

Introduction: 'we've moved on'

'We've moved on.' This apparently simple phrase, often uttered by officials and commentators on both sides since 1991, captures the evolving ambiguity of the relationship between the West and Russia. One (early) interpretation offered the more positive view that both sides have moved on from the confrontation of the Cold War: Russia is very different from the USSR, the West is much changed, and the relationship between them greatly altered. Despite numerous points of friction, there was no systemic ideological conflict with military confrontation – the West and Russia 'no longer peer at each other through binoculars', as one Western official observed in late 2013.¹ Indeed, since the start of the 1990s, significant cooperation has taken place between the West and Russia in terms of business, but also in sensitive areas including in the military and intelligence domains.

Another interpretation draws attention to the persistent friction between the West, particularly in its institutional forms such as the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Russia, whether over questions of wider Euro-Atlantic security, such as that caused by the Kosovo crisis in 1998/9 and the Russo-Georgia War in 2008, or bilaterally, such as the crisis in UK–Russia relations caused by the murder of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006. The various 'resets' and 'reloads' conducted in relations, most recently between 2009 and 2013, reflect attempts to draw a line under these problems and 'move on' from them.

But at a deeper level, this simple phrase reflects a conceptual gap in how Russia and the West interpret international affairs. When used by Western officials and observers, this phrase has often indicated Russia fatigue: 'we've moved on' has meant that the West has moved on from the political and security priorities of the Cold War era, and Russia, seen by many to be a declining power, is no longer among the new priorities – not least because it has not moved on

towards the hoped-for democracy and partnership with the West. Even with the emergency in Ukraine continuing into 2015, and then the Russian deployment to Syria, which together have led some senior military officials in the West to suggest that Russia poses the main threat to NATO and the USA, consensus on prioritisation has been difficult to achieve. Secretary of State John Kerry, for instance, disagreed with the military analysis of Russia, and suggested that Russia is a state with which the USA has disagreements, but not as an existential threat,² and there has been a tendency to focus instead on other problems such as Islamic State and counter-terrorism.

When the phrase is used by Russian officials and observers, on the other hand, it is to suggest that the post-Second World War international architecture led by the West no longer works, that Western political, economic and security frameworks are obsolete (and even create problems) and Western, especially Anglo-Saxon, influence in international affairs is declining. Indeed, the asymmetry of ‘we’ve moved on’ is thus echoed by a different symmetry: the West and Russia view each other as declining and decreasingly relevant powers that are morally bankrupt at home and pursue reckless and dangerous international policies abroad. This gap, set in the foundations of relations between the West and Russia in the early 1990s, has grown and is the font of the strong sense of strategic dissonance that increasingly characterises the relationship.

The war in Ukraine that began in 2014, the most serious emergency in relations for many years, threw the emphasis very much onto the dissonance inherent in this latter interpretation. But it also highlighted the inability to move on from the Cold War in terms of how both sides perceive the other. This book explores this gap, focusing on the Western difficulties in interpreting Russia.

This chapter sketches out the book’s underlying themes, beginning by reflecting on some of the problems that are set in the foundations of Russia’s post-Cold War relationship with the West. The chapter then points to problems that emerge from linguistic and historical ‘interpretation’, before laying out the structure of the book.

Russia’s post-Cold War emergence

Under Vladimir Putin’s leadership, Russia has emerged from the rubble of the USSR, getting up ‘off its knees’ and become

increasingly active on the international stage. Moscow has reached out to establish or enhance relationships with states and multilateral international organisations both in Eurasia and further afield, from Europe to China to Latin America, and sought to play a role in many of the major international questions of our time. At the same time, Russian domestic affairs and foreign policies have often surprised Western partners, officials and observers alike.

These surprises take different forms. They have come in ‘active’ forms, such as unexpected actions taken – the Russo-Georgia War in 2008, the energy crises in 2006 and 2009, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and Russia’s intervention in Syria in September 2015 and then its partial withdrawal from Syria in March 2016 being perhaps the most obvious examples. And they come in ‘passive’ forms, such as expected developments that did not take place, such as the anticipated rescinding of Russia’s recognition of the states of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which came as a surprise to many in NATO and had a chilling effect on NATO–Russia relations at the time of the NATO Chicago summit in May 2012.³ Such surprises often have important ramifications for the West’s relations with Russia. Change comes where it is not expected, and does not come where it is, and Russian policies and politics appear to change when they do not, and do evolve in ways that are not seen or anticipated – all creating dissonance in the relationship.

This sense of surprise is largely because post-Cold War Russia is poorly understood in the West – Russia has not conformed to Western expectations and hopes for its transformation, nor have senior Western officials been able effectively to interpret Russian language and actions. Often the interpretation of Russia has been based on *Western* assumptions rather than Russian ones. For much of the post-Cold War era, Russia has not been a political priority either for organisations such as NATO, or for member states such as the USA, UK and others, and so official expertise on it has been wound down or dispersed, and a gap has grown between policy-making and what remains of expertise on Russia in other areas such as academia.

This has allowed the emergence of a mainstream discussion about Russia that tends to dominate Western public policy and headlines but that suffers from numerous problems. It tends to be reactive and to focus on a small number of narrow and simplistic questions that are supposed to offer the skeleton key to unlocking the puzzle of Russia. These often focus on single issues and the crisis of the day, and offer a simplified binary picture that produces a one-dimensional discussion of Russia, such as whether Russia is

a democracy or authoritarian state, or whether Russia's relations with the West are cooperative or confrontational.

This is not new. In 1947, British author Edward Crankshaw emphasised the 'astonishingly limited and repetitive' nature of questions in the USA and UK. These included 'is Russia out to dominate the world? Is Russia a democracy *or* (always *or*) is Stalin a dictator? Is the N.K.V.D. really a Gestapo?'⁴ The central questions today directly echo those that Crankshaw sketches out, and the responses too often degenerate into a form of positional trench warfare, dominated by partisan factual bombardments of lists of violations (such as human rights) and confirmations of known sins (for example corruption), and counter-bombardments of lists of extenuating contextual reasons and circumstances between those who are critical of Russia and those who advocate greater understanding and cooperation respectively.

This has generated a discussion dominated by worn out clichés and stereotypes and exotic myths and fantasies about Russian life, often bolstered by the repetition of quotes from Western historical figures such as Winston Churchill, George Kennan and the Marquis de Custine. Perhaps the most pervasive (and abused) is the reference to Churchill's statement 'I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.' The quote is usually incomplete, however, omitting the continuation 'but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.'

These clichés and stereotypes are amplified by speculative reflections and predictions that draw selectively on Russian grapevine whispers about the informal and obscure aspects of Russian political life. The resulting commentary is often dramatised and hyperbolic – and misleading – and, taken all together, the smoke and noise from the bombardments and speculation obscure our vision of already complex and difficult to understand developments in Russia.

Partly as a result of these problems, much Western analysis of Russia seems to be locked into cycles of hope, optimism and anticipation, followed by disappointment, frustration and anger. Again, this is not new: Crankshaw noted this 'dire and inflexible rhythm' of the 'monotonous and gloomy regularity with which the birth and recurrent rebirth of goodwill between [the UK and Russia] has been succeeded by the resurrection of suspicion, hardening quickly into hostility open or concealed'.⁵

Such cycles have been visible throughout the post-Soviet era.⁶ Optimism about relations between Russia and the West during the

early 1990s moved towards crisis, even towards breaking point during the NATO campaign against Serbia in 1999, but subsequently underwent an improvement over the next few years leading to the Rome Declaration in May 2002 and the establishment of the NATO Russia Council. By 2008 and the Russo-Georgia War, however, relations had again reached crisis point before undergoing a series of ‘resets’ and ‘reloads’ in 2009 and 2010.

Similar cycles have been visible regarding hopes for Russia’s development. With Boris Yeltsin came hope for Russia’s change and transition to democracy. But, as Russia faced numerous economic and social problems and as Yeltsin’s own health deteriorated, including public displays of drunkenness, Yeltsin became a figure of mockery in the West. When Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, he was hailed as a sober, effective, even reformist leader. But this too turned first to disappointment and then, in some sections of officialdom and the wider commentariat, to an almost visceral dislike from 2003. When Dmitri Medvedev became president in 2008, he too was hailed by many as a figure who could modernise and liberalise Russia. Yet with the announcement in September 2011 that it would be Putin who ran for the presidency in 2012, the attitude of many in the West was to write Medvedev off with a mixture of almost tangible contempt and disappointment. Even though he moved to the position of prime minister, he was either spoken of by many Western commentators in the past tense or ignored.

In 2012, with Putin’s return to the presidency, the cycle entered another downturn. Indeed some officials and observers suggested that it was worse even than before, and commentators pointed to the final death of the ‘reset’ as a bilateral meeting between Presidents Obama and Putin was cancelled in autumn 2013 amid fractious debates over Western intervention in Libya, the ongoing civil war in Syria and another round of spy scandals – this time Moscow’s offer of asylum to Edward Snowden. Articles in high-profile media suggested that Putin’s third term as president was being defined by a newly confrontational attitude in Moscow, as the Russian leadership was simultaneously increasingly in conflict with the West and aggressive at home. *The Economist* suggested that ‘hostility to the West’ had become a ‘hallmark of Putin’s third presidential term’ and was leading to a ‘cold climate’ of ‘ill-concealed’ mutual resentment between the West and Russia.⁷ And all this came before the war in Ukraine that led to mutual recriminations, a suspension of partnership formats, and the imposition of sanctions first by the USA and EU on Russia, and

then by Russia on Western states that support sanctions against it – effectively the start of economic war.

The result of these points is that the mainstream view of Russia in the West among many political leaders and observers is narrow, simplistic and repetitive: with each new crisis, the same terms, phrases, analogies and images are repeated. A one-dimensional and increasingly automatic view of Russia has thus emerged, emphasised by the often hyperbolic tone of the discussion.

The shadow of the Cold War

For many, the war in Ukraine has created a crisis in relations between Russia and the West, one that is often presented as a new and deeply negative stage in relations, a ‘new Cold War’. The Cold War provides comfortable mental furniture, particularly when describing Putin’s Russia, which many have described as ‘going back to the USSR’, or the establishment of the ‘USSR 2.0’. Strobe Talbott, deputy Secretary of State from 1994 to 2001 and special advisor to the Secretary of State for former Soviet affairs and now president of the Brookings Institute, has suggested, for instance, that the ‘defining theme’ of Putin’s presidency was ‘turning back the clock’.⁸

This ‘new Cold War’ theme is not new. Since the mid 2000s, observers have increasingly framed tensions between Russia and the West in terms of whether or not they marked the start of a ‘new Cold War’. The debate was given lasting impulse when Vladimir Putin observed in a speech in 2005 that the collapse of the USSR was the ‘greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century’, in the process providing a quote often casually (but wrongly) deployed ever since to illustrate his apparent desire to re-establish the USSR.⁹ This sense was enhanced by Putin’s speech at the Munich security conference in February 2007, widely reported as the Russian leadership rekindling the Cold War, emphasised by Russian moves such as its suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) and the resumption of Russian strategic bomber flights in 2007.¹⁰

The Cold War also informs the discussion – and policies – in Russia. In 2004, Vladislav Surkov, then first deputy head of the presidential administration, suggested that international groups continued to live with Cold War phobia and consider Russia an adversary. During a speech in Berlin in June 2008, then president Dmitri Medvedev stated that it was ‘hard to escape the conclusion

that Europe's architecture still bears the stamp of an ideology inherited from the past'.¹¹ He thus emphasised Moscow's attempt to advance a new European security treaty to overcome this. Indeed, these proposals and other elements of Russian foreign policy during the Putin era can be understood as attempts to revise the results of the Cold War.¹²

But if the debate about a 'new Cold War' has increasingly featured in the discussion about the West's relationship with Russia, it is by returning to the end of the Cold War and early 1990s that we find the original gaps in the interpretation of events through which the current tensions have developed. The difference in understanding of the role of Mikhail Gorbachev, the last General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, symbolises this gap. In the West, Gorbachev is seen as an heroic figure, one who brought democracy and freedom to the USSR and first eased tensions in the USSR's relations with the West, and then brought a 'bloodless' end to the Cold War. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990. This positive (albeit only partially accurate) view echoes today, where his views are still treated with respect.

In Russia, however, Gorbachev is cast, even reviled, by many as the villain of the collapse of the USSR and Russia's subsequent problems. Catherine Merridale reminds us that the terms so appealing to the West – 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' – were interpreted very differently in the USSR. To some, in the wake of the Chernobyl accident, the openness of 'glasnost' represented the threat of an internal witch-hunt against incompetent managers through the exposure of their mistakes. To others, the restructuring involved in 'perestroika', represented a threat to the wages and benefits of the working class. So while the idea of reform appealed to all, the practicalities of what that meant did not. Thus, as Andrei Grachev suggested, few ask about the number of *coups d'état* Gorbachev actually managed to avoid in six and a half years of reform.¹³ Today in Russia he is broadly ignored, though feelings still run deep: one retired counter-intelligence colonel even recently referred to him as 'the number one German': ie. a traitor,¹⁴ and others recently published a book entitled *Gorbachev: Anatomy of Betrayal*.¹⁵

Beyond this illustrative symbol, however, a series of founding myths and misunderstandings began with the end of the Cold War that provide the basis for today's dissonant relations. In the West, it was a time of optimism, excitement and hope that Russia would enjoy a positive transition to democracy and return to the

Western family of nations as a partner on the international stage. In Russia, too, it was a time of optimism, though the Russian leadership sought recognition and greater assistance from the West for the sacrifices and contribution it had made to the peaceful ending of the Cold War.¹⁶ But a prolonged debate has raged about specific aspects of the post-Cold War era such as the lack of sufficient Western help for Russia (the failure to introduce a Marshall Plan for Russia, for instance), and yet too much ineffective or damaging ‘help’ for Russia (Western advisers giving bad advice), and then whether Russia’s development into a ‘normal country’ had stalled and who was responsible for this.¹⁷

Here is not the place to reprise those arguments. Suffice it to say that from the first, misperceptions and disagreements were woven into the foundations of the relationship: both the West and Russia believe that they ‘won’ the Cold War, and both sides blame the other for having missed opportunities after that to shape a more positive ‘post-Cold War’ environment. In the West, many see the 1990s as a dark era for Russia, but nevertheless a missed opportunity in terms of Russia’s transition to democracy. In Russia, a narrative, officially promoted and supported but not without substance, has evolved that points to the disastrous 1990s and the negative role the West played in those years, both misleading Russia with unfulfilled promises and inflicting damage on Russian interests while Russia was weakened after the collapse of the USSR.

A second important and long-lasting debate is over NATO’s alleged ‘no enlargement’ promise. This has become a central point of disagreement between the West and Russia. This question was raised by Putin in his Munich speech in February 2007, and has regularly re-emerged, most recently and obviously during the war in Ukraine in 2014. Indeed, senior Russian officials have long asserted that assurances were given by Western leaders to the Soviet leadership that any NATO enlargement following the Soviet withdrawal would be limited to the reunified Germany. This has led to a prolonged series of exchanges in which Western officials and observers have denied that such promises were made on one hand, and accusations by Russian officials and observers that NATO is an organisation that says one thing but does another – and so cannot be trusted. When there are moments of crisis or dispute, such as during the Libya and Ukraine crises, the NATO non-enlargement promise dispute resurfaces.¹⁸

But this disagreement again reflects the small gaps in the foundations of relations caused by misinterpretation. As some have

pointed out, the question is more ambiguous. Officials familiar with the discussions at the time suggest that spoken indications may have been given to Soviet officials – and then wrongly interpreted in Moscow as a promise. Rodric Braithwaite, UK ambassador to the USSR from 1988 to 1992, has subsequently suggested that

The assurances which Western politicians gave about the future of NATO were not binding, they were not written down, and they were given by people in a hurry, intent on achieving more immediate objectives. They were not intended to mislead. But the Russians inevitably interpreted them to mean that there would be no further expansion of NATO beyond Germany's new Eastern boundary.¹⁹

Similarly, Mary Sarotte suggests that, contrary to the arguments of many in the West, the matter of NATO enlargement arose early and included discussions about both East Germany and Eastern Europe. Senior Western figures gave speeches and hinted that there would not be enlargement. However, contrary to Russian assertions, no promise was given that NATO would not enlarge. She suggests that Bush's senior advisors had 'a spell of internal disagreement in early February 1990 which they displayed to Gorbachev', before uniting and not offering such a promise.²⁰

These are some of the 'original sins' on which today's relations between Russia and the West rest.²¹ They are well known in the Russia-watching community, and often remarked upon. But there are other important gaps that contribute to problems in relations and also Western misunderstanding of Russia that are less often remarked upon.

Linguistic 'false friends'

The first is a strong linguistic dissonance, both in terms of translation and different interpretation of terminology. Swedish analysts have suggested that the Ukraine crisis has revealed that the West and Russia are 'speaking different dialects' on security.²² And there are certainly visible gaps in terminology that reflect divergences: in Western terms, for instance, Crimea was 'annexed' by Russia, but in Russian terms, Crimea was 'reunified' with Russia. Similarly, NATO's policy is one of 'open door' or 'enlargement', whereas the Russian term is 'expansion'.

As important are the similar sounding words and phrases that act as 'false friends' that appear to offer commonality of meaning, but that are understood differently in Western capitals and Moscow

with important implications for how Russia is understood in the West and also for the development of the relationship. Western concepts and terms are often imposed on the Russian situation with misleading results. The rise of a Russian middle class, for instance, was a central aspect of the mainstream Western understanding of the protest demonstrations in 2011 and at the heart of hopes for Russia's transition towards democracy. In the West, the Russian middle class is understood to be a driver of political change, part of an evolving entrepreneurial private sector and civil society increasingly free and independent from the state. In Russia, however, the middle class, while reflecting some of the trappings of a Western middle class, is understood to be those who are 'budjetniki' – in other words, financed by the state budget and so not free from it. This changes the picture of the Russian middle class and its role in important ways, and Russian commentators suggest that 'there is little reason to believe that the middle class will react to the ongoing financial and economic crisis with protests or renewed calls for change'.²³

Once again, such problems are not new. During the Cold War, there were numerous linguistic divergences in which the same words were very differently understood. For instance, there was dissonance between the understanding of peace, détente and deterrence: such terms created false expectations based on the assumption that they meant something similar to both sides. As Peter Vigor observed, peace in the West has a positive connotation, embodied in the idea of freedom from, or cessation of, hostilities. The Soviet understanding, however, was different, having a more negative connotation, as 'peace as the absence of war or conflict'. Vigor suggested that these could be compared as Western 'peace and good will' and Soviet 'peace and ill will'. Similarly, in the West, deterrence was depicted as (mutual) vulnerability through the idea of mutually assured destruction. But in Moscow deterrence was understood as sufficiently strong war fighting capacity to impress an opponent and maintain strategic stability.

These differences had important ramifications as each side accused the other of hypocrisy when in fact they were acting within their own definitions. Different understandings of peace were translated into how each side viewed the processes of 'détente' and 'peaceful coexistence', and defence. Deterrence and defence were incompatible in the West, since improved defence would undermine the mutual vulnerability at the heart of deterrence, whereas in Russia improved defence was entirely compatible with deterrence.²⁴ As Ken

Booth noted, both Westerners and Soviets failed to get the other to accept and understand their understandings of such concepts.²⁵

Clumsy interpretation and consequent linguistic misunderstanding endures, and plays an important role in the relationship, as official meetings can embark on two separate, unintentionally conflicting discussions as a result of interpretation.²⁶ One example was during a meeting in late 2011 between senior Russian military officers and their Western counterparts. During a question and answer session, Western officers posed questions about Russian counter-terrorism in Chechnya. The word 'terrorist' was interpreted as 'rebel',²⁷ however, leading initially to confusion, then frustration, then increasing anger on the Russian side, before the interpreter's error was recognised. Though on this occasion the misunderstanding was resolved, the linguistic gap here is important, and, as discussed in Chapter 2, these differences continue to resonate at the highest political levels in Russia.

Problems in interpretation also reveal instances of 'false friend' differences. One example was the attempt in 2009 by the Obama administration to place its relationship with Russia on a better footing in the wake of the rising tension and the Russo-Georgia War. Hillary Clinton presented a souvenir 'reset' button to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, asking him if the Russian was correct, and assuring him that her staff had worked hard to ensure it was. But instead of using the Russian word for 'reset', the US interlocutors used the Russian term for 'overload'. The Russian newspaper *Kommersant* ran it as a front-page story, with a photo of the exchange of the souvenir, with the caption 'difficulties in translation again hinder Russo-American relations'.²⁸

Beyond the embarrassment caused, this linguistic error reflected deeper conceptual divergences in how the two sides saw the 'reset'. As Angela Stent noted, the question of the reset was both 'a literal and a philosophical question ... the metaphorical possibilities for interpreting reset were as extensive as the policy implications'. Did the reset mean pressing the button and returning the relationship to the status quo ante? If so, which status quo? For the USA, it appeared that the reset was an attempt to improve relations – to stem the deterioration, and, despite ongoing disagreements, 'revisit the many areas' in which the USA could and should be working with Russia.²⁹

For Moscow, rather than offering an opportunity for cooperation on common issues, the 'reset' appeared as Washington correcting its political course. Lavrov stated that the 'deterioration of relations

was not Russia's choice' and that it was the previous (George W. Bush) administration which had soured relations through its pursuit of the ballistic missile defence programme, 'unjustified NATO expansion' and the refusal to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty. Before any reset of relations could go ahead, 'we must get rid of the toxic assets inherited from recent years'.³⁰ And, as Stent has suggested, the Russians never took ownership of the 'reset', while the term 'reset' was neither in the Russian style nor language.³¹

The publication of the Russian military doctrine in 2010 offers another illustration of the importance of linguistic precision. The document was reported to suggest that NATO was seen as a 'threat' to Russia. Yet this was to miscast the nature of a difficult relationship. The doctrine actually posits NATO as a 'danger'. It also clearly defines the distinction between 'threat' and 'danger': a 'threat' is defined as the realistic possibility of an armed conflict arising, while a 'danger' is a situation with the potential under certain circumstances to develop into a threat. While Moscow certainly has problems with the Alliance, particularly on issues such as NATO enlargement, the 2010 doctrine did not define NATO in the category of realistic possibilities of armed conflict; indeed it made the distinction clear.

Some might suggest that this definitional difference is merely splitting hairs, since Russian officials often refer to NATO in terms that effectively equate to a 'threat' – and because in the West the terms 'threat' and 'danger' are often used largely interchangeably.³² But this is to miss the point. First, in the wake of the publication of the doctrine, much effort was spent on both sides attempting to clarify that Moscow did *not* see NATO as a threat, or with senior Western officials clarifying that NATO did not pose a threat to Russia, and that Moscow was wrong to think that it might – in effect a discussion about something that was not said and thus muddying an already complex and contentious question further. Interestingly, despite the rhetoric, this terminology did not change in the revised military doctrine published in late 2014.

Furthermore, as Keir Giles has pointed out, this distinction in the Russian military lexicon points to a more subtle perception of international affairs – and allows Russian officials to complain about NATO without being forced to do something such as re-orienting the military to counter the supposed threat posed by NATO.³³ Furthermore, by overlooking this subtle argument, the Western audience becomes insensitive to alterations made by Moscow in either previous or future iterations of the doctrine.

The wrong side of history?

The second strong dissonance relates to different understandings of history, and the way progressive understandings of history have underpinned Western interpretations of Russia. Swedish researcher Gudrun Persson has correctly suggested that history is an important element of state building in Russia today, as suggested by official statements, in official documents, and moves such as the establishment of a working group to develop a single interpretation of Russian history and the creation of a unit in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to combat the falsifications of history.

If the focus on the centrality of the Great Patriotic War is explicit, the sense of dissonance with others in the international arena is unmistakable. The National Security Strategy and Foreign Policy Concept both state Moscow's intention to counteract attempts to revise international history and Russia's place in it, and use history to provoke confrontation and revanchism in international affairs. Furthermore, Persson notes that while the Russian approach to history – focused on greatness and military history – is not unusual, it reflects a nineteenth-century methodology and is at odds with the one prevalent in the West that adopts a 'more critical approach to sources and historical events'.³⁴

There is a tendency among many Western observers and senior public policy figures – implicitly or explicitly – to discuss Russia in terms of being on the 'right' or 'wrong' side of history, of the 'progressive' nature of history and applying certain methods of assumption and inference as a result. Again, there are echoes of the late 1980s and early 1990s, since this builds on an optimistic vision of Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History' argument, the view that the end of the Cold War reflected the 'triumph of the West, of the Western idea' in the victory of liberalism, and the 'total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism'. (Many assumed that Fukuyama meant victory was complete. He did not, and stressed that it would be in the long run and that much of the world remained 'mired in history' – and, importantly for this discussion, 'Russia and China are not likely to join the developed nations of the West as liberal societies any time in the foreseeable future.')

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On this assumption is based the view that Russia – particularly under the leadership of Vladimir Putin – is on the 'wrong side of history' as 'shown' by the protest demonstrations in Russia in 2011, and the Russian state's position regarding the war in Syria. The US

leadership returned to this theme after the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, with President Obama stating that international criticism of Russian actions placed Russia on the ‘wrong side of history’, and John Kerry that Putin ‘may have his version of history, but I believe that he and Russia ... are on the wrong side of history’. ‘I must say I was really struck and somewhat surprised and even disappointed by the interpretations in the facts as they were presented by (Putin)’, he continued.³⁶

Russian points of reference in history are also different. This was well illustrated by a discussion that Vladimir Putin had with Russian historians in November 2014. Western reportage of the meeting emphasised Putin’s apparent ‘rehabilitation’ of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.³⁷ Putin, however, pointed to the West’s unreliability towards, even ‘betrayal’ of, its Eastern European allies, such as Poland in the Second World War, and contended that Western historians ‘hush up’ the Munich agreement and, in focusing on the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the division of Poland, overlook how Poland invaded and annexed part of Czechoslovakia when the Germans annexed the Sudetenland in 1938.³⁸

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Russian leadership does not see ‘sides’ of history in the same way, not least because Russia did not begin the same ‘end of history’ discussion that took place in the West. Lavrov has stated that ‘many politicians, particularly in the West’ enjoy using ‘bright slogans’ such as the ‘right side of history’, but these are ‘extreme’ and ‘emotional’. He then suggested that those who had followed Russia’s role in the arrangements for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, would recognise that Russia, with others, was on the ‘right’ side of history, while their (Western) partners had ‘flip-flopped’.³⁹

Nevertheless, ideas of the ‘end of history’ and the assumption that history can be interpreted in a progressive form has underpinned much of the Western understanding of Russia in the post-Cold War era. The entwining of ideas of ‘progress’ in history, and the comparison of Russian development with ourselves and Russia’s ‘return’ to the Western family of nations through transition to democracy, offers an easy, even irresistible, rule of thumb by which points of emphasis can be selected and rejected, and imposes a certain form in which a particular scheme of historic transformation emerges, allowing the classification of people into those who either furthered progress or tried to hinder it.

Those who oppose Vladimir Putin, for example, have been easily classified into recognisable agents of change, because observers see

similarities with a ‘modern’, Western society – and can be categorised as a ‘rising urban middle class’ – while the Russian leadership, especially Vladimir Putin, are categorised as those hindering progress.⁴⁰ This frames the discussion in a series of false delineations and definitions of ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’: some senior Russian figures are understood to be ‘liberals’, it seems, mostly on the basis of what they are not, rather than what they actually are.

This emphasis on the principle of ‘progress’ standing paramount as the scheme of history encourages the drawing of simple lines of causation and change through events, in the search for a desirable trajectory.⁴¹ This generates an outlook which acts with a gravitational pull on our inquiries – support is lent to those who appear to represent progress and is combined with the vilification of those who are seen to oppose it; and attention is focused on events, such as examples of popular protest against oppressive leaders, as a stage in the inevitable march of progress and liberty. On this basis observers adopt the role of participant and seek to deliver a moral judgement.

Second, this sense of transition builds on a series of abridgments that strips events and people of complexity and nuance. Furthermore, abridgments are based on a liberal Western perspective of progress. Conflicting context and detail are removed, on the assumption that the essentials can be told through a series of generalisations with apparently relevant examples. The abbreviation of complications and qualifications out of existence generates an unwarranted sense of certainty: abridgment builds on abridgment to oversimplify understanding, and, in doing so generates inferences rather than inquiry and concentrates the focus on our own questions. But these inferences are from the organisation we have given to our knowledge, from a particular series of abstractions, rather than developments in Russia. This serves to confirm and even imprison us in our biases, begging fewer questions about Russia and only drawing out the things we are looking for, while removing troublesome elements in the complexity to make the crooked straight and the story fit.

The third point is the combination of these two features: with the sense of transition and the abridgment comes the concentration on and magnification of similarities and differences in reference to the West. There is a particular tendency to write – explicitly or implicitly – on the side of, or in praise of the opposition in Russia, on the assumption that it is more analogous to the West’s own conditions. This tends to load the evidence in one direction, making the opposition seem more prominent, united and ‘Western’ than

it is. In drawing on the more accessible, more readily appreciable, Western-oriented evidence, it is hard to keep in mind the differences and diversity in Russia. It is easy to forget that opposition figures may oppose policies we support, or endorse policies we oppose, and to overlook or dismiss opposition forces that do not equate to our understanding of how developments should evolve. In sum, this 'progressive', transitional interpretation of Russia from communism to liberal democracy allows easy dramatisation with the pleasure of the apparent recognition of some of the participants and the plausibility of wider links and comparisons with an outcome that is earnestly desired.

Structure of the book

This book takes the form of an essay about Russia and how it is understood in the West. The central theme linking these aspects is that mainstream Western public policy and media views of Russia are dominated by a strong blend of ethnocentrism and a 'progressive' historical template, and that the expectation of Russia's convergence with the West, its 'return to the Western family of nations' as a democratic state that acts as a partner on the international stage, is both flawed and has distorted Western understanding of post-Cold War Russia.

The chapters each take one aspect of this theme, and examine it from different angles. While Chapter 1 reflects in depth on specifically Western aspects of this question, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 initially link to the central theme of the West's anticipation of Russian transition, but each then turns towards more detailed exploration of the Russian views of the international environment and domestic developments, and thus offer different ways of interpreting Russian foreign policy and domestic politics.

Beginning with the idea of the prevalent sense of surprise, Chapter 1 looks first at the impact of Russia's decline as a political priority for the West since the end of the Cold War and the practical impact this has had. It then reflects on the rising influence, especially, but not only, in public policy and media circles, of 'transitionology' (the conviction that post-communist states were moving towards democracy) as the main lens through which developments in Russia were interpreted. Finally, it sketches out a series of problems such as the prevalence of 'Putinology' and historical analogies.

Chapter 2 examines the evolution of the West's relationship with Russia since the end of the Cold War, focusing particularly on the

NATO–Russia relationship. Practical cooperation has taken place and a deep and wide institutional framework established, but dissonance has become increasingly obvious – and increasingly systematic. It sketches out some background, returning to the founding myths of the 1990s, especially the idea that Russia will return to the Western family of nations, before framing the chronological development of relations and the emergence of strategic dissonance from 2003.

Strategic dissonance refers to the increasing sense of disharmony and friction between the West and Russia over major questions both in bilateral relations and in how the world is understood – a disharmony that reflected the trend away from hopes for a ‘strategic partnership’ that dominated the 1990s and even continued into the 2000s, but that stopped short of being open conflict. It then explores the differing interpretations of international affairs that mean that ‘common’ problems are not ‘shared’ or even compatible.

Chapter 3 turns to look at Russian domestic politics, particularly the Western belief in and search for a particular kind of change in Russia – a transition to democracy. Taking as its focal point the election cycle of 2011–2012, the chapter begins by sketching the scene as often depicted in the West – the emergence of a largely middle class, liberal ‘white ribbon’ opposition in ‘unprecedented’ demonstrations, and the essentially reflexive sense that the Putin era was coming to a close. The term ‘reflexive transitionology’ suggests that, in responding to the (unanticipated) protest demonstrations in December 2011, the Western debate about Russia was an automatic return to the hopes, even ideals, of the earlier debates about Russia’s transition to democracy: the rise of an affluent, technologically advanced and politically liberal urban middle class instigating progressive political change towards liberal democracy in Russia.

The chapter explores the protest demonstrations, notes the ongoing importance of the role of the political left in Russia, and sets out the leadership’s response. Although many have emphasised the more repressive actions such as the imprisonment of protest leaders, the focus is on other significant developments that took place, including the establishment of para-institutional organisations such as the All-Russian Popular Front (ONF).

Chapter 4 continues the exploration of domestic politics, but turns to address the theme of ‘Putinology’, the focus on Putin as the central figure in Russian politics.⁴² Though he is undeniably important, ‘Putinology’ and ‘Putin’s Russia’ increasingly appears as a means of attempting to label Putin in the totalitarian tradition and a

vivid symbol of the development of Russia in the ‘wrong direction’. Furthermore, many other figures, both well established and emergent, have been either ignored or blanked out into abstract groupings such as ‘siloviki’ (those from the power structures) and ‘liberals’ (those suggested to be more Western leaning). They thus appear merely as ciphers, and, though subject to certain conditions and capable of certain desires, remain faceless, un-individualistic and asocial symbols. It has led to many errors in the general understanding of the nature of power and politics in Russia, not least the generational aspects of the leadership, the difficulties of power creation and the emergence of new figures. The chapter explores the nature of ‘manual control’ and the need for effective managers, and offers a brief overview of some of the prominent and emerging figures and their roles.

The conclusion briefly draws the threads together. In sum, this book offers an appraisal of how and why Russia has been misinterpreted in the West since the early 1990s and seeks to initiate a refocus. This is important because the next few years are likely to see the continuation of a dissonance and competition, the intractability of old problems and doubtless the emergence of new ones – whether they be on international affairs questions such as the ballistic missile defence programme and unresolved Euro-Atlantic security questions (not least the consequences of the war in Ukraine), or disagreements over developments in Russia itself, such as the parliamentary and presidential elections, scheduled respectively for 2016 and 2018.

Some caveats are necessary. First, the increasingly troubled nature of Russia’s relationship with the West is such that certain terms have become politically loaded. The terms ‘understanding’ and even ‘interpreting’ require clarification about what they do *not* mean in this book. Discussion about Russia has become more partisan as a result of the war in Ukraine, and in this context, ‘understanding’ is often equated with compromise with, and the appeasement of, Putin, and applied to apologists for him (‘Putin understanders’). To be clear from the outset, the terms ‘interpreting’ and ‘understanding’ are not used here as synonyms for ‘accommodating’, ‘compromising with’ or ‘accepting’ Russia, nor are they used as basis for ‘apologies for’ Russia or arguing that Western observers must be more politically ‘fair’ to Russia by overlooking the many problems, or ascribing extenuating circumstances.

Instead, the focus is on exploring the linguistic and conceptual gaps that have emerged between the West and Russia and how Russia works. In other words, it asserts that the route to a better understanding of Russia and thus a better ability to decipher

Russian politics and foreign policy takes into consideration Russian history and political landscape and language, and a clearer understanding of the individuals and groups involved. This requires curiosity and empathy – the capacity to understand what another person is experiencing from within the other person's frame of reference, in effect putting oneself in another's shoes. But empathy is not synonymous with sympathy, and the book illustrates clearly the disagreements between Russia and the West.

The second caveat concerns what is referred to in the book as a 'mainstream Western' view of Russia that has interpreted Russia in terms of 'transition' towards or away from democracy. This raises two points for clarification. First, the West is not as united as it was during the Cold War, and there are important distinctions within the West in terms of how Russia is seen and relations with it. Therefore, to be clear, the primary focus of the analysis of Western debate is on the debate in the Anglo-Saxon sphere. Thus attention is paid predominantly to US and British debates, though it also includes the debate at institutional level particularly in NATO, but also the EU.

Since there is also debate about what 'transitology' means, how it has evolved and the extent to which it dominated the academic debate, second, it is worth setting out what is meant here. Some, such as Gans-Morse, have argued that 'transitology' had only very limited influence in Russia studies. His analysis reflects a quantitative and qualitative examination of specifically academic literature. However, he does not reflect on the public policy and media influence on this debate, where the transition paradigm was at its strongest. Nor does he explore the deeper and more implicit influence of the transition approach that evolved into the 'regime question'.⁴³ Indeed, there is an extensive literature on post-Soviet transition, particularly relating to Russia, but also to other former Soviet states, including Georgia and Ukraine.⁴⁴ This literature offers the core of what is understood here as 'the mainstream', prominent as it is in public policy, think tank and media circles. In attempting to delineate this from other political science and academic 'transition' paradigms, Stephen Cohen coined the term 'transitionology'.⁴⁵ Although it is imperfect, given its linguistic clumsiness, 'transitionology' is the term used below to describe the transition paradigm and the search for 'progress' in Russia.

The third caveat relates to what the book does not attempt to address. Despite its focus on transition and democratisation, the book does not directly address questions of Russian democracy or authoritarianism. The various questions these themes raise have

been thoroughly examined by many others, indeed, it has been the central theme of analysis, though it is important to say here that critiquing the Western transition paradigm does not imply that Russia meets Western democratic standards. Equally, many other important issues are touched upon or raised tangentially, such as, in foreign policy terms, the Russo-Georgia war, the energy disputes between Gazprom and Naftogaz Ukraini (in 2006 and 2008–2009), or even the war in Ukraine, or domestically, flaws in the electoral process and corruption, but are not dealt with in depth. These, too, are covered elsewhere.

The fourth and final caveat is that the book focuses on Russia, and it does not explore whether the criticisms made of Western Russia studies are comparable to Western interpretations of other states or regions, either historically or currently, though there are some indications that they might be.⁴⁶ Some fine work was carried out during the Cold War era on the lack of empathy and fallacies of imposing Western conceptual, linguistic, political and societal frames of reference on to the USSR and the Middle East and making the false assumptions that Soviet decision-makers were operating on much the same principles and much the same view of the strategic situation as their Western counterparts.

Though they are not explored, many of the points made are also relevant in terms of Western understandings of other states of the former Soviet Union – beyond small handfuls of experts, there were very few who could claim expertise on Georgia or Ukraine until the wars in 2008 and 2014 respectively, and much of the discussion about them has been conducted along the lines of their transition to democracy. Western policy-makers and observers were often surprised by the responses of Tbilisi and Kyiv during these crises and misread their actions. Similarly, Western capitals were surprised by the so-called ‘Arab Spring’, and the discussion and responses to it likewise showed the hallmarks of optimistic assumptions about a transition to democracy.

This has also been a theme in the context of the West’s military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, in which critics have argued that the West suffers from similar problems, including a lack of awareness of the environment in which they were operating – and the attempt to exercise influence without deeming it necessary to learn about those whom they are seeking to influence.⁴⁷ It is sobering to hear senior US and British officials observe that, even after such long experience at war in Iraq and Afghanistan there are still too few people who know the regions intimately enough to be able

to frame the questions clearly enough to learn appropriate lessons from them, and to reflect on the potential implications of the contrasting lack of resources dedicated to Russia over the same period for the belated scramble to try to correct this from 2014. While additional resources are necessary, however, what is more important is a fresh way of thinking about Russia.

Notes

- 1 Correspondence with State Department official, October 2013.
- 2 'Kerry doesn't view Russia as an existential threat: State Department', *Reuters* (15 July 2015), www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-defense-dunford-state-idUSKCN0PK27120150710.
- 3 Correspondence with senior NATO official, May 2012. NATO summit declaration, paragraph 30, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87593.htm?mode=pressrelease.
- 4 E. Crankshaw, *Russia and the Russians* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1947), p. 6. Emphasis in original.
- 5 Crankshaw, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 3.
- 6 Philip Hanson has suggested that Western commentary on Russia since the early 1990s has been 'prone to surges of great optimism on one hand and deep gloom on the other', with both proving exaggerated. P. Hanson, *Russia to 2020*. Occasional Paper, Finmeccanica (November 2009), p. 43. Angela Stent also explored these cycles in the US–Russia relationship in her book *The Limits of Partnership: US–Russia Relations in the Twenty First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).
- 7 'Russia and the West: cold climate', *The Economist* (31 August 2013).
- 8 S. Talbott, 'The making of Vladimir Putin', *Politico* (19 August 2014), www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/putin-the-backstory-110151.html#.VQLB3r7JvL8.
- 9 This quote competes with the Churchill reference noted above for the most common reference used in the Western discussion about Russia. 'Annual address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation' (25 April 2005), http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/04/25/2031_type70029type82912_87086.shtml.
- 10 'Back to the Cold War?', BBC (10 February 2007), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6350847.stm>; E. Lucas, *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).
- 11 'Speech at meeting with German political, parliamentary and civic leaders' (5 June 2008), http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type82914type84779_202153.shtml.
- 12 D. Trenin, 'Vneshnaya politika' [Foreign policy], *Kommersant Vlast* (28 January 2008).

- 13 C. Merridale, *Red Fortress: The Secret Heart of Russia's History* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), pp. 352–353, 358.
- 14 A.S. Tereshchenko, *Marshal Voennoi Razvedki* [Marshal of Military Intelligence] (Moscow: Akva-term, 2012), p. 352. The author is grateful to Henry Plater-Zyberk for drawing this to his attention.
- 15 B. Oleinik, V. Pavlov and N. Ryzhkov, *Gorbachev: Anatomia predatelstva* [Gorbachev: Anatomy of Betrayal] (Moscow: Algoritm, 2013).
- 16 D. Trenin, *Getting Russia Right* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2007).
- 17 S. Graubard, 'The next debate: who lost Russia? A major debacle looms abroad while American policy makers ponder their domestic navels', *Los Angeles Times* (11 January 1994), http://articles.latimes.com/1994-01-11/local/me-10540_1_american-foreign-policy. The debate rumbled on for years: see J. Stiglitz, *Globalisation and its Discontents* (London: W.W. Norton and Co, 2002), chapter 5; the review article by J. Kaplan, 'Who lost Russia?', *New York Times* (8 October 2000), www.nytimes.com/2000/10/08/books/who-lost-russia.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm; V. Ivanenko, 'The importance of being normal', *Russia in Global Affairs*, 3:4 (October 2005); and 'Putin's victory and the limits of the "who lost Russia" debate' (5 March 2012), http://open.salon.com/blog/don_rich/2012/03/05/putins_victory_and_limits_of_the_who_lost_russia_question. It morphed into the Russia as a 'normal country' debate. See A. Shleifer and D. Treisman, 'A normal country', *Foreign Affairs* (March–April 2004); A. Schleifer and D. Treisman, 'A normal country: Russia after communism', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19:1 (winter 2005), pp. 151–174; S. Rosefelde, 'Russia: an abnormal country', *The European Journal of Comparative Economics*, 2:1 (2005), <http://eaces.liuc.it/18242979200501/182429792005020101.pdf>. A similar debate has taken place in the Western discussion about China and Japan.
- 18 O. Lungescu, 'NATO expansion and the Ukraine conflict', *Guardian* (5 March 2015); M. Kramer, 'The myth of a no-NATO enlargement pledge to Russia', *Washington Quarterly*, 32:2 (April 2009); M. Ruhle, *NATO Enlargement and Russia: Die Hard Myths and Real Dilemmas*, NDC Research Report (15 May 2014); E. Primakov, *Gody v bolsnoi politike* [Years in Big Politics] (Moscow: Sovershenno sekretno, 1999), pp. 232–233.
- 19 R. Braithwaite, *Across the Moscow River: The World Turned Upside Down* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 134.
- 20 M. Sarotte, 'A broken promise? What the West really told Moscow about NATO expansion', *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2014).
- 21 There are others, such as NATO's campaign in Kosovo in 1999.
- 22 N. Granholm, J. Malminen and G. Persson (eds), *A Rude Awakening: Ramifications of Russian Aggression Towards Ukraine* (Stockholm: FOI, June 2014), p. 11.

- 23 Nikolai Svanidze, 'Diletanty: pastukh i stado: kak menyalis otnosheniya naroda i glav gosudarsvta' [Dilettantes: the shepherd and flock: how relations between people and state leaders changed], *Radio Ekho Moskvy* (14 August 2014), <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/Diletanti/1379172-echo/#element-text>; A. Kolesnikov, 'The Russian middle class is a besieged fortress', Carnegie Centre, Moscow (6 April 2015), <http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=59655>.
- 24 P. Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace and Neutrality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), chapter 3, pp. 160–165.
- 25 K. Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), chapter 3.
- 26 It is a tangential but interesting point that Western and Russian approaches to linguistic interpretation differ: in the West, the preference is for L1 interpretation, the interpreter translating the foreign language into their own native language. From the Soviet period, Russian interpreting has tended to be L2 – the interpreter translates from their native language into a second language.
- 27 The Russian term used – повстанец (povstanets) – suggests a more romanticised image of a rebel with a cause. Unsurprisingly, this image is particularly provocative when dealing with serving Russian military officers who have fought in the Chechen campaigns.
- 28 'Sergei Lavrov i Khillary Klinton zagruzili povestku dnya' [Sergey Lavrov and Hillary Clinton loaded the day's agenda], *Kommersant* (7 March 2009), www.kommersant.ru/doc/1131090; 'Button gaffe embarrasses Clinton', *BBC News* (7 March 2009), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7930047.stm>.
- 29 Remarks by Vice President Biden at the 45th Munich Security Conference (7 February 2007), www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/RemarksbyVicePresidentBidenat45thMunichConferenceonSecurityPolicy/.
- 30 S. Lavrov, 'Russia-US relations: perspectives and prospects for the new agenda', speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (7 May 2009), <http://carnegieendowment.org/2009/05/07/foreign-minister-lavrov-on-russia-u.s.-relations-perspectives-and-prospects-for-new-agenda/1scd>.
- 31 A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: US-Russia Relations in the Twenty First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 211–212. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Russian term for 'reset' is being used in a domestic political context.
- 32 'Sir John Sawers, ex-MI6 chief, warns of Russia "danger"', BBC's Today Programme (28 February 2015), www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31669195.
- 33 K. Giles, *The Russian Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation 2010*, NATO Defence College Review (February 2010), www.ndc.nato.int/research/series.php?icode=9.

- 34 G. Persson, *Russian History: A Matter of National Security*, RUFBS Briefing No. 19 (August 2013).
- 35 F. Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest* (Summer 1989).
- 36 'Obama: Russia on the wrong side of history', *Associated Press* (3 March 2014), www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zUTCQB7SGE; Kerry cited in 'Russia on the wrong side of history says Kerry', *First Post* (19 March 2014), www.firstpost.com/world/russia-on-wrong-side-of-history-says-john-kerry-1440151.html. The Obama administration has often used the phrase 'the wrong side of history', also in contexts other than Russia.
- 37 T. Snyder, 'Russia: Putin defends Soviet-Nazi pact', *New York Times* (7 November 2014).
- 38 'Meeting with young academics and history teachers' (5 November 2014), <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/23185>.
- 39 Lavrov cited in 'U nashikh partniorov buili sharakhanya' [Our partners have been flip-flopping], *Kommersant* (30 September 2013), www.kommersant.ru/doc/2308493.
- 40 J. Yaffa, 'Reading Putin', *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2012), www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137728/joshua-yaffa/reading-putin.
- 41 For a critical examination of such an interpretation of history, see H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931). In some ways, Butterfield's book provides a model for this one.
- 42 Apart from some brief media profiles, the only major English language biographies of political figures in the post-Soviet period are of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy's book *Mr Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* is perhaps one of the best for offering detail on some of the other important figures. F. Hill and C. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2012); T. Colton, *Yeltsin: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2008). A number of biographies of Vladimir Putin were published to coincide with the presidential elections in 2012: M. Gessen, *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin* (London: Granta, 2012); C. Hutchins and A. Korobko, *Putin* (Leicester: Matador, 2012); R. Sakwa, *Putin Redux: Power and Contradiction in Contemporary Russia* (London: Routledge, 2014). Media profiles of individuals such as Alexei Navalny tend to be hagiographical, one-dimensional and repetitive. J. Ioffe, 'Net impact: one man's crusade against Russian corruption', *The New Yorker* (4 April 2011), www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/04/04/110404fa_fact_ioffe?currentPage=all. There are some biographical sketches of well-established business figures: C. Freeland, *Sale of the Century: The Inside Story of the Second Russian Revolution* (London: Abacus, 2005); D. Hoffman, *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002); C. Erickson, *The Oligarchs: Money and Power in Capitalist Russia* (Stockholm: Text, 2012).

- 43 J. Gans-Morse, 'Searching for transitologists: contemporary theories of post-communist transitions and the myth of a dominant paradigm', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 20:4 (2004), pp. 320–349. For the 'regime question', see R. Sakwa, "'New Cold War" or twenty years' crisis?', *International Affairs*, 84:2 (March 2008).
- 44 M. McFaul, *Post Communist Politics: Democratic Prospects in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993); M. McFaul, N. Petrov and A. Ryabov (eds), *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004); A. Aslund and M. McFaul (eds), *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2006); T. Bjorkman, *Russia's Road to Deeper Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); L. Shevtsova, *Russia – Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007); M.S. Fish, *Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); *Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do*, Council on Foreign Relations Report No. 57 (2006), www.cfr.org/iran/russias-wrong-direction/p9997.
- 45 S. Cohen, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post Communist Russia* (London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2000), p. 23.
- 46 B. Chu, *Chinese Whispers: Why Everything You Know about China is Wrong* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013); M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997); F. Gaub, *Arab Transitions: Late Departure, Destination Unknown*, EUISS Brief, Paris (July 2014); K. Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, (London: Croom Helm, 1979); E. Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1970).
- 47 F. Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 11–12.