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## Mr. Putin & the Art of the Offensive Defense

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# **Mr. Putin & the Art of the Offensive Defense**



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# Mr. Putin & the Art of the Offensive Defense

Fiona Hill

## **I: Observations on the Crisis in Ukraine and Crimea**

To begin to understand Russian President Vladimir Putin's approach to the current crisis in Ukraine, we have to start with an effort to understand the man himself. Vladimir Putin is a product of his environment—a man whose past experiences have informed his present outlook and world view. As Clifford Gaddy and I propose in our recent book, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, Putin is best understood as a composite of six multiple identities that stem from those experiences—the Statist, History Man, Survivalist, Outsider, Free Marketeer, and Case Officer. We argue that it is the combination of all these identities that made Putin an effective behind-the-scenes operator in Russian politics and helped propel him into the Kremlin in 1999-2000. These same identities are now at play as Putin deals with Ukraine and with the West's response.

Putin's broader experiences and world view are not unique in a Russian context. Three of the identities we discuss in the book, Statist, History Man, and Survivalist, are those of a classic Russian conservative, whose views have deep roots that can be traced through several centuries of Russian political thought. This is why Putin's actions in Ukraine are broadly popular in Russia—among both the “patriotic elites” and the general public—and have resulted, in February-March 2014, in a significant surge in his approval ratings.

## **Understanding Putin:**

A quick review of the identities Clifford Gaddy and I discuss in our book provides more of a context for current developments in Ukraine.

First, the Statist: Putin was selected as the successor to Russian President Boris Yeltsin in 1999, against the backdrop of a consensus among the Russian political elite about the importance of restoring order to the Russian state after a decade of domestic crisis and international humiliation in the 1990s. Putin used one of his first major political statements—his so-called “Millennium Message” of December 29, 1999—to present himself as a statist. From his earliest days in the Kremlin, Putin has promoted the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church, stressing communitarianism over Western individualism. He has drawn direct links between the modern Russian presidency and the pre-Revolutionary Russian tsars, and indulged in official bouts of Soviet nostalgia. His conservative agenda is an amalgam of traditional “Russianness,” embodied in the Russian Orthodox Church, and highlights of the Soviet era—from the national anthem to the victory of World War II, to sporting and cultural achievements.

In sum, Putin has pursued the goal of restoring and strengthening the state, by rediscovering and taking back Russia’s fundamental values, and re-energizing its historical traditions. As Putin presents it, Russia is a unique “civilizational pole,” distinct from the West, with a conservative social and political base rooted in a history. Since returning to the presidency in 2012, Putin has put Ukraine at the beginning and the center of his narrative. Ukraine is Kievan Rus’, the birthplace of the Russian state, and Ukrainians and Russians are one, single, united people, not just fraternal peoples.

This leads us to the second identity, the History Man: In official biographical materials, Putin portrays himself as a “student” of Russian history. As president, he has tied his personal destiny to that of the Russian state. He has actively used his own interpretations of the country’s past to reinforce his policy positions, frame current

events, and cloak himself in the mantle of historical legitimacy. For example, Putin has frequently highlighted parallels with Pyotr Stolypin—prime minister under Nicholas II, the last tsar of the Romanov dynasty—who championed far-reaching economic and social reforms. Putin selected the 100th anniversary of Stolypin’s death in 1911 to announce his intention to return to the presidency after four years of serving as Russian prime minister.

History is a political tool for Putin. It is also very personal. His parents were survivors of the siege of Leningrad in the 1940s and lost a son, Putin’s older brother, during their ordeal. His family’s harrowing tale from World War II fits neatly into Russia’s national historical narrative—where Russia constantly battles for survival against a hostile outside world. Every calamity and great sacrifice reaffirms Russia’s resilience and its special status in history. WWII and the tale of Russia’s survival against all the odds is a constant rhetorical touchstone for Putin, as well as for others from his generation. Putin rarely misses an opportunity to stress his personal connections to the siege of Leningrad and the national narrative of Russia’s “Great Patriotic War.”

This leads us to the third identity, the Survivalist: The collective experience of Russia’s long, dark history has turned the Russian population into survivalists—people who constantly think of and prepare for the worst. Throughout his presidency, Putin has raised survivalism from the personal to the national level. Putin concluded that the colossal debts his predecessors, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, racked-up over two decades undermined the sovereignty of the USSR. They made the fledgling Russian state beholden to the IMF, the World Bank and the United States in the 1990s in times of crisis. Putin made it a priority to get rid of them. He also created massive national financial and material reserves—everything from oil, gas, and refined petroleum products, to livestock feed, military uniforms, tents, medications, and generators—so that Russia would have the resources to withstand any natural disaster, war, or future economic crisis. In Putin’s view, for Russia to survive as a sovereign state, fend off Western pressure, and regain control of its own destiny,

the state had to pay off its debts and build up reserves.

These three identities we describe in the book help explain Putin's goals and how he sets priorities for Russian domestic and foreign policy. The next set of three identities help explain Putin's methods for achieving his goals and priorities. They tell us more about Putin, the man.

First, the Outsider: Putin has cultivated an image of himself as an outsider since he was a young man. He was born and raised in Russia's second city of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), the child of a factory worker and sometime janitor, with earlier humble roots in Russia's Ryazan province. In many respects, Putin was even an outsider within the KGB. He was recruited into the institution in the 1970s as part of an effort by KGB Director Yury Andropov to bring in a new generation of operatives from outside normal channels. Putin did not rise rapidly through the ranks of the KGB, nor did he secure plum postings. Putin was also never part of the leadership structures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

He remained an outsider throughout the 1980s. During the critical reform period of perestroika, the KGB posted Putin to the provincial city of Dresden in East Germany.

Putin has made a virtue of this outsider status throughout his presidency, stressing his connections to "ordinary" Russians and distancing himself from Moscow's resented elites. But one key point to bear in mind is that, by being posted in Dresden by the KGB from 1985-1990, Putin also missed the most revolutionary and pluralistic political period of perestroika, and the high points of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms. Instead, while he was in Dresden, Putin watched East Germany implode as a result of a struggle between would-be East German reformers and the hardline regime of Eric Honnecker.

Putin witnessed protests and street violence and developed (as he himself has admitted) a very negative view of the consequences of

the rise of political opposition movements. He saw, at first hand, their ability to bring down governments and destroy states. When he looks at the developments in Ukraine and the protests on Kyiv's Maidan Square, he looks at them through the lens of his experience in Dresden and East Germany. Moreover, when Putin came back to the Soviet Union after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he also found the USSR in its death throes. The Soviet Union had lost its dominant position in Eastern Europe and was about to lose its own statehood as a result of the same political and economic forces that pulled East Germany apart. This, as Putin stressed back in 2005, was for him one of the great catastrophes of the 20th Century. As a result, Putin has a very dark assessment of perestroika. He reacted very negatively to the revival of some of its core ideas in political debates and policies during the presidency of his long-time colleague Dmitry Medvedev, who came of age in Leningrad and graduated from university in that very period when Putin was in Dresden.

After his tenure as deputy mayor of St. Petersburg in the early 1990s, Putin was specifically brought to Moscow as an outsider in the summer of 1996. He was brought in as a member of the team of liberal reformers, then headed by Anatoly Chubais, to help root out entrenched interests in Moscow's political circles and, eventually, to rein in and harness Russia's oligarchs—the new businessmen who had acquired the most important parts of Russia's former state energy and industrial sectors during the Yeltsin-era privatization campaign.

This leads us to the second of Putin's more personal identities, the Free Marketeer: Putin's outsider status and his pragmatism enabled him to reject two of the central tenets of Communism: state ownership and central planning. History taught him that the Soviet economic system failed. Private property, free enterprise, and the market were superior. But Putin's understanding of capitalism was limited. The business practices he was exposed to during his time as deputy mayor of St. Petersburg were focused on personal connections to the city government, as well as exploiting vulnerabilities and loopholes created by the collapse of the Soviet economy in the 1990s. This

helps to explain why Putin is quick to use economic and trade levers in domestic and foreign policy disputes—deploying tax inspectors against domestic opposition figures and dragging them into court to answer accusations of economic crimes; turning off gas supplies to Ukraine in 2006 and again in 2009; and imposing import bans against Ukrainian chocolate in 2013 (along with Georgian and Moldovan wine and a whole raft of European and US products at other junctures). During his time as deputy mayor, Putin came to see the free market as a tool, an instrument, as well as a source of new opportunity.

The final identity, and one of the most important, is the Case Officer: Putin was initially encouraged to take up the position of deputy mayor in St. Petersburg by the KGB. After the collapse of the USSR, the local KGB began targeting the city's new private businessmen and the foreign investors, who were flocking into St. Petersburg in pursuit of new ventures. The KGB wanted to get a handle on what all these businesses were up to. As deputy mayor, Putin's job was to monitor and "manage" St. Petersburg's businessmen, to ensure that all the businesses, domestic and foreign, delivered on their promises to the city government. He collected compromising financial and personal information and leveraged it against them.

When Putin came to Moscow in 1996, he used these same textbook KGB tactics against corrupt bureaucrats, regional governors, and eventually the Russian oligarchs, who were fighting with each other over assets and preying on the Russian state. Through coercion, blackmail, and manipulation Putin got them under control and created a system of private enterprise with strings attached. The property rights of Russia's business magnates were ultimately dependent on the goodwill of the Kremlin.

If the six identities of the book are applied to understand Putin's approach to foreign policy, his main goal is that of the Statist. Putin wants to restore and preserve a Russia as a great power and world civilization. He wants Russia to be able to protect itself against all external threats. Putin is also the Survivalist who prepares himself

to deploy all the reserves necessary to protect the state. And, most importantly, Putin is the Case Officer when it comes to his methods. Vladimir Putin's approach to statecraft is shaped by his experience in the KGB—an institution that operated beyond the scrutiny of the public and without fear of laws or constraints in dealing with its opponents. Putin is prepared to do whatever it takes to reach his goals. His training in the KGB was shaped by the zero sum calculus of the Cold War, in which a win by the adversary meant a loss for the KGB and the Soviet Union.

## **II: Approaches to Foreign Policy**

Putin sees the main external threats to Russia coming from three dimensions. First, and most obvious, the threat to Russia's territorial integrity based on its long history of wars and invasions. Second, the threat to Russia's political sovereignty. In this case, Russia must be fully in command of its own destiny. Only Russians can be trusted to make decisions in Russia's interests as foreigners will never have Russia's interests as a priority. Third, the threat to Russia's "national identity." This dimension is vague, almost mystical, but it is an equally essential and vital element as the first two.

The threats to Russia's "national identity," as Putin and those around him see them, are more subtle.

Putin understands Russia's national identity as its unique history, culture, language, and values. Any attempt to impose non-Russian values on Russia is a threat. Especially suspect are "universal values," as argued by the West in general and the United States in particular. They are by definition, anti-Russian. In the world, as Putin sees it, there are only a handful of truly politically sovereign states. Even fewer states have a true national identity. Russia is more than just a "nation," "a people," "a state," it is also a separate "civilization."

All this means that, for Putin, there is very little margin for negotiations, for domestic or foreign policy "deals," or for taking an "off ramp," if Russia's survival is perceived to be threatened in some way. Putin will not make sacrifices or compromises unless

there is some ironclad guarantee that the benefits will far outweigh, and mitigate any negative consequences for Russia.

In foreign policy, Mr. Putin no longer sees the West as a model worth emulating. In his view the United States is politically gridlocked, mired in debt and overextended in foreign entanglements. The situation in Europe is no better. Russia, Putin has concluded, needs to go it alone—now more than ever. Russia must emphasize its own model. This further complicates efforts to deal with Russia on the diplomatic front in Ukraine, all the more so because, since the 2000s, President Putin has personally taken charge of Russian foreign policy. Vladimir Putin has repeatedly asserted, and seems to believe, that he is the only person capable of effectively countering the threats to Russia. This reinforces Putin’s conviction that he has to maintain his grip on power to counter all the threats Russia faces.

Putin tends to act on the global scene as he does at home. He scales his approach to domestic politics up to the international arena. As a former KGB case officer, international relations for Putin are mainly about people—or (in the old KGB parlance) “working with people.” In other words, this is all about recruitment, using all the intelligence officer’s tools to profile individuals, seek out vulnerabilities, exploit them and turn a target into an asset, an agent. This translates into a very top heavy focus in Russian foreign policy. Putin and the Kremlin, not the Russian Foreign Ministry and other parts of the Russian state bureaucracy, deal directly with the leaders of other countries, or indirectly through trusted intermediaries and informal back channels. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is more of a trusted (and extremely skilled) intermediary than a foreign minister. Putin stands behind Lavrov, not the Russian Foreign Ministry.

Putin resorts to methods he learned in the KGB for handling people at home and abroad to turn them into assets that will further his goals. These methods range from soft persuasion to naked intimidation and force. Since 2012, Putin has focused on dealing with the Russian opposition—co-opting some, and intimidating others by using the Russian legal and penal systems as a blunt instrument of repression.

Abroad, Putin has used similar methods to mitigate the blow-back to Russia from a series of external shocks, including in the Middle East with the Arab Spring and its aftermath, in the global economy from the Eurozone crisis, and now in Ukraine.

### **Ukraine and the Eurasian Union:**

The current crisis in Ukraine was triggered by Putin's attempts to bolster the Russian economy in response to a significant slow-down in GDP growth. When he first came into power, Putin was fixated on cementing Russia's status and its global standing on the basis of GDP growth and superior economic performance. In the 2000s, largely thanks to high and rising oil prices, Putin not only paid off the Russian state's debts, but he also presided over a period of economic growth that put Russia on track to become the world's fifth-largest economy. GDP growth replaced military might as Russia's most important indicator of success. Russia's growth boosted jobs and incomes and contributed to a decade of domestic stability.

In 2012, as Putin came back into the presidency, the future looked less rosy. Absent another sustained rise in oil prices, Russia's annual GDP growth seemed unlikely to surpass 1-2%. Slow growth could endanger domestic stability if jobs were lost in Russia's critical manufacturing sectors—which are poorly positioned to compete in the global marketplace. To deal with the threat of slow growth to the Russian state and political system, Putin turned to his survivalist instincts. He and his top financial and economic ministers and experts consistently lowered expectations about the future performance of the Russian economy. They jettisoned the rhetoric about Russian GDP growth. Putin asserted that economic success would now be gauged by making sure that the Russian economy was robust enough to withstand future economic shocks. He emphasized a policy of economic retrenchment—hunkering down and protecting the economy, ensuring fiscal stability, avoiding more ruinous state debt, building up financial reserves wherever possible, and holding onto existing Russian jobs and markets for Russian goods.

Putin's essentially defensive policies were suddenly upended, in his

view, by the European Union (EU) pushing to conclude Association Agreements with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia at the end of 2013. This was something of an unexpected development for Putin and Russia. Up until 2013, Moscow had been focused on its own economic “modernization partnership” with the EU and negotiations to expand trade and investment, as well as secure visa free travel for Russians with official or service passports. Russia had not been paying a great deal of attention to the fine print or implications of the EU Association Agreements, which the other four states on its borders had been working on with Brussels. These agreements, however, included Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreements that went far beyond the scope of what Russia was negotiating with the EU. The Association Agreements, once signed, would put Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia on a path toward the adoption and implementation of critical provisions of the European Union’s “Acquis”—the body of legislation, regulations, norms and obligations assumed by full member states of the EU.

The agreements threatened to close those states—with their collective populations of 62 million consumers—off from the Russian economy, or at the very least to increase the competition for Russian goods. Over the longer-term, as in the case of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (which were part of the Russian and then Soviet empires for 200 years), close association with the EU would reform and reorient the “post-Soviet” economic and governance structures of the four states in fundamental ways. Russia would no longer be able to assert itself as their major economic and political partner.

At the same time that Moscow had been negotiating its own trade deals with the EU, Putin had been promoting the creation of a separate Russia-led trading bloc, the “Eurasian Union.” This would expand an existing Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan to pull in other former Soviet countries, including Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia. Putin wanted to use the Eurasian Union as a platform to re-establish the trade, transportation and other economic linkages that had been ruptured by the collapse of the USSR, to

retain regional markets for Russian products, and help guarantee Russian jobs. He proposed that Russia lead the current and future members of the Eurasia Union in further trade negotiations with the EU. Getting back to the theme of threats to Russia's "national identity," Putin also came to see the Eurasian Union as a means of keeping the region around Russia as a buffer against the advance of political ideas and cultural values coming in from Europe and the West. There would be close trade relations between the Eurasian Union and the EU, but the Eurasian Union would steer clear of Europe's political norms.

Over the course of 2013, the EU made it clear to the four states and also to Russia that the Association Agreements were incompatible with the Eurasian Union. This would have to be an either/or proposition. For Vladimir Putin, steeped in the zero-sum calculations of the past, this was unacceptable. Given the imperative to protect Russia's economy, he wanted to make sure that Russia and Russia's interests were going to be factored into to any agreements.

At the EU's "Eastern Partnership" summit in Vilnius at the end of November 2013, the EU initialed Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with Georgia and Moldova. Russia exerted considerable pressure on all of the countries to forego their agreements with the EU and join the Eurasian Union. Armenia capitulated a couple of weeks before the EU summit and agreed to join the Eurasian Union. With days to go before the Vilnius meeting, Ukraine's leadership requested that the final signature on its agreement be postponed, citing Russian threats as the precipitating factor along with the perilous state of the Ukrainian economy. Shortly after the Vilnius summit, in December 2013, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich accepted what amounted to an economic bailout from Russia, mostly in the form of quarterly purchases of Ukrainian bonds, and a lower gas price. The protests, violence and chaos in Kyiv that led to Yanukovich's ouster at the end of February 2014, began in direct response to these actions.

Although the current crisis in Ukraine has deep domestic roots in internal Ukrainian political dynamics—including regional fissures, poor governance, and the personal financial preoccupations of President Yanukovich and his inner circle—the situation has been exacerbated by Vladimir Putin’s fixation on countering threats to Russia. Of all the countries in negotiations with the EU, Putin viewed Ukraine’s decision to reach an Association Agreement with the EU as the greatest threat to Russia’s complex of interests. In interviews, Putin readily conceded that the Eurasian Union would not amount to much without Ukraine, given its population of more than 45 million, its industrial base, and its close economic, historic and cultural ties to Russia.

### **Putin’s Offensive Defense:**

If Ukraine had begun to adopt EU legislation and regulations immediately after the Vilnius summit, Moscow’s leverage over the Ukrainian leadership would have been greatly reduced. Yanukovich stepped away from the Association Agreement, but Ukraine’s opposition leaders have pledged to return to the negotiations with the European Union and sign the agreement as soon as possible. With the move into Crimea, Putin is trying to regain Russian leverage over Kyiv, before a new government can assert and consolidate itself and get back to business with the EU. He has made his move using the same methods of manipulation, intimidation and force that he has deployed at home, as well as abroad in the war with Georgia in 2008. Putin has sought out vulnerabilities and aggressively exploited them.

Ukraine only has an acting president and an interim government, which has not been legitimized by elections. The temporary political arrangement includes representatives of the protestors whose collective action toppled Yanukovich. Putin has moved swiftly to underscore that Viktor Yanukovich is technically still the legitimate president of Ukraine, and to declare the interim government illegal. He has demonized the entire protest movement along with Ukraine’s opposition parties, by focusing in on the violence (including the sniper fire on protestors and security forces) that engulfed Kyiv’s

Maidan Square in February. And he has highlighted the activities and the presence of extreme rightwing elements among the protestors, while downplaying the representatives of a broad spectrum of Ukrainian society that swelled the crowds. Putin has further used the appointment of prominent rightwing protestors in the interim government to depict the temporary authorities in Kyiv as nothing more than a band of xenophobic extremists, thugs, and terrorists.

On this basis, Putin has extrapolated a major threat to ethnic Russians, Russian speakers and other ethnic and religious minorities, in the east and south of Ukraine close to Russia's borders. Stoking inter-ethnic tensions and fears in these regions in the Russian media (which is also the staple of news and information in Ukraine), Putin has invoked the right and the obligation of Russia to protect ethnic Russian and Russian speakers from attack. This right was first claimed under Russian President Boris Yeltsin in the early 1990s and is now enshrined in Russia's military doctrine. Attacks on Russian speakers outside of Russia's borders are seen as a legitimate trigger for Russian military action. A February 28, 2014 resolution of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, has given Putin additional legal cover, by approving intervention in Crimea and on the territory of Ukraine to defend ethnic Russians and Russian speakers.

Using these and the other legal levers at his disposal, including the agreements on the long-term basing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, appeals for Russian assistance from local authorities, and a hastily arranged March 16 referendum on independence (to get well-ahead of a new presidential election in Kyiv), Putin has effectively taken control of Crimea. Large-scale military maneuvers in Russia's western military district close to Ukraine's borders have increased the tension and signaled Russia's intent to use more force, in and outside Crimea, if necessary.

### **III: Ukraine and Its Meanings**

Beyond engaging in an offensive defense of Russia's interests. Vladimir Putin has had some other important goals in responding

to events in Ukraine. From his perspective, the softer methods of persuasion and intimidation he deployed before the EU's November Vilnius Summit did not work. They did not completely deter Ukrainians and others from pursuing closer relations with the EU, nor did they halt Europe's efforts to consolidate relations in the neighborhood. So now, he has to take harsher measures to ensure that no-one will ignore Russia's interests. The EU Association Agreements are now a red line for Putin, and this line has been crossed. Georgia crossed a similar line, as far as Putin was concerned, in 2008 when it persisted in pushing for a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP), and when Tbilisi then launched its own military intervention against separatist forces in South Ossetia. In 2008, Russia moved swiftly to punish Georgia militarily—in Abkhazia as well as South Ossetia. Russia attacked Georgian territory beyond the administrative borders of these two entities, refused to back down in the face of potential US and Western sanctions, and ultimately recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

For Putin the EU and NATO are equally threatening to Russia's interests, even if they are presented in the seemingly innocuous, lesser form of an Association Agreement or a MAP. Putin's current play in Crimea and Ukraine is the Case Officer's blunt messages directed at multiple actors:

To the European Union and the West: "You finally have to stop trampling over Russia's interests. Do you not get it? How long are we going to play this game? We thought we made it very clear in Georgia in 2008 that we are prepared to stand up for our interests, take the risks of military intervention. We can suffer sanctions and deal with any political and economic pain you can inflict. We have a higher threshold for pain than you do. Have you forgotten our national narrative and the siege of Leningrad? Do you want to go to war over Ukraine? We don't, but we're ready to if you don't back down and back off!"

To Ukraine and the prospective new leadership in Kyiv: "We've warned you and your predecessors repeatedly. What were you

expecting when you said you were going to continue with the Association Agreement? We took action against Georgia in 2008 over MAP. We would have taken action against Ukraine too in 2008 if you had kept on pressing like the Georgians, and you know it. Russia is the decisive factor in any major political and economic decision here, not the European Union, not NATO, not the United States, not the West. As you saw with Georgia in 2008, they will not and cannot protect you. Now Crimea is gone. Eastern and southern Ukraine could go too—unless all of you in Kyiv start to take Russia’s interests into consideration first and foremost. We will keep a grip on these territories to make sure this is crystal clear at all times.”

To Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, and all the other states that used to be part of the Soviet Union: “We hope you’ve really got the message now. If you’re thinking of transitions and new deals with other great powers, like Association Agreements, think of us first. We have plenty of levers we can use against you, and you know what they are. Remember—nothing really belongs to you, not even your own territory or all of your population, and you will always have to pay your tribute to Moscow.” There is a special message embedded in here for the Baltic states: “You may think you have escaped and are safe beyond the EU’s and NATO’s red lines, but can you be sure they can protect you? Remember you still have lots of Russian speakers inside your borders ...”

To the domestic Russian Opposition: “Those of you who took to the streets in 2011 and 2011, don’t get any more ideas. If you mobilize outside of scheduled elections and start protesting again, like they just did in Kyiv, we’ll come down on you hard. And it won’t just be the lawbooks we throw at you. Nasty business with those snipers on Maidan ... so much for peaceful protests.”

To the Broader Russian Population: “The Ukrainians just couldn’t get their act together. See what poor governance and then protests bring. They bring complete chaos, loss of life and property, and outside intervention and manipulation; and they push extremists to the top. You have protection at home and abroad. Would you want

to trade what you have now for that? If you want to avoid what's happening in Kyiv, you'd better stick with me, Vladimir Putin, the statist, the survivalist—the man who restored the state and Russia's great power status after the disasters of the 1990s; the man who has given you 14 years of stability and prosperity!”

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