Half a century ago, after the conflicts over Berlin and Cuba, a new term of art came into vogue: ‘crisis management’. American Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was even quoted as saying that crisis management had taken over from strategy. A small literature came to be devoted to the subject. In a number of respects, the term and the key themes it invoked were behind much of the debate on security policy for the remainder of the Cold War.

The term ‘crisis’ comes from a Greek word indicating choice or decision, and came to refer to the turning point in a disease. The crisis was the moment when the fever reached a peak and the patient was either going to get a lot worse or a lot better. It is the moment usually marked in TV dramas by delirious patients, caring nurses, anxious relatives and lots of patting down of sweating foreheads with cold sponges. The idea of an international crisis has the same sense of stress and urgency. It means a conflict has come to a head, normally because one side has taken a bold but provocative initiative. At the moment of crisis, some big, long-standing conflict is about to be resolved, either through last-minute diplomacy or by force. The drama comes from a deadline, perhaps reinforced by an ultimatum, and intense media attention. On the news channels, the moment is usually marked by late nights in the corridors of power, emergency summits and tense United
Nations Security Council meetings, while staying on the alert for military mobilisations and movements. Leaders of major powers would be expected to show that they had the temperament and character for a crisis. A steely resolve and calm judgement would be at a premium. This was the point of Hillary Clinton’s famous challenge to candidate Barack Obama in 2008 as to how he would cope when ‘it’s 3 a.m. and your children are safe and asleep. But there’s a phone in the White House and its ringing. Something’s happening in the world.’

Those words were recalled at the start of the Ukraine crisis in late February 2014, when a bold move by President Vladimir Putin of Russia appeared to catch the United States and its NATO allies unprepared and struggling for a response. By annexing Crimea, on the basis of its military significance and ethnic composition, Russia revived some of the classic concerns of European security. Obama had pressed the ‘reset’ button on relations with Russia when he became president in 2009; now they would have to be reset again. In this respect, the crisis represented a sharp geopolitical jolt, a reminder that hard power never quite goes away and that, however much we may wish it were not so, the role of force remains formidable when it comes to setting borders and changing regimes. There has even been an unnerving reference to nuclear weapons. Yet this crisis has also been about the supposedly ‘soft power’ of the European Union and its ability to reshape the political and economic structures of post-communist states. This crisis occurred at the intersection of geo-economics and geopolitics, and here was found to be some vital differences from the Cold War era.

Its origins could be traced back to the push to draw countries that had once been part of the Soviet Union into the Western sphere of influence and a Russian attempt to resist this through the formation of a Eurasian Customs Union. When President Victor Yanukovich turned away from the EU in November and towards Russia the next month, enticed by a $15 billion loan and cheap energy supplies, he triggered a sharp public reaction, which led to the occupation of Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), thereby giving the revolution its name, ‘Euromaidan’. Despite an attempt by the EU and Russia to broker an agreement between the government and the opposition, President Yanukovich fled to Russia on 24 February. A tran-
sitional government was installed, which Russia condemned as illegal and extremist. On 27 February, Russian special forces combined with local activists to take over government institutions in Crimea, as well as Sevastopol, the home of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. On 18 March, they were annexed by Russia.

That was not, however, the end of the crisis, as there were then a number of deliberate measures by Russia, again with local support, to destabilise Ukraine, largely by taking over government buildings in the main cities of eastern Ukraine. Meanwhile, a substantial military capability was maintained on the other side of the border, ready to invade. In addition, efforts were made to further destabilise an already unstable economy through export embargoes and threats to gas supplies. To add to the sense of a developing crisis, there were also threats to Moldova, and in principle Belarus and Kazakhstan could also come into play because of the Russian minorities in their territories. Thus, there were the seeds of something much larger, with immediate effects within the area of the former Soviet Union but extending much beyond.

In this article, I will first describe the basic principles of crisis management as developed during the Cold War. I will then consider the origins of the Ukraine crisis, before seeking to apply these principles to its management in the spring of 2014. Crisis management turns, in the end, on how core interests are defined, and the risks that a state is prepared to run to defend them. In the first instance, the crisis over Ukraine was about that country’s own identity and chosen direction in its economic and foreign policy. Those choices, and the manner in which they were made, made this far more of a crisis for Russia than for the US and its European allies by challenging President Putin’s project for the creation of a Eurasian Union that could provide some compensation for the loss of the Soviet Union. The Western response reflected the fact that Ukraine was not a core interest. What did matter, however, was a pattern of Russian behaviour that threatened to unsettle not only Ukraine but the whole region, including members of NATO. This required reaffirming the benefits of alliance to those members and drawing Moscow’s attention to the potential costs of continu-
ing with a campaign of ‘distraction, deception and destabilisation’ against Ukraine. The main costs to be faced by Russia lay not in countervailing military pressure by NATO but in the loss of any prospect of Ukraine joining a Eurasian Union, along with its potential economic revival in association with the EU, and, more immediately, a sharp deterioration in Russia’s own economic position.

**Principles of crisis management**

The basic challenge of crisis management is to protect core interests while avoiding major war. In the Cold War lexicon, the concept had some connections to ‘coercive diplomacy’. This concept refers to the use of threats to persuade an opponent to change policies, either in the form of deterrence, so that an aggressive move is not made, or compellence, to reverse an aggressive move that has been made. Thus, deterrence says ‘do not annex Crimea or else’, while compellence says ‘you must release Crimea from annexation or else’. Deterrence works best when set in place long before a crisis erupts, while compellence tends to come into play during a crisis, although in circumstances where it may only succeed with overwhelming power, because of the extent to which a compliant opponent will suffer a loss of face. By contrast, deterrence should be easier. The opponent, if deterred, can always deny that any aggressive act had been contemplated.

The art of coercive diplomacy lies in constructing threats, which can involve deeds as well as words, that achieve their political effects without having to be implemented. Those employing threats must take account of how wrong moves and inappropriate language might be inflammatory and counterproductive. Achieving the desired effect may also require inducements and compromises that can only be achieved through direct negotiations. Crisis management therefore may well involve coercive diplomacy, but requires a keen understanding of its limits, for threats may not be received or acted upon as intended.

The most toxic term once used to describe crisis management was ‘brinkmanship’. Its origins can be traced to US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who in 1956 remarked that ‘the ability to get to the verge without getting into the war is the necessary art. If you cannot master it, you inev-
tably get into war. If you try to run away from it, if you are scared to go to the brink, you are lost." Thereafter, Democrats spoke of brinksmanship to convey the recklessness of Dulles’s foreign policy. Governments would not actually wish to go over the brink, but creating the impression that they might nonetheless do so could risk either incredibility or unintended disaster. This led to characterisations of subsequent Cold War crises in the terms of a game of chicken, normally presented as two juveniles pointing cars at each other to see who would swerve first.

From Cuba came another, contrary, insight. This was the need to provide an opponent some face-saving device to help them get away from the brink. This is what US President John F. Kennedy was said to have done with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. The difficulty with this notion was that it depended on identifying a feature of the crisis that was vital to the opponent but not to you. With a trivial gesture no face would be saved. This pointed to the importance of clarity about core interests, and an ability to distinguish them from more peripheral concerns during the course of any negotiations. Thus, in the case of Berlin, the US was, in principle, committed to keeping Berlin as an open city. In practice, however, Kennedy accepted that the core interest was West Berlin and there was little to be done for the East. The erection of the Berlin Wall of August 1961 was a blow to the cause of German reunification, and to East Germans, but it defused the crisis. Similarly, in October 1962, Kennedy knew that he had to see Soviet missiles out of Cuba, but he did not mind conceding his right to invade Cuba and was also prepared to abandon US missiles in Turkey (although not too publicly).

Central to this question was the position of allies. A peace-time alliance such as NATO shored up deterrence by reminding Moscow that aggression against one meant taking on all. This demanded constant reassurances from the US, a requirement that continues to this day. During periods of relative calm, this could be achieved by routine communiqués and comforting rhetoric. This stance could soon be tested at times of crisis, not only because allies became needier but also because they often did not agree among themselves. The Cuban crisis was unusual in that it was about a direct and close threat to the US, although, even then, in both its origins and resolution
it was linked to European security. The international role of the US means that its crises have tended to revolve around its commitments to allies and the foreign-policy priorities they reflect.

In addition, the military elements had to be kept under strict control. They could serve diplomacy but should not force its pace. This was the lesson of 1914, when the demanding timetable of the German offensive became a serious destabilising factor. The fearful prospect of a nuclear equivalent, as the US and the Soviet Union wondered about each other’s ability to mount a pre-emptive first strike, led to the idea of ‘crisis stability’ as a key objective of arms control. For true crisis stability, there could be no lasting advantages in launching a surprise attack, so there would be no need to rush to war and there would be time to deliberate and negotiate. Related to this was the need for disciplined armed forces so that not even the smallest unit would get involved in an incident that could trigger something wider and more dangerous. As Kennedy observed when a U-2 strayed into Soviet airspace during the missile crisis, ‘there’s always some sonofabitch who doesn’t get the word.’ Avoiding escalation through inadvertence also required continuing communications and diplomatic activity during a crisis, whether through intermediaries, meetings at the foreign-minister level or direct conversations between leaders. The missile crisis led directly to the establishment of the Washington–Moscow hotline.

Lastly, while crises involved high stakes and little time, their conduct could have a long-term impact. Not only might major issues be ‘settled’ one way or the other – so, the crises of the early 1960s reduced the likelihood that either West Berlin or Cuba would be seized by force – but they also created the case law for later crises. More generally, memorable events shaped future thinking on crises and provided the precedents to which governments returned when seeking to rationalise their decisions or demonstrate that opponents were following double standards.

Out of this we might say that the art of crisis management involves an appreciation of: core interests, including those of allies and adversaries; how the adversary might be persuaded not to escalate further and, if
possible, to back down; risks of inadvertent escalation; possibilities and limits of coercive instruments; the importance of regular communications with adversaries and allies; and the long-term implications of short-term measures.

An awareness of these issues was soon in evidence during the crisis over Ukraine. Western capitals sought to sound resolute without being reckless. All wished to sound reasonable, even when making threats. High-level conversations continued with calls between national capitals, emergency sessions of international organisations and face-to-face meetings. In effect, Western capitals soon judged that there was little to be done in the first instance to reverse the annexation of Crimea and so the focus was on preventing further challenges to Ukrainian stability and sovereignty, and to that of other vulnerable states, notably Moldova.

Many commentators have given Western countries poor marks so far for their crisis management over Ukraine. It must be doubted whether liberal democracies can ever be adept when trying to keep up with fast-moving events. It is in their nature to be distracted, risk-averse and superficial when assessing developing situations, and then to appear to be at a loss when they are caught by surprise. Autocratic governments have a natural advantage, especially when executing a dramatic move for which they have all the capabilities in place. Accusations levelled against President Obama in this case have variously been described as failing to appreciate the developing logic of President Putin’s authoritarianism and his assertiveness, both at home and in Russia’s ‘near abroad’, while easing his risk calculus by hesitating when on the verge of taking a forceful position after Syria’s use of chemical weapons, and then looking for diplomatic exit routes over Iran. The Western response to the annexation of Crimea has been derided as feeble. From the other direction, the West has been criticised for failing to pay adequate attention to the full implications of what was going on in Kiev in February 2014, and for supporting what was, in the end, an anti-democratic seizure of power.

Behind these criticisms were assumptions about President Putin’s intentions and his qualities as a crisis manager. Was the annexation of Crimea a self-contained act of aggression or just the first of a sequence, with parts of...
Lawrence Freedman
eastern Ukraine next in line? Was the move viewed in Moscow as essentially
defensive, reflecting a sense of insecurity over a Western threat, or an assersion of strength, reflecting a sense of Western weakness? The underlying issue, to use a word much employed, was how to ‘de-escalate’ the crisis and then stabilise the situation, and who would be found to have come out on top as a result. The start of May 2014, when this article goes to press, may be too early to provide definitive answers to these questions, but the history of this crisis suggests some basis upon which to assess what President Putin hoped to achieve and how to judge any eventual outcome.

**From the Cold War to colour revolutions**

Crises erupt on the fault lines of the international system. These fault lines are normally well known, but their meaning and impact change over time according to developments in the particular states involved and, more broadly, in international relations. The fault lines within Central and Eastern Europe can largely be linked to the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires, and their decline and fall. A distinctive sort of crisis emerged within this region after the Cold War, although in vital respects it reflected conflicts that have long troubled Europe. In this way, Ukraine exemplifies many familiar problems, with borders that have never been truly settled and a population that is not homogenous. Many Central and Eastern European states include more than one nation (reflected in language or ethnicity), just as the nations tend to be found in more than one state. This complex relationship between sovereign territory and national identity has generated a number of crises, often as multinational states have come under pressure to allow secessions.

As the Cold War ended, the West stuck to the line that old borders should be respected, initially because of concerns about the consequences of the Soviet Union coming apart. In the end, the centrifugal forces at work in states where the old order was thoroughly discredited proved to be too strong. In addition to the Soviet Union, this could be seen in the ‘velvet divorce’ of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and, much more painfully, the break-up of Yugoslavia. One of the most important crises generated by this process was that of Kosovo in 1999. It was prompted by Serbia’s
determination to hold on to the province of Kosovo, in part by encouraging a mass exodus of Kosovars to neighbouring states. After a tentative start, NATO mounted a sustained air campaign that included attacks on targets in Belgrade. Eventually, Serbia capitulated and the refugees were allowed home. This crisis introduced new rationales for intervention, based on alleviating humanitarian distress and protecting vulnerable minorities. It qualified the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, elevated the principle of self-determination and reduced the standing of the Security Council, for the threat of a Russian veto meant that it was not asked to authorise this use of armed force.

This was a key moment in Russia’s disenchantment with post-Cold War security arrangements, especially in the context of the wider restructuring of the European state system, which had already begun and led to many post-communist states joining NATO and then the EU. This was largely beneficial to those countries, in terms of governance and economics as well as security, but was viewed from Moscow with increasing misgivings. It is now regularly alleged that NATO promised in 1990 not to accept Central and Eastern European countries into the Alliance and then reneged. In fact, no formal pledges were made with regard to future enlargement.

The dominant issue in 1990 was whether a unified Germany would be in NATO. The wider question was not raised until expansion began in earnest in 1997, and then even more so with the addition of the Baltic states, former members of the Soviet Union.

Potential Russian unease at this development was recognised. Initially, NATO sought to meet the demands for closer association through devices such as the Partnership for Peace, but this was insufficient to satisfy former Soviet satellites that were anxious that they might be gobbled up again without the protection of alliance. In compensation for its general acquiescence, Russia was given privileged opportunities for consultation as security issues developed. It was also drawn into high-level international bodies, so the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations became the Group of Eight. This did little to address President Putin’s growing irritation. In a speech to a largely NATO audience in 2007, he described the Alliance’s expansion as ‘a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust’.
By this time, his anxiety about the implications of the Western penetration into the old Soviet Union had been confirmed by the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine (followed less convincingly by the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan), when unpopular and corrupt governments succumbed to popular demands and street protests.\(^{22}\) Putin was deeply troubled by the possibility of these colour revolutions being imitated in Russia. This was a key factor in the strong authoritarian turn of his approach to domestic politics, with attempts to marginalise and expel opposition politicians, and undermine NGOs. One of his first responses was to start to crack down on those NGOs with overseas funding. This meant, he indicated, that they were not ‘standing up for people’s real interests’.\(^{23}\)

Concern about a potential contagion from these colour revolutions was combined with a stated responsibility for Russian minorities that had been left stranded as Russia’s borders contracted in 1991. This manifested itself in the form of interventions in support of breakaway entities with Transdniestr, a strip of land on Moldova’s border with Ukraine, which fought for secession in 1992. Part of the precedent was that this involved pro-Russian militias taking over government buildings. The ceasefire agreement left the territory effectively under Russian control and with a garrison of Russian troops. At the same time, South Ossetia declared itself independent of Georgia. The Georgian government’s attempt to re-establish control resulted in wars in 1991–92, 2004 and, most seriously, August 2008. This last conflict involved South Ossetian provocations and a Georgian military offensive to reclaim the territory in response, and ended up with South Ossetian forces, greatly assisted by the Russians, gaining full control. There was a similar pattern with Abkhazia: a war against Georgia in 1992–93 which the Georgians lost; an attempt to resolve the conflict, with ceasefire agreements; UN monitoring forces; and a Russian-dominated peacekeeping operation. This was all falling apart when the South Ossetian conflict flared in August 2008. The Russians took the opportunity to recognise Abkhazia. Russia was not, however, successful in getting others to share its recognition of these secessionist entities. It was joined only by Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru and Tuvalu.
It was significant that NATO had recently, in April 2008, spoken positively about Georgian (and Ukrainian) membership of the Alliance. This was provocative to Moscow and encouraged Georgia to be bold in a way that NATO countries could not back. This underlined the problem for NATO. Countries in Russia’s near abroad had reason to feel insecure: drawing them towards the Alliance could become more than a positive gesture and risked getting involved in direct conflicts. For those who were already NATO members, the benefits were clear. After a row in late April 2007 about the removal of a Soviet war monument from the centre of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, there was rioting by members of the country’s large ethnic-Russian population. As tempers flared, Germany brokered a truce. Russia made its views known through a prolonged cyber attack on Estonia, which reached a peak on 9 May, the anniversary of Germany’s defeat in 1945, targeting government websites, news agencies and large banks. In 2006 and 2009, Russia had shown how it could exercise another form of power: problems were caused for European buyers of Russian gas when supplies were cut off to pipelines through Ukraine as a result of disputes over payments. These cases showed how Moscow was exploring coercive means that stopped short of armed force.

European versus Eurasian union

By 2009, therefore, Russia had created its own precedents and had also drawn on what it considered to be the precedents created by NATO, notably in Kosovo. It was evident that Moscow felt that it had the right to intervene in the affairs of former members of the Soviet Union. The main threat to its influence was seen to come as much from the EU as NATO. The threat came because the EU, more than Russia, offered to post-communist countries the possibility of a transformational economic effect. The comparisons between Poland and Ukraine are instructive, for both had developed in similar ways under communist rule. Their fates since then have been wildly divergent. Between 1990 and 2012, Ukraine’s economy had shrunk by over 30% while Poland’s had doubled in size, so that Polish per capita incomes were five times those of Ukrainians. For those stuck in the corrupt, subsidised, heavy-industry stagnation of post-communism, association with the EU offered a path to prosperity they were unlikely to find elsewhere.
The EU/NATO countries closest to Russia, all with experience of being in the Soviet sphere of influence, began, after the attack on Georgia, to look to ways of assisting those who had yet to join Western institutions but were clearly wary of Russian pressure. The response was an initiative known as the Eastern Partnership, which was to include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.\textsuperscript{27} This was marked by a summit in Prague in the summer of 2009, and then one in Warsaw in September 2011. The goal was described as ‘building a common area of democracy, prosperity, stability and increased interactions and exchanges’. Major political and socio-economic reforms were required of the partner countries. If they could be achieved, then the prospect was one of progressive ‘economic integration in the EU Internal Market, and therefore to the creation of an economic area between the EU and partner countries’.\textsuperscript{28}

From the start, this initiative was denounced by Russia as an attempt to extend the EU sphere of influence into its neighbourhood. On 18 November 2011, not long after the Warsaw summit, Russia announced an agreement with Kazakhstan and Belarus (which because of its human-rights record was something of an outlier in the Eastern Partnership) to establish a Eurasian Customs Union by 2015.\textsuperscript{29} This was to mimic the EU in terms of starting as a customs union and then becoming something more, a supra-national entity (although obviously with Russia dominant) that would bring together economies, legal systems, customs services and even military capabilities to rival the EU, the US and China.

Whether or not this aspiration was ever realistic, it is not hard to see its attractions to President Putin. His efforts to modernise the Russian economy so that it could interact more effectively with the West had failed. The boon of high oil and gas prices had led to few lasting benefits, and the prospect for the Russian economy was of a progressive slide. For a leader who saw the collapse of the Soviet Union as a calamity, this was the only chance to begin a partial reconstruction, even if it meant interacting largely with economies with similar pathologies to Russia’s own. Added to this was the discontent witnessed in late 2011 when it became evident that, as prime minister, he intended to swap positions again with then-President Dmitry Medvedev, and his subsequent determination to strengthen the state appa-
ratus. Against this backdrop, the Customs Union appears as almost the last possibility of providing a sufficiently substantial context for the exercise of Russian power.

The problem for President Putin was that the inclusion of only Belarus and Kazakhstan would not be sufficient. Because of Russian support for the American-backed separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan was a lost cause, as was Georgia. The countries really in play were Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine. Yet, in the next in the series of Eastern Partnership summits, scheduled for Prague in November 2013, these countries would be invited to sign Association Agreements with the EU covering trade, which could preclude them from joining the Customs Union. This explains why Ukraine has come to matter so much for President Putin. Larger than other Central and Eastern European countries, and so much a part of the Russian past, Ukraine was seen in Moscow as the essential building block in the construction of the Customs Union.

The first requirement was to prevent Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine slipping away into the Western sphere. In August 2013, the Ukrainian paper Zerkalo Nedeli published a document which purported to describe how Russia might influence Kiev’s choice and force it to move away from the EU and back towards the Customs Union. This discussed influencing media attitudes, working with Ukrainian oligarchs and increasing economic dependence upon Russia. In early September, Armenia was persuaded, after its president met with President Putin in Moscow, to abandon its previous quest for an Association Agreement and opt instead for the Customs Union. With its economic and security dependency on Russia, it was in no position to resist. At the same time, when Moldova was warned by Russia not to sign an Association Agreement, there were references to the contested position of Transdniestr. Moldova, Europe’s poorest country, was dependent on its wine exports but found these embargoed by Russia. The strategy was only partially successful: Moldova still signed up with the EU in Vilnius. But Ukraine held back. President Yanukovich did not sign. In December 2013, he signed instead an agreement for a $15bn loan from Russia to bail out Ukraine’s struggling economy, along with an agreement on cheap gas prices.
This triggered the current crisis, as it was evident to Ukrainians that this represented a profound and possibly decisive official tilt away from the EU and towards Russia. There were fierce popular protests, which President Yanukovich handled poorly, alternating hot and cold: firstly, with an attempt to introduce authoritarian measures, then seeking compromise, followed by shooting and, finally, a hastily brokered deal on 21 February with the representatives of the EU and Russia present (although the latter did not endorse the deal). By this time, popular feeling was against the president and he fled, leaving behind evidence of startling, corruption-fuelled wealth. The transfer of power was irregular and improvised, and set precedents in terms of seizing buildings and setting up barricades as a means of coercing a government, but not wholly extra-constitutional because the parliament was still functioning. The new government was not ideal, but was better than could have been expected if there had been a complete power vacuum after the president’s flight.

Moscow’s position was that the US and the EU had connived in the illegal overthrow of President Yanukovich, which was led by fascistic elements. The detail of what actually happened in Kiev from 20–24 February does not support these allegations. The most damaging act taken by the Ukrainian parliament in the aftermath of Yanukovich’s flight was to vote to make Ukrainian the sole state language at all levels. This caused a strong adverse reaction in Crimea and southern and eastern Ukraine, and prompted street protests. Acting President Oleksandr Turchynov vetoed the bill on 1 March.

The real source of Putin’s anger was that a new government with a Western orientation represented a serious defeat, possibly fatal to his long-term ambitions. Everything that has happened post-Yanukovich has been geared to recovering this lost position. The ideal would be to have all of Ukraine turn away from the EU and back towards the Customs Union. The fallback position has been to ensure that at the very least it is unable to join the EU by keeping it in a state of constant chaos and uncertainty. This has involved seeking to make it impossible for Kiev to organise the elections planned for 25 May 2014, coupled with demands for a more federal constitution that would have the effect of allowing the Russian-oriented eastern regions to block a close association with the EU. Less clear is whether the
forms of coercive diplomacy employed by Putin to undermine the new government in Kiev, which have relied on using special forces and local activists to establish a presence hostile to the central government, firstly in Crimea and then in eastern Ukraine, have represented a form of pressure that could in principle be turned off, should the political demands be met. The more scary alternative is that these dynamics may be developing a trajectory of their own outside the control of either Kiev or Moscow, perhaps leading to dangerous choices for both.

A case could be made that the initial moves in Crimea were intended for coercive rather than separatist purposes. In his first statement, Putin said that he did not anticipate annexing Crimea and he may have been hoping for a much more generalised pro-Russian insurrection across eastern Ukraine.\(^\text{35}\) It was at this point that he first gained authority from the Duma to send peacekeeping forces into Ukraine to protect Russian minorities.\(^\text{36}\) It was soon evident that only Crimea, where there was already a substantial Russian military presence, was in any sense under Moscow’s control. On 16 March, a hastily arranged referendum supported a reintegration of Crimea into the Russian Federation. On 18 March, Russia completed the annexation.

The allegations about the Ukrainian groups responsible and their lack of legitimacy, and by contrast the praise of the determination of the Russian-speaking majority in Crimea to protect itself against these elements, were prominent in President Putin’s address on the annexation of Crimea on 18 March. He also made references to both the 1999 NATO campaign against Serbia and the eventual independence of Kosovo to demonstrate the West’s double standards when it came to international law. The main thrust of his analysis, however, was to emphasise how events in Kiev were part of a pattern. The colour revolutions were ‘controlled’. They did those who acted in their name little good, but in practice they were ‘aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration’. Confirming that Russia acted out of a sense of threat, he used a chilling metaphor: ‘Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard.’\(^\text{37}\)
The problem with which Putin was now left was that, while he had the consolation prize of Crimea, he could well have lost the larger prize of the rest of Ukraine. Accordingly, on 6 April, a new stage began as Russian special forces working with local militants took over administrative and police buildings in around a dozen important towns in eastern Ukraine. This followed the pattern of Crimea. The Ukrainian government was apparently unable to do much about these seizures, with its early ‘counter-terrorism’ efforts soon faltering. The numbers of militants involved, boosted by the alleged Russian special forces known as ‘little green men’, because of their uniforms and lack of insignia, were not large, but the connivance of the poorly paid and in some cases sympathetic local police meant that there was often little resistance. For added deterrent effect, there were also warnings of direct Russian military intervention in a ‘peacekeeping’ role in the event of a sustained Ukrainian offensive. Some 40,000 Russian troops were kept in position, on occasion engaging in exercises to demonstrate that they were ready to cross the border.38

This was all more clearly an example of coercive diplomacy, given that Moscow had already given itself enough reasons and authority to invade. Statements by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov set the tone, with the denunciations of the character and illegitimacy of the government in Kiev combined with demands for a very federal structure.39 The volatile nature of the situation could create circumstances in which areas such as Donetsk might be occupied by pro-Russian forces, but the Russian position would still not be as strong as in Crimea. Putin kept open the revanchist option by referring to ‘Novorossiya’, land conquered by Russia in the 1700s and turned over to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922. At the same time, the separatist option was opened when the Donetsk People’s Republic was proclaimed on 7 April.

In addition to possible concerns about international responses, there was no evidence that those occupying buildings were actively backed by substantial sections of the local population, which was a contrast with the position in Maidan. In some areas pro-unity demonstrations drew significant crowds. The overall impression, however, was of a population that would like more autonomy from Kiev but had no interest in joining Russia.40
Moscow would also have been aware of the difficulties of occupying and administering a territory of contested boundaries, and with an uncooperative population. There were already substantial problems being faced in Crimea, connected with issuing passports, introducing the Russian currency, changing legal frameworks, keeping shops supplied and a general collapse of the local economy. Moscow could take comfort from Kiev’s evident (and admitted) loss of control over the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, hoping that it might spread. Unless the government could reassert some authority, there was a risk to its ability to conduct nationwide elections and, over the longer-term, to bring in tax revenues and reform the economy. At the start of May, it revived its ‘anti-terrorist’ campaign, but other than to demonstrate that it had not abandoned the regions, it was hard to see how this could dislodge the militants, and it risked drawing the Russians further in. Its best outcome would be to have a negotiation on the meaning of ‘greater autonomy’. This was unlikely to happen while pro-Russian groups were still able to strengthen their position and keep open separatist options.

**Western responses**

These developments came as a shock to Western countries, which were unprepared. Up to February 2014, the EU had not seen Ukraine as a great prize for which it was worth making extraordinary efforts. After the disappointing aftermath of the Orange Revolution, it had been cautious in its dealings with Kiev. The ill-fated proposals of 2008 for Ukraine to sign a Membership Action Plan for NATO were dropped after the Russian intervention in Georgia, and Ukrainian politicians have avoided revisiting the idea, even after the loss of Crimea. While the EU was more actively engaged with Ukraine in pursuit of an Association Agreement, it was also cautious because of Ukraine’s chronic corruption, limited respect for the rule of law and uneven economic development. No Association Agreement was signed at the November 2013 Vilnius summit, in part because of Russian pressure but also because of EU concerns over the rule of law and human rights, notably the continued imprisonment of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. There was no attempt to match the
generous terms of the promised Russian loan, presumably out of a judgement that it would do little good, given the underlying state of Ukraine’s political economy.\(^43\)

Whatever Putin may have feared, the leading EU states did not see Ukraine as a natural member of the EU because of just how much had to be done to get the country into a fit state to join. Nor had they ever taken the Customs Union that seriously and, with a self-image as a soft, benign, civil power, did not fully appreciate how potentially threatening the Eastern Partnership could seem to Moscow. The partnership was championed by states with a deep distrust of Moscow, but was accepted by the rest of the EU without much consideration of its full implications or a readiness to accept any significant costs. It gave the impression that Ukraine was being pursued by two suitors. In practice, in the circumstances of late 2013, only Russia was prepared to bail out Ukraine’s bankrupt economy and so the choice was less real than the Maidan demonstrators believed. Christine Lagarde of the IMF noted that ‘without the lifeline it was getting from Russia … Ukraine was heading nowhere’.\(^44\) Ironically, the choice only acquired some reality as President Yanukovich’s government was toppled and a crisis developed in which the EU was obliged to offer Ukraine much more substantial support and could reasonably expect more reform.

Although Ukraine was covered by security assurances from leading Western countries, little reference was made to them as the crisis developed. The December 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances was a response to the presence of almost 2,000 strategic and 2,500 tactical nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Kiev agreed to the dismantling of these weapons and ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in return for a statement from Russia, the US and the United Kingdom that these powers undertook to extend security assurances to Ukraine.\(^45\) The anomalous position of Crimea and the base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol had notionally been resolved in 1997 with a ‘Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation’. The two countries agreed, under Article 2, to
‘respect each other’s territorial integrity, and confirm the inviolability of the borders existing between them’. The agreements were all invoked by Kiev early in the crisis, but to no avail.

Nor was the United Nations going to be of much use, because Moscow could exercise a veto as a permanent member of the Security Council, although it did provide a setting in which to demonstrate Russia’s isolation. The legitimacy of the referendum conducted on 16 March was challenged in terms of its conduct as well as in international law. Crimea’s entry into the Russian Federation was no more likely to be recognised by the wider international community than was the case with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. At the same time, the position of Crimea was anomalous. It had been transferred from Russia to Ukraine as the result of a somewhat quixotic gesture by Khrushchev in 1954. While a less rushed and properly monitored referendum would have produced a far more qualified result, the move had considerable local support. As noted earlier, in the discussion of coercive diplomacy, compellence is more difficult than deterrence. The sanctions imposed as a result of the annexation signalled displeasure in a mildly punitive way, and were largely directed against individuals.

The main Western effort therefore was to deter yet more Russian aggression. Thus, in announcing the limited sanctions, the EU observed that

any further steps by the Russian Federation to destabilise the situation in Ukraine would lead to additional and far-reaching consequences for relations in a broad range of economic areas between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other hand. The European Union calls on Russia to return to developing a strategic partnership with the EU instead of isolating itself further diplomatically and economically.

In response to the crisis, all cooperation with Russia was suspended, and moves were made to shore up confidence among Eastern European members, including preparations for sending more soldiers and equipment to their territories, and conducting more exercises. Air patrols were stepped up over the Baltic states and a US warship was sent to the Black Sea.
President Obama at the same time made it clear that he saw no circumstances in which the US would use armed force in connection with the Ukraine crisis. It was also clear that economic sanctions were facing a lot of opposition, especially in those European countries that had substantial trading relationships with Russia. Although Chancellor Angela Merkel took a reasonably robust position, many German political figures were reluctant to undermine the relationship with Russia that had been the basis for the Cold War détente and had facilitated Germany’s reunification. Other ‘realist’ commentators, including Henry Kissinger, encouraged a cool geopolitical assessment and warned against taking positions that could not be backed in practice.

Despite the inflammatory and contemptuous rhetoric of President Putin, Western leaders tended to take a measured tone, watching matters with ‘grave concern’ and warning of unfortunate consequences if Russia went too far. In addition, there were regular conversations between Western leaders and President Putin. On 14 March, US Secretary of State John Kerry met with Foreign Minister Lavrov in London, and then on 30 March in Paris, without Ukrainians present. The Ukrainians were present, as was the EU, at further talks in Geneva on 17 April, and these produced an outline agreement.

The agreement said nothing about the status of Crimea or the role of Russian troops. The constitutional proposals were stated in sufficiently vague terms for them to be acceptable to the Ukrainian government, which gained some de facto recognition from Russia by being accepted as an interlocutor. The most important sentences referred to the need to dismantle the barricades and end the occupations, but there were no provisions for their implementation, other than that they be monitored by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. This organisation was once championed by Moscow as a truly pan-European security institution, although it was less favoured after it gave no support to the Moscow line on events in Ukraine. While the agreement was generally disregarded, the inspectors did deploy, and gave objective and informed accounts of the situation on the ground. Its terms could provide the basis for an eventual settlement should the parties wish to achieve one.
There was greater Western activity with regard to the more substantial, but also more constructive, challenge of trying to revive and restructure the Ukrainian economy. Ukraine signed the political aspects of the Association Agreement with the EU. On 5 March, it also agreed a financial-assistance package of at least €11bn in loans and grants from the EU budget and EU-based international financial institutions. More importantly, the IMF was brought in to provide the funds without which the country would go bankrupt. This must involve measures to deal with corruption, manage debt and introduce market reforms, and may well be painful. Severe austerity measures could affect support for the Kiev government. The challenge of paying for Russian gas, the price of which was raised very steeply very quickly, added to the economic burdens, with the potential sanction here of the gas being turned off, to the detriment of other European countries as well as Ukraine.

Lastly, effort was put into reassuring NATO members who might feel threatened by a more aggressive Russia, including those with Russian minorities, that Article 5 obligations were firmly in place. Traditionally neutral countries such as Finland and Sweden had fresh reasons to reconsider their position vis-à-vis NATO.

Crisis management and Ukraine
Crisis management is the most demanding form of diplomacy, requiring an ability to match deeds with words, to convey threats without appearing reckless, and to offer concessions without appearing soft, often while under intense media scrutiny and facing severe time pressures. For different reasons, so far neither Russia nor the US and its European allies have handled the Ukraine crisis particularly well, which is why over its first months it gained in severity without an evident outcome being defined with which the key players could live. It has become more of a zero-sum game rather than less.

From the start, Moscow has appeared to have the initiative. The West struggled because it could not respond in kind. President Obama has been criticised for ruling out force, on the grounds that it is best to keep Moscow guessing, and this has been combined with a more general criticism for
conducting a foreign policy that has appeared to be geared more towards avoiding confrontations than accepting them as the price of global leadership. There is no evidence, however, that public opinion has been after a tougher stance, or that there are many obvious actions that could have been taken. Matters will have to get much darker before military responses are even mooted.

A more serious charge is that Western governments failed to grasp the dynamics of change in the region and what Putin has believed to be at stake. They have long struggled to find a way to engage with Russia that acknowledges its security interests without accepting its support for disagreeable regimes, such as Syria, and its distrust of popular movements. For its part Russia has felt marginalised and its concerns ignored. When its neighbours look to the West, it has come to assume a conspiracy rather than EU and NATO offering a more attractive and safer prospect. In this case, the EU did not appreciate how its tentative approaches to Ukraine could be seen as threatening to Moscow.

There is an argument that Ukraine should have been deliberately maintained by the West and Russia as a buffer, which would have meant avoiding any suggestion of EU, let alone NATO, membership. Unfortunately, Ukraine was too weak to survive as an independent buffer. Nor could it have been, as others have suggested, a cooperative project between Russia and the EU. At the heart of the issue was the political economy of Ukraine. The alternatives were serious reform involving a massive upheaval to get closer to the EU, getting closer to Russia as a means to avoid reform, or, as is still conceivable, splitting in two. The EU should have better understood the geopolitical game Putin believed himself to be playing with Ukraine last year, but it could not have matched Russia’s offer on debt relief. Given what was already known about the Ukrainian government and economy, a more generous offer to President Yanukovich would have been irresponsible. The EU did back the 21 February agreement in Kiev, and urged demonstrators to accept, but once Yanukovich fled the scene, and with the evidence of corruption left behind, it would have been impossible to insist on his return. While in the face of aggressive acts there
is always pressure to ‘do something’ to show disapproval, available punitive measures are unlikely to meet the scale of the challenge. Even in the most propitious circumstances, economic sanctions take time to work. It is therefore unwise to claim coercive effects for measures that will not generate real pressure.

The weakness of a temporary government in Kiev, the limits on Western responses and his readiness to employ armed force have enabled Putin to retain the tactical initiative. If he believes his own propaganda, then he may think that he has thwarted an anti-Russian plot and given himself a position to dictate Ukraine’s future. Nonetheless, this falls far short of a victory for Putin. Firstly, his dream of a Eurasian Union is now dashed. The doctrine which allows Moscow to interfere whenever it judges that Russian nationals in other countries need protecting puts all its neighbours on edge. Belarus and Kazakhstan, never mind Ukraine and Moldova, are showing signs of anxiety about the implications of Russian policies.65

Secondly, the economic impact of these events on Russia has been dire. Official forecasts cut projected growth for 2014 from up to 1.8% (itself well below previous expectations) to less than 1%, while capital flight in the first three months of the year was said to exceed $55bn. Russia has been unable to sell its bonds, and had to scrap a number of sales. The rouble has been one of the worst-performing developing-country currencies in 2014 and would have fallen further if reserves had not been used to prop it up. Russia’s credit ratings have been downgraded. The additional cost of absorbing Crimea has been put at $3bn per year. While the flow of gas through Ukraine gives it some leverage over both Kiev and other European capitals, 55% of Russia’s budget depends on gas exports and, over the long term, it is vulnerable to efforts to diversify supplies.66 In this respect, the crisis itself provides its own penalties. It was not necessary to introduce official sanctions for international financial institutions to become wary of taking on Russian clients.67

This is, in the end, far more a Russian crisis than a Western crisis. The interests are asymmetrical because of the role of Ukraine in Russian foreign policy. It is with Russia, therefore, that the main lessons of crisis management must be found. In order to avoid the legal issues raised by dispatching troops into another’s territory, the Russians have sought to claim that they
have been doing no more than responding to surges of popular feeling among fellow Russians unfortunate enough to live outside Russia proper. The military aspects of its intervention were thus to a degree covert. The initial military moves were well planned and executed, using special forces to ensure that key sites were seized, while the Ukrainian authorities were still trying to work out what was going on. Although an active Russian role was denied, this was never plausible.\textsuperscript{68}

In recent years, there has been much discussion of ‘narrative’ as an essential prerequisite of a successful strategy, a storyline that not only provides a justification for particular actions but also creates expectations for the future and so helps others, friends as well as opponents, adapt to a new situation. It is through words that crises are framed and their salient points identified. At times of crisis, when the intentions of the key actors are of vital concern, these narratives become even more important. Government statements are studied far more intensively than at other times. These narratives will also be tested quickly, should events on the ground not turn out as expected and key claims be refuted, leading to hasty rewriting of the storyline. Moreover, in the Internet age, when news comes through quickly from many sources on the front-line and is rapidly transmitted on, governments can struggle to control a poorly constructed story. Putin’s approach to this problem has been to tell whatever story suited his purposes, paying little attention to consistency or credibility. Statements have been made about minority rights and the virtues of self-determination that bear little relationship to the principles, let alone their application within the Russian Federation. It is always possible to fabricate and dissemble, especially if local media outlets have been turned into government mouthpieces and dissent squashed. But a government habitually relying on implausible claims and specious arguments gets caught out and soon finds that it is not believed even when telling the truth.\textsuperscript{69}

While it may be part of Putin’s strategy to keep everybody guessing and create a sense of menace, the way that claims have been made about Russia’s right to protect Russian-speakers in other countries makes it far harder to contain the crisis, as a number of neighbouring governments
are left unnerved, and have started to reappraise their own relations with Moscow. Comparisons are made with past Western interventions, such as Kosovo, but whatever their problems these were never about direct territorial acquisition.

The crisis also demonstrates that even a well-composed first step can create trouble when events do not move along as planned, leading to a struggle to find appropriate second steps. Russia may have been relying on a template derived from Georgia, which created expectations about both the Ukrainian and wider international reactions that have turned out to be incorrect. Specifically, probably mainly because of its limited options, but also its knowledge of what transpired in Georgia, the Ukrainian government avoided provocation. It did not rush into heroic battle. Given what it had been saying about the wild militants of Kiev, Russia was put in an awkward position by the Ukrainian military’s refusal to be either provoked or intimidated. The lack of large-scale, pro-Russian demonstrations in eastern Ukraine has not supported claims that Russia was obliged to rescue people facing danger and desperate for assistance, and has warned of the problems that could arise should it attempt to mount a full-scale occupation. At the same time, the events have irritated the hardline Ukrainian nationalists and damaged Kiev’s authority in the east, challenging its ability to hold elections and, thereafter, enforce its will. Frustration among well-armed, pro-Russian local groups, concerned that events are not turning out as they had hoped, may produce incidents that could make it harder to de-escalate, even if that is what is desired in national capitals. Again, this may not work out as Russia hoped unless it accepts the costs and severe risks, including local resistance, of a full occupation.

One substantial difference between Cold War crisis management and that of the twenty-first century is the importance of the economic dimension. There was very little interaction between East and West during the Cold War. The export of energy was one area which did gradually become more important. The position has changed substantially over the past few years. The Russian economy is now slowing down and Gazprom’s position is no longer so buoyant. Both need the revenues. Russia has chronic problems of demography and corruption. It has failed to move its economy
away from being dominated by oil and gas, and become an increasingly unattractive place to invest. It is not an emerging economy but a declining one. The past use of gas supplies for coercive purposes has encouraged customers to look elsewhere or to develop alternative supplies so they are less vulnerable to coercion. Finally, the transformation of America’s energy position over the past few years could be used to weaken Russia’s position further. One response to the crisis has been a European determination to move further away from dependence on Gazprom. The long-term significance of this should not be underestimated, even if it makes little difference in the short term.

While on the credit side President Putin might be looking to a weakened Ukraine and a divided West, the debit side appears to be much more substantial. At best for Moscow, Ukraine might be left as a failed state, unable to achieve unity or economic revival. This could have chaotic consequences, which would still leave Moscow (and everyone else) with a succession of problems. At worst for Russia, Ukraine might revive under Western tutelage and provide a stark contrast to Russia’s own stagnant political economy. Russia has already lost Ukraine as a constructive partner in a grand geopolitical project, and its wider influence in the former Soviet space has been undermined. After the vast expenditure on the Sochi Olympic Games, it has lost whatever benefits of soft power accrued from that event. The promise of a dynamic economy oriented to the West, with which President Putin came to power, no longer looks credible, with only dubious claims about possible links with China as compensation. Relying on energy assets to provide political leverage risks undermining the economy even more, while assertions of military strength remain limited in what they can achieve when used coercively.

In the end, the Soviet position during the Cold War was undermined by a flawed ideology. State socialism clearly performed poorly when set against liberal capitalism. For the same reason, the political economy of Ukraine is at the heart of this dispute. This is an area where the West has levers which it can deploy to enable Kiev to address its major problems of debt, corruption, poor governance, decaying infrastructure and a lack of economic reform. President Putin’s rhetoric is nostalgic and nationalist, and one should not
expect a lot of cooperation on the generality of international problems over coming months. As in the Cold War, if this becomes a competition between different economic and social systems, the West can win. The most important source of confidence, however, is that during the Cold War the Soviet Union was much larger and had its own allies. Those allies have now joined NATO and at the moment one can assume that they are feeling no regrets.

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**Notes**

1. The only source for this is Coral Bell, *Conventions of Crisis: A Study in Diplomatic Management* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). I have never found any other corroboration, but it sounds like the sort of thing McNamara might well have said.
3. Ariel Alexovich, ‘Clinton’s National Security Ad’, *New York Times*, 29 February 2008, [http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/29/clintons-national-security-ad](http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/29/clintons-national-security-ad). Interestingly, when news first came through that missile sites had been detected in Cuba, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy decided it was better for President Kennedy to get a good night’s sleep so that he could deal with the problem fresh in the morning.
7. For the distinction between deterrence and compellence, see Thomas


11 A memorandum prepared by the National Security Council on 26 October 1962 described one of the purposes of negotiations to be ‘to afford the Soviets face-saving cover, if they wish, for a withdrawal of their offensive weapons from Cuba’. US National Security Council, ‘The Cuban Missile Crisis’, 26 October 1962, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mse_cubao89.asp. In retrospect, 50 years after the crisis, a key element in its resolution was described as ‘the willingness of each side to allow the other a face-saving way out’. Bruce W. MacDonald, ‘Looking Back on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 50 Years Later’, United States Institute of Peace, 19 October 2012, http://www.usip.org/publications/looking-back-the-cuban-missile-crisis-50-years-later.


14 It had taken an inordinately long time to receive and decode Khrushchev’s message to President Kennedy on 26 October 1962. The ‘Memorandum of Understanding Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Regarding the Establishment of a Direct Communications Link’ was signed by the two sides on 20 June 1963.

15 In 1963 diplomat Harlan Cleveland observed: ‘you will have to live with the institutions you create. The law you make may be your own.’ The other lessons he identified were: ‘Keep Your Objectives Limited’; ‘Decide How Far You Would Go’; ‘Creep Up Carefully on the Use of Force’; and ‘Widen the Community of the Concerned’. On the character issue, he observed: ‘it takes no courage to bluster; it takes some to stand up to a mortal threat that plainly has to be faced. But what takes the most gumption is to persevere in a decision that takes months or years to prove itself.’ Harlan Cleveland, ‘Crisis Diplomacy’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 4, July 1963, http://www.foreignaffairs.
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18 Malcolm Rifkind, former British foreign secretary, stated: ‘on the basis of the measures announced so far by both the US and the EU, on visa controls and asset freezes internationally, I say with great sadness that is a pathetic and feeble response that does not match the seriousness which those implementing these responses have themselves acknowledged we face at the present time.’ Nicholas Watt, ‘Ukraine: UK to Push for Tougher Sanctions Against Russia over Crimea’, Guardian, 18 March 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/18/ukraine-uk-push-sanctions-russia-crimea.


27 Samuel Charap and Mikhail Troitskiy note that the six had little in common other than that they were ‘all but Russia’, with the three South
Caucasus countries not even sharing a border with an EU member state. Samuel Charap and Mikhail Troitskiy, ‘Russia, the West and the Integration Dilemma’, *Survival*, vol. 55, no. 6, December 2013–January 2014, p. 53.


Charap and Troitskiy, ‘Russia, the West and the Integration Dilemma’, p. 55.


According to a poll, ‘18.1% of Donetsk and 24.2% of Luhansk support the recent armed seizures of administrative buildings in the Donbas region, while surrounding provinces overwhelmingly disapprove of the current situation. 72% of Donetsk and 58.3% of Luhansk residents disapprove of the current actions. Roughly 25% in the Donbas region said they would attend secessionist rallies in favor of joining Russia.’ Support for closer ties with Russia had gone down from pre-crisis levels. Mat Babiak, ‘Southeast Statistics: A Report on KIIS Polling Data from April 8–16, 2014’, Ukrainian Policy, 16 April 2014, http://ukrainianpolicy.com/southeast-statistics-of-ukraine-april-2014/.


In 2013 Ukraine was ranked 144th out of the 176 countries investigated in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. Russia was ranked 127th. Transparency International, ‘Corruption Perceptions Index’, http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/.


This required respect for Ukraine’s borders, in line with the principles of the 1975 ‘Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe’; abstention from the use or
threat of force against Ukraine; support, should Ukraine be threatened by economic coercion; and agreement to bring any incident of aggression by a nuclear power before the UN Security Council. These were no more than assurances, although Ukraine refers to them as guarantees. France and China added their support. On the background to the nuclear deal, and why it made sense, see Tom Nichols, ‘Nuclear Weapons and the Ukraine Crisis’, War Room, 19 March 2014, http://tomnichols.net/blog/2014/03/19/nuclear-weapons-and-the-ukraine-crisis/.


The Russians remained actively engaged in the discussions with Iran on its nuclear programme, although their ability to exercise leverage here
was limited because lifting UN sanctions required unanimity on the Security Council.


text/2014/04/17/89bdoac2-c654-11e3-9f37-7ce307c56815_story.html.

59 See Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, ‘OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine’, http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/. A number of observers from Western countries acting in support of the organisation were taken hostage by separatists in late April.

60 The political section of the planned Association Agreement was signed on 21 March 2014. The remaining sections, notably the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, were scheduled to be signed after Ukraine’s presidential elections. European External Action Service, ‘Ukraine’, http://eeas.europa.eu/ukraine/index_en.htm.


62 Secretary Kerry stated: ‘we have to make it absolutely clear to the Kremlin that NATO territory is inviolable. We will defend every single piece of it.’ David Brunnstrom, ‘Kerry: NATO Territory Inviolable – “We Will Defend Every Single Piece”’, Reuters, 29 April 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/29/us-ukraine-crisis-kerry-idUSBREA3SoX520140429.

A late-April poll found broad support for President Obama’s approach. There was majority support across party lines for increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia, by 53%–36%, but also opposition to sending weapons to Ukraine, by 62%–30%. Susan Page and Kendall Breitman, ‘Poll: Americans Support Sanctions, Not Arms for Ukraine’, USA Today, 28 April 2014.


NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Philip Breedlove commented upon the military training and equipment of these pro-Russian ‘activists’, their weapon-handling discipline, coordinated use of tear gas and stun grenades against targeted buildings, speed in establishing roadblocks and barricades in the surrounding area, and professional manning of checkpoints. Kirit Radia, ‘NATO Commander Offers Evidence of Russian Troops in Ukraine’, ABC, 17 April 2014, http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2014/04/nato-commander-offers-evidence-of-russian-troops-in-ukraine/. Having first denied direct involvement of Russian forces in Crimea, Putin eventually admitted their role: ‘our soldiers, of course, stood behind the self-defense forces of Crimea. They acted very civilly, and as I said, decisively and professionally. It otherwise wouldn’t have been possible to hold an open, honest and dignified referendum and help people to express their opinion.’ Paul Sonne, ‘5 Things Putin Had to

