don’t get confused.” Although this public dissent turned out to be a misunderstanding caused by a communication error, [17] it does raise the question how members of the Trump Administration—more specifically within the National Security Council—view the U.S. policy on Russia. Therefore, in order to understand the latter, the respective positions of major U.S. foreign policy decision-making actors, as well as the rationale behind some of the administration’s decisions are worthy of review.

¹⁹ “As the balance of economic power changes, so do expectations about influence over international affairs. Shifting power dynamics create both opportunities and risks for cooperation, as some states have been more willing than others to assume responsibilities commensurate with their greater economic capacity. In particular, India’s potential, China’s rise, and Russia’s aggression all significantly impact the future of major power relations.” [5: 4]

²⁰ “China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests.” [12: 25]

²¹ As Nadia Schadlow argues, “the Middle East is in turmoil due not only to the assault of Islamist terrorist organizations, but also due to a regional competition among Iran, Arab states, Turkey, Russia, and the West”. [14]

The President’s National Security Team

Ever since his election campaign, Donald Trump’s views on Russia have been controversial. On the one hand, it was clear already before the election that the Trump team was the overall beneficiary of Russian interferences in the campaign which were directed against Hillary R. Clinton who was considered to be more hawkish with regards to Russia. Reports in mainstream media also emphasized Trump businesses having ties to pro-Kremlin Russian financiers. [18] Eventually, allegations of the Trump team’s collusion with foreign (Russian) actors triggered an official investigation by ex-FBI Director Robert S. Mueller as special counsel. While the investigation is pursued in the background, mainstream media—having a mutually sour relationship with President Trump—keeps the issue on high display thus maintaining domestic pressure on the White House. On the other hand, Donald Trump has championed the idea of mending bilateral relations “from a position of strength”. [11]²² This is mandated by his policies on “America First” and “peace through strength” but also driven by Congress which has quickly limited the President’s space of maneuver by enacting President Obama’s executive orders on earlier sanctions against Russian individuals thus making it impossible for President Trump to withdraw them without the legislative branch’s support. What makes the President’s position on the subject more controversial is his communications: though he adheres to the strong policies against Russia, he often shows reluctance.²³

The President’s mixed views on the relationship with Russia can be counterbalanced by the foreign and security policy decision-making actors surrounding him. Key among them is the National Security Advisor. President Trump’s first National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn (2017) was forced out of his job very early precisely due to his proximity to—and background negotiations with—Russian actors. [21] While the President showed mixed views on the issue,²⁴ his second National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster (2017–2018) was clearer and more open about Russia. Already under the Obama Administration, Lt. Gen. McMaster, as Head of the U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center, proposed a study on Russia’s new generation of warfare. In his April 2016 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, he indicated that while the U.S. was tied down in Iraq and Afghanistan, “Russia studied U.S. capabilities and vulnerabilities and embarked on an ambitious and largely successful modernization effort” to which the U.S. Army should adapt, as well. [22] Similarly, as National Security Advisor, he declared that “Russia is engaged in a very sophisticated campaign of subversion to affect our confidence

²² “Now, again, maybe I’m not going to be able to do a deal with Russia, but at least I will have tried. And if I don’t, does anybody really think that Hillary Clinton would be tougher on Russia than Donald Trump? Does anybody in this room really believe that?” [19]

²³ In case of the enacted sanctions known as the “Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act”, President Trump published a signing statement in which he called the piece of legislation “significantly flawed”, as it constrains his power as President. [20]

²⁴ Although President Trump did ask for the resignation of Lt. Gen. Flynn, shortly after the latter’s secret dealing with other (including Russian) diplomats came to light, he did not disapprove his actions, only the fact that the National Security Advisor did not truthfully inform the Vice-President about the discussions. As the President said: “Mike [Flynn] was doing his job. He was calling countries and his counterparts. So it certainly would have been okay with me if he did it. I would have directed him to do it if I thought he wasn’t doing it. I didn’t direct him but I would have directed him because that’s his job.” [19]

in democratic institutions, in democratic processes” and thereby creating divisions within Western societies. [23] However, Russia turned out to be one of the collision issues²⁵ between the President and the National Security Advisor who left office in March 2018. After his departure from the White House, Lt. Gen. McMaster noted that the United States has “failed to impose sufficient costs” on Russia. [25] President Trump’s new National Security Advisor, former U.S. Ambassador to the UN John R. Bolton shares his predecessor’s thoughts on Russian intent to divide the American society through its interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, as well as the idea that hitherto U.S. reactions should be intensified into “decidedly disproportionate”²⁶ retaliation. He also argued that due to the mainstream media’s pressure on the President and his campaign collusion with Russian actors, “the Trump administration has neither developed nor deployed a coherent Russia policy”. [26]

Similarly to President Trump, his first Secretary of State, Rex W. Tillerson (2017–2018) was initially regarded as one with mixed views on Russia. On the one hand, his ties to Russia were clear from the start: as CEO of ExxonMobil, he received the Order of Friendship medal by Russian President Vladimir V. Putin in 2013 for the company’s 2011 investment in the Russian territories of the Arctic. While the project suffered from the post-2014 sanctions, Mr. Tillerson was head of ExxonMobil until joining the Trump Administration which made him a target for inquiries on financial and economic interests in Russia. On the other hand, his business career was regarded as a proof of aptitude, as he had rallied a group of ex-diplomats and geopolitical experts for his advisory team at ExxonMobil. [27] Yet as Secretary of State, he struggled with his department which was under the blade of financial and personnel cuts. In fact, the Trump Administration has had a tendency to downgrade diplomacy and thereby the importance of Secretary Tillerson in foreign policy decision-making. In the meantime, he became more and more critical concerning Russia. Already during his congressional hearing for the post, Rex Tillerson called for a “clear-eyed” relationship with a Russia that “poses a danger, but it is not unpredictable in advancing its own interest”. Similarly to President Trump, he identified the source of the problem in weak American leadership and urged a “frank dialogue” between the two countries. [28: 6]²⁷ By the end of 2017, his position moved closer to the mainstream U.S. views on Russia, and he reminded that “absent a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine situation [i.e. the restoration of the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity], [...] there cannot be business as usual with Russia. [29]

²⁵ For example, President Trump criticized the National Security Advisor for one of his public remarks on Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, downplaying the Russian involvement’s importance regarding the outcome of the election. [24]

²⁶ As John Bolton noted in an opinion article a couple of months before his appointment of National Security Advisor: “We need to create structures of deterrence in cyberspace, as we did with nuclear weapons [...] One way to do that is to engage in a retaliatory cyber campaign against Russia. This effort should not be proportional to what we have just experienced. It should be decidedly disproportionate.” [26]

²⁷ “Our NATO allies are right to be alarmed at a resurgent Russia. But it was the absence of American leadership that his door was left open and unintended signals were sent. We backtracked on commitments we made to allies. We sent weak or mixed signals with ‘red lines’ that turned into green lights. We did not recognize that Russia does not think like we do. Words alone do not sweep away an uneven and at times contentious history between our two nations. But we need an open and frank dialogue with Russia regarding its ambitions, so that we know how to chart our own course.” [28: 6]

Since Tillerson’s final statement as Secretary of State was a condemnation of Russia,²⁸ his removal from the Trump Administration increased the media’s and the opposition’s suspicion of President Trump being too soft on the Kremlin. [30] However, President Trump’s new appointee, former CIA Director Michael R. Pompeo is considered to be a hardliner when it comes to Russia: already in his congressional hearing for his position at the CIA, Mr. Pompeo argued that: “Russia has reasserted itself aggressively, invading and occupying Ukraine, threatening Europe, and doing nearly nothing to aid in the destruction of ISIS.” [31: 4] Similarly, in his opening statement of his congressional hearing for the position of Secretary of State, he emphasized that: “President Trump’s national security strategy, rightfully, has identified Russia as a danger to [the United States].” [32: 10] Mr. Pompeo is regarded to have a better personal relationship with the President than his predecessor had, yet it is currently a question whether this would play a decisive role in guiding the President on Russia.

Compared to the aforementioned actors, the Secretary of Defense seems to have a stable position in President Trump’s administration. General James N. Mattis already revealed a fraction of the Trump Administration’s assessment of the international environment in an August 2016 article he co-wrote with fellows at the Hoover Institution, arguing that the world has become more dangerous as a result of “20 years of the United States operating unguided by strategy” and that Russia (along with China, Iran and terrorists groups) have assaulted the international order. [33] In his congressional hearing for the top position in the Pentagon, General Mattis said that the most important thing is to “recognize that [Vladimir Putin] is trying to break the North Atlantic Alliance”, adding that the actions of Russia—along with that of China and terrorist groups—represent “the biggest attack [on the post-WWII order] since World War II” and thus calling for U.S. deterrence. [34: 41] The U.S. commitment to NATO’s cohesion is a significant indicator of former Secretary Mattis’ efforts to guide the President in foreign and security policy. In contrast to Donald Trump’s harsh statement during the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign that the transatlantic alliance is “obsolete”, General Mattis has regarded NATO as “the most successful military alliance probably in modern world history and maybe ever” [34: 56] and has intended to emphasize this view to the President²⁹—in which he ultimately succeeded (based on President Trump’s later statements). As for the bilateral relationship with Russia, General Mattis did not reject the re-occurring idea of cooperation with Moscow on specific issues while having disagreements in other areas, however, he also noted that there are fewer opportunities for the former and more cases for the latter given that Russia “has chosen to be a strategic

²⁸ Regarding the assassination attempt against former Russian military intelligence officer Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom, Secretary Tillerson called Russia “an irresponsible force of instability in the world, acting with open disregard for the sovereignty of other states and the life of their citizens”. After President Trump removed Rex Tillerson from office, U.S. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi noted that “Secretary Tillerson’s firing sets a profoundly disturbing precedent in which standing up for our allies against Russian aggression is grounds for a humiliating dismissal”. [30]

²⁹ “I have had discussions with [Mr. Trump] on this issue. He has shown himself open even to the point of asking more questions, going deeper into the issue about why I feel so strongly. And he understands where I stand, and I will work with the other members of the national security team [...] to carry these views forward.” [34: 57]

competitor”. [34: 45]³⁰ At the same time, Secretary Mattis was considered to be a voice of reason within the Trump team, advocating consistency in U.S. engagements (including military operations) throughout the world and cautioning the President in tense situations with Iran or North Korea.³¹ While Gen. Mattis intended to utilize President Trump’s increase in the U.S. defense budget to prepare the armed forces for a potential conflict with Russia or China, [35] his caution of confronting the former was clear.³²

Actions of Deterrence

Throughout its first year the Trump Administration has made several steps directed against Russia in one way or another. These included the maintenance of economic pressure through sanctions against individuals, as well as cutting back diplomatic relations through the expelling of Russian diplomats. However, these were only reactions to specific Russian deeds. Considering the notion that the aforementioned competition with great power rivals manifests in various regions, the U.S. stance towards NATO and its eastern flank serves as a more persistent benchmark of how the Trump Administration engages vis-à-vis Russia. In addition to promoting “a strong and free Europe”, [12: 47] the Trump Administration is particularly attentive concerning “unfavorable shifts” in “regional balances” between the U.S. and other great powers.³³ Hence it intensified efforts aimed at deterring Russia in Europe, starting with a galvanized position on the issue of burden sharing within NATO. Donald Trump made several statements on U.S. dissatisfaction with the fact that most European members of the alliance are not paying enough on national defense and thus are (almost) free riders of Article 5 primarily assured by the United States. These included unconventional announcements such as having U.S. commitment to collective defense depend on whether the given member states actually spend 2% of their respective GDP on defense, as well as emphasizing the importance of the latter during his first attendance at a NATO summit while neglecting to mention America’s commitment to Article 5 at all. Such comments received overall negative reactions, yet there are two things that should be noted on the subject (apart from the fact that Secretary Tillerson, Secretary Mattis and later President Trump himself confirmed America’s pledge to preserve NATO’s collective defense).

³⁰ “I am all for engagement, but we also have to recognize reality and what Russia is up to. And there is a decreasing number areas where we can engage cooperatively and an increasing number of areas where we are going to have to confront Russia.” [34: 45]

³¹ Ranking Member of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee Adam Smith recalled saying to Gen. Mattis before his confirmation: “Trump has no idea what he’s doing but isn’t afraid to do it. You’re across the river, and they’re across the hall. [...] Your job is to make sure these morons don’t get up in the morning and advance some lamebrained idea.” [35]

³² In his Senate confirmation hearing, Gen. Mattis was asked whether he would support additional sanctions against Russia, to which he said: “I would like to get with the new national security team, craft a strategy to confront Russia for what it has done.” [34: 125]

³³ According to the Trump Administration’s 2017 national security strategy, “changes in a regional balance of power can have global consequences and threaten U.S. interests. [...] China and Russia aspire to project power worldwide, but they interact most with their neighbors. [...] The United States must marshal the will and capabilities to compete and prevent unfavorable shifts in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East.” [12: 45]

Firstly, this request from Washington is not new at all. Two of the most notable examples for this under the Obama Administration were the farewell remarks of former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates in June 2011, and President Obama’s remarks after the NATO summit in July 2016. Secondly, the novelty of the message’s style presumably had a purpose, as President Trump’s threat of decreasing American commitment to NATO was partially echoed by Secretary Mattis³⁴ who has kept the alliance in higher regard. The rationale behind this notion was to increase pressure on allies so that they would increase their respective defense budgets they had agreed upon after 2014 at a faster pace, and ultimately to strengthen NATO. This idea was also incorporated in the Trump Administration’s 2017 U.S. national security strategy, along with the concrete priority goal of having the allies reach their national defense budgets’ threshold of 2% of GDP (with 20% of that focused on military capability development) by 2024 as opposed to the Obama Administration’s 2015 national security strategy which emphasized U.S. commitment to Article 5 and cited some of the specific measures Washington had taken to help allies against Russia but did not really address their responsibility in this matter.³⁵ Thus in short, the Trump Administration’s tactic of rhetorically wavering U.S. loyalty to Article 5 has actually been aimed at strengthening the alliance to which Washington’s commitment in practical terms has remained.³⁶ Another example for the latter is the Trump Administration’s increasing focus on the European Deterrence Initiative, formerly known as European Reassurance Initiative. Both “versions” have served the purpose of increasing U.S. military presence in Central and Eastern Europe via rotations, joint international exercises, trainings, and the enhanced infrastructure and pre-positioning of military equipment. The Trump Administration continued to boost these efforts: whereas the administration’s EDI budget request for 2018 was \$4.8 billion (a \$1.4 billion increase compared to 2017), the request for 2019 grew further to \$6.5 billion. Most of these funds are intended for the U.S. Army’s intensified presence in Europe with an episodic and less predictable pattern and an increased number of equipment and vehicles (such as M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks, Patriot missiles, armored multi-purpose vehicles and Bradley fighting vehicles). According to the plans, the Army’s pre-positioned equipment in Europe should be fully prepared by 2020 when more dynamic deployments with increased troop numbers can take place. [39]

³⁴ At the February 2017 meeting of NATO’s Defense Ministers, Secretary Mattis said: “If your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to this alliance, each of your capitals needs to show support for our common defense.” [36] Although this quote did leave its mark in international media, the U.S. Secretary also indicated that the hinted scenario was one that he would not speculate more upon: “I’d prefer not to [elaborate more about the word «moderate»] because basically that is the headline I do not anticipate ever seeing. [...] And I’m very confident that we will not have to have that. Sometimes you say the things you don’t want to have happen so that you head them off.” [37]

³⁵ Furthermore whereas the 2015 document noted that “NATO is stronger and more cohesive than at any point in its history, especially due to contributions of the Nordic countries and newer members like Poland and the Baltic countries”, [5: 7] the 2017 strategy emphasizes that NATO “will become stronger when all members assume greater responsibility for and pay their fair share to protect our mutual interests, sovereignty, and values”. [12: 48]

³⁶ In June 2017, President Trump presented the issue the following way: “I have been an advocate for strengthening our NATO Alliance through greater responsibility and burden-sharing among member nations. [...] I’m committing the United States to Article 5. And certainly we are there to protect. And that’s one of the reasons that I want people to make sure we have a very, very strong force by paying the kind of money necessary to have that force.” [38]

Another form of deterrence measures is to be found in U.S. nuclear power. Already during the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, Donald Trump said that the Obama and Medvedev Administrations' 2010 bilateral strategic nuclear arms reduction agreement known as the New START Treaty left the United States in a disadvantageous position compared to Russia with the latter increasing its nuclear arsenal.³⁷ The 2017 U.S. national security strategy declared that “nuclear armed adversaries have expanded their arsenals and range of delivery systems” [12: 30] which was later confirmed by the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) specifically naming Russia and China in this regard. [41: 2] Although the latter document does not represent a harsh break from the Obama Administration's 2010 NPR, including the support for the aforementioned New START Treaty, [41: 73] it does have an increased focus on catching up with Russia in certain capabilities. Specifically, the report highlights that Russia achieved an advantage in non-strategic nuclear weapons as well as their delivery capabilities that do not fall under the regulation of the New START Treaty but do violate other agreements, most notably the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. [41: 9] Moreover, Russia increased its reliance on these systems and decided to follow an “escalate to de-escalate doctrine” by which it opens the possibility of limited nuclear first use in a conflict assuming that this escalation will not lead to Western retaliation but to “capitulation on terms favorable to Moscow”. [41: 30] Accordingly, the document calls for U.S. countermeasures that are compliant with existing arms limitation treaties but balance Russian non-strategic nuclear build-up at the same time, for example by introducing a submarine launched cruise missile along with a low-yield warhead. On the one hand, this move would serve as a deterrent against Russia's utilization of its aforementioned doctrine [42] while on the other, it could also put pressure on Moscow to return to the INF Treaty. In a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee shortly after the publication of the 2018 NPR, Secretary Mattis said that the initiative is intended to set U.S. diplomats “negotiating from a position of strength” with the aforementioned weapon systems functioning as potential bargaining chips.³⁸ [43] The issue of nuclear weapons and delivery systems has been one of the “hot spots” in U.S.–Russian quarrels throughout the last decade or so. Most recently, Vladimir Putin announced the development of a nuclear armed intercontinental missile that would allegedly penetrate any defense system. Reciting earlier complaints of American missile defense efforts hindering Russian security,³⁹ President Putin criticized current U.S. nuclear policy, as well. [45] While President Trump was less vocal on the subject, only calling the announcement “irresponsible”, [46] the case did not improve his

³⁷ During his debate with presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in October 2016, Donald Trump complained: “Take a look at the ‘start up’ that [President Obama and President Medvedev] signed. The Russians [...] create warheads, and we can't. [...] We're in very serious trouble, because we have a country with tremendous numbers of nuclear warheads [...] where they expanded and we didn't. [...] And [Hillary Clinton is] playing chicken.” [40]

³⁸ Secretary Mattis added: “I want to make certain that our negotiators have something to negotiate with, that we want Russia back into compliance. We do not want to forgo the INF [Treaty], but at the same time we have options if Russia continues to go down this path.” [43]

³⁹ Despite the accomplishments of the Obama Administration “reset” policy, particularly the 2010 New START Treaty, Russia has vowed to counter U.S./NATO missile defense efforts in Central and Eastern Europe by developing its nuclear capabilities, defense and delivery systems in parallel to the advancement of the United States' missile defense program, as announced by former Russian President Dmitry A. Medvedev in November 2011. [44]

stance towards President Putin whose remarks could have been understood as a challenge of the U.S. President’s strength. [47]

American efforts of stepping up against Russia are also enhanced through more direct engagement with frontier states as well. The need for containment measures was indicated in 2016 by policy analysts Jakub Grygiel and Wess A. Mitchell, the latter of whom became Assistant Secretary of State at the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs in the Trump Administration. The two scholars argued that in the time of intensified competition with revisionist powers, America should refocus its attention on alliances on the frontiers [48: 50] where “well-armed allies [...] are a strategic blessing for the United States [...] by becoming hardened obstacles [for the expansion efforts of revisionist powers]”. [48: 55] In accordance, the Trump Administration has moved forward with arms sales to Poland and Romania, the larger European frontline states,⁴⁰ and has indicated that it would ease U.S. international arms sales in general. [49] This departure from the Obama Administration’s considerations revealed a major novelty of the Trump Administration’s policy on dealing with Russian aggression in December 2017: namely, its blessing for arming Ukraine with lethal weapons. Such a move has been long in the making. The Ukrainian Government had approached the Obama Administration to request lethal weapons, and although this idea was pushed forward by some in Congress and advisors of President Obama, he declined out of fear that providing these weapons to Ukraine would only help to escalate the conflict and would ultimately hurt the Ukrainians (and allied cohesion) more than it would hurt Russia.⁴¹ Administration officials also fought to convince President Trump of the move with James Mattis and Rex Tillerson supporting the initiative that would enhance the already provided nonlethal arms (such as body armor, radars, radios and vehicles) with Javelin anti-tank missiles and sniper rifles. An important part of the Trump Administration’s rationale is that although these arms are lethal, they are still defensive in nature, meaning that they are only intended to improve the Ukrainians’ position against their adversaries, establishing a balance between them and thus make Russian efforts of further aggression more expensive.⁴² [51] This is what Jakub Grygiel and Wess Mitchell have described—in the case of allies—as “deterrence by denial” which in their words “involves the development of capabilities that hinder the enemy’s military advance by increasing the costs of territorial expansion and control”. [48: 55] Furthermore, the potentially increasing expenses of Russian military

⁴⁰ It is by no accident that President Trump’s first heads of state level meetings within Central and Eastern Europe were with the respective presidents of Poland and Romania in the summer of 2017.

⁴¹ As Anthony J. Blinken, Deputy National Security Advisor (2013–2015) and Deputy Secretary of State (2015–2017) to President Obama noted in October 2017: “Proponents [of lethal aid ban under the Obama administration] argued that any military escalation favored Moscow, for whom the stakes were higher and the ability to quickly pour more lethal weapons into Ukraine much greater. They were concerned Ukraine would be emboldened to act out militarily and overplay its hand. They knew that Moscow sought to divide us from our European partners, most of whom opposed lethal aid. President Barack Obama concluded that we should keep the focus where we had the advantage: on tough sanctions, economic aid to Ukraine, training for its troops, support for its reform efforts—especially combating endemic corruption—and determined diplomacy.” [50]

⁴² As Ukrainian President Petro O. Poroshenko pointed out in the summer of 2017: “Any defensive weapons would be just to increase the price if Russia makes a decision to attack my troops and my territory.” [51]

adventures can also contribute to the advancement of the peace process in Ukraine.⁴³ The case again reveals the Trump Administration’s general view that “peace through strength” offers a more viable path to engaging with Russia.

Conclusion

While President Trump’s foreign policy is usually viewed as controversial, it does show consistency in itself and partially with that of President Obama regarding Russia. Differing world views between the United States and Russia have already existed during the Obama Administration with the White House visioning a cooperation-oriented multi-partner world, and the Kremlin believing in a competition-based multi-polar one. By the end of President Obama’s term in office it became clear that Russian aggression significantly affected major power relations of the future.

The Trump Administration is even more outspoken and vocal in this regard. Its official national security policy documents are testimonies of a competition-based mindset according to which the world is a global arena where the United States faces great powers as rivals. Accordingly, there’s a contest of power with Russia (and China) manifesting in the geopolitics of several regions in the world. In addition to these declarations, the major foreign policy decision-making actors within the Trump Administration advocate a firm stance against Russia, as well. All of this has manifested in not only the maintenance of Obama-era initiatives countering Russian aggression but in their qualitative enhancement in Europe, as well.

The Trump Administration’s world view and concept of “peace through strength” suggest that President Trump’s personal tendencies of trying to get along with Russia are only examples of the already seen initial U.S. presidential efforts of reaching out to Moscow for the sake of mutually beneficial cooperation, and that they are largely outweighed by his administration’s awareness of the realities of great power competition—now openly declared on both sides. Given these conditions, a rapprochement with Russia under the Trump Administration is in fact more unlikely than before.

References

- [1] Editorial Board: What Trump still doesn’t get about Russian interference in the election. *The Washington Post*, 16.02.2018. www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/an-indictment-describes-russias-information-warfare-trump-continues-to-miss-the-point/2018/02/16/c2c34254-1359-11e8-9065-e55346f6de81_story.html?utm_term=.407c8ed0b0df (Downloaded: 17.04.2018)

⁴³ Ambassador Kurt Volker, the Trump Administration’s Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations said in April 2018: “I think the delivery of some of these defensive arms to Ukraine demonstrates [...] that the cost of escalating the conflict by Russia will only continue to grow. So [...] we hope that [...] [it] is clear to Russia that it’s just not worth it, that escalating the conflict is not the direction to go in. We should be instead trying to end the conflict and bring about peace. So I think having a stronger Ukrainian defensive capability helps in the process of then negotiating towards a final settlement.” [52]

- [2] VAJDICH, P. D.: Trump’s Russia Policy Is Better Than Obama’s Was. *Foreign Policy*, 13.04.2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/13/trumps-russia-policy-is-better-than-obamas/> (Downloaded: 17.04.2018)
- [3] WALT, M. S.: Obama Was Not a Realist President. *Foreign Policy*, 07.04.2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/07/obama-was-not-a-realist-president-jeffrey-goldberg-atlantic-obama-doctrine/> (Downloaded: 17.04.2018)
- [4] *National Security Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2010.
- [5] *National Security Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2015.
- [6] CLINTON, R. H.: *Foreign Policy Address at the Council on Foreign Relations*. (Speech Hillary Rodham Clinton Secretary of State) Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 15.07.2009. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/july/126071.htm> (Downloaded: 18.04.2018)
- [7] LAVROV, S.: The Present and Future of Global Politics. *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2 5 (2007), 8–21.
- [8] CARROLL, O.: US ‘devaluing’ international law and institutions, says Russia’s Sergei Lavrov. *Independent*, 15.01.2018. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sergei-lavrov-us-russia-foreign-minister-start-year-conference-united-nations-donald-trump-putin-a8160076.html (Downloaded: 18.04.2018)
- [9] *Vice President Biden’s Remarks at Moscow State University*. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Vice President, 10.03.2011. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/10/vice-president-bidens-remarks-moscow-state-university> (Downloaded: 18.04.2018)
- [10] *Remarks By The President At The New Economic School Graduation*. (President Obama’s Address at the New Economic School in Moscow.) Washington, D.C.: Office of the White House Press Secretary, 07.07.2009. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/video/President-Obamas-Address-at-the-New-Economic-School-in-Moscow#transcript> (Downloaded: 18.04.2018)
- [11] TRUMP, J. D.: Trump on Foreign Policy. *The National Interest*, 27.04.2016. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/trump-foreign-policy-15960> (Downloaded: 19.04.2018)
- [12] *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2017.
- [13] WALT, M. S.: What Trump Got Right About Foreign Policy. *Foreign Policy*, 28.08.2017. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/28/what-trump-got-right-about-foreign-policy/> (Downloaded: 17.04.2018)
- [14] SCHADLOW, N.: Welcome to the Competition. *War on the Rocks*, 26.01.2017. <https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/welcome-to-the-competition/> (Downloaded: 19.04.2018)
- [15] McMASTER, R. H., COHN, D. G.: America First Doesn’t Mean America Alone. *The Wall Street Journal*, 30.05.2017. www.wsj.com/articles/america-first-doesnt-mean-america-alone-1496187426 (Downloaded: 19.04.2018)
- [16] *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2018.
- [17] COLVIN, J., LEE, M., MILLER, Z.: ‘I Don’t Get Confused.’ Nikki Haley Fires Back at White House After Russia Sanctions Comment. *Time*, 18.04.2018. <http://time.com/5244371/nikki-haley-russia-sanctions-confused/> (Downloaded: 21.04.2018)

- [18] NESBIT, J.: Donald Trump's Many, Many, Many, Many Ties to Russia. *Time*, 02.08.2016. <http://time.com/4433880/donald-trump-ties-to-russia/> (Downloaded: 22.04.2018)
- [19] *Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 16.02.2017. www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-press-conference/ (Downloaded: 22.04.2018)
- [20] *Statement by President Donald J. Trump on the Signing of H.R. 3364*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 02.08.2017. www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-signing-h-r-3364/ (Downloaded: 22.04.2018)
- [21] SHEAR, D. M., GOLDMAN, A.: Michael Flynn Pleads Guilty to Lying to the F.B.I. and Will Cooperate With Russia Inquiry. *The New York Times*, 01.12.2017. www.nytimes.com/2017/12/01/us/politics/michael-flynn-guilty-russia-investigation.html (Downloaded: 23.04.2018)
- [22] BENDER, B.: The Secret U.S. Army Study That Targets Moscow. *Politico.com*, 14.04.2016. www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/04/moscow-pentagon-us-secret-study-213811 (Downloaded: 23.04.2018)
- [23] HR McMaster: Russian meddling 'sophisticated subversion'. *BBC*, 19.12.2017. www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42409144 (Downloaded: 23.04.2018)
- [24] JOHNSON, E.: Trump's rebuke of McMaster was months in the making. *Politico.com*, 20.02.2018. www.politico.com/story/2018/02/20/trump-mcmaster-tension-national-security-adviser-417110 (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [25] *US National Security Advisor LTG H.R. McMaster: Russian Aggression is Strengthening Our Resolve*. Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council, 03.04.2018. www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/transcripts/us-national-security-advisor-lt-gen-h-r-mcmaster-russian-aggression-is-strengthening-our-resolve (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [26] BOLTON, J.: Russian assault on 'American idea' enables Trump to take tough action. *The Hill*, 19.03.2018. <http://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/374489-russian-assault-on-american-idea-enables-trump-to-take-tough-action> (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [27] MacFARQUHAR, N., KRAMER, E. A.: How Rex Tillerson Changed His Tune on Russia and Came to Court Its Rulers. *The New York Times*, 20.12.2016. www.nytimes.com/2016/12/20/world/europe/russia-rex-tillerson-donald-trump-secretary-of-state.html (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [28] *Secretary of State Designate Rex Tillerson Senate Confirmation Hearing Opening Statement January 11, 2017*. Washington, D.C.: United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2017. www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/011117_Tillerson_Opening_Statement.pdf (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [29] TILLERSON, R. W.: I Am Proud of Our Diplomacy. *The New York Times*, 27.12.2017. www.nytimes.com/2017/12/27/opinion/rex-tillerson-state-department-diplomacy.html (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [30] BLAKE, A.: Did Trump fire Tillerson because he was too anti-Russia? *The Washington Post*, 13.03.2018. www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/03/13/did-trump-fire-tillerson-because-he-was-too-anti-russia/ (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [31] POMPEO, R. M.: *Statement for the Record before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*. Washington, D.C.: United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 12.01.2017. www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/statement-pompeo-011217.pdf (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)

- [32] POMPEO, R. M.: *Statement for the Record before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*. Washington, D.C.: United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 12.04.2018. www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/041218_Pompeo_Statement.pdf (Downloaded: 24.04.2018)
- [33] SHAKE, K., MATTIS, J., ELLIS, J.: A blueprint for American security. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11.08.2016. www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/article/A-blueprint-for-American-security-9137892.php (Downloaded: 25.04.2018)
- [34] *Alderson Court Reporting: Stenographic Transcript Before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate to Conduct a Confirmation Hearing on the Expected Nomination of Mr. James N. Mattis to be Secretary of Defense*. Washington, D.C: United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, 12.01.2017. www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/17-03_01-12-17.pdf (Downloaded: 25.04.2018)
- [35] JAFFE, G., RYAN, M.: Trump’s favorite general: Can Mattis check an impulsive president and still retain his trust? *The Washington Post*, 07.02.2018. www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/can-jim-mattis-check-an-impulsive-president-and-still-retain-his-trust/2018/02/07/289297a2-0814-11e8-8777-2a059f168dd2_story.html (Downloaded: 25.04.2018)
- [36] COOPER, H.: Defense Secretary Mattis Tells NATO Allies to Spend More, or Else. *The New York Times*, 15.02.2017. www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/world/europe/jim-mattis-nato-trump.html (Downloaded: 26.04.2018)
- [37] *Press Conference by Secretary James Mattis at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium*. Brussels: U.S. Department of Defense, 16.02.2017. www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1085679/press-conference-by-secretary-mattis-at-nato-headquarters-brussels-belgium/ (Downloaded: 26.04.2018)
- [38] *Remarks by President Trump and President Iohannis of Romania in a Joint Press Conference*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 09.06.2017. www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-iohannis-romania-joint-press-conference/ (Downloaded: 26.04.2018)
- [39] JUDSON, J.: Funding to deter Russia reaches \$6.5B in FY19 defense budget request. *DefenseNews*, 12.02.2018. www.defensenews.com/land/2018/02/12/funding-to-deter-russia-reaches-65b-in-fy19-defense-budget-request/ (Downloaded: 26.04.2018)
- [40] BLAKE, A.: The final Trump-Clinton debate transcript, annotated. *The Washington Post*, 19.10.2016. www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/10/19/the-final-trump-clinton-debate-transcript-annotated/?utm_term=.11f6abdf46a4 (Downloaded: 29.04.2018)
- [41] *Nuclear Posture Review*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2018.
- [42] MEHTA, A.: Nuclear Posture Review puts Russia firmly in crosshairs. *DefenseNews*, 02.02.2018. www.defensenews.com/space/2018/02/02/nuclear-posture-review-puts-russia-firmly-in-crosshairs/ (Downloaded: 29.04.2018)
- [43] MEHTA, A.: Will the US trade its new sub-launched cruise missile for Russian arms treaty compliance? *DefenseNews*, 06.02.2018. www.defensenews.com/space/2018/02/06/will-the-us-trade-its-new-sub-launched-cruise-missile-for-russian-arms-treaty-compliance/ (Downloaded: 29.04.2018)
- [44] *Statement in connection with the situation concerning the NATO countries’ missile defence system in Europe*. (By President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev.) Gorki: President of Russia, 23.11.2011. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/13637> (Downloaded: 29.04.2018)

- [45] SAVRANSKY, R.: Putin: New missile renders defenses useless. *The Hill*, 01.03.2018. <http://thehill.com/policy/international/376191-putin-new-missile-renders-defenses-useless> (Downloaded: 29.04.2018)
- [46] MORIN, R.: Trump, May call Putin’s statements on Russia’s nuclear arsenal ‘irresponsible’. *Politico.com*, 05.03.2018. www.politico.com/story/2018/03/05/trump-theresa-may-russia-putin-nuclear-arms-435840 (Downloaded: 29.04.2018)
- [47] LEE, E. C.: Trump tells aides not to talk publicly about Russia policy moves. *NBC*, 29.03.2018. www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-tells-aides-not-talk-publicly-about-russia-policy-moves-n861256 (Downloaded: 29.04.2018)
- [48] GRYGIEL, J., MITCHELL, A. W.: Pressure on the Peripheries. *The American Interest*, Summer (May/June) 2016, 49–55.
- [49] BENDER, B., PALMERI, T.: Trump to unleash more global arms sales. *Politico.com*, 29.07.2017. www.politico.com/story/2017/09/29/trump-global-arms-sales-243282 (Downloaded: 26.04.2018)
- [50] BLINKEN, J. A.: Time for the Trump Administration to Arm Ukraine. *The New York Times*, 04.10.2017. www.nytimes.com/2017/10/04/opinion/trump-ukraine-russia.html (Downloaded: 26.04.2018)
- [51] GORDON, R. M.: Jim Mattis, in Ukraine, Says U.S. Is Thinking of Sending Weapons. *The New York Times*, 24.08.2017. www.nytimes.com/2017/08/24/world/europe/mattis-ukraine-russia.html (Downloaded: 26.04.2018)
- [52] *Latest Developments on Ukraine Negotiations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 13.04.2018. <https://fpc.state.gov/280441.htm> (Downloaded: 27.04.2018)