TRIGGERS, TRAPS, AND MACKINDER'S MAPS:

THE RUSSIAN BEAR, NATO, AND THE NEAR ABROAD

BY

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

The United States' renewed focus on great-power competition means Western leaders must understand why, when, where, and to what end Russia will militarily intervene in world conflicts. Until it waded into the Syrian civil war in 2015, however, post-Cold War Russia projected power only in its near-abroad, specifically, former Soviet Satellite Republic (SSR) nations. This comparative case-study uses three of those interventions.

This thesis uses a critical-juncture framework to determine what factors drove Russia to intervene with overt, conventional military force in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), but not in Estonia (2007). In each case study, the researcher analyzed and compared five aspects: historical relationship with Russia, Russian-diaspora composition, Russian military presence, NATO-member status, and strategic geographic significance to Russia. The researcher found the target country's NATO-membership status or its strategic geographic significance to Russia were critical in the divergent outcomes.

In 2007, Russia conducted cyber attacks against Estonia as a retaliatory punishment for the relocation of a Soviet-era WWII memorial. A Russian invasion or the annexation of an Estonian border city, such as Narva, would have been a definitive case for invoking Article 5. While the relocation of the statue in Estonia was insulting, Russia was not willing to fight over it. In 2008, tensions between Georgia and its two breakout regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, prompted Russian intervention, leading to a 5-day war in the Caucasus. Although Russia claimed that it acted to protect the lives of its citizens, the study concludes that Russia intervened with overt, conventional military force to blunt the Caucasus nation's attempt at joining the NATO alliance. In 2014, the Ukrainian parliament impeached President Yanukovych, provoking the Russian invasion and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Russia feared Yanukovych's ouster would jeopardize its lease to the port of Sevastopol, and it acted to guarantee access.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

They are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner because we have an independent position… And with Ukraine, our Western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally. After all, they were fully aware that there are millions of Russians living in Ukraine and in Crimea. They must have really lacked political instinct and common sense not to foresee all the consequences of their actions… If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard. You must always remember this

Vladimir Putin, Russian President, March 2014

Background

Post-Cold War Russia persistently and aggressively seeks to regain its influence in Europe. What the country is willing to risk to protect its geographic sphere of influence from perceived NATO and U.S. provocation remains unclear. The 2007 cyber attacks against Estonia, the invasion of Georgian autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008, and the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine are examples of Russian actions in contiguous former Soviet satellites with large ethnic Russian diasporas. Each country was a NATO member or under consideration for membership, which led many to conclude the intention was to counter Western regional involvement or recapture lost major-power status Russia enjoyed during the Cold War.

At first glance, the similarities of each conflict led many to conclude that Russia was attempting to recapture lost power status due, in part, to Western regional involvement.[1] This assertion is partially consistent with Russia's 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS) and corroborated by both the European Union (EU) and US Defense

[1] Sean C. Mclay, "Deterring Russia's Revanchist Ambitions in the Baltic Republics" (Air War College Maxwell AFB United States, Air War College Maxwell AFB United States, February 16, 2016), http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD1037181.

Intelligence Agency (DIA), which concluded Russia's efforts to modernize its military capabilities were meant to reassert its prestige on the world stage.[2] Furthermore, President Trump's 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) acknowledges "Russia wants to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests… [and] seeks to restore its great-power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders.[3] International-relations scholars made similar claims in the wake of the Crimean crisis. One notable scholar, John Mearsheimer, contends intervention was a natural reaction to the West's decades-long encroachment on Russia's natural sphere of influence and should come as no surprise to the international community.[4]

There is also a growing number of political analysts who contend that an increased NATO presence in the Baltic region may drive Russian military action.[5] While it is easy to conclude that hindsight informs this analysis, many foreign-policy professionals shared similar concerns immediately following the Cold War. In 1995, Michael Mandelbaum, a professor of American Foreign Policy at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, argued that NATO expansion was "premature," "not an effective instrument for promoting free markets or

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[2] Russian Federaton and Vladimir Putin, "Russian National Security Strategy: The Kremlin," 2015, http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/l8iXkR8XLAtxeilX7JK3XXy6Y0AsHD5v.pdf; Isabelle Facon, "Russia's National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine and Their Implications for the EU" (Brussels, Belgium: European Parliament, January 2017), 13; Defense Intelligence Agency, "Russia Military Power: Building a Military to Support Great Power Aspirations," Military Power Report (Washington, DC, 2017), 31.
[3] United States and Donald Trump, "National Security Strategy of the United States," 2017, 25.
[4] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 77.
[5] Andrew Radin, "How NATO Could Accidentally Trigger a War with Russia," The National Interest, November 11, 2017, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-nato-could-accidentally-trigger-war-russia-23156.

democracy," and Russia would view expansion as "illegitimate."[6] In 1998, foreign-policy analysts at the Cato Institute claimed that NATO expansion was a "potentially disastrous idea," which threatened to "create a new division of Europe and undermine friendly relations with Russia."[7] Alan Tonelson, an editor for *Foreign Policy*, added, "unless Russia indefinitely remains weak, poor, and fragmented, the long-term effects could be much more dangerous and produce a blend of mistrusts and uncertainty that could easily lead to confrontation."[8] In the aftermath of the Cold War, Russia's military weakness assuaged any Western fear of retaliation, but several analysts warned that one should not assume they would remain weak forever.[9] These and many other concerns were considered but ultimately disregarded. Subsequently, NATO expanded in 1999, integrating the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. In 2004, the Baltic States and four other countries joined. While the Cold War ended in 1991 and despite continuous opposition by Russia, NATO continued expanding east, seemingly without any evaluation of the consequences. The 2007 cyber attacks on Estonia and 2008 Russo-Georgia conflict have prompted NATO to re-evaluate its planned expansion.[10]

Notwithstanding NATO's strategic pause, governments, military strategists, and think tanks alike continuously debate the prospects of protecting fellow NATO members. The Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are at the center of these debates as they are at risk of

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[6] Michael Mandelbaum, "Preserving the New Peace: The Case against NATO Expansion," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 3 (1995): 9–12, https://doi.org/10.2307/20047118.
[7] Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, *NATO Enlargement: Illusions and Reality* (Cato Institute, 1998), 2.
[8] Alan Tonelson, "NATO Expansion: The Triumph of Policy Incoherence," in *NATO Enlargement: Illusions and Reality*, ed. Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry (Cato Institute, 1998), 46.
[9] Carpenter and Conry, *NATO Enlargement*, 3.
[10] Jon E Chicky, *The Russian-Georgian War: Political and Military Implications for US Policy* (Silk Road Studies Program, 2009), 14.

Russian intervention. The Baltic region is NATO's most pressing concern because it resides in a proverbial geographic cul-de-sac, limiting NATO's ability to defend against a rapid Russian fait accompli. In 2016, a RAND study concluded that NATO could not successfully defend the region, and Russian forces could reach the Estonian and Latvian capitals, Tallinn and Riga, respectively, in 60 hours.[11] The report went on to state that seven army brigades, three consisting of heavy, armored brigades could prevent such an occurrence.[12] These assessments often assume President Putin has an interest in conventional military intervention in the Baltics. However, in the three cases examined in this study, only the 2008 Russo-Georgia conflict involved overt, conventional military force.[13]

The 2015 NSS views Russian international actions as an attempt to reassert regional and global influence.[14] By using subversive measures and bolstering its military capability, Moscow seeks to undermine the credibility of the US and its transatlantic partnerships.[15] Previous research focused solely on Russia's *maskirovka* strategies to inform and

[11] David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (RAND Corporation, 2016), 1.
[12] Shlapak and Johnson, 8.
[13] In this paper, 'overt, conventional military force' is best explained as the antithesis of covert, clandestine, irregular, or unconventional military action. Covert operations intend on concealing the identity of and permit deniability by the sponsor. See Jan Goldman Ph.D, *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Encyclopedia of Covert Ops, Intelligence Gathering, and Spies [2 Volumes]: An Encyclopedia of Covert Ops, Intelligence Gathering, and Spies* (ABC-CLIO, 2015), xvi. Clandestine operations differ slightly from covert as they only attempt to conceal the action rather than the sponsor. See Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (Routledge, 2012). Unconventional and irregular warfare covers a swath of actions including terrorism, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, cyber warfare, coup d'etat, and civil war. See Don Carrick et al., *Ethics Education for Irregular Warfare* (Routledge, 2016), 2 or James D. Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," in *Understanding Modern Warfare*, by David Jordan et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 299–318. In sum, an overt, conventional military action involves the unambiguous use of nationally attributable military force. There is no doubt who is conducting or sponsoring the operation.
[14] United States and Trump, "National Security Strategy of the United States," 27.
[15] United States and Trump, 47.

develop corresponding counter-strategies.[16] These studies explain how Russia intervenes in other countries, but the focus remains on its covert, subversive methods. While important, this focus is problematic for two reasons. First, the counter-strategies are reactionary. Second, the lynchpin of US and Western strategy is deterrence; deterrence is mentioned numerous times throughout the 2017 NSS and admits "deterrence today is significantly more complex to achieve than during the Cold War."[17] If this is true, then why do NATO and the US advocate for increased troop presence in the Baltics to deter Russian aggression? The rationale and logic used for advocating this position are like arguments made in the 1980s.

The beginning of the 1980s saw NATO shift from a nuclear to conventional deterrence in response to the strategic parity between the US and Soviet Union.[18] The policy shift also stemmed from Western

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[16] *Maskirovka*, directly translated from Russian, means 'disguise.' The term is used interchangeably to describe Russia's 'new-generation,' 'hybrid,' or 'unconventional' warfare strategies but is also used to describe specific 'elements' of Russian military strategy. These strategies include cyber attacks, political bribery, or lawfare. Lawfare, whether based on distorted or legitimate legal argumentation, is the use of law to accomplish military aims. Additionally, 'reflexive control' (RC) theory is another term used to describe Russian *maskirovka*. Reflexive control describes the practice of predetermining an adversary's behavior to one's own advantage. The strategy is viewed as the tool of the weaker to force the stronger belligerent into a 'no-win' situation. For a full discussion on 'lawfare', see Orde F. Kittrie, *Lawfare: Law as a Weapon of War* (Oxford University Press, 2016). The history and development of reflexive control theory is found in Timothy L. Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 2 (April 2004): 237–56. Russia's use of reflexive control is discussed in Maria Snegovaya, "Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare," Russia Report (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, September 2015). Another source explaining reflexive control theory's integration into Russia's information warfare strategy is Keir Giles, *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare*, NDC Fellowship Monograph Series ; 9 (Rome, Italy: NATO Defence College Research Division, 2016), http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=506.

[17] United States and Trump, "National Security Strategy of the United States," 27.

[18] Samuel P. Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe," *International Security* 8, no. 3 (1983): 32, https://doi.org/10.2307/2538699.

populations' desire to denounce first-to-use nuclear strategies,[19] as well as freezing the US and Soviet nuclear arsenal.[20] The alternative to nuclear deterrence was conventional deterrence. Conventional deterrence is the capability to deny battlefield objectives, to an aggressor, using conventional military forces.[21] This accomplishment, in turn, prevents an adversary from achieving political aims. Three key points underpin the logic of increased military-force presence to deter adversary action. First, military forces increase uncertainties and potential costs to aggressors. Second, military forces raise the probability of a successful defense which forces the aggressor to risk defeat. Finally, military forces can threaten retaliation against an aggressor's high-value targets.[22] Samuel Huntington argued in 1983 that NATO was unlikely to commit the resources required to field the forces needed to deter Soviet action.[23] Furthermore, to be an effective deterrent and provide its intended advantage, the large military presence needs to be concentrated at the point of attack, not simply exist in a general area.[24] The Cold War discussion concerning the efficacy of conventional deterrence is applicable in today's context as well.

Just as it was in the 1980s, the major assumption driving a conventional-deterrence strategy is that there is an aggressor with the means and intent to launch an overt, conventional invasion of another country. The question motivating this study is that of intent. The purpose of this study is to discover the distinct differences among

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[19] Hedrick Smith and Special to the New York Times, "GROWING NUCLEAR DEBATE; News Analysis," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1982.
[20] Judith Miller, "72% in Poll Back Nuclear Halt If Soviet Union Doesn't Gain," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1982, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/30/us/72-in-poll-back-nuclear-halt-if-soviet-union-doesn-t-gain.html.
[21] John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Cornell University Press, 1985), 15.
[22] Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe," 35–36.
[23] Huntington, 35.
[24] Huntington, 46.

Russian actions in Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine to determine which factors best determine when and where Russia is most likely to intervene in future cross-border disputes with overt, conventional military action.

Post-Cold War Russia, US, and NATO: Actions and Reactions

The Cold War's aftermath provided opportunities and challenges, not only for the US and Russia but NATO as well. Left alone as the world's only superpower, the US, in its unipolar moment, set out to expand a liberal world order.[25] The dissolution of the Soviet Union also drove NATO to reevaluate its mission and purpose in Europe. Although it was not an immediate decision, NATO chose to expand eastward and integrate former Warsaw Pact countries. The Russian reaction to NATO's expansion was as obvious as it was irrelevant. Russia balked at NATO's enlargement but was powerless to confront the alliance. To this day, Moscow officials claim the West broke a promise made by then-Secretary of State James Baker to Mikhail Gorbachev during negotiations over the reunification of Germany in 1991. The story stipulates Baker promised that NATO would not extend "one-inch east" of Germany. Considering that Putin habitually rails against NATO's supposed broken promise as fodder for his rhetoric, the chapter will conclude with how Russia reacted in the 1990s as events unfolded.

US Strategy

The freshness of a Cold War victory led to an ambitious and controversial US military strategy in March 1992. The Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) for Fiscal Years 1994-1999 was designed to convince potential rising powers not to "aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their *legitimate* interests… discourage [advanced industrial nations] from challenging [US] leadership… [and]

[25] Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990): 23–33, https://doi.org/10.2307/20044692.

the United States should be postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated."[26] The document was leaked to the press by an official who believed the post-Cold War strategy debate belonged in the public forum. Once reported, the guidance's central ideas were criticized.[27] Christopher Layne, a professor at the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, argued that the strategy intended to "preserve unipolarity by persuading Japan and Germany they [were] better off remaining within the orbit of an American-led security and economic system than if they became great powers."[28] Michael Mastanduno, a Professor of Government at Dartmouth, claimed that the DPG signaled that the US would deter threats from Russia or China, allied countries should contribute to this end, and there was no need to replicate the US effort.[29] Although the sweeping and grandiose vision of US foreign policy was jarring and seemed to embody a textbook definition of global hegemonic superpower behavior, it is also reasonable to argue the flux of NATO's mission, due to the end of the Cold War, drove the US to preserve its place on the world stage.

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[26] Guy Roberts, *US Foreign Policy and China: Bush's First Term* (Routledge, 2014), 36.
[27] Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop," *The New York Times [Online]*, March 8, 1992; Barton Gellman, "Keeping the U.S. First," *Washington Post [Online]*, March 11, 1992, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/03/11/keeping-the-us-first/31a774aa-fcd9-45be-8526-ceafc933b938/.
[28] Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 7, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539020.
[29] Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (1997): 67, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539283.

NATO's New Role and Rationale for Expansion

NATO underwent many incremental reforms during the Cold War. However, once it ended, NATO's role continuously morphed and transformed, ostensibly without end.[30] Beginning at the Rome Summit in 1991, NATO members acknowledged:

> The monolithic, massive and potentially immediate threat which was the principal concern of the Alliance in its first forty years has disappeared… The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO's European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy… NATO's essential purpose, set out in the Washington Treaty and reiterated in the London Declaration, is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter… To achieve its essential purpose, the Alliance [must] preserve the strategic balance within Europe [and] expand the opportunities for a genuine partnership among all European countries in dealing with common security problems.[31]

During the Cold War, the "immediate threat" to NATO was the Soviet Union. With NATO's sole existential enemy gone and its *raison d'être* largely swept away, a key question for the organization was how to deal with the new reality. Although some allies advocated for dissolution, others agreed with Britain's former prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, who said: "you don't cancel your home insurance policy just because there have been fewer burglaries on your street in the last 12 months!"[32] Additionally, from its inception, NATO was designed to be more than just a counterbalance to the Soviet Union and stated as much in its 1949 preamble: "The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes

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[30] M. Webber, J. Sperling, and M. Smith, *NATO's Post-Cold War Trajectory: Decline or Regeneration* (Springer, 2012), 21.
[31] NATO, "The Alliance's New Strategic Concept," November 8, 1991, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23847.htm.
[32] Robert B. McCalla, "NATO's Persistence after the Cold War," *International Organization* 50, no. 3 (1996): 455.

and principles of the Charter of the United Nations… are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, [and] founded on the principles of democracy, individuals liberty and the rule of law."[33] Combining the original 1949 treaty's preamble with the new strategic concept of 1991, we may surmise NATO members envisioned their role as the driving force behind the democratization of all of Europe. As mentioned earlier, scholars and political analysts disagreed with this strategy.

From its inception, the idea of expanding the alliance drew the ire of many, including Michael Mandelbaum. He argued NATO expansion would be "at best premature, at worst counterproductive, and in any case largely irrelevant to the problems confronting the countries situated between Germany and Russia."[34] Other scholars reasoned NATO's enlargement plans did not "adequately incorporate the fears and sensitivities in Russia" or account for the impact expansion had on Russian domestic and external politics;[35] similar issues were considered before West Germany's inclusion into NATO in 1955.[36] Comparably, the Clinton administration also wanted to avoid antagonizing Russia.[37] NATO allies shared similar concerns about possible nationalist backlash in

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[33] NATO, "The North Atlantic Treaty," April 4, 1949, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20120822_nato_treaty_en_light_2009.pdf.
[34] Mandelbaum, "Preserving the New Peace," 9.
[35] Marianne Hanson, "Russia and NATO Expansion: The Uneasy Basis of the Founding Act," *European Security* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 1998): 26, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839808407360.
[36] President Eisenhower spent several months debating the matter with George Kennan and John Foster Dulles to account for genuine Russian concerns and mitigate anti-Western sentiment. Doug Bandow, "NATO Enlargement: To What End?," in *NATO Enlargement: Illusions and Reality*, ed. Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry (Cato Institute, 1998), 203; Walter L. Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (Columbia University Press, 1989), 140.
[37] James M. Goldgeier, "NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision," *The Washington Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 85, https://doi.org/10.1080/01636609809550295.

Russia.[38] Nevertheless, proponents claimed that expansion was necessary to foster democracy and free markets in central Europe, while others asserted that the security vacuum in Europe required a "new security architecture," where NATO constituted its central piece.[39] Both proponents and opponents of enlargement were correct to worry about Russia's reaction. Russia characterized NATO's potential as a "threat to its well-being."[40]

Russia's Inactive Reaction

Russia perceived NATO's expansion as "creating a buffer zone in reverse" while simultaneously isolating Russia from the rest of Europe.[41] The Russian political establishment overwhelmingly viewed NATO's expansion as a direct contraction to basic Russian national interests.[42] Unfortunately, Russia had few, if any, options available to oppose. Both the Clinton Administration and its European allies knew this to be true, effectively bolstering their resolve for the increased inclusiveness of NATO. Despite prospective candidate states lacking the means to counter an Article V threat, NATO members contended that since no such near-term threat existed, states could develop capabilities after being admitted.[43] As a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Sherman Garnett, claimed that Russia's strategic

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[38] Paul E. Gallis, "NATO Enlargement: The Process and Allied Views," CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC, July 1, 1997), 2, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/97-666.html.
[39] Mandelbaum, "Preserving the New Peace," 9–12.
[40] Paul E. Gallis, "NATO: Congress Addresses Expansion of the Alliance," CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC, May 24, 1999), 15, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL30192.html.
[41] Joseph Laurence Black, *Russia Faces NATO Expansion: Bearing Gifts Or Bearing Arms?* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 9.
[42] Alexei K. Pushkov, "Don't Isolate Us: A Russian View of NATO Expansion," *The National Interest*, no. 47 (1997): 58.
[43] "Report to the Congress On the Enlargement of NATO: Rationale, Benefits, Costs and Implications" (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 1997), 10, http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA323514; Gallis, "NATO Enlargement: The Process and Allied Views," 2.

position was analogous to one of the many stories of Winnie the Pooh. Moscow, like old Pooh bear, wedged itself in a rabbit hole in search of honey. Just like the bear, Russia found itself stuck, "caught between its lofty ambitions and reduced capabilities."[44]

Many Russians also believed NATO's expansion broke promises made in 1990 and 1991, further stoking resentment.[45] Russian officials claimed that the inclusion of former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO would violate a "solemn pledge" made during the negotiations of German reunification in 1990.[46] The alleged "pledge" was seemingly corroborated by former White House official Jack Matlock in a 1996 hearing. He stated that Gorbachev received a "clear commitment that if Germany united, and stayed in NATO, the borders of NATO would not move eastward."[47] The most often-cited phrase, made by then-Secretary of State James Baker to Gorbachev, used by those harboring this belief is that NATO would not expand "one inch eastward." However, that passage was not a statement, it was a question, and it was posed in a manner to highlight the unattractiveness of an untethered Germany in Europe. In a secret letter sent to West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, Baker clarified how he posed the question to Gorbachev:

> Would you prefer to see a unified Germany outside of NATO, independent and with no U.S. forces," he asked, presumably framing the option of an untethered Germany in a way that Gorbachev would find unattractive, "or would you prefer a unified Germany to be tied to NATO, with assurances that

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[44] Sherman Garnett, "Russia's Illusory Ambitions," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 2 (1997): 61, https://doi.org/10.2307/20047937.
[45] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 22.
[46] Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 39, https://doi.org/10.1080/01636600902773248.
[47] "U.S. Policy Toward NATO Enlargement," § House Committee on International Relations (n.d.), 31, quoted in Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," 39.

> NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position?[48]

Immediately following the meeting and as the negotiations continued, it became apparent that the Bush foreign-policy team needed to present a more coherent, stricter message to Gorbachev.[49] President Bush made clear that a post-Cold War Europe required NATO as its dominant security organization and had zero desire to concede on the topic of NATO expansion.[50] Gorbachev ultimately agreed, albeit, in exchange for face-saving measures, none of which included any assurance NATO would halt expanding in the future.[51] The Soviet leader was bargaining from a position of weakness.

Russia's Decaying Military Capability

Throughout the Cold War, the USSR's geopolitical position derived directly from its military power-projection capabilities. However, the Russian military of the 1990s was in disarray, desperate to survive unrelenting internal political unrest and continual financial crises.[52] In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, meaningful reform progressed slowly.[53] The Russian Army experienced a "virtual collapse" of its manning system due to a smaller population base and 40 percent of military recruits failing to meet medical standards.[54] Inundated with older aircraft and decaying facilities, the Russian Air Force (VVS)[55]

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[48] Mary Elise Sarotte, "A Broken Promise? What the West Really Told Moscow About NATO Expansion," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 92.
[49] Sarotte, 94.
[50] Sarotte, 95.
[51] Sarotte, 96.
[52] Mark Galeotti, *The Modern Russian Army 1992–2016* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 8.
[53] Galeotti, 8.
[54] Michael Orr, "Reform and the Russian Ground Forces, 1992–2002," in *Russian Military Reform, 1992-2002*, ed. Anne C. Aldis and Roger N. McDermott (Routledge, 2004), 127–33.
[55] VVS stands for Voyenno-Vozdushnyye Sily which is the English spelling of авиация, военно-воздушные силы and is Russian for 'air force.'

struggled to upgrade its aircraft fleet, conduct critical capital repairs to airfields, or maintain any semblance of currency for its pilots.[56] By the mid-1990s, the Russian Navy lost half its squadrons, bases, personnel, ships, and rotary-wing aircraft.[57] Stéphane Lefebvre summed up Russia's military situation best: "the general ailments affecting the armed forces during the 1990s [consist of] underfunding, indiscipline, poor morale, personnel problems and 'institutional interests in self-preservation', that is, 'giving lip service to the realities of the post-Cold War environment' by trying 'to retain as much as possible traditional strategic roles and operational missions.'"[58]

There was never any expectation that Russia would remain in its weakened state for long. In fact, a 1997 Congressional Research Report asserted that Russian conventional forces could become a threat to its neighbors in a decade.[59] Although Russia was able to conduct its first and only large-scale military exercise in 1999, Zapad-99 provided yet another unconvincing performance.[60] However, in the year 2000, Russia was under new leadership. This leader promised to rebuild the country's military prestige.[61] Rather than focus on cost-saving measures as his predecessor Yeltsin did, he wanted the military able to contribute towards Russia's great-power ambitions.[62] This man was none other

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[56] Stéphane Lefebvre, "The Reform of the Russian Air Force," in *Russian Military Reform, 1992-2002*, ed. Anne C. Aldis and Roger N. McDermott (Routledge, 2004), 140.
[57] Mikhail Tsypkin, "Rudderless in a Storm: The Russian Navy, 1992–2002," in *Russian Military Reform, 1992-2002*, ed. Anne C. Aldis and Roger N. McDermott (Routledge, 2004), 161.
[58] Lefebvre, "The Reform of the Russian Air Force," 140.
[59] Gallis, "NATO Enlargement: The Process and Allied Views," 1.
[60] Roger N. McDermott, "Putin's Military Priorities: The Modernisation of the Armed Forces," in *Russian Military Reform, 1992-2002*, ed. Anne C. Aldis (Routledge, 2004), 258.
[61] McDermott, 257.
[62] Rod Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 11.

than Vladimir Putin, and he was assuredly not content to remain inactive.

Russian Diaspora

The dissolution of the Soviet Union created a 25-million-Russians diaspora seemingly overnight.[63] As Vladimir Shlapentokh keenly pointed out, "nowhere else has the transition in status from ruling nation to discriminated-against minority been so nearly instantaneous as in the USSR in 1990-91."[64] Although some academics focused on how the new minority would adapt to its changing conditions, others were concerned with the diaspora's threat to regional political stability.[65] A logical outgrowth of this concern was a concerted effort by many to analyze the effects that the dispersed population would have on Russian foreign policy. In numerous studies from the early 1990s to today, from Yeltsin to Putin, no matter the leader, the rights of Russians living in the near-abroad is a significant issue. Moscow is unlikely to abandon ties to its diaspora and will use this group to justify its actions. Rajan Menon, a Professor of International Relations at Lehigh University and director of Eurasia Policy Studies at the National Bureau of Asian Research, argued the same in 2001:

> The status of ethnic Russians in the near abroad will remain part of Russia's political discourse, given the allure of nationalism and its utility to demagogues… Controversies centering on the Russian diaspora have created more friction between Russia and the Baltic states (principally Latvia and

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[63] Pål Kolstø, "The New Russian Diaspora: Minority Protection in the Soviet Successor States," *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 2 (May 1, 1993): 197, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343393030002006.

[64] Vladimir Shlapentokh, Munir Sendich, and Emil Payin, *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics* (M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 20.

[65] For this paper, the author adopted Kolstø's definition of 'stability,' as it relates to a diaspora, which can mean two things: (i) the preconditions for an orderly and peaceful transition to a new, enduring state system in which inherent tensions do not lead to war; and (ii) the consolidation of legitimate regimes within each state which are not threatened by coups and counter coups. Pål Kolstø and Andrei Edemsky, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Indiana University Press, 1995), 290.

> Estonia) and will continue to do so. Nevertheless, the problem has been confined to the political sphere and has not involved the military for several reasons. Russia's leaders know that attempts to intimidate the Baltics would mobilize anti-Russian sentiments in the West and strengthen support for bringing them into NATO. Conversely, the leaders of Estonia and Latvia realize the need to reconcile their projects for nation building with Russia's interests. Russians in the Baltic countries have adjusted to irksome circumstances even when, as in the case of language and citizenship laws, they resent them.[66]

While Menon's assertion focused exclusively on the Baltic region, this author argues the Russian diaspora is a critical antecedent to regional tensions for all its bordering countries. Chapters two, three, and four will discuss this point further.

Research Methodology, Case Study Selection, and Thesis Overview

This paper includes three case studies and utilizes a process-tracing methodology to explain the varied Russian military responses in former Soviet satellite states. The multiple-case-study design and process-tracing method enable the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to find common causes across cases or predict contrasting results based on a theory.[67] Additionally, as Slater and Simmons pointed out, "political scientists increasingly recognized that our biggest 'why' questions [could not] be adequately answered without careful attention to the question of 'when.'"[68] Consequently, the researcher conducted a process-tracing method through a critical-antecedent and critical-juncture framework to determine how timing elucidated Russian actions.

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[66] Rajan Menon, "Structural Constraints on Russian Diplomacy," *Orbis* 45, no. 4 (2001): 587–88, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0030-4387(01)00093-X.
[67] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2002).
[68] Dan Slater and Erica Simmons, "Informative Regress: Critical Antecedents in Comparative Politics," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 7 (July 1, 2010): 886–87, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414010361343.

The critical-antecedent and juncture framework tandemly work to force the researcher to identify significant events preceding an outcome of interest. In this paper, the outcome of interest is the use or disuse of Russian overt, conventional military force in bordering countries. Critical antecedents are "factors or conditions that combine with causal forces during a critical-juncture to produce [a] long-term divergence in outcomes," while a critical-juncture is merely the *causal force* propelling a case on a new trajectory.[69] Illustrated in Figure 1, critical antecedents are one of four antecedent conditions in a case study and directly lead to causal forces.

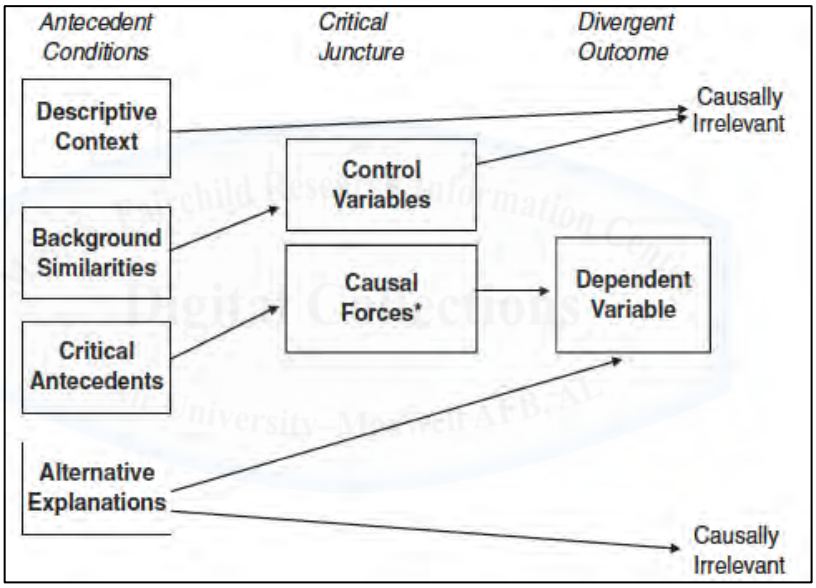

Figure 1: Critical Antecedent and Juncture Framework
Source: Extracted from Slater and Simmons 2010 Journal Article

When analyzing multiple case studies, some antecedent conditions act as control variables but do not provide any useful explanation to the event in question. In this paper, all three countries shared a rich history and common border with Russia. In two of the three cases (Estonia and Ukraine), a Russian diaspora made up a significant minority of the total populace. However, none of these observations were causal in Russia's use of overt, conventional military force. In some instances, the

[69] Slater and Simmons, 888-889.

historical aspects of a case, while interesting, are causally irrelevant to the outcome. In this study, all three countries attempted to gain independence during the Bolshevik Revolution. Although Estonia and Georgia succeeded in this endeavor during the interwar period, this observation is causally irrelevant to Russia's use or disuse of overt, conventional military force in the 21st century.

Case Study Selection

The three selected cases are similar, yet unique. Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine are former Soviet Satellite states, border Russia, and all were "attacked." However, Estonia was a NATO member and attacked only in the cyber domain, Georgia was invaded by an overt, conventional Russian military force, while "little green men" invaded Ukraine.[70] Additionally, the latter two countries were non-NATO members but considered for membership in 2008. In the event the researcher discovers case-inclusive causal mechanisms, he will use Beach and Pedersen's theory-building, process-tracing method to make connections between causes and outcome.[71]

[70] The term "little green men" refers to the soldiers occupying Crimea in 2014. The soldiers wore Russian uniforms and used modern Russian weaponry, but Moscow denied any involvement. The ambiguous nature concerning the soldiers' allegiance injected enough uncertainty into Kiev's and NATO's calculations to prevent them from mounting an adequate response. According to journalist Luke Harding, the "little green men" tactic follows a classic KGB strategy which encompasses disinformation, propaganda, political repression and subversion. Although many articles exist discussing the phrase "little green men," the tactic is related to what others call "Hybrid Warfare." Many military scholars debate the efficacy of the phrase "hybrid warfare" as it is synonymous with covert or irregular warfare. Mark Galeotti and Maria Snegovaya provide an excellent synopsis. Mark Galeotti, "'Hybrid War' and 'Little Green Men': How It Works, and How It Doesn't," in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, by Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (E-International Relations, 2016), 159; Maria Snegovaya, "Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare," Russia Report (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, September 2015), 14.

[71] Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching, and Tracing* (University of Michigan Press, 2016), 335.

Thesis Overview

The three case studies and a cross-case analysis constitute the remainder of this paper. Chapters two, three, and four comprise the 2007 cyber attacks on Estonia, 2008 Russo-Georgia conflict, and 2014 annexation of Crimea, respectively. Each chapter contains a detailed account of the incident and provides historically relevant information, establishing a common foundation. The conflict descriptions and historically pertinent information contextualize the incidents so we may, in the words of Eliot Cohen, understand the "essential elements of context and detail that make up a complex political-military situation."[72] The chapters conclude with analysis using the critical-antecedent and juncture framework described earlier. Each case study analyzes and compares five aspects: historical relationship with Russia, Russian diaspora composition, Russian military presence, NATO member status, and strategic geographical significance to Russia. The final chapter distills all the information and cases analyzed to uncover critical antecedent and juncture conditions which answer the central research question.

[72] Douglas Carl Peifer, *Choosing War: Presidential Decisions in the Maine, Lusitania, and Panay Incidents* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

Chapter 2

Estonia Cyber Attacks, 2007

The removal of the Bronze Statue is disgusting… [it] is blasphemous and will have serious consequences for our relations with Estonia.
Sergey V. Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister, 27 April 2007

The Incident

Tallinn's Bronze Soldier monument was a polarizing symbol and a city-center mainstay for Estonians from 1947 until its relocation in 2007. Soviet ideology dictated that all republics maintain a WWII memorial in their respective capitals.[1] In fact, Nikita Khrushchev attended the memorial's inauguration in honor of the liberating soldiers of Estonia.[2] Estonians saw the statue as a symbol of Soviet oppression while the Russian ethnic diaspora felt it represented a *lieu de memoire*, which symbolized their national identity.[3] Consequently, the statue became the focal point for the local Russian community during the May 9th "Victory Day" celebrations, commemorating the USSR triumph over Nazi Germany. In 2005, Moscow invited the Estonian president, Arnold Rüütel, to attend the 60th-anniversary celebration commemorating "V-Day," but the president declined.[4] Subsequently, Estonian nationalists began gathering at the statue waving flags and chanting nationalistic slogans, leading to increased tensions.[5] In 2006, protesters clashed again at the site, driving the Estonian government to cordon it off and

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[1] Mari-Liis Lamp et al., "Mobile Positioning Data in Emergency Management: Measuring the Impact of Street Riots and Political Confrontation on Incoming Tourism," in *Principle and Application Progress in Location-Based Services*, by Chun Liu (Springer, 2014), 299.
[2] Richard Stiennon, "A Short History of Cyber Warfare," in *Cyber Warfare: A Multidisciplinary Analysis*, by James A. Green (Routledge, 2015), 17.
[3] Maria Mälksoo, "Liminality and Contested Europeanness: Conflicting Memory Politics in the Baltic Space," in *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*, by Piret Ehin (Routledge, 2016), 70; "Places, Politics and the Archiving of Contemporary Memory in Pierre Nora's Les Lieux de Mémoire," in *Memory and Methodology*, by Susannah Radstone and Peter Carrier (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 39.
[4] Alison Lawlor Russell, *Cyber Blockades* (Georgetown University Press, 2014), 74.
[5] Lamp et al., "Mobile Positioning Data in Emergency Management: Measuring the Impact of Street Riots and Political Confrontation on Incoming Tourism," 299.

maintain constant police supervision.[6] Rüütel promised to resolve the issue by the following year.[7]

Estonia's parliament passed two laws in early 2007 providing the legal basis to relocate the monument. On January 10, The War Graves Protection Act allowed the government to move both the statue and soldiers' bodies to the Siselinna Military Cemetery.[8] On February 14, The Law on the Removal of Forbidden Structures prohibited Soviet-era symbols in public displays.[9] The law on Forbidden Structures was subsequently vetoed by President Toomas Hendrik Ilves the following day because he deemed portions of the law unconstitutional.[10] Russia's State Duma, the lower house of parliament, responded by passing a resolution accusing Estonia of "glorifying fascism" and simultaneously urged President Putin to impose sanctions.[11] The rhetoric intensified in early March when Konstantin Kosachev, the Duma's chairman of the international affairs committee, wrote an opinion article for *The Guardian*. In the article, Konstantin referred to the Estonians as "radicals," argued that Russia's trade relationship with Estonia be contingent upon the outcome of the statue, and echoed President Putin's remarks that the plan to "demolish" the war memorial was an "ultra-nationalist and very short-sighted policy."[12]

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[6] Joel Alas, "Government Split over Bronze Soldier," *The Baltic Times [Online]*, August 9, 2006, https://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/16056/.
[7] Russell, *Cyber Blockades*, 75.
[8] Robert Kaiser, "Reassembling the Event: Estonia's 'Bronze Night,'" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30, no. 6 (December 1, 2012): 1052, https://doi.org/10.1068/d18210.
[9] "Forbidden Structures," *The Baltic Times [Online]*, February 14, 2007, https://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/17342/; Kaiser, "Reassembling the Event," 1052.
[10] Kadri Masing, "President Jättis Keelatud Rajatise Kõrvaldamise Seaduse Välja Kuulutamata," Eesti Päevaleht, February 15, 2007, http://epl.delfi.ee/news/eesti/president-jattis-keelatud-rajatise-korvaldamise-seaduse-valja-kuulutamata?id=51076753; "Estonian President Vetoes War Memorial Removal Bill," RT International, February 23, 2007, https://www.rt.com/news/estonian-president-vetoes-war-memorial-removal-bill/.
[11] Adrian Blomfield, "War of Words over Bronze Soldier," *The Telegraph [Online]*, February 5, 2007, sec. World, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1541641/War-of-words-over-bronze-soldier.html.
[12] Konstantin Kosachev, "An Insult to Our War Dead," *The Guardian [Online]*, March 5, 2007, sec. Opinion, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/mar/06/comment.secondworldwar.

Despite the Ilves veto and increased rhetoric surrounding the laws, on April 26, 2007, government workers relocated the statue from a public square in downtown Tallinn to a military cemetery on the outskirts of town. Riots ensued.[13] Referred to as Bronze Night, ethnic Russians and protesters collided, resulting in 1,300 arrests, hundreds of injuries, and one death.[14] The statue's removal not only led to a public rebuke from Russia but also a massive distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack on April 27 against Estonia's banking, telecom, and government infrastructure.[15]

The cyber attacks lasted three weeks against a country considered the most "wired" in the world,[16] severely limiting the Estonian government's ability to "govern its country."[17] Dubbed "Web War 1" by *The Economist*, the attacks comprised of a one-million-computer botnet[18] that shut down Estonian computer networks, government ministries, and major banks.[19] At that time, it was the largest DDoS attack ever to take place.[20] Although the attacking sources were distributed worldwide, Estonian officials claimed they traced the assault to Russian-government web servers.[21] Other investigations traced the

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[13] Kaiser, "Reassembling the Event," 1046.
[14] Kaiser, 1046; Thomas Rid, *Cyber War Will Not Take Place* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.
[15] Steven Lee Myers, "Russia Rebukes Estonia for Moving Soviet Statue," *The New York Times*, April 27, 2007, sec. Europe, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/27/world/europe/27cnd-estonia.html; Stiennon, "A Short History of Cyber Warfare," 17.
[16] Joshua Davis, "Hackers Take Down the Most Wired Country in Europe," WIRED, August 21, 2007, https://www.wired.com/2007/08/ff-estonia/.
[17] Tom Espiner, "Estonia's Cyberattacks: Lessons Learned, a Year on | ZDNet," ZDNet, May 1, 2008, http://www.zdnet.com/article/estonias-cyberattacks-lessons-learned-a-year-on/.
[18] A botnet is a group of compromised Internet-connected computers forced to operate on the commands of an unauthorized remote user, usually without the knowledge of the computer's owner. For more information, see Paul J. Springer, *Encyclopedia of Cyber Warfare* (ABC-CLIO, 2017).
[19] "War in the Fifth Domain," *The Economist*, July 1, 2010, http://www.economist.com/node/16478792; Nir Kshetri, *The Global Cybercrime Industry: Economic, Institutional and Strategic Perspectives* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2010), 7.
[20] Paul J. Springer, *Encyclopedia of Cyber Warfare* (ABC-CLIO, 2017), 102.
[21] Steven Woehrel, "Estonia: Current Issues and U.S. Policy" (Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service, July 11, 2007), 3, https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc491019/citation/.

origin to Vladimir Putin's administrative bureaucracy, however, neither Putin nor the Kremlin acknowledged the findings.[22]

While some suggested that individual "patriotic hackers" perpetrated the incident,[23] the attack's scale and scope dispel this myth. Susan Brenner illuminates this fact in a breakdown of the actions taken:[24]

i. They were transnational, originating in Russia and targeting websites and networks in Estonia.

ii. They only targeted websites and networks in Estonia.

iii. They were deliberate, intentional assaults.

iv. The DDoS attacks were massive in scale, both regarding the data load and the size of the botnets used in them.

v. The attackers in part used botnets rented from cybercriminals.

vi. Those who planned the attacks were fluent in the Russian language.

vii. The attacks followed action by the Estonian authorities that insulted Russian citizens and Estonian citizens of Russian descent.

viii. They targeted critical infrastructure components, not for exploration, theft, or extortion, but specifically to cause damage in the form of disrupted and denied services.

ix. The attacks used Russian government internet addresses.

x. The Russian government publicly and repeatedly denied involvement in the attacks.

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[22] Springer, *Encyclopedia of Cyber Warfare*, 104; Mark Landler and John Markoff, "Digital Fears Emerge After Data Siege in Estonia," *The New York Times*, May 29, 2007, sec. Technology, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/29/technology/29estonia.html.

[23] Singer and Friedman made one such argument. They claimed that the Russian forums openly posted "tools and instruction kits" required to conduct a DDoS attack of this scale. In turn, this enabled "patriotic hackers" to do Russian bidding while simultaneously providing plausible deniability for Moscow. Peter W. Singer and Allan Friedman, *Cybersecurity: What Everyone Needs to Know* (OUP USA, 2014), 111.

[24] Susan W. Brenner, *Cyberthreats: The Emerging Fault Lines of the Nation State* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 86.

xi. The sequence of attacks included less sophisticated activity, such as putting a mustache on an online photo of the Estonian Prime Minister.

xii. Sophisticated computer expertise is no longer a precondition for launching DDoS attacks, even sophisticated attacks; 'commercial' tools are available online that make it relatively easy to assemble botnets and engage in other malicious activity.

In addition to cyber attacks, Russia imposed economic sanctions and decreased rail traffic through Estonia.[25] These actions mirrored other Russian foreign policies toward neighboring countries for perceived anti-Russian behavior. Furthermore, on the first day of the cyber attacks, the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov asserted that the statue's relocation was "blasphemous, and [would] have serious consequences for our relations with Estonia."[26] It is possible Lavrov's rhetoric was merely a coincidence, but it is more likely to have been a foreshadowing of future events. Regardless, the lack of a "smoking gun" directly linking Russia to the attack highlights an important fact: entities can target a state's national infrastructure while avoiding attribution.[27] In this case, even if Russia had admitted any guilt, it would obfuscate the matter more than clarify.[28]

Historic and Situational Context

Relationship with Russia

Estonia's relationship with Russia dates to the 18th century beginning with the Great Northern War. After the sudden death of the Swedish King Charles XI, the Danes, Poles, and Russians saw an opportunity to seize the Baltic territory.[29] All desired direct access to the Baltic trade.[30] Although the Swedish initially defeated the Russians at Narva in 1700, the Russian forces

[25] Woehrel, "Estonia," 4.
[26] Myers, "Russia Rebukes Estonia for Moving Soviet Statue."
[27] Danny Steed, "The Strategic Implications of Cyber Warfare," in *Cyber Warfare: A Multidisciplinary Analysis*, by James A. Green (Routledge, 2015), 79.
[28] Springer, *Encyclopedia of Cyber Warfare*, 104.
[29] Michael North, *The Baltic* (Harvard University Press, 2015), 146.
[30] North, 146.

eventually seized the upper hand by 1709.[31] Under Peter the Great's scorched-earth policy, Russia ended Swedish rule and conquered all of Estonia by 1710.[32] The proceeding two centuries marked the most extended peaceful era for Estonians since the middle ages.[33]

Despite a peaceful coexistence with Russia, Estonia's "national awakening" commenced in the mid-19th century. The "national awakening" describes the period of 1860 to 1917 when Estonian activists sought their own nation and culture.[34] It was not until 1905, with Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, that the Estonians were able to develop politically autonomous programs in a federalized Russia.[35] The fall of the Russian empire to Germany in WWI led to the formation of the Estonian Provincial Assembly in late 1917.[36] Two months later, on February 24, 1918, Estonia declared its independence.[37]

The conclusion of WWI and subsequent surrender of Germany did not create a lasting peace for Estonians. Conflict immediately erupted as the Bolsheviks invaded Estonia on November 28, 1918. The Estonian War of Independence lasted two years. The combination of guerrilla warfare tactics and mobilization of Estonian conventional forces facilitated the expulsion of the Soviets.[38] On December 21, 1920, Estonia's Constituent Assembly adopted and implemented its new constitution, marking the beginning of their Era of Liberal Democracy.[39]

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, initiated the end of Estonia's independence.[40] Unable to defend itself against the 160,000 Soviet troops massed at its borders, Estonia entered

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[31] North, 146–47.
[32] Toivo U. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians: Second Edition, Updated* (Hoover Press, 2002), 33.
[33] Raun, 36.
[34] Raun, 57.
[35] Raun, 81; North, *The Baltic*, 233.
[36] Peter Calvert, *The Process of Political Succession* (Springer, 1987), 67.
[37] North, *The Baltic*, 227.
[38] Richard Frucht, ed., *Western Europe: Challenge and Change*, vol. 1 (ABC-CLIO, 1990), 75–76.
[39] Frucht, 1:76.
[40] Frucht, 1:79.

into negotiations with Stalin in September 1939.[41] The mutual assistance pact between the two countries allowed the Soviets access to Estonian ports, airbases, and 25,000 troops in Estonia.[42] By June 1941, the "pact" devolved into the collectivization and nationalization of private property.[43] Additionally, the Soviet People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) began repressing and ethnically cleansing the Estonian populace.[44] That same month, Hitler broke the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, declared war on the Soviets, and by July 7, the German Wehrmacht reached the Estonian border.[45]

The sight of the German military was initially welcomed, but that feeling was short-lived.[46] Hitler's *Lebensraum* mandate meant Estonia was just another German province, and there was no hope of restoring Estonian independence.[47] In fact, the repression was worse. During the three-year occupation, the Nazi's opened several concentration camps killing an estimated 125,000 people.[48] As the Wehrmacht advance faltered, the Soviets pushed the front back into Estonia. On September 24, 1944, the Soviets recaptured all major cities and expelled the Germans in late November.[49] Estonians knew regaining their independence would be a struggle.

The Soviet occupation lasted the duration of the Cold War but segmented into three distinct eras: Stalinist, post-Stalinist, and de-Sovietization.[50] The Stalinist era featured mass industrialization, increased repression, and the

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[41] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 140.
[42] Raun, 141.
[43] Frucht, *Western Europe*, 1:80.
[44] Frucht, 1:80.
[45] Frucht, 1:80.
[46] Joseph Berger, "Some in Estonia Greeted Nazis in '41 as Liberators," *The New York Times [Online]*, April 22, 1987, http://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/22/world/some-in-estonia-greeted-nazis-in-41-as-liberators.html.
[47] Frucht, *Western Europe*, 1:80.
[48] Frucht, 1:80.
[49] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 159.
[50] The Stalinist era was from 1944-1953, the post-Stalinist era from 1953-1985, and the de-Sovietization era from 1985-1991. Toivo Raun dedicates Chapters 12, 13, and 14 discussing each era in detail. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 169-239.

beginning of the Estonian guerrilla movement.[51] In the post-Stalinist era, the Estonian government regained some decision-making power while the standard of living improved dramatically.[52] Although the Estonian position improved following the death of Stalin, Russification and Sovietization continued until the 1980s.[53] In early 1980, state-run television and radio workers staged a soccer match and asked the youth punk band, Propeller, to play the halftime show.[54] As the Soviet Union had banned rock music, officials immediately halted the concert and forcibly disbanded Propeller.[55] The government actions and reactions by the Estonian youth highlighted the growing discontent in the country. The incident also spurred forty prominent Estonian intellectuals to author the "Letter of Forty." It stressed the need for social change and was circulated widely.[56] In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power combined with his desire for *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) in the USSR marked the beginning of de-Sovietization.[57] Gorbachev's announcement also initiated the march towards Baltic independence and the Singing Revolution.

Singing Revolution

The Singing Revolution lasted four years (1987-1991), manifested itself in public singing festivals, and led to the restoration of independence for all Baltic states. For Estonians, the USSR's plan to excavate phosphate from north-central Estonia initiated a mass mobilization.[58] In the wake of the Chernobyl

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[51] Frucht, *Western Europe*, 1:80–81. The guerrilla movement consisted of thousands of stranded Estonian soldiers drafted into the German army. Many of these men disappeared into the woods and became known as "forest brethren." Although the guerrillas understood they had no hope in toppling the Soviet regime, they intended to extend the conflict long enough to introduce international pressure for Soviet withdrawal. For more information see Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 174-175.
[52] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 189.
[53] Frucht, *Western Europe*, 1:81.
[54] "Rock, Roll and Revolt," *Washington Post [Online]*, February 4, 1990, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1990/02/04/rock-roll-and-revolt/2688537b-aa0a-44c9-adef-6796eab1778b/.
[55] "Rock, Roll and Revolt."
[56] Frucht, *Western Europe*, 1:81.
[57] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 222.
[58] Raun, 223.

nuclear disaster the year prior, the mining operation would lead to the possible pollution of 40 percent of their water supply, increased air pollution, and an influx of immigrant labor.[59] Gorbachev initially welcomed the activism because it provided a "motor for [his] *perestroika*."[60] The more radicalized the Estonian political aspirations became, however, Soviet leadership reacted "with increasing coolness."[61] A 1990 public poll of the Estonian populace epitomized the revolution's momentum: 96 percent of ethnic Estonians and 26 percent of non-Estonians favored full independence from the Soviet Union.[62] Gorbachev reacted by cutting ties with reformists while his policies became much more conservative.[63] Gorbachev's move to the right only galvanized the Estonian's will to resist, and a political stalemate ensued. On August 19, 1991, Communist-party hard-liners attempted a coup d'état to seize power from Gorbachev.[64] Although the coup failed, it typified the opposition against the highly centralized communist government and accelerated the Soviet collapse later in the year. The incident also forced Gorbachev to resign as leader of the Communist party and expedited Estonia's recognition as an independent country. On September 2, 1991, President George H. W. Bush recognized Baltic independence, and the Soviet Union followed suit on 6 September.[65]

Russian Military Presence (Post-Cold War to Incident)

The Baltic states may have regained independence, but they were not sovereign; three years passed before Russian troops vacated the Baltic region. When the Soviet Union collapsed, over 100,000 Red Army troops remained in

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[59] Raun, 223.
[60] Raun, 227.
[61] Raun, 227.
[62] In 1989, only 56 percent and 5 percent of ethnic Estonians and non-Estonians, respectively, favored independence. *The Estonian Independent*, May 30, 1990; Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 229.
[63] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 230.
[64] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 244.
[65] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 245.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.[66] In September 1993, Lithuania became the first Baltic country free of a Russian military presence.[67] Latvia was next to formalize an agreement with troop withdrawal slated for August 1994; however, Russia continued to operate its Skrunda radar station[68] until 1998, followed by an 18-month dismantlement.[69] Negotiations between Estonia and Russia continuously stalled over terms concerning the treatment and housing of 10,000 retired Soviet officers living in Estonia.[70] The rights of Russian citizens in the near abroad was as significant then to Boris Yeltsin as it is today for Putin. Russia did not agree to withdraw its remaining 2,000 troops until Estonia acquiesced to some of its terms. The two countries struck a deal in July 1994 with Russian troops leaving the following month.[71] Per the agreements with each Baltic country, Russian troops no longer reside nor have they intervened militarily in the region.

Russian Military Status, Mid-2000s

Despite scoring a political victory in the Second Chechen War and restoring some credibility to the Russian military, reform implementation was slow. The two most significant obstacles hampering a military transformation were money and the military's high-command conservatism.[72] Putin understood that the former restriction demanded efforts be made to

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[66] James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia After the Cold War* (Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 171.
[67] Steven Erlanger, "Russia to Complete Troop Pullout in Lithuania," *The New York Times [Online]*, August 31, 1993, http://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/31/world/russia-to-complete-troop-pullout-in-lithuania.html.
[68] For additional information on the negotiations and significance of the Skrunda radar site, see Richard Mole, *The Baltic States from the Soviet Union to the European Union: Identity, Discourse and Power in the Post-Communist Transition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (Routledge, 2012), 126-127; Goldgeier and McFaul, 171–73.
[69] Celestine Bohlen, "Russia and Latvians Agree On Troop Pullout Deadline," *The New York Times [Online]*, March 17, 1994, http://www.nytimes.com/1994/03/17/world/russia-and-latvians-agree-on-troop-pullout-deadline.html.
[70] Alessandra Stanley, "Russia Agrees to Full Withdrawal Of Troops in Estonia by Aug. 31," *The New York Times [Online]*, July 27, 1994, http://www.nytimes.com/1994/07/27/world/russia-agrees-to-full-withdrawal-of-troops-in-estonia-by-aug-31.html.
[71] Stanley.
[72] Galeotti, *The Modern Russian Army 1992–2016*, 20.

dramatically improve the Russian economy. By 2007, Russia's economy hit a six-year high of 7.9 percent growth, propelled by construction, manufacturing, and trade sectors.[73] Although the improved economy led to increased military budgets, the military reorganization Putin sought remained elusive. Russian military leadership was still ensconced with old Soviet ways. Putin saw local and internal armed conflicts as Russia's primary security concern, while the military high-command maintained an emphasis on external, large-scale warfare.[74] The Russo-Georgia conflict in 2008 broke this stalemate. Overall, while Russia's military capability improved, it was still weak compared to its Soviet and contemporary counterpart.

The NATO Factor

The Baltic states were offered a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2001 and integrated in 2004. The admission of the Baltic states was politically driven and created a military dilemma for the organization.[75] In testimony given to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on April 3, 2003, Stephen Larrabee, a senior political scientist at RAND, highlighted four glaring military issues. First, NATO planners had no viable model for defending the region. Second, the Baltic's lack of strategic depth and military forces prevented a realistic, organic defense against a Russian invasion. Third, unlike Cold War NATO members, no buffer existed between Russia and the Baltic states. Finally, Western reinforcements were further away, limiting a timely defensive reaction.[76] Mark Kramer, Harvard program director for Cold War

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[73] "Russia's Booming Economy," *The Economist*, June 18, 2007, http://www.economist.com/node/9354403.
[74] Marcel de Hass, "The Development of Russia's Security Policy, 1992– 2002," in *Russian Military Reform, 1992-2002*, ed. Anne C. Aldis and Roger N. McDermott (Routledge, 2004), 14.
[75] F. Stephen Larrabee, "The Baltic States and NATO Membership," Pub. L. No. CT-204, § US Senate Committe on Foreign Relations (2003), 7, https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT204.html.
[76] Larrabee, 7.

Studies, made a similar argument in 2002.[77] Despite these concerns, the West maintained Baltic inclusion would "bolster regional stability," "strengthen NATO's internal cohesion," and perceived Russia's ambivalence as a sign it would not explicitly challenge the move.[78]

In the late 1990s, Russia considered Baltic inclusion into NATO as a "red line."[79] However, in 2002, that stance softened as both Putin and his Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov, considered NATO expansion an "internal matter" and did not want to jeopardize efforts to "deepen cooperation with NATO."[80] On March 29, 2004, the Baltic states as well as Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia integrated with NATO. Putin simply shrugged off the expansion, claimed that his relationship with the organization was "developing positively," and that he had "no concerns about the expansion… [as] today's threats are such that the expansion of NATO will not remove them."[81] Other government officials did not share this sentiment. Putin's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, noted "the presence of American soldiers on our border has created a kind of paranoia in Russia."[82] Russia's State Duma overwhelmingly passed a resolution denouncing the expansion, deriding the deployment of NATO forces in the region, and calling on Putin "to adopt appropriate measures to guarantee Russia's security."[83] A majority of Russians held negative views of NATO

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[77] Mark Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement," *International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 732, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.00277.
[78] Russia's defense minister, Sergei Ivanov, stated "every state has the right to decide for itself which military bloc it will join" and that "every [Baltic] state has the sovereign right to decide whether to seek NATO membership. Kramer, 754–55.
[79] Larrabee, The Baltic States and NATO Membership, 5.
[80] Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States and Russia," 748; Larrabee, The Baltic States and NATO Membership, 5.
[81] Quoted in Anton La Guardia, "Nato Is No Problem in Baltics, Putin Tells the West," *The Telegraph [Online]*, April 2, 2004, sec. World, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/1458449/Nato-is-no-problem-in-Baltics-Putin-tells-the-West.html.
[82] Steven Lee Myers, "As NATO Finally Arrives on Its Border, Russia Grumbles," *The New York Times [Online]*, April 3, 2004, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/03/world/as-nato-finally-arrives-on-its-border-russia-grumbles.html.
[83] Myers; La Guardia, "Nato Is No Problem in Baltics, Putin Tells the West."

expansion. Polls conducted after the 2004 enlargement showed that 58 percent of the Russian populace believed NATO was an aggressive military bloc.[84] Despite the unfavorable view, Russia took no formal action against Estonia or other Baltic states related to joining NATO.

Russian Diaspora in Estonia

The total and proportional number of ethnic Russians living in Estonia have steadily declined since the early 1990s. The decline is also coincidental with the region's overall waning population numbers. In 1995, the Russian diaspora constituted 30.3 percent of the 1.6M people living in Estonia.[85] In 2007, out of 1.3M Estonians, only 25.6 percent were ethnic Russians.[86] By 2017, the total population stood at 1.25M with ethnic Russians comprising only 24.8 percent.[87] The cities of Tallinn, Narva, and Tartu maintain the largest concentration of ethnic Russians.

The primary source of consternation for Russians living in Estonia pertain to requirements for citizenship. In 1992, the Estonian government readopted its 1938 Citizenship Law which provided citizenship to any person born to an Estonian parent after 1940. The law also outlined naturalization standards that included a 2-year residency, a 1-year waiting period, and a language-test requirement.[88] These conditions led to the disenfranchisement of many ethnic Russians, the creation of a sizeable stateless-person population,[89]

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[84] Ekaterina Kuznetsova, "NATO: New Anti-Terrorist Organization?," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations* 50, no. 3 (2004): 22.
[85] *The World Factbook 1995* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1995), Retrieved from https://theodora.com/wfb/1995/estonia/estonia_people.html.
[86] United States. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2008* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2008), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/download/download-2008/index.html.
[87] United States. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2017* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2017), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/en.html.
[88] *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1999: Estonia* (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 1999), https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/1999/327.htm.
[89] A stateless person is someone denied a formal, legal nationality. Stateless people may have difficulty accessing education, healthcare, or employment. For more information about the

and a perpetual source of friction between Moscow and Tallinn.[90] As of 2017, citizenship problems persist, and the number of stateless persons stood at 82,000.[91]

Statelessness materializes in multiple ways for ethnic Russians living in Estonia. First, stateless persons may apply for an "alien" or gray passport. The passport allows the holder to travel among EU countries easily but prevents the individual from remaining in place beyond a few months.[92] Second, gray passport holders can vote in local elections but cannot be political-party members or hold public office.[93] Third, the Russian-speaking population works predominately in lower-paying blue-collar industries, experiences 1.5 to 2 times higher unemployment, and allegedly endures salary discrimination because of the language requirement.[94] Despite these issues, ethnic Russians in Estonia enjoy a comparatively better standard of living than that of their Russian counterparts.[95] As the Russian journalist Vyacheslav

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problems facing stateless individuals, see the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) website at http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/stateless-people.html.

[90] Tom Hundley, "Stateless In The Baltics: Russians Are New Refugees," *The Chicago Tribune [Online]*, November 26, 1994, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1994-11-26/news/9411260121_1_latvian-baltics-citizenship.

[91] Agency, *The World Factbook 2017*.

[92] Tacita Vero' and Matthew Dessem, "The Gray Zone," *Slate*, March 13, 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/roads/2017/03/many_ethnic_russians_in_estonia_have_gray_passports_live_in_legal_limbo.html.

[93] *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Estonia* (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 2016), http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dlid=265416.

[94] Woehrel, "Estonia," 2–3; Vero' and Dessem, "The Gray Zone"; *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Estonia*.

[95] There are multiple ways to measure a country's standard of living. First, the World Bank uses Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, purchasing power parity (PPP), which is the gross national income (GNI) converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. An international dollar has the same purchasing power over GNI as a U.S. dollar has in the United States. GNI is the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (fewer subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad. ***Since 2000, the Estonian GNI PPP has remained 12-28 percent higher than that of Russia's.***
Second, the CIA ranks countries standard of living by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, PPP, which is gross domestic product converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. GDP at purchaser's prices is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not

Ivanov summed up, "the situation of the Russian-speaking minority… is far from ideal… [however] the majority of Russians there prefer to live in Estonia" rather than live in Russia.[96]

Strategic Geographic Significance

Figure 2: Map of Estonia
Source: http://ontheworldmap.com/estonia/estonia-road-map.html

The Baltic states are situated between Russia's western border, north of Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast, north-west of Belarus, as well as south and east

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included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. ***Since 1995, the Estonian GDP PPP has fluctuated between 10-28 percent greater than Russia's.***
Finally, the United Nations gauges living standards through its International Human Development Indicators (HDI) index. This index is a composite statistic (composite index) of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators, which are used to rank countries into four tiers of human development. A country scores higher HDI when the lifespan is higher, the education level is higher, and the GDP per capita is higher. ***Since 2000, the Estonian HDI continuously remains 10 percent than that of Russia. Estonia currently ranks 30th while Russia ranks 49th in HDI score***.
The GNI PPP and GDP PPP data are at https://data.worldbank.org/. The UN HDI score is at http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries.

[96] Quoted in Paul Goble, "Another Defeat for Putin's 'Russian World' – Very Few Russians in Estonia Want to Leave," *Estonian World [Online]*, February 17, 2015, http://estonianworld.com/security/another-defeat-putins-russian-world-russians-estonia-want-leave/.

of the Baltic Sea. During the Cold War, the Baltics served as a part of the buffer between the Soviet Union and western Europe, but Russia lost access to territory and control of numerous regional warm-water ports with the collapse of the Soviet Union.[97] Icebreaker ships and the Kaliningrad Sea Port limits the impact this loss had on Russia. Since 2007, albeit under different circumstances, Russia maintained access to the Crimean port of Sevastopol on the Black Sea. In short, the Baltic region is not geographically insignificant, but numerous other ports spanning the Arctic, Baltic, and Black Sea reduce the need for Russia to seize the territory.

Analysis and Conclusion

Russia conducted the cyber attacks against Estonia as a retaliatory punishment for the relocation of the Bronze Statue. The rhetoric and actions taken by Russian officials before, during, and after the incident lead the author to this conclusion. The lack of a "smoking gun" or overwhelming attributable evidence does not disprove Russian involvement; it only highlights the difficulty in tracing cyber attacks to their origin with fidelity.[98]

Russia did not intervene with overt, conventional military force for multiple reasons. The most significant factor was Estonia's membership in NATO. Russia's *modus operandi* involves obfuscating the situation and disguising its actions to induce hesitation or inaction by its adversary. In 2007, NATO's mutual defense guarantee, Article 5, did not contain any verbiage about cyber warfare.[99] A Russian invasion or the annexation of an

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[97] Warm-water ports do not freeze in the wintertime and have significant geopolitical implications for those not in possession of them. Russia has a long history fighting for and maintaining these types of ports. Peter the Great made it the cornerstone of his international policy to seek warm-water port access for trading purposes. For more information concerning the Russian geopolitical interest in warm-water ports see Braden, Kathleen E., and Fred M. Shelley. *Engaging Geopolitics*. Routledge, 2014, 17-18; Cohen, Saul Bernard. *Geopolitics of the World System*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, 190.

[98] Steed, "The Strategic Implications of Cyber Warfare," 79.

[99] NATO updated their Cyber Defense Policy at the Wales Summit on 5 September 2014. The policy formally codified NATO's recognition that "international law applies to cyberspace, and that cyber defense is part of NATO's core task of collective defense. Therefore, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty on collective self-defense can be invoked in case of a cyber attack with

Estonian border city, such as Narva, would have been a definitive case for invoking Article 5. Additionally, such a move would have been incongruent with its *maskirovka* strategy. While the relocation of the statue was insulting, Russia is likely more prepared to fight over NATO expansion or missile defense.

Second, Russia had and still has no military presence in the region which would have provided a means for intervening militarily. Without some semblance of legitimacy, Russia could not invoke the "little green men" explanation as it did later in Crimea.[100]

Third, the ethnic Russian diaspora in Estonia is aware they enjoy a better quality of life than their Russian counterparts. Estonia's government has made a concerted effort to create a thriving economy and distance itself from the Soviet autocratic ways of the past. While its laws restrict "aliens" from holding office, voting in national elections, and mandate a thorough knowledge of the Estonian language for citizenship, "gray" passport holders can travel freely in the EU as well as Russia. Moreover, three standard-of-living indicators, the GNI per capita PPP, the GDP per capita PPP, and the UN's HDI index show Estonia ranks significantly higher than Russia. This decreases the likelihood that Russian efforts to stir civil unrest would find a receptive audience. Stephen Larrabee's testimony to Congress in 2003 is as true today as it was 15 years ago, "Moscow has much less influence in the Baltic states today than it did five or ten years ago."[101]

Fourth, the history of Russia and Estonia dates to the 18th century, but Russia does not view Estonia and its people as its own. Before WWII, Estonians made up roughly 90 percent of the total populace. Once the Soviets reclaimed the country from Germany in 1944, they began the "Sovietization" or "Russification" process.

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effects comparable to those of a conventional armed attack." For the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) press release, see "NATO Summit Updates Cyber Defence Policy." NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE), October 24, 2014. https://www.ccdcoe.org/nato-summit-updates-cyber-defence-policy.

[100] Galeotti, "'Hybrid War' and 'Little Green Men': How It Works, and How It Doesn't," 159.

[101] Larrabee, The Baltic States and NATO Membership, 4.

As shown in Table 1, the USSR's Cold War policies significantly increased the total number and relative proportion of Russians living in Estonia, as compared to the early 20th century. Despite the large Russian diaspora, Russia's connection to the Baltics is relatively weak.

Table 1: Ethnic Estonians and Russian Demographics

Census/CIA Factbook	1934	1959	1989	1995	2007	2018
Total	1.126M	1.197M	1.566M	1.625M	1.315M	1.251M
Ethnic Estonians	87.7%	74.6%	61.5%	61.5%	67.9%	68.7%
Ethnic Russians	-	-	-	30.3%	25.6%	24.8%

Source: Created by the author using historical census data and CIA Factbooks

Samuel Huntington explained the divide in his *Clash of Civilizations* thesis. Huntington argued that the dissolution of the Soviet Union ushered in a new era for war's causation and posited conflict would arise between nations and groups of different civilizations rather than ideological or economic factors.[102] He explained the civilization dividing line between eastern and western Europe stems from the 1500 AD eastern boundary of Western Christianity.[103] The dividing line separates the Baltic states from Russia, while keeping Georgia and Ukraine aligned with Moscow.[104] Although the 2008 Russo-Georgia conflict and annexation of Crimea in 2014 illustrate the weakness of Huntington's thesis, the illustration is helpful in explaining the lack of closeness between the Baltics and Russia.

[102] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22, https://doi.org/10.2307/20045621.
[103] Huntington, 30.
[104] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon and Schuster, 2007), 26–27.

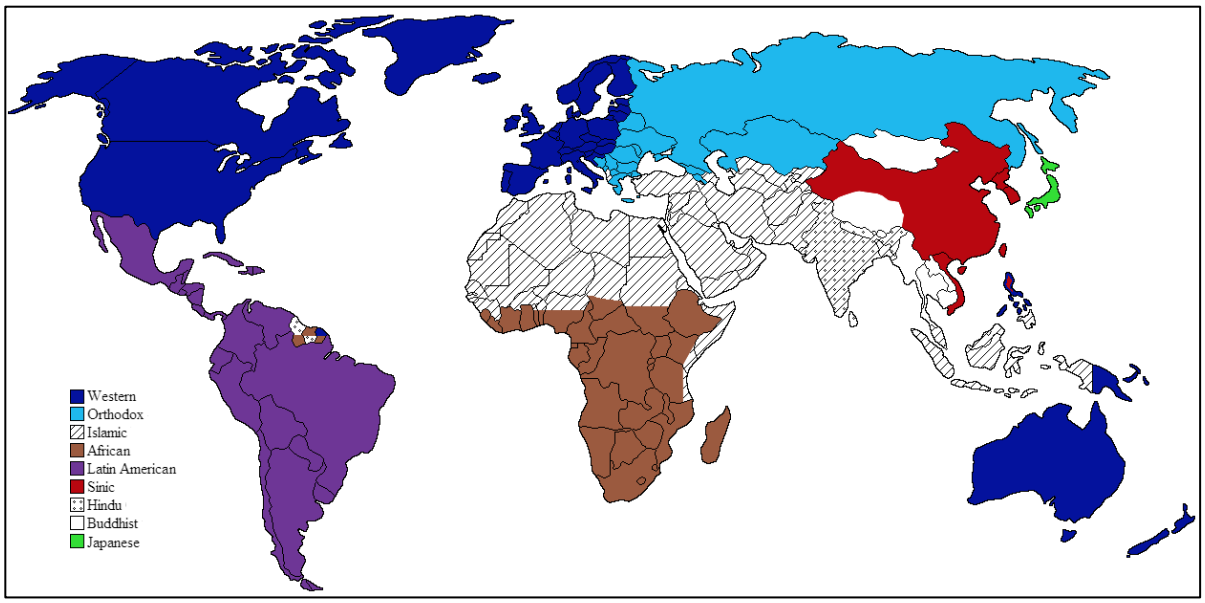

Figure 3: Huntington's Post-Cold War World Civilization Map
Source: Adapted from Huntington's The Clash of Civilizations

Finally, the strategic geographic significance of the region is an insufficient cause for an Russian overt, conventional military-force intervention. Although the forceful acquisition of the Baltic states may provide a buffer from the West, the move would also serve as a catalyst for war which is a counterproductive action. As mentioned earlier, the use of overt force is a clear violation of Estonia's sovereignty and well within NATO's Article 5 parameters. Additionally, the Baltic warm-water ports are of some strategic value as they increase the logistical throughput capacity for Russia; however, these new ports would not increase Russia's access to the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, Russia possesses ports in the Arctic, Baltic, and Black Sea, reducing the need to acquire additional ports.

Chapter 3

Russo-Georgia Conflict, 2008

NATO enlargement "is a direct threat to the security of our country… we have heard promises previously on the subject of expansion, but for us, there is no clarity about NATO's future intentions."

Vladimir Putin, Russian President, April 2008

In accordance with the Russian Constitution, I, as the president of the Russian Federation, am obliged to defend the lives and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they may be. The logic of moves taken by us is dictated by these circumstances. We will not leave unpunished the deaths of our compatriots. The perpetrators will be punished.

Dmitry Medvedev, Russian President, August 2008

The Incident

Russo-Georgia tensions went from simmer to boil in July 2008. On June 30, after multiple bombings across its breakout region, Abkhazia's foreign minister Sergei Shamba threatened to shut down the de facto border crossing between itself and Georgia.[1] Abkhazia blamed Georgian "special services" for attempting to "disrupt Abkhazia's tourist season."[2] On July 3, an explosion in the South Ossetian village of Dmenisi killed a local police official.[3] Later that day, the region's head of provisional administration, Dimitry Sanakoyev, escaped an apparent assassination attempt after his convoy rolled over a mine while traveling through a conflict zone;[4] three Georgian policemen were injured in the incident as well.[5] The following day, July 4, Georgian forces fired mortar

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[1] Luke Harding, "Abkhazia Blames Georgia for Bomb Blasts," *The Guardian [Online]*, June 30, 2008, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/30/russia.georgia; the bombing locations included the Sukhumi railway (18 Jun), the resort town of Gagra (29 Jun), and the breakout region's capital, Sukhumi (30 Jun).
[2] Harding.
[3] Johanna Popjanevski, "From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali: The Path to War in Georgia," in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia,* by Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (Routledge, 2015), 148.
[4] Popjanevski, 148.
[5] Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia* (Routledge, 2015), 252.

rounds into the Sarabuki heights, a strategic mountain location, killed three and wounded eleven people.[6] The crisis continued to unfold when, on July 8,[7] Russia flew four fighter aircraft over South Ossetia to "cool hotheads"[8] and "take urgent and active measures to prevent bloodshed and keep the situation within peaceful bounds."[9] According to a Central Asia-Caucasus Institute report, the incident was the first Georgian airspace violation acknowledged by Russia.[10] Georgia responded on July 10 by recalling its ambassador from Moscow for "consultations."[11]

During the latter half of the month, Russian and Georgian forces conducted regional military exercises. On July 15, Georgia's "Immediate Response" exercise included 600 Georgian military personnel, 1,000 US troops, and token forces from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine.[12] Held at Vaziani air base near Tbilisi, Immediate Response was an annual interoperability exercise designed to increase "security cooperation" between the US and its coalition

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[6] Gordon M. Hahn, "The Making of Georgian- Russian Five- Day August War: A Chronology, June– August 8, 2008" (2008). www.russiaotherpointsofview.com/ files/ Georgia_ Russian_ War_ TIMELINE.doc; cited in Gerard Toal, *Near Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 157.
[7] Toal, 164.
[8] Quoted in Svante E. Cornell, Johanna Popjanevski, and Niklas Nilsson, *Russia's War in Georgia: Causes and Implications for Georgia and the World* (Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University, 2008), 11.
[9] Quoted in Matthew Weaver, "Russia Admits Flying Jets over Breakaway Georgian Republic," *The Guardian [Online]*, July 10, 2008, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/10/georgia.russia.
[10] Cornell, Popjanevski, and Nilsson, *Russia's War in Georgia: Causes and Implications for Georgia and the World*, 11.
[11] Guy Faulconbridge and Margarita Antidze, "Georgia Recalls Envoy over Russian Jet Overflight," *Reuters*, July 10, 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-russia/russia-flexes-muscles-in-caucasus-as-u-s-urges-calm-idUSL1027316820080710; Jim Nichol, "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests" (Washington, DC: Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service, October 24, 2008), 4, http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA490073.
[12] Nichol, "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia," October 24, 2008, 4; "U.S. Troops Start Training Exercise in Georgia," *Reuters*, July 15, 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-usa-exercises/u-s-troops-start-training-exercise-in-georgia-idUSL1556589920080715.

partners.[13] Comparatively, Russia's exercise[14] in 2008 was officially billed as a "counter-terrorism" operation, involved 8,000 Russian troops, and was conducted alongside the Russia-Georgia border in the Greater Caucasus mountains.[15] The "counter-terrorism" narrative, however, does not withstand scrutiny from skeptics who claimed that Kavkaz 2008 was merely a cover for Russian military mobilization and buildup in the region.[16]

Contrary to official declarations and according to the Russian Defense Ministry's website, the goal of the exercise was to perform a "peace enforcement" operation.[17] During the exercise, participants received leaflets entitled "Soldier! Know your probable enemy!" which explicitly described Georgian forces.[18] As the exercise progressed, Russian forces fortified positions along the border. On July 18, the 76th Pskov Airborne Division established itself on the Roki and Mamisson passes while the Volgograd Infantry Division deployed to Krasnodar Kray.[19] On July 20, an infantry battalion entered the

[13] Vicken Cheterian, "The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars," *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 164, https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930903056768; Capt. Bryan Woods, "Security Cooperation Exercise Immediate Response 2008 Begins with Official Ceremony in Republic of Georgia," Government, www.army.mil, July 17, 2008, https://www.army.mil/article/10953/security_cooperation_exercise_immediate_response_2008_begins_with_official_ceremony_in_republic_of_g.

[14] In 2006, Russia began the "Kavkaz" exercises as a demonstration of regional Russian force. The exercise's scale increased annually but, overall, the objectives were similar. For further details, see Anton Lavrov, "Timeline of Russian-Georgian Hostilities in August 2008," in *The Tanks of August*, ed. Ruslan Pukhov (Moscow: Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, 2010), 41-42.

[15] Vladimir Mukhin, "Voinstviushe Mirortvortsi," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta [Online]*, July 18, 2008, http://www.ng.ru/regions/2008-07-18/1_peacemakers.html; Popjanevski, "From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali: The Path to War in Georgia," 148.

[16] George T Donovan Jr, "Russian Operational Art in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Army War College, March 25, 2009), 11–25, http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA500627.

[17] "Caucasus 2008," Russian Defense Ministry website, 15 July 2008, www.mil.ru/eng/1866/12078/details/index.shtml?id=47629; quoted in Andrei Illarionov, "The Russian Leadership's Preparation for War, 1999–2008," in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, by Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (Routledge, 2015), 71.

[18] Illarionov, 71.

[19] Illarionov, 71–72.

lower part of the Kodori Gorge.[20] Several days later, on July 25, a special medical detachment established a field hospital, which remained in place "at the request of local authorities," after the exercise concluded.[21] The Kavkaz exercise ended on August 2. The majority of the Russian forces re-deployed to their permanent bases, while the medical detachment and two reinforced motorized rifle battalions remained near the South Ossetia border.[22] The rifle battalions consisted of 1,500 soldiers, 14 T-72B battle tanks, 16 2S3 Akatsiya 152mm self-propelled howitzers, all supported by Russian aviation.[23] If hostilities erupted, their mission was to help the already-present, small Russian peacekeeping force and prevent Georgian forces from advancing while reinforcements deployed from Russia.[24] The lingering Russian troop presence combined with increasing tensions set the stage for a broadened confrontation.

The 2008 Russo-Georgia war officially began on August 7 when "heavy fighting" erupted in the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali.[25] Georgian officials claimed that they escalated hostilities for two reasons. First, the villages of Avnevi and Nuli, Georgian settlements in South Ossetia, were reported "under attack" and subjected to "merciless bombing" from Ossetian separatists and Russian mercenaries.[26] Second, Georgian intelligence asserted that Russian "armored vehicles, tanks and military trucks" entered the Roki Tunnel and were traveling towards Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital;[27]

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[20] Illarionov, 72.
[21] Illarionov, 72.
[22] Lavrov, "Timeline of Russian-Georgian Hostilities in August 2008," 43–45.
[23] Lavrov, 43–45.
[24] The Russian peacekeeping force consisted of lightly armored soldiers numbering from 500, in South Ossetia, to 2,300, in Abkhazia. Lavrov, 39-44.
[25] Heidi Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, vol. 1 (Council of the European Union, 2009), 5, http://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/IIFFMCG_Volume_I2.pdf.
[26] "Tbilisi sending troops, tanks to South Ossetia," *Kavkas Press*, August 7, 2008, https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_0_0_43/content/Display/PRINCE/CEP20080807950325.
[27] Heidi Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, vol. 3 (Council of the European Union, 2009), 24, http://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/IIFFMCG_Volume_III1.pdf.

Russia denied those claims. Russian officials maintained that Georgia's use of force resulted in thousands of civilian deaths, displaced more than 30,000 South Ossetians, and precipitated its intervention.[28] Notwithstanding the exaggerated casualty count and rhetoric of Russian officials, both the US Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the EU's IIFFMCG[29] concluded that the crisis escalated with Georgia's military mobilization and sustained artillery barrage into Tskhinvali.[30] However, the rapidity and magnitude of Russia's military response cannot be overlooked. The enormity of Russia's invasion suggests Moscow made long-term preparations for the Georgian conflict.

Political scientists Ariel Cohen and Robert Hamilton argue Russia planned the war to annex Abkhazia, weaken Georgian President Saakashvili's regime, and prevent NATO enlargement.[31] Robert Kagan, a US historian and foreign-policy analyst, asserts that Russia "precipitated a war against Georgia by encouraging South Ossetian rebels [and Saakashvili] fell into Putin's trap."[32] Despite the plethora of competing causes for Russian involvement, then Russian President Medvedev declared that his country's intervention was "in accordance with the Constitution and the Federal legislature" and that he had to "protect the rights and dignity of the Russian citizens anywhere where they

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[28] Heidi Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, vol. 2 (Council of the European Union, 2009), 188, http://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/IIFFMCG_Volume_II1.pdf; Peter Finn, "Russia-Georgia War Intensifies," August 10, 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/09/AR2008080900238.html.

[29] The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia was set up on December 2, 2008, by the Council of the European Union. The group's objective was to investigate the origins and the conduct of the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation.

[30] Nichol, "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia," October 24, 2008, 5; Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, 2009, 1:10.

[31] Ariel Cohen and Robert E. Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 16.

[32] Robert Kagan, "Putin Makes His Move," *Washington Post [Online]*, August 11, 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/10/AR2008081001871.html.

might be… we will not tolerate unpunished deaths of our countrymen; the guilty will get deserved punishment."[33]

The Georgian government and military were unprepared for the scale or scope of the massive Russian invasion. Georgia was ready for an offensive war with either Abkhazia or South Ossetia, not large-scale combat against a "superior, heavily armed, and air-supported" invasion on both fronts.[34] Table 2 illustrates Russia's numerical superiority. Physical force, however, was not the only tactic employed by Moscow during the conflict.

Table 2: Comparison of Forces in Georgian War Theater

	Russia	Georgia
Manpower (total Defense Ministry troops)	107,000	21,150
Main battle tanks	800	128
Armored infantry fighting vehicles and personnel carriers	2,000+	135
Artillery	900	109
Short-range ballistic missiles (SS-21, SS-26)	36+	0
Military aircraft (fixed-wing, all types)	400+	17
Helicopters (Army and Air Force)	147	35
Naval vessels (total)	122 (Black Sea Fleet)	8
South Ossetian militias	1,500	–
Abkhazian militias	23,000 (including reserves)	–
Cossacks	Several hundred	–
Chechen "East" Battalion	800–1,500	–

Source: Extracted from the Heritage Foundation's "Russian Forces in the Georgian War" Report.

In a prelude to its use of force and a repeat performance of its operations in Estonia the year prior, on August 8, Russia unleashed a cyber attack upon Georgian websites. First, the attacks defaced websites of prominent Georgian

[33] Dimitri Medvedev, "Ya Obyazan Zachitit Jizn Rossiiskix Grajdan (I Am Obliged to Protect the Lives of the Russian Citizens)," *Rusl News [Online]*, August 8, 2008, http://russianews.ru/project/16843/16851, quoted in Rick Fawn and Robert Nalbandov, "The Difficulties of Knowing the Start of War in the Information Age: Russia, Georgia and the War over South Ossetia, August 2008," *European Security* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 57–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2012.656601.

[34] Pavel Felgenhauer, "After August 7: The Escalation of the Russia-Georgia War," in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, by Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (Routledge, 2015), 165.

officials', including President Saakashvili, and those of Georgia's National Bank and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Second, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks shut down various public- and private-sector sites, including the Georgian parliament, news media outlets, and Georgia's largest commercial bank. Finally, the cyber attack included distributing malware to "deepen the ranks" and volume of the attacks.[35] The cyber attacks denied the Georgian government's ability to distribute timely information to its people or the world while simultaneously allowing Russian officials and media outlets to shape the strategic narrative. The narrative consisted of claims that the Russian intervention was a peacekeeping effort and an attempt to prevent a humanitarian crisis.[36] The combination of Russia's synchronized cyber attack and vast conventional military force denied the Georgian military any chance of recapturing the regions.[37]

Historic and Situational Context

Relationship with Russia

Georgia's national identity originated in the 4th century, its time as a Caucasus regional power occurred during the 11th through 13th centuries, and its inclusion into the Russian empire happened in the 18th century.[38] The Georgian kingdom weakened after years of relentless fighting with the Persian empire. On April 11, 1801, Russia's Council of the Emperor viewed the declining monarchy and its inability to prevent civil conflict as a "menace" to

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[35] Rid, *Cyber War Will Not Take Place*, 8.
[36] Ronald J. Deibert, Rafal Rohozinski, and Masashi Crete-Nishihata, "Cyclones in Cyberspace: Information Shaping and Denial in the 2008 Russia–Georgia War," *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 9, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611431079; Timothy L. Thomas, "The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises Its Five-Day War in South Ossetia," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 22, no. 1 (March 4, 2009): 52, https://doi.org/10.1080/13518040802695241.
[37] Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 16.
[38] Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, 2009, 2:2.

the Russian empire's southern borders.[39] Several of Russian Emperor Paul's advisors warned that Russia had enough territory to maintain its great-power position and should not get involved in the affairs of its neighbors unless there was some great imperative.[40] After years of debate and the death of Georgia's King Giorgi, Russia formally decreed the annexation of the Georgian Kingdom on January 18, 1801.[41] As the skeptics had cautioned, the incorporation of Georgia led to costly wars with the Persian and Ottoman Empires for several decades.[42]

The Bolshevik Revolution led to the collapse of the Russian Empire and Georgian independence from 1917 through 1921. Despite their new-found freedom and disdain for Bolshevik ideology, Georgian politicians were reluctant to break ties with Russia. Georgian contempt for the Bolsheviks resulted in the merciless crushing of several uprisings in the Ossetian region.[43] Unable to seize power on their own, the Georgian Bolsheviks required external assistance to succeed. Fortunately for the Bolsheviks, Soviet expansionist policies, aimed at controlling the lands of the former Russian Empire led, to a Soviet invasion in 1921 and reincorporation of Georgia as a Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) in 1936.[44]

The Soviet occupation of Georgia was brutal. Between 1921 and 1951, the Soviets executed over 50,000 ethnic Georgians. During the Stalin purges of 1936 through 1951,[45] another 150,000 were expelled or murdered.[46] During

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[39] N. Gvosdev, *Imperial Policies and Perspectives towards Georgia, 1760–1819* (Springer, 2000), 87.
[40] Gvosdev, 89.
[41] Gvosdev, 85.
[42] Gvosdev, 91.
[43] Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, 2009, 2:3-4.
[44] Michael Kort, *The Soviet Colossus: History and Aftermath* (M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 154; Barbara A. West, *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania* (Infobase Publishing, 2010), 236.
[45] The irony of Georgia's severe oppression was that Stalin was born and raised in the small Georgian town of Gori.
[46] West, *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania*, 236.

WWII, out of a population of 3.5M, Georgia mobilized 700,000 of its citizens for service in the Red Army; half of them perished.[47] On December 25, 1951, 20,000 Georgians were resettled in isolated regions of Northern Central Asia for allegedly conspiring against the Soviet government; many of them died.[48] While the oppression experienced by Georgians was severe, it was not unique compared to other Soviet-ruled countries. Just as it did in other countries, Soviet rule ushered in positive developments in the economy, science, and culture. Georgia rapidly transformed from an agrarian nation to an industrial and urban society, its transportation infrastructure was repaired and expanded, and a universal mandatory education system was implemented.[49] However, under Soviet rule, Georgia ranked amongst the poorest of the 15 Soviet republics.[50] The deterioration of the Soviet Union and the rise of Georgian nationalism in the late 1980s provided hope to many in the Caucasus that independence would better their situation.

On April 9, 1991, the Georgian Parliament declared its independence and began the country's second attempt at governing as a democratic republic. Initially, the relationship between Tbilisi and Moscow was tense. Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's anti-Russian agenda and nationalistic policies not only annoyed Moscow, it also antagonized ethnic minorities.[51] In the fall of 1991, the increasingly authoritarian rule led to the resignation of key government members, civil unrest, and massive demonstrations in the capital city. Unable to prevent the escalating protests, Gamsakhurdia declared a state of emergency and ordered his National Guard to crack down on the opposition forces.[52] Tengiz Kitovani, the commander of the National Guard, defied these

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[47] Alexander Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 39-40.
[48] Mikaberidze, 42.
[49] Mikaberidze, 40.
[50] Mikaberidze, 43.
[51] Mikaberidze, 305.
[52] Mikaberidze, 47.

orders and withdrew the majority of his forces to the outskirts of Tbilisi.[53] In January 1992, after months of fighting, Jaba Ioseliani's *Mkhedrioni* paramilitary units staged a successful military coup.[54] The military junta attempted to legalize its coup by inviting Eduard Shevardnadze back to govern the country.[55] In March 1992, Shevardnadze became the head of the Georgian State Council.[56]

The escalating conflicts with the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia amplified the internal turmoil already facing the new Shevardnadze government. In the spring of 1992, the continuous fighting between Georgian and South Ossetian separatists intensified, prompting Shevardnadze to request Russian assistance.[57] Russia mediated the Sochi Agreement ceasefire on June 24.[58] One month later, government officials of Abkhazia declared its sovereignty, leading Georgia to dispatch its National Guard on August 14 to quell the insurrection.[59] A major war broke out, leading to the expulsion of 300,000 Georgians and other Abkhazian residents through "widespread ethnic cleansing."[60] Sensing an opportunity to reclaim power, Zviad Gamsakhurdia returned to Georgia. Pro-Gamsakhurdia forces delayed Georgian

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[53] Mikaberidze, 305.
[54] Mikaberidze, 139.
[55] Shevardnadze was a prominent figure in Georgian politics as far back as the 1960s. In 1972, he became the first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party. During the 1970s, Shevardnadze notoriously treated dissidents harshly, catching the attention of the Kremlin. In 1976, he was appointed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and two years later, was promoted to the rank of candidate member of the Soviet Politburo. Between 1985 to 1989, Shevardnadze served as the USSR's minister of foreign affairs. His moderate political views, compared to Communist hard-liners, drew the ire of powerful Soviet officials. In December 1990, Shevardnadze resigned in protest amidst rumors of a possible coup. His protest and suspicions were correct. For a synopsis of Shevardnadze's life, see Mikaberidze, 575-579. For a detailed analysis of Shevardnadze's political accomplishments, see Carolyn Ekedahl and Melvin A. Goodman, *Wars of Eduard Shevardnadze* (Penn State Press, 2010).
[56] Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia*, 48.
[57] Nikola. Cvetkovski, "The Georgian–South Ossetian Conflict" (Aalborg University, 1999), http://www.caucasus.dk/publication5.htm. Section 4.2, last paragraph.
[58] Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia*, 583.
[59] Marcelo G. Kohen, *Secession: International Law Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115.
[60] Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia*, 48.

reinforcements to the Abkhazian front and obliged Shevardnadze to ask again for Russian assistance.[61] At the cost of re-orientating Georgian foreign-policy, Russian troops helped end both the Gamsakhurdia insurgency and Abkhazian conflict in 1993. Later in the year, Shevardnadze agreed to join Russia's Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[62]

During Shevardnadze's decade-long tenure as the country's leader, Georgia's geopolitical position shifted from being "quasi-dominated" by Russia to one of the largest beneficiaries of US aid.[63] The price of Russian assistance in Abkhazia came in the form of the Moscow Peace Agreement. Signed in April 1994, the agreement granted Russian "peacekeepers" access to the breakout regions.[64] In 1995, after realizing a close and profitable relationship with Moscow was not possible, Shevardnadze seized on the US's renewed regional interest in the Caucasus by promoting "a group of young and promising Western-educated politicians."[65] One of these politicians was Mikheil Saakashvili. As the 1990s ended, Russia's geopolitical power eroded from the second Chechen conflict, drawing Georgia further away from Moscow and closer to the West.[66]

Rose Revolution

The Rose Revolution began in November 2003, symbolized by the long-stemmed roses protesters carried, and prompted the end of President Shevardnadze's 8-year tenure. In 2003, Georgia held parliamentary elections with the results foreshadowing the upcoming 2005 presidential election.[67] The

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[61] Mikaberidze, 49.
[62] Tagliavini, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, 2009, 2:5.
[63] Thornike Gordadze, "Georgian-Russian Relations in the 1990s," in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, by Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (Routledge, 2015), 47.
[64] Gordadze, 35.
[65] Gordadze, 38.
[66] Gordadze, 40.
[67] Niklas Nilsson, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: The Break with the Past," in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, by Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (Routledge, 2015), 87.

presidential election was significant because it decided Shevardnadze's successor. Not content to leave anything to chance, Shevardnadze's "For New Georgia" government bloc blatantly rigged the election through ballot stuffing, bussing voters to multiple polling locations, and pre-marking ballots.[68] The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) concluded "the elections demonstrated that the authorities lacked political will to conduct a genuine democratic process. This resulted in widespread and systematic election fraud during and after election day."[69] In a cross-national study on electoral-system design and electoral misconduct, Sarah Birch, a political-science professor at King's College London, concluded that the 2003 Georgian parliamentary election rated a five-out-of-five on the Electoral Misconduct Index (EMI).[70] As reports revealed the extent of election fraud, government-opposition factions joined forces and led anti-government rallies in downtown Tbilisi.[71] In the weeks following the election, rallies spread and intensified. Mikheil Saakashvili emerged as the leader of the anti-government movement due to his strong results in the elections and role in the rallies.[72]

Internal and international pressure grew after the election. The apparent fraud committed by Shevardnadze's party led the US State Department to condemn the vote and state on November 20, "the results do not accurately reflect the will of the Georgian people, but instead reflect vote fraud. We are

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[68] Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Georgia Parliamentary Elections 2 November 2003: OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Part 1* (Warsaw, Poland, 2004), 17, https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/22206?download=true.
[69] Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 1.
[70] In her study, Dr. Birch's dependent variable was the level of misconduct in a given election, as evaluated by the OSCE following the Copenhagen Document, and measured on a 5-point scale. If a country fully complied with the Copenhagen Document, it received a score of one. If a country was "fundamentally flawed," it received a score of five. For further information, see Sarah Birch, "Electoral Systems and Electoral Misconduct," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 12 (December 1, 2007): 1543, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006292886.
[71] Nilsson, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: The Break with the Past," 88.
[72] Nilsson, 88.

deeply disappointed in these results and in Georgia's leadership."[73] The US's statement was unprecedented at that time. It was the first time the US "openly accused the leadership of a former Soviet republic of rigging an election."[74]

Emboldened by the support, Saakashvili demanded the immediate resignation of Shevardnadze on November 21, and stated he would mobilize supporters to prevent the new parliament from convening.[75] True to his word, on November 22, during Shevardnadze's opening remarks to the new parliament, Saakashvili led a protest into the chamber with a red rose clutched in his hand demanding that the president resign.[76] Shevardnadze was promptly rushed out of the building by his bodyguards, fled to his suburban residence, and declared a state of emergency.[77] After failing to secure the support of the security forces, on November 23, President Shevardnadze resigned.[78] Two months later, on January 4, 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili won a virtually uncontested presidential election, carrying 96 percent of cast votes.[79]

Relationship with the United States

The US exhibited a "high level of concern" over Georgia's fate after establishing diplomatic relations in 1992.[80] Through 2004, the US donated $1.4B in aid to the country, around $113M annually, while the EU provided $490M.[81] To bolster Georgia's participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace

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[73] Quoted in Seth Mydans, "Foes of Georgian Leader Storm Into Parliament Building," *The New York Times [Online]*, November 23, 2003, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/23/world/foes-of-georgian-leader-storm-into-parliament-building.html.
[74] Liz Fuller, "Shevardnadze's Resignation Resolves Constitutional Deadlock," RFE/RL Caucasus Report, November 24, 2003, https://web.archive.org/web/20061207022731/www.rferl.org/reports/caucasus-report/2003/11/41-241103.asp.
[75] Fuller.
[76] Charles H. Fairbanks, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," *Journal of Democracy; Baltimore* 15, no. 2 (April 2004): 116.
[77] Fairbanks, 116.
[78] Nilsson, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: The Break with the Past," 88; Fairbanks, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," 117.
[79] Nilsson, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: The Break with the Past," 89.
[80] Jim Nichol, "Georgia [Republic]: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests" (Washington, DC: Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service, March 11, 2005), 1.
[81] Nichol, 1.

(PfP) activities, total US aid in 2006 nearly quadrupled to $411M.[82] The increased regional attentiveness was attributable to US economic and military interests.

In 2006, a Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations concluded that Georgia was "a key conduit [for] Caspian Basin energy resources [flowing] to the West," which enabled the US and Europe to diversify their energy sources.[83] The South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline, and Western Route Export Pipeline (WREP) are the three major energy conduits transiting the Central Asia region. Combined, they can transport 25B cubic meters of gas per year, export 1.1M barrels of oil per day, and generate over $2B in direct investment to Georgia.[84] Comparatively, Iraq currently produces 4-5M barrels of oil per day.[85]

The US's focus on the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) was another significant factor in the strong relations between the US and Georgia. Given Russia's refusal to support Western "combat aircraft" access to its airspace, Georgia's geographic location facilitated the efficient movement of troops and heavy equipment.[86] Successful US and NATO efforts in Afghanistan relied upon

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[82] Nichol, 2; U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), "Foreign Aid Explorer: The Official Record of U.S. Foreign Aid," accessed February 24, 2018, https://explorer.usaid.gov/data.html.

[83] Quoted in Nichol, "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia," March 11, 2005, 1.

[84] "South Caucasus Pipeline Project," Corporate, British Petroleum (BP), Georgia, accessed February 25, 2018, https://www.bp.com/en_ge/bp-georgia/about-bp/bp-in-georgia/south-caucasus-pipeline--scp-.html; "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline," Corporate, British Petroleum (BP), Georgia, accessed February 25, 2018, https://www.bp.com/en_ge/bp-georgia/about-bp/bp-in-georgia/baku-tbilisi-ceyhan--btc--pipeline.html; "Western Route Export Pipeline (WREP)," Corporate, British Petroleum (BP), Georgia, accessed February 25, 2018, https://www.bp.com/en_ge/bp-georgia/about-bp/bp-in-georgia/western-route-export-pipeline--wrep-.html.

[85] Tom DiCristopher and Patti Domm, "Iraq Can Produce 5 Million Barrels a Day in Second Half of 2017, Oil Minister Says," News, CNBC, March 7, 2017, https://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/07/iraq-can-produce-5-million-barrels-a-day-in-second-half-of-2017-oil-minister-says.html.

[86] Svante E. Cornell, "Georgia after the Rose Revolution: Geopolitical Predicament and Implications for U.S. Policy" (Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, February 2007), 12, http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA464082.

overflight rights through the Caucasus.[87] Georgia was also among the top ten countries providing coalition forces for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).[88] When the Russo-Georgia conflict began in 2008, two of Georgia's elite light infantry battalions, roughly 2,000 soldiers, were deployed to Iraq, prompting the US to provide emergency airlift of those troops back to Tbilisi.[89] A month after the conflict, US President George W. Bush proposed a $1B humanitarian and economic-assistance package to help rebuild Georgia but did not commit the US to re-equipping Tbilisi's ravaged military.[90]

Relationship with Abkhazia and South Ossetia

During the Cold War, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were autonomous oblasts (AO) of the Soviet Union, but under the jurisdiction of the Georgian SSR.[91] Although the peoples of both regions considered the arrangement a "slight," it was not a significant source of tension until the 1980s.[92] Just as ethnic Georgians sought their independence from the Soviet Union, so too did the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Ossetians desired either independence from Georgia or joining the newly formed Russian Federation, but Tbilisi granted neither request. Abkhazia went one step further and officially declared its independence in 1992, prompting Georgian officials to send troops to the region and leading to a large-scale military conflict. A UN-

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[87] Svante E. Cornell, "Georgia after the Rose Revolution: Geopolitical Predicament and Implications for U.S. Policy" (Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, February 2007), iii, http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA464082.
[88] Nichol, "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia," March 11, 2005, 2.
[89] Ruslan Pukhov, ed., *The Tanks of August* (Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, 2010), 64.
[90] Steven Lee Myers, "White House Unveils $1 Billion Georgia Aid Plan," *The New York Times*, September 3, 2008, sec. Europe, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/04/world/europe/04cheney.html.
[91] ICG Europe, "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia" (Tbilisi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, November 26, 2004), 2.
[92] Scott Littlefield, "Citizenship, Identity and Foreign Policy: The Contradictions and Consequences of Russia's Passport Distribution in the Separatist Regions of Georgia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 8 (October 1, 2009): 1465, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130903134848.

and Russian-brokered peace deal ended the affair, which led to Russian peacekeepers remaining in both regions until the Russo-Georgia war of 2008.[93]

Russian Military Presence

Immediately following the Cold War, Russia maintained 1,600 military facilities and an estimated 15,000 troops in Georgia territory.[94] In 1995, excluding the "peacekeepers" in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the two governments agreed to a complete Russian military withdrawal of the country. In 1999, only four bases remained: Vaziani, located south of Tbilisi; Gudauta, located in Abkhazia; Batumi, located in the Adjara region; and Akhalkalaki, located near the Georgia-Armenia border. Russia departed Vaziani in 2001 and Gudauta in 2002.[95] In 2005, the Georgian legislature called for the closure of the remaining two bases by the summer of 2006 or it would place restrictions on Russian operations. Notwithstanding the renewed pressure from the Georgian government, US President George W. Bush's visit with Russian President Putin spurred Moscow to agree to an official deadline. In the summer of 2007, Russia closed its base in Akhalkalaki and redeployed its forces from the Batumi base later that year.[96] At the start of the Russo-Georgia conflict, the only formal Russian military presence in Georgia was the "peacekeepers" in both breakout regions.

Russian Diaspora in Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia

Since the declaration of Georgia independence in 1991, the number of ethnic Russians living in the country proper has never been significant. In 1992, the Russian diaspora constituted 5.1 percent of the 5.6M people living in

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[93] Littlefield, 1465–67.
[94] Kakachia Kornely, "End of Russian Military Bases in Georgia: Social, Political and Security Implications of Withdrawal," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no. 2 (50) (2008): 52.
[95] Jim Nichol, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Security Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests" (Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service, March 11, 2010), 58, http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA521230.
[96] Nichol, 59.

Georgia.[97] In 2008, out of 4.6M Georgians, only 1.5 percent were ethnic Russians.[98] By 2017, the total population stood at 4.9M with ethnic Russians comprising 1.2 percent.[99] Even when comparing these numbers with census data from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, displayed in **Table *3*** and **Table *4***, ethnic Russians do not comprise more than 10 percent of the total population. In Abkhazia, the ethnic Russian populace decreased from 14.4 percent out of 525,000 total people, in 1989, to 9.2 percent out of 240,000 people in 2011.[100] In South Ossetia during the same period, ethnic Russians comprised only 2,000 out of the total population of 70,000 to 100,000.[101] Moscow overcomes these weak "ethnic" links through the policy of "passportification."[102]

[97] Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 1992* (Government Printing Office, 1992), https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/48/pg48-images.html.
[98] Agency, *The World Factbook 2008*.
[99] United States. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2017* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2017), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html.
[100] Ethno Kavkaz, 'Naselenie Respubliki Abkhaziya', available at: http://www.ethno-kavkaz.narod.ru/rnabkhazia.html; cited in Littlefield, "Citizenship, Identity and Foreign Policy," 1466.
[101] Ethno Kavkaz, 'Naselenie Respubliki Yuzhnaya Osetiya', available at: http://www.ethno-kavkaz.narod.ru/rnsossetia.html; BBC News, 27 August 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/3797729.stm; cited in Littlefield, 1465.
[102] "Passportification" or "passportization" describes a country's mass distribution of passports to foreign peoples, enabling the issuing country to claim that they have a responsibility-to-protect the passport holders. For additional information, see Paul A. Goble, "Russian 'Passportization,'" *Times Topics Blog* (blog), September 9, 2008, https://topics.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/09/russian-passportization/ or Toru Nagashima, "Russia's Passportization Policy toward Unrecognized Republics," *Problems of Post-Communism* 0, no. 0 (December 13, 2017): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2017.1388182.

Table 3: Population of Abkhazia

Year	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	2003	2011
Total	201,016	311,885	404,738	486,959	486,082	525,061	215,972	240,705
Abkhazian (%)	27.8	18	15.1	15.9	17.1	17.8	43.8	50.7
Armenian (%)	12.8	15.9	15.9	15.4	15.1	14.6	20.8	17.4
Georgian (%)	32.6	29.5	39.1	41	43.9	45.7	21.3	17.9
Russian (%)	6.2	19.3	21.4	19.1	16.4	14.4	10.8	9.2
Greek (%)	7	11.1	2.2	2.7	2.8	n/a	0.7	n/a
Ukrainian (%)	2.3	2.7	2.8	2.5	2.1	n/a	0.8	n/a
Other (%)	11	4	4	3	3	8	2	n/a

Source: Table adapted from Littlefield's (2009) "Citizenship, Identity and Foreign Policy," and data from Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (UNPO)

Table 4: Population of South Ossetia

Year	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	2007 (est.)	2015
Total	87,375	106,118	96,807	99,421	97,988	98,000	70,000	53,532
Ossetian (%)	69.1	68.1	65.8	66.5	66.4	66.2	64.3	89.9
Georgian (%)	26.9	25.9	27.5	28.3	28.8	29	25	7
Russian (%)	0.2	2	2.5	1.6	2.1	n/a	n/a	3.1
Other	3.8	4	4.2	3.6	2.7	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Table adapted from Littlefield's (2009) "Citizenship, Identity and Foreign Policy," and South Ossetia 2015 Census

Moscow's passportification policy created an "inter-governmental linkage" between itself and the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[103] Russia benefited from this policy in two ways. First, the policy strengthened Abkhazian and South Ossetian loyalty while simultaneously weakening their ties to Georgia. Second, it provided Moscow leaders a "responsibility-to-protect" mandate whenever it suited their interests.[104] Under the guise of protecting its citizens, Russia legitimized its actions in Georgia through Article

[103] Andre W. M. Gerrits and Max Bader, "Russian Patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Implications for Conflict Resolution," *East European Politics* 32, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 301–3, https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2016.1166104.
[104] Gerrits and Bader, 303.

51 of the UN Charter, which preserves the "inherent right of [the] individual" and "collective self-defense."[105]

The NATO Factor

Georgian officials continually sought stronger ties with Western countries throughout the 1990s but did not formally request NATO membership until the early 2000s. In 1992, Georgia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), a liaison program between Warsaw Pact states and NATO. Two years later, the Republic signed the PfP Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), intent on increasing its security, defense, and cooperation with NATO. In 1999 and within the PfP framework, Georgia provided "peacekeepers" for NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR).[106] Finally, while addressing the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in November 2002, President Shevardnadze declared that Georgia was "determined to be a full member of NATO" and ready to "work hard to prepare for this historic mission."[107]

NATO members warmly greeted Shevardnadze's declaration but were reluctant to extend Georgia a pathway to membership immediately. NATO's Secretary General, Lord Robertson, typified this sentiment in a speech delivered to the University of Tbilisi in May 2003, stating that "the road ahead is clear: [NATO and Georgia] must focus on closer cooperation… Georgia has certainly already made encouraging steps, but it needs to pursue the work that still lies ahead with the same enthusiasm and determination it has demonstrated so far."[108]

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[105] "UN Charter, Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of The Peace, and Acts of Aggression," United Nations, accessed March 2, 2018, http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vii/.
[106] "Relations with Georgia," NATO, January 16, 2018, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm.
[107] Eduard Shevardnadze, "Statement by President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze at the EAPC Summit" (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) Summit, Prague, Czech Republic, November 22, 2002), https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021122h.htm.
[108] Lord Robertson, "Statement by President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze at the EAPC Summit" (Tbilisi University, May 14, 2003), https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2003/s030514a.htm.

Consequently, after the Rose Revolution, President Saakashvili entered Georgia into NATO's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), focused on reforming the country's human rights, anti-corruption, and civil-military relations.[109] The relationship evolved further in 2006 when NATO launched an "Intensified Dialogue" with Georgian officials, outlining the expectations and processes required of the aspiring country to achieve membership.[110] The "Intensified Dialogue" infuriated Moscow, prompting a warning from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating, "the case of Georgia has a special character because of its geographical proximity to Russia and the obvious complexity of the Caucasian problems."[111]

In 2008, Georgia failed to obtain a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP), as alliance members postponed the decision until later that year. Inclusion opponents stressed Georgia's inability and lack of progress in resolving its two "frozen conflicts" with Abkhazia and South Ossetia as their chief concern.[112] However, alliance members seemed to send a message to Russia with a summit communiqué: "we agreed today that [Georgia and Ukraine] will become members of NATO."[113] The Russian ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, clearly articulated Moscow's sentiment towards Georgia and its aspirations to join NATO. In an interview with *Spiegel*, he stated that "we cannot stand by

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[109] Sverre Myrli, 'Viewing NATO from the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia', NATO Parliamentary Assembly (2007); cited in Bianca Szytniewski, "NATO Enlargement and Democratisation: Interlinked, or Not? The Cases of Poland, Ukraine and Georgia" (Utrecht University, 2008), 54, http://dspace.library.uu.nl.aufric.idm.oclc.org/handle/1874/33503.
[110] "Georgia Begins Intensified Dialogue with NATO," NATO, December 14, 2006, https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/12-december/e1214b.htm.
[111] Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zayavleniye Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii v svyazi s resheniyem Soveta NATO nachat intensivnyy dialog' s Gruziyey [Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in connection with the decision of the NATO Council to start 'intensive dialogue' with Georgia], 22 September 2006, www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/F65544CF295B3E15C32571F10039ED61; quoted in Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals," *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 406, https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2014.963965.
[112] Paul Gallis, "The NATO Summit at Bucharest, 2008," CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC, May 5, 2008), 4, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RS22847.html.
[113] Gallis, 5.

idly. Abkhazia and South Ossetia share close ties with the Caucasian peoples in Russian territory. The attempt to push Georgia into NATO is a provocation that could lead to bloodshed."[114] Putin was equally clear about Russia's displeasure with NATO's proclamation when he declared that NATO enlargement a "direct threat to the security of our country… we have heard promises previously on the subject of expansion, but for us, there is no clarity about NATO's future intentions."[115] Initially perceived as rhetoric, Rogozin's and Putin's statements foreshadowed the future Russo-Georgian conflict.

Strategic Geographic Significance

Figure 4: Map of Georgia
Source: http://ontheworldmap.com/georgia/abkhazia-and-south-ossetia-on-the-map-of-georgia.html

Georgia resides within the southern Caucasus region, bordering Russia and Turkey. Russia has always viewed the region as a de facto southern buffer

[114] Spiegel, Interview with Russia's Ambassador to NATO: "The Attempt to Push Georgia into NATO Is a Provocation," March 10, 2008, http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-russia-s-ambassador-to-nato-the-attempt-to-push-georgia-into-nato-is-a-provocation-a-540426.html.
[115] Michael Evans, "Vladimir Putin Tells Summit He Wants Security and Friendship," *The Times [Online]*, April 5, 2008, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/vladimir-putin-tells-summit-he-wants-security-and-friendship-96655h3k9nf.

between itself and its enemies. In the 19th century, the enemies were the Ottoman and Persian empires, and in the 20th century, it was the NATO alliance. After the Cold War, Russia slowly phased out its bases, and in 2007, except for Russian "peacekeepers" in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, all bases were closed. Before agreeing to any official military withdrawal deadline, Russian President Putin stated that Georgia had the sovereign right to request base closures. He also claimed his General Staff "assured him that the Cold War-era bases were not of strategic importance to Russia."[116] Some interpret Putin's ambivalence as a political-facade; however, beyond extending its air defenses further south, Georgia's territory does not provide Russia any additional strategic geographical value. The Caucasus mountain range offers a natural land barrier between itself and nations to its south. Additionally, Russia's access to the Crimean port of Sevastopol precludes any need for Russia to acquire Georgia's three Black Sea ports. Although Georgia's territory does not provide Russia any added benefit, preventing NATO from full, unfettered access does. Georgian ascension into the alliance would remove the last buffer state between Russia and NATO, essentially encircling Moscow.

Analysis and Conclusion

Russia intervened with overt, conventional military force in Georgia to blunt the Caucasus nation's attempt to join the NATO alliance. NATO enlargement has always agitated Moscow officials, beginning with the first round of expansion in 1999. The Kremlin perceived NATO's growth as "creating a buffer zone in reverse" while simultaneously isolating Russia from the rest of Europe.[117] The Russian political establishment overwhelmingly viewed NATO's expansion as a direct contraction to fundamental Russian national interests.[118] During the 1990s and early 2000s, however, Moscow had few, if any options available to oppose. As the overall Russian economy improved, so too did is military equipment, capabilities, and ultimately, the

[116] Nichol, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia," 59.
[117] Black, *Russia Faces NATO Expansion*, 9.
[118] Pushkov, "Don't Isolate Us," 58.

country's ability to protect perceived regional interests. The prevention of further NATO expansion served as a *critical antecedent* for Russian intervention in Georgia's breakout regions.

In the Georgian case, Russia's interests involved preventing the Caucasus nation from joining the NATO alliance. Although Georgia was unable to procure a Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the Bucharest Summit in early 2008, NATO members declared that the country would inevitably integrate into the organization.[119] Russian officials claimed that this assertion was a "provocation that could lead to bloodshed" and was "a direct threat to the security of [their] country."[120] Furthermore, it was not a secret why some alliance members were tentative to extend a MAP to Georgia. Inclusion opponents stressed Georgia's inability and lack of progress in resolving their two "frozen conflicts" with Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a chief concern.[121] Therefore, Russian officials intended to exacerbate and prolong this "frozen" state for as long as possible. Although NATO expansion provided the necessary imperative for Russian intervention, Moscow required a plausible, legal rationale as well.

Russia legitimized its Georgian intervention in several ways. First, the 1992 Sochi Agreement and 1994 Moscow Peace Agreement provided Russia the legal basis for "peacekeeping" operations in the South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions, respectively. Both agreements mandated that Moscow enforce, monitor, and facilitate the ceasefires in the breakout regions.[122] Second, starting in 2000, Russia's military doctrine broadened the scope and range of operations of its "peacekeeping" forces. Beyond enforcing ceasefire agreements, Russian peacekeepers could disengage conflicting parties, enforce sanctions,

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[119] Gallis, "The NATO Summit at Bucharest," 5.
[120] Spiegel, Interview with Russia's Ambassador to NATO; Evans, "Vladimir Putin Tells Summit He Wants Security and Friendship."
[121] Gallis, "The NATO Summit at Bucharest," 4.
[122] Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia*, 583; Gordadze, "Georgian-Russian Relations in the 1990s," 35.

and create prerequisites for political settlements.[123] Third, once Georgian officials launched their offensive in South Ossetia, Russia claimed that it was obliged to protect its passport-holding citizens and its regional peacekeepers. Finally, Moscow used NATO's Kosovo campaign as another legal basis for intervention. Just as NATO officials used Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians in Operation Allied Force, Russia claimed that Georgian forces committed "genocide" as well in the breakout regions, which morally compelled them to act.[124] The increasing tensions between the breakout regions and Georgia, combined with Russia's "legal" justification, provided Moscow the *critical-juncture* for overt, conventional military force.

The South Ossetian and Abkhazian forces required outside assistance to overcome Georgia's military. Unlike the early 1990s, Georgia's military was more formidable and better prepared for a conflict with the breakout regions' forces. The US's "high level of concern" over Georgia's fate led to an increase in annual aid, which went towards counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism training and equipment.[125] Additionally, President Saakashvili's government reform agenda increased the overall military budget by 3,000 percent, going from $30M in 2003, to $1B in 2008, and accounting for 8.7 percent of the country's GDP.[126] Furthermore, Georgian leadership and its military postured and prepared for an "offensive" war with either Abkhazia or South Ossetia.[127] Consequently, when Georgia responded to the "merciless bombing" in South Ossetia on August 7, 2008, Ossetian separatists proved to be no match. However, Georgia's escalation compelled Russia to act with overt, conventional military force. The only way for Russia to prolong the tension between the two

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[123] Voyennaya Doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii [The military doctrine of the Russian Federation], Rossis- kaya Gazeta, 21 April 2000; cited in Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared," 405.
[124] Russian claims proved to be, at best, inflated and, at worst, fabricated. However, it did not prevent Moscow leadership from using the claim as a legal basis for intervention. For further reporting, see Megan K. Stack, "Russian Claims Appear Inflated," *Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 2008, http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/18/world/fg-breakaway18.
[125] ICG Europe, "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," 18.
[126] Pukhov, *The Tanks of August*, 31.
[127] Felgenhauer, "After August 7: The Escalation of the Russia-Georgia War," 165.

regions and Georgia was to intervene with overwhelming force. Once victorious, Russia used Kosovo as the legal precedent for *de jure* recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia thereby solidifying the "frozen" conflict and preventing Georgia from joining NATO.

Chapter 4

The Annexation of Crimea, 2014

Ukraine is not a western country but belongs to Slavic civilization and Orthodox culture. Hundreds of years living together makes Ukraine Russia's natural partner… nobody awaits either Russia or Ukraine in the West. They'll try to be friends with us, they'll promise a lot to us, but they'll never declare us as their natural partners.

Viktor Chernomyrdin, Russian Ambassador to Ukraine, 2001

Crimea has always been an integral part of Russia in the hearts and minds of [our] people… [the West] has cheated us again and again, made decisions behind our back, presenting us with completed facts… that's the way it was with the expansion of NATO in the East, with the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders… [our actions in Crimea] doesn't involve [the West].

Vladimir Putin, Russian President, March 2014

The Incident

Ukrainian President Yanukovych's decision not to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) in the fall of 2013, under the EU's Eastern Partnership Program (EaP),[1] led to massive demonstrations in country's capital.[2] The protests, known as the Euromaidan Revolution or Revolution of Dignity, culminated on February 20, 2014, when 100 people were reported shot and another 300 reported missing.[3] The events precipitated a Russian-mediated settlement between Yanukovych and opposition leaders. On February 22, protesters contested the agreement, and the Ukrainian Parliament impeached Yanukovych, forcing him and his party members to flee

[1] Currently, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is an EU joint initiative involving the EU, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. The partnership aims to strengthen political associations and economic integration, with the sole purpose of aligning the partner nations' legislation and standards closer to those of the EU. During the Riga Summit in 2015, the EaP adopted four priority areas of cooperation: a stronger governance, stronger economy, better connectivity, and stronger society. See https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/ headquarters-homepage/419/eastern-partnership_en for additional information on the EaP, its goals, and timelines.

[2] Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* (Rand Corporation, 2017), 1.

[3] Kofman et al., 85.

to Russia or Eastern Ukraine.[4] Moscow viewed the Euromaidan Revolution as a Western motivated and orchestrated effort, aiming to undermine Russian leadership.[5] The subsequent ousting of Ukraine's President Yanukovych, therefore, triggered a rapidity of Russian military efforts in Crimea.

On February 23, Russian President Vladimir Putin secretly convened a cabinet meeting with his special services and Kremlin Defense Ministry to discuss the Ukrainian situation.[6] At the conclusion of the meeting, Putin asserted that Moscow had no choice but to "bring Crimea back into Russia."[7] Three days later, a "band of armed men in unmarked uniforms took control of the Crimean parliament."[8] Dubbed "Little Green Men," Putin claimed that the masked men were "self-defense groups" organized by locals.[9] According to a recent RAND report, the "self-defense militia" were, in fact, part of Russia's Special Operations Command (KSO).[10] Unsurprisingly, on February 27, Russian forces occupied critical Crimean facilities, blockaded the Ukrainian naval fleet, and denied Kiev access to airports.[11] Recognizing the futility of their situation, many of the trapped Ukrainian forces defected or resigned their commissions. In short, Moscow's successful encirclement of Crimea and ad hoc arrangements with trapped forces enabled Russia to maintain a siege of the peninsula without much of a struggle.[12]

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[4] Pavel Polityuk and Matt Robinson, "Ukraine Parliament Removes Yanukovich, Who Flees Kiev in 'Coup,'" News, Reuters, February 22, 2014, https://in.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-parliament/ukraine-parliament-removes-yanukovich-who-flees-kiev-in-coup-idINDEEA1L04L20140222; Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 85.
[5] Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 14.
[6] "Putin Reveals Secret Crimea Plot," *BBC News*, March 9, 2015, sec. Europe, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31796226.
[7] Quoted in "Putin Reveals Secret Crimea Plot."
[8] Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015), 340.
[9] Little green men refers to the color of the uniform and the individuals' unconfirmed origin. Vitaly Shevchenko, "'Little Green Men' or 'Russian Invaders'?," *BBC News*, March 11, 2014, sec. Europe, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26532154.
[10] Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 8.
[11] Kofman et al., 86.
[12] Kofman et al., 9.

A week after seizing control of the peninsula, Moscow initiated a conventional-force buildup, facilitating the complete takeover of the region. On March 6, Crimea's parliament, led by the newly installed leader of the pro-Russian party, declared that the region wanted to join the Russian Federation and set a referendum date for March 16.[13] The referendum consisted of two votes: one to secede from Ukraine, establishing Crimea as an independent polity, and the other to accede to the Russian Federation. The referendum officially concluded on March 18, and with 97 percent of the voters backing the proposal to join. Russia successfully annexed Crimea with "no direct" casualties.[14]

Historic and Situational Context

Relationship with Russia

The Cossack Uprising of 1648, known historically as the Great Revolt, marked the beginning of Russian involvement in Ukraine.[15] The Cossacks were small groups of runaway peasants who settled in the region governed by the Polish king during the 15th century.[16] Although the Cossacks maintained the lowest social estate in Polish society, by the 16th century, they had become a

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[13] Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 340; The Washington Post, "Timeline: Key Events in Ukraine's Ongoing Crisis.," *Washington Post*, May 12, 2014, sec. Europe, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/timeline-key-events-in-ukraines-ongoing-crisis/2014/05/07/a15b84e6-d604-11e3-8a78-8fe50322a72c_story.html.

[14] Post, "Timeline"; Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 11.

[15] The name *Ukraine* originated in 1187 and was used as a territorial designation in the 16th century. The Cossacks, who are considered the precursors to modern Ukrainians, referred to the region as either their "fatherland" or "mother." After Polish rule, the name *Ukraine* became disused until the early 19th century when writers referred to it as the appropriate name for the territory in which Ukrainians lived. However, there was no distinct administrative entity called *Ukraine* until the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 when it became the Ukrainian State and a Soviet Socialist Republic. For an expanded history, see Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2010), 189–90.

[16] Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: A Birth of a Modern Nation*, Ebook. (Oxford University Press, 2007), 43.

political and military force.[17] As their numbers grew, the Cossacks became increasingly discontent about their social status, rights, and freedoms. Polish kings attempted to assuage these concerns but were unable to resolve the friction stemming from the Polish Catholic domination of the Orthodox Christian Cossacks.[18] Led by Hetman Khmelnytsky, the revolting Cossacks were unable to decisively achieve any of their stated aims until entering into a military alliance with the Muscovy tsardom.[19] The Agreement of Pereiaslav, signed in 1654, provided the Cossack's military equipment and guaranteed their religious rights and autonomous governance under Muscovy rule. The agreement also signaled the decline of Polish hegemony and the rise of Russian dominance in the region.[20]

The Muscovy tsardom transformed into the Russian empire during Peter the Great's reign in the early 18th century. The sudden death of the Swedish King Charles XI prompted the Danes, Poles, and Russians to fight over the Baltic territory.[21] The Great Northern War ended in 1721, with Russia controlling a substantial portion of the Baltic states.[22] As the 18th century progressed, so too did the Russian Empire's territorial expansion to the south. For centuries, the Ottoman Empire dominated the Black Sea region. In 1774, after decades of skirmishes and battles, Russia signed the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarjae with the Turks, effectively making the Crimean Khanate dependent on St. Petersburg. Nine years later, in 1783, Russian forces entered the peninsula, exiled the Crimean government, and formally annexed the region. The end of the Russo-Turkish War in 1792 and the subsequent signing of the

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[17] Fifteen to seventeenth-century Poland had seven distinct social estates. The Polish king was at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the nobility, clergy, townspeople, Jews, peasants, then the Cossacks. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 195–97.
[18] Polish authorities outlawed the Orthodox Church from 1595 to 1632, which fueled much of the discontent. Yekelchyk, *Ukraine*, 44.
[19] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 220.
[20] Magocsi, 227–29.
[21] North, *The Baltic*, 146.
[22] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 277.

Treaty of Jassy in 1793 provided international legitimacy to Russia's possession of the peninsula and southern Ukraine.[23]

As the Ottoman Empire steadily weakened in the 19th century, Russia continued its expansion southward, prompting British and French regional intervention. Britain wanted to blunt Russia's hegemonic rise while increasing its European balance of power. France's Napoleon III used the impending conflict as a domestic political tool.[24] These tensions resulted in the Crimean War, fought from 1853 to 1856. It shattered the "myth and reality" of Russian hegemony, left the Empire with no naval base along the Black Sea coast, and forced cash-strapped Russia to sell Alaska to the US.[25] In the end, however, Russia still possessed Crimea.[26] The remainder of the 1800s saw a Russian Empire in steady decline. The outbreak of WWI further weakened the monarchy, and when Russia succumbed to German forces in 1917, the empire ultimately collapsed under the conflict's strain.[27]

The Ukrainian revolutionary era began in March 1917 and lasted until October 1920.[28] Marked by continuous military invasions and peasant uprisings, multiple factions vied for control.[29] The Whites, Bolsheviks, Poles, Tatars, and a smattering of other ethnicities were amongst these many factions. In the Crimean Peninsula, the Bolsheviks had trouble defeating the Whites and enlisted the help of the Tatars. Once victorious, the Bolsheviks established the Soviet Ukrainian government which controlled much of modern-day Ukrainian territory, excluding Crimea.[30] For their part, the Tatars expected special recognition for their assistance, but none came initially. The

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[23] Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 140.
[24] Alan J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe: 1848-1918*, Reissue edition (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 60.
[25] Taylor, 85; Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 176-177.
[26] Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 177.
[27] Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2009), 339.
[28] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 500.
[29] Magocsi, 535.
[30] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 565.

Tatars, just as they did against the Whites, subsequently waged a guerrilla campaign against the Bolsheviks and attracted Lenin's attention.

Lenin sent his top diplomat on a fact-finding mission to determine the best way of gaining control of the situation and stopping the conflict. The diplomat returned and advised Lenin to create a Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federated Republic. The recommendation intended to gradually attract disenfranchised Tatars into the Communist Party and slowly change the regional dynamic. The plan worked and was part of Lenin's "nativization" policy, whereby the Soviet Union would re-Tatarize the Crimean Peninsula.[31] Stalin begrudgingly went along with Lenin's "nativization" policy but swiftly reversed course upon Lenin's death.

The Tatarization of the peninsula and Crimea's autonomy, under the Russian Federated Republic, were brief affairs. From 1921 through 1926, despite comprising only 25 percent of the total populace, Tatars filled many of the top ASSR leadership positions.[32] In 1928, Stalin began purging native cadres throughout the USSR, effectively tightening his overall grip on power and reducing, what he believed, a "threat to the unity of the Soviet state."[33] Stalin's revolution led to the execution of Crimea's nationalist leader Veli Ibrahimov and over 3,500 of Crimea's Tatar leadership, as well as the deportation of many of its intellectuals.[34] In the early 1930s, Stalin's collectivization campaign led to the deportation of tens of thousands of Tatarians and starvation of 60,000 more due to prolonged famine.[35]

> Whole villages of Crimean peasants were liquidated. Thousands of people were herded behind the barbed wire of deportation camps.

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[31] The Tatar's made up a 25 percent minority in 1921 but filled many of the leadership positions. Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 68-74.
[32] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 621; Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 70.
[33] Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 83.
[34] Williams, 81–83.
[35] Williams, 83–84; Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 623.

> People who had grown up in a mild, southern climate and who had never before left their native mountains and sea coast were transplanted to the taiga and the tundra and began to die off even during the first stages. This was not the application of some sort of mass measures, but the physical destruction, the merciless and senseless destruction of a whole people.[36]

By the end of the 1930s, Crimean Tatars comprised only 19 percent of the total population.[37] The mass deportations, however, were a mere prelude to Stalin's final Tatar sanitization at the end of WWII. On May 18, 1944, The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) loaded 188,000 Tatars onto trains and deported them to Kazakhstan and Soviet Central Asia.[38] Dispersed throughout the Soviet Union, the Tatars no longer had a nation to call their own and Crimea no longer required any special autonomy in the Russian SFR. Consequently, on June 30, 1945, Stalin downgraded Crimea from an ASSR to an oblast, effectively removing any special status the region maintained.[39]

Nine years later, Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, transferred the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR. The move had both a political and an economic purpose. First, following Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev used the transfer as a ploy to win over the Ukrainian Communists.[40] Second, the peninsula was still rebuilding from WWII damage. By transferring the oblast, the Ukrainian SSR assumed the entire cost of the rebuilding effort.[41] Regardless of Khrushchev's rationale, the 1954 transfer remained a source of tension even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In the summer of 1990, a year before the USSR's collapse and following in the footsteps of the Baltic States, Ukrainian parliament declared its

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[36] Edige Kirimal. "The Crimean Tatars." *Studies on the Soviet Union*. Vol. 10. No.1. 1970. 83. Quoted in Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 84.
[37] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 624.
[38] Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 99; Ivan Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine* (Scarecrow Press, 2013), 115.
[39] Ivan Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine* (Scarecrow Press, 2013), 116.
[40] Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 115.
[41] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, 116.

country's sovereignty from Moscow. Unlike the Baltic States, Ukraine's declaration did not explicitly indicate a desire to secede from the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian parliament's declaration stated that it, not Moscow, was "solely independent in determining the administration and territorial system of the Republic and the procedures for establishing national and administrative units."[42] On November 19, 1990, Ukraine and the Russian Federation signed the Treaty on the Basic Principles of Relations between the Russian Federation of the Soviet Socialist Republics and the Ukrainian SSR, agreeing to respect each other's territorial boundaries.[43] In 1991, the Baltic States overwhelmingly favored a complete secession from the USSR prompting Mikhail Gorbachev to take a more conservative stance on his reform efforts.[44] Gorbachev's actions did little to stem the drive for independence. Subsequently, on August 19, 1991, Communist party hard-liners attempted a coup d'état to seize power from Gorbachev. Although the coup failed, it typified the opposition against the highly centralized communist government and accelerated the Soviet collapse later in the year.[45] Emboldened by the turmoil in Moscow, the Ukrainian parliament declared and adopted a referendum of independence on August 24.[46] The referendum passed with an astounding 90.4 percent approval in early December.[47] Russia quickly recognized Ukraine's independence and moved to normalize relations.[48] On December 8, 1992, Ukraine became a

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[42] Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 331.
[43] Andrew D. Sorokowski, "Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 20 (1996): 319–29.
[44] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 230.
[45] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 244.
[46] Chrstyna Lapychak, "Ukraine, Russia Sign Interim Bilateral Pact," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 1, 1991, http://ukrweekly.com/archive/1991/The_Ukrainian_Weekly_1991-35.pdf.
[47] It is worth noting that the Crimean region's voter turnout and approval were significantly less than the rest of the country. The overall voter turnout was 84 percent while in Crimea, the turnout was only 60 percent. Additionally, Crimean's passed the referendum with only 54 percent of the vote. Pål Kolstø and Andrei Edemsky, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Indiana University Press, 1995), 191; Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 128.
[48] John-Thor Dahlburg, "Ukraine Votes to Quit Soviet Union: Independence: More than 90% of Voters Approve Historic Break with Kremlin. The President-Elect Calls for Collective Command

member of the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Despite the improved relations between the two nations, post-Soviet Russian nationalists immediately contested Crimea's status within the newly independent Ukraine.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and declaration of Ukrainian independence, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Crimeans squabbled over control of the peninsula. On May 5, 1992, the Crimean Parliament declared its independence from Ukraine and set the referendum for a vote in August.[49] The following week, on May 13, the Ukrainian government demanded that the Crimean legislative body annul the independence referendum, claiming it violated the Ukrainian constitution.[50] Crimea's Parliament suspended the referendum on May 20 but stated that Kiev's ultimatum played no role in the decision.[51] The Russian Duma responded to the suspension the next day. It claimed that the 1954 cession of Crimea was illegal.[52] Regardless of Moscow's dubious assertion and political posturing, Kiev granted Crimea greater

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of the Country's Nuclear Arsenal.," *Los Angeles Times [Online]*, December 3, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-03/news/mn-504_1_soviet-union.

[49] Serge Schmemann, "Crimea Parliament Votes to Back Independence From Ukraine," *New York Times [Online]*, May 6, 1992, https://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/06/world/crimea-parliament-votes-to-back-independence-from-ukraine.html.

[50] Chrystia Freel, "Ukraine Tells Crimea: Annul Independence," *Washington Post*, May 14, 1992, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/05/14/ukraine-tells-crimea-annul-independence/e6557a60-f993-4f0a-ae9a-6297340ae920/.

[51] Serge Schmemann, "Russia Votes to Void Cession of Crimea to Ukraine," *New York Times [Online]*, May 22, 1992, https://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/22/world/russia-votes-to-void-cession-of-crimea-to-ukraine.html.

[52] Mark Kramer, the Director of Cold War Studies at Harvard, challenged this assertion in an article written for the Wilson Center in 2014. In the article, Kramer utilized six Soviet documents to argue that Kremlin officials legally transferred the Crimean Peninsula to Ukraine under Article 18 of the 1936 Soviet constitution. Therefore, the region's transfer was less of a "gift" and more of a calculated political move by Khrushchev. Mark Kramer. "Why did Russia Give Away Crimea Sixty Years Ago." *Wilson Center Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) e-Dossier* 47 (2014); Peter Hilpold, "Ukraine, Crimea and New International Law: Balancing International Law with Arguments Drawn from History," *Chinese Journal of International Law* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 243, https://doi.org/10.1093/chinesejil/jmv011; Victor Zaborsky, "Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet in Russian-Ukrainian Relations" (Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, August 31, 1995), https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/crimea-and-black-sea-fleet-russian-ukrainian-relations.

autonomy contingent upon annulling the independence referendum.[53] On July 9, the Crimean legislature agreed to Kiev's terms and passed a moratorium on its referendum, while the Russian Parliament decreed Sevastopol a Russian city.[54] Although Russian President Yeltsin immediately disavowed his parliament's declaration, the UN Security Council (UNSC) issued a rebuke in late July, stating that the Russian Parliament's claim was in violation of the 1990 Friendship Treaty.[55] Undeterred, the Russian Parliament passed another resolution in July 1993 claiming Sevastopol as its own. Just as it did the year prior, the UNSC declared that there was no legal basis for such an assertion.[56]

Russia's persistent claims and interest in the Crimean region stemmed from three factors: a sizeable Russian diaspora, historical ties, and military interests. First, although ethnic Russians comprised a 20 percent minority in Ukraine, the inverse was true on the peninsula. In 1989, ethnic Russians constituted 70 percent of the Crimean region.[57] This percentage remains relatively constant today with any decrease or fluctuations attributable to Crimean Tatars immigrating back to the region and the emigration of Ukrainians. Second, because of the Soviet Union's breakup, both Ukraine and Russia vied for control over the Black Sea Fleet. The port of Sevastopol was Russia's only warm-water port and naval presence in the Mediterranean. Ukraine's bid did not sit well with Moscow, Russian sailors, or ethnic Russians living on the peninsula. While the loss of the Fleet would be a significant blow to Russia's security, the loss of the region would also negatively impact its national prestige. For Russians, the peninsula is where the tsarist and Soviet army "heroically defended" the country during the Crimean War and WWII,

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[53] Maria Drohobycky, *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges and Prospects* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), xxx.
[54] Drohobycky, xxx; Minorities at Risk Project, *Chronology for Crimean Russians in Ukraine*, 2004, http://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38ec2.html.
[55] Minorities at Risk Project.
[56] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, xlix–l.
[57] Ian Bremmer, "The Politics of Ethnicity: Russians in the New Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 2 (1994): 266.

respectively.[58] Consequently, in the fall of 1992, Ukrainian President Kravchuk and Russian President Yeltsin agreed to divide the Black Sea Fleet and readdress the issue in 1995.[59] It was not, however, until the two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship in 1997, whereby Russia kept 80 percent of the Black Sea Fleet, gained access to the port of Sevastopol for 20 years, and agreed to honor Ukraine's territorial sovereignty.[60] The relationship between Russia and Ukraine was relatively calm until the color revolutions began in the 2000s.

Orange Revolution

The Orange Revolution was a series of peaceful Ukrainian protests precipitated by a fraudulent run-off vote during the 2004 Presidential election. The two leading candidates were Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko. The Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma supported Yanukovych, who was considered pro-Russian and financed by powerful oligarchs in Eastern Ukraine.[61] Considering the political alternatives and based on his preference for closer Ukrainian-Russian ties, Putin was also a strong supporter of Yanukovych.[62] Conversely, Viktor Yushchenko had served as Ukraine's Prime Minister from 1999 through 2002, led an anti-corruption, pro-reform movement, and pledged to orient Ukraine away from Russia and toward the West.[63] Neither Moscow nor the current Ukrainian administration appreciated this stance and took measures to prevent the candidate's victory. In fact, a "third-party" poisoned Yushchenko in the run-up to the election to eradicate him from the ballot;[64] the case remains unsolved, and Russia denies any

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[58] Yekelchyk, *Ukraine*, 254.
[59] Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 341.
[60] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 730.
[61] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, 766; Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 732–33.
[62] Andrey Slivka, "Orange Alert," *The New Yorker*, December 6, 2004, 42, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/12/13/orange-alert-2.
[63] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, 774–75.
[64] Peter Finn, "Yushchenko Was Poisoned, Doctors Say," *Washington Post*, December 12, 2004.

involvement.[65] Nevertheless, both candidates made the final ballot, and on November 21, Yanukovych was declared the victor. However, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) immediately concluded Ukraine's Central Election Commission "displayed a lack of will to conduct a genuine democratic election process."[66] While Yushchenko appealed the election results to the Ukrainian Supreme Court, approximately 2.3 million Ukrainians took to the streets, peacefully protested, and demanded a second-round of presidential elections.[67] On December 3, Ukraine's Supreme Court annulled the election results, ruled the Central Election Commission acted improperly, and ordered another run-off vote on December 26.[68] The second run-off election ended with Yushchenko as the victor.

Although the Orange Revolution ushered in a renewed optimism for its country's future, the Yushchenko administration was unable to solidify its relationship with the West. The Orange-clad protesters sought a stop to the corruption, infringements on democracy, and economic turmoil.[69] The revolution failed, however, to produce any of these results during Yushchenko's tenure. Consequently, in 2010, Ukrainians turned back towards Yanukovych and Russia, setting the stage for Crimean conflict in 2014.[70]

Russian Military Presence

After declaring its independence in 1991, Ukraine inherited one of the largest armies in Europe. The collapse of the Soviet Union left 800,000 personnel, the Black Sea Fleet, and a large nuclear arsenal stranded in

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[65] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, 775.
[66] "Second Round of Ukrainian Election Failed to Address Election Irregularities and Lacked Transparency," Oranization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), November 22, 2004, https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/56979.
[67] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 733.
[68] Nick Paton Walsh, "Court Orders Repeat Ukraine Poll," *The Guardian [Online]*, December 4, 2004, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/dec/04/ukraine.nickpatonwalsh1.
[69] Yekelchyk, *Ukraine*, 289.
[70] "Viktory for the Blue Camp," *The Economist*, February 11, 2010, https://www.economist.com/node/15501625.

Ukraine.[71] As Russia was already inundated with other army personnel returning from Central and Eastern Europe, soldiers began swearing their allegiance to independent Ukraine in January 1992.[72] Portions of the Black Sea Fleet quickly followed suit, prompting the first major crisis in Russian-Ukrainian relations.[73] In 1997, after five years of negotiations and multiple interventions from outside entities, the two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship and Black Sea Fleet Accords. The agreement allowed Russia to maintain 80 percent of the Fleet, granted it access to the port of Sevastopol until 2017, permitted it to house up to 25,000 servicemen in Crimea, and included a Russian promise to honor Ukraine's territorial sovereignty.[74]

In 2008, while NATO considered extending Ukraine a MAP for admission into the alliance, President Yushchenko asserted that Ukraine would not renew the port lease for Russia. Once his successor Viktor Yanukovych took office, however, Ukraine lengthened the lease through 2042 in exchange for reduced gas prices.[75] Just as it did with Belarus and Kazakhstan, Russia sought possession and control over the 175 long-range missiles and 1,800 nuclear warheads located in Ukraine. Despite the disapproval of some academics, on January 11, 1994, Ukraine agreed to surrender its nuclear arsenal voluntarily.[76]

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[71] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, 30.
[72] Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 340.
[73] Plokhy, 341.
[74] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 730; Robert Orr, "Why Crimea Matters to Russia," *Financial Times [Online]*, March 3, 2014, https://www.ft.com/content/514abee5-c09b-34f6-9a3a-865a64540a65.
[75] Alan Yuhas and Raya Jalabi, "Ukraine Crisis: Why Russia Sees Crimea as Its Naval Stronghold," *The Guardian [Online]*, March 7, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/07/ukraine-russia-crimea-naval-base-tatars-explainer.
[76] John Mearsheimer argued a nuclear-armed Ukraine provided the best possible deterrent to Russian aggression. In 1992, Ukraine transferred all of its tactical nuclear weapons to Russia and Mearsheimer claimed that the West should not expect or want Ukraine to give up its strategic nuclear weapons. In fact, Mearsheimer went so far as to recommended the US allow Ukraine "slowly and quietly" to develop a "full-fledged nuclear capability." John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 50–66, https://doi.org/10.2307/20045622; R. W. Apple Jr., "Ukraine Gives In on

In short, while Ukraine absorbed most of the Russian military within its borders after the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia maintained a substantial military presence in the Crimean region up to and through the annexation of the peninsula.

The NATO Factor

Ukraine's desire for NATO inclusion and the West's rationale for expansion parallel similar discussions concerning former Warsaw Pact countries. In 1991, Ukraine became the founding member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), a liaison program between Warsaw Pact states and NATO.[77] In 1994, after Ukraine agreed to give up control of its nuclear arsenal, NATO endorsed the Partnership for Peace (PfP) plan, intent on increasing its security, defense, and cooperation with Ukraine.[78] Ukraine was the first Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member to join PfP.

Although NATO offered a similar PfP plan to Russia, Moscow rebuffed the offer and claimed "NATO was trying to split Europe with its plan to admit members from the former Warsaw Pact and the United States should not be allowed to dominate the world."[79] Nevertheless, proponents claimed that expansion was necessary to foster democracy and free markets in Central Europe, while others asserted that the security vacuum in Europe required a "new security architecture," where NATO constituted its central piece.[80] Opponents of NATO enlargement argued that it was "at best premature, at worst counterproductive, and in any case largely irrelevant to the problems

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Surrendering Its Nuclear Arms," *New York Times [Online]*, January 11, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/11/world/ukraine-gives-in-on-surrendering-its-nuclear-arms.html.

[77] John Kriendler, "Ukrainian Membership in NATO: Benefits, Costs and Challenges" (George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, July 2007), 5, http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA478859.

[78] Jack Nelson, "Ukraine Agrees to Give Up Its Nuclear Arsenal" *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1994, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-01-11/news/mn-10675_1_nuclear-arsenal.

[79] Elaine Sciolino, "Yeltsin Says NATO Is Trying to Split Continent Again," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/06/world/yeltsin-says-nato-is-trying-to-split-continent-again.html.

[80] Mandelbaum, "Preserving the New Peace," 9–12.

confronting the countries situated between Germany and Russia."[81] For its part, Ukraine naturally sought ways to ensure sovereignty and bolster security against Russia.

Ukraine's relationship with NATO progressed in the 1990s; and in May 2002, Ukrainian President Kuchma declared its desire to join NATO.[82] Initially, alliance members were suspicious of Kuchma's motives and thus reluctant to provide Ukraine a pathway for membership.[83] On the heels of the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential election and subsequent Orange Revolution, NATO's position changed. After "closely following" the campaign, the alliance invited new Ukrainian President Yushchenko to NATO headquarters, expressed support for his ambitious reform plans, and agreed to "refocus NATO-Ukraine cooperation (NUC) in line with the new government's priorities."[84] Given Putin's significant political and financial investment in Yanukovich, the pro-Moscow candidate, the election results and NATO's decision to "intensify dialogues" with Ukraine were a significant setback for Russian ambitions in its near abroad.[85] Although Putin did not "think any western countries, either European or the United States [were] working against the Russian Federation," he was bitter over the election and claimed that foreign governments financed the non-governmental organizations supporting Yushchenko.[86]

In 2008, just as in the case with Georgia, Ukraine failed to obtain a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP), as alliance members postponed the decision until later that year. While inclusion opponents stressed Georgia's "frozen conflicts" as their chief concern, NATO's reluctance to provide Ukraine a

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[81] Mandelbaum, 9.
[82] "Relations with Ukraine," NATO, March 9, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm.
[83] Kriendler, "Ukrainian Membership in NATO," 5.
[84] "Relations with Ukraine."
[85] Adrian Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *The New York Times [Online]*, April 12, 2005, sec. International, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/20050301faessay_v84n2_karatnycky.html?_r=0.
[86] Jonathan Steele, "Putin Still Bitter over Orange Revolution," *The Guardian [Online]*, September 5, 2005, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/06/russia.jonathansteele.

MAP centered around the majority of Ukrainians opposing accession into the organization.[87] Putin made Moscow's position crystal clear when he warned that Russia would redirect missiles and target Kiev if Ukraine joined NATO.[88] Undeterred by the threat, alliance members seemed to send a message to Russia with a summit communiqué: "we agreed today that [Georgia and Ukraine] will become members of NATO."[89] Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov responded that Russia would do all it could "to avoid an inevitable serious exacerbation of our relations with both the alliance and our neighbors."[90] Putin claimed "the appearance [of NATO] on our borders… will be taken in Russia as a direct threat to the security of our country… we cannot be satisfied with statements that this process is not aimed against Russia."[91] Although NATO and Ukraine continued to work with one another on a variety of issues, in 2010, Alliance members took Ukraine's membership off the NATO agenda.[92] Ukraine continued progressing towards NATO standards, but the bold 2008 communiqué seemed a distant memory.

[87] Gallis, "The NATO Summit at Bucharest," 4.
[88] Rosalind Ryan, "Join Nato and We'll Target Missiles at Kiev, Putin Warns Ukraine," *The Guardian*, February 12, 2008, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/12/russia.ukraine.
[89] Gallis, "The NATO Summit at Bucharest," 5.
[90] "Russia Will Block NATO Enlargement," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, April 13, 2008, 2.
[91] "Putin Cites Threat to Russia," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, April 13, 2008, 18.
[92] "Relations with Ukraine."

Strategic Geographic Significance

Figure 5: Map of Ukraine
Source: http://ontheworldmap.com/ukraine/ukraine-political-map.html

Ukraine is situated on Russia's southern steppe, north of the Black Sea, and shares a border with Belarus, Poland, Romania, and Moldova. When the Russian Empire acquired Crimea from the Ottomans in 1783, the Russians gained a warm-water port, better access to the Mediterranean Sea, and a buffer between itself and threats along its southern border.[93] Although the advent of modern icebreaker ships in the 20th century reduced the strategic impact of warm-water ports, all three of these benefits remain valid today. According to Lee Willett, a naval analyst at IHS Jane's, Russia seeks to project power in and through the Black and Mediterranean Seas; as such, the port of Sevastopol is

[93] Warm-water ports do not freeze in the wintertime and have significant geopolitical implications for those not in possession of them. Russia has a long history fighting for and maintaining these types of ports. Peter the Great made it the cornerstone of his international policy to seek warm-water port access for trading purposes. For more information concerning the Russian geopolitical interest in warm-water ports see Braden, Kathleen E., and Fred M. Shelley. *Engaging Geopolitics*. Routledge, 2014, 17-18; Cohen, Saul Bernard. *Geopolitics of the World System*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, 190.

"an important hub to project Russian naval power."[94] During the Russo-Georgia conflict in 2008, Russia launched its blockades and amphibious landings from Crimea.[95] Since 2010, the Black Sea Fleet was involved in operations in the Suez Canal, Gibraltar Straits, and allegedly served as Moscow's primary source of supplying the Assad regime in Syria.[96] Although Russia's large commercial port in Novorossiysk serves as an alternative basing location for its fleet, the lack of natural deep water and confined space limit it as a viable alternative to Sevastopol.[97] In short, Crimea and the port of Sevastopol are critically important to Russia's Black Sea Fleet and, by extension, its ability to project naval power throughout the region.

Russian Diaspora in Ukraine

The total and the proportional number of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine has decreased slightly since the 1990s due to low birth rates and emigration. In 1989, the Russian diaspora constituted 22.1 percent of the 50.9M Ukrainian populace while, in 2001, ethnic Russians constituted only 17.3 percent of the 48.8M people living in Ukraine.[98] Comparatively, the Crimean and Donetsk regions maintain a large concentration of Russian diaspora. Since 1989, ethnic Russians have comprised 70 percent of the Southeast region's total population, and that proportion has remained relatively constant.[99]

Crimea has exhibited a tendency for self-determination. In 1992, the Crimean Parliament declared its independence from Ukraine and set the

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[94] Kathrin Hille, "Ukrainian Port Is Key to Russia's Naval Power," *Financial Times [Online]*, February 27, 2014, https://www.ft.com/content/1f749b24-9f8c-11e3-b6c7-00144feab7de.
[95] Cited in Orr, "Why Crimea Matters to Russia."
[96] Igor Delanoe, "Russia Has a Deadly Plan to Defend the Black Sea," *The National Interest*, February 27, 2018, http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russia-has-deadly-plan-defend-the-black-sea-24678; Yuhas and Jalabi, "Ukraine Crisis."
[97] Hille, "Ukrainian Port Is Key to Russia's Naval Power."
[98] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 745.
[99] Inci Bowman, Valeri Kalabugin, and Alevtina Sedochencko, "Ethnic Composition of Crimea," International Committee for Crimea, August 12, 1999, http://www.iccrimea.org/population.html.

referendum to a vote in August.[100] The following week, on May 13, the Ukrainian government demanded the Crimean legislative body annul the independence referendum, claiming it violated the Ukrainian constitution.[101] Crimea's Parliament suspended the referendum and rescinded its constitutional declaration of independence on May 20, prompting Kiev to grant Crimea greater autonomy.[102] Exactly two years later, the Crimean Parliament reasserted its claim of independence, which led to another Ukrainian-Crimea constitutional crisis.[103] The chaotic Post-Cold War aftermath left many on the peninsula longing for stability and a freer hand in deciding their economic fate.[104]

Figure 6 illustrates how the passage of time did not satisfy these desires. In 2001, a Razumkov Center survey found that 50 percent of Crimean residents were in favor of leaving Ukraine and joining the Russian Federation. In 2008, the percentage increased to 73 percent with 85 percent of ethnic Russians and 65 percent of Ukrainians favoring secession.[105] After the pro-Moscow candidate, Yanukovych won the Ukrainian Presidency in 2010, the pro-secessionist fervor significantly dropped. In 2011, the Razumkov Center

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[100] Schmemann, "Crimea Parliament Votes to Back Independence From Ukraine."
[101] Freel, "Ukraine Tells Crimea."
[102] Schmemann, "Russia Votes to Void Cession of Crimea to Ukraine." Maria Drohobycky, *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges and Prospects* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), xxx.
[103] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, l.
[104] Multiple *New York Times* articles ran from January through September 1994 reporting that Crimeans felt closer to Russia and that they believed Ukraine put nationalistic goals ahead of the economic betterment of the region. Celestine Bohlen, "Russia vs. Ukraine: A Case of the Crimean Jitters," *New York Times [Online]*, March 23, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/03/23/world/russia-vs-ukraine-a-case-of-the-crimean-jitters.html; "Separatist Winning Crimea Presidency," *New York Times [Online]*, January 31, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/31/world/separatist-winning-crimea-presidency.html; Steven Erlanger, "Ukrainians Elect a New President," *New York Times [Online]*, July 12, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/07/12/world/ukrainians-elect-a-new-president.html; Craig R Whitney, "Eastern Europe, Post Communism: Five Years Later -- A Special Report; East Europe's Hard Path to New Day," *New York Times [Online]*, September 30, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/09/30/world/eastern-europe-post-communism-five-years-later-special-report-east-europe-s-hard.html.
[105] Cited in Ivan Katchanovski, "Crimea: People and Territory before and after Annexation," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2015), 83–84, http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2731366.

conducted another poll and found that support for Crimean independence had dropped to 25 to 35 percent, depending on nationality.[106]

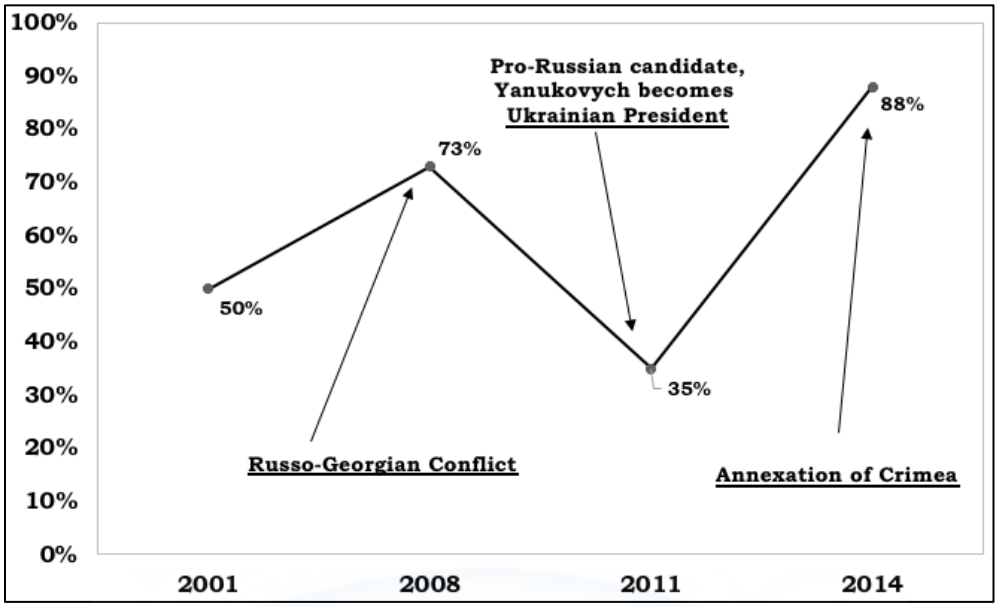

Figure 6: Crimean Desire to Join Russian Federation, by percentage
Source: Created by author using Razumkov Center and Pew Research Center Data from 2001, 2008, 2011, and 2014

The sentiment again reversed course following the Euromaidan Revolution, the ouster of Yanukovych, and subsequent Russian intervention. Many in the West argue the independence referendum was illegal, falsified, and demonstrated Russia's imperialistic ambitions.[107] Although Moscow's annexation of Crimea was in direct violation of the Budapest Memorandum (1994) and the Treaty of Friendship (1997), Western claims that the referendum results were falsified ignores multiple decades of survey data indicating the contrary. Even if one ignored the multiple attempts by Crimea to gain its independence and the Razumkov surveys, the Pew Research Center found that 91 percent of Crimeans said the referendum was "free and fair," and

[106] Cited in Katchanovski, 84.
[107] The referendum passed with 97 percent of the vote. Nile Gardiner et al., "Beyond the Crimea Crisis: Comprehensive Next Steps in U.S.-Russian Relations," 2896 (The Heritage Foundation, March 25, 2014), 1–10, https://www.heritage.org/node/11418/print-display.

88 percent thought that Kiev should recognize the results.[108] The polling data does not legally justify Russian action but does highlight Crimeans' continual displeasure with Kiev, regardless of their ethnicity.

Analysis and Conclusion

Russia seized and annexed Crimea to preserve its access to the port of Sevastopol. Crimea and the port of Sevastopol are critically important to Russia's Black Sea Fleet and, by extension, its ability to project naval power throughout the region.[109] Although Russia cloaked its seizure in legal language and initially denied its involvement, it merely intended to legitimate its "reputation as a lawful actor."[110] As the crisis escalated, Russia drew on "legal rhetoric" designed to blur legal and illegal actions, which Roy Allison referred to as "deniable intervention."[111] Deniable intervention intends to create "justificatory smokescreens" exploiting uncertain areas of international law.[112] Russia's rhetoric during the entire affair served to paralyze the Ukrainian government and the West.

Once Moscow successfully encircled Crimea and built up its conventional military presence, it pressured the Crimean legislature into expediting the independence referendum. Many in the West argued that the independence referendum was illegal and falsified.[113] Although Moscow's annexation of Crimea directly violated the Budapest Memorandum and the Treaty of Friendship, those claiming that the Kremlin falsified referendum result ignores multiple decades of survey data indicating the contrary. Russia simply used

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[108] "Despite Concerns about Governance, Ukrainians Want to Remain One Country" (Pew Research Center, May 2014), http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/05/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Ukraine-Russia-Report-FINAL-May-8-2014.pdf.
[109] Hille, "Ukrainian Port Is Key to Russia's Naval Power."
[110] Roy Allison, "Russian 'deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," *International Affairs* 90, no. 6 (November 2014): 1258, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12170.
[111] Allison, 1259.
[112] Allison, 1259.
[113] Gardiner et al., "Beyond the Crimea Crisis," 1–10.

the established tensions to justify its actions further. Once the referendum passed, Putin asserted that the US and Europe had "crossed a red line" and were responsible for the Yanukovych impeachment carried out by "Russophobes and neo-Nazis," and that Russia was justified to act.[114] A year after the annexation, Putin again admitted Moscow had no choice but to "bring Crimea back into Russia."[115]

Russia's *modus operandi* involves obfuscating the situation and disguising its actions to induce hesitation or inaction by its adversary. The Kremlin's insistence of "little green men" orchestrating the affair is undoubtedly congruent with its *maskirovka* strategy. The rhetoric and tactics employed by Moscow, however, do not negate the underlying rationale for seizing and annexing the Crimean Peninsula. Russia feared losing its basing rights in Sevastopol, had an opportunity to act, and seized the moment. Not only does Western inaction vindicate Moscow's cost-benefit analysis in proceeding with the annexation, but it also highlights the efficacy of Halford Mackinder's argument that nations compete over critical pieces of territory.[116] For Russia, losing the Sevastopol port would have crippled its great-power ambitions by denying its ability to project power in the Mediterranean.

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[114] Steven Lee Myers and Ellen Barry, "Putin Reclaims Crimea for Russia and Bitterly Denounces the West," *The New York Times*, March 18, 2014, sec. Europe, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/19/world/europe/ukraine.html.
[115] Quoted in "Putin Reveals Secret Crimea Plot."
[116] Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Forgotten Books, 2018), 1.

Chapter 5

Analysis and Conclusion

First and foremost, it is worth acknowledging that the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century… [today] we are a free nation and our place in the modern world will be defined only by how successful and strong we are... the moment we display weakness of spinelessness, our losses will be immeasurably greater.

Vladimir Putin, Russia President, April 2005[1]

Causes of Military Intervention Vary

The causal factors of war and conflict litter the academic landscape and vary from situation to situation, but upon closer inspection, common themes emerge. Considered the father of modern realism, Thucydides argued that the three strongest motivators for going to war were fear, interest, and honor.[2] Other realists theorized nations act in ways to maximize their security, power, or prestige.[3] Liberalists believe that war stems from bad institutions corrupting human behavior and fostering conflict.[4] Liberal theory argues that an expanding bloc of peaceful, interdependent, and "normatively satisfied states"

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[1] "Putin Deplores Collapse of USSR," *BBC News [Online]*, April 25, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4480745.stm; Associated Press, "Putin: Soviet Collapse a 'Genuine Tragedy,'" NBC News, April 25, 2005, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/7632057/ns/world_news/t/putin-soviet-collapse-genuine-tragedy/.

[2] Thucydides and Victor Davis Hanson, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, ed. Robert B. Strassler, trans. Richard Crawley, Touchstone ed. edition (New York: Free Press, 1998), 43.

[3] Defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz claim that the anarchical structure of the international system encourages states to maintain moderate and reserved policies to attain security. States are not intrinsically aggressive and "the first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system." John Mearsheimer, an offensive realist, states that the nature of international politics "has always been a ruthless and dangerous business… great powers fear each other and always compete with each other for power… great powers are primed for offense." Robert Gilpin argues "prestige, rather than power, is the everyday currency of international relations." Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reissued (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2010), 126; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 2–3; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Transferred to digital printing (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 31.

[4] Greg Cashman, *What Causes War?: An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 170.

reduces the risk of conflict.[5] Halford Mackinder's heartland theory implies nations compete over key pieces of geography.[6] The three cases analyzed contain elements of Realism, Liberalism, and Mackinder. In the Estonian case, its NATO membership proved most valuable in thwarting, at least in part, Russian overt, conventional military force. In the Georgian case, the probability of integrating into the alliance prompted a Russian invasion. In Ukraine, domestic political turmoil and the impeachment of its pro-Russian President put Moscow's Sevastopol port lease at risk and, in turn, its ability to project power in the Mediterranean. Putin had no choice but to protect his geographic foothold on the Black Sea and "bring Crimea back into Russia."[7]

Jack Levy explains that isolating a generalizable causal variable for conflict is difficult because different types of war have different causes, and those different causal variables have a varying impact on specific types of war.[8] Kenneth Waltz uses three levels of analysis, which he refers to as "images," to overcome this challenge. Unfortunately, each image is inherently partial and, therefore, no single image is deemed sufficient.[9] In short, no master theory of war's cause exists, most wars are due to multiple factors, and war's causation is case-specific. However, as Greg Cashman asserts in *What Causes War*, it may be possible to uncover repeated patterns of interaction between causal variables. In turn, these causal variables shape causal chains that

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[5] Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (August 18, 2003): 525, https://doi.org/10.1162/002081897550447.

[6] Mackinder argued the great wars of history were the outcome of the unequal growth of nations and that unequal growth was the result of "the uneven distribution of fertility and strategical opportunity upon the face of the globe." Although he was specifically referring to Eastern Europe, his point was that conflict was a result of the struggle over geography. Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Forgotten Books, 2018), 1.

[7] Quoted in "Putin Reveals Secret Crimea Plot."

[8] Jack S. Levy, *Causes of War* (Wiley-Blackwell (2010), Edition: 1, 288 pages, 2010), 208–9.

[9] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 225–30.

sequentially link or form a constellation of factors illuminating a root-cause.[10] Utilizing Cashman's logic, the researcher analyzed Russian actions in Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine to determine which factors drive Russia to intervene with overt, conventional military force.[11]

The End of an Era

The end of the Cold War ushered in what some IR scholars referred to as the "Unipolar Moment."[12] The United States stood as the global hegemon without peer in all instruments of national power. Throughout the Cold War, the Soviet Union's geopolitical position derived directly from its military power projection capabilities. The Russian military of the 1990s, however, was in disarray and desperate to survive unrelenting internal political unrest and continual financial crisis.[13] Moscow sought its national interests through coercive and cooperative strategies. It attempted forging closer relationships with newly formed members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) while simultaneously entering regional ethnic conflicts in pursue of national interests.[14] Sensing an opportunity to enhance America's relative and absolute position in the world, the US's Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) for Fiscal Years 1994-1999 sought to convince potential rising powers to avoid aspiring

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[10] Cashman, *What Causes War?*, 478.

[11] In this study, 'overt, conventional military force' is the antithesis of covert, clandestine, irregular, or unconventional military action. Covert operations intend on concealing the identity of and permit deniability by the sponsor. See Jan Goldman Ph.D, *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Encyclopedia of Covert Ops, Intelligence Gathering, and Spies [2 Volumes]: An Encyclopedia of Covert Ops, Intelligence Gathering, and Spies* (ABC-CLIO, 2015), xvi. Clandestine operations differ slightly from covert as they attempt to conceal only the action rather than the sponsor. See Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (Routledge, 2012). Unconventional and irregular warfare cover a swath of actions including terrorism, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, cyber warfare, coup d'etat, and civil war. See Don Carrick et al., *Ethics Education for Irregular Warfare* (Routledge, 2016), 2 or James D. Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," in *Understanding Modern Warfare*, by David Jordan et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 299–318. In sum, an overt, conventional military action involves the unambiguous use of nationally attributable military force. There is no doubt who is conducting or sponsoring the operation.

[12] Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," 23.

[13] Galeotti, *The Modern Russian Army 1992–2016*, 8.

[14] See Pavel K. Baev, Russia's Policies in the Caucasus (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997).

"to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect [their] *legitimate* [national] interests."[15] Once the DoD's plan to prevent the reemergence of a new rival was leaked to the press, criticism soon followed. Although the sweeping and grandiose vision of US foreign policy was jarring and seemed to embody a textbook definition of global, hegemonic, superpower behavior, the flux of NATO's mission, due to the end of the Cold War, drove the US to preserve its place on the world stage.

During the Cold War, the "immediate threat" to NATO was the Soviet Union. With NATO's sole existential enemy gone and its *raison d'être* largely swept away, a key question for the organization was how to deal with the new reality. NATO was designed, however, to be more than just a counterbalance to the Soviet Union and stated as such in its 1949 preamble: "The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations… are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, [and] founded on the principles of democracy, individuals [sic] liberty and the rule of law."[16] Combining the original 1949 treaty's preamble with the new strategic concept of 1991,[17] many NATO members envisioned their role as the driving force behind the democratization of all of Europe. Not only did scholars and political analysts disagree with this new direction, but so too did Russia.[18]

Russia perceived NATO's expansion as "creating a buffer zone in reverse" while simultaneously isolating Russia from the rest of Europe.[19] Unfortunately, Russia had few, if any, options available to oppose. Sherman Garnett claimed

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[15] Guy Roberts, *US Foreign Policy and China: Bush's First Term* (Routledge, 2014), 36.
[16] NATO, "The North Atlantic Treaty."
[17] NATO members concluded their 1991 Rome Summit by declaring their "essential purpose, set out in the Washington Treaty and reiterated in the London Declaration, is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter." NATO, "The Alliance's New Strategic Concept."
[18] Anatol Lieven, "Russian Opposition to NATO Expansion," *The World Today* 51, no. 10 (1995): 196.
[19] Black, *Russia Faces NATO Expansion*, 9.

that Russia's strategic position was analogous to one of the many stories of Winnie the Pooh. Moscow, like old Pooh bear, wedged itself in a rabbit hole in search of honey. Just like the bear, Russia found itself stuck, "caught between its lofty ambitions and reduced capabilities."[20] Many Russians also believed NATO's expansion broke promises made in 1990 and 1991, further stoking resentment.[21] Russian officials claimed that the inclusion of former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO would violate a "solemn pledge" made during the negotiations of German reunification in 1990.[22] However, the US made no such pledge.[23] Just as the truth resides in the eye of the beholder, so too was the promise of NATO expansion. Regardless of the legitimacy of Moscow's claim, Western nations must accept that Russia perceives NATO actions in their near-abroad as a threat, and no matter the Russian leader, Moscow will do what it can to undermine Western efforts at every turn.

The Bear Awakens from Hibernation

No country believed Russia would remain in its weakened state for long. In 1997, a Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report asserted that Russian conventional forces could become a threat to its neighbors in a decade.[24] It did not take long for the Russian Bear to validate this prediction. In 1999, Vladimir Putin became the Russian President and announced to the world that

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[20] Sherman Garnett is a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Garnett, "Russia's Illusory Ambitions," 61.
[21] Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," 22.
[22] Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," 39.
[23] The alleged "solemn pledge" occurred between US Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Union President Gorbachev. While negotiating to reunify Germany, Baker asked Gorbachev if he "would prefer to see a unified Germany outside of NATO, independent and with no US forces or a unified Germany to be tide to NATO, with assurances that NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward." President Bush immediately clarified the US position and made clear a post-Cold War Europe required NATO as its dominant security organization. Gorbachev agreed to the US terms in exchange for face-saving measures, none of which included any assurance NATO would halt expanding in the future. For more detail, see Mary Elise Sarotte, "A Broken Promise? What the West Really Told Moscow About NATO Expansion," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 92-96.
[24] Gallis, "NATO Enlargement: The Process and Allied Views," 1.

"Russia was and will remain a great power."[25] Putin promised to rebuild the country's military prestige[26] and wanted the military to contribute towards Russia's great-power ambitions.[27] In 2000, polls emphasized this point as a majority of Russians wanted Putin to "restore Russia to the position the Soviet Union had once held."[28] Unfortunately for Putin, he took over a country in economic ruin. Upon Putin taking office, Russia's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) dropped below that of Guatemala, Bulgaria, and Morocco.[29] Additionally, Russia's overall GDP fell $90 billion below Argentina and Switzerland as well as $20 billion lower than Austria.[30] Russia owed more money to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) than it had in foreign-currency reserves. Fueled by rapid economic growth, by 2010, Russia had increased its GDP by more than a factor of six.[31] In turn, the improved economy led to increased military budgets and a proclivity for intervention with its neighboring countries.

Cross-Case, Critical-Juncture Framework Analysis

Over the course of seven years, from 2007 through 2014, Russia acted aggressively against four of its neighboring countries. In 2007, Russia conducted cyber attacks against Estonia as a retaliatory punishment for the relocation of the Bronze Statue. The Russo-Georgia five-day war of 2008 was the second occurrence. Moscow claims that the Georgian military's aggressive push through South Ossetia resulted in thousands of ethnic Russian casualties. However, this researcher concludes Russian intervened with overt,

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[25] Vladimir Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," December 1999, http://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Putin.htm.
[26] McDermott, "Putin's Military Priorities: The Modernisation of the Armed Forces," 257.
[27] Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces*, 11.
[28] "A Strategy of Spectacle," *The Economist*, March 19, 2016, 22, https://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21694997-his-willingness-and-ability-act-abroad-gives-vladimir-putin-big-boost-home-strategy.
[29] Data derived from https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/compare-countries/
[30] Data derived from https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/compare-countries/
[31] "Economic Change in Russia," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), accessed January 18, 2018, https://www.csis.org/programs/russia-and-eurasia-program/archives/economic-change-russia.

conventional military force to blunt the Caucasus nation's attempt at joining the NATO alliance. In 2009, Russia conducted massive Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks against another former Soviet Satellite Republic (SSR). Although this paper does not cover the Kyrgyzstan case, it is worth noting that the cyber attack was intended to persuade the Kyrgyz President Bakiye into closing Manas Air Base (AB).[32] In 2014 and in response the Ukrainian Yanukovych's impeachment, Russia seized and annexed Crimea to preserve its access to the port of Sevastopol. This study analyzed each of these interventions to find commonalities and differences within and between cases.

The five questions asked of each case study structure the remainder of this section. First, the researcher analyzed how the historical relationship affected Russia's decision to intervene. Second, the dissolution of the Soviet Union created a 25-million-person Russian diaspora seemingly overnight.[33] Numerous studies conclude that a country's diaspora in the near-abroad affects the parent country's foreign-policy decisions. Therefore, the researcher analyzed how the ethnic Russian population in each country drove Russian actions. Third, in each of the examined case studies, Russian military presence in the victim country varied from no Russian military presence to a significant presence. Fourth, NATO played a role in each case study. Estonia was a NATO member, Georgia was being considered for inclusion, and Ukraine had been considered but was no longer on the NATO agenda at the time of the attack. Finally, the researcher analyzed the strategic geographic significance of each country to determine how it affected Russia's intervention posture.

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[32] Andrzej Kozlowski, "Comparative Analysis of Cyberattacks on Estonia, Georgia, and Kyrgystan," *European Scientific Journal, ESJ* 10, no. 7 (March 26, 2014): 241, http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/2941.
[33] Kolstø, "The New Russian Diaspora," 197.

Historical Comparison

Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine not only share a border with Russia, but they also share an extensive history. The uprising of Cossacks of the mid-17th century and the agreement struck with the Muscovy tsardom marked the beginning of Russian involvement in Ukraine.[34] Estonia and the Baltic States came under St. Petersburg jurisdiction during Peter the Great's quest to extend the Empire's territorial boundary in the early 1700s.[35] As Russia expanded farther south, it grew increasingly embroiled in conflict with the Ottoman Empire. After battling for decades, the Ottoman's ceded control of the Crimean Peninsula to the Russians in 1774.[36] In the Caucasus, a weakened Georgian kingdom alarmed Russian Emperor Paul's Council, which viewed the declining monarchy and its inability to prevent civil conflict as a "menace" to the Russian empire's southern borders.[37] Following the death of Georgia's King Giorgi, Russia formally annexed the Georgian Kingdom in 1801.[38] Russia's hegemonic rise prompted British and French intervention, resulting in Russia's defeat during the Crimean War. The defeat marked the beginning of the empire's steady decline and its inability to control territorial possessions.

During the Bolshevik Revolution, all three countries fought for their respective independence, but only Estonia and Georgia were successful, albeit, for a limited amount of time. In Ukraine, multiple factions vied for control.[39] In the end, only the Ukrainian Bolsheviks, backed by Soviet Russia, were able to institute an enduring government.[40] Georgia enjoyed independence from 1917 to 1921, but Soviet expansionist policies, which aimed to control the lands of the former Russian Empire, led to a Soviet invasion in 1921 and

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[34] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 220.
[35] Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 33.
[36] Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 140.
[37] Gvosdev, *Imperial Policies and Perspectives towards Georgia, 1760–1819*, 89.
[38] Gvosdev, 85.
[39] Magocsi, 535.
[40] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 535.

reincorporation of Georgia as a Soviet Socialist Republic in 1936.[41] Unlike Georgia and Ukraine, Estonia's use of guerrilla warfare tactics and mobilization of its conventional forces facilitated the expulsion of the Bolsheviks.[42] On December 21, 1920, Estonia's Constituent Assembly adopted and implemented its new constitution, marking the beginning of their Era of Liberal Democracy.[43] Unfortunately, Estonia's interwar independence lasted only 19 years. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, initiated the end of the Baltic State's independence.[44] Once the Allied powers defeated Nazi Germany in WWII, the USSR maintained control over all three countries. As the US and Soviet Union settled into the Cold War, Ukrainians, Georgians, and Estonians knew that regaining their independence would be a struggle.

The historical background for each case provides valuable context but is causally irrelevant to Russian military intervention. In Estonia's case, its history with Russia explains why the Baltic country immediately began to de-Sovietize its landscape and move the Bronze Statue. In the Georgian case, Stalin's brutal purges and lack of Cold War economic prosperity explains why Georgia looked to join Western alliances immediately following the deterioration of the Soviet Union. Although Ukraine's Soviet experience was comparatively better than other SSRs, it too believed its economic prosperity lay with Europe and not with Russia. In all three cases, Russia sought to maintain its influence over its bordering countries, but only intervened militarily in two of the cases. The historical aspects of the case studies, while insightful, are neither necessary nor sufficient to cause Russia's use or disuse of overt, conventional military force.

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[41] Kort, *The Soviet Colossus*, 154; West, *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania*, 236.
[42] Frucht, *Western Europe*, 1:75–76.
[43] Frucht, 1:76.
[44] Frucht, 1:79.

Russian Diaspora Comparison

The Cold War led to the emigration of ethnic Russians throughout Eastern Europe, resulting in a large Russian diaspora in the near-abroad after the USSR's dissolution. In Estonia, Sovietization significantly increased the total and relative proportion of Russians living in the country as compared to the early 20th century. In 1934, ethnic Estonians made up 87.7 percent of the total population. In 1989, the number stood at 61.5 percent, while ethnic Russians comprised 30.3 percent of the total populace.[45] The cities of Tallinn, Narva, and Tartu maintained the largest concentration of ethnic Russians. Ukraine's eastern regions, specifically Crimea, saw a dramatic demographic shift as well. Although the peninsula maintained a significant ethnic Russian presence before the Bolshevik Revolution, Stalin's Tatar purge in the 1930s and 40s swelled the number of Russians living in the region to 70 percent, where it presently remains.[46] Georgia's ethnic Russian population was never significant. In 1992, the Russian diaspora constituted only 5.1 percent of the total populace and only a minuscule 1.2 percent today.[47] Even Georgia's break-out regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have a small Russian diaspora. At the time of the Russo-Georgia conflict, ethnic Russians comprised only ten and three percent, respectively, of Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's population.

The differences among Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine's Russian diaspora are interesting. Although Moscow continually justifies its actions under the pretext of protecting its people, Russia only intervened with overt, conventional military force in Georgia and Ukraine. Additionally, between Georgia and Ukraine, only the Crimean region maintained a significant ethnic Russian populace. In the Georgian case, President Medvedev's declared obligation to

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[45] *The World Factbook 1995*.
[46] Bowman, Kalabugin, and Sedochencko, "Ethnic Composition of Crimea."
[47] Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 1992* (Government Printing Office, 1992), https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/48/pg48-images.html; United States. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2017* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2017), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html.

protect its citizens, "wherever they may be," was targeted more towards Moscow's "peacekeeping" forces in the breakout regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[48] Therefore, while the status of ethnic Russians in the near-abroad remains an integral part of Russia's political discourse, the evidence suggests a Russian diaspora does not provide necessary or sufficient cause for overt, conventional military intervention.

Russian Military-Presence Comparison

The collapse of the Soviet Union left many SSRs with a substantial Russian military presence. Estonia was the first to demand and succeed in removing all Russian forces from its territorial boundaries. In 1994, all Russian military personnel left the region,[49] and in 1998, Russia closed its Skrunda radar station.[50] Georgia successfully negotiated a full Russian military withdrawal in 1995. Excluding the 2,500 Russian "peacekeeping" forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Caucasus nation was free of any formal Russian military presence by the summer of 2007.[51] However, Russia's annual Kavkaz exercise left a significant troop presence on Georgia's borders and enabled Russia to rapidly respond to any Georgian military advancement in the breakout regions.[52] In Ukraine, the collapse of the Soviet Union left 800,000 military personnel, the Black Sea Fleet, and a large nuclear arsenal stranded.[53] After years of negotiation, both countries signed the Treaty of

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[48] Dimitri Medvedev, "Ya Obyazan Zachitit Jizn Rossiiskix Grajdan (I Am Obliged to Protect the Lives of the Russian Citizens)," *Rusl News [Online]*, August 8, 2008, http://russianews.ru/project/16843/16851, quoted in Rick Fawn and Robert Nalbandov, "The Difficulties of Knowing the Start of War in the Information Age: Russia, Georgia and the War over South Ossetia, August 2008," *European Security* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 57–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2012.656601.

[49] Stanley, "Russia Agrees to Full Withdrawal Of Troops in Estonia by Aug. 31."

[50] For additional information on the negotiations and significance of the Skrunda radar site, see Richard Mole, *The Baltic States from the Soviet Union to the European Union: Identity, Discourse and Power in the Post-Communist Transition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (Routledge, 2012), 126-127; Goldgeier and McFaul, 171–73.

[51] Nichol, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia," 59.

[52] The Russian peacekeeping force consisted of lightly armored soldiers numbering from 500, in South Ossetia, to 2,300, in Abkhazia. Lavrov, 39-44.

[53] Katchanovski et al., *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, 30.

Friendship and Black Sea Fleet Accords in 1997. The agreement granted Russia access to the port of Sevastopol until 2017 and the right to house up to 25,000 servicemen on the peninsula.[54] In 2008, while Ukraine was being considered for NATO membership, President Yuschenko asserted that his nation would not renew the port lease for Russia. However, once his successor Viktor Yanukovych took office, Ukraine lengthened the lease through 2042.[55]

In cases where Russia intervened with overt, conventional military force, Moscow also had a substantial military presence within the target country's borders. In Georgia, the "peacekeeping" forces and Kavkaz exercise provided Moscow the ability to respond to Tbilisi's push into South Ossetia immediately. In Ukraine, the port of Sevastopol lease and Treaty of Friendship enabled Russia to disguise its movements on the peninsula. Moreover, a military presence provide Russia a plausible explanation and some semblance of legitimacy to intervene militarily. Nonetheless, military presence is only a sufficient but not a necessary cause for using overt, conventional military force.

First, despite not having any military presence in the Baltic region, studies conclude Russia would have little trouble rapidly conducting a fait accompli.[56] Still, Moscow decided not to invade any portion of Estonia over the Bronze Statue incident. Estonia's NATO membership may have deterred Russian overt action, as the removal of a statue was not worth risking Western-intervention. Second, not mentioned in this study was the 2009 Russian cyber attacks on Kyrgyzstan. As the former SSR debated renewing the US lease on Manas AB, Russia launched a massive DDoS attack attempting to persuade Kyrgyz President Bakiye to close the base.[57] While it is unclear whether the cyber attack directly led to the base's closure, Russia did maintain a military

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[54] Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 730; Orr, "Why Crimea Matters to Russia."
[55] Yuhas and Jalabi, "Ukraine Crisis."
[56] Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, 1.
[57] Kozlowski, "Comparative Analysis of Cyberattacks on Estonia, Georgia, and Kyrgystan," 241.

presence in the country but did not take overt, conventional military action.[58] Finally, in 2015, Russia deployed forces and launched airstrikes in Syria without having any prior military presence.[59] In short, while Russian military presence within the target country's border was a factor in Moscow's intervention into Georgia and Crimea, it was neither a necessary nor sufficient factor.

NATO Status

Although each of the countries examined sought closer ties with the West, only Estonia successfully integrated into the NATO alliance. Moreover, at no point did Russia take a hardline stance against the Baltic state's inclusion. In 2002, Russia's Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov, considered NATO expansion an "internal matter" and did not want to jeopardize efforts to "deepen cooperation with NATO."[60] Once Estonia became a NATO member, Putin shrugged off the expansion, claimed that his relationship with the organization was "developing positively," and that he had "no concerns about the expansion."[61] Four years later, in the spring of 2008, NATO's plan to extend Membership Action Plans (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine garnered a clear rebuke by President Putin. Putin declared that NATO enlargement was "a direct threat to the security" of his country.[62] Although NATO deferred the decision to a later date, alliance members announced that Georgia and Ukraine would become members of NATO.[63] Additionally, it was not a secret why

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[58] Sultan-Khan Zhussip, "Russia Expands Its Military Presence In Region," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, November 12, 2008, https://www.rferl.org/a/Russia_Expands_Its_Military_Presence_In_Central_Asia/1348368.html.
[59] Patrick J. McDonnell, W.J. Hennigan, and Nabih Buhlos, "Russia Launches Airstrikes in Syria amid U.S. Concern about Targets," *Los Angeles Times [Online]*, September 30, 2015, http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-kremlin-oks-troops-20150930-story.html.
[60] Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States and Russia," 748; Larrabee, The Baltic States and NATO Membership, 5.
[61] Quoted in La Guardia, "Nato Is No Problem in Baltics, Putin Tells the West."
[62] Vladimir Putin, "Press Statement and Answers to Journalists' Questions Following a Meeting of the Russia-NATO Council," President of Russia, April 4, 2008, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24903.
[63] Gallis, "The NATO Summit at Bucharest," 5.

alliance members were tentative to extend a MAP to Georgia or Ukraine. While inclusion opponents stressed Georgia's "frozen conflicts" as their chief concern, NATO's reluctance to provide Ukraine a MAP centered around many Ukrainians' opposition to the organization.[64] Therefore, Russia's political aim was to exacerbate these concerns, which it accomplished by militarily intervening in Georgia's breakout regions in August 2008. Although NATO and Ukraine continued to work with one another on a variety of issues after the Russo-Georgia conflict, in 2010, Alliance members took Ukraine's membership off the NATO agenda.[65] Ukraine continued progressing towards NATO standards, but NATO members' bold communiqué seemed a distant memory.

Russia views NATO as a threat and will do what it deems necessary to prevent its expansion and disrupt the organization without directly confronting the alliance. In Estonia, NATO membership forced Russia to attack the Baltic nation through other means. In 2007, NATO had no clear guidance on how a cyber attack would or could trigger an Article 5 response. Even today, while NATO claims it will not rule out invoking Article 5 in the event a member finds itself under a "serious cyber-attack," there remains an ambiguous understanding of what rises to the level of "serious."[66] The Tallinn Manual provides some clarification, declaring "a State that is the target of a cyber operation that rises to the level of an armed attack may exercise its inherent right of self-defense."[67] Regardless, the use of overt force would be a clear violation of Estonia's sovereignty and well within NATO's Article 5 parameters. While the relocation of the Bronze Statue was insulting, Russia was not willing to confront a NATO member with military force. Ultimately, the lack of NATO

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[64] Gallis, 4.
[65] "Relations with Ukraine."
[66] "NATO Might Trigger Article 5 for Certain Cyberattacks," Defense News, August 8, 2017, http://www.defensenews.com/ 2017/05/31/nato-might-trigger-article-5-for-certain-cyberattacks/.
[67] Michael N. Schmitt, *Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 54.

membership provides a necessary, if not, sufficient cause for overt, Russian, conventional military intervention.

Strategic Geographic Significance

Figure 7: Current NATO Map
Source: http://www.businessinsider.com/map-of-the-russia-nato-confrontation-2015-2

Each of the three countries is geographically significant in some regard. Estonia's territory and the warm water port of Tallinn could provide Russia an additional buffer against NATO and logistical throughput for goods, respectively. However, Russia's heavily defended Kaliningrad Oblast and its access to other warm water ports decreases the marginal utility of acquiring the territory. Before Russia completely withdrew its forces from Georgia, Putin queried his General Staff about the territory's significance. His General Staff assured the Russian President that the "Cold War-era bases were not of strategic importance to Russia."[68] Although Georgia's territory does not provide

[68] Nichol, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia," 59.

Russia any added benefit, preventing NATO from full, unfettered access does. Georgian accession into the alliance would remove the last buffer state between Russia and NATO, essentially encircling Moscow. The Crimean port of Sevastopol is critically important to Russia, its Black Sea Fleet, and its ability to project power in and through the Mediterranean. Although Russia's sizeable commercial port in Novorossiysk serves as an alternative basing location for its fleet, the lack of natural deep water and confined space limit it as a viable substitute to Sevastopol.[69] In short, the strategic, geographic significance of Georgian and Crimean territory were both sufficient and necessary causes for Russia's use of overt, conventional military force. In Georgia, Russian intervention prevented the NATO alliance from having a strategic foothold on its southern border, while annexing Crimea guaranteed access to the port of Sevastopol.

[69] Hille, "Ukrainian Port Is Key to Russia's Naval Power."

Summary

The target country's NATO membership status or its strategic-geographic significance to Russia were critical variables in the divergent case-study outcomes. In 2007, Russia conducted cyber attacks against Estonia as a retaliatory punishment for the relocation of a Soviet-era WWII memorial. The Baltic nation's decision was several years in the making. Immediately after the Cold War, Estonia sought ways to remove all memories of Soviet-era occupation. A part of this "de-Sovietization" strategy included requesting and achieving the complete removal of Russian forces by the mid-1990s. Initially, NATO's planned expansion eastward did not include the Baltic states. However, all three nations' transformation into thriving economies precipitated the West's decision to offer Baltic countries membership in 2004. The combination of no formal or informal Russian military presence and Estonia's NATO membership precluded any rational possibility that Russia would use overt, conventional military force. A Russian invasion or the annexation of an Estonian border city, such as Narva, would have been a definitive case for invoking Article 5. While the relocation of the statue was insulting, Russia was not willing to fight over it.

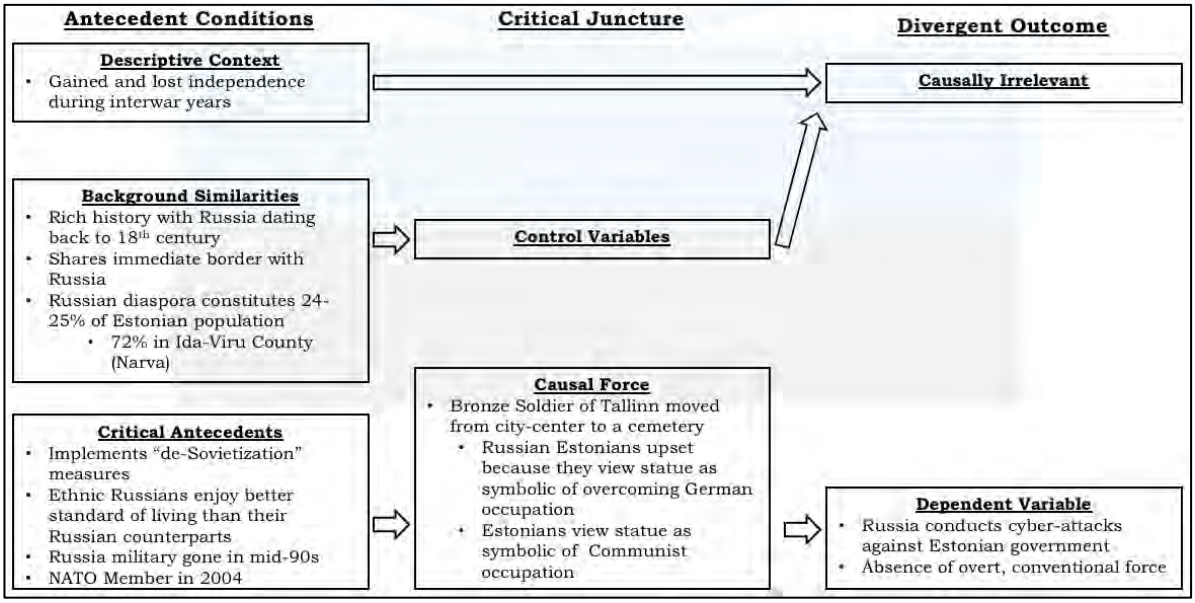

Figure 8: Estonia Cyber Attack Critical Juncture Analysis
Source: Created by Author

In 2008, tensions between Georgia and its two breakout regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, prompted a 5-day Russian intervention in the Caucasus. Although Russia claimed that it acted to protect the lives of its citizens, the evidence suggests that Russia intervened with overt, conventional military force to blunt the Caucasus nation's attempt at joining the NATO alliance. Unlike the Estonian case, Georgia's sovereignty was questionable. Moscow's "peacekeepers" and lingering troop presence along Georgia's border provided critical antecedents for Russia's invasion. Consequently, when Tbilisi rapidly advanced into South Ossetia, Russian forces immediately overwhelmed the small nation's military. While Georgia's territory did not provide Russia any added territorial benefit, preventing NATO from full, unfettered access did. Georgian accession into the alliance would remove the last buffer state between Russia and NATO, essentially encircling Moscow.

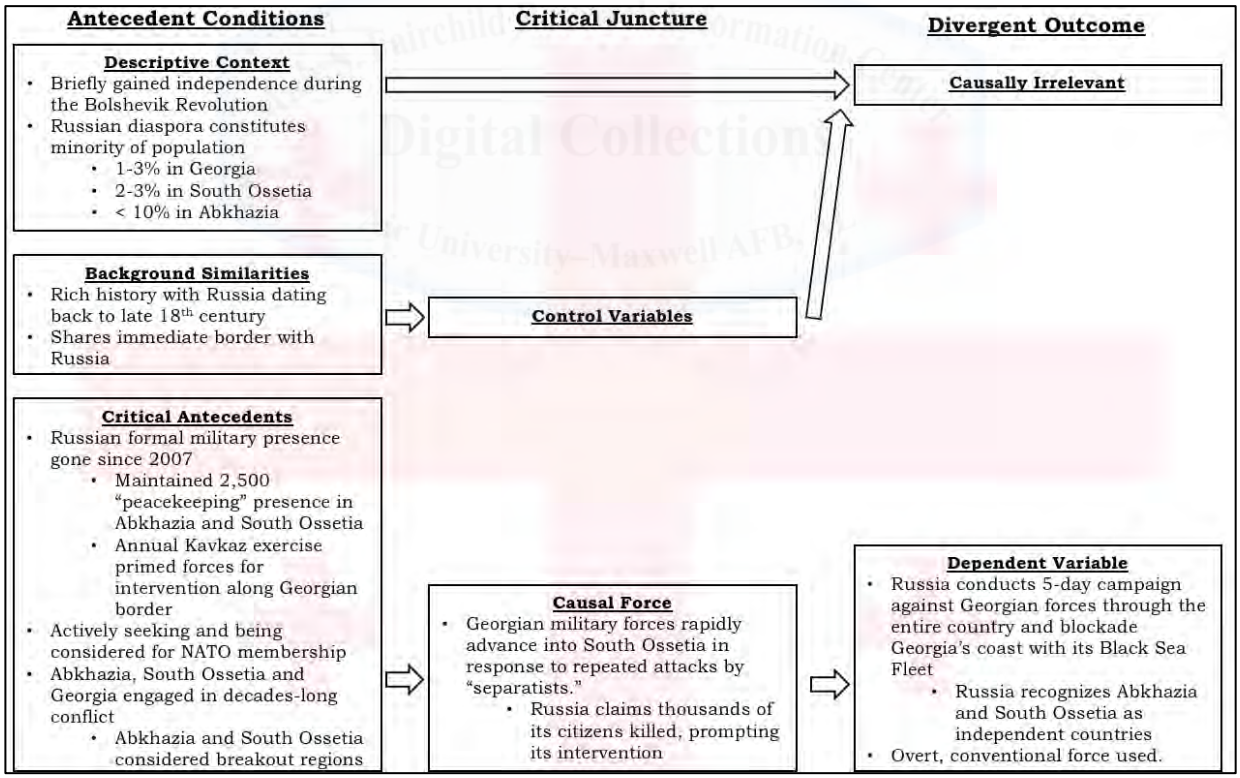

Figure 9: Russo-Georgia Conflict Critical-Juncture Analysis
Source: Created by Author

In 2014, the Ukrainian parliament impeached President Yanukovych, provoking the Russian invasion and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Russia feared Yanukovych's ouster would jeopardize its port of Sevastopol lease, and it acted to guarantee access. Just as in the Georgian case, Ukraine never rid itself of Russia's military presence; the 1997 Friendship Treaty allowed Moscow to maintain up to 25,000 troops on the peninsula. Additionally, Crimea's autonomous status and preference for Russian rule enabled Moscow to successfully push a "little green men" narrative, paralyzing the Ukrainian government and the West from intervening. Russia simply used established tensions to justify its actions. Russia feared losing its basing rights in Sevastopol, had an opportunity to act, and seized the moment. The West's inaction vindicated Moscow's cost-benefit analysis in proceeding with the annexation.

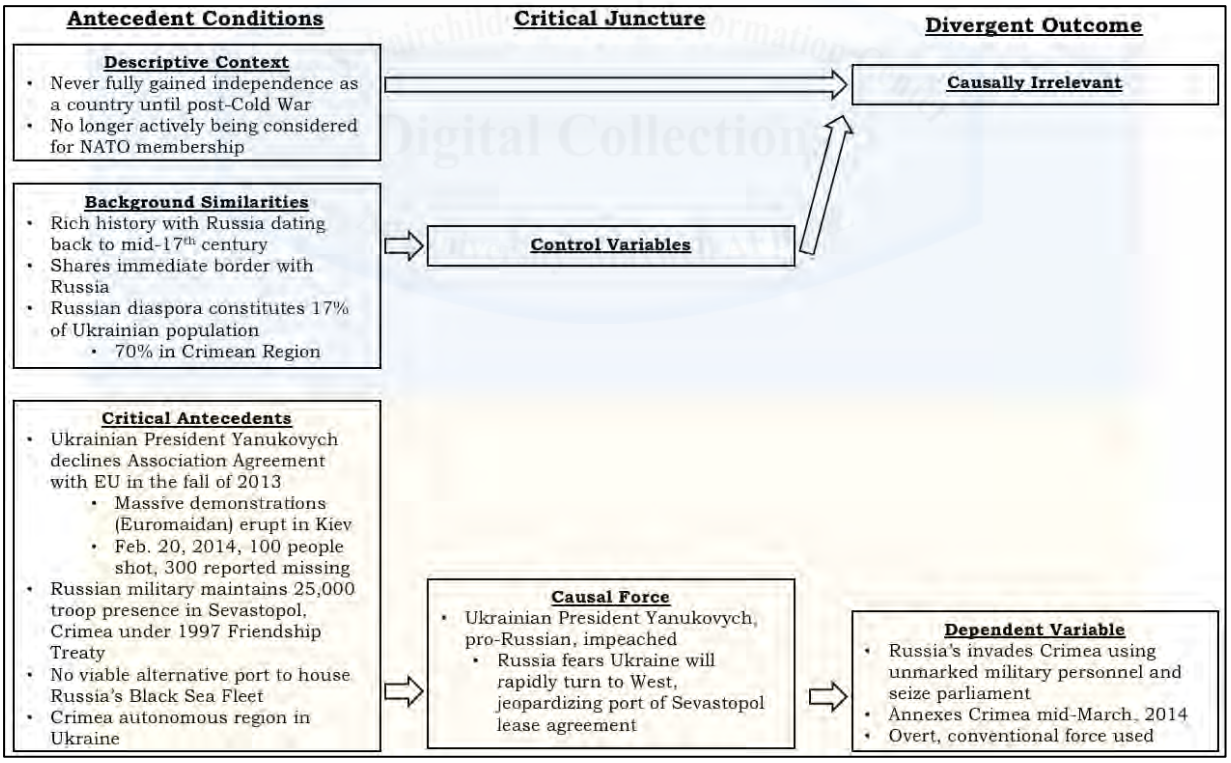

Figure 10: Annexation of Crimea Critical-Juncture Analysis
Source: Created by Author

Conclusion

The world of great-power competition never disappeared, other events merely overshadowed it. The Soviet Union's collapse left the US without a competitor. In the unipolar moment's wake, the US not only sought ways to dissuade potential rising powers from protecting their interests, but also pushed to expand the liberal world order's reach. Beginning in the mid-1990s, NATO expanded while Russia objected. No longer the military juggernaut of the Cold War era and suffering from economic turmoil, Russia's options were limited.

In 1999, Vladimir Putin ascended to the Russian Presidency, and the Russian Bear awoke. From the start, Putin declared that he aimed to make Russia great again, but the West failed to listen. As the Russian economy improved, so too did Russia's military capability and its ability to respond to perceived Western threats. Over the course of a decade, Russia watched NATO expand closer to its borders. It reacted with ambivalence towards the Baltic States' inclusion but made clear Georgia and Ukraine were off limits. NATO boldly retorted both countries would become members and the only thing standing between them and their inclusion was time. Proven wrong, NATO sat idly by while Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, effectively preventing either country from joining the Western military alliance.

Russia's sphere of influence remains finely focused on Eastern Europe. Unable to reverse the course of NATO's history and expansion, Moscow takes every opportunity to undermine what it perceives as Western efforts to encircle its country. In Estonia, Russia responded to the Baltic nation's relocation of a Soviet-era WWII memorial with a massive DDoS cyber attack, shutting down government services for several days. In 2008, tensions between Georgia and its two breakout regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, prompted Russian intervention, leading to a 5-day war in the Caucasus. Although Russia claimed that it acted to protect the lives of its citizens, the evidence suggests that Russia intervened with overt, conventional military force to blunt the Caucasus

nation's attempt at joining the NATO alliance. In 2014, the Ukrainian parliament impeached President Yanukovych, provoking the Russian invasion and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Russia feared Yanukovych's ouster would jeopardize its port of Sevastopol lease and it acted to guarantee access.

The evidence suggests a confluence of factors led Russia towards intervening with overt, conventional military force. Moscow will not tolerate NATO encroaching any further east and will act militarily to prevent such an occurrence. Conversely, Russia seems reluctant to directly confront NATO-member countries over perceived slights in its near abroad. The conundrum facing the West, then, is determining how to bolster security in the region and reassure its allies, without triggering a more intensified conflict with Russia. Moscow's annexation of Crimea demonstrates that Mackinder's geopolitical explanation of world events is still relevant; geography matters. Russia intervened in Georgia to keep a territorial buffer between itself and NATO and prevent the West from encircling Moscow. Russia annexed Crimea to preserve its access to the Sevastopol port and Moscow's ability to project power in the Mediterranean. The US and the Western-world's strategy, therefore, is best served by understanding the interplay of all the variables analyzed in this study. In short, Russia uses overt, conventional military force when it is triggered, it feels trapped, or when there is a strategic geographic interest at stake.

Glossary

AB – Air Base

AO – Autonomous Oblast

ASSR – Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

BTC – Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

CRS – United States Congressional Research Service

DDoS – Distributed Denial of Service

DIA – Defense Intelligence Agency

DPG – Defense Planning Guidance

EaP – (EU) Eastern Partnership Program

EMI – Electoral Misconduct Index

EU – European Union

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GWOT – Global War on Terrorism

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IPAP – Individual Partnership Action Plan

KFOR – (NATO) Kosovo Force

KSO – Russian Special Operations Command

MAP – (NATO) Membership Action Plan

NACC – North Atlantic Cooperation Council

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NKVD – Soviet People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs

NSS – National Security Strategy

NUC – NATO-Ukraine cooperation

ODHIR – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PfP – (NATO's) Partnership for Peace

SCP – South Caucasus Pipeline

SOFA – Status of Forces Agreement

SSR – Soviet Satellite Republic

UN – United Nations

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

UNPO – Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

VVS – Russian Air Force

WREP – Western Route Export Pipeline

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