

# GREAT DECISIONS

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## Russia's foreign policy

### Acronyms and abbreviations

**DNC**—Democratic National Committee

**ISIS**—Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (IS—Islamic State; ISIL—Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant; Daesh)

**NATO**—North Atlantic Treaty Organization

**NGO**—non-governmental organization

**UNSC**—United Nations Security Council

**USAID**—U.S. Agency for International Development

**WTO**—World Trade Organization

### Glossary

**Bolshevik Revolution (Russian Revolution):** Actually a pair of revolutions in February and October of 1917. The February revolution toppled the Tsarist autocracy that headed Imperial Russia, replacing it with a provisional government and community governing bodies called soviets. Over time, the soviets came to be dominated by adherents to the political movement Bolshevism, leading to the October Revolution, during which the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government and established the Soviet Union.

**Boris Yeltsin:** Former president of Russia (1991-1999), Yeltsin was the country's first post-Soviet leader. Despite early popularity as a democratic trailblazer who vowed to transform Russia's socialist economy with capitalist, market reforms, Yeltsin's plans ultimately led the country to the brink of economic collapse. Yeltsin's presidency devolved into chaos and his

popularity plummeted. On December 31, 1999, Yeltsin resigned, ceding the presidency to his chosen successor, then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

**Cold War:** A period of tension from the end of World War II to the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 that split the world between the Eastern Bloc (the communist Soviet Union and its satellite states) and the Western Bloc (the capitalist and democratic United States, NATO and their allies). While both sides fed regional proxy wars, the period was deemed "cold" because there were no large-scale or direct armed conflicts between the two polarities.

**Crimean Peninsula:** A peninsula in the Black Sea that became a territory of the Russian Empire in 1783, was gifted to Soviet Ukraine in 1954 and remained a semi-autonomous region of Ukraine until March 2014, when the Russian military, sparked by the Euromaidan protests, invaded and held a disputed referendum that returned Crimea to Russian jurisdiction.

**Crimean Tatars:** A Turkic Muslim ethnic group that originated on the Crimean peninsula as early as the 13th century, and which has historically faced persecution. Following the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, the Russian occupation liquidated the Crimean Tatar government, which it designated an extremist organization.

**Cuban Missile Crisis:** A 13-day conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1962, brought about by the deployment of U.S. ballistic missiles in Italy and Turkey and the subsequent deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba. The conflict was the closest the world came to a full-blown nuclear war during the Cold War period.

**Eurasian Economic Union:** A union established in 2015 between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. Similar to the functioning of the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union establishes the free movement of goods, capital, services and people, and standardizes other practices including, but not limited to, transportation, energy, foreign trade and customs.

**Euromaidan:** A series of pro-EU and anti-corruption demonstrations, beginning in Kiev, Ukraine in November 2013 after then-President Viktor Yanukovich suspended Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU. Euromaidan led to the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution, which ousted Yanukovich.

**European Union Association Agreement:** A framework cooperation treaty between the EU and a non-member state.

**Joseph Stalin:** The general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1922–52). Stalin governed as a dictator, establishing a violent and repressive version of Marxist-Leninism known as Stalinism that led to a “Great Purge” of hundreds of thousands of “enemies of the state”, and created a command economy, mass collectivization and industrialization.

**Kosovo War (1998–99):** A war between Yugoslavia—which controlled the territory of Kosovo—and Kosovo Albanian rebel group with the support of NATO and the Albanian army. The Kosovo War was one of multiple ethnic conflicts from 1991–2001 that ultimately precipitated the breakup of Yugoslavia. The role of NATO in Kosovo became a topic of heated debate, as the operation killed hundreds of civilians and was initiated without the approval of the UN Security Council.

**Michael McFaul:** Former U.S. ambassador to Russia (2012–14).

**Minsk I and Minsk II Agreements:** Two agreements signed in Minsk, Belarus to implement immediate ceasefire in eastern Ukraine. The accords have failed to stop the armed conflict between Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists backed by Russia.

**Ramzan Kadyrov:** The head of Chechnya, a Muslim republic of Russia, since Russian President Vladimir Putin nominated him in 2007. Kadyrov replaced his father, a former Chechen president, who was assassinated in 2004. Kadyrov is known for establishing a

stronghold over Chechnya after quelling conflict with the warlords who once controlled the military.

**Rex Tillerson:** The U.S. secretary of state of the Donald Trump administration and former CEO and chairman of ExxonMobil (2006–16). Tillerson is known for his business with Russia, which created a joint oil company, Exxon Neftegas, and for his opposition to the ongoing U.S. sanctions on Russia and Russian officials.

**Right Sector:** A far-right Ukrainian nationalist political party, which grew out of the Euromaidan protests and has been involved in paramilitary operations in the ensuing armed conflict.

**“Russian reset”:** The Barack Obama administration's foreign policy established in 2009 and carried out by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to improve U.S.-Russia relations. While most aspects of the bilateral policy were met (a treaty on nuclear weapons, Russian inclusion in the World Trade Organization, etc.), relations between the two countries continued to deteriorate.

**Russo-Georgian War:** A war between Georgia, Russia and the unrecognized, but Russia-backed, republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008. Georgia ultimately lost control of parts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Russia recognized as autonomous.

**Second Chechen War (1999–2000):** An armed conflict between Russia, Chechnya and various Islamist groups on the territory of Chechnya and other Russian borderlands in the North Caucasus. In the end, Russians established a pro-Russian Chechen government, and restored territorial control over Chechnya.

**Viktor Yanukovich:** The former president of Ukraine (2010–14) who ultimately chose rapprochement with Russia when he suspended Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU in November 2013. This decision sparked the Euromaidan protests that ousted him from the presidency in February 2014. Today, Yanukovich lives in exile in Russia.

**Viktor Yushchenko:** Former pro-Western president of Ukraine (2005–10). Yushchenko won the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election after the first two votes, in favor of Viktor Yanukovich, were found to be fraudulent.

**Vladimir Putin:** The president of the Russian Federation (2000–08; 2012–present), former prime minister of Russia (1999–2000, 2008–12) and former director of the Federal Security Service (1998–99). He is known for stabilizing the Russian economy after the Soviet collapse, as well as for democratic backsliding and an authoritarian governing style.

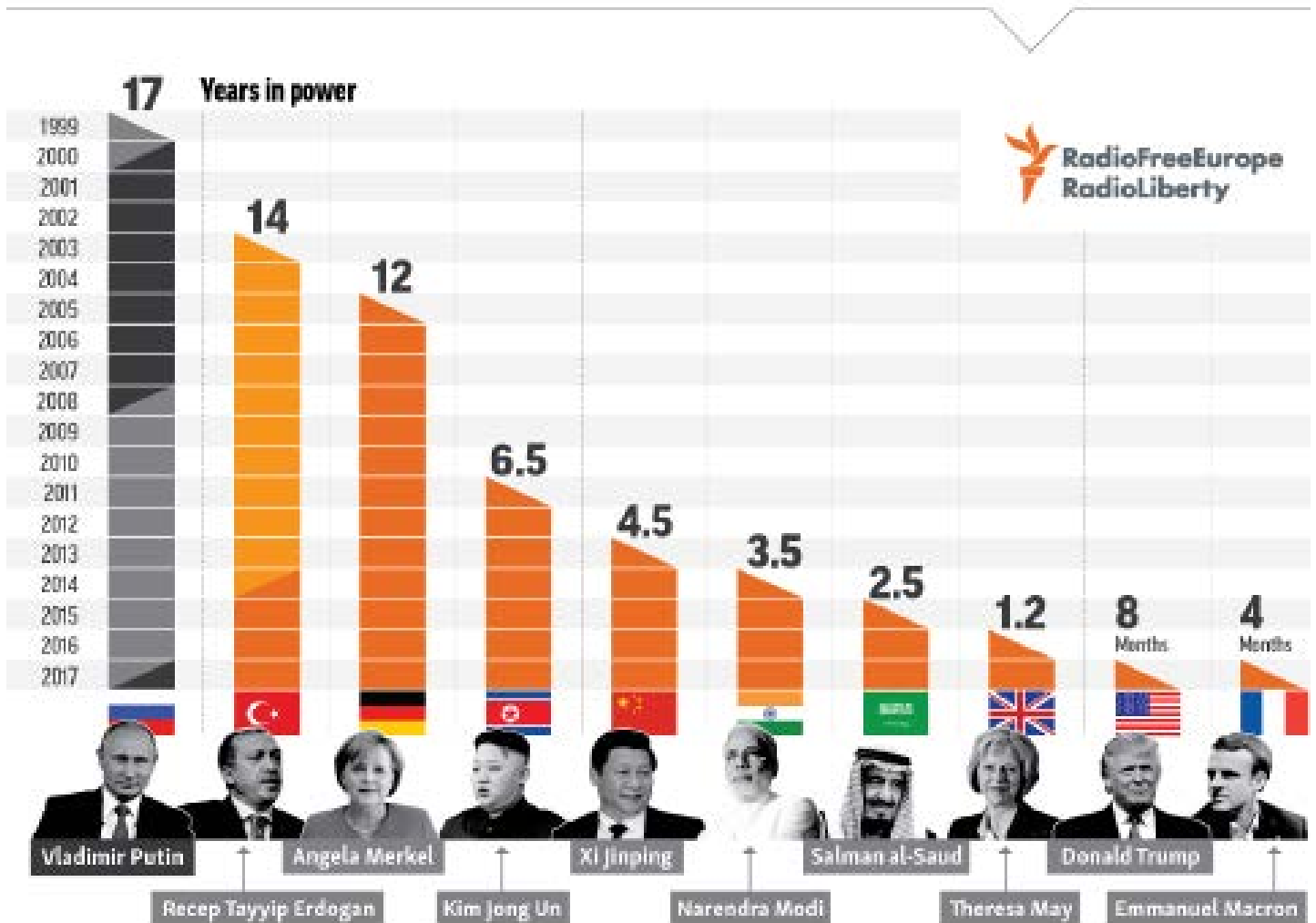
**Ukraine crisis:** An ongoing armed conflict, the Ukraine crisis began in November 2013 when then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich suspended preparations to implement an Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, leading to mass opposition protests known

as Euromaidan. In February 2014, pro-Kremlin Yanukovich was ousted, sparking pro-Russian protests in southern and eastern pro-Russian Ukraine. In March 2014, the Russian military intervened, absorbing the semi-autonomous Ukrainian peninsula, Crimea, in a disputed referendum. By April, the unrest in southern and eastern Ukraine had transformed into an armed conflict between Ukrainians and pro-Russian insurgents, who are backed by Russian forces.

**United Russia:** The ruling political party in Russia and the party of President Vladimir Putin, which made “Russian conservatism” its official ideology in 2009.

# 17 Years Of Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin just became the longest-serving Russian leader since Josef Stalin. Here’s how he compares with other world leaders:



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