

RUSSIA RECONSIDERED

Modern Iconoclast Cuts To The Heart Of The “Cold War Pathology” To Bring A Fresh Approach To Russia

Dallas, TX: In today’s America, Russia is still viewed as a villain of foreign relations. With many Americans still conscious of past Cold War memories, citizens have an outdated orthodox perception and a limited understanding of Russia and how the country has advanced over the years politically, culturally, and economically. In *Russia Reconsidered: Putin, Power, and Pragmatism* composed of his 28 years of work, Dr. Matthew Crosston has now become the voice for a new way of thinking on Russia.

Dr. Crosston, Executive Vice Chairman of Modern Diplomacy.eu and Senior Doctoral faculty at the American Military University, brings an accessible, understandable, and “sane study of Russia” to the stage in *Russia Reconsidered*. Not seeking to push an agenda but rather to present ideas and seek truth, Dr. Crosston shares that Russians are not so different from Americans in our thinking. We want to be seen, heard, and known for our contributions to the world.

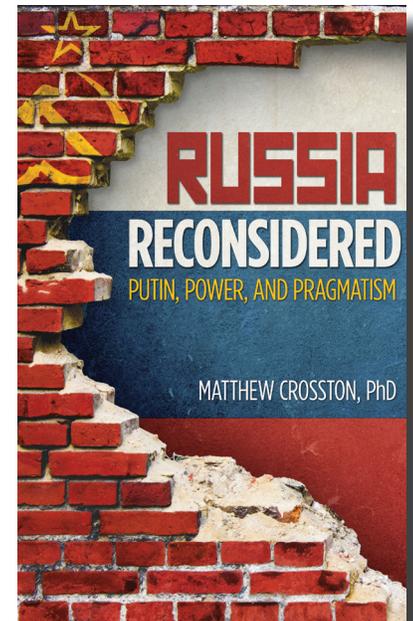
With a deep background in the subjects of Russia, intelligence, and the enigma that is Russian politics, Dr. Crosston and his contributors, comprised of both past students and other members of academia, have set out to change the way that many view Russia. They want to share a new way of thinking, which is quite the opposite of return-to-the-Cold-War, Putin’s-the-new-Hitler sentiment that is currently prevalent in the wonderful world of Washington. From space to Syria, and cyberwarfare to failed diplomacy, Dr. Crosston and his contributors survey and share a wide variety of angles in Russian-American relations exhibited in seven different sections in this book.

“So may this new cadre of iconoclastic scholars follow this humble first step: reject the presumed resentment, and follow a path that actually allows us all something other than a single dull conclusion. This is your challenge. This is our duty. Perhaps the fate of the world really does depend on it,” states Dr. Crosston.

As present-day relations between the United States and Russia are growing increasingly worse, moving forward will require works like this book to help create a better relationship between the two countries.

“More books like *Russia Reconsidered*, more people willing to accept my challenge to openly debate the myths of Russian-American relations, and new blood (at the academic AND diplomatic levels) willing to challenge old thinking and embrace novel opportunities without fear of reproach or rebuke....all of these things can make cooperation more possible,” says Dr. Crosston.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Crosston, PhD

Few people have careers in Russian studies longer or more distinguished than that of Dr. Matthew Crosston. His love of the post-Soviet world began twenty-five years ago while studying abroad in the previously closed military city of Tambov and continued with an undergraduate degree in Russian studies, a master's degree from SSEES–University College London, a doctoral



dissertation at Brown University, scholarly collaborations with the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and service as executive director of the East–West Fund for International Education. He has also founded the Russian Provincial Politics Summer Study Abroad Program at Clemson University and been a regular contributor to international analytic center Rethinking Russia, as well as the first American analytical blogger for the Russian International Affairs Council.

Crosston's previous books include *Shadow Separatism* and *Fostering Fundamentalism*, which focuses on his unique research specialty: international security and intelligence across the post-Soviet space, with an eye to the problems of democratic consolidation and fighting radical jihadist extremism.



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Q & A WITH THE AUTHOR

What is your background when it comes to Russia?

Just about every manner, angle, and activity that could involve training, studying, working, living, and interacting with Russia and Russians I have done since 1989. My first experience there abroad was as a student during the collapse of the Soviet Union (yes, I went to the Soviet Union but came back from the Russian Federation. I have a language and cultural fluency with Russia that is considered rare amongst Westerners and have acquired most of my experience there outside of the two international centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg. My academic career, while branching out into other areas, has never abandoned its original focus on Russian politics, culture, and foreign policy. In many ways, Russia was indeed my ‘first research love.’ To be only 46 but have 28 years of experience with the country shows a unique depth of familiarity.

Why is it important to read a book about Russia?

There has always been a joke about Russian relevance for diplomats, politicians, and academics. Mainly, it warns us to never think Russia will ever remain ‘irrelevant’ forever. One way or another, and history shows us usually in a way that is globally-impactful, Russia always returns back to the international stage demanding attention and significance. We forgot that lesson by the late 1990s when Russia seemed to be nothing but a corrupt failed democracy. Shame on us. Events like Syria, Snowden, and the 2016 American presidential elections prove we should not have forgotten our history or our inside jokes.

You criticize how the US government has formulated its foreign policy toward Russia, going back several presidential administrations. What is the essence of that criticism?

In short, we suffer from a ‘Cold War pathology,’ where we simply cannot comprehend any Russian initiative or maneuver that isn’t framed entirely by some innate desire to ‘return to the glorious Soviet past.’ I have shown in this new book how awkward, inaccurate, and dangerous that position is, as it blinds us to real Russian motivations and robs us of opportunities to lessen conflict and increase cooperation.

You talk about a rigid “Orthodoxy” in academia (especially American scholars) when it comes to Russian Studies. Please explain what this “Orthodoxy” is and why it matters for regular people.

This is the academic version of the above-mentioned “Cold War pathology.” For decades now Western academics have placed the study of Russia into a fairly narrow and unimaginative little black box that ends up limiting only our own development of a new generation of scholars capable of producing new knowledge and more innovative analyses of Russia and Russian-American relations. When the scholarly community does not lead the way to new knowledge it inevitably results in a stunted and regressed political reality on the ground. This book is an attempt to smash that Orthodoxy, or at least publicly challenge it to the stage.



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Q & A WITH THE AUTHOR

What do you think most Americans get wrong about Russians?

There are many things but perhaps the most profound and which best encapsulates all of the details and anecdotes under one umbrella is this: One of the biggest reasons Americans and Russians always find themselves at odds in politics is because of just how much ALIKE they are as people at the street level. Most in America would find this shocking but it is true. So much of our tension on a social level comes from the fact that we have so many shared 'cultural personality' traits.

You are critical of how the Russian hacking scandal is portrayed across the American media. Please give us your take on how the media portrayal of alleged Russian hacking during the American presidential election of 2016 has hurt Russian-American relations.

I like to call Russia the Bill Belichick of global affairs. The biggest problem with how we report supposed Russian misdeeds is the fact that most of its maneuvers are in fact within the structural rules of what they are trying to do. For example, the placement of numerous fake news sites on facebook by bots was actually utilizing the legal rules of facebook advertising. Russia simply used them in a way no one else had done before. This is exactly how so much animosity is generated toward Bill Belichick of the New England Patriots: the more rational voices will admit what he does isn't so much as formal cheating as informally taking advantage of the loopholes that exist for everyone, but only he seems to find them first. For a decade now Russia has been doing the same thing, whether we are discussing Crimea, Edward Snowden, Syrian intervention, or electoral hacking.

What is your characterization of President Putin and why do you feel most American media and academics misrepresent him?

I am one of the few who constantly try to temper down the rhetoric about President Putin's well-crafted public image. His KGB experience is exaggerated. His manipulative prowess is over-emphasized. His craven desire for power is not matched by real-world evidence. His sinister powers of death and destruction mythologized. I accept that Putin has done nothing whatsoever to calm these ridiculous portrayals down. I am sure in a way he loves them: to be the Slavic Clint Eastwood in Western eyes is certainly something to secretly savor. But just because the media likes to sell more downloads by portraying him in this way, it doesn't make it true. This new book is finally the effort to show how much of the media portrayal sells a sexy image, but doesn't show us the real man. And in this case, that sexy image actually makes our world a more tense and dangerous place.

Can the United States of America and the Russian Federation ever be 'true' allies? What would it take to make this happen?

More books like *Russia Reconsidered*, more people willing to accept my challenge to openly debate the myths of Russian-American relations, and new blood (at the academic AND diplomatic levels) willing to challenge old thinking and embrace novel opportunities without fear of reproach or rebuke....all of these things can make cooperation more possible.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT RUSSIA RECONSIDERED

“*Russia Reconsidered: Putin, Power and Pragmatism* casts doubt on the myths and stereotypes about Russia prevalent in the West and in the United States.”

Sergey Fedorchenko, PhD

Department of Political Science and Law, Moscow State Regional University

“The book is a powerful argument against many oversimplified, black and white, one sided interpretations of the current crisis between Russia and the West. The collection of essays offers a remarkable diversity of views, narratives and perceptions; a valuable source for those trying to get beyond usual stereotypes and conventional wisdom.”

Andrey Kortunov

Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council

“Crosston’s newest text, *Russia Reconsidered: Putin, Power, and Pragmatism*, is well written, comprehensive, extremely timely and engaging. Crosston’s insights on the political and security implications of modern Russia under Putin are based on solid scholarship and a keen amalgam of history and current events. Crosston’s observations about how Russia is engaging in the “new” Cold War are poignant, pragmatic and spot on – and the implications for a safe and secure United States are clear. I find this text to be essential reading for diplomats, policy makers, security experts and academics.”

Jim Ramsay, PhD, MA, CSP

Chair, Department of Business, Politics and Security Studies

Coordinator - Homeland Security Program, Professor of Security Studies, University of New Hampshire

President, International Society for Preparedness, Resilience and Security (INSPRS.org)

“Dr. Matthew Crosston’s book *Russia Reconsidered: Putin, Power and Pragmatism* is one of the most relevant, timely, and thought-provoking texts recently published. Crosston’s analysis of Russia, Russian foreign policy, US-Russia relations, the conflict in Ukraine, American perspectives on Russia, and more are informative and systematic, building on the strengths of his previous works to provide detailed accounts of the complex relations between the two states, their actions, and consequences. This challenging and wide-ranging text introduces the reader to the multiplicity of nuanced narratives on the interactions, signals, and interpretations used by both states. The portrayal of actors and contexts is direct, honest, and revealing. Because of this approach, the book is not only able to offer insights into a wide variety of questions of interest to many scholars of different disciplines, but also invite new types of questions, fresh understandings and stimulating debates to the study of contemporary Russia unlike what is usually offered in the discipline of Russian Studies.”

Lada V. Kochtcheeva, PhD

Associate Professor of Political Science, School of Public and International Affairs, North Carolina State University

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT RUSSIA RECONSIDERED

“Dr. Crosston’s work in *Russia Reconsidered* is second to none when it comes to the most important issues of global security and international affairs in the 21st century. Dr. Crosston’s overall scope of engagement here is well above most of the globally-recognized scholars within Russian and Eurasian Studies. In *Crosston* I see someone who is finally talented enough to surpass Mintz’s methodology panic and ambitious enough to embrace Singer’s call for real-world impact and relevance, putting the study of Russia back on a more ethically important and empirically genuine track where our research is not just a critical esoteric examination of current reality but is rigorously constructed, carefully oriented, and skillfully written so as to produce solutions and product that make our world truly a better place. This is an important new endeavor that should make people see Russian-American relations in an innovative new light.”

Maorong Jiang, PhD

Director, Asian World Center

Associate Professor of Political Science & International Relations, Creighton University

In this time when Russian-American relations is stuck in one of the worst conditions since the Cold War, this attempt by Professor Matthew Crosston to bring new conclusions and perspectives to light earns a particularly important level of attention from scholars of Russian Studies. Because Crosston has a deft capability with the Russian language, a unique professional history across the Post-Soviet space, and maintains important and serious contacts within Russia, he was able to gain access to relevant information and process powerful arguments that stand as a counter-argument to many of the myths plaguing Russian-American relations today. His systemic and rigorous analysis allows Western readers to form an objective perspective on the so-called ‘Russian aggression.’ Especially important is his original conception of ‘the New Fake Cold War’ and how it powers so much between the countries today. In my opinion, this book is an important new contributor in the contemporary world’s war against ‘fake news.’

Vladimir Kolotov, PhD

Head of the Far East Department, Faculty of Asian and African Studies, St. Petersburg State University

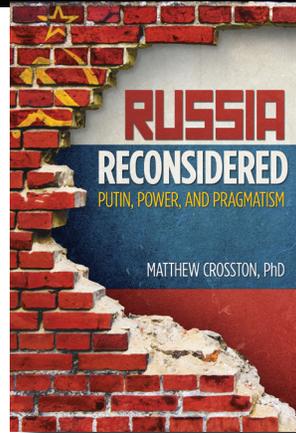
Member, Russian National Committee of the Council of Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific

We need multiple, courageous, directed efforts from all sides to defeat the repressive intellectual orthodoxy currently plaguing Russian-American relations and, therefore, hindering Russia’s relations with many other states. This does not mean everyone will get along perfectly and all sides will always agree. But it does mean relations will finally take on a less shrill, less melodramatic timbre and that will only be good for all concerned.” I fully agree and strongly support Crosston’s timely, wise, and forward looking wisdom and insight. *Russia Reconsidered* is critically needed today, both in Russia and the United States.

Jumber Asatiani, PhD

Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University

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SYNOPSIS

With his years of expertise in Russian studies, Dr. Matthew Crosston gives readers a close look at the many facets of the strained foreign relations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. While acknowledging the pragmatism, self-interest, and unethical aspects of Russia’s foreign policy, Crosston argues that this ever-tense situation is best viewed through an amoral, apolitical, and unbiased lens - a controversial approach in a country whose citizens have viewed Russia, the Former Soviet Union, as a black-and-white, clear-cut villain for decades. But with extensive research from the last few years, Crosston offers Americans a fresh perspective, and breaks up the current political and media narratives with a voice of hope and reason.