Since 2000 under former President Putin Russia has returned as a great power. Drawing upon the immense new wealth generated by oil and gas exports, as well as upon his ability to recentralize political power in Russia, Putin explicitly committed his government to reestablishing Russia’s role as a great power - beginning in former Soviet space. Moscow has made clear that it will no longer accept what it views as Western encroachment into areas viewed as central to Russia’s security interests. The growing friction in relations with the United States and the divisions within the European Union concerning the appropriate approach to take toward Russia have been greatly increased by the Russian invasion and occupation of much of the territory of Georgia.

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Roger E. Kanet is Professor in the Department of International Studies of the University of Miami. His recent publications include From Superpower to Besieged Global Power: Implications for American Foreign Policy and Global Order, coedited with with Edward A. Kolodziej; Russia: Re-Emerging Great Power; and The New Security Environment: The Impact on Russia, Central and Eastern Europe.
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