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Putin Lashes Out Against Cold War-Style Containment of Russia

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President Vladimir Putin accused the U.S. on Tuesday of having revived the Cold War policy of containment.

"The events in Ukraine are the concentrated expression of the policy of containing Russia. The roots of this policy go deep into history, it is clear that this policy, unfortunately, did not end with the Cold War," Putin said in a speech before a crowd of top Russian diplomats from around the globe.

The containment policy, rooted in the theory that strategically rebuffing Soviet initiatives on the global stage would eventually bring about the U.S.S.R.'s demise, formed the basis of the U.S.' Cold War strategy.

During his speech before a conference on Russia's foreign policy objectives Tuesday, Putin emphasized that Russia must continue to assert its role as a global superpower, despite pressure from the West.

"Our country will continue to defend vigorously the rights of Russians, our compatriots, around the world and will do so by any means necessary — from political and economic to the right of self-defense enshrined in international humanitarian law," he said, referring to Russia's annexation of Crimea in March.

Putin reiterated his steadfast criticism of U.S. unilateralism in international affairs, blaming it for having provoked and perpetuated the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and for having transformed the world into a"global barracks."

He listed the Ukraine crisis alongside the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Iraq, which he asserted had been the direct result of "unconstitutional coups."

Russia is being pressured by the U.S. over its "independent position" on these matters, he said. "We are aware of the pressure that our American partners put on France with an aim to halt deliveries of Mistral ships to Russia. We know that the U.S. hinted that if the French do not deliver the Mistrals, then sanctions will be gradually lifted from the banks, or at least reduced to minimum. If this is not blackmail then what is it?"

He was apparently referring to the French bank BNP Paribas, which pleaded guilty to money-laundering charges in the U.S. after having helped its clients dodge sanctions on Iran, Sudan and other countries. The bank agreed to pay out of $8.9 billion for its indiscretions.

Putin hinted that aligning Russian and Chinese interests could serve to counterbalance U.S. efforts to dominate the international arena. "Today we can say that a solid Russia-China alignment has been formed in the international arena, operating on the basis of common views on global processes and key regional problems," he said.

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