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A military parade celebrating victory during the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Red Square, Moscow, 9 May 2015.

## Russia's Near-Abroad Interventions: Crazy Like a Fox

by Enno Kerckhoff

Major Enno Kerckhoff, MSM, CD, is an armour officer with the Royal Canadian Dragoons. He graduated from RMC with a BA in Military in Strategic Studies (2002), from Norwich University with an MBA (2014), and again from RMC with a Masters of Defence Studies (2016). Major Kerckhoff is currently employed with the Strategic Joint Staff in Ottawa, but longs for the simple days when he had an armoured vehicle and not a cubicle in which to work. This article began as a paper submitted as part of the Joint Command and Staff Program at CFC Toronto.

### Introduction and Context

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has made several military interventions in neighbouring former Soviet republics. These actions have been interpreted aggressively in the West; however, in each case the intervention fulfills Russia's power needs in their 'Near Abroad.'<sup>1</sup> Interventions in Moldova (1992), Georgia (1992, 1994 and 2008) and Ukraine (2014) have followed a common pattern where Russia perceives an oppressed minority, deploys military force to prevent this oppression, and a residual Russian military presence in the state provides sufficient instability to prevent that state from having the requisite pre-conditions for joining NATO. This action has allowed Russia to prevent further NATO expansion in some areas of its Near Abroad without coming into direct conflict

with NATO forces. By remaining in the regions where it has intervened, Russia continues to benefit as long as the instability is maintained. These types of interventions have been described as generating a "frozen conflict," where hostilities remain low but unresolved for years. Under these situations, it is not in Russia's strategic interests to withdraw, or to fully resolve the conflicts, because this resolution opens the door for further NATO expansion. These are not the actions of a reckless government or even a megalomaniacal leader but are well-considered strategic moves to prevent further erosion of its sphere of influence.

The Russian military has undergone an evolution in its force structure over the past twenty years, facilitated by the aforementioned interventions. By deploying their military forces in limited conflicts, first in a covert, unconventional role, and later, in open fighting, the Russian military has been able to improve its deployability, increase its leaders' professionalism and send strategic messages to potential allies and opponents alike. Looking specifically at how reforms have made the Russian military more capable in limited interventions, it is possible to get a sense of what national interests the military is being told to prioritize. These modernized forces are then more mobile and more capable of responding to regional threats with a *qualitative* advantage, rather than the historical Russian *quantitative* advantage.



Near a blocked bridge across the Dniester River, Moldova, Dubasari, War of Transnistria, 1990.

## Moldova

The conflict in Moldova resulted from a civilian breakdown during the transition from Soviet control. Under the Soviet regime, language requirements kept Romanian-speaking Moldovans from holding important positions in the government. Many Moldovans were expelled to Siberia for having questionable loyalty.<sup>2</sup> During the *Glasnost* period of the 1980s and 1990s, ethnic Moldovans were able to assert greater control of the industrial and political forces within their republic. Among these measures were language laws that reversed the power dynamic and made it impossible for Russian-speaking leadership to remain in power.<sup>3</sup> In response to this threat against their social status, the Russian-speaking Moldovans broke away from Moldova and established the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic (TMR) on 1 September 1990. Russia did not immediately intervene. However, ethnic ties to an oppressed minority in a former republic would be repeated as the *casus belli* in future interventions.

Between 1991 and 1992, sporadic clashes between the Moldovan Army and TMR rebels escalated into open conflict, with the rebel personnel and equipment primarily drawn from Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army bases in the region.<sup>4</sup> The TMR was able to provide a sufficient threat to Moldovan forces due to the weapons and trained personnel they received through 14<sup>th</sup> Army, even if those

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resources were provided covertly. Stories of thefts and local retirements provided deniability.<sup>5</sup> Following the conflict, allegations of large transfers of weapons surfaced: “14<sup>th</sup> Army officials gave the separatists 24 tanks, 12 combat helicopters, 37,000 machine and sub-machine guns, as well as 120 cannons.”<sup>6</sup> Years of continual deployment to the region facilitated the development of family relationships and ties that would deepen 14<sup>th</sup> Army loyalties to pro-Russian separatists, rather than the Moldovans. Whether it was separatist sympathies among individual Russian soldiers, or an institutional transfer of arms, this covert support for separatist forces is a theme that would be repeated in future interventions.

Beginning in June 1992, Russian troops began fighting openly alongside the TMR separatists.<sup>7</sup> With such overwhelming force, ending the fighting took only a month, with a cease-fire line established along the Nistru River.<sup>8</sup> Those military stockpiles not used in the fighting largely fell under the control of the TMR forces once the cease-fire line was established. In order to secure these sites and prevent them from further destabilizing the region, Russian forces remained in place as part of a tri-lateral ‘peacekeeping’ mission, with all three parties to the conflict (Moldova, Transnistria and Russia) providing the troops.<sup>9</sup> A proper peacekeeping force under the supervision of the UN or the OSCE<sup>10</sup> would have at least provided sanction for forces to remain. However, international oversight and timelines would provide additional pressure to resolve the conflict. In order

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Separatist soldiers on a Soviet era BMP with both Russian and Transnistrian flags during the War of Transnistria, 1992.

to withdraw can be justified internally by the need to continue to represent the TMR's interests against international intervention, deliberately ignoring that the Russian involvement is, in itself, a foreign intervention in the eyes of the international community.

Russia intervened in Moldova ostensibly to protect an oppressed minority, to secure military bases where they had significant resources, and to prevent these weapons from being used against Russian interests. Following the cease-fire, however, Russian troops have consistently delayed their departure. Moldova has expressed an interest in joining NATO. However, it cannot do so with an ongoing internal crisis.<sup>13</sup> If Russian minority rights are

to better control the cease-fire negotiations, Russia has shown a preference to act with the multilateral approval of the parties to the conflict, rather than through a recognized external agency.<sup>11</sup> This action allows Russia to exercise its power directly to the conflicting parties, rather than through a potential moderating third-party, allowing it to bully each party individually, as required, rather than having to negotiate with an organized opposition bloc. In the 'peacekeeping' force for Transnistria, two of the three parties were Russian-controlled, allowing Russian interests to be weighted accordingly in the negotiations. With significant quantities of arms and equipment still needing to be moved away from the conflict zone, it was in Russia's interest to stall the proceedings as much as possible. By stalling, Russia could transfer additional arms to the TMR and prevent any future negotiations from including handing over arms to Moldova as compensation. This delay, therefore, fits Russia's strategic interests more directly than a resolution to the conflict.

Continuous negotiations since the 1992 cease-fire have resulted in some reduction in forces and weaponry, although delays in this withdrawal have been a destabilizing influence in the negotiations to establish a more permanent result.<sup>12</sup> The removal of Russian military equipment and forces could occur quickly, if Russia chose to do so. The unwillingness

no longer under threat, and the military equipment is secured (or can be moved back to Russia), then there is no further need for peacekeeping forces. That said, this does not fit with Russian strategic interests. By using the continued military presence to secure arms sites, Russia ensures that the conflict remains without a permanent peace, preventing Moldova from being a candidate for NATO expansion. Moldova's status as Europe's poorest nation continues to be a regional issue. Trade imbalances and embargos on Moldovan goods contribute to their failure to integrate into the larger European community and economic sphere of influence. By maintaining this frozen conflict, Russia can continue to exercise its influence over Moldova and coerce it away from NATO's sphere of military influence.



Map re-drawn by Accurats, taken from BBC news article "Ukraine crisis: 'Frozen conflicts and the Kremlin'" by Patrick Jackson, 10 Sept 2014.



A Russian armoured vehicle passes by the South Ossetian University's building in Tskhinvali during the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, 12 August 2008.

## Georgia

There have been several waves of Russian interventions in Georgia. The first, between 1992 and 1994, was precipitated by 1989 Georgian language laws similar to those in Moldova, limiting Russian participation in government.<sup>14</sup> Although the results of these actions took longer to observe in Georgia than in Moldova, this generated the same type of protectionist response from Russia. Russian intervention initially took the form of supplies of personnel and weapons (mostly leftover from the dissolution of the Soviet Union) to the Abkhazian and South Ossetian separatists.<sup>15</sup> Although the Sochi Treaty of July 1992 ended the military conflict of this first wave, Russian 'peacekeepers' have remained in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, providing a Russian-tinted legitimacy to the respective separation movements, and antagonizing the Georgian government.<sup>16</sup> The Russian sphere of influence in the Caucasus region and into the Middle East is contingent upon southern bases, including Armenia and Georgia.<sup>17</sup> The loss of Russian basing in Georgia may put Russian expeditionary operations at greater risk; Russia is therefore willing to expend resources to maintain this presence as a function of its continued interests in the region. Georgia is therefore much more important as a state under Russian influence and outside NATO's membership.

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2006 and 2008, Russia applied diplomatic and economic pressures against Georgia to demonstrate their displeasure with NATO overtures.<sup>18</sup> In August 2008, the Georgian Army's struggle with South Ossetian separatist forces resulted in open fighting over border villages, prompting the Russian Army to intervene on the side of the South Ossetians. To justify the intervention, Russia claimed the right to defend its peacekeepers present in the border towns as well as the ethnic Russians in the region.<sup>19</sup> Operationally, the Russian military encountered little opposition; the Georgian Army was overcome in only five days using overwhelming force rather than exploiting irregulars.<sup>20</sup> Although in this case, there was less of a covert military presence prior to open intervention, Russia has admitted that it had forces conducting exercises in the region and accused Ukraine of providing Georgia with weapons to counter Russia's support for the rebels.<sup>21</sup>

Russian strategy included an informational component, using media to portray the Russian soldiers as saviours to the minority groups in captured Georgian territory, with limited international success although the story was well received in Russia.<sup>22</sup> Coordinated cyber-attacks against Georgian government infrastructure were synchronized with the manoeuvre of Russian forces, leading to the reasonable conclusion that the Russian government either conducted or facilitated these attacks.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, Russia advanced on populated areas but appeared to be avoiding moving through them. This could be due to the greater threat from

unconventional forces, but could also be attributed to a desire to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties in order to preserve an element of the 'peacekeeping' myth.

As part of the terms of the cease-fire, Russia withdrew its forces from the remainder of Georgian territory. However, it continues to occupy South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and places pressure upon Georgia by making preparations that would appear to be aimed at annexation of the disputed regions. This continued instability serves the same military interest as Transnistria in preventing further NATO expansion.

Despite the speed and aggression of the attack, Russian military weaknesses were exposed in the brief Georgian deployment. Command and control, surveillance, and ground to air cooperation were all observed as being below expected levels of competence.<sup>24</sup> Specifically, several Russian casualties were attributed to a failure to communicate between close support aircraft and ground forces.<sup>25</sup> To improve the qualitative advantage over its potential rivals, Russia instituted a series of military reforms, including partial 'professionalization' of the Army, reorganization of reserve forces, and equipment upgrades to bring its estimated 10 percent of modernized military equipment up to 70 percent between 2008 and 2020.<sup>26</sup>

The Russian military clearly wanted to learn from its experiences in anticipation of future conflicts of a similar type. Although a conventional conflict on a large scale would require the type of mass mobilization typical of Russian forces in previous generations, smaller interventions would require a more specialized, higher quality combat force. The reform measures instituted following the Georgia conflict were an indicator of future Russian military plans, including the value to be placed upon special operations forces, air-to-ground cooperation, and small combat units, rather than massed armour and artillery formations.

In a larger sense, the Georgian conflict was a middle stage between the hesitant intervention in Transnistria and the annexation of Crimea. Beginning with the interventions in the early-1990s, Russia continued the pattern of using ethnic protection as a pretext for military action. It followed up with an ostensibly covert arming of separatist groups, and finally armed intervention on a much more aggressive scale than what was seen against Moldova. The forces used in the intervention were then left in place in the disputed zone, although less as Russia's *de-facto* 'peacekeepers' than a warning against further actions. Russia had made its case against NATO expansion into Georgia, and was prepared to leave forces in place as a reminder against future overtures.



Russian peacekeepers at the Georgian-South Ossetian border, 6 August 2008.



Anti-Russian intervention on Ukraine rally outside the Russian consulate in Gdansk, 15 March 2014. Protest organized by the Solidarity Union.

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Michał Fudra/Alamy Live News/Alamy Stock Photo DWYPSH

## Ukraine

Almost from Ukraine's inception as an independent state from the former Soviet Union, Crimea had special status within the new state. Ukraine recognized Crimea as an autonomous republic. However, ethnic tensions persisted, with significant numbers of Crimean residents who continued to identify as Russians rather than Ukrainians.<sup>27</sup> This demographic situation was at odds with the Crimean political leadership, leading to tension between the Crimean population and its government in Kiev. In 2014, the implementation of language laws that disadvantaged Russian-speakers, as well as Ukrainian economic overtures toward the West, constituted the proverbial 'final straws' leading to intervention on behalf of Russian-leaning Ukrainian elements. The political structure at the time was uncertain, with a Russian-backed president having fled, and a Western-backed interim government in Kiev failing to capture public confidence. This situation presented an opportunity for Russia to achieve another *political end* using *military means*. It was also an opportunity to employ the modernized forces following the lessons learned from the Georgian campaign of 2008.

In February 2014, Russian-supported irregular forces began an active resistance against the acting Ukrainian government, adding to the instability, and prompting chaos across the Crimea. The use of irregular forces for this purpose was described immediately prior to the Crimean intervention as a means to create a "...continually operating front over the entire territory of the opposing state."<sup>28</sup> The pro-Russian gangs, and later militia organizations, staged violent demonstrations that contributed to an uncertain security environment with constant threats.<sup>29</sup> This represented a continuation of the pattern of covert support for separatist regimes, as demonstrated in Moldova and

Georgia. Government instability and a questionable referendum on what Crimea ought to do regarding its status with Ukraine set the conditions for the protectionist argument that Putin needed to justify an intervention at the end of February.<sup>30</sup> The introduction of a regional referendum allowed Russia to use ethnic self-determination as a basis for their intervention, regardless of the international community's overwhelmingly negative perception of the referendum's legitimacy.

Anonymous uniformed soldiers began to appear in large numbers behind the demonstrations in February 2014, moving quickly across Crimea. Although the covert forces had removed badges and unit insignia, it has been assessed that they represented some of the best-trained and equipped soldiers in the Russian order of battle: Spetsnaz commandos, naval infantry units, and army paratroops.<sup>31</sup> Led by professionals rather than conscripts, and using the most up-to-date equipment, the unidentified soldiers clearly belonged to Russia rather than an *ad hoc* citizens' militia. At this point in the operation, however, it was more useful for Russian involvement to remain *covert*. Once key installations such as the Crimean parliament and major airports had been occupied, the conditions were met for *overt* Russian intervention on 1 March 2014, and annexation within the month.

Prior to the 2014 invasion, Russia already had up to 25,000 soldiers and sailors stationed at its Sevastopol naval base in the Crimea. Faced with this superior threat and the movement of additional, highly-skilled units by air and by sea, the Ukrainian military could offer only local, uncoordinated resistance. Although it could be argued that Russia's manpower and equipment advantage was overwhelming, this does not give adequate credit to the strategy chosen. By presenting Ukraine with the *fait-accompli* of occupation of their key infrastructure, there was nothing for the Ukrainian military to fight for in

Crimea – it was preferable to withdraw rather than engage the Russian Army. This strategy aligns with previous Russian actions in Georgia in that Russia did not seek to cause military or civilian casualties as part of its interventions, but rather, employed its military to achieve political ends.

Once the Crimea issue was solved by annexation, other areas of Ukraine were penetrated by Russian unconventional forces. The Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Eastern Ukraine have similar demographics to Crimea, with large Russian populations inside Ukraine's borders. Although it would have followed the common narrative more closely to

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Armed Russian soldier stands guard in front of a Ukrainian insignia outside Perevalne Base near Simferopol, Crimea, 2 March 2014.

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Daniel Van Moil/NurPhoto/ZUMA PRESS.com/Alamy Live News/Alamy Stock Photo DWGW70

Alleged Russian Special Forces on a civilian ship next to the Ukrainian fleet then blocked by Russian warships in the port of Sevastopol, Ukraine, 7 March 2014.

have Russia justify their intervention on behalf of an oppressed minority, the Eastern Ukraine intervention was less subtle. Immediately following Crimea's annexation, armed uprisings in Donetsk and Luhansk (known collectively as the Donbass region) further threatened Ukraine's hold on regions with large Russian populations. With large numbers of irregular forces and covert Russian military present and advancing into Ukraine, Russia continued to deny official involvement throughout the spring and summer of 2014. Nevertheless, Russia continued to supply the separatist militias with personnel, weapons, and equipment.<sup>32</sup> With heavy armaments and the reappearance of disguised Russian special forces soldiers, the separatist militias were able to seize large portions of the Donbass, including the important transportation hub at the Donetsk airport.

With the quality and scale of armaments provided to the rebels, Russian overt intervention was not required nearly as quickly as it was in Georgia. The separatists suffered setbacks during the early summer, including personnel and equipment losses that were widely broadcast as evidence of Russian involvement in brutal fighting with Ukrainian forces.<sup>33</sup> By the end of summer, it was no longer possible to maintain the illusion, and Russia's overt intervention ensured that any post-conflict negotiation would be done with separatists in control of key transportation nodes and significant portions of Ukrainian territory. It was important that Russia had an official presence in the region prior to a cease-fire because of the delays Russia can impose to withdraw these forces post-conflict. As was seen in Moldova and Georgia, the Russian style of peacekeeping can continue to destabilize the conflict zone

long after the fighting is done. With Crimea, the Russian base at Sevastopol would be a perpetual presence. However, the Donbass region needed a starting point for negotiations. The presence of Russian regular forces established this point.

The annexation of Crimea represents a departure from the stalemate that characterized the conclusion of hostilities in Moldova and Georgia. This decision makes strategic sense in the security it offers for Russian naval forces on the Black Sea, and continued support for separatist forces elsewhere in Ukraine. The residual instability in Donbass and Luhansk suits Russia's purposes in continuing to deny Ukraine admissibility to NATO. If NATO responds by dropping the stability requirement, and admits Ukraine as a member, the alliance would be bound to defend a country it has already demonstrated it is not comfortable defending.<sup>34</sup> While the Russian military presence in Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia are by-products of their respective conflicts, Russia derives only marginal military utility from them. Crimea, on the other hand, has the largest naval base on the Black Sea and has been Russia's military strongpoint in the south for generations. Jeffrey Mankoff is the Deputy Director and Senior Fellow with the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He maintains that the annexation would cause the remainder of Ukraine to lean further toward the West, both economically and militarily. He stated that Russian intervention may have "won Crimea, and lost Ukraine."<sup>35</sup> What this theory ignores, however, is that neither the EU nor NATO have been willing to lower their entry requirements in order to admit Ukraine (with the associated economic and military



A Pro-Russian elderly woman is arguing with bystanders about the future of the Crimea at the Ukrainian Coast Guard Headquarters in Simferopol, Crimea (Ukraine), 8 March 2014.

challenges it brings). NATO has already demonstrated that it has no intent to go to war over Ukraine. It did not do so over Crimea, and has not done so over the eastern provinces. By making its point in winning Crimea, Russia has no need of Ukraine.

Following Russian operations in Georgia, the modernization of the military continued, although at a slower pace. Rather than concentrating on high-technology fields that it could acquire from other nations, Russia sought to deepen the ‘professionalization’ of its personnel.<sup>36</sup> The changes implemented between 2008 and 2014 reduced the number of units and improved the quality of leadership, but retained conscription as an



Servicemen block and destroy illegal military groups during joint military exercises by Belorussian special operations forces and Russian airborne troops (VDV) in Chashniki District, Vitebsk Region, 4 April 2017.

economic measure, even though it is less efficient in a military sense.<sup>37</sup> As a result, Russia has a two-tiered military, part of which is well-equipped, rapidly-deployable, and has better quality leadership. The remainder of Russia's military is made up primarily of conscripts and non-professional leadership, with less-advanced weaponry.<sup>38</sup> With a large military, but a smaller cadre that has a rapid-reaction capability, Russia was well-suited to carry out the type of domestic counter-insurgency and limited expeditionary operations that are described herein. Using these assets, Russia could act covertly with smaller, more agile forces while larger forces remained visibly out of the conflict, along the border zone. This allowed Russia to maintain deniability in the intervention, with their overt forces clearly present on the border, while the special operations forces operated anonymously inside Ukraine.

### A warning for Belarus?

With the goal of preventing NATO expansion, it is implausible that Russia would choose to conduct an intervention in Poland, the Baltics, or any other existing NATO member. This clearly-aggressive act would go against the pattern Russia has established, and would not achieve the goal of thwarting NATO expansion. On the periphery, however, it is possible that Russia may seek to employ the same strategy in Belarus as it did in Ukraine. Russia currently has a mutual-defence agreement that essentially removes all distinction between Russian and Belarusian forces.<sup>39</sup> Included within this agreement are a number of key surveillance installations and military bases that grant Russia greater range into Western Europe. The perceived threat of Western Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) over the Russian sphere of influence makes the equivalent Russian system a necessary counter-move, with the westernmost range of the Russian system a limiting factor for determining the system's overall effectiveness. Guaranteeing the placement of Russian BMD as far west as possible is therefore an existential requirement for Russian homeland defence.

If this arrangement were to change, through *political regime* change, the imposition of new language laws, or if access to these bases were to be otherwise threatened, Russia could choose to act to protect its interests. Such an action would likely take the same form as Crimea, where it supports a domestic rebellion, covertly supplies these rebels with trained personnel and heavy equipment, then conducts an overwhelming overt intervention to complete the operation. Early indicators for this type of action could consist of:

- Election of West-leaning members to Belarusian parliament
- Changes in tone in diplomatic communiqués or public statements
- Increased pace of joint annual exercises, involving fewer Belarusian forces than typically seen
- Increased threat posture for Belarusian internal security forces
- Lower availability of Belarusian strategic assets to support Russian joint operations
- Pre-positioning forces on both sides of the Belarusian border

Although Russia is currently engaged in Syria and unlikely to seek another campaign in the near term, Belarus should be wary of social policies that might antagonize Russia. The relationship between Vladimir Putin of Russia and current Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko will be important to watch; increased personal tensions between the two men could be reflected in foreign policy decisions, and vice versa. This area is worthy of further study as the situations in Ukraine continue to evolve, particularly if Russia wants to more fully establish a zone of instability where NATO cannot make further advances.

### Conclusion

Russia's pattern of intervention has been clearly shown in the conflicts described herein. In each case, Russia claimed to have an interest in an oppressed minority, then intervened ostensibly on behalf of that minority, first with unconventional (covert) forces, then through shipments of weapons and support to the rebel groups. When the conflict persisted or deepened, an overt intervention with conventional forces overwhelmed local resistance quickly. When overt interventions were conducted, Russian forces were already well-placed to act quickly, seizing infrastructure and making the defenders' positions untenable. Following a cease-fire, irregular forces and weapons stocks remained in place to maintain an acceptable level of instability that would prevent the subject state from achieving the required standard for membership in NATO.

In 2016, as NATO announced troop deployments that echo the earlier days of the Cold War, the emphasis for these deployments has been upon the requirement to send a message to Russia of commitment to collective defence. NATO has stated they intend to engage with Russia on a two-track process,

using defence and dialogue to maintain security for its member states.<sup>40</sup> For their part, although Russia wants to prevent further NATO expansion, they will not do so recklessly. Poland and the Baltics are not at as great a risk from Russia as Ukraine, irrespective of NATO's deployments to Romania, Poland and Latvia. Russia may continue to foment instability with unconventional or cyber events to disrupt internal security in targeted NATO-member states but is unlikely to risk an overt attack or even sponsor minority groups due to the risks of those activities being tied back to Russian support. It fits with a hegemonic strategy for Russia to prevent NATO expansion in Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus – antagonizing NATO member states does not serve this strategic interest in the same manner.

If the US were placed in a similar situation, with an adversary expanding their military and political reach into the North American continent, it could be expected that the US would react with hostility. The US had such reactions when Russian overtures to Cuba resulted in the Bay of Pigs incident and the Cuban Missile Crisis. While a new Cold War may not be on the horizon, all sides are conscious of their respective interests. Russia has elements of power that it can exercise in order to further those interests and it should not come as a surprise when it chooses to do so.

**“Guaranteeing the placement of Russian BMD as far west as possible is therefore an existential requirement for Russian homeland defence.”**

Russian military interventions have been a staple of their security policy in the post-Soviet era. Rather than using diplomatic means to solve a conflict, Russia has been much more willing than western nations to use its military as an extension of diplomatic

means. From Transnistria to South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, the Russian military has been employed to good effect and has been able to leverage these deployments to improve their readiness for future operations. Russia has significant diplomatic, informational and economic means to exercise its national power. However, when dealing with its Near Abroad, military force still makes sense as a strategy. By keeping military forces involved in the above conflicts, Russia's strategic goal of preventing NATO expansion has been accomplished. Although Western statecraft would dictate that an end to the conflict is preferable, this is not the case for Russia, where an acceptable level instability meets their national aims.

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NATO flags fly before the start of the first exercise in the deployment of NATO Spearheads – *Noble Jump* – on the troop drill grounds near the town of Zagan, Poland, 18 June 2015.

Nikolay Vinokurov/Alamy Stock Photo HFNPE8



Russian honour guard soldiers march through Red Square during the Victory Day military parade, Moscow, 7 May 2015.

## NOTES

1. The 'Near Abroad' term has been used to describe a wide variety of the states comprising the former Soviet Union, particularly when the intent is to imply that the former Soviet Republics are less than independent from Russian power. For the purposes of this article, the term is intended to mean those neighbouring states over which Russia continues to exert considerable influence, particularly in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe.
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3. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
5. Andreas Morike, "The Military as a Political Actor in Russia: The Cases of Moldova and Georgia," in *The International Spectator*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Jul-Sep 1998), p. 124.
6. W. Alejandro Sanchez, "The 'Frozen' Southeast: How the Moldova-Transnistria Question has become a European Geo-Security Issue," in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, No. 22 (2009), p. 124.
7. Morike, p. 125.
8. Sanchez, "The 'Frozen' Southeast: How the Moldova-Transnistria Question has Become a European Geo-Security Issue.," 163
9. *Ibid.* Although Russia characterizes these troops as peacekeepers, they clearly do not meet the standard of impartiality expected in the concept of the UN peacekeeping operations.
10. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, although at the time it was known as the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or CSCE.
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12. Hill, p. 96.
13. Sanchez, p. 166.
14. Jeffrey Mankoff, "Russia's Latest Land Grab: How Putin Won Crimea and Lost Ukraine," in *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 93, No. 3 (May-Jun 2014), p. 62.
15. Ted Hopf, "Identity, Legitimacy, and the use of Military Force: Russia's Great Power Identities and Military Intervention in Abkhazia," in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. S1 (Dec 2005), p. 229. Also see Allison, p. 181.
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17. *Ibid.* p. 417.
18. Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals," in *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2014), p. 406.
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20. Karagiannis, p. 405.
21. Allison, p. 163.
22. Colonel George T. Donovan, "Russian Operational Art in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008," (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2009), p. 21.
23. *Ibid.* p. 20.
24. Timothy L. Thomas, "The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises Its Five-Day War in South Ossetia," in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2009), p. 32.
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