FOREIGN POLICIES OF RUSSIA AND EURASIA

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COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN

Transformation of the foreign and security policies of the successor states of the Soviet Union over the past quarter century reflects fundamental changes to the international system and the ways that we analyze it. In addition to altering the global balance of power and contributing to the end of the Cold War, the foreign policy revolution(s) in the post-Soviet space catalyzed ethnic, national, and resource disputes between and among the successor states, sub-national actors, and the outside world. Moreover, the fluid change in Russian and Eurasian foreign and security policies created new opportunities for international cooperation to resolve global problems—such as nuclear nonproliferation, energy security, terrorism, environmental security—as well as generated new risks of international instability and conflict, as evidenced by the ongoing crises in Ukraine and Syria and political outrage over Russian meddling in Western elections.

The purpose of this course is to examine the many dimensions to the foreign and security policies of Russia and the other new post-Soviet states in Eurasia. The approach is analytical, as each student will be required to read and think rather than memorize and regurgitate. Accordingly, specific emphasis is placed on understanding the:

- continuities and discontinuities in the overall Imperial/Soviet/post-Soviet foreign policy agendas;
- systematic influence of geostrategic, regional and sub-national factors on the international behavior of Russia and its neighbors throughout Eurasia; and
- critical contemporary U.S. foreign policy challenges and opportunities presented by Russian foreign policy in Eurasia, Europe, and beyond.

Another goal of this course is to strengthen your skills for thinking practically but systematically about the dynamic transformation underway in Eurasia and international affairs, in general. For example, is Russia today a “rising” or “declining” great power? What are the implications for U.S. security? Answers to such questions require abilities to identify, critically analyze, and apply distinguishing traits/perspectives/formulations/institutions in comparative, strategic, and policy issue contexts. Consequently, there will be strong emphasis placed on teasing out logically consistent policy implications from alternative theoretical explanations and inventive problem-solving. In pursuit of these goals, the class will engage in interactive discussions (with each other and prominent guest speakers), as well as structured, policy analytical
debates. To free up time for these activities, the course will de-emphasize detailed historical description, rote memorization, and lengthy research papers.

The course will begin with a review of the historical record and accompanying analytical debates surrounding the different phases of Imperial Russian/Soviet/post-Soviet foreign policy. Particular attention will be placed on the role of information in shaping Soviet/Russian policymaking and policies. The focus will shift to a discussion of alternative conceptual frameworks and approaches for explaining the post-Soviet international behavior of Russia and other newly independent states. This part of the course will analyze systematically the impact of geostrategic, regional, national, and sub-national pressures on the formulation and implementation of contemporary Russian and Eurasian foreign and security policies. Emphasis will be placed on studying these approaches as alternative explanations for various trends in international behavior, discerning the relative significance of different arguments. The final section of the course will integrate conceptual understanding of the sources of international behavior in prominent policy issue areas that preoccupy the contemporary foreign and security agendas of Russia and the other Soviet successor states. The latter will be capped by a set of in-class group deliberations and individual policy memos.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate proficiency at critiquing alternative explanations for the sources and consequences of Russian/Eurasian foreign and security policies. By embracing comparative perspectives, they also will become more aware of the diversity of strategic, regional, institutional political, historical/cultural, and normative approaches to Russian international behavior. In addition, students will enhance their professional development by learning to communicate effectively in applying critical analysis to generate concrete policy recommendations on international security issues at the nexus of U.S./European and Russian relations at various levels.

REQUIRED READING

This class will use a combination of articles and books. Selected articles are available in electronic form via t-square or the Internet.

The following five books (required) are available for purchase at GT Barnes & Noble Bookstore:


Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and


Recommended books for purchase include:


Readings are intended to complement lectures, and lectures will not simply reformulate material in the readings. Therefore, all reading is mandatory, unless otherwise indicated, and should be completed by the assigned date.

Given the highly fluid nature of the subject matter, there is no substitute for keeping abreast of the news. Therefore, it is expected that each student will read regularly either a daily newspaper, such as the *New York Times* ([www.nyt.com](http://www.nyt.com)), *Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)), or a weekly newsmagazine like the *Economist*. There are also extensive Internet resources on political developments in Russia and Eurasia, such as the *RFE/RL Daily Report* that can be received free of charge by sending an e-mail to: *newsline-request@list.rferl.org* with the word *subscribe* as the subject of the message. Similarly, students are encouraged to read on a regular basis short analytical pieces and commentaries available on *Russia Matters* ([https://www.russiamatters.org/](https://www.russiamatters.org/)). In addition, students are encouraged to peruse *Russia Today* to compare/contrast reporting of the same events by U.S. and Russian media sources. For *RT*, see [www.rt.com](http://www.rt.com); for reporting on U.S. news see [www.rt.com/usa](http://www.rt.com/usa). Throughout the course there will be discussion of contemporary events in Russia and across the former Soviet space, and basic familiarity with ongoing international events and foreign policy developments will be assumed.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

The course will consist of lectures and in-class discussion. There will be five sets of graded assignments.

First, students will be expected to attend and participate actively in all class sessions. This will include informal discussion and graded quizzes, as well as occasional preparatory assignments and group deliberations.

Second, all students will take an in-class *mid-term exam* on **October 11**. This will consist of IDs and short essays. A list of exam questions will be handed out in advance.
Third, each student is required to write a 5 page (double-spaced) critical review of an assigned reading or approved outside reading (e.g. analysis on *Russia Matters*, journal article) related to Part II. The assignment seeks to prepare students for critical thinking by honing skills related to paraphrasing the main argument and identifying prominent assumptions and causal logics, identifying logical inconsistencies in the argument, and teasing out the practical implications of the critique for assessing Russian/Eurasian contemporary foreign policies. All essay are due in class on **November 15**.

Fourth, students will work in groups to draft a 3 page (single-spaced) position paper for an in-class debate on a designated contemporary issue of Russian and NIS foreign policy specified in Part III. The papers should briefly summarize issues at the crux of the assigned debate over contemporary U.S. or Western policy (and related issues/questions TBA), and take a stand by specifying the determinants and consequences of Russian/NIS foreign policies, presenting key empirical evidence to support respective claims versus rival arguments, and offering a policy choice/recommendation. The latter should be addressed to a specific audience (U.S. government, NATO, international organization, company, or civil society). The position paper does not require citations but must include a bibliography. Each group will present its analysis and address constructive critique from the class. **Due in class on date of respective policy debate in Part III.**

Finally, each student will write an individual policy memo. This paper (7-10 pages, double-spaced) will address a contemporary policy debate of each student’s choosing. Each paper will require sections devoted to a) succinctly describing the issue at hand; b) summarizing contending debates over respective policy response(s); c) critically analyzing the assumptions and arguments related to the sources and consequences of related Russian/NIS foreign policies associated with at least two sides of the debate; and d) presenting logically-consistent policy recommendations to target audiences (government, non-governmental agency, firm). Footnotes are not required, but all sources must be included in the bibliography. Topics must be approved. **Brief outlines of each paper are due no later than November 29**, and **final policy memos are due by 5:00pm on December 11**. Late papers will not be accepted without prior approval.

**Websites of Interest**

https://www.brookings.edu/topic/russia/
https://www.csis.org/programs/russia-and-eurasia-program
http://carnegieendowment.org/programs/russia/
http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/programs/dinu-patriciu-eurasia-center
http://www.ponarseurasia.org/
http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/
http://chathamhouse.org
http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/62/usrussia_initiative_to_prevent_nuclearterrorism.html
http://economist.com
**Grading**

10% Class Participation & In-Class Assignments

20% In-class Mid-term

20% Critical Review

15% Policy Debates
   Group position paper (10%)/In-class presentation/participation (5%)

35% Individual Policy Memo

**Decorum & Integrity**

Learning together requires that everyone must feel welcome and able to trust others in the class. A central aim of the course is to encourage students to think and be critical. Accordingly, all students are expected to exchange freely ideas while respecting the opinions of each other. Similarly, each student must recognize that academic dishonesty (such as cheating on a test/quiz or plagiarism on a paper) completely undermines the mission of this course, is surprisingly easy to detect, and is taken very seriously by the Institute. Do not be tempted to take a short cut to complete an assignment—consult the GT honor code/Honor Advisory Council (http://www.honor.gatech.edu/index.php)--if there are any questions.

All lectures and discussions are not to be taped or recorded, unless approved by the professor. Students must turn off cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices that could be distracting during class. Exceptions in certain situations can be made upon prior approval of the professor.
COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I: The Historical and Analytical Legacy

AUGUST 21
INTRODUCTION

AUGUST 23
The Imperial Legacy: Historical Trends and Political Culture
Donaldson, Nogee, & Nadkarni Chps. 1 (peruse) and Chap. 2
Andrei Tsygankov, Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chp. 4 (t-square).

AUGUST 28-SEPTEMBER 4
Lenin & Stalin: From Revolution to Breathing Space to Cold War
Donaldson, Nogee, and Nadkarni, Chp. 3 & pp. 72-76.
Sudaplatov (t-square).
Kennan’s “Long Telegram” (t-square).
Soladatov & Borogan, Chp. 1

SEPTEMBER 6
Khrushchev: Postwar Peaceful Coexistence
Donaldson, Nogee & Nadkarni, pp. 76-89.
“Soviet Perspective on the Cuban Missile Crisis from Nikita Khrushchev’s Son,” https://news.usni.org/2012/10/24/soviet-perspective-cuban-missile-crisis-nikita-krushchevs-son
SEPTEMBER 11, 13 (quiz)  Brezhnev: From Detente to Confrontation
Donaldson, Nogee & Nadkarni, pp. 89-100.
Savel’yev & Detinov, pp. 31-54 (t-square).

*Recommended

SEPTEMBER 18- OCTOBER 4  Gorbachev: From New Thinking to Collapse
Donaldson, Nogee, Nadkarni, pp. 101-113; Stent, Prologue.
Soldatov & Borogan, Chp. 2
Stephen F. Cohen, Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives (New York: Columbia University, 2009), Chp. 5 (t-square).

*Tsygankov, Chp. 2.
*Savel’yev & Detinov, pp. 111-122; 141-150

SEPTEMBER 20  IN-CLASS VIDEO LECTURE
William Taubman, “Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse”

OCTOBER 9  NO CLASS- FALL RECESS

OCTOBER 11  MID-TERM EXAM
PART II: Sources of Post-Soviet Foreign Policies

OCTOBER 16-18

**Russian/NIS Foreign Policy Overview**
Donaldson, Nogee & Nadkarni, Chp. 7; Stent, Chp. 1. Cooley, Chp. 2.

*Tsygankov, Chps. 3-5.*
*Fyodor Lukyanov, “Putin’s Foreign Policy,” *Russia in Global Affairs* (May 4, 2016),
http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/redcol/Putins-Foreign-Policy-18133

OCTOBER 23-25

**Geostrategic Impulses**
Donaldson, Nogee & Nadkarni, Chps. 8 & 9. Cooley, Chps. 3-5. Stent, Chps. 2, 4, 6, 9, 10. Soldatov & Borogan, Chp. 10, 16-Epilogue

*Tsygankov, Chp. 6.*

OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 1

**Eurasian Security Dilemmas**

*Tsygankov, Chp. 8*
NOVEMBER 6-20

**Domestic Context of Foreign Policy**

*The Institutional (formal & informal) Context*
- Donaldson, Nogee & Nadkarni, Chp. 5.
- Taylor, Chp. 3
- Cooley, Chp. 9.
- Soldatov & Borogan, Chps. 3, 5-9 (peruse)

NOVEMBER 8

**Guest Lecture- Professor Charles Ziegler (University of Lousiville)**

NOVEMBER 15 (Critical Review Due)

**Democratization/Modernization and Foreign Policy**
- Tsygankov, Chp. 7.
- Taylor, Chp. 2, 4


*McFaul, Part I: Revolution

**The Putin Factor**
- Taylor, Chps. 1, 6-7

*McFaul, Part III: Reaction

**Russian Public Opinion & Foreign Policy**

“The Russian Elite 2016: Perspectives on Foreign and Domestic Policy,” 2016 Hamilton College Levitt Poll


Nationalism and Islam


NOVEMBER 22 NO CLASS- THANKSGIVING
PART III: Special Topics/Student Policy Debates

NOVEMBER 27

Russia and the Ukraine Crisis: How Did We Get Here? Where Do We Go? and What are the Implications for US/NATO Policies?
Stent, Chp. 12.
Soldatov & Borogan, Chps. 11-15 (peruse)
Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojanski, “A Closer Look at Russia’s Hybrid War,”
Kennan Cable 7 (April 2015),
https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/190090/5-KENNAN%20CABLE-ROJANSKY%20KOFIGMAN.pdf

Andrei Tsygankov, “The Sources of Russia’s Ukraine Policy,” Russian Analytical Digest 158 (December 18, 2014), pp. 2-5. (t-square).


*Daniel Triesman, “Why Putin Took Crimea”
Foreign Affairs (May/June 2016) (t-square).

NOVEMBER 29  
(Policy Memo Outline Due)  
Russia, Counter-terrorism and the Syrian Crisis: War by Proxy, Playing with Fire, or Opportunity for Constructive Engagement?

Or

Russia and Western Elections: Spy-Games, Opportunistic Meddling, or Strategic Red-line

Reading TBA

DECEMBER 4

CONCLUSION

DECEMBER 11

FINAL POLICY MEMOS DUE (5:00pm)