



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

U.S. STRATEGY FOR MAINTAINING A EUROPE WHOLE AND FREE



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Executive Summary

From the mid-1930s through the Cold War, Europe was critical to U.S. strategic thinking, which developed around the assumption that foreign domination of Europe was inimical to U.S. national security. With the end of the Cold War, the United States sought to forge a Europe that was “whole and free,” and four successive U.S. administrations diligently pursued a more cooperative relationship with Russia. And yet, while U.S. officials and leaders of NATO member states have consistently premised their European security policies on including Russia, Moscow has persistently described the United States and NATO as the “main enemy” in its military doctrine since 1992.

The increasingly sour tone of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s public comments, coupled with Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev’s call for a new European security architecture, suggest that Russia seeks to revise the European security order. Russia’s intervention in the Ukraine and Syria all but eliminate the possibility that the United States can return to its earlier strategy of attempting to incorporate Russia into European economic and security structures.

The persistent Russian effort to challenge both the security order in Europe and the stability of the NATO alliance requires a coherent strategic response. Defending Europe will henceforth demand greater attention from U.S. senior leadership and an increase in dedicated defense resources from the United States and its allies.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has been a perennial challenge to incorporate into the international order. Putin’s personalized leadership, complemented by a small circle of advisors and few restraints on his power, provides historical continuity with the patrimonialism of both Romanov and Soviet rule. His approach resembles the “Official Nationality” of Tsar Nicholas I more than the Brezhnev-era policies of the Soviet Union, although he also frequently uses proven Soviet methods such as wedge-driving, nuclear saber-rattling, and overt and covert propaganda. He sees world affairs as a zero-sum game, and he places great importance on controlling the countries on Russia’s periphery. Putin’s emphasis on maintaining a physical buffer zone, bolstering the integrity of the state, spreading fear and paranoia about outsiders, and controlling the population mirror the historical preoccupations of Russia’s ruling class. Although vulnerable to criticism and protests by disaffected elements of

the population, this system could well survive Putin’s departure from office, and U.S. policy-makers could well face Putinism without Putin.

The energy windfall between 2003 and 2014 allowed Moscow to upgrade its conventional and nuclear forces, acquire and improve new techniques of information warfare, develop novel doctrines of cross-domain coercion, and cultivate new tools to exploit Western vulnerability to sub-conventional or “gray zone” warfare. Russia’s military has invested in key capabilities that allow it to conduct decisive operations in regional conflicts and dominate escalation at the local level. These reforms, Russia’s development of anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities covering territory over most of NATO’s eastern frontline states, and the lack of U.S. and NATO forward presence represent a potentially formidable strategic challenge to NATO.

While the United States has reduced its deployed strategic launchers, has lowered its warhead count, and maintains only a small numbers of theater weapons deployed, Russia has prioritized the modernization of its nuclear forces and holds a formidable advantage in its stockpile of non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW). The calculated ambiguity of Russian doctrine over its nuclear policy and the nuclear saber-rattling that Putin has engaged in over Ukraine has further complicated NATO’s strategic planning.

Hybrid warfare provides Moscow with an additional means to achieve its political objectives. Russia’s concept of information warfare equips Moscow with an extremely flexible toolkit to deploy against adversaries: one that attempts to calculate strategic moves that fall below the threshold likely to elicit a U.S. or NATO military response. Moscow’s escalatory ladder has many rungs, and it is able to ratchet up its actions to achieve its policy objectives.

As Russia continues to invest aggressively in modernizing its military, many NATO countries continue to pursue policies of disarmament, divest themselves of key capabilities, and struggle to meet NATO’s 2 percent of GDP defense spending requirement. Europe’s political disunity, lack of leadership, and absence of appetite for confrontation with Russia, as well as the weakest United States military presence in Europe since World War II, allow the Kremlin to exploit its growing military capabilities along its periphery. The dwindling presence of NATO forces is now running the risk of failing to deter Russian aggression; it may have already fallen below this threshold with regard to the Baltics. Ultimately, maintaining forward presence and readiness to wage sustained joint and combined operations may be the greatest challenge for NATO’s forces.

The added force structure from the recently augmented European Reassurance Initiative constitutes the most significant reinforcement of NATO’s force posture since the Cold War ended. A single armored brigade combat team, however, even supported by NATO air and sea power, simply does not yield a significant shift in the Eastern Europe military balance. Ultimately, Russia appears to enjoy advantages that practically guarantee its ability to defeat NATO forces in the event of a local conflict with a NATO member state along Russia’s periphery. Mustering a credible deterrent based on an effective NATO forward defense will

require a significantly strengthened force posture, increased prepositioning of equipment, and a counterweight to the presence of integrated Russian A2/AD capabilities.

The United States and NATO have spent much of the past decade fighting low-end adversaries, against which they enjoyed a substantial qualitative advantage. Russia, for its part, has invested in key capabilities designed to erode NATO's military edge. As a result, the United States and its NATO allies need to focus on developing capabilities that will offset the operational challenges of Russia's maturing A2/AD capability. Specifically, the alliance will need to recapitalize its forces with an emphasis on long-range rocket artillery with area effects, anti-armor munitions, heavy armor, tactical drones, electronic warfare (EW) systems, and SEAD forces (Suppression of Enemy Air Defense).

Although Russian aggression currently focuses on the vulnerable Baltic States, Russia may shift its attention to other geographic areas as it continues to probe for weaknesses in Europe's security architecture. Therefore, U.S. policymakers will once again have to think about European defense in more traditional terms: a northern or Nordic-Baltic flank; a central front in Poland or Belarus; the special role of Kaliningrad; and a southern flank in Romania, Turkey, or the Black Sea. The United States should also exploit its emerging energy self-sufficiency to keep oil prices low, thus limiting Russia's discretionary income for continued military modernization.

The United States must take great care in strengthening its extended nuclear deterrence. As Russia modernizes its nuclear forces and repeatedly threatens nuclear use in a crisis, confidence in the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence in Europe—tenuous even at the height of the Cold War—continues to erode. Restoring that confidence will be a crucial part of any strategy to deter conflict and defend Europe from Russian irredentism.

Introduction

The United States may regard Asia as the most important theater for long-term U.S. interests and the Middle East as the theater with the most critical, immediate threats, but the European theater will also require early and persistent attention from the next administration. The established U.S. view that Europe should remain free from domination by a hostile power remains relevant to U.S. strategic interests. Furthermore, Russian revanchism in Europe, disunity among European nations, the debate over Russian involvement in the 2016 electoral cycle, the secondary effects of sanctions against Russia in Europe, and President Trump's expressed desire for a "reset" of relations with Moscow guarantee that the United States will need to remain meaningfully engaged in this theater.

The new administration will face pressure to provide assurances to NATO countries of the credibility of U.S. security guarantees as its strategic challenges from other regions continue to mount. A NATO Summit slated for Spring 2017 will be a key opportunity to reiterate the U.S. commitment to Europe and establish personal relationships with the leaders of countries that have traditionally been vital to U.S. national security in the region. The Summit, however, will take place amid ongoing conflict resulting from Russia's annexation of Crimea and instability in Ukraine, the likes of which Europe has not seen since the Balkan Crisis in the late 1990s.

The new administration should commit to a strategic approach to Europe that maintains the balance of power and prevents the continent's domination by any single force. This paper attempts to frame out such a strategy. Chapter One surveys historic U.S. strategy towards Russia from the Cold War to the present. Chapter Two examines Russian strategic culture, the nature of the Putin regime, and the modernized Russian military. Chapter Three will assess the balance of forces between NATO and Russia. The Final Chapter will suggest steps to enhance the alliance's deterrence posture and put the United States and its allies in a more advantageous position for continued deterrence in the face of a growing Russian threat.

CHAPTER 1

The Enduring Importance of Europe in a Shifting Strategic Landscape

From the mid-1930s to the end of the Cold War, Europe occupied a central place in U.S. strategic thinking. Even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor triggered U.S. entry into World War II, President Roosevelt and his senior military advisers had decided that the defeat of Germany should take priority.¹ This judgment stemmed from their view that the survival of Great Britain and Soviet Russia, who were leading the offensive against Nazi Germany, was essential to the success of U.S. war aims. It also marked a major and, as it turned out, long-term reorientation of America's role in preserving international order.

In the early postwar years, the U.S. national security establishment remained convinced that foreign domination of the industrialized, populous regions of Europe and Asia was inimical to U.S. national security. While U.S. policymakers were initially confident that America's economic power and nuclear monopoly would prevent Soviet domination of the European continent, Moscow's subjugation of the countries behind the Iron Curtain and its testing of an atomic bomb in August 1949 compelled Washington to act to preserve the balance of power in Europe. The United States offered significant economic contributions to the reconstruction of

¹ For the decision to pursue a Europe first strategy see Thomas Mahnken, "U.S. Grand Strategy, 1939–1945," in John Ferris and Evan Mawdsley, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Second World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 189–212; Peter R. Mansoor, "U.S. Grand Strategy in the Second World War," in Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich, *Successful Strategies: Triumphing in War and Peace from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 314–352; Louis Morton, "Germany First: The Basic Concept of Allied Strategy in World War II," in Kenneth Roberts Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1987, reprint of 1969 edition), pp. 11–48; and Kenneth Roberts Greenfield, *American Strategy in World War II: A Reconsideration* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), pp. 3–5. For the reorientation in American thinking, see Mark A. Stoler, "From Continentalism to Globalism: General Stanley D. Embick, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, and the Military View of American National Policy during the Second World War," *Diplomatic History* 6, no. 4, September 1982.

the European economy and, for the first time since the short-lived 18th century alliance with France, made permanent alliances with European countries. In keeping with the consensus that America's first line of defense was now overseas, the United States adopted a strategy of forward defense and power projection, and it enhanced the capabilities of European allies through security assistance.²

The end of the Cold War and the emergence of a Europe no longer divided by the Iron Curtain ushered in a period of severe turmoil on Europe's southern and southeastern Europe. The wars of the Yugoslav succession in the 1990s created one of the most serious challenges to European security since World War II. The war between Serbia and Croatia, followed by conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, killed hundreds of thousands and, created massive populations of displaced persons unparalleled since 1945, and tested both European and global institutions. In the aftermath of these conflicts, there was much speculation that Europe would diminish in importance, mainly because of the rapid economic growth of major Asian players on a global scale. Moreover, the Soviet threat that gave rise to the NATO alliance was gone, and the aging generation of U.S. policymakers who cut their teeth on European affairs in World War II and the Cold War were replaced by officials who had less experience with and fewer ties to Europe.³

The September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks, the unfolding global war on terror, and transatlantic conflicts over the Iraq war during the George W. Bush administration heightened European concerns that U.S. defense planning was increasingly focused on the Middle East and uncommitted to European security. When the Obama administration came into office, however, its commitment to wind down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan signaled to hopeful European counterparts a move toward restoring strained U.S.-European relations. U.S. policymakers, for their part, viewed Europe as a stable region that was a net contributor to international security rather than a consumer of security resources.

2 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 3–52; Melvyn P. Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War: 1945–1948,” *American Historical Review* 89, no. 2, April, 1984, pp. 346–381; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Robert W. Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

3 See, for example, John William Holmes, *The U.S. and Europe after the Cold War: A New Alliance?* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), p. 149. The classic articles by Stephen Walt are: Stephen M. Walt, “The Ties that Fray: Why Europe and America are Drifting Apart,” *The National Interest*, Winter 1998–1999, available at <http://nationalinterest.org/article/the-ties-that-fray-why-europe-and-america-are-drifting-apart-900>; and Stephen M. Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” *Survival* 39, no. 1, 1997, pp. 156–179. The U.S. losing interest in Europe is a familiar fear, which was rekindled by the announcement of the so-called pivot to Asia by President Obama. See Charles S. Sampson, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964–1968, Volume XIII, Western European Region* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995), p. 950. The U.S. Mission to the European Community reported to Washington that prior to the NATO Ministerial and the recently concluded visit of German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, “There was clear and growing belief that U.S. was losing interest in Europe and Atlantic partnership.” For the importance of the World War II generation to the global role of the United States, see David Fromkin, *In the Time of the Americans: The Generation That Changed America’s Role in the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

Around the same time, Russian President Vladimir Putin's increasingly disparaging public comments and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's call for a new European security architecture suggested that Russia sought to revise the European security order. The Russian invasion of Georgia clearly communicated Moscow's willingness to use force to achieve its objectives. The 2008 Georgia War, however, which one scholar described as "a little war that shook the world," failed to derail U.S. and NATO relations with Russia. On the contrary, the Obama administration endeavored to "reset" the relationship. Even after the 2014 invasion of Crimea, the Department of Defense's *Quadrennial Defense Review* expressed the view that the U.S.–Russian relationship would continue to be competitive, but cooperative.⁴

The Obama administration stated continuously that the security of Europe and the cohesion of NATO remained a vital U.S. interest, but Russia's invasion of Crimea has made clear that the defense of the continent would require the United States and NATO to take more concrete actions to address the challenges presented by a revanchist Russia. Failing to do so exposes NATO's most vulnerable frontline states to serious risk, especially in light of Russia's ongoing military modernization. Furthermore, the energy windfall of the decade between 2003 and 2014 has enabled Moscow to devote significant resources to upgrading its conventional and nuclear forces, acquiring and improving new techniques of information warfare, developing novel doctrines of cross-domain coercion, and cultivating new tools to exploit Western vulnerability to sub-conventional or gray zone warfare.⁵ Defending Europe will henceforth demand greater attention from U.S. senior leadership and additional defense resources from the United States and its allies if NATO is to meet the new challenges that confront the West.⁶

The Post-Cold War Period

Since the end of the Cold War, four successive U.S. administrations diligently pursued a better relationship with Russia. The United States advocated a Europe that was "whole

⁴ Ronald Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); "Possible Military Overhaul Outlined," *Washington Post*, May 10, 2001; Kristian L. Nielsen, "Continued Drift Without the Acrimony: U.S.–European Relations Under Barack Obama," *Journal of Transatlantic Relations* 11, no. 1, pp. 83–108; and Department of Defense (DoD), Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), *The Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: DoD, March 2014), pp. 5–6, 18.

⁵ Stephen J. Blank, "Imperial Ambitions: Military Buildup," *World Affairs*, May–June 2015, pp. 67–75; Dmitry Adamsky, *Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy*, Proliferation Papers #54 (Paris: IFRI Security Studies Center, November 2015). The literature on Russian hybrid warfare, or so-called gray zone conflict, and the threat it poses to NATO members and particularly the Baltics is large and growing. See, for example, Daniel S. Hamilton and Stefan Meister, eds., *The Eastern Question: Russia, the West, and Europe's Grey Zone* (Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations and The German Council for Foreign Relations, 2016). For a general view of the question of gray zone conflict, see Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding A Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015). For a skeptical view about Russia's willingness to use hybrid warfare, see Samuel Charap, "The Ghost of Hybrid War," *Survival* 56, no. 7, pp. 51–58. For the challenge to NATO, see David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016).

⁶ For the enduring importance of NATO, see Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), p. 213.

and free,” one in which former Warsaw Pact states and newly independent former Soviet Republics would be integrated into Europe’s security and economic institutions. As former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted, “The vision of Europe as whole, free and at peace had been a goal of every U.S. administration since the end of the Cold War. At its heart was the notion that peoples and countries could move beyond old conflicts to chart a peaceful and prosperous future.”⁷

Washington no longer saw Russia as an ideological or a military rival. Russia’s abiding strategic importance to the United States—its geopolitical position between Europe and Asia, a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, large stores of energy resources, and its remaining nuclear weapons cache—made improved relations with Moscow a priority for successive U.S. administrations. Indeed, the United States and Russia cooperated on several initiatives, including counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and nuclear non-proliferation. The George H.W. Bush administration avoided undertaking bold initiatives with its former adversary, focusing instead on nuclear arms reduction and economic assistance with measured expectations.⁸ The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) of 1991 was a product of this early successful cooperation, which intended to limit each state’s respective arsenals of nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles.

Unfortunately, initiatives to engage and include Russia in Euro-Atlantic institutions failed to allay Russia’s increasing resentment over NATO’s growing membership. Despite accepting invitations to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace program in 1994, as well as formalizing relations with NATO with the signing of the NATO–Russia Founding Act in 1997, Russian leaders remained distrustful of what they saw as an increasingly powerful and threatening U.S.–NATO nexus.⁹

The Kosovo conflict underscored Russia’s animosity towards NATO. Russian President Boris Yeltsin vehemently opposed NATO’s intervention and vetoed the move at the United Nations Security Council. NATO circumvented Russia with a decision to act sanctioned by the North Atlantic Council, which marked the first time that NATO had acted without United Nations approval. NATO carried out a 78-day air campaign until Serbian forces were forced to withdraw, ending a violent conflict that displaced hundreds of thousands of Kosovars. The end

7 Clinton, *Hard Choices*, p. 190.

8 Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.–Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

9 Gordon B. Hendrickson, *The Future of NATO–Russian Relations: or How to Dance with a Bear and Not Get Mauled* (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council of the United States, 2005). The standard account of the arms control diplomacy of the George H. W. Bush administration is Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1993). For the Clinton administration, see Strobe Talbott, *The Russian Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002). For the story of NATO enlargement, see Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for A New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and James Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999). The broader contours of U.S.–Russia policy are found in James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaull, *Power and Purpose: US Policy Toward Russia After the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

of the conflict led to the overthrow of the Milosevic dictatorship in Serbia and the emergence of a democratic, if unstable, Serbian state; it also opened the way for the emergence of an independent Kosovo.

NATO's success all but confirmed Russia's fears that its influence was waning, and underscored Russia's growing concern that a U.S.-led global order was emerging.¹⁰ The view of the country's ruling elite that Russia was a second-tier partner helped to undermine President Bill Clinton's ambitious attempts to refashion the entire U.S.–Russia relationship through his personal connection with Yeltsin. Russia's perceived subordinate status rankled, in particular, the leaders of the Russian security apparatus asserting themselves under the leadership of former intelligence apparatchik Yevgeny Primakov. It is little wonder then that Yeltsin's little-known successor, Vladimir Putin, quickly gained favor with this group by launching a renewed war in Chechnya in 1999. The move also played into nationalist sentiments of the broader Russian working class population.¹¹

Like his predecessors, George W. Bush entered the presidency with plans to improve U.S. ties with Moscow and to institutionalize the relationship with Russia's leaders that he believed had become too closely associated with the Clinton–Yeltsin relationship. These plans hit an immediate setback, however, after 51 Russian diplomats were expelled from the United States in 2001 in retaliation for FBI agent Robert Hanssen's spying for Moscow—Moscow subsequently expelled 50 U.S. diplomats from the Russian Federation. Bush, committed to building a national missile defense against rogue states like North Korea and Iran, then announced his intention to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty with Russia. Bush and Putin eventually established a personal relationship after meeting in June of 2001, and they were able to reach a consensus on the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), or the Moscow Treaty, which committed each country to dramatic reductions—by two-thirds—of their respective nuclear arsenals over ten years.¹²

In the aftermath of 9/11, Putin reached out to Washington to promote a partnership for jointly combating terrorism, premised on Russia's experience combating al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus. The brief partnership would yield some positive elements of cooperation, especially in the initial phases of the war in Afghanistan. Moscow permitted the deployment of U.S. military units in Central Asia, and they engaged in joint efforts to stanch the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan. Over time, however, the sense of common purpose eroded as Russian disapproval of the war in Iraq began to overshadow the initial post-9/11 goodwill.

¹⁰ Vladimir Brovkin, "Discourse on NATO in Russia During the Kosovo War," NATO–EAPC Research Fellowship, Final Report, 1999, available at <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/97-99/brovkin.pdf>.

¹¹ Stephen Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015); Walter B. Slocombe, "A Crisis of Opportunity: The Clinton Administration and Russia," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro, eds., *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy after the Berlin Wall and 9/11* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 78–95; and Talbott, *The Russia Hand*.

¹² Daryl Kimball, "U.S.–Russia Nuclear Forces and Arms Control Agreements," *Arms Control Association*, updated October 2016.

Russian officials viewed Operation Iraqi Freedom as a product of an American proclivity to pursue policies of intervention and regime change in other countries. It did not help that Saddam Hussein had been a long-time Soviet client who was well connected to senior members of the Russian security elite. Around the same time, mass protests began in Ukraine contesting irregularities in the 2004 presidential election. The country's "Orange Revolution," which brought pro-Western reformer Viktor Yushchenko to power, triggered a neuralgic response from Putin and Russian officials who related NATO enlargement to the growing phenomenon of popular upheavals in places like Kyrgyzstan and Georgia. Putin began to suspect that he, too, was the target of meddlesome American interventionism.¹³

In January 2007, President Bush announced that the United States would, in cooperation with NATO Allies, deploy two-stage missile defense interceptors in Poland and a mid-course European radar in the Czech Republic. Despite multiple U.S. efforts to explain the technical limitations of the system and the fact that the systems were designed to defend against growing Iranian capabilities, Russian officials saw the move as a direct threat to their nuclear forces. The Russian response sought to divide NATO by suspending Russia's participation in the Treaty for Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and renewing its opposition to NATO enlargement preceding the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest.¹⁴

Georgia's color revolution, aggressive pursuit of NATO membership, and incursion into South Ossetia provided the pretexts for Russia's successful invasion and subsequent annexation of territory in 2008. The August war was a departure for the Russian Federation, signaling its willingness to wield military force to counter perceived U.S. and NATO threats to its near abroad for the first time since the end of the Cold War. Russia's military, which had performed poorly in the two Chechen wars in the 1990s, had greater tactical success in Georgia and was able to mobilize and transport motorized elements more rapidly and effectively than in its earlier operations in the Caucasus. As scholarly observer Tor Bukkvoll noted, however, "Russia demonstrated that a large force of Soviet-organized, trained, and equipped troops could defeat a small force organized, trained, and partially equipped by the U.S. The conflict, however, also revealed many Russian shortcomings and inadequacies. It would be wrong to conclude that the victory was the result of successful military reform in Russia." In particular, the conflict exposed continuing problems with Russia's Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) and long-range precision strike capabilities. The following year, with oil prices remaining high, Putin intensified efforts to overhaul the armed forces and remedy the flaws that the Russo-Georgian War had exposed. Russia's

13 For the Russian view of and relationship with Saddam Hussein, see Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs: Behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to the Present*, translated by Paul Gould (New York: Basic Books, 2009), pp. 301–324. See also Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Myers, *The New Tsar*, pp. 263–280; and Nicholas Bouchet, "Russia's militarization of Colour Revolutions," *Policy Perspectives* 4, January 2016.

14 Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), pp. 153–160; and Ron Synovitz, "Russia Suspends Participation in Key Arms Treaty," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 14, 2007, available at <http://www.rferl.org/a/1077619.html>.

across-the-board modernization program sought to streamline the armed forces' command structure as well as modernize its conventional military capabilities and strategic nuclear forces to counter NATO's conventional superiority.¹⁵

Despite Russia's bold annexation of territory in a neighboring country, President Obama entered the White House intent on pursuing his own reset with Russia as a central element of his national security policy. Obama and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev were able to sign a nuclear agreement to replace the expiring START I treaty. In addition to New START, signed in 2010, the United States and Russia signed a transit agreement to facilitate the flow of U.S. personnel and equipment to Afghanistan. They also jointly pursued additional economic sanctions to pressure Iran to forego its nuclear weapons program. The budding rapprochement entailed some concessions by the United States, such as scrapping the two-stage Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI) deployment to Poland and the associated radar in the Czech Republic.

Although New START held out the promise of bilateral nuclear arms reductions forecast by the Moscow Treaty, the most recent data submitted by both sides suggests Russia has since increased its total warhead count, giving it a numerical advantage over the United States. Furthermore, the Obama administration accused Russia of being in violation of the 1988 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which places limits on the number of missiles in the 500–5,500-kilometer range. These violations have been matched with the return of harsh Soviet-style rhetoric from Russian officials, including threats by President Putin to employ nuclear strikes against NATO allies. From a doctrinal point of view, Russia has declared for more than a decade that it might resort to a theater nuclear strike in a regional conflict to achieve an outcome favorable to Russia.¹⁶ The use of theater nuclear weapons in its military exercises and the recent deployment of dual-capable SS-26 Iskander short-range ballistic missiles to Kaliningrad are consistent with this return to nuclear saber-rattling.

¹⁵ In addition to Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World*, see Svante Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2009); Carolina Vendil Pallin and Fredrik Westerlund, "Russia's War in Georgia: Lessons and Consequences," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 20, no. 2, pp. 400–424; Stephen Blank, "Georgia: The War Russia Lost," *Military Review*, November–December 2008, pp. 39–46; Tor Bukkvoll, "Russia's Military Performance in Georgia," *Military Review*, November–December 2009, pp. 58–61; and Ariel Cohen and Robert E. Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, June 2011). The quotation is from Bukkvoll, p. 61.

¹⁶ For the New START data see, "New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms," Department of State, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Fact Sheet, October 25, 2011; "New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms," Department of State, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Fact Sheet, October 1, 2016, available at <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/newstart/c39906.htm>; *Mark Schneider, Russian Violations of the INF and New START Treaties*, Information Series no. 410 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, August 15, 2016); James T. Quinlivan and Olga Oliker, *Nuclear Deterrence in Europe: Russian Approaches to A New Environment and Implications for the United States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011), pp. 51–61; Nikolai Sokov, "Why Russia Calls a Limited Nuclear Strike 'De-Escalation,'" *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, March 2014, available at <http://thebulletin.org/why-russia-calls-limited-nuclear-strike-de-escalation>; and Simon Shuster, "Why Russia Wants to Keep Its Nukes," *Time*, April 4, 2016.

As Obama began his second term and Putin returned to his presidential office in 2012, relations between the United States and Russia continued to deteriorate. The Obama administration’s signaling to President Medvedev that the U.S. would be more flexible on the missile defense issues that concerned Moscow had little carry-over effect. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted, “A cool wind was blowing from the east.” In June of 2012, Clinton sent Obama a memo arguing the United States was “no longer dealing with Medvedev and needed to be ready to take a harder line.” Putin, she explained, was “deeply resentful of the U.S. and suspicious of our actions and intent on reclaiming lost Russian influence in its neighborhood, from Eastern Europe to Central Asia.” Clinton warned that Putin might refer to his actions as “regional integration” but warned it was code for “rebuilding a lost empire.” The following year, the prolonged crisis in Ukraine led to the collapse of the Yanukovych government. Russia’s subsequent invasion and annexation of Crimea and destabilization of eastern Ukraine revealed Clinton’s warnings a year earlier to be prescient.

Putin, conversely, told the Russian Duma that by annexing Crimea, he had avenged Russia; he argued that the United States had set a precedent by intervening in the former Yugoslavia. Russia’s simmering war in Ukraine is an ongoing challenge by Moscow to the post-Cold War security order in Europe, the rules of the road agreed to by European nations in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and more broadly the U.S.-led normative rules-based international order.¹⁷

Russia’s opposition to the prevailing post-Cold War order now extends beyond Europe. This was made clear by Moscow’s aggressive support for the Bashar al-Assad regime through Russian military deployments to Syria in 2015; Moscow has flown bombing sorties, fired cruise missile salvos from both the Caspian Sea and the eastern Mediterranean, and deployed special operations forces. They have likewise coordinated with Iran’s forces to carry out a policy of projecting Russian power into areas that were not traditionally part of the old Soviet glacis, as well as maintained its existing presence in the region through its naval facility in Tartus. In addition to shifting the correlation of forces on the ground in the Syrian civil war to the advantage of the Syrian government, Moscow has displayed its military power to the United States and the West, tested new operational concepts, and exhibited maturing military capabilities—effectively advertising for its foreign military sales. The use of Kalibr land attack

¹⁷ Clinton, *Hard Choices*, pp. 236, 242–245; Dmitri Trenin, *Russia’s Breakout from the Post-Cold War System: The Drivers of Putin’s Course* (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014); Roy Allison, “Russian Deniable Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 6, pp. 1255–1297; Karl Heinz-Kamp, “Nuclear Implications of the Russian–Ukrainian Conflict,” *NDC Research Report*, Research Division NATO Defense College, April 2015; and “Crimea Crisis: Russian President Putin’s Speech Annotated,” *BBC News*, March 19, 2014.

cruise missiles and the deployment of the S-400 air defense system to Syria are specific examples of the use of the Syrian conflict as a marketing device.¹⁸

Russia's interventions in the Ukraine and Syria have made the U.S. strategy of incorporating Russia into European economic and security structures obsolete. Instead, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and others have heralded the return of a great power competition with Russia.¹⁹ As further evidence of this, whereas U.S. officials and leaders of NATO's member states have consistently premised their European security policies on including Russia, Moscow has persistently described the United States and NATO as the "main enemy" in its military doctrine since 1992. As Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has noted, "Russia doesn't consider NATO a partner, Russia considers NATO an adversary. Obviously, we have to adapt to that."²⁰ The realization that Russia will be an adversary for the foreseeable future, posing a potentially serious challenge to the security and solidarity of the North Atlantic Alliance, has changed the attitude of Western leaders. The assaults on Georgia and Ukraine, allegedly undertaken on behalf of the Russian diaspora, have been accompanied by reckless rhetoric and changes in force posture that threaten the security of frontline NATO member states from the Baltics to the Black Sea.

The persistent Russian challenge to the security order in Europe and the stability of NATO as an alliance requires a coherent strategic response. Leaders of the alliance acknowledged this in the July 2016 Warsaw Summit communique that stated Russia's "aggressive actions... are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace."²¹ The daunting challenge of developing a coherent strategy to counter Russia remains unmet. The remainder of this report attempts to address the question of *how* to structure a strategic response to the Russian Federation's increasingly competitive attitude and actions.

¹⁸ See Reid Standish, "Russia is Using Syria as a Training Ground for Its Revamped Military and Shiny New Toys," *Foreign Policy*, December 2015; Mark Galeotti, "What Russia's Military Proved in Syria," *Vox*, March 2016; "The Three Faces of Russia Spetsnaz in Syria," *War on the Rocks*, March 2016; Michael Kofman, "Why the U.S. should be Paying Attention to Russia's Latest Strikes in Syria," *War on the Rocks*, November 2015; and "Russia's Arsenal in Syria: What Do We Know?" *War on the Rocks*, October 2015.

¹⁹ Max Fisher, "The New Era of Great Power Competition," *Vox*, April 13, 2016.

²⁰ Cowell, Alan. "NATO Plans More Visible Presence in Eastern Europe." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 27 Aug. 2014.

²¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, North Atlantic Council, "Warsaw Summit Communique," July 2016.

CHAPTER 2

Strategic Culture and the Nature of the Putin Regime

Colin Gray defined strategic culture as “the assumptions that lie behind strategic behavior and the manifestation of such assumptions in behavior” that “consists of the socially constructed and transmitted assumptions, habits of mind, traditions, and preferred methods of operation—that is behavior—that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community.” He points out, “A cultural dimension to strategy does not stand in stark opposition to a process of strategic calculation,” and therefore policymakers do not exercise strategic choice “with a completely open, or blank, mind on strategic ideas, but rather with values, attitudes, and preferences through which they filter new data, and in terms of which they judge among alternative course of action.” Jack Snyder has suggested that Soviet leaders share a unique set of historical experiences, institutional relationships, and strategic predicaments. Understanding the distinctive mode of thinking common to Russian officials helps understand some of the specific features of the regime that Vladimir Putin has established since ascending to the presidency.²²

Former National Intelligence Officer for Russia Fritz Ermarth posits, “Strategic culture in the Russian case is very much influenced by political culture, how political power is defined, acquired, legitimized and used.” Likewise, Russia’s unique foreign policy culture, or “how the outside world is regarded and addressed,” and economic culture have contributed to its strategic culture. The country’s distinct political development, due in part to

²² Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 28–29; and Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1977), p. 38. For an overview, see Jeffrey S. Lantis and Darryl Howlett, “Strategic Culture,” in John Baylis, James Wirtz, Colin S. Gray, and Eliot Cohen, eds., *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 82–100. See also Colin S. Gray, “National Style in Strategy: The American Example,” *International Security* 6, no. 2, Fall 1981, pp. 21–47; and Colin S. Gray, “Comparative Strategic Culture,” *Parameters* 14, no. 4, 1984, pp. 26–33.

Russia's geographic position straddling Europe and Asia, naturally gives rise to a singularly Russian world view.²³

Russia's geography, topography, and climate have had significant effects on Russian politics and statecraft. Its terrain and climate patterns are unsuitable for a vibrant agricultural sector; periodic droughts and floods, barren lands, poor soil, and a short growing season are the main contributors to Russia's historically low agricultural yields. Historian Richard Pipes has noted, "The peculiar topographical and seasonal distribution of the rainfall is a major reason why, over the course of its recorded history, Russia has averaged one bad harvest out of every three." This stands in contrast to its European neighbors, whose historical agricultural surpluses helped spur transport and commerce networks and broader economic development.²⁴

As Pipes has written, "The history of Russian agriculture is the tale of a land being mercilessly exploited without being given much if anything to nourish it and thus being driven into exhaustion." Land exhaustion, in turn, created among the Russian peasantry a continual search for new lands to cultivate. Many of these lands, however, were controlled by hostile nations like the Poles, Lithuanians, and Swedes to the west and the Turkic and Mongol tribal states in the east.²⁵

While Russian land hunger and the need to colonize virgin territory created an expansionist dynamic that required the organization of an efficient state, the dispersed pattern of Russian settlement and a sparse population created serious obstacles. As Pipes noted, "The manner in which this predicament was resolved provides the key to Russia's constitutional development. The state neither grew out of the society, nor was imposed on it from above. Rather it grew up side by side with society and bit by bit swallowed it." The prince was lord and master and "outright owner of all men and things." Unlike Western Europe, inherent individual property rights did not develop; rather, all rights in property and governing power were granted by the Prince. Max Weber described this system as patrimonialism, or a "regime where the rights of sovereignty and the rights of ownership blend to the point of becoming indistinguishable, political power is exercised in the same manner as economic power."²⁶

The influence of patrimonialism on Russian political development endures. It arose in the early Russian state that developed around the Duchy of Muscovy, thrived during the reign of the Romanov dynasty, extended throughout the period of communist rule, and

²³ Fritz W. Ermarth, *Russia's Strategic Culture: Past, Present, and . . . in Transition?* (McLean, VA: SAIC, October 31, 2006), paper prepared for Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, available at <https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/russia.pdf>.

²⁴ This section draws heavily on the seminal work of Harvard historian Richard Pipes. In particular, see Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 1–24; Quotation on p. 5.

²⁵ Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, p. 12.

²⁶ Weber as quoted in Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, p. 21–22.

remains in the post-communist era of Vladimir Putin. Modern domestic political culture in Russia still bears the distinct imprint of patrimonialism, which, particularly after the rise of literacy and the development of mass media, uses fear of internal disorder to justify its continued reliance on authoritarian means to maintain the system in power.

Patrimonialism and Russia's geopolitical setting are perhaps the two greatest influences on its current strategic culture. As Ermarth suggests, Russian strategic culture "is grounded on the principle of *kto-kovo* [literally, who-whom], i.e., who dominates over whom by virtue of coercive power or status imparted by higher authority." The fears of disorder, encirclement, and surprise attack generated by Russian historical experience in the 20th Century—the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and the Nazi invasion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1941—have contributed to this strategic culture. Ermarth notes that, "Russian foreign policy culture has often expressed a puzzling combination of contradictory attitudes: defensiveness bordering on paranoia, on one hand, combined with assertiveness bordering on pugnacity, on the other. In the Russian mentality, both an inferiority complex and a superiority complex can be simultaneously on display." These bi-polar attitudes and a lack of institutional restraint on its rulers, a traditional characteristic of Russian political culture, have made Russia a perennially challenging actor to incorporate into the international order.²⁷

The Putin Regime

It is perhaps not surprising that Putin's leadership has been described as a one-man show. Putin's personalized leadership style, his small circle of advisors, and few restraints on his power are all in line with the patrimonialism of Romanov and Soviet rule. Despite the brief expression of a more pluralistic system under Medvedev, today there exist few checks and balances on Putin's power. The decision-making circle has been curbed significantly, and the constitution appears to guarantee that government institutions such as the Russian Parliament primarily exist to rubber-stamp the president's personal wishes.²⁸

Although Putin does not have to answer to an institutionalized political party in the same way Soviet leaders did via the Central Committee or Politburo, his leadership style is not an

²⁷ Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 24, 26; and Ermarth, *Russia's Strategic Culture*, p. 7.

²⁸ The literature on Putin and his regime is large and growing. See Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007); Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, revised edition (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2015); Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia and Its Future with the West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015); Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014); Myers, *The New Tsar*; Christine Ockrent, *Les Oligarques: Le System Poutine* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2014); Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia: The Journey from Gorbachev's Freedom to Putin's War* (London: Atlantic Books, 2015); and Mikhail Zygar, *All the Kremlin's Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016). From the media perspective, a fascinating and entertaining study is Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014). For the role that patrimonialism has played in the failure of Russian reform see, Vladimir Gel'man, "The Vicious Circle of Post-Soviet Neopatrimonialism," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, no. 5, pp. 455–473; and Fiona Hill, "Putin: The One-man Show the West Doesn't Understand," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 13, 2016.

anomaly; it is consistent with Russian conservative political culture. It is based on a deep-rooted, widespread belief in the necessity of a strong Russian state to ward off instability as well as a nostalgia for Russia's great power status. His leadership is also marked by heavy reliance on the so-called *siloviki* who, like Putin, are veterans of the security services and provide the cadres necessary to staff the government. The *siloviki*, thanks to Putin, also occupy what used to be called the "commanding heights" of the economy; they have been made wealthy (and more powerful) by the crony capitalist practices that permeate the Russian system of governance.

On the one hand, the Kremlin's near-complete control over mass media has cemented the power of this new Russian elite. It exercises this control with far more creativity and with much better results than the Soviet regime, reaping a more compliant Russian public. The creation of the Putin regime, however, has been accompanied by a fundamental disregard for the rule of law and the rise of politically inspired murders and assassinations.²⁹ This system, although vulnerable to criticism over its rampant corruption and long-term economic decline, could well survive Putin's departure from office. U.S. policymakers in the future may face Putinism without Putin.

Although Putin remains popular at home, the legitimacy of his regime rests upon a fragile base. It was at its strongest during the post-9/11 run-up in global oil prices. This spurred a Russian economic windfall, which largely benefitted and empowered Russian oligarchs in the subsequent reallocation of properties that yielded lucrative rents. This was accomplished in true patrimonial style; the president was the ultimate arbiter of who held what properties. But as oil prices decline and Russia's economy wanes, the regime's hold on power could become more perilous. Uprisings on Russia's periphery, such as the Color Revolutions that began in Ukraine in 2004-2005, have struck fear in the Kremlin. To maintain his popularity, Putin has taken care to shape his personal image as a strong, decisive leader. He has consistently stressed his attachment to the Russian Orthodox Church and has endorsed the notion that Russia is surrounded by enemies (the United States and NATO) who are attempting to deny Russia its rightful place in the world.

As a result, Putin has pursued his policy objectives through autocracy, orthodoxy, and nationalism. His approach, although frequently relying on proven Soviet methods like wedge-driving, nuclear saber-rattling, and overt and covert propaganda, strongly resembles the "Official Nationality" of Tsar Nicholas I more than the Brezhnev-era policies of the Soviet Union. He sees world affairs as a zero-sum game, and values gaining control over the countries on Russia's immediate periphery. As was true of past Russian leaders, Putin is preoccupied

²⁹ For Putin and his cronies' role in politically inspired murders, see Robert Owen, *The Litvinenko Inquiry: Report into the Death of Alexander Litvinenko* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2016), p. 245. For the tradition of political murder in Russian political culture, see Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *The Russian Syndrome: One Thousand Years of Political Murder* (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes and Meier, 1993).

with establishing a physical buffer zone, maintaining the integrity of the state, spreading fear and paranoia about outsiders, and controlling the populace.³⁰

These views are shared by Russia's governing elite as well as the general public. The parallel views of the establishment are understandable, given that by the mid-2000s, up to 70 percent of Russia's ruling elites had a background in security services, and KGB (the USSR's Committee for State Security) veterans largely run the Kremlin-sponsored United Russia Party.³¹ Mark Galeotti, a leading student of the regime, argues that this group saw themselves as "the frontline of the struggle for not just Russia's place in the world but Russia's distinctive culture and identity."³² Although official resentment towards the United States, and the West in general, has fluctuated since the end of the Cold War, the antagonism towards them among Russia's public has been steadily rising. A Russian public opinion poll in January 2015 revealed that Russian mistrust of the West had grown to its highest recorded level; 81 percent of those polled had a negative perception of the United States, while only 15 percent had a positive view. One out of four Russians, moreover, thought relations with the European Union (EU) were hostile, whereas only two years ago, that number was as low as one out of a hundred.³³ Despite two decades of developing new frameworks for cooperation, signing treaties, making pledges, attending summits, and planning optimistic resets of relations in the West, large swaths of the Russian population never stopped seeing the West as the enemy impeding Russia's ability to take up its rightful place on the global stage. Taking that place, however, required a reconstitution of Russian military power, which had declined drastically since the end of the Cold War.

Reforming and Modernizing Russia's Conventional Forces

The effort to renew the Soviet Union through *perestroika* and *glasnost* under Gorbachev in the 1980s precipitated the collapse of the Soviet military as an effective institution and eventually led to the breakup of the Soviet Union. The Soviet military was intimately connected to the political and economic system and could not withstand the repeated shocks that Gorbachev's reforms administered to it. The military, starved for funds after the breakdown of the Russian economy, faced manpower shortfalls, corruption, and controversy.³⁴

³⁰ Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and "Official Nationality" in Russia: 1825–1855* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959).

³¹ Fred Weir, "KGB Influence Still Felt in Russia," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 30, 2003.

³² Konstantin Benyumov, "'The West and Russia Are Already at War': An Interview with NYU's Mark Galeotti," *Meduza*, February 2015.

³³ Lipman, Maria. "How Russia Has Come to Loathe the West." European Council on Foreign Relations, 13 Mar. 2016

³⁴ This is described in detail in William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). On corruption and dedovshchina, or hazing rituals, see Brenda J. Vallance, "Corruption and Reform in the Soviet Military," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 7, no. 4, pp. 703–724.

The need to reform the Russian military was a perennial theme in political discourse throughout the Yeltsin era. The deficiencies of the Russian military were highlighted in the First Chechen War, but little came from efforts to reform the institution into a mobile, modern, professional force. Only after Vladimir Putin had consolidated power did he move to assert his control over the Russian military, eventually installing his fellow KGB alumnus Sergei Ivanov as Minister of Defense.³⁵ The run-up in oil prices after 2002 helped support military modernization programs that reflected Putin’s view of Russia’s place in the world. From 2001 to 2007, defense expenditures roughly doubled to 573 billion rubles. As reformers increased spending on operations and maintenance, intensified the tempo of training exercises, and reorganized Russian forces to make them more mobile and agile, the Russian military re-emerged as a more capable and modern force.

The war that broke out with Georgia in August 2008, however, demonstrated that, while Russia’s military had improved since its disastrous failures in Chechnya in 1994, it still suffered some glaring deficiencies: poor intelligence, inadequate C4ISR capabilities, insufficient precision munitions, lack of reliable force tracking capability, problematic logistics and command and control mechanisms, and an overreliance on undertrained conscripts and outdated equipment. Shortly after the Georgia campaign, the Russian Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov announced a package of reforms and modernization initiatives to address these deficiencies. The multifaceted defense program that President Medvedev and Serdyukov put into place focused on readiness, professionalism, and rearment to improve the operational capacity of the armed forces. To continue to facilitate reform, in 2015 Putin announced an increase in Russia’s defense spending from nearly \$57 billion to an estimated \$91 billion (in constant 2014 dollars).³⁶

Soviet-era mass mobilization methods haphazardly assembled disjointed groups of units that were unfamiliar with one another. The disorderly process of mobilization also drew attention to the fact that Russia was preparing military action. Moreover, the majority of Russian units suffered from low readiness levels in peacetime. Under its reforms since 2008, Russia’s excess units were disbanded to ensure there were fewer, more capable units ready for combat. Russia cut its unwieldy structure of 203 divisions to a more mobile 83 brigades, and it reduced its top-heavy officer corps. It improved the professionalism of its forces by cutting conscripts in

35 The literature on Russian military reform is extensive. Useful studies include: Bettina Renz, “Russian Military Reform,” *The RUSI Journal* 155, no. 1, pp. 58–62; Bettina Renz and Rod Thornton, “Russian Military Modernization,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 59, no. 1, pp. 44–54; Stephen J. Blank, “Potemkin’s Treadmill: Russian Military Modernization,” in Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills, eds., *Strategic Asia 2005–2006: Military Modernization in Asia* (Seattle, WA: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2006), pp. 175–208; Andrei Makarychev and Alexander Sergunin, “Russian Military Reform: Institutional, Political and Security Implications,” *Defense & Security Analysis* 29, no. 4, pp. 356–364; and Dale R. Herspring, “Vladimir Putin and Military Reform in Russia,” *European Security* 14, no. 1, pp. 137–155.

36 Athena Bryce-Rogers, “Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia–Georgia War,” *Demokratizatsiya* 21, no. 3, pp. 339–368. See Dale Herspring and Roger N. McDermott, “Serdyukov Promotes System Russian Military Reform,” *Orbis* 54, no. 2, pp. 284–301. Data on Russian defense expenditures from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*, available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>, accessed November 20, 2016.

favor of more highly trained noncommissioned officers, improving education for both troops and leaders alike, and it increased joint training exercises. Russia also de-layered and streamlined its military command structure into four strategic commands. Serdyukov dramatically eliminated administrative bloat in Russia's command and control structure to streamline decision-making. Although Russia's military has not been completely professionalized and its new brigade structure still suffers from some of the deficiencies of the older division system, it is now capable of conducting decisive operations in regional conflicts.³⁷ Russian forces demonstrated these improvements in Ukraine in 2014 when 40,000 troops were deployed to the border within several days. In 1999, it had taken Russia three weeks to deploy roughly the same size force into Chechnya.³⁸

Perhaps the largest expenditure under Russia's defense reform has been on rearmament. Russia announced in 2010 that it would invest 20 trillion rubles (U.S. \$700 billion at the time) over 15 years to procure new armaments for all parts of its armed forces in addition to replacing or upgrading its entire nuclear missile arsenal. Although the reforms were never intended to create military parity with the United States—indeed, Moscow would be unable to challenge the United States conventionally in a military confrontation—key capabilities such as advanced integrated air defense systems, unmanned aerial systems, advanced electronic warfare systems, enhanced massed fires, and heavy infantry vehicles have given it superiority over its immediate neighbors including the NATO states bordering Russia. The Russian military has also demonstrated its ability to project air power effectively beyond its borders, as demonstrated by its 2015 intervention in the Syrian civil war.

Russia's military reforms, the development of anti-access/area-denial capabilities that extend over most of NATO's eastern frontline states, and the lack of U.S. and NATO forward presence represent a potentially formidable challenge to NATO and compound the difficulties that the alliance currently faces. Moreover, profound economic, demographic, and cultural pressures in many European nations have led to consistent underinvestment in their defenses. This raises questions about the willingness of the alliance to meet its commitments to the defense of its frontline allies.³⁹

³⁷ See Renz and Thornton, "Russian Military Modernization," pp. 44–54; Rod Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011); Bettina Renz, "Why Russia Is Reviving Its Conventional Military Power," *Parameters* 46, no. 2, Summer 2016, pp. 23–36; and Stephan Frühling and Guillaume Lasconjarias, "NATO, A2/AD and the Kaliningrad Challenge," *Survival* 58, no. 2, April–May 2016, pp. 95–116.

³⁸ Alexander Golts, "Rehearsals for War," European Council on Foreign Relations, July 5, 2016.

³⁹ See Renz and Thornton, "Russian Military Modernization," pp. 44–54; Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces*; Renz, "Why Russia Is Reviving Its Conventional Military Power"; and Frühling and Lasconjarias, "NATO, A2/AD and the Kaliningrad Challenge."

Nuclear Modernization and Escalation Dominance

The 2010 New START Treaty limits both the number of U.S. and Russian deployed strategic nuclear weapons as well as the number of deployed and non-deployed missiles, bombers, and launchers.⁴⁰ According to the 2016 declaration made in compliance with the New START Treaty, Russia's stockpile contains 1,735 strategic warheads, and the Federation of American Scientists estimates that it possesses an additional 2,700 non-deployed strategic and tactical warheads.⁴¹ The treaty, although touted as cutting deployed warheads on each side by a third, has actually allowed Russia to build up and modernize its force while the United States has reduced both its deployed launcher and warhead count. Furthermore, there are no limitations on the number of NSNWs either country can field.⁴²

Russia has retired much of its outdated Soviet-era nuclear capability while simultaneously recapitalizing its entire arsenal of strategic nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Modernization plans call for reducing the number of Soviet legacy missile systems, which constitute 72 percent of the Russian missile arsenal, to 2 percent by 2021. Land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) remain the backbone of Russia's strategic nuclear forces. As Hans Kristensen and Robert Norris report, "The replacement of Soviet-era ICBMs with modern types is more than halfway done and scheduled for completion in 2022." The first phase of this has been the deployment of the new road-mobile SS-27 Topol-M missile. A newer version, the RS-24 Yars is now being deployed, and a compact version, the so-called RS-26 Rubezh, is under development; all carry multiple warheads. A rail-mobile version of the SS-21 is also under development and has already begun testing. Finally, the Russians are developing the SS-28 Sarmat, a new heavy missile that will carry maneuverable warheads that Russian officials claim will be able to evade U.S. missile defenses.⁴³

The Russian fleet of ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) will likely carry proportionately more of Russia's total warhead count when the modernization of the force is completed in the mid-2020s; this includes the entry of all eight of the new Borey-class submarines into service. The Borey-class ships will carry the SS-N-32 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) with six re-entry vehicles (RV) per missile—as opposed to the smaller RV count on the older SS-N-18 and SS-N-23 missiles carried on Russia's older Delta III- and Delta IV-class submarines. As for strategic aviation forces, the Russians deploy two relatively older bombers, the Tu-160 Blackjack and the Tu-95MS Bear H, both of which are undergoing upgrades.

⁴⁰ "New START at a Glance," *Arms Control Association*, August 2012; and Mark Schneider, "The Russian Nuclear Weapons Buildup and the Future of the New START Treaty," *Information Series* no. 414 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, October 27, 2016).

⁴¹ "Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance," *Arms Control Association*, October 2016.

⁴² Robert Joseph and Eric Edelman, "Trump's Nuclear Tweets," *The Weekly Standard*, January 16, 2017.

⁴³ "Russia Overview," *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, March 2015; Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "Russian Nuclear Forces, 2016," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 72, no.3, pp. 125–134, quotation on p. 127. For the rail-mobile test see Pavel Podvig's Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces website at http://russianforces.org/blog/2016/11/test_of_barguzin_rail-mobile_i.shtml.

According to the Russian press, the production line for the TU-160 is going to be reopened, and a newer version of the Tupolev Tu-22M Backfire bomber will be produced; observers expect it to eventually replace the older Bear bombers. The Russian bomber force is outfitted with nuclear-armed air-launched cruise missiles (ALCM) and short-range attack missiles (SRAM) as well as gravity bombs for the TU-160s. A more modern long-range ALCM, the Kh-112, will ultimately replace the older missiles in the Russian inventory. A next generation bomber, the PAK-DA, is also on the drawing boards, although it is not likely to be produced until the later 2020s.⁴⁴ The across-the-board Russian nuclear modernization, including the new heavy missile and a return to the older rail-mobile variant ICBMs, highlights the need for a robust U.S. nuclear triad as a deterrent. This is especially true because the United States maintains responsibility for extended deterrence guarantees for many of its allies around the world.⁴⁵

Despite the lofty goals for defense modernization articulated by the State Armaments Program, a sizeable gap will remain between Russian and U.S. conventional forces on the global level for some time to come. Fear of the conventional superiority of the United States and Russia's demographic weaknesses have created enormous incentives for Russia to stress modernization of its nuclear force—to offset its deficiencies in conventional forces, to deter the United States, and to maintain its status as a major military power. In other words, Russia does not need conventional parity with the United States, since it relies heavily on its modernized nuclear forces for deterrence. This was demonstrated once again when President Putin rattled his nuclear saber during the ongoing Ukraine crisis.

Although Russia's nuclear strategy remains a subject of debate among experts, some elements seem indisputable based on the multiple recent iterations of Russian military doctrine and consistent statements made by President Putin and other senior officials.

First, Russia's "no first use" policy, a powerful propaganda tool during the Cold War, notwithstanding its largely fictive nature, has been abandoned. This fact, coupled with Russian concerns over its potential conventional inferiority against geopolitical rivals, removes any doubt that Russian leaders reserve the possibility of using nuclear weapons first in a conflict.⁴⁶

Second, Russia has consistently maintained a substantial role for its nuclear arsenal in deterring various forms of military aggression. It serves the traditional strategic role of deterring

⁴⁴ Kristensen and Norris, "Russian Nuclear Forces, 2016," pp. 127–130.

⁴⁵ For U.S. extended deterrence guarantees, see Evan Braden Montgomery, *Extended Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age: Geopolitics, Proliferation, and the Future of U.S. Security Commitments* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2016).

⁴⁶ Serge Schmemann, "Russia Drops Pledge of No First Use of Atom Arms," *New York Times*, November 3, 1993; Beatrice Heuser, "Warsaw Pact Military Doctrines in the 1970s and 1980s: Findings in the East German Archives," *Comparative Strategy* 12, no. 4, pp. 437–457; and Beatrice Heuser, "Victory in Nuclear War? A Comparison of NATO and WTO War Aims and Strategies," *Contemporary European History* 7, no. 3, pp. 311–327.

nuclear aggression while also deterring a large-scale regional conventional war.⁴⁷ Russia’s 2000 military doctrine suggests that it could use nuclear weapons in response to a large-scale conventional attack that threatened the survival of Russia during a global or regional conflict. This represented an important change from the Yeltsin-era defense doctrine that limited nuclear weapons to deterring a global nuclear conflict. This thinking reflected an “expanded deterrence” theory that had begun to appear in Russian professional military journals in the late 1990s, suggesting nuclear weapons might be used to de-escalate a regional conflict.⁴⁸ In 2010, Russian military doctrine clarified that nuclear weapons would only be used in conventional conflict when “the very existence of the state is under threat” and made no reference to the notion of “de-escalation.”⁴⁹

Three different schools of thought regarding regional deterrence have emerged in Russia. The first calls for an integration of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons to create a nuclear deterrent. The second, non-nuclear deterrence, called for the use of conventional weapons as a final warning before limited low-yield nuclear weapon use. Lastly, the scientific community argues that the development of a new type of low-yield nuclear weapon would make their use credible by enabling strikes that did not produce “catastrophic consequences.”⁵⁰ Since the late 1990s, the Russian nuclear industry has been focused on designing a low-yield nuclear weapon to make the threat of use credible.⁵¹ Other threats that could necessitate the use of NSNW in the view of Russian defense analysts are the conventional military superiority of NATO and China.⁵² The troubling implications of lowering the threshold for nuclear use in order to provide regional nuclear deterrence are compounded by the fact that Russia is believed to have one of the largest NSNW arsenals in the world. Furthermore, no consensus exists regarding the specifics surrounding the concept of regional deterrence and the role that NSNW would serve. Various Russian military exercises have used NSNWs in the final phases of conventional attacks against a conventionally superior enemy.⁵³

The government of the Russian Federation has also sought to use the prospect of nuclear escalation to deter potential adversaries to its west or east from engaging in a conventional conflict. Over the past decade and a half, Russia’s military doctrine has stressed the potential to escalate a regional conflict with the use of nuclear weapons to subsequently de-escalate and prevail on Russian terms. Wargames simulating conflict with both NATO and China have involved conflict termination with the use of theater nuclear weapons. The theory

47 Adamsky, *Cross-Domain Coercion*, p. 96.

48 Nikolai Sokov, “Russia’s Nuclear Doctrine,” *NTI Issue Brief*, August 2004.

49 “Russia,” *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, updated March 2015.

50 Dmitry Adamsky, “If War Comes Tomorrow: Russian Thinking About ‘Regional Nuclear Deterrence’,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 1, 2014, pp. 169–177.

51 Adamsky, “If War Comes Tomorrow,” p. 175.

52 Dmitry Adamsky, “Nuclear Incoherence: Deterrence Theory and Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Russia,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1, 2014, p. 98.

53 Adamsky, *Cross-Domain Coercion*, p. 16.

underpinning this approach has been that adversaries would, in the end, accept limited gains or losses rather than risk the escalation of war with the use of nuclear forces. Although the most recent version of Russian doctrine does not include the specific language of earlier versions on escalation to nuclear use in a regional conflict, and some scholars have raised questions about the degree to which Russia is operationally prepared to execute such operations, the brandishing of nuclear weapons by Putin and other officials during the Ukraine crisis suggests that the notion remains a part of the Kremlin's operational code.⁵⁴

Despite the simulated use of nuclear weapons in exercises, no Russian policies or procedures appear to be in place that would identify the threshold for damage that would justify their use. This is due, in part, to a lack of criteria to define what constitutes unacceptable loss as well as to the inability of early warning systems to reliably relay information on an incoming devastating attack. Academic publications on regional deterrence illustrate that there is a high degree of ambiguity in determining when NSNW would be used in regional conflicts, but the possibility that they might be used is a real, if disturbing, possibility. As two scholars have recently noted:

Short of nuclear first use, or even explicit nuclear threats, Russia does possess strategic capabilities for fait accompli operations on its periphery and can assert a scenario-dependent case for favorable outcomes supported by escalation dominance. These capabilities might therefore deprive NATO of a proportionate “response in kind” under some conditions, leaving the alliance with little effective deterrence capability in theater. Any substantial pre-emptive deployment in theater by NATO forces would likely result in escalation, with the alliance lacking control over that escalation. Consequently, in such a hypothetical scenario, Moscow could even pre-empt NATO’s deployment, leaving the alliance facing the decision as to whether to back down or effectively go to war with Russia.⁵⁵

The calculated ambiguity of Russian doctrine and the nuclear saber-rattling that Putin has engaged in over Ukraine poses a major challenge for NATO. It is imperative that NATO and the United States develop an approach to this new paradigm for nuclear use that strengthens deterrence against Russian aggression, while also minimizing the risk of escalation.

⁵⁴ The most recent review is Dave Johnson, “Nuclear Weapons in Russia’s Approach to Conflict,” *Recherches & Documents*, no. 6, November 2016. Also useful is Elbridge Colby, “Russia’s Evolving Nuclear Doctrine and Its Implications,” *Note de la FRS*, no. 1, January 12, 2016. For Russian exercises that have relied on nuclear use, see Qunilivan and Oliker, *Nuclear Deterrence in Europe*; Roger N. McDermott, *Russia’s Conventional Military Weakness and Substrategic Nuclear Policy* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Office, January 2011), available at <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil>; and Jacob Kipp, “Russia’s Nuclear Posture and the Threat that Dare Not Speak Its Name,” in Stephen J. Blank, *Russian Nuclear Weapons: Past, Present and Future* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), pp. 459–504. For skeptical views, see Adamsky, “Nuclear Incoherence”; and Olga Oliker, *Russian Nuclear Doctrine: What We Know, What We Don’t and What that Means* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2016). A comprehensive overview is in Keith Payne et al., *Russian Strategy: Expansion, Crisis and Conflict* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2016), pp. 61–82.

⁵⁵ Stephen J. Cimbala and Roger N. McDermott, “Putin and the Nuclear Dimension to Russian Strategy,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 4, pp. 535–553, quotation on p. 552. A brief summary of Russia’s modernization of its nuclear arsenal is Adam Lowther and Angelo Bonavita, “The Nuclear Threat Environment Facing the Trump Administration,” *War on the Rocks*, December 7, 2016.

Non-Linear, Hybrid, or New Modes of Warfare

Russia's combined employment of irregular forces and sophisticated information operations in Crimea has focused the attention of Western strategists on sub-conventional, or so-called "hybrid," warfare. The hybrid form of war mixes low-cost measures including "reflexive control," active measures, political warfare, political subversion, and cyber operations with an aggressive employment of high-end conventional military capabilities. Gustav Gressel argues that to understand how Russia now prepares for war is to realize they do so "in an entirely different way than the West. Russia's military efforts are embedded in a multi-pronged drive to overwhelm, subvert, and subdue the opposing society that is much more ruthless and efficient than the West's 'comprehensive approach'—the coordination of civilian and military efforts in conflicts and crises."⁵⁶ Timothy L. Thomas defines reflexive control as a "means of conveying to a partner or an opponent specially prepared information to incline him to voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action."⁵⁷ Vladimir Lefebvre, one of the premier Soviet scholars on reflexive control, has written that:

In making his decision, the adversary uses information about the area of conflict, about his own troops and ours, about their ability to fight, etc. We can influence his channels of information and send messages, which shift the flow of information in a way favorable for us. The adversary uses the most contemporary method of optimization and finds the optimal decision. However, it will not be a true optimum, but a decision predetermined by us.⁵⁸

Ultimately, reflexive control is a tool through which Russia can influence an opponent into unknowingly making decisions that are advantageous to the Kremlin by skewing the enemy's perception of reality. When harnessed with the capabilities of proxy, surrogate, or conventional forces on the ground as in Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria, it represents a potentially formidable capability for accomplishing political-military objectives.

Russia's concept of information warfare, given Russian budget limitations and U.S. global conventional superiority, provides Moscow with an extremely flexible toolkit to deploy against adversaries who enjoy an economic and technological advantage. Russian policymakers, aware their ambitions outstrip their military resources, engage in a type of "guerrilla geopolitics" that seeks leverage against a superior adversary. These measures are carefully calculated to fall below the threshold that Russian officials deem likely to elicit a U.S. or NATO military response, thereby avoiding a great power confrontation.⁵⁹ Moscow's escalatory ladder, however, has many rungs, and it is able to successfully ratchet up these measures to achieve its

⁵⁶ Gustav Gressel, "Russia's Quiet Military Revolution, and What It Means for Europe," *Policy Brief*, European Council on Foreign Relations, October 12, 2015.

⁵⁷ Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 2, p. 237.

⁵⁸ Maria Snegovaya, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, September 2015).

⁵⁹ Mark Galeotti, "Putin's Tactics against the West," *The European*, September 2014.

policy objectives based on its calculation of plausible response. Information warfare is inherently challenging to detect or control since the measures, by design, are intended to confuse and neutralize the enemy from responding decisively. It also takes advantage of Washington's rigid bureaucratic decision-making processes and the need for the United States to justify its foreign policy and military use to Congress, the public, and allies. The Putin regime, in contrast, needs no parliamentary approval nor faces any serious oversight in carrying out this type of operation. It took the Council of the Federation the better part of an hour to approve deployment to Ukraine and even less time to approve sending air support to Syria a year later. Moscow did not inform its allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), for example, of its plan to launch cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea in 2015.⁶⁰

The Russian ability to exploit conflicts in these gray zones allows it to further weaken the faith of U.S. allies in American commitments and assurances, fray the fabric of NATO, and help Russia achieve its broader foreign policy goals.⁶¹ Whether describing this phenomenon as hybrid warfare, new generation warfare, or non-linear warfare, it is more important to recognize that, in addition to its modernized nuclear arsenal and increased ability to mobilize and deploy conventional forces, hybrid warfare provides Moscow with additional means to achieve its political objectives.⁶²

60 Alexander Golts, "Rehearsals for War," *Commentary*, European Council on Foreign Relations, July 5, 2016.

61 Michael Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding A Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, December 2015).

62 For the debate on hybrid war, see Samuel Charrap, "The Ghost of Hybrid War," *Survival* 57, no. 6, pp. 51–58; Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer Look at Russia's 'Hybrid War,'" *Kennan Cable*, no. 7, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 2015; Bettina Renz, "Russia and 'Hybrid Warfare,'" *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3, pp. 283–300; Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith, *Russia and Hybrid Warfare: Going Beyond the Labels*, Aleksanteri Papers, no. 1 (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, 2016); Keir Giles, *Russia's Hybrid Warfare: A Success in Propaganda*, Security Policy Working Paper, no. 1 (Berlin: Bundesakademie Fur Sicherheitpolitik, 2015); Keir Giles, *Russia's "New" Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power* (London: Chatham House, Royal Institute of International Affairs, March 2016); Roger McDermott, "Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?" *Parameters* 46, no. 1, pp. 97–105; Timothy Thomas, "The Evolution of Russian Military Thought: Integrating Hybrid, New-Generation, and New-Type Thinking," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 4, pp. 554–575; Mark Galeotti, "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and Russian Non-Linear Warfare," *In Moscow's Shadows: Analysis and Assessment of Russian Crime and Security*, available at <https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>; and Mark Galeotti, "Russia's Hybrid War as a Byproduct of a Hybrid State," *War on the Rocks*, December 5, 2016. The quotation comes from Mark Galeotti, "Hybrid, Ambiguous, and Non-Linear: How New Is Russia's 'New Way of War,'" *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 27, no. 2, pp. 282–301, p. 283.

CHAPTER 3

The New Strategic Situation and U.S.–NATO response

The transatlantic community is contending with several persistent strategic challenges, among them a growing wave of populist, anti-globalist sentiment and a European Union whose institutions are overwhelmed by lagging economic growth and mass migration from the Middle East and Africa. No challenge is more pressing from the U.S. perspective, however, than an increasingly revanchist Russia. The United States military presence on the continent is the weakest it has been since World War II due to the post-Cold War drawdown, forward U.S. forces being redeployed to uphold widespread international commitments, and the unrelenting defense budget cuts over the past eight years. As Russia continues to invest aggressively in modernizing its military, many NATO countries continue to pursue policies of disarmament, divest themselves of key capabilities, and struggle to meet NATO's 2 percent of GDP defense spending requirement. European political disunity, lack of leadership, and disinterest in confrontation with an increasingly aggressive Russia allow the Kremlin to exploit its growing military capabilities on the continent. Indeed, the correlation of forces in the European theater has arguably not been this favorable for Russia since the end of the Cold War.

Balance of Forces between NATO and Russia in Europe

The U.S. defense posture and its investment in European security are essential; the U.S. contribution makes up over 70 percent of NATO's defense expenditures. Although the United States military is still the best fighting force in the world, its presence in Europe has been greatly diminished since the Cold War, and it is now dangerously close to reaching—if not already beyond—the threshold of acceptable risk in the Baltics. The U.S. military footprint has decreased from 435,000 personnel during the Cold War to 65,000 personnel in 2017, despite maintaining an overall end strength of 1.3 million. The cuts have hit the U.S. Army hardest, with only two brigade-sized combat units left in Europe: a Stryker Brigade Combat

Team in Germany and an Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Italy, neither of which is equipped for a conventional battle against heavy forces. At the time of the Russian invasion of Crimea, for example, there was not a single U.S. tank in Europe. The location of U.S. forces, despite changing geostrategic issues, still reflects Cold War threats; they are based in Western Europe, far from NATO's frontline states. U.S. ground forces in Europe are based primarily in Germany and Italy, while the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are oriented predominantly in the Mediterranean. Although the U.S. Air Force has seven operating bases in Western and Southern Europe, it fields a modest fleet of 200 fighter, attack, rotary wing, tanker, and transport aircraft among them. Even U.S. missile defense capabilities on the continent are specifically designed to counter a small number of missile threats from the Middle East; they are not configured to defend allies against Russian large-scale air and missile attacks.

Despite the superior aggregate capability of European NATO militaries, the Kremlin has invested in key capabilities and platforms that seriously challenge the alliance's ability to respond in the case of a conflict. Thus, while NATO's armed forces outnumber those of Russia, alliance commanders have the inherent disadvantage of trying to mobilize disjointed air and land forces from multiple countries on short notice and deploy them to Eastern Europe. Russia enjoys a distinct local advantage in terms of force mobilization and deployment, especially against NATO frontline states. As Alexander Lanoszka explains:

Individually and collectively, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania suffer from an unfavorable balance of power with Russia. Their armies comprise about 2,800, 1,250 and 7,350 soldiers respectively; by contrast, the Russian ground forces amount to 250,000 soldiers, to say nothing of the country's aerial, maritime and nuclear capabilities.

In terms of air power, the United Kingdom and France can carry out a full range of combat missions. Italy's and Germany's air forces have far less multi-mission training, and remaining NATO member air forces are both modest and single-mission. Although inferior in size and quality, Russia's air force can still mobilize an estimated 320 combat aircraft for offensive operations. Combined with its surface-to-air defenses, such forces could be a major threat to NATO's frontline states. In the event of aggression against the Baltic States, for example, NATO air and ground forces would have to simultaneously suppress Russian IADS (integrated air defense systems) as well as defend against air attacks, which would require a high level of coordination among various air and ground forces (and perhaps naval forces as well). Lacking adequate ground-based air and missile defense capacity, NATO forces and bases would likely suffer heavy casualties from air and missile attack.

Although American air power is postured to reinforce Europe's air forces in the event of a crisis, whether the U.S. military can achieve the same level of air superiority that it enjoyed in previous decades is uncertain. Moscow has begun chipping away at this traditional U.S. comparative advantage by investing in modern air defenses, which may have capabilities to counter stealth aircraft. At the same time, the U.S. air forces have little recent operational experience in highly contested environments. Russian advances in electronic warfare and

cyber-attack capabilities could be used to jam radars and deny signals intelligence key to effective U.S. air operations.

European land forces are numerically superior to Russia, but NATO forces do not match Russian forces in terms of readiness. Although there are disputes over exact readiness levels of Russian forces, a recent report by the RAND Corporation states that Russia's Western Military District forces may have some 25 maneuver battalions, ten artillery battalions, and five surface-to-surface missile battalions. Furthermore, while 65 percent of Russian combat brigades are combat ready, European land forces are only 31 percent deployable, and 7.5 percent can be sustained in expeditionary operations in Eastern Europe. Analyses of Russia's military activities in Ukraine indicate that a Russian army brigade can usually generate one battalion tactical group (BTG) that is combat ready, rapidly deployable, and sustainable for a rotation of 4–6 months, meaning more Russian forces can remain deployed longer than NATO ground units. In addition, many NATO member militaries lack training in combined arms maneuver warfare and have little experience operating in the combat conditions they would likely face against Russian forces in Eastern Europe.

Ultimately, forward presence and readiness to wage sustained joint and combined operations may be the greatest challenge for NATO's forces. Despite their numerical edge, European nations are at an inherent disadvantage because they must first mobilize, coordinate, and deploy forces from 28 nations. If required to respond to an Article V violation, Russia could achieve a fait accompli before NATO could organize, let alone effectively respond. Even more worrisome is the fact that NATO's military posture is particularly weak in the Baltic States—the countries that are, perhaps, most vulnerable to Russian aggression. Local ground forces are capable of company-sized deployments for training and exercises, but they are not prepared to engage in large-scale defensive operations. Similarly, frontline state air forces are focused on peacetime missions and lack sufficient aircraft to engage in modern air warfare operations. Again, the imbalance of forces is even more pronounced in the Baltic Sea, where NATO only maintains a sporadic maritime presence.

European Reassurance Initiative + Other Enhanced Measures

In an acknowledgment of the growing asymmetry of forces in Europe, the United States has responded modestly by providing additional rotational units to forward-based positions throughout the Baltics. Funds for the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), intended to shore up the U.S. position in Europe and ease Allied concerns about the U.S. Article V commitment, have also increased from \$780 million in FY 2016 to \$3.4 billion in FY 2017. A large part of the funding will go to support a rotational armored brigade combat team (BCT), thus establishing a third U.S. BCT to be positioned on the continent at all times. The remaining monies will be devoted to funding prepositioned stocks of equipment in theater, including tanks, heavy artillery, weapons, ammunition, and other gear for the rapid equipping of forces. The material, however, will be stored in warehouses in Western Europe rather than on NATO's eastern front.

Another effort to protect the alliance’s vulnerable eastern front is NATO’s Readiness Action Plan (RAP), spearheaded by the United States. The RAP seeks to identify long-term challenges and solutions to ensure adequate command and control of NATO forces in the face of a sudden conflict. Among the RAP’s principal initiatives are fighter air patrols, deployment of rotational NATO troops for training exercises, airborne warning and control system (AWACS) surveillance flights over NATO’s eastern flank, and greater maritime air patrols. The RAP will also strengthen the existing NATO Response Force (NRF) that has land, sea, air, and special forces components, and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) are also being positioned in the Eastern European states to enhance coordination between NATO’s integrated military command and frontline national forces.

Although the added force structure from the ERI constitutes the most significant reinforcement of NATO’s force posture since the Cold War ended, a single armored brigade combat team, even supported by NATO air and sea power, does not represent a major enhancement in the alliance’s efforts to deter Russian aggression; while the enhanced force is meant to create higher risks for and impose greater costs on Russia, it simply does not yield a significant-enough shift in the Eastern Europe military balance to affect Russia’s calculus.

The rotational forces included in the ERI and their periodic deployment to Baltic countries will not be sufficient to hold off a determined Russian force that might engage in military aggression against one or more of the exposed NATO member countries. As former Supreme Allied Commander General Phillip Breedlove has stated, a “rotating presence is no substitute for permanent force presence.” The U.S European Command’s 2015 Theater Strategy elaborated on that point, stating, “USEUCOM [United States European Command] cannot fully mitigate the impact felt from a reduction in assigned military forces through the augmentation of rotational forces from the United States. The temporary presence of rotational forces complements but does not substitute for an enduring forward-deployed presence that is tangible and real. Virtual presence means actual absence.” Early in 2017, the National Commission on the Future of the Army also recommended a permanently stationed Brigade Combat Team in Europe. Despite the positive steps taken by the United States and European NATO allies to increase the number of forward-positioned troops and raise the tempo of multinational exercises to improve cohesion among allies, these measures, even collectively, will not likely be adequate to deter Russia aggression.

Another challenge to the prepositioned troops is Russia’s widening anti-access/area-denial bubble, which makes it increasingly difficult for reinforcements to reach the frontline states rapidly once a conflict has started. The Russian A2/AD bubble, which already covers the Baltic States in their entirety as well as large parts of Polish territory, would make it extremely difficult for troops from Western and Central Europe to deploy into Eastern Europe. Moscow also benefits from a geographical advantage; its forces would be operating in close proximity to its lines of supply, and there are no natural barriers to impede a potential offensive. Russia, as a unitary actor, not only enjoys an overall higher level of readiness than its NATO counterparts but also directs and coordinates the mobilization of its forces as a single entity—as opposed to

NATO, whose countries are unlikely to mobilize either in lockstep or in a highly coordinated manner. Moreover, Russian preparations for military actions could be disguised as exercises, as was the case in both the buildup to the operations against Georgia and Ukraine. An attack with relatively little warning could see Russia, in the absence of serious resistance on the ground, achieve operational victory in a matter of days; this scenario renders the heavy NATO forces that require weeks or months to mobilize and deploy from North America or Western Europe irrelevant. The delay in U.S. and allied reinforcements would be compounded by the technical difficulty of entering a theater shielded by Russian long-range rockets based in Kaliningrad and Belarus. NATO's paradigm of "reassurance through readiness" is an outdated response in light of the changed threat environment and the relatively higher readiness and maturing capabilities of a modernized Russian military that can contest NATO's superiority in all domains of warfare at the local level. Thus, rather than maintain a forward defense posture, NATO is defaulting to a posture relying on modest "tripwire" forward-deployed forces—trading space for time in order to enable U.S. and Western European NATO forces to mobilize and deploy to Eastern Europe to retake lost ground. Given the geography of the Baltic region, this posture runs very high risks and potentially disastrous costs if deterrence fails.

In sum, Russia appears to enjoy multiple advantages practically guarantee its ability to defeat NATO forces if a conflict were to break out with a NATO member state along Russia's periphery, even with the recently enhanced NATO force posture. As a result of this posture imbalance, the modestly increased arms and only slightly enhanced presence provided by the ERI initiative will likely fall below the threshold of what is necessary to present a formidable deterrent to an aggressive Russia. Mustering a credible deterrent based on an effective NATO forward defense will require a combination of a significantly strengthened force posture; increased prepositioning of equipment; and a counter to the presence of integrated Russian land, air, and maritime A2/AD capabilities.

CHAPTER 4

Enhancing the Alliance's Capabilities and Deterrence Posture

The United States and NATO have spent much of the past decade fighting low-end adversaries in irregular conflicts that allowed Western militaries to operate in permissive environments with substantial qualitative advantages over its adversaries. This led European countries to prioritize making their militaries more expeditionary: ground forces trained for counterinsurgency and stability operations as well as air operations focused on tactical strike systems, transport helicopters, and air tankers, and unmanned aerial vehicles for ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance).⁶³ All of these platforms are non-stealthy and far less suitable for operations in the highly contested environments that European NATO forces would face in a conflict with Russia.

Russia, for its part, has invested in capabilities designed to erode NATO's military edge. As a result, the United States and its NATO allies need to focus on developing capabilities that will offset the operational challenges Russia's maturing A2/AD capability presents to the alliance. Specifically, the alliance needs to re-capitalize its forces, emphasizing long-range rocket artillery with area effects and anti-armor munitions, heavy armor, tactical drones, electronic warfare capabilities, and SEAD forces.

⁶³ Octavian Manea, "The A2/AD Predicament Challenges NATO's Paradigm of 'Reassurance Through Readiness,'" *Small Wars Journal*, June 9, 2016; and Frühling and Lasconjarias, "NATO, A2/AD and the Kaliningrad Challenge."

Armored Vehicles

In a potential conflict in the Baltics, Russian forces would employ armored vehicles, including tanks and infantry fighting vehicles (IFV). NATO would only be able to respond with what it currently has stationed in the Baltic States and what the United States could deploy within a very short warning period. The counter-terrorism and stabilization missions of the past 15 years have not required advanced armor, and the United States has been slow to invest in active protective systems (APS) for its armored vehicles, making them highly vulnerable to anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and advanced rocket-propelled grenades (RPG). Conversely, Russia's T-90 tanks are outfitted with Kontakt-5 reactive armor that can stop kinetic energy rounds and a number of active protection systems that can defeat ATGMs and RPGs. The M1 Abrams tank, the mainstay of the U.S. Army since the end of the Cold War, would likely find itself outnumbered facing Russian forces with anti-tank guided munitions "with an effective range that could penetrate the armor of most if not all NATO combat vehicles."⁶⁴

Artillery

Russia currently enjoys both a quantitative and qualitative superiority in conventional artillery systems, an area in which the United States long held a qualitative advantage. Over the past 15 years, the U.S. Army has reduced the amount of its artillery and has dramatically cut the air defense artillery units operating within its maneuver forces. Whereas Russia has substantial fires and air defense artillery, as well as numerous independent tube and rocket artillery and surface-to-air missile units, there are currently no comparable U.S. fire brigades in Europe.⁶⁵ The U.S. military has also been slowly abandoning its qualitative edge, largely by giving up cluster munitions and failing to procure modern long-range precision strike munitions.

The Russians, by comparison, have invested heavily in new artillery and munitions. As a result, a Russian heavy rocket launcher battalion can cover a lethal area that is at least five times greater than the area that can be targeted by a U.S. multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) battalion firing conventional high-explosive munitions.⁶⁶ Russia has invested in thermobaric warheads that generate an intense blast of exploding gasses that is far more lethal than conventional explosives. Although not a signatory to the Cluster Munitions Convention, the United States has voluntarily and significantly reduced its holding of cluster munitions despite Russia's increased reliance on the same. Russia's artillery can also outrange U.S. field cannon and rocket artillery.⁶⁷ Given these disparities, it is no wonder that Army Chief of Staff

⁶⁴ David Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Outnumbered, Outranged, and Outgunned: How Russia Beats NATO," *War on the Rocks*, April 21, 2016.

⁶⁵ Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*.

⁶⁶ Robert Scales, "Russia's Superior New Weapons," *The Washington Post*, August 5, 2016.

⁶⁷ David Johnson, *The Challenges of the "Now" and Their Implications for the U.S. Army* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), p. 8.

General Mark Milley was forced to admit before the Senate Armed Services Committee that the U.S. Army in Europe is “outranged [and] outgunned on the ground.”⁶⁸

Air and Missile Defenses

In Ukraine, the combination of Russian integrated and networked self-propelled air defense systems, as well as man-portable air defense systems, practically wiped out Ukrainian air forces. Without the ability to suppress Russian air defense assets and attack hardened bases, Ukraine found its armed forces immobilized.⁶⁹ The lack of U.S. air and missile defenses (AMD) means the only effective challenge to these attacks would be from NATO combat air patrols, which would be numerically inferior to the local Russian air combat forces. Russia’s ability to challenge NATO’s aggregate air superiority also increases the vulnerability of NATO forces to massive waves of air attacks, especially at the onset of war.

The lack of air cover and insufficient AMD capacity would likely result in heavy losses for NATO ground forces operating in areas vulnerable to attack from Russian rocket and artillery. Eastern European airfields, ports, and other infrastructure would be similarly vulnerable to large Russian ground- and air-launched missile salvos that could easily overwhelm the limited magazines of current U.S. AMD.

In order to increase the defensive capacity of NATO ground forces and infrastructure, the United States and other NATO countries should invest in new AMD systems, including mobile medium-range kinetic and non-kinetic air and missile defenses with high rates of fire and 360-degree threat engagement capability. Modest improvements in NATO’s current defensive posture in the Baltic States and Poland, including the deployment of AMD forces, could also be beneficial in deterring gray zone aggression.

Electronic Warfare

The U.S. Army has few electronic warfare sensors, no long-range jammers, and no current plans to field them before 2023.⁷⁰ Whereas the Army relies on other U.S. services for EW capabilities, the Russian army has fully equipped electronic warfare brigades that give them a distinct advantage at the tactical level. In fact, General Ben Hodges, the Commander of USAREUR (U.S. Army Europe), has described the Russian capability as “eye-watering.”⁷¹ Russia has skillfully exhibited its electronic warfare technology in both the wars in Georgia and Ukraine, where Russian forces were able to jam GPS, radio, and radar signals, thereby

⁶⁸ Shlapak and Johnson, “Outnumbered, Outranged, and Outgunned: How Russia Beats NATO.”

⁶⁹ Phillip Karber and Joshua Thibault, *Russia’s New Generation Warfare* (Vienna, VA: The Potomac Foundation, May 2016).

⁷⁰ Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., “Army Electronic Warfare Investment Lags Russian Threat,” *Breaking Defense*, March 21, 2016.

⁷¹ Paul McCleary, “Russia’s Winning the Electronic War,” *Foreign Policy*, October 2015.

degrading communications and preventing the Ukrainians from anticipating incoming artillery attacks or coordinating counter-battery fire.⁷²

Tactical UAVs

The Russian military has demonstrated its sophisticated use of tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) for target acquisition, massed artillery fires, battle damage assessment, and ISR missions in Ukraine. The successful integration of tactical UAVs by Russia compound the advantage of massed artillery area fires, with data from the Ukraine conflict showing that 85 percent of causalities resulted from artillery fire.⁷³

Justification for a Stronger Conventional Deterrence Posture

Russia's advantages in these areas are expanding faster than the offsetting measures currently being considered as part of the ERI, and increased investments to counter these capability gaps should be integral to thinking about U.S. defense funding levels.

Critics of efforts to strengthen deterrence along NATO's eastern front point to a low likelihood of direct Russian aggression against NATO states. Conversely, Moscow's persistent hostility towards NATO, its increasingly sophisticated military capabilities, and its demonstrated willingness to use force against its neighbors make detailed security analyses and serious preparation at the very least a prudent measure, given U.S. interests and its commitment to European allies. The frontline NATO allies closest to Russia are looking for reassurance in the face of NATO's declining military capabilities, Russia's military modernization, and increasingly aggressive Russian policies. Failure to bolster NATO's defenses could increase the likelihood of a conflict stemming from Russian miscalculation; if Russia was tempted to employ force in a future crisis involving the Baltic States, then the United States and its allies could be faced with a land grab. This could fracture the alliance and incur great cost in blood and treasure to reverse.

Doubts over the legitimacy of U.S. and NATO security guarantees have spread due to the perception of U.S. passivity in the face of Russian aggression against Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine, not to mention President Trump's persistent questioning of the alliance's value during the 2016 electoral cycle. If this continues, allied capitals may decide to pursue independent nuclear capabilities to replace eroding U.S. security guarantees. Or, Western European nations may seek to accommodate Russia at the expense of the frontline states.⁷⁴ Moreover, if NATO does not take the steps necessary to strengthen its defensive posture and deterrence

⁷² Joe Gould, "Electronic Warfare: What US Army Can Learn from Ukraine," *Defense News*, August 2015.

⁷³ Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Russian Drone Threat: Army Seeks Ukraine Lessons," *Breaking Defense*, October 14, 2015.

⁷⁴ For the discussion about European nuclear capability, see Konstantin von Hammerstein, Christiane Hoffmann, Peter Müller, Ovried Nassauer, Christoph Schult, and Klaus Wiegrefe, "Elephant in the Room: Europeans Debate Nuclear Self-Defense after Trump Win," *Der Spiegel*, December 9, 2016, available at www.spiegel.de/international/world/europe-responds-to-trump-win-with-nuclear-deterrent-debate-a-1125186.html.

fails, the United States may find itself forced to fight an extremely costly conventional conflict. A conflict between two nuclear powers inherently has the potential for escalation and nuclear use, making a potential crisis even more dangerous. Given the variety and gravity of the potential conflicts, strengthening NATO's deterrence posture along its eastern flank is a sensible measure.

The presence of enhanced NATO forces could also contribute to deterring sub-conventional attacks and more limited threats. Adequate forward-positioned forces might also deter Russia from employing the kind of salami slicing tactics against frontline NATO states that China has employed successfully in the East and South China Seas.⁷⁵ Forward-deployed forces should include security assistance forces that can support indigenous forces against Russia's irregular and special operations forces (SOF); these forward-deployed NATO forces would not only provide a conventional deterrent but also build partner capacity against gray zone aggression.⁷⁶

The United States has other vital interests beyond the security of the European continent; if it were unable to meet its commitments to the North Atlantic Alliance, the effects would ripple globally. The United States has traditionally relied on its alliance relationships—bilateral treaties in Asia and a series of special relationships in the Middle East—to preserve regional order and access to the global commons. Today, those relationships remain crucial to maintaining freedom of the seas in Asia, containing Iran's bid for hegemony in the Middle East, and fighting the Islamic State and other violent extremists who threaten international security. NATO remains the most successful military alliance in history, and it would be a great strategic misstep to neglect or divest it in the face of growing Russian aggression.

Challenges to European Unity

Any strategy to enhance NATO's defense posture must begin with its overall requirement for alliance unity. Since NATO operates by consensus, changes in strategy and posture must be based on an alliance-wide accord. Driving wedges between NATO states to diminish the alliance's effectiveness was a classic Soviet tactic during the Cold War, and Putin's Russia seems determined to probe for weaknesses that might similarly reduce or destroy the alliance's ability to function. As Secretary of Defense James Mattis noted at his confirmation hearing, President Putin "is trying to break the North Atlantic Alliance." Putin and his colleagues have

75 For the use of salami-slicing tactics to undermine U.S. alliance commitments, see Jakub J. Grygiel and A. Wes Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies and the Crisis of American Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

76 Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Preserving the Balance: A U.S. Eurasia Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2017), p. 85.

been particularly adroit at using its commanding position in the oil and gas market as a source of economic and political influence in Europe.⁷⁷

Achieving a NATO-wide consensus is challenging at the best of times, and America's allies in Europe now face formidable challenges to their unity. Britain's exit from the European Union, a migration crisis (the management of which involves some NATO forces), and ongoing economic challenges in a number of European countries (including slow economic growth and debt management) plague the alliance. Crises have also prompted the rise of far-right nationalist and populist political parties that have made it more difficult to arrive at a shared perception of the dangers a revanchist Russia poses. Furthermore, some of these nationalist parties receive support, monetary or otherwise, from Moscow; this, in effect, buys Moscow greater political influence on the continent and further destabilizes European unity.⁷⁸

The rise of nationalist and populist groups reflects a general disenchantment in the institutions most invested to the European security framework—namely the European Union and NATO. The strengthening of isolationist and protectionist narratives constitutes a challenge to the alliance's cohesion and could impede a unified response to the Russian threat. The cost of sanctions against Russia to the continent, which has been estimated at up to \$114 billion in lost trade and perhaps two million jobs, further compounds the challenge of achieving a unified resistance to Russian aggression.⁷⁹ As it stands, the imposition of sanctions must be unanimously approved by all 28 member states of the EU, so the growing influence of populist parties could endanger their continuation. Western-imposed sanctions and low energy prices have hindered Russian muscle-flexing since 2014, but the removal of sanctions would allow Russia to devote greater resources to defense.

A further impediment to developing a consensus over the challenge posed by Russia is the diplomatic lag in accepting that Moscow is no longer a potential partner. Although Russian military doctrine since the 1990s has continuously identified the United States and NATO as the “main enemy,” NATO has predicated its approach on cooperative diplomacy. Despite Russia’s increased aggression on the continent, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Phillip Breedlove explains, NATO has been “making decisions about force structure, basing investments, looking to Russia as a partner.” While Breedlove concedes that

77 Mattis, as quoted in Spencer Ackerman and Lauren Gambino, “Russia is Trying to Smash NATO, James Mattis Says in Confirmation Hearing,” *The Guardian*, January 12, 2017; and Missy Ryan and Dan Lamothe, “Placing Russia First Among Threats, Defense Nominee Warns of Kremlin Attempts to ‘Break’ NATO,” *Washington Post*, January 12, 2017.

78 For the rise of populism in Europe, see Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Trump, Brexit and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Not and Cultural Backlash*, Faculty Research Working Paper, RWP16-206 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Kennedy School of Government, August 2016); Susi Dennison and Dina Pardijs, *The World According to Europe’s Insurgent Parties: Putin Migration and People Power* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2016); Fredrik Wesslau, “Putin’s Friends in Europe,” *Commentary*, European Council on Foreign Relations, October 19, 2016, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_putins_friends_in_europe7153; and Tony Patterson, “Putin’s Far Right Ambition: Think Tank Reveals How Russian President is Wooing—and Funding—Populist Parties Across Europe to Gain Influence in the EU,” *The Independent*, November 25, 2014.

79 Ian Bremmer, “This is Why the Far Right is on the Rise in Europe,” *Time*, October 15, 2015.

it is now “a very different situation,” it will take a concerted effort by the new Trump administration to develop a shared alliance-wide assessment of the threat from Russia.⁸⁰

Despite NATO’s institutional efforts, public opinion will remain a constraint on its combined actions. A recent poll asked: “If Russia got into a serious military conflict with one of its neighboring countries that is our NATO ally, do you think our country should or should not use military force to defend that country?” In the United Kingdom, Poland, and Spain, support for a military response was under 50 percent, while 53 percent of French, 51 percent of Italians, and 58 percent of Germans said no. The majority of Americans and Canadians, on the other hand, replied in the affirmative.⁸¹ The disparate range of public opinion in NATO capitals provides ample opportunity for Russia to seek to divide the alliance and render it ineffective before or during a crisis. These public attitudes will also be an obstacle to NATO countries as they attempt to reverse the trends of the last 25 years to restore their defense budgets.

In the long term, America should leverage its emerging energy self-efficiency to diminish Moscow’s economic and political influence in Europe and reduce the continent’s dependence on Russia’s resources. The lifting of the legal ban on oil exports from the United States at the end of 2015 was a good first step. It should now be followed by an unequivocal declaratory policy that the U.S. government views gas exports to European allies as part of its overall strategy to maintain the security of the region. To facilitate this, the U.S. government should license the construction of additional LNG (liquefied natural gas) export terminals on the East Coast. Other steps, like reversing the Obama administration’s Keystone XL pipeline decision, could follow.⁸²

Expanding NATO’s Focus Beyond Baltic-centric Deterrence

Some of the newer member states of NATO, particularly the Baltic States, face circumstances that bear some resemblance to those that beset Ukraine before the Russian annexation of Crimea and incursion into eastern Ukraine. They were constituent republics of the old Soviet Union that gained their independence after the collapse of the USSR, a reality that the contemporary Russian government has not accepted as an end state. They also have sizable ethnic Russian populations that could become a pretext, as it was in Ukraine, for Russian intervention in their internal affairs.

⁸⁰ Daniel Goure, “NATO Works to Bolster its Defenses against Russia,” Lexington Institute, July 1, 2014.

⁸¹ “NATO Public Blames Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Aid,” Pew Research Center, June 2015.

⁸² Testimony of Robert McNally, “American Energy Exports: Opportunities for U.S. Allies and U.S. National Security,” Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, June 23, 2015; Leon E. Panetta and Stephen J. Hadley, “The Oil Export Ban Harms National Security,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 2015; and Georgi Kantchev, “With U.S. Gas, Europe Seeks Escape from Russian Energy Grip,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 2016.

Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia are also highly vulnerable to a Russian attack. They share a long border with their increasingly neighbor and lack operational depth and natural barriers to slow an invasion. The proximity of the Baltic States and Russia means that, once a conflict begins, Russian forces could reach the capitals of these countries in under a day, leaving little time to reinforce those countries with additional NATO forces. NATO and the United States have expended much of their post-Crimea effort on taking steps to shore up the alliance's deterrent posture and the defense of the Baltic States. It is clear, however, that NATO must take a broader approach to strengthening deterrence. Even a Baltic crisis could have implications for other NATO and non-NATO nations in Europe, and Russia may shift its attention to other geographic areas as it probes for weaknesses to exploit in the Europe's security architecture. Therefore, U.S. policymakers will once again have to think about European defense in more traditional terms of a northern (or Nordic/Baltic) flank, a central front, and a southern flank.

The Northern Flank and the Role of Finland and Sweden

The vulnerability of the Baltic States has thrown into stark relief the prospective roles of Sweden and, to a greater extent, Finland. As European democracies, both countries have acknowledged that Russia's revisionist ambitions are counter to the norms and principles of the European order. The Nordic region is intrinsically tied to Baltic security, and both Finland and Sweden face similar strategic challenges and uncertainties. The proximity of Finland and Sweden to the Baltic States, however, could provide NATO with greater strategic depth, making the reinforcement and resupply of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania far easier. Moreover, most military operations in the Baltics would necessarily involve Swedish and Finnish airspace, as well as land and sea approaches to the region, making their cooperation an important factor in NATO's ability to establish and sustain a favorable military balance. Their shared region also encompasses the Danish Straits, which played a part in the Crimean War, the Russian Civil War, both World Wars, and the Cold War.⁸³ Its three channels connect the Baltic Sea to the North Sea, and they are crucial trade routes for the Baltic nations and Russia (who increasingly ships its energy exports through these straits). Securing access to these Danish Straits would be important for NATO in the event of a conflict in the Baltics: a fact that is not lost on Russia.

Finland, in particular, maintains a small yet modern force that includes F/A-18 multirole aircraft and the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles (JASSM). Moreover, both Sweden and Finland's armed forces are interoperable with NATO forces after participating in two decades of operations in Kosovo, Bosnia, Libya, and Afghanistan.

Much can be accomplished in shoring up NATO's deterrent posture in the north. As the dangers of conflict increase in northern Europe, the benefits of Finland and Sweden joining

⁸³ Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis, *The Role of Sweden and Finland in NATO's Defense of the Baltic States* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, April 28, 2016).

NATO are becoming more apparent. Although the current political environments in Finland and Sweden are not conducive to NATO membership, the prospects for collective defense appear high in the long term. The United States should seek opportunities to improve military relations with Finland and Sweden. The recent Statements of Intent signed by both Finland and Sweden to strengthen respective bilateral relations with the United States provide an excellent starting point. The United States should also seek ways to strengthen defense industrial cooperation with Finland and Sweden, which could smooth their path to NATO membership when the political circumstances become favorable. Although NATO membership for Finland and Sweden would certainly antagonize Russia, it would also drive home the self-isolating character of Russia's aggressive foreign policy over the past decade and perhaps impose costs specifically on the Putin regime.⁸⁴

The Special Role of Kaliningrad

Russia maintains 25,000 soldiers, two air bases, and dozens of dual-capable missiles in Kaliningrad, a small enclave that borders Lithuania and Poland. The presence of Russia's Baltic Fleet in Kaliningrad, which hosts 50 warships as well as submarines, also testifies to the strategic importance of the territory.⁸⁵ Kaliningrad is the hub of Russia's maturing A2/AD complex, which extends well beyond the Baltics region. Kaliningrad's A2/AD bubble includes IADS with mobile surface-to-air missiles like the S400 *Triumf/SA-21 Growler* that has a range of up to 400 km, as well as dual-capable mobile short-range ballistic missile systems like the *Iskander-M/SS-26 Stone* with an operational range of 500 km—ranges that cover large swathes of the Baltics States, the Baltic Sea, and Poland (see Figure 1).⁸⁶

84 Coffey and Kochis, *The Role of Sweden and Finland in NATO's Defense of the Baltic States*. See. See Stefan Fors and Pekka Holopainen, *Breaking the Nordic Defense Deadlock* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, February 2015). The texts of the Statements of Intent can be found at http://www.government.se/49d2af/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/statement-of-intent-swe_us-20160608_signed.pdf; and http://www.defmin.fi/files/3543/Statement_of_Intent.pdf. The text of the respective Swedish and Finnish Reports on NATO membership can be found at <http://www.government.se/contentassets/5c39a5fe2c2745f18c8e42322af4fbc4/international-defence-cooperation--efficiency-solidarity-sovereignty>; and <http://formin.finland.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=157408&GUID={71D08E6C-3168-439F-9C31-0326D1014C26}>. Also useful is Barbara Kunz, *Sweden's NATO Workaround: Swedish Security and Defense Policy against the Backdrop of Russian Revisionism*, IFRI Focus Strategique no. 64 (Paris: IFRI Security Studies Center, November 2015).

85 Kalev Stoicescu and Henrik Praks, *Strengthening the Strategic Balance in the Baltic Sea Area* (Tallinn, Estonia: International Centre for Defence and Security, March 2016), p. 18.

86 Jonathan Wade, "Kaliningrad: Russia's First Line of Defence," *The Sentinel Analytical Group*, April 17, 2016.

FIGURE 1: RUSSIA'S A2/AD COVERAGE OVER NATO'S NORTHERN FLANK⁸⁷



⁸⁷ Data to build this chart was derived from IHS Jane's in January 2016.

The exclave is also home to infrastructure that can house tactical nuclear weapons, although the presence of such weapons has not been confirmed. Kaliningrad's two air bases, undergoing refurbishment, are frequently used by Russia to fly missions near NATO airspace. Due to its strategic location, Kaliningrad is also where Russia has placed the Voronezh-DM—its latest generation early warning radar system. Its 10,000-km range is capable of monitoring NATO movements and countering NATO's missile defense systems.⁸⁸ Russia's A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad are designed to defend the exclave, provide coverage for Russian forces operating in the Baltic region, and prevent NATO from reinforcing the region in the event of a conflict. Although the geographic position of the Oblast isn't conducive to mobilizing troops for offensive operations, its proximity to NATO members grants Russia an advantageous position in the Baltic Sea, giving Russia a forward operating base in the midst of NATO nations.

NATO, for its part, should look more broadly at medium-range theater ballistic missiles in addition to cluster munitions. Although the former would require the United States to withdraw from the INF Treaty of 1987, Russia has already ceased to abide by this agreement. The fact that medium-range missiles may also be useful for the United States in the East Asian context offers yet another reason to begin now to explore the possibility of fielding such systems in the future.

Central Front: Poland, Belarus

Poland and Belarus deserve special attention because of the strategically important 60-mile land border between Poland and Lithuania, which connects Russian ally Belarus and Moscow's military exclave in Kaliningrad.

Securing the so-called "Suwalki Gap," which is named after a small border town in Poland, represents one of the biggest concerns for Polish and NATO defense officials. Seizing this narrow corridor would allow Russia to cut off NATO's only land bridge to the Baltic States. The Suwalki Gap's proximity to Kaliningrad, Belarus, and Russia's Western Military District could help Moscow to achieve a fait accompli, occupying the Baltic States before the West could deploy significant additional military forces to the region.

Belarus enables Russia to extend its military footprint and, in so doing, enhances its geostrategic advantages: a fact that underscores the need for NATO to enhance its defense efforts in Poland. The air defenses of Russia and Belarus are totally integrated, and their respective armed forces regularly conduct large-scale exercises together. Close coordination between land forces and fire units in the Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus could severely attrite NATO reinforcements attempting to transit the Suwalki Gap. Belarus may join forces with Russia, and its potential contribution of troops and other assets to Russian military operations should be taken into account. Belarus has around 100 attack and multi-role combat aircraft and some

88 Wade, "Kaliningrad: Russia's First Line of Defence."

20 attack helicopters, as well as three mechanized brigades, two mobile brigades, and one *spetsnaz* brigade.⁸⁹

Poland would like to acquire precision-guided munitions and electronic warfare systems; penetrating manned and unmanned aircraft for ISR, communications, and strike; upgraded air and missile defense systems; and modern combat aircraft to counter Russian A2/AD capabilities. NATO investment in long-range artillery is of particular importance given the operational challenges imposed by Russia’s advanced air defenses. In the event of a conflict in Eastern Europe, NATO forces would have to contend with the ability of the air defense systems in Russia and Kaliningrad to almost immediately detect and engage NATO aircraft taking off from airfields in the Baltics or Poland. While the combat effectiveness of NATO aircraft would be hampered by the density of Russia’s IADS, NATO long-range artillery could still support maneuver forces and suppress enemy air defenses. The U.S. Army and the ground forces of other NATO countries could further enhance the ability of surface fires to supplement for air cover with additional investment and procurement in medium- and long-range ground-launched precision fires.

Southern Flank: Romania, Turkey, and the Black Sea

Although the NATO’s Baltic vulnerabilities have received plenty of attention from military and defense experts, its southeastern flank is increasingly vulnerable in the wake of Russia’s deployments to Syria. The frozen conflict in Moldova provides a pretext for Russia to intervene, and observers speculate that Putin’s talk of creating “Novorossiya”—a phrase that refers to an area in present-day Ukraine once controlled by the Russians during the 19th century—could include the Russian-speaking population in Transnistria. A Russian action against Moldova would have serious political-military implications for its neighbor Romania, a NATO member.⁹⁰

The second challenge for U.S. policymakers and NATO officials is the unstable and problematic relationship between Russia and Turkey—once a robust anchor of the alliance’s southern flank. Relations between the two countries have been fraught by a deep historical enmity that has its roots in the 19th- and 20th-century competition between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, followed by the tensions of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War did not lead to an immediate warming of relations, but, with the advent of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and the rise of political Islam in Turkey in 2002, it soon became apparent that Turkey would be a less reliable partner for NATO. The relationship between Moscow and Ankara, however, has become more complicated as a result of the bloody and horrific civil war

89 Stoicescu and Praks, *Strengthening the Strategic Balance in the Baltic Sea Area*, p. 20.

90 Vladimir Socor, “Putin’s Crimea Speech: A Manifesto of Greater Russia Irredentism,” Jamestown Foundation, March 25, 2014 at <https://jamestown.org/program/putins-crimea-speech-a-manifesto-of-greater-russia-irredentism/>; and Adrian Croft and Alexander Vasovic, “NATO Commander Warns of Russian Threat to Separatist Moldovan Region,” *Reuters*, March 23, 2014, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-idUSBREA2M09920140323>.

in Syria. The ups and downs of the relationship are beyond the scope of this study, but a few observations are relevant to those who seek answers to the new challenges to European security posed by Russian revanchism.⁹¹

At the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, Turkey and Russia found themselves on opposite sides, with Turkey seeking the ouster of Assad and Russia emerging as his strongest supporter and advocate. The fact that the two sides were at loggerheads made the crisis that erupted over the November 2015 Turkish shoot-down of a Russian fighter jet all the more serious. While the United States and Turkey clashed over policy in Syria, especially over the role of the Kurdish forces, relations between Turkish President Erdogan and Putin warmed. In the wake of the failed July 15, 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, the Russian and Turkish governments have come to a closer, more common understanding. The joint Russo–Turkish air strikes against ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) forces in al-Bab in Syria in January 2017 are a reflection of this burgeoning relationship.

This increasing collaboration is not purely the result of Erdogan and Putin's personal whims or agenda. In fact, a specific set of geopolitical ideas—Eurasianism—underpins this emerging potential entente. Eurasianism is an ideology that suggests both Russia and Turkey, because of their geographic location and unique histories, belong neither solely to Europe nor to Asia. Rather, they have a special disposition that distinguishes them from the transatlantic community of democracies. As Turkey's difficulties with the European Union and the United States over the growing authoritarian bent of its government expand, the temptation of turning against its traditional associations and aligning with Russia and the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is increasing. It is far from clear whether Erdogan has chosen this path, but U.S. and NATO leaders will have to handle the relationship with Turkey with greater care and prepare for the contingency that the military bases and facilities in Turkish territory on which NATO has relied for more than 60 years may no longer be available.⁹²

⁹¹ For the Romanov–Ottoman background see Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires: 1908–1918* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For Turkey's increasing unreliability as a NATO ally, see Stephen Larrabee and Angel Rabasa, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008); and Stephen Larrabee, *Turkey as a U.S. Security Partner* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008). The story has been brought up to date by the Bipartisan Policy Center's Task Force on Turkey, co-chaired by Eric S. Edelman and Morton Abramowitz; see *Turkey: An Increasingly Undependable Ally* (Washington, DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, April 2015).

⁹² For the Eurasian temptation, see Mustafa Akyol, "What the Russia Lobby in Ankara Wants," *Al Monitor*, December 15, 2016, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/turkey-russia-what-russian-lobby-wants.html>. On the background of Eurasianism and Turco–Russian cooperation and competition, see Sener Akturk, "The Fourth Style of Politics: Eurasianism as a Pro-Russian Rethinking of Turkey's Geopolitical Identity," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 1, pp. 54–79; Dmitry Shlapentokh, "The Ideological Framework of Early Post-Soviet Russia's Relationship with Turkey: The Case of Alexander Dugin's Eurasianism," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 3, pp. 263–281; David Svarin, "Towards A Eurasian Axis? Russia and Turkey Between Cooperation and Competition," *Global Affairs* 1, nos. 4–5, pp. 381–398; and Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz, "Turkey and Russia in a Shifting Global Order: Cooperation, Conflict and Asymmetric Interdependence in a Turbulent Region," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 1, pp. 71–95. For the vulnerability of Incirlik Air Base and other facilities, see John Cappello, Patrick Megahan, John Hannah, and Jonathan Schanzer, "Covering the Bases: Reassessing U.S. Military Deployments in Turkey After the July 2016 Attempted Coup D'Etat," *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*, September 2016.

Both the political and military challenges of the southern flank merit greater attention from U.S. and NATO strategists.⁹³ Russia’s deployment of fighter aircraft and advanced air and missile defenses to Syria, as well as its cruise missile strikes, represent an unprecedented use of Russian military combat power in the Middle East. Russian A2/AD capabilities deployed in Crimea and the Levant have created new operational challenges for NATO in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean. As NATO reinforces its conventional forces in Europe, it cannot neglect the southern flank and must adapt the NATO Maritime Strategy to include operations in contested air and sea space.

Strengthening U.S. Extended Nuclear Deterrence

The American nuclear umbrella has been a mainstay of European defense since the birth of the North Atlantic Alliance. The ability of the United States to extend deterrence of nuclear attack to its allies in Europe was an important element in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons beyond the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. It also provided the means for executing what has come to be called the “first offset strategy”—utilizing U.S. nuclear superiority in the 1950s and 1960s to counter the Soviet Union’s quantitative advantage in conventional forces. After the advent of nuclear parity, the United States worked diligently to keep U.S. and European defenses coupled. When the Cold War ended, however, the salience of U.S. nuclear weapons, including the forward-deployed nuclear weapons in Europe, began to recede.

Although U.S. ground forces used to have tactical nuclear weapons in all of its artillery battalions in Europe, they are completely gone, as is the knowledge of how to employ them. Indeed, a Defense Science Board study has found that the United States has suffered a decline in its nuclear deterrence skills due to inadequate attention to the issues of nuclear strategy. The U.S. tactical nuclear arsenal is now reliant on Air Force gravity bombs, which may not be deliverable, given the challenges of Russia’s A2/AD bubble. Russia’s large stock of theater nuclear weapons and its declared willingness to use them to resolve a regional crisis on favorable terms must be taken seriously by NATO members. Since Russia has explored the use of so-called tactical weapons for the purpose of conflict termination in scenarios that explicitly envision a battle with NATO forces, the alliance must plan for this contingency, even if some scholars doubt Russia’s resolve to wage a limited nuclear war. Because Russia has modernized its nuclear force and repeatedly threatened nuclear use in a crisis, confidence in the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence, a difficult proposition even at the height of the Cold War, has eroded in Europe. Like the United States, NATO has also de-emphasized the importance of nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, Russia has progressively modernized its nuclear arsenal. Ironically, in an almost mirror-image of the United States in the 1950s, the increased Russian reliance on limited nuclear strikes and theater nuclear

93 Alessandra Giada Debenedetto, *Implementing the Alliance Maritime Strategy in the Mediterranean: NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian*, Research Paper No. 143 (Rome: NATO Defense College Research Division, December 2016).

weapons appears to stem from its current demographic difficulties and deficiencies in its conventional forces.

All of this underscores the imperative of maintaining NATO as a nuclear alliance. This requires NATO to continue to maintain U.S. forward-deployed nuclear weapons in Europe and NATO allies to maintain dual-capable aircraft in their inventories for the foreseeable future. The alliance must also reinvigorate the Nuclear Planning Group so that the allies can re-educate themselves in the complexities of maintaining credible extended nuclear deterrence in Europe. Restoring that confidence will be a crucial part of any strategy to deter conflict and defend Europe from Russian irredentism.⁹⁴

Recent studies have recommended the United States and NATO to take steps to attain greater credibility and flexibility when it comes to extended deterrence. Work is ongoing to provide modest increases in NATO's capabilities, notably the modernization of the B-61 gravity bomb and the fielding of dual-capable versions of the F-35 fighter aircraft. These initiatives are commendable but, on their own, unlikely to solve the problem. One relatively easy measure for NATO is to expand participation in the nuclear mission by new member states (those that have joined the alliance since 1997). The best and most likely candidate is Poland, which could procure either dual-capable F-16s or F-35s. Although basing for these dual-capable aircraft could be a consideration, there are few arguments against training Polish pilots and their units to participate in nuclear missions while maintaining non-strategic nuclear weapons at their current locations.

Other steps that NATO should consider include bringing back a version of the submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM) and a new ALCM. The United States, for example, might consider developing a lighter, shorter-range version of its Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) missile to replace its aging ALCM. These weapons could become part of the NATO inventory delivered by dual-capable aircraft. The United States could also re-field tactical nuclear weapons in existing 155-mm howitzer battalions in the Baltics that are unable to hit deep Russian targets, enabling NATO forces to occupy a key position on a lower rung on the escalatory ladder. In addition, the United States should start the research and development of a new Pershing-3 ballistic missile. Finally, in light of existing Russian breaks from the agreement, the United States should consider eventually withdrawing from the INF Treaty.⁹⁵

94 Francis J. Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition: U.S. Grand Strategy, the Nuclear Revolution, and Non-Proliferation," *International Security* 40, no. 1, pp. 9–46; , OSD, Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Nuclear Deterrence Skills* (Washington, DC: DoD, September 2008), available at <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/ADA487983.pdf>; Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The Nukes We Need: Preserving the American Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6, November/December 2009; and Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The New Era of Nuclear Weapons, Deterrence, and Conflict," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 1, Spring 2013.

95 Evan Braden Montgomery, *Extended Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age: Geopolitics, Proliferation, and the Future of U.S. Security Commitments* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2016); and Matthew Kroenig, *Toward a More Flexible NATO Nuclear Posture: Developing a Response to a Russian Nuclear De-Escalation Strike* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, November 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

By most measures, Russia is a declining power with a relatively weak hand to play in the game of nations. This is something that President Obama noted on several occasions, correctly observing that Russia is largely a regional power, albeit one with a nuclear arsenal that could inflict enormous damage on the United States. Nonetheless, since Putin has returned to office, he has launched a determined effort to reassert Moscow's influence in areas formerly under Soviet control. Russia's objective is to overturn the European security order that emerged after the end of the Cold War. This involves halting or rolling back the process of NATO enlargement; establishing and enforcing a Russian sphere of influence in its near abroad; and projecting power in the Middle East to supplant the United States as the region's "indispensable nation." In the process, Russia has become at the least a major geopolitical competitor for the United States, if not an outright adversary. As Fareed Zakaria has observed, "[Mitt] Romney famously said in 2012 that Russia was the United States' 'number one geopolitical foe.' President Obama mocked the claim, and others—myself included—thought it was an exaggeration. We were wrong; Romney was right."⁹⁶

If Russia's hand has been weak, President Putin has played it shrewdly. Russia has made major strides toward modernizing its nuclear and conventional forces and wielding force effectively to secure limited objectives along Russia's periphery. The United States has largely left the playing field to Putin while continuing to cling to an older, no longer relevant vision of cooperative security. However, since Russian strategy masks several vulnerabilities, the United States has a number of options for countering and limiting Russian political-military moves.

⁹⁶ For Russia's limits as a competitor, see Eric S. Edelman, *Understanding America's Contested Primacy* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), pp. 45–48; Steve Holland and Jeff Mason, "Obama, in a Dig at Putin, Calls Russia 'Regional Power,'" *Reuters*, March 25, 2014; and Fareed Zakaria, "Putin Wants a New World Order. Why Would Donald Trump Help Him," *Washington Post*, December 15, 2016.

Recognizing that the United States and Russia are strategic competitors is a necessary first step to developing an effective strategy for success. The Pentagon’s recognition that the United States is entering an era of renewed great power competition is therefore a very welcome development. Getting a unified view inside the U.S. government and in the NATO Council will be a larger but essential task.

Second, one of Russia’s key weaknesses is its reliance on oil and gas exports to finance its government’s budget. This provides the U.S. with a strategic opportunity since hydraulic fracturing and other techniques have created the prospect of greater U.S. energy self-sufficiency. The United States should pursue new policies and technologies to keep oil prices low, thus limiting Russia’s discretionary income for continued military modernization. In fact, this year it appears that Russian defense spending has declined for the first time in many years. Increased gas production and greater exports of liquefied natural gas also will give U.S. allies in Europe alternatives and deny Russia opportunities for blackmail and political influence.

Third, the United States must once again consider nuclear extended deterrence seriously, take steps to broaden the participation of the allies in the nuclear mission, and develop additional capabilities to strengthen the credibility of the alliance’s ability to respond to a limited Russian nuclear strike.

Fourth, the United States and its NATO allies will need to think once again about the European theater in terms of its distinct flanks and fronts. Each has its particular set of challenges that NATO officials will need to address as they rebuild the alliance’s conventional deterrent capabilities.

Fifth, the United States needs to lead the way for the alliance by investing in new capabilities that will address some of the operational problems that Moscow’s investment in modernization, particularly its maturing A2/AD bubble, has created. The United States and NATO cannot continue to be “outgunned and outranged” in ways that play to Russia’s local advantage, particularly in the Baltic States or in the vicinity of the Suwalki Gap. Executing a deterrence strategy for Europe at an acceptable level of risk necessitates greater funding. If the gap widens between U.S. security ends and the means to achieve them, the United States will surely fall short of deterring Russia and assuring our allies.⁹⁷

Finally, perhaps the most urgent requirement is for the United States to develop better abilities to counter Russia’s highly developed capabilities in information warfare. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union’s efforts in this regard were ham-handed and countered relatively easily. Contemporary efforts, however, are extremely sophisticated and based on a Russian understanding that sees propaganda, disinformation, and “active measures” as part of a continuum of activities that include operations in the electromagnetic spectrum (sensors and jammers) and cyber operations. The recent debate over Russian efforts to create havoc with

97 Krepinevich, *Preserving the Balance*, p. 106.

the U.S. election campaign in 2016 is only a limited example of what the United States and NATO allies might encounter on a battlefield. There is no more urgent requirement for U.S. strategists than developing an answer to Russia's skillful use of information warfare tactics.

These tasks would be more easily accomplished without the limits on defense spending created by the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 and sequestration. Government officials, members of Congress, and defense experts have come to see these limits, which the National Defense Panel labeled a "serious strategic misstep," as immutable.⁹⁸ In 2017, with a unified government for the first time in almost a decade, it is possible to imagine the repeal of the BCA, an end to sequestration, and a return to defense budgets at a level sufficient to address current U.S. strategic shortfalls. In fact, President Trump called for precisely this in his September 7, 2016 speech in Philadelphia when he said, "As soon as I take office, I will ask Congress to fully eliminate the defense sequester and will submit a new budget to rebuild our military." Absent steps in this direction, the United States will find it difficult to meet the challenges that Russia has managed to present to European security. The result might well be a European security order that is less stable and less conducive to national prosperity than what we have experienced since the end of the Cold War.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The National Defense Panel, *Ensuring a Strong U.S. Defense for the Future: The National Defense Panel Review of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: The United States Institute of Peace, July 2014), available at http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Ensuring-a-Strong-U.S.-Defense-for-the-Future-NDP-Review-of-the-QDR_o.pdf.

⁹⁹ The text of President Trump's Philadelphia speech is available at <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/campaign/294817-transcript-of-donald-trumps-speech-on-national-security-in>.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

A2/AD	anti-access/area denial
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile (Treaty)
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
ALCM	air-launched cruise missile
AMD	air and missile defense
APS	active protection system
ATGM	anti-tank guided missile
AWACS	airborne warning and control system
BCA	Budget Control Act
BCT	brigade combat team
BTG	battalion tactical group
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
CFE	Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (Treaty)
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DoD	Department of Defense
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
EU	European Union
EW	electronic warfare
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GBI	Ground-Based Interceptor
GDP	gross domestic product
GPS	Global Positioning System
IADS	integrated air defense system
ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile
IFV	infantry fighting vehicle
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (Treaty)
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JASSM	Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile
KGB	Committee for State Security (USSR)
LNG	liquefied natural gas
LRSO	Long-Range Standoff (missile)
MLRS	multiple launch rocket system
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

LIST OF ACRONYMS

New START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (2010)
NFIU	NATO Force Integration Unit
NRF	NATO Response Force
NSNW	non-strategic nuclear weapons
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
RAP	Readiness Action Plan
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
RV	reentry vehicle
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEAD	Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses
SLBM	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SLCM	submarine-launched cruise missile
SOF	special operations force
SORT	Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty
SRAM	short-range attack missile
SSBN	ballistic missile submarine
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
USAREUR	United States Army Europe
USEUCOM	United States European Command
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

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