

FROM KÖNIGSBERG TO KALININGRAD AND BACK
THE NEXT PHASE OF RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

The Weizsäcker Lecture

at the American Academy in Berlin

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Thank you, Karl [von der Heyden], for the honor I have of giving the Weizsäcker Lecture—and doing so in the presence of its namesake. Mr. President, it's a pleasure to see you again. I remember with appreciation your receiving me on several visits I've made to Berlin in the past, most recently in 2003, when Wolfgang Ischinger arranged for a delegation of American Think Tankers to spend several days in Berlin. On that same visit, we met the leader of the principal opposition in the Bundestag—who had grown up in Templin, spoke excellent Russian, and was insightful about what was going on in Russia and its implications for Germany, Europe, and what I will call the political, as opposed to the geographic, “West.”

That is my topic this evening. I can't imagine a better place to address it than in this city, which is so closely associated with the worst and best of times in the 20th century. Berlin went from being a center of a great culture, to the capital of a predatory monstrosity, to the epicenter of the cold war, to a potential flash point for World War Three, to the place where—more than any other—the cold war ended in 1989.

For a few hours last July, when then-Senator Obama spoke to a huge crowd in the Tiergarten, Berlin was yet again in the news—as the focus of an historic American presidential campaign. Mr. Obama used the occasion to set the tone for his administration's approach to the world. Two sentences are worth quoting: “In this century, we need a strong European Union that deepens the security and prosperity of this continent, while extending a hand abroad. In this century—in this city of all cities—we must reject the cold war mind-set of the past, and resolve to work with Russia when we can, to stand up for our values when we must, and to seek a partnership that extends across this entire continent.”

What strikes me about that passage is the basic continuity it suggests in U.S. and European policy over the past two decades. On both sides of the Atlantic, there has been a broad consensus that the dissolution of the Iron Curtain

created the opportunity for the gradual political and economic integration of countries that had been separated by the cold war.

But that eventual outcome depends largely on Russia's evolution in the way it governs its own people, treats its neighbors and engages with the rest of the world.

Since Czarist times, Russia's internal regime and external behavior have been closely linked. Repression inside Russia has often coincided with intimidation and aggression beyond its borders. Conversely, internal reform and a live-and-let-live foreign policy have gone hand in hand.

So it was with Mikhail Gorbachev, whose policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* were closely tied to "partnership" and "new thinking" in Soviet foreign policy. Similarly, Boris Yeltsin's efforts to decentralize and democratize Russia were connected with his eagerness for Russia to be recognized as a member in good standing of the international community, with a seat at the table of the board of directors of the world.

Russia has changed course under Vladimir Putin. When he first moved to Moscow in the late 90s, he used the vocabulary of a St. Petersburg reformer, including the word *zapadnichestvo*. That term roughly translates as "Russia's Western vocation," and it is redolent of Peter the Great and the westernizers of the 19th century. But Mr. Putin also adopted an Orwellian terminology that featured phrases like "managed democracy," "the vertical of power," and "the dictatorship of law."

Speaking of laws—and of dictatorship—there is a piece of legislation under consideration by the Duma that would treat critics of the government as traitors and those who have contact with foreign NGOs as spies.

True to the historical pattern, in parallel with the possibility of this sort of draconianism at home, Russia is—in various ways, and with varying degrees of

clarity about who's responsible—throwing its weight around abroad. To wit: the resort to cyberwarfare against Estonia and, last August, the invasion of a neighboring state.

Then, of course, there are the annual winter reminders from Moscow that Gazprom remains an instrument for exerting pressure on other countries.

Those cases are rightly notorious. Others deserve more attention than they have received so far. One is a law, also before the Duma, that would extend the protection of the Russian government to those it calls “compatriots” outside Russia. Coming on the heels of the de facto annexation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, this legislation has a distinct echo of the way in which the powers that ruled from this city 70 years ago applied the concept of *Volksdeutsche* to the Sudetenland and Poland.

More recently—that is, in 1977—a very different sort of German leader, Helmut Schmidt, warned that Moscow was trying to “decouple” Europe from the United States. Chancellor Schmidt was concerned about the hardware of Soviet power—specifically, the SS-20 intermediate-range missile. Recently, decoupling has again become part of Moscow's strategy toward the West. Alert to signs both of unease in Europe over American policy and of divisions within Europe itself, Russian officials have used rhetoric and diplomacy to try to drive wedges in what they would like to think is a shaken, even fractious Alliance.

Add all this up, and it's not surprising that many are worried about a new cold war. I would argue that that's not the way to think about what's happening.

Unlike the U.S.S.R., Russia does not embody or promulgate an alternative model of political and economic governance; it has no real allies, even—and perhaps especially—in its own neighborhood; and despite its formidable nuclear arsenal, it is no longer a military superpower. The use that Russian armored

columns made of the Roki tunnel between North and South Ossetia last August bears little resemblance to what we once feared might happen in the Fulda Gap.

Finally, the ideological dimension of what is happening in Russia has virtually nothing to do with those two 19th century thinkers—both native sons of Germany—whose portraits were ubiquitous in Soviet times. The legacy in Russia of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels is as dead as they are. Russia today can more usefully be seen as a misguided attempt to put into practice Thomas Hobbes’s conviction that the natural human condition is a “war of all against all”; that the security of a state requires an authoritarian ruler; and that successful states are those, as he put it, that strike the “posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another.”

Contrast that vision with the one developed by another giant of the Enlightenment—specifically, the *German* Enlightenment, since the philosopher in question was a professor of logic and metaphysics at Albertina University in Königsberg.

Immanuel Kant advocated a perpetual, democratic peace, based, at the national level, on a *Völkerbund* (a preview of the Federal Republic), on “the confraternity of trade” (a preview of the Common Market), on a confederation of likeminded states (a preview of the EU), and on an alliance of republics to deter and if necessary defeat aggressive empires (a preview of NATO).

In our own day, the pairing of Hobbes’s and Kant’s names is often shorthand for the dichotomy between “realists” and “dreamers.” But Kant did not come to his vision while he was asleep. Rather, he was wide awake to the realities of his day, including the Seven Years War. For five of those years, East Prussia was gobbled up by the Russian Leviathan. The city fathers of Königsberg had to swear allegiance to Catherine the Great. In the markets and shops that Kant passed on his perambulations, trade had to be conducted in rubles.

That episode presaged what happened two centuries later. As a result of agreements concluded in Potsdam—11 kilometers from where we gather this evening—the Germans of Königsberg were deported, their places taken by Russians (Stalin and Suslov’s “compatriots”); the ruble again became the local currency, and Kant’s beloved Hanseatic port was closed off from the world, acquiring, in the process, a new name: Kaliningrad.

Now that exclave of Russia is on our minds now in a way that resonates with Chancellor Schmidt’s warning of 30 years ago. This past November 5, the day after Barack Obama’s election as president, his soon-to-be Russian counterpart, Dimitri Medvedev threatened to deploy Iskander, or SS-26, missiles in Kaliningrad and target them against Poland.

It’s hard to imagine a development that more vividly demonstrated how Russia had reassumed the posture of a gladiator, brandishing its weapons and fixing its eyes on perceived—or, I would say, imaginary—enemies.

So the question for all of us is this: how should we, in the West, deal with Russia in the current phase of its evolution? Here is one way to frame an answer to that question: we should create conditions that will, over time, convince the Russians that their post-Marxist, post-Soviet, Hobbesian experiment is, in fact, *unrealistic*. It simply won’t work to Russia’s advantage in an age of interdependence, global challenges, and what I will call—using Eurospeak—the “broadening” and “deepening” of transnational governance. The 21st century is—or at least must be, if we’re going to survive it—an age that is ill-suited to gladiators and leviathans; it is an age that needs, and will reward, countries that have adopted the Kantian version of realism, which might be called “enlightened Realpolitik.”

Berlin is the capital of one such country, and there are 26 others. Despite the travails and debates associated with place names like Lisbon, Ireland, France and Turkey, the EU is proving that the Kantian paradigm of statehood and

statecraft, unlike the Hobbesian one, *does* work; it works not just for this continent, but as a model for other parts of the world.

Moreover, the United States, as of January 20, has an administration that believes in the theory and practice of the European Project. Granted, you're no more likely to hear Barack Obama invoking Kant than Vladimir Putin invoking Hobbes. But it's clear from what the new American president said in the Tiergarten last July and in his inaugural address three weeks ago that the government he leads is re-embracing the Kantian idea, which, under other labels (such as "Wilsonian"), long animated American foreign policy before the aberration of the George W. Bush years.

Among the several reasons to welcome this development is that it will help bring the U.S. and Europe back into sync with each other—both in general and, in particular, with regard to strategy toward Russia.

That strategy should start with four premises:

First, the West's interest in the choices Russians make about their country's political evolution is legitimate, given the extent to which our security depends on those choices.

Second, Russia today is not moving in a direction that we see as in our interest (or, for that matter, in Russia's own).

Third, our leverage over Russia is limited, given the upsurge in nationalism, resentment, and truculence on the part of the Russian *élite* and leadership. Moreover, there is apparently a high degree of popular support for those attitudes, much to the dismay of the brave but beleaguered liberals and westernizers who remain active in Russian politics today.

But here is an important—and new—fourth point: Russia today is significantly different from the country we saw a year ago. It is in acute financial distress. It has already run through more than a third of its hard currency reserves.

A Russia that is less cocky, more self-consciously vulnerable about its standing in an interconnected world, could go one of two directions: it might become more repressive and bellicose, or it may learn a version of the lesson we Americans have (I hope!) learned over the last eight years—that no nation can succeed acting alone.

Our challenge is to encourage the latter consequence. That said, only Russia is going to determine its internal course. Our remonstrations, exhortations, and demands on that subject are, at best, ineffective and, at worst, counterproductive. Of course we must be clear about our views on democracy, pluralism, and rule of law. But we should concentrate our diplomatic energy on the international environment in which Russia lives—and do so in a way that may alter, over time, the Russian government’s calculus about how it relates to that environment.

That means strengthening—again: *deepening* and *broadening*—multilateral institutions and agreements. I have in mind especially those structures and accords that entail norms to which Russia must adapt if it is to be a leading player in—and a full beneficiary of—a consensual, rule-based international system of the sort that the professor of Königsberg had in mind two centuries ago when he thought about the future of his continent.

In dealing with the Russians in the months head, primacy should be given to the security realm. That means returning to negotiated arms control of the sort that kept the peace during the cold war. That enterprise has lapsed over the last 8 years, but it is being revived by the Obama administration. There are various ways in which the resumption of meaningful arms control can yield further nuclear reductions. That process might also help resolve the dilemma posed by the U.S. missile defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as the prospect of Iskanders in Kaliningrad.

In addition to being determined to rescue arms control from the willful neglect of the previous administration, President Obama and Secretary Clinton intend to refurbish the latticework of cooperative structures, at all levels, that make up the international system.

At the worldwide level, there's the OECD (in which Russia is an observer) and the WTO (for which it is an applicant), as well as the G-8, which is morphing before our eyes into something substantially larger.

At the transregional level, there's the OSCE—in which Russia is a member, though a recalcitrant and sometimes obstructionist one. There are, in the Atlantic-Eurasian space, some 20 organizations with mutually overlapping memberships and missions. Here too, they range from ones that Russia belongs to, such as the Council of Europe, to ones with which it has a partnership, including, of course, the EU.

Northern Europe is an especially rich patchwork of groupings that promote, in different ways, trade, integration, cross-border cooperation on environmental and health issues, and confidence-building measures in the military sphere. It is no coincidence that the northwestern quadrant of the Eurasian landmass is the most stable, peaceful, and prosperous area along the periphery of the former Soviet empire.

Part of the challenge now is to apply lessons of cooperation, coordination, and confidence-building from the Nordic/Baltic experience of the last 18 years to the Southeast of Europe, including the Black Sea/Caucasus region, which is the *least* stable, and the most conflict-prone.

In the Far East, too, there are opportunities to build on Russian, European, and American participation in APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

So, in a very real sense, the political “West” has Russia surrounded. That's a fact—and a formulation—that would make many Russians nervous, or worse,

since “encirclement” is the English version of the word that they use for “containment.”

But what I’m describing is emphatically *not* containment, since that cold-war strategy was based on a globe-girdling system of military alliances whose purpose was to contain the expansion of Soviet power: NATO, CENTO, and SEATO.

Of those three pacts, only NATO survives. It has outlasted the cold war because it has—whatever the Russians may fear and say—taken on a post-cold war identity and mission. If the NATO-Russia Council can be revitalized (and that will require an exertion of political will on both sides of the hyphen), it can help ameliorate Russia’s neuralgia about the Alliance by demonstrating, in practical ways, that NATO is part of a larger latticework of cooperative structures that share a commitment to transparency, cooperation, mutual benefit, and common solutions to common problems.

A Western strategy that makes the most of this emerging system has, as its purpose, *including* Russia rather than excluding or containing it—*engaging* and *encouraging* the positive forces in Russia rather than just deterring the negative ones.

So how do we draw the Russians into this construct? Actually, they are giving us an opening, though perhaps without meaning to. What they bill as new proposals are actually old complaints, thinly disguised. An example: last summer—on June 5, here in Berlin—President Medvedev delivered a speech calling for a “new European security architecture.” Since then, Americans and Europeans have tried, through both official and unofficial channels, to get the Russians to elaborate. It’s been largely a sterile exercise. Eight months after Mr. Medvedev floated his idea, the Russian proposal remains pretty much content-free, except for an undisguised desire to undermine NATO, and an insistence on a veto

over any Western policy that would infringe on Russia's self-proclaimed "sphere of privileged interest" in the so-called "near abroad."

We must be clear that we—the U.S. and Allies—are determined to thwart those Russian goals. But with that determination established from the outset, we can take the Russians up on the idea of a structured process to review the landscape of European security, including, of course, energy security.

For this strategy to work, there must be more coherence and consensus *within the West* about how to handle the issue of NATO and EU enlargement. Those two processes are organically linked; they must continue in a synchronized, careful fashion. With regard to NATO, "careful" means in a way that's faithful to the original purpose of enlargement. That purpose was twofold: to enhance the security of the Alliance as a whole and to extend the European zone of a democratic peace eastward. But being "careful" must *not* mean refusing to support the European aspirations of Russia's neighbors any more than it means giving up on such aspirations among many Russians.

A last thought, which I'll direct to you, Karl and Gary [Smith]: the American Academy in Berlin might consider convening a conference that brings together thought-leaders from NGOs and think tanks in Russia, other former Soviet republics, and the West to tackle the issues I've touched on, and others as well. Rather than holding that conference here, at the Hans Arnhold Center, you might hold it instead in Kaliningrad at the local university, which—by the way—was recently renamed after Immanuel Kant. That way, you'll ensure that there are, once again, enlightened German voices in *that* city, helping to guide a discussion of Europe's and Russia's future—and figuring out ways to make those two futures more compatible in the years ahead.

