

# Problem One: Control of the Arctic

## Russia in pole position as US falls behind in race for Arctic resources

*With Obama set to become the first president to visit the Arctic, the region is marked by a steady Russian buildup*

September 2, 2015 6:28AM ET

by **Tom Kutsch** @tomkutsch

When President Barack Obama on Wednesday becomes the first sitting U.S. president to set foot above the Arctic Circle, he will enter a vast territory undergoing a historic and rapid transformation. Climate change, resource competition and renewed Russian military interest threaten to turn a place marked by cooperation in the decades since the Cold War into a zone of contention.

As the sea ice recedes, Arctic waters, including the Chukchi and Beaufort seas, are becoming more navigable than at any time in the known past. Yet in the race to stake claims in this newly accessible region, Russia is far ahead of the rest.

Until now, international cooperation in the region has largely been handled through the Arctic Council. Made up of eight nations — the U.S., Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Finland and Canada — it aims to work on environmental protection and sustainable development.

The council has had some notable successes. In April it adopted the framework of an agreement to reduce the emissions of methane and black carbon, a dark compound that absorbs heat and accelerates the melting of ice. But since its creation in 1996, the body has largely avoided the most contentious security issues in the region's increasingly tense geopolitics.

“Nearly 20 years later, the Arctic is beginning to become militarized, and there is no forum or place to discuss security-related issues and to promote greater transparency and confidence,” said a report, “The New Ice Curtain,” released in August by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank based in Washington, D.C.

“For Russia, the Arctic is an important issue of national identity, as well as enormous economic priority (20 percent of Russia's GDP is generated in the Arctic) and security necessity where national resources are spent; environmental considerations ... are largely an afterthought,” the report reads. “For the United States, it is the exact opposite. The United States does not see itself as an Arctic nation, and it prioritizes the environment and scientific research first, with economic development and security a distance second, due to insufficient national resources and political support.”

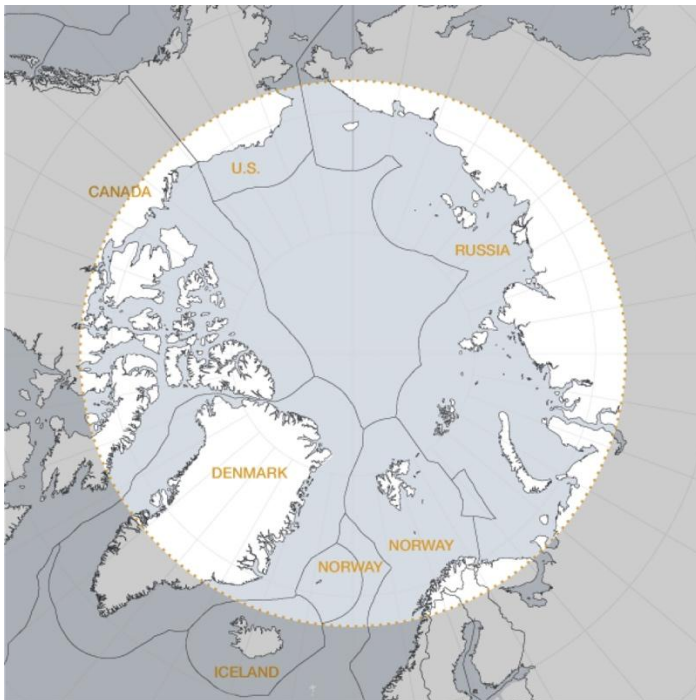
Russia conducted massive military exercises in March, with more than 45,000 Russian troops, 41 ships and 15 submarines. “New challenges and threats to military security require the armed forces to further boost their military capabilities,” Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said at the time. “Special attention must be paid to newly created strategic formations in the north.”

And Russia has reopened Soviet-era military bases across the Arctic.

In a sign of how far behind the U.S. has fallen in the push to exploit an Arctic now less encumbered by ice sheets, Obama — who is visiting Alaska — on Tuesday announced a plan to speed up by two years the building of new icebreaking ships that can help access and navigate routes for sea traffic and resource exploration.

Russia has 41 icebreakers. The U.S. fleet contains two, and they are outdated.

The Russian military buildup in the region has come amid a parallel diplomatic effort by several countries to press for more Arctic territory.



Source: Flanders Marine Institute (Map by Joanna S. Kao)

The Arctic nations currently lay claim to the sea areas that lie within exclusive economic zones (EEZ) — under the various international legal conventions that make up what is known as the Law of the Sea — which extend 200 nautical miles from their land territories.

In the past, exploiting these claims has been limited by the reality of year-round ice. Today global warming has led to a corresponding assertiveness among countries pressing for more territory — all the way up to the North Pole, which, according to international law, is under the sovereignty of no nation and lies in international waters surrounded by the Arctic countries’ EEZs.

Under the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), countries can make claims within 10 years of ratifying the treaty to extend their sovereignty outside their EEZs, based on U.N. rulings of where their underwater continental shelves lie — potentially entitling them to more territory.

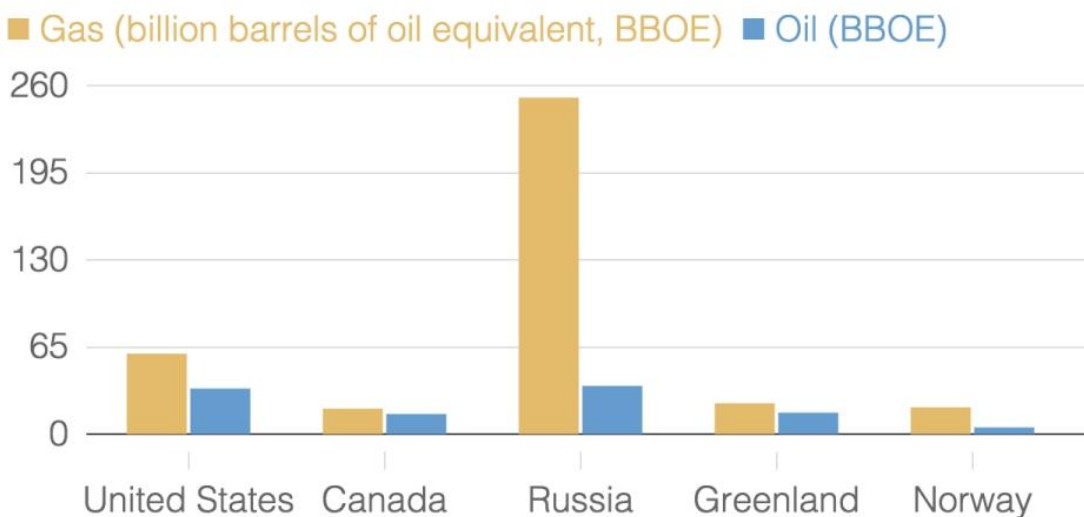
Norway, Canada, Denmark (an Arctic nation through its territory of Greenland) and Russia have all submitted claims to the U.N. in the past decade asking for more Arctic territory. As recently as last month, Moscow petitioned the U.N. to recognize an additional 463,000 square miles.

The U.S. has not submitted such a claim with the U.N. because it has not ratified the agreement — despite Obama’s, George W. Bush’s and Bill Clinton’s urging ratification and even though Washington officially considers UNCLOS part of international law.

U.S. ratification continues to be blocked at home by conservative legislators who object to its effect on U.S. sovereignty claims in the region.

Meanwhile, Russia’s military push and territorial claims come as Washington and Moscow lead the push to explore the Arctic’s rich and largely untapped energy resources.

#### Russia, U.S. lead in potential oil and gas resources in the Arctic



Data: National Petroleum Council

“Beyond exploration and ecotourism, there is interest in natural resources that are becoming more exploitable by changing ice patterns,” said Adm. Paul F. Zukunft, the head of the U.S. Coast Guard, in his 2015 State of the Coast Guard address in February.

According to a study ([PDF](#)) released earlier this year by the National Petroleum Council, the Arctic region contains as much as 25 percent of the world’s remaining undiscovered conventional petroleum resources — much of them in seabed areas that shrinking ice sheets are uncovering.

With Russia relying heavily on fossil fuels to support its economy, which is struggling amid a falling ruble, it is not surprising that Moscow is doing all it can to exploit such resources in a region that accounts for a large part of its maritime territories.

But for the U.S. — with a stronger economy less tied to an oil industry already hit by record-low oil prices and with cheaper forms of fossil fuel production available through fracking operations on land — the relative lack of attention to the Arctic might simply be a matter of economics.

Bureaucratic hurdles may also be a factor. “Arctic fossil fuel development may not ... be the panacea sometimes imagined,” Erica Dingman, a senior research fellow at World Policy Institute, wrote last month on her Arctic policy blog for the institute. “In part, this is a result of what drillers consider a complicated regulatory regime in Canada’s Arctic. The extent to which Arctic oil resources are developed remains uncertain.”

For now, however, there is little question that Russia’s footprint is the largest in the rapidly changing region, militarily, economically and commercially.

“The United States really isn’t even in this game,” Zukunft said last month.

Source: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/2/the-us-confronts-a-russian-push-for-the-arctic.html>

# Problem Two: Russian Brain Drain

## Russia's Brain Drain Is Astounding

Elena Holodny

Dec. 2, 2014, 10:54 AM

Russia is experiencing another major brain drain.

Although emigration trended downward from 1997 to 2011, there was a sudden spike in people leaving the country around the third term of President Vladimir Putin, according to Rosstat, Russia's federal state statistics service.

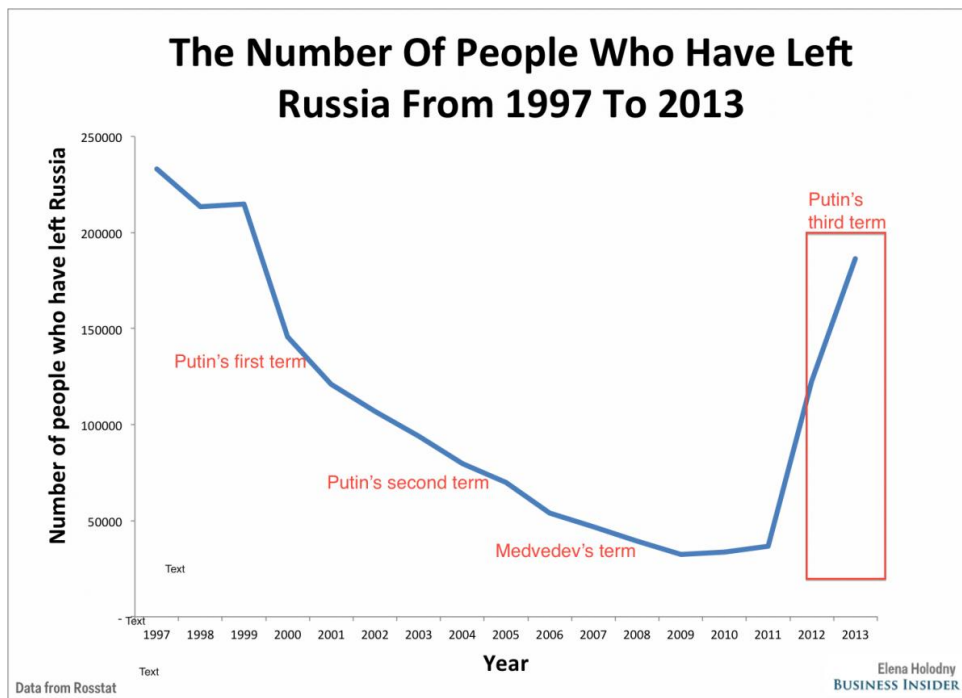
In 2012, almost 123,000 people left, and in 2013, more than 186,000 got out.

Additionally, a UN report showed that 40,000 Russians applied for asylum in 2013 — 76% more than in 2012.

The biggest bombshell of all is that since April 2014 — a month after Russia annexed Crimea — 203,659 Russians have left the country.

By comparison, approximately 37,000 people left the country in 2011, and less than 34,000 people left in 2010.

Furthermore, the emigration numbers may be even higher. "The official statistics are very low," Mikhail Gorshkov, the director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Sociology told Reuters.



*Elena Holodny/Business Insider*

What's particularly interesting is the type of people who are leaving the country.

"While the total number of Russians who leave for good remains relatively small, the profile of the typical emigrant has changed. When the Soviet Union dissolved, the most common emigrant was a poor, unskilled young man. Today, it is a well-off professional," according to World Policy.

"People who have it good are starting to leave," Anton Nosski, a tech entrepreneur, told World Policy.

Notable individuals who have left include chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov, economist Sergei Guriyev, journalist Leonid Bershidsky, and the founder of VKontakte (Russia's version of Facebook) Pavel Durov.

For the most part, these people are leaving either for their children or for their professional futures. "Corruption, red tape, and allegedly crooked courts are [also] driving the exodus among entrepreneurs," according to Reuters.

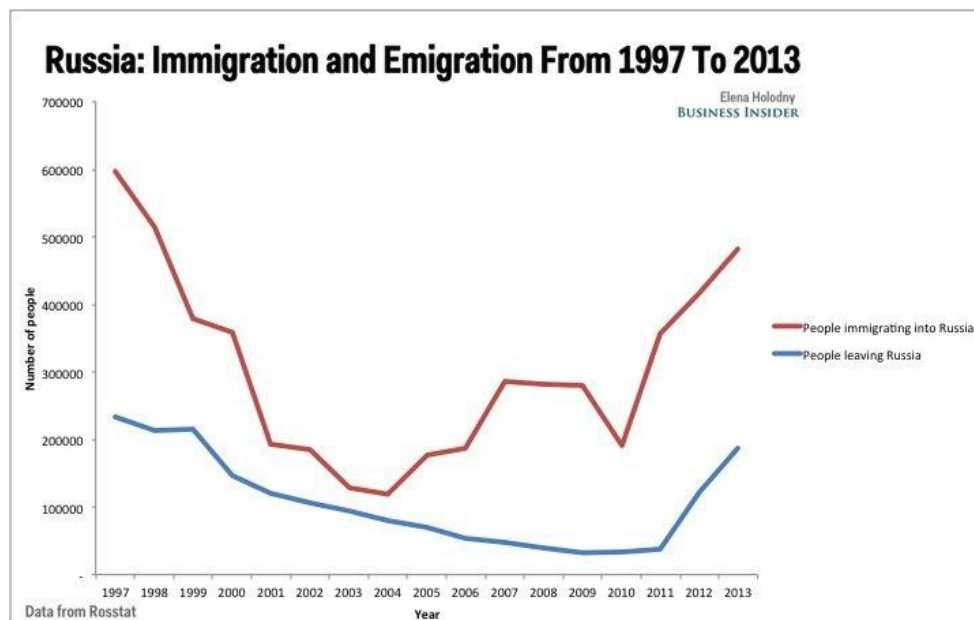
"I want my children to grow up in a fairer country, one where the rule of law is more or less observed. I used think it was possible to build a better society in Russia, but I've basically lost all hope now. It's time to leave," one Russian businessman told Vocativ.

"Russian venture capital funds want to invest their money only in Russia," start-up founder Artem Kulizhnikov told Bloomberg news, "but we want to build an international business and they won't support us."

Additionally, Russia's "creative class" is starting to feel isolated, although some politicians seem unfazed.

"Russia won't lose anything if the entire so-called creative class leaves. What's the creative class anyway? For me, a woman who gets up at 5 a.m. to milk a cow is creative because she produces something. Not some guy with a stupid haircut who sits in a cafe all day long writing in his blog," said Vitaly Milonov, a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg.

But the brain drain isn't the whole story. A huge influx of immigrants are entering Russia as well.



*Elena Holodny/Business Insider*

This makes sense: If many high-level individuals and intellectuals are leaving Russia, more high-end jobs and opportunities will become available in Russia.

According to the UN, Russia saw the second-largest number of international migrants in 2013. The number of people moving into Russia actually tops the number of people moving out (which you can see above.)

Many of the immigrants come from countries like Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, according to data from Rosstat.

Additionally, millennials who are culturally Russian but were born in the US or Europe are considering opportunities in Russia.

"There are opportunities for my children in Moscow that aren't found anywhere else," one parent told BI.

"I believe that Russia is at a point where they realize they cannot rely on just oil and gas to keep up with the other BRIC countries and Western economies. Russia is looking to diversify its economy," one 20-something told BI. "The opportunities in Russia seem to be more promising than here in the States currently. Before the current sanctions and drastic low oil prices, Russia was a top seven economic power. As a young Russian-American, I've thought about pursuing opportunities abroad that do not exist in the US."

The bottom line: Russia is seeing some dramatic demographic changes that could greatly influence its economic and political future.

Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/russia-brain-drain-putin-ukraine-crimea-2014-12?r=UK&IR=T#ixzz3UHWhskUi>





# Problem Three: European Sanctions

## **Putin: EU sanctions are “theater of the absurd”**

By **LAURENS CERULUS** | 1/11/16, 4:01 AM CET | Updated 1/11/16, 9:14 AM

The EU’s sanctions on Russia in the wake of the Ukraine crisis are “absurd,” President Vladimir Putin said in a German newspaper interview, in which he blamed the

eastward expansion of NATO for replacing the Berlin Wall with “invisible walls” between Russia and Europe.

“What the European Union is doing with those sanctions is nothing but a theater of the absurd,” the Russian leader told Bild in the interview published Monday,

referring to the economic restrictions imposed in 2014 after the Kremlin annexed Crimea and backed a separatist rebellion in eastern Ukraine.

“The West’s sanctions are not aimed at helping Ukraine, but at geopolitically pushing Russia back,” he said. “They are foolish and are merely harming both sides.”

He said that, “without exception,” the Ukrainian government in Kiev is to blame for the failure to implement fully last year’s Minsk ceasefire agreement, in particular the promised constitutional changes to give autonomy to eastern Ukraine by the end of 2015. “This has not happened, and the year is over,” Putin said. “That’s not Russia’s fault.”

Asked about the damage of Western sanctions on the Russian economy, Putin acknowledged that “the sanctions are severely harming Russia. But the biggest harm is currently caused by the decline of the prices for energy.”

He said there was a “positive side” to the drop in oil and gas revenues: “If you earn so many petrodollars — as we once did — that you can buy anything abroad, this slows down developments in your own country.”

The economy is “gradually stabilizing,” he said, saying that while GDP fell 3.8 percent last year and inflation clocked in at 12.7 percent, Russia ran a trade surplus. “For the first time in many years, we are exporting significantly more goods with a high added value, and we have more than \$300 billion in gold reserves. Several programs for modernizing the economy are being carried out,” he said.

The Russian president wouldn’t say anything he admired about German Chancellor Angela Merkel, but said, “I trust her, she is a very open person.”

When Merkel visited Putin in Sochi in 2007, the Russian president brought his black Labrador Koni to the

meeting, making the German chancellor, who is widely known to fear dogs, visibly uncomfortable. Asked whether he did that on purpose to put her ill at ease because he knew she was scared of dogs, Putin said: “No, I did not know that. I wanted to make her happy. When I learned that she does not like dogs, I apologized, of course.”

In his first half decade in power, after taking office in 2000, Putin sought close relations with the West. He turned more hostile to America in the last years of the Bush presidency, and then harder against the West after reclaiming the presidency of Russia in 2012 and launching a domestic crackdown on opponents.

“I’m still the same,” Putin said.

The two waves of NATO enlargement — in 1999 and then in 2004 — that saw much of the former Warsaw Pact join the alliance broke a promise made by Western leaders to the Soviets in the closing days of the Cold War and “led to mutual misunderstandings and assignments of guilt,” Putin said. “They are the cause of all crises ever since.”

“Of course every state has the right to organize its security the way it deems appropriate,” the Russian leader added, referring to the NATO members in Eastern Europe. “But the states that were already in NATO, the member states, could also have followed their own interests — and abstained from an expansion to the east.”

Source: <http://www.politico.eu/article/putin-bild-interview-russia-relations-cold-war-sanctions-ukraine-crimea-isil/>

# Problem Four: Russian Expansion

## Russia and the Curse of Geography

Want to understand why Putin does what he does? Look at a map.



TIM MARSHALL OCT 31, 2015

Vladimir Putin says he is a religious man, a great supporter of the Russian Orthodox Church. If so, he may well go to bed each night, say his prayers, and ask God: “Why didn’t you put mountains in eastern Ukraine?” If God had built mountains in eastern Ukraine, then the great expanse of flatland that is the European Plain would not have been such inviting territory for the invaders who have attacked Russia from there repeatedly through history. As things stand, Putin, like Russian leaders before him, likely feels he has no choice but to at least try to control the flatlands to Russia’s west. So it is with landscapes around the world—their physical features imprison political leaders, constraining their choices and room for maneuver. These rules of geography are especially clear in Russia, where power is hard to defend, and where for centuries leaders have compensated by pushing outward.

Western leaders seem to have difficulty deciphering Putin’s motives, especially when it comes to his actions in Ukraine and Syria; Russia’s current leader has been described in terms that evoke Winston Churchill’s famous 1939 observation that Russia “is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside of an enigma.” But it’s helpful to look at Putin’s military interventions abroad in the context of Russian leaders’ longstanding attempts to deal with geography. What if Putin’s motives aren’t so mysterious after all? What if you can read them clearly on a map? For Russia, the world’s largest country by landmass, which bestrides Europe and Asia and encompasses forests, lakes, rivers, frozen steppes, and mountains, the problems come by land as well as by sea. In the past 500 years, Russia has been invaded several times from the west. The Poles came across the European Plain in 1605, followed by the Swedes under Charles XII in 1707, the French under Napoleon in 1812, and the Germans—twice, in both world wars, in 1914 and 1941. In Poland, the plain is only 300 miles wide—from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Carpathian Mountains in the south—but after that point it stretches to a width of about 2,000 miles near the Russian border, and from there, it offers a flat route straight to Moscow. Thus Russia’s repeated attempts to occupy Poland throughout history; the country represents a relatively narrow corridor into which

Russia could drive its armed forces to block an enemy advance toward its own border, which, being wider, is much harder to defend.

## The European Plain



The European Plain, shaded in dark gray.

Light gray indicates the shallow sea floor that surrounds the plain. (Jeroen / Wikimedia)

On the other hand, Russia's vastness has also protected it; by the time an army approaches Moscow, it already has unsustainably long supply lines, which become increasingly difficult to protect as they extend across Russian territory. Napoleon made this mistake in 1812, and Hitler repeated it in 1941.

Just as strategically important—and just as significant to the calculations of Russia's leaders throughout history—has been the country's historical lack of its own warm-water port with direct access to the oceans. Many of the country's ports on the Arctic freeze for several months each year. Vladivostok, the largest Russian port on the Pacific Ocean, is enclosed by the Sea of Japan, which is dominated by the Japanese. This does not just halt the flow of trade into and out of Russia; it prevents the Russian fleet from operating as a global power, as it does not have year-round access to the world's most important sea-lanes. Russia as a concept dates back to the ninth century and a loose federation of East Slavic tribes known as Kievan Rus, which was based in Kiev and other towns along the Dnieper River, in what is now Ukraine. The Mongols, expanding their empire, continually attacked the region from the south and east, eventually overrunning it in the 13th century. The fledgling Russia then relocated northeast in and around the city of Moscow. This early Russia, known as the Grand Principality of Moscow, was indefensible. There were no mountains, no deserts, and few rivers.

Enter Ivan the Terrible, the first tsar. He put into practice the concept of attack as defense—consolidating one's position at home and then moving outward. Russia had begun a moderate expansion under Ivan's grandfather, but Ivan accelerated it after he came to power in the 16th century. He extended his territory east to the Ural Mountains, south to the Caspian Sea, and north toward the Arctic Circle. Russia gained access to the Caspian, and later the Black Sea, thus taking advantage of the Caucasus Mountains as a partial barrier between itself and the Mongols. Ivan built a military base in Chechnya to deter any would-be attacker, be they the Mongol Golden Horde, the Ottoman Empire, or the Persians.



Now the Russians had a partial buffer zone and a hinterland—somewhere to fall back to in the case of invasion. No one was going to attack them in force from the Arctic Sea, nor fight their way over the Urals to get to them. Their land was becoming what's now known as Russia, and to invade it from the south or southeast you would have to have a huge army and a very long supply line, and you would have to fight your way past defensive positions.

In the 18th century, Russia, under Peter the Great—who founded the Russian Empire in 1721—and then Empress Catherine the Great, expanded the empire westward, occupying Ukraine and reaching the Carpathian Mountains. It took over most of what we now know as Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—from which it could defend against attacks from the Baltic Sea. Now there was a huge ring around Moscow; starting at the Arctic, it came down through the Baltic region, across Ukraine, to the Carpathians, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Caspian, swinging back around to the Urals, which stretched up to the Arctic Circle.

At the end of World War II in 1945, the Russians occupied territory conquered from Germany in Central and Eastern Europe, some of which then became part of the U.S.S.R., as it began to resemble the old Russian Empire writ large. This time, though, it wasn't the Mongols at the gates; after 1949, it was NATO. The fall of the U.S.S.R. in 1991 caused Russian territory to shrink again, with its European borders ending at Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, even while NATO crept steadily closer as it incorporated more countries in Eastern Europe.

## Russia's Changing Borders



Reuters

Two of Russia's chief preoccupations—its vulnerability on land and its lack of access to warm-water ports—came together in Ukraine in 2014. As long as a pro-Russian government held sway in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, Russia could be confident that its buffer zone would remain intact and guard the European Plain. Even a neutral Ukraine, which would promise not to join the European Union or NATO and would uphold the lease Russia had on the warm-water port at Sevastopol in Crimea, would be acceptable. But when protests in Ukraine brought down the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich and a new, more pro-Western government

came to power, Putin had a choice. He could have respected the territorial integrity of Ukraine, or he could have done what Russian leaders have done for centuries with the bad geographic cards they were dealt. He chose his own kind of attack as defense, annexing Crimea to ensure Russia's access to its only proper warm-water port, and moving to prevent NATO from creeping even closer to Russia's border.

## The Ukraine Buffer



The same geographic preoccupations are visible now in Russia's intervention in Syria on behalf of Putin's ally, Bashar al-Assad. The Russians have a naval base in the port city of Tartus on Syria's Mediterranean coast. If Assad falls, Syria's new rulers may kick them out. Putin clearly believes the risk of confronting NATO members in another geographic sphere is worth it.

Russia has not finished with Ukraine yet, nor Syria. From the Grand Principality of Moscow, through Peter the Great, Stalin, and now Putin, each Russian leader has been confronted by the same problems. It doesn't matter if the ideology of those in control is czarist, communist, or crony capitalist—the ports still freeze, and the European Plain is still flat.

Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/russia-geography-ukraine-syria/413248/>

## Problem Five: Corruption

### ‘Putin is destroying Russia. Why base his regime on corruption?’ asks Navalny

Russia’s opposition leader and anti-corruption campaigner, held under house arrest, says president is using war to stay in power

[Shaun Walker](#) in Moscow

Friday 17 October 2014 13.04

High in a dilapidated Soviet-era tower block miles from the centre of Moscow, the door opens to a small, tidy flat. It belongs to Alexei Navalny, once touted as the most potent threat to the Russian president, [Vladimir Putin](#), to emerge in Russia in recent years.

Since February, the politician and activist has been [under house arrest](#). A voracious social-media user with a talent for [140-character attacks on the Kremlin](#), the 38-year-old is banned from using the telephone or internet, though his wife can use them. He can only leave the confines of his flat when a police van drives him to hearings of his latest court case.

In a recent relaxation of the terms of his arrest, he is now allowed to speak to people other than his relatives, meaning that for the first time in six months, his colleagues and friends can visit him. He is also able to receive journalists, and the Guardian is the first of the international press to see him since his house arrest began.

Dressed in a blue T-shirt and jeans, he pads barefoot through the small flat into the kitchen, where his wife, Yulia, pours tea. A tagging bracelet around his ankle ensures that if he leaves the flat, the police will be alerted immediately.

“I’m really sick of sitting at home,” he says, with a wry smile. In the corner of the living room is a cross trainer, the only way he can get exercise. “But I’ve had experience of real arrest for up to 15 days several times, and it’s much easier to put up with house arrest when you understand what the alternative is.”

Navalny was the great hope of the wave of street protests that shook Moscow in 2011-2012, with many opposition-minded Russians confidently predicting he would become the next president of [Russia](#).

Those protests petered out after a vicious crackdown saw court cases against its leaders and some ordinary protesters, but Navalny is still the most worrying opposition figure for the Kremlin. Some uneasy liberals point to his nationalist streak and see in him a charismatic but dangerous demagogue.

What is clear is that he is able to win support among voters: despite smears on state television and little access to any normal type of campaigning, [he managed to win 27% of the vote in last autumn’s Moscow mayoral elections](#).

Since then, a lot has happened, notably the annexation of Crimea and the fighting in east Ukraine. [A summit in Milan](#) on Friday attended by Putin, Ukraine's president, Petro Poroshenko, and other European leaders including the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, failed to reinforce the faltering ceasefire.

Despite the fact that many Russian nationalists support the separatists in east [Ukraine](#), Navalny feels Putin has laid the groundwork for his regime's eventual collapse.

“There's a lot of commentary now that Putin has shown he's not about money, and about enriching his businessmen buddies, but he has decided to build a great nation, a great Russia or to resurrect the Soviet Union,” says Navalny, who [first became known for his anti-corruption investigations](#), unveiling the secret mansions and foreign accounts of Putin cronies and government officials. “I think in reality it's all much more simple. Putin has resorted to the method that various leaders have used for centuries: using war or military actions to solve internal problems and boost ratings. That happens even in democratic countries – look at [Bill Clinton in Yugoslavia](#).”

Unlike most of the liberal opposition, who have never found a common language with ordinary Russians, there was always a sense in the Kremlin that Navalny could be dangerous; a fear that his nationalism and charisma could appeal not only to the Moscow hipsters, but equally to the provincial masses, tired of seeing rampant corruption blight the country's governance.

Those in power have long been split about how to deal with the troublesome campaigner; some believe he should be locked up, others think he should be free but closely monitored. For a while in 2013, it looked as if an [allegation of embezzling funds](#) from a timber company in the city of Kirov would put him in prison; but he was released after a surprise about-face, given a suspended sentence, and allowed to run in Moscow's mayoral elections.

His good showing there clearly spooked some of those in power. A second court case, based on claims that Navalny and his brother defrauded a Russian subsidiary of the French chain Yves Rocher, began. In February he was put under house arrest, and the case has been rumbling on since.

The strategy for now seems to be to shut him up without causing too much of a scandal. To a large extent, it has worked. There has been little outcry over the fact that he is under house arrest – after all, he is not in jail – but at the same time, working on his anti-corruption investigations has become impossible and he has largely disappeared from public discourse.

With everything else happening in Russia, even the hearings of the second court case receive just a fraction of attention that the Kirov case received. Navalny says about 30 prosecution witnesses have been called so far, and “all of them ended up testifying in our favour – it's stupid and completely absurd.”





Navalny with his wife, Yulia, in Moscow after he was unexpectedly released from jail in Kirov in 2013.  
Photograph: Dmitry Lovetsky/AP

He puts the strange zigzagging in the case down to the fact that nobody lower down in the system knows what to do with him.

“Obviously it will be a guilty verdict, but what the sentence will be can only be decided by one man, and that man has a lot of stuff on his plate besides me at the moment. He’s fighting a war against Obama, against the west, against God knows what else.”

The authorities continue to keep Navalny on his toes, and there is always the threat of new criminal cases. Sometimes the charges appear so flimsy they veer into the realm of the absurd. Over the summer, his flat was raided by investigators who seized a picture. The picture had been drawn by a street artist in the town of Vladimir, and been on display on a public wall. Someone pilfered it, and gave it to Navalny as a present.

“The artist has given interviews everywhere saying he never sells his art, that he doesn’t care that it was taken, that he doesn’t want there to be a court case, but they just ignore him – the case exists. From the case materials we can see that FSB [security services] generals are working on the case. They have six top investigators working on it!” Employees of Navalny’s anti-corruption foundation have been questioned, searches carried out, computers and telephones seized.

Indeed, Navalny is such a toxic figure in Russia that any association with him can lead to trouble. In the Kirov court case, a former business partner was hauled into the dock alongside the politician; his brother Oleg is also on trial in the current case.

“That’s one of the most unpleasant parts of my work, because everything that happens around me is basically one giant court case, which spreads out to engulf the people that are close to me,” he says.

It was hinted at several times that he would be better off leaving the country, but he decided to stay. Is he really more use to the opposition cause under house arrest, or potentially in jail, than he would be from abroad?

“Why should I leave? I have not committed any crime. You can agree or disagree with my political position but it’s absolutely legal. And along with me, 90% of Russians think corruption is high, and 80% of Russians think we should bring criminal cases against corrupt officials. It’s also an important matter of trust. If I want people to

trust me, then I have to share the risks with them and stay here. How can I call on them to take part in protests and so on if they are risking things and I am not?"

He says it is pointless to make predictions either about his own fate or about how much longer Putin will be in power. Navalny has set up a political party, although it is not able to contest elections, and says he still harbours ambitions that one day he will be actively involved in politics, "including fighting for the top job".

As for how Putin will finally end up leaving the Kremlin – through a split in the elite, a violent revolution or a democratic transition – Navalny believes one thing is for certain: "In Russia, it will not be elections that provide a change of government."

### **Navalny in his own words**

On **Mikhail Khodorkovsky**, formerly owner of Yukos, Russia's biggest oil company, who was jailed in 2003, released in 2013 and now lives abroad:

"Perhaps if he had stayed an oligarch, I would have had a lot of points of dispute with him, particularly on the rights of minority shareholders, which I worked on as a lawyer. Yukos was famous for various corporate battles. But that was 10 years ago, and discussing it is pointless. I don't see any position that Khodorkovsky has now that I don't share."

### **On Putin's reaction to Ukraine:**

"Out of nowhere, without any warning, boom: suddenly a genuine, anti-criminal revolution. This was a terrible blow for Putin, a hundred times more painful than the Georgian events, than [former president Mikheil] Saakashvili and his anti-corruption reforms. He cannot allow this in Ukraine. So I think one of his strategic goals in the coming years will be to do absolutely everything to undermine the Ukrainian state, to ensure that no reforms work, so that everything ends in failure."

### **On the consequences of Russian actions in Ukraine:**

"Putin likes to speak about the 'Russian world' but he is actually making it smaller. In Belarus, they sing anti-Putin songs at football stadiums; in Ukraine they simply hate us. In Ukraine now, there are no politicians who don't have extreme anti-Russian positions. Being anti-Russian is the key to success now in Ukraine, and that's our fault."

### **On what he would ask Putin**

"I would be interested to understand his motivations, particularly on Ukraine. Because he is destroying our country. It will all collapse, and surely he can't not understand that it's all going to collapse."

“If he wants to be an authoritarian leader, then that’s one thing. But why doesn’t he want to be a Russian [Lee Kuan Yew](#)? Why does he want to base his authoritarian regime on corruption? There are other ways of doing it.”

### **On finding the ‘Putin account’:**

“I think there are probably a number of numbered accounts in Swiss banks where money is kept that Putin considers his personal money. But in the main it is all kept by nominal holders, like [head of Russian Railways Vladimir] Yakunin or the Rotenbergs [two billionaire brothers, who are childhood friends of Putin]. The money is communal.

“If intelligence services really wanted to find Putin’s money there would be ways of doing so, but all we can do is work with open sources and the information we get from insiders. We can’t show up at a Swiss bank and seize documents or analyse transfers. Corruption in Russia is so open that even we can find a huge amount. But to find Putin’s accounts, that’s beyond our capabilities.”

### **On how he spends his time under house arrest**

“I’m reading a huge number of books; basically doing what everyone dreams of doing but never has time for. I’m watching the ‘250 best films ever’ one by one. All this American nonsense like The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, and other old films.”

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/17/putin-is-destroying-russia-why-base-his-regime-on-corruption-asks-navalny#img-1>



# **Problem Five: Environmental Issues**

## **Environmental issues in Russia**

### **Climate issues in Russia**

Russia produces a significant portion of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and is therefore an important country in the international climate negotiations. The Kyoto protocol did not come into force before it was ratified by Russia. Nevertheless, Russia's positions in the coming climate negotiations are an open question. Russian science and public has taken a more sceptical position to man-made climate change than the rest of the world, school education is weak and it is very little public information available about climate change. Since the country is rich on oil, gas and coal, fossil fuel is a priority together with maintaining its nuclear capacity.

### **Challenges in relation to nuclear-waste and accidents**

The first generation nuclear reactors have reached their designed lifespan. The oldest existing Chernobyl-type RBMK-1000 unit of Leningrad NPP and the oldest model of VVER-440 power unit of Kola NPP reached their designed lifespan in 2003.

The first generation reactors create a higher probability of nuclear accidents, and should be closed at the planned expiry date. They should not be granted permits for prolonged operation. Necessary funds for decommissioning must be established, and the preparation of decommissioning started.

By-products of nuclear weapons production caused permanent damage near Tomsk and Krasnoyarsk in southern Siberia, and near Chelyabinsk in the Ural Mountains. Fallout from the 1986 explosion at Ukraine's Chernobyl' nuclear power plant affected Russia primarily in Bryansk Oblast (see Chernobyl' Accident). Less well-known than the Chernobyl' disaster were accidents at the Mayak nuclear weapons production plant near Chelyabinsk in 1949, 1957, and 1967, which together released significantly higher emissions than Chernobyl'

The Soviet military tested nuclear weapons on the islands of Novaya Zemlya in the Arctic Ocean, which was their second testing site after Semipalatinsk (now Semey), Kazakhstan. Nuclear reactors and wastes were dumped into the Barents and Kara seas of the far north, and in far eastern Siberia. Dumping of nuclear wastes in the Sea of Japan (East Sea) continued until 1993. The disposal of nuclear submarines and nuclear waste is still a problematic issue. Although a number of nuclear submarines have been decommissioned, many are still docked at Russian ports as a result of a lack of money and facilities for storing nuclear wastes.

### **Erosion and degradation of land and water**

Land and water resources experienced severe degradation during the Soviet period. Some areas, such as the Kuznetsk Basin on the Tom' River in southern Siberia, the industrial belt along the southern portion of the Ural Mountains, and the lower Volga River, were degraded beyond repair.

Chemical fertilizers and airborne pollutants have contaminated some agricultural areas. Soil resources have also been adversely affected by mismanagement. Broad areas of land in southern Russia suffer from erosion. Wind erosion has affected the more arid parts of the North Caucasus, lower Volga River basin, and western Siberia. Pollutants released into rivers have accumulated in lakes and seas with limited water exchange, including the Caspian Sea, the Sea of Azov, and the Black Sea. A toxic layer of hydrogen sulfide covers the Black Sea, due in part to organic compounds from agricultural byproducts and untreated sewage. Many Russian cities are not equipped with adequate sewage treatment plants. Inadequate or nonexistent wastewater treatment contributes to the degradation of rivers and lakes.

Many hydroelectric dams were built during Soviet times on Russia's major rivers. A series of dams on the Volga River has significantly slowed the river and decreased the volume of water it can carry; the decline in the flow of the Kuban' and Don rivers has been even greater. The rivers therefore retain even more of the pollutants that are discharged into their waters. In addition, many of the dams do not have properly functioning fish ladders, so many fish do not make it past the dams to their spawning grounds. As a result, the numbers of

sturgeon and other fish have been greatly reduced.

### **Deforestation and destruction of forests**

Forests in more accessible parts of the country suffer from deforestation caused by extensive logging. The rate of deforestation has increased in the Ussuri region in extreme far eastern Russia because of the activities of foreign logging operations. Some large stands of undisturbed forests are protected in Russia's extensive network of national reserves and parks. Adequate funding for park rangers and other personnel is lacking, however, and poaching (illegal hunting) of endangered animals such as the Siberian tiger has increased as a result.

Airborne pollutants have caused damage to vegetation in many areas of Russia. Copper, cobalt, and nickel smelters emit huge amounts of sulfur dioxide in the northern Siberian city of Noril'sk and on the Kola Peninsula in northwestern Russia. Winds spread these contaminants across northern Europe, where the pollutants have caused widespread destruction of Scandinavian forests. They have also affected large areas of forests in the Kuznetsk Basin and the southern Urals.

Source: <http://naturvernforbundet.no/international/environmental-issues-in-russia/category930.html>